

Economic metaphors in business English

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Abstract

Our theoretical framework is based on Lakoff and Johnson's theory of conceptual metaphors which doesn't view metaphors as means of adorning language. Metaphors are not related to the aesthetic function of language, they are rather connected to our conceptual system. We embrace Lakoff's idea that metaphors do not occur primarily in language, but in thought, that metaphors belong to conceptual and social-cultural phenomena, rather than to the linguistic phenomenon. From Lakoff's classification of metaphors we believe that structural metaphors and orientational metaphors pertain to the business English genre. We also aim to analyse the means by which these conceptual categories are obtained: verbs, idioms, pre- and post-modifiers, as well as the cases in which morphological changes entail metaphorical meaning.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor, economic, metaphorical load;

1. Introduction

The paper analyses economic metaphors from the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. We established the business English genre for sampling our population of texts for the following

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reasons: the quite high frequency of metaphors, conceptual metaphors arise frequently in business English texts. The second reason is the high degree of metaphorical load. In our undertaking business genre has turned out to be a fertile ground for investigating conceptual metaphors. The economics books are very scientific they operate with definitions and specialized terminology, usually, their readership consists of educated specialists and specialists to become who are business and terminology aware. When it comes to business newspapers and magazines, things change as these are not aimed only at specialists and top management positions with degrees in economics, banking or finance. Business magazines and newspapers address to wider readership from different social categories: entrepreneurs, students in business as well as other professional categories who want to get informed. Business newspapers do not have the same degree of metaphorical load, this differs from one text to another, from one author to another.

2. Method

We resorted to corpora for the identification of business metaphors. Corpus-based approach opens new avenues for analyzing business English metaphors and at the same time it offers new insights on business English. Among the advantages provided by the corpus-based approach we will briefly mention the following. Firstly, corpora enable the investigation of genre specific metaphors, in our case business metaphors. Secondly, with the help of corpora larger amounts of data can be investigated, the research is not limited to short samples of data. Corpora comprise larger volumes of data to be analysed which reinforces and accounts for the validity of a corpus-based research. Thirdly, corpora give the researcher the possibility to compare the findings, thus conceptual categories of metaphors identified in one language SL can be compared to conceptual categories identified in another language TL in order to investigate similarities and differences.

In our investigation the business English corpus we amassed contains 50 newspaper articles. This approach proved to be more valuable in the research of metaphors than the traditional one, in that it encompasses authentic material and it enables drawing comparisons. The samples of authentic materials grant greater validity to our investigation.

The investigation and research of metaphors in a text/ corpus require the analysis of Source Domain and of Target Domain. The Target domain is investigated manually or electronically with the help of headwords, then we investigated the entailments and mappings in the Source Domain.

There are two ways of identifying conceptual metaphors in corpora:

1. manual annotation, we identify conceptual categories expressed linguistically. The manual annotation of the corpus enabled us to identify at the same time the Target Domain, the Source Domain and the metaphorical mappings.

2. automatic annotation with the help of concordancing programs, we are searching for specific headwords;

For our investigation we amassed the same population of business English texts selected from online business newspapers such as *The Economist*, *Financial Times*. The annotation and identification of metaphors were done manually. We resorted to manual annotation, despite the length of our corpus, as with automatic annotation there is the risk that conceptual categories remain unidentified.

3. Findings

The types of business metaphors which arise in business English press are clustered around money metaphors, animal metaphors, time metaphors. In this paper we chose to analyse animal metaphors and animate metaphors arising in business press. On the one hand we selected animal characteristics transferred to human beings and institutions, in this case the metaphors were mainly nominal. We also analysed animal behavior transferred to human beings and institutions, the metaphors were

rendered in this case by verbs. We identified conceptual categories clustered around animal metaphors such as:

1. Event Structure Metaphors
2. Orientational Metaphors

The corresponding conceptual categories for the above-mentioned categories of metaphors include:

1. Intensity is heat;
2. Entrepreneurs are animals.
3. People are animals;
4. Institutions are animals;

The conceptual category *People are animals* is expressed either by verbs or by nouns. On studying animal and plant metaphors Alice Deignan points out that: 1. Source domain nouns often have metaphorical meanings that are verbs. 2. Metaphorical meaning are sometimes associated with single inflection and /or are found in expressions that are fixed lexically and/or gradually. (Deignan 2006:119).

