

Classical and modern approaches to the theory of metaphor

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Annotation *The article explores the evolution of metaphor theory from classical to modern frameworks and discussing its development through philosophy, rhetoric, linguistics, as well as cognitive science. Classical theories, well rooted in Aristotelian tradition, do conceptualize metaphor as a decorative linguistic device, while more modern cognitive approaches, particularly Conceptual Metaphor Theory, view metaphor as quite fundamental to all human thought and communication. The article examines key and fundamental theoretical shifts. The paper analyzes these significant theoretical developments, emphasizing how each viewpoint advances our comprehension of the intricate nature and purpose of metaphor. Additionally, the study sheds light on how metaphor shapes conceptual knowledge and has a significant impact on language. This study provides analysis of metaphor's ongoing significance by highlighting its crucial role in meaning production and the complex processes of interpretation through the integration of viewpoints from the domains of cognitive linguistics and literary studies. Moreover, the research highlights how metaphor structures conceptual understanding, influences discourse, and reflects represented cognition.*

Key words: *metaphor, rhetoric, analogy, conceptual metaphor, interpretation, cognitive linguistics.*

Классические и современные подходы к теории метафоры

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Аннотация: *В статье рассматривается эволюция теории метафоры от классических до современных концепций, а также её развитие в философии, риторике, лингвистике и когнитивной науке. Классические теории, уходящие корнями в аристотелевскую традицию, рассматривают метафору как декоративный лингвистический приём, в то время как более современные когнитивные подходы, в частности теория концептуальной метафоры, рассматривают метафору как фундаментальную составляющую человеческого мышления и коммуникации. В статье рассматриваются ключевые и фундаментальные теоретические изменения. В работе анализируются важные теоретические разработки, подчёркивается, что каждая точка зрения способствует нашему пониманию сложной природы и назначения метафоры. Кроме того, работа освещает то, как метафора формирует концептуальное знание и оказывает значительное влияние на язык. В этом исследовании анализируется непреходящая значимость метафоры, подчёркивается её важнейшая роль в создании смысла и сложных процессах интерпретации посредством гармоничной интеграции точек зрения из областей когнитивной лингвистики и литературоведения. Более того, статья показывает, как метафора формирует концептуальное понимание, влияет на дискурс и отражает репрезентативное познание.*

Ключевые слова: *Метафора, риторика, аналогия, концептуальная метафора, интерпретация, когнитивная лингвистика.*

Metafora nazariyasiga klassik va zamonaviy yondashuvlar

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Annotatsiya: *Maqolada metafora nazariyasining klassikadan zamonaviy doiralarga evolyutsiyasi va uning rivojlanishini falsafa, ritorika, tilshunoslik, shuningdek kognitiv fan orqali muhokama qilinadi. Aristotel an'alarida kelib chiqqan klassik nazariyalar metaforani dekorativ lingvistik vosita sifatida kontseptsiyalashtiradi, zamonaviyroq kognitiv yondashuvlar, xususan kontseptual metafora nazariyasi metaforani barcha inson tafakkuri va aloqalari uchun juda muhim deb biladi. Maqolada asosiy va fundamental nazariy o'zgarishlar ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqola ushbu muhim nazariy ishlanmalarni tahlil qilib, har bir nuqtai nazar metaforaning murakkab tabiati va maqsadini tushunishimizga qanday yordam berishini ta'kidlaydi. Bundan tashqari, tadqiqot metafora kontseptual bilimlarni qanday shakllantirishi, tilga sezilarli ta'sir ko'rsatishi haqida ma'lumot beradi. Ushbu tadqiqot metaforaning doimiy ahamiyatini tahlil qilib, uning ma'no ishlab chiqarishdagi hal qiluvchi rolini va kognitiv tilshunoslik va adabiyotshunoslik sohalaridagi nuqtai nazarlarni uzluksiz birlashtirish orqali talqin qilishning murakkab jarayonlarini yoritib beradi. Bundan tashqari, maqola metafora kontseptual tushunishni qanday tuzishi, nutqqa ta'sir qilishi va idrokni aks ettirishini ta'kidlaydi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *metafora, ritorika, analogiya, kontseptual metafora, talqin, kognitiv lingvistika.*

Introduction

Metaphors represent important cognitive processes that influence our perception, categorization and interpretation. Both contemporary and classical theories of metaphor offer crucial insights into the ways in which metaphor affects perception and cognition. Linguists (Aristotle (trans. by Stephen Halliwell, 1984), Lakoff G., Johnson M. (1980), Fauconnier G. (2002), and Turner M. (2002), Quintilian (H. E. Butler, Trans. 1920-1922), Richards (1936), Black M. (1962) and others) made a significant contribution to the evolution of metaphor, each of them proposing their own theories expanding the understanding of the concept metaphor. When taken as a whole, these theories demonstrate how metaphor can enhance conceptual structures in a variety of circumstances, activate cognitive schemas, and facilitate the transfer of knowledge.

