

Conceptualization of Ideas Through Novel Metaphors in Hayley Long's *Sophie Someone*Nimrah Nazim*¹, Maria Kalsoom², Farzana Masroor³**Original Article**

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Abstract

Metaphors for most of the traditional rhetoric have been defined as a figure of speech through which writers equate one thing with another by directly comparing them. Traditionally, metaphors have been analyzed on the linguistic plain, based on their literariness. However, lately, their relationship with human cognition has been established. This idea led to the postulation of the Theory of Cognitive/ Conceptual Metaphors which stated that metaphors are not simply linguistic but the cognitive conceptualization of one concept into another to make sense of it. Some conceptual metaphors are hard to map and create uniqueness in the literary work that they are being used in. Hayley Long's Sophie Someone makes use of novel conceptual metaphors to create a metaphorically deviant work that functions as codes, and by decoding them the complete meaning is drawn. The current study aimed to contextualize the selected novel conceptual metaphors from Sophie Someone, analyze these metaphors, and unpack the significance of the selected conceptual metaphors. The results show that the novel conceptual metaphors not only add to the style of the novel but also are closely related to Sophie's cognition and are in accordance with how Sophie sees the world from her standpoint. The findings of the study will be useful for later studies on the analysis of novel metaphors in different pieces of literature.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor; novel metaphors; cognition; Sophie Someone; language and thought

1. Introduction

Sophie Someone (2015) written by Hayley Long narrates the life story of a fourteen-year-old girl, Sophie, who lives in Belgium with her parents and little brother. After leaving England when she was only four to five years old, her family settled in Belgium. Her life is threaded with secrets, and she is on a mission to uncover all the secrets that have plagued her life from the moment she left her home in England. Her voyage to uncover the secrets about herself and her family leads to startling revelations that further confuse the young girl, and which are hard to put into words. The novel, therefore, is written in an array of unconventional metaphors that reflect the mental state of the young Sophie. These novel conceptual metaphors are not only peculiar to the context of the story but also highlight the uniqueness of Sophie as a narrator who is capable of manipulating the words and using them in her way, foregrounding the themes of identity in the novel. The current study will, therefore, aim to unpack and analyze some of these conceptual metaphors present in *Sophie Someone* to highlight that metaphors are not simply textual and have a conceptual system

behind them that can give the reader an insight into the mental state of different characters, especially the protagonist Sophie.

1.1. Literature Review

In the field of rhetoric, the concept of metaphor was first introduced by the Greek philosopher Aristotle who introduced it as a device for finding similarities (Vakhovska, 2017). A metaphor, according to Aristotle, is giving a name to something that originally belonged to something else based on some underlying similarities of analogy (Lan, 2005). Linguistic metaphor is 'the use of language to refer to something other than what it was originally applied to, or what it 'literally' means, to suggest some resemblance or make a connection between the two things' (Knowles and Moon, 2006). The essence of any metaphor resides in the interaction between the metaphorical expression and the context in which it is used (Richards, 1936). Earlier philosophers like Aristotle took metaphors as an ornament that embellishes the language, establishing a substitution view of metaphors where metaphors are just substitutes for everyday language. The arguments about the metaphors vary from Aristotle's view of language as a gift of genius that can never be taught to Percy Shelley's declaration that language is metaphorical (Ricoeur, 1977). However, later studies dismantled this linguistic view of metaphors and raised the point that a metaphor is more than just a device for aesthetics, it is a fundamental mechanism of the human mind that structures human experiences and shapes the perception and cognition of humans (Vakhovska, 2017).

