

Retraction Notice

Title of retracted article: **A Cognitive Poetic Approach to the Function of Metaphor**
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Journal: Advances in Literary Study (ALS)
 Year: 2015
 Volume: 3
 Number: 3
 Pages (from - to): 84 - 88
 DOI (to PDF): <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/als.2015.33013>
 Paper ID at SCIRP: 2820156
 Article page: <https://www.scirp.org/Journal/PaperInformation.aspx?PaperID=57287>
 Retraction date: 2018-11-19

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 Editor with hints from Journal owner (publisher)
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History

Expression of Concern:

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Correction:

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Comment: The paper does not meet the standards of “Advances in Literary Study”.

This article has been retracted to straighten the academic record. In making this decision the Editorial Board follows [COPE's Retraction Guidelines](#). Aim is to promote the circulation of scientific research by offering an ideal research publication platform with due consideration of internationally accepted standards on publication ethics. The Editorial Board would like to extend its sincere apologies for any inconvenience this retraction may have caused.

The full retraction notice in PDF is preceding the original paper, which is marked "RETRACTED".

A Cognitive Poetic Approach to the Function of Metaphor

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Received 22 May 2015; accepted 14 June 2015; published 19 June 2015

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Abstract

Metaphor is not just a rhetorical device, but an issue of conceptualization in cognitive linguistics. Based on the cognitive theory of metaphor, this research attempts to analyze the two poetic texts and their expression of functions. Metaphor functions are not only as ornaments but also as the poet's conceptualization and cognitive means. Poetical metaphor has the rhetoric function because it offers the advantage of being at once expressive, compact and vivid. Cognitive function and aesthetic function of poetical metaphor make poetry convey the truth and the beauty.

Keywords

Metaphor, Conceptualization Metaphor, Cognitive Poetic, Metaphor Function

1 Introduction

The traditional rhetorical viewpoint regards a metaphor as an art of verbal persuasion and a substitution of words when it is paraphrased into a non-metaphorical expression by means of analogy between the substitution word and the word being substituted. Therefore, metaphor is considered to be an ornament of language which conveys no new information. It is said that poetic language is beyond ordinary language that it is something different, special, with extraordinary tools and techniques like metaphor and metonymy, instrument beyond the reach of someone who just talks (Lakoff & Turner, 1989).

Metaphor as a regular term in cognitive linguistics, it involves a totally different interpretation. Metaphor is generally defined as a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically. It is suggested that metaphor is essentially an issue of conceptualization in cognitive linguistics (Hiraga, 2005). Therefore, a cognitive approach to metaphor comes out and Lakoff and Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980 marks its beginning. Lakoff's metaphor theory differs from the traditional metaphor views. It is revolutionary in many aspects. Such viewpoint is supported by Lakoff & Johnson (1987), Lee (2001), and so on.

Metaphor can be defined as “mapping cross conceptual domain” in which “the schemata structure of the source domain is projected onto the target domain in a way that is consistent with inherent target domain structure” (Lakoff, 1993: 245). Based on the cognitive theory of metaphor, the poetic texts are analyzed in the framework of cognitive poetic. It is claimed that the basic conceptual metaphors which underlie everyday expressions also underlie many of the poetic metaphors that they serve in part to give power to the poetic metaphor. In other words, the poetic metaphor is a non-conventional use of conventional metaphor. Lakoff & Turner (1989: 67-72) suggested that the ways in which poets aimed at poetic effects from conventional cognitive metaphor. Thus, four techniques are proposed in the following: extending a conventional metaphor in a novel way, elaborating the image-schemas by filling special or unusual cases, questioning the limitation of conventional metaphors and offering a new one, and forming composite metaphors by the non-conventional combination of multiple conventional metaphors for a given target domain. These techniques, which use conventional metaphors in special and non-automatic ways, make poetic metaphor noticeable and memorable. Poets by their non-conventional use of metaphors, lead their readers beyond the bounds of ordinary modes of thoughts. This research makes an attempt to elucidate how a poem can be analyzed in term of the conceptual metaphors.

2. The Relation between Metaphor and Poetry

It is accepted without doubt that there is an intimate relationship between poems and metaphors. Some scholars assumed that metaphor is the vital principle of poetry and the glory of the poet. Others argued that the mind of a poet is a set of metaphorical syntax, and metaphor is the announcer of the nature, and the essence of the poetry. Generally speaking, Aristotle (1954) has revealed some universal laws of metaphors, in his pioneering work *Rhetoric and Poetic*. A writer once promulgated that we may confront many beautiful expressions and metaphors in our daily life, which had far away their beauty with the time goes by and faded their brightness as the overuse of them. It is true that no one could prevent a wise man from enjoying the merits of these words, and nothing could depreciate the brilliance of the ancient writers who had provided a great amount of wonderful choices of words.

