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## **Ontological Metaphor in the Language of *The Leatherstocking Tales* by James Fenimore Cooper**

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**Abstract.** In most cultures, the convention of human experiences into material forms allows us to perceive events, activities, emotions, and ideas as objects or materials, which are forms of ontological metaphor. Considering experiences as an entity allows us to talk about it, quantify it, and identify its particular aspects. Depending on different purposes, ontological metaphors are used to promote expressive capabilities in each specific case. This article studies the analysis of ontological metaphors in *The Leatherstocking Tales* by James Fenimore Cooper based on the metaphor theory of Lakoff and Johnson. The author uses qualitative methods to conduct research focusing on written data from selected works of Cooper. Events and actions are conceptualized as objects, activities are conceptualized as materials, and states are conceptualized as containers so that an event exists in space and time and has defined boundaries. The purpose of this study is to help students understand the impact of ontological metaphors in novels. This will help them increase their awareness of language acquisition and the use of metaphors in American culture.

**Keywords.** ontological metaphor, container, entity, substance, language, novel

### **Introduction**

Metaphors play an important role in the consideration of literary works because they contain a lyrical and lovely phraseological meaning to listen to, and metaphor itself refers to the way we express ourselves. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is the preferred strategy for expressing poetic imagination and creating extraordinary language rather than ordinary language. Metaphor is a tool commonly used in poetry, novels, films, books, and songs. lyrics to compare two things. In music, similarities are often associated with themes and current rumors or are associated with other songs. When an artist or composer compares or describes one person, action, feeling, place, or object as something else, they are using metaphor.

In *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson divided metaphors into three types: structural metaphors, orientational metaphors, and ontological metaphors. Of these, ontological metaphors are a type of metaphor (or figurative comparison) in which something concrete is projected onto something abstract. The mapping provides a way of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and essences.

Ontological metaphors can create a stronger effect on readers because the metaphor serves to represent a group of ideas about the words being expressed. Ontological metaphors create such an image in people's minds that the meaning of a statement is easier to grasp.

Speech is one of the ways that people express their thoughts, but to describe their thoughts, we do not always use words that have a direct meaning. Sometimes, people use a verse or a lyric to convey their feelings. For a writer, the work is a reflection of their feelings and what they want to convey. But for the reader, a literary work, in addition to its entertainment function, can also teach them something through the messages that the writer implies through the language of the work.

Metaphor can be considered a tool used by James Fenimore Cooper as a main theme in creating language and conveying messages through his novels. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors not only enhance vividness and interest in thinking but also shape our perception and understanding.

We have selected four works with rich metaphorical language in *The Leatherstocking Tales*, namely *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Prairie* (1827), and *The Deerslayer* (1841). James Fenimore Cooper often uses ontological metaphors in his works to flexibly express the historical and cultural characteristics of the American people, and his works thus generalize the life and character of the American people, which is a blend of native and immigrant spirit.

*The Leatherstocking Tales* is a series of five novels by James Fenimore Cooper, published between 1823 and 1841. The novels constitute a saga of 18th-century life among Indians and white pioneers on the New York State frontier through their portrayal of the adventures of the main character, Natty Bumppo, who takes on various names throughout the series. The books cover his entire adult life, from young manhood to old age, though they were not written or published in chronological order. The individual novels are *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Prairie* (1827), *The Pathfinder* (1840), and *The Deerslayer* (1841).

*The Pioneers* is both the first and the finest detailed portrait of frontier life in American literature; it is also the first truly original American novel. The main subject of the book is the conflict between two different views of the frontier—that of Natty Bumppo (here called Leather-Stocking), who sees the land as “God’s Wilderness,” and that of another main character who wants to tame and cultivate the land. *The Last of the Mohicans* takes the reader back to the French and Indian War. This work was succeeded by *The Prairie*, in which the very old and philosophical Leather-Stocking dies, facing the westering sun he has so long followed. Identified from the start with the vanishing wilderness and its native inhabitants, Leather-Stocking becomes an unalterably elegiac figure.

## **1. Literature review**

### **1.1. Ontological metaphor**

Metaphors are examples of figurative language. They are a figures of speech used to convey a message that is more complex than the simple meaning of their words. Figurative language is not meant to be taken literally. Ontological metaphors (figures that provide “a way of seeing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances”) are one of three overlapping categories of conceptual metaphors established by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*. The other two types of metaphors are structural and orientational. “TIME IS AN OBJECT” is a common ontological metaphor.

