

A Comprehensive Analysis of Visualizing Metaphors: Linguistic Decoding of Meaning in the Movie The Donkey King

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Abstract

The present research looks into the Conceptual Metaphors from the movie The Donkey King. It aims to recognize metaphors from the movie to reveal their hidden meaning and comprehend how the movie's language is used to construct ideologies. It deals with the linguistic and visual analysis of the metaphors from the film in which the role of language is pivotal in constructing ideologies. The current study employed the theoretical framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory of Johnson and Lakoff (1980). The study's findings disclosed that 5 major metaphors are identified from the selected parts of the movie. It also deals with ideology construction through the language used in the movie i.e. the quality of narcissism depiction through language, and the image of unity through the usage of words in the movie. The study shows that language is the main element in movie through which are identified and ideology is constructed through language in the movie The Donkey King.

Keywords: meaning, visual analysis, language, conceptual metaphors, ideology, linguistic analysis, visual metaphors

Introduction

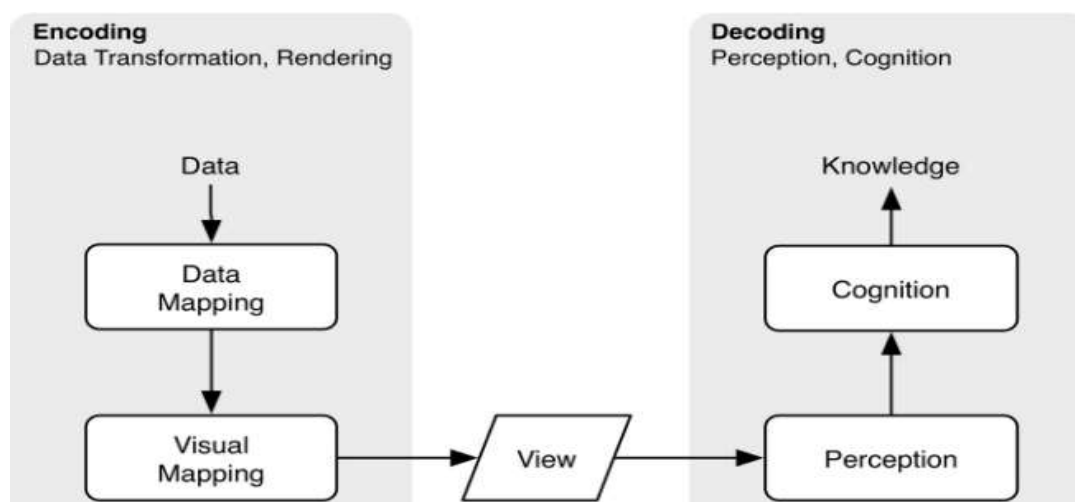
Conceptual Metaphor (CM) is a tool for dramatizing, concretizing, and popularizing ideas. Conceptual Metaphors help people create the world and conceptualize truth by clarifying their conceptual systems as well as reflecting their thoughts or knowledge. Metaphor in media content has the ability to call attention to some features of the text while simultaneously obscuring other characteristics seen in the written word. A metaphor is typically described as the metaphoric language employed in writing to produce an appealing effect that is rhetorical. Metaphor is frequently seen as both a figure of thinking and a figure of speech. Over the course of time, metaphor has been thoroughly examined in cultural materials including books, poems, lyric writing, and nonfiction. Hence, most people consider metaphor to be only an innovative, lyrical, but decorative linguistic element (Siriam.S & Widyastuti, 2023). Metaphor is now more than just a written analogy; it is also a cognitive paradigm that is tied to our style of perceiving and how we perceive things. Metaphors are used to explain and link two disparate ideas, and their core is the application of a single concept for comprehending others (Peng, 2023).

The metaphors in movies with animation are both a way of inference derived from actual life and a style of storytelling generated by various parts. One method for describing a plot line that is essential to movies with animation is metaphor telling. In the setting of a movie, the major character's visual performances boost the physical appeal of the movie, and encoded messages are also communicated in the visuals (Chiu & Chu, 2019). According to (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Yicai and Xueai, 2021) metaphorical phrases in human speech are methodically linked to conceptual ideas, allowing individuals to examine the essence of figurative concepts and comprehend the hypothetical character of our actions using figurative statements. According to

their measure of normality and purpose, the basic and complicated level metaphors are divided into many different groups on the bases of their function (Borys, 2023).

