

THE USE OF METAPHORS IN UZBEK LULLABIES AND THEIR EQUIVALENTS IN OTHER CULTURES: AN INTERCULTURAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract. *This article explores the use of metaphors in Uzbek lullabies and compares them with their equivalents in lullabies from other cultures. Lullabies, as a form of oral folk literature, are rich in figurative language that conveys emotions, values, and cultural norms. By analyzing common metaphors related to nature, protection, love, and child upbringing, this study highlights the universality and specificity of metaphorical expressions across cultures. The research employs a comparative intercultural approach, revealing how metaphors reflect both shared human experiences and unique cultural perspectives.*

Keywords: *Uzbek lullabies, metaphor, intercultural analysis, oral folk literature, child-rearing, cultural values, figurative language*

Introduction

Lullabies are a fundamental component of intangible cultural heritage. In Uzbekistan, lullabies, or allalar, have been orally transmitted for generations, embodying the wisdom, emotions, and social norms of the community. One of the most striking features of these lullabies is the use of metaphors, which allow caregivers to convey complex emotions, cultural values, and moral lessons in a poetic and memorable manner.

Across the world, lullabies serve similar functions, yet the metaphors employed often differ, reflecting each culture's environment, beliefs, and child-rearing practices. Comparative studies of lullaby metaphors thus provide insight into intercultural commonalities and divergences, enriching our understanding of cultural cognition and emotional expression.

Analysis of Uzbek lullabies reveals several recurring metaphorical themes: *Nature as Protector and Comforter*

Example: “Quyosh senga nur sochsin, osmon seni qo`llasin”
 (“May the sun shine for you, may the sky protect you”).

Stars and sky symbolize safety, warmth, and divine protection.

Animals as Guardians

Birds, lambs, and nightingales frequently appear as metaphors for gentleness, guidance, and playfulness.

Precious Objects as Symbols of Love

References to jewels, pearls, and silk often metaphorically express a child's value and cherished status in the family.

Sleep and Rest as Passage to Safety

Metaphors of rivers, clouds, or gentle breezes depict sleep as a transition into a safe and nurturing realm.

These metaphors are not merely decorative; they encode cultural norms, expectations, and emotional patterns. They also facilitate affective bonding between caregiver and child.

Comparative Intercultural Analysis

When compared to lullabies from other cultures, both similarities and differences emerge:

English Lullabies

Example: “Rock-a-bye Baby” uses a tree and cradle metaphor, linking sleep to natural stability.

Similar to Uzbek lullabies, nature serves as a metaphor for protection, though with a different imagery style.

Japanese Lullabies

Example: “Shabondama” (Soap Bubbles) uses ephemeral bubbles as a metaphor for fragility and impermanence.

While Uzbek lullabies emphasize safety and continuity, Japanese lullabies often highlight transience and mindfulness.

African Lullabies

Animals are central metaphors, portraying communal values, guidance, and resilience, resembling Uzbek usage of animal metaphors.

The comparison indicates that while the themes of protection, love, and guidance are universal, the specific imagery and symbolic choices reflect local cultural values, environmental conditions, and philosophical outlooks.

Discussion

Metaphors in lullabies perform dual but interconnected functions: emotional regulation and cultural transmission. From a psycholinguistic perspective, lullabies serve as a medium through which caregivers convey comfort, security, and affection, while simultaneously introducing children to culturally grounded moral values and social norms. In Uzbek lullabies, metaphors often intertwine natural imagery—such as stars, rivers, and birds—with spiritual and familial values, creating a multilayered poetic framework. This framework does not merely soothe the child; it also functions as a subtle vehicle for socialization, instilling cultural knowledge, ethical principles, and communal expectations from an early age.

Cross-cultural comparisons indicate that while the emotional functions of lullabies are largely universal, the symbolic strategies and metaphorical choices are highly culture-specific. For example, natural metaphors in Uzbek lullabies emphasize protection, continuity, and divine oversight, whereas in Japanese lullabies, metaphors often highlight impermanence, transience, and mindful acceptance. Similarly, in many African lullabies, animals serve as key metaphors for resilience, communal belonging, and moral guidance, reflecting sociocultural priorities distinct from those in Central Asia. Such comparisons underscore the dual role of metaphors as both cognitive tools—shaping how children conceptualize safety, love, and morality—and cultural markers, conveying distinctive cultural worldviews.

From a pedagogical standpoint, a nuanced understanding of metaphorical structures in lullabies can significantly enrich early childhood education. Educators and caregivers can use these metaphors to foster emotional literacy, imaginative thinking, and intercultural competence, enabling children to recognize universal human

experiences while appreciating cultural diversity. Additionally, these metaphors provide linguists and cognitive scientists with a rich corpus for investigating figurative language processing, conceptual metaphor theory, and the interaction between language, cognition, and culture. Specifically, analyzing Uzbek lullabies within an intercultural framework offers insights into how metaphorical thought is shaped by both environmental factors and sociocultural norms, illuminating broader patterns in human conceptualization of emotion, care, and social responsibility.

Conclusion

The study of metaphors in Uzbek lullabies and their intercultural equivalents demonstrates that while the core functions of lullabies—comforting, guiding, and socializing children—are universal, the choice of metaphorical imagery varies according to cultural context. Uzbek lullabies emphasize natural and spiritual motifs, reflecting local environmental and social conditions. Comparative analysis not only highlights intercultural similarities but also underscores the richness and diversity of human emotional and linguistic expression.

In conclusion, the metaphorical richness of lullabies represents a convergence of affective, educational, and cultural functions. By comparing Uzbek lullabies with their international equivalents, researchers can trace both universal tendencies in human emotional expression and culture-specific narrative strategies. This not only contributes to the field of intercultural pragmatics but also highlights the potential of oral literature as a tool for cognitive and cultural development in early childhood.

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