



**SYMBOLISM, METAPHOR, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN
NAVOI'S WORKS: A LINGUOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract: *This study examines symbolism and metaphor in the works of Alisher Navoi from a linguocultural perspective, focusing on how figurative language reflects cultural values and national identity in classical Turkic literature. The research is based on selected texts from Khamsa, Lison ut-Tayr, and Hayrat ul-Abror. The methodology combines qualitative textual analysis with cognitive and linguocultural approaches to identify conceptual patterns and culturally marked imagery. The findings reveal that Navoi's figurative system represents a coherent cultural worldview shaped by ethical ideals, spiritual beliefs, and social norms. Dominant metaphors such as life as a journey and knowledge as light demonstrate universal cognitive tendencies, while symbolic images including birds, gardens, and light encode culture-specific meanings. The study highlights the significance of Navoi's heritage for linguocultural and literary research.*

Uzbek: *Ushbu tadqiqot Alisher Navoiy asarlaridagi ramziylik va metaforani lingvomadaniy nuqtayi nazardan tahlil qiladi hamda mumtoz turkiy adabiyotda obrazli til orqali madaniy qadriyatlar va milliy o'zlik qanday aks etishini yoritadi. Tadqiqot Xamsa, Lison ut-Tayr va Hayrat ul-Abror asarlaridan tanlangan matnlarga asoslanadi. Metodologiya konseptual tuzilmalar va madaniy jihatdan belgilangan obrazlarni aniqlash maqsadida sifatli matn tahlili, kognitiv va lingvomadaniy yondashuvlarni uyg'unlashtiradi. Natijalar Navoiy obrazli tizimi axloqiy qadriyatlar, ma'naviy e'tiqodlar va ijtimoiy me'yorlar ta'sirida shakllangan yaxlit madaniy dunyoqarashni ifodalashini ko'rsatadi. Hayot – safar, ilm – nur kabi yetakchi metaforalar inson tafakkuriga xos universal xususiyatlarni aks ettirsa, qushlar, bog'lar va yorug'lik kabi ramziy obrazlar milliy-madaniy ma'nolarni ifodalaydi. Tadqiqot Navoiy merosining lingvomadaniy va adabiy tadqiqotlar uchun muhim ahamiyatga ega ekanini ta'kidlaydi.*

Russian: *В данном исследовании анализируются символизм и метафора в произведениях Алишера Навои с лингвокультурологической точки зрения, с акцентом на то, как образный язык отражает культурные ценности и национальную идентичность в классической тюркской литературе. Материалом исследования послужили отобранные тексты из произведений «Хамса», «Лисон ут-Тайр» и «Хайрат ул-Абрар». Методология сочетает качественный текстовый анализ с когнитивным и лингвокультурологическим подходами для выявления*





MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

концептуальных моделей и культурно маркированной образности. Полученные результаты показывают, что образная система Навои формирует целостную культурную картину мира, обусловленную этическими идеалами, духовными убеждениями и социальными нормами. Доминирующие метафоры, такие как «жизнь — путь» и «знание — свет», отражают универсальные когнитивные тенденции, тогда как символические образы птиц, садов и света передают национально-специфические значения. Исследование подчеркивает значимость наследия Навои для лингвокультурологических и литературоведческих исследований.

Keywords: *Symbolism, metaphor, linguocultural analysis, cultural identity, Alisher Navoi, cognitive metaphor, national worldview, figurative language, Turkic literature, cultural codes, conceptual mapping.*

Uzbek: *Ramziylik, metafora, lingvomadaniy tahlil, madaniy identitet, Alisher Navoiy, kognitiv metafora, milliy dunyoqarash, obrazli til, turkiy adabiyot, madaniy kodlar, konseptual xaritalash.*

Russian: *Символизм, метафора, лингвокультурный анализ, культурная идентичность, Алишер Навои, когнитивная метафора, национальная картина мира, образный язык, тюркская литература, культурные коды, концептуальное моделирование.*

1. Background information

Alisher Navoi (1441–1501) is a cornerstone of Turkic literary culture. His works are celebrated not only for their aesthetic beauty but also for their rich symbolic and figurative language, which conveys moral, spiritual, and social values. Navoi's poetry and epics, such as *Khamsa*, *Lison ut-Tayr*, and *Hayrat ul-Abror*, contain complex metaphorical and metonymic systems that express cultural identity and collective worldview. While previous studies focus on Navoi's literary and historical contributions, there is a gap in examining how metaphor and metonymy function as cognitive and linguocultural tools for expressing national and ethical concepts. This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing his figurative language within a linguocultural framework.

