

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR, UNIVERSALITY AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Introduction

Emotion is one of the most central and pervasive aspects of human experience. Its cognitive veracity is evidenced by language, behaviour and physiology. As such, the domain is an ideal testing ground for Cognitive Linguistics, succinctly illustrating the two overarching commitments of the paradigm, namely the “Generalisation Commitment” and the “Cognitive Commitment” (Evans and Green 2006:40). The former sets out to establish recurring patterns within the language system disregarding traditionally imposed dichotomies. The latter represents the view that principles of linguistic structure should reflect what is known about human cognition from other disciplines, particularly the other cognitive sciences. It then follows that language and linguistic organization should reflect general cognitive principles, such as categorization or metaphor, which, in turn, are rooted in human embodied experience. According to this empiricist view, our construal of reality is mediated in large measure by the nature of our bodies, which has far-reaching consequences for cognition. In other words, since the human mind must bear the imprint of embodied experience, we can only talk about what we can perceive and conceive, for instance, space, time or emotions. Given the premise that the principles that inform language reflect general cognitive principles, the language system itself can be seen as a window that enables the direct investigation of conceptual structure. However, the reality of common cognitive principles does not give rise to uniform linguistic organization and structure. On the contrary, cross-linguistic variation is widespread. At the same time, the existence of certain common patterns across languages is a matter of empirical fact. This apparent duality regarding linguistic universals leads Cognitive Linguistics to adopt a neo-Whorfian bias, whereby commonalities are viewed as mere constraints. In other words, language not only reflects conceptual structure, but can also give rise to conceptualization. Moreover, the abundance of cross-linguistic differences (Croft 2003) suggests the subsistence of significant conceptual discrepancies, which considerably undermines the validity of universal principles of language,

¹ Katedra Filologii Angielskiej, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń, e-mail: pieshaul@wp.pl

as posited by formal linguists (Chomsky 1965, 1995). Instead of Universal Grammar, cognitive (functional) typologists postulate a common conceptualizing capacity arising from fundamental shared aspects of human cognition (Givón 1991).

It seems justified then to postulate the soundness of research into conceptual metaphor, grounded in embodied experience and facilitated by common facets of human cognition. In what follows, we are going to demonstrate that the universal cline of conceptual metaphor can be successfully applied to explaining and teaching the language of emotions.

1. Conceptual metaphor and emotions

Kövecses (2002: 20) provides a comprehensive list of concepts which are abstract, diffuse, lacking in clear delineation and, as a result, “cry out” for metaphorical conceptualization. Those constructs constitute potential target domains which borrow ontology, structure, and/or orientation from more experientially direct sources². According to Kövecses (2002), emotions are par excellence target domains since they are primarily understood by means of metaphor. Consequently, ANGER, JOY/ HAPPINESS, or LOVE are experientially motivated by, for instances, forces, containers, or hot liquids. If, then, we want to understand the structure of a particular emotion, we should know the source domains which account for its coherent organization. Naturally, the kind of understanding referred to is the insight provided by linguistic evidence, which, however, may well be integrated into theories of the cognitive structure of emotions stemming from other disciplines. Ortony et al. (1988: 191) propose that emotions are axiologically-loaded reactions to events, agents, or objects with their particular nature determined by the way in which a specific situation is conceptualized. The systematic account of the cognitive generation of emotions thus emerging leads to classes of emotions, distinguished on the basis of evaluations in terms of different kinds of knowledge representations. The language of emotions articulates similar factors, encapsulated in emotion scenarios, where causality, intensity, or physiological and behavioural reactions receive particular attention (see, for instance, Kövecses 1986).

Research into the structure of emotions within Cognitive Linguistics concentrates on basic-level categories (Johnson – Laird and Oatley 1992), among which ANGER seems to have been particularly popular (Kövecses 1986, 2002, Lakoff and Kövecses 1987, Mikołajczuk 1996, Yu 1998). A standard cognitive linguistic analysis of an emotion involves the following:

² For an exhaustive discussion of the theory of conceptual metaphor see, for instance, Kövecses 2002, Lakoff and Johnson 2003, Lakoff and Turner 1989.

