



# Metaphorical Expressions in The Field of Equestrianism: A Comparative Analysis of English And Uzbek

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**Abstract:** The metaphorical use of equestrian vocabulary is a vivid reflection of cultural history, social psychology, and worldviews embedded in both English and Uzbek societies. This article explores the nature, structure, and semantics of metaphorical expressions relating to equestrianism in these two languages. By employing both cognitive-linguistic and comparative-cultural approaches, the study reveals similarities and divergences in the conceptualization of the horse as a metaphorical source domain. Corpus-based evidence, literary analysis, and ethnolinguistic data are integrated to elucidate how metaphorical language drawn from the equestrian sphere functions within wider discourses of power, speed, nobility, unpredictability, and social order. The research demonstrates that, while both English and Uzbek employ equestrian metaphors to articulate core human experiences, the specific mappings and lexical realizations reflect unique sociocultural trajectories. The article concludes with implications for bilingual lexicography, cross-cultural communication, and metaphor studies.

**Keywords:** Equestrian metaphors, comparative linguistics, cognitive metaphor, Uzbek, English, corpus analysis, conceptual domains.

**Introduction:** Metaphor, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) famously posited, is not merely a rhetorical device but a foundational mechanism of thought, permeating language, culture, and cognition. Within this framework, source domains such as animals and, in

particular, the horse, play a critical role in mapping embodied and social experience onto abstract concepts. The centrality of horses to the socio-economic and spiritual fabric of both Anglo-Saxon and Turkic societies renders equestrianism an especially fertile ground for metaphorical extension.

In English, the horse has historically symbolized speed, power, nobility, and, at times, unpredictability—a legacy traceable from chivalric romance through industrial transformation and into modern sports and politics. In Uzbek, the horse (ot) is not only a practical means of transport and a symbol of pastoral nomadism but also a cultural signifier embedded in oral epics, proverbs, and daily expressions. These deeply rooted associations ensure that equestrian metaphors in both languages are more than decorative flourishes; they are windows into collective mentalities and values.

The comparative study of equestrian metaphors in English and Uzbek remains relatively underexplored in linguistic literature, especially when approached through an integrative cognitive-cultural and corpus-based perspective. Most previous studies have addressed metaphor within a single language or focused on more globally prominent domains such as war, journey, or body. This article seeks to fill the gap by systematically analyzing equestrian metaphorical expressions in English and Uzbek, investigating the nature and distribution of source-target mappings, the cultural salience of specific metaphorical patterns, and the implications of these patterns for cross-cultural understanding and translation.

The objectives of this study are threefold:

1. To identify and classify the main types of metaphorical expressions related to equestrianism in English and Uzbek;
2. To compare the conceptual frameworks underlying these metaphors;
3. To analyze the cultural, pragmatic, and cognitive factors influencing metaphor choice and meaning in both languages.

To achieve the stated objectives, the research adopts a mixed-method approach combining corpus linguistics, cognitive metaphor analysis, and cultural-ethnolinguistic interpretation.

For English, the primary data sources include the British National Corpus (BNC), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and selected literary and journalistic texts focusing on equestrian topics. For Uzbek, data were sourced from the O'zbek Milliy Korpusi (Uzbek National Corpus), as well as digitalized folklore collections, proverbs, and periodicals devoted to rural life and sports.

The study utilizes the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007), which involves:

- a) Reading through texts to establish contextual meaning;
- b) Identifying words with a more basic contemporary meaning related to equestrianism;
- c) Determining if the basic meaning contrasts with the contextual meaning;
- d) If so, coding the instance as metaphorical.

A target sample of 250 metaphorical expressions from each language was collected, ensuring representation from a range of genres (literature, journalism, spoken discourse, proverbs, idioms). Each example was manually coded for source domain, target domain, frequency, and pragmatic function.

