Michał Janowski (Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz):
The Role of Inheritance in Endowing Abstract Concepts with Image-schematic Structure

ABSTRACT:

As it was demonstrated by Donald Schon in his classic article "Generative metaphor," a metaphoric mapping has the power to create new, alternative understandings of a given concept. Examples of such re-formulations of problems abound in literature on cognitive linguistics – cf. Schon's technical example of a paintbrush as a pump, Michael Reddy's *conduit metaphor* vs. *toolmaker's paradigm* as two conflicting accounts of communication, or Turner's discussion of Christ's words *I am the way, the life, the truth, no-one comes to the Father except through me* which violate the Invariance Hypothesis and force one to reinterpret Christ as a divine being. To all of the above examples, I will add yet another, a description of a tree, found in a popular science book:

> For all its mass, a tree is a remarkably delicate thing. All of its internal life exists within three paper-thin layers of tissue – the phloem, xylem, and cambium – just beneath the bark, which together form a moist sleeve around the dead heartwood. However tall it grows, a tree is just a few pounds of living cells thinly spread between roots and leaves. These three diligent layers of cells perform all the intricate science and engineering needed to keep a tree alive, and the efficiency with which they do it is one of the wonders of life. (Bryson)

As is evident from the above passage, the act of likening a tree to a moist sleeve of living tissue around a dead core proposes a new, refined understanding of a well entrenched concept. Such new understandings occur each time a language user chooses one metaphor over another in talking about a particular concept – the act of choosing a particular metaphor consists in informing the target domain with the image-schematic structure of the source.

One of key questions in cognitive lexical semantics is the origin of image-schematic structure in abstract concepts. Since abstract concepts without any referent in the physical world (such as IDEA, SOUL, INFORMATION, or LUCK) may have no original image-schematic structure of their own (or not very much of it, depending on the given concept) they are understood entirely via metaphor. Thus, a fair amount of the image-schematic structure they possess is imported from the source domain(s) used in their metaphorization.

Significantly, the mere fact that abstract concepts acquire structure via metaphoric transfer is made possible because they *inherit* rudimentary object properties by virtue of being concepts – this is the essence of Szwedek's Objectification theory. Abstract concepts, represented by nouns or noun phrases in language inherit the image-schematic structure of prototypical objects. The notion of *inheritance* can be used to explain the origin of rudimentary image-schematic structures of concepts (abstract target domains in metaphoric mappings).

The term *inheritance* is derived from Beaugrande and Dressler's 1981 discussion of coherence (procedural models of knowledge). Beaugrande and Dressler define inheritance as transfer of knowledge among items of the same or similar types or sub-types and list three kinds of inheritance, of which Type 3, **inheritance by analogy**, is of rather obvious importance for metaphoric mappings, and has consequently become the focus of this study. In this type of inheritance, entities take over features from those entities with which they stand in **analogy**, i.e. they are of different classes but are similar in some useful respects (the authors adduces the example of MIND IS A MACHINE metaphor). (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981, p. 91 ff).

In the course of a previous study (Janowski 2006) I found intriguing properties of the highly abstract concept of ADVERTISING, which showed a very high degree of plasticity in accepting various unexpected schematic structures mapped onto it in metaphoric transfer. To

provide a mere sample of examples, the nouns 'advertising' and 'advertisement' were found to collocate with such adjectives as 'heavy', 'spicy', 'strong', 'powerful', 'rich', and 'full-bodied'. There are surprisingly many metaphoric expressions based on the mapping ADVERTISING IS FOOD. The present study analyses modern contemporary mappings onto the domain of advertising in an attempt at proposing broad conclusions on the nature of abstract concepts.

Ultimately, the word 'advertising' can be traced back to the Latin *advertere* ['to turn towards']. When it was originally borrowed from French, it meant *notice.* Over the years, its relational, process-like structure, related to it originally being a verb, has changed sufficiently for it to become a highly flexible English nominal concept, accepting various, often conflicting structures in highly complex metaphoric mappings.

If the phenomenon of conceptual metaphor is to be understood as Langacker presents it in his *Dynamic Usage-based Model*, as resting on a general notion of comparison, and specifically, categorization, in which established structures are used for assessing novel structures, <u>than</u> this description requires a further specification, which would take inheritance into account. Abstract concepts are formed by imposition of similarities onto the constructs which inherit rudimentary schematic structure of objects. The present study is based on a corpus-based analysis of the concept of ADVERTISING and several related concepts. The analysis of the linguistic data makes it possible to verify the role of inheritance in the formation of image-schematic structures of abstract concepts in general. Thanks to a corpus-based approach, it has become possible to express the role of inheritance and imposition of various structures in quantitative terms, which presents an intriguing picture of this aspect of language.

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