EXPLORING LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE MEANING IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A COMPARATIVE PRAGMATIC APPROACH

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Abstract: The subject of this study is the comparison of literal and figurative meaning in both English and Uzbek languages. A focus of the research is on the variation in meaning across different contexts, communicative intentions and cultures. Literal meaning is the literal interpretation of words, but many times in real communication, figurative language like metaphors and idioms is used to express feelings, abstract concepts and interpersonal attitudes. The study examines the figurative expressions of the English and Uzbek languages in view of their mutual similarities and differences in terms of semantic structure, contextual use and translation strategies. The results show that the meaning of certain concepts, such as those that feature shared human experience, is relatively easy to translate between languages, while the meaning of others, such as those that are highly culture-dependent, is more challenging to translate. The research also indicates that the translation is not a mere lexical matching but must be pragmatic, showing adaptation. Overall, the study demonstrates that figurative competence is an important aspect of language learning, language translation, and intercultural communication.

Keywords: The English language, Uzbek language, pragmatics, intercultural communication, contextual interpretation, literal meaning, figurative meaning, metaphor, translation and semantics

Introduction

Language is not just a set of words and grammatical structures for the purpose of conveying information; it is also a complex system of words and grammatical structures by which people express feelings, attitudes, cultural values, underlying motives, and abstract concepts. As in everyday communication, speakers don't always depend on the dictionary definition, as people in contact with one another interpret beyond its literal meaning. This has made the connection between literal and figurative meaning one of the main concerns of contemporary linguistics, particularly semantics, pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, and translation studies. Literal meaning is traditionally believed to be the most important and most stable form of interpretation, yet in real communication, the use of figurative meaning is equally significant in the construction of understanding and communication [1].

Literal meaning typically indicates the conventional and straightforward meaning of a word or expression. It is the interpretation that is most often found in dictionaries and is interpreted without further interpretation. But, in the real world of communication, speech is never entirely

literal, as speakers routinely use expressions in a metaphorical, idiomatic, symbolic and emotionally charged way to enhance their expressiveness and effectiveness. Figurative meaning enables language users to express ideas that might not always be clearly expressed in the words used. Speakers recognise the implication behind such expressions as time flies, break the ice, and heavy heart, but not because of the literal structure of these expressions [2].

The relationship between these two aspects of meaning gains even more importance in the context of multilingual and intercultural communication. English and Uzbek are two languages of different families and are in possession of different historic, cultural and communicative traditions, but both languages are in regular usage with the help of figurative language. In many cases, figurative expressions are ones that represent universal human experiences, feelings, and perceptions, and are, therefore, somewhat culture-independent. However, it is hard to understand and difficult to translate some metaphoric expressions and idiomatic constructions because of their close relationship with the national mentality and culture. Therefore, the direct word-for-word translation does not always maintain the effect that the original language intended, emotional tone, or stylistic naturalness of the language of the expression [3].

The other crucial factor in the construction of meaning is the pragmatic context. The meaning of an expression is not only dependent on the individual words, but also on the communicative situation, the speaker's purpose, his/her social status, emotional climate and cultural background. What a single word can say is often determined by context, usage, and intent. This is especially apparent in figurative language since expressions in this type of language frequently include implied meaning rather than explicit explanation. Learners who only pay attention to the literal translation often have difficulties understanding the literal meaning of the idioms, metaphors or context-dependent expressions in spontaneous communication [4].

In recent years, more and more attention has been given to the figurative meaning in cognitive and pragmatic linguistics, as it has been increasingly understood that figurative language is not only decorative but deeply related to conceptualisation and thinking of human beings. Metaphors shape the sense of time, feelings, relationships and social reality. Therefore, the study of figurative meaning is an effective way to understand language and human cognition. The study of comparative aspects of English and Uzbek is of particular importance because it can help to reveal the universal tendencies of semantics and interpretation of the language in different cultures [5].

The purpose of this research is to consider the relationship between literal and figurative meaning in the languages of English and Uzbek based on comparison and pragmatics. Emphasis is placed on metaphorical expressions, understanding the context and translation strategies to overcome language differences where no direct equivalent exists. The study also aims to uncover the effect of cultural background on the construction of meaning and the reasons why some figurative expressions are more transferable across languages than others. The study aims to show through the analysis of linguistic samples of both languages that, in addition to lexical knowledge, contextual awareness and intercultural understanding are also important factors for successful interpretation. In general, the results can be applied to language teaching, translation activities, and continuing studies on the semantics of figurative language.

Methods

This research aimed to explore the role of literal and figurative meanings in the communicative process in real communicative situations using a qualitative comparative approach.

Because the study was related to interpretation, contextual meaning and translation processes, and not the measurement of numbers, it was thought that the most relevant methodological framework was qualitative. This way, the researcher can concentrate on the inner semantic structure of expressions, the role of pragmatic context and the cultural aspects that shape the process of construction of sentence meaning in different languages [6].

