Research Article

METAPHOR AS INSTRUMENT OF IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS IN IWEKA'S THE ANCIENT CURSE AND ACHEBE'S THINGS FALL APART

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to demonstrate Nigerian authors' creativity in the exploration of metaphors for the construction of religious ideology and other forms of thought belief in their texts, The Ancient Curse and Things Fall Apart. A metaphor can be conceived in relation to any coherent organization of human experiences. Thus, human language becomes the vehicle for the articulation and projection of these experiences in communication. This is permissible following the pivotal role of language in the conceptualization of ideas. Working with cognitive linguistics from this panorama, Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphors becomes a handy theoretical base for this work. Aspects of van Dijk's (2006) socio-cognitive approach to critical discourse analysis will also be explored for the analysis of the ideologies projected using cognitive metaphors. Excerpts from the text formed the data for analysis. Findings revealed that the authors principally employed orientational and ontological metaphors as cognitive linguistic tools for ideological constructions. The works are characterized by such cross-domain mappings like: FEAR IS A BEING, PEACE IS A FRAGILE OBJECT, ANGER IS WAR, DEATH IS A BEING, HEALTH IS UP; SICKNESS IS DOWN, SUCCESS IS UP; FAILURE IS DOWN.

Keywords: *metaphor, ideology, constructs, Achebe, Iweka*

Introduction:

The role of language in meaning makes it appear inexhaustible. The flexibility of human language permits its manipulation by speakers and writers to suit their communicative purposes. Cognitive linguistics explains this aspect of the property of language by maintaining

that humans conceptualize ideas and express them through language in divergent ways (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Invariably, language can be expressed in words, thoughts and actions to arrive at meanings. Cognitive linguistics explores divergent aspects of language study by viewing linguistic knowledge as part of general cognition and thinking (Babatunde & Aremu, 2016). However, human thought is a cardinal point in language study and this forms the focus in cognitive linguistics which crept into language study some decades ago through the works of various authors and linguists. Among these scholars, the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is outstanding in dissecting the notion of cognitive linguistics.

In their submission, the human conceptual system is basically such that it is metaphorical in nature and controls what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and relate to people. From this panorama, they conclude that human system of conceptualization plays a pivotal role in the definition of our daily lives. This implies that this point of view is evident in the way man thinks and conceptualizes ideas in communication. It practically suggests that our system of conceptualization is extremely founded on language. Lakoff and Johnson explicate this line of thought following the concept of argument. Hence, the conceptual metaphor in the statement: Argument is war. This means that our natural conceptual system is full of metaphors because so many of the concepts that are important to man, as they project, are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience. In other words, we have to strive to grasp these experiences which may be ideas, emotions, time and the like. Therefore, there is the need for language to capture the abstract ideas and expressions more vividly. For Paul Gee (1999), People use different styles of language to recognize and build ideas. One of these easy ways of conceptualizing ideas that are abstract is through the use of conceptual metaphor.

On the other hand, metaphor was viewed as an exclusive reserve of the highly educated ones like the poets. That was Aristotelean notion of metaphor. However, Lakoff and Johnson's intervention becomes a paradigm shift from the traditional concept of metaphors. Their work is, therefore, a succinct prove that metaphors are obviously ubiquitous in nature. Since metaphors are no longer regarded as the prerogative of the learned class, the philosophers and poets which needed extraordinary efforts to decode and comprehend, there is currently an obvious shift from that perspective within the contemporary linguistic circle where they are explored to enact ideologies in literary texts as in the present texts of study: the Ancient Curse and Things Fall Apart. Therefore, this work sets out to explore how power, dominance and inequality as ideological practices are constructed through the use of everyday metaphors in the texts of study.

Literature review

In communication, language performs multiple functions which include supporting the performance of social activities as well as supporting human affiliation within cultures, social groups and institution (Gee, 1999). In other words, communication opens up channels through which language projects cognitive ideas. Cognition in this regards relates to human thoughts and ideas and how they influence language and linguistic features. Evans and Green (2006) discuss some fundamental properties as well as design features of human minds in relation to functions of language. Agbedo (2000) maintains that cognitive linguistics studies language in its cognitive function where cognition refers to the crucial role of intermediate informational structures with our encounter with the world. In his submission, our encounter with the world of experience is mediated through informal structure of the mind. According to Melefa (2014),

the concept of deploying a metaphor in a discourse is a pragmatic process which explores our cognition thereby setting the mind in motion to draw from the environmental resources for the sake of painting a picture of a phenomenon.

