METAPHOR IN NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT:

Whether metaphor identification in newspapers is straightforward or may pose difficulties has not been reported before. The Pragglejaz Group (2007) demonstrated the MIP procedure by applying it to a sentence from a news article, which hints that the procedure is particularly transparent for the news register. In the original Pragglejaz article, however, the procedure was developed by analyzing just a handful of sentences. One might expect application of the method to a large amount of data, as carried out in my project, to reveal cases that fall beyond the protocol, and, indeed, its application to larger samples of text has led to some adjustments.

KEYWORDS: metaphor, metaphorical profiles, linguists, examples of metaphor.

INTRODUCTION:

Metaphor is hotly debated and much researched by linguists. This may seem strange: why are linguists concerned with the stuff of poets? The answer has to do with cognitive linguistics, a powerful new way of looking at both language and thought – and with them metaphor. Unlike earlier models of language, which considered language apart from other cognitive abilities, cognitive linguistics sees language as interacting with perception, memory and reasoning. It emphasizes that even seemingly arbitrary aspects of language, like choosing prepositions (why do you get *on* the bus but *in* the car?), have meaningful systematic underpinnings in thought. In 1980, Lakoff and Johnson published a seminal work on metaphor that would go on to set the direction of metaphor research for years to come. In their work, Lakoff and Johnson collected sets of systematically organized metaphorical language data that, it was claimed, reflect conventional thought structures in the human mind. Here is an example of such a set (1980, p. 46, italics in original):

What he said left a bad *taste in my mouth*.

All this paper has in it are *raw facts, half-baked ideas, and warmed-over theories*.

There are too many facts here for me to *digest* them all.

I just can't *swallow* that claim.

That argument *smells fishy*.

Let me *stew* over that for a while.

Now there's a theory you can really *sink your teeth into*.

We need to let that idea *percolate* for a while.

That's *food for thought*.

He's a *voracious* reader.

We don't need to *spoon-feed* our students.

He *devoured* the book.

Let's let that idea *simmer on the back burner* for a while.

This is the *meaty* part of the paper.

Let that idea *jell* for a while.

That idea has been *fermenting* for years.

The expressions in italics do not refer to food in this context but are used to describe the more abstract topic of ideas. In each list item, one can see that an abstract, more complex and fuzzy concept – An idea – is structured in terms of a concrete, more familiar, simple and physical concept of food. These are expressions of metaphor in the sense of cognitive linguistics: metaphor is seen as the linguistic expression of a cross-domain mapping in thought – usually from a more concrete source domain (e.g. food)

to a more abstract target domain (e.g. ideas). The patterns of thought underlying *linguistic* expressions are termed *conceptual* metaphors. The expressions themselves are referred to as linguistic metaphors. In the example above, the metaphorical expressions in italics are realizations of the conceptual metaphor IDEAS ARE FOOD. Lakoff and Johnson took such systematic sets as evidence that we not only talk about one thing in terms of another, but that we also *think* in these terms. "Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person's conceptual system" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 6). Metaphors thus provide a window on the ways language is structured and on the ways in which we think and learn. In this view, they are no longer regarded merely as an element of poetry but are recognized as a central device in human thought. This is the reason metaphor has become such an important topic of linguistic research.

Lakoff and Johnson's work on conceptual metaphor created a whole new field of research within cognitive linguistics. As with much groundbreaking research, it also has been heavily criticized (e.g. Jackendoff & Aaron, 1991; Murphy, 1996, 1997; Steen, 1994; Verwaeke & Green, 1997; Verwaeke & Kennedy, 1996). One point of critique is their method of data collection: it is not clear how they accumulated the examples offered in support of their claims. The bulk of their examples seem to be constructed rather than found and are presented out of a larger context. In this thesis I will take the view that to develop a deep understanding of metaphor, it is necessary to move beyond invented examples and decontextualized materials. If we want to understand how people use metaphorical language, its functions, in what kind of situations and in what ways it is used, how people understand metaphorical language and

what kind of effects it might have on them, we need to look at real language as it is used and produced in everyday life. This focus on metaphorical language use by real people in real situations of use is only a recent phenomenon (Cameron, 2003; Charteris-Black, 2004; Cienki & Müller, 2008; Deignan, 2005; Koller, 2004; Semino, 2002).

When working with real language data, it is important to consider not just the language but its context. A text does not exist in a vacuum – it is produced by someone for someone else in a certain situation and way for a particular purpose. "Discourse (…) is a complex communicative event that also embodies a social context, featuring participants (and their properties) as well as production and reception processes" (van Dijk, 1988, p. 2). Consequently, natural discourse provides a much richer source for investigating the function of metaphor.

One abundant source of real discourse is the news. Since "society is pervaded by media language" (Bell, 1991, p. 1), news influences much of our lives. It has attracted significant research interest. Critical discourse analysis, for example, aims to reveal power and inequality in social and political contexts and to uncover ideological bias of texts (van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). Metaphor has the ability to highlight some aspects of a concept while at the same time hiding others (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 10). It is thus a powerful tool for creating subtly persuasive messages serving ideological purposes in the press (CharterisBlack, 2004; Santa Ana, 1999).

