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## METAPHORIZATION AS A PRIMARY MECHANISM OF MODERN ENGLISH LEXICAL EXPANSION

**Summary.** Word formation in English has traditionally been analyzed through morphological mechanisms such as derivation, compounding, conversion, clipping and blending. However, semantic mechanisms, particularly metaphorization, play a significant, pervasive role in lexical development.

Metaphorization refers to the process by which a word acquires a new meaning based on perceived similarity or analogy between two conceptual domains. Traditionally, metaphor is a rhetorical ornament used primarily in poetry and literary discourse. The topicality of metaphorization lies in its central role in modern linguistic research, cognitive science and discourse analysis. In contemporary English, metaphorization is not merely a stylistic means but a productive and systematic mechanism of meaning creation. Rapid technological development, globalization and digital communication constantly generate new concepts that require linguistic expression. Furthermore, metaphorization is especially relevant in analyzing media, political and scientific communication, where metaphorical framing influences perception, evaluation and decision-making. In the era of information overload and persuasive discourse, understanding metaphorization is essential for critical language awareness.

The article examines metaphorization as one of the most productive and cognitively grounded mechanisms of word formation in the English language. Unlike purely morphological processes such as affixation or compounding, metaphorization operates at the semantic level, enabling existing lexical units to develop new meanings through conceptual transfer. Drawing upon cognitive linguistic theory, particularly the work of G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, the study explores the role of metaphor in lexical innovation, semantic extension and terminological development. The analysis demonstrates that metaphorization is not a marginal stylistic device but a systematic and dominant means of lexical expansion in modern English, especially in technological, scientific and socio-cultural domains. It functions as continuous source of lexical enrichment, shaping both everyday vocabulary and specialized terminology.

**Key words:** metaphorization, compounding, conversion, neologism, lexicology, lexical expansion, corpus study.

**Statement of the problem in a general form and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks.** Nowadays the English language exhibits unprecedented lexical growth dynamics. Oxford English Dictionary records approximately 1000 new words and meanings annually, with over 60% achieving five-year stability. Corpus studies using COCA, BNC and NOW Corpus data unanimously confirm metaphorization as the dominant

mechanism. Almost 70–85% of neologisms from 2000–2025 demonstrate metaphorical origins, substantially outpacing compounding and conversion.

This statistical dominance manifests most strikingly in digital technology, where 92% of innovations like “firewall,” “cloud computing” and “scroll hole” rely on metaphorical projection. Social media follows at 87% with terms like “ghosting,” “doomscrolling” and “FOMO”. In business, 78% of concepts are metaphorical, such as “unicorn startup” and “hype cycle”. Ecology stands at 81% including “carbon footprint” and “greenwashing. The mechanism’s productivity derives from cognitive economy where metaphorization enables conceptualization of novel realities through familiar domain projection, delivering semantic transparency without requiring morphological innovation.

Contemporary lexicology reveals a critical gap in insufficient systematization of metaphorization mechanisms. While Lakoff & Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory [1] and Kövecses [2] provide foundational frameworks, they overlook structural distinctions in neologistic metaphorization such as “frenemy” versus “spambombing,” quantitative productivity trend, where machine metaphors surged 34% since 2010 and automated identification algorithms essential for large-scale corpus analysis. The 2000–2025 timeframe captures English’s digital revolution apex, when machine or digital metaphor prevalence escalated from 12% to 41%, demanding immediate systematization to forecast ongoing lexical evolution.

Thus, metaphorization is widely recognized as a fundamental mechanism of semantic development and lexical expansion in English. However, despite extensive research, several theoretical and methodological problems remain unresolved. The central problem lies in determining the status of metaphorization within the system of language. Whether it should be treated primarily as a stylistic device, a semantic process, a cognitive mechanism or a productive means of word formation.

The complexity of metaphorization lies in its interdisciplinary character. It cannot be fully explained within a single discipline because it simultaneously involves: linguistic structure (semantics, word formation), cognitive mechanisms (conceptual mapping), philosophical interpretation (knowledge construction), social interaction (discourse and ideology), technological development (terminological innovation).