This is probably why Mey (2001) asserts that "metaphors are always charged with high pragmatic explosives" (p.303). And they are as well "loaded weapons" (Balinger, 1980) while Judge (1991) in Mey states that metaphors are entrenched in human believe system. This is what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) mean in saying that some cultures have the future in the front while others have it in the back and consciousness is believed to be up as against unconsciousness that is down. This is following the experience that when one is conscious, one is strong, agile, active, and has ability to sit or stand up /erect. This is not obtainable for an unconscious person who lays down, weak and inactive. In other words, metaphor plays an important role in the way humans function and make sense of their experiences. Invariably, human understanding takes place in terms of the entire domain of experience and not in the isolation of concept.

Although several scholars have done much work on the concept of cognitive linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) stand out in their theory of cognitive linguistics. Yet, Ungerer and Schmid (1996) identify three distinctive approaches to cognitive linguistics which include experiential, prominence and attentional views of language. In their view, experiential view of language relates to the notion that interpretation of words and expressions arises from the world of knowledge and experience. Prominence view explains why when we look at an object in our locale or environment, we single it out as a perpetual prominent figure standing out from the attentional view of language which assumes that what we express often reflects those parts of an event that attract our frame as part of an event which attracts our attention (Babatunde & Aremu, 2016). The sum total of the above is that metaphor complements the communicative function of language in a more vivid manner.

Conceptual review of ideology and its perspectives

Ideologies are belief systems which involve mental objects such as ideas, thoughts, beliefs, judgment and value (Van Dijk, 2013). According to him, it is an abstract axiomatic oasis of the socially shared belief systems of groups which have crucial cognitive dimension, Van Dijk submits that ideologies are social based which makes it relate to groups, position, gender, and even interests. For these, they often culminate into struggle, power and dominance. Ideologies have basic canons and interpretative procedures that allow in-groups to comprehend and make sense of social realities, every day practices and relation to other groups (Button 1991). For Van Dijk (2013), ideologies have contextual variable manifestations such that belief systems within a political terrain are termed political ideologies. Those within a religious discourse or contexts, are known as religious ideologies and in the case of the cultural manifestation, they are called cultural ideologies. The present study focuses on ideologies that manifest within cultural and religious domains. In the cultural parlance, ideological practices (belief system) subject people to various forms of inequality, exploitation, torture, slavery, perpetual sheepish submissiveness and so on. Cultural ideology is then a belief system which relates to culture; it is a set of ideas, value system and norms that pertain to culture. It is a set of ideas and values that characterize a particular belief system or culture of a particular set of people.

Theoretical Framework

This study has utilised a cognitive oriented theory which is conceptual metaphor theory for analysis and discussion.

Conceptual metaphor theory

Among the literary gurus whose works have made tremendous impacts on the concept of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) are very conspicuous. According to them, metaphor is pervasive in everyday life in language, in thought and in action. They maintain that human conceptual system is basically metaphorical in nature in that it controls our perceptions. They uphold that metaphors, as linguistic expressions, are possible basically because there are metaphors in our conceptual system; they are not decorative devices, peripheral to language and thought but basically, part of our cognition which structures our perception and understanding. In cognitive linguistics, metaphors frame our opinions about life thereby becoming our resources for processes of thought. Hence, metaphors are linguistic tools.

However, language is not a personal phenomenon but a social reality; in the same way, metaphors should not be conceived as a private enterprise but rather manifest within particular social domains. Harrison, (2007) asserts that huge areas of our language and experiences are shaped by metaphors. Accordingly, it has been observed by Mey, that "metaphors are not individual means of conceptually dealing with the world, but means that have become current within a given linguistic and cultural community" (2001, P. 302).

In cognitive linguistics, there is the concept of mapping which has to do with predetermined set of corresponding points between the source and the target domains. Mapping forms the basic understanding of how one gets from point A to point B. However, basic human phenomena and experiences can be captured and described by such example as the following as presented by Lakoff and Johnson (1980)): **TIME IS MONEY, ARGUMENT IS WAR.**

In their submission, they identify many types of conceptual metaphor among which are ontological metaphors, orientation/spatial metaphors and structural metaphors. Ontology, here, is the branch of thought that is concerned with the nature of existence. Ontological metaphor, in their explanation, helps us to comprehend nonphysical things as an entity or substance. Ontological metaphor gives us various metaphor models for how the mind frames aspects of mental experiences.

