

Complex Metaphor

Nino Kemertelidze, Professor

Grigol Robakidze University, Tbilisi, Georgia

Tamar Manjavidze, PhD student

Grigol Robakidze University, Tbilisi, Georgia

Abstract

Metaphor has always been attracting researchers' attention. A lot of things have been written and are still being written about this phenomenon in philosophy, psychology, linguistics and literary theory, because metaphor is one of the crucial topics in contemporary science. Linguistics always considered it as means of filling the gaps existing in language and enriching the speech.

Metaphor is based on the principle of identification. It becomes stylistic device when two completely different phenomena/ things/ events are united in the mind according to a certain feature, which one of them does not possess in reality. It happens when the creator of metaphor finds something in common in two presented things.

Introduction

The term "metaphor" as the etymology of the word reveals, means transference of some quality from one object to another. The word "metaphor" has the same root as "amphora" - meaning the Old Greek vessel, which was used to carry or keep precious liquid. As David Grove states the aim of a metaphor is to transfer information.

According to the traditional classification metaphors are divided into Genuine, Trite and Sustained (prolonged).

The aim of the presented article is to introduce absolutely different kind of metaphor not known before - complex metaphor.

Concept of Complex Metaphor

Complex metaphor seems to have nothing in common with sustained metaphor though as a trite metaphor acquires new emotional colouring by adding a certain word and becomes sustained, the same is observed with the complex metaphor. If in case of sustained metaphor a word intensifies the meaning, in case of complex metaphor it is a

sentence or even a paragraph that creates the same effect. This variety of metaphor can consist of one or more sentences; it can also include the whole paragraph. The characteristic feature of this type of metaphor is that it can be divided into constituent parts being either metaphors themselves or other stylistic devices.

Thus, we consider a sentence, a paragraph, a page or even the whole story as a complex metaphor in case it is perceived as one whole metaphor and is divided into inner metaphors or other stylistic devices.

Complex metaphor is considered to have a metaphoric effect. Notwithstanding the fact that it may contain even neuter words, it still maintains a strong emotional colouring. If complex metaphor can be divided into constituent components, then why do we perceive the unity of different metaphors or other stylistic devices as one metaphor, which we call the complex metaphor?

The first reason why we have introduced the concept of complex metaphor is the fact that the unity of various metaphors or other stylistic devices carries the same emotional loading as each constituent metaphor does. Moreover, in most cases it can even have stronger effect. It is also noteworthy that such type of metaphor makes one whole idea whereas its components render only the fragments of this idea.

On the basis of the analyzed material we tried to distinguish very interesting cases of complex metaphors, namely the cases when metaphors of different intensity can be united in one sentence (complex metaphor).

“I want a breath of our passion to stir dust of dead lovers into consciousness to wake their ashes into pain.”

(Oscar Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Grey”)

The given example can be regarded as a complex metaphor consisting of four metaphors of different intensity which we call “inner metaphor”.

1. breath of passion
2. dust of dead lovers
3. breath of passion to stir dust
4. wake their ashes into pain

Another case of complex metaphor is when one sentence is divided into two independent metaphoric clauses.

“When poverty creeps in at the door, love flies in through the window.”

(Oscar Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Grey”)

1. poverty creeps in at the door;
2. love flies in through the window;

With the help of the given metaphor, the author vividly describes the cruelty of life and even seems to predict the end of the romance as to our opinion the first metaphor “poverty creeps in at the door” is the analogy of the heroine’s life. Namely poverty deprives her from true love which according to the author “flies in through the window”. The third case unites such examples of complex metaphor when it is divided into two constituents, phrases.

“The thought brought a gleam of pleasure into his brown agate eyes.”

(Oscar Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Grey”)

In the given example, the metaphor “thought brought a gleam of pleasure” can be divided into the following parts:

1. The thought brought
2. a gleam of pleasure

The first part “the thought brought” belongs to the class of trite metaphors, the second metaphor is thought to be genuine.

“Her eyes caught the melody and echoed it in radiance.”

(Oscar Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Grey”)

This complex metaphor consists of two inner metaphors:

1. eyes caught the melody
2. eyes echoed the melody in radiance

In this case both metaphoric constructions are connected with the same subject. The whole sentence describes the heroine’s feelings and as metaphor is based on analogy; her eyes vividly showing her happiness are identified with love. Thus, the metaphor “eyes echoed the melody in radiance” shows the love that distance could not manage to wither and the metaphor “eyes caught the melody” is the melody accompanying the true love dwelling in lovers’ hearts.

Let’s analyse some other examples:

“When they (eyes) opened, the mist of a dream had passed across them.”

(Oscar Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Grey”)

This metaphor can be divided into two inner metaphors.

1. mist of a dream
2. dream had passed

The word “dream” functions in both inner metaphors. It can be considered as the linking “bridge” of the mentioned inner metaphors. The first one belongs to the class of genuine metaphor and the second one to the trite metaphors.

