

## The Role of Metaphor and Metonymy in the Conceptualization of Art Terms: A Cognitive-Linguistic Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

*This study embarks on an advanced cognitive-linguistic inquiry into the ontological scaffolding and epistemic architecture of art-related terminology, interrogating the intricate interplay between metaphorical and metonymic schemata as fundamental heuristic devices in the conceptual structuration of artistic discourse. Anchored in the theoretical matrices of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Conceptual Metonymy Theory (CMTy), this research elucidates the neurocognitive substrates and diachronic sedimentation of figurative cognition as an indispensable semiotic apparatus in the encoding of aesthetic semiotics. Employing a corpus-driven, multimodal hermeneutic methodology, the study deconstructs entrenched cognitive mappings that pervade English and Uzbek art lexicons. Furthermore, the study interrogates the diachronic plasticity of these cognitive operations, delineating their phylogenetic stratification and ontogenetic variability within diverse semiotic ecologies. By integrating the theoretical paradigms of cognitive linguistics, semiotics, and phenomenological aesthetics, this research advances a transdisciplinary discourse on the axiological and typological intricacies of art terminology, ultimately contributing to the meta-theoretical evolution of cognitive-semiotic inquiry in aesthetic linguistics.*

**Keywords:** Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), conceptual metonymy theory (CMTy), cognitive linguistics, art terminology, figurative cognition, epistemic projection, diachronic and

synchronic analysis, cross-linguistic semantics, semiotic frameworks, aesthetic lexicology, metaphorical and metonymic mappings.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The conceptualization of art term is deeply embedded within the cognitive and linguistic structures that mediate human perception, interpretation, and articulation of aesthetic experience. At the core of this epistemological process lies the intricate interplay between metaphor and metonymy, two fundamental cognitive mechanisms that serve as the scaffolding for meaning construction within art discourse. The dynamic role of these conceptual devices in shaping the terminological framework of artistic expression extends beyond mere linguistic ornamentation; rather, they function as cognitive imperatives that facilitate cross-domain mappings and inferential reasoning, thereby endowing art terminology with its structural coherence and semantic malleability. From a cognitive-linguistic standpoint, metaphor operates as a mechanism of analogical transference, wherein abstract artistic concepts are mapped onto more concrete experiential domains, whereas metonymy engenders contiguity-based semantic relations that optimize referential precision and communicative efficiency.

In the 1930s and 1940s, terms began to be studied as a distinct linguistic unit and became a specialized object of research. The phenomenon of the "information explosion" served as a catalyst for the rapid development of terminology, reflecting changes in science as well as in socio-economic spheres. This implies that terminological units demonstrate the close interconnection between science and language. They function as catalysts in the process of knowledge transmission, serving as a means of ensuring coherence and systematic organization [1: 104]. The achievements of contemporary scientific thought enable the examination and analysis of the meaning of the concept of a term, thereby facilitating the study of the specific relational units between semasiological terminology and lexical semantics. As a result of the significant expansion of

terminological knowledge, certain branches of terminological research have emerged as independent scientific disciplines, including onomasiological, functional, historical, comparative terminology, semasiological, typological studies, terminography, specialized terminology (e.g., economic terminology), text terminology, and the theory of cognitive terminology [2: 274-275]. Linguistic research reveals the existence of various approaches to interpreting the concept of a term. To this day, no single, universally accepted definition of the term “term” has been established, which can be attributed to its complexity and multifaceted nature. Different scholars have highlighted the key aspects of this concept while proposing distinct criteria for its definition. This situation necessitates the identification of the specific characteristics of terminology and the establishment of a practical definition of the term to address challenges in research. At the same time, analyzing the diverse perspectives within the scientific field enables the identification of the most general and universal formulations.