E.g. THE MIND IS AN ENTITY

TH MIND IS A MACHINE

Eg. My mind is not at rest.

His mind is not here.

It appears your mind is somewhere.

Do you have anything in mind? In other words, this captures the mind as an entity capable of staying put. Ontological metaphors present us with a coherent account of cognitive experiences e.g. He broke under cross – examination.

She was weakened by her past experience.

The experience shattered him.

On the other hand, orientational Metaphor gives a concept of spatial orientation like:

HAPPY IS UP

I am feeling up today.

Such orientations as up and down, high and low, front and back, in and out, on and off, deep and shallow, central and peripheral have a basis in our own physical and cultural experiences although they vary from culture to culture. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) observe that in some cultures, the future is orientationally in the front whereas, in some others, future is in the back. Hence, the following expressions in Igbo culture:

Ihe ukwu ka kpe azu. This means: Great things are behind or Greater things are yet to come (and they are coming from behind where the orientation is that the future is behind). This is the cognitive orientational ideology of the Igbo name "Azuka" (that which is coming from behind or afterwards is greater).

Nke ka mma na-abia (n'ihu). This means: The better ones are coming (in front). The Igbo also operate within the cultural orientation of the future being at the front. Hence such proper name as: Iruka, Nkeiruka which means "Future is greater" or "Future ones are greater" respectively.

Structural metaphor: This is a metaphorical system in which one complex concept (typically abstract) is present in terms of some other (usually more concrete concept)

E.g.   TIME IS A RESOURCE; RATIONAL ARGUMENT IS WAR. Generally, for the fact that so many important concepts are either abstract or not clearly delineated ideas, time etc), they need to get a grasp by means of other concepts for better comprehension. Therefore, from the theory, it is deduced that: Metaphor is a central abstract linguistic tool that structures thinking and knowledge, grounded in physical expression and ideological inclinations. From the foregoing, this study will delve into the identification of the various types of metaphors explored in constructing ideologies in the texts of study.

Existing studies

Some studies have been carried out on conceptual metaphor and religious ideologies. From a pragmatic perspective Babatunde and Aremu (2016) examined a pragmatic study of conceptual metaphors in Nigerian Christian Tracts. They employed cognitive linguistics in their study as that which is often used to explain the ambivalence in human language. From there they point out that in cognitive linguistics, linguistic behavior is not separated from the general cognitive abilities that allow mental processes of reasoning, memory and attention but understood as an integral part of this. From their research, they concluded that tract as a religious text is characterized by such conceptual metaphors as sin is a wall, a domicile, a destroyer and a terminator; God is father and a container; Christian life is a journey, the world is a market, more is up and less is down. They finally state that the ontological correspondence of the source to target domains facilitate the interpretation of the cognitive meanings in metaphors used in Nigeria Christian Tracts.

In the same vein, Kamalu and Tamunobelema investigated linguistic expression of religious identity and ideology in selected postcolonial Nigeria literature. They use grammatical resources of mood and transitivity for this investigation. They finally conclude that postcolonial Nigeria nation has suffered calamitous losses from religious conflicts which prompted Nigeria's 21st century writers to use their works to present a situation in which groups use language to construct individual and collective identity and ideology, legitimize their actions and justify acts of violence. Their work differs from the present one since the latter

will concentrate on the use of cognitive metaphors in constructing religious ideologies in different literary texts.

Moreover, Adedeji (2016) looks into "The Spirit – child as Metaphor for disruption and cohesion in Nigeria literature; A case study of Fagunwa, Tutuola, Achebe, Soyinka, Clark-Bekederemo and Okiri". From this angle, one sees that within the traditional religious ideologies in Nigeria literature and culture, there exists the phenomenon of intractable beings that operate outside the pale of societal laws. The concept of Spirit –Child (Abiku Ogbanje) is often associated with children who exhibit unchild –like antics and disruptive behaviours (Adedeji 2006). They are seen as metaphors for disruption as well as cohesion. Adedeji investigates how this set of children can be a metaphor for disruption as well as cohesion in Nigeria literature. The activities of these children are usually manipulated from the spirit world. He finally concludes, in his analysis that the spirit child in selected Nigerian texts is gradually shifting from the traditional perception of harbingers of disruption and sorrow to icons of cohesion and national healing.

