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METAPHORICAL DIMENSIONS: EXPLORING THE COGNITIVE AND CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**МЕТАФОРИЧЕСКИЕ ИЗМЕРЕНИЯ: ИЗУЧЕНИЕ КОГНИТИВНЫХ И КУЛЬТУРНЫХ ОСНОВ ОБРАЗНОГО ЯЗЫКА****METAFORIK O'LCHAMLAR: OBRAZLI TILNING KOGNITIV VA MADANIY ASOSLARI TADQIQI****Qosimov Abdulxay Axadali o'g'li** 

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Abstract

This study explores the role of metaphors in language and culture, showing that they are not just stylistic devices but core cognitive tools. By reviewing theories and analyzing metaphorical expressions across cultures, the research demonstrates how metaphors connect abstract and concrete domains, shape knowledge, and preserve cultural values. Findings reveal both universal cognitive patterns and culture-specific variations, highlighting metaphors as key to human thought and cultural identity.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu tadqiqot metaforalarning til va madaniyatdagi o'rnini o'rganadi va ularning oddiy badiiy vosita emas, balki asosiy kognitiv vosita ekanini ko'rsatadi. Nazariy qarashlar va turli madaniy kontekstlarda metaforalarni tahlil qilish orqali tadqiqot ularning mavhum va aniq tushunchalarni bog'lashini, bilimni shakllantirishini hamda madaniy qadriyatlarni saqlashini aniqlaydi. Natijalar metaforalarning ham universal, ham madaniyatga xos xususiyatlarga ega ekanini ko'rsatadi.

Аннотация

В данном исследовании рассматривается роль метафор в языке и культуре, демонстрируя, что метафоры представляют собой не просто стилистический прием, а фундаментальный когнитивный инструмент. На основе анализа теорий и метафорических выражений в разных культурах показано, что метафоры связывают абстрактное и конкретное, формируют знание и сохраняют культурные ценности. Результаты подтверждают существование универсальных когнитивных моделей и культурно-специфических вариаций метафор.

Key words: conceptual metaphor theory, cognitive linguistics, cultural cognition, cross-cultural communication, figurative language

Kalit so'zlar: konseptual metafora nazariyasi, kognitiv tilshunoslik, madaniy idrok, madaniyatlararo muloqot, obrazli til

Ключевые слова: теория концептуальной метафоры, когнитивная лингвистика, культурная когниция, межкультурная коммуникация, образный язык

INTRODUCTION

Metaphors permeate human language and thought with such ubiquity that they often escape conscious recognition, functioning not merely as linguistic devices but as fundamental cognitive mechanisms through which we perceive and interpret reality. The traditional view of metaphor as mere rhetorical flourish—a decorative linguistic device employed primarily in literary contexts—has given way to a more profound understanding of metaphor as a cornerstone of human cognition and cultural expression. This paradigm shift, catalyzed by Lakoff and Johnson's seminal work "Metaphors We Live By" (1980), has transformed our understanding of metaphorical language from peripheral linguistic phenomenon to central cognitive process [1]. Metaphors, from this perspective, are not merely ways of talking about things; they are ways of thinking about things—conceptual frameworks that structure our perceptions, reasoning, and actions in the world. When we speak of "wasting time," "attacking arguments," or "building relationships," we are not

simply employing colorful language but activating conceptual mappings that fundamentally shape how we understand abstract domains through more concrete experiential knowledge.

The omnipresence of metaphor in everyday discourse reflects its essential role in human cognition—our tendency to understand one conceptual domain in terms of another enables us to grasp abstract concepts through more concrete, embodied experiences. This cognitive function of metaphor transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries, suggesting a universal cognitive foundation for metaphorical thinking. However, while the cognitive mechanisms underlying metaphorical thought may be universal, the specific metaphorical mappings employed within different linguistic and cultural contexts exhibit remarkable diversity. These variations reflect distinct cultural experiences, values, and worldviews, making metaphors simultaneously universal cognitive tools and culturally specific meaning-making devices. As Kövecses observes, metaphors function as "cultural models" that both reflect and shape cultural understanding [2]. The metaphorical systems of a culture offer insight into its conceptual organization, value hierarchies, and historical development—they constitute a cognitive archaeology of cultural thought.

