

Metaphors as a Part of Figurative Language

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Abstract: *Metaphors are part of figurative speech which may be based upon very different types of similarity, for instance, the similarity of shape: head of a cabbage, the teeth of a saw. This similarity of shape may be supported by a similarity of function. The transferred meaning is easily recognised from the context: The Head of the school, the key to a mystery. The similarity may be supported also by position: foot of a page/of a mountain, or behaviour and function: bookworm, wirepuller.*

It would be a mistake for any speaker – native, new or experienced – to be reluctant to use metaphors as they are such a colorful, poetic element of any language. As can be seen, although there is an extensive list of existing metaphors, new ones can be made at any times, as long as they can be easily understood and related to. And as also can be seen, even when they go wrong, they add an extra element of fun.

Key words: *metaphor, figurative language, metalanguage, target domain, source domain, concept, traditional metaphor, modern metaphor, literal.*

Very often we may encounter metaphors in many spheres of our lives: literature, poetry, television, and even everyday speech. Most of the time we use metaphors without noticing that we are, actually, using figurative language. Metaphors help to make our speech colourful, expressive and witty. If we analyze metaphors used in several languages closely, we may see traces of culture in them. First of all, let's answer to the question: what is a metaphor?

A metaphor is a word or a phrase for one thing that is used to refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar. Metaphors are a form of figurative language, which refers to words or expressions that mean something different from their literal definition: 'Jack is a lion'.

Litvinova and Menshakova claim "Metaphor is one of the natural means of thought formation and wording in scientific search, it reflects knowledge processing and reasoning, and it is a means of linguistic representation of knowledge in science. In linguistic texts on Metaphor metaphors attain the role of metalanguage. Metaphorical modelling of the concept of Metaphor in linguistic texts helps to study the main peculiarities of this metalanguage and define its functions".¹

Encyclopedia Britannica says: "metaphor is a figure of speech that implies comparison between two unlike entities, as distinguished from simile, an explicit comparison signaled by the words like, or as": 'Jack is like a lion'.²

Löbner supports that "metaphor is: concepts, notions, models, pictures from one domain, the source domain, are borrowed for the description of things in another domain, the target domain"³. Generally speaking, "a metaphor yields a new concept in the target domain, a concept that is similar to the original concept of the source domain in that it contains certain elements, although not all, of the source concept"⁴.

A metaphor is defined as an indirect comparison between two or more apparently unrelated things. The point of similarity may be physical but often it is chosen for its connotations. Newmark states that the first purpose of a metaphor is to describe something comprehensively, economically and generally more forcefully than what is possible in literal language.⁵

Below are some of popular metaphors that were recorded in history and never lose their topicality:

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances. (William Shakespeare)

America has tossed its cap over the wall of space. (John F. Kennedy)

You ain't nothin' but a hound dog, cryin' all the time. (Elvis Presley)

¹ Litvinova, Menshakova, *Metaphorical Representation of Metaphor in Linguistics*, 2017: 100.

² Encyclopedia Britannica, www.britannica.com.

³ Löbner, *Understanding Semantics*, 2002: 20.

⁴ *ibid*: 23.

⁵ Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation*, 1988: 88.

You are my sunshine, my only sunshine... (From the song)

So, the above examples show that metaphors have long become an essential part of our daily activities and lives.

The study about metaphors is called Metaphorology. There exist 2 views to metaphors: traditional and modern. Traditional view of metaphor started from the time of Aristotle up to 1980, when George Lakoff and Mark Johnson made a breakthrough in science in the book *Metaphors We Live By*. According to the traditional view:⁶

1. Metaphor is a property of words; it is a linguistic phenomenon.
2. Metaphor is used for some artistic and rhetorical purpose.
3. Metaphor is based on resemblance between the two entities that are compared and identified.
4. Metaphor is a conscious and deliberate use of words, and you must have a special talent to be able to do it and do it well. Only great poets and eloquent speakers can be its masters.
5. It is also commonly held that metaphor is a figure of speech that we can do without, we use it for special effects, and it is not an inevitable part of everyday human communication.

In 1980 Lakoff & Johnson became the fundamentalists of the modern view: cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor. In their book they claimed:⁷

1. Metaphor is a property of concepts, and not of words.
2. The function of metaphor is to better understand certain concepts, and not just some artistic or aesthetic purpose.
3. Metaphor is often not based on similarity.
4. Metaphor is used effortlessly in everyday life by ordinary people, not just by special talented people.
5. Metaphor far from being a redundant though pleasing linguistic ornament, is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning.

⁶ Perdawdy I., *Conceptual Metaphors*, 2018: 5.

⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 1980: 85.

Lakoff and Johnson showed convincingly that metaphor is pervasive both in thought and everyday language. In cognitive linguistics metaphor is defined as **understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain**: conceptual domain (A) is conceptual domain (B). The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called **source domain**. The conceptual domain that is understood this way is the **target domain**. Here are some examples:

- **Life is a journey.**
 - He's *without direction in life*.
 - I'm *where I want to be in life*.
 - I'm *at a crossroads in my life*.
 - They'll *go places in life*.
 - He's never let anyone get *in his way*.
 - She's *gone through a lot in life*.

Thus, in '**Life is a journey**', life is the target domain, while journey is the source domain.

In conclusion, metaphors are stylistic devices which are used in figurative meaning based on the comparison and similarity. It is one of the means of figurative language which makes our speech colourful and memorable.

References:

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