BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg
BG PULSE JOURNAL

THE LINGUOCOGNITIVE AND AXIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE CONCEPTS OF HAPPINESS AND GOODNESS IN UZBEK FOLK TALES

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doi:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24030611

Abstract. This article examines the metaphorical and linguocultural representation of the concepts of happiness and goodness in Uzbek folk tales. The research material consists of the folk tales "The Three Brave Brothers," "The Flying Carpet," and "The Golden Watermelon." The study explores the mechanisms through which abstract concepts such as happiness, opportunity, goodness, prosperity, and generosity are expressed through concrete images such as birds, hunting, flight, gold, and harvest. Expressions such as "the bird of happiness," "the hunt for happiness," "the flying carpet," and "the golden watermelon" are analyzed within the framework of conceptual metaphor theory, and their semantic and axiological meanings are revealed. The findings demonstrate that in folk tales, happiness is not presented as a state of passive expectation but rather as a concept associated with aspiration, action, and purposeful activity. Goodness, in turn, is manifested as a value intrinsically connected with honest relationships, doing good deeds, generosity, and prosperity.

Keywords: folk tale, concept of happiness, concept of goodness, conceptual metaphor, linguocognitive analysis, axiology, linguoculture, national mentality, symbolic image.

INTRODUCTION.

In modern linguistics, the study of linguistic units in connection with human cognition, national worldview, and cultural experience has become one of the important areas of scientific research. In particular, within the fields of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology, considerable attention is being devoted to the role of metaphors, concepts, and symbolic units in human understanding of the world. Metaphor is now regarded not only as a figurative device characteristic of literary discourse but also as a cognitive mechanism that enables abstract concepts to be perceived through concrete experience.

Folk tales are an important source for studying these phenomena. This is because folk tales embody ideas about human life, aspirations, happiness, goodness, justice, wealth, and well-being through images, events, and symbolic expressions. In such texts, abstract concepts are often expressed through images drawn from people's everyday experiences, such as birds, hunting, flight, gold, and harvest.

The association of the concept of happiness with the images of a "bird" and "hunting" in Uzbek folk tales, the representation of opportunity through the "flying carpet," and the manifestation of goodness and prosperity through the symbol of the "golden watermelon" make it possible to understand the people's life experience and system of values. These images go beyond the scope of ordinary artistic representation and embody specific national and cultural meanings.

The relevance of this study is determined by the need to examine the concepts of happiness and goodness in Uzbek folk tales as distinct linguocognitive and axiological units, identify the mechanisms of their metaphorical representation, and reveal their relationship with national thinking.

The aim of the study is to identify the characteristics of the metaphorical representation of the concepts of happiness and goodness in the folk tales “The Three Brave Brothers,” “The Flying Carpet,” and “The Golden Watermelon,” and to clarify their linguocultural and axiological meanings.

LITERATURE REVIEW. Although the theoretical foundations of metaphor originated in ancient poetics, its cognitive nature began to develop as a distinct scientific field in the second half of the twentieth century. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson interpreted metaphor as an important mechanism of human thought and substantiated the perception of abstract concepts through concrete domains of experience. Their theory of conceptual metaphor emphasizes that one concept is understood through another, with specific cognitive correspondences established between the source and target domains [1].

Z. Kövecses focuses on the relationship between metaphorical models and culture, demonstrating that their formation is influenced not only by universal human experience but also by the historical and cultural perspectives of a particular nation [2]. This approach is particularly significant for analyzing metaphors in folk tales. This is because images in folk tales reflect universal human perceptions while also representing values characteristic of a particular national culture.

In Uzbek linguistics, Sh. Safarov's studies on cognitive linguistics serve as an important theoretical foundation for examining the relationship between concepts, linguistic units, and cognition [3]. M. Asqarova's research devoted to the semantic and cognitive foundations of figurative meaning formation in the Uzbek language provides theoretical opportunities for explaining the mechanisms of metaphorical transfer [4].

H. X. Bozorov's research on the linguocultural features of Uzbek folk tales highlights the role of linguistic means that express national values, symbolic units, and the people's mentality in fairy-tale texts [5]. This study demonstrates the importance of examining folk tales as a source that preserves and transmits national and cultural experience from one generation to another.

Although existing studies have contributed to illuminating the theoretical and linguocultural aspects of metaphor, the scope of the present article is clearly defined. It comparatively analyzes the interrelationship between the concepts of happiness and goodness in three folk tales, their realization through metaphorical images, and their evaluative meanings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY. The research material consists of the Uzbek folk tales “The Three Brave Brothers,” “The Flying Carpet,” and “The Golden Watermelon.” These tales are considered relevant to the research objectives because they contain metaphorical units expressing the concepts of happiness, opportunity, goodness, prosperity, and generosity.

The study employs semantic, componential, conceptual-metaphorical, comparative, and linguocultural methods of analysis. The following analytical model was used to examine metaphorical units:

SOURCE DOMAIN → TARGET DOMAIN → SEMANTIC TRANSFER → LINGUOCULTURAL MEANING.

For example: BIRD → HAPPINESS → acquisition, aspiration → taking action to achieve happiness.

