

Allegory and Symbol in Literary Discourse: A Pragmatic and Comparative Analysis of Uzbek and English Texts

SAYDALIYEVA GULCHEKHRA SAYDUMAROVNA
Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the pragmatic functions of allegorical-symbolic representation in English and Uzbek literary discourse from a comparative perspective. It argues that although allegory and symbol are closely related semiotic phenomena, they differ in semantic determinacy and interpretative scope: allegory tends toward relatively fixed conceptual meanings, while symbolism remains more open and multilayered.

The study shows that allegorical meaning in literary texts emerges through the interaction of linguistic units, cultural associations, and contextual interpretation. Phytomorphic codes are examined as key linguocultural mechanisms that transform lexical items into carriers of implicit cultural and ideological meanings.

The analysis reveals that English literary discourse predominantly links allegorical-symbolic structures with individual psychology and social evaluation, whereas Uzbek literary discourse more strongly reflects collective identity, historical memory, and ethical values. The findings demonstrate that allegorical-symbolic expression functions as an important pragmatic tool for conveying implicit meanings and guiding reader interpretation in both traditions.

Keywords: Allegory, symbolism, pragmatics, literary discourse, implicit meaning, comparative analysis

INTRODUCTION

In literary discourse, allegorical-symbolic elements operate as implicit carriers of authorial intention, facilitate access to deeper layers of textual meaning, and influence the reader's interpretive engagement with the text. Accordingly, this section provides a comparative examination of the pragmatic functions of allegorical-symbolic representation in Uzbek and English literary texts, emphasizing its contribution to meaning-making processes and communicative effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In traditional literary and linguistic views, symbol is commonly regarded as the phenomenon most closely related to allegory in terms of semantic structure. The primary feature that brings these two concepts together is their shared reliance on figurative representation as a means of conveying meaning. (Ivin & Nikiforov 1997). This affinity is reflected in many scholarly definitions, where a symbol is typically understood as an image, object, or concept that possesses an independent meaning while simultaneously evoking a broader, more generalized, and often implicit layer of significance.

Nevertheless, the conceptual proximity between allegory and symbol should not be interpreted as evidence of their equivalence. On the contrary, a number of scholars have emphasized the existence of fundamental distinctions between the two. While both operate through indirect meaning construction, they differ in the degree of semantic determinacy, the nature of representational relationships, and the mechanisms through which meaning is generated and interpreted within a text (Grass 2012).

According to this perspective, the meaning of a symbol cannot be fully disclosed through purely logical or rational explanation. A symbol does not exist independently of the figurative structure in which it is embedded, nor can it be reduced to a fixed conceptual formula detached from its artistic context. In other words, any attempt to translate a symbol

directly into conceptual language risks diminishing its aesthetic richness and semantic complexity (Kojnikova 1987). Therefore, symbolic meaning is understood as inherently dependent on the integrity of the artistic structure, emerging through the interaction between the symbolic image, the textual context, and the reader's interpretative engagement. Allegory and symbol are both phenomena formed on the basis of the interaction between "inner" and "outer" layers of meaning.

However, the degree of correspondence between these layers is not identical. In allegory, the relationship between internal meaning and external image is relatively indirect and partial, whereas in symbol this relation approaches a state of near-equivalence. Therefore, allegory and symbol can be differentiated and comparatively analyzed on the basis of several linguistic criteria.

First, they differ according to the source of meaning formation. In allegory, an abstract concept serves as the initial point of departure and is subsequently concretized through figurative expression. In contrast, in symbols, a concrete phenomenon or object functions as the primary basis, gradually acquiring deeper semantic layers through cultural and contextual enrichment (Brown & Weber 2023).

Second, the relationship between idea and image differs in nature. In allegory, the external figurative layer tends to dominate the internal conceptual meaning. In symbols, however, a balance is established between the inner and outer layers, resulting in a unified structure in which idea and image complement each other (Emery 2012).

