



METAPHORICAL UNITS IN SCIENTIFIC, MEDIA, AND LITERARY DISCOURSE

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Introduction

Metaphor is not only a decorative device of poetry. In modern linguistics, metaphor is understood as a cognitive and communicative mechanism through which people conceptualize abstract, complex, and emotionally charged experiences. Since the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, metaphor has been studied not merely as a rhetorical figure, but as a basic principle of human thought. People often understand one domain of experience through another: argument may be understood as war, time as money, life as a journey, knowledge as light, and society as a body.

Metaphorical units appear in different types of discourse, but their functions are not identical everywhere. In scientific discourse, metaphor helps name new concepts, organize theoretical knowledge, and make abstract phenomena understandable. In media discourse, metaphor frames social events, evaluates political or educational processes, and influences public opinion. In literary discourse, metaphor performs a strongly expressive and aesthetic function, creating emotional depth, imagery, and symbolic meaning. Therefore, the study of metaphorical units across scientific, media, and literary discourse allows researchers to see how language reflects thought, culture, ideology, and communicative purpose.

A metaphorical unit may be a single word, a phrase, a collocation, or a larger textual construction used metaphorically. For example, expressions such as *the foundation of knowledge*, *economic growth*, *a wave of criticism*, *the roots of culture*, and *the heart of the problem* are metaphorical units because they transfer meaning from a concrete source domain to an abstract target domain. These units are important because they show how speakers structure reality through language.

Metaphorical Units in Scientific Discourse

Scientific discourse is usually associated with precision, objectivity, and logical explanation. However, this does not mean that science is free from metaphor. On the contrary, many scientific concepts are introduced, explained, and developed through metaphorical language. Scientific metaphor is especially important when researchers need to describe abstract, invisible, or newly discovered phenomena.



In scientific discourse, metaphors often have a nominative or conceptualizing function. They help name something that is difficult to describe directly. For example, terms such as *genetic code*, *cellular machinery*, *information flow*, *language processing*, *cognitive mapping*, and *neural network* are metaphorical in origin. The word *code* comes from the domain of communication and secret writing, but in biology it is used to describe the system through which genetic information is stored and transmitted. Similarly, *network* originally refers to interconnected physical structures, but in cognitive science and computer science it is used to describe systems of relations.

Scientific metaphors also simplify complex knowledge. They allow researchers and readers to understand unfamiliar phenomena through familiar images. For example, when the brain is described as a computer, the metaphor highlights information processing, storage, input, and output. This metaphor is useful because it makes cognitive processes more accessible. However, it also has limitations because the human brain is not actually a computer. Thus, scientific metaphors do not merely explain reality; they also shape the way scientific reality is imagined.

Another important function of metaphor in scientific discourse is theoretical framing. Different metaphors may lead to different models of explanation. In linguistics, for example, language has been described as a system, a tool, a mirror of thought, a social practice, and a living organism. Each metaphor emphasizes a different aspect of language. If language is viewed as a system, attention is given to structure and rules. If language is viewed as a tool, attention is given to use and function. If language is viewed as a living organism, attention is given to change, growth, and development.

In corpus-based metaphor studies, scientific discourse is useful because it contains repeated metaphorical patterns. These patterns are not accidental. They often become conventionalized and accepted as part of academic terminology. For example, in educational research, scholars frequently use metaphors such as *learning pathway*, *knowledge construction*, *academic development*, *research framework*, and *theoretical foundation*. These expressions are so common that they may no longer feel poetic, yet they still preserve metaphorical meaning. A *foundation* belongs to the domain of building, but in academic discourse it refers to the basic principles on which knowledge is constructed.

Therefore, metaphor in scientific discourse is not ornamental. It is conceptual, explanatory, and terminological. It helps science create names, build models, organize knowledge, and communicate complex ideas.

Metaphorical Units in Media Discourse

Media discourse is one of the richest areas for metaphor analysis because



media texts do not only report events; they also interpret and evaluate them. Newspapers, online platforms, television reports, and analytical articles use metaphor to present social reality in a particular way. Through metaphor, media discourse can make an issue appear dangerous, urgent, positive, negative, progressive, or problematic.

One of the main functions of metaphor in media discourse is framing. A frame is a way of organizing perception. When an event is described through a particular metaphor, readers are encouraged to understand it according to that source domain. For example, if education reform is described as a *battle*, then participants may be seen as fighters, problems as enemies, and success as victory. If reform is described as a *journey*, then attention moves to direction, stages, obstacles, and progress. If the economy is described as a *patient*, then crisis becomes illness, government action becomes treatment, and recovery becomes health.

Media metaphors often have an evaluative function. They do not only explain; they judge. Expressions such as *a broken system*, *a toxic political climate*, *a wave of protests*, *the collapse of trust*, *a growing crisis*, and *the roots of corruption* carry strong evaluative meanings. They guide the reader toward a particular emotional and intellectual response. For instance, describing a system as *broken* suggests that it needs repair, while describing a problem as having *deep roots* suggests that it is old, serious, and difficult to remove.

In political and social media discourse, metaphors of war, disease, natural disaster, construction, and movement are especially frequent. A government may *fight inflation*, society may face a *wave of migration*, corruption may be called a *disease*, and reforms may be described as a *roadmap*. These metaphors are powerful because they make abstract social processes more concrete. At the same time, they may also manipulate public perception by highlighting some aspects and hiding others.

