CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN INTERNET ARTICLES CONCERNING CLIMATE CHANGE – A CASE STUDY

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This paper investigates conceptual metaphors occurring in internet articles. Conceptual metaphors are comprehended as conceptualizing certain entities (target domain) in terms of other entities (source domain). The article focuses on the employment of the metaphors and their possible influence on the recipients of the texts. The material used consists of two articles published on a website "Sustainability Times", addressing the problem of climate change and its consequences.

Key words: *conceptual metaphor, internet articles, climate change*.

У статті проаналізовано концептуальні метафори, що використовуються в інтер-нет-статтях. Концептуальні метафори тут розглядаються як сприйняття знань про певні явища (цільову область) через знання про інші (вихідну область). У роботі досліджено, як використання метафор впливає на рецепцію тексту. Матеріалом до-слідження послужили дві, розміщені на веб-сайті "Sustainability Times" і стосується змін клімату, а також їх наслідків.

Ключові слова: *концептуальна метафора, інтернет-стаття, зміна клімату*.

Niniejszy artykuł analizuje metafory konceptualne występujące w języku używanym w artykułach internetowych. Metafory konceptualne są tu rozważane jako postrzeganie wiedzy o pewnych rzeczach (domeny docelowej) poprzez wiedzę o innych rzeczach (domenę wyjściowej). Praca ta bada w jaki sposób wykorzystanie wspomnianych metafor rzutuje na odbiór danego tekstu. Materiał badawczy składa się z dwóch artykułów zamieszczonych na stronie internetowej „Sustainability Times" i traktuje o zmianie klimatu, a także o konsekwencjach z nią związanych.

Słowa kluczowe: metafora konceptualna, artykuły internetowa, zmiana klimatu.

Introduction

Nowadays, global warming and climate change are widely discussed on various media platforms, including press and internet articles, news, and lectures. In this paper, I

want to focus on web pages, as they are accessible to many people and the information contained within them is not only easy to find but also frequently imposed on the Internet user. The person may not look for the articles consciously, but they appear anyway via the diversified algorithms of certain websites.

In this paper, I will consider a few articles, published over the span of the last few months, on the website called *Sustainability Times*. The website mentioned provides its readers with news, debate, and analysis of the sustainability in a broad sense. Among the most frequent topics on this website are: sustainable business and industry, sustainable development, environmental protection and the global fight against climate change. The topic of climate change is a widely discussed issue, not only in the internet articles but also in press, television, radio or political debates. There are a few papers analyzing this problem on a larger scale, for example a study carried out by Skinnemoen (2009). The author compiled a corpus consisting of almost 100.000 words and on this basis he demonstrated the employment of various conceptual metaphors concerning climate change, for instance CLIMATE CHANGE IS MOVEMENT, THE EARATH IS A GREENHOUSE or ENVIRONMENTALISM IS WAR. All of them occurred in different text and were analyzed as reoccurring patterns. This paper however focuses only on two internet articles, employing qualitative analysis.

While analyzing the articles from the website mentioned, the main focus of my attention was the employment of the conceptual metaphors in the text, as they are considered as a powerful tool of manipulation (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and influence on the recipients. Without a doubt, it is not the only tool of creating an influence that may be noticed in articles. Bednarek (2005) lists many others, as for instance, the picture chosen and the framing of it, or cutting and pasting specific quotations, depending on the desirable context. However, in this case, I will focus mainly on the conceptual metaphors. The way in which the conceptual metaphors establish their influence upon the recipients is not always straightforward. In fact, in the majority of cases, they are employed unconsciously by default. Nevertheless, the unconscious employment of the conceptual metaphors in the press articles is debatable, as journalists usually possess high linguistic competences and may alter the text in such a way that it will impact the readers' minds in the expected fashion (Steen 2015).

Conceptual Metaphor

As stated by Reddy (1979), metaphors are omnipresent in our everyday communication and reflect our conceptualization of the world. Consequently, they may alter our conceptualization or affect it various ways. Reddy (1979) investigated the metaphors in the form of a conduit metaphor where abstract concepts, such as feelings, thoughts or intentions are inserted into containers, such as words or phrases. The recipients are to extract the information from a given container. This idea was later developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) who argued that metaphors. Although not always consciously, are reflected in various ways in our everyday communication. One of their main examples is the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS A WAR, reinforced by many examples of its linguistics expressions, for instance:

"Your claims are *indefensible*
He *attacked every weak* point in my argument. His criticism were *right on target*.
I've never *won* an argument with him." (Lakoff, Johnson 1980)

In considering these examples it can be perceived that not all of these expressions are used intentionally. It is not a literary measure but evidence of the mind perceiving arguments as war. A person in an argument may win or lose, the interlocutor is perceived as an enemy and the claims are entities which need to be defended.

