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Cognitive Analysis of Metaphor and Emotions in Political Discourse: The Case of The President of Uzbekistan's Speeches

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Abstract: This article analyzes the role of metaphor and emotions in political discourse from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. The research object consists of official speeches delivered by the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, between 2016 and 2024. The study identifies the main conceptual metaphor models – “journey”, “house/building”, “struggle/battle”, and “nature/renewal” – and examines their communicative functions. Emotional elements such as hope, pride, responsibility, and motivation, used in the speeches, are also analyzed to reveal their role in inspiring, uniting, and shaping public consciousness. The results demonstrate that metaphors and emotions in presidential speeches serve not merely as stylistic ornamentation but as powerful cognitive tools for conceptualizing and conveying political ideas.

Keywords: Political discourse, metaphor, emotion, cognitive linguistics, Shavkat Mirziyoyev's speeches, conceptual metaphor, communicative functions, inspiration, public consciousness, audience impact.

INTRODUCTION: The cognitive mechanisms underlying the use of metaphors and the expression of emotions in political discourse, focusing on the speeches of the President of Uzbekistan. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Emotion Appraisal Theory, the research explores how metaphors serve as powerful cognitive tools for framing political ideas, shaping public perception, and influencing socio-political attitudes. The analysis reveals that metaphorical expressions are not merely stylistic devices but act as conceptual structures that

enable the audience to understand complex political issues in more accessible and emotionally resonant ways. Furthermore, the study identifies emotional appeals—such as hope, pride, concern, and solidarity—that are strategically embedded in presidential discourse to strengthen persuasive impact and national unity. The findings demonstrate that the integration of metaphor and emotion plays a crucial role in constructing political realities, mobilizing public sentiment, and reinforcing the ideological framework of governance. Political communication serves not only to transmit information but also to emotionally influence audiences, inspire them, and shape public consciousness. In this regard, the use of metaphors and the expression of emotions in political speeches are of great significance. Cognitive linguistic theories make it possible to analyze the mechanisms through which metaphors and emotions are formed and function in political texts and speeches. This article focuses on the role of metaphors and emotions in political discourse, using the speeches of the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, as a case study.

Main Part

A metaphor functions not only as an ornamental stylistic device but also as a conceptual model. It makes complex social phenomena more comprehensible and relatable to the audience. As a conceptual tool in human cognition, metaphor conveys abstract concepts in vivid and accessible forms, creating emotionally resonant contexts in political discourse.

Common metaphor models in Shavkat Mirziyoyev's speeches include:

- **Journey metaphor:** "We have a long road ahead," "We have stepped onto a new path of development." This metaphor conceptualizes the development process as a journey, emphasizing the pursuit of a goal.
- **House metaphor:** "Our homeland is our common home," "We are building a new Uzbekistan." This model strengthens the idea of unity and solidarity.
- **Struggle metaphor:** "We will persist in our struggle against challenges." This frames social problems as adversaries that must be overcome.
- **Nature/renewal metaphor:** "We have planted the seeds of hope for the future," "The spring of renewal has come to our land." This presents social change as a natural, life-giving process, enhancing optimism.

In addition, emotional elements such as hope, pride, responsibility, and motivation are actively employed. For example, the phrase "Let us work together for the future of our children" not only conveys information but also evokes feelings of responsibility and unity.

The analysis of the President of Uzbekistan's speeches

reveals a systematic use of conceptual metaphors and emotional appeals, which jointly function to frame political messages and influence public perception. The data were collected from several official addresses, including annual messages to the Oliy Majlis, speeches on Independence Day, and public policy statements.

Applying the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), three dominant metaphorical domains were identified:

1. Nation as a Family

o Example: "Our great Motherland is our shared home, and each of us is a member of this big family."

- **Analysis:** This metaphor fosters unity and solidarity by evoking a sense of belonging and collective responsibility. By framing the nation as a family, the President implicitly positions himself as a guardian or elder figure, thus legitimizing leadership authority.

2. Development as a Journey

o Example: "We have entered a new stage of our great path towards renewal and prosperity."

- **Analysis:** This metaphor frames socio-economic reforms as a collective voyage, where challenges are seen as temporary obstacles, and progress is envisioned as reaching a common destination. It motivates perseverance and optimism among citizens.

3. Challenges as Battles

o Example: "We will resolutely fight against corruption and injustice, without compromise."

