

Analysis of Figurative Language used in the Novel “An American Brat” by Bapsi Sidhwa’s.

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ABSTRACT

The present study is conducted to analyze Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel “An American Brat” under the notion “Conceptual Metaphor Theory”, generated by Lakoff & Johnson (1980). The study aims to find out the types of metaphor and the purpose of their use in this particular novel. This study uses the qualitative approach of research methodology. The way readers conceptualize things differently through different metaphors is also pointed out in this study. At the end, it is concluded that the metaphor is the matter of both language and thought as language is the only source to express the inner world of mind. Through this valuable study, it is also pointed out how the writer succeeded in converging different ideologies by the use of metaphor. It is also found at the end of this particular study that different metaphors create different images in the mind of readers.

Keywords: Metaphor, Ideologies, Approach, Novel, Analysis.

Introduction

The scientific study of language reveals that it is systematically structured through discrete units. Words are stored in a mental lexicon, combined into meaningful expressions. Sentences, composed of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and other parts of speech, raise the question: How is the meaning of a sentence derived from its parts “Language functions as a means of communication, transferring messages between speakers and listeners, or writers and readers, using signs. The principle of compositionality suggests that the meaning of a sentence can be understood by interpreting the meaning of its components (nouns, verbs, etc.). If words are discrete units that refer arbitrarily to objects in the physical world and sentences follow syntactic rules, it becomes possible to construct a language and its grammar based on the meanings of individual lexical items. Metaphor, as part of conceptual structure, reflects how thoughts and ideas are organized in the mind. It is a process of mapping one concept onto another, allowing abstract ideas (targets) to be understood through more concrete experiences (sources). According to the theory of embodiment (Johnson, 1987), this conceptual process is grounded in physical experiences.

Metaphor has a profound impact on human cognition and is especially significant in literary and political contexts. Defined as a tool to represent one thing in terms of another, metaphor influences not only language but also thought and reasoning. Lakoff (1993) notes that metaphors test the intellectual capabilities of both writers and readers. *An American Brat*, set in 1978 Lahore, unfolds against the backdrop of General Zia-ul-Haq's rise to power and the impending execution of liberal leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Zareen, a supporter of Bhutto, opposes Zia’s fundamentalist Islamic regime. Fearing that her daughter, Feroza, is becoming conservative under these rules, Zareen decides to send her to America to escape this influence. Feroza is sent to live with her uncle Manek, a doctoral candidate at MIT.

The novel follows the journey of a Parsi family, focusing on 16-year-old Feroza, who is sent to America to avoid the fundamentalism in Pakistan under Zia’s rule. The narrative revolves around five main characters: Feroza, her parents Zareen and Cyrus, her uncle Manek, and her grandmother Kutlibai. The story reflects a common aspiration among middle-class families from the Indian

subcontinent to move to America, believing it to be a place where they can escape their native challenges and achieve a better life. In *An American Brat*, Bapsi Sidhwa explores this dream through the experiences of Zareen's family, highlighting the cultural and personal transformations that ensue.

Research Objective:

To identify the metaphors in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *An American Brat*.

Research Question:

What types of metaphors has Sidhwa used in her novel *An American Brat*?

Literature Review

Metaphor has been defined and understood differently across time. Aristotle was the first to explore it, describing metaphor as a "rhetorical phenomenon" and distinguishing it as more significant than simile due to its complexity (Beckman, 1991). He described metaphor as a transference of meaning, where one thing is named after something else due to perceived similarities (Ortony, 1979). The term "metaphor" originates from the Greek words "meta" (across) and "pherein" (to carry). Aristotle's definition of metaphor as a rhetorical phenomenon that provides an ornamental quality to language is foundational. His idea that metaphors add complexity to literary texts can be applied to Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat*, where metaphors serve to illustrate the complex identity struggles of the protagonist, Feroza. (Beckman, 1991) Richards (1936) introduced the concept of tenor and vehicle, which can be applied to the metaphorical representation of Feroza's identity transformation. The vehicle of cultural transition in *An American Brat* creates new meanings when interacting with the tenor of tradition, symbolizing the inner conflict experienced by the protagonist. In *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors shape our thoughts and actions. In *An American Brat*, the metaphor of the journey illustrates Feroza's personal transformation, where her immigration from Pakistan to America serves as a symbolic journey from tradition to modernity. McGlone (2007) emphasized metaphors as linguistic tools that transfer meanings. In *An American Brat*, metaphors of flight and freedom echo throughout the narrative, symbolizing Feroza's struggle to escape the confines of her conservative upbringing and embrace personal freedom. Kovecses (2002) posits that metaphors differ based on cultural experience. Sidhwa uses cultural metaphors to juxtapose Eastern and Western values, using images of clothing and food to reflect Feroza's gradual adoption of American culture while struggling with her Zoroastrian roots. Reddy (1979) argued that language functions like a conduit, transferring ideas between minds. In *An American Brat*, language barriers and cultural misunderstandings serve as metaphorical representations of the challenges Feroza faces as she navigates her new world, illustrating the dissonance between thoughts and expression. Steen (2002) shifted focus from language to thought, suggesting that metaphors are deeply tied to cognitive processes. Sidhwa's use of metaphors in *An American Brat* reflects the cognitive dissonance Feroza experiences, torn between two cultures and two worlds, highlighting her internal battle. Lakoff (1990) contends that metaphorical frameworks shape understanding. In *An American Brat*, the metaphor of "flight" represents Feroza's struggle for gender equality and personal autonomy, mirroring broader feminist concerns about the societal restrictions placed on women. Semino and Steen (2008) distinguished between every day and literary metaphors. Sidhwa's metaphors in *An American Brat*—such as references to "bridges" between cultures—are not only aesthetically complex but serve a functional role in highlighting the protagonist's dual identity. Lakoff and Johnson (1987) emphasized that metaphors shape societal perceptions. In *An*

