

Weather as the source domain for metaphorical expressions

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The statement of the thesis

The aim of the study is to demonstrate the pervasiveness of concepts related to WEATHER that indicate the presence or absence of problems in human mind. The linguistic material that is the subject of the analysis is the language used in everyday communication. An additional claim is that the directionality of metaphorical transfer is uniform and proceeds from concrete to abstract concepts. Furthermore, I will try to show that talking about the presence or absence of problems in terms related to WEATHER is systematic and forms a coherent network of metaphorical expressions whose structuring is partial. The final claim I would like to make is that the expressions that reflect the concept have a common experiential basis, and it is only because of its presence that the metaphor can be comprehended.

The Methodology of Research

The main source that was used throughout the study is the British National Corpus (BNC). While studying the examples found on the corpus website, I realised that it is very common to talk about the presence or absence of problems in terms of WEATHER. I have noticed that different parts of speech connected with WEATHER are used to construct metaphorical expressions which indicate the presence or absence of problems. In this group are adjectives, for instance *cloudy, rainy, foggy, sunny*, etc., nouns like *fog, rain, sunshine, sun, cloud*, and verbs, for example *thunder, rain*, etc. Having found numerous examples, I divided them into two groups, one describing good weather and the other describing bad weather, in order to prove that there is a certain systematicity in talking about problems in terms of WEATHER.

Metaphor

In his study about metaphor, Joseph E. Grady writes that “[i]f cognitive linguistics is a study of ways in which features of language reflect other aspects of human cognition, then metaphors provide one of the clearest illustrations of this relationship” (Grady 2007: 188). Cognitivists state that it is almost impossible to analyse metaphor without noticing the connections between lexical semantics and usage of lexical items as well as comprehension and perception of the world (188). In other words, some aspects of human experience are associated with others to facilitate perception and cognition; perhaps the relation between the neurological system and metaphors proves this contention (188).

Lakoff and Johnson in their book *Metaphors We Live By* write that the essence of metaphor is based on understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another (1980: 5). For this reason, each metaphor has a source domain and a target domain. Only through the use of linguistic expressions tied to the source domain can the target domain be fully comprehended (Lakoff 1987: 266–267). Kövecses describes target domains as “abstract, diffuse and lack[ing] clear delineation; as a result they ‘cry out’ for metaphorical conceptualization” (2002: 20). Evans and Green explain that due to their intangibility abstract aspects are difficult to convey, whereas source domains tend to be tangible, and thus more understandable (2006: 298).

Mapping is often assumed to be a basic process of metaphorical thinking (Grady 2007:190). Grady discusses mapping on the example of the *ship – state* metaphorical correspondence, where elements of the source domain (ship and navigation) are mapped onto the elements of the target domain, that is nations and politics. The source domain entails language and images that are used to evoke the association with the target domain that is current in the discourse (2007:190). Similarly, Roft and Cruse emphasise that “metaphors are conceptual structures and are not merely linguistic in nature, although, of course, they are normally realised linguistically” (2004:197). Likewise Lakoff notes that “(...) the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualise one mental domain in terms of another” (Lakoff 1992: 202).

Structural metaphors make up the most substantial category of metaphors. They are used to conceptualise complex, more abstract aspects of experiences by employing simpler and better known experiences, e.g. argument is war (Haase 2002: 6). The so-called *highlighting/hiding* phenomenon is an important feature of this group. It involves giving special attention to certain aspects while others remain out of sight. In the example given above, the conflict feature is highlighted whilst co-operation, which can also be a feature of war (especially at its end), remains hidden (6).

Oriental metaphors belong to a group in which concepts are organised spatially. The experiences of physical space are the basis of this relationship. Examples include: *being happy is high, being sad is down* (Haase 2002: 7).

Metaphors motivated by the experience of physical objects are the last group in which experiences can be identified and categorised as entities restricted by a surface. The concept ABSTRACTS ARE THINGS is one of many ontological metaphors and can be found in the following examples: *a series of questions, hold on the same wish* (6).

Systematicity of Metaphor

Systematicity is understood as the entailment of metaphors related to a metaphorical concept, since “[m]etaphors appear more apt when they systematically evoke, or connect into, established modes of metaphoric thought” (Veale 2003: 28). The example *low temperature is lack of emotions* shows that certain lexical items, such as *frozen heart, ice, cold reception*, form a systematic manner of describing *lack of emotions*. The constituents of the *low temperature* concept point to *lack of emotions*, and language follows this pattern (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 7). Emotions are conceptualised in terms of temperature and it has an impact on the way the presence or absence of emotions is described in language. Systematicity may be external or internal, implying internal and external coherence between a given concept and emotion. The former signifies a network of metaphorical expressions within the field of a concept, while the latter is kept between different conceptual metaphors, when there is an element that is shared, by association as in HAPPY IS UP, CONTROL IS UP (1980: 18) (Taverniers 2002: 123).

