

An Idealized Cognitive Model Analysis of Metaphors in American Economic News Report

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Abstract: On the basis of the theoretical framework of Lakoff's Conceptual Metaphor, the paper researches into the cognitive model of conceptual metaphors in American Economic News Reports. Moreover, the paper tries to analyze economic discourse by the application of Idealized Cognitive Model of its metaphorical thinking combined with cultural model and reflect the ideology of the media. It aims to help English learners ponder the implied meaning the economic news reports conveyed and take a new look at metaphors between the lines.

1. Introduction

Metaphor, as a pervasive phenomenon in languages, has been researched since Aristotle. In 1980, the publication of Lakoff & Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By* marked a milestone in cognitive study. They raised the conceptual metaphor theory. They claimed that metaphor is not just restricted in language, but also in thought and action and "our ordinary conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature." (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003:4).

With the wild spread of this new theory, many research fields, such as economy discourses, have witnessed the application of cognitive linguistics. Since the economy is quite abstract, metaphorical expressions can be easily found in economic discourses to make abstract and obscure economic phenomena vivid and understandable. Henderson (1982) first discussed the application of metaphors in economic discourse. McCloskey (1990,1995) researched into the importance of metaphors in economic discourse and points out its pervasiveness. Some scholars (Bichieri1988, Boers1997) have studied specific conceptual metaphors in economic discourses. It is noted that these previous researches lack systematic analysis and haven't take the cultural factors into consideration.

Based on the framework of conceptual metaphor theory, the paper researched into the metaphors in American economic news reports by collecting 98 pieces of economic news from *New York Times* (July 2017 --Sept. 2017). The paper mainly focuses on the cognitive mode in economic discourse and analyzes the Idealized Cognitive Model (briefly ICM) in order to dig out the ideology beneath the cognitive metaphors.

2. Theoretical Basis

Cognitive model, as the basic means of acquiring knowledge, is the psychological token of human being's cognitive experience which is formed under the specific cultural background. The study of cognitive models of a certain sort has been fashionable in cognitive science for some years now. Idealized cognitive models (ICM) are cognitive terms raised by Lakoff in 1987. Lakoff argued that ICMs is the basic means by which human beings structure knowledge. Gibbs further developed ICM in the following statement: "An ICM is a prototypical 'folk' theory or cultural model that people



created to organize their knowledge. ICMs make some sense, given that ICMs are idealized and do not fit actual situations in a one-to-one correspondence, but relate many concepts that are inferentially connected to one another in a single conceptual structure that is experientially meaningful as a whole.” (Jiang Xiaohong 2008:22) An ICM, as a cognitive structure, is idealized for the purpose of understanding and reasoning, and its function is to represent reality from a certain perspective.

3. Data Description

The author collects three-month economic news from *New York Times*, which is an American daily newspaper founded and continuously published in New York City since 1851. *New York Times* has won 104 Pulitzer Prizes, the most of any news organization. Its website was the most popular American online newspaper website as of December 2008, receiving more than 18 million unique visitors in that month. Its economic news is influential in America. All the samples selected cover a wide range of economy: finance, insurance, stock markets, etc. And the linguistic realization of metaphorical concepts, include nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. The research methodology the author adopted is qualitative analysis.

After clarifying the two basic theoretical issues, the author turns to make a general analysis of empirical data. According to the criterion mentioned above, the author selects metaphorical expressions from *New York Times* (July 2017 --Sept. 2017). These empirical data are generally classified into seven typical metaphors in terms of their source domains, i.e. WAR, JOURNEY, HUMAN BEING, UP/DOWN, WATER, NON-HUMAN, CLIMATEWATER, NON-HUMAN and CLIMATE. The more specific information for each category is illustrated in the following table:

Table 1: Conceptual Metaphors in Economic Discourses

Category of Concept	Entry	Frequency	Percentage
WAR	21	4107	43.51%
JOURNEY	58	1603	16.98%
HUMAN BEING	27	1321	13.99%
UP/DOWN	28	1221	12.93%
WATER	37	745	7.89%
NON-HUMAN	40	287	3.04%
CLIMATE	17	156	1.65%
Total	228	9440	100%

Among them, four major conceptual metaphors will be discussed in the following parts: ECONOMY IS WAR and ECONOMY IS JOURNEY, ECONOMY IS HUMAN BEING, and UP/DOWN metaphor. And the following analysis will be carried on the common characteristics of conceptual metaphor. And then a further research will be made to probe into the inner reasons for such conceptual metaphors.

