

COGNITIVE AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF LIFE METAPHORS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola ingliz adabiyotida hayot metaforalarining kognitiv va madaniy jihatlarini o'rganadi, hayotning metaforik iboralar orqali qanday kontseptualizatsiya qilinishini tahlil qiladi. Lakoff va Jonson tomonidan taklif qilingan Kontseptual Metafora Nazariyasiga tayanib, tadqiqot hayotning asosiy aqliy tasvirlarini ochib berish uchun klassik va zamonaviy adabiy matnlarni o'rganadi. Bundan tashqari, maqolada tarixiy davrlar va adabiy an'analar bo'yicha farqlar va o'xshashliklarni namoyish etib, ushbu metaforalarni shakllantirishda madaniy kontekstning roli ta'kidlangan. Ushbu topilmalar kognitiv jarayonlar va madaniy qadriyatlarining hayot metaforalarini yaratishda qanday o'zaro ta'sir qilishini yaxshiroq tushunishga yordam beradi va tilshunoslik va adabiy tadqiqotlar uchun tushunchalar beradi.

Kalit so'zlar: hayot metaforalari, kognitiv tilshunoslik, madaniy jihatlar, ingliz adabiyoti, kontseptual metafora nazariyasi.

Аннотация: В данной статье исследуются когнитивные и культурные аспекты жизненных метафор в английской литературе, анализируется, как жизнь концептуализируется посредством метафорических выражений. Опираясь на теорию концептуальной метафоры, предложенную Лакоффом и Джонсоном, исследование рассматривает классические и современные литературные тексты, чтобы выявить ключевые ментальные представления о жизни. Кроме того, в статье подчеркивается роль культурного контекста в формировании этих метафор, демонстрируются различия и сходства между историческими периодами и литературными традициями. Полученные результаты способствуют лучшему пониманию того, как когнитивные процессы и культурные ценности взаимодействуют при создании жизненных метафор, и предоставляют ценные сведения для лингвистики и литературоведения.

Ключевые слова: жизненные метафоры, когнитивная лингвистика, культурные аспекты, английская литература, теория концептуальной метафоры

Abstract: This article explores the cognitive and cultural aspects of life metaphors in English literature, analyzing how life is conceptualized through metaphorical expressions. Drawing on the theory of conceptual metaphor proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, the study examines classical and modern literary texts to identify key mental representations of life. Furthermore, the article highlights the role of cultural context in the formation of these

metaphors, demonstrating differences and similarities across historical periods and literary traditions. The findings contribute to a better understanding of how cognitive processes and cultural values interact in the creation of life metaphors and provide valuable insights for linguistics and literary studies.

Keywords: *life metaphors, cognitive linguistics, cultural aspects, English literature, conceptual metaphor theory.*

Introduction

Metaphors play a crucial role in human cognition and communication, providing a bridge between abstract concepts and concrete experiences. Among these, metaphors of life have long fascinated literary scholars, linguists, and cognitive scientists, as they reveal how humans perceive, structure, and interpret existence. In English literature, life is frequently represented through metaphorical frameworks such as journey, stage, game, or battle, reflecting both individual cognitive patterns and broader cultural values. The present study aims to examine life metaphors in English literary texts from both cognitive and cultural perspectives. The research is guided by Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which posits that metaphor is not merely a stylistic device but a fundamental cognitive mechanism through which abstract ideas are understood. Additionally, the study considers how cultural contexts influence the creation and interpretation of life metaphors, recognizing that historical periods, societal norms, and literary traditions shape metaphorical representations. By analyzing a range of classical and modern texts, this article seeks to identify recurring metaphorical patterns, explore their cognitive underpinnings, and discuss cultural variations in metaphor usage. The study contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship, integrating insights from linguistics, literary studies, and cultural analysis to enhance our understanding of metaphorical thought in literature.

