

Image Schema Analysis on Psalm 23: A Study of Metaphor Based on Cognitive Theory

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Abstract— This article aims to identify what types of image schemas operating in Psalm 23 “The Lord is My Shepherd. This text is very old and full with metaphors. According to the theory of Conceptual Metaphor, metaphorical phenomena are not merely as a linguistic matter, but rather as a process of cognition by which humans understand the reality (Lakoff and Johnson,1980). Unconsciously, conceptual metaphor generates metaphorical expressions in our daily life. Behind the conceptual metaphor, there are image schemas serving as a pre-conceptual structure derived from physical experiences, cultural background, and ideology of a nation. Image-schema is a recurring structure within our cognitive process (Johnson,1987).

The Psalm 23 “The Lord is my Shepherd” consists of 6 verses, each may be contained of more than one sentence or phrase. It was written by King David about the fifth and the tenth century B.C. to show the goodness of God, and His close relationship with His people. God is portrayed as a good shepherd caring deeply to His cattle. Mapping method is adopted to construct the meaning of metaphor in which *The Lord* as Target Domain and *Shepherd* as Source Domain. Then, each verse is analyzed to find image schemas involved in the text. As the result, there are seven types of image schemas in Psalm 23: *container*, *path*, *link*, *force*, *attraction*, *blockage*, and *removal of restraints*. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that *image schema* as an elementary part of conceptual metaphor has potential to be an analysis tool to discover the meaning of metaphorical texts.

Keywords: *image schema, conceptual metaphor, and Cognitive Linguistics.*

1. Introduction

The Book of Psalm is a part of Old Testament writings of *The Bible*. It is classified as literary genre because it contains of a collection of prayers, songs, and praises. This book was composed in the tenth and the fifth centuries B.C. but it is still being used in rituals by both the Christians and the Jews. Psalm is an expression of the deepest religious experience due to the intimate relationship between the psalmist and God.

The Book of Psalm consists of 105 psalms, and Psalm 23 “The Lord is my Shepherd“ is very popular in use. It portrays a close relationship between God as the caring shepherd and men as a flock of sheep. Understanding metaphor “The Lord is my Shepherd” from the perspective of cognitive theory means to construct the cognitive process expressed in the lingual phenomena. Metaphor is a means of how humans understand the world, especially the abstract, complicated,

or divine realities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1984). Interpretation of metaphor, therefore, needs cognitive approach rather than structural one.

This article has two purposes: (1) to identify what types of image schema operating in Psalm 23 and (2) to construct the meaning or message of Psalm 23.

2. Theoretical Framework

There are five assumptions of Cognitive Linguistics to build its theory (Langacker, 1987), as follows:

- (a) Refusing the notion that linguistic competence is autonomous and separated from human cognition as claimed by generative grammar theory.
- (b) Grammar is understood in relation with conceptualization. Linguistic data stored in human brain is not different from other knowledges.
- (c) Knowledge of language comes from the use of language to comprehend the reality which is the same as non-linguistic tasks.
- (d) Linguistic competence is not innate (Chomsky), but the result of learning.
- (e) Meaning is a central focus in language, other structures are related to semantics. Cognitive linguistic tries to understand how semantics and syntax cooperate, how the relation between using language and thinking, and how the process of conceptualization through language are.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is a vital sub-discipline of Cognitive Linguistics focusing on the cognitive process behind the language. The seminal study of CMT based on the book *Metaphor We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) suggested that metaphor was not only a question of language but of thinking and consequently of behaving. Within this cognitive framework, some linguists began to approach metaphor by suggesting the existence of knowledge structures held in human cognition. They hypothesized that these knowledge structures are basically metaphorical, therefore, the way of human thinking is also metaphorical. According to Lakoff and Johnson, these knowledge structures were resided in long term memory, and they are termed as Conceptual Metaphor.