- 1) determining physiological and/or behavioural reactions co-occurring with a particular emotion (e.g. increase in body temperature);
- 2) (on the basis of the metonymies thus obtained and the corresponding linguistic evidence) establishing experientially motivated conceptual metaphors (e.g. ANGER IS A HOT FLUID INSIDE A CONTAINER/ HEAT);
- 3) determining specific source-target mappings arranged along stages of a scenario (e.g. the cause of increase in fluid heat: the cause of anger, the hot fluid inside the container/ the heat of a fluid in a container: the anger, the degree of fluid heat: the intensity of anger, the physical container: the angry person's body);
- 4) establishing possible entailments (e.g. WHEN AN ANGRY PERSON EXPLODES, PARTS OF HIM/ HER GO UP IN THE AIR).

Looking at the above-presented analysis of ANGER, a striking difference can be spotted in the ontology of the emotion: while some studies (Kövecses 1986; Ungerer and Schmid 1996) view ANGER as HEAT, others (e.g. Kövecses 2002) propose A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER source domain. In my view, neither of the intuitions is correct since HEAT describes INTENSITY whereas FLUIDS refer to our conceptualization of EMOTIONS. In other words, I propose ANGER IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER and INTENSITY IS HEAT metaphors as more appropriate ones.

Taking into account the fact that the same physiological symptoms often co-occur with different emotions, it is only to be expected that linguistic evidence can be found which is neutral with reference to the emotion described. This phenomenon seems particularly pervasive with expressions occurring in syntactic/semantic frames from the source domain. For instance, the concept of FIRE motivates mappings onto the domains of ANGER, LOVE, JOY/ HAPPINESS, HATRED or PRIDE and hence *burn with, kindle, smother, smolder* or *flames of* collocate with a variety of emotions. Similarly, the combinatorial range of *be filled with, a source of, an overflowing of, or well up* is fairly extensive. Table 1 below offers a juxtaposition of physiological symptoms and behavioural reactions accompanying basic emotions in Polish and English. As evidenced, there are a number of symptoms which are not only universal throughout the domain of emotions but also cross-linguistically. One may then be tempted to assume that common symptoms will result in the universality of metaphors which are grounded in physiological reactions. However, bearing in mind the "Cognitive Commitment" together with the Linguistic Relativity Principle (Whorf 1956), plausible universal patterns may well be heavily constrained.

Table 1. Selected physiological symptoms of emotions: English and Polish (partly based on Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 132)

SYMPTOM	EMOTION (ENGLISH)	EMOTION (POLISH)
increase in body temperature	ANGER, JOY/ HAPPINESS, LOVE, PRIDE, DISGUST/HATE	ANGER, JOY/ HAPPINESS, LOVE, PRIDE, DISGUST/HATE
increased internal pressure (blood pressure, muscular pressure, pulse rate, palpitations)	ANGER, DISGUST/ HATE, PRIDE, FEAR	ANGER, DISGUST/ HATE, PRIDE, FEAR
redness in face and neck area	ANGER, JOY/ HAPPINESS, PRIDE, LOVE	ANGER, JOY/ HAPPINESS, PRIDE, LOVE
crying and tears	ANGER, SADNESS, FEAR, JOY/ HAPPINESS	ANGER, SADNESS, FEAR, JOY/ HAPPINESS
drooping posture	SADNESS, FEAR	SADNESS, FEAR
jumping up and down	JOY/ HAPPINESS, FEAR	JOY/ HAPPINESS, FEAR
erect posture	JOY/ HAPPINESS	JOY/ HAPPINESS
general physical agitation	ANGER, DISGUST/HATE, FEAR, JOY/HAPPINESS, LOVE	ANGER, DISGUST/HATE, FEAR, JOY/ HAPPINESS, LOVE
interference with accurate perception	ANGER, LOVE, PRIDE	ANGER, LOVE, PRIDE
interference with breathing and swallowing	ANGER, FEAR	ANGER, FEAR
disrupted functioning of digestive system	FEAR, DISGUST/HATE, ANGER	FEAR, DISGUST/HATE, ANGER
interference with normal (mental) functioning	PRIDE, LOVE, ANGER	PRIDE, LOVE, ANGER
brightness of the eyes	JOY/ HAPPINESS, PRIDE, LOVE, ANGER, DISGUST/ HATE	JOY/ HAPPINESS, PRIDE, LOVE, ANGER, DISGUST/ HATE

1.1. Universality of conceptual metaphors

As postulated above, common physiological reactions need not lead to conceptual and semantic universality. First of all, it appears that some symptoms have not become conventionalized (e.g. dryness of the mouth for fear). Moreover, certain symptoms are definitely more universal than others (e.g. increase in body temperature vs. jumping up and down or interference with breathing or swallowing). The most productive physiological reactions include: increase in body temperature and internal pressure, crying and tears, general physical agitation and brightness of the eyes. We may then assume that the metonymic source domains

motivated by those reactions would be most probable candidates to occur in universal conceptual metaphors.

