



THE ROLE OF METAPHOR IN DRAMATIC DISCOURSE AND ITS
CULTUROLOGICAL FEATURES

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Abstract; *This article investigates the role of metaphor in dramatic discourse with particular emphasis on its culturological features and interpretative potential. Drawing on cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, and cultural studies, the research explores how metaphors in dramatic texts function not only as stylistic devices but also as culturally embedded cognitive models that shape meaning, character construction, and audience interpretation. The study employs a qualitative analytical methodology, examining selected English-language dramatic works through metaphor identification procedures and discourse-based interpretation. The findings demonstrate that dramatic metaphors reflect culturally specific worldviews, values, and social tensions, while simultaneously serving universal cognitive functions. The article argues that metaphor in dramatic discourse operates at the intersection of language, culture, and performance, contributing to both aesthetic impact and cultural meaning-making. The results have implications for discourse studies, literary analysis, translation, and intercultural communication.*

Keywords: *metaphor; dramatic discourse; cognitive linguistics; culture; discourse analysis; culturology*

Introduction

Dramatic discourse represents a unique form of language use in which meaning is constructed through dialogue, action, and performance. Unlike narrative prose, drama relies heavily on spoken interaction, symbolic language, and pragmatic implication. Among the linguistic devices that shape dramatic meaning, metaphor occupies a central position. Metaphor in drama extends beyond ornamental language; it functions as a cognitive and cultural mechanism through which abstract ideas, emotional states, and social conflicts are conceptualized.

In contemporary linguistics, metaphor is understood as a fundamental cognitive process rather than a purely rhetorical figure (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This perspective is particularly relevant for dramatic discourse, where metaphorical language mediates between the inner psychological world of characters and the shared cultural knowledge of the audience. Dramatic metaphors often encode culturally specific values, historical experiences, and ideological tensions, making them a rich site for culturological analysis.





Despite extensive research on metaphor in poetry and prose, dramatic discourse has received comparatively limited attention, especially from a linguo-culturological perspective. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how metaphors function within dramatic discourse and how their meanings are shaped by cultural contexts. The research focuses on English-language drama while engaging with broader theoretical implications applicable to cross-cultural literary studies.

The objectives of this article are threefold: (1) to analyze the functional roles of metaphor in dramatic discourse; (2) to identify the culturological features embedded in dramatic metaphors; and (3) to explore how metaphor contributes to character development, thematic construction, and audience interpretation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Metaphor in cognitive linguistics

Within cognitive linguistics, metaphor is conceptualized as a fundamental mechanism of human thought that enables individuals to understand abstract concepts through more concrete experiential domains. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal work demonstrated that metaphor is not limited to literary language but structures everyday cognition, reasoning, and communication. Conceptual metaphors such as *TIME IS MONEY* or *ARGUMENT IS WAR* reveal culturally entrenched ways of interpreting reality. Subsequent studies have expanded this framework by emphasizing embodiment, image schemas, and experiential grounding of metaphorical mappings.

Kövecses (2010) further argues that while many conceptual metaphors are potentially universal due to shared bodily experience, their linguistic realizations and dominant patterns are culture-specific. This claim is particularly relevant for dramatic discourse, where metaphors are strategically selected to resonate with the audience's cultural expectations and emotional sensibilities. Cognitive metaphor theory thus provides a robust analytical tool for examining how dramatic language encodes culturally mediated meanings.

2.2 Dramatic discourse as a linguistic phenomenon

Dramatic discourse occupies an intermediate position between spontaneous spoken interaction and carefully constructed literary language. Scholars such as Culpeper (2001) and Short (1996) emphasize that dramatic dialogue simulates natural conversation while simultaneously fulfilling artistic and ideological functions. Turn-taking, deixis, politeness strategies, and implicature operate alongside symbolism and thematic coherence.

In this hybrid discourse type, metaphor plays a crucial role in compressing meaning and conveying complex psychological and social states within limited textual space. Because dramatic texts are designed for performance, metaphors gain additional semiotic layers through prosody, gesture, and stage action, intensifying their interpretative impact.

2.3 Metaphor and culture: a culturological perspective

Culturology views language as a repository of cultural knowledge and collective memory. From this perspective, metaphors function as cultural signs that encode values, norms, and worldviews (Sharifian, 2017). Dramatic metaphors often draw on culturally





salient domains such as religion, nature, family, and power structures. For example, metaphors based on light and darkness frequently reflect moral and spiritual dichotomies embedded in Western cultural traditions.

In drama, such metaphors facilitate shared understanding between playwright and audience by activating culturally familiar frames. At the same time, dramatists may manipulate conventional metaphors to challenge dominant ideologies or expose cultural contradictions.

2.4 Previous studies on metaphor in drama

Research on metaphor in dramatic texts has largely focused on canonical authors, particularly Shakespeare. Charteris-Black (2004) demonstrates how metaphors of disease, war, and the body articulate political power and social disorder in Shakespearean drama. Other studies highlight metaphors of identity and time in modern drama, linking linguistic choices to historical and ideological contexts.

