The Linguistic Nature Of Metaphor

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the analysis of different approaches to the understanding of metaphor formation mechanisms by domestic and foreign linguists. In this article, the three main aspects of metaphor nature have been observed: stylistic, semantic and cognitive. According to the stylistic approach, metaphor is defined as a means of poetics, the semantic approach is based mainly on meaning concepts and the cognitive approach deals with mental processes and mental activities studies of a person. Within the cognitive approach metaphor is interpreted as a universal cognitive mechanism which enables study of unobservable mental phenomena occurring in a person's mind and is connected with recognition and understanding of the social realm. As a result of this analysis, metaphor is treated as a semantic process – a special derivative-nominative phenomenon, which contains the evaluation of reality on the one hand, and as a cognitive process, which refers to the understanding of one idea, or conceptual domain, in terms of another on the other hand.

Introduction

Nowadays, metaphor seems to be a more complicated and important phenomenon, than it used to be. The results of recent research suggest that metaphor plays an active role in forming a personal world model and integrating verbal and sensory-imaginative system of humans; it also presents a key element in the categorization of language, thinking and perception. Therefore, metaphor is investigated not only under linguistic science, but also under psychology, cognitive science and artificial intelligence theory. Metaphor is an event, which has been attracting attention of the most prominent scientists and thinkers since antiquity.

Methods of study

There exist numerous theories concerning the nature of metaphor. They can be conventionally divided into three large groups. The first, *stylistic* approach, treats metaphor as a poetic phenomenon. The s*emantic* approach, which identifies metaphor's structure as a connection of the two ideas into one shape. Finally, the *cognitive* approach deals with mental activities studies. In this paper, we provide a review of some of the seminal and ongoing literature discussing each of the three approaches in the context of metaphor study.

Review of literature

The position of the English rationalist philosophers of XVIII century towards metaphorical transference took

exaggerated forms. Thus, J. Locke considered that "if we talk about the things as they are, we must accept, that any rhetorical science, going beyond everything, that brings order and clarity, any artificial and improper usage of words, created by eloquence, only implies teaching false verities, evoking passions, deceiving reason and, consequently, is a pure deception in reality" [Locke, 1985:566].

Henceforth, this point of view, denying any positive value of metaphor, predominated for a very long time in works by positivists and empiric criticists, who regarded metaphor as not only an excessive means of language, but even as a harmful factor, sidetracking perceptions of reality.

A. Richards was the first who paid attention to the connection within the bounds of metaphorical construction of two separate ideas, which resulted in one conceptual formation on the semantic level. According to Richards, "when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction" [Richards, 1990:46].

Richards's statement is based upon the conceptual theory of meaning and Black's statement rests on referential theory. Black thinks that the metaphorical process deals with two disparate referents. One of them is the entity that is being denoted in the process and subsequently acts as the primary subject. The other is a subsidiary subject, which correlates with the denotatum of ready denomination. The heterogeneity of these entities and attendant associative complexes allow a going beyond of the limits of the old and new conceptions, thus synthesizing fundamentally new information. The latter is being formed, according to Black, as if the concept of a primary subject would go through a filter of a subsidiary one, which stands for its associative complex. In addition, there is in the process the metaphor creator's focus within contextual frames on features relevant to metaphorical synthesis [Teliya, 1988:33].

D. Davidson, in opposition to Black's concept concerning extensional associative common meanings following the metaphorical image, sets the idea that metaphors mean nothing other than their literal meaning. "Metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more" [Davidson, 1990:173-174].

Davidson's idea was supported by J. Searle. "In the case of the metaphorical utterance, the truth conditions of the assertion are not determined by the truth conditions of the sentence and its general term. Metaphorical meaning is always speaker's utterance meaning" [Searle, 1991:524].

According to his point of view, the theory of metaphorical transference resolves into the fact that the recipient, having a literal meaning of utterance, can restore its metaphorical sense. Searle suggests analyzing the example: Sally is a block of ice. Following it, we can assume that the author meant not literal, but transferred meaning of the utterance. Searle derives a common strategy for metaphorical transference: when the utterance is not clear literally, one should seek difference from literal meaning.