Achebe is one of Nigeria's earliest literary writers while *Thing Fall Apart* as his first text has gained unimaginable acceptance internationally. However, the text is yet to be exhausted even with all the analyses ever done from it. This study shall demonstrate this. On the other hand, Chidubem Iweka's *The Ancient Curse* is a novel that centres on religious fraud. The text contains some elements of belief in reincarnation (as a belief system). Obi in his past life of reincarnations is expected to carry the mantle of being the chief priest of his family deity, Ogidi, but because of his subtle inclination to Christianity which poses as a superior religion in his generation, he refuses to worship or service the deity. He begins to be tormented by deity by killing members of his family – his father, mother, brothers and finally his wife. This is a way of subjecting him to the acceptance of the chief priesthood of the deity contrary to his will. However, in order to save his only daughter's life which is the next target of Ogidi, he accepts to serve the deity but in a Christian way. He named the deity Jesus (but not of Christ) and harbours it within the church where he uses its power to perform 'miracles' for the unsuspecting vulnerable worshippers. In certain traditional cultures, deities usually demand human sacrifice, as in the case of Ikemefuna in *Things Fall Apart*. Obi's deity now demands that he sacrifices his only child, Chioma,

Data presentation and analysis
 Thing Fall Apart (TFA)
The following excerpts are drawn from TFA.
Excerpt 1: **Okonkwo's fear was greater than these.** *It was not external but lay deep within himself.* **It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father** (page 11). The researchers, at this point, demonstrate the mapping of the structure of one thing onto the structure of another in the data with the following cross-domain mapping: FEAR IS A BEING. Here, the source domain which deals with a set of literal entities, attributes and relationships linked semantically in the mind is BEING while the target domain dealing with abstract concept of our experiences is FEAR. This has been lexicalised in the data using the following items: *greater than these, not external, lay deep within.*

In the above excerpt, Achebe conceptualizes how fear is oriented in human cognition as something that occupies a space in the depth of human body. This corresponds with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) explication of orientational metaphor as that which gives a concept of

spatial orientation. The implication of this is that fear is a being that occupies a space in the body of Okonkwo and it equally has a semantic feature of + solid. Therefore, Achebe has used fear in this context as an orientational metaphor to represent the ideology that a lazy father may likely beget a lazy child (son) and laziness in the Igbo socio-cultural parlance is an ideological disposition that is attributable to one's parents. However, given the fact that Unoka, Okonkwo's father is, literally speaking, the chief custodian of and/or a human metaphor for laziness, he is likely not to be bordered by the grim prospect of begetting a lazy son in the person of Okonkwo. Therefore, the Igbo ideological disposition towards a lazy child as a representation of lazy parents may be the least of issues to worry Unoka. Okonkwo may have also come to terms with the fact that his father is not perturbed about whether he becomes lazy or not and that explains why he is afraid of being termed lazy. Achebe, most probably, presents it thus because writers choose metaphorical elements in accordance with the ideology they intend to construct.

Excerpt 2.

And that the year *Okonkwo broke the peace* and was punished, as was the custom, by Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess (page 23).

Here, the cross-domain mapping is: PEACE IS A FRAGILE OBJECT. The above mapping is substantiated by the fact that the writer uses peace as a concrete object that is prone to breakage, thereby presenting it as an ontological metaphor. According to Lakoff and Johnson, ontological metaphor helps us to comprehend nonphysical things as an entity or substance. In this excerpt, *peace* is as an abstract entity belonging to the semantic field of tranquility but it is here used with the verb *broke* which is a lexical item that should ordinarily have selected a lexical item with the semantic feature + concrete + breakable. However, from the perspective of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) ontological metaphor, the mind conceives peace as a concrete concept which prompts the writer to use it with a lexical item that has the semantic features: + concrete +breakable. With that, the ideological value of the metaphor *peace* is appreciated. This is because there are some obvious implications of breaking a concrete object. The first is that the breakage brings about loss and the second is that the shards of the broken object or its pieces may injure someone. Since metaphor and thought go together, the mind conceives that when peace is broken, unity is affected, emotions are injured and relationships are shattered. For this, the writer uses *peace* as a concrete object in the domain of ontological metaphor.

Excerpt 3.