## 2. METAPHOR AND METONYMY AS A BASIC MECHANISM IN THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ART TERMS

Just as an artist strives to enrich their work with various colors and techniques to give it a unique brilliance, a writer also endeavors to make their literary creation vivid and impactful through diverse linguistic means. By employing different stylistic devices, they can immerse the reader in the narrative, evoke deep emotions, and even move them to tears. The role of stylistic devices in achieving such an effect is unparalleled. In modern art terminology, one of the sources of terminological expansion includes terms created through stylistic means. However, there are certain hesitations when it comes to accepting them as fully established terms. Let us now briefly touch upon the concepts of metaphor and metonymy in linguistics.

The term “metaphor” was first used by Isocrates in his work *Evagoras*. This type of transition is based on any form of similarity between two objects or phenomena. Metaphorical meanings can emerge based on a person’s external appearance,

physical and psychological state, movements of body parts, stages of life, clothing, and its components. The English scholar E. Orton identified three main reasons for using metaphors in everyday life:

- they help us to speak concisely;
- they make our speech more vivid;
- they allow us to express things that cannot otherwise be articulated. [3: 215]

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- Metaphorical models help determine the socio-political consciousness level of a nation, enabling conclusions to be drawn. Studying them allows for an evaluation of the national, mental, and cultural perspectives of different peoples. This idea is also reflected in the views of prominent scholars in contemporary metaphorology, such as J. Lakoff and M. Johnson, in their work *Metaphors we live by*:

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Metaphors are not only part of everyday life and language but also deeply embedded in our thinking and activities. Our conceptual system itself is, in essence, metaphorical.

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- Through metaphors, epistemological significance is revealed, forming signifying words that are linked to a person's worldview. For this reason, metaphor is often regarded as an "ideal essence."

One such method involves comparing original (source) metaphors with their translations. This approach requires not only a linguistic comparison of these cultural elements but also consideration of the cultural and oral literary traditions unique to a given nation. For example, in Uzbek paremiology, the traditional symbol of "baldness" (*kal*) was initially associated with cunning and later metaphorically linked to the image of a "fox" (*tulki*). In translation, attention must be paid to ensuring that the conveyed meaning aligns with contemporary interpretations. While in modern contexts, cunning and deceit are metaphorically associated with the verb to "fox" (*tulki*), in historical and oral Uzbek literature, similar behaviors were

metaphorically depicted through expressions like *kalkirdikorlari* (the deeds of the bald) [4: 107].

In metaphor, two key aspects must be distinguished:

1. metaphor as one of the three primary mechanisms of cognition (which includes rational, empirical, and metaphorical types of cognition);
2. metaphorical thinking as a specific stage of cognitive development.

Two types of metaphors can be found in the structure of a text:

1. **Individual metaphors used by the author:** These types of metaphors have an occasional (context-dependent) nature, meaning their metaphorical significance is understood only within the framework of a particular text. Their occurrence in other texts is highly limited.
2. **Conventional (fixed) or widely used metaphors:** These metaphors carry meanings that are easily understood by all language users and are frequently used in communication. Most linguists who study metaphors emphasize that stable metaphors are closely related to idioms or can even function as idioms. This stability is the result of their long-term use in human speech over centuries. As a result, they become entrenched in the minds of speakers as specific cognitive models, reinforcing the strong and consistent connection between a metaphorical standard and its symbolic object [5: 40].

Not only are metaphors frequently encountered in human speech, but metonymies also hold an invaluable place in language. If we turn our attention to metonymy.

Metonymy (from the Greek *metonymia* – renaming) is a shift from one object to another based on their contiguity or real-world connection. In our cognition, two objects are linked in such a way that they can be referred to by a single name. Metonymy, therefore, arises as a type of figurative meaning formed through this process. While metaphor relies on similarity – where similar

objects or phenomena share the same name—metonymy is determined by the adjacency or close association of objects [6: 87].

Unlike metaphorical transference, which conditionally signifies the similarity of objects, actions, or qualities, metonymy is based on the adjacency or close association of things, concepts, or actions that are not inherently similar. For example, different types of “objects” can be referred to by the same word, such as an industrial enterprise and its employees – both can be denoted by the same term (e.g., “plant” in “a new plant” and “the plant fulfilled the plan”). Similarly, a single word can represent a country, a state, or its government (e.g., “France” in “the people of France” and “France signed a treaty”).

