Brief – Online Journal of Snippets

Issue 1 (June 2011), Cognitive Linguistics

Contents

Nonlinearity of the language process

Marta Bogusławska-Tafelska

Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski
Olsztyn, Poland

Contemporary linguistic research, in its both pathways: (i) theoretical, which occupies itself with modeling linguistic phenomena, and (ii) applied, which enquires and proposes modifications to the linguistic reality, finally admits its interdisciplinary character. Hence, studies into language as a process parameterized endogenously (through genetic/biological and psychological/cognitive aspects) and exogenously (through cultural, social, environmental and situational constraints) are stratified along a wide spectrum of scientific research fields. Today, the studies of human language become the search of the knowledge of man being in the world. The plurality of scientific endeavor in contemporary linguistics includes models of traditional linguistics, psychology, cognitive science, (neuro)biology, anthropology, cultural studies, sociology and ecology, to mention but several disciplines forming local alliances with the study of language today. The applications of the mathematical theory of chaos, or the quantum physics models into the linguistic studies constitute the freshest proposals in this transdisciplinary scholarly work (cf. Patton, 1990; Penrose, 2005; Bogusławska-Tafelska, 2008).

When a linguist opens himself/herself to the wide context all linguistic phenomena are embedded in, he/she notices the following features of language:

(1) dynamism or context-relatedness, stemming from the basic facts (i) of language being a process composed of subprocesses/mechanisms; and (ii) language being but one of the life processes in the continuum of the reality. Thus, it has become essential to extend the starting systemic analyses in linguistics by the cultural/social and cognitive/biological considerations, which will encapsulate both the

      intrapersonal, the interpersonal and ecolinguistic contexts;
(2) momentary nature of all linguistic/cognitive phenomena;
(3) nonlinearity of language.

The last two features are founded on the first feature of the language dynamism. The context sensitivity and parametrized character of the language process result from the fact that everything about human language, starting from language representation in the mind, through language production processes, reception processes, interpersonal and intrapersonal communication or the dynamics of the education process, is the result of constant rearrangement, in which even one small element changes the values of the remaining parameters, ultimately bringing about the paramount change to the entire language context; it may be a change of mood or a new information that within a moment alters a language user's cognitive map, bringing about a shift in the course of thought and communication, not planned or anticipated earlier. It may be a reaction of the interlocutor to the communicative situation, or, simply, his/her organism dysfunction (i.e. a headache) which, again, bring about a spontaneous, one would like to say 'non-rational' or 'nonlinear' alternation to the communicative situation. A happy commentary to this everlasting fluctuation within human language milieu has it that: "it's like walking through a maze whose walls rearrange themselves with every step you take" (Gleick, 1987 cited in Patton, 1990, p.82).

Contemporary linguistics, to account for the issues signaled here, has reached for mathematical models of chaos (cf. Gleick, 1987 cited in Patton, 1990, pp.82-84; Gleick, 1998), and for quantum models of the mind (cf. Penrose 2004, 2005). The resulting hybrid models of the mind and language create a novel methodological-conceptual means to undertake the study of nonlinearity and emergent nature of language and other cognitive processes.

References

Bogusławska-Tafelska, M., 2008. Cognitivism in linguistics. Why sciences are to fall into one interdisciplinary paradigm. In: Puppel, S. and Bogusławska-Tafelska, M. eds. (2008) New Pathways in Linguistics. Olsztyn: Instytut Neofilologii UWM, pp.45-60.

Gleick, J., 1998. Chaos. London: Vintage Books.

Möhlhäusler, P., 2003. Language of environment, environment of language. London: Battlebridge Publications.

Patton, M., 1990. Qualitative evaluation and research methods. London: Sage Publications.

Penrose, R., 2004. 'consciousness'. In: Gregory, R.L. ed. (2004) The Oxford companion to the mind. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.215-216.

Penrose, R., 2005. Shadows of the mind. London: Vintage Books.

