

Animal Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics

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The phenomenon of AM (animal metaphor) can be discussed based on the class-inclusion model in cognitive linguistics. In this article, we try to prove that this kind of metaphor accords more with this model than with correspondence model of Lakoff. It does not mean that the correspondence model is not valid in this regard, but we argue that depending on the nature of this kind of metaphor, class-inclusion model can explain some of its characteristics better than the other models. The correspondence model assumes that metaphors are essentially analogical in character. Also, it suggests that mappings are one-to-one and structurally consistent. Invariance principle of this model states that metaphorical mappings preserve the cognitive topology (that is, the image schema structure) of the source domain, in a way consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain. But, the class-inclusion model does not treat metaphors as analogies rather the source is treated as prototypical instantiation of a larger, newly created super-ordinate category, which is seen then as encompassing both source and target domains. This newly created category uses a prototypical member as an exemplar. We tried to compare these two models in explaining AM in Persian.

Keywords: AM (animal metaphor), correspondence model, class-inclusion model

Introduction

Metaphor has been studied for many years especially in cognitive linguistics. The importance of metaphor studies in cognitive linguistics maybe the result of the nature of it. If cognitive linguistics is the study of ways in which features of language reflect other aspects of human cognition, metaphors provide one of the clearest illustrations of this relationship (Grady, 2007).

Koveceses (2002) defined metaphor as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. A conceptual domain is any coherent organization of experience. Thus, for example, we have coherently organized knowledge about journeys that we rely on in understanding life. This is the thing which has been studied in correspondence model.

Correspondence model has been accepted by metaphor scholars from its introduction by Lakoff (1993). It has been used for describing metaphors, although some different versions of it were suggested.

Some scholars tried to reform some of its ambiguities by adding different traits to it, as a result that the blending theory was introduced.

But, none of these things have prevented it to fulfill its role as the best frame for describing metaphors, until Glucksberg and Keysar (1990) tried to show some of its shortcomings and weak points in explaining proper name metaphors. They introduced class-inclusion model as a substitute, then.

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The later acts more efficiently, at least in describing proper name metaphors. But, what are the characteristics of each model and why did the correspondence model force to withdraw at least in one front, regardless its worldwide acceptance? And what was the reason of current challenging situation that causes these two models to array troops against each other? Finally, we tried to explain why animal metaphors fail to be accommodated within a correspondence model as the case of proper name metaphor.

Features of AM (Animal Metaphors)

First, it is necessary to note that what counts as an AM is the use of an animal name as the source rather than the target. Let us flash back to our childhood stories; we may remember some sentences such as “Fox fired up/fox was fuming”. Here fox is target and fire is source, but if we say in Persian: “He is a fox”, then fox is source here and this sentence is an example of AM.

Second, the animal’s name in an AM may be used either referentially (that is, it may be used simply as a label for an object) or predicatively (that is, it may be used as a description that an object may satisfy to varying degree or perhaps not satisfy at all), as it is illustrated in Example (1) and (2):

Example (1) He is a lion;

Example (2) He is a poor lion who has lost everything.

In Example (1), the “lion” is used referentially. In the context, we can see that it represents all those traits which we have accepted for a lion (in folk model) and it attributed them to target. But in Example (2), using “poor” shows that the person fails to have those predicted features which we expected for a lion.

Of course, it is worth to note that this animal’s name makes sense, only if we know those culturally accepted features for lion.

Moreover, we should bear in mind those characteristics which conventionally stand for an animal and become fixed by repeated usage.

Finally, aside from knowing the accepted characteristics, we should be aware of those irrelevant traits that must be ignored, in order to make a metaphor shaped. The main difference here is being “animal” and “human”. So, it is clear that metaphors are selective, highlighting particular aspects of the source and the target while hiding others (Lakoff, 1993).

It is well worth considering that an animal name is used whether for a person who has the highlighted characteristics or lack it, while the “lion” can be used to admire a person because of his/her bravery or mock him/her for his cowardice.

AM and Two Models of Metaphor

The correspondence model assumes that metaphors are essentially analogical in character; it means they possess the systematic pairing of relations and entities across the source and the target.

In other words, there is a mapping between the source and the target which shows one to one correspondence. Lakoff (1993) suggested that particular correspondence between certain kinds of source and certain kinds of target already exist in our long-term semantic memory due to the sensory motor experiences we are exposed to as a consequence of our neurobiological make up. In this model, we always face some kinds of limitations, unless we may be surrounded by the large number of possible mapping. As a result, some particular kinds of mappings appear to be preferred over others. It refers to Lakoff’s (1993) “Invariance Principle” which emphasizes that metaphorical mappings should preserve the cognitive topology (that is, the image schema structure) of the source

domain in a way consistent with the inherent structure of target domain. So, based on this principle, perseverance of structural relations is necessary in the course of mapping (Turner, 1991).

In contrast to Lakoff's model, the class-inclusion model does not treat metaphors as analogies. Rather, the source is treated as a prototypical instance of a larger, newly-created and super-ordinate category, which is then seen as encompassing both source and target domains (Glucksberg, 2001). Because it is a newly-created category, the super-ordinate category cannot be directly named, and hence, there is a need to use a prototypical member as an exemplar of such a category (Wee, 2004). Thus, according to the class-inclusion model, in understanding an expression, such as "He is a fox" in Persian, the speaker treats a fox as a prototypical member of the category of "individuals who are clever, cunning, etc.". This is a super-ordinate category which allows both "fox" and "human being" to be seen as its members. This model does not assume that metaphors are necessarily analogical in nature. It may be the main difference between this model and correspondence model which is reflected in forming ad hoc super-ordinate category in comparison to systematic mapping of Lakoff's model which is formed between the internal structures of the source and target domains. The ad hoc category is created in the mind of hearer/reader and source, and the target is introduced as category members. The source, as a prototypical member, simply helps in this process.

The Role of Culture in AM Birth

"He is a fox" in Persian and "He is an owl" in English are two metaphors with almost the same meaning (the first one is somehow negative and the second is positive, but both refer to cleverness). "Fox" is an animal that is well known because of its cleverness in Persian and "owl" is the bird whose main characteristic is its wisdom.

When we speak about AM and face such a difference, we can see the traces of culture in forming this kind of metaphor. The culture's role can be clearer when we see that the same animal is prototype of different features in various cultures. For example, "owl" is a sinister bird in Persian and is used to refer to sinister person (compare this with English). Of course, we may face some similarities in this kind of metaphor in different cultures. For example, "dog"—to the best of the author's knowledge—is known for its loyalty in different cultures.

We do not want to compare cultures in this regard, because this job is difficult and time-consuming. We just want to show the role of culture in forming AM by these simple examples.

The other thing that worthes regarding is those characteristics which animals are famous for.

Some AMs are formed based on physical appearance or feature of an animal (using elephant or chicken in Persian) and some of them are used because of those traits which folk models decide about (such as cleverness for fox and loyalty for dogs).

Another point which was discussed earlier and worth to berepeated is the case of metaphors which are used to show the lack of some characteristics, that is, they are used to mock a person who does not have that feature, such as "You are chicken!".

Although it is clear, we note that some animals are used in this kind of metaphor for the sake of their positive features and for admiring someone who has that feature (e.g., lion), while the others are used because of their negative features to humiliate or mock someone (e.g., chicken).

Conclusions

Although correspondence model is useful for describing different kinds of metaphor, it seems that

class-inclusion is more efficient in explaining animal metaphor. It is more congruent with this kind of metaphor, because everything is ad hoc in AM forming and some mismatches of source and target characteristics are justified with this model. Also, the ignorance of some characteristics and highlighting the others are explained.

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