Metaphor between Classical Arabic Rhetoric and the New Rhetoric: A Study on the Concept and Mechanisms of Analysis



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Abstract:

In Arabic rhetoric, metaphor is inherently linked to poetic imagination, rhetorical ornamentation, and non-conventional linguistic usage. This relationship has been confirmed by early Arab scholars in their analytical studies of poetic discourse across various eras, revealing the evidential force and rhetorical strength of metaphor in conveying meaning and fulfilling communicative purposes. A close examination of classical rhetorical research devoted to figurative modes of expression reveals a clear convergence regarding the treatment of metaphor—both in terms of its structural and semantic analysis, and in terms of its persuasive power in achieving poetic and oratorical aims.

With the rise of the Western "New Rhetoric," metaphor gained a broader meaning. Lakoff and Johnson argue that it extends beyond poetry, shaping thought, perception, and daily activity. Drawing on Piaget, they suggest children learn language through metaphorical associations formed from limited cognitive awareness and object perception.

keywords: Metaphor ; argumentation ;simile ; persuasion ; conception

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Introduction:

Among the semantic relations connecting words, meanings, and external realities—relations deeply explored by classical Arabic rhetoricians—is the metaphorical relation. The inherent need of language for continual expansion and renewal compelled its users to adopt a particular mode of synthesis between linguistic expression, rational thought, and objects of perception. This gave rise to discursive systems, among which metaphor **(Azouzi, 2014, p. 136)** occupies a central position, whereby words deviate from their primary meanings toward new metaphorical meanings that become attached to them—often to the extent that both meanings coexist as equally authentic.

While the wealth of knowledge in both classical Arabic rhetoric and contemporary Western rhetoric is notable, the absence of a systematic framework for comparing metaphor's theoretical underpinnings and analytical strategies within these two different contexts presents an area for further investigation. The issue lies in the lack of a common approach that would help elucidate the connection between metaphor as a rhetorical, cognitive, and persuasive technique in classical rhetoric and New Rhetoric.

Classical scholars studied this rhetorical phenomenon through a dual lens—not contradictory, but complementary—namely: imagination (takhyīl) and persuasion (iqnāʿ). Both dimensions elevated metaphor to a strategic rhetorical device: either as an aesthetic instrument that delights the soul and stirs emotion, or as an argumentative tool employed to influence the audience and achieve various communicative purposes.

The concept of metaphor in classical Arabic rhetoric gradually evolved toward a more intellectual and analytical orientation, particularly in the works of ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, al-Sakkākī, and Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī. Their analyses of rhetorical discourse revealed the logical and inferential structure underlying metaphor—an aspect most clearly articulated in al-Jurjānī's theory.

To this end, the current study attempts to provide an answer to the following **research question**: To what extent do classical Arabic rhetorical theories and New Rhetoric converge or diverge in their treatment of metaphor, particularly regarding the mechanisms of its analysis and its dual functions as a cognitive tool and an argumentative strategy?

Metaphor in Classical Arabic Rhetoric: Concept and Mechanisms of Analysis

Section 1 :Metaphor According to al-Jurjānī

1: Metaphor as Analogical and Inferential Structure in al-Jurjānī's Theory

Al-Jurjānī defines metaphor as "a type of simile and a mode of representation; and simile is analogy (qiyās), which operates within what hearts comprehend, minds perceive, and intellects deliberate—not what ears merely hear." By doing so, he considers metaphor as an extension of simile, established for the very purpose of comparison. The ultimate goal of metaphor is to intensify resemblance in order to achieve rhetorical impact and persuasive effect. **(Al-Jurjani, Asrar al-Balaghah, 2007,, p. 47)**

These correspond to what he terms al-maqīs (the measured) and al-maqīsʿalayh (the standard of measurement). The persuasive power of metaphor lies in how these elements are revealed or concealed within the expression. Al-Jurjānī further distinguishes between metaphor as a linguistic structure (connected to simile) and a cognitive structure (connected to representational thought), where the mind constructs conceptual imagery based on inference.

He aligns metaphor with analogy (qiyās), arguing that it is fundamentally an inferential structure composed of a source and target united by a common underlying attribute (wajh al-shabah). This view was later adopted and expanded by Ṭāhāʿ Abd al-Raḥmān **(Taha, 2015, p. 115)**, who considered analogy the foundational logical structure of all natural language expressions—literal or figurative.