However, relatively few studies integrate cognitive, discourse-analytical, and culturological perspectives within a single framework. This study addresses this gap by offering a comprehensive analysis of metaphor in dramatic discourse as a culturally embedded cognitive phenomenon.

3. Methodology

1.1 Research design

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative discourse-analytical design grounded in cognitive linguistics and culturology. The research focuses on metaphor as a culturally embedded cognitive mechanism in dramatic discourse, examined through close textual analysis and contextual interpretation.

3.2 Corpus selection: English and Uzbek drama

To ensure cross-cultural comparison, the corpus includes selected scenes from English and Uzbek dramatic works. English-language texts are represented by canonical drama (e.g., William Shakespeare) and modern English drama, while Uzbek drama is represented by plays from prominent Uzbek playwrights reflecting national cultural values, historical experience, and social ideology.

The selection criteria included: (a) cultural significance of the play; (b) richness of metaphorical language; (c) dialogic intensity; and (d) relevance to social and ethical themes. This comparative approach allows identification of both universal and culture-specific metaphorical patterns.

3.3 Metaphor identification and analysis

Metaphorical expressions were identified using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP). Each metaphor was analyzed in terms of its source and target domains, discourse function, and cultural motivation. Special attention was paid to metaphors related to identity, morality, power, and emotion.

3.4 Comparative analytical framework





The comparative analysis examined similarities and differences between English and Uzbek dramatic metaphors, focusing on:

- dominant conceptual metaphors;
- culturally salient source domains;
- ideological and value-based meanings;
- pragmatic and performative functions.

4. Analysis and Results

This section presents a comparative analysis of metaphorical expressions in English and Uzbek dramatic discourse, highlighting both universal cognitive patterns and culture-specific realizations.

4.1 Metaphor as a tool of character construction in English and Uzbek drama

In English drama, characters frequently conceptualize inner states through metaphors grounded in natural forces, spatial movement, and bodily experience. For example, ambition and power are often expressed through metaphors of ascent, light, or force, reflecting individual-centered cultural models.

In contrast, Uzbek dramatic discourse shows a stronger tendency toward metaphors based on family relations, honor, and moral duty. Emotions and personal struggles are often framed through metaphors of burden, fate, and heart, which align with collectivist cultural values and ethical responsibility.

4.2 Metaphor and dramatic conflict: a cross-cultural view

In English drama, conflicts are commonly framed through metaphors of war, struggle, and competition, emphasizing confrontation and individual agency. Such metaphors reflect historical and cultural narratives of power and political tension.

Uzbek drama, by contrast, frequently employs metaphors of balance, trial, and endurance. Conflicts are conceptualized as moral tests rather than direct confrontations, underscoring the cultural importance of patience, social harmony, and respect for tradition.

4.3 Culturological symbolism in dramatic metaphors

Religious and mythological imagery plays a significant role in both traditions but differs in orientation. English dramatic metaphors often draw on Christian symbolism, light–dark opposition, and biblical allusions. Uzbek drama frequently incorporates metaphors rooted in Islamic culture, folklore, and nature-based symbolism, such as earth, water, and road.

These metaphorical choices function as cultural markers that guide audience interpretation and emotional response.

4.4 Performance and cultural interpretation

In both English and Uzbek drama, metaphor interpretation is shaped by performance. However, Uzbek theatrical tradition places greater emphasis on intonation, pauses, and symbolic gesture, reinforcing metaphorical meaning through collective cultural codes. This highlights the inseparability of metaphor, performance, and culture in dramatic discourse.

5. Discussion





The findings confirm that metaphor in dramatic discourse functions as a cognitive-cultural interface that mediates between language, thought, and society. Consistent with cognitive linguistic theory, metaphors structure conceptualization; however, their specific realizations are shaped by cultural context.

From a culturological perspective, dramatic metaphors serve as carriers of cultural memory and ideological meaning. They allow playwrights to negotiate social values, critique power relations, and explore identity within culturally recognizable frameworks. The performative nature of drama further amplifies metaphorical meaning, transforming linguistic expressions into embodied cultural experiences.

The integration of cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis thus offers a comprehensive account of how metaphor operates within dramatic texts.

6. Implications

The study has implications for literary analysis, translation studies, and language education. Understanding the cultural grounding of metaphors can improve dramatic translation and intercultural interpretation. In pedagogy, metaphor analysis can enhance learners' cultural competence and critical reading skills.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The study is limited to English-language dramatic texts and qualitative analysis. Future research may incorporate corpus-based methods, comparative cross-cultural studies, and performance-oriented analysis.

8. Conclusion

This article demonstrates that metaphor in dramatic discourse is a powerful linguistic and cultural mechanism that shapes meaning, character, and audience interpretation. By integrating cognitive linguistics and culturology, the study highlights the inseparability of language and culture in dramatic texts. Metaphor emerges as a key element through which drama reflects and constructs cultural reality.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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