



METAPHOR IN ARABIC

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with metaphor in Arabic . Metaphor is a very important figure of speech , and the Arabic language, especially the language of literature is abundant in this rhetorical device. Its use by men of letters is indicative of their linguistic knack and broad scope of imagination and vision from old times in ignorance till now .The research aims at defining metaphor for its importance linguistically and in terminology , explaining the bases of metaphor, also it deals with metaphor types and functions .The study is full of high level metaphors in holy Quran , poetic and other literary texts . Finally , the study concludes that metaphor is not only used by writers ,also it is used by ordinary people unconsciously in daily conversations ,exactly as writers use It indirectly to distinguish their style from others .

Keywords: metaphor, texts, Arabic

الاستعارة باللغة العربية

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المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة الاستعارة في اللغة العربية اذ تعد الاستعارة شكل مجازي مهم خاصة في لغة الادب التي تزخر بهذه الوسيلة البلاغية اذ استخدمها الادباء منذ القدم في عصر الجاهلية وحتى يومنا هذا كمؤشر على مقدرتهم اللغوية ورؤيتهم وخيالهم الخصب. ويهدف البحث الى التعريف بالاستعارة لأهميتها بدءا بمفهوم الاستعارة لغة واصطلاحا ثم التطرق الى أركانها التي تتألف منها ثم أنواعها وأخيرًا وظائفها . اذا تتجلى الاستعارة بأجمل حلتها في القرآن الكريم والنصوص الشعرية والأدبية الأخرى. وتخلص الدراسة الى ان الاستعارة لا يقتصر استعمالها على الادباء بل يستخدمها الناس العاديون في احاديثهم اليومية دون ان يشعروا، تماما كما يستخدمها الكتاب بطريقة غير مباشرة لتميز اسلوبهم عن غيرهم.

كلمات مفتاحية: استعارة ، نصوص ، عربية

Historical Background:

Linguists and rhetoricians differed in defining metaphor in expression between extension on the one hand to include synecdoche and specificity on the other hand. Al-Jahiz was perhaps the first to define metaphor in the field of general studies by saying: “metaphor is the naming of one thing by another if it can stand in its place” (Al-Jahiz, N.D.: 153). This definition is based on the linguistic meaning of metaphor and it does not show the bases and features of metaphor accurately (Matloob & Al-Baseer, 1982: 343)

Ibn Al-Mu‘tazz was the first to study metaphor in a book devoted wholly to it. He said that metaphor is attributing a feature from its association with something to something not associated with it.



When Al-Jurjany joined the field of rhetorical studies, he defined metaphor by distinguishing it from synecdoche. He said: “metaphor obtains when you want to compare (link) something to something else, showing it, and borrowing the image for that thing” (Al-Jurjany, 1978: 53; Matloob & Al-Baseer, 1982: 345).

Any way, this definition links metaphor and simile, which made Al-Sakkaki put forward a constant definition for metaphor that still exists nowadays (Matloob & Al-Baseer, 1982: 346). He defined it as: “metaphor is mentioning one part of simile meaning the other part, showing that both parts share the same feature or attribute.

Metaphor in Language and Terminology:

Linguistically, metaphor (Al-Isti'arah) is derived from borrowing (Al-'aria) which is transferring a thing from one person to another. It has the meaning of the transferring; as in:

استعار أحدهم سهماً من كنانةٍ آخر.

Some one borrowed an arrow from somebody's quiver.

There is a relation between the linguistic and terminological meanings, since metaphor as a term implies transferring the utterance from its chosen meaning to another one (Abbas, 1987: 157).

It is also defined as “using an utterance not in what it is chosen for due to a relation” (i.e. similarity) between the meaning transferred from and that meaning which is used in a context which causes deviation from the real meaning (Al-Hashimi, 1994: 304).

Bases of Metaphor:

Every metaphor must include three bases:

1. Al-Musta'ar (the transferred utterance).
2. Al-Musta'ar minhu or al mushabbah bihi (the vehicle or the image).
3. Al-Musta'ar lahu or al-mushabbah (the tenor or the object).

2 and 3 are called the two parts (Abbas, 1987: 158).