2 :Degrees of Metaphor according to al-Jurjānī

Al-Jurjānī classifies metaphor based on its proximity to literal meaning, which determines its persuasive strength:

- **First Degree: Near-Literal Metaphor**

This is the lowest level of metaphor, where the figurative term is closely associated with its literal meaning. Examples include using "flight" for a non-winged being to signify speed, or likening a galloping horse to a falling star. **(Al-Jurjani, 2007,)**

- **Second Degree: Intermediate Metaphor**

Here, the shared attribute exists in both domains as a real quality. For instance: "I saw a sun," intended metaphorically to describe a person with a radiant face. **(Al-Jurjani, 2007)**

- **Third Degree: Pure Metaphor**

This is the highest, most abstract form, in which the comparison is conceptual rather than sensory—for example: "the light of truth," where light is metaphorically applied to knowledge or revelation. **(Al-Jurjani, Asrar al-Balaghah, 2007,, p. 47)**

3: Metaphor according to al-Sakkākī

Within his exposition of ʿilm al-bayān (the science of figurative meaning) and its analytical branches, al-Sakkākī raises a significant theoretical inquiry. He asks how the user of metaphor, simile, or metonymy approaches the intended meaning in the manner of one engaged in logical reasoning (istidlāl). In doing so, he clearly elevates metaphor from a mere stylistic ornament to a structured cognitive and argumentative act. **(Al-Sakkaki., 1987, p. 504)**

Al-Sakkākī asserts that metaphor functions as a form of logical proof, whereby a quality that necessarily belongs to one entity is transferred to another to establish a conceptual claim. For example, when one says: "Her cheeks are roses," the speaker attributes to the cheek the pure redness of the rose as a necessary quality, thereby inferring beauty and freshness. Likewise, when stating: "There is a lion in the bathhouse," the metaphor transfers the qualities of bravery and strength to a human subject in order to assert dominance or courage.

He further explains that argumentative reasoning in metaphor may occur through:

- Explicit declaration, where the metaphor is openly stated, or Implicit
- suggestion (kināyah), where the meaning is inferred by the listener through contextual cues.**)Abd Al-Ridha(2019 ،**

Analytical Conclusions from al-Jurjānī and al-Sakkākī

Based on their theoretical frameworks, metaphor in classical Arabic rhetoric is characterized by the following:

- A dual structure combining linguistic form and cognitive logic.
- A persuasive function, rooted in analogical reasoning.
- A communicative orientation, directed toward the intellect and understanding—not merely auditory perception.

An analytical approach that necessitates examining both explicit linguistic elements and implicit inferential components.

This can be visualized through a rhetorical communicative model:

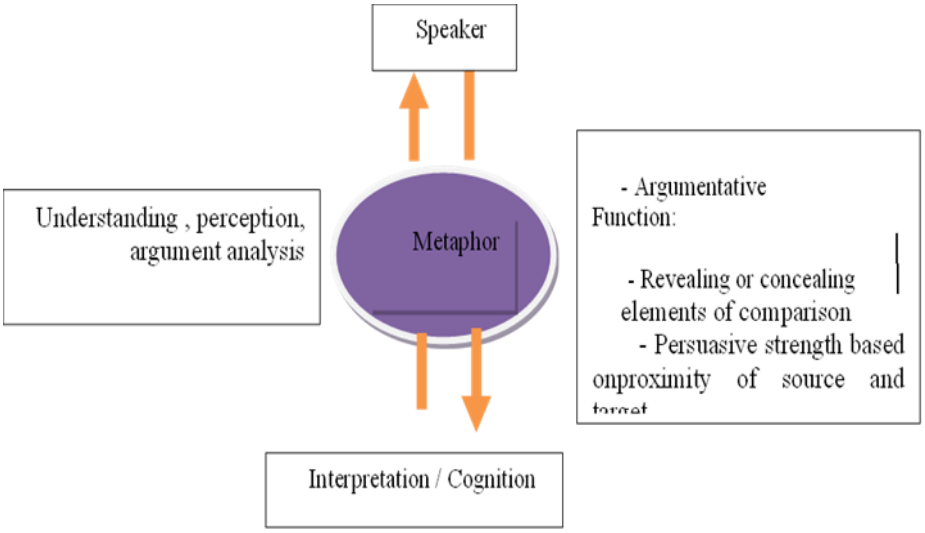


Figure1: Elements of the rhetorical system – Metaphor

Section 2: Metaphor in New Rhetoric: Concept and Analytical Mechanisms

The term New Rhetoric in modern discourse refers to the revival and recontextualization of Aristotelian rhetoric in contemporary Western studies, particularly through the works of Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca)**Abd Al-Ridha H(2019** ،.. Unlike the traditional view that confined rhetoric to speech-making or poetic embellishment, the New Rhetoric considers it a discipline grounded in both rational argumentation and emotional influence Abd Al-Ridha H (2019), directed toward persuasion in real communicative contexts. While both Arabic classical rhetoric and Western rhetoric aim at persuasion and aesthetic impact, modern Western rhetoric diverges into two distinctive approaches:

- The Dialectical-Logical Approach
  - Based on principles derived from mathematical and formal logic.
  - Seeks to achieve rational conviction.
- The Stylistic-Aesthetic Approach
  - Focuses on the beauty of expression and the role of imagery.
  - Studies metaphor as a tool for constructing meaning and influencing perception.