The study employed mainly descriptive and interpretive analysis of the linguistic examples taken from authentic language use. The selection of English figurative expressions for the study was based on the following considerations: They are frequently found in the speech of learners, in written texts, in media and in everyday conversations. The expressions featured idioms, metaphorical phrases, emotionally charged turns, and context-specific phrases like break the ice, under pressure, time flies, burning desire and lost in thought. The equivalents or functional alternatives of their Uzbek equivalents were then identified and comparatively studied from the following criteria: semantic structure, communicative function, contextual flexibility and translation adaptability. These expressions were not randomly chosen since they express different types of figurative meanings and have different levels of translatability between the two languages [7].

This comparative stage of the analysis was aimed at finding out the similarities and differences in the conceptualisation of figurative meaning in English and Uzbek. In this process, special emphasis was placed on metaphorical imagery, emotional intensity, lexical structure and pragmatic implication. Among the few instances in which there was a direct lexical equivalence, the study focused on the communicative effect and stylistic tone of both languages. The expressions with no natural equivalent were analysed with the adaptation strategies, descriptive reformulation or through the metaphorical substitution. This comparative procedure has enabled them to find that in the process of successful translation, one might interpret in a functional manner rather than by correspondence of lexical level [8].

Pragmatic analysis also played an integral part in the methodology, as figurative meaning can not be fully understood without being in the communicative context. The meaning of each expression was therefore explored in particular situational environments to see how the speaker's intention, emotional tone, interpersonal relationship, and contextual background affect the interpretation of each expression. The research took into account the meaning differences that are possible in the communicative contexts arising from identical lexical structures. This was especially significant due to the frequent use of indirect explanations, inferences and common understanding in the field of figurative language within the context of the study [9].

The other methodical aspect was the semantic classification of figurative expressions based on their conceptual basis. Groups of expressions related to emotional state, movement, psychological condition, physical pressure, and temporal perception were clustered together to see if there are any common patterns of metaphor in these expressions across languages. This classification allowed the identification of those figurative concepts, which showed common cognitive tendencies and those which were particular to a certain cultural context. According to the result of analysis, many metaphoric structures of English and Uzbek are grounded in common human experiences connected with perception of body, emotional response, and spatial orientation, which, despite different realisation in language, might be rather similar [10].

The theoretical framework of the study is based on the aspects of semantics, pragmatics, cognitive linguistics and translation studies. Semantic theory offered means for studying the direct

meaning relations, and pragmatic theory helped in understanding the interpretation of the meaning in context and communicative intention. The concept of conceptual metaphor theory of cognitive linguistic approach was used to describe the representation of abstract ideas through concrete human experiences. Equivalence, adaptation and meaning preservation were analyzed in relation to cross-linguistic transfer, which was facilitated by translation theory [11].

The overall methodological approach is, as it were, interdisciplinary, as the interaction between literal and figurative meaning cannot be explained from one linguistic perspective only. The study is aimed at giving a wider view on the dynamics of meaning in the process of English-Uzbek communication, on the basis of comparative analysis, pragmatic interpretation, semantic analysis and translation-oriented observation. This methodical approach also helps in achieving the practical aims of the research, especially in language learning, intercultural communication and language translation, in which the correct interpretation of figurative meaning is one of the major problems.

Results and Discussion

The comparative analysis showed that the literal and figurative meanings in the language of English and Uzbek interact with each other, and the interaction takes place in a complex form, including semantic interpretation, context influence and cultural perception. Some of the figurative expressions in both languages show some obvious conceptual similarities, but many others show marked differences in structure, imagery and communicative realisation. The results show that figurative meaning could not be considered as purely a linguistic phenomenon because its successful understanding requires the participation of pragmatic context and intercultural knowledge as well [12].

One of the most obvious things that has been observed in the analysis is that emotional expressions are embedded in metaphor. Feelings in both the English and the Uzbek languages are often expressed in terms of bodily sensation, body condition, or spatial orientation. This is seen in the metaphorical mapping of 'heavy heart' and 'yuragi og'ir' to one another, for instance: emotional sadness is linked to physical weight in both languages. There were also similar patterns noticed in words containing both psychological pressure, internal tension, and emotional instability. Many parallels indicate that many figurative structures are based on universal human experience and not just language-specific invention [13].

Meanwhile, the study identified that a certain degree of similarity between concepts does not necessarily ensure complete equivalence of communicative use. Some expressions in English retain their emotional overtones, irony or stylistic nuance in Uzbek. For example, the meaning of under pressure may be translated relatively directly as bosim ostida, but there may be various usages in context depending on social tone, communicative purpose and emotional implication. The phrase can be used in various situations and contexts with flexibility in English, and has a more pronounced emotional or situational connotation in Uzbek. This illustrates the role of discourse traditions and pragmatic expectations in figurative interpretation, other than it is influenced by the lexical meaning.

Another important result is about the idiomatic constructions which have structures not equivalent across languages. The figurative image itself was culturally and linguistically specific, as was the expression break the ice, which posed great challenges for translation. Literal translation into Uzbek yields confusing or unnatural interpretations which do not convey the intended meaning of the message. Thus, a translator often does not use direct lexical transfer, but rather functional

adaptation strategies. The translated text is more communicatively effective and contextually natural, rather than maintaining the metaphorical structure of the original text. It is an observation that successful translation does not necessarily involve reproducing the same wording, but accurately retaining the meaning and pragmatic function [15].