Based on empirical findings from other sciences, some cognitive linguists try to create psychological models for language relating to categorization, conceptualization, memory, imagery, and cognitive process such as *mental space* (Fauonnier, 1994), *image schema* (Johnson, 1987), *gestalt* (Lakoff, 1987). One of such models is image schema serving as recurring pre-conceptual structure, unconsciously operating in human cognitive process in terms of understanding the world and structuring experiences through language (Johnson, 1987). Moreover, Johnson (1987) makes a list of image schema consisting of 15 types, and classifying them into three categories: (i) *spatial motion group*, (ii) *force group*, and (iii) *balance group*.

3. Research Methods

This is a descriptive qualitative research aiming to investigate in depth the phenomena of metaphorical expressions in a text as the data. The main tasks are to collect data, to describe them, to analyze, and interpret them. According to Sutopo (2002), this kind of research may be called *embedded case study* meaning that data and the problem of research have already existed before the data are collected. Therefore, it is not necessary to formulate hypothesis and to test it. In a qualitative research, abstractions are made based on the collected data so it is also called an inductive research.

Metaphor “The Lord is my Shepherd” contains “the Lord” as Target Domain (TD) and “Shepherd” as Source Domain (SD). Analysis is done by mapping between SD and TD to construct the meaning, supported with sociocultural context of SD. Moreover, image schema analysis is adopted to identify what kinds of image schema are involved in the metaphor.

4. Novelties

Methodologically, the use of image schema as a tool of analysis is relatively a new method in the study of metaphor. Thus, this method can be applied to other fields of study in which they contain metaphorical expressions both in orally and written form. Besides, the novelty is shown by the research finding that image schema as a pre conceptual element of metaphor is expressed in lingual forms such as preposition (for example, *in* for IS Container, *out of* and *from* for IS Force) and sentence patterns such as the use of causative verbs (for example, *make* and *lead* for IS Force).

5. Discussion

Psalm 23 “The Lord is my Shepherd” is considered as a conceptual metaphor because The Lord as Target Domain is an abstract, complicated reality which is conceptualized by mapping to the Source Domain Shepherd which is very familiar thing in real life. Here is the mapping of this metaphor:

	SD : Shepherd	TD: The Lord
Characteristic:	Gentle Caring Responsible Helpful	The merciful loving God
Function:	To protect To lead To guide To guard To feed	To guarantee all human needs physically and mentally on the journey of life in this world

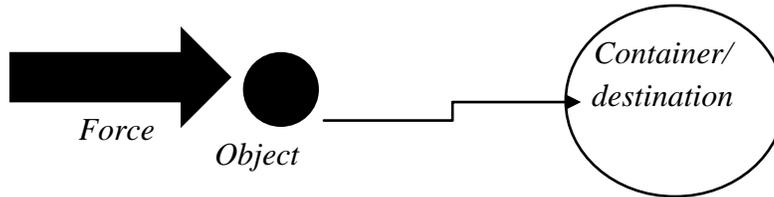
Based on the mapping above, the metaphor “The Lord is my Shepherd” conceptualizes The Lord (TD) as the merciful, loving God who guarantees all human needs on the journey of life in the world. The message is “trust in him totally by obeying his rules”. The use of Shepherd is due to the vital role of a shepherd in the Jewish people. As a nomad tribe at that time, the flock of sheep was the most valuable treasure for which a dedicated and skillful shepherd was needed. Besides, the Jewish founding fathers were also shepherds such as Abraham, Moses, and David. Considered as the writer of psalms, David himself was a shepherd before he was ordained as the king of Israel. Thus, he knew well about the characteristics of shepherd which was chosen as SD to conceptualize God.

