

Conceptual Metaphor of Death in Emily Dickinson's *I know that He exists*

الاستعارة مفاهيمية للموت في قصيدة إيميلي ديكنسون "أعلم أنه موجود"

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Abstract

Conceptual metaphor is considered as involving structures that linguistically define metaphors. It is considered as being structures that linguistically define metaphors. It is a noticeable tool that represents a considerable difficulty in understanding the meaning exchanged, spoken or written, literary language especially the poetic one is no exception. To the researcher's best knowledge, conceptual metaphor has been tackled from different perspectives; yet a few studies have dealt with conceptual metaphor in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. To this end, this study aimed at analyzing the types of conceptual metaphors of death in Emily Dickinson's *I know that He exists* base exploring how the concept of death is best conceptualized in the selected poem. The analysis is based on Lakoff and Johnson's (2003)

model of conceptual metaphor. The findings revealed that there were 4 structural metaphors and only one ontological metaphor.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, metaphor, Emily Dickinson.

المستخلص

تعتبر الاستعارة المفاهيمية بمثابة تراكيب تحدد الاستعارات لغويًا. إلى حد علم الباحث ، تم تناول الاستعارة المفاهيمية من وجهات نظر مختلفة ؛ لكن هناك عدد قليل من الدراسات التي تناولت الاستعارة المفاهيمية في شعر إملي دكنسون. تتعامل الدراسة مع أنواع الاستعارة المفاهيمية للموت في إملي دكنسون ، "اعرف انه موجود". لذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل أنواع الاستعارات المفاهيمية للحياة في القصيدة المستهدفة. ولهذه الغاية ، تم تحليل القصيدة بشكل هادف بناءً على نموذج لأكوف وجونسون (2003) لنظرية الاستعارة المفاهيمية. كشفت النتائج أن هناك أربع استعارات هيكلية و استعارة واحدة وجودية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستعارة المفاهيمية، الاستعارة، إملي دكنسون

1. Introduction

Cognitive semantics is treated as one of the essential approaches in cognitive linguistics. According to Allwood and Gardenfors (1998), cognitive semantics "identifies meanings of expressions with mental entities" (p: 29). The subject of CM as a part of cognitive semantics has long been of a considerable importance in cognitive linguistics. Lakoff and Turner (1989) argued that "metaphor is a matter of thought- all kinds of thought: thought about emotion, about society, about human character, about language, and about the nature of life and death" (xi). Lakoff and Turner (2003) claimed

that metaphor is to understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another.

In addition, Kövecses (2010) stated that, from a cognitive linguistic point of view, metaphor is characterized as capturing one conceptual domain in terms of another. Metaphor works when two concepts are to interact in the human mind to create knowledge which is held in the individual concepts (Baake, 2003). On this account, it has a fundamental role in the process of person knowledge. As maintained by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) metaphors do not only provide vivid thoughts but also they pattern the way of perceptions in mind. They have drawn a great attention to the exclusive meaning of metaphor by saying that " metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language" (p. 68)

Yousif (2018) showed that we have two kinds of languages: ordinary language and literary language. As a matter of comparison, literary language seems to be used to convey deep feelings, messages and images to the audience. Thus, CM is a very essential part in poetry. Lakoff and Turner (1989) in their book *more than cool reason* indicate that metaphorical expressions are widely used in a way that is different from everyday language. Metaphor is one of the marvelous types of figurative language that is widely used in poetic texts to give a special aesthetic value (Dancygier & Sweetser 2014). This can give the impression that in literary works, the aesthetic sense can be achieved by the use of figurative language. The idea of aesthetic turns to be the highlight in structuring literary works, and this makes literary works different from other non-literary ones.

