

CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN EMILY DICKINSON'S SELECTED POEMS

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Abstract: *This study is an investigation of conceptual metaphors of social life in Emily Dickinson's selected poems in the framework theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003), Kovecses (2010). In this paper, the structural metaphors, orientational metaphors and ontological metaphors will be analyzed to reflect the opinions of theirs about life, love, and sadness in the lyrics of the poets. The study is mainly carried out through the documentary analysis and descriptive study with the support of qualitative and quantitative approach. The results of this research show that there are twenty source domains of conceptual metaphors used to express social life. Finally, the research showed that conceptual metaphor is being in our everyday life.*

Keywords: *metaphor; conceptual metaphor; life; love; sadness; selected poems.*

I. Introduction

Since metaphor is believed as a component of figurative language, it is one of those figures of speech in language that should be interpreted figuratively. Using metaphor in poem is one of the most fascinating and creative works of the poet. According to Ullmann [11] metaphor is so intimately connected with the texture of human speech that people have previously encountered it in a variety of forms: as a significant motivator, a sort of synonym and polysemy, a meaning of filling a gap in lexicon, and a variety of other functions. Metaphor is no longer a matter of language, but a tool of human being to

understand, perceive and conceptualize the work. According to Sandstrom [9], metaphors allow people to enhance the language.

Lakoff and Johnson [6, p.5] defined metaphor as "Understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another". The authors also explain that "Every experience takes place within a vast background of cultural presuppositions" (p.57). Lakoff and Johnson [6] clearly stated their position about metaphor: "Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action". What is more, Ungerer and Schmid [12] thought that conceptual metaphors

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are organized in a system of thoughts and not particularly in language. Metaphorical expressions reflect how we regularly think about things and how we usually use one kind of experience in a certain context to understand another kind of experience during a different circumstance. Thus, approaching language towards cognitive linguistics is a new direction in which more current linguists and supporters are interested.

A poem is a piece of writing composed of short lines that uses sound and rhythm to express thoughts and feelings. Wordsworth [13] stated poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility. Gill [1] stated that poem is a charming collection of words that contain deep meaning. Also, Tomlinson [10, p.38] thought that “Poetry is the expression of ideas and feelings through a rhythmical composition of imagination and beautiful worlds selected for their sonorous effects”.

It is apparent that metaphorical language stimulates the imagination, allowing the writer to express more emotions and sensations. Metaphor reveals complexities for which there is no standard word and encourages readers to think abstractly. Most people choose metaphor to delivered messages because it is an effective way to transmit vivid imagery that goes beyond literal words, resulting in visuals that are simpler to comprehend and respond to than literal language. As a poet, Emily Dickinson is very well-known for her use of figurative language, especially metaphor in her works. She was born in Amherst on December 10, 1830,

and dead-on May 15, 1886. She is now regarded as one of the most influential personalities in American poetry. Her poetry has been published all over the world through various media. The most intriguing aspect of Emily Dickinson’s poetry is her distinctive writing style. This is interested the researcher in how conceptual metaphor is applied and what kind of conceptual metaphors in her

For these reasons above, this paper chooses Emily Dickinson’s poems as the subject of the research in the framework theory of Lakoff and Johnson [6] and Kovecses [5] to show that there are conceptual metaphors of social life in her poems.

II. Literature review

2.1. Conceptual metaphor

Metaphor plays a fundamental role in the language and imagination. It is a best choice of describing reality and ideas when literal language can not. Metaphor develops meaning by describing a certain feature about one thing in terms of another. John Peck and Mertin Coyle [3, p.141] said that “ It is able to create an effect of defamiliarization and challenge our normal way of thinking about things, restructure our perceptions.”

Lakoff and Johnson [6] have drawn their attention to the exclusive meaning of metaphor: “Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language”. They link or expresses one concept to another concept in different terms metaphorically. Metaphors not only help people think more vividly,

but also help organize our perceptions in our minds. Also, Kamaliah [4] states that metaphor which serves to illustrate an idea decoratively and catches an attention of the audience is called conceptual metaphor. Conceptual metaphor sustains its metaphorical value, so it is necessary to make an effort to comprehend the meaning of a conceptual metaphor.

Punter [8] defined the term 'metaphor' that it is a process of mapping between two different conceptual domains". Moreover, it is interesting to observe that another linguist Kövecses [5, p.4] also proves the similar idea that: "A conceptual metaphor consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another. A conceptual domain is any coherent organization of experience". Conceptual metaphor structures are analyzed as systematic and firm relations between two conceptual domains with correlative mappings written in small capitals. Correlative mapping indicates a projection of A structure over B one. This mapping results in the organization of our outlooks on appropriate categories in the B target domain, in the forms of A source domain. Commonly, categories in the source domain are more specific. Meanwhile, those in the target domain are more abstract. This means that the writer bases on their experiences about human beings, things and specific daily events to conceptualize abstract categories.