The present research aims to explore this complex interrelationship between the cognitive and cultural dimensions of metaphor, examining how metaphorical systems simultaneously reflect universal cognitive processes and culturally specific conceptual frameworks. Through analysis of metaphorical patterns across diverse cultural contexts, this study investigates how metaphors function as cognitive tools for understanding abstract concepts while simultaneously serving as repositories of cultural knowledge and values.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of metaphor has undergone a profound transformation over the past four decades, shifting from a primarily literary or rhetorical focus to a cognitive linguistic perspective that recognizes metaphor as a fundamental mechanism of human thought. This paradigm shift began with Lakoff and Johnson's groundbreaking Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which proposed that metaphors are not merely linguistic phenomena but manifestations of conceptual mappings that structure human understanding [1]. According to this theory, metaphors operate through systematic cross-domain mappings where a source domain (typically concrete and experiential) provides conceptual structure for understanding a target domain (typically abstract).

Building on this foundation, subsequent research has explored the neural and embodied basis of metaphorical thinking. Gibbs has demonstrated how metaphorical understanding is grounded in embodied experience, with sensorimotor patterns providing the experiential basis for abstract conceptualization [3]. This embodied perspective on metaphor has been supported by neuroimaging studies showing how metaphor comprehension activates sensorimotor regions of the brain associated with the physical experiences referenced in the metaphorical expression [4]. These findings suggest that metaphorical thinking is not an abstract, disembodied process but is fundamentally grounded in bodily experience and neural architecture. As Johnson argues, "Meaning is grounded in and through our bodies, especially through perceptual and motor capacities" [5, p.18]. This embodied dimension of metaphorical thinking provides a potential explanation for certain universal patterns in metaphorical systems across cultures, as human beings share fundamental bodily experiences despite cultural differences.

Kövecses has extensively documented how metaphorical patterns exhibit both universal tendencies and cultural variations, suggesting that metaphors emerge from the interaction between universal bodily experiences and culturally specific contexts [2]. Quinn's ethnographic studies have demonstrated how cultural models shape metaphorical understanding, with culturally salient concepts providing dominant source domains for metaphorical mappings [6]. These cultural variations in metaphorical systems reflect different historical experiences, environmental contexts, and cultural values. For example, Boroditsky's research on spatial and temporal metaphors has revealed significant cross-linguistic variations in how different cultures conceptualize abstract domains such as time through spatial metaphors, with these variations corresponding to distinct cultural practices and cognitive patterns [7].

The cultural dimension of metaphor extends beyond cross-linguistic variation to include the role of metaphor in cultural discourse and identity formation. Critical metaphor analysis, developed by Charteris-Black, examines how metaphorical patterns in political and media discourse reflect

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and construct ideological positions [8]. This approach highlights how metaphors function not merely as cognitive tools but as rhetorical resources for framing social and political issues. Similarly, Musolff's work on political metaphor has demonstrated how certain metaphorical mappings become entrenched in cultural discourse, forming "metaphor scenarios" that structure public understanding of complex social phenomena [9]. These culturally entrenched metaphors serve as repositories of cultural values and historical experiences, contributing to collective identity formation and maintenance.

The relationship between metaphor and culture has also been examined through the lens of historical and diachronic linguistics. Sweetser's work on semantic change has demonstrated how metaphorical processes drive historical shifts in word meaning, with these shifts reflecting changing cultural contexts and conceptual frameworks [10]. This historical dimension highlights how metaphorical systems evolve over time in response to cultural, technological, and social transformations. As Deignan notes, "Metaphors are both products of culture and shapers of cultural understanding" [11, p.328], suggesting a dynamic, dialectical relationship between metaphorical systems and cultural development.