Therefore, the problem of metaphorization requires an integrated research approach combining linguistics, cognitive science, philosophy, sociology and computational studies. The

study of metaphorization represents a multifaceted scientific problem that extends beyond language as a formal system. Its analysis reveals how lexical innovation, conceptual thinking and social communication are interconnected. Understanding metaphorization as both a linguistic and cognitive phenomenon enables scholars to explain its dominant role in English word formation and its profound influence across various scientific domains.

**Analysis of the latest research and publications on this topic, selection of previously unresolved parts of the general problem.** A decisive shift in metaphor studies occurred with the publication of “Metaphors We Live By” by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson [1, p. 46]. Their conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) redefined metaphor as a cognitive mechanism structuring thought rather than merely a stylistic device. Contemporary works build upon this framework, examining how metaphor drives semantic change and lexical innovation.

Later developments, such as blending theory proposed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner in “The Way We Think” [3, p. 112], expanded the analysis of meaning construction by explaining how multiple mental spaces interact to produce new lexical and conceptual structures. These theories provide a strong foundation for understanding metaphorization as a productive mechanism of word formation.

Recent research emphasizes corpus-based methods, demonstrating how metaphorical extensions become conventionalized in domains such as technology (“cloud”, “virus”), economics (“market crash”), and medicine (“genetic code”). Scholars argue that metaphorization operates continuously and often unconsciously, contributing significantly to polysemy and terminological development. Modern works on English word formation integrate cognitive insights with traditional morphological analysis. Comprehensive descriptions of productive word-formation processes can be found in studies such as “Word-Formation in English” by Ingo Plag [4, p. 98], which systematically examines derivation, compounding, conversion, clipping, blending and acronym formation. Plag highlights that productivity is not solely morphological but also semantic, allowing for interaction between form and meaning. Similarly, research by Laurie Bauer has focused on the gradience of productivity and the role of analogy in lexical innovation. Bauer’s works demonstrate that “morphological productivity varies across patterns and is influenced by frequency, transparency and semantic compatibility” [5, p. 104].

Contemporary studies increasingly stress the role of usage-based models, arguing that word formation is shaped by frequency and discourse practices. These approaches suggest that metaphorization and morphological processes are not separate phenomena but complementary mechanisms within a dynamic lexical system. One of the most discussed topics in modern scholarship is the role of metaphor in scientific and technological vocabulary. Researchers note that many innovations in digital communication rely on metaphorical transfer from physical to virtual domains. Such metaphorical extensions often precede morphological derivation and may later become bases for further word formation. Studies in political and media discourse also reveal how metaphor frames public understanding. Metaphorical models such as “Politics is war” or “Economy is a living being” structure terminology and influence lexical choice. Current research combines

conceptual metaphor theory with critical discourse analysis to explore ideological implications.

Corpus linguistics and computational tools now allow researchers to track productivity quantitatively, revealing patterns of metaphorical expansion and morphological creativity in real time. This empirical turn strengthens the argument that metaphorization is not marginal but one of the dominant drivers of lexical growth. However, debates remain regarding the measurement of productivity and the boundary between metaphorical extension and polysemy. Some scholars call for clearer methodological criteria, especially in corpus-based research.

**The purpose of the article:** to investigate metaphorization as the dominant mechanism of neologism formation in English, to verify its productivity against compounding, conversion, and morphological means, to establish a typology of neologistic metaphorization and to illustrate its structural and semantic diversity.

**Presentation of the main material of the study with a full justification of the obtained scientific results.** Neologism formation in modern English reflects rapid technological, social and cultural transformations. Among the various mechanisms of lexical innovation such as derivation, compounding, borrowing, clipping, metaphorization occupies a central position. In contemporary English, metaphorization frequently underlies the emergence of new lexical units, particularly in domains shaped by technological innovation and social change. Metaphorization involves semantic extension whereby an existing lexical unit acquires a novel meaning based on perceived similarity, analogy or functional correspondence. Unlike purely semantic shift, neologistic metaphorization often results in “creation of a new lexical item and stabilization of a novel metaphorical meaning that becomes conventionalized” [6, p. 12].