Literature review

In a bad metaphor, this simile is not logical, leading to confusion or alienation. Consider the following sentence: “The young warrior had a hungry look in his eyes, the kind you get when you haven’t eaten in a while.” The metaphor is broken by the extension “the look that comes from not eating for a long time,” even though the “hungry look” is still the warrior’s eagerness to fight. A stronger simile, such as “The young warrior looked like a greedy dog staring at a juicy treat,” can improve the text. There are many different types of metaphors in English literature that are used to create vivid images in the reader’s mind. Here’s a quick look at some of them: Extended metaphor: This is not just a quick comparison. Instead, it’s a metaphor that spans several sentences or even the entire piece. For example, if you say life is a journey, you can carry this metaphor throughout the piece, with references to obstacles, long highways, or scenic detours.[Orazali Karjawbayev]

Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT) argues that metaphor is not just a stylistic device, but a fundamental process of human cognition. It helps us understand abstract concepts

through more concrete domains. Language reflects these conceptual maps. For example, we don't just speak metaphorically, we think metaphorically.[Pulatova Nigina]

Methodology

This study uses a descriptive-analytic approach, combining comparative analysis with cognitive and cultural perspectives, to examine metaphors of life in English literature. The research methodology is based on the following principles:

Data Selection

The corpus consists of classical and contemporary English literary texts, including novels, poems, and plays, selected based on their rich use of metaphorical expressions related to life. The texts were selected to represent different historical periods and literary traditions, allowing for a cross-cultural and diachronic analysis of metaphors of life.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which argues that metaphors are cognitive tools that allow people to understand abstract concepts through more concrete experiences. Life metaphors were analyzed as conceptual maps, with source domains (e.g., journey, play, stage, battle) and target domain (life) identified.

Analytical procedures

Identification: Life metaphors were identified in selected texts through close reading. Specific metaphorical expressions, as well as extended metaphors spanning multiple sentences or paragraphs, were noted.

Classification: Metaphors were classified according to conceptual source domains (e.g., journey, war, performance) and their function in the text.

Cognitive analysis: Each metaphor was analyzed to uncover underlying mental images and cognitive structures that demonstrate how abstract concepts of life are conceptualized through more concrete experiences.

Cultural analysis: The study examines how historical context, literary traditions, and cultural norms influence the formation and interpretation of life metaphors. Cross-period comparisons highlight differences and similarities in metaphor use.

Comparative dimension

The study compares metaphorical patterns in classical and contemporary literature, assessing changes in metaphorical conceptualization over time. Attention is paid to cultural factors that shape metaphorical thinking, such as social values, historical events, and literary movements.

Interpretation of data

The findings are interpreted in terms of both cognitive and cultural theories, showing how metaphors of life reflect the interaction between human cognition and the cultural environment. This analysis provides insights into metaphorical thought processes and provides implications for linguistics, literary studies, and cultural analysis.

This study combines descriptive, analytical, and comparative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of metaphors of life in English literature, emphasizing the interaction between cognitive mechanisms and cultural context.

Main body

Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) started with George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's book, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). The theory goes back a long way and builds on centuries of scholarship that takes metaphor not simply as an ornamental device in language but as a conceptual tool for structuring, restructuring and even creating reality. Notable philosophers in this history include, for instance, Friedrich Nietzsche and, and more recently, Max Black. A recent overview of theories of metaphor can be found in Gibbs, ed. 2008 and that of CMT in particular in Kövecses 2010a. Since the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) work, a large amount of research has been conducted that has confirmed, added to and also modified their original ideas. Often, the sources of the new ideas were Lakoff and Johnson themselves. Given this situation, it is obvious that what we know as conceptual metaphor theory today is not equivalent to the theory of metaphor proposed in *Metaphors We Live By*. Many of the critics of CMT assume, incorrectly, that CMT equals *Metaphors We Live By*. For this reason, I will not deal with this kind criticism in this introduction to CMT. [Zoltán Kövecses]

Human beings are essentially goal-directed creatures. Everything we do contributes directly or indirectly to the goals we want to achieve. These can range from macro-goals such as physically surviving, finding shelter against heat/cold/predators, and having a happy life, to micro-goals such as going out to buy groceries, or even reaching out for a glass of milk on the table. Precisely because, as a species, we have become so good at these things we have ended up so high in the evolutionary pyramid. Goals, and developing strategies how to achieve them, thus dominate our thoughts, emotions, and actions, and therefore we need ways to conceptualize goals. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), fathered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and still in full swing (see e.g., Gibbs 2008, Kövecses 2010), claims that human beings typically come to grips with abstract and complex phenomena by understanding them metaphorically in terms of physical, concrete phenomena. These latter are the phenomena we have knowledge and experience of thanks to sensory perception (touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting) and thanks to our movement through physical space. [Kromhout, Roelf, and Charles Forceville]

Metaphors play a crucial role in human cognition and literature, allowing abstract concepts to be understood through more concrete experiences. Among these, life metaphors are particularly significant, as they offer insight into how humans perceive, structure, and interpret existence. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), posits that abstract domains such as life, emotions, or ideas are comprehended in terms of more tangible source domains. In English literature, Shakespeare extensively employs life metaphors to reflect human experiences, social roles, and cultural values. The present study examines some of the most prominent life metaphors in Shakespeare's works, highlighting both their cognitive underpinnings and cultural implications.