American Brat, the metaphor of the "veil" becomes symbolic of both literal and metaphorical barriers. Sidhwa critiques not only cultural restrictions placed on women but also broader societal limitations imposed by tradition.

Richards (1936) challenged Aristotle's view that metaphor was a special skill, arguing that everyone uses metaphor naturally. He introduced the terms tenor and vehicle to explain how metaphors create new meanings through interaction. For example, in "Man is a Rock," man is the tenor, and rock is the vehicle, creating a new concept through their combination. Metaphor, once seen as merely decorative, has evolved in scholarly thought. Mahon (1999) explains how Aristotle's discussions in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* contributed to misconceptions about metaphor. While *Poetics* focuses on creative literary metaphors, *Rhetoric* addresses everyday language metaphors. Scholars like McGlone (2007) further extended Aristotle's ideas, emphasizing metaphor's role in cognition.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory revolutionized metaphor studies by showing that metaphors are not just linguistic ornaments but central to human thought. They argued that people conceptualize abstract ideas, such as love or life, through concrete metaphors like "love is a journey." Metaphors, therefore, influence both language and cognition, and their usage varies across cultures based on experiences (Kovecses, 2002). Moreover, Gibbs (1994) explained how tenor and vehicle interact differently across various theories, showing that metaphor extends beyond simple comparison to convey complex meaning. This interaction between source and target domains in metaphors allows us to understand abstract concepts.

Finally, Lakoff and Turner (1990) demonstrated that even in poetry, metaphors reflect deep cognitive structures rather than mere deviations from standard language use. They argue that metaphors shape not just poetic expression but how we perceive and interact with the world. Their work, alongside others like Reddy (1979), who highlighted metaphor's pervasive role in everyday language, has reshaped our understanding of metaphors as fundamental to human communication.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative research methodology is employed to analyze the metaphors in "An American Brat." The study emphasizes a qualitative approach for selecting and interpreting metaphors, exploring their purpose, and how they lead to different conceptualizations.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which claims that metaphors are not just a matter of language but are deeply rooted in thought and cognition. The principles of CMT include: Metaphors are rooted in thought rather than just language. They help convey ideas, perceptions, and concepts. The meaning of metaphors can vary across cultures and contexts. Metaphors are unavoidable in communication, as they reflect human experience.

Data Collection Tools

For this study, several tools were used, including: Textbook: The novel "An American Brat" was the primary source for identifying metaphorical expressions. Laptop, notebook, internet and pencils, Used for organizing data, taking notes, and drafting the analysis.

Metaphor Identification and Analysis Process

The study follows Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) as proposed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007).

Data Analysis

Table 1: Metaphor and Effect

No. Metaphor	Effect
1 "Instinct had registered" & "Clouds lurking"	Visualizes Cyrus's awareness of hidden tension.
2 "Bottled up for thirteen years of martial law"	Makes political repression feel like a trapped object.
3 "Fertile imagination had bridged the distance"	Imagination and emotional gap become tangible.
4 "Cyrus took matters in his hands"	Highlights Cyrus's control, reflecting male authority.
5 "Zareen's heart sank"	Conveys her sadness in a concrete, relatable way.
6 "Puncturing my eardrum"	Exaggerates the discomfort caused by loudness.
7 "Third World Pakis"	Exposes bias, reflects cultural prejudice and tensions.
8 "The air was pregnant with unspeakable knowledge"	Captures a tense atmosphere of unspoken concern.
9 "Gravitational pull of the country"	Emotional ties are felt as a physical force.
10 "Tide of passengers"	Suggests chaos and uncontrollable movement.
11 "Honey" & "Gave a quick hug"	Adds warmth and affection.
12 "Settled down when the bus took a sharp turn"	Reflects the unpredictability of the journey.

