

Cognitive Semantic Analysis of Shehu Sani's *Poem for the Broom*

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Abstract

This research aims at studying Shehu Sani's 'Poem for the Broom' from a cognitive semantic perspective. The objectives of the study are to examine the attribute mapping, relational mapping, and the system mapping of the poem. The datum for the study is elicited from Shehu Sani's Facebook page. The theory of analogical mapping, which has a bearing with cognitive poetics, is adopted as the framework for data analysis. The research found out that there are attribute mappings of concrete entities into abstract entities as were seen between 'Broom' and 'leadership,' 'blood' and 'killings,' 'swords' and 'wars,' 'carpets' and 'secrets' amongst others. The study also discovered that, at the relational level, the idea of the Broom is mapped onto the ideals of good leadership. *Non-partisan discharge of duties* is the source domain whereas *sweeping those of friends under the carpet* is the target domain. At the system mapping level, the study showed that the 'Broom' was used as a proper noun and the pronoun 'it' serves as its replacement. Hence, the structural metaphor observed from the poem proceeds from 'politics is a game.' From a semantic point of view of the system mapping, the research revealed that the 'Broom' in the poem is a metaphor representing APC, which uses broom as its logo. Therefore, in a good democratic government, a country should not be tainted with corruption and other forms of misconduct. The research recommended that a cognitive semantic analytical approach should be adopted in analysing poems and discourses of political actors in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Cognitive semantics, Poem for the Broom, Shehu Sani, analogical mapping*

Introduction

Analysis of poems is not a new angle of research in the academia. Different approaches have been used to analyse poems ranging from stylistics to literary pragmatics. Analysing poems from a cognitive semantic perspective is a burgeoning area of research. Cognitive semanticists believe that meaning of utterances can be inferred from different bodily movements man encounter in life. The cognition involved in these bodily movements can be used in assigning meaning to some linguistic expressions. This principle is referred to as *image schemas*. Image schemas refer to body-mind constructs deriving from experiences based on spatial relations, which can be extended metaphorically by moving from concrete to abstract (Johnson, 1987; Saeed, 2003; Johnson, 2005). Aside the image schemas, cognitive semantics also have other sub-theories such as analogical mapping and conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Prominent in cognitive semantics is its attention to metaphor, metonymy and polysemy. Cognitive semantics has been applied to rhetorics (Turner, 1987),

categories of thought (Lakoff, 1987), artificial intelligence (Falkenhainer, Forbus, and Gentner, 1989), poetic language (Lakoff and Turner, 1989; Freeman, 1998; Esfehiani, 2011), historical linguistics (Sweetser, 1990), ethics (Johnson, 1993), Igbo verbs (Mbah and Edeoga, 2012; Onuoha, Mbah, and Nwaozuzu, 2014).

In this study, an attempt is made to add to empirical studies on the application of cognitive semantics to poems as a way of exploring the border between mind and body. In doing so, the study will adopt the analogical mapping theory in analysing Shehu Sani's 'Poem for the Broom.' A cognitive approach to the study of poem is known as cognitive poetics – a term credited to Tsur (1980). In cognitive poetics, attempt is made to discern how the arrangement of words, visual and aural patterns can at the same time trigger human minds by transmitting semantic knowledge and changing human perception. The difference between cognitive science and cognitive poetics is that whereas the former centres on common characteristics of all human cognition, the latter studies human cognitive processing, which shapes both poetic language and form the readers' responses to them (Esfehiani, 2011).

The problem statement of this study is academic-based in the sense that very few works have applied cognitive semantic approach to the study of poems within the Nigerian political context. There are quite a number of sub-theories under cognitive semantics; the scope of this study is limited to the adoption of analogical mapping in analysing the data. Out of quite a number of poems, the study chooses Shehu Sani's 'Poem for the Broom.' This poem is a satirical one written by Shehu Sani towards the time of his defection from the All Progressive Congress (APC). Shehu Sani is a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria representing Kaduna Central.

This research work will add to the literature in cognitive semantics in general and its application to poetic language in particular. The research will provide a blueprint for subsequent researchers who want to do a related research. The data for this research was drawn from the Facebook page of Shehu Sani. The data will be analysed qualitatively using the theoretical tenets of analogical mapping.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to examine Shehu Sani's 'Poem for the Broom' from a cognitive semantic perspective. The specific objectives of this paper are to examine the attribute mapping, relational mapping, and system mapping of Shehu Sani's 'Poem for the Broom.'

