

Mechanism of Conceptual Blending In Zoomorphic Metaphor: On the Material of the English and Russian Languages

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of zoomorphic metaphor as transferring features of animal world onto the other elements of reality, sportspeople in particular; the theory of conceptual integration of J. Fauconier and M. Turner is used to analyze the zoomorphic metaphor; zoomorphic metaphor in sport communication represents an interaction of two mental spaces, where source domain represents an element of the animal world and target domain represents an element of the sport world; result of the interaction – blended mental space – is analysed from the point of view of its productiveness, several models of zoomorphic metaphor are distinguished in the English and Russian languages, contrastive analysis reveals convergent and divergent features of zoomorphic metaphor in Russian and English languages. Zoomorphic metaphor in the English language tends to focus on group activity in sport which is deduced with the help of quantitative analysis whereas in the Russian language individual actions of a sportsman are mostly described through zoomorphic metaphor.

Key words: Zoomorphic metaphor, Cognitive mechanism, Conceptual blending, Mental space, Blend

INTRODUCTION

Most scholars agree on the fact that metaphor has transcended the “stylistic device” description, it is now considered a mental phenomenon. Metaphor is an attempt of a person to create a relation of similarity in his or her conceptual system. According to G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, “conceptual metaphors and metonymies, representing the universal human capability to structure new realms of knowledge while relying on the experience of human interaction with the world, are “phenomena”, providing understanding” (1).

In cognitive linguistics, there are several directions for studying metaphors: the classical theory of conceptual metaphor (1), the theory of conceptual blending (2), the theory of primary and complex metaphors (3), connectivity

theory of metaphor interpretation (4), descriptor theory of metaphor (5), theory of metaphorical modelling(6), etc.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Importance of metaphor studies is based on close relation between thinking and speaking: factual material analysis reveals patterns of thought characteristic of a certain language group. Moreover, metaphors functioning in a certain conceptual sphere – sport, politics, economics – tend to acquire a pattern which fits the speaker’s conceptual system.

Interacting conceptual structures are traditionally divided into source domain and target domain. According to conceptual metaphor theory, the source domain is the one, elements of which (frames and scenarios) correlate with the target domain elements, thus, the “result” of metaphor is a mapping scheme. However, the other existing point of view can be described in the following way: interaction of the two domains results in creating a new domain. The idea of generating new conceptual structures from given ones was developed by G. Fauconnier and M. Turner and resulted in creating “conceptual blending theory.”

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The theory of conceptual blending is considered a continuation of conceptual metaphor theory with some changes. The theory of conceptual blending is based on the interaction of two partial temporary conceptual structures - mental spaces (7). They are formed in the process of discourse development and are similar to conceptual domains, but mental spaces are formed in the online mode, and the structure of the mental space depends on the intentions of the author. Cross-space projection brings together the elements of two mental spaces. In the process of interaction, there are common elements that relate to the third – generic – space (7). The most significant difference between the theory of conceptual integration is the presence of the fourth space called a blended space. This space is a new conceptual structure, new knowledge (7). This process is not mechanical - the components of two spaces are not simply combined into one space, there is a selection of components that are projected into blend depending on the intentions of the author, that is, the process of conceptualization is similar to a biological process. Another difference is the possibility of interaction of not only two but more spaces. Moreover, since theory of conceptual blending studies the dynamic structures that arise in the process of discourse development, the blend as a conceptual structure can subsequently become an input mental space and participate in the creation of a new blend.

The study of metaphor from the position of the theory of conceptual integration allows us to uncover the mechanism of meaning formation, highlighting not only the interaction itself, but also the result of interaction. The productivity of the metaphor is expressed in content called emergent ones. Emergent features are called such signs that appear in the blend under the interaction of mental spaces, but in the mental spaces themselves are not available.

100 articles were examined as a material of the research from Russian language online newspapers (www.gazeta.ru/sport/, www.sport-express.ru/, <http://www.sovsport.ru/>) and 100 articles – from English language online newspapers (www.skysports.com/, www.telegraph.co.uk/, www.edition.cnn.com/sport/).

