

CULTURE-SPECIFIC METAPHORS IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN

Oripova O'g'iloy Baxtiyor qizi

National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek, master's student

Email: oripovaugiloy92@gmail.com**Yusupova Shoirra Batirovna**

National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek, professor

Email: yusupovash22@gmail.com**Abstract**

This article examines culture-specific metaphors in English and Russian from a comparative perspective. It focuses on metaphor as both a stylistic and cognitive phenomenon, highlighting its role in shaping cultural worldview. The study analyzes metaphorical expressions related to nature, emotions, and time, identifying both universal and culture-bound patterns. The results show that while some metaphors are shared across languages, many reflect unique cultural values and historical experiences.

Keywords

metaphor, culture, English language, Russian, cognitive linguistics, stylistic devices, comparative analyses, linguistic universals, translation studies, cultural identity.

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматриваются культурно обусловленные метафоры в английском и русском языках с сопоставительной точки зрения. Особое внимание уделяется метафоре как стилистическому и когнитивному явлению, формирующему языковую картину мира. Анализируются метафоры, связанные с природой, эмоциями и временем, выявляются универсальные и культурно-специфические модели. Результаты показывают, что наряду с общими метафорами существуют значительные различия, отражающие культурные ценности и исторический опыт.

Ключевые слова

метафора, культура, английский язык, русский, когнитивная лингвистика, стилистические средства, сравнительный анализ, лингвистические универсалии, переводоведение, культурная идентичность.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada ingliz va rus tillaridagi madaniy xususiyatga ega metaforalar qiyosiy jihatdan tahlil qilinadi. Metafora stilistik va kognitiv hodisa sifatida ko'rib chiqilib, uning dunyoqarashni shakllantirishdagi roli yoritiladi. Tabiat, hissiyotlar va vaqt bilan bog'liq metaforalar tahlil qilinib, umumiy va madaniy jihatdan o'ziga xos jihatlar aniqlanadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, ayrim metaforalar universal bo'lsa-da, ko'plari muayyan madaniyat, tarix va qadriyatlarni aks ettiradi.

Kalit so'zlar

metafora, madaniyat, ingliz tili, rus, kognitiv lingvistika, stilistik vositalar, qiyosiy tahlil, lingvistik universalialar, tarjimashunoslik, madaniy o'zlik.

Introduction. Metaphor is widely recognized as one of the most important mechanisms



in language, functioning not only as a stylistic device but also as a fundamental tool of human cognition. According to the theory developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphor enables individuals to conceptualize abstract ideas through more concrete experiences.

Language is closely connected with culture, and metaphor serves as a bridge between linguistic expression and cultural perception. Different cultures use metaphorical expressions to reflect their values, traditions, and historical background. As a result, metaphor becomes an important indicator of national worldview.

Despite the growing interest in cognitive linguistics, comparative studies of culturally marked metaphors in English and Russian remain insufficient. Therefore, the aim of this article is to identify and analyze culture-specific metaphors in these two languages and to determine their similarities and differences.

Main body. Metaphor can be understood as a cognitive mechanism through which one concept is interpreted in terms of another. It is not confined to literary or poetic language but is deeply embedded in everyday communication, shaping the way people perceive abstract concepts such as time, emotions, relationships, social roles, and life experiences. Individuals often employ metaphors unconsciously to make sense of complex phenomena, organize thought, and convey meaning. A comparative analysis of English and Russian metaphors highlights both universal cognitive tendencies and culturally specific patterns, demonstrating the intricate relationship between language, thought, and culture. Certain metaphorical concepts appear across languages due to shared human experience.

For instance, the conceptual metaphor *Life is a journey* is common to both English and Russian. In English, phrases such as “*at a crossroads*,” “*moving forward*,” or “*reaching a dead end*” express progress, obstacles, and goals. Similarly, in Russian, expressions like «*жизненный путь*» (*life path*), «*идти вперёд*» (*to move forward*), and «*попасть в тупик*» (*to reach a dead end*) reflect the same underlying conceptualization. This demonstrates that certain cognitive models, rooted in fundamental human experiences, transcend cultural boundaries. Another universal metaphor is *Emotions are forces*, where emotional states are described as forces that can overwhelm or drive a person.