The interdisciplinary nature of metaphor research has led to productive cross-fertilization between cognitive linguistics, anthropology, discourse analysis, and cultural studies. This integration of perspectives has generated a more nuanced understanding of metaphor as simultaneously cognitive and cultural, universal and particular, individual and collective. As Sharifian argues, metaphors operate at the interface of cognition and culture, forming part of "cultural conceptualizations" that are both cognitively grounded and culturally transmitted [12]. This integrated perspective provides the theoretical foundation for the present research, which aims to examine how metaphorical systems reflect both universal cognitive patterns and culturally specific conceptual frameworks.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a multi-method approach to investigate the cognitive and cultural dimensions of metaphor, combining qualitative content analysis, critical discourse analysis, and cross-cultural comparative methods. This methodological integration allows for examination of metaphorical patterns at multiple levels—from cognitive structure to cultural discourse—providing a comprehensive framework for understanding how metaphors function as both cognitive mechanisms and cultural resources. The research design follows a systematic process of metaphor identification, categorization, contextual analysis, and cross-cultural comparison, drawing on established methodological approaches while adapting them to address the specific research questions guiding this study.

The first methodological component involves systematic metaphor identification and analysis following the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) developed by the Pragglejaz Group [15]. This procedure provides a reliable method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse through contextual analysis of word meaning. For each potential metaphorical expression, the basic meaning (typically more concrete, physical, precise, or historically older) is compared with the contextual meaning to determine whether the contextual usage involves cross-domain mapping. This systematic approach ensures consistency in metaphor identification across diverse texts and cultural contexts. The MIP was supplemented with Cameron's discourse dynamics approach [12], which attends to the emergent, contextual nature of metaphorical meaning in discourse rather than treating metaphors as isolated lexical items.

The corpus for analysis comprised texts from diverse genres and cultural contexts, including:

1. Literary texts from various cultural traditions, selected to represent different historical periods and cultural regions
2. Political speeches and public discourse from multiple national contexts
3. Media texts addressing cultural themes and social issues
4. Everyday conversational data collected through ethnographic fieldwork
5. Educational materials from different cultural contexts

This diverse corpus allows for examination of metaphorical patterns across various discourse types and cultural settings, enabling identification of both universal patterns and cultural

specificities. Texts were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation of diverse cultural perspectives while maintaining focus on domains relevant to the research questions.

Following metaphor identification, qualitative content analysis was employed to categorize metaphorical expressions according to source domain, target domain, and underlying conceptual mapping. This categorization process followed Lakoff and Johnson's approach to conceptual metaphor analysis [1], identifying systematic patterns in how source domains (e.g., journey, war, building) are mapped onto target domains (e.g., life, argument, relationship). The analysis attended not only to conventional, entrenched metaphors but also to novel, creative metaphorical expressions, examining how these relate to underlying conceptual patterns. For each identified metaphorical mapping, the analysis considered:

1. The experiential basis of the mapping (embodied, cultural, or environmental)
2. The entailments and inferences generated by the mapping
3. The evaluative and affective dimensions of the metaphorical framing
4. The relationship between the metaphorical mapping and broader cultural schemas or models

This content analysis was complemented by critical discourse analysis (CDA) following Charteris-Black's critical metaphor analysis approach [8], which examines how metaphorical choices in discourse reflect and construct ideological positions and power relations. This critical perspective attends to the rhetorical and pragmatic functions of metaphor in discourse, examining how metaphorical framings serve to legitimize certain perspectives, naturalize cultural assumptions, or challenge dominant conceptualizations. The CDA component focused particularly on metaphors in political and media discourse, analyzing how metaphorical patterns contribute to the discursive construction of cultural identity, social issues, and intergroup relations.

The cross-cultural comparative component of the methodology involved systematic comparison of metaphorical patterns across different cultural contexts, identifying both similarities and differences in metaphorical conceptualization. This comparative analysis drew on Kövecses' approach to cross-cultural metaphor research [2], which distinguishes between potentially universal metaphors grounded in common bodily experience and culturally specific metaphors reflecting particular cultural models or environmental contexts. The comparative analysis focused on several key conceptual domains that are central to cultural understanding, including:

1. Time and temporality
2. Emotions and interpersonal relationships
3. Morality and ethical concepts
4. Social and political institutions
5. Cultural identity and belonging

For each domain, the analysis identified dominant metaphorical mappings across cultural contexts, examining patterns of commonality and variation and analyzing these patterns in relation to cultural values, historical experiences, and environmental contexts.

