

UDC: 159.942.5

# CLASSIFICATION OF THE METAPHORS ACCORDING TO THE DEGREE OF UNEXPECTEDNESS

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## **Abstract:**

Unexpectedness causes great emotions in real life; the more unexpected this or that phenomenon is the greater the caused emotion is, be negative or positive. The classification of metaphors given in article is based on the degree of their unexpectedness. The article discusses genuine and trite metaphors and the way metaphor passes in the period of its existence.

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## **Introduction**

Unexpectedness causes great emotions in real life; the more unexpected this or that phenomenon is the greater the caused emotion is, be negative or positive. The same can be said about any stylistic device, namely in case of metaphor.

## **Classification of Metaphors**

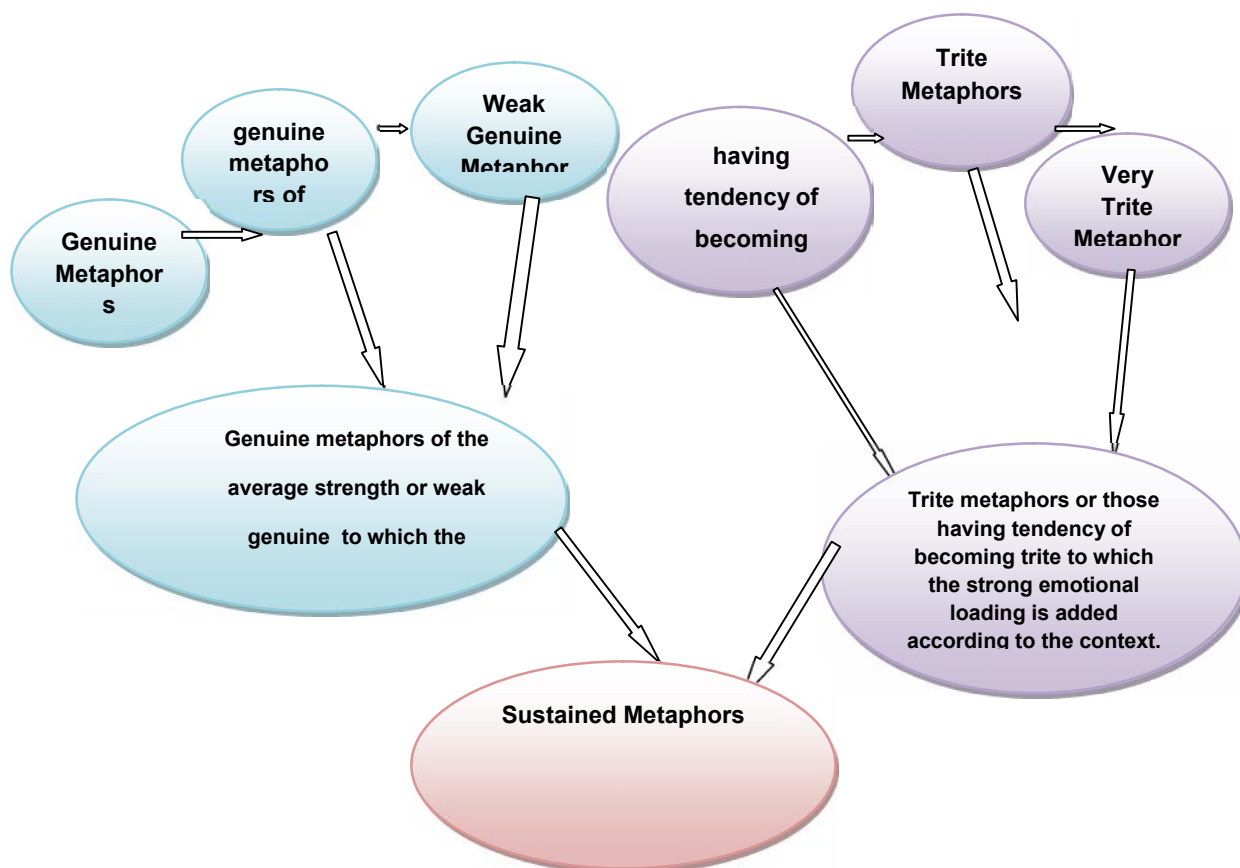
Considering the above mentioned it would be appropriate to classify metaphors according to its degree of unexpectedness.

