

MALAY METAPHORS: SOURCE DOMAIN AND HISTORICAL CONNECTION

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1. Introduction

As the English metaphor can be identified as consisting of two components known as the source domain and the target domain (Saeed 1977), a study was carried out to find out whether the same is true of the Malay metaphor. The results indicate that they adhere to the same principle. This being the case, a further study was conducted on the source domain as this domain consists of concrete forms which describes or explains the target domain. It is discovered that the words used in this component are derived from man and nature. Of particular interest is the discovery of a whole network of words used in the field of agriculture, a field which is no longer dominant in their lives.

In trying to achieve the above objective, this paper will attempt to provide a brief outline of the topics mentioned above by defining the metaphor and discussing the components of a metaphor with particular attention given to the source domain. This is followed by a discussion on the source domains of metaphors which are related to agriculture and finally, a brief explanation on its historical significance.

2. Definition of a metaphor

Many have stated that the word **metaphor** originated from the Greek words *meta* and *pherein* which carries the summarized meaning of 'the transfer of meaning'. To explain this phenomena, many definitions have been put forward. Aristotle, being the earliest among them stated that the metaphor involves the giving of a name to something else. The transfer is from genus to species, species to genus, or species to species based on analogy (Lappin 1981).

To further clarify this definition, Stern (1965) quoting from Stählin stated that the metaphor is a form of figurative language where something that is being referred to is given another name by the following process:

- (i) the transfer does not involve an essential identity of the two referents,
- (ii) the designation is taken from another sphere of experience than that to which the actual referent belongs, and
- (iii) the process of transfer is not expressed.

The Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (1992: 836) further explains the metaphor as:

(the use of) an expression which means or describes one thing or idea using words usually used of something else with very similar qualities (as in *The sunshine of her smile* or *The rain came down in buckets*) without using the words *as* or *like*.

These definitions clearly indicate that there are two parts to a metaphor and that the two parts are from different fields. These two parts or components interact, leading to a transfer of meaning which is not explicitly stated, as words such as *as* or *like* are not used. Looking at the first example provided by the last definition, the metaphor would be the combination of *sunshine* and *her smile*. These two are from totally different fields as the former is part of nature while the latter refers to what a person is doing. *The sunshine* also describes *her smile* without the use of any explicit markers that are found in similes. The same rule applies to the next example where the metaphor is based on the direct comparison between *rainfall* and *buckets*.

3. The components of a metaphor

In the previous section, we have established that the English metaphor consists of two components. References to these two components have included *tenor* and *vehicle* (Richards 1936) *principal* and *subsidiary subject* (Black 1962), as well as *topic* and *image* (Larson 1984). The terms that will be used throughout this paper to refer to these two components are **source domain** and **target domain** (Saeed 1997) as these are widely used presently.

Based on Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) findings, Hatch and Brown (1995) noted that abstract concepts are often explained using more concrete concepts. Therefore, "we use terms from a concrete *source* field to talk about an abstract *target* field" (1995:86). An example which they use to illustrate this point is the abstract concept of IDEA which is explained using words from other source fields such as plants or food:

Source	⇒	Target	Source	⇒	Target
Plants	⇒	Ideas	Food	⇒	Ideas
Ideas are planted			cook up an idea		
even in a barren mind			idea smells fishy		
ideas grow from seeds			swallow an idea		
ideas bud, flower or die			a half-baked idea		
on the vine					

(Hatch & Brown 1995:86)

These examples clearly indicate the use of concrete concepts such as plants and food to explain the abstract concept of IDEA. The explanation is not based on any lengthy or wordy explanations but it is based on our ability to perceive and comprehend the nature of plants and food thus, enabling us to see the comparison being made between these and IDEAS.

4. Agriculture as a source domain

We will now look at some examples of Malay metaphors in which the source domain are linked to the field of agriculture. The **American Heritage Dictionary** (1980) states

that agriculture is “the science, art, and business of cultivating the soil, producing crops, and raising livestock useful to man.” This provides the basis for the selection of source domain words related to the field of agriculture. Our discussion will be divided into three stages. It will begin with: (a) the components of the land (jungle) which needs to be cleared before cultivation can take place, followed by (b) the actual planting and sprouting of roots and finally, (c) the blossoming of the flower.

(a) The components of the land (jungle)

Located near the equator, Malaysia enjoys a tropical climate the whole year round. Its rainforest is known for its dense vegetation making a walk through the jungle difficult. Clearing the land for agriculture would be equally difficult due to the presence of collective groups of plants: **semak samun** which refers to the undergrowth consisting of shrubs, bushes and low growing trees; **hutan belantara** which refers to the extensive jungle; **rimba** which means forest or jungle; **rimba yang bersimpang-siur** which refers to the extensive forest or jungle, as well as parts of plants; **ranting dan duri** which refers to branches and thorns as parts of the tree; **berduri** which means having thorns; and **reba ranjau** which refers to obstacles on the ground such as felled timber or branches which could hurt a person. These Malay words which form the source domain of the Malay metaphors in this study are listed below:

1. Mungkin dia maklum, **dunia luar terlalu banyak ranting dan duri** menanti.
(Maybe he is aware that there are many branches and thorns (for him) in the outside world.)
2. Terlalu banyak **arca berduri** mesti diinjak.
(Too many thorny statues must be moved.)
3. Mengapa harus gentar berdepan dengan **rimba fikir yang bersimpang-siur**, fikirnya sambil beredar, membiarkan lelaki itu terpaku sendiri.