TABLE 1 METAPHORS CLUSTERED AROUND CONCEPTUAL CATEGORIES

1. Humans are animals	
<p>The Source Domain is animal behavior and the Target Domain is people and institutions. There produces a semantic transfer of animal characteristics and behaviour to people:</p>	<p><i>The problem might be collective groupthink; people tend to express their pessimism or optimism relative to the <u>herd</u>.</i></p>
<p>This category of metaphors can be rendered by verbs or in the last case by verbal collocations. In the examples provided animal characteristics are transferred to human beings. In the first two examples the metaphorical load is influenced by the use of <i>flock</i> as a verb. As pointed above by Deignan 2006, the verbal use of <i>flock</i> entails a higher degree of metaphorical load. In these cases there were strong conceptual similarities between Target Domain and Source Domain.</p> <p>In this example the entailment is Situations are animals, the collocation <i>to give rein over</i> implies a tight control on an animal which is transferred to the German economy.</p>	<p><i>Europeans still <u>flock</u> in the US for holidays even though American guns kill far more people than terrorism.</i></p> <p><i>Even Chinese tourists, still <u>flocking</u> to Europe and other parts of Asia, are showing less interest in Taiwan: visitor numbers are up by just 5% this year.</i></p> <p><i>News of arrest <u>rattled</u> Brazil`s financial industry.</i></p> <p><i>If someone <u>gave</u> me <u>free rein</u> over the German economy and asked me to raise its output per person to American levels, I know the sorts of things I would do, but I have a low level of confidence that I could succeed, or even close much of the gap, within a generation.</i></p>
2. Entrepreneurs/ Managers are animals	
<p>In today`s business environment an entrepreneur needs to strive to be successful and to remain on the market, this is why he needs to borrow features of</p>	<p><i>In essence, the pair thought they could survive only by moving like <u>sharks</u>.</i></p>

animal behaviour.	
3. Institutions are human beings	
<p>Institutions borrow characteristics specific to human beings. In this case the Source domain is human behaviour and the Target domain is people/institutions, the conceptual entailment is : <i>Intensity is heat</i></p> <p>Cases of personifications were also identified: Spreads are considered persons.</p> <p>Inventories are considered humans.</p>	<p><i>He said having the plans at your fingertips would be especially empowering if the New York City <u>real estate market heated up</u> and buyers felt pressure to speed up due diligence before a competing buyer closed the deal.</i></p> <p><i>Hedge funds and private equity funds are still offering backing for deals, believing that the <u>real estate market will warm up</u> again this year.</i></p> <p><i>Mr Gross is right that <u>narrower spreads are eating into the returns of some investors.</u></i></p> <p><i>Companies would seek to make payments quickly and receive them slowly. Their inventories <u>would grow fatter.</u></i></p>
Physical pain is transferred from people to institutions:	<p><i>Foreign <u>subsidiaries are proving a headache</u> for big Spanish banks.</i></p> <p><i>First, low interest rates <u>have not hurt investment.</u></i></p>
This type of metaphor is also expressed by verbs:	<p><i>This is hardly surprising since the <u>banks have survived and are still nursing wounds</u> incurred last time.</i></p>
4. Institutions are animals	
In this case markets are considered animals. The second implication is the orientational metaphor <i>up-down</i> . <i>Bear market</i> is associated with <i>Less is down</i> , while <i>Bull market</i> with <i>More is up</i> .	<p><i>This week a report showing a slump in China's imports and exports in November was read differently by <u>bulls and bears.</u></i></p>

5. Intensity is speed/ Lack of intensity is lack of speed	
	<i>Even retail stalwarts like Macy's and Gap have reported <u>sluggish sales</u>.</i>
6. Vitality is a substance	
<p>This type of conceptual metaphors is mainly expressed by nouns:</p> <p>It is also expressed by means of verbs:</p>	<p><i>Economy's <u>stamina</u>.</i></p> <p><i><u>Exports are the lifeblood</u> of Taiwan's economy, accounting for nearly three-quarters of its output.</i></p> <p><i>Deposits <u>drained out of them</u> on fears that the country would leave the euro and revert to the drachma, inflicting huge losses on depositors.</i></p>
7. Things are containers	
<p>Human characteristics are assigned to things. In this case mattresses replace banks as containers. Money is seen as a solid object.</p>	<p><i>Mattresses do not charge for storing notes.</i></p>

4. Conclusion

After investigating a corpus made up of 50 business texts we conclude that the conceptual profile of the metaphors identified in our paper is structured around orientational metaphors and structure metaphors. Out of these the most frequent conceptual categories pertain to *Institutions are human beings*, *Human are animals*. The metaphorical implication is not a matter of frequency or intensity, its degree varies from one text to another, from one author to another. The cases when one word attains metaphorical meanings or becomes part of conceptual categories differ, the metaphorical correspondences developed by words are different from one context to another, from one register to another.

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