

# The Study of Similes in Uzbek Linguistics: An Exploration of Their Structural and Semantic Nature

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## Abstract

The present article provides a comprehensive examination of similes within the framework of Uzbek linguistics, focusing specifically on their structural and semantic properties. As a fundamental cognitive and stylistic mechanism, the simile plays a crucial role in conceptualizing reality and enriching the expressive capacity of the Uzbek language. This research aims to systematically categorize the structural formations of comparative constructions while simultaneously analyzing the semantic domains that dictate the selection of comparative vehicles. Through a rigorous structural-semantic analysis of empirical data drawn from contemporary Uzbek literary texts and everyday conversational corpora, the study identifies the primary morphological and lexical markers of similes, delineating their syntactic functions and semantic nuances. The findings reveal that the structural apparatus of Uzbek similes is predominantly governed by agglutinative affixes and specific postpositional lexical units, which inherently influence the semantic depth and pragmatic application of the comparison. Furthermore, the semantic mapping of comparative vehicles demonstrates a profound ethnolinguistic connection to the natural environment, traditional agrarian lifestyles, and the broader cultural worldview of the Uzbek speaking population. Ultimately, this research bridges classical stylistic approaches with modern cognitive linguistics, offering a nuanced understanding of how comparative thought processes are grammaticalized and semantically structured in the modern Uzbek linguistic landscape.

**Keywords:** Simile, Uzbek linguistics, structural-semantic analysis, cognitive linguistics, comparative structures, semantic domains, linguistic markers.

## Introduction

The investigation of figurative language has perpetually occupied a central position within the broader discourse of general linguistics, philosophy, and cognitive science, reflecting humanity's inherent reliance on metaphorical and comparative reasoning to decode complex environmental phenomena. Among the myriad figures of speech, the simile stands out as a foundational cognitive mechanism that explicitly bridges two disparate conceptual domains by highlighting a shared attribute, thereby facilitating both comprehension and aesthetic enrichment. In the specific context of Turkic languages, and Uzbek linguistics in particular, the structural and semantic nature of similes presents a deeply fascinating area of inquiry due to the agglutinative morphology and rich historical literary traditions of the

language. Historically, the study of comparisons, known traditionally in Turkic and Persian-Arabic poetics as "tashbeh," was heavily circumscribed within the boundaries of literary criticism, stylistics, and classical poetics. Ancient treatises on rhetoric and eloquence painstakingly cataloged the aesthetic virtues of poetic comparisons, evaluating them based on their originality, emotional resonance, and alignment with established literary canons. However, the transition from purely stylistic interpretations to rigorous grammatical, structural, and cognitive analyses marks a significant evolutionary milestone in contemporary Uzbek linguistics. This paradigm shift necessitates a granular exploration of how comparative thought is syntactically constructed and semantically motivated within the actual linguistic system, moving beyond the isolated

appraisal of literary masterpieces to encompass the everyday functional grammar of the language.

To fully grasp the structural-semantic nature of similes in the Uzbek language, it is imperative to dissect the universal architecture of comparative constructions and contextualize it within Uzbek morphosyntax. Theoretically, a complete simile comprises four distinct components: the tenor, which is the subject being described or compared; the vehicle, which serves as the object or concept to which the tenor is compared; the ground, representing the specific feature, quality, or action shared by both the tenor and the vehicle; and the marker, which is the formal linguistic device that explicitly signals the comparative relationship. In Uzbek linguistics, these elements are systematically conceptualized as "o'xshatiluvchi" (the entity being compared), "o'xshatmish" (the standard of comparison), "o'xshatish asosi" (the foundational basis of comparison), and "o'xshatish vositasi" (the comparative instrument or marker). The structural integrity of an Uzbek simile is heavily reliant on the morphological and lexical variations of the comparative marker, which dictates not only the syntactic configuration of the sentence but also the semantic intensity and register of the utterance. Unlike Indo-European languages that predominantly utilize independent prepositions to establish comparisons, the Uzbek language leverages a highly productive system of nominal affixes alongside a specialized vocabulary of postpositions and comparative particles.