According to Goatly [2], regarding the way metaphor worked, there are three terms which constitute a metaphor: topic (tenor), vehicle and ground. Topic is the subject of metaphor or the intended idea to be expressed; vehicle is another idea by

which the tenor is being described; and ground is the similarities and/or analogies involved, or the basis on which topic and vehicle could be put together. For example, in the statement "Bob is a tiger in debate", "Bob" is the tenor and "Tiger" is the vehicle. The analogy between Bob and tiger, which is possibly the way Bob arranges his arguments, cunning and strong like a tiger, make it difficult to rebut by others, becomes the ground.

Conceptual metaphors are perhaps often seen as the means for simplifying and explaining abstract conceptual domains. Lakoff and Johnson [6] argued that "The use of conceptual metaphors is not always a conscious choice, but something used automatically" (p.3). Because conceptual metaphors are such fundamental and deeply integrated parts of language and thought, they are used continually to a great extent without people realizing it. Therefore, describing one conceptual domain via another may not be as uncommon as one first may think.

A standard definition adopted in this present paper is that "A conceptual metaphor is understanding one domain of experience (that is typically abstract) in terms of another (that is typically concrete)" [Kövecses, 5, p.13].

2.1.1. Structural metaphors

Structural metaphor is a metaphor where one concept is expressed in terms of another structured or concept. These involve the structuring of one kind of experience or activity in terms of another kinds of experience or activity. Lakoff and Johnson [6] argued that the cognitive

function of these metaphors is to enable speakers to understand target A by means the structure of source B. Structural metaphor involves “imposing part of one gestalt structure upon another” (p.178).

Lakoff and Johnson analyze the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor as an example of a structural metaphor “When people debate, what people do and how people comprehend what people are doing is structured. ARGUMENT is constructed, understood, performed, and discussed in part through the lens of WAR. The concept is structured metaphorically, the activity is structured figuratively, as a result, the language is structured metaphorically.” [6, p.5]. This metaphor is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expression as it expressed in some sentences such as:

“Your claims are indefensible.” “He attacked every weak point in my argument.”

“His criticism was right on target”

What is more, examples of this metaphor are when people discuss the concepts of love, social organization, theory, life, etc.

Someone when talking about her love may say “I don’t think our relationship is going anywhere”, “We’re at a crossroads” or “We are stuck”. There exists in this sentence a metaphor “LOVE IS JOURNEY”. Another example is IDEAS ARE FOOD. This metaphor can be used in “I can’t digest all these facts”, “I just can’t swallow that claim” or “Let me stew over that for a while”.

2.1.2. *Ontological Metaphors*

According to Kovecses [5, p.37], ontological metaphors provided much less cognitive structuring for target concepts than structural ones do. Ontology is a branch of philosophy that has to do with the nature of existence. “Ontological conceptual metaphors enable speakers to conceive of their experiences in terms of objects, substances, and containers in general, without specifying further the kind of object, substance, or container” (p.328). In general, ontological metaphors enable people to see more sharply delineated structure where there is very little or none. To put it another way, people classify unbounded and unstructured events, activities, ideas and emotions as concrete entities and substances.

2.1.3. *Oriental metaphors*

Lakoff and Johnson [6] considered that orientational metaphor deals with spatial orientations. An orientational metaphor is a metaphor which is based on the orientation of space. It is made from spatial relationship concepts such as up-down; in-out; on-off; and front-back. The relationship is normally based on our experiences of the physical space we have.

2.2. *Poem*

Poems are as widespread and nearly as ancient as language. The most primitive people used it, and the most sophisticated people cultivated it for its pleasure-giving properties. People have read, listened to, or recited it because they enjoy it. Perrine [7, p.3] stated that “Poem might be defined as a kind of language that says more and says it more intensely than does ordinary language “. That is, the poetry makes use of specific

language. This is not everyday language. Meanwhile, Wordsworth defined poem as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind". The particular language employed in the poems is chosen for its beauty. This is crucial since poems written in everyday language will have little impact on the readers.

Death, agony, and suffering are not joyful in real life, but they can be in poetry. They will be more pleasurable for intelligent readers if they are conveyed through the medium of art. A poem can only be recognized through the response of a good reader who has developed some sensitivity to the poetry. However, there is a catch in reading the poem. There are several ways to learn more about it, including the following:

1. Read a poem more than once.
2. Keep the dictionary close at hand and make use of it.
3. Read so as to hear the sounds of the words in the mind.
4. Always pay close attention to what the poetry is communicating.
5. Practice reading aloud a poem.