Let us consider this glorious ayah;

﴿الر كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ
(إبراهيم: 1)﴾

“A. L. R. A Book which we have revealed Unto thee, in order that Thoa mightes lead mankind out of the depths of darkness Into light – by the leave of their Lord –to the way of (Him) the Exalted in Power Worthy of all Praise” (Ali, A. Y., 1989: 619).

In this verse, there are three metaphors: (الظلمات path, النور light, الصراط darknesses). For every one of these metaphors there are three bases: in the first metaphor, al-musta'ar (الظلمات the darknesses), al-musta'ar lahu (the object) ‘disbelief’ and al-musta'ar minhu (image) is the meaning chosen for the dark; since it must be a word with two meanings, the first of which is that chosen for



the word and the second meaning is that the word is used in. Also in the second metaphor, al-musta^ʿaar is (النور light), al-musta^ʿaar lahu is 'belief', whereas al-musta^ʿaar minhu is the meaning chosen for (النور the light). The third metaphor is (الطريق the path), where al-musta^ʿaar is 'path/way', al-musta^ʿaar lahu 'Islam' and al-musta^ʿaar minhu is the meaning chosen for path/way (Abbas, 1987: 158, 159).

Types of Metaphor:

Late rhetoricians have divided metaphor into many types; it has been divided according to what two groups of them say into implicit and explicit metaphor which has been divided according to whether what we metaphorize has been physically realized or mentally into realized and proclaimed metaphor. According to the utterance in use (tenor) into original (main) and dependent. It has also been classified regarding the attached connections into untied, supported and abstract. Finally, it has been classified according to the relation between the tenor and the vehicle into six types: (1) metaphorizing something tangible for something tangible in a physical way. (2) metaphorizing something tangible for something tangible in a mental way. (3) metaphorizing something sensible for something sensible in a mental way. (4) metaphorizing something tangible for something sensible in a mental way. (5) metaphorizing something sensible for something tangible in a mental way. (6) metaphorizing something tangible for something tangible sometimes in a physical way and other times in a mental way (Al-Samra'ee, 1974: 122, 132; Matloob and Al-Baseer, 1982: 350).

Explicit and Implicit Metaphor:

Explicit Metaphor:

Linguistically, proclamation means mentioning something explicitly; terminologically it is what is used to designate the vehicle without the tenor (Matloob and Al-Baseer, 1982: 351) as in:

ورداً وعضت على الغناب بالبرد

فأمطرت لؤلؤاً من نرجسٍ وسقت

She gave a rain of pearls from narcissus, watered roses and gnawed the jujube with hail.

"Pearls", "narcissus", "roses", "jujube" and "hail" are used respectively for the tears, eyes, cheeks, fingers and teeth (Al-Hashimi, 1994: 305). This kind of metaphor may be called proclaimed or realized. "Proclaimed" shows that the tenor is mentioned and inscribed. As for the realized metaphor it shows that the tenor is realized physically and mentally: physically is when one says:

رأيت أسداً.

I saw a lion.

to mean "a brave man". Mentally is when one says:

أبديت نوراً.

I showed a light.



to mean “a proof”, which the brain realizes without a physical connection as in:

﴿ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴾ (الفاحة: 6)

“Show us the straight way” (Ali, A. Y., 1989: 15).

to mean the righteous religion (Matloob & Al-Baseer, 1982: 351).

The late scholars divided explicit metaphor in regard to its two parts the tenor and the vehicle into:

(1) The Congruous-Opinion, Explicit Metaphor: It is the kind whose two parts refer to a single thing since they are not opposed to each other as in using life and divine guidance in “gave life” as in:

﴿ أَوْمَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ ﴾ (الأنعام: 122)

“He who was dead, To whom We gave life”, (Ali, A. Y., 1989: 325).

that is to say, “the person who was astray, We will guide”. The divine guidance and the life can undoubtedly be put together (Al-Qzaweeni, N.D.: 289).

(2) The Non-Congruous, Explicit Metaphor: It is the kind of metaphor whose two parts do not refer to a single thing since they are opposed to each other as is the case with combining death and going astray of the right path, as in “he who was dead, to whom We gave life” (Al-An’am, 122). That means a person who has gone astray was divinely guided whereby, going astray was likened to death. It is called non-congruous as long as death and misguidance cannot be combined in one single thing (Matloob and Al-Baseer, 1982: 352).