Partiality of Metaphor

Low temperature is lack of emotions. There exist numerous linguistic expressions that reflect this conceptual metaphor, for example:

(1) A cold reception

(2) *It's been a little chilly in the office since Mr. Brown became boss Your heart is made of ice*

In view of the above examples, it should be concluded that the words *cold, chilly, ice* used to describe the target domain, that is, lack of emotions, are indeed connected with low temperature. However, not all the words implying low temperature relate to this conceptual metaphor which is evident in the case of *snow, floe, snowball*. There are many other words that are not used when talking about the lack of emotions, like for example: *snow, floe, snowball*. The lexicon that describes low temperature is used partially to structure the metaphor. Partiality of metaphor makes the metaphor figurat-

ive and keeps it beyond the realm of literal meaning (Lakoff and Johnson 1999:53-54).

Experiential Basis of Metaphor

Lakoff describes the experiential basis on the example of the metaphor MORE IS UP. The concept is based on human experience. If one thing is put on top of another in a container, the level of the heap rises; therefore MORE relates to UP and LESS relates to DOWN (Lakoff 1980:19). The way humans conceive of things comes from experiences of everyday existence:

Human spatial concepts, however, include UP-DOWN, FRONT-BACK, IN-OUT, NEAR-FAR, etc. It is these that are relevant to our continual everyday bodily functioning, and this gives them priority over other possible structurings of space – for us. In other words, the structure of our spatial concepts emerges from our constant spatial experience, that is, our interaction with the physical environment. Concepts that emerge in this way are concepts that we live by in the most fundamental way (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 56 – 57).

According to Lakoff and Johnson, humans developed a tendency to think metaphorically about things beyond their comprehension by imposing limitations of finiteness: “[w]e experience many things, through sight and touch, as having distinct boundaries, and, when things have no distinct boundaries, we often project boundaries upon them (...)” (1980: 58). It can be said that humans think about everything that is non-finite or abstract in terms of tangible entities (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 59).

The undirectionality of Metaphor

A significant aspect pointed out by cognitivists is the undirectionality of conceptual metaphors. Metaphors carry over features from a source domain to a target domain, not the other way round (Evans and Green 2006: 296). For instance, while DEATH is conceptualised in terms of a PERSON, PERSONS cannot be structured in terms of DEATH: people are not usually perceived as ‘deaths’. It is no coincidence that the terms ‘target’ and ‘source’ signify the only direction of metaphorical mapping.

Vyvyan Evans and Melanie Green analyse two examples given by Lakoff and Turner: PEOPLE ARE MACHINES and MACHINES ARE PEOPLE to show that undirectionality is kept even when two metaphors share the same source and target domain (2006: 297):

PEOPLE ARE MACHINES

- a. John always gets the highest scores in maths; he’s a human calculator.

- b. He's so efficient; he's just a machine!
- c. He's had a nervous breakdown

MACHINES ARE PEOPLE

- a. I think my computer hates me; it keeps deleting my data.
- b. This car has a will of its own!
- c. I don't think my car wants to start this morning.

Even if, at first glance, the two conceptual metaphors appear to reflect one another, a close analysis reveals that there are different mappings in the two metaphors. In the first case some characteristics that belong to machines are mapped onto people (for example the speed of machines), and in the second one typically human traits, like volition, are ascribed to machines (Evans and Green 2006: 297). In other words, “[t]his shows that even when two metaphors share the same two domains, each metaphor is distinct in nature because it relies upon different mappings” (297).

Metonymy

A point of similarity in both metaphor and metonymy is that they are conceptual in nature and pervasive: “Lakoff and Johnson argued that metonymy, like metaphor is a conceptual phenomenon, but has quite a distinct basis” (Evans and Green 2006:311). While analysing metaphors, one can observe cross-mappings, but there is no such process in metonymy. In this case one entity may stand for another because of their coexistence within the same domain (Evans and Green 2006: 312). For instance, in the case of *I don't read Borges*, it is obvious that one cannot *read* people. In this sentence *Borges* stands for *Borges' books*.

The Linguistic Material Gathered Related to WEATHER

In the next part of this thesis, I present examples of linguistic expressions related to the concept of WEATHER. They are divided into lexical categories that refer to various atmospheric phenomena.