According to the Merriam -Webster Dictionary (2003), metaphor is described as following:

- a. "A figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them (as in drowning in money)."
- b. "An object, activity, or idea treated as a metaphor: a symbol."

This definition indicates that metaphors are not just rhetorical devices but fundamental tools for conceptualizing abstract ideas through analogy. However, to reach this stage metaphor went through various stages that contributed to its development, from being only linguistic ornament (Aristotle, trans. by Stephen Halliwell, 1984) to becoming a way of unconscious thinking (G. Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphor was mostly considered a rhetorical ornament in classical antiquity, a stylistic element that gave speech more elegance, vitality, or persuasiveness. The first systematic study of metaphor was provided by Aristotle (trans. by Stephen Halliwell, 1984) in his *Poetics and Rhetoric*, where he defined it as a type of analogical substitution that allows a speaker to move meaning from one domain to another for aesthetic or explanatory reasons. This perspective was expanded upon by Roman rhetoricians like Cicero and Quintilian, who saw metaphor as a tool for improving eloquence, persuasiveness, and emotional impact.

But when contemporary language and cognitive viewpoints emerged, this decorative viewpoint came under increasing criticism. Metaphor was reinterpreted in the 20th century as a basic mental function rather than just a figure of speech. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) was first introduced in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's groundbreaking work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), which marked an important change in metaphor studies. According to this theory, metaphor is essential to everyday thought and perception and is not just found in poetic language. According to CMT, people frequently use metaphorical mappings drawn from tangible, physiological experience to comprehend abstract domains like time, emotion, morality, and causality.

A wide range of disciplines, including cognitive psychology, philosophy, ethnography, discourse analysis, and artificial intelligence, are covered by modern metaphor studies. The focus on function, cognition, and conceptual structure has replaced form and style in the humanities and sciences, which is reflected in contemporary conceptions of metaphor. It is widely acknowledged that metaphor is not just decorative but essential to human understanding of the universe (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The aim of this research is to analyze the evolution of metaphor theory through both traditional and contemporary paradigms. It explores significant conceptual changes, starting with ancient philosophical viewpoints and ending with theories of cognition and blending that highlight the vital role of metaphor in communication and cognition.

Methods

This theoretical study uses a comparative-analytical method to examine and synthesize a wide range of scholarly texts, from classical rhetorical treatises to modern cognitive linguistic works. Primary texts by Aristotle (trans. by Stephen Halliwell, 1984), Quintilian (H. E. Butler, Trans. 1920-1922), Richards (1936), Black (1962), Lakoff & Johnson (1980), and Fauconnier and Turner (2002) form the corpus for analysis. The research draws upon textual interpretation, cross-theoretical comparison, and illustrative examples from both classical and contemporary sources to demonstrate the evolution of metaphor theory.

1. Historical-Descriptive Analysis

From classical rhetoric to contemporary cognitive linguistics, metaphor theory has undergone significant development. Key presumptions, terminologies, and analytical frameworks in each era are highlighted in foundational writings including Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (Quintilian, 2001), Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and Aristotle's *Poetics and Rhetoric* (Aristotle, 1996).

2. Theoretical Comparison

Modern conceptual methods, which see metaphor as essential to mind and meaning-making, are contrasted with classical metaphor theories, which see metaphor as a rhetorical or stylistic element, using a contrastive strategy. The definition, function, scope, mechanisms, and application domains (literature, cognition, discourse, etc.) are among the comparison criteria.

3. Conceptual and Cognitive Framework Application

Modern conceptual metaphor theory, as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), is applied to analyze sample metaphors like *TIME IS MONEY* and *ARGUMENT IS WAR*. This demonstrates how metaphor operates in everyday language and cognition, extending beyond rhetorical ornamentation.

4. Discourse and Pragmatic Analysis

Selected metaphorical expressions are also examined through a pragmatic lens, drawing on Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986) and discourse analysis (Steen, 2008). This component highlights how metaphor functions in real-world communication by analyzing its role in meaning negotiation, audience inference, and cognitive effect.