The core of this strategy is the following: when we hear that S is P, in order to find possible variants of R (associative meanings, in compliance with which comparison is made), the directions should be found, where S could be analogous to P; that requires addressing the most distinguished trait of P group items [Searle, 1991:532-533].

But the principles identified by Searle do not clarify the question about the grounds, on which among the variety of P characteristics, R characteristics would be singled out to be projected onto S. In other words, why by Searle's example, among various characteristics of ice, should we distinguish its temperature property, which, as we believe, would not serve as explanation or association, to help to grasp Sally's emotional state?

Therefore, despite the seeming soundness and reasonable basis of Searle's theory, the latter does not embrace the range of variants of metaphorical meaning, does not provide the sequence of their detection, consequently it cannot serve as a complete theory.

An important contribution to metaphor study was made by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson. They come to the conclusion that "Metaphorical expressions have penetrated the various aspects of our life including thought and action" [Lakoff, Johnson, 1990:387].

This conclusion is based on the fact that the reality we perceive, the ways we behave and our relationships with people are regulated by a mostly metaphorical cognitive system especially in the atmosphere of globalization and worldwide contacts on official level and personal level [Gilmutdinova, Safiullina, 2016:55].

Therefore, our mentality, everyday experience and behavior are determined by metaphors to a great extent.

When objects are indiscrete and diffused, they can still be categorized. That way of interpreting physical phenomena is necessary for meeting certain pragmatic objectives. Such objectives usually require setting artificial limits onto physical phenomena in order to make them discrete, which is inherent to a human or a physical object restricted by some surface. Just like the results of human experience on spatial orientation generate orientational metaphors, the results of experience related to physical objects (especially those related to the human body) create a basis for enormous diversity of ontological metaphors, that is the way of interpreting events, actions, emotions and others as objects and substances [Lakoff, Johnson, 1990: 407-408]. Ontological metaphors, like orientational ones, are restricted in usage, reducing to the defining of an event, its qualitative characteristics, and so on. So we can "come to conclusion that the basis of a word figurative meaning is the collective image of a specific symptom, such as an appearance, for example" [Zamaletdinov, Faizullina, 2015:59].

 The examples of ontological metaphors analyzed by Lakoff and Johnson are the following types: "the mind is a machine" and "the mind is a brittle object". These metaphors are examples of sophisticated ontological metaphor, "mind is entity". These metaphors represent different models of the human mind and thus provide focus on various aspects of mental experience. The "the mind is a machine" metaphor belongs to mental aspect of psychic life. It gives us a "conception of the mind as having an on-off state, a level of efficiency, a productive capacity, an internal mechanism, a source of energy, and an operating condition" [Lakoff, Johnson, 1990:411-412]. For example: «*My mind just isn't operating today; I'm a little rusty today; Boy, the wheels are turning now*». "The mind is a brittle object" metaphor is not as rich; it allows for talk about the psychological and spiritual strength of a person. For example: «*Her ego is very fragile; She is easily crushed; I'm going to pieces; His mind snapped*».

Such ontological metaphors are very natural and mind penetrating, that is why they are perceived as obvious, direct descriptions of inner world phenomena. The fact that they are of metaphorical origin rarely comes to native language speakers' heads, The basis for such a natural look is that such metaphors are an integral part or an inner world pattern, intrinsic to our culture; it is in terms of that pattern that people think and act, "being a means of intercultural communication and self-realization in the outside world" [Grolman, Deputatova, Biktagirova, 2016:181].

A thorough review of Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor theory is essential because during the analysis of metaphorical transference we will draw upon the ideas of basic and conceptual metaphor made by the authors.