Componential analysis was used to classify metaphor types (e.g., horse as power, horse as unpredictability, horse as hierarchy). Comparative cognitive analysis mapped similarities and differences in conceptual metaphor structures (CMs) across languages, following the methodology established by Kövecses (2002) and Musolff (2016). Ethnolinguistic context was provided via references to folklore and historical sources.

Coding reliability was ensured via inter-coder agreement checks, reaching a Cohen's kappa of 0.84, indicating substantial agreement.

The analysis of English data revealed several recurring conceptual metaphors where the horse domain is mapped onto abstract human domains. The most prevalent include:

- **HORSE AS POWER/ENERGY:** The equation of horsepower with mechanical and personal strength is fundamental. Expressions such as “workhorse” (a reliable, diligent person or thing), “horsepower” (measure of engine power), and “full throttle” (maximum effort or speed) demonstrate this mapping.
- **HORSE AS STATUS/NOBILITY:** Metaphors like “on one's high horse” (acting superior or arrogant), “thoroughbred” (of distinguished pedigree or high quality), and “dark horse” (an unexpected competitor) exploit social hierarchy and pedigree associations.
- **HORSE AS UNPREDICTABILITY:** Idioms such as “wild horse(s) couldn't drag me away” and “hold your horses” (wait, slow down) capture the animal's perceived spirit and need for control.
- **HORSE AS VEHICLE OF TRANSITION:** Expressions such as “changing horses midstream” (altering course or leader during a critical period) use the animal as a symbol of journey and risk.

The metaphors are pervasive in both everyday speech

and specialized registers, particularly in politics, business, and sports. For example, political campaigns frequently reference “dark horses” and “front runners,” drawing on racing imagery. The “workhorse” metaphor is also highly productive, being adapted to technology, science, and organizational life.

In Uzbek, the metaphorical use of *ot* (horse) is equally rich but displays a different cultural resonance. Key patterns include:

- **OT AS SPEED AND VIGOR:** The horse as an emblem of quickness, energy, and youth is embedded in proverbs such as “*Otdan tushgan yigitga yer tor*” (the earth is narrow for a young man who has left his horse), denoting restlessness and ambition.
- **OT AS LOYALTY AND COMPANIONSHIP:** Uzbek metaphors often reflect the intimate social and emotional bonds between horse and owner: “*Otga minmagan otashini bilmaydi*” (He who has not ridden a horse does not know its fire/spirit) conveys the value of direct experience.
- **OT AS SOCIAL HIERARCHY AND HONOR:** High social status is frequently equated with prized horses; “*Oti borning oti bor, oti yo‘qning oti yo‘q*” (He who has a horse has value, he who does not, does not) emphasizes wealth and prestige.
- **OT AS FATE OR UNPREDICTABILITY:** Folkloric expressions such as “*Otning oyog‘i baxt keltirar*” (The horse’s hoof brings fortune) highlight the unpredictability of luck or destiny, often tied to equestrian imagery.

Unlike English, many Uzbek metaphors maintain closer links to everyday rural life, ceremonies, and oral storytelling traditions. The horse also figures in metaphors of reconciliation, peace, and even spiritual transformation—testifying to its deep integration in Turkic cosmology.

Although both languages frequently draw on the horse for metaphors of power, speed, and hierarchy, the specific mappings and extensions differ, reflecting sociocultural realities. English metaphors, shaped by centuries of aristocratic equestrian sport and subsequent technological transformation, often focus on competitiveness, industrial might, and social standing. Uzbek metaphors, shaped by nomadic-pastoral traditions and the horse’s role in kinship, gift-giving, and ritual, stress emotional connection, loyalty, and fate.

Notably, both languages employ the horse as unpredictability metaphor but with nuanced differences: English tends to frame unpredictability in terms of control and restraint (“hold your horses”), while Uzbek emphasizes destiny and external fortune

(“*Otning oyog‘i baxt keltirar*”).