4. Conceptual Metaphors in Economic Discourse

4.1 ECONOMY IS WAR

The war metaphor is commonly seen in economic discourse. War concept used in the economic field has deep social basis and cultural basis. War has close connection with economy, since there are many similarities between military and economic activities, such as competition between two parts, gain and lose in a battle, and victory and defeat exist both in these fields. When war is mentioned, there are some entailment that people cannot avoid discussing. Though it is not a war, the economy is taken as a war among antagonists.

Some linguistic examples are presented as following:

- (1) Back in the mid-1980s, Boeing and Airbus avoided a trade war by making a gentlemen's

agreement not to seek government financing to sell planes in each other's home markets.

(2) It seems unlikely that he will intervene in the battle over the Bush tax cuts.

(3) ...those companies fiercely protect the code underpinning their trading strategies.

(4) As for Greece, its feet had to be held to the fire before its leaders would agree to fight corruption and root out decades of financial mismanagement.

In the above four examples—"trade war, battle, trading strategies, fight"—the business competition is regarded as "war", which indicated its nature is fierce and fury as a battle. From the metaphorical expression, people can vividly understand the hardness and fierceness of business competition.

4.2 ECONOMY IS JOURNEY

JOURNEY metaphor is one of the most popular metaphors in conceptualized system, since it is a common activity in human's physical experience. There are a set of correspondences in the mapping from JOURNEY domain to ECONOMY domain. The mapping process can be analyzed as following:

a. LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES ARE JOURNEYS:

(5) Over the years, foreign capital flowing into emerging markets has played a crucial role in helping finance *roads* in India, factories in China and buyers of luxury cars in Brazil.

Economic development somewhat is linearly forwards, just like the road or path towards particular destination. In the above examples, "roads" and "path" are used to refer to the methods or strategies which will lead to efficiency and more profits.

b. PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS

(6) But most of the industry has *moved* to China over the last two decades because of lower costs and weak environmental enforcement there.

(7) American businesses are *far from* unified on whether Washington should be waging a currency fight with China.

In the above examples, the metaphorical expressions can be divided into two types: the action of moving toward purposes; the distance from the desired goals. Metaphorical expressions—*moved to*—indicate efforts have been made to achieve the aim. And metaphorical expression—*far from*—refers to the degree of economic development.

c. MAKING PROGRESS IS FORWARD MOVEMENT

(8) As equities *advanced*, the dollar declined over the weekend after promises by the world's 20 biggest economies to avoid a currency war.

The action of moving forward are endowed with positive meaning. Just as the above examples show, *advanced* or *going forward* convey active connotations of making progress.

d. SPEED OF PROGRESS IS SPEED OF MOVEMENT

As has been discussed in the previous part, the forward movement in JOURNEY domain is mapped onto making progress in ECONOMY domain. Thus, the speed of movement corresponds to the speed of making progress.

e. DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOVEMENT

Adam Smith has described customs tariffs as "trade barriers", in which problems, difficulties or impediments in economic activities are compared to "barriers" on the road in the journey. See more examples:

(9) China had set off a "damaging cycle" of "competitive non-appreciation" in which countries aimed to *block* their currencies from rising in value to support their exporters.

(10) Still, American companies face complex political and bureaucratic *obstacles* to gaining a large part of India's business.

When companies or other economic entities face such "*blocking*" or "*obstacles*", they tend to overcome or solve such problems or difficulties.