Source domains resemble the metaphor's mode of communication. But the word domain suggests a whole conceptual scope is the basis for the symbolic link. Any source of information, therefore, indicates the complete set of the component elements. Target domains resemble a metaphoric tone. The intended field is conceptual. In reality, if one wants to draw attention and root the notion in a situation, symbolic comprehension is required (Stanley, 2018). Target and Source domains are linked with each other abstract ideas of perception are connected with concrete ideas together to form the mapping of both domains containing the set of metaphors.

Visualizing metaphors is a creative process that transforms abstract or figurative language into visual forms, making complex ideas more tangible and easier to understand. This approach is particularly valuable in educational contexts, where it aids in the comprehension and retention of nuanced concepts, as well as in communication and artistic endeavors, where metaphors play a significant role in conveying deeper meanings.



One method for visualizing metaphors is literal representation. For instance, consider the metaphor "time is money." This can be visually depicted by merging the image of a clock with coins or a dollar sign, directly illustrating the notion that time, like money, has value and can be spent or wasted. Such direct visual connections facilitate quick comprehension of the metaphor's meaning without requiring much interpretation (Smith, 2020).

Another approach is symbolic representation, where visual elements suggest a deeper, often more abstract meaning. Take the metaphor "the mind is a garden." Instead of showing a literal garden, you might depict a human head with flowers and plants growing from it, symbolizing ideas and thoughts as plants that need care and cultivation. This offers a richer, more nuanced understanding of the metaphor (Jones, 2019).

In some cases, contrasting images effectively visualize metaphors. For instance, the metaphor "life is a rollercoaster" can be illustrated by juxtaposing a calm, straight path with a chaotic rollercoaster track. This contrast highlights the unpredictable ups and downs of life, clarifying the metaphor's message through visual means (Williams, 2021).

Abstract visualization is another powerful tool for representing metaphors. For example, the metaphor "ideas are seeds" can be abstractly illustrated by showing seeds transforming into lightbulbs. This blend of natural and artificial imagery captures the essence of growth and the blossoming of ideas, offering viewers an imaginative way to interpret the metaphor (Johnson, 2018).

Sequential imagery can also break down a metaphor into a series of related images. The saying "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" could be visualized through a sequence starting with a foot stepping onto a path, followed by scenes showing the path

extending into the distance. This narrative visual format emphasizes the gradual progress of a long journey, helping to convey the metaphor's message (Lee, 2022).

For digital formats, interactive visuals can be particularly effective. For example, a metaphor like "from confusion to clarity" could be visualized with an interactive slider that transitions from a chaotic, jumbled image to one that is orderly and clear. This allows the viewer to engage directly with the metaphor, enhancing understanding through interaction (Davis, 2023).

Finally, collages provide a way to combine multiple elements into a cohesive visual representation of a complex metaphor. The metaphor "the world is a stage" might be visualized through a collage that includes images of masks, curtains, and a globe. This layered approach allows for a richer, more textured interpretation of the metaphor, capturing its multiple facets in a single image (Miller, 2020).

Through these various techniques, visualizing metaphors turns abstract ideas into compelling, accessible images, enhancing understanding and engagement across different contexts.

Research Objective

1. To investigate the conceptual analogies in *The Donkey King* using the language used in the film

Significance

The abundance of animated movies in the present world have gained a tremendous amount of attention because of the use of language, screenplay, didactic ideology, metaphors,

and hidden signs. Conceptual metaphor analysis is essential as it plays a pivotal role in semiotic and visual analysis. It implies that people use metaphors to interpret more symbolic, concrete reality through the prism of more ethereal ideas and feelings (Kosimov, 2023). The goal of the current study is to gain a deeper understanding of conceptual metaphors that are employed in *The Donkey King* since the language employed in the film denotes the ideology associated with conceptual metaphors.