Theory of analogical mapping

The theory of analogical mapping is one of the sub-theories of cognitive semantics. In extant literatures, the chief proponent of this theory is not clearly known. Some authors have remarked that the theory is a brainchild of Kikuya Ichikawa in 1963 in his *Analogical mapping theory in creative thinking* (Obitube, 2017). The theory has been further developed by Gentner (1983), Holyoak and Thagard (1995), Fauconnier (1997), Freeman (1998), Fauconnier and Turner (2002). The claim of analogical mapping is that there exists a

manipulation of linguistic data in a speaker's language so as to achieve an intended linguistic expression of meaning (Obitube, 2017). In analogical mapping, the features of an entity are transferred to another. For instance, the features of a virus present in a human's body is transferred to the virus experienced in a computer system. As humans detest virus in their body, they also detest virus in a computer system (Fauconnier, 1997). Three types of mapping were identified by Fauconnier (1997) namely: projection mapping (projects structure from one domain onto another), pragmatic function mapping (established between two entities by virtue of a shared frame of experience) and schema mapping (based on bodily movements or experiences).

In analogical mapping, conceptual mapping can occur at three different levels: attribute, relational, and system mapping. Attribute mapping creates a connection between two entities based on the semantic similarity. It can be likened to Peirce's iconicity principle, which links two entities based on their physical attributes. Relational mapping generalises little causal relationship between corresponding objects. Relational mapping is similar to Pierce's index principle, which seeks to map an entity onto another based on its shared symptoms. In this case, smoke can serve as the index of fire. System mapping, on the other hand, is based on a one-to-one mapping and structural consistency such that each element in the source maps is consistently and uniquely related to an element in the target. In cognitive poetics, system mapping provides a full understanding of a poem (cf. Holyoak and Thagard 1995; Bussmann 1996; Freeman 1998; Esfehiani 2011).

In the theory of analogical mapping, metaphor is one of the key elements. The cognitive skills: attribute, relational, and system mappings are based on analogical reasoning, which results in metaphor creation. These cognitive skills give the readers the privilege to access the mental mappings of a speaker or writer through his talk or text. The theory of analogical mapping is adequate for analysing poems because it comprises metaphorical conceptualisations, image schema mapping, and gives a collective assessment of the poem through system mapping. This is the reason for its adoption as the theoretical framework for this research.

Related works in literature

This section of the study reviews research works which are related to this study. Esfehiani (2011) analysed Omar Khayyam's poetry using the theory of analogical mapping. The research sought to demonstrate the unique aspects of Khayyam's thought and showing the reason for his preferred pattern in order to draw his world through poetry. In addition, the research ventured into determining if the poems analysed actually belonged to Omar Khayyam. The finding of the research revealed that in Khayyam's poetry, there exist instances of attribute, relational and system mapping. From the research, it was discovered that concrete entities such as pottery and pot were used to conceptualise abstract entities like world and human. On the other hand, it was revealed that 'yesterday' in the poem means 'death' whereas 'today' means 'life.' In an attempt to achieve the second objective of the paper, the research found out that cognitive poetics is a potent tool of discerning the difference between an original literary work and a forged one. The researcher concluded that by applying the concepts of cognitive poetics, critics will provide such a reliable and

scientific method, which can be a step forward in the area of textual criticism which seems to suffer from the lack of accurate and systematic methods.

Mbah and Edeoga (2012) studied the image schemas present in the Igbo verb *sè* from a cognitive semantic perspective. The research aimed at identifying the image schemas of the verb *sè* using a descriptive method and to ascertain whether the verb is an empty dummy as claimed by some scholars. The findings revealed that the meanings of the verb follow three image schemas: the containment, path and force schemas. It also revealed that the verb root is not an empty dummy as some writers contend. The research concluded that the verb *sè* provides additional evidence to the effect that meaning is conceptualisation and metaphor and image schemas extend the meaning of structures or sentences.

Onuoha, Mbah and Nwaozuzu (2014) examined the Igbo verb, *kwa* using a cognitive semantic approach. The aims of the research were to discern the image schemas of the verb and whether it is an empty dummy. The findings revealed that the verb belongs to two image schemas: the PATH and the FORCE image schemas. The study also revealed that *kwà* is not semantically empty. The researchers concluded that the image schemas of *kwà* are experientially based conceptual constructs, which can be metaphorically extended from physical and concrete to psychological and abstract domains.

Krisagbedo and Agbedo (2018) investigated the metaphorical entailments of 'other room' statement by Muhammadu Buhari as a linguistic marker of sexism and gender-based violence. The research adopted conceptual metaphor theory as its theoretical framework. The research found out that metaphor is a dominant trope that offers a window for social labelling practices and construction of gendered entities and identifiable sexist connotations. The findings of the research also revealed that 'kitchen,' 'living room,' and 'other room' instantiate gendered metaphorical expressions, which actually represent intimate partner violence as an aspect of gender-based violence that relegate women in man's typical patriarchal society. The metaphorical entailments observed from the source domains: kitchen, living room, and other room are cook, incapacitation, and sexual object. The researchers recommended an urgent rethink in the domains of language use and patriarchal ideology in a manner that would narrow gender gap and bolster African feminism, which is an advocacy for women's rights over their lives, bodies, and decisions.