4.3 ECONOMY IS HUMAN BEING

(11) Another name often mentioned is Ajit Jain, the *head* of Berkshire's lucrative reinsurance business.

(12) Industry analysts say Huawei, based in Shenzhen, has quickly *matured into* a fierce competitor in one of the most important and hotly contested technology arenas.

(13) Analysts said the improving credit environment was a *healthy* sign, both for the bank and the broader economy.

(14) As a result, the euro is finding it difficult to reclaim much lost ground despite the general rise in *risk appetite* since the United States jobless claims figures were released.

From the above examples, it is clearly that economy is HUMAN BODY (*head*), LIFE CYCLE (*matured into*), HEALTH(*healthy*) and EATING (*risk appetite*). Head is very important in human body and has the decisive function. It is very suitable to use “head” to refer to the important and influential company or person. Maturity corresponds to the well-developed situation of the economic entities. From these examples, we can see clearly that economic entities are considered as human bodies, and their general conditions thus are compared as health condition of human beings.

4.4 UP/DOWN metaphor

UP/DOWN metaphor belongs to orientational metaphor in conceptual metaphor theory. It can also be regarded as a kind of spatialization metaphors, which are rooted in physical and cultural experience. According to Lakoff, many basic spatial concepts are included in orientational metaphor, such as up and down, in and out, front and back, on and off, deep and shallow, central and peripheral. In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (2003:16-18) has discussed many specific linguistic examples concerning UP/DOWN metaphor. Among these examples, this is quite common in economy domain: MORE IS UP; LESS IS DOWN. The followings are some linguistic examples taken from economic news report.

(15) Nasdaq composite index *climbs* 11.46 points, or 0.46 percent, to 2,490.85.

(16) Economists had expected the number to *go down*, by 4,000.

The above examples show fully the metaphorical expressions of MORE IS UP. Some are preposition together with verb (*go up*) or adjective (*high*) indicating the value or cost increase; some are verb conveying the implied meaning of UP, such as *soar*, *boost*, *rise*, and *climb*. ; LESS IS DOWN. Their linguistic forms include preposition together with verb (*go down*), adjective (*low*), noun (*fall*) and verb (*fall*).

5. ICM Analysis of Metaphors in Economic Discourse

The metaphors coming from daily life are more convincing. These metaphors used in the economic news report are all closely associated with people's own experience and its framing is originated from the psychological framing of human beings to the world, namely, the cognitive mode. These metaphors can easily arouse resonance. Therefore, the metaphors applied in economic news report are not chosen randomly; they have close connection with its social and culture context and reflect the ideology of the media.

In the first place, cultural context is the crucial factor that affects metaphorical model. The ICM of color words indicating goodness is BLUE IS GOOD in English economic discourse. Blue chip denotes companies or their shares considered a reliable investment. Blue in English conveys the meaning of goodness. In English discourse, red is seldom used to represent goodness, since in westerner's ICMs on color RED is the color of blood which contains the impression of violence and danger. For example, red ink is used in reference to financial deficit or debt. All these show that conceptual metaphors reflect the culture model which functions as a filter in the course of metaphor framing.

In the second place, people always organize knowledge and superficial reality according to structure, and each ICM contains a complicated structure and each can construct a mental space. And metaphorical model is sub-model of ICM; its nature is conceptual and systematic. What conceptual metaphors displayed is not fragmented ideas or opinions, but coherently systems. In the news reports, the commonly used metaphors, namely, WAR, JOURNEY, HUMAN BEING and UP/DOWN, display the shared entailment with different superficial metaphorical expressions. They all implied the fierceness of market economy. With the application of different types of conceptual metaphors, the

writers expressed their various purposes of the discourses.

6. Conclusion

Economic discourse, especially economic news, is closely connected with people's daily life. Since economic activities or entities are abstract and complicated, conceptual metaphors are applied to play an important role in economic news. By studying the real nature and ideology implied between the news, people can have a better understanding of the economy. And it not only adds the readability, but also provides a fresh perspective on the economic news.

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