

Multimodality in Literary Text
Lecture 10
Persuading with Abstraction: Rhetoric and Metaphor
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Learning objective

At the end of this meeting, you are expected to understand:

1. Basic theory of metaphor
2. Metaphor domains
3. Rhetorical tropes: metaphor, hyperbole, metonymy, synecdoche, personification

This lecture ten will be mainly sourced from the book Machin and Mayr entitled “How to Do CDA” in 2012. However additional references will be added from other books and journal articles. Examples will be made based on the topic discussed or taken from any relatable sources.

Metaphor is one of course topic discussed in English Literature Major, specifically in the Semantic course. Some JIU students even conducted research about metaphorical expressions in various literary works, such as poetry, novels and movies. Metaphor, which is one of figurative language, is commonly associated with flowery language to represent something. There are many other figurative languages which are: simile, metonymy, hyperbole, and synecdoche. In linguistic, metaphor is identified when words or phrases are used in a way that connects to a different context form the current speech or text. Linguistic metaphors involve using words and phrases in a way that goes beyond their usual or core meanings (Cameron, L., 2008). Semino (2008) also divided metaphor into various scopes, such as: in discourse, in literature, in politics, in science and education, and in advertising.

This chapter will demonstrate that metaphor is not just the opposite of truth. Instead, it is a vital aspect of how humans think. We often comprehend things by comparing them to other things. What is crucial to understand is that this comparison can actually shape our understanding particular thing or concept.

Here are some metaphor examples taken from Literary Devices website:

1. Laughter is the best medicine.
2. Time is money.
3. He is buried in a sea of paperwork.
4. His heart of stone surprised me.
5. Last night I slept the sleep of the dead.
6. The new parents had stars in their eyes.
7. Your heart is my piñata. (Chuck Palahniuk)

8. Life is a highway. (Tom Cochrane)
9. Love is a battlefield. (Pat Benatar)
10. Each friend represents a world in us. (Anais Nin)
11. You are sunlight and I moon. (Miss Saigon)
12. If music be the food of love, play on (William Shakespeare)
13. Adults are just obsolete children and the hell with them. (Dr. Seuss)

In the first example “laughter is the best medicine.” Of course, laughter is not a medicine. Laughter is not literary drugs that contains ingredients. This kind of metaphor expression makes it easier to be understood that laughter can help the healing process when someone is facing hard times, either madness, sadness, and grief. Another example is “time is money.” It is not literally that time has a certain currency to buy something. This metaphor expression tries to compare the value of time is the same as the value of money.

It is essential to understand that metaphors are a common part of language and a key method for understanding the world. However, some metaphors can hold ideological importance. The metaphors we adopt can affect not only how we perceive and comprehend the world but also influence our actions, the institutions we create, and how we structure our societies (Machin and Mayr, 2012). Fairclough in Machin and Mayr (2012) highlights that metaphors can carry hidden ideological meanings because they can both hide and influence our understanding, all while making it seem like they are exposing it. This means that metaphors can be used to mask power imbalances in language. Metaphors, along with other language techniques, are useful tools for those who want to replace real, tangible elements like actions, identities, and contexts with abstract concepts.

Fairclough in Machin and Mayr (2012) points out that metaphors can carry hidden ideological meanings because they can both hide and influence our understandings, while at the same time making it seem like they are exposing it. This means that metaphors can be used to hide the underlying power relations in language. Metaphors, along with other language techniques, are useful tools to replace the real, tangible elements like actions, identities, and contexts with abstract concepts.

We can observe how hidden metaphors work in the phrases such as ‘happy’ as ‘up’ and ‘sad’ as ‘down’. Why does our society accept it this why? Why should happiness be associated with up and sadness with down? For instance, we say “things are looking up” and “the housing market is sinking”, but again, why should lower prices be associated with down? Our language is full of such kind of references. This hidden associations can influence the way we think and speak without us even realizing it.

Furthermore, Machin and Mayr also points out the Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) and Arnheim’s idea (1969) that metaphor is one fundamental way in which humans organize their experiences. We use established metaphors to understand and relate the world. People use these metaphors to make their statements sound more convincing or to undermine the opposing views. Metaphors allow us to focus on one aspect of an experience while hiding the others. For example, the ‘laughter is the best medicine’ draws our attention to the idea that laughter carries out a role like medicine to cure the disease, but hides the idea that the medicine and disease itself should be seen together as a whole. Frankly speaking, laughter cannot cure the

physical disease that medicine usually does. Laughter can help to heal the mental illness or pain that someone is feeling in which medicine cannot do it.