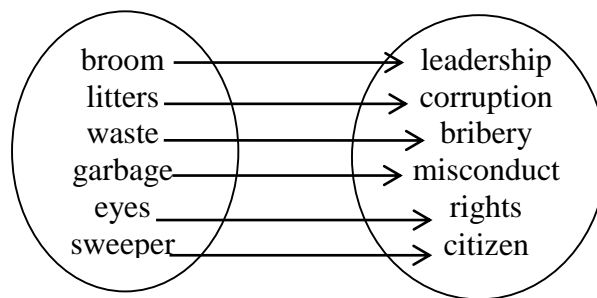
In summary, the theory of analogical mapping has been reviewed. The gap found out in the literature is that no known work, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, has adopted the theory of analogical mapping to study Shehu Sani's 'Poem for the Broom.' This gap is what this research intends to fill. For the purposes of this study, the theory of analogical mapping will be used for the analysis. The theory of analogical mapping is adequate for analysing poems for this study because it comprises metaphorical conceptualisations, image schema mapping, and gives a collective assessment of the poem through system mapping. This accounts for its adoption as the theoretical framework for this research. In doing so, the poem will be subjected to attribute, relational and system mapping analysis so as to ascertain the nature of alignment between the source and target domains as well as explore the border between mind and body. The metaphorical conceptualisations in the poem will also be investigated.

Analysis

Attribute mapping of the poem

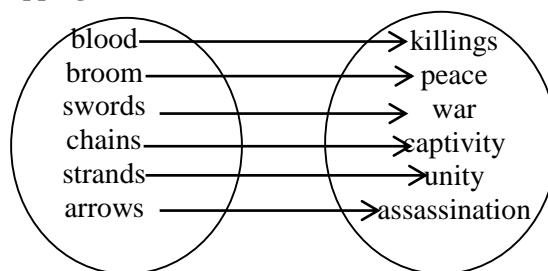
Attribute mapping, as has been established, “takes one pair of objects considered in isolation from any objects, which can be done on the basis of semantic similarity between the attributes that apply to each object in the pair.” In ‘Poem for the Broom’, there are instances where concrete objects are mapped onto abstract entities based on semantic resemblance between the concrete and the abstract. In lines (1-3) (see appendix), there is an attribute mapping of ‘Broom’ onto ‘leadership (good),’ ‘litters’ onto ‘corruption,’ ‘garbage’ onto ‘misconduct,’ ‘eyes’ onto ‘rights’ and ‘sweeper’ onto ‘citizen.’ The idea of sweeping with the broom was used to metaphorically conceptualised characteristics of good leadership. This attribute mapping is illustrated in the diagram below:

Fig 1: Attribute mapping of lines 1-3



In addition, from lines 4 – 9, there are metaphorical mappings of concrete entities onto abstract ones. There are attribute mappings of ‘blood’ onto ‘killings,’ ‘Broom’ onto ‘peace,’ ‘swords’ onto ‘war,’ ‘chains’ onto ‘captivity’ ‘strands’ onto ‘unity’ and ‘arrow’ onto ‘assassination.’ These mappings proceed from the poet’s knowledge of the link between the concrete entities (the source domains) and what they represent in the abstract (target) domain. These mappings can be illustrated diagrammatically as highlighted hereunder.

Fig. 2: Attribute mapping of lines 4-9



The attribute mappings present in lines 10-16 are between ‘dirts’ and ‘misdeeds,’ ‘foes’ and ‘political opponents,’ ‘podium’ and ‘public,’ ‘friends’ and ‘political allies,’ ‘carpet’ and ‘secrecy,’ ‘speak’ and innocence,’ ‘men with swords’ and ‘violence,’ ‘cobweb afar’ and ‘out-group corruption,’ ‘cobwebs a near’ and ‘in-group corruption.’ The similarities that exist between the source and the target domains make it possible for the feature of one to be transferred to another. The source domains are metaphorical conceptualisation of the abstract domain where blood is a metaphor for the end-product of killings, swords for war, chains for

captivity and strands of the broom as a metaphor for unity. These image schemas emanate from man's experience in the real world.

