RESEARCH ARTICLE

Pragmatics of Mixed Metaphors in Uzbek And English Languages

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Abstract

This article examines the pragmatic functions of mixed metaphors in Uzbek and English languages within the framework of cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis. Mixed metaphors arise when different metaphorical images or conceptual domains are combined within a single linguistic expression. Although traditionally regarded as stylistic inconsistencies, modern linguistic research demonstrates that such constructions may perform important communicative functions. The aim of the study is to analyze the pragmatic roles of mixed metaphors in literary and public discourse in Uzbek and English languages. The research applies comparative analysis, semantic analysis, and discourse-based approaches. The results show that mixed metaphors function as tools for linguistic creativity, emotional intensification, evaluative expression, and communicative efficiency. English mixed metaphors frequently emerge from idiom blending, whereas Uzbek mixed metaphors are more common in literary narrative and figurative discourse. The findings contribute to the broader understanding of metaphor pragmatics in cross-linguistic research.

KEYWORDS

Mixed metaphor, pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, malaphor, discourse analysis, figurative language, linguistic creativity, conceptual blending.

INTRODUCTION

Metaphor is one of the most fundamental mechanisms of human cognition and linguistic expression. Traditionally, metaphors were primarily viewed as stylistic devices used in literary texts. However, modern linguistic research has demonstrated that metaphor plays a much broader role in human cognition and communication. According to the cognitive theory of metaphor, metaphor is not merely a rhetorical ornament but a conceptual mechanism that structures human thinking [1].

The influential work Metaphors We Live By by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson revolutionized the understanding of metaphor in linguistics. The authors argue that human conceptual systems are fundamentally metaphorical in nature and that abstract concepts are often understood through concrete experiential domains [1]. For instance, conceptual metaphors such as TIME IS MONEY, ARGUMENT IS WAR, and LIFE IS A JOURNEY illustrate how metaphor structures everyday language and thought.

Within metaphor studies, mixed metaphors represent a particularly intriguing phenomenon. A mixed metaphor occurs when two or more metaphorical images or conceptual domains are combined in a single utterance. Traditionally, such expressions were often considered stylistic mistakes or rhetorical inconsistencies. However, contemporary linguistic research has shown that mixed metaphors may serve important pragmatic functions in discourse [2].

Mixed metaphors frequently occur in spoken language, literary discourse, political speeches, and media communication. In

many cases they arise due to linguistic creativity, emotional intensity, or spontaneous speech production. Rather than being purely erroneous constructions, they may contribute to the expressiveness and persuasive power of discourse.

Despite the growing interest in metaphor research, the pragmatic functions of mixed metaphors remain relatively understudied, particularly in cross-linguistic contexts involving Uzbek and English languages. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the pragmatic characteristics of mixed metaphors in Uzbek and English discourse.

METHOD

Mixed metaphors occur when different metaphorical expressions derived from separate conceptual domains are combined within a single linguistic structure. From a cognitive perspective, such constructions can be explained through conceptual blending processes, where elements from multiple mental spaces are integrated into a new conceptual structure [3].

In English discourse, mixed metaphors often arise through the blending of idiomatic expressions. For example:

People who live in glass houses shouldn't flog dead horses.

This expression combines two well-known idioms:

• People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones

• Beat a dead horse

The resulting phrase produces a humorous and ironic effect that attracts attention and demonstrates linguistic creativity. According to Crystal, such constructions frequently occur in informal speech and journalistic writing [4].

Another example of metaphorical blending is:

Don't cry over sour milk.

This expression merges the idioms don't cry over spilled milk and sour grapes, creating a hybrid proverb with humorous and expressive effect [5]. Such formations are sometimes referred to as malaphors, a term used to describe the blending of two proverbs or idioms into a new expression [6].

In Uzbek language, mixed metaphors are more frequently observed in literary discourse. Uzbek writers often combine multiple figurative images in order to intensify emotional expression or create vivid stylistic effects. For example:

"Yuragim muzlab turgan olovga aylandi."

This metaphor blends two contradictory conceptual domains — coldness and heat — to convey emotional conflict and psychological tension. Such metaphorical constructions illustrate the expressive potential of Uzbek figurative language. Uzbek literary texts frequently employ metaphorical blends to describe emotional states, moral conflicts, or dramatic situations. These metaphors contribute to the richness of literary narrative and enhance the aesthetic quality of the text [7].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of linguistic data demonstrates that mixed metaphors perform several important pragmatic functions in discourse.

First, mixed metaphors frequently serve as manifestations of linguistic creativity. Speakers combine different metaphorical structures to produce original expressions that capture the attention of listeners or readers. Such creative constructions are particularly common in spoken discourse and media communication [8].

Second, mixed metaphors often function as means of emotional intensification. When several metaphorical images are combined, the resulting expression may convey stronger emotional meaning. For instance, Semino notes that metaphorical blends are frequently used in discourse describing physical pain or emotional distress [9].

Third, mixed metaphors may express evaluative meaning. In political or journalistic discourse, metaphorical blends are often used to express criticism or persuasion. For example:

We must steer the ship of the economy before it falls off a cliff.

This sentence combines two metaphorical models:

• ECONOMY IS A SHIP

• CRISIS IS A FALL

Such constructions strengthen the rhetorical impact of discourse and influence audience perception [10].

Fourth, mixed metaphors can function as a form of linguistic economy. A single metaphorical expression may simultaneously convey multiple meanings derived from different conceptual domains. This allows speakers to communicate complex ideas concisely and effectively.

Comparative analysis also reveals significant differences between Uzbek and English usage of mixed metaphors. English mixed metaphors frequently emerge through idiom blending, whereas Uzbek mixed metaphors are more commonly associated with literary narrative and expressive storytelling.

These differences may reflect broader cultural and stylistic traditions in the two linguistic communities.

CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that mixed metaphors represent an important pragmatic phenomenon in both Uzbek and English languages. Although traditionally regarded as stylistic inconsistencies, modern linguistic research indicates that mixed metaphors may perform meaningful communicative functions. Mixed metaphors contribute to linguistic creativity, emotional expression, evaluative meaning, and rhetorical effectiveness in discourse. They allow speakers to combine different conceptual domains and generate new figurative meanings.

The comparative analysis suggests that English mixed metaphors frequently arise from idiom blending, whereas Uzbek mixed metaphors are more strongly connected with literary narrative and expressive stylistics.

Therefore, mixed metaphors should not be considered merely rhetorical mistakes but rather meaningful linguistic constructions reflecting cognitive processes and communicative intentions.

Future research may explore mixed metaphors in political discourse, digital communication, and media language in order to further understand their pragmatic and cognitive functions.

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