“His handsomeness at night became a drug, and the image of his night blinded self seeking her, touched her, and disarmed her.”

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

The given sentence is another example of complex metaphor in which the following three metaphoric constructions can be singled out:

1. His handsomeness became a drug
2. the image touched her
3. the image disarmed her

The first metaphoric construction can be regarded as genuine metaphor, but second and third ones are definitely trite metaphors.

“The feeling which flew through her and which carry her along, are of love, protection, devotion. These feelings create a powerful current on which she floats.”

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

The given sentence can be perceived as one complex metaphor consisting of four metaphoric constructions:

1. feeling flew through her
2. feeling carry her alone
3. feelings create a current
4. she floats on the current (of feelings)

The first two constructions are trite metaphors, but the third and fourth are cases of genuine metaphors though neither of them causes great emotions if taken separately. Notwithstanding this fact, combination of all underlined metaphors make rather strong complex metaphor what depicts the heroines feelings well enough.

Let us analyse different type of complex metaphor. This is the case when each construction of the complex metaphor is the stylistic device but all of them are metaphors.

“The song ascended, swelled, gathered together all the turmoil of the sea, the rutilant gold carnival of the sun, rivaled the wind and flung its highest notes into space like the bridge span of flamboyant rainbow”

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

As it has already been mentioned, metaphor is complex if its constituent parts are several metaphors and/or other stylistic devices, though neutral words and phrases are

still observed in it. But the given example is different as its each constituent phrase is stylistic device. They are:

1. song ascended, swelled, gathered together all the turmoil of the sea
2. song ascended, swelled, gathered together the rutilant gold carnival of the sun
3. carnival of the sun
4. song rivaled the wind
5. song flung its highest notes into space like the bridge span of flamboyant rainbow
6. song flung its highest notes into space
7. bridge span of flamboyant rainbow
8. flamboyant rainbow

The first construction is the genuine metaphor in which three verbs express the action of one and the same noun, but only one of them (“swell”) makes the construction genuine. Otherwise saying, if not the word “swell” the construction would be considered as trite metaphor. The same can be said about the second construction. The only difference is that one more metaphor is singled out in it, which is discussed as the third case. The third construction “carnival of the sun” is so unexpected and describes the beauty of the Sun in such an elevated way that it is regarded as being genuine. The fourth construction – genuine metaphor – shows the beauty of the song. The fifth construction can be considered as inner complex metaphor, which on its term is divided into three constructions, the first of which is trite metaphor, the second one is genuine metaphor, but the third which is the part of the previous construction is trite epithet. All constituent parts of the complex metaphor serve the same purpose – show the glory of the song.

Let us analyse the same type of complex metaphor.

“Give me the real mountains, and a wind that sweeps up the clouds and mental cobwebs.”

(Anais Nin “The Fear of Nice”)

The given complex metaphor can be divided in the following way:

1. Give me real mountains- hyperbole
2. Give me wind- hyperbole
3. Wind that sweeps up mental cobwebs- the genuine metaphor, which includes another genuine metaphor “mental cobwebs”.

The type of complex metaphor considered below is the most complicated case. Unlike the above discussed examples, the given complex metaphor, comprising the

whole paragraph, consists of not only different inner metaphors and other lexical stylistic devices but also various syntactic stylistic devices. At a first glance it can seem unbelievable that metaphor notwithstanding its complexity, contains syntactic stylistic devices, but the example given below will prove this fact. Some neutral words are also included in the paragraph.

The discussed example is taken from Edgar Alan Poe's story "Oval Portrait" which depicts the heroes' whole life and which is perceived by the reader as one complex metaphor.

"She was a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee. And evil was the hour when she saw, and loved, and wedded the painter. He, passionate, studious, austere, and having already a bride in his Art; she a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee; all light and smiles, and frolicsome as the young fawn; loving and cherishing all things; hating only the Art which was her rival; dreading only the pallet and brushes and other untoward instruments which deprived her of the countenance of her lover. It was thus a terrible thing for this lady to hear the painter speak of his desire to portray even his young bride. But she was humble and obedient, and sat meekly for many weeks in the dark, high turret-chamber where the light dripped upon the pale canvas only from overhead. But he, the painter, took glory in his work, which went on from hour to hour, and from day to day. And he was a passionate, and wild, and moody man, who became lost in reveries; so that he would not see that the light which fell so ghastly in that lone turret withered the health and the spirits of his bride, who pined visibly to all but him. Yet she smiled on and still on, uncomplainingly, because she saw that the painter (who had high renown) took a fervid and burning pleasure in his task, and wrought day and night to depict her who so loved him, yet who grew daily more dispirited and weak. And in sooth some who beheld the portrait spoke of its resemblance in low words, as of a mighty marvel, and a proof not less of the power of the painter than of his deep love for her whom he depicted so surpassingly well. But at length, as the labor drew nearer to its conclusion, there were admitted none into the turret; for the painter had grown wild with the ardor of his work, and turned his eyes from canvas merely, even to regard the countenance of his wife. And he would not see that the tints which he spread upon the canvas were drawn from the cheeks of her who sat beside him. And when many weeks had passed, and but little remained to do, save one brush upon the mouth and one tint upon the eye, the spirit of the lady again flickered up as the flame within the socket of the lamp. And then the brush was given, and then the tint was placed; and, for one moment, the painter stood entranced before the work which