By adopting Image-Schema theory, moreover, an analysis can be done on the Psalm 23 as follows:

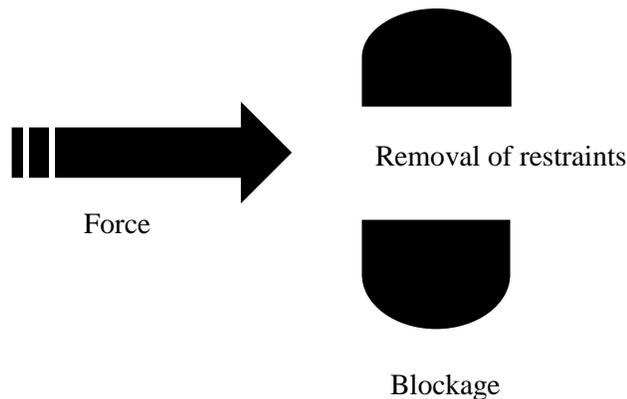
1. *The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need.*
2. *He lets me rest in fields of green grass and, lead me to quite pools of fresh water.*
3. *He gives me a new strength. He guides me in the right paths as he has promised.*
4. *Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, Lord, for you are with me. Your shepherd’s rod and staff protect me.*
5. *You prepare a banquet for me, where my enemies can see me; you welcome me as a honored guest and will my cup to the brim.*
6. *I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life; and your house will be my home as long as I live.*

Verse 1: it is the statement containing the theme of the psalm, the psalmist’s belief that God’s goodness will fulfill his life. *Verse 2:* there are two Image-Schemas (IS) involved in it, *Force* (God) works on the object (psalmist) so the object moves into the *Container* (green grass, fresh pools of water) as the destination. This verse means that God has already prepared all human needs in a prosperous place (IS *Container*), and no reason to worry this life. *Verse 3:* God as *IS Force* working on the object, then it moves on the right path (IS *Path*) towards the destination

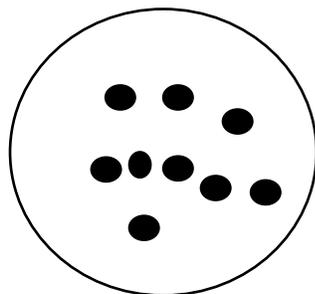
(God's promise). *IS Force* and *Path* in this verse mean that God will guide and protect humans in their life journey to arrive at the final destination. He does not give all worldly needs, but also spiritual strength so they can walk in the right path of life. In both verse 1 and verse 2, *IS Force* is expressed by causative verbs *let* and *lead*, as illustrated here:



Verse 4: *IS Container* expresses sufferings and difficulties (darkness) in life. It is scary and frightened to pass such a place but together with God (*IS Link*) there are strength and bravery (*IS Force*) to go through. The force is able to get rid of all difficulties and sufferings (*IS Removal Restraint*). Rod and staff are instruments used by the shepherd to protect flock of sheep from the predator's threat (*IS Blockage*). This verse says that together with God, no reason to be afraid of danger and difficulties. God will protect humans from any threat as far as they obey His rules. These image schemas may be illustrated as here.



Verse 5: God is also conceptualized as a host of banquet, who invites all human who follow His rules. A feast is an expression of *IS Container* in which the objects (guests) feel happy. All guests are treated as honored persons, served with plenty of food and drink. In *The Bible*, Heaven is often pictured as a banquet to illustrate the eternal happiness. *Verse 6*: It is the conclusion of all previous verses expressing *IS Link* by which objects (God's goodness and love) will be as one with people who obey His commands. It is the ultimate goal of life, being together with God (*IS Container*).



Banquet = container

6. Conclusions

Based on the discussion above, it may be concluded as follows:

- (i) Psalm 23 “The Lord is my Shepherd” is a conceptual metaphor in which *The Lord* serves as Target Domain and *Shepherd* as Source Domain. Based on mapping, the metaphor has function to conceptualize *The Lord* as the merciful, loving God who guarantees all human needs on the journey of life by trusting in Him and obeying his rules.
- (ii) The meaning or message of a metaphorical text like “The Lord is my Shepherd” may be constructed by adopting Image Schema analysis based on the cognitive theory. There are six image schemas operating in this metaphor: *container*, *path*, *force*, *link*, *blockage*, and *removal of Restraints*. Based on IS analysis, Psalm 23 portrays about the journey of life to the the ultimate destination in which God gives guaranty to guide, guard, protect, and supply all humans’ needs as far as humans obey His rules. It is also a picture of intimate relationship between God (shepherd) and the psalmist (human). Thus, this meaning is relevant to the finding of mapping above.

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