



THE ROLE OF MOTION VERBS IN THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SPACE AND TIME: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Jovliyaev Dilshod Ziyoyul o'g'li

Master's Student, Department of Linguistics (English Language)

University of Information Technologies and Management

Abstract: Space and time are fundamental dimensions of human cognition reflected in language through various lexical and grammatical means. Among these means, motion verbs occupy a particularly important position because they not only describe physical movement but also serve as conceptual tools for understanding temporal progression and abstract experience. This study investigates the role of motion verbs in the conceptualization of space and time in English and Uzbek from a comparative cognitive-semantic perspective. The analysis demonstrates that both languages employ motion-based conceptual structures to represent temporal relations, future and past events, personal development, and social change. While English and Uzbek share similar cognitive mechanisms grounded in embodied experience, they differ in the linguistic resources through which these meanings are expressed. The findings contribute to comparative linguistics and cognitive semantics by revealing the significance of motion verbs in organizing human perception and linguistic representation.

Keywords: motion verbs, space, time, conceptualization, cognitive semantics, English, Uzbek, comparative linguistics.

Introduction: Space and time constitute two of the most essential categories through which people perceive and interpret reality. Human experience unfolds within spatial and temporal dimensions, and language provides the means for representing these dimensions. Motion verbs are particularly significant because



they establish a direct connection between bodily experience and conceptual thought.

Research in cognitive linguistics has shown that abstract concepts are frequently understood through more concrete experiences. Since movement is one of the most common aspects of human interaction with the world, motion-based conceptual structures often serve as foundations for understanding time, change, development, and social processes. Expressions such as time goes by, the deadline is approaching, vaqt o'tmoqda, and bayram yaqinlashmoqda illustrate how temporal relations are interpreted through the language of movement.

Although space and time have been widely investigated in cognitive linguistics, the specific role of motion verbs in English and Uzbek remains insufficiently explored. The present study therefore examines how motion verbs function as linguistic instruments for conceptualizing space and time and identifies similarities and differences between the two languages.

The objectives of the research are:

1. To identify motion verbs involved in spatial and temporal conceptualization.
2. To analyze semantic extensions from physical movement to abstract domains.
3. To compare English and Uzbek motion-based conceptual structures.
4. To determine the cognitive and pragmatic functions of motion verbs.

Literature review: The theoretical foundations of this study originate from cognitive linguistics, particularly conceptual metaphor theory. Lakoff and Johnson argued that abstract concepts are understood through concrete experiential domains. Space and motion represent some of the most productive source domains because they are directly accessible through bodily experience.

Talmy demonstrated that motion events play a central role in semantic organization and that languages differ in how they lexicalize movement while sharing common cognitive principles. Langacker emphasized that linguistic structures reflect conceptual processes rather than objective reality alone. Similarly,



Levinson showed that temporal reasoning often relies on spatial frameworks because spatial orientation provides a natural basis for organizing sequential events.

Studies of English reveal that verbs such as go, come, pass, approach, and advance frequently participate in metaphorical extensions. In Uzbek, verbs such as bormoq, kelmoq, o'tmoq, and yaqinlashmoq display similar tendencies. However, comparative investigations specifically focusing on motion verbs as instruments of spatial and temporal conceptualization remain limited.

Materials and methods: The study employs a qualitative comparative methodology based on principles of cognitive semantics and contrastive linguistics. The corpus consists of 600 examples collected from literary works, journalistic texts, academic discourse, and everyday communication in English and Uzbek.

The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, motion verbs were identified and classified according to semantic characteristics such as movement, direction, arrival, departure, and transition. Second, their literal and metaphorical meanings were examined through semantic analysis. Third, conceptual metaphor analysis was applied to determine how spatial movement is mapped onto temporal and abstract domains.

The comparison focused on lexical realization, directionality, temporal extensions, metaphorical meanings, and pragmatic functions.

Results. The analysis demonstrates that motion verbs play a fundamental role in conceptualizing both spatial and temporal experience. In many examples, temporal relations are represented through movement along a path. English expressions such as time goes by, winter is approaching, and the moment has arrived portray time as a moving entity. Similar patterns appear in Uzbek expressions such as vaqt o'tmoqda, kunlar o'tib bormoqda, and bayram yaqinlashmoqda.

A second finding concerns future and past orientation. In both languages, future events are commonly represented as locations ahead of the speaker, while past events are viewed as positions behind. Expressions such as moving toward success



and oldinda katta vazifalar turibdi conceptualize the future as a destination. Likewise, leave the past behind and ortda qolgan yillar represent the past through backward spatial orientation.

Motion verbs also extend into abstract domains. English constructions such as move forward, reach a conclusion, and fall behind correspond to Uzbek expressions such as oldinga siljimoq, xulosaga kelmoq, and ortda qolmoq. These examples indicate that movement serves as a cognitive model for intellectual, emotional, and social development.

The comparison further reveals that English often employs lexicalized and phrasal constructions, whereas Uzbek relies more heavily on agglutinative morphology and contextual specification.

Discussion: The findings support the cognitive-semantic assumption that abstract thinking is grounded in embodied experience. Since movement is one of the most basic forms of human interaction with the world, motion-based schemas become natural tools for understanding temporal progression and conceptual change.

The similarities observed between English and Uzbek indicate that many motion-based conceptualizations originate from universal cognitive mechanisms. Human beings in different linguistic communities perceive time through movement, trajectory, and direction because these experiences are shared aspects of physical existence.

At the same time, differences in linguistic realization demonstrate the influence of grammatical structure on conceptual expression. English tends to use fixed lexical constructions, whereas Uzbek frequently employs verbal morphology and contextual elaboration. These differences do not alter underlying conceptual mappings but affect the way they are linguistically encoded.

The study also shows that motion verbs contribute to discourse organization by structuring arguments, indicating transitions, and emphasizing developmental



processes. Consequently, their role extends beyond lexical meaning into broader cognitive and communicative functions.

Conclusion: The study demonstrates that motion verbs play a central role in the conceptualization of space and time in both English and Uzbek. Temporal progression, future orientation, past experience, and abstract development are frequently understood through motion-based conceptual structures. Although the two languages differ in grammatical realization, they share common cognitive mechanisms grounded in embodied experience.

The findings confirm that motion verbs function not only as indicators of physical displacement but also as conceptual instruments through which speakers organize and interpret reality. The research contributes to comparative linguistics, cognitive semantics, and discourse studies by highlighting the importance of motion in linguistic representation and human cognition.

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