Kövecses (2002) selects several conceptual metaphors common in English and checks their occurrence in other typologically distant languages. He concludes that the source domains of UP, LIGHT, and A FLUID IN A CONTAINER appear in English, Chinese and Hungarian to provide the basis for the concept of HAPPINESS. Strikingly, his findings are fairly consistent with those emerging from Table 1 above. Namely, FLUIDS are related to both blood and tears, and LIGHT can be abstracted away from brightness in the eyes. The verticality schema can be related to erect posture or jumping. Another study reveals a cross-linguistic ubiquity of the CONTAINER metaphor for ANGER. English, Hungarian, Japanese, Zulu, Polish, Wolof, and Chinese seem to share the view of an angry person as a PRESSURIZED CONTAINER (Kövecses 2002:173). This, in turn, implies that an increase in internal pressure is one of the most often conceptualized physiological responses (see Table 1 above). In other words, the resulting universal conceptual metaphor emerges as a upshot of the constraining effect of embodiment.

Still, the universality proposed above appears to suffer from certain drawbacks. First of all, the ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER metaphor is a complex one, involving structural implications (Kövecses 2002). The conceptualization encompasses an ontological/image-schematic notion of the CONTAINER and the highlighted facet of INTENSITY. Therefore, the metaphor should be reformulated to include the BODY IS A CONTAINER as well as INTENSITY IS PRESSURE. If we return to a similar reformulation proposed for ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER (see page 3 above), it may well be inferred that complex (structural) metaphors can be seen as composed of entities (e.g. fluids, containers) and aspects (e.g. intensity, control), both of which correspond to Kövecses' (1986: 116) notion of superordinate concepts participating in the creation of constitutive metaphors. In other words, Kövecses suggests that ENTITY, INTENSITY, LIMIT, FORCE, CONTROL, VALUE, UNITY, etc. are potential source domains, which poses another methodological inconsistency. Namely, if INTENSITY is a constitutive source domain how do we account for the INTENSITY IS HEAT metaphor proposed by the same author? In other words, more physical constructs are needed to elucidate fairly abstract notions, among them also VALUE, CONTROL or UNITY.

To conclude, physiological reactions give rise to potential source domains in metaphorical mappings. However, the pool of behavioral responses is not uniform since some are likely to produce prototypical ontological metaphors (e.g. THE BODY IS A CONTAINER; AN EMOTION IS A SUBSTANCE/ A FLUID), others will give rise to less clearly delineated concepts (e.g. AN EMOTION IS LIGHT; (THE CAUSE OF) AN EMOTION IS A FORCE) still others tap to orientations and scales (e.g. HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN; INTENSE IS UP; INTENSITY IS HEAT; INTENSITY IS PRESSURE; INTENSITY IS

MOVEMENT). Lakoff and Johnson (2003) postulate a typology of conceptual metaphors, whereby all metaphors are structural, all are ontological, and some are orientational. If their classification were to be evaluated in terms of universality, we might want to view orientations and, by analogy, scales as the least felicitous "tertia comparationis." Structural metaphors, akin to basic-level mappings postulated by Kövecses (1986), might also be problematic since they employ too rich knowledge matrices to be counted as universal concepts or semantic primes (Wierzbicka 1996). Therefore, ontological metaphors emerge as the most feasible vestiges of conceptual commonalities.

1.2. Pedagogical implications

1.2.1. Objectification

If the above postulate is correct, significant implications for language teaching may be drawn. Those inferences are linked to the Theory of Objectification developed by Szwedek (2002, 2004). This viable alternative to metaphorisation hinges upon the experiential and conceptual primacy of the OBJECT schema. Set within the philosophical tradition of *reism* (Kotarbiński 1929 discussed in Szwedek 2002), the theory postulates that the omnipresence of objects in the physical world as well as the developmental prominence of the sense of touch, programmed onto our neural systems, render ontological metaphors primary, while both orientational and structural ones should be viewed as secondary and derivative. This line of argumentation is in consonance with the refinements on Kövecses' formulations of the conceptual metaphors for ANGER proposed above.