Despite the foundational theoretical frameworks established by earlier generations of lexicologists and grammarians, a comprehensive, unified structural-semantic analysis of similes in contemporary Uzbek discourse remains noticeably underrepresented in modern academic literature. Much of the existing

scholarship tends to fragment the study of similes, with morphologists concentrating exclusively on the grammatical derivation of comparative affixes, while semanticists and literary critics focus inordinately on the symbolic interpretation of the vehicles. This artificial compartmentalization fails to account for the dynamic, interdependent relationship between structural form and semantic meaning. Consequently, there is an urgent theoretical necessity to approach Uzbek similes through an integrated structural-semantic lens that acknowledges how specific syntactic arrangements directly constrain and mold semantic interpretation. Furthermore, the advent of cognitive linguistics demands that similes no longer be viewed merely as ornamental rhetorical devices, but rather as indispensable cognitive templates that reveal the underlying conceptual systems of the speech community. By analyzing the structural configurations and semantic domains of similes, researchers can uncover the ethnocultural paradigms, historical experiences, and collective psychology embedded within the Uzbek language. Therefore, the primary objective of this article is to systematically investigate the structural-semantic nature of similes in modern Uzbek linguistics, aiming to categorize their formal morphological and syntactic structures, analyze the semantic fields from which comparative vehicles are drawn, and elucidate the profound interconnection between linguistic form and cognitive representation in the Uzbek linguistic worldview.

### **Literature Review**

The academic inquiry into the nature of similes and comparative structures boasts a rich and diverse intellectual lineage, encompassing classical rhetorical theories, modern structuralism, and contemporary cognitive paradigms. Foundational Western theoretical frameworks, particularly those articulated by scholars such as I. A.

Richards and Max Black, fundamentally altered the trajectory of figurative language studies by conceptualizing metaphors and similes not merely as linguistic embellishments, but as dynamic interactions between distinct cognitive domains [1], [2]. Richards introduced the enduring terminology of the "tenor" and "vehicle," establishing a structural vocabulary that would eventually permeate global linguistic studies. Subsequently, the monumental cognitive shift initiated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson repositioned these figurative devices as central components of human conceptual systems, arguing that human thought processes are inherently structured by comparative associations [3]. Within the Russian linguistic tradition, which significantly influenced the methodological development of Soviet and post-Soviet Turkic linguistics, researchers such as N. D. Arutyunova conducted exhaustive structural and semantic analyses of comparative constructions, meticulously detailing the syntagmatic relationships and semantic valencies that govern the formation of similes in synthetic languages [4]. These extensive theoretical foundations provided the necessary conceptual scaffolding for the emergence of specialized research dedicated to the structural and semantic peculiarities of the Turkic language family.

In the specific realm of Uzbek linguistics, the systematic investigation of similes transitioned gradually from classical philological commentaries to rigorous structural, morphological, and semantic analyses during the latter half of the twentieth century. Prominent Uzbek linguists such as A. Hojiyev and Sh. Rahmatullayev laid the essential groundwork for understanding the semantic dimensions of the Uzbek lexicon, including the phraseological and comparative units that heavily rely on analogical structures [5],

[6]. Rahmatullayev's extensive lexicographical work implicitly highlighted the structural boundaries of lexicalized similes, providing a vast repository of comparative phraseologisms that continue to serve as primary data for modern researchers. However, the most direct and exhaustive foundational work dedicated explicitly to the phenomenon of similes in the Uzbek language was authored by M. Mukarramov, whose comprehensive monographs systematically categorized comparative constructions based on their grammatical constituents and stylistic functions within literary texts [7]. Mukarramov's classifications remain a cornerstone of Uzbek stylistics, although his primary focus was predominantly oriented toward the poetic and rhetorical functions of similes rather than their broader cognitive and semantic implications in everyday discourse.

In recent decades, the trajectory of Uzbek linguistics has increasingly aligned with global cognitive and structural-semantic trends, leading to a renewed academic interest in the deeper cognitive mechanisms underlying comparative language. The cognitive foundations of the Uzbek language have been extensively explored by N. Mahmudov, who emphasizes that linguistic structures, including similes, are direct reflections of the ethnocultural and psychological framing of the Uzbek speech community [8]. Mahmudov's cognitive approach insists that the selection of the "o'xshatmish" (vehicle) is never arbitrary but is deeply rooted in the historical and environmental consciousness of the people. Furthermore, contemporary structuralist approaches, championed by scholars like R. Sayfullayeva and M. Qurbonova, have meticulously analyzed the syntactic valency and morphological constraints of comparative markers within modern grammatical frameworks, demonstrating how affixes and

postpositions interact within complex sentence structures [9], [10]. Despite these significant advancements, an identifiable gap remains in synthesizing the structural grammar of similes with their cognitive-semantic motivations into a cohesive, integrated analytical model. The present research seeks to build upon this robust literary foundation by fusing the structural categorization methodologies of Sayfullayeva and Mukarramov with the cognitive-semantic perspectives advocated by Mahmudov and international scholars like Croft and Cruse [11], thereby offering a holistic, structural-semantic exposition of similes in the contemporary Uzbek language.