The suggested classification is based on the traditional one (genuine, trite and sustained metaphors). On the basis of the material under investigation we propose rather different version of this classification.

At first we would like to discuss genuine and trite metaphors and that way a metaphor passes in the period of its existence. Otherwise saying each of them is “born” as genuine and

in the course of time it becomes trite and being even an inseparable part of the language often are not perceived as metaphor any longer.

The material under investigation gave us the opportunity to set intermediate links between genuine and trite metaphors what is well seen in the scheme below:



Let us discuss each of them separately.

### The class of genuine metaphors

The research proved that even not all genuine metaphors can arouse the same kind of emotions; i.e. not all of them are equally strong.

“She didn’t listen. She was free in her *prison of passion*. ”

(O. Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Gray”)

In the given case, the phrase “prison of passion” is a vivid example of genuine metaphor. At the first glance these two words do not seem to be possibly combined in one phrase as a prison cannot have passion. But if we go deep into the context and consider the

nature of metaphor (that of being based on analogy), it becomes clear that one of the characters' heart is identified with prison.

"In the garden scene it had all the tremulous ecstasy that one hears just before dawn when nightingales are singing. There were moments, later on, when it has the wild *passion of violets*."

(O. Wilde "The Picture of Dorian Gray")

We consider that the phrase "passion of violets" is a rather strong metaphor. It clearly indicates a lady's innocence and that passion which gradually awakes in her. As we see, the given metaphor not only causes emotions, but also is rather informative.

"His mother! He had something on his mind to ask of her, something that he had brooded on for many months of silence. A chance phrase that he had heard at the theatre, a whispered sneer that had reached his ears one night as he waited at the stage-door, had set loose a train of horrible thoughts. He remembered it as if he had been the lash of hunting crop across his face."

(O. Wilde "The Picture of Dorian Gray")

The given metaphor "a train of horrible thoughts" points to the fact that a flow of terrible thoughts occupied one of the characters' mind for a second. It is obvious, that the mentioned metaphor gives more emotional loading to the context.

As motioned above, the examples prove that even genuine metaphors are not equally strong.

### **The class of genuine metaphors of average strength**

We suggest that to the class of genuine metaphors of average strength belong such metaphors that arouse emotions, are unexpected enough, though these emotions are not as strong as in case of the genuine metaphor.

"How sweet life was. *She was swimming in warmth and in light*, floating on cotton. Other music was inspiring and ideal."

(Anais Nin "The Fear of Nice")

The metaphoric construction "She was swimming in warmth and in light" is the genuine metaphor of average strength. Though, it should be mentioned that the phrase "she was swimming" (S + V) is completely neutral and has nothing to do with metaphor; but the words "warmth" and "light" turns the given phrase into metaphor. This is the case when by adding complement to a subject and predicate, an expression becomes strong and we get a

metaphor. It is obvious that a hero takes pleasure of life what is proved by the context “How sweet life was”.

“The silence continued to transmit messages between them.”

(Anais Nin “A Spy in the House of Love”)

In the given case the whole sentence is a metaphor – genuine metaphor of average strength. Using the given stylistic device, the author quite effectively describes mute conversation and shows that sometimes silence tells more than words.

### **The class of weak genuine metaphors / those having tendency of becoming trite**

“She was the loveliest thing I have ever seen in my life. You said to me once that pathos left you unmoved, but that beauty, mere beauty, could fill your eyes with tears. I tell you, Henry, I could hardly see this girl for the mist of tears that came across me.”