Research Question

1. What kind of conceptual metaphors does the movie *The Donkey King* adopt in its linguistic representation?

Review of the Literature

Silvestre-López (2020) examined a collection of speeches concerning meditation delivered by three well-known spiritual instructors and examined the function of using conceptual metaphor in non-religious yet spiritual contexts contemplative language. The results of the study showed how appropriate metaphors are employed purposely in conversations and the way they are employed to depict the process and practice of mindfulness in emotional but secular environments. According to Zibin (2022), conducted research that evaluated the mono-modal and multimodal metaphors used to describe the coronavirus in 80 drawings by 11 Jordanian illustrators. The findings show that multiple source domains represented various facets of the coronavirus. Additionally, they demonstrate that mono-modal projection of the kind of visual pictorial goal was the method of configurations structure most frequently utilized to interpret the idioms.

Rasse et al. (2020) aimed to increase the scope and focused on and investigated how readers of poetry make use of conceptual metaphors. The researchers used a psycholinguistic trial with 38 people who all happened to be English speakers to address this issue. When choosing or scoring tasks for individuals that demonstrated their subconscious and conscious comprehension of the conceptual metaphors, individuals in the trial reviewed poetry passages that contained conceptual metaphors. The outcomes of the two activities demonstrate that when studying poetry, people are able to recall psychological analogies. Furthermore, this gives concrete evidence for the claim that essential elements of poetic language and mental processes result from conceptual metaphors.

Using the basis of the works of Ukrainian poets, the researchers seek to define the particular mental (conceptual) metaphor and ascertain its function in the language of poetry and the origins of the terms intellectual and “conceptual” metaphor as well as a comparison of theories of how these terms should be interpreted in light of various language traditions, both home and foreign. The results of the investigation demonstrate that while local researchers discriminate between cognitive and conceptual metaphors, foreign experts do not. To pinpoint the distinctive features of Ukrainian poets' use of intellectual (conceptual) metaphor, their poetic speech was also examined. The study concludes that metaphor, as the most efficient instrument for enhancing cognitive functioning, is a sign of how Ukrainian poetic language understanding is evolving and growing more strongly linked while also being focused on the logical dimension (Kravets et al., 2021).

Research Gap

The content analysis of films to identify metaphors, as conducted by La Dunifa and La Ode Mutawakal (2022), and the examination of memes to understand how metaphor modality and graphical metaphors are perceived in visual forms, as explored by ElShami et al. (2023), offer significant insights into the role of metaphors in media. These studies highlight the importance of visual metaphors in shaping audience perceptions and conveying complex ideas through imagery. However, most of the existing research has been focused on data collected from regions outside of Pakistan, leaving a gap in the study of metaphor use within Pakistani media. Given this context, there is a clear opportunity to explore the use of conceptual metaphors within Pakistani films, specifically through a semiotic analysis of the movie *The Donkey King*. This research seeks to delve into the conceptual metaphors embedded in the film, as these metaphors serve as essential building blocks for interpreting and deriving meaning from the narrative. By identifying and analyzing these metaphors, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how metaphors function in Pakistani cinema, particularly in the context of *The Donkey King*.

Research Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. Information is gathered from certain segments of the film *The Donkey King*. The researcher looked at metaphors from the film by taking notes and capturing the screen. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory was utilised by the researcher for the purpose of inquiry and the researcher modified the theory according to the analysis of metaphors, as it is linked with domains and mapping. The following framework is adopted in this study as given below in Fig 1.