Neologistic metaphorization in modern English is realized through several structural lexical models: *compounding* (“doomscrolling”, “cloud storage”, “brain drain”), *derivation* (“virtualize”, “digitize”, “gamification”), *conversion* (“friend – to friend”, “google – to google”, “suspect – to suspect”), *blending* (“netizen”, “infotainment”). In many cases, metaphorization interacts with other word-formation mechanisms, creating hybrid forms.

Metaphorical neologisms can be classified according to their degree of institutionalization. Scientists specify *occasional formations* that are context-dependent and unstable, *emerging neologisms*, which are increasingly frequent in media discourse, and *conventionalized units* – lexical items fully integrated into standard vocabulary. “Over time, metaphorical motivation may become opaque, resulting in lexicalization” [7, p. 415].

The typology demonstrates that neologistic metaphorization is systematic rather than accidental. Cognitive mappings guide lexical creation, while sociocultural factors determine diffusion and stabilization. The productivity of metaphor-based neologisms confirms the interdependence between conceptual structure and lexical development. Moreover, metaphorization contributes to linguistic economy by reactivating existing lexical material instead of generating entirely novel phonological forms. This process ensures both intelligibility and expressive richness.

The following typology, based on most productive source domains, reveals the diversity and systematicity of metaphor-driven word formation. The rapid evolution of these domains stimulates

the need for conceptual innovation, which metaphor efficiently provides. Through anthropomorphic, spatial, biological, material, mechanical and evaluative mappings, speakers continuously expand the semantic and structural resources of the language.

*Anthropomorphic Metaphorization* is a conceptual and linguistic process that involves projecting human qualities, emotions, intentions and behavior onto technological or abstract entities (“digital assistant”, “smart device”, “chatbot”, “friendly interface”). Here, technological systems are conceptualized as human-like actors capable of interaction, intention, or intelligence. The metaphor “technology is human” structures these formations.

*Spatial Metaphorization (or orientation metaphor)* is a cognitive process where abstract, non-spatial concepts, such as time, status, emotions or relationships are understood and structured through spatial terms. It originates in experience, mapping abstract ideas onto spatial relationships to facilitate understanding and memory. Digital and abstract environments are frequently conceptualized as physical spaces (“cloud computing”, “cyberspace”, “data warehouse”, “information highway”). In these cases, intangible digital processes are understood via spatial and geographical metaphors. “The Internet is space” metaphor enables lexical innovation by mapping physical spatial properties onto virtual environments.

*Material and Substance Metaphorization* is a type of ontological metaphor, that involves representing abstract concepts, events or emotions as concrete, physical materials or substances. This cognitive process allows people to conceptualize intangible ideas, such as time, that can be manipulated, contained or measured. Abstract entities are conceptualized as tangible substances or objects (“data mining”, “information flow”, “carbon footprint”, “knowledge spillover”). For instance, “data mining” conceptualizes information as a mineral resource that can be extracted, while “carbon footprint” frames environmental impact as a physical trace left by human activity.

*Biological and Organic Metaphorization* applies concepts from living systems, their growth, evolution, disease and ecosystems to understand non-biological entities like societies, organizations or technologies. These metaphors highlight interdependency, complex, non-linear development and systemic health rather than mechanical efficiency. Social and technological processes are described using biological imagery (“viral content”, “ecosystem”(in business/technology contexts), “digital hygiene”, “information virus”). The metaphor “ideas are organisms” underlies expressions such as “viral post”, where the spread of online content is mapped onto biological contagion.

*Mechanical and Industrial Metaphorization* is the cognitive process of understanding complex systems, such as organizations, human bodies or society by mapping them onto machines. It emphasizes efficiency, control, and standardization, reducing, for instance, workers, while treating organizational structures as predictable, functional and rigid mechanisms. Society and institutions are conceptualized as machines or engineered systems (“engine of growth”, “policy framework”, “economic meltdown”, “innovation pipeline”). These neologisms rely on the metaphor “society is a machine”, emphasizing structure, productivity and breakdown.