The analysis also showed that for some figurative expressions, the metaphorical sense is simplified in the translation process. In the English language, the phrase time flies is used to represent time in terms of movement and speed, while in the Uzbek language, it is usually expressed in more direct terms: structures similar to Uzbek vaqt tez o‘tadi are used to represent time. The central communicative idea is not altered, but the metaphorical images are not as vivid in translation. We did find the same tendencies in a few other cases where we had been told that the Uzbek translation had chosen to sacrifice style for clarity. This pattern suggests intra-linguistic differences in figurative density due to the conventions of communicative situations and stylistic preferences.

Another highly important factor throughout the research was contextual dependence. To interpret expressions like lost in thought, cold response, or burning desire, one must take into account the communicative environment, the intention of the speaker, the emotional context, and that of the discourse. One form of expression can be interpreted in different ways in literary narration, informal dialogue, academic discussion, and interpersonal communication. So the figurative meaning is dynamic and not static. The findings are compatible with pragmatic theories that suggest that meaning is created by interaction between the linguistic form and the contextual inference, rather than by words or phrases themselves [16].

The comparative results also showed that the cultural worldview plays an important role in figurative interpretation. Some English metaphors related to movement, speed, independence or personal emotional experience are distinct from Uzbek metaphors that are more rooted in inter-personal respect and collective perception, as well as in culturally distinct images. This makes it difficult to find direct equivalents even if the general meaning seems to be the same. The differences demonstrate that figurative language involves more than just the structure of language; they also involve the social mentality and cultural cognition.

A few examples were analysed as part of this study and are summarised in the table below:

Expression	**Literal Meaning**	**Figurative Meaning**	**Uzbek Equivalent**	**Translation Strategy**
break the ice	destroy frozen surface	begin communication comfortably	suhbatni boshlash	adaptation
heavy heart	physical heaviness	sadness or emotional pain	yuragi og‘ir	direct equivalent
time flies	movement through air	time passes quickly	vaqt tez o‘tadi	simplification
under pressure	physical force	psychological stress	bosim ostida	partial equivalence
lost in thought	physically lost	deep concentration	o‘yga cho‘mgan	metaphorical substitution
burning desire	fire and heat	intense motivation	kuchli istak	semantic adaptation

The table shows that in the case of conceptual similarity, cultural compatibility and contextual flexibility, various approaches to translation of figurative expressions are needed. Some expressions allow for virtually direct transfer, and others require reformulation or restructuring of the semantics to achieve the same communicative effect. The overall results corroborate that the figurative meaning plays a key role in real communication and cannot be used only as an ornamentation of the language. The figurative expressions influence the emotional interpretation, interpersonal communication and cognitive understanding in English and Uzbek. Furthermore, the study shows that meaning construction is a continuous process of interaction between the lexical structure, contextual inference, cultural knowledge and communicative intention. If any of these are not taken into account, it may lead to a faulty interpretation or translation.

In terms of application to language education and translation studies, the results of the research have some implications. On a practical level, the research findings suggest several implications for language instruction and translation studies. Learners who are only capable of processing literal meaning may find it hard to process authentic communication, as figurative expressions are dominant in both verbal and written communications. Thus, it is essential to build figurative competence by analysing the context rather than by isolating words. Likewise, translators should interpret figurative expressions in such a way that they can achieve pragmatic equivalence and cultural adaptation instead of word-for-word correspondence [17].

In more general linguistic terms, the results corroborate cognitive and pragmatic approaches based on the assumption that figurative language plays a crucial role in human conceptualisation. Metaphorical thinking has an impact on the way in which people think about feelings, relationships, time, social interaction and abstract experience. As such, the study of figurative meaning not only helps in the development of semantic theory but also in broader issues of intercultural communication and human cognition itself.

Conclusion

The present study has been based on the comparison and pragmatics of literal and figurative meaning in English and Uzbek. The result indicated that the definition of meaning in language is not only the direct meaning indicated by the dictionary, but it also depends on the ability to interpret meaning metaphorically, as well as the ability to interpret meaning with context and background knowledge. Literal meaning is the basic semantic structure of an expression, while figurative meaning lets speakers communicate in a more emotional, attitudinal and abstract way in real communication. Analysis showed that there are figurative expressions in the English and Uzbek languages which have similar conceptual bases related to human experiences like emotional pressure, sadness, deep thought and others. But there are lots of fanciful expressions which vary greatly and are affected by national culture and communicative traditions. In so doing, it is often not possible to render the original meaning or stylistic effect into English and back again. The study also confirmed the role of pragmatic context in the interpretation. Figurative expressions cannot be accurately understood without taking into account the communicative situation, the purpose of the speaker and emotions. Thus, the key for successful translation is the adaptation and contextual interpretation, not mechanical equivalence.

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