Implicit Metaphor:

Linguistically, the adjective implicit is derived from the verb ‘imply’ which means to restrict and veil; terminologically, it is the second type of metaphor which is called metaphor via using implication by Al-Qazzweeni. He states “Simile may be kept and no part of it is explained but only the tenor” (Al-Qazzweeni, N.D.: 309). The contemporaries depend on what Al-Qazzweeni used as implied metaphor maintaining that the implicit metaphor is “the one in which vehicle is deprived of its name; it is enough to mention something referring to it” (Matloob, 1975: 133); as in the verse by Abu Thuayb Al-Huthaly:

ألفيت كل تميمة لا تنفع

وإذا المنية انشبت أظفارها

If death did cling its nail,

No amulet would ever be of avail.

The poet here likened death to a beast and how people will all inevitably die, without making any sort of distinction between a helpful and a harmful person. He linked the concepts “nails” and “death” to highlight the element of similarity (Matloob and Al-Baseer, 1982: 354).

What Al-Qazzweeni used as an unreal metaphor should accompany the implicit one because the implicit metaphor is a condensed simile, and the unreal metaphor is the relation between the omitted vehicle and the simile which is the basis of the implicit metaphor; therefore, the unreal metaphor has no



independent identity and it is the collocate of the implicit metaphor (ibid: 353-354).

Original Metaphor and Dependent Metaphor:

Original Metaphor:

Metaphor is based on considering the vehicle an origin being independent. It obtains when the vehicle is common names or verbal nouns (gerunds) as in (man, lion, sitting down, and standing up) because they are original. Metaphor is based on likening the tenor with the vehicle, and it is not but describing the tenor since it has something in common with the vehicle. The basis of description is the fact as in (a white body) or (a clear whiteness) (Al-Sakkaki, 1937: 179-180; Al-Razi, 1985: 121).

Dependent Metaphor:

This type is based on regarding the tenor as a subordinate and derivative division, where metaphor occurs in items other than generic nouns such as verbs, adjectives derived from verbs, and particles (Al-Sakkaki, 1937: 180; Al-Razi, 1985: 89). As mentioned earlier, metaphor based on simile which can be attained if the tenor is qualified (described); and verbs and the adjectives that are derived from them cannot be described alone, but they can be described if they are dependent on other (metaphors). The metaphor in this verse:

ضحك المجد لنا لما رأنا بدم الأبطال مصبوغاً لوانا

“Glory gave us a laudatory smile while beholding our banner gilded with the heroes’ blood”.

has not occurred in the verb (ضَحِكَ) but in the verbal noun (الضحك/ laughing) (Al-Samra’ee, 1974: 125).

Supported, Abstract and Untied Metaphor:

This division has been based on the suitable expressions that are mentioned with the vehicle, tenor or both of them or neglecting them as follows:

Supported Metaphor:

Al-Tarsheeh (الترشيح/support) linguistically means backing and strengthening and terminologically means associating tenor with the expression which suits the vehicle as in this glorious ayah:

﴿أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا رَبَحَتِ تِجَارَتُهُمْ﴾ (البقرة: 16)

“These are they who have purchased error for guidance, so their commerce was profitless” (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996: 16).

The word (اشترى/purchased) is a metaphor with the evidence which is (الضلالة/error) since the word (الضلالة) cannot be purchased or sold; then this metaphor is supported and strengthened by mentioning what suits the vehicle (الربح والتجارة/profit and trading) (Matloob and Al-Baseer: 1982: 357).

Abstract Metaphor:

Linguistically, Al-Tajreed (التجريد/Abstraction) means stripping and removing (Al-Fayruzi, 1983: 282) and terminologically it means that the borrowed item is associated with the description of tenor and what suits it in order to abstract it



from exaggeration that makes the vehicle combined with the tenor as is the case in the basis of the supported and the absolute metaphor (ibid: 358), as in this glorious ayah:

﴿ فَأَذَاقَهَا اللَّهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴾ (النحل: 112)

“So Allah made it taste extreme of hunger (famine) and fear, because of that (evil, i.e. denying prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which they – its people – used to do)” (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996: 362).

So, Allah said (أذاقها/made it taste) but not (كساها/made it dressed). The purpose of tasting is to afflict it with what (اللباس/clothes) has been metaphorically used for as if Almighty Allah has said: “Allah has afflicted it with the clothes of hunger and fear”.

