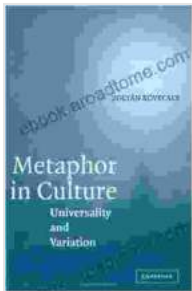


# Metaphor: Exploring Universality and Variation Across Cultures

Metaphor, a powerful tool of language, transcends the boundaries of literal meaning, inviting us into a realm of imagination and deeper understanding. It weaves its way through our everyday speech, shaping our thoughts and perceptions of the world around us. But beyond its pervasive presence in human communication, metaphor holds a captivating secret: its universality.



## Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation

by Zoltán Kövecses

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

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## The Universality of Metaphor

Across cultures and languages, researchers have consistently observed the presence of metaphor in human discourse. Studies have revealed that metaphors drawn from the domains of the body, nature, and social interactions are remarkably widespread.

For instance, the concept of "love" is often metaphorically expressed as a burning fire in many cultures. This fiery metaphor captures the intensity and warmth associated with this emotion.

The universality of metaphor suggests that it is an inherent cognitive process, ingrained in the human mind. This commonality underscores the fundamental role of metaphor in our ability to communicate, think, and make sense of the world.

### **Variation in Metaphor**

While metaphor exhibits universality, it is not entirely uniform across cultures. Subtle variations exist, reflecting the unique experiences, beliefs, and values of different societies.

For example, the Lakoffian conceptual metaphor "argument is war" is prevalent in Western cultures. However, in Japanese culture, arguments are often conceptualized as a dance, highlighting the emphasis on harmony and interpersonal relationships.

These variations in metaphor usage not only reveal cultural differences but also provide insights into the cognitive processes that shape our perceptions and understandings.

### **Metaphor, Culture, and Language**

The relationship between metaphor, culture, and language is intertwined and complex. Metaphors reflect and reinforce cultural values and beliefs, becoming integral to the very fabric of a society.

In the Hopi language, for instance, there is no exact equivalent for the English word "time." Instead, the Hopi conceptualize time as a fluid, cyclical process, reflected in their use of metaphorical expressions such as "the river of time."

Language, in turn, influences how we perceive and use metaphors. The grammatical structures and vocabulary of a language can shape the ways in which metaphors are constructed and interpreted.

### **Cognitive Consequences of Cultural Variation in Metaphor**

The variation in metaphor usage across cultures has cognitive consequences. Research suggests that cultural differences in metaphor may influence how people think about and solve problems.

For instance, individuals from cultures that emphasize a "controlling" metaphor for nature tend to adopt a more interventionist approach to environmental issues, while those from cultures that emphasize a "nurturing" metaphor adopt a more collaborative approach.

These findings highlight the profound impact of metaphor on our cognitive processes, shaping our perceptions, beliefs, and decision-making.

Metaphor is a captivating phenomenon that transcends cultural boundaries yet exhibits subtle variations. Its universality underscores its fundamental role in human cognition, while its variation provides a window into the diverse ways we perceive and make sense of the world.

By exploring the universality and variation of metaphor across cultures, we gain a deeper understanding of human communication, thought, and the

intricate relationship between language and culture.



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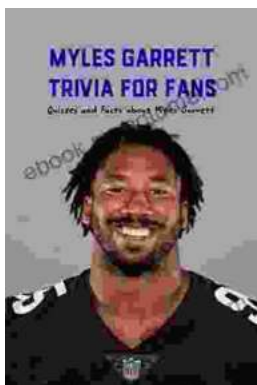
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