The mechanics of the Theory of Objectification can be illustrated on the basis of the concept of FEAR. Szwedek (2004) presents the structure of the emotion as, first of all, an object. Only then are any refinements related to structure or orientation allowed. Thus, the following hierarchy based on the inheritance of properties is proposed:

- FEAR IS AN OBJECT, e.g. *have no fear*
- FEAR IS A SUBSTANCE, e.g. *be filled with fear*
- FEAR IS A CONTAINER, e.g. *live in fear*
- FEAR IS AN ANIMATE OBJECT, e.g. *when fear comes*
- FEAR IS A LIVING OBJECT, e.g. *growing fear*
- FEAR IS A SUPERNATURAL BEING, e.g. *Holy fear*

Szwedek's (2004) graded construal of FEAR will now be verified against relevant data in Polish and Spanish in order to discriminate the most universal source domains (Table 2).

Table 2. Universal FEAR metaphors: English, Polish, and Spanish

FEAR IS AN OBJECT

ENGLISH	POLISH	SPANISH
feel fear	poczuć strach	sentir miedo
have a fear	mieć stracha	tener miedo de algo

FEAR IS A SUBSTANCE; THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTIONS

ENGLISH	POLISH	SPANISH
fill with fear	napełniać strachem	meter miedo (put fear)
cold sweat	zimne poty	sudor frío

FEAR IS A CONTAINER

ENGLISH	POLISH	SPANISH
live/be in fear	żyć/być w strachu	vivier con miedo
get into a panic	wpaść w panikę	we have entrar pánico

FEAR IS AN ANIMATE OBJECT

ENGLISH	POLISH	SPANISH
arouse fear in somebody	wzbudzić w kimś strach	dar miedo alguien (give fear to someone)

Table 2 above is a result of a confrontative study of metaphorical expressions related to basic emotions in English, Polish, and Spanish, which I am still elaborating on. The arrangement of the data clearly suggests that universal conceptual metaphors motivating FEAR-related expressions are scarce. To be more precise, only two source domains, AN OBJECT and A CONTAINER, are common across the three languages studied. FEAR IS A SUBSTANCE and FEAR IS AN ANIMATE OBJECT are more problematic. Although there are expressions testifying to their validity in English and Polish, Spanish seems to be motivated by a more general OBJECT schema (examples in bold). Hence, universal patterns are practically and effectively limited to OBJECT and CONTAINER schemas. It appears then that the soundness of the Theory of Objectification is reinforced by cross-linguistic data.

1.2.2. Metaphorical motivation

The Cognitive Paradigm is useful in foreign language instruction as it operates with the notion of motivated meaning, which, in turn, facilitates learning (Kövecses 2001). Consequently, metaphorical expressions, including idioms, are viewed as products of our conceptual system rather than mere linguistic devices.

Metaphorical motivation or semantic transparency has been widely applied to the teaching of idioms and phrasal verbs (e.g. Holme 2004). It appears that the

most common metaphor-based expressions have to do with the human body, and, as Kövecses (2001: 113) implies those should be primarily taught to learners of foreign languages. Thus, expressions concerning emotions are perfect items to be introduced at an early stage of language instruction since they refer to experientially relevant domains. Kövecses (2001) states that idioms (multi-word expressions) should be, first of all, characterized with reference to the possible range of target domains which a given source concept structures. The scope of metaphor is said to constitute the general meaning of an idiom. For instance, the domain of FIRE maps onto LOVE, ANGER, HATRED, ENTHUSIASM and IMAGINATION. Consequently, Kövecses (2002: 203) proposes that the meaning of a given metaphorical expression, e.g. *spit fire*, *burn with love* or *the fire is gone* is motivated by being grounded in the FIRE domain. In other words, given the set of conceptual metaphors, i.e. ANGER IS FIRE, LOVE IS FIRE, HATRED IS FIRE, etc., we can predict that the metaphorical expressions/ idioms will have to do with one of the possible target domains. The conceptual metaphors then serve as links between otherwise independently existing abstract domains.

Although the notion of general meaning definitely facilitates motivated learning, the idea of metaphorical motivation could, nevertheless, be refined.

1.2.2.1. Metaphorical motivation as a structured system

I would like to postulate that metaphorical motivation, understood as the scope of a conceptual metaphor, should be presented in a structured and systematic way for the learning process to be considerably assisted. Metaphorical conceptualization is an intrinsic feature of discourse. Danesi's (1993) idea of conceptual fluency quoted in Kövecses (2002) as well as Holme's (2004) notion of the mind-mapping technique both presuppose that people have a metaphorical competence, which, as any other aptitude, requires coherent development. However, Kövecses' (2002) groupings of metaphorical expressions seem to lack ontological consistency.

