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A Linguistic Analysis of Metaphor in Journalism

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ABSTRACT

The current study is a comparative linguistic analysis of metaphor use in media texts published between 2018 and 2023 in English, Uzbek, and Karakalpak newspapers. This period was selected due to its linguistic richness and sociopolitical intensity, characterized by international crises, regional transformations, and the intensification of digital media activities. This study looks at how metaphors work as tools for thinking, values, and style in various media settings, based on Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) cognitive metaphor theory and other cultural approaches. The object of this study is metaphorical expressions, selected for analysis, ensuring an optimal degree of thematic extension and analytical intensity. These metaphorical expressions were removed from the news articles in The Guardian, The New York Times, Yangi O'zbekiston, and Erkin Qaraqalpaqstan since these newspapers were chosen for their national representativeness, thematic range, linguistic diversity, and ideological significance. Each of them reflects the dominant media discourse within their own sociocultural contexts, thus providing a well-balanced corpus for cross-linguistic metaphor research. The metaphors were grouped categorically into topics such as politics, economics, health, and social issues. These findings put metaphor at the forefront of media linguistics, demonstrating its potential to enhance mediating between language, thought, and culture. The study calls for the introduction of metaphor awareness into media literacy practice to facilitate critical reading and intercultural communication.

Keywords: Comparative Linguistics; Cross-cultural Analysis; Cultural Mentality; Ideological Framing; Journalistic Discourse; Metaphor in Media

Background

In today's media, metaphors are more than just rhetorical tools; they are also cognitive and cultural tools that societies use to see, understand, and tell stories about reality. Journalism often relies on metaphors to make challenging and abstract problems easier to understand, especially when things are changing or going wrong. The current work is driven by a growing interest in the intersection of metaphor, ideology, and media discourse in different languages and cultures. This paper looks at how different cultures use metaphors to show both shared and different sociopolitical realities. It does this by looking at English, Uzbek, and Karakalpak media texts from Advent 2018 to 2023.

This time, which is full of global upheavals like the COVID-19 pandemic, regional reforms, and more digitisation, is a great time for metaphorical creativity and ideological framing. Comparative methods in multilingual settings help us understand how media not only reflect but also shape the sociocultural views of their audiences. The study finds similarities and differences in how metaphors are used in different situations to help people from different cultures talk to each other. It looks at two important Central Asian news sites, Yangi O'zbekiston (Uzbek) and Erkin Qaraqalpaqstan (Karakalpak), and compares them to two English-language heavyweights, The Guardian and The New York Times. Even though they are in different media environments, each one is a positive indicator of what most people think. This study looks at how people use metaphors in different cultures to observe both universal cognitive patterns and culturally specific differences.

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory of Lakoff and Johnson (2003) is the basis for our theory. It says that abstract reasoning is based on systematic maps of embodied experience. We build on this foundation by adding pragmatic and cultural points of view, using political-metaphor framework and Kobuljonova's (2000) cultural-linguistic approach to Uzbek. From this perspective, metaphors are like mental shortcuts, stylistic decorations, and ideological tools that are deeply rooted in collective memory and editorial policy (Lakoff, & Johnson, 2003).

While Central Asian scholarship remains scattered, English-language scholarship offers numerous examples of media metaphors, such as Charteris-Black's (2021) war-and-journey typologies and Musolff's (2016) scenario analysis. Uzbek studies have looked at poetic metaphor and journalistic style (Sultonsaidova & Sharipova, 2009). Karakalpak metaphorology, on the other hand, mostly looks at literary texts and dialect surveys (Kosshygulova, *et al*., 2022). Most studies that compare languages do not use data from the same time period across languages. This study wants to fill that gap.

Three contributions are the most important. First, we put together a trilingual corpus of 120 news articles from The Guardian, The New York Times, Yangi O'zbekiston, and Erkin Qaraqalpaqstan over the course of six years. Second, we use a detailed metaphor-identification protocol to locate 300 important metaphors in four areas: politics, economics, health, and social issues. Third, we look at these results through a culturally sensitive lens, connecting figurative patterns to national stories like Aq altin ("white gold"), Aral hawazi ("voice of Aral"), and the English WAR metaphor.

Literature Review

Metaphor research comes from a mix of different fields, including cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and cultural linguistics. When you put these points of view together, you develop an analytical lens that is based on the body, ideology, and culture (Teliya, 1988). Cognitive Foundations. Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) showed that metaphor is not just a way of writing; it is a way of thinking. People can understand Lakoff &ideas by connecting them to concrete, physical experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). There is evidence from experimental studies (Gibbs,

2005) and neuroimaging studies (Bergen, 2012) that metaphor activates sensorimotor brain regions. Kövecses (2008, 2010) showed that these mappings are affected by the culture in which they are used. For example, the English metaphor "economic engine" suggests technological productivity, while Uzbek discourse may frame the economy as a cultivated field (Abduolimova, 2022).

