

The Study of Domains and Conceptual Mapping in “An Ode to death” by Daud Kamal

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Abstract

This paper aims to find out the conceptual metaphors in “an ode to death” written by Daud Kamal. It ascertains the importance of mapping procedure in understanding any conceptual metaphor. The article shows the process of mapping for each conceptual metaphor in the poem, hence proving that the understanding of a sentence is something more than understanding a word and conceptual domains plays a vital role in decoding the intended message.

Keywords: *conceptual metaphors, target domain, source domain, mapping*

1. Introduction

The studies of metaphor have been the point of focus for the research since very long dating back to Aristotle (Lakoff, 1993 ; Fauconnier & Sweetser, 1996 ; Goatly, 1977; Cameron, 1999a: 1999b ; Steen ,1999; Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). There is a large amount of work done on metaphors but the most recent is the approach of cognitive linguistics and psychology which has changed the boundaries of metaphors. Initially, it was considered as a poetic device but now it is considered to be found in all the written and spoken languages. The credit goes to the conceptual metaphor theory. The method that Lakoff has “adopted (e.g. Lakoff, 1993) crucially depends on claims about conceptual domains” (Heywood, Semino & Short, 2002). This paper aims to find out the metaphorical uses of language in Ode to Death written by Daud Kamal in the light of Lakoffian conceptual domains. Based on the analytical thinking of hearing a metaphor, this paper aims to describe target and source domain of metaphoric instances. It also aims to attest that the understanding of the meaning of a speaker’s sentence is something more than understanding the words. A linguistic expression is made significant when it is understood in the context of a knowledge domain.

2. Literature Review

Metaphors are very powerful and natural cognitive devices which help us understand complex ideas. In the classical theory, metaphors were defined as linguistic expressions that were outside everyday conversation (Lakoff: 1992). Later, cognitive linguistic theories saw metaphor as basic to human cognition and language behavior (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff, 1987). Lakoff believed that the overviews governing poetic metaphorical expressions were not in language, but in mind. They are general mappings across conceptual domains. Moreover, these general principles which take the form of conceptual mappings, do not apply to poetic expressions of novel only,

but also to the ordinary everyday language. In short, it was a movement from the general poems and novels to everyday language (1992). As linguists started taking metaphor as a cognitive process; it started to give rise to different ideas. Conceptual metaphor theory is the most celebrated of the theories. Its goal, “like most areas of linguistics, is to seek generalizations that are both consistent with the data and that serve an explanatory function” (Sullivang & Jiang, 2013, p.1)

For critically analyzing any metaphor, it is necessary to evaluate its source and target domain. Source and target domain is the bridge between known and unknown. “Metaphor organizes what, relatively speaking, is unknown or uncertain and usually more abstract (the target domain) in terms of something that is better known through direct, more concrete and grounded experience (the source domain). One concept, situation or domain is used metaphorically to describe or understand the contents, scope, interactions and logic of something else.” (Smith, 2004, p.6). A target domain is a semantic domain that is structured and understood metaphorically in terms of another domain (Lakoff: 1987:276) which is source domain. Many elements of the target come from source domain. According to Lakoff each conventional metaphor which he calls mapping, “is a fixed pattern of conceptual correspondence across conceptual domains.” (Lakoff, 1992) For instance,

“Love is a Journey”

The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphor is “Journey” which is the source domain, whereas, the conceptual domain that we try to understand in relation to the source domain is “Love”, which is the target domain. Love cannot be a journey in the literal meaning but it is used as a metaphor by the use of conceptual domains. This happens because of the correspondence between the target and the source domain which is called “mapping”. Fauconnier believes that these mappings “are central to any understanding of semantic and pragmatic language interpretation and cognitive construction” (ibid).

