

THE LINGUOCULTURAL ENCODING OF COMPARISON: TOWARD A UNIFIED THEORETICAL DEFINITION

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Abstract: The given research explores the phenomenon of cultural linguistic encoding in comparisons with the aim of developing a unified theoretical definition grounded in cross-linguistic evidence. The research focuses on English and Karakalpak languages, examining how comparison serves as a cognitive and cultural mechanism for representing reality, values, and social perception. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach that integrates corpus-driven analysis, contrastive linguistics, and cognitive-semantic interpretation. The analysis is conducted across structural, semantic, and pragmatic dimensions, with particular attention to culturally marked elements and conceptual metaphors. The findings reveal both universal and culture-specific patterns in the cultural linguistic encoding of comparison. While both languages employ similar structural models of comparison, significant differences are observed in the selection of cultural symbols, evaluative meanings, and metaphorical mappings. Karakalpak comparisons demonstrate a stronger reliance on ethnocultural imagery and traditional worldview, whereas English data exhibit a higher degree of abstraction and conventionalization.

Keywords: cultural linguistic encoding, comparisons, contrastive linguistics, cognitive linguistics, corpus-based analysis, English language, Karakalpak language, cultural semantics, conceptual metaphor, discourse analysis

INTRODUCTION

Comparative studies in the field of Cultural Linguistics clearly demonstrate that similes function as a “mirror” of national self-awareness, reflecting how speakers conceptualize reality through culturally embedded patterns. As figurative structures, comparisons not only describe similarities between objects but also reveal culturally significant associations, stereotypes, and evaluative norms that shape collective consciousness.

English and Karakalpak languages represent two distinct linguistic and cultural systems in which comparative constructions act as a form of cultural linguistic code, transmitting values, historical experience, and traditional ways of life through a system of culturally marked standards. In both languages, comparisons frequently rely on

culturally salient images-such as elements of nature, social roles, and everyday practices-which serve as reference points for interpreting human qualities and social phenomena. However, the selection and interpretation of these images differ significantly, reflecting the unique ethnocultural backgrounds of each speech community.

In modern cultural linguistics, the concept of cultural linguistic code is considered one of the key analytical tools for examining the interaction between language and culture. It enables researchers to identify how cultural meanings are encoded, structured, and transmitted through linguistic forms. Within this framework, comparative constructions occupy a special position, as they integrate cognitive processes, linguistic structures, and cultural knowledge into a unified expressive mechanism.

According to A.Wierzbicka, language functions as a carrier of culturally conditioned meanings, often conceptualized as "cultural scripts," which reflect the shared knowledge and values of a given linguistic community. From this perspective, comparisons should not be viewed merely as rhetorical or stylistic devices, but rather as verbal manifestations of culturally grounded conceptualizations. They encode culturally specific ways of perceiving and evaluating reality, thereby contributing to the formation of a national worldview.

Despite the growing interest in cultural linguistic studies, the phenomenon of cultural linguistic encoding in comparative constructions remains insufficiently theorized, particularly in cross-linguistic contexts involving less-studied languages such as Karakalpak language. Existing research tends to focus either on structural aspects of comparison or on general cultural semantics, without providing an integrated framework that unites cognitive, linguistic, and cultural dimensions.

Therefore, the given study aims to develop a unified theoretical definition of cultural linguistic encoding of comparison based on a contrastive analysis of English and Karakalpak languages. The research seeks to identify the structural and semantic features of comparisons, to reveal culturally specific patterns of encoding, and to explain the cognitive mechanisms underlying these patterns.

The novelty of the study lies in its integrative approach, combining corpus-based analysis, cognitive interpretation, and cultural linguistic methodology. The findings are expected to contribute to the advancement of cultural linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and contrastive studies, as well as to provide a reproducible analytical model for future cross-cultural research.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate the cultural linguistic encoding of comparisons in English and Karakalpak languages. The research combines contrastive linguistics,

cognitive linguistics, and corpus-driven analysis to develop a unified theoretical definition grounded in empirical data.

The design is comparative and explanatory, aiming not only to identify similarities and differences between the two languages but also to interpret the underlying cultural linguistic mechanisms that shape comparative constructions. The empirical data for this study are derived from two primary sources: Corpus Data - English data are extracted from established corpora such as the *British National Corpus (BNC)* and the *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*. Karakalpak data are compiled from literary works, folklore and academic texts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A comparison of English and Karakalpak comparisons shows a formal similarity in their models, as well as differences in their linguocultural content. For example, the English comparison “*as busy as a bee*” is based on the image of the honeybee as a symbol of organization and industriousness in English culture. In the Karakalpak language, a similar meaning can be conveyed through the metaphor “*pal harredey miynetkesh*” (hardworking like a bee) where the image of the bee also actualizes the social concept of industriousness, but is associated with traditional agricultural culture and the value of collective labor.

