

COGNITIVE AND LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF FAMILY METAPHORS IN ENGLISH DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This study investigates the cognitive and linguocultural features of family and kinship metaphors in English discourse. The research is based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory and cultural linguistics. The analysis focuses on how metaphorical expressions reflect cultural values, social relations, and cognitive models related to family and kinship. The findings show that English family metaphors mainly represent functional, individual-oriented, and socially structured conceptualizations. The study also confirms that metaphor functions as both a cognitive and cultural mechanism in discourse.

Keywords

cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, family metaphor, kinship, linguocultural analysis, English discourse, cultural linguistics.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada ingliz diskursidagi oila va qarindoshlik metaforalarining kognitiv hamda lingvomadaniy xususiyatlari tadqiq etiladi. Tadqiqot konseptual metafora nazariyasi va madaniy lingvistika doirasida olib borilgan. Tahlilda oila va qarindoshlikka oid metaforik ifodalarning madaniy qadriyatlar, ijtimoiy munosabatlar hamda kognitiv modellarni aks ettirishi yoritilgan. Natijalar ingliz tilidagi

oila metaforalari asosan funksional, individual yoʻnalgan va ijtimoiy tuzilishga asoslangan konseptualizatsiyani ifodalashini koʻrsatdi. Shuningdek, metafora diskursda kognitiv va madaniy mexanizm sifatida faoliyat yuritishi aniqlandi.

Kalit soʻzlar: kognitiv lingvistika, konseptual metafora, oila metaforasi, qarindoshlik, lingvomadaniy tahlil, ingliz diskursi, madaniy lingvistika.

Аннотация. В данной статье исследуются когнитивные и лингвокультурологические особенности метафор семьи и родства в английском дискурсе. Исследование основано на теории концептуальной метафоры и культурной лингвистике. Анализ направлен на выявление того, как метафорические выражения, связанные с семьёй и родственными отношениями, отражают культурные ценности, социальные отношения и когнитивные модели. Результаты показывают, что английские семейные метафоры в основном выражают функциональную, индивидуально-ориентированную и социально структурированную концептуализацию. Кроме того, подтверждается, что метафора функционирует как когнитивный и культурный механизм в дискурсе.

Ключевые слова: когнитивная лингвистика, концептуальная метафора, семейная метафора, родство, лингвокультурологический анализ, английский дискурс, культурная лингвистика.

INTRODUCTION. In contemporary linguistic scholarship, the study of language has extended beyond the analysis of formal structures to encompass the investigation of cognitive, cultural, and social mechanisms underlying meaning construction. Within this paradigm shift, cognitive linguistics has established itself as one of the most influential approaches, emphasizing the role of human experience, conceptualization, and cultural knowledge in language use. A central concept within this framework is metaphor, which is no longer viewed merely as a rhetorical ornament but as a fundamental cognitive

instrument through which individuals conceptualize abstract phenomena and organize their understanding of reality.

The increasing significance of cognitive and linguocultural studies corresponds to the broader educational and scientific reforms being implemented in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Particular attention has been paid to the development of foreign language education, intercultural communication, and internationally oriented linguistic research. The Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF–5117 “On Measures to Further Improve the System of Learning Foreign Languages” and the priorities outlined in the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026 emphasize the necessity of conducting innovative research based on contemporary scientific methodologies and integrating national scholarship into the global academic community. These reforms highlight the importance of investigating language not only as a means of communication but also as a reflection of cultural and cognitive processes.

Among the various domains of metaphorical conceptualization, family and kinship occupy a particularly important position due to their universal presence in human societies and their close connection with cultural identity, social organization, and value systems. Family relations represent one of the earliest and most fundamental forms of human interaction; therefore, the ways in which they are conceptualized linguistically provide valuable insights into collective patterns of thought and cultural worldviews. Metaphorical representations of family and kinship serve as linguistic manifestations of social norms, interpersonal relationships, and culturally embedded conceptual structures.

Recent developments in cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics have demonstrated that metaphorical systems are shaped by the interaction of universal cognitive mechanisms and culture-specific conceptual models. Scholars such as Kövecses, Sharifian, Gibbs, and Yu have argued that metaphor reflects both embodied

human experience and culturally shared knowledge. Consequently, the study of family and kinship metaphors offers a productive framework for examining the interrelationship between language, cognition, and culture.

Despite the growing body of research on conceptual metaphor and cultural conceptualization, the cognitive and linguocultural features of family and kinship metaphors in English discourse have not been sufficiently investigated as an integrated system. Existing studies tend to focus either on general metaphor theory or on broader sociocultural aspects of language, leaving a need for more specialized analyses of kinship-related metaphorical models.