Untied Metaphor:

The adjective ‘untied’ linguistically means released, while terminologically, untied metaphor is an adjective of the metaphor that has not been associated with what suits the vehicle or the tenor (Matloob & Al-Baseer, 1982: 358), as in this glorious ayah:

﴿ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا ﴾ (مريم: 4)

“He said: “My Lord! indeed my bones have grown feeble, and grey hair has spread on my head” (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996: 399).

So the word (اشتعل/burnt) is the borrowed item and the tenor is (الشيب/the grey hair) which has been likened to the flames in its whiteness and spread in the hair (Al-Zamakhshari, 2002, Vol.2: 502). The abundance of white hair is the evidence of the metaphor (اشتعل/burnt). So if what suits the vehicle, which is (الاشتعال/burning), and what suits the tenor, which is the spread of white hair in that way, have not been mentioned, the metaphor is untied and if what suits both the vehicle and the tenor have been mentioned, it will be untied metaphor also as in:

لدى أسدٍ شاكٍ السلاحِ مقذِفٍ له لبْدُ أظفاره لم تقلم

With a charging lion, armed to the teeth with a heavy mane and unclipped claws.

The poet here has used the expression (الأسد/lion) as a metaphor for the brave man, and he has mentioned what suits the tenor when he says (مقذِفٍ/charging, شاكٍ/armed to the teeth, السلاح/). So he abstracted it and mentioned what suits the vehicle when he said (له لبْدُ أظفاره لم تقلم/with a heavy mane and unclipped claws), so making it supported metaphor. The gathering of abstraction and support leads to the contradiction and inconsistency between them, as if the metaphor has not been associated with anything and looks like the untied metaphor (Matloob and Al-Baseer, 1982: 358).

The Division of Metaphor according to the Relationship between the Vehicle and the Tenor:

This is another division based on considering what can be perceived by the sense or mind from the two sides and the relation. Relying on this, Al-Qazweeni has divided metaphor into six parts (Al-Samra'ee, 1974: 130-131):



1. Perceptibly using a perceptible thing as a metaphor for another thing: This is as using the word (الشمس/sun) as a metaphor for a man whose face shines with handsomeness.

2. Mentally using a perceptible thing as a metaphor for another one as in:
﴿ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيحَ الْعَقِيمَ ﴾ (الذاريات: 41)

“When We sent against them the barren wind” (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996: 685).

Here, the two sides are perceptible: the wind and the barrenness, but the relation that holds them together is a mental one.

3. Using a perceptible thing as a metaphor for another one by means of perceptible-mental relation.

4. Using a sensible thing as a metaphor for another one by means of a mental relation, such as using the noun of non-existence as a metaphor for the existence if they share the futility; or using the noun of existence as a metaphor for the non-existence if its required traces remained (Al-Nwoaeri, N.D.: Vol.7: 58).

5. Mentally using a perceptible thing as a metaphor for a sensible one such as using light, which is perceptible, as a metaphor for ‘proof’ as in this glorious ayah:

﴿ بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ ﴾ (الأنبياء: 18)

“Nay, We fling (send down) the truth (this Qur’ān) against the falsehood (disbelief), so it destroys it” (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996: 424).

6. Mentally using a sensible thing as a metaphor for a perceptible one as in this glorious ayah:

﴿ إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا شَهِيقًا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ تَكَادُ تَمَيِّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ﴾ (الملك: 7-8)

“When they are cast therein, they will hear the (terrible) drawing in of its breath as it blazes forth. It almost bursts up with fury” (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996: 742).

So (الغيط/fury) is a sensible thing and it has been used metaphorically to refer to the blaze of the hellfire (Al-Samra’ee, 1974: 130-131).

Proverbial Metaphor-Proverb:

What has been previously presented can be applied only to the single metaphor, i.e. that is represented in one word, but there is another kind of metaphor which occurs in a larger structure. This means that the structure is not used for its real meaning in order to make a resemblance between the two situations. The metaphor is similar to the compound simile, but the tenor here is not mentioned of course; rather, it is understandable from the context of situation (Al-Saiad, 1977: 149). The common example for the proverbial metaphor is when one addresses a man hesitating to do something, saying:

أراك تقدم رجلاً وتؤخر أخرى.

