

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Conceptual Map of The System of Metaphors

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Abstract

This article examines the conceptual map of metaphorical systems in English literary discourse from the perspective of cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory. The study explores metaphor not merely as a stylistic ornament, but as a mechanism of meaning construction and conceptual organization within literary texts. Particular attention is devoted to the role of metaphor in shaping artistic perception, directing interpretation, and establishing semantic relations between conceptual domains.

KEY WORDS

Conceptual metaphor, conceptual map, target domain, source domain, invariance principle, cognitive linguistics, metaphorical projection.

INTRODUCTION

Metaphor in literary text appears not only as a decorative device, but also as a mechanism for meaning construction and the activation of conceptual systems. Within the framework of poetics, metaphor possesses a semantic power that breaks "impossible" boundaries, brings distant notions closer together, and elevates the ordinary into something higher. Therefore, in determining the semantic nature of literary metaphor, it is necessary to take into account that it has functional and nominative features distinct from those of ordinary or simple metaphor.

MATERIALS

The differences between literary metaphorical nomination and ordinary language metaphor can be systematized as follows: metaphorical nomination in language is usually systematic, relatively objective, reflects collective subject-logical relations, serves a communicative function, and in most cases possesses an "anonymous," that is, reproducible character. Literary or poetic metaphor, by contrast, is more often non-systematic and subjective, reflects the author's viewpoint and individual perception, primarily performs an aesthetic function,

preserves the author's individual style, and appears in rare or unique forms.

As noted by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, the semantic functioning mechanism of metaphor is based on the principle of "highlighting and hiding": metaphor strongly highlights certain aspects of the target concept while concealing others. This phenomenon is especially significant in literary texts, because through such focus the author determines which features of the image will become the center of aesthetic and emotional influence. Thus, in literary discourse metaphor performs not only a nominative function, but also a pragmatic-interpretative guiding function. [1,10.]

In works of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, the model "Argument is War" conceptualizes the process of argument in terms of competition, strategy, attack, and defense. In this case, presenting arguments is conceptualized as "opposing" or "attacking" an opponent. However, this model conceals those aspects of argument that are oriented toward cooperation, agreement, or the collective search for truth. As a result, argument is more often discussed within the

paradigm of “victory.”

The conceptual map of metaphorical systems in literary texts is represented as a network of cross-domain projections, where the target domain (for example, time, love, or life) is modeled through the source domain (such as war, journey, or resource). Within this conceptual framework, domains also generate particular semantic entailments. Consequently, one basic conceptual metaphor is realized consistently through numerous linguistic units in the text and reinforces the literary concept.

Within the conceptual approach, metaphor is interpreted as a “mechanism of thinking”: the power of conceptual metaphors lies in the fact that they function steadily and often unconsciously in the human mind. They do not disappear; rather, they are preserved in consciousness and influence our understanding of the world.

In constructing a conceptual map, the main operational units are the target domain and the source domain. The object or phenomenon being metaphorically conceptualized belongs to the target domain, while the concepts that help to understand it belong to the source domain. In this respect, target and source domains may interact in different ways: they may belong to different taxonomical domains and have no direct connection with pragmatic function, or they may belong to different functional-conceptual spheres and become interconnected on the basis of cross-domain correspondence. [2,64p.]

One of the important principles that ensures the stability of the conceptual map is the principle of invariance, which presupposes the universal mechanisms of establishing figurative analogy in human cognition. Based on this principle, dominant concepts that repeatedly occur within a poetic text or an author’s corpus are brought to the center of the conceptual map. [3, 114p]

An important methodological point here is that a conceptual map should not be regarded as a “simple scheme,” but rather as a network of cross-domain relations.

METHODS

The article employs a combination of cognitive-semantic, conceptual, stylistic, and discourse-analytic methods in order

to investigate the functional-semantic features of metaphors and the conceptual organization of metaphorical systems in English literary discourse. The methodological framework of the research is grounded in the theory of conceptual metaphor developed within cognitive linguistics, particularly the approaches proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.

The primary method used in this article is cognitive-semantic analysis, which enables the examination of metaphor as a mechanism of conceptual mapping between source and target domains. Through this method, metaphorical expressions are analyzed not merely as stylistic substitutions, but as cognitive structures that organize conceptual perception and textual meaning.

Contextual and interpretative analyses are also employed to determine the semantic and pragmatic functions of metaphors within literary discourse. Particular attention is devoted to the ways in which metaphorical structures influence reader interpretation, emotional perception, and ideological orientation within the text.

In addition, stylistic analysis is applied to identify the role of metaphor in the formation of authorial idiolect and artistic worldview. This method allows the investigation of recurring metaphorical images, symbolic oppositions, lexical choices, and syntactic constructions that contribute to the stylistic individuality of literary discourse.

The study further utilizes conceptual metaphor analysis in order to classify metaphorical systems according to recurrent conceptual models such as SHAME IS FIRE, SIN IS DARKNESS, and SIN IS STAIN. These metaphorical systems are examined as interconnected conceptual networks functioning through cross-domain relations and semantic entailments.

RESULTS

The analysis demonstrates that metaphorical systems in English literary discourse are organized through interconnected conceptual mappings between source and target domains rather than through isolated figurative expressions. The findings reveal that conceptual metaphors function as stable cognitive-semantic structures that shape thematic organization, emotional perception, and interpretative processes within literary texts.

Table1

| | | | |
|----------|------------|----------------------|----------|
| Metaphor | Conceptual | Invariance principle | Analysis |
|----------|------------|----------------------|----------|

| | system | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ...look inward, and discern the black reality of what they idolize? (4,185p.) | Evil, sin are darkness – | The functions associated with darkness demonstrate the possibility of concealing evil and sin through the symbolic framework of darkness. | Through the lexical unit black, the author conveys the extent of the character’s inner darkness, simultaneously expressing moral evaluation, psychological self-perception, and conceptual metaphor within a single word. |
| ...their blood may fairly be said to have left a stain upon him. (4,12p.) | Sin is a stain – Sin is conceptualized as a visible stain, representing the character’s spiritual and moral corruption. | Stains remain visible and are difficult to erase; likewise, guilt and moral blame may persist for many years. | Here, the author emphasizes the enduring moral guilt that has persisted throughout the years. |

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study demonstrate that metaphor in English literature is not merely as a stylistic ornament, but as a cognitive-semantic mechanism that structures meaning and directs reader interpretation. The study supports the theory of conceptual metaphor proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, according to which metaphor is grounded in conceptual mapping between source and target domains. However, the results also indicate that literary metaphor differs from ordinary metaphor because of its symbolic

complexity and interpretative depth. The analysis reveals that recurring metaphorical models such as SHAME IS FIRE, SIN IS DARKNESS, and SIN IS STAIN form interconnected conceptual networks that organize thematic and semantic unity within the text. Furthermore, metaphor selectively highlights certain aspects of reality while concealing others, thereby influencing emotional perception and ideological interpretation.

CONCLUSION

An important methodological point here is that a conceptual map should not be regarded as a “simple scheme,” but rather

as a network of cross-domain relations. For example, the target domain death may be interpreted through various source domains such as journey, sleep, darkness, prison, or hell, each representing different semantic pathways. Such a multidirectional network ensures the multilayered semantic richness of the literary text.

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