ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКАЯ, ПРИКЛАДНАЯ И СРАВНИТЕЛЬНО-СОПОСТАВИТЕЛЬНАЯ ЛИНГВИСТИКА / THEORETICAL, APPLIED AND COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS

ON METAPHORICITY GRADES OR "METAPHORICAL CIRCLE" THEORY

Research article

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Abstract

The present article focuses on the problem of metaphor essential properties through the lens of the notion "metaphorical circle" introduced by the authors several years ago. The basic principle underlying the theory under consideration boils down to the assumption that metonymy precedes the emergence of metaphor, as metaphor stems from the so-called substance (object)-related space.

The purpose of the given article is to throw light upon our Metaphorical Circle Theory whose potential is great in metaphor ontology explanation practices and to prove the existence of metaphoricity grades characterized by different degrees of concreteness.

The basic assumption underlying the present piece of research can be reduced to the fact that metaphor properties are best explicated by way of metonymy.

Metaphor is considered on the level of substance (object)-related entities, on the level of cognition, on the language-oriented level as well as on the culture-specific level. A number of examples are analyzed to illustrate the theoretical assumptions made.

Within the specified substance (object)-related space / dimension metaphor is closely related to metonomy through the mechanism of symbolization.

The given article also discusses salient criteria typical of traditional semantics for setting apart metaphor and metonymy in the light of "metaphorical circle" theory. The conclusion arrived at is the boundaries between metaphor and metonymy are fuzzy and slippery.

Keywords: metaphor, metonymy, substance (object)-related space / dimension, cognitive space / dimension, language-oriented space / dimension, culture-specific space / dimension, metaphoricity grade.

О СТЕПЕНЯХ МЕТАФОРИЧНОСТИ ИЛИ ТЕОРИЯ «МЕТАФОРИЧЕСКОГО КРУГА»

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Настоящая статья посвящена проблеме сущностных свойств метафоры через призму введенного авторами несколько лет назад понятия «метафорический круг». Основной принцип, лежащий в основе рассматриваемой теории, сводится к предположению, что метонимия предшествует возникновению метафоры, поскольку метафора исходит из так называемого субстанциального (предметного) пространства.

Цель данной статьи – объяснить теорию Метафорического Круга, потенциал которой велик в практиках объяснения онтологии метафоры, и доказать существование степеней метафоричности, характеризующихся разной степенью конкретности.

Основное предположение, лежащее в основе настоящего исследования, сводится к тому, что свойства метафоры лучше всего объясняются посредством метонимии.

Метафора рассматривается на уровне субстанциональных (предметных) сущностей, на уровне познания, на языково-ориентированном уровне, а также на культурно-специфическом уровне. Проанализирован ряд примеров, иллюстрирующих сделанные теоретические предположения.

В рамках указанной субстанции (предмета), связанной с пространством/измерением, метафора тесно связана с метономией посредством механизма символизации.

В данной статье также рассматриваются характерные для традиционной семантики существенные критерии разграничения метафоры и метонимии в свете теории «метафорического круга». Заключается вывод, что границы между метафорой и метонимией являются размытыми и непостоянными.

Ключевые слова: метафора, метонимия, субстанциальное (предметное) пространство/измерение, когнитивное пространство/измерение, языковое пространство/измерение, культурно специфичное пространство/измерение, степень метафоричности.

Introduction

The present article in broad terms deals with a debatable issue of metaphor-related essential qualities. To be more exact, the matter to be dwelled upon will handle such problematic areas of metaphor analysis as metaphor vs metonymy as well as metonymy within metaphor due to the so-called substance (object)-oriented features metaphor radiates. The purpose of the given article is to throw light upon our metaphorical circle theory whose potential is great in metaphor ontology explanation practices and to prove the existence of metaphoricity grades characterized by different degrees of concreteness.

The basic assumption underlying the present piece of research can be reduced to the fact that metaphor properties are best explicated by way of metonymy.

The metaphoricity density largely depends on the metaphoric grade a particular linguistic metaphor has attained under the influence of both linguistic and extralinguistic factors.

The so-called Metaphorical Circle Theory reveals the mechanism of metaphor production synergetics as well as takes into account the major levels of metaphor being and functioning.

