

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF METAPHOR IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LITERARY WORKS

Zilola Berdiyeva

Master Student Nordic International University

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

E-mail: berdiyevazilola@gmail.com

+998998025702

Zilola Berdiyeva

Nordik Xalqaro Universiteti Magistranti

Toshkent, O'zbekiston

Зилола Бердиева

Магистрант Нордического международного университета

Ташкент, Узбекистан

Abstract

This study presents a comparative analysis of metaphorical expressions in English and Uzbek literary works, focusing on Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and G'afur G'ulom's *Shum Bola*. The aim of the research is to investigate how metaphors function as cognitive, cultural, and stylistic devices in literature, highlighting similarities and differences between the two linguistic traditions. The study employs a qualitative approach, lexical-semantic analysis. The results demonstrate that in both works, metaphors serve as conceptual tools that structure abstract experiences through concrete, embodied images. English metaphors often emphasize moral reasoning, temporal progression, and social ideology, while Uzbek metaphors foreground physical hardship, survival, and spatial experience. Both rely on idiomatic expressions embedded in cultural context, still differ in focus and lexical realization. In conclusion, metaphor serves as a universal cognitive-linguistic mechanism, simultaneously shaped by culture, history, and narrative purpose.

Keywords: Metaphor, Literary Analysis, Cross-Cultural Comparison, English Literature, Uzbek Literature, Figurative Language, Lexical functions.

Introduction

The metaphorical meaning emerges from their interaction; it cannot be reduced to a simple replacement of one word by another. [Black, 1977; 27] Black goes further and argues that a metaphor projects a system of associated implications from the source concept onto the target concept. This interaction restructures our understanding of the target, producing new insights and sometimes new conceptual distinctions. In this line of thinking, a working definition might be: Metaphor is a linguistic expression in which elements from one domain vehicle-source are used to structure and reinterpret another domain tenor-target, creating new meaning through the interaction of their associated features. In Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the focus moves from individual expressions to underlying conceptual mappings. Lakoff and Johnson famously define metaphor as: “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (e.g. understanding arguments in terms of war, time in terms of money) [Lakoff & Johnson, 1980]. Kövecses, summarizing the cognitive linguistic perspective, describes metaphor as a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system: a systematic set of correspondences between a source domain and a target domain. According to him linguistic metaphors in texts are surface realizations of deeper conceptual structures, many conceptual metaphors EMOTION IS HEAT, LIFE IS A JOURNEY appear across languages, but their elaboration in specific metaphoric expressions is shaped by culture, history and genre. [Kovecses, 2005]. Metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word, phrase or image is transferred from its usual referent to another, creating an implicit comparison and a vivid artistic image. Conceptual level -Metaphor is a cross-domain mapping in thought by which speakers conceptualize abstract or complex experiences time, love, fate, nation in terms of more concrete domains space, journey, body, family [Kövecses, 2005]. The meaning of a metaphor arises from the interaction of tenor and vehicle: both elements are simultaneously active, and each modifies the other. Instead of simple substitution, Richards emphasizes semantic interaction: new meaning is produced when the vehicle’s associations are applied to the tenor in

context. This model has been influential in literary criticism and communication studies. [Blisky, 1952; 137] Black radicalizes this idea into a full interaction theory. He distinguishes between the focus and the frame the literal context. The metaphor works by projecting a network of “associated commonplaces” from the vehicle domain onto the topic through the focus–frame relation [Black, 1977; 27]. For example, in *Man is a wolf*, culturally shared beliefs about wolves that are selectively projected onto the concept man. The result is not a simple comparison but a restructuring of how the topic is understood. These theories explain how metaphor can create new insights, not just restate known facts. They are well suited for the analysis of literary metaphors, where context and conceptual reorganization are crucial. The interaction model remains largely qualitative and difficult to operationalize for systematic corpus or cross-linguistic analysis. It focuses on individual metaphors rather than on recurring systems of metaphor across a language or culture. It offers limited tools for explaining cross-cultural patterns (e.g., why some metaphorical mappings are shared across languages while others are culture-specific). These problems prepared the ground for Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which generalizes interaction to the level of conceptual domains. Lakoff & Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By* marks a paradigm shift: metaphor is no longer a primarily linguistic ornament but a basic mechanism of thought. [Lakoff & Johnson, 1980]. Kövecses and later cognitive linguists refine this model by systematizing the classification of metaphors and by emphasizing the interaction between universal embodiment and culture-specific elaboration [Kovecses, 2005]. Recent work in cognitive neuroscience explores how metaphor processing is implemented in the brain. Novel metaphors elicit stronger activation in executive control and attention networks than conventional metaphors, suggesting greater integration demands [Black, 1977]. Research on metaphor in English and Uzbek has revealed both universal cognitive patterns and language-specific cultural nuances. Qobuljonova, Sharafutdinova, and Safarova provide a comparative overview, emphasizing that while certain conceptual metaphors appear across both languages, others are shaped by distinct cultural contexts. Building on this, Sobirjon, Muhammadqasimovna, Abdumutalibovich, and Boburjon focus on phytonym metaphors, demonstrating that both languages use plant-based imagery to convey life, growth, and moral qualities, though the specific associations differ according

