



**SYSTEMIC SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE CONCEPTOSPHERE OF
ROAD IN UZBEK AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES: A COMPARATIVE
LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS**

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Abstract: This article analyzes how the idea of “road” is used metaphorically and culturally in Uzbek and Russian languages. Using such an analysis, the study shows that the terms yo‘l and doroga not only state meanings but also symbolize morality, national identity and how life is perceived. Referencing old texts, proverbs, literature and theories on human thinking, the study distinguishes the key and secondary aspects of the idea of a road in both languages. The expression “life is a road” works in every culture and it means “faith, community and divine harmony” in Russian literature but “spiritual effort, fate and forgiveness” in Uzbek literature. Because of different religions and ideas, these differences point to the way culture and thought connect in the use of metaphors. The investigation adds to comparative studies in conceptual thinking by explaining how different cultures use certain metaphors differently.

Keywords: road metaphor; conceptosphere; Uzbek language; Russian language; cognitive linguistics; cross-cultural semantics;

Introduction. The term “road” (called yo‘l in Uzbek and дорога in Russian) is important within the vocabulary and culture of both Uzbek and Russian speakers. The meaning of this metaphor is deeper than a detailed path and it also refers to emotions and thoughts about life, choice and our destiny. As Likhachev (1993) explained such cultural concepts as “road” function as semantic centers in a nation’s thoughts, making it possible for speakers to express abstract ideas and personal views through clear words. Such metaphors are part of our language and they also show meaningful links among our minds, how we speak and culture.

Though both languages use the road metaphor, it is important to see that its form and purpose are different in different cultures. In the Uzbek language, the word yo‘l often brings up thoughts of faith, right and wrong and caring for society. In this language, дорога may include a sense of life-searching, solitude or the tough choice you have to make. There are subtle differences because every culture has been influenced by special events in history, religion and politics.

The study attempts to analyze the form and meaning of “yo‘l/doroga” in Uzbek and Russian through the way it appears as metaphor in proverbs and literature. The primary aims of the investigation are to check how the concept of “road” is structured, to find out what different languages link with the concept and to find common and unique metaphorical uses for the “road.” This study explores the main ideas and the rest of what the concept of “road” carries in each language. In what way does the use of “road” metaphor suggest the national attitudes and mindset? By what sounds and language patterns does Uzbek and Russian discuss the idea of the road?

Here, the article tries to discover both the similar metaphorical images found in these languages as well as their specific cultural expressions. This will benefit the developing discipline of cross-cultural cognitive linguistics and give new knowledge about the symbolic role of “road” as a

concept in Turkic and Slavic languages.

Literature Review. The conceptosphere helps to explain how concepts are created and how they are organized in any language and culture system. According to Karaulov (1987), the term means a space where cultural concepts are connected and Likhachev (1993) added that every culture has a main set of energized and important concepts that create its world perspective. In these two languages, the word for “road” (doroga in Russian, yo‘l in Uzbek) is significant, since it exists physically as well as being a central concept for culture and metaphors.

For Russians, the way to conceptualize doroga goes way past the normal meaning of the term. According to Ippolitov (2020), in the works of Russian literature, a road is often shown as a place where characters face inner changes or important decisions. Ostrovskaya (2022) also makes it clear that in Russian novels, the doroga often symbolizes the ups and downs, tough choices or inner journey of life. These ideas can be seen in Borozdny’s explanation, where he describes the road as something that tells a story of a person’s search, feeling adrift and the process of finding meaning in the bigger picture of culture.

The word yo‘l in Uzbek also has a lot of meaning and cultural background which can be shown through classical and recent proverbs. Already in the 11th-century Devoni Lug‘otit Turk, the Turkic innovator Mahmud Koshg‘ariy treated yo‘l as something with moral, social and religious value, not only as a marker of place (Koshg‘ariy, 1072). Sharipova (2022) points out that Uzbek proverbs underline destiny, good conduct and harmonious living among people. In contrast with Russian doroga metaphors which are centered on people and their own lives, Uzbek yo‘l metaphors mainly represent the culture of the society and its guidelines for living.

