

CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract: This article examines metaphors as a complex linguistic device that shapes how people perceive and interpret political realities. Drawing on insights from semantic theory, classical rhetoric, and cognitive linguistics, it considers metaphor as a way of constructing meaning based on perceived similarities and embodied experience. Using examples from contemporary English and Uzbek political discourse, the article highlights the linguistic, stylistic, semantic, cognitive, psychological, and pragmatic roles of metaphor. The analysis shows that political metaphors are not just expressive figures of speech but also, they are strategic tools for persuasion, legitimizing authority, and shaping collective identity, helping audiences understand and engage with socio-political issues.

Key words: emotiveness, conceptual metaphor, stylistics device, political discourse, semantic interpretation.

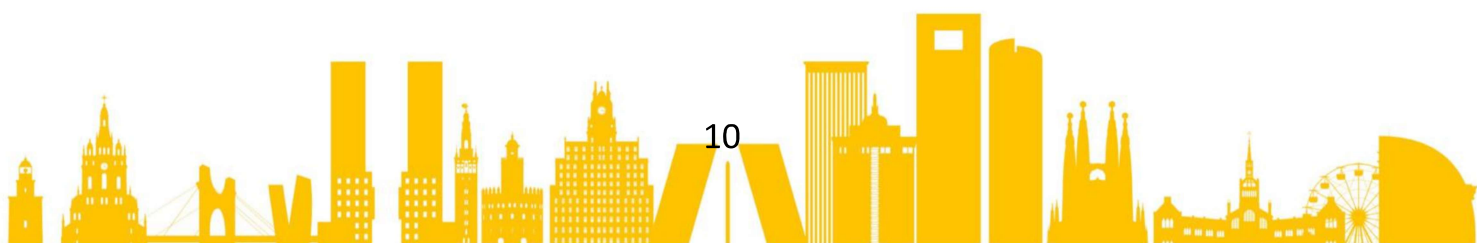
Introduction

In contemporary linguistics, metaphor is no longer seen merely as a stylistic device; it is recognized as a central mechanism for constructing meaning and cognition. By linking abstract ideas to concrete, culturally grounded experiences, metaphor allows complex concepts to become more understandable and relatable. This perspective has opened new avenues for studying metaphor, especially in political discourse.

Political language plays a key role in shaping public opinion and legitimizing authority. In this context, metaphor acts as a powerful cognitive and rhetorical tool, structuring political realities, guiding interpretation, and appealing to shared values. This article explores political metaphor from linguistic, semantic, cognitive, psychological, and pragmatic angles, drawing on examples from English and Uzbek political discourse to show how metaphor persuades, informs, and shapes understanding across cultures.

Discussion

In linguistics, metaphor is considered as being associated with semantic shift. However, when types of semantic transfer are misinterpreted or insufficiently differentiated, the metaphor sometimes expands to include phenomena that are not forms of semantic transfer, such as symbolism or metamorphosis. Semantic transfer is a change in meaning resulting from the interaction of lexical units within a phrase, involving the redistribution of semantic functions among its components. Through associative (paradigmatic)



or syntagmatic relations, one element of a linguistic structure acquires a new meaning. Thus, semantic transfer can be defined as the process by which a lexical unit develops a new semantic structure through its contextual and relational use.

A metaphor is a type of semantic transfer in which the name of one object is used to refer another based on common semantic features reflecting similarities in objective or subjective reality. What distinguishes metaphor from other mechanisms of meaning transmission is its reliance on perceived similarity. Although this criterion may seem simple at first glance, closer theoretical analysis shows that metaphor is a much more complex linguistic phenomenon.