In order to select from the sphere under analysis information useful for understanding this new area it is necessary to establish the aspects, which will be considered invariant and which will be disregarded during transference. From the examples above by Lakoff and Johnson, the aspects connected with planning and targeting were kept invariant. Empiric research made by J. Carbonell, proved that during metaphoric transference the concrete elements and characteristics rarely stay invariant, it is patterns and rules for deduction that frequently stay invariant [Carbonell, 1981, 1988]. The frequencies, observed with a large amount of metaphors, were generalized by J. Carbonell, as a regulatory invariance hierarchy. Conceptual relations in the following example are listed in descending order of expected invariance:

1. *Complex of targets before the subjects*. The targets, if present in the original area, are almost always transferred onto new areas. If the original area includes the subjects, which are not present in the new area, the targets are transferred onto personified entities of a new area. Thus, in metaphor "Inflation is war", inflation has the image of an enemy one has to fight with until victory.

2. *Planning and counterplanning strategies within confrontation and cooperation of the subjects.* These strategies are almost always transferred unchanged; they regulate the targets on priorities and help to choose possible means for achieving single targets. The main metaphor's merit here is its possibility for consistent planning

in an unfamiliar situation.

3. *Causal structures*. If the causal structure of the original area is rather explicit, it is usually preserved during transference. For example, pharmaceuticals treat disease, accordingly, economic measures can treat inflation.

Discussion

Today, metaphor is interpreted under the c*ognitive* approach, which has become widely spread and which is characterized by a new systemic analysis of metaphorization processes (the crux of this approach is in mental activities studies). According to E. McCormack, metaphor is regarded not only as semantic, but as a fundamental cognitive process, without which knowledge acquisition would be impossible [McCormack, 1990:381].

Many supporters of the cognitive approach agree that it is analogy, and not formalized procedures such as deduction and induction, that plays the key role in our semantic conclusions. Analogy is based on the transference of knowledge from one meaningful sphere to another. From that point of view, metaphor is a linguistic reflection of significant analogue processes. National and cultural knowledge, fixed in lexical meaning, is the associative component, which helps metaphor formation. But, linguistic meaning is defined through cultural environment, prior experience, and practical skills, to a large extent. That is why we should define metaphor not only as a linguistic, but also as a conceptual phenomenon which reflects "axiological consciousness and value-conscious attitude" [Gilmutdinova, Safiullina, Aleeva, 2016:55].

The most important conclusion to the aforementioned is the following: metaphor is not confined only to the language sphere, because the process of thinking is mostly metaphorical. Man's conceptual system is organized and ordered metaphorically. "The characteristics of the objects marked with metaphors is very specific. It may belong to the set of common ideas about the world of native speakers, mythology, culture and religion" [Bochina, Starostina, 2016:105]. Metaphors as language expressions become available only due to the fact, that they exist in a human's conceptual sphere. That is why, when we speak of metaphors like "argument is war", the corresponding metaphors should be understood as metaphorical facts (concepts).

Conclusions

An insight view into metaphor's inner structure enables for distinguishing the following analogy characteristics, traced in our material: 1) the certainty of the basic system, that is knowledge of an initial area of meaning. It is expected that, the deeper knowledge of an initial area we possess, the easier it is for us to determine the important relations during transference; 2) clarity, that is the level of precision of correspondence between the compared areas; 3) intensity, that is the number of transferred predicates; 4) breadth.

We consider metaphor as the way of forming inter-frame relations of heuristic strength. Thus, key metaphors apply an image of one reality fragment to another reality fragment. In this way, they form its conceptualization, similar to the traditional conceptual system.

Finally, having studied metaphorical processes as a factor of cognitive reality systematization, it is necessary to note that metaphor functions both in mind and language, appearing to be wider than that of just of a trope. In this regard, metaphor is an instrument of reality cognition (or categorization) by a person, and reality identifies thought processes extensively.

Having analyzed the stylistic, semantic and cognitive concepts of metaphorical transference, we, following much scientific though, consider metaphor unconventional and hardly yielding to logic phenomenon. But, we assume that metaphor should not be studied separately, as semantic or cognitive events alone, but more as cognitive and semantic together, since the so-called cognitivists expose profound conceptual mechanisms for metaphor emergence, that is the substance of content, and as for representatives of the semantic approach, they consider metaphor's language processes, to be the substance of expression.

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