Okonkwo bit his lips as *anger welled up within him* (page 23).

Cross-domain mapping: ANGER IS WAR.

Here is another display of ontological metaphor. The ubiquitous nature of metaphor gives the author the power to express anger in terms of a concrete entity that swells or rises. Anger in this context can as well be seen in terms of spatial or orientational metaphor for it to have been oriented upwards unlike peace and calmness that can be associated with downward orientation like "calm down"; everything calms down when there is peace. The aftermath of the anger that welled up within Okonkwo is that he beats his wife heavily not minding that it is the Week of Peace. In line with the above cross-domain mapping, one can say that Okonkwo takes war (metaphorised as anger) to his wife. In wars, people usually do not accord their actions critical evaluation. They usually act impulsively. This is why the ANGER IS WAR cross-domain mapping succinctly metaphorises the context of the utterance captured on pg. 23 of *TFA*. All

the expressions and conceptions are as a result of the ubiquitous nature of metaphor from a cognitive point of view.

The Ancient Curse

The following excerpts are culled from **The Ancient Curse** thereby making up the data for analysis:

Excerpt 4.

Any moment now and the anger of death would barge in and offer him his last wish, a stick of cigarette, a beer, a glass of kai-kai gin or whatever that would give him a last kick before *his descent into the hell*. (page 1).

Cross-domain mapping: DEATH IS A BEING

The orientation of hell is that of downward trajectory and that is what Iweka portrays in this excerpt. However, death can be viewed from the perspective of ontological metaphor since it is expressed as an entity capable of barging into one's household to make a compulsory non-palatable offer which results in a descent into the hell. Here, death is metaphorised as a sentient being capable of responding to conscious or sense impressions. This is clearly lexicalized in: *anger of death, barge in, offer wish,* and others. It is only a being that has the ability to instigate the above actions attributed to death. Of critical metaphorical significance is the phrase "the anger of death". This goes beyond assigning to death actions that could be enacted within the physical space to assigning it an action that captures it as a sentient agent. All these capture the use of metaphor as instrument of ideological constructs in the texts.

Except 5.

When Martha was admitted to St Theresa's, *Ebere had noticed her highly depressed mood and tried to help lift her spirits* (page 3).

Cross-domain mapping: HEALTH IS UP; SICKNESS IS DOWN

Upward orientation is associated with positive evaluation while downward orientation is associated with a negative evaluation. Here, the writer deploys orientational metaphor in expressing the feelings of Martha. A depressed spirit has a downward orientation unlike a lively spirit that is cognitively associated with upward spatial metaphor. These are clearly lexicalized in *highly depressed mood* relating to downward orientation on the one hand, and *lift her spirits* relating to upward orientation, on the other. This ideology is neatly constructed using orientational metaphor which, as already noted, is concerned with spatial relations such as up-down, front-back, in-out and others. It places concepts linearly, orienting them in line with metaphorical orientations.

Excerpt 6.

The ups and *downs of life* had finally landed Grace in the spiritual mission after the ups seemed to have been totally eliminated, *leaving a pitiful stage of unfulfilled dreams and intense hardship* (page 10).

Cross-domain mapping: SUCCESS IS UP; FAILURE IS DOWN

From the above excerpt, one sees the display of the concept of spatial orientation in the form of orientational metaphor. Here fortunes are expressed in upward trajectory while misfortunes take downward orientation. This is why the speaker maintains that after ups are completely

eliminated, what are left will only be downs expressed as misfortunes, unfulfilled dreams and unimaginable hardships.

Conclusion

In Igbo cultural domain where the two texts are set, the distinctive ways of realizing meaning and expressions especially ideological ones are seen from orientational and ontological metaphorical perspectives. From the six excerpts discussed four orientational metaphors and two ontological metaphors are identified. The texts are characterized by such cross-domain mappings like: FEAR IS A BEING, PEACE IS A FRAGILE OBJECT, ANGER IS WAR, DEATH IS A BEING, HEALTH IS UP; SICKNESS IS DOWN, SUCCESS IS UP; FAILURE IS DOWN.

This work is significant to the general readers/public as it demonstrates that through the use of cognitive metaphor, ideologies can be enacted and reproduced; to language students, it will enrich their knowledge of metaphor especially the everyday metaphors and add to an existing literature on cognitive metaphor in relation to ideology thereby becoming an invaluable reference point in language pedagogy.

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