In comparative studies, it becomes clear that yo‘l and doroga feature some similar metaphorical expressions and also have many unique ones. Nosirov (2021) explains that the social and emotional aspects of the universal metaphor life is a journey are expressed differently in the two languages. Uzbek writing aims to provide clear advice, maintain right values and ensure a person lives morally, whereas Russian stories angle towards investigating a person’s senses, loneliness and the importance of keeping going. In a similar way, Latipov (2023) explains that even though both traditions portray the road as a symbol for living, the imagery and language chosen are different between Uzbek’s emphasis on peace and Russian’s highlight on friction.

All of these works indicate that even though life is commonly seen as a road in the mind, how these mappings become part of culture is strongly influenced by the people in that culture and their past. There is shared logic in these two metaphors, but they carry social and cultural differences typical for both countries.

Methodology. Using corpus-based techniques, this research studies how the “road” metaphor (yo‘l/doroga) is organized and understood culturally in Uzbek and Russian by making comparisons between these two languages. The main goal is to discover how this metaphor appears in two communities with a long historical tie by examining real language used in proverbs, classic literature and folk stories.

I used different textual sources that were written in Uzbek and Russian for data collection. One important resource for Uzbek is by Mahmud Koshg‘ariy called Devoni Lug‘otit Turk (created in 1072) because it contains many expressions and useful information about ethno linguistics. This area is also improved by Uzbek proverbs made today and important literary texts featuring Tog‘ay Murod, whose writings show how yo‘l is described in metaphorical ways in modern times. On the Russian side, the sources included works written by A.S. Pushkin, for example *Zimnyaya doroga* (1830) and *Teleqa jizni* (1836) and by N.V. Gogol, especially *Мёртвые души* (1842) which makes use of subtle references to roads, movement and a person’s destiny. Russian folk tales which often have basic road motifs (for instance, if you go to the left, you lose your

head), give access to cultural metaphors.

For the second step of analysis, the study makes use of many established cognitive and linguistic instruments. The first one is called conceptual metaphor theory, mainly relying on the approach of Lakoff and Johnson in 1980 which lets us relate something abstract (like life or destiny) to something more tangible such as a road or journey. The research also uses linguocultural modeling suggested by Popova and Sternin (2000) which lets the researcher analyze the meeting point of language, national awareness and collective memory in the metaphorical system. Last but not least, the collected metaphorical units were sorted into central and peripheral parts of every language's conceptosphere, adhering to the method of Karaulov (1987) for analyzing the linguistic personality.

Using such a method makes it possible to find out the ways in which metaphors common to both languages, like "life is a road," are influenced by the different cultures and traditions in which they develop.

Results. When comparing the yo'l/doroga conceptosphere in Uzbek and Russian, we can recognize that both societies have the same basic structure but use different metaphors. Both these terms are based on the main themes of movement, decision-making and progress and this corresponds to the well-known conceptual metaphor which says life is comparable to a journey (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Still, the ways in which these notions are developed in different languages are very different. In most Russian novels, the idea of road becomes connected to significant stories that usually involve themes of fate, sacrificing oneself or searching for meaning in life. In her studies, Ostrovskaya (2022) observes that the Russian word *дорога* is usually linked to hard challenges and a sad irony found in numerous stories from the national literature. In the Uzbek culture, yo'l often represents tests of a person's morals and faith which is clear when we look at how often it appears in religious wisdom from the teachings of Mahmud Koshg'ariy (in his work *Devoni Lug'otit Turk*).