Semino (2008) highlights that many scientific concepts, like 'the greenhouse effect', 'genetic codes', 'electrical waves and particles', contain metaphors. Scientists often use metaphors to explain complex ideas in simpler terms to make them easier to understand and convince us of their validity. However, we should examine how these metaphors impact our thinking, action, and institutional structures, similar to the metaphor of 'heart as a mechanism'. As Semino (2008) states when metaphors dominate our perception of a phenomenon, they become more challenging to explain the literary meanings because they have been accepted unconsciously as the way we understand the world.

Metaphor Domains

Machin and Mayr (2012) use the term '**conceptual domain**' because metaphor can express not only the language or visual communication but also the way of thinking and realization of human experience. For instance, when we describe personality differences as a contrary object, it helps us comprehend and deal with them more easily and effectively.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain metaphor creation using the term "source domain" and "target domain" with the following simpler breakdown:

Target domain: this is the main concept or idea we want to talk about using a metaphor

Source domain: this is the concept we use to create the metaphor and help describe the target domain.

The analogy can be interpreted from the sentence "Your argument is half-baked" or "I have to digest his nasty comments." Both sentences consist of a common conceptual metaphor in English about 'idea is food' which the target domain is the 'idea' and the source domain is the 'food'.

Cameron (2007) argued that when people talk about certain subjects, the conversation can be dominated by one particular **source domain**. For example, when we talk about broken relationships or broken hearts, we often use terminologies related to 'journey' such as:

1. They finally finish the **journey** they started four years ago.
2. They decide to **walk in different paths** from now on.
3. They have been through the **bumpy roads** which they can't stand anymore.
4. They look backwards to see how **far** they have come.
5. We are **off the track** and there is no **way back**.
6. This journey has never had any **destiny** from the beginning.

Meanwhile, reconciliation in relationships also draws the same conceptual domain or source domain:

1. Let us keep **moving forward** and set our destiny.
2. Do not give up with the **storms** might come later, we can get through it together.

3. Let us have **rest** when we are tired and continue the **trip** when we feel well.
4. **Home** is where you are.

In the literal meanings, relationships have nothing to do with journey. But somehow, this kind of comparison between relationship and journey has become a stable way of thinking when we talk about it. In this kind of case, we can see how metaphors shape our perspective about certain events or experiences and how metaphors can also serve a solution in understanding the meaning of the sentence better or make the sentence become more meaningful.

Rhetorical Tropes

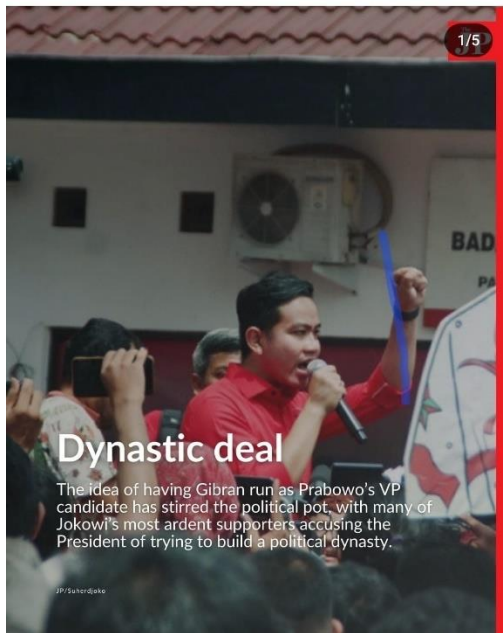
In this part, there will be deeper discussion about several types of rhetorical tropes. These types are also discussed in the Not only the elaboration of each rhetorical trope but also, I will provide the related examples as the illustrations.