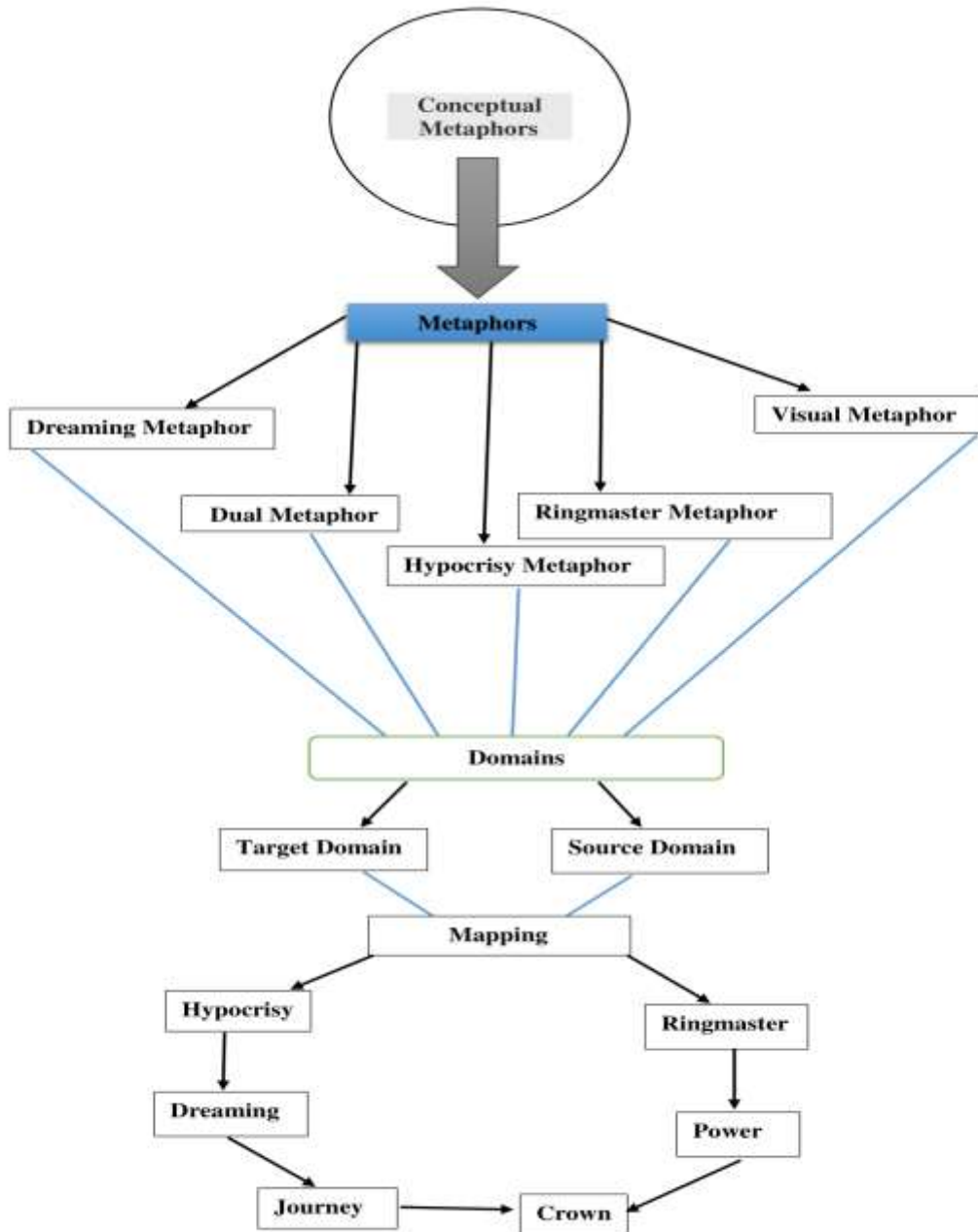


Figure 1. The framework of Conceptual Metaphors, Domains, and Mapping

Data Analysis

5 metaphors are selected and analyzed from the selected parts of the film. The Donkey

King by adapting framework of conceptual metaphors, domains, and mapping. It involves the analysis of conceptual metaphors.

(I) Dreaming Metaphor

Mangu: I never would have thought, I would be sitting here in front of you on "I Want to be a Millionaire."

Lando: Lando Chuckles, so cute, dare to dream, my friend, dare to dream.....

Uncle Perry: Better stop wasting your time, Mangu. You can't sleep all day, wake up, Donkey. Do you hear me, it's past 7:30 in the morning. Are you going to sleep all day?

Mangu: I did it, I won, I'm so happy, I'm a millionaire. I'm a millionaire, I bet you're proud of me, huh?

Hi, Uncle.

Uncle Perry: Don't sit there and "Hi" to me, lazy bones.

Mangu: Oh, dear Uncle Perry, you woke me up 10 seconds before I became rich.

