

Cognitive Linguistics in Arabic Rhetorical Studies (A Foundational Study)

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Abstract:

Language is the means of communication adopted by man since the beginning of history. It was a tool for expressing his daily needs, his thoughts, and his hidden components, and through it he tried to understand himself and the surrounding world, and to comprehend his relation to this world. Language has always been a subject of research and study since ancient times, and in the modern era the field of linguistic research has witnessed great development. Interest in language was no longer confined to one aspect or one field. Historians agree on considering linguistics as a science concerned with the scientific study of language. Linguistics subsequently went through several stages of development and progress, leading to the multiplicity of its branches, approaches, and currents. Among the linguistic trends that emerged at the beginning of the 1980s is the cognitive trend, or what came to be known as cognitive linguistics. Its emergence was linked to the works of a number of linguists who directed their efforts towards studying the relationship between language and the mind. It is not a science closed in upon itself, but rather a set of multiple and diverse theories. Its founding concepts are based on epistemological roots with the Arabic rhetorical tradition.

Therefore, this article seeks to highlight the features of rhetorical studies in the works of 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī and the concept of cognitive linguistics, its main theories, and to explore the points of convergence between the Arab and Western approaches.

Keywords: Arabic rhetorical studies, Cognitive linguistics, Language, Mind.

La linguistique cognitive dans les études rhétoriques arabes (étude fondamentale)

Résumé :

Le langage est le moyen de communication adopté par l'homme depuis le début de l'histoire. Il était un outil permettant d'exprimer ses besoins quotidiens, ses pensées et ses sentiments cachés, et grâce à lui, il essayait de se comprendre lui-même et le monde qui l'entourait, ainsi que de comprendre sa relation avec ce monde. Le langage a toujours fait l'objet de recherches et d'études depuis l'Antiquité, et à l'ère moderne, le domaine de la recherche linguistique a connu un grand développement. L'intérêt pour le langage ne se limitait plus à un seul aspect ou à un seul domaine. Les historiens s'accordent à considérer la linguistique comme une science qui s'intéresse à l'étude scientifique du langage. La linguistique a ensuite connu plusieurs étapes de développement et de progrès, qui ont conduit à la multiplicité de ses branches, de ses approches et de ses courants. Parmi les courants linguistiques qui ont émergé au début des années 1980, on trouve le courant cognitif, ou ce qui est devenu connu sous le nom de linguistique cognitive. Son émergence est liée aux travaux d'un certain nombre de linguistes qui ont orienté leurs efforts vers l'étude de la relation entre le langage et l'esprit. Il ne s'agit pas d'une science fermée sur elle-même, mais plutôt d'un ensemble de théories multiples et diverses. Ses concepts fondateurs s'appuient sur des racines épistémologiques issues de la tradition rhétorique arabe. Par conséquent, cet article vise à mettre en évidence les caractéristiques des études rhétoriques dans les travaux d' 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī et le concept de linguistique cognitive, ses principales théories, et à explorer les points de convergence entre les approches arabe et occidentale.

Mots-clés : *Études rhétoriques arabes, Linguistique cognitive, Langage, Esprit.*

Introduction:

Language is the means that man has relied on since the dawn of time to express his needs and hidden components. It is a source of inspiration through which he has sought to understand the world, to understand the self, and the relations that bind him to all possible worlds. Although language takes multiple forms, man has used it for purposes that express his communicative and inferential abilities. He has constantly been able to access and penetrate the hidden side owing to his cognitive competence.

