THE INTERACTION OF LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE MEANING IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A COMPARATIVE AND PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This paper will discuss the interplay of literal and figurative meaning in the English and Uzbek languages and the role of these two levels of meaning in communication, interpretation and translation. Despite the fact that literal meaning is usually viewed as the main source of meaning, the actual use of language demonstrates that speakers often use figurative expressions to express more complicated ideas, feelings and attitudes. The study is comparative and pragmatic in that it focuses on the specific expressions in the two languages, comparing and contrasting how they acquire a different meaning to suit the context and communicative purpose. Special focus is put on the issue of translations, and translation problems are mostly prevalent when figurative expressions lack direct counterparts. The results indicate that a direct word-to-word translation can be quite inadequate, and it can result in a misinterpretation or unnatural wording. Rather, successful translation involves adaptation, where emphasis is made on the maintenance of meaning as opposed to structure. The analysis also brings to light the role of cultural background in the interpretation, indicating that certain figures of speech can be easily interpreted across languages, whereas others rely on certain cultural knowledge.

Keywords: literal meaning, figurative meaning, metaphor, translation problems, intercultural communication, interpretation of semantics, pragmatic context, English and Uzbek.

Introduction

The nature of meaning as a functioning of language has always been one of the main issues in the field of linguistics. Initially, it might appear that meaning is directly related to words. But closer inspection reveals that this relation is not necessarily as simple as that. Words do not work independently, and their meaning is relative and will be determined by circumstances, purpose, and application in a communication. This is especially clear with the analysis of the correlation of literal and figurative meaning [1].

Literal meaning is said to be the most direct and the most conventional form of interpretation, which is usually embodied in dictionary definitions. However, figurative meaning gives the speaker the liberty to look beyond direct reference and convey abstract concepts, feelings, and attitudes. These two kinds of meaning are highly interrelated in the context of real communication. Speakers alternate between them, more often without even being conscious of this fact, and this demonstrates that meaning is dynamic and not fixed [2].

This is even more apparent in intercultural and multilingual situations. In the translation of expressions between languages, variations in structure and cultural background start to play a part in interpretation. Certain figurative expressions are decipherable in different languages since they are based on human common experience. But others have cultural attachments to rely on, and might become unintelligible when directly translated. This not only poses difficulties to learners, but also to translators who need to be able to strike a balance between accuracy and the natural expression [3].

The other significant aspect is the influence of context in the interpretation process. The same phrase can have various meanings in different circumstances in which it is applied. Even simple phrases can be misinterpreted without the knowledge of the context. This is more so when it comes to figurative language, where meaning is usually indirect and hinges on inference. Students who are stuck on the literal meaning will struggle to comprehend real communication, especially in an informal or conversational atmosphere [4].

Although it is important, the figurative meaning is often considered a minor part of language. But practically, it is the key to communication. It enables speakers to express complicated concepts in a more adaptable and expressive manner and makes language more efficient in actual communication. Such neglect can also result in not fully comprehending the operation of meaning in its daily application. This paper will analyse the interplay of literal and figurative meaning in the English and Uzbek languages with specific reference to context, translation and intercultural communication. The research aims at elucidating the process of constructing meaning in real-life circumstances and why it can be problematic by taking a comparative and pragmatic approach to the issue. It is assumed that the results will not only be useful in terms of theoretical knowledge but also in the practical application of language learning and translation.

METHODS

This paper assumes a qualitative and analytical methodology to investigate the interrelation between literal and figurative meaning in English and Uzbek. The study is not founded on experimental data, but on theoretical interpretation and comparative analysis of a few linguistic examples of interest. This method is common in linguistic studies where the emphasis is made on meaning building and understanding as opposed to quantitative measurement [5].

The analysis is centred on a group of popular English phrases, which have both literal and figurative senses. These also contain idiomatic and metaphorical phrases like break the ice, time flies, under pressure, and lost in thought. These phrases have been chosen because they are common in everyday speech and because they are related to meaning interpretation. They were analysed against their Uzbek counterparts to determine the similarities and differences in structure, use and representation of the concept. The analysis of the figurative meaning using the authentic language examples is deemed to be an effective technique of applied linguistics [6].