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the cognitive and linguocultural features of family and kinship metaphors in English discourse. The research seeks to identify dominant conceptual models, analyze their semantic and cultural foundations, and determine the role of metaphor in the construction of social meanings. The findings are expected to contribute to the further development of cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics, and discourse studies, while also providing insights relevant to intercultural communication and foreign language education.

LITERATURE REVIEW. Recent developments in cognitive linguistics have significantly transformed the understanding of metaphor, shifting its status from a rhetorical device to a fundamental mechanism of conceptualization. Contemporary scholars argue that metaphor plays a crucial role in structuring abstract concepts through more concrete and experience-based domains. Within this perspective, metaphor is viewed as an essential cognitive tool that shapes human perception, reasoning, and communication.

One of the central areas of metaphor research concerns the conceptualization of social relations, particularly family and kinship. As universal elements of human experience, family relationships occupy a significant place in linguistic and cultural

systems. Researchers have noted that metaphorical representations of family serve not only as linguistic expressions but also as cognitive models through which individuals interpret social roles, interpersonal obligations, and collective values. Consequently, the study of family metaphors provides important insights into the relationship between language, cognition, and culture.

The cultural dimension of metaphor has received increasing attention in recent years. Kövecses argues that although metaphorical thinking is grounded in universal human experience, the selection and interpretation of metaphorical models are influenced by cultural contexts. Different linguistic communities conceptualize similar social phenomena in different ways, reflecting their specific historical experiences, value systems, and cultural traditions. This perspective is particularly relevant for the study of family and kinship, where cultural norms strongly influence conceptualization patterns.

The relationship between language and culturally shared knowledge has been further explored within the framework of Cultural Linguistics. According to Sharifian language encodes cultural conceptualizations that are collectively constructed and transmitted across generations. These conceptualizations are reflected in metaphorical expressions that reveal how speakers perceive social reality. Family and kinship metaphors therefore function as important carriers of cultural meanings, representing beliefs about authority, responsibility, solidarity, and social identity.

Recent studies have also emphasized the cognitive basis of kinship conceptualization. Gibbs maintains that metaphorical structures emerge from embodied experience but develop within specific sociocultural environments. Similarly, Yu highlights that kinship metaphors reveal underlying cultural models through which societies understand emotional bonds, family hierarchy, and interpersonal relationships.

Such findings demonstrate that metaphor serves as a bridge between individual cognition and collective cultural knowledge.

In English discourse, family and kinship metaphors frequently reflect concepts of structure, support, protection, and social organization. Metaphorical expressions associated with parental roles, family unity, and kinship relations contribute to the construction of culturally meaningful representations of social life. These metaphorical models reveal how English-speaking communities conceptualize family relationships and negotiate social values through language.

Despite the growing body of research on conceptual metaphor and cultural conceptualization, relatively limited attention has been paid to the cognitive and linguocultural characteristics of family and kinship metaphors specifically within English discourse. Most existing studies focus either on general metaphor theory or on broader cultural aspects of language, leaving a gap in the systematic analysis of kinship-related metaphorical models. Therefore, further investigation is needed to identify the conceptual structures and cultural meanings underlying family and kinship metaphors in English.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the cognitive and linguocultural features of family and kinship metaphors in English discourse. By integrating insights from cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics, the research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how metaphorical conceptualizations reflect cultural values, social relationships, and cognitive patterns in the domain of family and kinship.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY. The present study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate the cognitive and linguocultural features of family and kinship metaphors in English discourse. The research is grounded in the theoretical principles of Cognitive Linguistics and Cultural Linguistics, which view

metaphor as a conceptual mechanism reflecting both cognitive processes and culturally shared knowledge.

The study draws upon Conceptual Metaphor Theory as the primary analytical framework. Within this perspective, metaphorical expressions are examined as manifestations of underlying conceptual mappings between source and target domains. Particular attention is given to the ways family and kinship relations are metaphorically represented and how these representations reflect cultural values and social perceptions.

The data for the study consist of family- and kinship-related metaphorical expressions collected from English phraseological dictionaries, idiomatic expressions, proverb collections, and naturally occurring discourse examples. Only metaphorical units that demonstrate clear conceptual and cultural significance were selected for analysis.