First: Arabic Rhetorical Studies

Tracing the historical course of Arabic rhetoric helps in presenting a clear picture of the birth and development of this science. Whoever delves into the history of Arabic rhetoric realizes that it passed through three stages: the stage of intuitive appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of literary discourse without detailed knowledge of their exact specifications, nor their inclusion in a terminological system; the second stage, in which many of these aspects were identified and grouped into categories sharing considerable formal similarities; and the third stage, the stage of scientific systematization into the tripartite division of *ma'ānī*, *bayān*, and *badī'*.¹

These evolutionary stages can be labeled as follows: the stage of intuitive appreciation, the stage of synthetic collection, and the stage of al-Sakkākī's systematization.²

¹ See: Mohamed Abdel Muttalib, *Arabic Rhetoric: Another Reading*, p. 21

² See: The same reference, p. 18

1. The Origin of Arabic Rhetoric:

Arabic rhetoric arose in the context of literary debates and poetic contests in literary markets such as 'Ukāz and others, in the form of simple critical remarks since the pre-Islamic era and the beginning of the Islamic era. These remarks then developed and expanded, though they remained marginal and occasional.¹

Al-Jāhīz authored *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* and *al-Ḥayawān* and is considered through them the true founder of the science of rhetoric. In general, the sciences of rhetoric – *bayān*, *ma'ānī*, and *badī'* – remained intertwined within literary and critical works, used as tools for criticism, comparison, and evaluation among writers and poets, as did Qudāma ibn Ja'far in his critique of poetry and prose, and al-Āmidī in his *al-Muwāzana* between Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī.² At the beginning of the 5th century AH, Arabic literature entered a stage of weakness and stagnation, where interest shifted to form at the expense of content. The focus of good poets was placed on forced rhymed prose, alliteration, and the like, while meaning was neglected. The reaction was negative, embodied in the emergence of a new current calling for the abandonment of poetry.³

2. The Concept of Rhetoric:

Speech is described as rhetorical if it contains a single element: the accuracy and completeness of signification re-

¹ See: Ahmed Shamia, *The Characteristics of Arabic and the Qur'anic Inimitability*, University Publications Office, Algeria, 1995, p. 119

² See: Jaafar Al-Babili, *The Summary in Explaining the Proofs of Inimitability*, Al-Jalil Press, Damascus, p. 28.

³ See: Ahmed Shamia, *The Characteristics of Arabic and the Qur'anic Inimitability*, p. 323

garding that which it signifies—that the meaning is expressed from the direction most proper for conveying it.¹

Rhetoric is manifested in knowing how to connect sentences with each other, and to know this one must understand the relation of the sentence to the situation or context in which the speech occurs. The situation or context determines the description of the utterance it requires, which they expressed by saying: “For every situation, there is an appropriate discourse.”²

The fundamental function of language is communication and conveying the speaker’s intention to the listener. This function determines the relation of the situation or context to the speech. For this reason, ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī defined rhetoric as directing speech according to the requirements of the situation and appropriateness of the context.³

Ibn al-Muqaffa’ defined it by saying that rhetoric is a name applied to many aspects: sometimes it lies in silence, sometimes in listening, sometimes in poetry, sometimes in rhymed prose, and sometimes in oratory.⁴

Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī defined it as that whose path is near and whose end is far-reaching, known by both non-Arabs and Arabs, the Bedouin and the townsman. The matter lies in maintaining balance, changing expressions, and ease of pronunciation.⁵

¹ See: Jaafar Al-Babili, *The Summary in Explaining the Proofs of Inimitability*, p. 28.

² See: The same reference, p. 29.

³ See: Abdul Qahir Al-Jurjani, *The Proofs of Inimitability*, 3rd ed., Cairo, 1992, p. 62.

⁴ See: The same reference, p. 64.

⁵ See: Tammam Hassan, *The Arabic Language: Its Meaning and Structure*, 2nd ed., 1976, p. 68.

Al-Sakkākī (d. 626 AH) defined it in his *Miftāḥ* as “the study of the properties of speech composition in conveying meaning, and what relates to this of stylistic elegance, in order to avoid error in applying speech, with meanings being subordinate to it.” It was also said that rhetoric is knowing separation and connection, being concise without incapacity, and elaborate without defect.¹

As for al-Jāḥiẓ, he saw it as the meanings presented according to the requirements of the situation. Ibn Khaldūn followed the approach of al-Jāḥiẓ and al-Sakkākī, seeing that the basis of composition in prose and poetry is wording, and that it is the means by which the speaker conveys his need.