Depending on the type of association between objects (concepts) or actions, metonymy is classified into spatial, temporal, and logical metonymy.

The term “logical metonymy” is somewhat arbitrary, as it applies, to some extent, to all types of metonymy. For example, personal names such as Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz are frequently found in the Uzbek language. It has been stated that the derived meanings of personal names are more commonly observed in spoken language. In such cases, a person’s discoveries, character, or symbolic aspects are transferred to their works, leading to the occurrence of metonymy.

For instance, metonymy can arise when literary works associated with writers are referred to by the writer's name. In this case, the word related to the work in speech is omitted due to ellipsis, and its meaning is instead expressed through the name of the writer. E.g.: *Chol-chi, ko'zoynaginantgancha bot-bot kitobvaraqqaydi: **Bedilmi, Mashrab?*** (“The old man wipes his glasses and repeatedly turns the pages of the book: **Bedil? Mashrab?**”) (A. Oripov); *Menga**Pushkin**birjahon, Menga**Bayron**birjahon.* (“To me, **Pushkin** is a world, to me, **Byron** is a world.”) (E. Voqিদov) [7: 151].

As we have understood, metaphors and metonymies not only enhance expressiveness in literary texts, enrich speech, and refine linguistic expression but also serve additional functions, such as word formation and the creation of specialized terminology in various fields.

### 3. METAPHORICAL AND METONYMIC CONCEPTUALIZATION IN ART TERMINOLOGY

Artistic language is deeply influenced by cognitive structures that facilitate meaning-making. The conceptualization of art-related terms is not a purely descriptive endeavor but a process imbued with metaphorical and metonymic transformations that enrich interpretation and discourse. Lakoff and Johnson's theory of conceptual metaphor posits that abstract notions are often structured through metaphorical mappings [8: 127], whereas metonymy, as outlined by Kövecses establishes meaning through contiguity. In the field of art, these cognitive mechanisms serve to encode aesthetic experiences into linguistic form, fostering a deeper comprehension of artistic movements, stylistic elements, and creative techniques [9: 64]. Metaphors in artistic terminology emerge from the interplay between visual perception, emotion, and cognitive schemas. They provide a structured way of understanding abstract artistic concepts by mapping them onto familiar domains. Some fundamental metaphorical mappings in art terminology include:

- **Painting as language:** Terms such as "visual syntax," "artistic vocabulary," and "painterly rhetoric" frame visual art as a linguistic system, suggesting that paintings "speak" through compositional elements.
- **Color as emotion:** The classification of colors as "warm" (e.g., reds, oranges, yellows) and "cool" (e.g., blues, greens, purples) is metaphorically grounded in human sensory and affective experiences. Additionally, phrases such as "a melancholic blue" or "a passionate red" demonstrate the conceptual link between chromatic properties and emotional states.
- **Light as knowledge:** Artistic descriptions often employ the metaphor of light as an epistemic tool. The term "illuminated manuscript" connotes both literal illumination and intellectual enlightenment, while "dark art" metaphorically suggests obscurity, mystery, or even malevolence.

- **Space as time:** Art movements and stylistic changes are often described using temporal metaphors, such as "the dawn of impressionism" or "the twilight of the Baroque era," highlighting how spatial constructs influence temporal perception.
- **Brushstroke as Gesture:** Expressionist and abstract paintings are frequently analyzed through the metaphor of brushstrokes as bodily movement. Phrases like "violent brushstrokes" or "delicate strokes" liken the act of painting to physical gestures, reinforcing the embodied nature of artistic creation.