The metaphor as a linguistic device has been studied for a long intellectual tradition, originating in classical rhetoric. Aristotle was the first to systematize a metaphor, defining it as transferring of a name from one object to another based on similarity, analogy, or proportion. In his works a metaphor is often understood as an abbreviated comparison, because it forces a person to pay attention to some similarities, often new and even unexpected. He noted that every metaphor is rooted not in language, but in reality, arising from a sense of similarity between different things. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, metaphor continued to be defined mainly as an ornament of speech within the framework of rhetoric and poetics, performing aesthetic and expressive functions rather than cognitive ones. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, scholars began to reconsider metaphor as a semantic phenomenon. Linguists such as I. A. Richards emphasized the interaction between the components of a metaphor (tenor and vehicle), shifting attention from mere decoration to the construction of meaning. An important turning point came at the end of the 20th century with the emergence of cognitive linguistics. In their influential work *"Metaphors We Live By"* (1980), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argued that metaphor is not only a linguistic device but a fundamental mechanism of human thought, that shapes perception, reasoning, and conceptualization. According to this view, metaphor structures everyday language and cognition through systematic mappings between conceptual domains. Modern research considers metaphor as a multidimensional phenomenon, studied in linguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, psychology, and cultural studies, including political, educational, and literary discourse. Throughout the history of political discourse metaphor has had a crucial, serving as a powerful linguistic and cognitive device for shaping public perception and ideological framing. In classical antiquity, political metaphors were already known as essential rhetorical devices.

"It has been established that metaphors are universals of human consciousness, and modern psychologists tend to associate the metaphorical perception of the world with the genesis of man and, consequently, human



culture” [14, 88]. Maslova V correctly emphasizes the psychological and cultural components of metaphor. Using vivid comparisons in political discourse enhances politicians capacity to shape public cognition and emotions and attain their communicative objectives.

Notably, political discourse in many societies plays a very important role in shaping public opinion, building national identity, making political power seem legitimate. Political texts employ a wide range of linguistic and discursive means. As a strategic form of communication, metaphor relies not only on factual information but also on persuasive linguistic devices that influence the audience’s perception of political realities. Among many stylistic devices, metaphor stands out as a particularly powerful cognitive and rhetorical tool. Metaphor can serve both to soften potentially dangerous political statements and to manipulate the electorate. Its ability to remain in the audience’s memory for a long time and to influence the addressee’s associative thinking makes it possible to construct images that do not correspond to reality. Metaphors have a significant influence on human thinking. Political metaphor determines the range of possible exits from a crisis that politicians subsequently consider in the decision-making process.

In modern political communication of most regions, metaphors used by politicians play a crucial role in shaping public perception by structuring how abstract socio-political phenomena are conceptualized and evaluated. There are a lot of metaphors to be analyzed in many political speeches. Now we will analyze one of the most common examples of metaphors applied by the USA politician Herman Cain during his 2011 Republican presidential campaign.

For instance, *“This economy is on life support”* [15].

This sentence describes the state of the American economy in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, thereby creating an image of the economy as a critically ill patient dependent on external assistance rather than as a reliable, self-sustaining system. This metaphor includes a cross-domain mapping in the coherent construction *“economy is life support”* where the target domain *“economy”* is described in terms of the original area *“medical life-support systems”*, leads to semantic transference of attributes such as fragility and dependency. From stylistic point of view, the metaphor increases expressiveness and liveliness, making an abstract economic situation more concrete and emotionally affecting the listeners. Semantically, it carries negative evaluative connotations, suggesting crisis, vulnerability, and the need for urgent intervention, thereby introducing an ideological assessment into the speech. From a cognitive point of view, this metaphor relies on embodied knowledge of diseases and healthcare to structure understanding of economic conditions, linking economic policy with familiar concepts of health and survival, which can influence how audiences conceptualize possible solutions. From pragmatic perspective, this metaphor is convincing, because it



not reminds of urgency but also justifies policy preferences (e.g., advocating for bold reforms) and aligns the politician's agenda with the perceived need to "resuscitate" the economy, thereby shaping both public interpretation and political choice.

Now, we will look through next example in Uzbek language.

"Uchinchi Renessans davriga poydevor qo'yilmoqda"[16].