Second: Cognitive Linguistics

1. The Concept of Cognition:

- *Linguistically:* The *Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ* states: “So-and-so knew (‘*arafa*) with leadership; he managed their affairs and directed their policy. To know something is to perceive it with one of the senses. He is therefore knowing (‘*ārif*) or knowledgeable (‘*arīf*). It is said: ‘I will surely know (*la-‘arifanna*) what you did, i.e., I will repay you.’”²

In *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, al-Zabīdī wrote: “‘*arafa* – *yaʿrifu*, *maʿrifa*, *‘irfān*, and *‘urfa*.” Ibn Sīda said that their distinctions are subtle. Al-Rāghib stated: “*Maʿrifa* and *‘irfān* are the per-

¹ See: Al-Sakkaki, *The Key to the Sciences*, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah, p. 70.

² See: Arabic Language Academy, *Al-Muʿjam Al-Wasit*, Al-Shorouk International Library, 4th ed., 1426 AH / 2005 AD, entry “‘*Arafa*,” p. 595.

ception of a thing through reflection and consideration.”¹

- *Terminologically*: Cognition or cognitive science is a new field of knowledge encompassing many disciplines in the scientific domain concerned with studying the mind and intelligence.

Lakoff provided one of the most precise and comprehensive definitions: “Cognitive science is a new field that brings together what is known about the mind from many academic disciplines – psychology, linguistics, anthropology, and computer science. It seeks detailed answers to questions such as: What is the mind? What is the conceptual system? How is it organized?”²

Another important definition is that of the linguist Lemoine, who defines it as: “A field established independently since 1977, aimed at studying cognitive and artificial processes, combining several disciplines, most important-

¹ See: Muhammad Murtada Al-Husayni Al-Zabidi, *Taj Al-‘Arus*, reviewed by Samir Shams, Dar Al-Abhath, Tlemcen, Algeria, 1st ed., 2011, p. 201.

² Al-Azhar Al-Zannad, *Cognitive Linguistic Theories*, Arab Scientific Publishers, Dar Mohamed Ali Publishing, Editions Al-Ikhtilaf, Tunisia, 1st ed., 2010, p. 15.

ly neuroscience, informatics, logic, and cognitive psychology.”¹

2. Philosophical and Historical Foundations of Cognition:

To study any science and understand its meaning, it must be linked to the philosophical and historical context in which it arose. This principle applies to cognitive science.

2.1. Philosophical Foundations:

Cognition is considered a scientific revolution against behaviorism, as referred to by the physicist Thomas Kuhn, who presented many examples of the development of natural sciences, showing that the course of science does not proceed cumulatively in one direction but in circular paths. This model determines the course of research and study, and the ways of understanding and interpreting results.²

2.2. Historical Foundations:

Gardner dates the beginning of the cognitive revolution to 1948, the year when a conference on the mechanisms of behavior was held at the California Institute of Technology. It was dedicated to studying how the nervous system controls behavior. It was attended by elite researchers in this field. One of the most important interventions was that of Karl Lashley, professor of neuroscience at Harvard University. His intervention focused on the foundations and assumptions of behaviorism. He argued that any theory studying

¹ See: The same reference, p. 16

² See: Mohamed Taha, *Epistemology (New Horizons in the Study of the Mind)*, p. 176

human behavior must be able to explain complex behavior such as linguistic behavior or playing sports.¹

3. Cognitive Linguistics:

The term refers to the trend that developed in the 1980s in the United States. The term itself appeared at the end of the 19th century and spread in the 20th century as a result of the interest of a number of linguists in studying the relation of language to the mind and to external reality. This gained wide attention, especially with the writings of its early founders (Lakoff and Talmy).