Third, the degree of identity between idea and image also varies. In allegory, this correspondence remains incomplete, whereas in symbols it reaches a much higher level of convergence, approaching near-equivalence (Mellor 1979).

Fourth, they differ in terms of linguistic realization. Allegory may be expressed at the level of a word, phrase, sentence, episode, or even an entire text. Symbol, by contrast, is typically realized at the level of a word or phrase. Thus, allegory has a broader scope of functioning, while symbol is more compact in form but significantly deeper and more layered in meaning.

(Berefelt 1969). Allegory and symbol are widely regarded as phenomena that are ontologically and genetically closely related, as evidenced by numerous studies (https://rik.mgpu.ru/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2018/09/2_2007_7.pdf).

Contemporary scholars also acknowledge this relationship and when discussing the nature of allegory and its connection to symbol, emphasize that both undergo continuous transformation within historical development. In his work *The Problem of the Symbol and Realistic Art*, A. F. Losev examines the symbol in comparison with closely related structural-semantic categories and notes that symbols are often confused with allegory. This confusion is primarily explained by the fact that both phenomena intersect at certain points of generality and unity. Therefore, the boundary between allegory and symbol is not always strict or easily distinguishable; rather, their differences are in some cases extremely subtle and fluid in nature.

J. Huizinga interprets allegory as a form of symbol that has been transferred to the surface of representation, that is, deliberately transformed into an external mode of expression (Huizinga 1988). In this regard, he relies on I. V. Goethe's well-known observations. According to Goethe, allegory transforms a phenomenon into a concept and subsequently converts the concept into an image; in this process, the concept is fully unfolded within the image and expressed in a delimited form. In contrast, in the symbol, a phenomenon becomes an idea, and the idea becomes an image; however, the idea embodied in the image remains incomplete and is not ultimately finalized. It is therefore semantically open, profound, and not reducible to a fixed or exhaustive definition (Huizinga 1988). Consequently, while meaning in allegory is relatively determinate and bounded, in the symbol it is multilayered, open, and continuously subject to interpretation. Some scholars interpret the theory of the symbol within a dialectical framework. In their view, the aesthetics of the symbol is understood as an artistic form oriented toward the complete and perfect expression of the Platonic eidos, that is, essence (Ovsyannikova 1993). According to this conception, a necessary, internal, and organic connection exists between sign and meaning, and the symbol functions as a trope that expresses

truth and essence on the basis of this intrinsic unity. From this perspective, the symbol appears to overcome the mediating complexity inherent in linguistic representation, as it presents the object in such a way that representational means do not obstruct the process of perception.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

From a semiotic perspective, allegory shares common features with the artistic symbol, as both mobilize the image as a sign-based form of expression that conveys meaning. Nevertheless, allegory is distinguished from the symbol by its relatively unambiguous mode of interpretation, its more clearly defined vector of semantic development, and the specific genre-related features determined by these factors (Jilevich 2020).

However, in contrast to such idealist aesthetic interpretations, researchers have also proposed an alternative understanding of the nature of allegorical meaning. According to this view, the essence of allegory lies not in the continuity between image and idea or between sign and meaning, but rather in the emphasis on the discontinuity and irreducible distance between them (Maslennikova 1999). Accordingly, while in the symbol meaning is perceived as the result of a natural and intrinsic connection, in allegory it acquires a conventional, arbitrary, and constructed character. Thus, allegorical meaning is not an immediate or self-evident essence but a system of meaning formed on the basis of specific cultural, semiotic, and interpretative conventions. In this sense, allegory does not represent a direct manifestation of an original truth, but rather an indirect and mediated form of artistic expression that is partially removed from it (Jilevich 2020). As a result, the relationship between an allegorical image and the meaning it conveys is indirect and grounded in conventional signification rather than in any intrinsic or natural correspondence. In this regard, allegory approximates the symbol, insofar as the symbol likewise articulates a relatively stable and culturally sedimented meaning through a determinate figurative form.

