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Conceptual Metaphor Analysis of Taban Lo Liyong's *Showat and Sowhat*

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Abstract

This work explores the conceptual metaphors in the drama *Showat and Sowhat* by Taban Lo Liyong, a Ugandan playwright. It seeks to highlight those conceptual precepts that are linguistically shared in the text to achieve meaning. Again, the linguistic metaphors that conventionally convey innocuous and transparent meanings are examined through the mapping of conceptual domains. The study examines how these inferred meanings and some obvious misinterpretations can have profound consequences on the lives of the characters in the drama text and by extension to Nigeria. Ten textual data were purposively drawn and analyzed using the conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1993). The study discovers that the dominant conceptual metaphors used in the drama text are: TIME IS A MOVEMENT IN SPACE, MORALITY IS LIGHT OR DARKNESS, COLOURS ARE HUMAN DISPOSITION AND EMOTIONS ARE FORCES. The findings show that the quality of people's thoughts determines how they talk and express

themselves metaphorically. It was also found that conventional words used in the text are cognitively loaded with conceptual metaphors that may escape the uncritical reader. The work recommends the critical reading of texts in order to unravel and deconstruct the hidden meanings of these metaphors.
Keywords: Conceptual or Cognitive Metaphor and Metaphor

Introduction

Metaphor permeates human social lives and utterances. It enables speakers and writers to express ideas that are beyond the literal level of meaning. Readers tend to connect to new ideas through metaphorical expressions. These metaphorical meanings created are crucial in any human culture due to the indispensable roles that meaning plays. Ifeatu (2018) opines that "meaning is something both affected by and affecting the world we live in". Meaning shows the relationship between the sign and the signified in the world of the referent, although not all signs have an objective referent in the world. Hence, people react to meaning differently based on their different interpretations.

Ogden and Richards (1923) assert that "meaning is a notational term and there is certainly no single, correct explanation of meaning". Osgood, Tannenbaum and Suci (1957) opine that "the meaning of a sign in a particular context and to a particular person at a particular time (...) is the representational mediation process which it elicits". Following this, authors tend to use language features like ambiguity, metaphorical expression, symbolism and variability of associative meaning to create a picture with words and to show how certain cultural aspects are valued and seen as positive or negative by speakers of a language. The flexibility and variability associated with the use of these language features then lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation because a word can mean different things in different expressions and in different experiences and world views. This study solves the problems of misinterpretation that may arise from the variability and flexibility in peoples' use of metaphors by analyzing and explaining those

conceptual metaphors that are inherent in the text of the study through the cross-mapping of those linguistic metaphors used by characters in the text of study. This study fills the gap in learning by highlighting those conceptual ideas that are linguistically shared in the text in order to achieve meaning. Again, the linguistic metaphors that conventionally convey innocuous and transparent meanings are examined through the mapping of conceptual domains. This will help readers to appreciate the dynamics of meaning in relation to how meaning affects language and society. Readers can then draw typical examples from the characters in the fictional world of artists in order to impact their social reality. This study focuses on the conceptual metaphor meaning, especially the conventional metaphors in the utterances of characters in *Showat and Sowhat* by Taban Lo Liyong. It also investigates how misinterpretations can have profound consequences on the lives of the characters in the drama text and by extension to Nigeria.

Review of Relevant Literature

A lot of research has been done in the field of conceptual metaphors (CM). Bounegru and Forciville (2011) found that the cartoons that they investigated originated from CM. In addition, some researchers studied CM in song lyrics (Cardoso and Vieira, 2006).

Cardoso and Vieira (2006), for instance, investigated CM in Dido's song Passage2013, 1(2), 125-134 127 lyrics White Flag. The focus of their study was the process of co-construction of the meaning of the metaphorical expression in the lyrics by EFL students. They found that students could identify CM's underlying metaphorical expression when the students discussed the lyric in the group.