Through comparisons, parts of the linguistic picture of the world become actualized, and although these parts are very familiar to representatives of a single linguocultural society, they can create difficulties in intercultural communication. For instance, while the English comparison “*as white as snow*” is used in Karakalpak, comparisons related to local natural realities are also actively employed, such as *súttey aq* and *appaq paxtaday*. This reflects the uniqueness of the national way of life and its system of figurative benchmarks.

Within the framework of the linguocultural approach developed by V.A. Maslova, the linguocultural code is understood as a system of signs and symbols that represent culturally significant information and ensure its preservation and transmission through language. In relation to the analysis of comparisons, this code is manifested in the selection of a reference image, its symbolic significance, and its evaluative orientation. Thus, a comparative image serves as a cultural marker, which cannot be interpreted without reference to background knowledge and nationally specific associations. [3:202]

For example, the English proverb “*as stubborn as a mule*” refers to a stubborn, obstinate person. Nevertheless, in Karakalpak proverbs and sayings, one can distinguish several phrases that convey the meaning of stubbornness, obstinacy, and even sometimes foolishness associated with stubbornness. In the Karakalpak language, the phrase “*Shopan kóp bolsa, qoylar óledi*” (If there are many shepherds, the sheep will die) can be used as an important image for nomadic and pastoral traditions. This

can indicate a situation where there is no result due to numerous “stubborn” opinions. This demonstrates the variability of cultural linguistic codes, but the “human-animal” general cognitive model is preserved.

As is known, the concepts of code and symbol are central to semiotics, the science that studies symbols. A. Nurmonov states that “any material representation of social information is a sign.” [4:57]

Initially widely used within mathematics and computer science, the concept of code began to be applied in the humanities. In this, language and culture, which have the character of symbols, are of particular importance. Through symbols, they transmit the experience and norms of the people to future generations. F. Usmanov notes that when discussing code, one important aspect should be considered: “encoded information is encrypted information, and there must be a decryption stage.” [9:49]

Regarding this, M.L. Kovshova’s explanation is worthy of attention: “In semiotics, a code signifies a class of signs and the rules for their ‘reading’ by an interpreter, which, in turn, are conditioned by knowledge in a particular field, by a particular culture, and by the interpreter’s competence. [2:169]

Thus, in semiotics, a symbol and a code enriching it with meaning are distinguished, allowing the interpreter to “read” the encrypted information. For example, for the English, white is a symbol of honesty, justice, peace, law, and moral openness. However, in the stereotypes of Karakalpak culture, white is understood by its meaning as a symbol of goodness, purity, cleanliness, impeccability, humanity, etc.

Various symbols are widely used in specific academic disciplines and in everyday life. The reason humans continue to fill their world with symbols can be seen as the desire to convey messages in a compact form and the pursuit of efficiency. Representing information with small, conventional units-codes-can be a universal tool for its creation and for entering into communication. Thus, the semiosphere plays an important role in human life. M. Kovshova argues that “the primary code in the universal human semiosphere is language.” [2:145] That is, any semiotic system can be encoded through language. Culture, in turn, has its own semiosphere. In this context, stable units such as symbols, customs, traditions-ceremonies, and religious narratives constitute the signs of a culture.

G. Tokarev compares the way of thinking about cultural code to a matrix. It is believed that it directs and defines the content and forms of mental and linguistic expression. [9:40] According to psychologist K. Rapay, codes define images associated with a particular concept in our consciousness. To understand the meaning of an image embedded in a particular culture, it is necessary to understand its code. [6:168]

D. Xudayberganova suggests that cultural codes represent a system of material or ideal symbols that conditionally, symbolically, and encodedly reflect a specific cultural content. [11:29]

O.A. Svirepo understands cultural codes as a set of basic concepts, values, norms, and guidelines necessary for reading cultural texts.. [7:162]

Therefore, based on the foregoing, a cultural code can be defined as a set of basic concepts, guidelines, values, and norms that reflect the priorities of culture.

