Social Functions of Metaphor –
A Case Study Applying Tamil and Telugu Examples

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Introduction

We may use an ordinary language to convey our ideas, thoughts, and feelings to our fellow beings. We may also use metaphors, idioms, riddles, puzzles, proverbs, etc. embedded in the ordinary language. These additions to the bare ordinary language are termed by the scholars as 'figurative speech' in literature.

Previously, traditional scholars like Plato thought that, to use the figurative language, a person needs different cognitive ability. Such use is distinct from true knowledge. These are only ornamental devices and not necessary for effective communication.

But recent researches showed that human cognition is filled with various kinds of figurative speeches. Certainly poet's language is more attractive and creative than ordinary people's language. But much of our everyday speech reflects people's ability to use figurative language in their speech.

Aim of This Paper

The main aim of this paper is to describe metaphor, one of the figurative speeches commonly used in any society. Metaphor is used in various fields like art, science, myth,

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culture, politics, and speech acts, etc. In this paper, the author tries to point out the metaphors which are used in the fields of Arts (especially Cinema), Politics and Communication among the students.

There are specific reasons to select these areas. These three areas are more powerful in their own way. Cinema is the most attractive field all over India. Age is not a crucial factor when it comes to cinema. Cinema attracts persons of all ages, from small kids to very old people. Cinema and theater are used as channels for social change and political power. Cinema is also considered the best vehicle for conveying message to the society. Politics is a major field which attracts people with power and money. Students are free birds who can express their ideas freely and they are 'the citizens' of the future society.

Metaphor

Aristotle defined metaphor: "It consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else, the transference being either genus to species or from species to genus or species to species or on the ground of analogy" (*Poetics* 1457b). *Oxford Concise Dictionary* defines metaphor as 'the use of a word or phrase to indicate something different from (though related in some way) the literal meaning'.

Functions of Metaphor

 i)   Metaphor is used mainly for communicating ideas or information.
 ii)   It also has some special functions such as intimacy between the speaker and the listener.
 iii)   It informs the attitude and belief in indirect ways.
 iv)   It also signals formality or hostility.
 v)   It also helps to indicate membership in a particular subgroup and to maintain social status (Gibbs 1994).

Martin (1995), in his book *Language and subculture*, refers to metaphors used by the underworld people as 'Antilanguage'. He exemplifies some of the metaphors which used by the underworld people of Calcutta.

Kaacaa keela	unripe banana	Young girl
Daabal dekkar	double Decker	Fat lady
Saain board	sign board	Married lady

Gibbs (1994), in his book *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language and Understanding,* also gives some items which are used among the drunkards and college students. He terms these items as 'metaphors'. For example, use of 'boose' in an informal situation and 'sprit' in formal situation for liquor. He also mentions that college students create thousands of metaphors to talk about their college life.

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Like Martin and Gibbs, in this paper, the author tries to describe the metaphors which are used in the fields like Cinema, Politics, and Communication among the students.

Importance of Cinema - Metaphorical Extension in Movie Domain

Cinema world offers many metaphorical expressions from the title to the end of the movie. The following are some of the titles which have metaphorical meanings. Examples given below are from the titles of Tamil movies.

Title of the movie	Literary meaning	Metaphorical meaning
puu onRu puyalaanadu	A flower turned a cyclone	The heroine who became ferocious due to the injustice meted out to her by the villain.
oru uudaap puu kaN cimiTTukiratu	A blue flower is winking its eyes	The lady who is having enchanting beauty like the blue flower.

tisai maaRiya paRavai kaL   The birds which   The lovers who could not get married and who, thus, changed their directions in life, not united in wedlock with each other.

Some more titles which are used metaphorically are as follows. 'kaTaloorak kavitaikaL', 'suvarillaata cittirangaL', 'niRam maaRata puukkaL', 'azhiyata kolangaL'.

One actor described the director of a movie, the unit members and himself as Krishna, the *Pandavas* and *Arjuna*. The movie is metaphorically described as "Kurushketra War".