Again, Kamailah (2013) investigated CM in the song lyrics of Mylo Xyloto Cold album. She discovered that the CM present in the songs is about life, love, changes and condition. The work of Kamailah is similar to this present work in that they both studied

CM, but their area of difference is on their text: this work studies drama text whereas, the former studied CM in lyrics.

Statement of the Problem

People think and act metaphorically because they can express themselves metaphorically. They believe that speaking metaphorically is the exclusive reserve of some gifted individuals without them being aware that they too speak metaphorically. This is seen in the bid to use concrete realities to explain abstract facts about life.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What conceptual metaphors can be inherent in *Showat and Sowhat* by Taban Lo Liyong?
2. What are the implications of the conceptual metaphors found in the drama text?

Conceptual Review

Metaphors and Conceptual or Cognitive Metaphors

A metaphor is a departure from the literal use of language. It serves as a condensed or elliptical simile, in that it involves an implicit comparison between two disparate things (Abrams, 1999). Metaphor has been seen as a ubiquitous component in human language. Ogbulogo (2005) says that "metaphorical expressions are figurative languages because they operate from the point of extension of meaning resulting in polysemy or transfer of senses". Metaphor is traditionally considered as part of figures of speech, being used mainly in poetry. It is saying one thing in terms of something else. It is a common belief that metaphor occurs only in the realm of literature and it is consciously cast, but cognitive linguists have debunked that notion as clearly seen in Lakoff's conceptual metaphor. People use metaphors every day and unconsciously and not just to portray language, but in every action. (Gibbs, 1990; Lakoff and Turner, 1993) claim that "much of our

conceptualization of experience is metaphorical which both motivates and constrains the way we think creatively. The idea that metaphor constrains creativity might seem contrary to the widely held beliefs that metaphor somehow liberates the mind to engage in divergent thinking".

(Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff 1993) view metaphor as a matter of thoughts and not just language. Metaphor tends to be pervasive in everyday life and not just in language, but also in thoughts and actions. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). It gives a deeper understanding of a message's intent as well as a speaker's intent in a metaphorical expression. They explain metaphors by using cross-domain mappings of the target domain and the source domain. Kovecses (2010) argues that, "people make heavy use of conventional everyday metaphor and that their creativity and originality actually derive from them". In his view, metaphor is seen as "understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. Metaphorical expressions are the linguistic expressions that come from the language or terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain". The two domains that are used in conceptual metaphors are the source and target domains. The source domain is the concrete or physical domain that helps us to understand the abstract domain; the target domain.

Lakoff's idea of conceptual metaphor can be extended to the metaphors used in Taban Lo Liyong's *Showat and Sowhat* as metaphors are conventionally held and are effortlessly used by members of a linguistic community to discuss abstract ideas of life, death, human, argument, love, war and others, since the linguistic sign, signifier and the signified are grossly inadequate to relate ideas of thoughts. "People can explain abstract ideas through the use of various concrete realities. Hence, metaphorical expression gave rise to conceptual metaphor.

Kovecses (2010) distinguishes between metaphorical expression and conceptual metaphor by saying that the latter are words or other linguistic expressions that come from the language or terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain. All the

expressions that have to do with life that come from the domain of journey are linguistic metaphorical expressions, whereas, the corresponding metaphor they make manifest is the conceptual metaphor. For example, 'life is a journey, 'argument is war', and 'time is money and so on. Conceptual metaphor is the mapping of domains; using concrete realities to explain abstract realities. It accounts for ideas and thoughts that cannot be duly explained (Kovecses, 2010) This work uses the cognitive linguistic perspective of metaphor because it is pervasive in people's everyday usage of language yet they never see it as being metaphorical.

Theoretical Review

The theoretical framework on which this work is hinged is the conceptual metaphor theory.