GOLD → WEALTH → value and rarity → material prosperity and well-being.

The main focus of the study is not merely on the lexical meanings of metaphorical units but also on their functions in expressing the fairy-tale plot, the characters' activities, and the people's values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. In Uzbek folk tales, the concepts of happiness and goodness are expressed through various images and reflect the people's life experiences and spiritual views. The image of the bird of happiness in "The Three Brave Brothers," the images of flight and opportunity in "The Flying Carpet," and the images of gold, harvest, and generosity in "The Golden Watermelon" demonstrate that these concepts are interconnected, although they manifest themselves in different semantic directions.

The Representation of the Concept of Happiness through the Images of a "Bird" and "Hunting"

The expression "Go on a hunt for happiness to catch the bird of happiness," found in the folk tale "The Three Brave Brothers," is one of the important examples demonstrating the metaphorical realization of the concept of happiness. In this sentence, the abstract concept of happiness is conceptualized through the image of a concrete living creature — a bird. The lexical units "to catch" and "to go hunting" associate the process of attaining happiness with physical activity.

Two conceptual metaphorical models emerge in this expression:

HAPPINESS IS A BIRD.

ATTAINING HAPPINESS IS HUNTING.

The everyday experience of birds moving freely and the necessity of searching and making an effort to catch them suggests that happiness, too, is a blessing that cannot be attained automatically. Thus, the image of the "bird of happiness" in the tale appears as a metaphorical unit expressing a person's aspirations, efforts toward a goal, and desire to achieve success.

In the phrase "to go on a hunt for happiness," the attainment of happiness is conceptualized as an active process. The hunter's efforts to search for prey, reach it, and capture it are compared to the process of striving for happiness. As a result, happiness is transformed from a state of passive expectation into a concept associated with active movement and aspiration.

This metaphorical model also expresses the values of diligence, courage, and striving toward a goal, which occupy an important place in the people's outlook on life. Therefore, in this tale, the concept of happiness is represented not merely as an emotional state or desire but also as a concept that determines an individual's active position in life.

The expression "one who can distinguish between white and black" in the tale also plays an important role in expressing the moral maturity of the characters. Here, the colors white and black are used not only in their literal color meanings but also as means of moral evaluation. The color white establishes semantic associations with goodness, righteousness, and purity, while black represents evil, wrongdoing, and danger.

The conceptual model of this unit is as follows:

WHITE → GOODNESS, RIGHTEOUSNESS, VIRTUE.

BLACK → EVIL, WICKEDNESS, DANGER.

The father's description of his sons as those who "can distinguish between white and black" indicates not only their ability to distinguish things in the external world but also their capacity to understand good and evil in life. In this way, a metaphorical expression based on color becomes an axiological means of defining moral maturity.

The Representation of the Concepts of Opportunity and Dreams through the Image of the "Flying Carpet"

In the folk tale "The Flying Carpet," the carpet, which serves as the central image, transforms from an ordinary household object into a symbolic means representing extraordinary opportunity. In everyday life, a carpet is an object spread on the floor, whereas in the tale it has the ability to move through the air and cover long distances within a short period of time.

The semantic development of this image occurs according to the following model: CARPET → FLIGHT → OVERCOMING DISTANCE → OPPORTUNITY → DREAM.

The carpet's ability to fly gives rise to a characteristic that an ordinary object does not possess. As a result, it becomes a metaphorical image representing the opportunity to overcome spatial limitations, reach distant destinations, and achieve intended goals.

The concept of flight has particular semantic significance in this image. Flight is associated with going beyond the limits of ordinary human movement, attaining freedom, and gaining new opportunities. For this reason, the flying carpet can be interpreted not merely as a magical means of transportation but also as a symbolic-conceptual image that serves to realize human dreams and goals.

The transformation of the carpet into a small handkerchief in the tale also reinforces its symbolic meaning. The transformation of an object that appears large and powerful into a small form signifies the difference between outward appearance and inner potential. This gives rise to an artistic conception that power and opportunity are not determined solely by an object's size or external characteristics.

The fact that the carpet functions through “respect for the old man” further expands the linguocultural meaning of the image. In this case, magical opportunity is combined with respect for elders, reverence, and the value of human relationships. Consequently, the magical object in the tale also embodies meanings associated with the people's spiritual views.

Thus, the image of the “flying carpet” appears as a symbolic-metaphorical unit that unites the concepts of opportunity, freedom, dreams, and goals.

The Concepts of Goodness, Prosperity, and Generosity in the Image of the “Golden Watermelon”

In the folk tale “The Golden Watermelon,” the concept of goodness is revealed through the relationship between material wealth and spiritual values. The appearance of gold inside an ordinary watermelon changes the semantic character of the object, transforming it into a symbol of wealth and prosperity.

This image is formed on the basis of the following metaphorical model:

GOLD → VALUE → WEALTH → PROSPERITY.

Similarly: WATERMELON → HARVEST → ABUNDANCE → THE RESULT OF LABOR.

As a result of the combination of these two semantic layers, the image of the “golden watermelon” goes beyond the scope of an ordinary agricultural product and becomes a symbol of material and spiritual reward achieved through labor.