3. Methodology and Data

This paper uses the concept of Lakoff’s conceptual metaphors. The concept of target and source domain will be applied on An Ode to Death written by Daud Kamal. Firstly, a general theme and description of the poem will be given to clarify the meaning of the poem. Secondly, all the conceptual metaphors will be explained in terms of their source and target domain. The poem is as follows:

our ode to death is in the lifting of a single eyebrow. Lift it and see. (Conrad Aiken)
 Death is more than certain, says e.e Cummings,
 But the clocks go on ticking as before
 And in every particle of carbon dust
 There lives a diamond dream
 How many galaxies yet to be explored-
 How many seeds in the pomegranate of time?
 The pine tree blasted by last year’s Thunderbolt
 And the burn out match stick in my ashtray
 Look so terribly alike
 I have sat by your bedside and felt
 Your sinking pulse. Are the hair and bones

Really indestructible and how long
Does it take for the eyes
To dissolve in the grave?
Two streams mingle in a forgotten river.
Between the eye and the tear
There is the archipelago of naked rocks
Only sleep and silence there-
No anchorage for grief.
I, too, have wandered in a forest of symbols
And clutched at the harlots of memory.
I have seen the “stars plummet to their dark addresses”
I have felt your absence around my neck
But let bygones be bygones
Who was the deceiver and who the deceived
Was I on a floating island
And were you on the shore?
Which one of us moved away?
(Daud Kamal)

4. Analysis

The poem is about the ultimate reality of the death. The distance between the death and a person is so short that by rising the eyebrow one can see it coming. By taking the quotation from E. E. Cummings, he asserts the sureness of the death. It is an undeniable reality. The needles of clock never stop when someone dies whether they are the most beloved ones. Life has to move on. The carbon is the vital ingredient of diamond but all the carbon is not utilized to make diamond. Humans do not have enough time to fulfill all their desires or to be a part of something extraordinary because of their short lives. There is no difference between the small and big in the eyes of death. A big palm tree or a match stick, both have to taste death. On the death bed, when the person is near to death, one can feel the approaching death. It does not take long. There is a determined time for bones and hair to see death after the flash is gone. Human body and soul are like those two streams that join together and flow in this world together. They forget their death but it comes as soon as a tear falls from the eye. The island signifies grave. In grave there will be utter silence and darkness. The speaker also recalls his own bad deeds that he has done in this world, but now that time has passed. He does not understand whether its death that has deceived him or life. He is moving towards death but there are two possibilities, either he has moved away from life or the life has moved away from him.

4.1 Analysis of Conceptual Metaphors

When metaphor is conceived and expressed its structure continues to influence ongoing thinking and discussion (Smith, 2004).

“our ode to death is in the lifting of a single eyebrow. Lift it and see”

Source domain: lifting of a single eyebrow

4.1.1. Target domain: death

In the first verse of the poem, he uses a conceptual metaphor “lifting of a single eyebrow”. The meaning of the verse is that the distance between the death and the person is so short that if a person raises the eyebrow he or she can see the death. The knowledge

structure is mapped by using ‘lifting of a single eyebrow’ with death schema. It is not conventionally placed with the death. In this situation, the domain of distance and movement is used together as a source domain for mapping it on the target domain of death.

“But the clocks go on ticking as before”

Source domain: clock

4.1.2. Target domain: persistent world

In the verse 3, there is a use of conceptual metaphor. The moment we read the verse, it clearly defines the meaning. As we all know, that the clock is a reference to time. It creates a mental image of time. The concept of the verse clarifies when the verse is read as a whole. The verse suggests that the world does not stop for anyone. It will move on the way it was before. The existing knowledge in the mind of the reader about the clock is mapped with the death. The use of ‘as before’ shows that the ticking of clock is suggestive to the unstoppable world. The source domain is clock which is mapping the target domain of persistent world.

“And in every particle of carbon dust
There lives a diamond dream”

Source domain: diamond

4.1.3. Target domain: rich

Verse 4 and 5 needs some background knowledge of Chemistry. The proposition is that everyone cannot fulfill their dreams of becoming rich in this short time when death is ready to take them. Every human being living on this earth is compared to the carbon dust. Each one of them has a dream bigger than diamond but only few will be able to make their dreams come true in this short span of life. He is using the schema of chemical science, where carbon is the ingredient of diamond. According to the knowledge of world, diamond is the most expensive metal. Hence, we can see the mapping of this worldly knowledge of diamond and chemistry to conceptualize the meaning. The source domain is of diamond and the target domain is becoming rich.

