Conceptual Metaphor Theory

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Abstract: The article is dedicated to the study of metaphor. A metaphor is an amazing phenomenon in language and thinking. The essence of this phenomenon is that this process takes place at a subconscious level, and without noticing it, we metaphorize our speech in order to convey our thoughts to the listener, interlocutor or reader in the most imaginative and understandable way.

Keywords: metaphor, linguistics, cognitive thinking, concept, vocabulary.

The fundamental tenet of Conceptual Metaphor Theory is that metaphor operates at the level of thinking. Metaphors link two conceptual domains, the 'source' domain and the 'target' domain. The source domain consists of a set of literal entities, attributes, processes and relationships, linked semantically and apparently stored together in the mind. These are expressed in language through related words and expressions, which can be seen as organized in groups resembling those sometimes described as 'lexical sets' or 'lexical fields' by linguists. The 'target' domain tends to be abstract, and takes its structure from the source domain, through the metaphorical link, or 'conceptual metaphor'. Target domains are therefore, believed to have relationships between entities, attributes and processes which mirror those found in the source domain. At the level of language, entities, attributes and processes in the target domain are lexicalized using words and expressions from the source domain. These words and expressions are sometimes called 'linguistic metaphors' or 'metaphorical expressions' to distinguish them from conceptual metaphors.

For proponents of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, thought has primacy over language. The theory was not intended to account for language in use, which is merely the surface manifestation of more important phenomena. Nonetheless, patterns of word use are the main evidence presented for the theory. These

linguistic data have tended to be generated intuitively, either by the researcher or by informants, but in recent years some researchers are beginning to analyze naturally occurring language data.

Proponents of Conceptual Metaphor Theory argue that few or even no abstract notions can be talked about without metaphor: there is no direct way of perceiving them and we can only understand them through the filter of directly experienced, concrete notions. The conceptual metaphor a purposeful life is a journey is cited widely in the literature[1]. This is realized linguistically through expressions such as "He got a head start in life. He's without direction in life. I'm where I want to be in life…"[2]. It is difficult to find linguistic expressions about the development of an individual's life which are not also used to talk about literal journeys. Other metaphors are used to talk about different aspects of life; Lakoff cites a purposeful life is a business[3]. It is very difficult to find expressions used to talk about the subject of life which are not metaphorical in some way. If it is true that abstract subjects are generally talked about using metaphor, and a mass of linguistic evidence has been gathered to support this contention, a close examination of the metaphors used can be an important key to the way people have mentally constructed abstract domains.

Conceptual metaphor theorists claim that all metaphors both hide and highlight aspects of the target domain. For instance, the conceptual metaphor understanding is seizing, discussed by Lakoff and Turner [4]suggests that an idea is a concrete object which can be metaphorically grasped and then held. This highlights a familiar aspect of understanding new ideas but hides the important point that sometimes understanding comes slowly, with some effort, and that ideas are reinterpreted by each individual.

[1] Lakoff G. The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor. In A. Ortony (ed.), Metaphor and Thought, - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1993.- pp. 202-251
[2] Ibid p. 223
[3] Ibid p. 227
[4] Lakoff and Turner , Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor,1989.

The poetic metaphors that had been analyzed in research in literature and philosophy for many years were of minor importance for conceptual metaphor theorists. If conceptual metaphors help people to understand abstract subjects of such central importance as life and communication, then the metaphorical expressions that should form the focus of study are the conventional, frequent ones. These will provide clues to the conceptual structures that both reflect and shape the thought patterns of the community. To describe these, a common technique is to identify the linguistic metaphors used to talk about a topic, and from these postulate underlying conceptual metaphors, which are presumed to motivate them. The researcher can then consider which aspects of the target domain are highlighted and hidden by the metaphor.

In many cases, linguistic metaphors represent subconscious choices on the part of the speaker or writer, whose choice of language is partly constrained by the conceptual structures shared by members of his or her community. Metaphors can also help people to talk about difficult, emotionally intense or uncommon experiences, and thus, according to conceptual metaphor theory, to think about them. Gwyn analyzed the metaphors that seriously ill people used to talk about their experience, and drew conclusions about their thoughts and feelings on the basis of these.

Metaphor

Traditional View

The word "metaphor" originates from the Greek word "metapherein" which means "to carry from one place to another"[5]. Metaphor is also defines as "a word or phrase used in an imaginative way to describe somebody or something else in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful"[6]. Therefore, in common sense, such sentence as "She has a heart of stone" is a metaphor in which "heart" is compared to "stone". Metaphor is used to

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[5] Miller, Metaphor and Political Knowledge, 1979. - p. 156
[6] Hornby. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2000.- p. 803

achieve some literary and persuasive effect, adding eloquence to our communication. This traditional concept can be concisely featured by five of its most widely accepted characteristics:

1. Metaphor is a property of words; it is a linguistic phenomenon.

2. Metaphor is used for some artistic and rhetorical purpose, such as when Shakespeare writes "*all the entire world's a stage*".

3. Metaphor is based on resemblance between the two entities that are compared and identified.

4. Metaphor is a conscious and deliberate use of words, and you must have a special talent to be able to do it and do it well. Only great poets or eloquent speakers can be its masters.

5. It is also commonly held that metaphor is a figure of speech that we can do without, we use it for special effects, and it is not an inevitable part of everyday human communication[7].

Popular as this conception of metaphor is in both academic and general views, it is not the only perspective on metaphor.

The pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday language was first realized in 1979. Speakers of English use a lot of metaphorical expressions when their topic is about communication, for example, "to pack thoughts into words", "the sentence was filled with emotion", "hollow words", "find good ideas in the essay", "seal up meaning in sentences"[8].

A new conception of metaphor that challenged all the above features of the traditional view with its systematic and coherent basis was first proposed in 1980 by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's study "Metaphors We Live By". Their perspective has been widely known as the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor.

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[7] Kovecses Z. Metaphor: A Practical Introduction,- New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. - p. Vii
[8] Reddy M. J. The conduit metaphor: A case of frame conflict in our language about language. In A. Ortony (ed.), Metaphor and Thought., -Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979. - pp. 167-168)

Metaphor, since then, is also attributed to structuring much of human thinking rather than simply being a literary device [9]. For example, the following sentences are persuasive evidence for metaphor's ubiquity both in thought and everyday language:

1. This is <u>where I want to be</u> in life.

2. It's time to stand up; besides, you shouldn't live <u>without direction</u> like that.

3. I'm stuck <u>at the crossroads</u> of life.

4. With such a talent for music, he is bound to <u>go places</u> in life.

5. He's very determined and would never let anyone get <u>in his ways</u>

6. His children are now more sympathetic towards him after all he's <u>gone through</u>.

Hence, the majority of the ways we speak about life in English can be traced from the way we speak about journeys. Cognitive linguists explain this phenomenon by stating that the concrete concept of journey aids the thinking about abstract concepts such as life.

Thus, the deeply- rooted view of metaphor was rejected by the following claims in cognitive linguistics:

1. Metaphor is a property of concepts, and not of words.

2. The function of metaphor is to better understand certain concepts, and not just some artistic or esthetic purpose.

3. Metaphor is often not based on similarity.

4. Metaphor is used effortlessly in everyday life by ordinary people, not just by special talented people;

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[9]Wilson N. L. Conceptualizing Motion Events and Metaphorical Motion: Evidence from Spanish/ English Bilinguals,- California: Doctoral dissertation. University of California, Santa Cruz, 2005.

5.   Metaphor, far from being a superfluous though pleasing linguistic ornament is an inevitable ornament, process of human thought and reasoning[10].

THE LIST OF USED LITERATURES

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