Metaphor has been paid rather more attention from literary theory, philosophy and cognitive psychology than from linguistics or applied linguistics. In the domain of cognitive linguists, metaphor is not just a surface ornamentation of language but a phenomenon of human thought process. Cognitive linguistics has shifted the focus of attention from metaphor in language to metaphor in the mind, or conceptual metaphor. Hence, when addressing poetical metaphor or metaphor used in poetry, we investigate more it from the cognitive perspective, not only the use of language, but also the conceptualization of language.

3. The Functions of Poetic Metaphor

Great poets can speak to us in that they use the modes of thought everyone possesses. Employing the capacities we share, poets can illuminate our experience, explore the consequences of our beliefs, challenge the way we think, and criticize our ideologies (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). Further, Lakoff & Turner suggest that the following significant functions of metaphor (1989: 64-65):

- 1) The power to structure. Metaphorical mapping allow us to impart to a concept structure which is not there independent of the metaphor.
- 2) The power of options. Schemas are very general, as they must be to cover the range of possible instantiations.
- 3) The power of reason. Metaphors allow us to borrow patterns of inference from the source domain to use in reasoning about some target domain.
- 4) The power of evaluation. We not only import entities and structure from the source domain to the target domain, we also carry over the way we evaluate the entities in the source domain.
- 5) The power of being there. The very existence and availability of conventional conceptual metaphor makes them powerful as conceptual and expressive tools

Metaphor in poetry is multi-level and has particular characteristics in addition to the semantic features of ordinary metaphor such as literal contradiction, fuzziness, directionality, etc. There are also some features or functions suggested, such as creativeness, inexhaustibility, and coherence.

Firstly, as for creativeness, poetic metaphor may occur in texts like newspaper writings, spoken discourses, novel or some others, but it occurs at random. Poetical metaphor is nearly poetic metaphor on some level or other.

Poetic metaphor is the sign of the style of poetry. A poem is nothing if not creative. A poem is regarded as insightful or perceptive poem only if with creative or original metaphor which makes it fresh and intriguing. Creativeness is the unclear and crucial feature of poetical metaphor.

Now, Ezra Pound's *In a Station of the Metro* will be evoked as an example:

In a Station of the Metro

*The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.*

Imagery in poetry is a word or sequence of words that refers to any sensory experience. The poem is written by Pound after he emerged from a Paris subway. It had been raining that day. When he emerged from the underground subway, he saw the beautiful faces. The experience motivated him to write the poem. Pound wrote a thirty-line poem and destroyed it, and months later made a poem half that length; a year later he made the hoku-like sentence. This little poem is a metaphorical pairing of two images. Through this creative metaphor, the poet denoted his sensory experience. And by using concrete particulars, it stirs the reader's imaginations. Secondly, inexhaustibility refers to readers' inexhaustible understanding of poems. The inexhaustibility of poetical metaphor is closely related to its ambiguity. Thirdly, it is about coherence. The contemporary text linguistics holds that cohesion and coherence are the two basic necessities to structure conversations. The former refers to the consistency of form, and the latter refers to the consistency of content. A poem is an integrated system, whose lines or stanzas interact harmoniously and systematically. Once a metaphoric subject is chosen, the whole text should be extended around the central concept. Once a metaphoric subject is chosen, the whole text should be extended around the central concept. A genuine poet always keeps coherence in his mind and coherence is the essential feature of poetical metaphor.

Therefore, poems cannot live without metaphor because so many functions metaphor can create in a poem, and it is metaphor that makes a poem as vivid as a reflection of actual life. The two poems *In a Station of the Metro* and *The Road Not Taken* reflect the common realization of images, focusing on the interaction between objectivity and subjectivity and depending on the physical experience and cognition in real life. The images of expression in the two poems agree with the main ideas advocated by Lakoff and Johnson. Lakoff and Johnson pointed out that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system based on which we think and act is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

4. The Conceptual Metaphors in Poems

Lakoff & Johnson (1980) suggested that the traditional metaphor is a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. And even metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. Nowadays, the study of metaphor has moved from primarily literary area to the realms of psychology, linguistics and cognitive science. As cognitive scientists have learned more about human conceptual systems, the essential role played by metaphorical thought has become more evident. In other words, the cognitive view distinguishes the traditional metaphor theories from conceptual metaphor theory. Metaphor is the omnipresent principle of language, and not only a language phenomenon but also a way of human thinking. It is pervasive in language and thought in everyday life, and even in the precise language for science.