1. Metaphor

As has been explained earlier that metaphor is, **the way we understand something through another thing. Or the way we express something using something else or another terminology.** For example: “Love is a battlefield” an old song of Pat Benatar, here we find that love is being compared to a battlefield or like a war. For me, this metaphor gives a powerful message on the reality of a romance relationship. It expresses that having a romance relationship is not as easy as it is said. It might be beautiful and full of happiness at the beginning, but as the time goes by problems occur and people change. Hardship in love does not always lead to a breakup, sometimes problem can also strengthen the relationship itself. Love can be like a battlefield if the couple unite against the problems. If they could overcome this hardship, their love grows stronger. Therefore, the use of such kind of metaphor can dramatically simplify the processes and give more emphasize to the emotions.

Furthermore, Machin and Mayr (2012) also state that the use of metaphor can be found easily in the political speeches and articles in the media. Metaphors are used in politics to convey specific ideological messages. Metaphors can somehow trigger emotions and create political myths. These metaphors shape how we think about political issues, making it challenging to consider alternative viewpoints until we finally accept it the way it is served to the readers or viewers (Charteris-Black, 2011). As CDA learners, metaphor analysis helps us understand how political rhetoric communicates persuasive worldviews through language.

As Indonesia is now getting closer to the 2024 national election, we can find many metaphor expressions come out from politicians and news writings in the media. In the previous chapter, I once discussed about the political dynasty of Jokowi’s family. That topic is still relatable to this metaphor discussion. There is also an article taken from Jakarta Post Instagram account which posted the same



issue. As you can see in the following figure, it is written “**Dynastic deal** – The idea of having Gibran run as Prabowo’s VP candidate has **stirred the political pot**, with many of Jokowi’s most ardent supporters accusing the President of trying to build a **political dynasty**.”

This article describes the flashback of his first son and son-in-law became mayors. Then his youngest son who is now becoming the chairman of a party called PSI. The latest issue is that his oldest son is predicted to be the vice president candidate for 2024 presidential election.

From the headline of the article, there are three metaphor expressions: dynastic deal, stirred the political pot, and political dynasty. This vice president issue is represented as a royal dynasty (dynastic deal and political dynasty) and cooking process (stirred the political pot).

Figure 1 (Lai, Y., and Suhenda, D., 2023)

2. Hyperbole

Oxford dictionary defines hyperbole as exaggerated statements that does not meant to be taken literally. In English literature, hyperbole is used throughout the conversations, speeches, rhetoric, films, poetries, and literature. As one of literary devices, hyperbole is used to draw emphasize through extreme exaggeration. The readers and listeners would be aware how the hyperbole exaggerates something (Deguzman, 2021). For example, “I have watched this film a thousand times”, readers would instantly aware that it is not a literal meaning of watching it that much.

Deguzman (2021) points out **two functions of hyperbole: to describe a feeling and to emphasize a point**. In the film Titanic, there is a scene of Jack stands in the front of the ship and shouts “I’m king of the world.” This expression describes Jack’s feeling of immense joy using the hyperbole. The second function of hyperbole, to emphasize a point, makes it clear how much a person believes in a statement. There was a speech of President Roosevelt which used exaggeration to reassure the country when he stated “So first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Obviously, there are other things to fear but his exaggeration emphasizes his main point that fear is unhelpful and makes things worse. Therefore, in certain situations, when a strong point needs to be conveyed, plain language is just not enough.

Hyperbole can also be found easily in news texts, such as:

“The demonstration was a mob rampage” or “the frenzied bloody attack” or “a strategic frontal assault”

When portraying ‘our side’ in a conflict, a journalist might choose to describe the situation as a ‘strategic frontal assault’. Following Van Dijk’s approach, conversely, the journalists may describe the actions of

the opposing side as 'frenzied bloody attacks. Similarly, a demonstration that the journalist favors could be labeled a 'human tide,' while the one unpreferable or rejected is called as 'mob rampage.' The same case happens in Indonesian situation. For example, when a number of university students conduct a demonstration at government offices or in front of DPR-MPR, there will be different discourses used to name them. To be neutral, they can be called as 'students' or 'mahasiswa'. To show negative connotation, they are can be called as 'rebel demonstrators' and hide their real identity as students. By examining text for hyperbolic language, we can uncover what they conceal and how they assess persons, places and events.