In English literary texts, the pragmatic function of allegorical-symbolic expression is frequently associated with the representation of subjective interiority, socio-cultural contradictions, critical discourses, and ironic modality. In such contexts, the surface-level image typically operates as a semiotic vehicle that encodes a deeper stratum of signification. Consequently, the reader is compelled not only to reconstruct the narrative sequence but also to engage in the interpretation of the text's latent ideological and conceptual dimensions. From this perspective, the expressive potential of allegorical-symbolic configurations within the English literary tradition is closely tied to this multilayered semiotic structure.

Within literary discourse, allegorical and symbolic expressions constitute essential linguopoetic mechanisms that contribute to the stratification and expansion of textual semantics. Meaning, in such configurations, is not overtly articulated; rather, it is generated through the interplay of imagery, symbolic codification, intertextual allusion, contextual embedding, and inferential operations within the reader's interpretative cognition. Accordingly, the analysis of the allegory-symbol nexus provides a fundamental theoretical basis for the elucidation of implicit meaning in literary texts, as well as for the explication of the semantic and pragmatic mechanisms governing its production and reception.

Primarily, it is necessary to delineate the conceptual and functional relationship between allegory and symbol. The symbol is characterized by its capacity to encompass multilayered signification within a single representational unit, along with its inherent openness, semantic plurality, and interpretative indeterminacy. Allegory, in contrast, constitutes a more systematized and conceptually oriented semiotic formation. Within allegorical structures, images function as carriers of specific conceptual content, organized in a coherent, conventionalized, and often teleologically oriented manner. In this sense, the symbol may operate as a constitutive element within allegorical systems, whereas allegory integrates a network of interrelated symbols into a unified artistic-semiotic configuration. Importantly, while the symbol preserves semantic

openness and interpretative plurality at the level of the individual sign, allegory tends to delimit interpretative trajectories, orienting the reader toward a more determinate conceptual resolution.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The difference between allegory and symbol is also evident in their degree of linguistic realization. Allegory can be formed at the level of a word, phrase, sentence, episode, or even an entire text. The symbol, by contrast, is more commonly realized at the level of a word or phrase, yet it is semantically much deeper and more multilayered. For example, units such as “black robe,” “milch cow,” “moth,” and “snake venom” may carry symbolic meanings; however, when they are integrated into a coherent ideological system within a specific context, they acquire allegorical value. In this sense, allegory can also be interpreted as a system of culturally stabilized symbols whose meanings are relatively conventionalized and broadly understandable.

In English literary discourse, allegorical-symbolic expressions function as important linguopoetic devices in the semantic organization of the text, and their use is observed in relation to the following aspect.

In both English and Uzbek literary discourse, the allegorical-symbolic use of phytonyms is determined not only by their nominative function but also by their role as an important linguocultural code expressing collective cultural memory. The “phytonymic code” can be understood as a mechanism through which plant names generate symbolic and allegorical meanings in literary texts. In English literary discourse, “oak” symbolizes antiquity, strength, aristocracy, and national stability; “rose” represents love and beauty; “lily” signifies purity and chastity; and “willow” conveys sorrow and separation. In Uzbek cultural thought, the phytonymic code is defined by the symbolic-semantic load of plant names: *chinor* represents ancestry and eternity, *ildiz* denotes homeland and historical memory, *gul* symbolizes femininity and beauty, *lola* expresses youth, love, and sometimes sacrifice, *rayhon* signifies purity and spiritual fragrance, *tol* represents grief and separation, and *anor* conveys abundance and continuity of نسل (lineage).

Thus, in both English and Uzbek literary discourse, phytonymic codes-systems of symbolic meanings formed through plant names-function as important linguocultural means of generating allegorical meaning. These codes do not merely perform a nominative function in the literary text; rather, they express people's perceptions of nature, historical memory, moral values, and aesthetic worldview.