### **Methodology**

The methodological framework of this research is predicated on a comprehensive, mixed-methods approach that seamlessly integrates structural-semantic analysis with the fundamental principles of contemporary cognitive linguistics. To ensure a robust and empirically valid investigation of similes within the Uzbek language, the study deliberately eschews purely prescriptive grammatical models in favor of a descriptive, corpus-informed analytical strategy. The primary objective of this methodology is to systematically isolate comparative constructions within natural linguistic contexts, dissect their formal syntactic and morphological architectures, and subsequently analyze the semantic motivations that govern the relationship between the tenor and the vehicle. By employing a dual-focus methodology, the research simultaneously addresses the mechanical construction of similes—how they are structurally assembled using the grammatical tools available in Uzbek—and their semantic resonance, exploring the cultural and cognitive significance of the chosen comparative elements.

Data collection for this study was executed through purposeful, stratified sampling of

contemporary Uzbek texts to capture a wide spectrum of stylistic registers and semantic variations. The primary textual corpus comprises selected literary works from prominent twentieth and twenty-first-century Uzbek authors, including the intricate prose of Abdulla Qodiriy and the evocative poetry of Erkin Vohidov, which provide rich repositories of both classical and innovative comparative structures. To counterbalance the elevated register of literary texts and ensure the findings reflect the broader linguistic reality, the corpus is supplemented with transcriptions of contemporary journalistic prose and authenticated samples of colloquial Uzbek conversation. Once the data collection phase was finalized, the analytical procedure commenced with the extraction of all sentences containing explicit comparative markers, yielding a substantial dataset of preliminary comparative structures.

The subsequent analytical phase employed meticulous componential analysis to deconstruct each extracted simile into its constituent functional parts: the subject of comparison, the object of comparison, the basis of comparison, and the explicit comparative marker. This structural dissection facilitated the categorization of the similes based on the morphological and lexical nature of their markers, allowing for the precise mapping of syntactic patterns. Following the structural classification, a rigorous semantic field analysis was applied exclusively to the vehicle components of the similes. This involved grouping the objects of comparison into overarching semantic domains and sub-domains based on their fundamental lexical meanings and conceptual associations. The semantic categorization process was deeply informed by the tenets of cognitive linguistics, which posit that the frequency and nature of comparative vehicles serve as direct indicators of the ethnocultural

worldview and cognitive mapping strategies inherent to the specific speech community under investigation.

### Results and Analysis

The comprehensive structural-semantic analysis of the extracted textual data reveals that similes in the Uzbek language are highly dynamic and morphosyntactically diverse constructions, exhibiting a complex interplay between grammatical form and semantic depth. The structural architecture of an Uzbek simile is fundamentally dictated by the grammatical category of the comparative marker, which seamlessly bridges the subject of comparison with the object of comparison. Our analysis indicates that the formal expression of similes in Uzbek operates primarily along a continuum between synthetic morphological derivation and analytic lexical construction. The synthetic approach is realized through the extensive utilization of specific agglutinative affixes directly

attached to the nominal root of the vehicle, whereas the analytic approach relies on independent auxiliary words, predominantly postpositions, that follow the vehicle in the syntactic sequence. The structural typology of these comparative mechanisms profoundly influences both the rhythmic flow of the utterance and the nuanced precision of the comparative foundation.

To systematically illustrate the structural diversity of comparative constructions observed within the corpus, the findings have been categorized based on the grammatical nature of the comparative markers. The quantitative and qualitative distribution of these structural types provides crucial insights into the functional grammar of Uzbek similes. Table 1 outlines the primary structural typologies of simile markers identified in contemporary Uzbek discourse, detailing their grammatical classifications and typical structural configurations.