This led to the belief that metaphors are not rhetoric, rather they are wholly conceptual – an idea that was taken up by Lakoff and Johnson and later by Turner to develop Cognitive Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff & Turner 1989). The concept of "Conceptual Metaphor" is based on the idea that a metaphor is not a part of language, rather it is the means by which people conceptualize many abstract ideas in terms of some other thing that is concrete to make sense of it or to make it more comprehensible. Lakoff (1993) discards the traditional rhetoric theory of metaphor altogether and asserts a concept that is more focused on cognition and states that "the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another" (Lakoff, 1993, p. 203). This approach toward metaphor, however, is not a new one, and many theorists have also postulated this idea of cognitive metaphor before Lakoff and Johnson in the aftermath of the rise of cognitive theories during the 1940s (Madsen, 2016). With the rise of these theories, many researchers began to postulate that thought and cognition might themselves be what Richards (1938) "radically metaphoric" (p. 48). The seminal work in this direction was conducted by Whorf (1956) who said that the abstract assumptions that are built into metaphors of time and thought in the English Language present a wholly unique perspective of the world.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) relate metaphors to thought and cognition asserting that the possibility of metaphors as linguistic expressions exists precisely because the metaphors are already ingrained in a person's conceptual system. Furthermore, metaphors are used extensively in everyday life not only in language but in our thought and action as well. This is because one of the key characteristics of a conceptual metaphor is that it creates a connection between and mediates human understanding and worldview (Lan, 2005). One of the main postulates of the conceptual metaphor theory is that all abstract ideas and ultimately metaphors are derived from the human experience of action and perception, and all "meaning is grounded in our bodily experience" (Johnson, 2007, p. 12). This means that all the abstract ideas like love, anger, time, etc., are understood in terms of analogies and their association with the physical world and action.

Similarly, concepts like knowledge and understanding are understood in terms of metaphors that connect these abstract ideas with comparatively concrete ones (Madsen, 2016). By drawing on a concept domain that is already well understood, a novel concept domain is then made easy to comprehend (Feldman, 2008).

Kövecses (2002) while defining the conceptual metaphor, relates it to cognitive linguistics and describes it as comprehending one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain by giving various examples. She states that we make use of conceptual metaphors in our everyday life when we are talking or thinking about life in terms of journeys, arguments in terms of war, theories in terms of buildings, and many such concepts. This means that a conceptual metaphor connects two varying semantic areas/domains where one domain, known as the 'target domain', is concrete, referring to a thing, person, direction, etc., and the other domain is abstract, for example, thought, emotion, notion, etc., and is termed as the 'source domain' (Kövecses, 2002). This further adds to the conceptual/cognitive metaphor theory that rejects the traditional, linguistic perspective of the metaphor employing it as a decorative tool instituting it as something central to the thought process, thus making it important for language as well. There exists a correspondence between the target and source domains (Kövecses, 2002) when ideas and knowledge are 'mapped' from the source domain onto the target domain by the conceptual metaphor (Deignan, 2005).

At times, metaphors are difficult to map on the conceptual plain and their inherent correspondence requires some digging in. Deignan (2005) calls these metaphors 'innovative metaphors' and states that they are a subject of interest for researchers in literature. Lakoff (1993), on the other hand, uses the word 'novel metaphors' for these metaphors and divides them into three categories: extensions of conventional metaphors, which he later termed Complex Metaphors (Lakoff, 2008), Generic-level metaphors, and Image-metaphors. These novel conceptual metaphors become difficult to comprehend because they map the concepts onto the subconscious conceptual system and are most abundantly employed in poetry and literary works where novelty and innovation are the writer's goals. To comprehend these novel metaphors, one needs to refer to his/her everyday metaphor system constantly and maximally because these novel conceptual metaphors are mostly an extension (or a complication) of our everyday system and use of metaphorical thought (Lakoff, 1993). Conceptual metaphors, especially novel conceptual metaphors, thus play a significant role in the analysis of literary texts because they can unpack what is going on behind the metaphors and can unravel many peculiarities of text and the hidden depths of characters.

Romero and Soria (2005) presented a framework compatible with the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) allowing the description of the metaphoric verbal utterances. Their study was guided by the difference between literal and nonliteral metaphoric expressions that were proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and focused more on the non-literal metaphoric expressions because they believed that this aspect was overlooked in the original conceptual metaphor theory. In the paper, nonliteral metaphoric expressions were discussed in terms of contextual abnormality and conceptual contrast. The framework also presented suggestions for the interpretation of the process of metaphor mapping that leads to the comprehension of the metaphor's meaning.