The allegorical potential of phytonyms is primarily associated with their dual-layer semantic structure. In the first layer, a plant name has a denotative meaning; for instance, English units such as "oak," "rose," and "yew," as well as Uzbek units such as *chinor*, *gul*, and *tol*, refer to specific botanical entities. In the second layer, however, these names acquire symbolic meanings under the influence of cultural experience, collective memory, and literary context. In English, "oak" signifies antiquity, land-based stability, aristocratic heritage, and national values, whereas in Uzbek, *chinor* is not merely a tree but a symbol of ancestry, roots, the nation, and eternity.

Within this process, nouns, adjectives, and verbs perform distinct linguistic functions. Nouns establish the material basis of the symbol: units such as *chinor*, *ildiz*, *gul*, "oak," "stream," and "tree" form the symbolic core within the text. Adjectives, in turn, assign evaluative, emotional, and culturally embedded semantic features to these referents. For example, in combinations such as *azim chinor*, *ona tuproq*, *qizil gul*, and *oq gul*, adjectives do not function as purely descriptive elements but rather intensify culturally encoded meanings. Similarly, in English expressions such as "beautiful oaks," "natural beauty," and "old yew arbour," adjectives elevate phytonyms to the level of aesthetic and cultural coding.

The analysis shows that in English, verbs such as "was swelled," "scattered," "continue," and "decay" contribute to the creation of meanings related to inner order, continuity, or loss through natural imagery. In the construction of symbolic-allegorical meaning, verbs function not merely as static descriptors of phytonymic symbols but as dynamic elements that activate meaning in motion.

In Uzbek literary discourse, verbs such as *o'sib chiqqan* (has grown up), *tutashib ketgan* (has become interconnected), *shovillaydi* (rustles), and *qon tirqirarmish* (to bleed) serve to animate plant imagery, representing it as a living, feeling, and memory-bearing entity.

Although there are similarities in the formation of symbolic-allegorical structures through phytonymic codes in both English and Uzbek literary discourse, their cultural and semantic orientations differ. In English texts, phytonymic codes are often associated with spatial settings such as “estate,” “garden,” “lawn,” and “country house,” thereby reflecting social status, property culture, aesthetic sensibility, and moral norms. In Uzbek texts, however, plant imagery is more frequently linked with concepts such as *ona tuproq* (motherland/soil), *ildiz* (root), *avlod* (generation), *xonadon* (household), and *yurt* (homeland).

Examples from English literary works:

...the beautiful oaks and Spanish chestnuts which were scattered over the intermediate lawn. (Austen 2008a)

Every disposition of the ground was good; and she looked on the whole scene, the river, the trees scattered on its banks and the winding of the valley, as far as she could trace it, with delight. (Austen 2008a)

And you, ye well-known trees! - but you will continue the same. No leaf will decay because we are removed, nor any branch become motionless although we can observe you no longer! (Austen 2008b: 32)

As they approached Barton, indeed, and entered on scenes of which every field and every tree brought some peculiar, some painful recollection, she grew silent and thoughtful... (Austen 2008b: 410)

On Thursday afternoons (half-holidays) we now took walks, and found still sweeter flowers opening by the wayside, under the hedges. (Brontë 2018)

The situation of the house was good. High hills rose immediately behind... the others cultivated and woody. (Austen 2008b: 34)

The data analysis demonstrates that in English literary discourse, symbolic and allegorical meanings are not realized through direct lexical reference, but rather emerge from the lexical-semantic properties of units such as “tree,” “oak,” “chestnut,” “leaf,” “branch,” “fruit-tree,” “mulberry,” “yew,” and “flower.” These lexical items initially function as denotative plant names; however, within specific contextual configurations, they acquire secondary signification and come to encode abstract conceptual domains such as memory, heritage, moral order, familial stability, and spiritual regeneration. In this semiotic process, nouns constitute the material anchoring of the symbolic system, adjectives intensify its evaluative and culturally embedded meanings, while verbs dynamically extend phytonymic imagery by associating it with processes of action, remembrance, and psychological transformation.