Results

- **Definition of metaphor and how it functions.**

According to contemporary views, metaphor is now defined as a cognitive mechanism rather than a rhetorical device, as it was in classical conceptions:

Metaphor is the transference of a term from one area to another based on resemblance or similarity, according to classical theories (Aristotle, trans. Halliwell, 1984). Its main rhetorical purpose was to elicit aesthetic appreciation, elucidate meaning, and enhance language.

Metaphor is defined as a basic process of conceptual mapping between source and destination domains by contemporary theories (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors are thought of as instruments that organize abstract ideas (such TIME, EMOTION, and JUSTICE) in terms of tangible, lived experience.

- **The Metaphorical thought mechanism.**

The mainstay of classical theories was substitution: metaphor switches out one term for another to achieve a rhetorical impact.

Conceptual mappings between domains are emphasized in contemporary cognitive theories (LIFE IS A JOURNEY, for example) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). These mappings are based on sensorimotor experience and are methodical rather than haphazard. For example, “down” is commonly associated with negativity (“feeling low”), whereas “up” is frequently associated with positive emotion (“high spirits”).

- **Classical Theories of Metaphor.**

Aristotle’s Rhetoric and Poetics offer foundational definitions. In Poetics, metaphor is described as the transfer of a word from its usual context to an alien one, based on analogy (Aristotle, trans. Halliwell, 1984). For example, calling a brave man a “lion” suggests shared attributes of courage.

In Rhetoric, Aristotle explains that metaphors function by revealing similarities between dissimilar things – effectively facilitating persuasion and emotional impact (Aristotle, trans. Halliwell, 1984).

The exploration of metaphors by Aristotle can be seen in his two major works:

- *Poetics*: He defines metaphor as “the introduction of an alien term” (ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορά), meaning a word is transferred from its original meaning to another context where it becomes meaningful (Aristotle, trans. by Stephen Halliwell, 1984)

- *Rhetoric*: Aristotle further explains that metaphor is based on similarity (analogy), meaning that a metaphor works when there is an underlying resemblance between the concepts being compared (Aristotle, trans. by Stephen Halliwell, 1984)

A systematic taxonomy of metaphors according to the animate/inanimate character of the replaced concepts was presented by Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria* (Quintilian, H. E. Butler, Trans. 1920-1922). He distinguished four main categories of metaphors:

1. Animate for animate. A living thing is substituted by another (a charioteer is called a steersman).

2. Inanimate for inanimate. An inanimate thing is substituted by another (‘classique immittit habenas’).

3. Animate to inanimate. From the animate to the inanimate (the enemy is called a sword).

4. Animate for inanimate (the crown of a mountain).

The fourth form, in which inanimate objects are given life and consciousness, is the one Quintilian preferred since he thought it had the most potential to improve the vividness and emotional impact of oratory.

According to Galperin (1977) metaphors can be both *single* (isolated) and *expanded*, when one figurative expression generates a whole system of interconnected metaphors. He also distinguished between *linguistic* (established, erased) and *authorial* (individual-stylistic) metaphors. In this context, his traditional approach retains the rhetorical understanding of metaphor as a stylistic

tool, but I.A. Richards (1936), in his important publication “*The Philosophy of Rhetoric*” changed how we understand metaphor with his Interaction Theory. Richards introduced each of the important concepts of “tenor” and “vehicle” (Richards, 1936).

The “*tenor*” represents the subject or concept being communicated. The “*vehicle*” is the metaphorical term or image used to depict that subject. According to Richards, meaning does not arise completely from just substituting that vehicle for its tenor, but from a certain dynamic interplay between those two. This interaction results in a modified meaning. This interaction also results in an improved meaning.

In *Models and Metaphors*, Max Black elaborated on the **Interaction Theory** by presenting “implicative complexes” (Black, 1962). Black claimed that such metaphors function as selective filters, carefully highlighting specific aspects of the tenor while simultaneously removing others. Each single term in a metaphor, according to Black, carries a system of associated implications - a network of connotations, background knowledge, and cultural understandings. The interaction in between all these implicative complexes certainly shapes a reading of the metaphor. The interpreter draws upon their comprehension of both of the tenor and of the vehicle to construct toward a coherent and meaningful understanding. (Black, 1962).

- **Application Domain**

According to contemporary metaphor theory, metaphor is present in all forms of discourse, including common talk, political discourse, scientific discourse, and journalism. For instance, metaphors like “attacking a problem” and “grasping an idea” are employed in cognitive rather than artistic contexts. The widespread use of metaphor in influencing how people understand and express experience is highlighted by this extension.

