The Development of Scientific Theories of Metaphor Translation from the Cultural Point of View

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Abstract: This article concerns about the essential theories of metaphor translation, their specific features, differences and similarities and the development of metaphor theory throughout the years. In addition, here is highlighted the well-known scholars, their scientific works are also given and discussed, the linguists attitude to the issue is explained.

Keywords: metaphor, translatability, culture, conceptual theory, contemporary theory, traditional views.

Metaphors, in generally, are the manner we think about and convey everything which are strongly ingrained in our culture. Because metaphors arise in their individual communities, only a small number of them are likely to be shared between languages. As a result, most metaphors are classified as culturally distinctive components. The differences are more noticeable when the two languages are from distinct cultures, such as English and Chinese. Because metaphors give us unique ideas and expand our awareness of underlying values concealed in a culture, their translation might inspire outsiders to get immersed in the culture of the original language.

Early linguists such as Catford [1,54] observed that when there is a strong cultural load in a cultural transfer process, it is significantly harder to convey the original cultural material while translating metaphors. Metaphor translation is heavily influenced by cultural differences. At the same time, cultural characteristics differ from one language to the other. One of the first and most significant issues of disagreement in metaphor translation studies is the translatability of metaphor. Translatability is defined here as the ability to be translated word for word. On this point, there are three options: untranslatable, completely translatable, and conditionally or partially translatable, which means that the degree of translatability is dependent on a number of factors [6, 262-2795]. Researchers who advocate for comprehensive translation argue that metaphor is a global language phenomena whose underlying imagining process is a common attribute of humanity, i.e., across all speech cultures. As a result, metaphor can be simply translated literally, and there is no need for extra care in metaphor translation. This argument, while unduly basic, gives an intriguing view of language insofar as it highlights common ground between languages and human intellect.

The contemporary theory of metaphor translation

Before the late 1970s, metaphor was widely regarded as a matter of language and rhetoric. This changed with Ortony’s [5,183] influential edited volume “Metaphor and thought” signaling a transition known as “the cognitive turn”: metaphor was becoming a topic of mind. Ortony’s edition set the tone for the next year, when Lakoff and Johnson released their equally innovative “Metaphors we live by”. When a second, updated version of “Metaphor and Thought “was released fourteen years later, it inevitably featured a new chapter by George Lakoff [4,202-251], who is one of the key reasons for the second, revised edition. Lakoff outlined out the cognitive-linguistic approach to metaphor that had been improved since Lakoff and Johnson, taking the
risk of claiming a great deal of academic credit for the cognitive turn: the definite article in the
title of the piece does have specific intentional significance. It is debatable if that claim to fame
is valid, but it provides a handy and natural point of interest for the current discussion, in which
we shall question the suitability of the cognitive-linguistic approach as the contemporary theory
of metaphor. Instead, we will propose that we require a new and improved modern theory of
metaphor. It will incorporate some of the beliefs and results of the old contemporary theory, but
it will additionally place them in a broader theoretical foundation, necessitating a revision of the
forecast of the general ubiquity and relevance of metaphor in cognition. The new modern theory
of metaphor provides an enhanced research paradigm in which previous answers may be
reinterpreted and new questions can be addressed. Lakoff does not accept the traditional theory
of language, which regards metaphor as a matter of language, in his Contemporary Theory of
Metaphor. “The locus of metaphor is not in language at all,” he claims, “but in the manner we
construct one intellectual realm in relation the other.” “The conceptual structure underpinning
a language has millions of mental analogies,” he believes. One would suppose that Lakoff is also
interested in culture because he regards experience and knowledge as the foundations of
metaphor theory. Metaphors We Live by, by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, a philosopher,
proposes that “metaphors not only keep our ideas lively and engaging, but they also organize our
thoughts and comprehension.” They consider metaphor to be “pervasive in everyday life not just
in language but also in thinking and behavior.” Furthermore, they state that “our regular
conceptual framework, through which we both think and act, is basically metaphorical in
character.” As a result, they contend that “the way we think, what we feel, and what we do every
day is very much a question of metaphor.” Metaphor conceptions in Lakoff and Johnson’s
culture are not always the same as in other cultures.