**Table 1: Structural Typology of Simile Markers in Contemporary Uzbek**

| Grammatical Category  | Specific Markers                | Structural Configuration                    | Functional Syntax                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Morphological Affixes | <i>-dek, -day, -simon, -ona</i> | [Vehicle + Suffix]                          | Attached directly to the nominal stem, creating an adverbial or adjectival modifier representing a high degree of integration. |
| Lexical Postpositions | <i>kabi, singari, yanglig'</i>  | [Vehicle] + [Postposition]                  | Operates as a distinct lexical unit governing the preceding noun, often utilized in formal, academic, or literary registers.   |
| Modal Particles       | <i>go'yo, bamisoli, xuddi</i>   | [Particle] + [Subject] + [Vehicle + Marker] | Functions at the clausal level, emphasizing the hypothetical, illustrative, or absolute nature of the proposed comparison.     |

The morphological affixes, most notably *-dek* and its phonetic variant *-day*, emerge as the most highly productive structural markers in everyday conversational and standard written Uzbek. These suffixes are exceptionally versatile, effortlessly attaching to nouns, pronouns, and even verbal nouns to instantly generate a

comparative modifier. When a suffix such as *-dek* is employed, the semantic boundary between the vehicle and the marker effectively dissolves, resulting in a tightly bound conceptual unit that heavily emphasizes the specific shared attribute, often prioritizing brevity and directness. Conversely, the lexical postpositions, such

as *kabi* and *singari*, maintain distinct morphological independence and are significantly more prevalent in formal prose, scientific discourse, and elevated literary texts. The use of these analytical markers tends to expand the syntactic distance between the elements of the simile, creating a more deliberate, measured, and explicit comparison that allows for the integration of complex, multi-word phrases as the vehicle. The modal particles, including *go'yo* and *bamisoli*, operate on a macro-structural level, frequently preceding the entire comparative clause to establish an overarching atmosphere of analogy, and they are almost universally accompanied by an affix or postposition later in the sentence to complete the grammatical requirement of the comparison.

Transitioning from the structural mechanics to the semantic substance of the similes, the analysis of the vehicle components exposes the profound cognitive topography

and ethnocultural specificities of the Uzbek language. The selection of the object of comparison is never an arbitrary linguistic exercise; rather, it is a highly structured cognitive process constrained by the historical, environmental, and socio-cultural experiences of the speech community. By isolating the semantic kernels of the vehicles utilized in the corpus, the research successfully categorized the comparative standards into distinct, highly populated semantic domains. These domains reflect the conceptual reservoirs from which Uzbek speakers most frequently draw to elucidate abstract concepts, emotional states, and physical properties.

Table 2 presents the systematic categorization of the predominant semantic domains serving as comparative vehicles in the analyzed Uzbek corpus, highlighting the specific sub-categories that define the ethnolinguistic landscape.