1.2. Research Objectives

The study will be guided by Lakoff and Johnson's the Cognitive Theory of Metaphors and will try:

1. To identify different unconventional metaphors used by Hayley Long in *Sophie Someone*
2. To contextualize the unconventional metaphors in *Sophie Someone*
3. To relate these metaphors with the Cognitive Theory of Metaphors
4. To unpack the significance of these conceptual metaphors in relation to the themes of the story as well as the characters.

1.3. Research Questions

The current study will try to answer the following questions by carrying out a textual analysis of the selected conceptual metaphors from the novel:

1. What are some of the novel metaphors used in *Sophie Someone* by Hayley Long?
2. How has the author contextualized the conceptual metaphors in the novel?
3. How can the conceptual metaphors used in the book be related to the Cognitive Theory of Metaphors?
4. What is the significance of the novel conceptual metaphors to the story and the characters in the novel?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The scope of the current study is based on the conceptual metaphors that have been used in the book, *Sophie Someone*. These conceptual metaphors are used in a very novel way in the book that tells a lot about different characters of the book, especially the protagonist, Sophie. The results of this research study will provide a guideline that can be helpful for other researchers in the application of Cognitive Metaphor Theory and the conceptual mapping of metaphors on different literary pieces to highlight different underlying implications of the narrative and the characters.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

The current study is limited to the analysis of the selected metaphors from *Sophie Someone* by Hayley Long and attempts to study these selected metaphors in the light of Lakoff and Johnson's Cognitive Metaphor Theory. Furthermore, the data analysis is limited only to the following two tenets of the cognitive metaphor theory: the conceptual structure of a metaphor and the embodiment of the metaphor.

2. Methodology

The following research study makes use of the qualitative method. Qualitative research is a type of scientific method especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations (Mack & Woodson, 2005). This research study is carried out in light of Lakoff and Johnson's Cognitive Theory of Metaphor (1980). In addition, the descriptive analysis model is used as a research method that relies on the description of the facts presented in the selected data and then analyzes them.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The main aim of this research study is the analysis of different conceptual metaphors used in Hayley Long's *Sophie Someone*. For this purpose, the study makes use of the theoretical and analytical framework of Lakoff and Johnson's Cognitive Theory of Metaphor (1980). The theory postulates that metaphor is not simply a decorative feature of language, rather it is backed up with thought which is central to our cognition and conceptual system, and it affects how we make sense of ourselves and the world we live in.

Lakoff and Johnson postulated the theory in their seminal work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) as a response traditional notion of metaphor as a linguistic device and introduced the idea that metaphors are not limited to language and are significant for human cognition. One of the central features of the theory is the concept that human understanding of abstract concepts is based on our concrete experiences and therefore conceptual metaphors are used to map concrete experiences onto abstract domains. This postulate of the theory is used in the current study to study selected metaphors from the selected novel as it investigates how metaphors influence perception, reasoning, and problem-solving.

2.2. Methodological Framework

For the current research study, the descriptive analysis model has been used as a research method. It comprises a set of methods and tools that are used to describe and summarize present data. In qualitative research, the model is used to categorize and organize data to make it more accessible for analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that the descriptive analysis model involves making present data more manageable through the process of coding and summarizing. In the current study, the given data is coded and categorized into different metaphors which are then analyzed using Lakoff and Johnson's Cognitive Theory of Metaphor (1980).

2.3. Data

The data for analysis is taken from Hayley Long's novel *Sophie Someone* which was written in 2015. The novel is selected for its unique writing style that makes use of an array of novel conceptual metaphors to narrate the story. This deviant style of writing not only makes the novel interesting but also makes it an ideal subject for the application of Lakoff and Johnson's Cognitive Metaphor Theory (1980). For the analysis, some of the novel metaphors used in the book are selected and analyzed based on their significance to the plot of the story and how these metaphors are related to the cognition and worldview of the protagonist.

2.4. Data Collection

The data is collected by a close reading of the selected novel. In analyzing the subject materials, this research uses literary research.

3. Analysis and Discussion

Sophie Someone (2015) by Hayley Long is written in an array of conceptual metaphors that give additional depth to the story. The novel narrates the story of a teenage girl, Sophie, who along with her family lives in Brussels, Belgium, and has migrated there from England. The experience of migration and displacement from her country at a young age influences Sophie's ability to narrate her life story and to cope with this difficulty of articulating her opinions, she makes use of a very special language. Sophie's language is marked by using words for things and people other than the words that are normally used for them. This substitution of words makes it a bit difficult at the start to decode what Sophie is trying to say because her unconventional use of metaphors is not

present on the linguistic plane and cannot be explained by a simple explanation of the metaphors. These metaphors are based on Sophie's cognition and are in accordance with how Sophie sees the world from her standpoint. Her unique use of language reflects the uniqueness of her character and relates to an important aspect of the plot of the novel. Because of their uniqueness and significance to the plot of the novel, these metaphors need to be studied because that could lead to a better understanding of the characters and the novel. In the following sections, the researchers have tried to unpack the selected metaphors from the novel and have also justified the author's choice of using novel metaphors and their significance to the novel.

3.1. Epigraphs

The novel starts with two epigraphs, both of which contribute to the author's justification of using metaphor-laden language for her novel to add another layer of meaning to it. The first epigraph comprises a short poem by American poet Emily Dickinson titled *Hope is a Thing with Feather*. The poem's third line, "And sings the tune without the words," (Long, 2015, p:1) resonates with the author's choice of using novel metaphors in the book by relating it with hope. According to this poem, endless hope enables a person to cope with every difficulty and problem that life throws in one's path, as it constantly sings an out-of-tune song of never giving up without saying any words. In the novel, Sophie is doing the same as she is hopeful to uncover the family's secrets that plague her family. She is consistent in her efforts and narrates her story the same way as hope motivates a person, by singing an out-of-tune song. Her out-of-tune song manifests in her usage of unconventional words and metaphors to share her story with the audience.

The second epigraph is an original piece written by Hayley Long herself and is the most significant in justifying her usage of conceptual metaphors. The epigraph is in the form of a short poem and states that sometimes, certain things become difficult to spell out and therefore, are extremely hard to tell. Owing to their difficulty of delivery and articulation, another way should be taken through which one can tell the story without telling the story. Because if words and stories are bottled up, they might hurt you. Therefore, according to the author, stories need to be told, and with this idea in her mind, she narrates Sophie's story in "the only way [she] I dare tell it/ In [her] my own special language" (Long, 2015, p.2). This special language is again her unconventional metaphors that dominate the novel. As mentioned earlier, Sophie has a unique voice and the novel being written in the first-person narration acquires an overall unique voice that can only be understood by contextualizing the unique elements of the novel. Otherwise, it is just gibberish that is hard to make sense of. The epigraph, therefore, can be taken as a justification by the author for her excessive use of unconventional metaphors in her novel. The analysis of some of these metaphors is given below.

3.2. People – Pigeons

The very first metaphor that the readers come across is "pigeon," which in the first read makes it seem like the novel might be from the perspective of a pigeon, but another read will provide a context to the word 'pigeon' and make the reader understand what the author actually means. In light of the following excerpt from the first chapter, we can draw out the conceptual metaphor: PEOPLE ARE PIGEONS.

The quick answer is easy. I'm the exact same *pigeon* I've always been. I was born. I kept breathing. And here I am fourteen years later. Still me. The long answer is massively more complicated. Because actually, I'm not. Actually, I'm a totally different *pigeon* entirely. (Long, 2015, p. 8)

Equating a person/ people with pigeons at first glance might seem an odd choice of words and a bizarre notion but on the cognitive plane, this equation makes perfect sense. The aforementioned metaphor can be contextualized to have a better understanding of it by the following lines from the novel, "Sometimes, I couldn't make sense of what other *pigeons* were saying to me" (Long, 2015, p.8), "I understand now why *pigeons* sometimes make promises they shouldn't" (Long, 2015, p. 28). There are many other such lines as well, through which a reader can easily link people with pigeons, but the question is why the author has used such a term for people, what is her reasoning behind it, and most importantly, what is its significance to the story.

In the case of PEOPLE ARE PIGEONS, the person or people serve as a target domain, whereas pigeons serve as the source domain. Pigeons are known for staying in flocks and migrating from one place to another and are the birds with a high percentage of movement. And the same is true for people as well. Humans are social animals who survive and thrive in a social setting with other people, and like pigeons are in constant motion. This can be considered a general concept behind the usage of the PEOPLE ARE PIGEONS metaphor but when you look at it from Sophie's perspective, things become much clearer. As mentioned earlier, the story is told from Sophie's perspective and the metaphors are actually how she sees the world, so from her perspective, we can infer the fact that she has to migrate from England to Belgium at a very tender age and obviously that displacement from her home had an impact on the little Sophie. From her viewpoint, therefore, people and pigeons are the same because they migrate and are displaced from their original homes. She is projecting her understanding and experience of the world and generalizing to create this unique metaphor, that not only makes the story interesting but also gives us an insight into Sophie's mind that how for her humans are as homeless as pigeons because, like them, they are always moving to and fro, from one place to another.

3.3. Tourists – Tortoises

Another interesting and rather unique metaphor that the readers come across is in Chapter 6 of Part 1 of the novel, when Sophie substitutes the word tourists with tortoises, and the narrative goes like this,

Just then, a couple of Japanese *tortoises* approached and slowed to a stop next to us. They pointed at the big white building and then pointed to a page in their guidebucket (guidebook) and began to chirp loudly in Japanese. (Long, 2015, p. 33)

By reading these lines, the conceptual metaphor that can be inferred is TOURISTS ARE TORTOISES, and this metaphor is contextualized by using the word "tortoises" in association with words like "guidebucket (guidebook)," "camouflage (camera)," "pilchards (pictures)," and their sense of loss in the city, and stopping at every point to take pictures. The target domain of this conceptual metaphor is tourists, and the source domain is tortoises. Again, a very bizarre choice of metaphor, and unlike the PEOPLE ARE PIGEONS metaphor, not many explicit similarities can be found between the two that can pinpoint the reason why the author has chosen to use this metaphor. But the readers can develop a parallel between the two on the following basis: first and foremost, because of their speed and steadfastness, and second, because both tortoises and tourists are out of place in their surroundings, that is a tortoise in a city and a tourist in a foreign city and country. One can observe by looking at the tourists that they walk pretty slow, much like tortoises, because at every point, they stop for sightseeing and clicking photographs, but these tourists are the ones who mostly end up having traveled and discovered the place the most because of their steadfastness, an ability similar to the tortoise winning the race in the Aesop's

Fables. Most importantly, if we look at the metaphor from Sophie's perspective, it can be said that she believes that both tortoises and tourists look out of place in cities, and at some point, she uses the phrase "lost tortoise" (Long, 2015, p. 77) for herself, which conveys the similar idea. Another similarity is the fact that both tourists and tortoises carry their "homes" with them, for tortoises it is their shell and for tourists, it is the luggage they carry that contains all the essentials of life and survival. These similarities can be considered the reason why the author chose this metaphor and how Sophie looks at it.

3.4. Secrets – Serpent

Secrets are always deprecating and lead to a crisis in most cases, but equating them to serpents, Hayley Long comments on their poisonous trait. This metaphor is central to the plot of the novel because it closely relates to the plight of Sophie and her family. Secrets are breaking her family and she is on a mission to uncover those secrets, which like serpents are poisoning her family from inside. The conceptual metaphor SECRETS ARE SERPENTS can be drawn from the following lines:

Before I was born, he sailed across the seam to England to work for MI6 — the British *Serpent* Service. I can't tell you what he did, because it's top *serpent*. (Long, 2015, p. 14)

The source domain for this conceptual metaphor is the serpent, especially the poisonous trait of serpents, and the target domain is secrets. From Sophie's point of view, secrets are as deadly and poisonous as the serpents because it was the secrets that drove her and her family away from their home and their families, and the revelation of what is trying to destroy her family from within. The whole plot of the novel revolves around secrets, as like serpents they crawl and poison everything. The whole book can be summarized in one line said by Madame Wong to Sophie, when she says, "Each family has its serpents" (Long, 2015, p. 201). Each family has secrets but the secrets that Sophie's family have are enormous and like a serpent have taken a firm grip on Sophie's family, getting out of which is proving extremely hard for her and her family.