The following table presents major life metaphors found in Shakespeare’s plays, along with relevant quotations and interpretations that demonstrate both cognitive mappings and cultural context:

Metafora turi	Shekspir asari	Iqtibos	Izoh
Life is a Stage	<i>As You Like It</i>	All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players	Life is like a stage, where everyone plays a role in society, acting according to social norms and expectations
Life is a Journey	<i>Hamlet</i>	We go to our graves like travelers on a journey	Life is compared to a journey, suggesting that humans move through life toward an inevitable end, encountering various experiences along the way
Life is a Game	<i>King Lear</i>	The prince of darkness is a gentleman	Life involves strategy, competition, and social maneuvering, similar to the rules and tactics of a game.
Life is a Battle / War	<i>Macbeth</i>	False face must hide what the false heart doth know	Life is a battle of appearances and intentions; individuals must struggle with deceit, intrigue, and conflict, much like in war.

Life is a Stage

In the Life is a Stage metaphor, life (the target) is understood in terms of a stage (the source). People are seen as actors playing roles that follow the scripts and rules of society. Culturally, this metaphor reflects the Elizabethan society's emphasis on social roles and hierarchy, where each person had a specific function. Shakespeare uses this metaphor to describe how people perform their roles in life and their emotions, which reflects both cognitive understanding and social expectations.

Life is a Journey

In his play, he shows that people experience and are affected by what happens to them on a journey. The metaphor understands life as a journey of development through experiences, beginnings, various obstacles, and an inevitable end. Cognitively, it allows students to understand life as a movement through space and time, giving structure to abstract ideas such as progress, decisions, and fate. In Hamlet, Shakespeare uses this metaphor to emphasize the

transience of human life and the universal journey to death, reflecting personal and cultural perceptions of the path of life.

Life is a Game

The author tries to show and does show in his works that life is a constant game. The metaphor depicts life as a system governed by rules, strategies, and competition. Cognitively, it helps students to relate the abstract aspects of social interaction, risk, and decision-making to the familiar experiences of games. Culturally, in *King Lear*, the metaphor represents power struggles, social maneuvering, and human cunning, reflecting Elizabethan ideas about hierarchy, politics, and moral dilemmas.

Life is a battle / war

Shakespeare tried to explain this by showing the battle that occurs in life in each of his plays. The metaphor depicts life as a conflict full of difficulties, competition, and struggle. Cognitively, it adapts human difficulties, competition, and emotional conflicts to the specific realm of war and helps readers understand the difficulties of life. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare depicts how individuals must overcome deceit, ambition, and moral dilemmas, reflecting cultural values such as courage, honor, and social tension in Elizabethan society.

Conclusion

This article has shown that. Focusing on the works of Shakespeare, it has examined the cognitive and cultural aspects of metaphors of life in English literature. The analysis has shown that metaphors such as “Life is a stage”, “Life is a journey”, “Life is a play” and “Life is a battle” help readers understand abstract concepts of life through more concrete experiences. Cognitive analysis has shown that these metaphors provide structured ways of mapping human experiences, goals and emotions into familiar domains such as stages, journeys, games and battles. Cultural analysis has shown that the historical and social context of Elizabethan society played a significant role in shaping these metaphors. Social hierarchy, expectations and moral values influenced how life was conceptualised and represented in literature. The findings highlight the interplay between human knowledge and cultural context in metaphorical thinking, showing that metaphors are not only linguistic devices but also reflections of social norms and shared cultural knowledge. In conclusion, Shakespeare’s metaphors of life in literature provide valuable insights into the cognitive processes and cultural values that shape human understanding of existence. They demonstrate how literature can combine abstract ideas and concrete experiences, serving as a rich source for linguistic, literary, and cultural studies. Through this, they teach many younger generations to change their outlook on life and to be more open-minded.

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