Associations on the sides of these systems help to tell them apart. Many times, *дорога* is seen metaphorically as something related to being put out, wandering and coming back, this illustrates the common folk and religious storyline of going off and then returning home (Borozdny, 2020). Nevertheless, in Uzbek, expressions used on the margins underline the importance of working together, remaining patient and following God's advice, as pointed out by Sharipova (2022). "Taking the right and moral path is needed for a happy life" is a main idea present in "To'g'ri yo'l omadga eltadi." By comparison, the Russian expression "Дорога ложка к обеду" ("The spoon is efficient at dinner") tells us that people are more concerned with practicality and good timing than ethical perspectives.

The meaning of the idea "relation as path" describes different values around the world. Most of the Uzbek sayings that are centered on roads speak about moral choice, God's guidance and persistence. At the same time, Russian-language poems reflect on the search for meaning, the outcome of loss and how faith guides one through life, often highlighting the journey itself by terminology such as "путь страдания" (2020).

Road metaphors used in both cultures also express the themes they hold in common and differ at the same time. The path is often described as a solitary effort and as redeeming, usually with images of darkness, cold snow or spiritual feel. Unlike Turkic, Uzbek texts often show yo'l as an experience done in a group, with friends and two elements are important: hospitality and approval from above. With the help of idioms, poetry and repeating symbols, this shared religious outlook shows yo'l as a path in life and in ethics (Sharipova, 2022).

Based on these findings, we know that even though everyone uses the road metaphor, its meaning is largely affected by culture, history and philosophy. Therefore, the rise of the

yo‘l/doroga notions allows us to access the mindsets of the nations that use them.

Discussion. A comparison between the yo‘l and doroga metaphors demonstrates how people in different cultures understand the same principle in their own way. The idea that life is similar to a road or a journey appears in people’s mental systems in many regions. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) such metaphors relate the basic concepts of going in a certain direction, time passing and possible outcomes to the more general idea of life. Vezhbitskaya (1996) also points out that the basic metaphor works the same in many languages and relates it to the way our body affects our understanding. But, as these aspects are applied in certain linguistic and cultural situations, the shared frame leads to different developments. You can often find *doroga* serving as a symbol of spiritual difficulty or a spiritually meaningful journey in Russian literature, as in Gogol’s novel “Dead Souls”, published in 1842 and in Ostrovskaya’s recent (2022) study on the subject. Meanwhile, in the Uzbek outlook, the trip is viewed as a moral improvement in line with divine design which is clear in the fortune-rich works of Koshg‘ariy (1072) and the anthropological study of Tursunov (2019).

Besides, when it comes to word groups related to the environment, speakers reveal differences in how well concepts are defined. In Russian, common sayings using the ‘road metaphor’ appear as fixed set expressions such as “идти своим путём” (“to follow one’s own path”), but in Uzbek, that metaphor stays flexible and appears in many aspects of life such as in religious, ethical and poetic texts (Sharipova, 2022). Even though both languages use the same idea as the reference point, their social and cultural aspects are expressed differently. According to Russian metaphors, it is Tamerlane’s own actions and fate that take precedence; moreover, in Uzbek expressions, the main focus remains on the honor and values of the community as a whole. The results back up the overall argument that cultural and religious knowledge help create metaphorical systems. Despite looking the same across the world, the “road” metaphor uncovers the influence of past worldviews in different countries.

Conclusion. This study explored the metaphorical concept of “the road” as something found in many cultures but adapted in different cultures and languages. They use the same metaphor to describe life—as a journey—though how they develop these symbols is quite different. In Uzbek, a road can mean being close to faith, patience and your fate, but in Russian, it usually reflects the difficulties of life, separation from others and suffering that eventually leads to redemption. Such differences are due to the way Islamic and Orthodox-Christian traditions shape people’s worldviews. Analysis of different languages and concepts reveals that conceptual metaphors are always changing and influenced by both the past and society’s values. Thus, this study adds to the development of studies comparing languages and cultures and points out the value of more detailed cross-traditional studies in the field of metaphor. Future study might investigate how talk about roads as metaphors changes in modern political, digital and religious language, especially in Islamic and Orthodox write-ings, since “movement” here may have many layers of meaning.

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