Bosman defined it in his dictionary as “an interdisciplinary trend in research, developed in the late 1950s in the United States, concerned with studying the mental processes of acquiring and using knowledge and language, in contrast to behaviorism which focused on observation.”² In *Dictionary of Linguistics and Pragmatics*, Alan Cruse defined it as “an approach to studying the structure of linguistic behavior.” It includes several basic propositions, the first being that language is designed to convey meaning, the second being that linguistic capacities are embodied – there is no independent part of the brain devoted solely to language; meaning is conceptual and involves an image shared with or influenced by perceptual raw material.³ Many studies date the rise of cognitive linguistics to 1987, the year Lakoff’s book and Langacker’s *Cognitive Grammar*

¹ See: The same reference, p. 178.

² See: Omar Bin Dahman, *Metaphors and Discourse: A Contemporary Cognitive Approach*, Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Languages, Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou, 2012, pp. 19–20.

³ See: The same reference, p. 20.

appeared, followed in 1988 by Talmy's article. The early beginnings were seen in the publication of *Metaphors We Live By* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. The term "cognitive linguistics" then crystallized, referring to a trend that encompasses a number of theories sharing the same foundations and premises.¹

Third: Points of Convergence between Arabic Rhetorical Studies and Cognitive Linguistics

1. The Concept of Metaphor in al-Jurjānī's *Asrār al-Balāgha*:

Metaphor is a type of simile and a form of analogy. Simile is comparison, and comparison applies to what hearts comprehend, minds grasp, and what understandings, intellects, and hearing perceive.²

2. Metaphor Praised from the Aspect of Expression:

Al-Jurjānī says: "If you find this matter evident, not troubled by doubt, nor weakened by decay, then look at the poems that were praised for their wording, described as sound, attributed to refinement, and said to be like water in flow and like air in gentleness. Metaphor thus attained its place and achieved its aim, until the meaning reached the heart and settled in the understanding, while the expression reached the ear. Metaphor, in general, is when a word has an original meaning in linguistic usage, attested by evidence to be specific to it when coined, then the poet or another uses it in a different sense."³

¹ See: Atiya Suleiman Ahmed, *Qur'anic Metaphors and the Cognitive Theory*, Modern Academy for University Books, Cairo, n.ed., 2014, p. 55.

² See: Abdul Qahir Al-Jurjani, *Asrar Al-Balagha*, annotated by Mahmoud Mohamed Shaker, Publishing House, Jeddah, p. 30.

³ See: The same reference, pp. 35–36

Metaphor has always been a central concern of rhetoricians and writers, who have written thousands of works on it. In their view, no literary text, whether poetry or prose, can be devoid of it. Poetic style is considered the most powerful expressive style, penetrating deeply through the use of analogy and similarity. However, what modern theories such as Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Conceptual Blending have offered in terms of a new and different concept of metaphor compels us to reconsider the concepts presented by classical theories. Traditional views confined it to a limited orbit, considering it merely a tool of analysis for interpreting natural language and its potential for generating metaphors and new meanings. The new view, in the light of cognitive sciences, has made it a concept with cognitive power and a part of our conceptual thinking, turning it into a tool for constructing meaning.¹

3- Metaphor in the Cognitive Perspective:

A- Conceptual Metaphor Theory:

Metaphor is no longer considered a linguistic phenomenon resulting from substitution or deviation from a literal meaning to a figurative one; rather, it is a cognitive process inherent in the mind that establishes its conceptual systems. That is, metaphor in its essence is of a conceptual, not linguistic, nature. This is what Lakoff and Mark Johnson argued in their joint book, in which they dealt with metaphor from a new cognitive perspective, different from the traditional one. Lakoff and Mark included metaphor in this book as an important part of our daily experiences, behaviors, and emotions. The researchers confirmed this in their book by

¹ See: The same reference, p. 38.

saying: metaphor represents, for a large number of people, something related to poetic imagination; it concerns ordinary usages, and people think that metaphor is a linguistic property pertaining to words, not to thinking and activities. However, we realized that metaphor is present in all our daily experiences.¹