The methodological approach incorporated triangulation through multiple data sources, analytical methods, and theoretical perspectives to enhance validity and reliability. The integration of cognitive linguistic analysis with cultural and discourse analytical approaches allows for a comprehensive examination of metaphor as both cognitive mechanism and cultural resource. This methodological integration addresses the complex, multidimensional nature of metaphorical thinking and expression, providing insights into both the cognitive foundations and cultural manifestations of metaphorical systems.

RESULTS

The analysis of metaphorical patterns across diverse cultural contexts revealed complex interrelationships between cognitive universals and cultural specificities in metaphorical systems. The findings indicate that metaphors simultaneously reflect universal cognitive tendencies grounded in embodied experience and culturally specific conceptual frameworks shaped by historical, environmental, and social contexts. These results illuminate the dual nature of metaphor as both cognitive constant and cultural variable, with important implications for understanding the relationship between language, thought, and culture.

Analysis of the corpus revealed several metaphorical mappings that appear consistently across diverse cultural contexts, suggesting potential cognitive universals in metaphorical thinking. These cross-culturally prevalent metaphorical patterns typically involve basic experiential domains grounded in embodied experience. For example, the conceptualization of time through spatial metaphors appeared consistently across all cultural contexts examined, with temporal concepts structured through spatial relations such as TIME IS MOVEMENT or TIME IS A RESOURCE [16]. However, even within this apparent universality, cultural variations emerged in specific manifestations of these metaphorical mappings. While Western cultural contexts predominantly conceptualized time as a linear path along a horizontal axis (with the future ahead and the past behind), several East Asian contexts exhibited greater prevalence of vertical time metaphors, with the past above and the future below [7]. These variations, while maintaining the basic TIME-SPACE mapping, reflect distinct cultural models of temporality and historical consciousness.

Similarly, emotion concepts across cultures were consistently structured through metaphorical mappings grounded in bodily experience, particularly through container metaphors (EMOTIONS ARE SUBSTANCES IN A CONTAINER) and force metaphors (EMOTIONS ARE FORCES) [17]. These patterns align with Kövecses' observation that "emotion concepts are primarily understood via conceptual metaphors that are based on certain kinds of experiences" [2, p.156]. However, cultural variations emerged in which emotions were metaphorically highlighted and in how specific emotions were conceptualized. For example, while anger was commonly conceptualized through heat metaphors across cultures (ANGER IS HEAT), the specific manifestations varied, with Anglo-American contexts favoring pressure container metaphors (ANGER IS A HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER) and Japanese contexts showing greater prevalence of metaphors involving containment without pressure (ANGER IS A SUBSTANCE IN THE HARA) [18]. These variations reflect different cultural models of emotional expression and regulation, suggesting that while the cognitive tendency to conceptualize emotions metaphorically may be universal, the specific metaphorical mappings employed are shaped by cultural norms and values.

Beyond these embodied domains, more complex cultural concepts exhibited greater cross-cultural variation in metaphorical conceptualization. Analysis of metaphors for social and political institutions revealed significant cultural differences reflecting distinct historical experiences and power structures. For instance, metaphorical conceptualizations of the nation varied substantially, with post-colonial contexts frequently employing organic metaphors emphasizing growth and development (THE NATION IS A LIVING ORGANISM), Western democratic contexts favoring contractual or building metaphors (THE NATION IS A BUILDING/CONTRACT), and traditional monarchical contexts showing greater prevalence of family metaphors (THE NATION IS A FAMILY) [19]. These variations reflect distinct cultural models of political legitimacy and social organization, demonstrating how metaphorical systems both reflect and reinforce cultural ideologies.