Cloud (noun, verb), cloudy (adjective)

The event was clouded over by protests

Cloudy phrases must be eliminated

She didn't discover a numinous cloud of ignorance.

Some strong emotions seemed to cloud Michele's eyes, but he asked lightly enough (...)

She felt involved, the cloud that hung over Rosę hung over her too.

Rain (noun, verb), rainy (adjective)

We should have been putting money by for a rainy day because that rainy day came.

Do we take it that the rainy day has finally arrived?

It never rains but it pours.

Into each life some rain must fall.

I won't let you rain on my parade - he retorted.

Storm (noun, verb)

A political storm has also been sparked by the closure, with the threat of legal action between the council's Recreation Department and Environmental

Services.

His body stilled like the calm before the storm.

She noticed the tightness of the thin lips, instinct warning her that trouble was at hand, so she leaned back in her chair and waited for the storm to break.

Archbishop in storm over contraception.

To weather the storm.

Several hundred million peasants will rise up like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a force so swift and violent no power however great will be able to hold it back.

She was unsure if her proposal could weather the storm of scrutiny.

Hurricane (noun)

I feel as if my mind is whirling madly, like a hurricane.

Thunder (noun, verb)

The face was veiled in cloud, thunder and lightning raged. Harry walked on, his face like thunder, his fists still clenched. The boss thundered into the room.

Fog (noun), foggy (adjective)

My memory is a little foggy.

A foggy idea.

He threw some daylight into her fog.

Haze (noun)

They can't say that I'm in a druggy haze or that I'll get out of it.

Through the haze of despair she noticed the sheriff.

Through his haze, Charles realized that it wasn't just the crisis that made them so deferential, it was the part he was now playing, too.

Shine (verb), sunshine (noun)

Sun always shines on TV. You are the sunshine of my life.

Sunny (adjective)

Sunny future for BBC voice.

That weekend found him in a sunny mood.

Sunny vertiginous freedom.

I mean you are looking back on your childhood you always think of your childhood being sunny days.

Grey sky, clear sky (nouns premodified with adjectives)

It's gonna be clear skies from now on.

Grey skies are gonna clear up!

When she learnt about the old truth, the long lie, she cried out it was a bolt

from a clear sky shattering her life.

Hiss kiss was pure joy, winging happiness as if her spirit was soaring into a clear sky.

It is truly said that he can go to bed at night with a clear sky as far as Home.

Affairs are concerned and wake up the next morning with a major crisis on his hands.

Heavy weather (noun premodified with an adjective)

You are making heavy weather of it.

3.2. Material Divided into Conceptual Metaphors

Having analysed the material gathered, I noticed that all the examples can be categorised into certain conceptual metaphors. The source domain for all these concepts constitutes the lexicon describing WEATHER CONDITIONS, whereas the target domain constitutes the presence or absence of problems. The following conceptual metaphors can be identified for the examples collected:

(1) RAIN IS MISFORTUNE

- a) We should have been putting money by for a rainy day because that rainy day came.
- b) Do we take it that the rainy day has finally arrived?
- c) It never rains but it pours.
- d) Into each life some rain must fall.
- e) I won't let you rain on my parade - he retorted

(2) FOG IS CONFUSION

- a) My memory is a little foggy.
- b) A foggy idea
- c) He threw some daylight into her fog.

(3) STORM IS AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR/REACTION

- a) A political storm has also been sparked by the closure, with the threat of legal action between the council's Recreation Department and Environmental Services.
- b) His body stilled like the calm before the storm.
- c) She noticed the tightness of the thin lips, instinct warning her that trouble was at hand, so she leaned back in her chair and waited for the storm to break.
- d) Archbishop in storm over contraception.

e) Several hundred million peasants will rise up like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a force so swift and violent no power however great will be able to hold it back.

f) She was unsure if her proposal could weather the storm of scrutiny

g) Get out! – he stormed.

(4) STORM IS HARD TIMES

a) Bob lost his job, but somehow his family weathered the storm.

b) When she learnt about the old truth, the long lie, she cried out it was a bolt from a clear sky shattering her life.

(5) HEAVY WEATHER IS PROBLEMS

a) You are making heavy weather of it.

(6) GREY SKIES IS DIFFICULT PERIOD

a) Grey skies are gonna clear up! Put on a happy face.

b) When there are grey skies, we don't mind grey skies, you will turn them blue, Stanley Boy.

(7) CLEAR SKIES IS LACK OF PROBLEMS

a) His kiss was pure joy, winging happiness as if her spirit was soaring into a clear sky.

b) It is truly said that he can go to bed at night with a clear sky as far as Home Affairs are concerned and wake up the next morning with a major crisis on his hands.

c) It's gonna be clear skies form now on.