Due to the multiplicity of approaches, New Rhetoric has been characterized by conceptual diversity rather than a single unified theory. This has also resulted in

translation differences in Arabic: some scholars translated “rhetoric” as بلاغة, others as خطابة, while some combined both.

Among the major theoretical frameworks in New Rhetoric is the Theory of Linguistic Argumentation.

1:Theory of Linguistic Argumentation

This modern semantic theory introduces new perspectives on meaning and addresses issues neglected by classical logical models. It emphasizes the argumentative function of language as its primary function. Developed extensively by Oswald Ducrot in 1973, this theory views natural language not as a neutral medium, but as an inherently persuasive system designed to influence and guide interpretation (Hamdawi 2014).

2:Argumentative Metaphor

Argumentative metaphor is characterized by the speaker’s deliberate intent to convey a particular idea in a manner that influences or persuades the listener. It is one of the most significant linguistic tools employed in modern argumentative theories to analyze discourse. As a linguistic mechanism, metaphor retains its classical persuasive function while acquiring a broader role in contemporary pragmatic contexts.

According to Ṭāhāʿ Abd al-Raḥmān)Abdurrahman(1998 ،, the argumentative nature of metaphor is founded on several conceptual principles

Firstly: Metaphorical discourse is inherently dialogical: it presupposes interaction between speaker and listener.

Secondly:Metaphor is argumentative in nature: its purpose is to influence cognitive orientation and guide interpretation.

Thirdly: Metaphor is practical and dynamic: it functions at both the imaginative and rational levels simultaneously.

Speakers often choose metaphor over literal language because metaphor possesses greater persuasive force)Sakr(. This persuasive power isevaluated through the argumentative hierarchy **(السُّلَّم الحجاجي).** For example, in the Qur’anic verse:

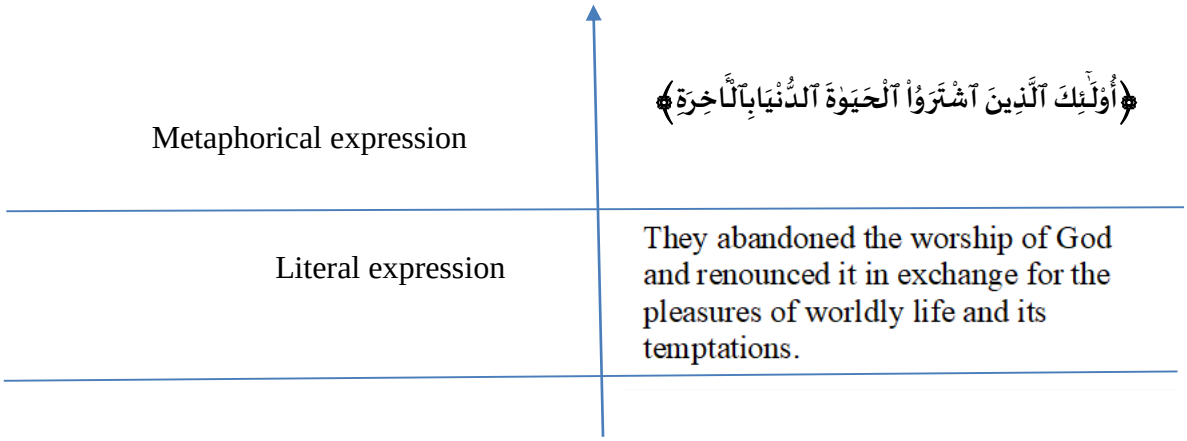
﴿أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱشْتَرَوُا۟ ٱلْحَيَوٰةَ ٱلدُّنْيَا بِٱلْـَٔاخِرَةِ﴾ **(elbakara, p. 86)**

"Those are the ones who have purchased the worldly life in exchange for the Hereafter."

The word “purchased” operates metaphorically to indicate a deliberate transactional exchange, highlighting the gravity of renouncing the eternal for the transient. On the argumentative scale, this metaphor carries higher persuasive

intensity than a literal statement such as "They abandoned worship for worldly pleasure." Thus, metaphor enhances the rhetorical force of the discourse.
This can be illustrated in an argumentative comparison:

Metaphorical Expression	Literal Equivalent
Those who purchased the worldly life with the Hereafter	Those who abandoned the worship of God in exchange for worldly pleasures.