to cultural and environmental influences. Similarly, Sultonovna and Davlatovna analyze metaphors within proverbs, highlighting how English metaphors often reflect individual experience and abstract concepts, whereas Uzbek metaphors are more socially grounded, encoding communal values and traditional wisdom. Collectively, these studies illustrate that metaphor serves as a cognitive and cultural bridge, reflecting universal thought patterns while simultaneously revealing the unique values and worldview embedded in each language. [Sharafutdinova D]. Lexemes are the fundamental building blocks of language, according to Qobuljonova G. It is used to provide names to the things that are in the world. It is not limited to naming; it also serves other purposes, such as transferring knowledge to future generations (cumulative), realizing (perceptive), and influencing the listener (expressive). She also thinks that comparison plays a crucial part in world learning. Every new thing or event is always compared to things or events that have already been realized, which results in calling the latter by their names. [Sharafutdinova D]

Research methods

The present study adopts a comparative, descriptive, and analytical approach to investigate metaphorical expressions in two literary works: Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and G'afur G'ulom's *Shum Bola*. The research aims to identify, classify, and compare metaphors at both lexical and conceptual levels, highlighting cognitive, cultural, and stylistic similarities and differences. The study combines qualitative text analysis with elements of cognitive-linguistic and cultural interpretation. The texts were chosen based on the following criteria: Literary significance – both works are widely recognized in their respective literary traditions and offer rich narrative contexts for metaphorical analysis. Thematic comparability – both novels explore social and moral development, hardship, and human experience, making it possible to compare metaphorical treatment of abstract and concrete phenomena. Language representation – *To Kill a Mockingbird* represents contemporary English literary style, while *Shum Bola* reflects modern Uzbek literary expression, allowing for cross-linguistic comparison. All narrative passages, dialogues, and descriptive passages within the novels were included in the corpus to ensure a comprehensive analysis.

Result

Metaphorical expressions of “To kill a mockingbird” “Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. [Harper, 2024;7] “A tired old town” is metaphor as a personification. The adjective tired normally describes a human physical or mental state. The town is attributed a human condition, suggesting stagnation, weariness, and lack of vitality rather than literal age. Harper uses the metaphor in order to set the emotional and ideological atmosphere of the novel, preparing the reader for themes of decay and conservatism.

The sheriff hadn’t the heart to put him in a jail alongside Negroes, so Boo was locked in the courthouse basement [Harper, 2024;11]. “**Hadn’t the heart**” literally refers to the heart as an organ. Here, the phrase metaphorically denotes emotional reluctance or moral hesitation. The expression exposes racial segregation norms of the time, revealing social prejudice through casual language. The writer indirectly criticizes social injustice while maintaining a neutral narrative tone.

“Summer was on the way” [Harper, 2024;18]. Harper Lee personified summer as it is coming. Here, summer is conceptual metaphor. “On the way” typically describes human movement. Time is conceptualized as motion toward the observer. It can be classified TIME IS A MOVING OBJECT according to Lakoff and Johnson’s theory. (Lakoff & Johnson–type metaphor).

“She was a widow, a chameleon lady who worked in her flower beds in an old straw hat and men’s coverall’s, but after her five o’clock bath she would appear on the on the porch and reign over the street in a magisterial beauty” [Harper, 2024;]. “Chameleon” is an animal capable of changing color. The writer uses a name of the animal by emphasizing its feature. The woman is metaphorically described as adaptable and dual-natured. By using this metaphor, the writer intends to highlight social role-switching and complexity of character. “Not a soul in sight.” [Harper, 2024;7] Soul literally refers to spiritual essence. Soul is used as a person, by emphasizing complete absence. It can be considered as a metonymic metaphor. A fixed English idiom rooted in religious-philosophical worldview. The function of metaphor –soul is here, intensifying the sense of emptiness and stillness.