Table 2: Metaphor and Analysis

No. Metaphor	Analysis
1 "Clouds lurking behind his wife's abstracted welcome"	<p>Animating Metaphor: Clouds are given the animate quality of "lurking," implying hidden emotions. The metaphor symbolizes Zareen's concealed sadness and worry, particularly regarding her daughter, Feroza. It reflects the tension between the inanimate and animate qualities of the clouds.</p> <p>Source Domain: "Clouds lurking"</p> <p>Target Domain: Zareen's feelings and intentions</p> <p>Shared Characteristic: Sadness, sorrow</p> <p>Personifying Metaphor: Clouds are humanized to express Zareen's concealed emotions.</p>
2 "Garments that rained on Lahore every winter"	<p>Absolute Metaphor: "Rained" suggests the abundance of garments arriving. While there is no literal connection between rain and garments, the metaphor emphasizes their overwhelming presence.</p>

No.	Metaphor	Analysis
	"Garments clothed its freezing populace"	Personifying Metaphor: Garments are personified with the ability to "clothe," emphasizing their protective role.
3	"Suitcases stood in a corner"	Personifying Metaphor: Suitcases are given the human action of "standing," symbolizing their readiness for travel.
4	"Fertile imagination had bridged the distance"	Personifying Metaphor: Imagination is personified with human qualities, "bridging" the emotional gap between characters, suggesting closeness.
5	"Terror implanted springs into her feet"	Personifying Metaphor: "Terror" is personified with the ability to "implant springs," reflecting Feroza's immediate and energized reaction due to fear.
6	"Hurt puppy look"	Active Metaphor: "Hurt puppy look" draws a parallel between Khutlibai's helpless emotional state and that of a vulnerable puppy, emphasizing her pain and vulnerability.
7	"Shoulders fallen, mouth collapsed, looking unbearably wounded"	Extended Metaphor: A series of comparisons illustrating Khutlibai's emotional defeat. "Shoulders fallen" suggests shame, "mouth collapsed" signifies despair, and "looking unbearably wounded" reflects her emotional suffering after harsh words from her daughter.
8	"The holy fire"	Root Metaphor: The "holy fire" is deeply embedded in Zoroastrian religious beliefs, symbolizing spirituality and sanctity. The fire represents sacred ideals and religious practices, connecting metaphor to cultural identity.
9	"Warming to the woman's no-nonsense charm"	Synaesthetic Metaphor: The metaphor uses sensory language ("warming") to express Feroza's emotional response to the woman's charm. The warmth symbolizes affection, linking emotional reactions with sensory experiences.

Results & Conclusions

The current study explores the types, purposes, and effects of metaphors used in Bapsi Sidwa's novel *An American Brat*. Initially, language was considered independent of thought, but later, it was understood that language conveys meaning through context, linking human experience, thought, and language, a concept central to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

The study identifies several types of metaphors used in the novel, such as concrete, personifying, root, active, synesthetic, extended, and absolute metaphors, with concrete metaphors being the most prevalent. These metaphors make abstract concepts easier to understand by connecting them

to concrete images. The purpose behind the metaphors ranges from explaining religious ideologies to portraying cultural norms, such as the metaphor “holy fire,” which refers to the Parsee religion. The study highlights how readers conceptualize metaphors differently. For example, in the metaphor “mouth collapsed,” the destruction of hopes is perceived, while “looking unbearably wounded” suggests that those hopes might still be healed. The research confirms Richard’s (1936) claim that metaphors activate two different thoughts, creating new meanings when vehicle and tenor interact. This interaction often requires context and background knowledge for full comprehension, as shown by the example “gravitational pull of the country.”

The analysis reveals that metaphors are not only linguistic tools but also reflections of thought, experience, and culture. Metaphors like “sexual license” and “holy war” demonstrate how metaphors convey cultural, regional, and religious meanings. The study concludes that metaphors enhance communication, create imagery, intensify meaning, and are crucial for persuasion. It also opens up new opportunities for scholars interested in exploring metaphorical language in literature.

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