(8) SUNNY IS OPTIMISTIC

a) Sunny future for BBC voice.

b) That weekend found him in a sunny mood.

c) Sunny vertiginous freedom.

d) I mean you are looking back on your childhood you always think of your childhood being sunny days.

(9) ANYTHING THAT SHINES IS HAPPINESS

a) Sun always shines on TV.

b) You are the sunshine of my life.

(10) HAZE IS PROBLEMATIC

a) They can't say that I'm in a druggy haze or that I'll get out of it.

b) Through the haze of despair she noticed the sheriff.

c) Through his haze, Charles realized that it wasn't just the crisis that made them so deferential, it was the part he was now playing, too.

(11) THUNDER IS NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

a) The face was veiled in cloud, thunder and lightning raged.

b) Harry walked on, his face like thunder, his fists still clenched

(12) THUNDER IS SUDDEN ACTION

a) The boss thundered into the room.

(13) HURRICANE IS NEGATIVE STATE OF MIND

a) I feel as if my mind is whirling madly, like a hurricane.

(14) CLOUD IS A SYMBOL OF PRESENT OR FORTHCOMING PROBLEMS

a) The event was clouded over by protests

b) She didn't discover a numinous cloud of ignorance.

c) Some strong emotions seemed to cloud Michele's eyes, but he asked (...)

d) She felt involved, the cloud that hung over Rose hung over her too.

In the case of RAIN is a MISFORTUNE metaphor, the source domain concept (RAIN) is used to talk metaphorically about the target domain concept. The concept

RAIN denotes an unspecific but negative occurrence (as in sentence 1c and 1d). The expression “rainy day” figuratively means a period of misfortune (sentence 1a and 1b). In sentence 1e, the verb “rain” denotes an action which is meant to spoil some event (“parade”).

In the next metaphor the source domain concept (FOG) is used to talk about the target domain concept (CONFUSION). The concept FOG denotes fuzziness with reference to memory and ideas (examples 2a and 2b). The fog figuratively signifies confusion, a feeling of embarrassment, confusing situation or a state of not being certain about what is happening or what something means (as in sentence 2c).

The source domain concept of STORM is used to talk metaphorically about the target domain concept, that is an AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR or an AGGRESSIVE REACTION. The concept STORM denotes behaving in a threatening way and being ready to attack in a reaction to something (as in sentences 3a, 3d and 3e). It may also denote an angry action or movement in a particular situation (examples 3b, 3c and 3g). Sometimes the concept refers to the force or suddenness of something as in the sentence 3f.

In the case of metaphor STORM is HARD TIMES, the source domain STORM is used to talk metaphorically about the target domain. The concept STORM denotes a difficult period in somebody’s life (as in sentence 4a). A “bolt” that is a part of the metaphorical concept STORM may denote the cause of unhappiness that occurs suddenly and unexpectedly (as in example 4b).

There are some metaphors that occur rarely in everyday expressions; however, they do show that people associate bad weather with trouble as in the case of HEAVY WEATHER is PROBLEMS. Here the source domain HEAVY WEATHER is used to talk metaphorically about the target domain concept. The concept HEAVY WEATHER denotes an unspecific but negative phenomenon, a problem (see example 5a).

In the case of GREY SKIES is a DIFFICULT PERIOD, the source domain concept (GREY SKIES) is used to talk metaphorically about the target domain concept. The concept GREY SKIES specifically refers to a particular length of time that is not easy for somebody (see examples 6a and 6b).

The next metaphor CLEAR SKIES is a LACK OF PROBLEMS. This metaphor is the opposite of the previous one. The source domain concept CLEAR SKIES is used to talk figuratively about the target domain concept. The concept CLEAR SKIES indicates a state without problems, an optimistic situation (as in sentence 7b) or a period of time without trouble (7c) or it functions as an unspecific but optimistic symbol (7a).

Another metaphor with positive meaning is SUNNY is OPTIMISTIC (8). The source domain concept is used to talk metaphorically about the target domain (OPTIMISTIC). The concept SUNNY refers to an unspecific but positive feature or being happy etc. (as in sentences 8b, 8c and 8d). It can also signify good things to happen or something to be successful (as in sentence 8a).

In the case of ANYTHING THAT SHINES is HAPPINESS (9), the source domain concept (ANYTHING THAT SHINES) is used to talk metaphorically about the target domain concept. The concept ANYTHING THAT SHINES denotes an unspecific but optimistic occurrence. The word “sunshine” figuratively means something fortunate, here it describes someone who is dear to someone else and who perhaps brings happiness (sentence 9b). In the sentence “sun always shines on TV” (9a) the verb “shine” means “to be bright and positive”, not to have any negative sides, not to exhibit any problems.

