

METAPHOR AND EMOTIONAL FRAMING IN UZBEK MEDIA DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Abstract: This article investigates the linguistic strategies of metaphor and emotional language in Uzbekistan's press discourse on social justice. Drawing on critical discourse analysis and conceptual metaphor theory, the study examines how abstract notions of justice, fairness, and inequality are concretized through figurative language. Examples from Uzbek media illustrate that metaphors such as "justice is a foundation" construct social reality by emphasizing stability and moral order. Emotional language, including negatively charged lexical items like "we distanced ourselves from justice," serves to provoke public empathy and mobilize civic awareness. While these strategies enhance rhetorical impact, their ethical use remains crucial to avoid manipulation or oversimplification. The article highlights the intersection of state policy, national values, and global justice discourse in the Uzbek context.

Keywords: metaphor, emotional language, social justice, Uzbek media, critical discourse analysis, framing;

In contemporary Uzbekistan, media discourse plays a central role in articulating social justice issues such as inequality, marginalization, and legal fairness. The press does not merely transmit information; it shapes public consciousness through carefully selected linguistic tools. Among these, metaphor and emotional language are particularly powerful. Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are not decorative but conceptual—they structure how people think about justice. Emotional language, as noted by Wodak and Meyer (2009), embeds ideology and sentiment into public communication. This article analyzes how these strategies function in Uzbek media, drawing on examples from national news sources.

This study applies qualitative discourse analysis to a corpus of Uzbek-language articles from *Uza.uz* and *Kun.uz* (cited in the original document). The analysis focuses on metaphorical expressions and emotionally charged vocabulary related to social justice. Conceptual Metaphor Theory [3] and Critical Discourse Analysis [2] guide the interpretation.

In the statement "*Adolat – davlatchilikning mustahkam poydevoridir*" ("Justice is the strong foundation of statehood"), the source domain "foundation" maps onto the target domain "justice." This metaphor implies that without justice, the state collapses. Such framing aligns with Rawls' (1971) theory of justice as the first virtue of social institutions. Unlike abstract legal definitions, the foundation metaphor evokes physical stability and collective security, making justice tangible to readers.

Another example: "*Bizda bir necha 10 yillar davomida «fuqaro huquqi»ga ustuvorlik berildi, adolat huquqidan uzoqlashdik, din va diyonatni huquqdan yiroqlashtirdik*" ("For decades, we prioritized 'citizen rights' over justice, distanced ourselves from the right to justice, and separated religion from law"). The verbs *uzoqlashdik* (we distanced ourselves) and *yiroqlashtirdik* (we separated) imply

collective moral failure. This emotional framing creates a sense of national introspection, urging readers to support reforms. As Van Dijk (1993) argues, elite discourse often uses such emotional structures to influence public opinion on social inequalities.

Excessive emotionalization may lead to simplification. For instance, portraying justice only as a foundation might obscure procedural or redistributive dimensions [6]. Journalists must balance rhetorical power with analytical depth. Metaphor and emotional language in Uzbek media serve as strategic tools for making social justice accessible and urgent. However, their effectiveness depends on responsible use. Future research should examine how these strategies evolve as inclusive language develops in Uzbekistan.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that metaphor and emotional framing are not merely stylistic features of Uzbek media discourse but central mechanisms through which social justice is conceptualized and communicated. By drawing on conceptual metaphors such as “justice as a foundation,” media narratives render abstract legal and ethical principles more concrete, relatable, and persuasive for the public. At the same time, emotionally charged language fosters a sense of collective responsibility and moral engagement, encouraging audiences to reflect on societal shortcomings and support reform-oriented agendas.

However, the analysis also reveals that these discursive strategies carry inherent risks. Overreliance on simplified metaphors or heightened emotional tone may obscure the complexity of social justice issues, limiting critical understanding of their procedural and structural dimensions. Therefore, the effectiveness of Uzbek media discourse depends on achieving a careful balance between rhetorical accessibility and analytical depth. Ultimately, as Uzbekistan continues to develop its media landscape and public discourse, the responsible and nuanced use of metaphor and emotional framing will remain essential. Further research is needed to explore how these strategies adapt to emerging norms of inclusivity and how they shape public perceptions of justice in an evolving sociopolitical context.

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