AMERICAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND LEARNING
ISSN: 2996-5128 (online) | ResearchBib (IF) = 9.918 IMPACT FACTOR
Volume-3| Issue-5| 2025 Published: |30-05-2025|

METAPHORICAL SYNTAXEME ANALYSIS IN POLYSEMY

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15559748

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Abstract

this article investigates the role of metaphorical structures in the syntactic realization of polysemous meanings. Using the framework of syntaxeme theory and cognitive linguistics, it explores how metaphorical extensions of meaning are embedded in syntactic units. By analyzing data from English and Uzbek, the study demonstrates how conceptual metaphors are grammatically instantiated, influencing the interpretation of polysemous words. The research highlights the interplay between metaphor, syntax, and semantic variation within the cognitive framework. The extended analysis offers practical implications for translation, language teaching, and artificial intelligence language processing.

Key words

corpus selection, syntaxeme identification, metaphorical mapping, cross-linguistic comparison, semantic classification

Introduction: polysemy refers to the phenomenon of a single word acquiring multiple related meanings. A significant portion of these meanings arises through metaphorical extension, a process in which a word's usage is transferred to a new conceptual domain. Metaphors such as "argument is war" or "time is money" are not only cognitive in nature but also have tangible syntactic reflections. The syntaxeme – a minimal syntactic unit carrying both grammatical and semantic value – provides a useful tool for analyzing how metaphor shapes sentence structure.

The integration of metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and syntaxeme theory (Zolotova, 2001) offers a unique perspective on how language users cognitively and syntactically construct meaning. While polysemy has been traditionally explored within lexical semantics, this study places emphasis on how the metaphorical motivations of meaning shifts are structurally manifested in actual usage. By analyzing metaphorically polysemous syntaxemes, we can better understand how the mind processes abstract meanings in concrete syntactic frames.

Methods: the study applies a qualitative and comparative linguistic methodology with the following procedures:
- Corpus selection: Extracting metaphorically polysemous constructions from the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Uzbek National Corpus.
- Syntaxeme identification: Determining the minimal syntactic structures in which metaphorical meanings are activated.
- Metaphorical mapping: Linking conceptual metaphors to their syntactic realizations using cognitive linguistic frameworks.
- Cross-linguistic comparison: Evaluating how English and Uzbek express similar metaphorical ideas with different syntactic constructions.
- Semantic classification: Categorizing metaphorical expressions according to underlying cognitive domains (e.g., motion, possession, perception). Examples of verbs such as "grasp," "attack," and "carry" are analyzed in both literal and metaphorical contexts to illustrate syntactic variation and metaphorical projection.

Results: The findings reveal the following insights: Many metaphorically derived meanings of polysemous words exhibit distinct syntaxeme patterns. Example: "grasp" in "She grasped the concept" vs. "She grasped the rope"—both share syntactic structure, but the semantic domain shifts from physical to mental. In Uzbek, the verb "ushlamoq" shows similar duality: "U arqonni ushladi" (physical) vs. "U fikrni ushladi" (mental, metaphorical). Conceptual metaphors such as "understanding is grasping," "communication is transmission," and "emotion is heat" influence verb-object constructions. The metaphorical meaning often constrains the selection of syntaxemes; abstract objects (e.g., idea, plan, memory) commonly appear in metaphorical constructions. English tends to maintain a single syntactic frame for both metaphorical and literal uses, while Uzbek often employs aspectual or affixal modifications to distinguish them. Additional findings: Metaphorical extensions are often predictable and structured, guided by cognitive schemas such as containment ("in trouble", "in love") or motion ("go through changes"). Syntaxemes associated with mental or abstract domains typically contain animate or sentient subjects and abstract objects, further highlighting the cognitive dimension. Multi-word expressions and idioms often rely on metaphorically polysemous syntaxemes: e.g., “carry weight,” “break the ice,” “shed light.”

Discussion: the study confirms that metaphorical thinking is deeply embedded in syntax. Syntaxemes not only accommodate metaphorical extensions but also reflect the underlying conceptual mappings. The metaphorical syntaxeme analysis enables us to trace how abstract thought is encoded in everyday language

structures. Moreover, differences in metaphorical syntax across languages highlight the role of linguistic typology in conceptual realization. For instance, English relies on syntactic uniformity, while Uzbek uses morphosyntactic variation to signal metaphor. The comparative analysis also shows that while conceptual metaphors are largely universal, their grammatical realization is language-specific. The study provides several implications:
- Second language learning: Teaching syntaxeme-based metaphorical constructs improves comprehension of non-literal language.
- Lexicography and dictionary design: Including syntactic frames alongside metaphorical senses supports accurate word sense disambiguation.
- Translation studies: Understanding metaphor-syntax interplay aids translators in preserving meaning across languages.
- Natural Language Processing (NLP): Enhancing semantic parsers with metaphorical syntaxeme data improves the accuracy of AI language models.

In conclusion, metaphorical meanings in polysemy are not just semantic phenomena but are realized through systematic syntactic patterns. Syntaxeme analysis provides a powerful tool for exploring these mappings. The study underscores the value of combining cognitive and syntactic perspectives to better understand language complexity and nuance across different linguistic systems. Future research can expand this approach by exploring additional language families, incorporating psycholinguistic experimentation, and applying the findings to real-world domains such as education, AI development, and intercultural communication.

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