According to the dialogue in the movie mentioned above, Mangu (the donkey) was dreaming of himself showing up on "I Want to Be a Millionaire" at the outset of the movie while still in joy. Since he was a child, he had an aspiration of appearing on a competition show and winning millions of dollars. He was seated on the hot seat in his daydream, and host Lando was praising his ability to dream. Uncle Perry made him face reality by labelling him as a sloppy, which goes against his dream because it implies that he is sluggish. In his dream, he has just one query left to become a billionaire, and suddenly his cocoon of daydreaming explodes. Furthermore, this dreaming metaphor highlights the dreams of Mangu in the movie along with his aspiration of becoming a donkey millionaire.

(II) Dual Metaphor

Group of Animals: We demand a fair share in Azad City.

Mangu: Hey, Zandar Bear, why the protests?

Zandar Bear: Mangu, this is not just a protest. We are taking a stand against the rich.

Mangu: But what if one day I suddenly become a rich donkey? Will you protest against me?

Zandar Bear: Mangu, open your eyes, they'll never let you become rich. The game is rigged against ordinary people.

Mangu sees the greeting from an advertisement as he enters Azad City. But as he made his way across the city, he came across a banner stating how essential a democratic system is, along with goats holding banners asking for votes. These images serve as a dual metaphor for the city's struggle with democracy and the goats' zeal to control it. The movie's dialogue between Mangu and Zandar Bear exemplifies the tension that exists between animals' aspirations for democratic systems and equal rights, and the regard that people in positions of power accord them despite the fact that they are also animals. Although the dualistic system depicted in the image entails the monarch's progeny becoming yet another king, the group of animals seeks equal rights.

(III) Hypocrisy Metaphor

Fitna to King: My Lord, what if we were to turn our great nation into a democracy and let the animals choose the king themselves? We control everything, animals will think they voted for a king, but everything's been already fixed. As long as things go according to plan, the prince wins.

Fitna to Mangu: Silly Mangu, of course, you can. Think of the endless possibilities. When you're king, you'll have tons of money, a huge mansion, a beautiful girlfriend who will shower you with love, and other things...

The

conversation Fitna has with the King and the Mangu in the passage above demonstrates her cleverness, deceit, and ability to manipulate others. The King was growing old and wanted to

name his own child the next ruler of Azad City, and he desired to do so during the city celebrations. However, Fitna, who is skilled in arrogance, convinced the king to adopt the democratic system that all people have, which she then used to her advantage. She informs the other animals about the need for a democratic system and denounces the king's son as their prince. Fitna played an inept game by getting the king to consent to the scheme through an election, and she will be the one to select the nominee to run opposing Prince. Mangu is chosen by Fitna will perform tryouts before running against the king's son in the election. Fitna persuades Mangu that he is the best contender and that he could end up wealthy, but Fitnah is adamant that Mangu is a fool and that a dumb cannot rule. Furthermore, the movie's Fitna character epitomizes hypocrisy.

(III) Ringmaster Metaphor

Ringmaster: growls, whips cracks

Fitna: oh, oh! I will deliver hundreds and hundreds of animals to your circus, hundreds.

Mangu: I was under the illusion that I was a king.

The Ringmaster portrayed the pivotal role of the circus's master in the film "The Donkey King". Ringmaster captured every creature, including the King and the King's Son, to take them to the circus. In the movie, Ringmaster is portrayed as a human who retains his power to use whatever is necessary to maximise profits. Fitna, the devious one, became alarmed when she realised that the figment in the Ringmaster's hands was licking the soles of his feet. Ringmaster emerged as Mangu's turning point in the film Mangu was motivated to work towards the animals' safeguard from Ringmaster and Fitna when he discovered the cages in which they had been kept hostage via physical force. As Mangu lived in a world of ambiguity and illusion until his false

concept of the ideal controlling kingdom collapsed the movie's ringmaster role acted as a wake-up call for him. Mangu was prepared to turn the world upside down and battle for animal liberty.

Visual Metaphor



The idea that the donkey is a king adorning a crown, the way the movie poster describes the visual impact of the crown and the movie name, and perhaps most importantly—the Mangu shirt with the words “fantasy” initials on it all have a creative influence on the viewer's mind when watching The Donkey King. In the movie, after winning the kingdom, Mangu changes both

physically and cognitively as he embraces his desire and adopts a new perspective on everything around him.