RESULTS

Metaphorical speech of sports commentators and journalists as the main subjects of sports discourse is confirmed by a significant number of studies, see (8), (9), (10), (11), (12), (13). The zoomorphic metaphor, however, has not received illumination, although this kind of metaphor, as shown in our study, is quite common.

The following examples are given to describe conceptual blending underlying zoomorphic metaphors:

«It summed up City's strangely subdued approach as the opening 45 minutes passed them by, and was in direct contrast to Madrid, who hunted City down like a pack of dogs when in possession». (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/football/2016/05/04/how-did-real-madrid-beat-manchester-city-in-the-champions-league/>)

In this example the author uses the expression “pack of dogs” to describe the behaviour of the football team (Real Madrid). This case is an example of a zoomorphic metaphor based on the interaction of the mental space “football team” and the mental space “a pack of dogs”. In the cross-space projection we have the following correspondences: team - a pack, sportsmen - dogs, opponents - prey, game - hunting. In the common - generic - space, “unity of the group” and “group interaction” elements are derived. Determining the integrated space - the blend - is an element of “vigor” from the mental space of the “pack of dogs”, which is expressed by opposing one team with another: the expression “subdued approach” is used to demonstrate contrast - sluggish games of one team vigorous game Enemy. The vigor of the players is also explicitly expressed with the help of the lexeme “hunted”: the way that the football team seeks to defeat the opponent is similar to the way a pack of dogs tries to get its prey in natural habitat. The “hunting” scenario as a process of searching and catching prey is projected onto the process of tackling the ball during the match. This example leads us to the conclusion about the existence of the model “Team - a pack”, the unity of activity and specific behaviour is attributed to the team with the help of analogy.

“Team is a pack” is a frequently functioning model in both British and Russian media:

- «We've talked about wanting to be a brutal English pack and going back to the old days of *teams* fearing our pack» (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/rugbyunion/international/england/12165206/Six-Nations-Triple-fitness-sessions-and-6.30am-starts-make-England-meaner-and-leaner.html>).

- “**Е т о т н о м е р , к а к I pridavavshiy komandevyerenost golNkulu, - svoe gorodasimvoly: novyelytsa – khorosho, no “neukrotimyelvy” silnee, kogdamogutraschityvatna vsyustayu**” (<http://www.sport-express.ru/football/africa-cup/reviews/v-rossiyu-probilis-kamerunskie-neukrotimye-lvy-1214358/>)

- **Tornton podderzhals obratyev poakulieystaie I tozhevystrelildupletom** (https://www.gazeta.ru/sport/2016/02/23/a_8088221.shtml)

Associations of a certain athlete with an animal lie in the basis of the metaphorical model “athlete - animal”:

- «His style is very explosive and a very committed style. Vardy is a bit similar. They go when they go. They are

like the lion, he has to catch the animal in the first 200 metres.” (<http://www.skysports.com/football/news/11670/10080158/alexis-sanchez-like-a-lion-on-the-hunt-arsene-wenger-says>)

- “I’m not going to start diving at things. I’m just going to fight my fight. It’s the chin I am hunting.” (<http://www.skysports.com/more-sports/ufc/news/29876/9895525/ufc-189-conor-mcgregor-vows-to-knock-out-jose-aldo>)
- “Kakim-to chudom “Kolorado” **vnovvyshelypered – zaschitnikryliev ne vyneslyvovremyashaibu** s pyatachka, I naneyekorshunomnakinulsya Blake Komo.” (https://www.gazeta.ru/sport/2016/02/13/a_8072267.shtml)
- “**Manucharyan v tom episode, kogdazastavilzapanikovatLombertsa**, bylmolodtsom! Korshunomnaletel,ibelgiets okazalsya bespomoschnym, kak tsyplenok pered khishchnikom.” (https://www.gazeta.ru/sport/news/2013/10/27/n_3283101.shtml)