III. Methodology

This study uses both a qualitative and quantitative research design, as well as descriptive and contrastive analytic methods, to achieve its goal. Contrastive

analysis and description are examples of qualitative approaches. The research employs a descriptive technique to describe the meanings of conceptual metaphors in Emily Dickinson's selected poems.

In this study, the researcher collects data using a documentary approach. The study's data sources are four poems which are *If you were coming in the fall*, *The brain is wider than the sky*, *I felt a cleaving in my mind* and *Exultation is the going*. Thus, to make it easier for the researcher to collect the data, the three poems stated above with Emily Dickinson's lyrics were acquired from the website Genius.

Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory was chosen as a paradigm of language metaphor expression. The writer uses a distributional strategy combined with a substitutional methodology to analyze the data. The distributional technique is an approach to data analysis that considers the language itself. Substitutional method is a technique for swapping out specific pieces for others.

To its end, the author needs to answer the following questions: 1) What types of metaphors are found in Emily Dickinson's selected poems?; 2) What are the meanings of conceptual metaphors used in Emily Dickinson's selected poems?

IV. Findings and discussions

4.1. Structural metaphors in Emily Dickinson's selected poems

In terms of structural metaphors, there are nine kinds of structural metaphors in Emily Dickinson's four poems. This table below shows the meanings of these kinds of metaphors.

Table 1. Structural metaphors in Emily Dickinson's selected poems

No	Lyrics	Structural Metaphors	Meaning	Poem title
1	If you were coming in the fall	TIME/ SEASON IS LOCATION	The speaker looks forward to the return of the one she loves.	If you were coming in the fall
2	I'd brush the summer by	TIME/SEASON IS OBJECT	The speaker believes that if their lover arrives, she will dismiss the time he was gone.	If you were coming in the fall
3	I'd wind the months in balls, And put them each in separate drawers	TIME/SEASON IS OBJECT	If the lover has arrived, the speaker will overlook the entire period of waiting. Because the length of his absence is irrelevant as long as he returns, and they reunite.	If you were coming in the fall
4	If I could see you in a year	TIME /SEASON IS LOCATION	The speaker expects her lover's arrival in a year.	If you were coming in the fall
5	when this life was out,	LIFE IS MONEY	This metaphorical expression means if the time of her death had come.	If you were coming in the fall
6	I'd toss it yonder like a rind, And taste eternity	TIME IS FRUIT	The speaker would willingly die if they would be together forever.	If you were coming in the fall
7	I tried to match it - Seam by Seam But could not make them fit.	MIND IS PUZZLE	In her thoughts, the speaker attempts to connect one thought to the another.	I felt a cleavage in my mind
8	But sequence ravelled out of Sound Like Balls - upon a Floor.	MIND IS OBJECT	During the waiting period, the speaker makes considerable effort to prevent falling apart.	If you were coming in the fall
9	Exultation is the going Of an inland soul to sea	DEATH IS DEPARTURE	The metaphor implicates the elation of death moment when the soul leaves the parochial limits to the eternal.	Exultation is the going

4.2. Ontological metaphors in Emily Dickinson's selected poems

Ontological metaphor is used in the analyzed lyrics of Emily Dickinson's selected poems which are shown in the table 2 below.

No	Lyrics	Ontological Metaphors	Meaning	Poem title
1	With half a smile and half a spurn	EXPRESSION IS CONTAINER	The speaker expresses a little bit happy and a little bit anger when her lover has arrived.	If you were coming in the fall

No	Lyrics	Ontological Metaphors	Meaning	Poem title
2	I felt a Cleaving in my Mind - As if my Brain had split -	MIND IS CONTAINER	The author is describing a psychological experience, such as a lapse into irrationality, a breakdown, or the forgetting of a thought or word.	I felt a cleaving in my mind
3	The one the other will contain With ease- and you- beside	MIND IS CONTAINER	Our minds are so enormous that they can take in the entire universe.	The brain is wider than the sky
4	The one the other will absorb As sponges –Buckets- do	MIND IS CONTAINER	Our mind's has impressive size to be able incorporate the universe into itself, and thereby even to absorb an ocean.	The brain is wider than the sky
5	The thought behind I strove to join	MIND IS HUMAN	The speaker attempted to keep her thoughts from separating.	I felt a cleaving in my mind
6	Unto the thought before	SOUL IS CONTAINER	The speaker emphasizes the heroic efforts she exerted in order to keep herself from falling apart.	I felt a cleaving in my mind
7	Of an inland soul to sea	SOUL IS CONTAINER	A landlubber feels exhilarated about to embark on a voyage to the open sea	Exultation is the going