With the development of Cognitive sciences, in particular Cognitive Linguistics and Cognitive Stylistics a breakthrough in understanding of metaphors was performed by the development of *Conceptual Metaphor theory* (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Lakoff’s and Johnson’s theories were originally inspired by Michael Reddy’s article *The Conduit Metaphor*. The main idea of CMT was that human’s mind is metaphorical in thinking and producing the speech, that this process occurs on our unconscious state as a way of ordinary thinking.

According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), we understand abstract ideas by systematically mapping them from concrete, embodied experiences. *TARGET DOMAIN - SOURCE DOMAIN* is a representation of these mappings, also referred to as conceptual metaphors. For example, we use phrases like “saving time,” “wasting time,” and “budgeting our time” because the conceptual metaphor “*Time is money*” influences our language and actions. Similarly, the conceptual metaphor “*Argument is war*” illustrates within phrases like “attacking an argument,” “defending a position,” and “shooting down an opponent’s claims (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Later empirical research in cognitive linguistics has reinforced the CMT and developed it within another theory of Conceptual Blending. *Blending Theory*, also known as Conceptual Integration Theory, developed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) in *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* offers a new mental consideration of metaphor. According to this theory, metaphor emerges when concepts from other domains are selectively projected into a blended space, resulting in emergent meaning. The blended space (the new conceptualization that results from the integration of elements), a generic space (common abstract structure), and input spaces (the source and target domains) are important parts of this process. (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002).

Discussion

The comparative analysis of classical and modern metaphor theories reveals a profound evolution in how metaphor is conceptualized, studied, and applied. The transition from viewing metaphor as a linguistic ornament to understanding it as a central mechanism of cognition reflects a broadxser shift in the intellectual landscape - from a formalist and rhetorical paradigm to a cognitive

and interdisciplinary one. This transformation holds significant implications for the study of language, thought, and culture.

Metaphor was regarded primarily for its rhetorical power- that is, its ability to convince, adorn, and clarify - in classical ideas, especially those developed by Aristotle (trans. by Stephen Halliwell, 1984) and later developed by Roman rhetoricians. Although these views recognized that metaphor may help people understand difficult concepts, they limited its use to persuasive or artistic language. It was believed that the audience's job was to decipher figurative similarities as a passive recipient.

On the other hand, contemporary theories contend that metaphor is a fundamental component of human cognition, especially those based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphor is a reflection of how people think about the world through their lived experiences, not just a language expression. Commonplace metaphors like "*carrying emotional baggage*" and "*grasping an idea*" are examples of profound, methodical mappings between mental domains rather than artistic decorations.

Modern theories, particularly those influenced by pragmatics and discourse analysis, emphasize interpretive flexibility. Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986), for instance, suggests that metaphor interpretation depends on contextual inference and cognitive effort, highlighting the role of the audience as an active co-constructor of meaning.

This change has reinterpreted the role of metaphor as generative rather than only an ornamental or instructive. It frames social and political discourse, organizes information, and directs reasoning. Metaphor is therefore a fundamental component of human understanding of reality rather than a characteristic of language that is discretionary.

Conclusion

Metaphor has evolved from being a rhetorical device to a basic cognitive process. Aristotle (trans. by Stephen Halliwell, 1984) and Quintilian (H. E. Butler, Trans. 1920-1922), prominent classical philosophers, saw metaphor as a language ornamentation based on analogy and substitution that mainly served to enhance rhetoric and its decorative purpose in speech. Modern cognitive theories, however, have reinterpreted metaphor as essential to human cognition. The notion that meaning arises from the dynamic interplay between a tenor (subject) and vehicle (metaphorical term), as opposed to simple substitution, was first presented by Richards' Interaction Theory. Black elaborated on this by stating that metaphors draw attention to specific elements of meaning and influence perception by creating sophisticated connections. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory was a significant breakthrough as it explained how metaphors develop in cognition and affect thinking subconsciously through conceptual mappings. This concept was expanded upon by Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) Blending Theory, which described how metaphors combine various mental areas to produce new meanings.

As a result, metaphor research has broadened beyond its rhetorical foundations to include linguistics, cognitive science, philosophy, psychology and communication studies. This article has demonstrated that a more comprehensive understanding of metaphor's ongoing significance in language, philosophy, and culture can be obtained by looking at it from both a historical and theoretical perspective.

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