Pragmatic Roles. Charteris-Black (2004) came up with Critical Metaphor Analysis, which looks at metaphor as a way to frame public discourse. Musolff (2016) came up with scenario theory, which connects groups of metaphors to moral stories, like seeing corruption as a disease that needs to be quarantined, used metaphors like PATH, BUILDING, and FAMILY to talk about how to make leaders legitimate. In Uzbek media, metaphors like yangilanish yo'li ("path of renewal") serve similar legitimizing purposes (Sultonsaidova & Sharipova, 2009).

Memory of Culture. Sharifian (2017) stressed how cultural schemas affect the choice of metaphors. Uzbek metaphors use images from farming and crafts, according to Kobuljonova (2000) and (Kosshygulova, *et al.*, 2022) wrote down Karakalpak metaphors that show what life was like near the Aral Sea. Telia's "phraseological picture of the world" from 1988 shows how idiomatic expressions can express values. For example, Aral Hawazi brings up ecological trauma and solidarity in a certain cultural context. Things to think about when it comes to style. The style of journalism divides clarity and persuasion (Galperin, 1977; Arnold, 2002). Uzbek scholars (Bakieva, & Teshebaeva, 2019) warn against using metaphors too much, but they do agree that they can help people remember things. Karakalpak norms (Bekbergenov, 1973) allow images that are culturally relevant. Register constraints affect the availability of metaphors, which is like what Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2009), Biber (2006) said about how genre shapes lexis.

Methods

Making up the corpus. The study put together a trilingual corpus of 120 news articles, with 30 each from The Guardian and The New York Times (in English), Yangi O'zbekiston (in Uzbek), and Erkin Qaraqalpaqstan (in Karakalpak). The articles, which came out between 2018 and 2023, are about social, political, economic, and health issues. The criteria for selection were high circulation, relevance to national discourse, and ease of access. Finding Metaphors. We implemented the NVivo 14 programme for a qualitative data analysis that can handle, code, and analyze large amounts of text data to systematically find and study metaphorical language in journalism. After getting a lot of news articles from reliable sources like The New York Times, The Guardian, Yangi O'zbekiston and Erkin Qaraqalpaqstan, each article was put into NVivo for structured analysis. Using the MIPVU protocol (Steen *et al.*, 2010), we found metaphors by comparing the contextual meaning of a word with its more basic meaning to see if it was used metaphorically. Once they were found, metaphorical phrases were linked to nodes that stood for conceptual metaphors, like "ECONOMY IS A MACHINE" and "INFLATION IS AN ENEMY". NVivo's hierarchical coding system makes it possible to group these metaphors into larger thematic groups, like economic engine, war policy, and voice of nature. The software also made it easier to create quantitative analysis, like frequency counts and comparisons between sources. This assisted us in achieving a better idea of how metaphors work in different media cultures. Overall, NVivo helped make the metaphor analysis more reliable, open, and easy to repeat, making it a strong digital space for qualitative linguistic research. In total, we coded and extracted 300 metaphorical expressions, putting them into groups based on their source domains (like WAR, NATURE, and MACHINE) and their target domains (like governance and the economy). This method made our metaphor analysis more reliable, clear, and easy to repeat. For example:

-English: "fight against inflation" — The word "fight" usually means fighting, but in this case it refers to financial policy. The mismatch is a metaphor for a signal.

-Uzbek: "bahor nafasi" ("breath of spring") to talk about reform. "Breath" usually means breathing, but here it means renewal.

-Karakalpak: "Aral Hawazi" ("Voice of the Aral")"- voice" usually means human speech, but it can also mean environmental activism.

How to Analyze. After being sorted into groups, the metaphors were looked at for how often they appeared, where they came from, and what their practical uses were. After that, a qualitative cross-linguistic comparison was made that linked the use of metaphors to cultural stories and the way editors put themselves in the story. The NVivo software made it easier to code and group themes. Understanding Culture. We also looked at how each metaphor fits with the culture. For instance, oq oltin ("white gold") was looked at in the context of Uzbekistan's cotton industry and its agricultural history after the Soviet Union. Aral Hawazi was put in the context of Karakalpakstan's environmental activism. The phrase "economic engine" and other English metaphors were connected to industrial capitalist ideas.

Results & Discussion

English media's metaphorical language often turned on war (e.g., "battle against inflation"), sports (e.g., "scoring political points"), and technology (e.g., "the economy's engine"). Reflecting a Western approach toward production and adversarial framing, these metaphors frequently stress dynamism, competitiveness, and control.

Uzbek and Karakalpak media, on the other hand, mostly depended on metaphors taken from agriculture (e.g., oq oltin "white gold" referring to cotton), nature (e.g., bahor nafasi "breath of spring" for reforms), and cultural-historical references (e.g., Temuriyler dáwiri "The Temurid Era" to describe a period of rebirth or grandeur).

Some metaphorical language revealed how local culture shapes journalistic language, unique for their linguistic setting. For Karakalpakstan, Aral Hawazi ("Voice of the Aral") for instance functions as both a cultural emblem of loss and identity and an environmental metaphor.