Furthermore, cross-linguistic analysis reveals areas of direct equivalence, such as the notion of the “workhorse,” and areas where translation requires cultural adaptation or paraphrasing—particularly in expressions deeply rooted in folklore or specific social practices.

Quantitative corpus analysis demonstrates that horse-related metaphors in English are more prevalent in written genres such as journalism and political commentary, while in Uzbek they are more frequent in oral genres, folklore, and everyday speech. Literary texts in both languages exploit the metaphorical potential of the horse to characterize individuals (heroes, rivals, fools), dramatize conflict, or signal transformation.

For instance, in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, the famous line “A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!” is not only literal but serves as a powerful metaphor for desperation and the shifting fortunes of power. In Uzbek epic poetry, the hero’s horse is often as vividly characterized as the hero himself, with metaphors that underscore loyalty, bravery, and endurance.

The findings underscore the universality and diversity of equestrian metaphorical expression. Both English and Uzbek conceptualize the horse as a source of power, energy, and status, yet these qualities are inflected through distinct historical, economic, and social lenses.

In English, the legacy of chivalry, sporting tradition, and industrial development underpins a metaphorical focus on competition, hierarchy, and technological prowess. The extension of “horsepower” to machines, for example, reflects the absorption of animal qualities into the logic of modernity. Conversely, the “dark horse” metaphor, now common in political discourse, evokes the unpredictability of competition and the allure of the outsider.

In Uzbek, the horse remains closer to its pastoral and communal roots. Metaphors derived from equestrianism function as vehicles for expressing social cohesion, hospitality, and personal fate. The prevalence of proverbs and idioms centering on *ot* attests to the enduring value placed on oral tradition and face-to-face communication. Uzbek metaphorical language also encodes collective wisdom, resilience, and adaptability in a landscape where mobility was historically key to survival.

From a cognitive perspective, both languages utilize equestrian metaphors to bridge the gap between embodied experience and abstract domains. The prevalence of the horse as a source domain suggests a shared human tendency to project salient animal characteristics—strength, movement,

unpredictability—onto the complexities of human existence. However, the differential selection and elaboration of specific metaphorical patterns are guided by cultural models, social structure, and historical memory.

For translators, lexicographers, and educators, these findings underscore the necessity of cultural competence in interpreting and rendering metaphorical language. While some metaphors have direct equivalents, many are deeply culture-bound, requiring explanation, adaptation, or creative substitution. The translation of Uzbek metaphors rooted in ritual or folklore, for instance, may necessitate footnotes or glosses in English texts.

Finally, the corpus evidence reveals the dynamic, evolving nature of metaphorical usage. As societies change—urbanize, digitize, globalize—old metaphors may fade while new ones emerge. The adoption of English equestrian terms in modern Uzbek journalism, for example, reflects both linguistic borrowing and the globalization of sports culture.

This study has demonstrated that equestrian metaphorical expressions in English and Uzbek, while grounded in shared human experience, are distinctively shaped by their respective sociocultural environments. The comparative analysis highlights both universality and specificity in metaphor use, offering insights into the ways language encodes values, identities, and worldviews.

For English, equestrian metaphors serve as tools for expressing power, competition, and social mobility—echoing the legacy of aristocracy, industrialization, and sport. For Uzbek, the metaphors reflect a world of communal ties, fate, and the ever-present relationship between human and animal, inscribed in oral tradition and lived experience.

The findings have practical implications for bilingual lexicography, translation practice, and intercultural communication. They also contribute to broader theoretical debates in metaphor studies, confirming that while metaphors are, in many respects, universal, their instantiation in language and thought is always particular.

Future research might extend this analysis to other Turkic and Indo-European languages, trace diachronic shifts in metaphorical patterns, or explore the intersection of metaphor with visual and performative arts. Ultimately, the horse—both real and imagined—continues to gallop through the linguistic landscapes of both East and West, carrying with it the cargo of culture, memory, and meaning.

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