“How many seeds in the pomegranate of time?”

Source domain: seeds of pomegranate

4.1.4. Target domain: life span

Pomegranate is a fruit and no one is aware of the number of the seeds in it. Similarly, no one is aware of the number of days or moments one is going to live. The source domain of pomegranate is used for mapping the target domain of ignorance of life’s span.

“Your sinking pulse. Are the hair and bones”

Source domain: sinking of a ship or boat

4.1.5. Target domain: pulse or life

The word sinking, according to rules, is used with boat or ship (inanimate objects). It is used with the word “pulse” which is the sign of life. The prior knowledge of sinking suggests that something is not destroyed but it is near to its destruction. The mapping of the knowledge of sinking and pulse suggests that the person is on his death bed. The source domain of sinking of a ship or boat is mapping the target domain of pulse or life.

“To dissolve in the grave?”

Source domain: dissolve

4.1.6. Target domain: grave

Dissolve means to become one with something and be the part of it. He has used it with the grave which is ontological mapping between two conceptual domains. The pre-existing knowledge of dissolve works and forms a conceptual structure to clarify the meaning in reference to grave by suggesting that the dead body will also be vanished in the soil.

“No anchorage for grief”

Source domain: anchorage/ port

4.1.7. Target domain: grief

Anchorage means port. The pre-existing knowledge of the schema of island which has a port, helps in forming the concept in our mind. We know that the port is used for ships where the journey stops. By using it with grief, he is mapping the idea that grief is never ending because it has no port to end its journey. The conceptual domain of port is used as a source domain and grief is used as target domain.

“I, too, have wandered in a forest of symbols”

Source domain: forest

4.1.8. Target domain: symbols

Symbols are inanimate. It means to be emblem for something. One symbol cannot stand for more than one thing. Human beings are all different from one another. They are like symbols. Forest is a separated place. Anyone who goes there for first time will be lost and will “wander”. This suggests that the speaker has wandered in this world. He has used conceptual domains which are mapped to give conceptual metaphor.

“And clutched at the harlots of memory.”

Source domain: clutching

4.1.9. Target domain: memory

The mapping is on two levels. Firstly, harlot is a noun meaning prostitute. Here the harlots of memory are linguistically not possible but metaphorically possible. Harlot is used for the bad deeds of his life. The prior knowledge suggests that prostitute is the sign of immorality; therefore, it is used for his bad deeds. Secondly, to clutch one's memory is not possible. Clutch is a verb which requires any inanimate object. In this construction it is followed by the abstract noun ‘memory’. Therefore, it is used as conceptual metaphor. The source domain of clutching is used to map with the target domain of memory.

I have seen the “stars plummet to their dark addresses”

Source domain: star /dark addresses

4.1.10. Target domain: elite/ grave

Stars are fixed in the sky and shines bright. We see stars as something of high order. It signifies people of this world who are enjoying high positions. Address is the particular place where someone lives. In the literal sense there is no such place as dark address. Hence, it is used as conceptual metaphor. We know that a dark place where human being lives is the grave. He is using conceptual domains to give the meaning that people of all status are born to be the part of the grave.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The section of analysis demonstrates the use of conceptual mapping. Kamal has used plenty of conceptual metaphors in his poem. The reader is able to get the meaning out of the poem through a cognitive process rather than taking everything in the literal meaning. “cognitive linguistics is concerned with the conceptual workings of the embodied mind, all aspects of human experience and behavior, whether from the perspective of the writer, from the perspective of the reader, or from the perspective of the text itself, are relevant and are integrated into a cognitive understanding of the literary experience” (Freeman, 2002, p.1). The analysis shows that target and the source domain of all the conceptual metaphors used in the poem. It also establishes the process of how a reader will try to interpret the meaning. The analysis also gives the procedure of the cognitive process involved in mapping the target and source domain; hence, it attests that the understanding of the meaning of a sentence involves more than understanding the words. A linguistic expression is made significant when it is understood in the context of a knowledge domain.

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