

## “SEMANTIC FEATURES OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR”

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Within the framework of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is no longer regarded merely as a stylistic or rhetorical device, but as a fundamental mechanism of human thought. The theory of conceptual metaphor, developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, demonstrates that human cognition is largely metaphorical in nature. According to this theory, people understand abstract concepts through more concrete and experiential domains<sup>29</sup>.

This thesis aims to analyze the nature of conceptual metaphor, its semantic features such as meaning extension and abstraction, the relationship between source and target domains, and its role in meaning construction, supported by real examples from English.

A conceptual metaphor is defined as a cognitive process in which one conceptual domain (the source domain) is used to understand another conceptual domain (the target domain). Lakoff and Johnson define metaphor as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another”<sup>30</sup>.

For example:

TIME IS MONEY

- You are wasting my time.
- This project cost me a lot of time.

In this case, the abstract concept of time is understood in terms of the concrete concept of money, reflecting an economic interpretation of time.

One of the key semantic features of conceptual metaphor is meaning extension, whereby words extend beyond their literal meanings into metaphorical usage. This process allows lexical items to acquire new meanings based on conceptual mappings.

Example:


- He attacked my argument.

Here, the verb attack is extended from its literal meaning (physical violence) to a metaphorical meaning (verbal criticism).

<sup>29</sup> Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>30</sup> Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press, p. 5





Lakoff argues that such extensions occur through systematic mappings between domains, enabling speakers to transfer meaning from one domain to another<sup>31</sup>.

Conceptual metaphor plays a crucial role in the abstraction process, allowing individuals to comprehend complex and abstract ideas through concrete experiences.

Example:

LOVE IS A JOURNEY

- Our relationship is at a crossroads.
- We are going in different directions.

In these expressions, love is conceptualized in terms of a journey, making the abstract concept more accessible.

Kövecses emphasizes that metaphor is essential for abstract thinking, as it provides a structured way to understand intangible concepts<sup>32</sup>.

A fundamental component of conceptual metaphor theory is the distinction between source domain and target domain:

- Source domain: a concrete, familiar domain (e.g., war, journey, food)
- Target domain: an abstract or complex domain (e.g., argument, life, ideas)

Example:

ARGUMENT IS WAR

- He defended his position.
- She shot down my argument.

Here:

- Source domain: WAR
- Target domain: ARGUMENT

Lakoff and Johnson describe this process as mapping, where elements from the source domain are systematically projected onto the target domain<sup>33</sup>.

Conceptual metaphor plays a central role in meaning construction within language and cognition. It contributes to:

1. Cognitive function – structuring human thought
2. Semantic function – generating new meanings
3. Pragmatic function – enhancing expressiveness in communication

Black, in his interaction theory, suggests that metaphor creates meaning through the interaction between two conceptual systems<sup>34</sup>.

Example:

- He is a shining star.

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<sup>31</sup> Lakoff, G. (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and thought* (pp. 202–251). Cambridge University Press.

<sup>32</sup> Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>33</sup> Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>34</sup> Black, M. (1962). *Models and metaphors*. Cornell University Press.





In this case, the metaphor maps qualities of a star (brightness, prominence) onto a person, creating a new evaluative meaning.

Below are common conceptual metaphors with authentic English examples:

1. TIME IS MONEY

- Don't waste my time.
- This task cost me hours.

2. LIFE IS A JOURNEY

- She has come a long way.
- He is at a turning point in life.

3. ARGUMENT IS WAR

- He attacked every weak point.
- I defended my opinion.

4. IDEAS ARE FOOD

- I can't digest this theory.
- This is food for thought.

5. EMOTIONS ARE FORCES

- She was overwhelmed by anger.
- Fear gripped him.


These examples demonstrate how metaphor permeates everyday language and reflects underlying cognitive structures.

Conceptual metaphor is a fundamental aspect of human cognition and language. It enables individuals to understand abstract concepts through concrete experiences, facilitates semantic extension, and plays a key role in meaning construction. The interaction between source and target domains allows for systematic mapping, which shapes both linguistic expressions and cognitive processes. Therefore, conceptual metaphor should be regarded not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as a cognitive and cultural one.

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