In the English language expressions include “*overcome with anger*” or “*burst with joy*,” whereas Russian uses «*гнев охватил*» (*anger seized*) and «*всплеск эмоций*» (*a surge of emotions*). Despite these similarities, culturally specific metaphors reveal significant differences between the two languages. One of the most striking distinctions lies in nature-related imagery. Russian language frequently draws on elements of the natural world, employing metaphors involving forests, rivers, storms, and fields to convey human experience. Examples include «*широкая душа*» (*a wide soul*), representing generosity; «*буря эмоций*» (*a storm of emotions*), expressing intense feelings; and «*тихая гавань*» (*a quiet harbor*), symbolizing safety or refuge. These metaphors reflect the historically strong connection between Russian culture and the natural environment, highlighting both emotional and philosophical dimensions.

In contrast, in the English language metaphors rely less on natural imagery and often prioritize social, economic, or mechanistic domains. Phrases such as “*storm of criticism*” or “*the calm before the storm*” exist, but nature is not as central to conceptualization as it is in Russian language. This divergence may be attributed to the historical development of English-speaking societies, particularly the early influence of industrialization and urbanization, which shaped a more practical and socially oriented worldview. Cultural norms and values also influence the expression of emotion through metaphor.

In the Russian language metaphors frequently convey highly intense, vivid emotional states, often referencing the heart or soul. Examples include «*сердце разрывается*» (the heart is tearing apart) or «*душа болит*» (the soul hurts), reflecting the cultural acceptance of openly expressed, deeply felt emotions. English metaphors, however, generally communicate emotional states in a more restrained, indirect manner, such as “*heartbroken*,” “*feeling blue*,” or “*under*



pressure.” Time is another conceptual domain where metaphor reveals cultural variation. In English, time is frequently conceptualized as a valuable, quantifiable resource, with expressions such as “*time is money,*” “*spend time,*” “*save time,*” and “*waste time,*” reflecting pragmatism and efficiency.

Conversely, in the Russian language metaphors often depict time as a flowing, continuous phenomenon rather than a controllable resource. Phrases like «*время идёт*» (time goes) and «*время течёт*» (time flows) emphasize a more philosophical and reflective perception of temporal experience, suggesting patience and acceptance rather than urgency. Animal metaphors further illustrate cultural differences.

While some symbolic associations are shared across languages, the connotations and stylistic nuances often differ. For example, the fox symbolizes cleverness in both English (“*cunning as a fox*”) and Russian («*хитрая как лиса*»), yet the emotional or evaluative tone may be stronger in Russian. The bear is another culturally loaded animal; in English, it may represent strength or clumsiness, whereas in Russian, it often conveys power, resilience, and a sense of national symbolism. Wolves may signify danger or independence in both cultures, but the emotional coloring and frequency of use vary.

Metaphors are also central to conceptualizing social relationships and hierarchy. English often employs metaphors related to structure and competition, such as “*climb the social ladder,*” “*gain ground,*” or “*fall behind,*” whereas metaphors in the Russian language emphasize relational closeness or distance, such as «*тёплые отношения*» (*warm relationships*) and «*холодное отношение*» (*cold attitude*). Overall, the comparative analysis demonstrates that metaphors in the languages English and Russian reveal a complex interplay between universal cognitive patterns and culture-specific features. Metaphors in the English language frequently reflect pragmatism, social structure, and economic value, whereas in the Russian language metaphors highlight emotion, nature, philosophy, and relational depth. These patterns underscore the importance of cultural context in understanding and interpreting metaphorical language, with significant implications for translation, intercultural communication, and language education.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the comparative analysis of English and Russian metaphors shows that metaphor is both a universal and culture-dependent phenomenon. While some metaphorical models are shared across languages, many are shaped by cultural traditions, values, and historical experience.

The study confirms that metaphors serve as an important tool for expressing cultural identity and worldview. Understanding these differences is essential for effective intercultural communication, translation, and language teaching.

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