3. Personification/objectification

Personification is one of literary devices that **gives the characteristics of human into non-human things or inanimate objects**. The non-human things can be in the form of animals, objects, or certain conceptual abstraction. While, the characteristics of human applied to these things can be about their emotions, behaviors, or actions that bring nonhuman things to life (Deguzman, 2021). In literature and everyday speech, personifications are commonly used as it can value up the life, energy, and animation to the lifeless objects. For example: "The sun smiled down on us" and "the leaves are dancing with the wind." There is no way a sun can smile and leaves can dance. Those are the acts of human beings. There can be more examples of personification in movies such as "beauty and the beast" or "Frozen" or in any children's literature where the objects are humanized by doing something that normally done by human beings.

In literary production, there are three functions of Personification (Deguzman, 2021):

1. **To simplify the complex concepts:** Personifying nonhuman subjects or inanimate objects makes it easier to explain abstract concepts. For instance, using "birds and bees" simplifies a complex topic like human reproduction.
2. **To add excitement in the text:** In literature and poetry, personification can make the text more engaging. Bringing trees, animals, or objects to life by letting them interact with characters can capture the reader's interest.
3. **To create vivid setting:** Personifying story elements helps establish the story's world. Personified objects can make the setting appear dynamic or eerie, depending on how the personification is used. For instance, a haunted house that seems to move in a horror story.

In discourse analysis, the use of personification or objectification can conceal the actual agent and processes. For example, "Democracy will not stand by while this happens" (Machin and Mayr, 2012). In its literal meaning, democracy is a political system. However, politicians sometimes treat it like a person. When they do it, they might say that they and their party, along with some other members in governments will not tolerate certain things. By giving democracy human qualities, they can hide who is really responsible. They also use the idea of democracy to protect themselves and taking advantage from hiding the real situation. Therefore, if democracy appears to have an issue with something, it must be an enemy of freedom and fairness.

4. Metonymy

In language, metonymy is a figure of speech derived from the Greek which means 'change of name'. **it is substituting a name of an attribute or adjunct for the associated meaning.** In other words, it is like using a word connected to something to talk about that thing itself (Deguzman, 2020). I believe you are familiar with 'White House' which refers to the U.S. presidential or governments. In the sentence "The White House has decided to remain silent," readers are aware that a building cannot decide something. Instead, 'the white house' is a metonymic term to refer to the U.S. administration. In Indonesian the term '*pihak berwajib*' is used when we talk about police officers. In literary works, metonymy is a powerful literary device to express something. For example, in Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar", Mark Antony uses 'lend me your ears' as a metonymy to ask for a close attention and to listen to the speaker. A common metonymy is using a place to represent an institution, industry, or person. In CDA, again, metonymy can hide the actual actors behind an organization/ institution and their actions (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

Furthermore, metonymy has important functions in language, going beyond just rhetorical device. It plays an essential role in promoting effective communicating, enriching literary expressions, simplifying daily interactions, enhancing understanding, and fostering a sense of community (Deguzman, 2020).

5. Synecdoche

The use of synecdoche is when **a part represents a whole and vice versa.** It is a way for the speaker to avoid being too specific when they talk about something (Machin and Mayr, 2012). This part is easier to understand through its practical examples. For example, the sentence "he buys a new set of wheels" talks about a new car. The car is represented by the wheels as the body parts. Another example is "the country will not take sides in war." Here, the country is summarizing the government and its citizens. Therefore, 'the country' is used to as a whole part to represent the partial parts.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, we explored that metaphor isn't just about fancy or poetic language; it's a fundamental part of how humans think. Metaphors help us make sense of complex ideas. But they can also be used strategically to simplify processes and highlight or downplay certain aspects. The widespread use of a metaphor can even impact how we structure our societies, like when we treat society as a marketplace where we all compete to offer our services. This affects how we run our schools and provide support.

We have also seen those rhetorical techniques, such as metaphors, are great for simplifying complex details, but they can be incredibly persuasive, guiding our understanding by connecting one thing to another in an emotional or simplistic way. In our analyses, it's important to spot these rhetorical techniques and then uncover the broader messages they convey. This means identifying what gets simplified or glossed over and how they promote sequences of actions.

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Sources of Figure:

Figure 1:

Lai, Y., and Suhenda, D., (2023). "Dynastic deal: Prabowo names Jokowi's son his running mate". [thejakartapost.com](https://www.thejakartapost.com)

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2023/10/23/dynastic-deal-prabowo-names-jokowis-son-his-running-mate.html>