The Donkey King is a movie about a donkey named Mangu who can rule like a monarch, and the visual metaphor in the film supports the metaphor of the donkey donning a regal robe and a crown.

Target and Source Domain

The target domain, often known as the individual who actually gets the visual in doubt, is a feature or circumstance that is characterized through or related to the producing domain. The area of thought, from which we produce graphical representations to comprehend yet another conceptual domain, is the source domain and the target domain is the domain of conceiving things Using the source domain, we attempt to acquire insight into the target domain. (Nordquist, 2020).

Mapping

Mapping in domains target and source is associated with abstract and concrete ideas linked with the cognitive aspects. In the context of cognitive comprehension, metaphors are related to specific domains. In metaphors, a chain of ideas both abstract and concrete are marked or connected, and the connections are made through the mind's cognitive processing. In the procedure of mapping the target domain, the domain that is connected with concepts generates a mapping with the source domain. Mapping target and source domains to define the relation of conceptual metaphors that are analyzed from the selected parts of the movie are building a relation of the meaning in Fig 2 given below.

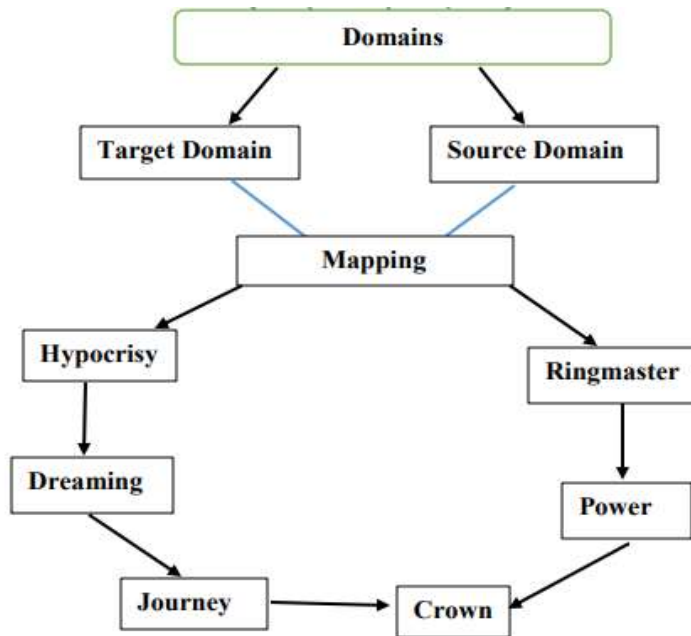


Figure2. Mapping of Domains

In mapping of domains target and source metaphors are making a connection with cognitive aspects. The dreaming metaphor, hypocrisy metaphor, and ringmaster metaphor are linked to the depiction of the character in the movie. Aspects like power are mapped with the Ringmaster character who holds power over other animals by capturing them at a circus, the aspects like a journey and crown are entitled to Mangu, the donkey wearing a crown mapping his way to Azad city is his journey from rags to riches that is depicted in the movie *The Donkey King*.

Conclusion

The research investigation probed into the cognitive metaphors present in the motion picture *The Donkey King*, employing Johnson and Lakoff's theory of conceptual metaphors as a framework. Through a meticulous analysis of selected scenes, the researcher

identified five significant conceptual metaphors, revealing how these metaphors function within the film to convey complex ideas and emotions. The study's findings shed light on how the movie's metaphorological elements contribute to a deeper understanding of the underlying meanings, offering insights into the way metaphors map across different domains to create connections in language and thought. This exploration not only enhances our comprehension of the film's narrative techniques but also underscores the importance of metaphors in shaping viewers' interpretations and responses.

While this study focused specifically on the conceptual metaphors embedded in *The Donkey King*, it opens up avenues for further research into the film's metaphorical landscape. Future researchers may choose to explore other aspects of the film or related media campaigns, particularly those dealing with ontological, structural, and orientational metaphors. By expanding the scope of analysis, subsequent studies can contribute to a broader understanding of how metaphors function across different contexts and genres, ultimately enriching the discourse on metaphorology in visual media.

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