Research methods and principles

The topic of metaphor being gradable has been widely discussed in works by prominent linguists ([1], [2], [3]). For instance, R. Jacobson's works come to mind first (1956, 1971), he tried to draw a demarcation line between metaphor and metonymy through syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations proving that one metaphor can be more metaphoric whereas another one can be less metaphoric and therefore reveal more metonymic qualities. Though the aforementioned issues have been looked into properly from different angles, the unanimous opinion on them has not yet been formulated.

In view of the above, we put forward the so-called *Metaphorical Circle Theory* [4] several years ago. The theory under discussion illustrates the grades metaphor has, depending on certain inner and outer conditions of its functioning. The notion of metaphorical circle can be clarified the following way.

To start with, metaphor, being multi-facetted, penetrates several spaces or dimensions. On the one hand, the most concrete properties exhibited by metaphor can be revealed by means of analyzing substance (object)-related metaphor within the framework of **substance (object)-related space / dimension**, the initial stage of metaphor production. On the other hand, the designated space / dimension can encompass metaphor as a symbol (when metaphor has already gone through all the grades possible) and becomes the final stage of metaphorical sense development. This space / dimension creates the right conditions for metaphor to exhibit striking metonymic properties. This happens by way of an object performing the function of metaphor in our consciousness when symbolization occurs. According to G.I. Berestnev, substance(object)-related metaphors serve as the most appropriate reflections of abstract entities derived from the deepest corners of consciousness when plunged into our concrete tangible reality [5, P. 47]. Thus, on the one hand, substance (object)-related space / dimension gives rise to **metaphor-object**, on the other hand, it makes for **metaphor-symbol** emergence. For example, *the crucifix* is known as a symbol representing *the sun*, *man with outstretched arms* and even *the world tree*. Such examples show how concreteness and abstractivity overlap within one and the same linguistic sign. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson designate such cases as metonymies under the disguise of metaphors [6, P. 67].

G. Lakoff and M. Johnson were pioneers in putting metaphor into **cognitive space / dimension**. Through mechanisms of generalization and particularization metaphor finds its realization in cognitive models of dynamic character with different degrees of abstractivity / concreteness. The more concreteness metaphor has, the nearer it is to expressing metonymic relations. The cognitive models under consideration include

1) **image-schemas** (representing the process of metaphor and metonymy overlap);

2) **generalized / idealised cognitive metaphor models** with metonymy underlying them: ontological, structural, orientational metaphors;

3) numerous rather concrete manifestations of metaphorical configurations (Eg. MAN is INSECT (spider, etc.), this insect is able to cast a net and wait for the prey to get into it). The third case illustrates (figuratively speaking) metaphor's endeavor to drift apart from metonymy though this undertaking on its part seems rather elusive.

Metaphor is not only a certain object or cognition mechanism, its major function is to make our language more figurative. Thus, metaphor gets into **language-oriented space / dimension**. Linguistic metaphor is manifested with the help of a linguistic sign. Moreover, language-oriented space / dimension creates the most appropriate conditions for setting apart metaphor from metonymy by giving a more or less specific context though the boundaries between these two entities seem rather fuzzy and slippery. Besides, one linguistic metaphor can be more metaphoric than another one (see P. Hank's research into metaphor gradability on the example of SEA OF SOMETHING [7]). The brighter the image conjured up by metaphor is, the fewer metonymic features metaphor possesses.

Finally, metaphor also finds itself in the so-called **culture-specific space / dimension** where metaphor functioning largely hinges on connotations and various evaluations subject only to proper professional interpretation.

The table below summarizes the points made above (see Table 1: *Metaphor through the lens of space / dimension-oriented configurations*).

Table 1 - Metaphor through the lens of space/ dimension-oriented configurations

DOI: https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2023.42.12.1

Space/ dimension (nature)	Metaphor type	Concise description
Substance (object)-related (horizontal)	Substance (object)-related metaphor realized either through metaphor-object or metaphor-symbol	The initial stage of metaphor production: metonymic features outweigh metaphoric features proper

Cognitive (horizontal)	1. Image-schemas; 2. Generalized / idealized cognitive metaphor models: ontological, structural, orientational metaphors; 3. More or less concrete manifestations of generalized cognitive metaphors belonging to type 1 and 2	Metaphor is a mechanism of cognition we cannot do without; metaphor is on the point of isolating itself from metonymy
Language-oriented (horizontal)	Linguistic metaphor (metaphor-sign)	Both linguistic and extralinguistic contexts regulate the degree of metaphoricity. The brighter the image created, the fewer metonymic features come to the fore
Culture-specific (vertical)	Culture-specific metaphor (cultural metaphor-sign)	This space is vertical (compared to the three other spaces / dimensions); culture-specific connotations are largely associated with metaphor functioning

The above insights prove that metaphor properties description as well as the problem of metaphor vs metonymy differentiation should motivate the linguist to do research into metaphor on the following levels: substance (object)-related level; level of cognition; language-oriented (linguistic) level; level of culture. It is worth mentioning that the first three levels represent a hierarchy whereas the level of culture penetrates this hiararchial structure and finalizes the whole process of metaphor shaping. The interaction of the levels mentioned leads to a rather tight fusion of object and image and makes for metaphor-symbol appearance (arche-sense subject to proper interpretation on the part of an addressee). Thus, metaphor starts within the boundaries of substance (object)-related space / dimension, and it also attains its final development grade within the same space. This way the so-called metaphorical circle emerges. This process can start anew any time on condition that the arche-sense of metaphor-symbol can gradually become less evident and this metaphor-symbol turns into metaphor-object again under certain conditions created by this or that culture. Hence, one can assert that metaphor is an autopoetical entity (the notion derived from synergetics) (see [8], [9]). This idea is illustrated below in Table 2: *Level organization of metaphor analysis model*.

Table 2 - Level organization of metaphor analysis model

DOI: https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2023.42.12.2

Level of substance (object)-related entities	Level of culture-specific senses
Level of cognition	
Language-oriented level	
	Symbolization through object

Let us consider the interaction of the spaces / dimensions described on the example of the following metaphorical context. This context is also of interest because metaphor here reveals one more important quality known as discursivity: *"I recognize the Republican party as the **sheet anchor** of the colored man's political hopes and the **ark** of his safety"* – Frederick Douglass, an American writer and political activist.

Level of substance (object)-related entities (substance (object)-related space / dimension): *an anchor* as an integral part of ship rigging (any of various devices dropped by a chain, cable, or rope to the bottom of a body of water for preventing or restricting the motion of a vessel or other floating object, typically having broad, hooklike arms that bury themselves in the bottom to provide a firm hold [10]); an ark as a big vessel built by Noah to rescue everybody from the Inundation. Also called Noah's Ark, the large boat built by Noah in which he saved himself, his family, and a pair of every kind of creature during the Flood. Gen. 6–9 [11]).

Level of cognition (cognitive space / dimension):

It seems that metaphor functioning on this level can be best exemplified by way of G. Fauconnier and M. Turner's Conceptual Blending Theory:

Network model: SHEET ANCHOR

1) **S (source domain)** – anchor; **sss** (input space 1) – emergency postural anchor → the only last hope;

2) **T (target domain)** – a party capable of protecting the rights of African Americans; **ttt** (input space 2) – a political party fighting for the interests of African Americans → capable of offering refuge from discrimination → hope for the better future;

3) **G (generic space + mental connectors)** – the last hope;

4) **B (blended space)** – the given metaphor depicts the Republican party as the only refuge; the so-called salvation anchor for all African Americans;

5) **BTS (blended target-space model): CONTAINER-OBJECT** – *sheet anchor*, **CONTAINER-SUBSTANCE** – hope for salvation.

Network model: ARK (OF ITS SAFETY)

1) **S (source domain)** – ark; **sss** (input space 1) – Noah's Ark → a spacious vessel built by Noah to save himself, his family and animals during the Flood → salvation place;

2) **T (target domain)** – a party capable of protecting against discrimination; **ttt** (input space 2) – the Republican Party → criticized slavery → offering protection for African Americans;

3) **G (generic space + mental connectors)** – salvation, protection, security;

4) **B (blended space)** – the ark was a save house for its passengers, like the Republican Party being the guardian for African Americans in terms of protecting them from slavery and discrimination;

5) **BTS (blended target-space model): CONTAINER-OBJECT** – ark, **CONTAINER-SUBSTANCE** – salvation, security; MIND IS A MACHINE – ideology practiced by the Republican Party presents a mechanism against discrimination, slavery, racism.

Thus, in order to reinforce the effect the concepts of salvation and security are realized twice within one metaphorical context through the discursive combinability of metaphorical models.

Language-oriented level:

1) The English language accommodates the idiomatic expression known as "sheet anchor", it can be utilized both literally and figuratively: a final reliance or resource, as when in danger [12].

2) The lexeme "ark" also gets its metaphorical interpretation: a place of protection or security; refuge; asylum [11].

Consequently, the language has successfully adapted the expressions in question to its usual functional practices.

Level of culture-specific senses: In religious tradition typical of English-speaking bearers *anchor* represents a symbol of hope and security. Furthermore, *anchor* also symbolizes tranquility and credibility. *Ark* is a symbol of God presence and it is also associated with hope, security and protection. Thus, the so-called cultural specificity is construed on religious foundations. The examples show that the highest metaphoricity grade is attained in the act of symbolization where the metaphorical image gets stabilized by way of the semiotization of object-related entities.

Metaphoricity is gradable, indeed

The following examples can illustrate the fact that metaphoricity is gradable. Let us consider the metaphorical pattern '*a tsunami of something*': an extremely large quantity of something bad: a tsunami of: *He described the government's explanation as a tsunami of lies* [13]. Taken separately, the word 'tsunami' stands for 'a very large wave or series of waves caused when something such as an earthquake moves a large quantity of water in the sea' [13]. The metaphorical pattern under discussion can be utilized in the following way: *a tsunami of severity, a tsunami of disability*, *a tsunami of cash, a tsunami of bankruptcies, a tsunami of drugs, a tsunami of evictions, a tsunami of unemployment, a tsunami of sorrow, a tsunami of generosity, a tsunami of success, a tsunami of acceptance*, etc. Here special attention deserve the patterns '*a tsunami of unemployment*' as well as '*a tsunami of generosity*', '*a tsunami of success*', '*a tsunami of acceptance*' for the following reasons. In addition, the pattern '*a tsunami of sorrow*' catches the eye due to its targeting at the emotional sphere of a person. Firstly, the example '*a tsunami of unemployment*' demonstrates a rather high degree of frequency that makes the metaphorical image created less vivid and more usual. We have already accustomed to such expressions:

(1) Economists Predict "Tsunami" of Unemployment: *Economists are worried tough times are ahead. "The real tsunami is coming," Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, told Axios. "My guess is at this point hiring in the industries that have been hit hard is going to abate."* [14].

(2) UK faces a 'Tsunami' of Unemployment in the Autumn: *Following Bank of England predictions that 2.5 million people could be out of work by the end of the year, the TUC warned the clock is ticking to avoid a "tsunami of unemployment" in Autumn.*

It said the government risked throwing away the good work achieved by the JRS and has therefore created a new short-time working scheme designed to prevent mass unemployment and help firms bounce back after the crisis [15].

(3) Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown warns of 'Tsunami of Unemployment' after Lockdown: *Former Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, has warned of a "tsunami of unemployment" and business bankruptcies – unless the Chancellor delivers new economic lifelines.*

Mr Brown has urged Rushi Sunak to call a UK-wide jobs summit to "fix the fundamental flaws in his COVID recovery plan."

If he doesn't, said Mr Brown, he risks leaving half a million young people without a job or a future [16].

(4) Prevent 'tsunami' of job losses when furlough ends, TUC urges Sunak: Rishi Sunak *has been urged by union leaders to launch a wage subsidy scheme to prevent a "tsunami" of unemployment when furlough comes to an end this autumn* [17], etc.

There are a plethora of such 'tsunami' contexts on the Internet (see Google Search results).

Secondly, the expression '*a tsunami of sorrow*' (though it emphasizes a negative emotion – 'something bad') looks and feels more metaphoric than the previous one, as it penetrates an unusual sphere for the pattern under discussion.

(5) *The thoughts of letting go of everything I love overwhelms like a tsunami of sorrow* (Sandra Cisneros) [18].

Thirdly, the examples with 'something good' in the of-phrase are not typical of the English language at all, therefore they are charged with the highest metaphoricity-related energy:

(6) *Daily ripples of excellence – over time – become a tsunami of success* (Robin Sharma) [18].

(7) *I've given up asking questions. I merely float on a tsunami of acceptance of anything life throws at me…and marvel stupidly* (Terry Gilliam) [18].

The expression '*a tsunami of generosity'* appears on the basis of two metaphorical patterns:

1) a tsunami of something and

2) a wave of generosity.

These two strong associations are even discursively tagged on to the metaphorical patterns in question in our minds. E.g. *a wave of generosity after Covid-19 tsunami* [19].