It was done by a comparative approach where each expression was evaluated in the two languages. Special consideration was paid to those cases in which it was impossible to find a direct analogue. When this happened, then the emphasis was on adaptation of meaning as opposed to direct transfer. Such a cross-linguistic comparison is often employed to display universal and language-specific aspects of meaning [7].

The research also involves some aspects of pragmatic analysis. The figurative expression was studied in context so as to appreciate how meaning varies with communicative intention, tone

and circumstance. This represents the concept that meaning is not predetermined but arises as a part of language use, which is one of the main concepts of pragmatic inquiry [8].

The primary analysis tool was interpretative analysis. The study was aimed at determining patterns of meaning and how the patterns operate, rather than quantitatively assessing the results. This helped to investigate not just what expressions are, but how they work in the actual communicative situations.

Semantics, pragmatics, and metaphor theory are other theoretical frameworks employed in the research. These lenses offer a starting point to comprehend the interaction between literal and figurative meanings and how they are perceived in different languages. Through the integration of theory and practical demonstration, the study will seek to provide a better depiction of meaning in real-life language use. In general, the methodological approach indicates the character of the research, which is focused on interpretation, as opposed to measurement. By qualitative analysis and comparison, the study aims to elucidate how figurative meaning works and why it poses opportunities as well as challenges in communication and translation.

Results

The comparison has shown that figurative expressions have an interpretation in both English and Uzbek that obeys several observable patterns. Whereas certain expressions are indeed very similar in both languages, there are those that need to be adapted because of the variations in structure, usage and cultural background. The trends were even more evident as the chosen expressions were analysed in the context of meaning, translation, and contextual application.

Among the most noticeable are the results that the expression founded on physical experience is frequently perceived in a similar way in different languages. Indicatively, such expressions as heavy heart and yuragi og‘ir are both based on the notion of weight to explain emotional complication. These similarities lead to the idea that there are some common figurative meanings that have their roots in the common human perception, and thus are simpler to interpret and translate. This confirms the concept of metaphorical thought being somewhat universal, although the languages may vary in their form [9].

Meanwhile, the analysis revealed that not every expression can be directly transferred. There is no natural counterpart of such idiomatic phrases in Uzbek as break the ice. When such instances occur, the initial metaphor is normally substituted by a descriptive phrase which communicates the same communicative role. This means that meaning may be retained despite the change in structure, which underscores the significance of functional equivalence in translation [10].

The other significant discovery is related to expressions, in which the metaphorical structure is streamlined. Time flies is a phrase that exemplifies this. In English, movement is a concept that can be used to describe the time passing so quickly. Uzbek, though, translates this meaning as vaqt tez o'tadi, in which the metaphor of flying is dropped. Although this change has taken place, the general meaning is not lost. This implies that translation may entail the de-figurative reduction of complexities in a bid to end up with clarity.

Context also played a role as revealed in the analysis. Phrases like under pressure and lost in thought are only interpreted in the correct manner when put in a particular context. Their meaning can be ambiguous or unclear without the context. This proves that figurative interpretation does not solely rely on the lexical meaning but also on pragmatic considerations like intention and communicative situation [11].

Also, the analysis revealed that figurative expressions differ regarding flexibility. Certain words retain the same meaning in various contexts, whereas others vary according to the context in which they are used. To illustrate, the word burning desire could have varying degrees of intensity depending on the circumstances. Alternatives in Uzbek can maintain or diminish this strength, depending on the adaptation of the expression. The results are presented in the following table:

Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning	Uzbek Equivalent	Translation Type
break the ice	break frozen surface	start communication	suhbatni boshlash	adaptation
heavy heart	physical weight	sadness	yuragi og‘ir	direct equivalent
time flies	movement	time passes quickly	vaqt tez o‘tadi	simplification
under pressure	physical force	stress	bosim ostida	direct equivalent
lost in thought	being lost	deep thinking	o‘yga cho‘mgan	metaphor change
burning desire	fire/heat	strong motivation	kuchli istak	partial adaptation

On the whole, the findings indicate that figurative meaning is implemented by a mixture of general cognitive schemas and language peculiarities. There are those terms that can be translated with little modification, and there are those that need to be modified to ensure the statement is clear and natural. This reaffirms that translation cannot be a mechanical process, but a process that entails interpretation and adaptation.