In these examples “sportsman” and “animal” mental spaces interact. The existence of a generic space is due to the presence of such frames as: “living being” and “subject of activity”. The athlete in the situation of sports competition resembles an animal in the habitat, the behavior of the athlete is compared with the behavior of the animal in a situation of opposition to the natural enemy, which in conceptual integration is reflected by the “focus on the characteristics of the athlete”: agility, strength, aggression. These elements are present in both mental spaces, in the blend comparison takes place: the characteristics of the animal exceed the characteristics of the athlete, quantitative characteristics are transferred to the athlete, highlighting his exceptional physical characteristics. The zoomorphic metaphor “sportsman - animal”, thus, serves to enhance quantitative characteristics and corresponds to the generally accepted concept of “hyperbole”.

The given examples are frequent in the English language. At the same time, there are other kinds of zoomorphic metaphor that can be called occasional, i.e. characterized by a rather low level of reproducibility:

- «The likeable Italian had identified survival in a league dominated by multi-billion-dollar behemoths like Manchester United and Arsenal as his club’s priority». (<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/03/sport/sporting-surprises/>)

In this example we highlight the interaction of the mental space “football team” and “hippopotamus”. Unlike the previous example, in which the “group” element was distinguished in the generic space, in this example we are dealing with the team as a single organism. In the blended

space, the element of “existence and functioning” is derived - like a living organism, the team goes through the stages of development and performs certain functions. But the blend is a rather complicated phenomenon: the size of the football club, which the author tries to reflect in this zoomorphic metaphor, depends on the importance of the club in modern football, this importance is expressed in the money equivalent: “multi-billion-dollar behemoths”.

- “Detroitu” **ostavalossdelatodinvzmakhkrylyamidlyatogo, chtobyokazatsa v pervoitroykeAtlanticheskogodiviziona**”. (https://www.gazeta.ru/sport/2016/02/13/a_8072267.shtml)

Thus, the analysis of conceptual integration in these examples allowed us to identify the following models of zoomorphic metaphor:

- “team is pack”,
- “athlete is an animal”,
- “team is an animal”.

DISCUSSION

Focus on cognitive perspective of metaphor contributes to finding and analysing patterns of thought. Identifying true, hidden motives of a speaker presents difficulty to the communicants revealing complexity of the patterns. Conceptual integration analysis exposes the aim of a speaker and allows tracing the whole structure of conceptual integration back to its starting point.

Sport contains numerous meanings as discourse analysis provides us with data on several types of metaphor. Zoomorphic metaphor serves the following purpose: it denotes the attitude of a subject of a competition towards the opponent and sets the behavioural pattern. Actions of a sportsperson (or sportspeople) are viewed through natural selection perspective unveiling motives of a doer of the action. Hyperbole which takes place in the blended space is achieved with help of enhancing frames of individual or group activity: speed, strength, stamina, agility and brutality.

Zoomorphic metaphor, thus, serves the purposes of describing a doer of the action through transcending his or her physical and psychological limitations. This may be regarded as temporary degrading of a person to biological state with a loss of social identity. It is commonly used in any type of discourse and may be signify a negative vector towards asocial behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

Contrastive quantitative analysis revealed prevalence of a certain model in each language. Russian sport texts are characterized by a dominating model “Athlete as an animal”, whereas English texts are characterized by the prevalence of “team is a pack” model. The opposition of individual and group activity in sport is a universal opposition of unity and its elements.

Model	Amount in the English language	Amount in the Russian language
“Athlete is an animal”	32% (47)	53% (89)
“Team is pack”	60% (88)	41% (70)
“Team is an animal”	8% (11)	6% (8)

The results of the research reveal convergent features in conceptualizing sportspeople in the process of sport competition (mechanism of conceptual blending) and divergent features (predominance of certain metaphoric models) in English and Russian languages. Defining patterns of metaphoric modelling contribute to distinguish cultural specifics of a language, thus, construing linguistic worldview.

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Note:

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