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) was derived from the work written in 1980 by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson titled *Metaphors We Live By*. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), "metaphor is pervasive in the language since it is pervasive in thought and action; cognition itself is deemed to be metaphorical. Put differently, linguistic metaphor is considered to be a natural consequence of underlying metaphorical thought; they are surface reflections of conceptual mappings between different cognitive domains". CMT claims that metaphor is a fundamental part of human thought; 'our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). It further claims an intimate relationship between, language, culture and cognition. The basis of metaphorical cognition is a system of conceptual mapping between cognitive domains (Ezeifeka, 2018). Proponents of the theory claim that people construct many concepts by mapping abstract conceptual domains into their knowledge of concrete domains. Ezeifeka (2018) explains the source domain as those literal

entities, processes and relationships linked semantically and apparently stored together in the mind as part of human's encyclopedic knowledge, while the target domain is got from the abstract concept of man's experiences and takes its structure from the source domain. For example, 'argument, life and time' cannot be thought of without referring to some concrete domain to help conceptualization. (for example, war, journey and money respectively). In other words, argument is conceptualized as war, time as money and life as a journey. CMT terms 'argument', 'time' and 'life' as the 'target domain', while 'war', 'journey' and 'money' as the 'source domain'.

Methodology

This study is qualitative and descriptive in nature. A qualitative research design was used for this research. This is aimed at identifying the conceptual metaphors inherent in *Showat and Sowhat* by Taban Lo Liyong. Hence, textual data were used for this research as opposed to numerical ones. The source of data is Taban Lo Liyong's *Showat and Sowhat*. Ten (10) textual extracts were purposively drawn from the conversation of the characters. Only those utterances that are relevant to this study were selected and that was what formed the justification for the selection of ten (10) textual extracts. Again, the method of the metaphor identification process is from the Praggo Jazz Group (2007) and it states

1. Read the entire text–-discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
2. Determine the lexical units in the text–discourse
3. (a) For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in context, that is, how it applies to an entity, relation, or attribute in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). Take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit.

   (b) For each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the

given context. For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be —more concrete; what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell, and taste. —Related to bodily action. —More precise (as opposed to vague) —Historically older. Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit.

(c) If the lexical unit has a more basic current–contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it.

If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical.

The CMT method of analysis was adopted in this study and the underlying conceptual metaphors were usually described using uppercase letters in the formula:

X IS (or AS) Y: where X represents the target domain and Y the source domain, or as Lakoff (1993) mnemonics, TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN (Ezeifeka, 2018).

Conceptual Metaphors in *Showat and Sowhat*

To Illustrate the Conceptual Metaphor TIME IS A MOVEMENT IN SPACE

Kovecses (2010) posits that… "the major metaphor for the comprehension of time is one according to which time is an object that moves". This is seen in the following conversations that ensued between Liyong's characters

Text 1*:*

Shiney: Go and tell her that Shone-on's time has come

Boimuke: Time for what?

Shiney: That's a women's affair. She will understand (64).

It then, therefore, means that time has finally caught up with Shone-on to deliver her child. The lexical item that signals this

metaphorical meaning is 'has come' which indicates movement to a particular destination. Therefore, the utterance means that Shone-on has gone into labour in order to be delivered her baby.

Text 2:

Masso*: I haven't noticed anything out of the way. But perhaps I haven't been particularly observant. My time and energies have all been taken up with straightening her younger brother. He seems to be going through a difficult and confusing stage lately* (P.27).

Masso says that all her time annergies have all been taken up and the lexical choice that encodes this metaphorical utterance is 'have all been taken up'. This indicates the movement of time to a particular point in space. It, therefore, means that all her time has been moved towards straightening the path of their son, Boimuke. So, 'have all been taken up' is the linguistic metaphor that evokes the conceptual metaphor that TIME IS A MOVEMENT IN SPACE.

Text 3:

My-show: …*There is nothing we can do today except accept the inevitable and wait till the days tick themselves away in the calendar (P.4)*

'Days' and 'tick themselves away' are the linguistic choices that make the utterance metaphorical. Tick away is used in this utterance to understand the passing away of time (day) and it metaphorically denotes movement. Hence, 'tick away' is the lexical choice that encoded this metaphorical utterance.