News is the subject of interest in this thesis, more specifically the use of metaphor in newspaper articles. The aim of this work is to examine metaphor in newspapers from both a cognitive linguistic and discourse analytical perspective. Cataloging and describing metaphorical expressions and conceptual structures in real language data such as news

discourse has value in and of itself: it provides a test for existing theories of language and thought and guides linguists in developing new theories. But a cognitive linguistic approach alone is not enough. A study of actual language use also demands a discourse analytical angle. This is necessary in order to connect metaphorical forms and structures to their functions – when, why and how do journalists use metaphor? The cognitive linguistic definition of metaphor as a crossdomain mapping will be used as a framework to describe and analyze which linguistic forms of metaphor are typical of news texts and in which contexts and for which purposes they may be used. Insights gained from a discourse perspective can then feed back into conceptual metaphor theory.

There is a variety of prior work on metaphor in news. It has been investigated in very specific topics such as immigrant discourse (Santa Ana, 1999), or single articles (e.g. Kitis & Milapides, 1997 on ideology construction), and its use has been discussed for a range of subregisters such as business texts (e.g. Koller, 2004) or sports reporting (e.g. Charteris-Black, 2005). Other research has given detailed accounts of the use of selected samples of conceptual metaphors and/or metaphorical expressions (Heywood & Semino, 2007; Koller, 2004). Metaphorical language use in news as a register as a whole, however, has not yet been given due attention. Goatly (1997) created "metaphorical profiles" for several registers, giving estimates of the frequencies of a range of metaphorical phenomena in news texts. This had not been previously attempted, and was a worthwhile effort. How precisely his metaphorical data was collected, however, is not clear. This makes it difficult to draw general conclusions from that study.

In order to extract features of metaphorical language use that are characteristic of news texts, I will take a corpus-linguistic, quantitative approach. Though discourse analysts have not traditionally drawn comparisons to other texts or general corpora (Deignan, 2005, p. 135), there is good reason to do so: a corpus analysis that compares the news register to other domains of discourse can reveal distinguishing features of metaphorical language in newspapers. The corpus I work with contains four registers – news texts, academic texts, fiction and conversation – and has been built using a systematic, explicit, repeatable method for metaphor identification. Chapters are devoted to the development of this protocol, which is a response to the vast amount of intuition-based metaphor research. It will also supplement quantitative methods with qualitative analysis. While a quantitative analysis can show general trends, a qualitative analysis of metaphorical language use is required to gain a better understanding of its functions in a larger discourse context.

That being said, this work will move beyond the boundaries of a corpus linguistic approach. Studying the forms and patterns of metaphorical language in news language can reveal their functions in discourse. It does not tell us, however, whether newspaper readers actually think metaphorically. Finding an answer to this question has both theoretical significance and practical implications for journalistic writing. I thus will use psycholinguistic methods to investigate the impact of metaphor form and conceptual structure on the construction of metaphorical schemas by readers.

My study of metaphor in newspapers is multidisciplinary. While the cognitive linguistic assumption of metaphor as a cross-domain mapping forms the framework for all analyses, an understanding of metaphor use in real language data requires more diverse perspectives. I use corpus linguistics to research

metaphor variation. Metaphorical forms, functions and patterns are analyzed with a discourse analytical approach. In order to learn more about the cognitive representation of metaphors in people's minds, this symbolic analysis is complemented with a behavioral approach.

Metaphor identification: building a database

With most studies of metaphor being concerned with analyzing artificial examples, short snippets of text, a restricted selection of conceptual metaphors or a narrow topic of interest, the field remains in its infancy. In order to "grow up", it needs to make the leap from qualitative to quantitative research. And in order to do that, a large corpus of text annotated for metaphor is essential. Here we make that leap. Together with a small group of analysts, I have built a corpus of about 190,000 words comprising four registers taken from the BNC-Baby – a four million word sub corpus of the British National Corpus: these registers are news, academic texts, fiction, and conversation. In this thesis, the news register is singled out for particular attention. The other three registers receive similar treatment in a series of companion works (Dorst, in preparation; Herrmann, in preparation; Kaal, in preparation). In order to build a corpus annotated for metaphorical language use it is not sufficient to take an "I-know-it-when-I-see-it" approach. Instead, it is necessary to have a clear set of rules for identifying metaphor. The Pragglejaz Group (2007) has formulated such a set of instructions for identifying metaphorical language use in discourse. Their goal was to move away from intuition and to achieve reliable metaphor identification across analysts. My study aims at quantifying metaphorical language and answering questions like: how common is metaphorical language in newspapers and how does its frequency compare to that of other registers? Which metaphor forms are most common? Which word class is typically metaphorically used? And so on. Moreover, my study will describe the use and function of metaphor in newspaper texts and will test whether people create metaphorical schemas when reading metaphorical expressions in press reports. This host of important questions cannot be addressed without a solid database.

Analysts systematically collected metaphorically used expressions by applying the Pragglejaz protocol and monitored their performance through reliability tests. The resulting database is a unique effort to add validity and comparability to metaphor research. It forms the backbone for all ensuing analysis. To my knowledge this is the first study to describe the characteristics of metaphorical language in newspapers in comparison to other registers that is based on a corpus annotated for metaphorical language use on the basis of an explicit, reliable procedure.

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