The following example depicts the figurative speech clearly. "*arjunudiki srikrishnuDu radha sardhi ayinaTTu nirmaata nagalaxmi krushniDigaa ii harikrushna arjunuDigaa uuniT subyulu panDavulugaa neeTTi rayatu bharatamuloo samasyal pariskaramkoosam ceesina kurushetra yuddame tiger haricandra Prasad*".

In another movie, one actor tried to caution his sister-in-law's mother-in-law and father-in-law that their son married a spoiled girl. The following metaphor is used to describe the particular scene.

"*okatoo namber janta egareesi veltunnaanu. Miiru loo gaDDu praantamuloo unnaaru*". This caution is using the symbol of flood which is compared to that spoiled girl in the movie.

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Some of the scenes are shown metaphorically in the movies. The following are some of the examples:

The falling of *kumkum* (the auspicious powder which is applied on forehead by married women), *puuja* things and the stopping of 'harati' are the metaphoric symbols for the forthcoming inauspicious events in the house.

The cat licks the milk; the cat catches the parrot, milk is spilled on the floor, the wild animals attacking their inferior ones are some the symbol used in cinemas for the villain's molesting the heroine sexually.

The time and the seasonal change are metaphorically shown by revealing the potter's wheel, bicycle-wheel, and the tree with no leaves, and the tree which sprout the leaves.

The stormy ocean is shown to express the mental condition of the character when they hear the shocking news or unexpected news.

The elopement of lovers or the escape of somebody like prisoners or captives is depicted by flying of birds.

The picture of mongoose and snake reveals that close friends have became enemies like snake and mongoose.

Not only the titles and the scenes of the cinemas are metaphorically made but also the hero and the heroines get the titles/names metaphorically.

The hero/heroine whose movies are a great success at the box-office are described as possing 'golden leg' and the hero/heroine who is a flop may get the title 'iron leg'. There are titles also given to the hero/heroines depending on their performance and their mass appeal.

Rajini	superstar
Chiranjivi	mega star
Vijayashanti	lady boss, lady amitabh, dashing lady
Dev Anand	evergreen hero
Amitabh	big **B**
Sushila	ghana ko:kila
Hema Malini	dream girl
A.R. Rehaman	tune maantrikiDu

Movies are categorized in the following manner, depending on their acceptability to a variety of audiences.

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Erra cinema   Red movie the revolutionary movie
Class cinema
Mass cinema
Sentiment cinema

The success of the movies are termed in the following way

Hit
Superduper hit
Netti aTi
duuL
takker
cakkai pooTu

The flops are termed in the following way.

Flap
Balti koTTindi
Bolta koTTindi
Uuttikiccu

Metaphorical Extension in Politics

Now, let us see how metaphorical expression takes place in the domain of politics. Today politics occupies the most important place in the society. People take much effort to compete in the elections and get power through the elections. In this situation, election is compared with so many things like war, gambling, *jatra* (journey, struggle), festival, etc.

Election is framed like war. *Samaram, pooru, kurukhetram* and *yuddam* are expressions used to describe elections, keeping in mind the competition between the parties like the countries at war. The tools of war such as the troops like horse, elephant, warrior's arrows, and sword, etc. are compared to the powerful ballot box, voters' list, votes and the public. Public election is easily felt like a battlefield, with political parities engaging in war.

Election is compared with jatra. In this, how the people make arrangements to celebrate the village deities, the same way the preparations take place before the election. The following examples describe this:

ప్రభుత్వ నిధులతో చేపట్టె అభివృద్ధి ప్రారంభోత్సవాలు కూడా ముందుస్తు ఎన్నికలు జాతరను తలపింప చేస్తున్నాయి. "The preparation which is undertaken by using the government money (unlawfully) makes us remember the election jatra."

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In the same way election is treated as 'ఓటుల పండగ' "the festival of votes'' because the political leaders may do some development work in their constituencies and extend some favours to the people in order to get votes as just before festivals begin people start cleaning their houses, doing white-wash of their homes, etc.

