

The Main Features of Conceptual Metaphors in Modern Linguistics

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Abstract

Metaphors have long been topic of interest for the scientists of many spheres. Recent emerge of cognitive linguistics gave life to a new approach to metaphors, researching them from different angles. This article is devoted to the realization of conceptual or cognitive metaphors in linguistic context with the help of bright examples. It outlines basic notions related to the topic. It is known that metaphors are the main conceptual domain in cognitive linguistics. It refers to the understanding of one idea in terms of another.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, cognitive linguistics, metaphorization, abstract concepts, cognitive linkages, cognitive mechanism, target audience, discursive, concept.

During the last decades most linguistics have been payed more attention to cognitive structure and mechanisms which is the key features of cognitive linguistics. One of the most essential words in cognitive linguistics is conceptual metaphors , which refers to the process of creating cognitive linkages, or mappings, between many concepts (conceptual structures) from other domain. Studies on metaphor and its influence on human knowledge have proliferated during the recent decades, not only in the field of Linguistics or Literary Studies, but also in other Social Sciences. This has revealed the potential that metaphor bestows speakers and writers in favouring a particular standpoint. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) showed that metaphorical expressions pervade language and evince the existence of conceptual models sustaining our comprehension of everyday situations. Nowadays, the pervasiveness of metaphor is widely accepted as a necessary cognitive mechanism in our comprehension of target domains. The term of “cognitive metaphor” is introduced to the linguistics by M. Black. Metaphor is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” [Lakoff, Jonson 1980: 2]. The rising interest in metaphor studies accelerated after the publication of Lakoff and Johnson’s “Metaphor we live by”. Unlike the standard linguistic approach to metaphor, G. Lakoff believes that conceptual metaphor expresses a universal feature of thought. This idea, and a detailed examination of the underlying processes, was first extensively explored by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their work “ Metaphors We Live By “ in 1980. Since then, the field of metaphor studies within the larger discipline of cognitive linguistics has increasingly developed, with several annual academic conferences, scholarly societies, and research labs contributing to the subject area.

Nowadays, we can use metaphors in every field of study. A fundamental question that might be raised is that why metaphors are extensively used in our language. This question might be answered differently from different perspectives. From a literary perspective, it might be said that metaphors are used to make language more beautiful. Metaphor is a literary device that is used to make language colorful and attractive. Therefore, from a literary perspective, metaphors are used to make a profound impact on the target audience and to get them involved in the content of the message. From a psycholinguistic perspective, the answer would probably be very different. One possible answer is the power of metaphors to communicate effectively. However,

this answer is very general. This article tries to answer this question more specifically by discussing several categories of concepts that are described by metaphors or are used to metaphorically describe other concepts. Because of their nature, abstract concepts are extensively described by metaphors. Before discussing metaphoric description of abstract concepts, their nature and characteristics are discussed in the following section. Obtaining direct interaction with the world can cause metaphORIZATION process in our language when one conceives new notions or ideas that are known to one due to previously gained experiences. For instance, the adjective “ wide “ used literally to talk about spacial measurements in such word combinations as “ wide road “ or “ wide river “ can be used metaphorically with shifts to the sphere of social relations (wide public), legal sphere (wide powers), geology (wide fraction), etc. [Evans, Green 2006:1] A field of study known as cognitive linguistics, which looks at language from the perspective of how humans use it to carry out cognitive tasks, has grown as a result of linguists' interest in various cognitive structures and the mechanisms that underlie them over the past few decades. Metaphorical mapping arises from the interaction of two knowledge systems, namely the cognitive source domain and the target domain, which is implied by the metaphORIZATION process. Dealing with the concept of metaphor, Black remarks that a figurative form normally substitutes the literal one, though sometimes there is no literal expression at all, so that a metaphor is just “the use of a word in some new sense in order to remedy a gap in the vocabulary” [Black, 1955: 280]. In scientific texts, metaphor usually fulfills a task directly related to the contents of a theory or to the explanation of a phenomenon [Fauconnier, 1997: 165-168].

The process of metaphORIZATION implies interrelation of two knowledge structures, namely cognitive source domain and target domain as a result of which metaphorical mapping occurs. Such mapping appears itself at the level of sentence and text meaning and thus conveys our vision of the world. For instance, the metaphor TIME (target) IS MONEY (source) in such expressions as “ Don’t waste your time on that silly thing “ draws attention of the recipient to the idea of value and exhaustibility of this resource, the idea that stands as a part of MONEY cognitive structure, that is, our knowledge of the world shows that there exist numerous situations where time is directly connected with the money spent on it, e.g. time wage, taxi fare, etc.

Some examples of metaphorical mapping illustrating the interrelation of MONEY source domain and TIME target domain are given below.