**Table 2: Semantic Domains of the Vehicle Component in Uzbek Similes**

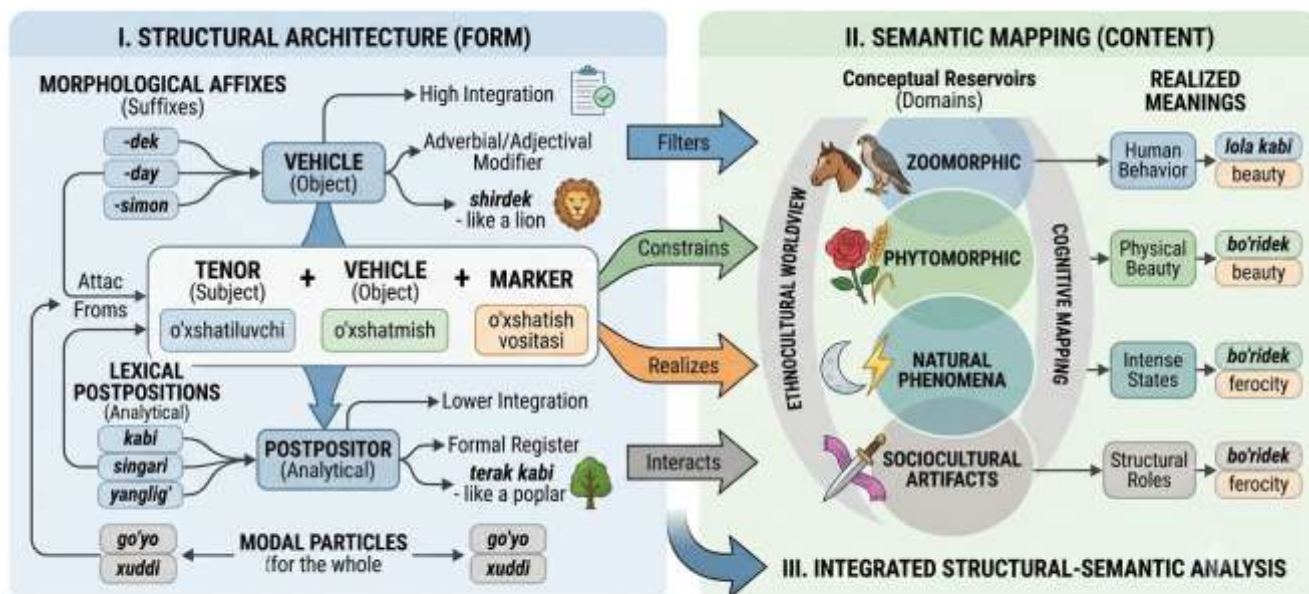
| Primary Semantic Domain | Specific Sub-Categories                                      | Conceptual Motivation in Context                                                                                   |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Zoomorphic (Animals)    | Domestic livestock, birds of prey, wild predators            | Represents human behavioral traits, physical agility, ferocity, loyalty, or inherent perceived flaws.              |
| Phytomorphic (Plants)   | Fruit-bearing trees, specific flowers (tulip, rose), crops   | Symbolizes physical beauty, youth, stages of human development, frailty, and the ephemeral nature of life.         |
| Natural Phenomena       | Celestial bodies (moon, sun), weather elements, water bodies | Conceptualizes intense emotional states, overwhelming force, radiant physical attractiveness, and vastness.        |
| Sociocultural Artifacts | Traditional clothing, agrarian tools, architectural elements | Illustrates functional utility, structural stability, rigidity, or specific traditional societal roles and values. |

The semantic analysis conclusively demonstrates that the Uzbek comparative worldview is overwhelmingly anchored in the physical and natural environment. The zoomorphic domain is particularly robust, reflecting a historical linguistic layer deeply connected to pastoral and agrarian

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traditions. Comparisons utilizing domestic animals frequently convey complex social behaviors and temperaments, whereas the invocation of wild predators is typically reserved to illustrate extraordinary courage, aggression, or swiftness. Similarly, the phytomorphic domain underscores a

## CONCEPT MAP OF SIMILE IN UZBEK LINGUISTICS: STRUCTURAL-SEMANTIC SYSTEM



**Figure 1:** Comprehensive schematic of the structural-semantic system of similes in modern Uzbek linguistics, illustrating the dynamic interplay between grammatical forms (markers, architecture) and conceptual domains (zoomorphic, phytomorphic, natural, sociocultural).

profound cultural appreciation for aesthetics and the natural life cycle, with specific flora like the tulip (*lola*) or the poplar tree (*terak*) serving as deeply entrenched, culturally codified standards for beauty and physical stature, respectively. Furthermore, the recurrent use of celestial bodies and meteorological phenomena to describe human physical attractiveness and volatile emotional states highlights a universal cognitive tendency to map the macrocosm onto the human microcosm, a tendency that the Uzbek language realizes through highly specific, culturally resonant imagery. The interplay between these rich semantic domains and the versatile structural markers constitutes the core essence of the Uzbek simile, blending grammatical precision with profound cultural conceptualization.

### Discussion

The empirical findings of this structural-semantic analysis offer a profound and multi-faceted perspective on the intricate mechanics of comparative language within Uzbek linguistics, bridging the gap between formal grammatical architecture and

cognitive semantic representation. When juxtaposed with the comparative mechanisms of Indo-European languages such as English or Russian, the structural flexibility of the Uzbek simile becomes particularly pronounced and theoretically significant. While English predominantly relies on rigidly positioned prepositions and conjunctions such as "like" and "as" to establish an analogical relationship, the agglutinative morphological typology of the Uzbek language empowers speakers to generate comparative semantics through a highly productive system of suffixes. This morphological capability allows for the creation of incredibly compact, dense, and tightly integrated comparative units that function fluidly as adverbs or adjectives within the sentence structure. The dual availability of both synthetic affixes and analytical lexical postpositions in Uzbek provides speakers and writers with an exceptionally nuanced stylistic repertoire, enabling them to consciously calibrate the formality, rhythm, and cognitive distance of the comparison to perfectly align with the specific communicative context.