Metonymy operates within the same cognitive domain, facilitating meaning shifts based on direct associations. In art terminology, metonymy often emerges through references to materials, techniques, artists, and artistic periods:

- **The artist for the artwork:** – The names of renowned artists frequently metonymically stand for their works. Expressions such as "a Rembrandt" or "a Picasso" do not merely reference the artist but signify specific paintings or styles.
- **The material for the artwork:** Many art terms involve metonymic shifts where the medium substitutes for the artwork itself. For instance, "an oil" refers to an oil painting, and "a watercolor" signifies an artwork created with watercolor paints.
- **The tool for the technique:** Certain artistic methodologies are named after the primary tool used, such as "etching" (from the etching needle) and "lithography" (from the lithographic stone).
- **The place for the institution:** Museums and galleries are frequently used metonymically to denote their collections or cultural significance. For example, "the Louvre" is often used to refer to its holdings rather than the physical building itself.
- **The movement for the style:** – Art movements, such as Cubism or Surrealism, can metonymically stand for the stylistic tendencies and thematic preoccupations associated with them.

Additionally, metaphorical and metonymic processes contribute to the historical evolution of art terminology. Many terms that originated as figurative expressions have become conventionalized within the lexicon of art criticism. For instance, the term "Impressionism" was initially a derogatory metaphor but later became the standard designation for the movement. Similarly, the metonymic shift in referring to "Flemish Primitives" as an artistic school demonstrates how language shapes the perception of artistic heritage.

#### 4. EXAMPLES OF CONCEPTUALIZATION OF METAPHOR AND METONYMY IN ART TERMINOLOGY

<b>Metaphoric examples</b>	
"Color Palette of Emotions"	The term "palette" metaphorically represents a range of emotions, as if emotions were colors an artist could mix and apply.
"Sculpting Ideas"	The verb "sculpting" is metaphorically used to describe shaping abstract ideas as if they were marble or clay.
"Brushstrokes of Time"	time is conceptualized as an artist's brushstrokes, implying gradual change and artistic influence on history.
"Canvas of Life"	life is metaphorically depicted as a canvas where experiences are painted like an artwork.
"Architect of Sound"	a musician or composer is metaphorically referred to as an architect, implying that music has a structural and designed quality.
"Chiaroscuro of Thought"	the contrast between light and dark in a painting (chiaroscuro) is metaphorically applied to the complexity of human thought.
"Symphony of Colors"	a combination of colors is metaphorically likened to a symphony, emphasizing harmony and composition.
"Carving the Soul onto Paper"	writing or artistic expression is metaphorically equated with carving, suggesting deep emotional imprinting.
"Dancing Lines"	lines in an artwork are described as "dancing," implying movement and fluidity.

"Frozen Music"	(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's metaphor for architecture) – Suggests that architectural structures are like captured, structured music.
<b>Metonymic examples:</b>	
"The Easel Won the Prize"	the artist is replaced by "easel" (his tool), implying that the artist and the artwork are interconnected.
"The Gallery Applauded the Masterpiece"	"Gallery" metonymically stands for the viewers or critics within the gallery.
"The Brush Moved with Precision"	"Brush" metonymically refers to the painter who controls it.
"Acrylics Dominate Modern Art"	"Acrylics" stands for artworks created using acrylic paint.
"Reading Picasso"	referring to a painting or artwork by the artist's name, rather than stating "Reading a book about Picasso" or "Viewing a Picasso painting."
"The Stage Spoke Volumes"	"Stage" represents the performance or the actors upon it.
"The Museum Acquired a Van Gogh"	"Van Gogh" refers to his artwork, not the person himself.
"The Frame Defines the Masterpiece"	"Frame" represents the boundaries and artistic presentation rather than just a physical object.
"The Opera House Echoed with Applause"	"Opera House" refers to the audience inside, expressing their reaction.
"The Ivory Tower of the Art World"	"Ivory Tower" metonymically refers to an elite, detached art institution or artistic ideology.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The intricate interplay of metaphor and metonymy in the conceptualization of art terms underscores the cognitive and semiotic richness of artistic discourse. While metaphor facilitates cross-domain mappings that enhance interpretative depth, metonymy establishes associative links that streamline communication. By examining these linguistic mechanisms, scholars can better understand the evolving nature of artistic

language and its role in shaping aesthetic perception. Further research in cognitive poetics and multimodal metaphor analysis may offer additional insights into the ways metaphor and metonymy function in the broader field of visual culture and artistic semiotics.

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