



SPATIAL METAPHORS AND COGNITIVE MAPPING IN MODERN ENGLISH FICTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how spatial metaphors shape readers' cognitive mapping of narrative worlds in modern English fiction. Drawing upon cognitive semantics, the study examines how authors such as Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Ian McEwan employ spatial expressions to reflect psychological, moral, and ideological dimensions of human experience. By analyzing selected excerpts, the research reveals how spatial metaphors serve as conceptual tools for understanding reality and consciousness in literary text.

Introduction

Modern English fiction represents a transformation in the use of space and perspective. The shift from external description to internal consciousness has made spatial language a means of expressing thought and emotion. In cognitive semantics, space is a fundamental conceptual domain through which humans organize experience. In cognitive semantics, **space** is considered one of the most fundamental conceptual domains through which humans organize experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Talmy, 2000). The way people perceive and describe spatial relations - *up/down, inside/outside, near/far* - also shapes how they think about time, emotion, and social relations. Consequently, spatial metaphors are not just decorative literary devices; they reflect universal cognitive structures. This paper aims to analyze how modern English writers use spatial metaphors to build **cognitive maps** of fictional worlds. By examining selected texts by Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Ian McEwan, the study reveals how spatial organization contributes to the representation of human consciousness, ideological systems, and ethical dilemmas.

This paper aims to explore how modern writers use spatial metaphors to construct meaning and how readers cognitively map fictional worlds through these metaphors.

Literature Review

The study of spatial metaphors has been central to cognitive linguistics since the works of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) explains how humans understand abstract concepts through embodied spatial experience, such as “up” for positive states and “down” for negative ones. Lakoff (1993) later extended this framework to analyze metaphorical patterns in discourse. In literary studies, cognitive poetics (Stockwell, 2002; Semino, 2008) has provided tools for exploring how readers comprehend spatial metaphors and spatial mapping.

Methodology

This study applies a qualitative, interpretive method based on cognitive-semantic analysis. Three representative modern English writers, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Ian McEwan were selected for textual analysis. Each author's work was examined for spatial metaphors and conceptual patterns reflecting human cognition. Woolf's stream-of-consciousness style, Orwell's allegorical and dystopian narratives, and McEwan's psychological realism were analyzed in light of spatial conceptualization.

This study applies a **qualitative textual analysis** grounded in the principles of cognitive semantics. Three modern English writers were selected for their distinct yet complementary approaches to space and metaphor:

- **Virginia Woolf**, representing psychological modernism;
- **George Orwell**, representing political and social allegory;
- **Ian McEwan**, representing contemporary moral and psychological realism.

Passages from Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Orwell's *1984* (1949), and McEwan's *Atonement* (2001) were analyzed to identify key spatial metaphors. Each text was examined for conceptual patterns that map physical space onto mental or moral dimensions.

Analysis and Discussion

Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway" employs spatial metaphors to express fragmented consciousness. The movement through London streets mirrors the flow of thought, and spatial transitions represent shifts in time and memory. Space becomes psychological, a metaphor for the mind's fluidity.

George Orwell's "1984" presents space as ideological control. The spatial confinement of citizens, the architecture of surveillance, and the metaphorical "Big Brother watching" encode the loss of freedom and autonomy.

Conclusion

The thesis demonstrates that spatial metaphors play a crucial role in shaping modern fiction's conceptual and emotional landscape. Through the frameworks of cognitive semantics, spatial structures emerge as vehicles for meaning, revealing how authors translate mental, social, and ethical dimensions into spatial form. Woolf's inner spaces, Orwell's oppressive architecture, and McEwan's moral geographies all contribute to readers' cognitive mapping of narrative worlds. Ultimately, spatial metaphors in modern English fiction illustrate the profound link between **language, thought, and space**. They remind us that to understand literature is also to understand how the human mind organizes its world, through paths, boundaries, and directions both physical and conceptual.

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