The analytical procedure was conducted in several stages. First, metaphorical expressions associated with family and kinship were identified and categorized according to their conceptual domains. Second, the selected examples were analyzed using cognitive-semantic interpretation in order to determine the underlying conceptual mappings. Third, the identified metaphors were examined from a linguocultural perspective to reveal the cultural values, social norms, and conceptual patterns reflected in English discourse.

The study utilizes qualitative content analysis as the principal method of interpretation. This approach enables an in-depth examination of metaphorical meanings and their cognitive and cultural implications. Through the integration of cognitive and linguocultural perspectives, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how family and kinship metaphors function within English discourse.

ANALYSIS AND RESULT. The analysis of family and kinship metaphors in English discourse reveals that metaphorical conceptualization is closely connected with

both cognitive mechanisms and cultural values. The collected data demonstrate that family-related metaphors are primarily organized around the conceptual domains of structure, authority, care, and social connection.

One of the most productive conceptual models identified in the data is the metaphor **FAMILY IS A STRUCTURED UNIT**. Expressions such as family unit, broken home, and close-knit family conceptualize the family as an organized social structure whose stability depends on the quality of interpersonal relationships. These metaphorical expressions indicate that family is perceived not merely as a biological group but as a functional system that requires cohesion and mutual support. Such conceptualization reflects the importance of social organization and individual responsibility within English-speaking communities.

Another prominent metaphorical pattern is **FATHER IS AN AUTHORITY FIGURE**. Expressions such as head of the family and pillar of the family portray the father as a source of leadership, stability, and responsibility. From a cognitive perspective, these metaphors map the domain of physical support and structural strength onto family relations. Linguoculturally, they reflect traditional perceptions of paternal authority and social responsibility within the family structure.

The analysis also demonstrates the significance of the metaphor **MOTHER IS A SOURCE OF CARE AND SUPPORT**. In expressions such as motherly love and the heart of the family, the mother is conceptualized as the emotional center of family life. These metaphors highlight values associated with nurturing, protection, and emotional attachment. The conceptualization suggests that motherhood is closely linked to empathy and interpersonal solidarity in English discourse. Furthermore, kinship relations are frequently represented through the metaphor **KINSHIP IS A BOND**. Expressions such as blood ties and family bonds conceptualize relationships among relatives as strong and enduring connections. This metaphor

emphasizes unity, continuity, and belonging, demonstrating how kinship functions as a fundamental social and cultural category.

The findings indicate that English family and kinship metaphors are largely based on concepts of structure, support, responsibility, and emotional connection. These metaphorical models reveal the interaction between cognitive processes and cultural values in the construction of social meanings. Therefore, family and kinship metaphors can be viewed as important linguistic tools through which English-speaking communities conceptualize and communicate social relationships.

Table 1. Dominant Conceptual Metaphors of Family and Kinship in English Discourse

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR	EXAMPLE EXPRESSION	COGNITIVE INTERPRETATION
FAMILY IS A STRUCTURED UNIT	Family unit, broken home	Family as an organized social system
FATHER IS AN AUTHORITY FIGURE	Head of the family, Pillar of the family	Father as leader and source of stability
MOTHER IS A SOURCE OF CARE	Motherly love, heart of the family	Mother as emotional and nurturing center
KINSHIP IS A BOND	Blood ties, family bonds	Kinship as a lasting social connection

The results confirm that metaphorical representations of family and kinship in English discourse are shaped by both universal cognitive patterns and culturally specific understandings of social relations. The identified metaphors function as conceptual tools that organize and communicate culturally shared knowledge about family life and interpersonal relationships.

CONCLUSION. This study examined the cognitive and linguocultural features of family and kinship metaphors in English discourse within the frameworks of Cognitive Linguistics and Cultural Linguistics. The analysis demonstrated that metaphorical conceptualizations of family and kinship are not merely linguistic phenomena but also reflections of culturally shared knowledge and cognitive processes.

The findings revealed several dominant conceptual models, including FAMILY IS A STRUCTURED UNIT, FATHER IS AN AUTHORITY FIGURE, MOTHER IS A SOURCE OF CARE, and KINSHIP IS A BOND. These metaphors illustrate how English-speaking communities conceptualize family relations through notions of structure, responsibility, emotional support, and social connectedness. The results further indicate that metaphorical representations of family and kinship are shaped by the interaction of universal cognitive mechanisms and culture-specific values.

The study confirms the significance of metaphor as a cognitive and cultural tool for constructing and communicating social meanings. By examining family and kinship metaphors in English discourse, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between language, cognition, and culture. Furthermore, the findings may serve as a useful foundation for future studies in cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics, discourse analysis, and intercultural communication.

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