In this regard, Emily Dickinson is considered a well-known representative in poetry who used metaphorical expressions. She succeeded in decorating her

poetry by using CM. By the use of CM, she was able to convey her deep feelings, her situation, and her thoughts. Accordingly, CM was argued to be a good tool which enabled Dickinson to be successful in handling many concepts, themes, and images in her poems. Literature is a term used to describe written works that have an artistic form and intellectual worth in order to express language in ways that are different from how it is used in everyday life. According to Cuddon (2013) "Literature is a broad term that usually denotes works belonging to the major genres: epic, drama, lyric, novel, short story, and ode," (p:404). Poetry is a type of literature. For its aesthetic use of language; it occupies a major position in literary genres. Poets turn to use figurative language in their work for the purpose of conveying their feelings, attitudes, and thoughts to the audience. Metaphor is one of the noticeable figurative tools. It adds some extra aesthetic sense to literary works, particularly poems. Dickinson is considered an important representative whose poetry seems to be decorated with metaphors.

Previous studies such as (Cenita (2020), Inpok et al (2019), Syarwani (2017), Chen (1982) have made an attempt to study metaphor in Dickinson's poems from different perspectives. It was noticed that these works on metaphor rely on rule-based, statistical model or investigate metaphor in literary contexts. None of them have dealt with metaphor in the poetry of Dickinson from a cognitive semantic point of view. That is, the cognitive aspect of metaphor has not been dealt with yet. It is argued that CM is a powerful tool used by Emily Dickinson to convey her feelings, thoughts and attitudes to the readers. Emily Dickinson excessively uses the metaphorical language in her poetry. Accordingly, the researcher attempts to answer the following question: What are the types of CM used in Emily Dickinson's poem of death *I know that He exists?*

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Conceptual Metaphor: An overview

It is a matter of degree when it comes to the distinction between literal and metaphorical language. To establish a line between literal and metaphorical language, it is vital to comprehend the communication process. Thus, when speakers want to convey something about reality or experience in the world, they begin with a mental cognitive process. The speaker then proceeds to form the statement in the briefest and the most relevant manner in order to explain the concept. The idea or notion regarding anything that will be conveyed is referred to as a proposition. They will encode this proposition using linguistic codes, which are commonly used to connect the meaning of a concept with physical shapes, in order to communicate it in a text or an utterance. Listeners perceive the text or utterance, decode it, then interpret it by estimating what the speakers' thoughts are most likely to be conveyed as stated by (Goatly, 1997)

In most cases, the proposition organized by speakers will, to a greater or lesser extent, approach the notion being conveyed. The greater the disparity between the stated proposition and the intended interpretation, the greater the metaphorical value. The gap might appear when the world's reality or experience does not precisely fit into proportional form (1997). However, when literal language fails to describe reality, metaphor is the best option. Metaphor produces meaning by expressing a feature of one object in terms of another, which is at best ornamental and at worst misleading.

Furthermore, Goatly (1997) stated that there are three terms that make up a metaphor in terms of how it works: theme (tenor), vehicle, and ground. The subject of the metaphor (tenor) is the intended notion to be represented; the vehicle is another thought by which the tenor is described; and the ground is the similarities and/or analogies involved, or the foundation on which topic and vehicle might be put together in this way. Thus, in the metaphorical sentence "Bob is a tiger in discussion," "Bob" represents the tenor and "tiger" represents the vehicle. The ground is the analogy between Bob and the tiger, which is possibly how Bob prepares his arguments, cunning and strong like a tiger, making them tough to refute by others. As stated by William (1992), metaphor is a structure that connects two conceptual domains. A dead metaphor is one that has become so frequent that it goes unnoticed all of the time (conventional metaphor). The expressions that have lost their freshness or metaphorical meaning and are digested automatically and readily are referred to as dead metaphors. However, this does not imply that they have lost their mental energy or that they are dead. They are, on the contrary, alive in the sense that they regulate our thought: they are metaphors we live by.