A Case Study of Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken*

Poems cannot live out of metaphor, and it is metaphor that makes a poem as vivid as a reflection of actual life. The following poem written by *Robert Frost* is favored by most linguists in order for elucidating cognitive metaphors. Here it is invoked as a sample for a brief view how a poem is likely to be analyzed in terms of cognitive metaphorical devices. As is shown as follows:

The Road Not Taken

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood*

And looked down one as far as I could
 To where it bent in the undergrowth;
 Then took the other, as just as fair,
 And having perhaps the better claim,
 Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
 Though as for that, the passing there
 Had worn them really about the same,
 And both that morning equally lay
 In leaves no step had trodden black.
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
 I doubted if I should ever come back.
 I shall be telling this with a sigh
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I...
 I took the one less traveled by,
 And that has made the difference.

This poem can be analyzed in terms of its conceptual metaphors. There are so many words, such as *travel*, *traveler*, *tread*, *come back*, and etc. which are utilized metaphorically based on the similarities between life and a journey. Therefore, we can reach the conclusion that the core metaphor of the poem is LIFE IS A JOURNEY.

It is well known that a journey has its beginning and its ending as a person's life when starts with birth and finishes with death. Everyone is equal to this natural law no matter you are a king or even a beggar. In the journey, we are certain to be faced with *two roads* but we could not travel both at the same time, if we choose one, which means we cannot take the other at the same time and it is the same with one's life. We may have two or more choices at times during our life, however, once we choose to live in a certain way, we exclude the possibility of others. And when we travel in one way and leave the road not taken for another day, and we will never know whether that road not taken is good or not and doubt if I should ever come back. Similarly, to one's life, we may feel regretful to the chances lost during the life. Besides, there are other similarities between life and journey. Before we take a journey, we must make a detailed plan so that we can reach the destination easily and effectively, or we may waste some time. Meanwhile when we meet difficulty, we must overcome it, otherwise, we cannot even finish our journey. In order to live a colorful and meaningful life, we must plan our life carefully and persist in working hard or the goal of our lives cannot be achieve at all. Evan & Green has concludes a mapping of LOVE IS A JOURNEY. As is illustrated in the following (Evan & Green, 2006: 295) (Table 1).

Based on the argumentation that we have listed above, a corollary is that we can understand abstract things, that is, the target domain (life) in terms of metaphorical mapping from the source domain (journey) based on direct physical and social experiences. The examples illustrate show that we conceptualize *life* in terms of *journey*. There are a lot of concepts in our heads that govern our thought processes and everyday functioning, and they are not just matters of the intellect. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, how we deal with our daily lives and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central

Table 1. The mapping of love is a journey.

Source: journey	Mappings	Target: love
Travellers	→	Lovers
Vehicle		Love relationship
Journey		events in the relationship
Distance covered		Process made
Obstacles encountered		Difficulties experience
Decision about direction		Choice about what to do
Destination of the journey		Goals of the relationship

role in defining our everyday realities. To conceptualize the abstract domains of thought we relate them to more concrete concepts with which we have direct experience. We do this by mapping across domains and corresponding elements of the more concrete one. From which we can conclude that what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. But our conceptual system is not something we are normally aware of. In most of the little things we do every day, we simply think and act more or less automatically along certain lines. Just what these lines are is by no means obvious. One way to find out is by looking at language. Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what that system is like. Based on these linguistic evidences, Lakoff & Johnson (1980) has argued that most of our ordinary system is metaphorical in nature.

Metaphors are not just semantic extensions of one isolated category to another category in a different field, but that the connections and relations between categories play an important part. And the way people understand abstract things is metaphorical mapping from the source domain based on direct physical and social experiences. Thus, the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another so that metaphor should be understood as metaphorical concepts. In sum, metaphor is a primary tool for understanding our world, entering an engagement with powerful poetic metaphors is grappling in an important way with what it means to have a human life (Lakoff & Turner, 1989).

5. Conclusion

Broadly speaking, metaphor functions not only as ornaments but also as the poet's conceptualization and cognitive means. Poetical metaphor has the rhetoric function because it offers the advantage of being at once expressive, compact and vivid. Cognitive function and aesthetic function of poetical metaphor make poetry convey truth and beauty at the same time. Truth and beauty are what poems aim at, also are the significance of the existence of this special art-poetry. A poet has once observed that a great poem is a fountain forever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight. In modern times, poetry is ignored but just being studied as in school essays. Poetry is a minority interest. However, metaphor, in its broad sense, is pervasive and essential in language and thought. It is obvious to make the fundamental distinction between the traditional and the contemporary theories of metaphor. The traditional approach studies metaphor as individual linguistic expressions or rhetorical devices: what artistic or aesthetic literary or poetic in nature. In the contemporary paradigm, on the other hand, metaphor is studied as systems of human conceptualization, operating deep in human thought and cognition and at the same time, surfacing in everyday language in a systematic manner. On this view, metaphor in poetry or in literature at large is but a special case of metaphor in general, based on the same mechanism. Therefore, our current analysis of poetic metaphors just is largely for purposes of probing into the stylistic features of a poem and the motivation of the one who creates it.

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