

**COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS OF RHETORICAL QUESTIONS
AND METAPHORS IN DOCTOR–PATIENT INTERACTION A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK MEDICAL
DISCOURSE**

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Annotation. *This article examines the communicative and psychological role of rhetorical questions and metaphors in doctor–patient interaction. Special attention is given to their use in English and Uzbek medical discourse. The study demonstrates that rhetorical devices help doctors reduce emotional tension, simplify complex medical information, motivate patients, and create trust during communication. The article also compares the cultural characteristics of metaphorical expressions and rhetorical questions in English and Uzbek speech.*

Keywords: *rhetorical question, metaphor, medical discourse, doctor–patient communication, deontology, patient psychology.*

Introduction

Communication between doctors and patients plays an important role in successful diagnosis, treatment, and emotional support. A doctor’s speech is not limited only to medical terminology; it also includes linguistic and psychological strategies that influence the patient’s emotional state. Among such strategies, rhetorical questions and metaphors are especially significant.

Rhetorical questions help maintain dialogue, attract the patient’s attention, and encourage cooperation. Metaphors, on the other hand, simplify complicated medical information and make it easier for patients to understand their condition. For example, expressions such as “fight against illness,” “your body needs healing,” or “we are on the road to recovery” are often used to create hope and motivation.

In English-speaking medical culture, rhetorical devices are often used to support the patient emotionally and to involve them in decision-making. In Uzbek medical discourse, however, metaphors are more frequently connected with politeness, respect, religion, and cultural values. Expressions such as “Inshaallah, you will recover” or “Keep your spirits high” are common examples of supportive communication.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical basis of this study is connected with the works of several international scholars. The conceptual metaphor theory developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson

explains that metaphors are not only stylistic tools but also reflect the way people think and understand reality. In medicine, metaphors help patients understand difficult medical concepts through familiar images. Jonathan Charteris-Black studied the pragmatic role of metaphors in communication, while Elena Semino analyzed metaphor use in cancer discourse. Their studies show that metaphors can influence how patients perceive illness and treatment. The communicative role of rhetorical questions can also be explained through discourse theory and speech act theory. According to these approaches, rhetorical questions do not simply request information; they may encourage agreement, reduce social distance, or reassure the listener.

Rhetorical Questions in Doctor–Patient Communication

Rhetorical questions are widely used in medical interaction because they help doctors create a friendly atmosphere. Questions such as “Do you feel a little better today?” or “We are making progress, aren’t we?” are not only requests for information. They also encourage the patient to feel more confident and optimistic.

In English medical discourse, rhetorical questions are often used to involve the patient in treatment decisions:

- “Are we ready to take the next step?”
- “Do you think this medicine is helping you?”
- “You are feeling stronger today, aren’t you?”

In Uzbek medical discourse, rhetorical questions usually express politeness and emotional support:

- “O‘zingizni yaxshiroq his qilyapsizmi?”
- “Shunday qilsak yaxshi bo‘lmaydimi?”
- “Biroz yengillik sezayapsiz, to‘g‘rimi?”

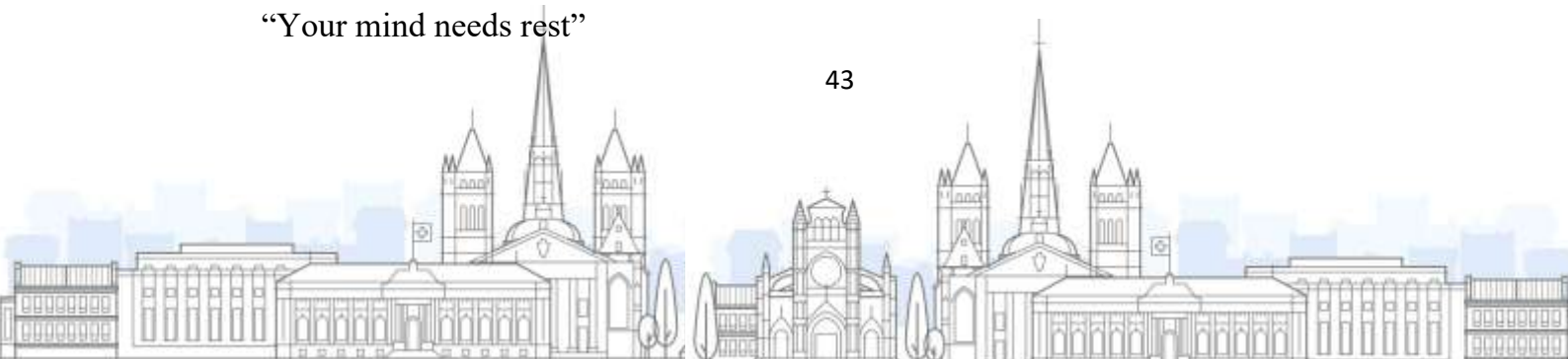
These expressions help reduce fear and increase trust between doctor and patient.

Metaphors in Medical Discourse

Metaphors are especially important when doctors need to explain difficult diagnoses or motivate patients. Medical terms can often sound frightening, so doctors frequently replace them with softer and more understandable expressions. For example, instead of saying “heart attack,” some doctors may use the expression “heart episode.” Instead of directly emphasizing the seriousness of cancer, they may describe it as “a growth that needs treatment.” Such metaphorical language reduces emotional stress and allows the patient to process information more calmly.

Common English metaphors in medical communication include:

- “Fight against illness”
- “The body is recovering”
- “Your mind needs rest”



“We will overcome this together”

Uzbek medical discourse also contains many metaphorical expressions:

“Kasallikka qarshi kurashish”

“Tanani tinglash”

“Davolanish yo‘li”

“Ko‘nglingizni keng qiling”

These metaphors are often related to cultural values, family support, patience, and religious beliefs.

Comparative Analysis of English and Uzbek Medical Discourse

Although English and Uzbek doctor–patient communication share many similarities, there are also important differences. English-speaking doctors often use rhetorical questions to involve patients in the treatment process. Uzbek doctors, however, usually focus on emotional closeness, politeness, and encouragement.

Conclusion

Rhetorical questions and metaphors are important elements of doctor–patient communication. They are not only linguistic tools but also psychological instruments that help reduce fear, create trust, and motivate patients. Both English and Uzbek medical discourse use these rhetorical devices actively, although their communicative functions may differ according to cultural traditions. The study shows that doctors should be trained not only in medical knowledge but also in communication skills. Practical courses on empathy, rhetorical strategies, and metaphorical language can improve doctor–patient relationships and increase the effectiveness of treatment.

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