Metaphors in Uzbek Literary Texts. "Shum Bola": "U qirq-qirq besh yoshlar chamasidagi qorachadan kelgan, xushqomat, qalamqosh bir xotin edi" [G'. G'ulom, 2021; 53]. In this sentence, the words " qorachadan kelgan " and " qalamqosh " are used as metaphorical units, far from their meaning, and are used figuratively to describe a person according to their characteristics of an appearance. Here, " qorachadan kelgan " is used in the sense of dark, brown, or wheat-colored. "Qalamqosh" is used to compare thin, beautiful eyebrows. "Har ikkalamizning ham dunyo qidirib, baxt izlab yurgan o'spirinligimiz ma'lum bo'ldi" [G'. G'ulom, 2021; 58]. The world –dunyo is aimed to use as wealth, money for living or food. Writer means to imply not real world that surrounding us, but property that children are seeking for. "Men bechora qinga solingan pakkiday, zindonda yotardim." in this sentence zindon-prison, cell, jail. Writer symbolize the tandir (oven specially for baking bread, built from soil) as a jail. Actually here, Shum bola-naughty boy is lying in the tandir, but not in a real prison. The prison is expressed small place, difficulties as a figurative meaning. He feels in a jail himself. Zindon-jail is using as a metaphorical phrase.

"Tonggacha yer-ko'rpayu bir parcha g'isht bosh ostida" [G'. G'ulom, 2021; 55]. Yer-ground is used as a blanket for lying purpose. Boy spends most his nights outside, so he stays in the fields. In the phrase "until morning, the earth was his blanket," the earth is described as a blanket. The earth is not a real blanket, but it is used figuratively to show cold, hardship, and sleeping outdoors without protection.

Discussion

By analyzing Uzbek literary works it can be seen that sentences demonstrate how metaphor functions as a key stylistic device to convey character description, emotional states, and social hardship in a vivid and expressive manner. In the

examples “qorachadan kelgan” and “qalamqosh,” metaphor is used to describe a person’s physical appearance through figurative comparison rather than literal meaning. These expressions do not denote their original lexical meanings but instead highlight color, shape, and aesthetic qualities, making the description more expressive and culturally grounded. In “dunyo qidirib,” the metaphor shifts from physical description to abstract life goals. The word “dunyo” does not refer to the actual world but symbolizes wealth, livelihood, and material survival, reflecting the socio-economic struggles of youth. The tandir is metaphorically presented as a prison, emphasizing confinement, fear, and helplessness rather than an actual jail. Similarly, the earth described as a blanket conveys homelessness, cold, and endurance, highlighting the character’s exposure and vulnerability. Finally, in the metaphor of “stones” exceeding “tears,” physical objects are transformed into symbols of violence, cruelty, and oppression. Here, metaphor intensifies emotional pain, contrasts external aggression with inner suffering, and reflects the harsh realities of urban life. Overall, these metaphors collectively serve to enrich character portrayal, compress complex experiences into vivid images, intensify emotional impact, and reflect social and psychological realities beyond literal expression. They illustrate how metaphor moves language from simple narration to deep artistic and emotional representation. By analyzing metaphorical expressions in “To Kill a Mockingbird” we can see that metaphor functions not merely as an ornamental stylistic device but as a structural and cognitive mechanism through which social reality, psychological states, and moral attitudes are conceptualized. Harper Lee consistently employs metaphors that are grounded in everyday language, allowing figurative meaning to emerge naturally from ordinary discourse rather than from elevated poetic diction.

Table 2 Lexical-Based Comparison of Metaphors in English and Uzbek Literary Works

Lexical Features	English “To kill a Mockingbird”	Uzbek “Shum Bola”	Similarities	Differences
Body/mental state	Tired town, hadn’t the heart, lost his mind		Human attributes used metaphorically	English uses body/mind lexemes for moral and psychological states
Direction	Summer was on the way		Abstract concepts expressed via direction	Time–movement metaphor appears in English
Animal lexemes	chameleon lady		Animal feature used to describe humans	English uses animal metaphor
Religious lexemes	Not a soul in sight		Cultural worldview	English reflects tradition
Color & shape lexemes		qorachadan kelgan, qalamqosh	Physical description	Uzbek emphasizes visual–feature
Life lexemes		dunyo qidirib	Abstract life goals	Uzbek focuses on livelihood and survival
Object lexemes		zindon, yer-ko’rpa	Hardship expressed	Uzbek metaphors are concrete and physical
Lexical conventionality	Idiomatic, fixed expressions	Semi-idiomatic, contextual	Both rely on shared cultural lexicon	English more idiom-based

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