Other linguists intrigued in cognition, such as Wezbycka [7, 287–313], Jackendoff, and Aaron
[3,320-338], as well as cognitive psychologists such as Gluxberg and Kaisar, raised fundamental
objections to the details of the cognitive-linguistic approach to metaphor in thought when Lakoff
was writing his contemporary theory of metaphor. They questioned Lakoff's understanding of the
function of metaphorically motivated polysemy in the lexicon, one of the three most powerful
forms of proving a metaphor in cognition.

Gentner and Bowdle proposed a theory of metaphor that put the contrast between traditional and
unique metaphor into an even more obvious historical context [2,109-128]. Gentner and Bowdle
put forward a theory for the development of a metaphor that brought the contrast between
traditional and new metaphor into an even more obvious historical context. They claim that a
metaphor, if it is new (at the beginning of its existence), requires different mental operations than
if it is traditional (in the medium) or died in the end. They agree with Gluxberg that some
metaphors need classification (or abstraction) and not cross-domain comparison (or comparison),
but you have provided scientific proof that this is happening differently than Gluxberg expected.
The main advantage of metaphor theory in this regard is that not only the new or generally
accepted conceptual structure of a metaphor affects how it is put together by comparison or
classification, but also that this conceptual metric of the metaphor interacts with linguistic
structures in which cross-domain mapping functions are transferred: real metaphors act
differently than comparisons.

The conceptual theory of metaphor translation studies

Metaphor translation has been a source of concern in translation studies because cross-cultural
and cross-linguistic variances can inhibit interlinguistic transmission. With the beginnings of
Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which concentrates on the conceptual model of
metaphorical language, a number of studies have developed to examine metaphor translation
from a cognitive standpoint, providing a diverse set of research objectives and approaches. This
study aims to demonstrate what the cognitive method has brought to translation studies by
presenting a critical overview of contemporary cognitive research in metaphor translation. It is
claimed that cognitive theory may get to the essence of metaphor, an important cognitive tool for

meaning-making, and also translation, a cognitive activity. In the examination of product- and process-oriented metaphor translation, examples from the literature suggest that a cognitive approach may account for in-depth conceptual transference.

Prior to the 1990s, the question of metaphor translation was primarily addressed by linguistic and textual methods. However, a cognitive approach contends that metaphor is not simply an issue of language but ought to be recognized as a conceptual device which enables one to understand and reason about abstract concepts and knowledge, which, when applied to TS, can offer a more concrete translation [6, 262-279]. Over the last two decades, there has been a dramatic increase in cognitive study interest in metaphor translation and following scholars contributed to this process a lot: Samaniego Fernández, Schäffner, Velasco Sacristán, Fuertes Olivera, Vandaele and Lubin, Schäffner and Shuttleworth, Kövecses, Hani, Pavlovi, and Jahi, Massey and Ehrensberger.

Conceptual metaphor theory and traditional views

In 1980, Lakoff and Johnson proposed Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), an original viewpoint on metaphor. Metaphorical phrases, in their opinion, are not only decorative figures of speech, but reflections of human cognitive processes, i.e. the way we think. Metaphorical expressions emerge from human cognitive systems known as conceptual metaphors. Nevertheless, the CMT has just lately been used in translation research. This might be clarified through the fact that translation studies is currently shifting away from linguistics and closer to cultural studies, social science, and ethics.

In their 1989 book More Than Cool Reason, Lakoff and Turner present an outline of the classic ideas of metaphor. Because all of these ideas contradict their concept of metaphor as a cognitive phenomenon, they indicate the distinctions and provide arguments in support of their position. Lakoff and Turner begin with the assumption that all traditional interpretations of metaphor are incorrect. They also pinpoint two significant causes of conventional theories’ failures:

1) literal meaning theory;
2) not looking for conceptual generalizations.

All things considered, the translatability of metaphoric expressions is one of the most intriguing issues in translation. In addition, it may be stated that one fundamental step in deciphering the meaning of a mental image in the source language so that it can be translated into the target language is to have an understanding of its cultural context. This is to demonstrate how people see them as a result of engaging with their surroundings. The theories of metaphor translation demonstrate increasing interest and actuality of this issue for solving translation problems connected with culture. Each of them reflects the views of scholars of different period and deserves special attention.

References:

