THE INTERCONNECTION OF CULTURE AND METAPHOR: A COGNITIVE-LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *This study investigates the intricate relationship between culture and metaphor within the framework of cognitive linguistics. It mentions that metaphor functions not merely as a rhetorical or linguistic phenomenon but as a fundamental mechanism of conceptualization shaped by cultural experience. Drawing upon Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the paper examines how culturally specific models and shared social practices influence the formation and interpretation of metaphorical expressions. While certain metaphorical patterns exhibit universality due to common human embodiment, their linguistic realizations and cognitive salience are profoundly determined by cultural context. The findings underscore that metaphors simultaneously reflect and construct cultural cognition, serving as essential instruments in the representation, transmission, and perpetuation of collective worldviews.*

Keywords: *culture, metaphor, language, concept, interconnection, abstract domain, source domain, context, social experience, meaning.*

Metaphor is more than just a stylistic ornament of language - it is a fundamental mechanism of human cognition and a reflection of cultural experience. The study of metaphor within a cognitive-linguistic framework emphasizes its role in structuring conceptual thought, highlighting the deep connection between language, mind, and culture. Culture provides the cognitive and experiential basis through which metaphorical concepts are formed, shared, and interpreted. The interconnection of culture and metaphor is thus essential for understanding how people conceptualize their world and communicate abstract meanings through concrete imagery.

The conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) in their seminal work “Metaphors We Live By”, revolutionized the study of metaphor by demonstrating that metaphor is not merely linguistic device but cognitive in nature. According to CMT, people understand and structure abstract domains (such as time, emotion, and morality) through mappings from more concrete domains (such as space, movement, or objects)[1]. For instance, metaphors like “time is money” or “life is a journey” reflect underlying conceptual structures that guide thought and behavior. These metaphors are not universal but are shaped by cultural

[1] Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). Metaphors We Live By. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

experience and shared conceptual models. Culture serves as a repository of collective experience, values, and social practices. Consequently, cultural models shape the metaphorical systems that operate within a given linguistic community.[2] For example, the English metaphor "argument is war" (e.g., "he attacked my point") reflects a culture that values competition and individualism. In contrast, some East Asian cultures, which emphasize harmony and collective understanding, may conceptualize argument in terms of a cooperative dialogue rather than confrontation. This demonstrates that metaphors not only encode cognitive processes but also reveal underlying cultural ideologies and value systems.

Cognitive linguistics views metaphor as a tool for categorization and sense-making. Through metaphor, speakers conceptualize abstract or complex phenomena in terms of familiar, embodied experiences.[3] However, the selection of these source domains is culturally motivated. For instance, in cultures where nature is central to life, metaphors often draw from environmental or agricultural experiences. In contrast, industrialized societies tend to use mechanical or technological source domains. The metaphorical concept of "time as a resource" in Western culture, expressed through phrases like "spend time" or "waste time," reflects the capitalist worldview in which productivity and efficiency are paramount. In contrast, cultures that perceive time cyclically or communally may not employ such metaphors. Cross cultural metaphor studies reveal both universality and variation. Certain metaphors - such as "life is a journey" -appear across many cultures, suggesting shared cognitive and experiential foundations. Yet the specific linguistic expressions and connotations differ across cultures. The paths, obstacles, and destinations described in life-journey metaphors depend on culturally specific narratives and moral expectations.[4] Similarly, emotional metaphors (e.g., "anger is heat") are nearly universal due to their grounding in bodily experience, but cultural scripts determine how emotions are expressed and regulated. Thus, the study of metaphor within a cognitive linguistic framework underscores the dynamic interplay between universal embodiment and cultural particularity. The interaction between culture and metaphor also has implications for intercultural communication and translation.[5]

Misunderstanding metaphors may lead to misinterpretation of cultural values or intentions. Translators must therefore recognize the cultural grounding of metaphorical expressions to convey their meanings appropriately.[6] For instance, idioms rooted in

[2] Kövecses, Z. (2005). Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[3] Gibbs, R. W. (1999). Researching Metaphor. In L. Cameron & G. Low (Eds.), Researching and Applying Metaphor (pp. 29–47). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[4] Kövecses, Z. (2015). Where Metaphors Come From: Reconsidering Context in Metaphor. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[5] Yu, N. (1998). The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor: A Perspective from Chinese. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
[6] Sharifian, F. (2017). Cultural Linguistics: Cultural Conceptualizations and Language. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

cultural artifacts or religious beliefs (e.g., "carry one's cross") may lose their metaphorical resonance if translated literally into a culture with different symbolic frameworks. Hence, the cognitive-linguistic approach provides valuable insights for applied linguistics, cultural studies, and translation theory. From a broader perspective, metaphors not only reflect cultural cognition but also participate in shaping it.

Through repeated metaphorical use, certain conceptual patterns become entrenched in the collective consciousness of a society. The phenomenon, referred to as metaphorical entrenchment, influences how members of a culture perceive reality and behave within it[7]. For example, metaphors of the nation as a "family" or "body" can influence political discourse and social cohesion. In cognitive cultural linguistics, the recursive relationship between metaphor and culture - where each continuously shapes the other - is a central theme. Recent developments in cognitive linguistics have introduced the concept of cultural cognition to further elaborate the mutual influence of culture and thought. Researchers such as Zoltán Kövecses argue that while conceptual metaphors arise from universal human embodiment, their realization and frequency are determined by cultural context. This approach integrates anthropological and psychological perspectives into metaphor studies, offering a holistic understanding of meaning making processes. Cognitive cultural linguistics thus bridges individual cognition and collective cultural identity[8].

In conclusion, the interconnection of culture and metaphor reveals the intricate relationship between language, thought, and social experience. Metaphor functions as a cognitive and cultural tool through which humans conceptualize and communicate their understanding of the world. It embodies both universal human embodiment and culturally specific models of reality. By examining metaphors through a cognitive-linguistic perspective, scholars gain insights into how cultures construct knowledge, express values, and negotiate meaning. The study of metaphor as a reflection of cultural cognition continues to offer fertile ground for interdisciplinary research in linguistics, anthropology, and cognitive science.

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