- This technology will save you hours.
- I’ve invested a lot of time in her.
- That flat tyre cost me an hour.
- Do you have much time left?

The following features of conceptual metaphors can be defined:

- 1) metaphors serve as a transition from familiar to unknown, therefore, source domains compared to target domains are usually more precise, understandable through the direct experience and are easier to use in communication;
- 2) spheres connected with metaphors are asymmetrical and unequal: the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY exists, but there is no opposite metaphor JOURNEY IS LOVE as physical events are not conceived through abstract notions;
- 3) as a rule, metaphors emphasize certain aspects of comparison, e.g. the metaphor TIME IS MONEY highlights the function of money but not on the size of a note; 4) metaphors function at different levels of certainty, some at a higher, more general one, others at a more specific level; metaphors of a higher level have a more universal character which allows them to appear in different languages and cultures whereas metaphors of a lower level are rather culturally presupposed.

The above mentioned and other typical features are shown in G. Lakoff and M. Johnson's classification of conceptual metaphors which has been included in the book "Metaphors we live by". According to the authors of the book all conceptual metaphors can be divided into three groups: structural, orientational and ontological. Structural metaphors are defined as "cases when one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another". When a person interacts with the surrounding world he compares such interaction experience with that gained before so that in the best way to understand it.

Thus, he compares unknown and strange concepts with the features of categories already known and familiar.

In everyday life language the structural metaphor TO ARGUE IS TO FIGHT is exemplified in the following sentences:

- He attacked every weak point in my argument.
- His criticisms were right on target.
- I've never won an argument with him.

In contrast to structural metaphors structuring one concept in terms of another orientational metaphors form "a whole system of concepts with respect to one another" (ibid.) in order to capture the experience of space orientation such as "up – down", "inside – outside", "deep – shallow" etc. Such spatial relations occur due to the existence of the very human body which is involved in the interaction with the outside world.

Below some examples of orientational metaphor are provided. HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN

- He's really low these days.
- Her spirits rose.
- I'm feeling down.
- I fell into depression.

The ontological metaphor HEART IS A CONTAINER represents such form of perception though it is worth noting that under the notion heart stands inner world of a human and his soul rather than a human body organ. This metaphor relying on the orientation "inside – outside" manifests itself in the following sentences:

- In my heart I know that she is right.
- She doubted that I spoke from the heart/from the bottom of my heart.
- Fear can have no place in his heart.
- The news filled her heart with joy.

In discourse, conceptual metaphors are examined in relation to the circumstances of their formation and functioning, taking into account the author's intentions and pragmatic qualities in terms of a broad social, economical, political, historical, and cultural backdrop. The term "discursive" was coined to describe this method to material analysis, and it has since become a core principle of modern cognitive linguistics. Everybody knows that language is a crucial thing in a society or social community such as to share the thought, idea, desire, and feeling of someone. Therefore, the language is beneficial to humans. Generally, there are five language functions in human beings. They are the informational function, the expressive function, the directive function, the phatic function, and the last is the aesthetic function [Leech, 1974]. The purpose of the speakers or authors who write the literary works use the figurative language because they want to arise the aesthetic or artistic function [Kovecses, 2010]. Figurative language can be called by figure of speech. By using the figurative language, the speakers or authors can evoke an emotion or feeling and imagery from their writing. Therefore, the figurative language makes the expression of meaning through the speech or writing easily to

understand and more relatable to the audiences, listeners and the readers in their daily life. Meanwhile, the use of metaphor is not only used in literary works such as in a poem, poetry, drama, novel and so on but the use of metaphor also can be seen in daily conversation. It can be seen in many situations such as in a speech, conference, meeting or another formal situations [Amirudin, 2017]. It can be applied in another aspects which is correlated to the language competence. The language have close relation with metaphor. Automatically, the person who has speech or writing contains metaphor. Any textbook usually contains about the metaphor.

In conclusion, it can be said that the studies in the field of language and mind interrelation lead to the emergence of a cognitive theory of metaphor which states that metaphor is not confined to the level of language but as a consciousness phenomenon manifests itself in the process of thinking and acting. To confirm this statement George Lakoff and Mark Johnson elaborated the classification of conceptual metaphor which includes structural metaphors (a source domain is used to understand a target domain), ontological metaphors (abstract notions are viewed as concrete objects with clear outlines) and orientational metaphors (ways to fix the experience of spatial orientation). Yet, such classification is subject to discussions as the examples illustrating a particular type of metaphor can be perfectly attached to another type. The use of metaphor is not only focused on learning materials but can be applied in daily conversation. By metaphors, one can compare something that is difficult by visualizing another thing. The use of metaphors can refine the speech conveyed by a speaker or author. If someone wants to express an opinion, idea, thought and feeling or maybe someone want to refute something it will feel more polite. The metaphor usage is to develop the critical thinking of the students.

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