In the subsequent metaphor, the source domain concept HAZE is used to talk about the target domain concept. The word “haze” is used to talk figuratively about the mental state in which thoughts and feelings are not clear (as in sentences 10b and 10c) or about a strange feeling when under the influence of drugs.

When talking about emotions in terms of WEATHER, another metaphor discussed is THUNDER is NEGATIVE EMOTIONS. The source domain concept (THUNDER) is used to talk metaphorically about the state of being extremely angry, a feeling of violent anger (sentences 11a and 11b).

The concept THUNDER may also refer to some unspecific but negative action that is done quickly and often unexpectedly. See example 12a.

In the case of HURRICANE is a NEGATIVE STATE OF MIND, the source domain concept (HURRICANE) is used to mean figuratively a negative mental and physical condition that a person is in (as in sentence 13a).

Finally, the metaphor based on the WEATHER concept is a CLOUD as a SYMBOL OF PRESENT OR FORTHCOMING PROBLEMS. The source domain concept (CLOUD) is used to talk metaphorically about the target domain concept. The concept CLOUD symbolizes something that makes one feel sad and anxious (see sentences 14b and 14d). The verb “cloud” figuratively means to fill one’s eyes with tears, make the eyes less clear (as in sentence 14c), but the verb “cloud over” denotes an action that is meant to spoil something that happens, often something very important, a planned public or social occasion (as in sentence 14a).

After analysing these categories, one can identify a superordinate metaphor for the concepts given above: WEATHER CONDITIONS ARE PROBLEM INDICATORS. The

concepts can indicate the presence or absence of problems. As one can observe in the examples collected, *sunny* is associated with something optimistic or without problems (8); whereas what is described as *hazy* or *foggy* is associated with something problematic (respectively 10, 2, 11), *rainy day* is an equivalent for a hard period (1a, 1b) and *storm* may stand for 'saying something furiously' (3g). It seems that concepts related to GOOD WEATHER (9 examples) are not as pervasive as those related to BAD WEATHER (31 examples).

3.3. The systematicity of WEATHER concepts

The presence or absence of problems is conceptualised in terms of WEATHER and the language follows the pattern, using such adjectives as: *cloudy*, *rainy*, *foggy* or the nouns *rain*, *fog*, *storm*, etc. to indicate that something problematic happens, whereas the words *sunny*, *clear skies*, *sunshine* are used to talk about positive, optimistic perspectives or to describe a person that one loves or that helps to forget about problems (respectively 8, 7d and 9). In conclusion, the concepts related to WEATHER form a systematic collection of problem indicators.

It has to be mentioned that, in the examples that represent the above concepts, the words related to WEATHER are different parts of speech; there are adjectives, nouns, verbs as single words, and phrases such as *grey skies*. This suggests that the analysed concept is present in linguistic communication.

4. Conclusions

The cognitivists mentioned in the first chapter of this study conducted linguistic research to prove that metaphors are a part of human conceptual system. Indeed, the structure of everyday communication reflects metaphorical thinking.

After analysing the data, it can be concluded that people think about some atmospheric phenomena as problem indicators and this conceptual structure is exhibited in everyday linguistic communication.

The mapping of the analysed superordinate metaphor is unidirectional, since the presence or absence of problems is conceptualised in terms of WEATHER; however, meteorological conditions cannot be seen in terms of PROBLEMS.

The partiality of the concept, that is the subject of this study, is evident. Many words related to the domain of WEATHER appear in everyday conversation, yet the entire lexicon is by no means exhausted, as not all of the words form a connection with the source domain. An example of a word that is not used metaphorically within the analysed concept is *drizzle*.

Different parts of speech (i.e. *rain* as a noun, *rain* as a verb, adjectives like *sunny*) related to BAD WEATHER are used to describe certain problematic situations, something difficult to deal with or a state of not being certain about something. By contrast, different words related to GOOD WEATHER are used to describe a positive situation, a perspective or a state of mind without confusion or doubts. It demonstrates that there is a certain systematicity in speaking about the presence or absence of problems in terms of WEATHER and it makes the analysed concept ubiquitous.

Certain assumptions can be made as to the reasons why people speak about the presence or absence of problems in terms of WEATHER. Problems appear in everyday life and so does the weather topic. Bad weather often evokes sadness, therefore it can be said to constitute a problem; similarly, good weather is often equated with cheerful mood. Thus, in view of the above analysis, weather can be seen as an important experiential basis for conceptual metaphors.

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