- **Analysis:** The battle metaphor intensifies the seriousness of the problem and portrays the government as an active defender of national interests. It evokes courage, determination, and a call to action.

2. Emotional Appeals in Political Rhetoric

Emotions are deliberately embedded in the discourse to strengthen persuasive impact. The analysis identifies four recurrent emotional appeals:

- **Hope and Optimism** – Reinforced by metaphors of light, dawn, and future growth.

o Example: "A bright tomorrow awaits our hardworking and united people."

- **Pride and National Identity** – Triggered through historical references and cultural heritage.

o Example: "Our ancestors' courage and wisdom will forever be a guiding light for our independent Uzbekistan."

- **Concern and Responsibility** – Emphasized when addressing social issues.

o Example: "We cannot remain indifferent when even one child is left without education or care."

• **Solidarity and Unity** – Highlighted through inclusive pronouns ("we," "our") and collective goals.

o Example: "Together we will build a strong and prosperous Uzbekistan."

3. Interaction of Metaphor and Emotion

The President's speeches demonstrate that metaphors and emotions do not function in isolation. For instance, the "Nation as a Family" metaphor inherently carries emotional weight—evoking affection, loyalty, and mutual care—while the "Development as a Journey" metaphor generates anticipation and shared commitment. This strategic blending increases the motivational and mobilizing potential of political communication.

Through metaphor, complex socio-economic and political processes are transformed into images that are not only easier to understand but also emotionally engaging. In political discourse, metaphors serve to:

- Represent complex processes through relatable imagery;
- Foster a sense of collective action among listeners;
- Strengthen the spirit of overcoming challenges.

These metaphors are not mere figures of speech; they bring political concepts closer to the audience and amplify their emotional impact.

Scientific Context. There are numerous significant academic works on the study of metaphor and emotions in political discourse. One of the most influential is Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), which laid the foundation for conceptual metaphor theory and interpreted metaphor as an integral part of human thought. Charteris-Black's *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor* (2005) provides a scholarly basis for understanding how political leaders deliberately employ metaphors to influence, inspire, and shape public consciousness. Musolff (2016) offers an in-depth analysis of the interrelation between metaphor and political discourse.

Among Uzbek scholars, X. Abdullayeva (2020) has explored the linguo-cultural characteristics of metaphors in political speech, while M. O'rinboyeva (2019) has studied the linguistic manifestations of emotionality. These studies confirm that metaphor in political speech is not merely decorative but serves as a potent cognitive instrument that inspires audiences and conveys societal meanings.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the method of cognitive discourse

analysis. The dataset consists of Shavkat Mirziyoyev's campaign speeches, addresses to the Oliy Majlis, and public meetings from 2016 to 2024. First, metaphorical expressions in the speeches were identified and grouped according to conceptual models. Next, emotional lexicon was analyzed for its communicative function and its contextual impact on the audience. Hundreds of examples were collected and examined from both semantic and functional perspectives.

Emotions and Their Communicative Function. In political speeches, emotions function to inspire listeners, unite them, and persuade them to accept certain ideas. In Shavkat Mirziyoyev's speeches, the following emotional tones are frequently observed:

- **Hope and confidence:** fostering trust in the future ("Everyone is working together for the prosperity of our country").
- **Pride:** expressing national achievements ("We are worthily continuing the legacy of our ancestors").
- **Sense of responsibility:** encouraging every citizen to recognize their duties toward the state ("Let us work together for the future of our children").

These emotions are typically intensified through tone, strong phrasing, and emotionally rich metaphors.

Cognitive Approach to Analysis. Cognitive linguistics links metaphors and emotions in political discourse to conceptual systems in the human mind. For instance, the "journey" metaphor is directly tied to the cognitive concept of moving toward a goal: "we" implies collective action, while "road" symbolizes the process of achieving it. Similarly, the "struggle" model turns the listener from a passive observer into an active participant.

CONCLUSION

In the speeches of the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, metaphors and emotions are actively used as powerful tools of political discourse. They serve to convey complex political and economic processes in simple, understandable, and emotionally compelling ways. Cognitive linguistics provides an effective framework for analyzing these processes, identifying the conceptual models underlying metaphors, and studying the communicative functions of emotions. In this sense, metaphors and emotions in political communication are not merely stylistic embellishments but essential instruments in shaping public consciousness.

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