Relational mapping of the poem

Relational mapping generalises even a little resemblance between the corresponding objects and their relations in terms of cause and effect. At the relational level, the idea of the Broom is mapped onto the ideals of good leadership. The Broom is relational to the All Progressive Congress (APC) of Nigeria, which uses broom as its party logo. Presently in Nigeria, APC is the ruling party and the poet used the poem to pass a message to APC members on the actual thing they needed to do as good leaders. The quality of impartial and non-partisan discharge of duties was mapped onto not baring the dirt of foes in public and sweeping those of friends under the carpet. This feature is also mapped onto not sweeping away only men who speak and leave behind men with swords. Here, the poet is metaphorically referring to the members of the Indigenous People of Biafra and Fulani herdsmen. Cobwebs are unwanted substances in a room and the unimportance of cobweb is mapped onto corruptions in politics. In the removal of cobwebs, some leaders are partisan in the sense that they attack the corrupt activities of members of opposition parties and exonerate members of their party.

System mapping of the poem

From a syntactic perspective, the initial letter of the word, 'broom' was capitalised in the poem showing that the poet conceives it as a proper noun referring a particular entity and the inanimate pronoun 'it' was used in place of 'Broom.' The verbs: 'should' and 'must' run through the poem to denote expected and compulsory actions. The interconnection of the lines of the poem suggests that a good 'Broom' should not engage in polarisation of 'positive self-representation' and 'negative other-representation.' Since it is at the system mapping level that the metaphorical analogy in the poem is created, the structural metaphor seen in the 'Poem for the Broom' is derived from 'Politics is a game.' Just like in the game of chess where the queen can 'kill' anybody, the poet suggests in lines (1-3) that the queen should 'kill' those expected of her to 'kill' and not to 'kill' the player. In lines 4 and 5, for the queen to 'kill' other players, she must ensure that she possesses the adequate criteria for killing at a particular point in time. In this type of metaphorical conceptualisation, some features that may not be seen in the source metaphor can be seen in the target metaphor. In a chess game, for instance, the unjust act of a player may not have a significance in real life but in the game of politics, an inappropriate act of a political player can result in unintended calamities.

From a semantic perspective, the 'Broom' in the poem is a metaphor representing APC, which uses broom as its logo. In essence, the poem entails that as APC embarks on its fight against corruption, it should ensure that it is not guilty of crimes it charges others.

Summary and conclusion

The study has examined Shehu Sani's 'Poem for the Broom' from a cognitive semantic perspective. The research was necessitated by the dearth of research on analysis poems by a politician in Nigeria using analogical mapping. The study analysed the poem by using the attribute, relational and system mappings, which are the procedures of data analysis using analogical mapping. From the study, it was discovered that in the poem, there is an attribute mapping of concrete entities into abstract entities as could be seen between 'Broom' and 'leadership,' 'blood' and 'killings,' 'swords' and 'wars,' 'carpets' and 'secrets' amongst others. The study also found out that, at the relational level, the idea of the Broom is mapped onto the ideals of good leadership. The qualities of *impartial and non-partisan discharge of duties* were mapped onto *not baring the dirt of foes in public* and *sweeping those of friends under the carpet*. This feature is also mapped onto not sweeping away only men who speak and leave behind men with swords.

From a syntactic perspective, the findings of the study showed that the 'Broom' was used as a proper noun and the pronoun 'it' served as its replacement. Hence, the structural metaphor observed from the poem proceeds from 'politics is a game.' From a semantic point of view of the system mapping, the research discovered that the 'Broom' in the poem is a metaphor representing APC, which uses broom as its logo. This metaphor was formed based on the characteristics of a broom in keeping surroundings clean. Therefore, in a good democratic government, a country should not be tainted with corruption and other forms of misconduct.

Metaphorical expressions are windows used in determining the state of the mind or the mental disposition of a speaker or writer. The poem concurs to the principle of the "embodied mind," which states that there is a relationship that exists between the mind and the body. Man's activity of using broom to sweep off dirt is mapped onto the metaphorical conceptualisations of a good administration being able to eradicate ills in the society without fear or favour. Therefore, cognitive poetics as an aspect of cognitive semantics is a potent framework for analysing poems in Nigeria and beyond. The research recommends that other cognitive semantic theories such as conceptual metaphor and image schemas in analysing poems and discourses of political actors in Nigeria.

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Appendix

Poem for the Broom

The Broom should sweep the litters, the waste and the (1)
garbage it encounters and not pluck the eyes of the (2)
sweeper. (3)

The Broom must not be stained with oil or blood for it (4)
to sweep so clean. (5)

The Broom must be Broom and not swords or chains (6)
or else it's not Broom. (7)

The Broom should be an assembly of strands to (8)
sanitize and not arrows for hunting. (9)

The Broom should not bare The dirt of foes to the (10)
podium and bury that of friends under the carpet. (11)

The Broom must not sweep away only men who speak (12)
and leave behind men with swords. (13)

The Broom must not remove cobweb afar and (14)
leave untouched the cobwebs a near. (15)

The Broom can only clean if it's also clean. (16)

Source:

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10216339397898466&id=1260145433