SEMANTIC FEATURES OF METAPHORS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH PROVERBS

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Abstract: *Metaphor is an important linguistic phenomenon that enables people to express abstract ideas through concrete images and familiar experiences. In proverbs, metaphorical expressions communicate cultural values, moral principles, and collective wisdom in a concise and memorable form. This article examines the semantic features of metaphors in Uzbek and English proverbs, focusing on their figurative meanings, conceptual structures, and cultural characteristics. Through comparative and semantic analysis, the study explores metaphorical representations of knowledge, human character, time, labor, and experience. The findings demonstrate that both languages employ metaphor to communicate similar human experiences, although their images and cultural associations may differ.*

Keywords: *metaphor, proverbs, semantics, Uzbek language, English language, conceptual metaphor, cultural meaning, comparative linguistics.*

Language reflects the ways in which people understand the world, interpret their experiences, and communicate cultural knowledge. Metaphor plays a significant role in this process because it allows speakers to explain abstract concepts through familiar objects, natural phenomena, and everyday activities. Metaphorical expressions are particularly common in proverbs, which preserve traditional wisdom and communicate general observations about human life. Uzbek and English proverbs provide valuable material for comparative linguistic

research. Both languages contain expressions related to knowledge, experience, honesty, hard work, and human relationships. Although the underlying ideas may be similar, the images used to express them can differ according to linguistic conventions and cultural associations.

Metaphor is traditionally defined as the transfer of meaning from one concept to another on the basis of perceived similarity or association. For example, describing a courageous person as a lion does not refer to the individual as an animal. Instead, it transfers the qualities of courage and strength associated with the lion to a human being.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphor is not merely a stylistic device but also a fundamental mechanism of human thought. According to conceptual metaphor theory, people frequently understand abstract experiences through more concrete domains. For example, the expression “Time is money” conceptualizes time as a valuable resource. Proverbs represent an important area for studying metaphor because they combine figurative language with social experience and moral evaluation. Their meanings often extend beyond the literal interpretation of individual words. Consequently, understanding a metaphorical proverb requires linguistic knowledge and an awareness of the situation or cultural context in which it is used.

English proverbs frequently employ metaphorical images from nature, animals, and everyday activities to express general truths about human behavior. The proverb “Still waters run deep” illustrates the relationship between natural imagery and human personality. Literally, it refers to water that appears calm but may be deep. Figuratively, it suggests that quiet individuals may possess profound thoughts, emotions, or knowledge. The metaphor transfers the physical characteristic of water to the psychological characteristics of a person. Another example is “An old fox is not easily snared.” The fox represents an experienced and cautious individual, while the trap symbolizes danger or deception. The proverb emphasizes that experience helps people recognize difficult situations and avoid mistakes. The expression “A stitch in time saves nine” also

demonstrates metaphorical meaning. Its literal meaning concerns repairing a small tear before it becomes larger. Figuratively, it teaches that solving a problem early can prevent more serious difficulties in the future. The practical activity of sewing becomes a model for responsible decision-making.

These examples demonstrate that English proverbial metaphors frequently express advice through familiar images. Their semantic functions include evaluation, explanation, warning, and the transmission of practical knowledge.

Uzbek proverbs also use metaphorical imagery to communicate cultural values and collective experience. Nature, agriculture, animals, and human activities provide important sources for figurative meaning.

The proverb “Daraxt mevasi bilan, odam mehnati bilan” means that a tree is known by its fruit and a person by their work. The expression establishes a parallel between a tree and a human being. Just as the fruit demonstrates the quality of a tree, a person’s work demonstrates their abilities and character. The proverb therefore emphasizes the importance of judging people by their actions and achievements. Another example is “Bilagi zo‘r birni yiqar, bilimi zo‘r mingni yiqar.” This proverb suggests that a physically strong person may defeat one opponent, whereas a knowledgeable person can overcome many challenges. The contrast between physical strength and intellectual ability emphasizes the value of education and wisdom. Knowledge is represented as a powerful resource that enables people to achieve their goals.

The Uzbek proverb “Mehnatning tagi - rohat” expresses the idea that effort eventually leads to comfort or reward. Its meaning connects the experience of working with the expectation of a positive outcome. Although the expression relies partly on a conventional association between effort and reward, it illustrates how concrete experiences contribute to the development of abstract moral principles.

These examples demonstrate that Uzbek proverbial language uses figurative meaning to communicate the importance of work, knowledge, responsibility, and personal development. The comparison of Uzbek and English proverbs reveals both conceptual similarities and differences in metaphorical expression.

The English proverb “Knowledge is power” and the Uzbek proverb “Bilagi zo‘r birni yiqar, bilimi zo‘r mingni yiqar” communicate a comparable idea. Both emphasize the effectiveness of knowledge. However, the English expression presents knowledge directly as power, whereas the Uzbek proverb contrasts physical strength with intellectual ability. This difference illustrates how similar concepts can be expressed through different semantic structures. Another comparison can be made between “A stitch in time saves nine” and “Mehnatning tagi - rohat.” Both expressions concern effort and beneficial outcomes, but their meanings are not identical. The English proverb emphasizes the importance of timely action, while the Uzbek proverb highlights the relationship between labor and reward. Metaphorical images may also reflect culturally familiar activities. Agricultural practices, household tasks, and observations of nature can provide recognizable images for Uzbek speakers. English proverbs similarly employ familiar activities and natural phenomena to explain abstract principles. Nevertheless, these observations should not be interpreted as absolute differences between the two cultures. The semantic equivalence of proverbs must therefore be examined at several levels, including conceptual meaning, metaphorical imagery, evaluative force, and communicative function. Two expressions may communicate similar advice without sharing the same literal image.

Metaphorical proverbs perform cognitive, educational, evaluative, and communicative functions. They help people understand abstract ideas, preserve traditional knowledge, and express judgments about human behavior. Their cultural significance becomes especially apparent when a metaphor relies on experiences familiar to a particular community. However, a culturally specific image can communicate a principle that is widely understood across languages. For this reason, comparative analysis must distinguish between the cultural associations of an image and the general meaning of the proverb.

Metaphor is also important in translation. Translating a proverb word for word may preserve its original imagery but fail to communicate its conventional

meaning naturally. An effective translation should consider the intended message and, where possible, identify a target-language proverb with a comparable meaning and communicative function.

In my conclusion, the analysis demonstrates that metaphor is an important semantic mechanism in Uzbek and English proverbs. It enables speakers to express abstract concepts through concrete images drawn from nature, animal behavior, practical activities, and everyday experience.

Both languages employ metaphorical expressions to communicate knowledge, wisdom, labor, human character, and responsibility. Nevertheless, the same conceptual idea may be expressed through different images and rhetorical structures. These differences reflect linguistic conventions and cultural associations without necessarily indicating fundamentally different values.

The study also demonstrates that metaphorical meaning depends on the interaction between literal imagery, figurative interpretation, and communicative context. Understanding these relationships is essential for comparative linguistics, translation studies, and foreign-language education.

Further research using a larger collection of Uzbek and English proverbs could establish more systematic patterns of metaphorical usage and provide additional evidence concerning the relationship between language, cognition, and culture.

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