F. Usmanov suggests that “viewing parts of the objective world as cultural symbols is formed as a result of understanding the world and life experiences. In this process, natural phenomena, human external features and internal qualities, and artifacts acquire a second cultural meaning beyond their self-expressive content.”. [10:50] For example, for the Karakalpak people, “*qara uy*” (black house) is not just a place of residence or a celebration, but also a home of ancestors and their direct descendants, a respected and honored home. The Karakalpaks have lived in yurts since ancient times. The place where the smoke rises from the black yurt, that is, the ceiling, is called the *shañaraq*. The white yurt is also understood as a son’s newly built house, the creation of a new family, and the continuation of a lineage. [5:31] Among the Karakalpak people, the words *shañaraq* and *tutin* were used in the sense of “household.” That is, the household, the home, is the most sacred concept. Therefore, there’s a saying among the people that kindness is the foundation of a home. For example:

*Usı jerde ósip-ónip,
Qara shañıraq el bolǵanbız.
Aýır miynetine kónip,
Islep qara ter bolǵanbız. (I.YUsupov)*

One of the fundamental codes of English linguoculture is the concept of "Home," which embodies the value of personal space and autonomy. The proverb “*An Englishman’s home is his castle*,” widely found in paremiological lore and discursive practice, reflects the esteem for the home as a protected bastion of personal freedom. This code is closely intertwined with the concept of "privacy," which manifests in the lexicon, phraseology, and communicative strategies aimed at maintaining social distance.

Cultural codes can manifest in various material forms, such as the realities of everyday life, flora, fauna, and others. Literature distinguishes between codes such as somatic, spatial, temporal, object, biomorphic, spiritual, mythological, theomorphic, and color. In science, instances of conflating the term “cultural codes” with the term “linguocultural codes” are observed. A linguocultural code is the verbalized manifestation of a cultural code. “Anything can be expressed in verbal language. Verbal language absorbs the figurative codes of culture. In this case, a change occurs in the expression plan of the code, and cultural codes become verbalized, turning into a linguocultural code,” says V.M. Savitsky. [8:57]

S.V. Ivanova and Z.Z. Chenisheva believe that the ethnocultural connotation of stereotypes is mainly manifested in metaphorical and metonymic tropes, similes, phrases, and proverbs. [1:327]

The imagery within the similes, which are the object of our research, serves as a key to entering the world of culture. This imagery, embedded in the semantics of the similes, provides an opportunity to understand the cultural information, the cultural norms of a nation, the prevailing values in its mentality, and, in general, its worldview.

The Karakalpak proverb "*kózdiñ qarashıǵınday saqla*" "to protect like the apple of one's eye" expresses the value of cherishing, protecting, and valuing the most precious, most valuable thing. For example, *Pákligiñdi kózdiñ qarashıǵınday saqla*.

Also, in the Karakalpak language, there is a saying "*Kózdiñ qarashıǵınday*" like "*the apple of one's eye*," which refers to a beloved child. This comparison stems from the most ancient mythological form of perceiving the world, where the opposition of "*light and darkness*," that is, "*good and evil*," is reflected.

Thus, the eyes are a bridge between the universe and humanity. Their crucial importance for human perception of the universe encodes them as "seekers" even of things that are not subject to direct sensory perception. As can be seen, eyes, which are the organ of the visual sense, must be protected and cherished.

In English, this is conveyed by the comparison to cherish something as the apple of one's eye (to cherish more). For example, *He cherished his family as the apple of his eye*.

The English idiom "*the apple of one's eye*" etymologically traces back to biblical tradition and functionally corresponds to the Russian phrase "*зеница ока*" and the Karakalpak phrase "*kózdiñ qarashıǵı*." This serves as a basis for considering it a complete linguocultural equivalent in the fields of translation studies and linguocultural analysis. Thus, in constructions that use the comparison "*to protect like the apple of one's eye*," the cultural meaning that the object of comparison is highly valued and important is encapsulated. This is considered a somatic code, and through similes in both the English and Karakalpak languages, it is primarily used to express the cherishing of public property, the Homeland, children, freedom, another's trust, and sacred pilgrimage sites. Thus, it can be understood that the objects used in this comparison are the most valuable and precious things that should be preserved in English and Karakalpak cultures. The essence of the linguocultural code is that it allows one to understand cultural norms, stereotypes, and values.

CONCLUSION

In linguoculturology, the cultural (or linguocultural) code is understood as a system of signs and meanings through which a culture constructs and interprets reality. These codes can be mythological, somatic, zoomorphic, colorative, spatial, and of other types, wherein linguistic units are considered their material carriers. Taking the above

into account, the linguocultural code of similes can be defined as a collection of culturally embedded images, associative connections, and value-based interpretations that are actualized through comparative constructions and which shape their nationally specific semantics. This concept allows for similes to be viewed as elements of the linguistic worldview, functioning at the intersection of linguistic, cognitive, and cultural factors, and creates a theoretical foundation for their comparative and translation studies analysis.

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