I see you stepping forward and then backward (I see you hesitating).

The same thing applies to saying:



رأيت أسداً.

I have seen a lion.

which originally was (رأيت رجلاً كالأسد/I have seen a man like a lion), and then the man seen becomes 'a real lion'. Also one can say to a man who exerts his efforts in a futile way:

أراك تنفخ في غير فحم وتخط على الماء.

whose English equivalent is:

You are flogging a dead horse. (Al-Saiad, 1977: 149)

If the proverbial metaphor is commonly used, it will become a proverb. The proverb is characterized by being a short, well-known statement holding together euphemism and the perfect simile. Every proverb has an origin in which it was firstly said and a situation (exemplary) in which it is used, where the second case is likened to the first one, so the form of the proverb, in which it was firstly mentioned, should be stuck to and it should be cited by the same expressions by means of which it was firstly heard. The Arabic language scholars say: "Proverbs cannot be changed"; for example, if one says to someone who tries to do something when it is too late: (الصيف ضيعت اللبَنَ) s/he should not add the second person singular masculine pronoun تـ 'taa' because originally it was used to address a woman, so its form should not be changed when it is used in a similar situation whoever the addressee is (Al-Saiad, 1977: 149-150). The proverb:

عند جهينة الخبر اليقين.

The absolute certainty is with Juhaina.

is usually said to someone (regardless of person, number or gender) who knows something accurately. All these proverbs and others that have been mentioned by the Arabs are examples of the proverbial metaphor (Al-Saiad, 1977: 149-150).

Functions of Metaphor:

Ramadhan (1988) mentions that metaphor has three functions, they are presented as follows:

1. **Substantiation (التجسيد):** It helps in concluding one of the technical features of the explicit metaphor which is represented in substantiating the abstract things in a perceptible form which can be seen and realized by the mind (Ramadhan, 1988: 58), as for example in:

﴿وَأَيَّةٌ لَهُمُ اللَّيْلُ نَسْلَخُ مِنْهُ النَّهَارَ فَإِذَا هُمْ مُظْلِمُونَ﴾ (يس: 37)

"And a sign for them is the night. We withdraw there from the day, and behold, they are in darkness" (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996: 577).

In this ayah Almighty Allah has resembled the disappearance of day light, its abating from the universe and the appearance of the darkness to the process of sloughing (sloughing) (ibid.: 69). That is why metaphor was used as a means to bring these meanings close and substantiate the content of the image (ibid.: 70).

2. **Materialization (التجسيم):** There is no difference between substantiation and materialization; materialization is making explicit the abstract things so as to



appear as perceptible things in general; whereas substantiation is done through using materialized perceptible adjectives to refer to the abstract things (ibid.: 110) as in: ﴿

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ وَلَكُمُ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا تَصِفُونَ﴾

(الأنبياء: 18)

“Nay, We fling (send down) the truth (this Quran) against the falsehood (disbelief), so it destroys it, and behold, it (falsehood) is vanished. And woe to you for that (lie) which you ascribe (to Allah by uttering that Allah has a wife and son)” (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996: 424).

So, الدمغ (invalidation, refutation or destruction) as it is mentioned in the translation is analogous to القذف (flinging or sending down) in terms of the description and both of them, which suggests to the mind that there is a struggle between the truth and the falsehood which will not take long before the triumph of the truth and the defeat of the falsehood. The metaphor here extracts the meaning and materializes it in this vigorous compound image (ibid: 113).

3. **Personification (التشخيص):** It is the process of ascribing life to inanimate things, natural phenomena and sentiments and feelings. This life may become a human life, i.e. it is the process of personifying the sensible meanings by ascribing human features to them so the image becomes full of life and motion as in:

﴿قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِظٍ﴾ (الأنعام: 104)
“Verily, proofs have come to you from your Lord, so whosoever sees, will do so for (the good of) his own self, and whosoever blinds himself, will do so to his own harm, and I (Muhammad) ﴿ﷺ﴾ am not a watcher over you” (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996: 192).

The proofs (البصائر) are sensible and abstract but in the Glorious Quran, they are put in a clear vigorous image so the verb of ‘coming’ can be ascribed to them. Then we are made to perceive these meanings in a dynamic image which becomes more perceptible if looked at attentively (Ramadhan, 1988: 129).

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