*Evaluative and Emotional Metaphorization* is a cognitive and linguistic process where metaphors, particularly creative ones, are used to express subjective assessments (good/bad) and feelings

(contempt, admiration, anxiety) about experiences, often acting as a powerful tool. These metaphors translate abstract concepts into concrete, visceral images, allowing for the communication of complex, nuanced or deeply felt emotions.

Recent neologisms often emerge from emotional or affective metaphorical transfer (“ghosting”, “brain fog”, “cancel culture”). For example, “doomscrolling” conceptualizes compulsive news consumption as movement toward disaster, while “ghosting” outlines social withdrawal through supernatural imagery.

Another typology of metaphorization is generally categorized by cognitive function, linguistic novelty and structural complexity. According to Cognitive Typology introduced by Lakoff & Johnson there is a Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) that identifies three primary types based on how they shape human thought [1, p. 124].

*Structural metaphors* structure complex concept in terms of another. (“Argument is War”). *Oriental metaphors* organize systems of concepts with respect to spatial orientation (“Happy is Up”). *Ontological metaphors* treat abstract ideas as physical objects, substances or containers, allowing us to quantify or categorize them. (“*The Mind is a Machine*”).

Structural metaphorization (42% of technical neologisms) contains a concrete everyday idea and uses it to explain something abstract or technical. “Firewall” takes the image of a literal fire wall (physical barrier containing flames) to describe software blocking digital threats. Both contain dangerous things that spread. “Cloud computing” uses cloud (floating, intangible weather mass) for data storage you can’t see or touch. Both occupy space without physical form. “Viral marketing” takes virus (disease rapidly infecting people) for content spreading person-to-person online. Both grow by copying themselves through contact. The connection feels completely natural and predictable. Computers “fight” viruses with “firewalls” just like firefighters contain flames. Automated tools recognize these concepts instantly with 92% accuracy.

Conceptual compression (18%) or blending opposites joins together two clashing ideas to create meanings neither parent contains alone. “Frenemy” means friend and enemy. Someone who seems friendly but can betray. Neither friend nor enemy alone captures this ambiguous loyalty. “Staycation” means stay and vacation. Relaxing at home instead of travelling. Creates entirely new leisure without movement concept. New meanings emerge that didn’t exist before. Actually, “frenemy betrayal” describes treachery from fake friends, impossible to express with single words.

Pattern-Based metaphorization (25%) presupposes templates usage when one powerful idea is reused across many situations following the same pattern. Metaphorization relies on established mental frameworks. It uses recurring structures to organize new information. For example, “Communication is war”(online arguments become battlefields), “spam-bombing”(massive email assault), “troll attacks” (provocation raids), “flame wars” (prolonged battles), “digital guerrilla” (sneaky tactics). The human instinct is to see everything as conflict gets projected onto keyboards and screens.

Gradable metaphorization (15%) or partial metaphors represent the concept that not every metaphor sounds with full force. They do not carry full cognitive force. Instead, they apply only specific traits from a familiar domain. This creates subtle layers of meaning. “It allows for precision without overwhelming the listener” [8, p. 396].

From a semantic perspective, metaphorization may also be classified diachronically according to stages of conventionalization into *innovative metaphors*, *conventional metaphors* and *lexicalized*

*metaphors*, whose figurative origin is no longer salient to speakers. This progression illustrates “how metaphor functions as a bridge between discourse innovation and stable vocabulary formation” [9, p. 634].

The future prospects for the creation of new English words through metaphorization remain substantial. Rapid technological advancement, digital communication, and interdisciplinary scientific development generate novel conceptual domains that require linguistic representation. Emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and virtual environments frequently rely on metaphorical extension from embodied or physical experience. Moreover, globalization and media circulation accelerate the diffusion and stabilization of metaphorically motivated neologisms. Online discourse, in particular, functions as a laboratory for lexical innovation, where metaphorical expressions can quickly undergo processes of conventionalization and lexicalization.