From a cognitive and semantic standpoint, the extensive categorization of the comparative vehicles unequivocally reinforces the theoretical postulate that similes function as vital windows into the ethnocultural cognition of a speech community. The overwhelming prevalence of zoomorphic, phytomorphic, and naturalistic semantic domains within the analyzed corpus is not merely a linguistic coincidence but a direct reflection of the historical, geographical, and socio-economic realities that have shaped the Uzbek cognitive landscape over centuries. The frequent linguistic reliance on agrarian imagery, specific native flora, and traditional livestock to conceptualize abstract human emotions and complex interpersonal behaviors demonstrates how deeply the traditional Uzbek lifestyle is inscribed into the very grammatical and semantic fabric of the language. This suggests that understanding a language's comparative structures requires moving beyond structural syntax to actively engage with the cultural encyclopedic knowledge of the speakers, as the semantic weight of a simile like "shirdek" (like a lion) or "guldag" (like a flower) encompasses entirely specific, culturally conditioned networks of meaning that may not directly translate across linguistic borders.

Furthermore, the integration of structural and semantic methodologies in this study illuminates the critical interdependence of form and meaning, demonstrating that the choice of a specific structural marker often subtly dictates the semantic interpretation of the entire comparative clause. The findings highlight that the structural-semantic approach is indispensable for modern Uzbek linguistics, moving the discipline away from isolated morphological categorizations toward a holistic understanding of meaning-making processes. However, it is necessary to acknowledge the inherent limitations of

corpus-based studies, as the dynamic, rapidly evolving nature of contemporary spoken Uzbek continuously generates novel comparative slang and informal analogies that may not yet be captured in formal literary or journalistic texts. Recognizing this, the theoretical models and structural typologies articulated in this research provide a stable, yet adaptable, foundational framework that future scholars can utilize to analyze the ongoing evolution of figurative language, computational semantic mapping, and the intricate challenges of cross-cultural translation in the Uzbek language.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the present research has systematically illuminated the structural and semantic dualism that fundamentally characterizes similes within contemporary Uzbek linguistics. By moving beyond traditional poetic and purely stylistic appraisals, this study has firmly situated the analysis of comparative constructions within the rigorous frameworks of structural grammar and cognitive semantic theory. The exhaustive examination of empirical linguistic data unequivocally demonstrates that the structural apparatus of the Uzbek simile is defined by a versatile, bipartite system encompassing highly productive agglutinative suffixes and specific analytic lexical postpositions. This structural diversity not only dictates the syntactic configuration of the comparative clause but also provides speakers with intricate stylistic mechanisms to modulate the intensity, formality, and directness of their analogical expressions. The morphological fluidity inherent to the Uzbek language facilitates the seamless integration of comparative concepts into the broader grammatical stream, distinguishing its typological behavior from languages reliant solely on prepositional comparative markers.

Equally significant are the insights garnered from the semantic field analysis of the comparative vehicles, which vividly uncovers the ethnolinguistic cognitive mapping strategies of the Uzbek speech community. The overwhelming reliance on semantic domains rooted in the natural environment, traditional agrarian life, zoomorphic behaviors, and specific cultural artifacts unequivocally proves that similes are profound repositories of collective cultural memory and environmental perception. These linguistic mechanisms serve not merely as decorative rhetorical flourishes, but as essential cognitive instruments through which speakers conceptualize abstract realities, emotional depths, and complex social dynamics by anchoring them to familiar, culturally resonant phenomena. The intersection of specific grammatical structures with these deeply entrenched semantic domains constitutes the unique linguistic identity of the Uzbek simile.

Ultimately, this integrated structural-semantic exploration substantially enriches the existing body of knowledge in Turkic linguistics and provides a robust theoretical foundation for future interdisciplinary research. The typologies and semantic frameworks established herein hold significant practical implications for the advancement of Uzbek computational linguistics, particularly in the development of sophisticated natural language processing algorithms capable of recognizing and interpreting complex figurative semantics. Furthermore, the detailed understanding of the cultural and cognitive motivations behind comparative structures offers invaluable insights for the field of translation studies, ensuring that the profound semantic depth and structural elegance of the Uzbek language are accurately and effectively conveyed across distinct linguistic and cultural boundaries.

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