TIME AS A VALUABLE COMMODITY

The idea of time as something that is essential and capable of being exhausted can also be seen in the conversation that ensued between Shone-on and Boimuke when they were preparing for the trade fair being held in the Sacred Grove as thus:

Text 4:

Boimuke*: Come on sister, walk faster*

***Shone-on**: Why are you now so much in a hurry? Wasn't it you who took your time gorging yourself full-on gruel? Let me take my timewalking majestically to the market (P.18*).

The lexical item that signals the metaphorical nature of time in that utterance is 'took your time and 'take my time'. Taking one's time in this context means using one's time as an indispensable and a valuable commodity. Therefore, people understand 'time' in terms of something that is valuable.

To Illustrate MORALITY IS LIGHT OR DARKNESS
Unwanted Pregnancy Is Light

Light and darkness are basic human experiences, where the properties of light and darkness tend to appear as weather conditions, especially when we speak and think metaphorically (Kovecses, 2010). Unwanted pregnancy is seen as light or darkness for both families; Showat and Sowhat. Liyong's characters especially Masso use the light metaphor of shinning whenever she wants to discuss with Boimuke how long Shiney has been sleeping around with her daughter as thus:

Text 5:

Masso: Since when has your sister and that horrible boy been hiding from you?
Boimuke: You mean Shiney? Shiney is not horrible. He always gives me sweets.
Masso: Forget about other boys. When did Shiney start shining on your sister? (P.28).

To 'shine' means 'light' and it calls to mind 'sunlight' which is used to metaphorically discuss the act of impregnation; it is used to describe the way Shiney, the son of the Showats shone on Shone-on, the daughter of the Sowhats; Shiney impregnates Shone-on. When the sun shines, it illuminates every dark area and it is usually seen by all. Therefore, the underlying meaning in the utterance of

Masso- 'when did Shiney start shinning on Shone-on?' shows that Shone-on's unwanted pregnancy is welcomed. It is a light on the family.

Again, the names of the characters such as Shiney and Shone-on are metaphorical. Shiney means light; able to reflect light or to be bright, while Shone-on is that that receives bright light. Therefore, Shiney shinning on Shone-on means that Shiney's action on Shone-on brings light, therefore her pregnancy is a blessing to the families and the society.

UNWANTED PREGNANCY IS DARKNESS

Sowhat, in another utterance when his daughter, Shone-on has been discovered pregnant, told every member of his household to prepare their clubs and swords, so they could fight the Showats, in order to darken Shiney's armour as thus:

Text 6:

Sowhat: *Shut up! They will pay dearly for this. Let me go! Mr. Showat you had better be ready with all the forces in the world and show me what metal you are made of. This is an affront. And we are going to darken Shiney's armour. Today! Call all members of my household. Let me get armed. We are taking Shone-on to her people now (P.35).*

Sowhat wants to turn the pregnancy time for Shiney into darkness so that he will lose his reputation in society. It then goes further to say that when people want to talk about human experiences; they tend to use the properties of light and darkness. To darken Shiney's armour in this utterance means to shame Shiney; to reduce his social worth. Consequently, the lexical items of 'shiney, shone-on, shining and darken' are what signal the metaphorical meaning. Hence, they belong to the source domain and are used to explain the target domain of morality. Unwanted pregnancy here can be likened to darkness when Sowhat says that he will darken

Shiney's armour (strength). In lamenting the daughter's fate, Sowhat also says

Text 7: Sowhat: *The bright lights of Showmanship have blinded her eyes, the lamp of my eyes* (P.35). Light is drawn here as wealth. It is capable of making one go blind to world realities. The ostentatious lifestyle of the Showats has made their daughter not to see unwanted pregnancy as evil. Sowhat depends on Shone-on, his daughter, to propagate their age-long tradition to upcoming generations, but his means of seeing has been turned to darkness. Sowhat sees unwanted pregnancy as darkness, which represents evil. All of these figuratively allude to Shone-on's pregnancy.