In the fairy-tale plot, the poor farmer's assistance to the stork, his bandaging of its broken wing, and his care for the bird are causally connected with subsequent events. The farmer's acquisition of the golden watermelon as a result of his selfless kindness expresses the belief in folk thinking that goodness is ultimately rewarded.

This relationship can be explained through the following conceptual chain:

GOODNESS → PROSPERITY → WEALTH → GENEROSITY.

In this model, wealth is not interpreted separately from goodness. On the contrary, material well-being is associated with a person's good deeds, honest relationships, and assistance to others. In this respect, the image of the golden watermelon appears not only as a symbol of wealth but also as a material expression of goodness.

The poor farmer's sharing of the gold with his guests in the tale ensures the realization of the concept of generosity. This situation demonstrates that the value of wealth lies not only in acquiring it but also in using it for the benefit of others.

In contrast, the rich farmer's deliberate harm to the stork reveals his greed and violence. As a result, the appearance of bees rather than gold in his watermelon creates a moral opposition within the plot.

This opposition is expressed as follows: GOODNESS AND HONEST RELATIONSHIPS → PROSPERITY.

VIOLENCE AND SELF-INTEREST → MISFORTUNE.

Thus, the image of the golden watermelon in the tale serves to distinguish between two different moral attitudes. On the one hand, there is the farmer who attains prosperity through kindness, generosity, and honest relationships; on the other hand, there is the rich farmer who faces punishment as a result of violence and self-interest.

Through this opposition, the people's moral criteria concerning wealth are also revealed: true prosperity is determined not only by material wealth but also by goodness, honesty, and generosity.

Comparative Analysis of the Concepts of Happiness and Goodness in Folk Tales Although the concepts of happiness and goodness are expressed through different images in the three tales examined, their meanings share common linguocultural principles. In “The Three Brave Brothers,” the attainment of happiness is associated with aspiration and action, whereas in “The Flying Carpet,” opportunity and dreams are embodied through the image of flight. In “The Golden Watermelon,” the outcome of goodness is manifested through prosperity, wealth, and generosity.

Folk tale	Metaphorical image	Target concept	Linguocultural meaning
“The Three Brave Brothers”	Bird of happiness	Happiness	Striving for happiness and attaining it
“The Three Brave Brothers”	Hunt for happiness	Action, aspiration	Taking active steps toward a goal
“The Three Brave Brothers”	Distinguishing between white and black	Moral maturity	Distinguishing between good and evil
“The Flying Carpet”	Flying carpet	Opportunity, dream	Overcoming limitations and striving toward a goal
“The Golden Watermelon”	Golden watermelon	Wealth, prosperity	The material and spiritual outcome of goodness
“The Golden Watermelon”	Sharing gold	Generosity	Using wealth for the benefit of others

As can be seen from the table, the concepts of happiness and goodness in the tales are based on different semantic sources. The images of the bird and hunting represent the process of attaining happiness; the flying carpet, based on the image of flight, expresses opportunity and dreams; while the images of gold and harvest represent wealth and prosperity.

The common feature of these images is that they make it possible to understand abstract concepts through objects and actions closely related to people's everyday experiences. At the same time, metaphors are not limited to expressing meaning figuratively; they also establish positive or negative attitudes toward particular values.

Based on the analysis, the following conceptual relationships can be identified:

ACTION → HAPPINESS: searching and striving are necessary to attain happiness;

FLIGHT → OPPORTUNITY: it is possible to approach a goal by overcoming existing limitations;

GOODNESS → PROSPERITY: the outcome of doing good is associated with well-being;

WEALTH → GENEROSITY: the value of material possessions is also manifested in sharing them with others;

MORAL DISTINCTION → MATURITY: understanding good and evil is considered a moral criterion of an individual.

Thus, in Uzbek folk tales, the concepts of happiness and goodness are not formed independently but develop in a meaningful interrelationship. The pursuit of happiness is associated with an individual's active efforts, while goodness is connected with moral attitudes and practical actions.

CONCLUSION. The analysis of the folk tales "The Three Brave Brothers," "The Flying Carpet," and "The Golden Watermelon" made it possible to draw the following conclusions:

In Uzbek folk tales, the concepts of happiness and goodness are expressed through concrete images such as birds, hunting, flight, gold, and harvest, reflecting the people's national thinking and life experience.

The expressions "bird of happiness," "hunt for happiness," and "distinguishing between white and black" in the tale "The Three Brave Brothers" reveal moral values such as active striving to attain happiness and distinguishing between goodness and evil.

In the tale "The Flying Carpet," the image of flight serves as a symbolic means expressing freedom, opportunity, and hopes, while in "The Golden Watermelon," the images of gold and harvest represent the concepts of generosity, goodness, and prosperity.

In the content of the tales, goodness and honesty are associated with positive outcomes, whereas self-interest and violence are linked to negative consequences. This confirms the close relationship between the concepts of happiness and goodness and the people's moral views and national values. Linguocognitive and axiological analysis contributes to identifying the linguistic expressions and semantic layers of these concepts.

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