Section 3 :Conceptual Metaphor Theory

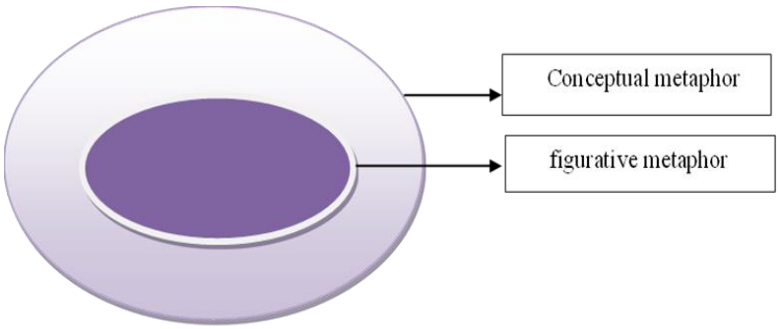


Figure 2: The inclusion of the figurative metaphor within the conceptual metaphor

Metaphor is no longer understood as a mere linguistic substitution or an aesthetic rhetorical device confined to poetry)Khalil *(1997* ،. Instead, it is now seen as an essential cognitive mechanism that shapes how individuals conceptualize the world.

According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, conceptual metaphor structures our thoughts, actions, and perceptions. It operates not only in literary or poetic discourse but across all domains of natural language, including everyday communication, politics, philosophy, religion, and social interaction.

Key Features of Conceptual Metaphor

1-It is cognitive, not merely linguistic.

2-It shapes human perception and reasoning.

3-It connects abstract concepts to concrete experiential domains through conceptual mapping.

As defined by María Teresa Cabré:"A conceptual metaphor is a mental construct created by an individual or a community regarding a particular phenomenon, even when that phenomenon does not exist as an objective physical reality." Khalil (1997).

Example of Conceptual Metaphor: Love is a Journey

Expressions such as: (Santibáñez, 2018)

1- "I don't think this relationship is going anywhere."
2- "Look how far we've come."

illustrate how the abstract concept of love is understood through the concrete schema of a journey, where partners are travelers, obstacles are challenges, and destinations represent relationship goals.

Cognitive and Pragmatic Implications

Ṭāhāʿ Abd al-Raḥmān asserts that every act of natural language use inevitably involves a degree of conceptual transfer between domains (Abderrahma , 1986). This transfer is never entirely literal or precise but contains a productive ambiguity that grants language flexibility, adaptability, and persuasive effectiveness. He explains that metaphor reflects a cognitive process of moving from one experiential world to another—a movement that generates new meanings shaped by the listener's interpretive context.

Lakoff believes that metaphor is an integral part of our daily discourse; it exists within our experiences and is expressed through our language. Studying metaphor therefore requires examining two levels — figurative expressions and non-figurative expressions — since its scope is quite broad, as previously mentioned. (Johnson, 2016)

His approach is empirical, as he considers metaphor a means of understanding one experience through another. For example, the concept of "time is money" illustrates how the experience of time is understood through the experience of

money. However, while the experience of money is concrete, that of time is abstract.

Thus, Lakoff argues that our material experiences help us construct abstract concepts.

The main ideas presented by Lakoff and Johnson in their Conceptual Metaphor Theory can be summarized as follows:

- Our everyday experiences contribute to the formation of conceptual metaphors.
- Metaphorical thinking is deterministic, governing our perceptions and experiences.

Abstract concepts expand only through metaphor.

Conclusion:

Metaphor, regardless of its various fields of application, remains the only mental space capable of expanding abstract conceptions of the world. It can be seen either as an imaginative discursive system through which a language user seeks to achieve multiple purposes by engaging in different linguistic games, or as an abstract conception arising from materially grounded experience.

This study has led us to several important findings, including the following:

In classical Arabic rhetoric, metaphor followed two main orientations:

An aesthetic and imaginative orientation, aiming to appeal to and influence the audience.

A rational and argumentative orientation, viewing metaphor as a reasoning system intended to persuade.

The rational orientation of metaphor made it a dialogical and interactive form of discourse.

Metaphor, by nature, is conceptual, whereas metaphorical expressions represent a secondary level, as proposed by George Lakoff in his book Philosophy in the Flesh.

Metaphor exists in our daily lives, and we use it naturally

Arab rhetoricians were aware of the metaphorical concept of language. They discussed this matter and analyzed various metaphorical expressions that demonstrate it.

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