To Illustrate the Conceptual Metaphor EMOTIONS ARE FORCES

Kovecses asserts that forces in the physical world take different shapes such as pulling, driving, pushing or sending another thing. These forces affect various changes in the thing acted on. This conceptual metaphor is seen in the utterance of the Judge in the court as thus;

Text 8:

Judge: ... *Your adrenaline climed up to the height of Mount Kilimanjaro (P.58).*

'Climed up' is the linguistic metaphor that points to the utterance as being metaphorical. Adrenaline is an anger hormone and this hormone surged up in Showat when the Sowhats were breaking down his fence and barns with their swords and clubs and this was what made him fire in the air. It is also pertinent to note here, that emotion is of Latin origin and it means to move up. So, 'climed up' means to move up.

Love Is a Heat

The source domain of heat and cold is used in the conceptualization of passions, desires and emotions such as rage,

love, hate and some others. Liyong uses this to refer to the love between his characters: Shiney and Shone-on as thus;

Text 9

***Shiney**: One look from her melts my heart (P.47).*

'Melt' is the lexical item that points to the expression as being metaphorical. The writer used the word 'melt' to show the emotion between his characters: Shone-on and Shiney which can be likened to something that soothes. Shiney professes that the look in his lover's eyes provides some soothing effect to him. It could also mean that Shiney has a frozen heart, which only the love of Shone-on can soften.

COLOURS ARE HUMAN DISPOSITIONS

White Hair is Wisdom

Colour metaphor is usually used to point to the abstract target. It is also used to show emotions, virtues, states and so on. In Liyong's work, colour as a source domain is used to understand abstract domains such as danger, evil, wisdom and so on as thus:

Text 10

***Sister sis:** Why was his hair all white?*
***My show**: Because he is old and wise.*
***Sister sis**: Will Daddy's hair also grow all white?*
***My- show**: Yes, if he too grows wise (Liyong,61).*

In our society, people use colours to show emotions, virtues, vices, states and so on. When one grows grey hair, he or she is considered as being old and wise, but it is not usually the case as some people naturally have grey hair and it does not make them old and wise.

Discussion of Findings

The aim of this study was to examine the conceptual metaphors inherent in Taban Lo Liyong's *Showat and Sowhat* and to determine the implications of these conceptual metaphors.

For this reason, this research was carried out using a qualitative research design by focusing on the textual analysis of the conversations among characters in the drama text of the study. It was found that meaning is both affected and affecting the world. It was also discovered that meaning goes beyond its literal sense and people use metaphor every day of their lives unconsciously and not consciously restricted to only writers, poets or some talented people.

In answer to research question one, the conceptual metaphor that can be derived from the conventional use of these lexical and grammatical choices are: TIME IS A MOVEMENT IN SPACE, MORALITY IS LIGHT OR DARKNESS, EMOTIONS ARE FORCES AND COLOURS ARE HUMAN DISPOSITIONS. For research question two, the implication of the conceptual metaphors found in the text is that metaphors are pivotal to people's understanding as it is capable of concealing and revealing realities and learning opportunities. In the text, the character, Sowhat uses metaphors to reveal to the Judge, the shameful situation brought by the Showats to his family. Again, conceptual metaphors help in thinking of ideas in new ways and how such ideas can be expressed as there is a relationship between thought processes and language. This is evident in the conceptual metaphors drawn from characters' literal expressions.

Conclusion

This study concludes by saying that people use metaphors every day of their lives and it is usually found in our conversations. Metaphorical expressions are the catalysts of conceptual metaphors, especially linguistic metaphors. Therefore, one need not be talented before he or she could use metaphors loosely. So, people use their concrete realities to further expatiate abstract facts of life. This is done unconsciously irrespective of age, tribe and belief.

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