In Uzbek literary discourse, the findings indicate that allegorical meaning is predominantly not articulated through explicit didactic exposition but is instead mediated via culturally entrenched symbolic structures grounded in collective memory. Within this framework, lexical units such as *chinor* (plane tree), *ildiz* (root), *ona tuproq* (mother soil/homeland), *tana* (trunk/body), *qon* (blood), *nasl* (lineage), *qizil gul* (red flower), and *oq gul* (white flower) extend beyond their primary nominative function and operate as carriers of complex conceptual meaning. For instance, *chinor* does not merely denote a botanical entity but functions as a culturally salient symbol of historical continuity and intergenerational persistence. Similarly, the semantic domains of “root” and “blood” transcend individual biological reference and instead index collective genealogical origin and the existential foundation of communal identity. In expressions such as “If a blade strikes the trunk of the plane tree, it bleeds,” the tree is anthropomorphized, whereby the natural referent is reconceptualized as a metaphorical embodiment of the nation’s corporeality, collective memory, and sacralized existence.

Abdulla Qodiriy’s narrative discourse, images such as “red flower” and “white flower” encode differentiated aesthetic and ethical dimensions of femininity, as well as nuanced

representations of human dignity and emotional refinement. Consequently, in Uzbek literary texts, symbolic structures do not obscure allegorical meaning but rather naturalize and embed it within culturally specific cognitive frameworks. As a result, meaning is not primarily accessed at the lexical surface level but is reconstructed through deeper semantic strata associated with memory, homeland, lineage, purity, and vitality.

The analysis of the presented examples indicates that in Uzbek literary discourse, phytonymic codes function as a multilayered and highly productive linguocultural mechanism for the construction of allegorical meaning. Lexical units such as *chinor* (plane tree), *ildiz* (root), *tomir* (vein/root), *tana* (trunk/body), *barg* (leaf), *gul* (flower), *xazon* (fallen leaves), *maysa* (grass shoot), *lola* (tulip), *nastarin* (jasmine), *na'matak* (wild rose), and *chechak* (blossom) initially operate at the denotative level as referents of plants or natural elements. However, within literary contexts, they transcend their lexical boundaries and evolve into symbolic-allegorical signs that encode abstract concepts such as people, homeland, lineage, memory, life, love, loss, and spiritual renewal.

Nouns establish the material foundation of the symbolic system, adjectives intensify its emotional and culturally embedded meanings, while verbs extend phytonymic imagery into domains of action, state, and inner experience. For instance, verbs such as *ingraydi* (groans), *ko'milib yotadi* (lies buried), *egilib qolibdi* (has bent down), *qalqib boradi* (floats/drifts), *chayqala boshladi* (begins to sway), *hayot beradilar* (give life), and *umid beradilar* (give hope) transform botanical imagery from static description into dynamic signs that convey psychological and philosophical meaning.

CONCLUSION

Thus, in Uzbek literary discourse, phytonymic codes generate allegorical meaning not through explicit moral or didactic exposition, but through culturally grounded symbolic associations embedded in national cognition. These codes establish a profound semantic interconnection between nature

and humanity, homeland and lineage, memory and loss, as well as love and hope. Accordingly, phytonyms should be regarded not merely as descriptive lexical units, but as essential linguocultural mechanisms that articulate the spiritual experience, collective memory, and philosophical worldview of the people.

From this perspective, the formation of allegorical meaning through phytonymic codes may be interpreted as a three-stage process in literary discourse. First, the plant name functions as a referential designation of a concrete object. Second, it activates culturally conditioned associative meanings. Third, within the textual context, these associations are transformed into abstract conceptual structures, thereby generating allegorical meaning.

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SAYDALIYEVA GULCHEKHRA SAYDUMAROVNA

PHD STUDENT,

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE,

NAMANGAN STATE INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES,

NAMANGAN 160139, UZBEKISTAN.

E-MAIL: <SAYDALIEVA1983@GMAIL.COM>