Considering the previous example, one may notice the emerging structure of a conceptual metaphor. There are three main types of conceptual metaphors, as noted by Kövecses (2010): structural, orientational and ontological. However, in this paper, I will focus on structural metaphors. Such metaphors are composed of two components, namely the source and target domain, where the source domain is employed to express the notions of the target domain. The target domain most frequently entails more abstract notions, such as love, death or time, whereas the source domain is usually concerned with everyday concepts, such as human body, machines or sports. In the example above, LOVE is the target domain and WAR is the source domain.

Conceptual metaphors, as previously mentioned, may be a powerful tool of influencing the readers' subconsciousness. The effect may be obtained by employing the metaphors in such a way, that they highlight or hinder particular aspects of a given situation (Kövecses 2010: 91). An excellent example of taking advantage of the connotations of a particular metaphor is the comparison of perceiving an argument as war

or as a game. In the first case, an interlocutor in the discussion is perceived as an enemy and the primary goal of the discussion (war) is not to have the better arguments (weapons) but to defeat the opponent at all cost. In the case of the metaphor ARGUMENT IS A GAME, the attitude towards the interlocutor is not so aggressive, it is more oriented towards entertainment and the outcome is not as much important. It is all about the process. However, the attitude towards the source domain might be ambiguous, as noted by Ritchie (2003), who suggested that metaphors may be subjected to multiple interpretations and may lead to occurrences of miscommunication.

Text 1: "Closing out 2018 with a climate wake-up call"

The first article presented in this paper is titled "Closing out 2018 with a climate wake-up call" by Tim Yeo and was published in December 26th, 2018 on the website introduced in the paragraphs above. While perorating the most environmentally significant information of the last year and forecasting the possible environmental changes for the up-coming year, the author of the article employs a variety of dramatic language. Let us consider a few examples from the article.

(1) a change which will have *grave consequences for humanity*
(2) global emissions have *resumed their upward trend*
(3) it is more urgent than ever to recognise nuclear energy as an essential part of the world's *response to climate change*
(4) decision to phase out nuclear has *jeopardised* its energy security, *wrecked* its chances of reaching its 2020 emissions reduction targets and *damaged* air quality in its cities
(5) a lack of policy clarity […] is *holding back* investment in new nuclear capacity
(6) The EU's ambitious vision of becoming *climate neutral* by 2050

The examples presented above, indicate that climate change in this article is perceived as an enemy or a predator to the humankind. The phrases like *grave consequences*, which were employed in the article suggest the danger caused by the enemy, namely climate change, and its ruthlessness. It is not a type of enemy with whom it is possible to negotiate. Although in the article there is a mention of *the world's response to climate change*, it is not a response in a sense of a discussion but rather in a sense of a backfire, as in a battle or war. There are many more instances of the vocabulary from the domain of battle/war employed in the article. Words such as *jeopardise*, *wrecked*

or *damaged* clearly indicate the tensions between the parties, as well as a predator and a victim.

Furthermore, in this case of the conceptual metaphor, people are not presented as the opposing side in the war, but they are represented or they employ nuclear energy as their defender. In the end, there are two opponents in the war presented in the article, namely climate change, and nuclear energy. Failing to employ the nuclear power equals deterioration of human living conditions and losing the power over possible future challenges, as for instance energy shortages. Consequently, the well-being of the humankind is dependent on nuclear energy.

Whilst considering the examples extracted from the first article, it may be concluded that the conceptual metaphor used here might be identified/labeled as CLIMATE CHANGE IS AN ENEMY AT WAR and NUCLEAR ENERGY IS A DEFENDER. The target domain of climate change is expressed via the employment of the source domain which is an enemy at war or a battle. However, this enemy is not an entity with whom it is impossible to reason. There is a way to have an exchange with climate change (*response*) and there is an option of becoming *neutral* towards it. On the opposing side, nuclear energy is portrayed as the defender of people and provider of their well-being.