he had wrought; but in the next, while he yet gazed, he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with a loud voice, 'This is indeed Life itself!' turned suddenly to regard his beloved: - She was dead!"

As we see, the whole paragraph which is unity of different stylistic devices and figurative sentences provokes rather strong emotions in readers and is perceived as one whole complex metaphor. It consists of fourteen sentences.

The following stylistic devices are singled out in the given complex metaphor:

1. "She was a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee."

This sentence, which itself consists of two clauses, is stylistically coloured though only one stylistic device, namely trite epithet "maiden of rarest beauty" is presented in it.

2. In the sentence "And evil was the hour when she saw, and loved, and wedded the painter" the phrase "evil was the hour" is regarded as a good example of stylistic inversion.

3. Next comes the sentence "He, passionate, studious, austere, and having already a bride in his Art" in which the phrase "having already a bride in his Art" is a genuine metaphor showing hero's attitude towards art, as art is personified.

4. "She a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee; all light and smiles, and frolicsome as the young fawn; loving and cherishing all things; hating only the Art which was her rival; dreading only the pallet and brushes and other untoward instruments which deprived her of the countenance of her lover." The given sentence provokes great emotions in reader and is rather rich in stylistic devices. Namely: a) repetition of the first sentence - "she a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee;" b) simile - "frolicsome as the young fawn;" c) trite metaphor, to be more precise personification - "hating only the Art which was her rival." This latter is the immediate continuation of the idea expressed in the clause "having already a bride in his Art."

5. The phrase "she was humble and obedient, and sat meekly" presented in the sentence "But she was humble and obedient, and sat meekly for many weeks in the dark, high turret-chamber where the light dripped upon the pale canvas only from overhead" is an example of synonymous repetition as both adjectives "humble" and "obedient" and the adverb "meekly" have the same semantic meaning (all of them express obedience). In spite of the fact, that the word "meekly" is expressed by other part of speech, the given phrase can be regarded as synonymous chain repetition.

6. "But he, the painter, took glory in his work, which went on from hour to hour, and from day to day." Although the phrase "he took glory in his work" does not include any kind of stylistic device it is still rather elevated expression and consequently provokes great emotions to readers.

7. "And he was a passionate, and wild, and moody man, who became lost in reveries; so that he would not see that the light which fell so ghastly in that lone turret withered the health and the spirits of his bride, who pined visibly to all but him." The given sentence consists of two metaphors: a) "became lost in reveries" – genuine metaphor and b) "withered the health and the spirits of his bride"- would be a trite metaphor if not the word "spirit" which gives the phrase such emotional colouring that the whole phrase can be perceived as a sustained metaphor. By transformational method the phrase can be divided into two inner metaphors: a) "withered the health" and b) "withered the spirits".

8. "She saw that the painter (who had high renown) took a fervid and burning pleasure in his task". The phrase "fervid and burning pleasure" is an epithet which makes the sentence emotionally coloured.

9. "And in sooth some who beheld the portrait spoke of its resemblance in low words, as of a mighty marvel, and a proof not less of the power of the painter than of his deep love for her whom he depicted so surpassingly well." Though the sentence does not contain any stylistic devices it still arises great emotions in reader.

10. "And when many weeks had passed, and but little remained to do, save one brush upon the mouth and one tint upon the eye, the spirit of the lady again flickered up as the flame within the socket of the lamp." The whole sentence "the spirit of the lady again flickered up as the flame within the socket of the lamp" is simile, where two trite metaphors- "spirit of the lady" and "spirit flickered" are singled out.

Conclusion

In conclusion we would like to say that complex metaphor can be called a sentence, a paragraph and even the whole story that can consist of several inner metaphors as well as other stylistic devices and even neutral phrases combination of which makes the effect of one metaphor and consequently raises strong emotions.

References:

Lakoff G., Jonson M. *Metaphors We Live By*. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago and London 1980.

Kövecses Z. *Metaphor and Emotion*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. 2000.

Bailey R. *Conceptual Metaphor, Language, Literature and Pedagogy*.
Journal of Language and Learning .Volume 1 Number 2 2003

Goossens L. *Metaphonymy: The interaction of metaphor and metonymy in expressions for linguistic action*. *Cognitive Linguistics* 1-3. 1990.