Metaphor And Macrostructure In English And Uzbek News Headlines

Alimova Kamola Tursunovna
Senior Lecturer
Uzbekistan State World Languages University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
E-mail: kamola.alimova85@mail.ru,
ORCID: 0009-0002-3083-6100

Abstract. This paper investigates how implicit cultural meanings emerge from metaphor and discourse macrostructure in English and Uzbek news headlines. The study combines a hermeneutic reading of headline metaphors with macro-structural discourse analysis, arguing that what appears as stylistic economy often functions as cultural coding. A brief comparative discussion shows how metaphorical patterns and thematic macrostructures differ across English and Uzbek online media and how these differences shape reader expectations.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor; macrostructure; news discourse; hermeneutic analysis; Uzbek headlines; relevance

INTRODUCTION

Headlines compress narrative into a few words, yet they frequently deliver more than information. They activate conceptual metaphors, define thematic priorities, and cue evaluation through culturally familiar scripts. These implicit meanings matter in bilingual contexts because audiences may share some background knowledge but not others, and misalignment can create misunderstanding or bias.

In Uzbek scholarship on English-Uzbek online headline comparison, the national-cultural and pragmatic dimensions of headlines are emphasized as key to interpreting media discourse (Xo‘jamurodov, 2025). The present paper develops this insight by focusing on two mechanisms: metaphor and discourse macrostructure.

BACKGROUND AND CURRENT STATE

Conceptual metaphor theory argues that metaphor is not a decorative device but a fundamental mechanism of thought. Metaphors map experience from one domain to another and thus structure what counts as a “problem,” “movement,” “pressure,” or “growth” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In headlines, such mappings can guide evaluation without explicit commentary.

News discourse research adds that headlines are macro-structural signals: they summarize the ‘theme’ of a story and organize how readers build a coherent representation of events (van Dijk, 1988). The headline thus operates as a macro-proposition that controls subsequent interpretation.

From a pragmatic angle, the interpretation of headlines relies on ad hoc concept construction: readers fill in under-specified meanings by drawing on expectations and context (Ifantidou, 2009). This is where cultural knowledge becomes decisive. A sociolinguistic perspective on news language further emphasizes that news is produced through selection, transformation, and institutional routines rather than by direct “recording” of facts (Bell, 1991).

EXPERIENCE PART

The analysis follows a hermeneutic-discourse procedure. First, metaphorical nuclei in headlines are identified (e.g., battle, pressure, path, rise/fall, opening doors). Second, each metaphor is interpreted as a cultural mapping: what does it presuppose about agency, morality, and collective goals? Third, the headline’s macro-structural role is reconstructed: what thematic “summary” is being proposed, and

which aspects are suppressed? Finally, the reading is checked against alternative interpretations to avoid over-interpretation, consistent with hermeneutic discipline.

The procedure is suitable for cross-linguistic comparison because it isolates mechanisms that can differ even when the referential topic is similar.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Metaphors in English headlines often emphasize contestation and high-impact change, encouraging readers to perceive events as struggle or disruption. Such metaphors increase salience and efficiently package evaluation. In Uzbek headlines, metaphorical patterns often support narratives of development, openness, and staged reform, thereby presupposing that social change is managed through institutional pathways rather than through continuous conflict.

At the macro-structural level, English headlines tend to foreground a single dramatic proposition that can stand alone as a story skeleton. Uzbek headlines may more frequently embed the headline in a broader macro-structure of official updates and policy sequencing, which aligns with a horizon of procedural legitimacy and planned modernization.

Ifantidou's (2009) account helps explain why these differences matter: ad hoc concept construction depends on what a reader expects to be relevant. When headline metaphors or macro-propositions rely on culturally specific scripts, cross-linguistic interpretation becomes fragile. This is a central practical problem for bilingual media consumers and for translators.

CONCLUSION

Implicit cultural meaning in headlines is systematically produced through metaphor and macrostructure. A hermeneutic reading makes these mechanisms explicit and thus available for critical evaluation. The study supports Uzbek research that treats headlines as national-cultural and pragmatic codes and connects this to established accounts of metaphor, news macrostructure, and pragmatic interpretation.

Future work should test the proposed patterns on a larger corpus and integrate reader-response methods to validate how different audiences actually interpret metaphorical headlines.

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