



PRAGMATIC AND CULTURAL INTERPRETATION OF METAPHOR IN MODERN LITERARY DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This thesis explores the pragmatic and cultural dimensions of metaphor within modern literary discourse. Building on the theoretical insights of linguopragmatics and cognitive linguistics, the study analyses how metaphors function as communicative tools and as reflections of national mentality in literature. Drawing examples from Charles Dickens and Tohir Malik, the paper demonstrates that metaphors serve not only aesthetic but also ideological, psychological, and cultural purposes. They reveal the writer's worldview, emotional stance, and social critique. The findings show that while English and Uzbek authors employ metaphor differently, both traditions use it as a bridge between personal experience and collective cultural identity.

Keywords: *metaphor, linguopragmatics, culture, cognition, literary discourse, Charles Dickens, Tohir Malik.*

In the field of modern linguistics, metaphor has evolved from being viewed as a purely stylistic ornament to a multidimensional phenomenon connecting language, cognition, and culture. The pragmatic interpretation of metaphor focuses on how it operates within communicative contexts—how the speaker's or writer's intention interacts with the listener's or reader's understanding. Meanwhile, the cultural interpretation explores how metaphors embody collective knowledge, traditions, and values.



According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors structure human thought through conceptual mappings between domains of experience. This view is supported by Arutyunova (1990), who emphasises that metaphor performs a communicative function by adapting to the context and the interlocutor's worldview. Gasparov (2002) considers metaphor a semiotic phenomenon that unites individual creativity with cultural memory. In modern literary discourse, this synthesis is particularly visible: metaphors reveal how writers communicate social meanings through culturally resonant imagery. This thesis aims to explore the pragmatic and cultural aspects of metaphor as used in English and Uzbek literary contexts, focusing on the works of Charles Dickens and Tohir Malik. In literary communication, metaphors often perform pragmatic tasks—persuasion, irony, evaluation, or emotional expression. Dickens's works provide vivid examples of metaphor as a pragmatic instrument of social criticism. In *Hard Times*, the metaphor “the mill of facts” illustrates the mechanisation of education and the dehumanising effects of industrial ideology. The phrase appeals not only to the reader's intellect but also to their emotions, inviting moral reflection. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens frequently employs metaphors to evoke sympathy and highlight social injustice: expressions such as “the chains of poverty” and “the frozen heart” transform abstract conditions into tangible realities. These metaphors carry pragmatic force, shaping the reader's attitude toward social inequality. Similarly, in Tohir Malik's *Shaytanat*, metaphorical expressions like “the poisoned soul of the city” and “faith's dimmed light” express moral corruption and inner decay. Malik's metaphors are contextually motivated—they convey moral evaluation and emotional intensity shaped by Uzbek socio-cultural norms. This illustrates that metaphor in literature functions not only for decoration but for communication and persuasion within a specific cultural frame.

The cultural interpretation of metaphor highlights how figurative language mirrors a community's worldview. Every culture uses certain images to express



emotions and ideas—what Lotman (1992) terms “the semiotic code” of culture. In Uzbek linguistic culture, metaphors often draw from nature and spirituality. Phrases like “Ko‘ngil daryosi” (“the river of the soul”) or “Dil muzladi” (“the heart froze”) express emotional states through elements of water and temperature—symbols deeply rooted in Eastern thought. These metaphors reflect the national tendency toward emotional sincerity and spiritual symbolism. In contrast, English metaphors frequently express individualism and rationality. Expressions like “the cold shoulder,” “the heat of passion,” or “a heart of stone” reveal cultural associations between emotion and morality. As Crystal (2008) points out, English metaphors often serve to organise social relationships by encoding emotional restraint and politeness norms. The comparison between Dickens and Malik shows that both authors employ metaphor to project human experiences into culturally meaningful imagery. However, while Dickens’s metaphors often critique social systems, Malik’s focus on ethical and spiritual transformation aligns with the moral traditions of Uzbek literature.

The analysis of pragmatic and cultural interpretations of metaphor suggests several important conclusions:

1. Metaphor as a Communicative Tool: It shapes emotional engagement and interpretive depth, serving pragmatic goals like persuasion and empathy.
2. Metaphor as a Cultural Mirror: It encodes collective values, traditions, and ideologies within linguistic imagery.
3. Cross-Cultural Variation: English and Uzbek metaphors differ in their dominant conceptual domains—rationality versus spirituality—but share universal cognitive structures.
4. Interdisciplinary Relevance: Metaphor links linguistics, literature, psychology, and anthropology, making it a key object of modern semiotic research.



Thus, the study confirms that metaphor in modern literary discourse serves both pragmatic and cultural purposes, uniting the personal voice of the author with the collective consciousness of society.

Metaphor is a living mechanism of language, constantly evolving with social and cultural change. In modern literary discourse, its pragmatic and cultural functions overlap: it conveys emotion, expresses ideology, and reflects the worldview of both author and reader. In Dickens's and Malik's works, metaphor acts as a mediator between individual experience and cultural memory. It helps decode moral and emotional realities that transcend linguistic boundaries. As a result, metaphor remains not only a stylistic ornament but a fundamental component of human cognition and communication—an artistic bridge between words, meanings, and worlds.

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