This sentence reflects key features of modern Uzbek political rhetoric, combining brevity, symbolic density, and a desire for persuasion. From a grammatical point of view, the sentence is a simple declarative clause with a passive verbal construction (*qo'yilmoqda*). The passive voice hides the agent, shifting focus from the actor to the process itself. This grammatical choice is typical of institutional and political discourse, where free will is often collectivized or implicitly attributed to the state or society as a whole. The present continuous tense (*-moqda*) indicates an ongoing, progressive action, reinforcing the notion that the transformation process is currently underway rather than completed. Such a temporary frame implies continuity and constant effort. Stylistically, the proposal refers to publicistic-political discourse with elements of rhetorical sublimity. The absence of emotional markers or conversational elements gives the statement an official and authoritative tone. At the same time, its metaphorical structure enhances its expressiveness, making it memorable and impactful despite its syntactic simplicity. The sentence is an example of concise rhetoric in which minimal linguistic material conveys a broad ideological message. Lexically, the provided sentence combines: abstract-historical terminology (*Renessans*), ordinal numeral (*uchinchi*), and vocabulary related to concrete construction (*poydevor*). The lexeme "*Renessans*" introduces an intertextual reference to global historical narratives of intellectual and cultural revival, while "*Uchinchi*" presupposes the existence of earlier national renaissances, thus embedding the statement in a broader historical continuum. The noun "*poydevor*" functions as a key lexical trigger activating construction-related schemas.

Semantically, the utterance operates on both literal and figurative levels. While no physical foundation is being laid, the sentence encodes a metaphorical meaning in which socio-political reforms are conceptualized as the initial stage of a grand historical transformation. The statement carries a positive evaluative (meliorative) semantic load, framing the described process as constructive, necessary, and forward-looking. The lack of explicit qualifiers strengthens its universality and interpretive openness.

From a cognitive-linguistic standpoint, the sentence exemplifies the conceptual metaphor. This metaphor enables abstract national progress to be cognitively structured in terms of tangible, spatial experience. The "foundation" implies stability, durability, and long-term vision, while the "Renaissance" activates a schema of enlightenment, creativity, and intellectual



flourishing. Such metaphoric mapping facilitates comprehension and ideological alignment by anchoring complex political ideas in everyday embodied experience.

Psychologically, the statement functions as a motivational and identity-forming message. By invoking a “Renaissance,” it appeals to collective pride and historical consciousness. The emphasis on foundations suggests participation and responsibility, implicitly positioning citizens as contributors to a larger national project. The sentence also fosters future-oriented optimism, reducing uncertainty by framing ongoing reforms as purposeful and historically significant. Pragmatically, the utterance performs a legitimizing and mobilizing function. Although formally declarative, it operates as a strategic speech act, reinforcing the legitimacy of current reforms and encouraging public support without issuing direct commands.

The passive construction and generalized reference allow the statement to function effectively across diverse audiences, making it adaptable to speeches, policy documents, and media discourse.

The sentence “*Uchinchi Renessans davriga poydevor qo‘yilmoqda*” represents a highly efficient unit of political discourse in contemporary Uzbek rhetoric. Through metaphorical conceptualization, lexical symbolism, and pragmatic ambiguity, it constructs a powerful narrative of national renewal. Its multidimensional linguistic structure enables it to function simultaneously as description, evaluation, and persuasion, thereby exemplifying the strategic use of language in modern state discourse.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to note that metaphor performs various functions in political speeches. It is used to attract the attention of an audience, convey a complex idea or information in an accessible, concise form, enhance the emotional coloring of a statement, create a certain political image and so on. This article shows that political metaphors are much more than decorative language—they shape how people think, feel, and interpret political realities. By analyzing examples from both English and Uzbek political discourse, we see that metaphor’s structure abstract ideas in concrete, relatable ways, appeal to emotions, and guide public perception. They can simplify complex socio-political issues, legitimize reforms, and even influence collective decision-making. Ultimately, metaphors are powerful tools that connect language, thought, and culture, highlighting how carefully crafted words can inspire, persuade, and mobilize societies.

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