Alisher Navoi's literary heritage represents not only artistic excellence but also a complex linguistic system through which cultural knowledge and national consciousness are constructed. In his poetic and epic texts, metaphor and metonymy function as fundamental cognitive tools that organize meaning, structure abstract concepts, and transmit culturally embedded values. Rather than serving as ornamental devices, these figurative mechanisms shape the conceptual worldview of Turkic society by linking concrete experience with moral, spiritual, and social ideas.

Metaphorical models such as the conceptualization of life as a journey, knowledge as light, and love as fire reveal universal patterns of human cognition while simultaneously reflecting culturally specific imagery rooted in Islamic philosophy, nomadic traditions, and





MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

Eastern aesthetics [Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. 1980]. Metonymic expressions, including part–whole relations, symbolic objects, and spatial references, contribute to the compression of meaning and the preservation of collective memory, enabling readers to access shared cultural knowledge through linguistic cues.

From a linguocultural perspective, the interaction of metaphor and metonymy in Navoi's discourse constructs a culturally marked semantic space in which identity, values, and worldview are continuously negotiated. The analysis of these figurative structures demonstrates how language functions as a mediator between individual creativity and collective cultural experience. Consequently, studying metaphorical and metonymic patterns in Navoi's works allows for a deeper understanding of how classical Turkic literature encodes cultural identity and maintains its relevance in contemporary linguistic and intercultural scholarship.

Although Navoi's poetic genius is widely acknowledged, few studies systematically examine the interaction of metaphor and metonymy in conveying cultural identity. There is a need to understand how these figurative devices encode moral, spiritual, and social concepts in classical Turkic literature.

2. Metaphor and Metonymy in Navoi's Works

Metaphors in Navoi often conceptualize life, knowledge, and emotions through concrete imagery. Metonymic expressions condense meaning by linking objects, spaces, or social concepts. Cognitive-linguistic analysis helps identify how abstract ideas are structured via figurative language. Symbols such as birds, gardens, light, and wine serve as carriers of cultural values and spiritual concepts. Navoi's figurative language creates a semantic space where national identity, ethical ideals, and spiritual beliefs intersect, reflecting both universal cognition and culture-specific elements.

2.1. Metaphorical Patterns in Navoi's Works

In the poetic and epic works of Alisher Navoi, metaphor functions as a central cognitive mechanism that structures abstract concepts through tangible imagery. For example, in *Khamsa*, Navoi employs layered metaphors such as the image of the moth drawn to the candle, representing the human soul's longing for divine truth and spiritual sacrifice. These metaphors do not merely ornament the text; rather, they provide a cognitive mapping that bridges concrete sensory experience and philosophical meaning. This suggests that Navoi's metaphors are structurally tied to ethical and spiritual concepts, reflecting both universal and culturally specific cognitive patterns.

Another domain where metaphor plays a vital role is the conceptualization of light as a source of knowledge and inner illumination. Navoi uses light both literally and figuratively to represent intellectual clarity and moral insight. Across his works, including *Lison ut-Tayr*, the journey toward enlightenment is metaphorically framed as a movement from darkness (ignorance) toward light (wisdom), revealing a deeply cultural worldview shaped by intellectual and spiritual ideals [Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press].





MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

Metaphorical conceptualization in Navoi's poetry also extends to emotional domains. For instance, the metaphor "life as a journey", often accompanied by images of travel and movement, connects physical experience with existential and ethical reflection. This metaphor resonates with the Sufi understanding of life as a quest for unity with the divine, demonstrating how Navoi's metaphors function at the intersection of cognition and cultural meaning.

2.2. Metonymy and Figurative Compression

Metonymy, though less explored in classical studies, emerges in Navoi's language as a powerful figure of associative linkage. In his poetry, spatial and part-whole associations act metonymically to condense cultural and social meaning. For example, the "garden" metonymically stands not only for nature's beauty but also for communal harmony, moral order, and paradise imagery — all central constructs of Turkic cultural values. When a garden is depicted as offering refuge or peace, the physical space implicitly represents societal ideals of unity and ethical harmony.