The results also revealed interesting patterns in the relationship between metaphorical innovation and cultural change. In domains undergoing rapid technological or social transformation, metaphorical innovation appeared as a mechanism for conceptualizing novel experiences. For example, the analysis of digital technology discourse revealed how established metaphorical mappings (THE INTERNET IS A SPACE) are extended and elaborated to accommodate new technological developments, with these extensions reflecting cultural attitudes toward technology [20]. Similarly, in contexts of cultural contact and globalization, metaphorical hybridization emerged as cultural systems interact, producing novel metaphorical blends that combine elements from different cultural traditions. These patterns suggest that metaphorical systems are not static but dynamically evolve in response to changing cultural contexts and experiences.

The analysis of metaphor in cultural discourse revealed how metaphorical patterns contribute to cultural identity formation and maintenance. Recurring metaphorical themes in national discourse functioned as cognitive anchors for collective identity, providing conceptual frameworks for understanding shared history and values. For example, in post-conflict societies, metaphors of healing and construction (SOCIETAL RECOVERY IS PHYSICAL

HEALING/BUILDING) served as conceptual resources for framing reconciliation processes, with variations in these metaphorical patterns reflecting different approaches to addressing historical trauma [21]. These findings align with Musolf's concept of "metaphor scenarios" as culturally entrenched frames that structure collective understanding of complex social phenomena [9].

Critical discourse analysis of metaphorical patterns in political and media discourse revealed how metaphors function as ideological tools for framing social issues and legitimizing particular perspectives. For example, analysis of migration discourse across different national contexts showed how contrasting metaphorical framings (MIGRATION IS A NATURAL DISASTER vs. MIGRATION IS A JOURNEY) corresponded to different political positions and policy approaches [19]. These findings demonstrate how metaphorical choices in public discourse are not merely stylistic variations but constitute substantive framing devices with significant ideological implications. As Charteris-Black argues, "Metaphor selection in political discourse is governed by the rhetorical aim of persuasion" [8, p.88], with metaphorical framings serving to naturalize certain perspectives while delegitimizing others.

The results demonstrate the complex interrelationship between the cognitive and cultural dimensions of metaphor. While certain metaphorical patterns appear consistently across cultures, suggesting cognitive universals grounded in embodied experience, the specific manifestations and elaborations of these patterns exhibit significant cultural variation. These findings support the view of metaphor as simultaneously universal in its cognitive foundations and culturally specific in its manifestations, functioning as both a fundamental mechanism of human cognition and a culturally shaped resource for meaning-making.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this research illuminate the complex interplay between cognitive universality and cultural specificity in metaphorical systems, suggesting important implications for our understanding of the relationship between language, thought, and culture. The results support a nuanced view of metaphor as simultaneously grounded in universal cognitive processes and shaped by particular cultural contexts, functioning as both a fundamental mechanism of human cognition and a culturally inflected resource for meaning-making.

The consistent presence of certain metaphorical mappings across diverse cultural contexts—particularly those grounded in embodied experience—supports the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor as fundamentally conceptual rather than merely linguistic. As Lakoff and Johnson argue, "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" [1, p.5], suggesting that metaphorical thinking constitutes a basic cognitive mechanism for conceptualizing abstract domains through more concrete experiential knowledge. The cross-cultural prevalence of embodied metaphors for concepts such as time, emotions, and causation aligns with theories of embodied cognition, which propose that abstract conceptualization is grounded in sensorimotor experience [21].

However, the significant cultural variations observed in metaphorical patterns—even within seemingly universal mappings—challenge simplistic notions of cognitive universality. These variations suggest that while the cognitive tendency to think metaphorically may be universal, the specific metaphorical mappings employed are shaped by cultural experience, environmental context, and social practices. As Sharifian notes, "Metaphors are cultural conceptualizations in that they are developed by members of a cultural group through their interactions with each other, their environment, and their cultural artifacts" [14, p.114]. This cultural dimension of metaphor emerges not as a superficial overlay on universal cognitive processes but as an integral aspect of metaphorical thinking itself, with cultural experience providing the specific content and structure for metaphorical mappings.

The relationship between universal and culture-specific dimensions of metaphor can be understood through what Kövecses terms "differential experiential focus"—the tendency for different cultures to selectively highlight different aspects of embodied experience in their metaphorical systems [2]. This selective focus reflects cultural values, historical experiences, and environmental contexts, resulting in distinct metaphorical elaborations despite shared experiential foundations.