The following additional examples highlight the variety of metaphorical expressions examined: "Harbiy tafakkur kuchi, donish aqliy quvvati, davlatchilik iste'dodi bilan Temuriylar sulolasi umrini uzaytirib, uning siyosat maydonida 332 yil yashab qolishiga yo'l ochdi." —Considering governance as vitality, military, intellectual, and political capabilities are metaphorically depicted as prolonging the dynasty's lifespan.

"Temuriyler dáwirinde ilimge itibar hám ilimpazlarga sıylasıq." — Knowledge is portrayed as a prized resource and an era-defining virtue, and science and scholars are honored.

"Aral xawazin Evropaga jetkize alganın maqtanısh penen aytıp otti." — Regional identity and ecological discourse are linked by the metaphor "Aral xawazi" ("Voice of Aral").

"The question of whether the American Dream still exists is raised by its history." — The metaphor of the "American Dream" views the national ethos as a dynamic story.

"The Union Jack is being waved by English politicians, but its meaning is ripped and tattered." — Under ideological pressure, the flag metaphor conveys national identity.

"Just before the election, a resurgent virus strikes the heartland." The political and emotional gravity of

public health emergencies is exemplified by disease as an attacker.

The comparative study of metaphorical statements in English, Uzbek, and Karakalpak newspapers recognizes pertinent patterns that mirror not only linguistic choice but also the unwritten cultural, ideological, and historical backgrounds underlying media communication. The results are classified in thematic categories recognized—politics, economics, health, and social issues—to provide a comprehensive view of the employment of metaphors and its influence on meaning-making in journalism (Kallibekova, 2022; Teliya, 1988).

In all three languages, metaphors are powerful tools of rhetoric and argument, but their thematic interests and stylistic affinities are quite different. In English-language media such as The Guardian and The New York Times, metaphors of war, technology, and sport dominate political and economic rhetoric. "Information war", "economic engine," and "battleground of ideas" frame abstractions of political conflict and economic machinery in terms of contest and mechanistic efficiency.

Conversely, Uzbek and Karakalpak literature exhibit more trends towards nature, agriculture, and folk allegories. Oq oltin (white gold), Aral hawazi (The Voice of Aral), and Temuriyler dáwiri (The Temurid Era) are titles which indicate the enduring importance of countryside life and local history.

Despite these differences, therefore, some analogies also emerge. All three media systems use metaphor as a tool to condense complex realities, engage people at an emotional level, and produce plausible narratives. Both in Western and Central Asian contexts, metaphors provide linguistic briefs to report policy shifts, economic hardship, and community values.

The ideational structure is distinct: English media war metaphors sanction competition and conflict, while Uzbek and Karakalpak natural and historical metaphors emphasize community, sustainability, and continuity. Yet both sets of metaphors fulfil the same ideological function of shaping public interpretation and perception.

The effect appeal also is phrased differently: English metaphors cause urgency or strategic thinking, whereas Central Asian metaphors create nostalgia, solidarity, and pride of culture. However, in both instances, metaphor contributes to affective force.

In the construction of identity, Uzbek and Karakalpak media metaphors proclaim national and ethnic identity, whereas English media metaphors proclaim ideological or technological superiority. But both systems use metaphors to consolidate group self-concepts.

Cross-linguistic contrastive comparison confirms metaphor's privileged status in framing news across linguistic cultures. Such an insight can strengthen cross-cultural communication and promote metaphor literacy in the school curriculum.

There are several problems with this study. First, the article sampling was limited to online archives that are open to the public, which could have omitted important print-only material. Second, even though metaphor identification is systematic, it is still subjective. Third, the biases of the editors at the newspapers may affect how often and which metaphors they use. Finally, the way that different languages use syntax may affect how important metaphors are in different languages (Kallibekova, 2022).

Table 1. Visual Summary of Dominant Metaphor Categories (2018–2023)

Language	Politics	Economy	Health	Society
English (EN)	WAR, GAME, BATTLE	MACHINE, ENGINE	VIRUS, WAR	SPORT, THEATER

Uzbek (UZ)	PATH, FOUNDATION	ORCHARD, HARVEST	BLOOM, SPRING	CRAFT, FAMILY
Karakalpak (KK)	DYNASTY, VISION	SEA, RIVER	VOICE, BREATH	ANCESTORS, LAND

This table summarizes the most common metaphorical domains in each language across key journalistic topics.

Conclusion

The several ways metaphor functions in journalistic cultures are shown by this comparative study. Metaphor in English, Uzbek, and Karakalpak media serves not only as stylistic window dressing but also as a carrier of cultural memory, ideological development, and social values. The study confirms that in order to foster cross-cultural understanding and critical reading, media education initiatives must include metaphor awareness—especially in multilingual and cosmopolitan settings—in order. Emphasizing the relative aim of this study, a comparison of similarities and divergences in the use of metaphors has been quite important in developing an understanding of the way language mediates our comprehension of reality in culturally particular settings. Comparative study in audiovisual media and social media can be followed up on, where metaphor is still developing dynamically.

Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate: This article is a review of previously published studies and does not involve any new experiments with human participants or animals. Therefore, ethics approval and consent to participate are not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: Not Applicable.

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