The theory of conceptual metaphor has studied the functioning of metaphor as a mental mechanism in representing one domain on the basis of another domain, and this applies to all linguistic activities, whether spontaneous or literary-creative. Kovecses defined conceptual metaphor by saying: if we understand one conceptual domain through another conceptual domain, then we are facing a conceptual metaphor.²

An example of conceptual metaphor is our saying "love is a journey." It is a conceptual metaphor because we deal with love as if it were a journey: it has a path, places, a beginning, and an end. That is, we use the schema of the source domain (journey) to understand the target domain, which is love. Thus, the experience of love begins, encounters difficulties, reaches crossroads, and ends at a destination.³

4- The Concept of Metonymy in the Traditional Perspective:

Metonymy was not a rhetorical figure extensively studied in Greek rhetoric. The first mention of metonymy was in a rhetorical work dating back to the first century BC. At first,

¹ See: Mohamed Saleh Al-Bouamrani, *Theoretical and Applied Studies in Cognitive Semantics*, Alaeddin Library, Sfax – Tunisia, 1st ed., 2009, p. 125.

² See: Atiya Suleiman Ahmed, *Qur'anic Metaphor in the Light of Cognitive Theory*, p. 59.

³ See: George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 21.

metonymy meant (definition of the name). Then its definition evolved to become a part of speech, used to refer to something in its literal meaning and to indicate something else by virtue of a kind of relation. The difference between the two definitions is clear: the first confines metonymy to a word, while the second refers to a part of speech.¹

In the context of Arabic rhetoric, we note the subtle combination brought by al-Jurjani between literal and figurative meanings. He said that (metonymy) stands in opposition to (literal), so whatever is a path in one of them, linguistically or rationally, is a path in the other. Thus, he asserts that this classification is aware that departing from literal meaning is not a fall into falsehood but another path parallel to literal meaning. As for artistic treatment, it is necessary to distinguish between linguistic figurative meaning, which is divided into metaphor and metonymy. Al-Suyuti, in *Al-Itqan*, considered that metonymy is of two types: the first in structure, called “metaphor of attribution,” while the second, “metonymy,” is the word used for what it necessarily implies in the context of discourse. As for allusion, it is a word intended for the necessary meaning with the possibility of intending the original meaning.²

5- The Concept of Metonymy in the Cognitive Perspective:

Al-Jurjani, in a general conception that can be considered pre-cognitive, linked the two linguistic givens, making the first dependent on the second, in his statement that linguistic considerations follow the conditions and customs of society. Therefore, it is not surprising that the concept of metonymy

¹ See: Abdul Qahir Al-Jurjani, *Asrar Al-Balagha*, p. 411.

² See: Al-Tahanawi, *Kashshaf Istilahat Al-Funun*, p. 1473.

has changed over time. At the beginning, metonymy represented a rhetorical figure and was classified accordingly. Contemporary linguists have maintained this subsidiary status of metonymy, while new rhetoricians have made the primary figure the metaphor, and considered metaphor and metonymy secondary figures arising from a double composition of metonymies.¹

As for Paul Ricœur, he points to the functional richness of metaphor, as it branches into original and derivative types, in comparison to metonymy's limitation to nouns. Ricœur concluded that metaphor has a role in discourse.²

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that there are points of convergence between the Arab linguistic heritage and modern linguistics, especially Arabic rhetoric, whose traces can be found in cognitive linguistics. The concepts established by cognitive linguists are taken from the works of rhetoricians, especially al-Jurjani, and have been developed according to the needs of the era through:

The cognitive trend renewed the approach to metonymy on multiple levels, building in one respect a view considered natural.

The new concept of metaphor contributed to building new conceptions, as metaphor in its new sense is a conceptual cognitive mechanism, a cognitive faculty based on selective mapping.

¹ See: Saber Al-Hubasha, *Metonymy: An Attempt to Understand Its Status in Cognitive Linguistics*, Vol. 4, 2017, p. 41.

² See: The previous reference, p. 42.

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