For example, the metaphor *education is an engine of development* presents education as a driving force that moves society forward. This metaphor has a positive evaluative meaning because it associates education with progress, movement, productivity, and national development. In contrast, the metaphor *education is in crisis* creates a negative frame and suggests urgency, instability, and the need for immediate intervention. Both metaphors may refer to the same educational sphere, but they produce different interpretations.

Media discourse is also culturally marked. In English media, metaphors often come from the domains of competition, business, technology, health, and architecture: *policy framework*, *economic engine*, *political battlefield*, *digital ecosystem*, *institutional architecture*. In Uzbek media, metaphorical units may



frequently draw on culturally familiar domains such as path, foundation, light, growth, heart, purity, and family relations: *taraqqiyot yo'li* “path of development,” *bilim poydevori* “foundation of knowledge,” *ma'rifat nuri* “light of enlightenment,” *yosh avlod kamoloti* “growth/maturation of the young generation.” Such metaphors reveal not only linguistic patterns but also cultural values.

Thus, metaphor in media discourse is not neutral. It frames events, evaluates reality, constructs public attitudes, and sometimes supports ideological positions.

Metaphorical Units in Literary Discourse

Literary discourse is traditionally the most obvious field of metaphor use. In poetry, prose, drama, and other literary forms, metaphor creates imagery, emotional intensity, symbolic meaning, and aesthetic beauty. Unlike scientific discourse, where metaphor often becomes conventional and terminological, literary metaphor is frequently original, expressive, and context-dependent.

The main function of metaphor in literary discourse is expressive and aesthetic. Writers use metaphor to show inner states, emotions, conflicts, and experiences in a vivid way. For example, sadness may be presented as darkness, love as fire, memory as a river, life as a road, hope as light, and death as sleep. These metaphors allow the reader to experience meaning emotionally rather than only intellectually.

Literary metaphors are often more open to interpretation than scientific or media metaphors. A metaphor in a poem may carry several meanings at the same time. For instance, the metaphor *the heart is a locked room* may suggest emotional secrecy, pain, loneliness, protection, or fear of intimacy. The exact meaning depends on the broader literary context. Therefore, literary metaphor is not only a linguistic unit but also a device of artistic thinking.

In literary discourse, metaphor can also reflect national-cultural worldview. Uzbek literary tradition, for example, often uses images connected with nature, spirituality, moral purity, love, patience, and the human heart. Words such as *ko'ngil* “inner heart/soul,” *nur* “light,” *gul* “flower,” *yo'l* “path,” *daryo* “river,” and *olov* “fire” may function metaphorically in poetry and prose. English literary discourse also uses nature and body metaphors, but the specific associations may differ according to historical, religious, and cultural traditions.

Another important feature of literary metaphor is its ability to individualize experience. While scientific metaphor tends to generalize, literary metaphor often particularizes. It does not simply say that “life is difficult”; it may represent life as a storm, a narrow bridge, a long winter, or a silent room. Each image creates a different emotional world. This is why literary metaphor



is central to style and authorial voice.

Literary metaphor may also perform a cognitive function. It can reveal hidden similarities between different phenomena and make readers see ordinary things in a new way. When a writer describes time as a thief, the metaphor does not only beautify the sentence; it expresses the idea that time silently takes away youth, opportunities, and life itself. In this sense, literary metaphor combines imagination, emotion, and thought.

Comparative Discussion

Although metaphorical units occur in scientific, media, and literary discourse, their dominant functions differ. In scientific discourse, metaphor is mainly conceptual and explanatory. It helps create terminology and organize abstract knowledge. In media discourse, metaphor is mainly evaluative and argumentative. It frames events and influences public interpretation. In literary discourse, metaphor is mainly expressive and aesthetic. It creates imagery, emotional depth, and symbolic meaning.

However, these functions may overlap. A scientific metaphor may also be persuasive. A media metaphor may also be expressive. A literary metaphor may also conceptualize reality. For example, the metaphor *foundation of education* may appear in scientific writing as a theoretical term, in media discourse as an argument for investment, and in literature as a symbol of personal development. The same source domain can function differently depending on discourse type.

The analysis of metaphorical units should therefore consider several aspects: the source domain, the target domain, the linguistic form, the context, and the communicative function. A corpus-based approach is especially useful because it allows researchers to identify repeated patterns rather than relying only on isolated examples. Through corpus analysis, one can see which metaphors are frequent, which discourse types prefer which source domains, and how metaphorical meanings are shaped by grammar and collocation.

Conclusion

Metaphorical units are important linguistic and cognitive tools in scientific, media, and literary discourse. In science, metaphor helps name and explain abstract concepts. In media, metaphor frames social reality and shapes public opinion. In literature, metaphor creates emotional, aesthetic, and symbolic meaning. Across all three discourse types, metaphor connects language with thought, culture, and communication.

The study of metaphorical units is especially valuable for comparative linguistics because metaphors reveal both universal cognitive patterns and culturally specific ways of conceptualizing reality. English and Uzbek, for example, may share common metaphors such as knowledge as light, life as a journey, and society as a body, but they may differ in frequency, emotional tone,



grammatical realization, and cultural association. Therefore, metaphor analysis can show not only how people speak, but also how they think, evaluate, and imagine the world.

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