The Metaphorical Conceptualization of Death in Holly Defense Literature
(Case Study: the Novel "I Am Alive")

Ahlam Gholamshahi[1], Sasan Sharafi[2], Mansoore Shekaramiz[3]*

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the metaphorical conceptualization of "death" in the Novel "I am alive" by Masoumeh Abad (2014) to find out how a teenage girl who was held captive by the Ba'athist regime in Iraq for 4 years, perceive and represent the phenomenon of death. This analysis has been done within the framework of conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Lakoff, 1993) and the findings of the research reveal that the authors have used various conceptual domains including school, fighting, entertainment, journey, disease, natural phenomena, beverage, reward, key, as well as the cognitive mechanisms of personification, animism, and Objectification, all of which are based on metaphor to express the concept of death.

Keywords: *conceptual metaphor in the novel, metaphorical conceptualization, Metaphor and memories of holy defense, Literary analysis of sacred defense literature*

[1] PhD Candidate, Department of General Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran. Email: gholamshahi1362@gmail.com

[2] Corresponding Author, Assistant Professor, Department of General Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran. Email: s.sharafi@iauahvaz.ac.ir

[3] Assistant Professor, Department of General Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran. Email: mansooreshekaramiz@gmail.com

Extended Abstract

1. **Introduction**

The eight-year imposed war is one of the important events in contemporary Iran, which has had a significant impact on the fields of culture, literature, and art. The memories of the war period, including the memories of captivity in Iraqi prisons and camps, are a reliable and rich source for a better understanding of the various dimensions of the war and its events and consequences. The aim of this study is to examine the metaphorical conceptualization of "death" in the story "I Am Alive" by Masoumeh Abad (2014), to understand what a teenage girl who has been in the captivity of the Ba'athist regime in Iraq for 4 years has perceived about the phenomenon of death and how she has represented it. This research has been conducted within the framework of the theory of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999; Lakoff, 1993). According to this theory, a metaphor is the understanding of one domain of experience in terms of another domain. A metaphor is not only a literary device and not only specific to language, but a cognitive and conceptual mechanism that plays a necessary role in the system of human cognition and processes of understanding and thinking.

Research Question

The question raised in this research is:

- In the novel "I Am Alive" (Masoumeh Abad, 2014), how is the metaphorical conceptualization of the phenomenon of death or martyrdom done?

Based on the answer to this question, it can be understood how the novelist, as a woman who has been present in the war and experienced the hardest conditions of captivity in the enemy's prison for four years, perceives and expresses death in metaphorical forms.

2. Literature Review

One of the topics that has received attention from researchers in the literature related to the eight-year imposed war is the use of metaphors in conceptualizing issues and events related to the war, which has been reflected in prose texts (novels and stories) and poetry. Oliyaei (2011) has examined the reflection of the eight-year war in the memoirs of

Iranian women based on the theory of conceptual metaphor and concluded that female writers have focused more on spiritual and emotional issues in their memoirs of the war, and there is no significant difference between men and women in their presence in the war. Staji and colleagues (2018) have studied animal-based metaphors in the literature of the Holy Defense. The findings of this study indicate that the conceptual domain of animals is one of the most common source domains for metaphorical expressions, playing an important role in conceptualizations related to the domain of the imposed war.

In addition to novels, the poems of the Holy Defense have also been studied based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Marouf (2016) has examined the metaphors related to the concepts of martyrdom and martyrdom in the poems of the Holy Defense. According to the results of this study, the source domains of flight, path, wine, galaxy, birth, martyrdom, place, and life have been the most common conceptual metaphor domains for expressing the concept of martyrdom. Pournorouz (2020) has investigated the conceptual metaphors used to express the concept of "war" in the poems of both male and female poets of the Holy Defense. The findings of the research indicate that poets have used various conceptual domains such as human, spring, fragrance, city, building, prayer, and poetry to express the concept of martyrdom.

3. Methodology

In terms of methodology, the research is a corpus-based research whose data are extracted from the text of the book "I am alive" (Abad, 2013). In order to identify the conceptual metaphors and their source domains, linguistic metaphors in the text must first be identified and analyzed, and then their underlying conceptual metaphors must be extracted and examined. Therefore, the entire text of the book was read from beginning to end, and all linguistic expressions that metaphorically conveyed the concept of death or martyrdom were identified. These linguistic expressions, referred to as *linguistic metaphors* (Kövecses, 2010), were then classified and analyzed based on their source domains.

4. Results

The results of the research indicate that the novelist has used various metaphors to express her experiences and emotions regarding the phenomenon of death, based on diverse conceptual domains including

school, struggle, entertainment, travel, illness, natural phenomena, beverages, rewards, and key. She has also utilized cognitive mechanisms of anthropomorphism, zoomorphism, and personification, all based on metaphor, to express the concept of death.

The commonly used metaphors for representing death or martyrdom are "martyrdom is human", "martyrdom is a path", "martyrdom is a refreshing drink", and "martyrdom is flight." These metaphors reveal that within the cultural context of the Holy Defense, death or martyrdom is regarded as a significant and noble concept. While the public may find this concept unfamiliar and fearful, authors of Holy Defense novels who have firsthand experience on the front lines and with the phenomenon of death/martyrdom, hold a positive and favorable view of it. This perspective is deeply rooted in the religious beliefs of the authors, for whom martyrdom is seen as a means to attain divine presence.

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