4.3. *Oriental Metaphor*

Oriental metaphor is used less than structural metaphors and ontological metaphors but depending on different purposes in use, orientational metaphor is used in typical ways shown in the table 3 below:

Table 3. Oriental metaphors in Emily Dickinson's selected poems

No	Lyrics	Oriental Metaphors	Meaning	Poem title
1	The Brain - is wider than the Sky For - put them side by side	MORE IS DEEP	The mind is able to absorb, interpret, and subsume perceptual and experiential information.	The Brain is wider than the sky
2	The Brain is deeper than the sea For - hold them - Blue to Blue	MORE IS DEEP	The mind can contain and carry thoughts of all the oceans. The mind has capacity to synthesize information and think about itself and the world, not its actual breadth.	The Brain is wider than the sky

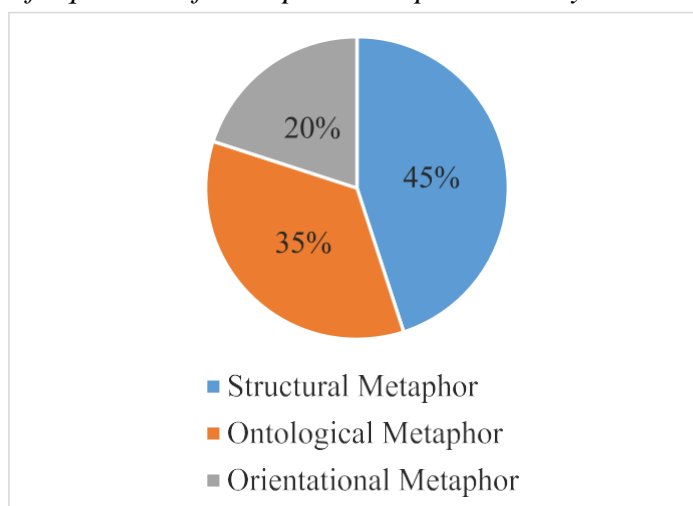
No	Lyrics	Oriental Metaphors	Meaning	Poem title
3	But now, all ignorant of the length of time's uncertain wing	MORE IS LONG	All the woman's concerns during the time she waited for her lover to arrive have vanished.	If you were coming in the fall
4	Into deep Eternity -	MORE IS DEEP	This metaphor serves to bring the depth of the sea to mind while emphasizing how the spirit's journey is infinite.	Exultation is the going

4.4. Summary

The findings of the research are from four Emily Dickinson's selected poems: *The brain is wider than a sky* (1), *Exultation is the going* (2), *Ifelt a cleaving* (3) and *Ifyou were coming in the fall* (4). All the poems were analyzed based on the theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) about conceptual metaphor. There are 20 conceptual metaphors in total, including 9 structural metaphors, 7

ontological metaphors, and 4 orientational metaphors, according to the findings. The results are presented in appendix 1, 2, and 3, with the first column indicating the number of conceptual metaphors discovered, the second column indicating the lexeme found in the lyrics as conceptual metaphors, and the third column indicating the number of coded poems. In the appendices, all the findings were bolded.

Figure 1. Types and frequencies of conceptual metaphor in Emily Dickinson's selected poems



The figure shows that structural metaphors are the most common in the selected poems, accounting for 45%, ontological metaphors for 35%, and orientational metaphors for 20% of the total number of conceptual metaphors found.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study and a discussion of the different types of metaphors discovered, the researcher concludes some points about the conceptual metaphor in four Emily Dickinson's selected poems. Additionally,

when it comes to the implicit meaning of metaphor in Emily Dickinson's poems, the researcher came to the conclusion that Dickinson's poems are about life, love, and sadness. Metaphor is a device for seeing the secondary meaning or terms of words, which means that metaphor includes the secondary meaning of words that are carried literally. The poems deliver a variety of messages. Behind the poems are a message of information and social life. It is clear that metaphor plays a significant role in this poem. Hence, in her poems, Dickinson used conceptual metaphor to express her feelings, and there are sentences with metaphor meaning. The use of metaphor enhances the poem's readability and helps teachers use the metaphorical expression discovered in this study better. Also, language teachers need to include conceptual metaphors in their teaching so that students can learn to use them not only in literary works, but also in everyday communication. Finally, metaphor helps the readers to imagine the poem, and readers will no longer have difficulty deciphering the meaning of metaphorically employed language.

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