Discussion

The findings indicate a significant fact that figurative meaning does not transfer across languages predictably or in a definite manner. Although words may be used interchangeably, they can have different meanings depending on their application. This implies that meaning cannot be found in words alone but is created through the process of language, context and experience.

There were several terms that were very similar in English and Uzbek. Examples such as the one of heavy heart and that of yuragi og’ir show that emotional experiences are frequently interpreted in terms of physical feeling. This is a similarity that is a product of shared thought, not direct linguistic borrowing. The way abstract concepts are articulated appears to be influenced by human perception, and this is why there are metaphors that are common to all languages [12].

A closer look will show that similarity in the conceptual level does not necessarily imply the same use. Phrases which appear to be similar can have different emphasis or style in usage. As an example, a sentence like under pressure can be used in both languages, but the impact of such a sentence can differ according to the tone or context. Minor variations in usage have a bearing on how the message is received, particularly in more complex communicative situations. Another tendency manifests itself in idiomatic expressions. The phrases such as breaking the ice are not easily transferable as their meaning is not based on the literal meaning but on a convention. The reproduction of the original structure may confuse. Reformulation is the way to save meaning in such situations. The translator changes the focus from form to function and tries to reproduce the communicative act rather than reproduce the words. This supports the notion that translation is an interpretive process and not substitutive [13].

The other tendency which is noticeable is the modification of metaphorical imagery. The phrase, time flies, can be used to demonstrate the simplification of the figurative structure. Movement is used as a source domain in English, whereas in Uzbek, it is more likely to convey the same thought directly. The metaphor is not as developed, yet the message is clear. These

modifications demonstrate that clarity may usually be given precedence over stylistic conservation, especially where phrases are moved to another linguistic setting. Context turns out to be a resolute factor time and again. Figurative expressions are not clear without situational support. It is unclear how phrases can be interpreted when they are out of context in the communicative context. That is why figurative language is often misunderstood by learners at the initial stages. The use of the literal meaning is not enough to give an adequate direction. The interpretation becomes better when the focus is put on the context and intention.

The results further indicate that figurative language brings about accessibility and challenges in intercultural communication. There are some common patterns of ideas that make particular expressions easier to comprehend. Meanwhile, forms that are culturally specific bring along obstacles. These two predispositions coexist and this implies that effective communication is based on flexibility and not rules [14].

This has practical implications in terms of pedagogy. The isolation-based teaching strategies that deprive vocabulary of contextualization can inhibit understanding. Figurative expressions have to be exposed to actual usage, where the learners can see how the meaning changes. Promoting interpretation rather than a literal translation assists in attaining a more adaptive meaning of language. Such flexibility is required in the practice of translation. Mechanical equivalence can hardly give natural results.

Its extended meaning is that figurative meaning cannot be considered a secondary feature. It is a key factor in the development of the expression and interpretation of ideas. Language functions in a synthesis of structure, context and patterns of thinking. Any of these aspects can be disregarded, resulting in partial interpretation. These observations are in favour of the opinion that figurative language is not a matter of style but is imbued with human thought. Its use goes beyond decoration and shapes the construction of meaning during daily communication [15].

Conclusion

This paper has explored the interaction of literal and figurative meaning in English and Uzbek in terms of interpretation, translation and intercultural communication. The review revealed that meaning is not predetermined in words, but it emerges through usage, context and understanding. Sayings that may seem to be plain on the surface have more layers, which can only be seen in actual communication. Certain patterns of the figurative language were discovered to be alike in both languages, particularly those which are related to human fundamental experience. Such instances facilitate easy interpretation and facilitate communication between language groups. Meanwhile, numerous terms rely on the cultural tendencies and are not transferable. The difficulty in trying to translate them word-for-word can diminish the clarity or give unnatural output. The results indicate that the context of interpretation should be paid attention to, and not the isolated forms. It is in the context of the expressions that meaning is better discerned. This is especially crucial among learners, who at first might turn out to be literal. In practice, it is better to use flexible strategies than to employ strict equivalence in translation. Reformulations of expressions to the target language aid in maintaining meaning and enhancing naturalness. The same can be applied to language teaching, in which figurative meaning ought to be presented in real application and not in an abstract manner.

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