In a related analysis of Mahbub ul-Qulub, studies have shown that metaphor and metonymy types such as synecdoche enrich the poetic expressiveness and emotional impact of figurative language. Although Navoi uses metonymy less frequently than metaphor, its presence deepens interpretive layers by allowing a part of cultural life (e.g., an object, an attribute) to stand for broader cultural patterns.

3. Symbolism in Navoi's Cultural Universe

Symbolism in Navoi's works often relies on cultural images that encode ethical, spiritual, and social values. For example, the symbolic birds in *Lison ut-Tayr* — such as Simurg, Humo, and Qaqnus — operate not merely as narrative characters but as metaphors of spiritual aspiration, destiny, and the transformative journey. As symbolic figures, they represent both inherited mythic traditions and culturally situated interpretations of human pursuit toward truth.

Similarly, numerical symbols function as coded cultural signs. The repetition of specific numbers in Navoi's poetry — like "one," "seven," or "nine" — transcends their literal meaning and evokes spiritual, mystical, and cosmological associations. Numbers have been used for symbolism since classical period. In Navoi's work we can numbers go from "one", "seven" to "eighteen thousand", and "one thousand and one". Also, he uses the number "nine" as "nine fathers", "nine gifts" and "nine states because there are ancient beliefs associated with each number [Matluba Sadullaevna Akhrorovna, 2]. Through these numerical motifs, Navoi creates symbolic depth that both reflects cultural assumptions about unity, perfection, and cosmic order and demonstrates his skill in elevating simple linguistic elements to multi-layered artistic images.

4. Similes and Linguocultural Expression

Similes, as a figurative expression, enrich Navoi's imagery by drawing explicit comparisons between abstract concepts and culturally familiar elements. In *Hayrat ul-Abror*, similes link sensory experiences (like the breeze or blooming flowers) to Sufi





MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

philosophical concepts, thus embedding cultural values within linguistic structures [Navoi, A. (2010). Hayrat ul-Abror]. There are noun-based similes, such as “moon like face”; adjective-based similes like “tears like pearls”; verb-based similes like “lips opened like a flower”. These similes do not merely beautify text; they encode culturally salient connections that help readers interpret moral and spiritual meaning in context. For instance, a breeze likened to blooming flowers evokes both aesthetic pleasure and cultural associations with renewal and divine grace [Abduolimova, M., & Akhrorova, Z. (2025) 5(07), 79–81].

This aligns with Navoi’s larger linguocultural project of articulating spiritual ideals through metaphorical representation, blending cognitive reconceptualization with culturally grounded imagery.

5. Integration of Figurative Devices in Constructing Cultural Identity

The figurative systems in Navoi’s works — including metaphor, metonymy, symbolism, and simile — intersect to construct an overarching cultural worldview deeply rooted in ethical, spiritual, and social values. Metaphors allow abstract concepts to become intelligible by grounding them in sensory imagery, while metonymies associate specific cultural units with broader conceptual fields. Symbolic images function as cultural codes transmitting collective memory, and similes enhance conceptual clarity through culturally familiar parallels.

Together, these figurative devices establish a semantic network that articulates national identity and cultural meaning in classical Turkic literature. Navoi’s use of figurative language thus reflects not only universal cognitive patterns but also distinct cultural connotations shaped by Islamic philosophy, Eastern aesthetics, and Turkic traditions. This integrated perspective confirms that Navoi’s figurative language operates as a linguistic mirror of cultural identity, positing literature as both a repository and a transmitter of cultural worldview. Such an approach enriches not only literary scholarship but also contributes to the fields of cognitive linguistics and linguocultural studies.

6. Conclusion

The study shows that Navoi’s use of metaphor and metonymy is not merely stylistic but a systematic method of encoding cultural meaning and national identity. His figurative language reflects ethical, spiritual, and social values, creating a culturally marked semantic space. Through metaphor, Navoi transforms abstract concepts such as love, faith, time, and morality into vivid and accessible images, enabling readers to perceive complex ideas through concrete experience. Metonymy reflects social relations, historical realities, and symbolic associations, strengthening the realism and communicative impact of his texts. Together, these figurative mechanisms demonstrate Navoi’s linguistic mastery and his ability to unite aesthetic beauty with cultural meaning. The analysis confirms that Navoi’s figurative language contributes significantly to the development of Turkic literary tradition and offers valuable material for linguocultural and cognitive studies.





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