Thus, originally the pattern 'a tsunami of something' emerged to talk about countable entities both abstract and concrete like lies, drugs (**the first grade of metaphoricity**). Later after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 the patterns accepted and started to actively exploit uncountable abstract nouns like violence, severity, unemployment, etc (**the second grade of metaphoricity**). Here one can also mention the examples like *a tsunami of sorrow*, though their usuality is less pronounced as the image created is brighter. Then the combinability rules were violated and 'something good notion' appeared in the of-phrase (**the third grade of metaphoricity**). The metaphors of the third type are still regarded as innovative.

Metaphor vs. metonymy dilemma

In this part of the article, we aim at making a systematic description of the criteria allowing to distinguish metaphor from metonymy.

Having considered the criteria in question worked out by prominent scholars, one can reduce them to the following two:

1. Inner comparison underlies metaphor, whereas contiguity forms the basis of metonymy;

2. Metonymy retains the link to the target domain, being referential in nature, whereas metaphor penetrates several domains.

Let us look into the aforementioned criteria from the Metaphorical Circle Theory perspective.

The so-called **substance (object)-oriented metaphor** (the rose is a symbol of love; the pigeon is a symbol of freedom and independence, etc.) equally bears upon both contiguity and comparison associations. In this case one can spot object and symbol overlapping as well as making the object similar to a certain non-material entity.

Cognitive metaphor manifesting itself in the form of an image-schema (e.g. PART – WHOLE, WHOLE – PART, etc.) illustrates analogous abilities of a person but at the same time contiguity associations are always present here. Consequently, image-schemas represent a simultaneous metaphor and metonymy realization. **Structural**, **ontological**, **orientational metaphors** initially presuppose metonymic relations in their foundations.

Let us discuss the expression '*credit crunch'* from the perspective mapped out above. As far as its cognitive configuration is concerned, the given expression is associated with the Lakoff and Johnson structural metaphor model. *One can spot an immediate realization of metaphor and metonymy within the expression under analysis. It is noteworthy that 'credit crunch' has been in circulation since August 2007 and it is widely exploited to designate economic downturn / recession/ economic slump/ economic crisis; credit-crunch [compound adj.]: credit-crunch Britain, etc.*

Metonymic model 1:

CREDIT CRUNCH IS ECONOMIC CRISIS *(credit has dried up → banks collapse → businesses fold → governments frantically bail out → bankruptcy, unemployment, less consumer spending => RECESSION).*

Metonymic model 2:

CREDIT CRUNCH IS ANY PROBLEMATIC SITUATION

Metaphorical model:

T (target domain): a **difficult situation** *[caused by a lack of money] (cash/ budget/ financial crunch)*

S (source domain): a **noise** *[like the sound of something being crushed]*

Metaphorical mapping:

A DIFFICULT FINANCIAL SITUATION IS A CRUSHING NOISE *(dangerous, spontaneous, unpleasant to the ear, and destructive) [4, P. 166-167].*

Thus, on the cognitive level the expression 'credit crunch' represents a complex construction organized by way of two cognitive metonymies and one cognitive metaphor, though traditionally viewed this construction would be interpreted in metaphor terms as the mechanism of comparison outweighs the mechanism of contiguity. Nevertheless, the metaphorical mapping itself is able to evoke the so-called contiguity association.

The second criterion of metaphor-metonymy differentiation turns out to be not sustainable when it comes to cases of referential metaphor. Here the following example comes to mind: *Susan sank into sadness. She stayed at the bottom for many months*. The context utilized underpins the following orientational metaphor model: SADNESS IS DOWN as well as the referential metaphor model in the second sentence: BOTTOM IS THE WORST PHASE OF HER SADNESS STATE.

Conclusion

Metaphorical Circle Theory allows to look into metaphor *in actu* (a dynamic aspect of metaphor comes to the fore) and proves the fact that metaphoric and metonymic conceptualization processes go hand in hand. Meanwhile, the simpler process (qualified as metonymic) triggers and sustains a more complicated process known as metaphorical reality concepualization.

The initial substance (object)-related characteristic of metaphor is the result of contiguity association and proves the hypothesis that the boundaries set between metaphor and metonymy are permeable and highly penetrable therefore one entity can dissolve in the other one easily, conjuring up various images and associations in the minds of addressees. It becomes apparent why the term 'metaphtonymy' has appeared recently.

As a result, metaphor examples prove to be gradable. Where metonymy emphasis is more palpable, the impact of metaphor exerted is less evident.

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