An entry from an online etymological dictionary implies that the concept of FIRE is structurally complex (see: added emphasis in bold print):

Fire (n.) NO.E. fyr, from P.Gmc. *fuir (cf. O.Fris. fiur, O.N. fúrr, M.Du. vuur, Ger. Feuer), from PIE *perjos, from root *paewr- (cf. Armenian hur "fire, torch", Czech pyr "hot ashes", Gk. pyr, Umbrian pir, Skt. pu, Hittite pahhur "fire"). Current spelling is attested as early as 1200, but did not fully displace M.E. fier (preserved in fiery) until c.1600. PIE apparently had two roots for fire: *paewr- and *egni- (cf. L. ignis). The former was "inanimate", referring to **fire as a substance**, and the latter was "animate", referring to it **as a living force**. (<http://www.etymonline.com>)

The above inference is confirmed by psycholinguistic studies by Haman (2002), who espouses reducibility of complex concepts. In view of his research into the nature of metaphorical constructs, human categorization of multifaceted configurations hinges upon perceptual abilities, whereby the critical role of the

tangible attributes of objects should be highlighted. Therefore, it seems justifiable to postulate that the domain of FIRE is still fairly abstract and thus should be conceptually reduced to more basic ontologies, e.g. OBJECTS, SUBSTANCES, MOVING, ANIMATE or LIVING OBJECTS. Consequently, the following system of metaphors may well be suggested for FIRE-related expressions:

AN EMOTION IS FIRE; FIRE IS AN OBJECT

e.g. *set fire, catch fire, be on fire, fire between them*

AN EMOTION IS FIRE; FIRE IS A SUBSTANCE; THE BODY IS A CONTAINER

e.g. *spit fire, fume*

AN EMOTION IS FIRE; FIRE IS A MOVING/ ANIMATE OBJECT

e.g. *fire spreads, the flames are gone, the fire went out*

AN EMOTION IS FIRE; FIRE IS A LIVING OBJECT

e.g. *be consumed by the inferno*

AN EMOTION IS FIRE; A PERSON IS A BURNING OBJECT

e.g. *kindle imagination, smolder with anger, burn with love*

One of the advantages of the above arrangement is a graded hierarchy of concepts: basic notions are shown in conjunction to facilitate the learner's comprehension of underlying conceptual mechanisms and to reinforce his/her metaphorical competence. Instead of introducing complex metaphors (e.g. ANGER IS HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER), students of a foreign language should, first of all, become acquainted with basic ontologies and their consequences. For instance, if AN EMOTION IS A FLUID and THE BODY IS A CONTAINER, the following collocations will be ubiquitous: *full of, filled with, overflow with, pour emotions out to somebody*. If LOVE IS FOOD, it must, by entailment, be AN OBJECT, so *you can have love, give love* or even *throw love* so that *it can fall on somebody* or *be between two people*.

It is then evident that the idea of presenting metaphorical motivation as a structured system of concepts facilitates establishing commonalities within and between languages. Basic collocations employing essential ontologies should then be anchoring points for any educator promoting multicultural integration.

Conclusion

The theory of conceptual metaphor has undeniable pedagogical implications. The "Cognitive Commitment" views metaphorical mappings as patterns of thought manifested in language and action, and facilitated by the premise concerning the embodiment of meaning. Physiological symptoms, behavioural reactions, developmental evidence as well as cultural frames (e.g. The Great Chain of Being, Lakoff and Turner 1989) are thus instrumental in providing motivation for meaning, mostly by means of constraining possible conceptualizations. If tapping

to universal patterns facilitates learning, we should set out to pinpoint elements of collective human experience. Cross-linguistic evidence seems to confirm the primacy of certain concepts, namely those grounded in the OBJECT schema. It is then feasible to postulate that metaphorical motivation of linguistic expressions should be presented as a structured system anchored in basic ontologies.

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the perennial question of motivation in language learning. The basic assumption underlying the exposition of linguistic data is that of equivalence between meaning and conceptualisation. Consequently, language is viewed as a manifestation of the architecture of the human mind. Moreover, the notions of embodied realism and the universal conceptualizing capacity facilitate a linguist's search for universals. Thus, accepting the premise of the "Cognitive Commitment", metaphorical expressions and idioms related to the domain of basic emotions are perceived as motivated by the building blocks of our conceptual systems. And it is precisely those universal constructs that should be evoked first during the teaching/learning process.