COGNITIVE MECHANISMS OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR FORMATION IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract: This article examines the cognitive mechanisms of conceptual metaphor formation in English and Uzbek political discourse. Conceptual metaphor is analyzed as a cognitive mechanism that enables speakers to understand abstract political phenomena through concrete domains of human experience. The study focuses on major metaphorical models, including **JOURNEY, WAR, BUILDING, FAMILY, and NATURE**, and examines their cognitive and pragmatic functions. The analysis demonstrates that conceptual metaphor formation involves experiential grounding, cross-domain mapping, frame activation, and cultural contextualization. Although several metaphorical structures are common to both languages, their realization and communicative functions may vary according to cultural and political contexts.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, cognitive mechanism, political discourse, metaphorical mapping, source domain, target domain, framing, embodied cognition.

INTRODUCTION

Conceptual metaphor occupies an important position in cognitive linguistics because it explains how abstract concepts are structured through concrete human experience. Lakoff and Johnson define metaphor not simply as a linguistic expression but as a conceptual mechanism through which one domain of experience is understood in terms of another [1, pp. 3–6].

This approach changed the traditional interpretation of metaphor as merely a stylistic phenomenon. Political discourse provides particularly favorable conditions for metaphorical conceptualization because political notions such as **POWER, DEMOCRACY, REFORM, DEVELOPMENT, CRISIS** and **GOVERNMENT** are

highly abstract. Political speakers therefore use familiar experiential domains to make such concepts cognitively accessible to audiences. The main objective of this study is to identify the cognitive mechanisms through which conceptual metaphors are formed in English and Uzbek political discourse and to determine similarities and differences between the two languages.

MAIN PART

Cognitive mechanisms of metaphor formation

The fundamental mechanism of conceptual metaphor is **cross-domain mapping**. In this process, knowledge from a relatively concrete **source domain** is projected onto an abstract **target domain** [1, pp. 61–68].

For example: **JOURNEY → POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The political process is consequently interpreted through the concepts of movement, direction, destination, obstacles and progress. Expressions such as *"the path to reform"* or *"moving towards development"* demonstrate the conceptual metaphor **POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IS A JOURNEY**. Another important mechanism is **embodied cognition**. Human conceptualization is partly grounded in bodily and sensory experience. Concepts such as *up/down, strength/weakness, movement, balance,* and *inside/outside* originate in physical experience and can subsequently structure abstract political concepts [6, pp. 16–21].

Thus, expressions such as *"strong leadership"* conceptualize political authority through the physical experience of strength. A further mechanism is **frame activation**. A metaphor does not activate an isolated word; it activates a broader cognitive scenario. According to Musolff, political metaphors can establish particular interpretive frames through which political events and actors are understood [5, pp. 1–6].

Therefore, metaphorical choice can influence the audience's interpretation of political reality.

Metaphorical models in English and Uzbek political discourse

The **WAR** metaphor is highly productive in English political discourse. Expressions such as *"political battle," "attack the policy," "defeat the opposition"* conceptualize

politics through conflict. The source domain of WAR provides the target domain of POLITICS with concepts of opponents, strategies, attacks, defense, victory and defeat. Such metaphorical structures can increase emotional intensity and persuasive force [2, pp. 8–12].

The **JOURNEY** metaphor is also widespread in both English and Uzbek political discourse. Political development is represented as movement towards a particular goal. In Uzbek political discourse, expressions related to *taraqqiyot*, *rivojlanish*, *yangi bosqich*, *oldinga harakat* similarly construct development as a process of movement. The **BUILDING** metaphor represents society, institutions, or reforms as structures that can be constructed, strengthened, modernized, or rebuilt. The conceptual relationship can be represented as:

SOCIETY/INSTITUTIONS → BUILDING

This model highlights stability, foundations, construction and gradual development. The **FAMILY** metaphor is particularly relevant to political discourse in contexts where social cohesion and collective identity are emphasized. The mapping **SOCIETY IS A FAMILY** activates concepts of unity, care, responsibility and belonging. Comparative research indicates that English and Uzbek political discourse share major metaphorical models, but their frequency and pragmatic emphasis can differ according to sociocultural context [3, pp. 16–19].

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The analysis indicates that conceptual metaphor formation is based on three closely connected cognitive operations: **experiential grounding, cross-domain mapping and frame activation**. Experiential grounding provides the cognitive basis of metaphor; mapping establishes the relationship between source and target domains; framing determines which aspects of the target concept become salient.

For example, the metaphor **POLITICS IS WAR** foregrounds confrontation and competition, whereas **POLITICS IS A JOURNEY** emphasizes direction and progress. **SOCIETY IS A BUILDING** highlights construction and stability, while **SOCIETY IS A FAMILY** foregrounds unity and mutual responsibility.

Thus, metaphors do not merely describe political reality. They **structure its interpretation**. The selection of a particular source domain determines which characteristics of a political phenomenon become cognitively prominent. This confirms the argument that metaphor is closely related to political framing and persuasion [2, pp. 15–18].

The comparison of English and Uzbek discourse also demonstrates the interaction of universal and culture-specific mechanisms. Embodied experiences provide a universal cognitive basis for metaphor, whereas cultural values and political traditions influence the selection and interpretation of particular metaphorical models.

CONCLUSION

Conceptual metaphor in English and Uzbek political discourse represents a fundamental cognitive mechanism for conceptualizing abstract political reality. Its formation is primarily based on **embodied experience, cross-domain mapping, frame activation and cultural contextualization**. The analysis shows that **JOURNEY, WAR, BUILDING, FAMILY and NATURE** are among the important conceptual models used in political communication. While their cognitive foundations are largely universal, their pragmatic functions and linguistic realization may differ between English and Uzbek. Consequently, conceptual metaphor should be regarded not as a decorative linguistic device but as a mechanism of **meaning construction, political framing and persuasion**. The study of metaphorical mapping therefore provides an important methodological basis for comparative research into English and Uzbek political discourse.

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