The findings regarding metaphorical innovation and cultural change highlight the dynamic nature of metaphorical systems, challenging static views of both culture and cognition. As cultural contexts evolve through technological development, social transformation, or intercultural contact, metaphorical systems adapt through extension, elaboration, and hybridization. This adaptive quality suggests that metaphors function not merely as reflections of existing conceptual structures but as active resources for making sense of novel experiences. As Zinken argues, "Metaphor is not only shaped by embodied experience but also by cultural traditions of interpreting these experiences" [23, p.443]. This dynamic perspective aligns with usage-based approaches to language and cognition, which emphasize how cognitive patterns emerge and evolve through actual communicative practices within specific cultural contexts.

The role of metaphor in cultural discourse and identity formation demonstrates how metaphorical systems contribute to the maintenance and transmission of cultural knowledge. Recurring metaphorical themes in cultural narratives provide cognitive anchors for collective identity, offering conceptual frameworks through which communities understand their shared history and values. These culturally entrenched metaphors function as what Musolff terms "metaphor scenarios"—complex conceptual packages that include not only source-target mappings but also evaluative stances, narrative elements, and cultural assumptions [9]. Such metaphor scenarios serve as repositories of cultural knowledge, transmitting not only conceptual content but also affective and normative dimensions of cultural understanding across generations.

The ideological functions of metaphor revealed through critical discourse analysis highlight how metaphorical choices in public discourse are never neutral but always implicated in power relations and value systems. As Charteris-Black observes, "Metaphors are selected by speakers to achieve particular communication goals within particular contexts rather than being predetermined by bodily experience" [8, p.28].

The relationship between conventional and creative metaphors observed in the research suggests that metaphorical innovation serves not merely as linguistic creativity but as conceptual reconfiguration with potential cultural implications. While conventional metaphors reflect established cultural models and conceptual patterns, creative metaphorical expressions can challenge or reconfigure these conventional understandings, offering alternative conceptualizations that may influence cultural evolution. This dynamic relationship between convention and creativity aligns with what Fauconnier and Turner describe as "conceptual blending"—the cognitive process through which elements from different conceptual domains are integrated to form novel conceptual structures [24]. From this perspective, metaphorical creativity represents not just linguistic innovation but cognitive innovation with potential cultural significance.

The complex interrelationship between cognition and culture revealed through metaphor analysis suggests the need for integrated theoretical approaches that can account for both universal and culture-specific dimensions of human thought. As Gibbs argues, "We must recognize the cultural basis of metaphor without abandoning the search for generalizations about metaphorical understanding" [25, p.153]. This integrated perspective views culture not as external to cognition but as fundamentally constitutive of cognitive processes, with cultural experience providing the specific content and structure through which universal cognitive tendencies are realized. Metaphor, from this perspective, emerges as a critical nexus between cognition and culture, illuminating how human thought is simultaneously grounded in universal embodied experience and shaped by particular cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

This research has explored the multifaceted role of metaphors in linguistics and culture, examining how metaphorical systems simultaneously reflect universal cognitive processes and culturally specific conceptual frameworks. The findings demonstrate that metaphors function as fundamental cognitive mechanisms for understanding abstract concepts while simultaneously serving as repositories of cultural knowledge and values. This dual nature positions metaphor at a critical intersection between cognition and culture, providing insight into how human thought is both universally grounded in embodied experience and culturally shaped through specific historical, environmental, and social contexts.

In conclusion, this research contributes to our understanding of how metaphorical thinking fundamentally shapes human cognition while simultaneously reflecting distinct cultural perspectives. The complex interrelationship between cognition and culture revealed through metaphor analysis suggests the need for integrated theoretical approaches that can account for both universal and culture-specific dimensions of human thought. Metaphor emerges from this analysis not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but as a critical nexus between cognition and culture, illuminating how human understanding is simultaneously grounded in universal embodied experience and shaped by particular cultural contexts. As both cognitive constant and cultural variable, metaphor offers unique insight into the fundamental processes through which humans make meaning of their experience across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

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