Text 2: "Climate change is making ocean waves stronger"

The second article which was chosen to be presented here is the one entitled "Climate change is making ocean waves stronger" by Daniel T. Cross, which was published on the website on January 19, 2019. This article focuses on a study examining the correlation between climate change, and more specifically warming of the water surface temperatures, and the increase in the intensity of the ocean waves. This increase is perceived as the first global signal of the consequences of climate change in the wave climate patterns. To talk about this issue, the author employs a variety of dramatic vocabulary, and, as in the previous article, much of the vocabulary used here is connected with the domain of war. However, this portrayal of climate change is not equivalent to the previous one. In this case, climate change is not the direct enemy or a predator to the humankind. The following examples, extracted from the aforementioned article, position the climate change in a particular way.

(7) Climate change *is making ocean waves stronger*

(8) Climate change is *set to wreak havoc* worldwide *with dramatic changes in weather patterns*

Considering these examples one may notice that climate change is not the direct cause of people's misfortunes. In fact, it may be perceived as a military strategist or a puppeteer whose job is to direct its soldiers or puppets to do whatever is intended by the master. What is more, the word *make* in the example (7) is usually perceived rather negatively, as in *compel*. The person who is made to do something is usually not eager to do so. Furthermore, the example (8) presents the dramatic changes in weather pattern, here they are changes in waves intensity, as a means of destroying the planet. Hence, one may perceive these changes as a weapon in the hands of the enemy at war or in a battle. Certainly, there is more evidence in the text for presenting the changes as a weapon against the humankind and the planet itself and it is manifested by the employment of a vocabulary which clearly indicated the domain of war/battle.

(9) Storms will get more frequent and *severe*

(10) Ocean waves, too, will get more *destructive*

(11) *battering* waves

Considering these instances, it is evident, that the waves, and by extension, one of the consequences of climate change, are presented as a weapon or a soldier of climate change. It has qualities of causing serious damage and being dangerous to humans. Another approach is presented in the following examples from the article:

(12) *mitigate* the ocean's *impacts*

(13) Ocean waves *determine* where people build infrastructure

(14) [people] *require protection* through coastal defenses

(15) Sea level rise will further *aggravate* these effects by allowing more wave energy to *reach* shoreward

Here one may perceive that the degree of the destruction caused by the ocean waves is dependent on the territory they are able to reach. Again, in this case, the waves may be perceived as soldiers who try to extend their territory or a weapon which is used to cause extensive destruction. In both cases, people are trying to limit the destruction through various ways, one of which is to build a physical shield in a place which is suspected to be under attack in the future.

Taking all these examples into consideration, one may notice an emerging conceptual metaphor: CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE ARE WEAPONS.

As explained in the paragraphs above, the consequences of climate change (here stronger ocean waves), are portrayed as weapons of climate change. The consequences are a part of the target domain, whereas weapons represent the source domain. They are used to attack the enemy, in this case, humankind. They are dangerous and cause destruction. People need to have a kind of shield to protect themselves from them.

Conclusions

In this paper, I examined the linguistic expressions of conceptual metaphors employed in two articles published on a website *Sustainability Times*. Both of the articles were concerned with climate change and its consequences. The first article exhibited climate change as the main enemy and the cause for people to present their countermove, which is nuclear power. In the second article, climate change is represented by one of its consequences, stronger ocean waves, underlining its significance and power for which people need to prepare. However, such presentation of the problem is not merely a matter of stylists or creativity of the author. The articles portray a certain vision of the problem which may affect the readers' consideration of a given problem.

The first article presented a vision which one may describe as more positive. Climate change is portrayed as a threat but a one that may be relatively easily neutralized via the employment and development of nuclear energy. The text suggests that the size of the damage is highly dependent on the people. It is their decision of whether to take advantage of nuclear energy or to deteriorate the situation. The author clearly believes that there is only one just decision. Though the text makes it sound like people are free to choose, the vision of nuclear energy is certainly presented as positive and desired whereas the usage of coal leads to disastrous consequences.

Although in the first article there was a way of fighting back or neutralizing the problem presented, in the second article analyzed here there was no such way made available to the knowledge of the reader. It may be perceived as causing concern, as people are only able to limit the destruction. What is more, there is an even more ominous threat emerging in between the lines of the article – ocean waves becoming stronger and more devastating is only the first weapon of the climate change, as put by the author. This is a clear indicator that people may expect more of such threats and there is no solution proposed by the author which may discourage the reader from taking action.

The significance of different portrayals of a problem stems from their discursive strategies. By describing the problem as an entity which is gradually forcing itself on the recipient's territory, the author may exert a powerful impact on the reader and therefore influence his or her world view. On the other hand, the author portraying the problem as distant and irrelevant, might have an opposite effect.

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