(O. Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Gray”)

In the given example the metaphor “the mist of tears” is regarded to be a weak genuine metaphor or the metaphor having the tendency of becoming trite. Otherwise saying, though such metaphors have not lost their emotional colouring yet, probably they will soon become trite. The author uses the mentioned metaphor to better express one of the characters’ feelings. As difficult it is to see anything in the mist as it was difficult for Dorian to see the beloved from the eyes full of tears.

“Ordinary people waited till life disclosed to them its secrets, but to the few, to the elect, the mysteries of life were revealed before the veil was drawn away.”

(O. Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Gray”)

This trope is transitional between genuine and trite metaphors. The metaphor “life disclosed its secrets” lacks emotional colouring though it is somehow still loaded and consequently, arouses emotions in a reader.

“Sybil and her brother took their seats amidst a crowd of watchers ... The brightly coloured parasols danced like monstrous butterflies.”

(O. Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Gray”)

In the given example, as in the previous one, the metaphor “parasols danced” is transitional between genuine and trite metaphors. This stylistic device is used to underline the beauty of nature and how it harmonizes with people.

### **The class of trite metaphors**

“They fled from the eyes of the world, the singer’s prophetic, harsh, ovarian prologues.”

(Anais Nin “A Spy in the House of Love”)

It is noteworthy that though the metaphor “the eyes of the world” is trite, it still arouses certain emotions in a reader. It is the result of the fact that the semantics of the constituents of this phrase is perceived simultaneously. The unity of this words appeared to be rather effective as even in case of trite metaphor it did not lose emotional colouring.

“The garden was quiet now. The last note of the song hung in the air. The crying died down and the little girls skipped away.”

(Anais Nin “The Song in the Garden”)

The given example contains two trite metaphors “note of the song hung” and “the crying died down”. It should be mentioned that though neither of them arouse great emotions, they still describe the garden silence in a rather beautiful way. Notwithstanding the fact that the first sentence “The garden was quiet now” have absolutely no stylistic loading, it would be impossible to understand its following two metaphors. Consequently, the first sentence can be considered as the axis which together with the following two sentences and the metaphors describes the scene of silence figuratively.

### **The class of very trite metaphors**

This class unites the so called very trite metaphors, which may even not be considered as tropes. Though, once they were metaphors and had the corresponding emotional colouring but as a result of being used frequently, they lost their initial loading.

“Words dropped mechanically from her lips”.

(O. Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Gray”)

The metaphor “words dropped” is an example of a very trite metaphor. We suppose that it cannot have as much influence on a reader or a listener as a genuine or even trite metaphor. But it should be noted that it still has a certain, the slightest emotional colouring and expresses the bewildered woman’s condition well enough.

## **The class of sustained metaphors**

We consider sustained metaphors to be such metaphors to which the strong emotional loading is added according to the context. Two cases are distinguished:

a) Trite metaphors or those having tendency of becoming trite (weak genuine) to which the strong emotional loading is added according to the context.

b) Genuine metaphors of the average strength or weak genuine (those having tendency of becoming trite) to which the strong emotional loading is added according to the context.

“Our proverbs want rewriting. They were made in winter, and it is summer now, springtime for me, I think a very dance of blossoms in blue skies.”

(O. Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Gray”)

It is considered that “dance of blossoms” is the metaphor of average strength though the phrase “in blue skies” adds emotional loading to the context thus making the mentioned metaphor genuine. According to the traditional classification, metaphor is sustained when a trite metaphor acquires new colouring in a certain context. As in the given example an additional phrase is used to make metaphor stronger, we have introduced a new class of the sustained metaphors. Thus the whole phrase “dance of blossoms in blue skies” belongs to this class.

## **Conclusion**

The discussed examples showed the way metaphor passes from its “birth” (genuine) to its “death” (very trite). We observed how strong it is at the beginning and how it fades and dies in the course of time.

Thus, unexpectedness and an emotion are in directly proportional relations with each other.

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