Sophie's perspective again comes into play, and we see and understand SECRETS ARE SERPENTS by contextualizing it with Sophie's understanding of what secrets are and how they destroy the very foundation of things. For her, the nature of secrets is the same as the serpents as both of them poison and kill, and this concept she materializes in her language when she makes use of the given conceptual metaphor. Equating secrets with serpents also highlight the deceptive and untrustworthiness of secrets and secret holders, because traditionally, in biblical tales and most of the narratives, serpents are always associated with trickery and deception and as a means of death. But for Sophie, it is important to keep some secrets as well, because the same serpent that is poisonous and kills is a source of medicine as well. Secrets that will help heal her family are worth keeping according to her but those that are eating up the core of her family need to be taken care of and eradicated.

3.5. Why Metaphors

While reading *Sophie Someone*, one might wonder why novel metaphors are used. And why such an excessive use of metaphors? What is their significance to the plot and the characters? Hayley Long presents a justification for her excessive use of metaphors in the second epigraph of the book where she states that sometimes to articulate your mind and narrate one's story, one needs to improvise on the language and use a unique language. Because some stories are hard to tell, and some secrets cannot be said out loud for the harm that might be caused for

spelling them out. Therefore, Long uses an array of metaphors to sing an out-of-tune song narrating the story of Sophie and her family.

Another reason could be that the author has tried to give the touch of a detective novel to the book and has written the book in the form of unconventional metaphors that act as codes. Readers have to decode these metaphors to make sense of what the writer is trying to say. Section three of the book is titled "Sophie Sherlock" which resonates with this idea of the novel being written as a detective work that needs to be solved. This is also related to Sophie's role as a detective who is trying to uncover the secrets her family is hiding. She plays the persona of a detective for most of the novel and is trying to dig deep into her family affairs. The novel is her quest to uncover the truth and the unconventional metaphors help keep this quest interesting and serve as codes. These codes are understood by contextualizing them according to the given clues and only after this decoding, the meaning is made clear. Hence, it can be said that the novel metaphors observed in *Sophie Someone* are used to give a touch of mystery and link it with detective works, in which readers get involved in the active decoding of clues to get to the truth. Similarly, Sophie is also involved in an active investigation and takes the readers along in this quest.

4. Conclusion

Sophie Someone is the story of a teenage girl who is on a quest to uncover the secrets that plague her family. She was a resident of England by birth but because of some trouble his father got himself into, she had to migrate to Belgium with her family. The book narrates Sophie's story from a first-person point of view and gives the reader an insight into Sophie's mind. The book excessively uses numerous conceptual metaphors, and these metaphors play a significant role in the plot of the book. Conceptual metaphors are based on cognition and an analysis of these metaphors can give us a deeper understanding of the story and the characters. The novel metaphors in the book give an additional layer of meaning to the book and are therefore of importance and a significant subject of analysis. The theory of Conceptual/ Cognitive Metaphors tries to unpack and evaluate these conceptual metaphors to have a better understanding. The current paper employs the analytical and theoretical framework of Lakoff and Johnson's Theory of Conceptual/ Cognitive to analyze and discuss selected metaphors: PEOPLE ARE PIGEONS, TOURISTS ARE TORTOISES and SECRETS ARE SERPENTS, from Long's *Sophie Someone* to contextualize these novel metaphors to the plot of the story and map out their significance to the characters as well. The findings revealed how a literary writer can play with the use of language to provide insight into the thinking of characters and how metaphors can serve as an expression of human emotions that people can relate to with some decoding and making sense of the concepts behind them. The study is useful for other researchers interested in the utility of metaphors to voice human emotions and their dexterous use by literary writers to meet various ends.

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