Like election, politics is also compared with gambling, war, cancer, chess, suDigundam (whirl pool), etc. In gambling, if luck is there one can become rich. Otherwise one will totally be ruined. Likewise in politics if the person won then his life became more powerful with power and wealth. Otherwise the person will be totally ruined. So, politics is called రాజకీయ జదం. రాజకీయ చతురంగం etc

When a thing loses its identity or if it disappears due to the power of politics, then politics is referred to sudigunDam. ఉదా. 'రాజకీయ సుడి గుండంలో కను మరుగవుతుల్ల బతకమ్మ కుంట' "The temple Badukamma is disappearing in the whirl pool of politics".

To get votes, the political parties will take up some issues. Before the election they will show much interest relating to those issues. One such issue is *singuru* water. The news papers compared *singuru* water issue to vajraayutam (diamond-edged sword) and tarakamantram (life-giving and life-sustaining mantra). Each political party shows great interest in solving such probles as *singuru* water crisis. How vajraadudam is important to Indra *singuru* water issue is like vajraayudam to political leaders to get votes. So they are talking these issues like chanting tarakamatras.

Some of the diseases like HIV AIDS, cancer, diabetes are assumed to be incurable in popular belief. Politics is one such area where one cannot satisfy all the voters with permanent solutions for the problems faced in society, thus goes the popular belief. A person who is in power refers to politics as cancer due to the continuous trouble he faces from his opponents.

அரசியல் என்பது ஒரு புற்றுநோய் அதைக் குணமாக்க எந்தவித மருந்தும் இல்லை

In another incident politics is compared with gutter and *Kurushetra* war. Those who are cynical compare politics as drainage and those who get benefit out of politics compare politics as Kurukhetra war, a fight for justice.

அரசியல் ஒரு சாக்கடை "politics is gutter"
அரசியல் என்பது காய்கறி வியாபாரம் அல்ல.

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"Politics is not a vegetable business."

அது ஒரு குருசேத்திர யுத்தம். "It is a Kurukhatra war"

Political leaders and other prominent personalities also have various names depending on their behaviour. The following are the examples.

Samaraviira simham	Saddam Hussain
Apaddharma mantra	Chandra babu naidu
Mr. Clean	Rajiv Gandhi
Edaarikookila	Asok Gohtli
Abinava Sardar	Advani
Rajakiiya caduruTu	Ajit Jogi
Big bull	Harsa Mehata
Iron leg	Party that will face defeat.
muDupu, suitcase, peTTe	Bribe

College Students and Use of Metaphors

Gibbs (1994) points out that college students are so many metaphors to talk about their college life. The metaphors used by the college students can be divided into three types. 1. Terms used by the boys among themselves to tease girls and lectures. 2. Terms used by girls to tease boys. 3. Some terms common to both boys and girls.

Terms Used by Boys to Refer to Girls

STD	"The girl who is staying in the hostel and studying"
Ruuj party	"The girl who feels shy"
bonjaay	"The girl who has short hair"
pimplekapadiya	"The girl who has pimples"
One day match	"Fixing a lady for a night"

Terms Used by Boys to Refer to Lecturers (Teachers) in the College

Sprinkler	"The lecturer who sprinkles spit while taking class"
Spring	"The lecturer who jumps while teaching a lesson"
Periappa	"Head of the Department"
Jeyalalitha	"Lady's college principal"
Taabeelu meestaru	"The teacher who used to do things slowly"
Gantulu meestaru	"The teacher who jumps while teaching a lesson"

Metaphor Used by Girls To Refer to Boys

Maimoo	"The fellow who followed the girl silently"

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IDimannar	"The boy who touches the girl"
Primitive type	"Old fashioned boy"
Touch me not	"The boy who feels shy"
Buddhaavataaram	"The boy who does not show interest in any girl"

Terms Used to Refer to Both Boys and Girls

Kalaaykalaam	"To tease others
Kadale pooTalaam	"Chatting with girls
Landu pannu	"To tease others

Conclusion

The figurative speech is not only for poets. Even ordinary people use figurative speech in their day-to-day life. The deliberate use of metaphor in groups establishes a new track of speech communication for those who use metaphors. Group solidarity, speech fashion, and apt descriptions are all achieved through this process. People who are not part of the group may not fully comprehend the meaning of such metaphors. In this way the use of metaphor opens a new conversational mode in the society.

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