According to Kovesces (2002), "Ontological metaphor has much less cognitive structuring for target concepts than structural metaphors do and enables speakers to conceive of their experiences in terms of objects, substances, and containers in general, without specifying further the kind of object, substance, or container" (p. 38). It seems that ontological metaphors are the means, that is, the further structure of structural metaphors. He argues that the abstract target in this case is given new abstract entities. This means that the target domain will become a concept that has more experience than the original concept in terms of objects, substances, and containers (our experience of objects, substances, and containers). And vice versa, personalization, when non-humans are understood as humans.

## ***1.2. Types of ontological metaphors***

### ***1.2.1. Container metaphor***

Container metaphors, according to Lakoff and Johnson's theory, are ontological metaphors in which an idea is described as having an internal and external dimension and the ability to hold something else. Container metaphors are metaphors in which something is seen as a container with an inward dimension that includes both the inside and the outside. Containers include events, actions, activities, and states such as entering or exiting a difficult situation, competing, or enjoying the completion of a task.

As a subgroup of ontological metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson have proposed container metaphors. To illustrate what we have in mind, recall Lakoff and Johnson's observation that ontological metaphors are used "to comprehend events, action, activities, and states. Events and actions are conceptualized metaphorically as objects, activities as substance, and states are containers" (p. 30). Activities in general are viewed metaphorically as MATERIALS and therefore as CONTAINERS

Example: Are you *in* the race on Sunday? (race as CONTAINER OBJECT)

### ***1.2.2. Entity and substance metaphors***

The second subtype of ontological metaphors is entity and substance metaphors. Also, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), entity and substance metaphors are ontological metaphors in which an abstraction is represented as a concrete physical object. Based on that definition, a metaphor experienced with physical object by a person can give them a way of viewing event, emotion, action, and ideas as substance. Viewing something as substances allows them to refer to it.

In a sense, the entity and substance metaphor is an ontological metaphor, in which an abstraction is described as an actual physical item. According to that concept, a metaphor experienced by speakers with actual objects provides them with the means to view events, emotions, actions, and ideas as entities. By viewing something as a material thing, they can refer to it.

Example: We need to *combat inflation* (INFLATION IS AN ENTITY)

### ***1.2.3. Personification***

Another species of ontological metaphors, which Lakoff and Johnson (1980) called "perhaps the most obvious ontological metaphors are those where the physical object is further specified as being a person" (p. 33), is personification. According to Lakoff and Johnson, the use of personification metaphors. "Allow us to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities" (p. 33). Personification is seen as one category that covers a huge variety of metaphors where each picks out various different aspects of a person or ways of looking at a person. As extensions of ontological metaphors, "what they all have in common is that they are extensions of ontological

metaphor and that they allow us to make sense of phenomena in the world in human terms" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 34). Personification is an important metaphorical device that would be broken down in this study into personification referring to human qualities, human actions, and human abilities.

Example: His *religion tells* him that he cannot drink fine French wines.

## 2. Methodology

In order to achieve the aim, this study uses qualitative research using two main research methods: descriptive and analytical methods. The descriptive method used in the study aims to provide a meaningful description of the ontological metaphor in Cooper's *The Leatherstocking Tales*.

The research was done through analysis method. The data for the analysis were collected from *The Leatherstocking Tales* by James Fenimore Cooper: Based on a theoretical basis mainly taken from the book *Metaphors We Live By* by Lakoff & Johnson and *From Linguistic to Conceptual Metaphor in Five Step* by Steen:

*From Linguistic to Conceptual Metaphor in Five Step (Steen, 2009, 1999)*

Steps	Procedures
Step 1	Identify metaphor-related words
Step 2	Identify propositions (metaphorical idea)
Step 3	Identify open comparison (nonliteral comparison)
Step 4	Identify analogical structure (nonliteral analogy)
Step 5	Identify cross-domain mapping

## 3. Finding and discussion

### 3.1. Container metaphors in the series "The Leatherstocking Tales" by James Fenimore Cooper

We always perceive the world through material forms or transform the abstract into something that has a material form, thereby determining the properties of things in the direction of up-down, inside-outside. Through that way, we see those objects as containers with an inside and an outside and, therefore, can move in-out, and up-down,... In that way, "we use ontological metaphors to comprehend events, actions, activities, and states. Events and actions are conceptualized metaphorically as objects, activities as a substance, states as containers" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 30). In everyday language, this is the case; in literary language, the use of ontological metaphors is even richer, specifically as in the survey table below.

**Table 1:** Container metaphors in the series "The Leatherstocking Tales" by James Fenimore Cooper

No.	Language	Ontological metaphor	Work title
1	In war, he is daring	war as CONTAINER OBJECT	The last of the Mohican

2	We shall be as likely to fall into their midst	Their as CONTAINER OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
3	The North American Indian clothes his ideas in a dress which is different from that of the African	Dress as CONTAINER OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
4	The uncertainty which exists in their traditions	Traditions as CONTAINER OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
5	Like a man lost in thought	Thought as CONTAINER OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
6	With the judgment hanging about his soul	Soul as CONTAINER OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
7	You were about opening your mind more fully on that matter the day you got in	Mind as CONTAINER OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
8	With a wonderful pliability of temperament, had dropped into his assumed character as gracefully as he had ever moved in any other.	Assumed character as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Pioneers
9	In the shades of this forest	shades	The Pioneers
10	He fully comprehended the language in which the preceding dialogue had been conducted.	Dialogue as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Pioneers
11	Let us conceal ourselves in the cavern	Cavern as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Pioneers
12	He was relieving himself of a fatiguing burden	Fatiguing burden as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Pioneers
13	The Judge was roused from his reflections	Reflections as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Pioneers
14	These, which in the language of the country are termed stubs, abounded in the open fields adjacent to the village,	Fields as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Pioneers
15	Amid the monotonous rolling of the prairie	Prairie as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Prairie
16	This is a damned envious world that we live in	Damned envious world as	The Prairie

		CONTAINER OBJECT	
17	It lay in a wilderness	Wilderness as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Prairie
18	Shutting from the air even the firelight of the cheerful apartments	Air as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Prairie
19	The train taken by his thoughts had, already, conducted him, in imagination, far into an ideal world	Imagination ideal world as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Prairie
20	They who think man enjoys all the knowledge of the creatur's of God, will live to be disappointed	Disappointed as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Prairie
21	Mahtoree, alone, had occasionally elevated his dark, grim countenance above the herbage, straining his eye-balls to penetrate the gloom which skirted the border of the brake.	Gloom as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Prairie
22	To the surprise of Deerslayer, Judith seemed the most distressed, Hetty listening eagerly, but appearing to brood over the facts in melancholy silence	Melancholy silence as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Deerslayer
23	He sunk back behind the trunk of the fallen tree against which the other reclined, and lay in its shadow, as dark, as motionless	fallen tree shadow as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Deerslayer
24	He was indulging in his slumbers.	Slumbers as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Deerslayer
25	Not a sound broke the stillness of the surrounding prairie	surrounding prairie as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Deerslayer
26	An exclamation of surprise broke from the lips of Deerslayer	Lips as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Deerslayer
27	Which lay bathed in the sunlight	Sunlight as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Deerslayer
28	Hurry, that I'm consorting any plan to put myself in his	Moccasins as CONTAINER OBJECT	The Deerslayer

	moccasins, for such a thought doesn't harbor in my mind	Mind as CONTAINER OBJECT	
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### 3.2. Entity and substance in the series “The Leatherstocking Tales” by James Fenimore Cooper

Lakoff & Johnson (1980) argue that “our experience of physical objects and substances provides a further basis for understanding—one that goes beyond mere orientation” (p. 25). Understanding our experience in terms of physical objects and substances allows us to single out some of our experiences and treat them as separate objects or substances of the same kind. Only by understanding the nature and manner of metaphors of physical objects and substances in a culture, particularly through literary works, can we understand the way native speakers think and perceive the world, thereby enhancing their linguistic and cultural understanding of native speakers of English.

**Table 2:** Entity and substance metaphors in the series “The Leatherstocking Tales” by James Fenimore Cooper

No.	Language	Ontological metaphor	Work title
1	He may have thought less favorably of the substitute	Thought is an OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
2	The straggler who brought up the rear appeared alone to betray his real thoughts	Real thoughts is an OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
3	They saw through the hills	Saw is an OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
4	The time of the red men has not yet come again	The time is an OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
5	The uproar which had so lately echoed through the vaults of the forest was gone	The uproar is an OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
6	While sounds of discord have rent my ears	Sounds of discord is an OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
7	But neither sounds nor language seem to touch his soul	Soul is an OBJECT	The last of the Mohican
8	And as often have they responded to my efforts with whoopings and howlings that have chilled my soul!	Efforts is an OBJECT Soul is an OBJECT	The Pioneers
9	In this manner throwing himself upon the filial piety of his child for his own future maintenance	Future is an OBJECT	The Pioneers
10	Though frequent brushing had quite destroyed its nap	Nap is an OBJECT	The Pioneers
11	The character of his whole appearance, especially contrasted	Mental is an OBJECT	The Pioneers



	to the air of humor in his next companion, was that of habitual mental care.		
12	Even the heartless but bright rays of a December sun were missed as they glided into the cold gloom of the valley.	Cold gloom is an OBJECT	The Pioneers
13	People are always for dividing the credit at a thing, in order to bring down merit to their own level.	Credit is an OBJECT	The Pioneers
14	My character against a horn of powder	Character is an OBJECT	The Pioneers
15	And patiently awaited the moment when he might renew his conversation with beings in whom he felt a growing interest	Moment is an OBJECT	The Prairie
16	Their presence awakened recollections and emotions	Recollections and emotions are OBJECTS	The Prairie
17	The train taken by his thoughts had, already, conducted him, in imagination, far into an ideal world	Thought is an OBJECT	The Prairie
18	He even anticipated their cupidity, by tendering to the chiefs such articles as he thought might prove the most acceptable.	Cupidity is an OBJECT	The Prairie
19	That her hopes were now placed, no less on his discretion, than on his disposition to serve her.	Hope is an OBJECT	The Prairie
20	But the fatigues of a day of unusual toil lay too heavy on the sentinel to leave the other long in doubt	Fatigues is an OBJECT	The Prairie
21	And then abandoned his immediate purpose in obedience alone to the suggestions of a more crafty policy.	Suggestions is an OBJECT	The Prairie
22	The struggle between thirst for vengeance and cupidity was severe but short.	Vengeance and cupidity are OBJECTS	The Deerslayer
23	Because it's reason again instinct	Reason and instinct are OBJECTS	The Deerslayer
24	It was fortunate that the senses of the aged hunter remained so acute,	Senses is an OBJECT	The Deerslayer

	and that he had lost none of his readiness of action		
25	But the most striking peculiarities of this scene were its solemn solitude and sweet repose.	Solemn solitude and sweet repose are OBJECTS	The Deerslayer
26	If she has passed half the time you mention in the centre of a spot so favored	Time is an OBJECT	The Deerslayer
27	That's naked truth	Truth is an OBJECT	The Deerslayer
28	Her wits are so small that you may easily convert her into one of your own way of thinking, in all things.	Wits is an OBJECT	The Deerslayer

### 3.3. Personification in the series “The Leatherstocking Tales” by James Fenimore Cooper

Personification is a way of attaching to objects or phenomena human characteristics or traits or referring through human eyes. Therefore, personification is a type of metaphor that includes a series of different metaphors, each metaphor expressing different aspects of a person or a way of looking at people. Personification is a common cognitive method in many languages around the world, present in most aspects of life and many different situations and language styles. In particular, in literary language, personification is a rhetorical metaphor that evokes or describes animals, trees, objects, etc. with words that are normally used to call or describe people, making the world of animals, trees, and objects closer to people and expressing human thoughts and feelings. This method is used quite commonly in literary works, making the work more vivid and soulful.

**Table 3:** Personification in the series “The Leatherstocking Tales” by James Fenimore Cooper

No.	Language	Ontological metaphor	Work title
1	In this happy country, it is barely possible for honesty, intellect and sobriety to fall	Country is personification	The Pioneers
2	Whatever views the world might entertain of this act of the Major	The world is personification	The Pioneers
3	A pine or a hemlock that had been stripped of its bark, and which waved in melancholy grandeur its naked limbs to the blast, a skeleton of its former glory.	Pine and hemlock are personifications	The Pioneers
4	A river to which the Atlantic herself has extended an arm in welcome.	Atlantic is personification	The Pioneers
5	The outline of each dark pine was delineated far in the depths of the forest, and the rocks, too smooth and too perpendicular to retain the	Pine and rocks are personification	The Pioneers



	snow that had fallen, brightened, as if smiling at the leave-taking of the luminary.		
6	When the thoughts of Munro were less occupied that at present		The Pioneers
7	Their formation might tell the truth too early	Formation is personification	The Pioneers
8	His cunning tells him how to get together the goods of the earth	Cunning is personification	The last of the Mohican
9	The snows came to tell them to be thankful	Snows is personification	The last of the Mohican
10	when was a wolf known to speak the truth?		The last of the Mohican
11	His heart teaches him to pay warriors to fight his battles		The last of the Mohican
12	The wind made their clearings		The last of the Mohican
13	The sun and rain ripened their fruits		The last of the Mohican
14	His legend had touched the sympathies of his listeners		The last of the Mohican
15	What brings a Huron in here? Justice.	Justice is personification	The Prairie
16	Duncan had no other guide than a distant glimmering light, which served, however, the office of a polar star to the lover.	distant glimmering light is personification Polar star is personification	The Prairie
17	In humbling himself before the Power that he revered, in thanksgiving at his escape.	Power is personification	The Prairie
18	The hound himself knows so much		The Prairie
19	The god of the winds had permitted his subordinate agents to escape from their den, and that they now rioted, in wantonness, across wastes, where neither tree, nor work of man, nor mountain, nor obstacle of any sort, opposed itself to their gambols.	Winds is personification	The Prairie
20	But that evil is nigh, and that wisdom invites us to avoid it,	Evil and wisdom are personifications	The Prairie
21	And apparently as insensible as the wood itself.	Wood is personification	The Prairie

22	Though nature has cheated him of the pleasure of stripping the 'arth of its lawful trees.	Nature is personification	The Deerslayer
23	Without the help of what is called the law		The Deerslayer
24	This tree, like so many millions of its brethren, lay where it had fallen, and was mouldering under the slow but certain influence of the seasons.	Tree is personification	The Deerslayer
25	The decay, however, had attacked its centre, even while it stood erect in the pride of vegetation, bellowing <b>out its heart</b> , as disease sometimes destroys the vitals of animal life, even while a fair exterior is presented to the observer.	Tree is personification	The Deerslayer
26	As if vegetation were not satisfied with a triumph so complete, the trees overhung the lake itself, shooting out towards the light	Vegetation is personification	The Deerslayer
27	Quivering aspens, and melancholy pines	aspens and pines are personifications	The Deerslayer
28	The whole earth apparently being clothed in a gala-dress of leaves.	Earth is personification	The Deerslayer

### 3.4. Summary

By specifically pointing out the elements of ontological metaphor, the survey study on four novels should not aim to determine the frequency of ontological metaphor in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Leatherstocking Tales* series, but the representative survey samples can also generalize how the texts in the novels are created and combined to create the meaning of the works. The findings show that the physical and material metaphors are most commonly used in the works; the container metaphor also occupies a relatively large position, and personification is used less than the previous two types of metaphors. These types of ontological metaphors are used to describe the style and abstract concepts of the American frontier. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the types of ontological metaphors found in the language of James Fenimore Cooper's novels are ways to convey ideas and artistic content to the readers; in return, the readers can explore the author's descriptive images.

### 4. Conclusion

Surveying and pointing out the types of ontological metaphors in the novel series called *The Leatherstocking Tales* by James Fenimore Cooper shows that ontological metaphors appear a lot and have contributed significantly to the formation of the meaning of linguistic expression in the work. Through the types of ontological metaphors in the works, not only do they help people understand more deeply the layers of meaning of the text, but they also help

them feel excited when approaching the flexible words in the novels. In particular, the meaning of metaphorical expressions has helped abstract ideas and objects to be explained or understood when metaphorically or mapped between containing scopes or defined objects. Studying and analyzing literary language from the perspective of cognitive linguistics has greatly contributed to providing readers with a more complete view of the metaphorical meaning behind linguistic expression in literature in general and in daily life in particular. This helps readers, especially those learning foreign languages, specifically English, achieve two goals in the same reading activity: the first is entertainment, and the second is to improve their ability to use the language. This means turning the goal into a driving force to pursue the goal of grasping the way native speakers use the language.

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