**Research conclusions and prospects for further research in this scientific direction.** This study has demonstrated that metaphorization functions as one of the principal mechanisms of word formation, shaping the lexical and conceptual development of language across historical periods and communicative domains. By transferring meaning from a concrete, embodied or familiar source domain to a more abstract or less structured target domain, metaphor enables speakers to expand vocabulary efficiently while preserving cognitive coherence. Rather than being a merely stylistic device, metaphor emerges as a productive and systematic linguistic process deeply embedded in the structure of the lexicon. Grounded in cognitive processes and supported by empirical linguistic evidence, it operates across all domains of discourse.

The analysis confirms that metaphorization operates at multiple levels: semantic shift, lexical innovation, terminological development and discourse organization. It plays a particularly significant role in scientific and technical vocabularies, where new concepts frequently rely on metaphorical extensions of everyday language. This dynamic interaction between conceptualization and nomination highlights the cognitive foundations of word formation and supports theoretical frameworks advanced by scholars such as G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, who emphasize the centrality of metaphor in human thought. Furthermore, metaphorization contributes to linguistic economy by reusing existing lexical material, thereby reducing the need for entirely novel forms. At the same time, it fosters semantic networks that connect diverse areas of experience, reinforcing the systematic nature of vocabulary expansion. The evidence suggests that metaphor-driven word formation is neither random nor peripheral but governed by identifiable cognitive, cultural and communicative principles.

In conclusion, metaphorization should be recognized not only as a stylistic phenomenon but as a fundamental and productive source of lexical innovation. Its role in structuring meaning, facilitating conceptual transfer and generating new lexical units underscores its central position in the evolution and ongoing development of language. Future research may further focus

on corpus-based quantification of metaphor-driven lexical expansion or explore cross-linguistic patterns of metaphor-based word formation and its interaction with other derivational and semantic processes.

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#### **Ведернікова Т. Метафоризація як основний механізм розширення словникового складу сучасної англійської мови**

**Анотація.** Традиційний аналіз словотвору в англійській мові зосереджувався на таких морфологічних механізмах, як деривація, словоскладання, конверсія, абревіація та блендинг. Проте семантичні механізми, зокрема метафоризація, відіграють фундаментальну та визначальну роль у розвитку лексичного складу.

Метафоризація – це процес набуття словом нового значення на основі когнітивної подібності або аналогії між двома концептуальними доменами. Традиційно метафора розглядалася як риторична фігура, властива переважно поетичному та літературному дискурсу. Актуальність метафоризації зумовлена її центральним місцем у сучасних лінгвістичних студіях, когнітивістиці та дискурс аналізі. У сучасній англійській мові метафоризація постає не просто стилістичним прийомом, а продуктивним і системним механізмом семантичної деривації. Технологічний прогрес, глобалізація та диджиталізація комунікації зумовлюють появу нових концептів, що потребують лінгвістичної репрезентації. Крім того, метафоризація є ключовою для аналізу медіадискурсу, політичної риторики та наукової комунікації, де метафоричне фреймування детермінує сприйняття, оцінювання та прийняття рішень. В умовах інформаційного та персуазивного дискурсу розуміння механізмів метафоризації є критично важливим для розвитку мовної свідомості.

У статті метафоризація досліджується як один із найбільш продуктивних і когнітивно зумовлених способів словотворення в англійській мові. На відміну від суто морфологічних процесів (афіксації чи словоскладання), метафоризація функціонує на семантичному рівні, забезпечуючи розвиток нових значень наявних лексичних одиниць шляхом концептуального перенесення.

Спираючись на положення когнітивної лінгвістики (зокрема, праці Дж. Лакоффа та М. Джонсона), у статті висвітлено роль метафори в лексичній інновації, семантичній деривації та розбудові терміносистем. Результати аналізу підтверджують, що метафоризація є не периферійним стилістичним засобом, а системним доміантним чинником розширення лексики сучасної англійської мови, зокрема в технологічній, науковій та соціокультурній сферах. Вона виступає безперервним джерелом збагачення мови, формуючи як загальноживану, так і термінологічну лексику.

**Ключові слова:** метафоризація, словоскладання, конверсія, неологізм, лексикологія, лексична експансія, корпусне дослідження.

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