Identifying metaphors in discourse with MIV and MIP procedures

Joanna Chwesiuk

Warsaw University
Warsaw, Poland

So far cognitive linguists have been looking for expressions in language which reflect metaphors in the mind and trying to understand what these expressions actually reveal about the processes of cognition and communication (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1993; Kövecses, 2002). Recent studies have paid closer attention to metaphor as found in its natural discourse environment (Cameron, 2003; Deignan, 2005; Koller, 2003; Musolff, 2004, 2006). The new focus on metaphor as a part of everyday discourse has created, however, a new challenge: in order to study metaphor in a constantly changing, dynamic environment of real language use, researchers need a reliable method for metaphor identification which can be flexibly applied to many research contexts. Such a method should allow for comparisons across different metaphor studies, thus contributing to the creation of a more detailed picture of metaphor in its natural discourse environment.

Two methods designed specifically for metaphor recognition in spoken and written discourse are Metaphor Identification through Vehicle Terms (MIV) as proposed by Lynne Cameron (2003; n.d.) and Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) as developed by metaphor scholars from the Pragglejaz Group (Pragglejaz Group, 2007; Steen et al., 2010). The MIV as well as the MIP are inductive (not deductive) approaches: all generalizations about metaphor in real language use are based upon a manual, bottom-up analysis of the discourse data. The basic distinction between the two methods consists in the fact that the MIV concentrates on identifying "linguistic metaphor vehicles" (Cameron, n.d.), while the MIP focuses on identifying "metaphorically used words in discourse" (Pragglejaz Group,

2007, pp.1). However, except for this slight difference in the terminology used, metaphor scholars applying the MIV as well as those using the MIP base their investigation into the phenomenon of metaphor upon the same assumptions.

While not denying the link between conceptual structure and language, both approaches shift the locus of attention from metaphor in the mind to metaphor in real language use. The MIV and the MIP proponents claim that not every metaphor in language is necessarily conditioned by metaphor at the conceptual level (Cameron, 2003, pp.22; Pragglejaz Group, 2007, pp.24, 33). To identify metaphorical potential of words in discourse, the MIV as well as MIP exploit a simple semantic test: a linguistic expression is metaphorical when its most basic, physical or concrete sense stands in contrast to its current contextual meaning and there is a "transfer of meaning" between these two senses (as explained by Cameron, 2003, pp.60) or a meaningful "comparison" is drawn between them (Pragglejaz Group, 2007, pp.3). Despite the fact that the above principles of linguistic metaphor identification seem to be rather vague, both methods aim at achieving a reliable account of metaphor in real language use and try to deal with similar problematic areas (such as delexicalized verbs and prepositions, similes, metonymies or multiword units). To increase the intra-rater reliability, both procedures involve the use of corpora and corpus-based dictionaries as well as an iterative analysis of the discourse data. On the other hand, in order to strengthen the inter-rater reliability, both approaches recommend group discussion and cross-checking of the results of metaphor identification procedure (Cameron, 2003, pp.62; Pragglejaz Group, 2007, pp.21-33).

References

Cameron, L., 2003. Metaphor in educational discourse. London: Continuum.

Cameron, L., n.d. Procedure for metaphor analysis. Finding metaphors in discourse data. [online] Available at: <http://creet.open.ac.uk/projects/metaphor-analysis/procedure.cfm?subpage=discourse-data> [Accessed at 9 January 2011].

Deignan, A., 2005. Metaphor and corpus linguistics. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Koller, V., 2003. Metaphor clusters, metaphor chains: Analyzing the multifunctionality of metaphor in text. Metaphorik, 5, pp.115-134.

Kövecses, Z., 2002. Metaphor. A Practical Introduction. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lakoff, G., 1993. The contemporary theory of metaphor. In: A. Ortony, ed. 1993. Metaphor and Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2nd edition), pp.202-251.

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M., 1980. Metaphors We Live By. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Musolff, A., 2004. Metaphor and Political Discourse: Analogical Reasoning in Debates about Europe. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Musolff, A., 2006. Metaphor scenarios in public discourse. Metaphor and Symbol, 21(1), pp.23-38.

Pragglejaz Group. 2007. MIP: A method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse. Metaphor and Symbol, 22(1), pp.1-39.

Steen, G. et.al., 2010. Metaphor in usage. Cognitive Linguistics, 21(4), pp.765-796.