Consequently, these metaphors are fundamental to our ways of thinking and comprehending reality. The use of a dead metaphor spares people the burden of having to convey their thoughts in their own words as stated by (Gerald, 1986). For example, the phrase "to grasp the concept" is essentially a metaphor. The literal meaning of grasp is an action of physically taking hold of something, especially with the hand. Concept is an abstract entity that is conceived in the mind, whereas grasp is an action of physically taking hold of something. However, the phrase has become so common that most English speakers are unaware of the meaning of the word grip, which refers to physical movement. The eye of a needle, a branch of an

organization, to kill two hours, to digest the idea, a cold feeling, and a heavy visage, for example, are no longer recognized as metaphors since their metaphorical values have been drowned in everyday English use.

On the other hand, live metaphor or CM is a type of metaphor that serves to demonstrate an idea in a decorative manner while also attracting the audience's attention (1986). Live metaphor retains its metaphorical power, sometimes with a subtle contrast that makes the tenor and vehicle seem irrelevant; hence, understanding the meaning of a live metaphor necessitates some effort. The appeal of live metaphor is the possibility of putting the tenor and the vehicle together on the basis of likeness, matching, or analogy.

2.2 Types of CM

The three varieties of CM identified by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) are structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, and ontological metaphor.

A. structural metaphor

A structural metaphor is a metaphor that expresses one concept in terms of another structure or concept. These entail the organization of one type of experience or activity in relation to another type of experience or activity. To put it another way, Koveses (2010) pointed that the cognitive function of these metaphors is to allow speakers to comprehend target A through the structure of source B. This means that the word "structural metaphor" refers to an idea that is figuratively arranged within another term. The metaphor of ARGUMENT IS WAR as tackled by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), for example, can be presented in a number of ways, including *Your claims are unjustifiable*, *every weak point in my argument was attacked*, or *His criticisms hit the point*. It can be observed in this metaphor that the

concept of argument is understood in terms of battle, or physical confrontation. When humans desire something, they use verbal arguments rather than physical conflict to get it. As a result, verbal conflicts are understood in the same way as physical fights are (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

B. Ontological Metaphor

When compared to structural metaphors, ontological metaphors give far less cognitive structuring for target concepts. Ontology is a philosophical which is field concerned with the nature of existence as stated by (Koveses, 2010).

An ontological metaphor is one in which an abstract object, such as an activity, emotion, or concept, is materialized or transformed into a separate thing and used as if it were a physical item. We interact with objects and substances on a daily basis, and this interaction provides the basis for many ontological metaphors. To put it another way, we classify events, activities, ideas, and emotions that are limitless and unstructured as concrete beings and substances. However, there are four subcategorizes of ontological metaphor:

1. Entity Metaphor

In this type an abstract concept is presented in terms of physical object. The expression '*my mind is operating today*' is a clear example of this type. In this example, the abstract entity which is the "mind" is represented in terms of concrete entity which is the machine.

2. Container Metaphor

In this type of metaphor, an abstract concept is represented as a container that has inside and outside. It is possible that it has something else.

For example, '*his words carry little meanings*'. In this example the abstract concept 'words' is represented as a concrete container as stated by Lakoff and Johnson (2003)

3. Personification

When a human characteristic is bestowed on something that is not human, such as an object or an animal, it is referred to as personification. To provide detailed descriptions, writers personify objects. Examples: My pen was flying over the paper at a breakneck speed. (I was typing at a breakneck speed.) In the wind, the leaves swayed. (The leaves were tossed around by the wind.). Leaves falling personification is a figurative language in which an animal, an object, or a concept is given the attribute of human beings. It is a subtype of metaphor, an implicit parallel in which the figurative phrase is always a human individual (Perrine, 1977).

Additionally, personification is the process of presenting an abstract phenomenon like inflation as an entity or a person. Inflation is eroding our level of living; we must resist inflation. This metaphor aids us in comprehending alien creatures via the lens of human activities and motivations. Inflation is depicted not only as a person, but also as an enemy in the scenario above, and we have a means of behaving or positioning ourselves in relation to the abstraction as a result. (2003)

C. Orientational Metaphor

According to Perrine (1977), most metaphors that serve this purpose have to do with basic human spatial orientations, such as up-down, center-

periphery, and so on, hence the name orientational metaphor. It indicates that orientational metaphors use spatial orientations to arrange an entire system of concepts. As a result, ideas like states and emotions, such as the following metaphor concepts, are orientated to an imagined space:

HEALTHY IS UP; SICK IS DOWN: and CONSCIOUS IS UP;
UNCONCIOUS IS DOWN:

3. Methodology

This qualitative study is a cognitive semantics analysis of the types of conceptual metaphors of death in Emily Dickinson's *I know that He exists*. The analysis of the poem is based on Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) model of conceptual metaphor. The corpus of this study was selected from *THE COMPLETE POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON* edited by Thomas H. Johnson. The poem was read several times to grasp detailed comprehension of its themes and the metaphor used by the poet. Then, every stanza was selected and examined depending on the following criteria. The poem was selected purposively based on the idea that it is one of the representative poems that includes CM of death.

3.1 The Adopted Model

Metaphor is claimed to be essential to language and thinking in this perspective. As a result, there is a theory called CM Theory that may be considered as an extension of this viewpoint (Saeed, 2016). In their groundbreaking paper *Metaphors, We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson introduced this new perspective on metaphor for the first time in 1980.

Metaphor is defined by Lakoff and Johnson as knowing and experiencing one sort of object in terms of another. In the cognitive linguistic approach,

metaphor is defined as comprehending one conceptual domain in relation to another conceptual domain, according to Kövecses (2010). Any systematic building of experience is referred to as the conceptual domain here. The source domain (where it is normally physical) and the target domain (where it is usually abstract) are the two conceptual domains that make up a conceptual metaphor. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), human concepts govern what is sensed, how we approach this environment, and how we interact with others. Lakoff and Johnson came to the conclusion that the human cognitive process is heavily metaphorical.

Additionally, because metaphors exist in a person's mental framework, they, as verbal representations, are conceivable decisively. The metaphorical verbal statements are just reflections of an underlying intellectual relationship (Evans and Green, 2006). As a result, a distinction between intellectual metaphor and metaphorical verbal expression may be noticed here. The CM of *TIME IS MONEY*, for example, may be conveyed in a variety of metaphorical forms, such as "You're wasting my time," "You're running out of time," "I don't have the time to give you," and so on. As a result, all of the metaphorical phrases mentioned underneath it are based on the conceptual metaphor. The mappings will be formed since these experiences are known to have two conceptual domains linked. Furthermore, Kövecses (2010) depicted the mappings as a series of well-organized correspondences between the source and target, with the conceptual component of B corresponding to the component of A. The poem, *I know that He exists*, numbered 764 in the complete collection of Emily Dickinson's poems was purposefully selected depending since it contains different types of CM.

4. Findings and Discussion

In this section, the researcher analyzed the concepts of life found in Emily Dickinson's poem, based on Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) model of CM Theory.

P2 (338) (I know that He exists)

S1

*I know that He exists
Somewhere - in Silence-
He has hidden his rare life
From our gross eyes.*

S2

*Tis an instant's play.'
Tis a fond Ambush - '
Just to make Bliss
Earn her own surprise!*

S3

*But-should the play
Prove piercing earnest -
Should the glee - glaze-
In Death's-stiff-stare-*

S4

*Would not the fun
Look too expensive!
Would not the jest-
Have crawled too far!*

The poet expresses her faith in God's existence. However, this assurance is gradually replaced with a feeling of doubt and the complexity of life and man's relationship with God. The first verse expresses trust in the existence of God, despite the fact that man cannot see or hear Him. He's 'hidden, in silence and away from our gross eyes'. God's quiet and hiding from man's gaze is an illustration of a constant theme in western available literature regarding the challenging metaphysical topic of Heaven's stillness concerning man's plight: He is already there, so where is He whenever person wants Him? However, it is important to realize that the author's questioning is not really a denial, but rather a desire to learn more. The poet offers a metaphor that represents life as being both brief and insignificant.

In S2, there was a clear CM structured by the poet in the line 'Tis an instant's play'. In this line, the poet metaphorically conceptualized the notion of life as a play. This kind of metaphor is known as a structural metaphor. In such conceptualization, the poet embodied the shortness and the joy of life as the short time of a game. The terms 'jest' and 'fun' in the last stanza indicated the meaning of the word *play*. The idea of the ambiguity of life's significance is pushed further on through such careful wording. Life was a play that lasted for "*a moment*" compared to immortality after death. Life was seen as a *sweet ambush* which will be illustrated in the following paragraph. This metaphor carried the CM of LIFE IS A PLAY.

In the verse 'Tis a fond ambush', the same kind of conceptual metaphor, which is a structural metaphor, was used. The poet again structured the concept of life as a trap. This conceptualization enabled the poet to conceptualize the negative side of life. Also, she embodied the idea that as a trap is a cause to finish someone's life, life was also the cause

behind her sorrow. When this brief existence is ended, a fun surprise stroke from a secret spot in which God would jump out in playful surprise. The thrill of finally seeing him face-to-face would be astonishment. Dickinson cleverly used the exclamation strategy after 'surprise' making the phrase be conceptualized as if he were leaping from His secret spot, bearing the treasure of eternity. This metaphor contained the CM of LIFE IS A TRAP.

In S3, the structural metaphor was understood throughout the whole stanza. In this stanza, the poet genially conceptualized the concept should the harshness of death be the only way to get rid of her life. This CM can be interpreted by the use of 'glee-glaze and death's stare'. The poet conceptualized her worry that all of this *play* would develop into a bitter complicated business *piercing earnest* and what seemed to be a game will turn out to be a deception on man. According to the poet, it would be a cruel joke if there were no life despite the promise of immortality. In this kind of metaphor, the CM of LIFE IS A JOKE was embodied.

As for S4, the poet utilized a structural metaphor in which the concept of life and fun were structured as money. This conceptualization was enriched by the use of the adjective 'expensive'. Such conceptualization enabled the poet to conceptualize the idea that life and all its joys were just like money which would be lasted sooner or later. In this regard, the adjective *expensive* implied that all of man's lighthearted enjoyment (life) in this world would be rendered useless. Thus, in this concept, there was the CM of LIFE IS MONEY.

Regarding the last two lines, there also found an ontological metaphor in which the concept of the *jest* was conceptualized in terms of something that could be an infant crawl. This kind of CM is known as personification. Cleverly, the poet shifted the tone of the poem which

started with the concept that life is fun to be like someone moves towards uncertainty. As a result, the CM of LIFE IS A JOURNEY was structured differently in this poem. This can be illustrated in the following figure:

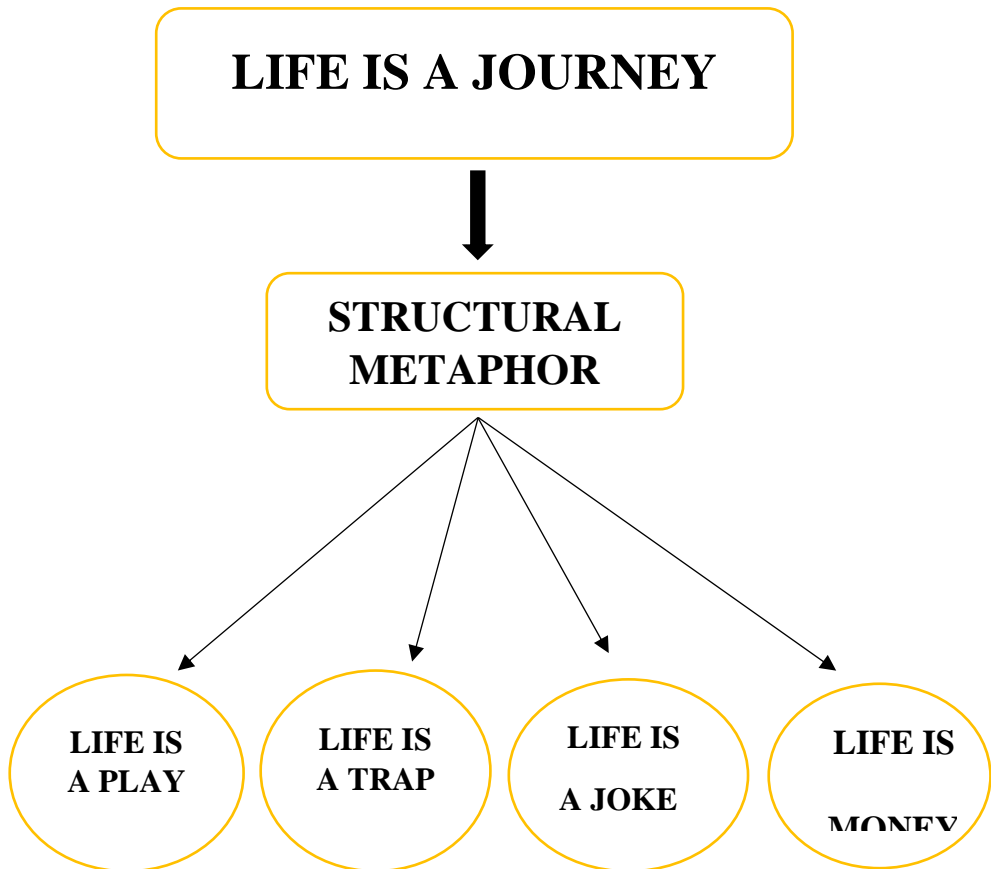


Figure 4.5 The Structural Metaphors in Emily Dickinson's Poem of Life "I know that he exists"

In this poem, the first CM of LIFE IS A PLAY was structured in a good way. In this conceptual metaphor, the poet structured the concept of time life, which is an abstract concept, in terms of a concrete concept play. The poet depended on the subcategories shared between life and play. The first subcategory is that both life and play have a beginning point. The second subcategory is that both of them include activities. Life includes the processes of planning, thinking, and the activities of doing things. On the other hand, the play includes the processes of thinking, planning, and the activities of training and of playing.

The third shared subcategory is that there are the doers of the actions in both life and play. The doers of the actions in the concept of life were represented in the ordinary people who do the normal activities while the doers of the actions in a play were represented in the players who do the activities of playing. Both life and a play have an end. This was considered the fourth shared subcategory. The end of life was represented in the death of someone while the end of a play was represented at the end of the time allotted. Finally, after the end of both life and a play, there would be either a win or a loss. Being rewarded with eternity was the prize in the eyes of the poet. Besides, being rewarded with a prize was a win in the eyes of players. Accordingly, eternity was the prize for the poet.

5. Conclusion

Answering the research question, "**What are the types of CM used in Emily Dickinson's poem *I know that He exists***", the researcher has concluded the following:

1. In S1, there was one structural metaphor LIFE IS A PLAY, in which the poet conceptualized the notion of death in terms of a play.

2. In S2, the researcher found that there was only one type of CM (structural metaphor) LIFE IS A TRAP by which, the poet conceptualized the notion of life as a trap.
3. As for S3, the researcher found another structural metaphor LIFE IS A JOKE. In this CM, the poet was able to structure the idea of life in terms of a trap.
4. In S4, it was found that there was a structural metaphor LIFE IS MONEY. In this CM, the notion of life was being structured in terms of money. Only one ontological metaphor was found in the same stanza.

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