

Rethinking Critical Metaphor Analysis

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Abstract

Critical Metaphor Analysis is concerned with integrating critical discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, pragmatics and cognitive linguistics to explore implicit speaker intentions and covert power relations through the analysis of metaphoric expressions. CMA has been a meaningful enrichment of both Critical Discourse Analysis and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This paper aims to give an overview of the formation of CMA, the research findings, the existing problems and the possible solutions.

Keywords: Critical Metaphor Analysis, conceptual metaphor, Critical Discourse Analysis

1. Introduction

Cognitive linguistics has focused on human neural make-up as it impacts language and cognition (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999) and tended to be taken as a “hard” science. Cognitive linguistics has long tended to neglect the sociocultural situation of cognition or its connections to discourse. As a result, cognitive linguistics, for a long period of time, appears to be the representative of decontextualization and naturalization of ideologically loaded phenomena. On the other hand, it is known that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is “primarily interested [in] and motivated by pressing social issues” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 252) and is concerned with the way discourse serves to constitute and negotiate such issues. CDA seeks to unveil the ideology carried by and hidden in discourse. CDA argues that every discourse act is assumed to have a potentially conscious intention that reflects the relative social positions of the text producer and recipient.

An integrating trend of these two disciplines has been under way. Recently cognitive linguistics has paid more attention to the sociocultural factors in language use and the links to discourse. Furthermore, CDA has absorbed the results from the research of cognitive linguistics and resorted to the methodology adopted in cognitive linguistics. Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) has been a typical example of the combination of these two fields of research, and has been a prolific interface so far. The significance of this paper is to present an overview of the formation of Critical Metaphor Analysis and the research findings, find out the problems of CMA and explore the possible solutions.

2. Integrating CDA with Cognitive Metaphor Theory

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) originated from Critical Linguistics in the late 1970s, the basic tenet of which is that discourse is not neutral as it is demonstrated to be. CDA aims to use linguistic expressions and refer to social and historical context to bring the hidden ideology to the surface to inspect the complicated relationship among language, power and ideology. CDA is mainly concerned with developing and increasing our awareness of social relations that are expressed by language in order to change them. Fairclough (1989, p. 1) states the goals of CDA are to: correct a wide underestimation of the significance of language in the production, maintenance, and change of social relations of power and increase consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others, because consciousness is the first step to emancipate.

CDA emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary work in order to gain a proper understanding of how language functions in constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing social institutions or in exercising power (see van Dijk, 2002; Graham, 2002; Lemke, 2003; Martin, 2002; Gee, 2004; Blommaert, 2005). As a result, CDA draws on neighboring human science disciplines such as psychology, history, politics, sociology, cognitive linguistics etc. and attempts to integrate these theories.

Metaphor research has been focused for a long period of time by different schools, from traditional approach that

regards metaphor as a rhetorical device of language used or aesthetic purpose to the cognitive semantic approach which treats metaphor as a cross-domain mapping that is pervasive in our thought and reflected in our daily use of language. Metaphorology became a flourishing academic discipline thanks to George Lakoff & Mark Johnson's contribution. George Lakoff & Mark Johnson initiated cognitive semantic approach to metaphor in their classic work *Metaphors We Live by* (1980) by putting forward conceptual metaphor theory (CMT). What makes the cognitive semantic approach to metaphor unique is the important distinction between conceptual metaphors or metaphorical concepts on the one hand, and linguistic metaphors or metaphorical expressions on the other (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The main creed of this approach is that metaphor is a way of thinking and metaphorical expressions are systematically motivated by underlying conceptual metaphors. In other words, CMT is fundamentally concerned with the conceptual metaphors from which linguistic representations are produced naturally as Santa Ana (2002, p. 29) points out:

The cognitivist focus of attention is not on individual sentences. The object is not any particular linguistic expression of metaphor, but the metaphoric mapping between two semantic domains.

Yet the examples given by Lakoff & Johnson, and their followers were not attested citations because the context in which metaphors occurred was not taken into consideration. Correspondingly, the important questions as to who is using the metaphor, who is its recipient, for what rhetorical purpose it is adopted, cannot be satisfactorily answered.

Charteris-Black put forward Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) in his book *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis* (2004), which is a meaningful enrichment to both CDA and CMT. This approach, by integrating CDA, corpus linguistics, pragmatics and cognitive linguistics, provides new insights to both CDA and CMT and aims to explore the implicit speaker intentions and the covert power relations within the social and cultural context.

3. Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor Analysis

CMA, as an approach to metaphor analysis that aims to reveal the covert (and possibly unconscious) intentions of language users (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 34) and doesn't deny the conceptual nature of metaphor; instead CMA is based on the main claim of CMT that metaphor governs thinking. In addition, this approach also brings metaphor back into the traditional view of metaphor, a branch of philosophy, where metaphor was treated as a way of argumentation as well as a way of composition and style. The reason why the speaker substituted the metaphorical expressions for the literal ones was not just for ornament, but also for persuasion. It is well-known that the main function of metaphor in the context of public speeches is to influence audience opinion. Thus, the comprehensive understanding of metaphor requires the consideration of its context. This pragmatic perspective on metaphor claims that cognitive semantics alone cannot give a sufficient account of metaphor because it is not practical to understand what metaphors mean when taken out of context. Instead, we need to understand what speakers mean pragmatically when metaphors are used in a particular context to achieve a certain communication goal. In support of this, Levinson (1983, p. 56) holds that: "A pragmatic approach will be based on the assumption that the metaphorical content of utterances will not be derived by principles of semantic interpretation; rather the semantics will just provide a characterization of the literal meaning or conventional content of the expression involved, and from this, together with details of the context, the pragmatics will have to provide the metaphorical interpretation."

Charteris-Black (2004) argues that metaphor analysis should integrate linguistic, semantic, cognitive, and pragmatic criteria because metaphor cannot be explained by means of only linguistic, cognitive, pragmatic theory. To put it in another way, the framework used to analyze metaphor must combine the following three components: linguistic, cognitive, and pragmatic criteria since any one component itself is not sufficient to give a comprehensive explanation of metaphoric expressions.

Based on linguistic, pragmatic and cognitive criteria, Charteris-Black (2004, p. 21) redefines the key terms as follows:

A metaphor is a linguistic representation that results from the shift in the use of a word or phrase from the context or domain in which it is expected to occur to another context or domain where it is not expected to occur, thereby causing semantic tension. It may have any or all of the pragmatic and cognitive characteristics that are specified above.

A conceptual metaphor is a statement that resolves the semantic tension of a set of metaphors by showing them to be related.

A conceptual key is a statement that resolves the semantic tension of a set of conceptual metaphors by showing them to be related.

Cameron & Low (1999, p. 80) describe three stages in the methodology of metaphor analysis:

The methodology of metaphor analysis typically proceeds by (1) collecting examples of linguistic metaphors used to talk about the topic... (2) generalizing from them to the conceptual metaphors they exemplify, and (3) using the results to suggest understandings or thought patterns which construct or constrain people's beliefs and actions.

These steps are very similar to Fairclough's (1995, p. 6) three stages of identification, interpretation and explanation, and comprise the methodology of CDA.

Charteris-Black (2004) adopts the three steps in his research: identification, interpretation and explanation of conceptual metaphors. Metaphor identification indicates a close reading of a sample of texts to figure out candidate metaphors. In this process, "the presence of incongruity or semantic tension—either at linguistic, pragmatic or cognitive levels—resulting from a shift in domain use" is the criterion to determine whether a certain linguistic expression is a candidate metaphor or not (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 35). These candidate metaphors have metaphoric potential, but they can be confirmed or abandoned by a further qualitative phase in detailed corpus analysis.

Metaphor interpretation is concerned with ascertaining the relationship between metaphors and the cognitive and pragmatic elements that determine them, which indicates the identification of conceptual metaphors, and where feasible, conceptual keys. Conceptual metaphors are used to resolve the semantic tension between metaphors while conceptual keys are identified to solve the semantic tension between conceptual metaphors. At this stage, it is likely to consider the extent to which metaphor choices account for constructing a socially important representation.

After metaphor identification and interpretation, discourse analysts can go further to explain the reasons why these metaphors instead of the others are chosen in a certain situation. To explain a metaphoric usage, the analysts need to identify the social agency that is involved in the production of metaphoric expressions and their social role in persuasion, that is to say, the ideological and rhetorical motivation of a metaphorical expression. The formation of conceptual metaphors and conceptual keys and illustration of the typical evaluation of metaphors will assist in explaining why they can be persuasive (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 39). The explanations should reveal "understanding or thought patterns which construct people's beliefs and actions" (Cameron & Low, 1999, p. 88).

4. Research Findings of Critical Metaphor Analysis

Charteris-Black adopts this three-step analysis to identify, interpret and explain the metaphors in discourse, such as British Labor and Conservative Party manifestos, American presidential speeches, sports and finance reporting, Old Testament, New Testament and the Koran. The qualitative and quantitative analysis of the corpus provides sufficient and significant findings which support Charteris-Black's view that solid scholarly work on metaphor can play an important part in taking a stance in sociopolitical issues. He uses corpus data to test the claim that metaphor expressions are systematically motivated from metaphorical thinking, and further explores how metaphor choice facilitates expressing speaker intentions and thus carrying ideological influence. The interpretation and explanation of metaphor in this approach is based on the corpus from real-world usage rather than from the analyst's intuition.

Charteris-Black (2004) devotes the bulk of his book to exploring a corpus of fifty-one inaugural speeches of US presidents from George Washington to Bill Clinton, which is made up of 33,252 words and spans about 200 years. From the corpus analysis, he is able to extract seven metaphoric themes: CONFLICT, JOURNEYS, BUILDINGS, FIRE AND LIGHT, PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, RELIGION, BODY PARTS. The analysis of metaphors in US Inaugural Corpus reveals that these metaphors are rooted in everyday experiences like struggle, sensory experience, movement, interaction with physical environment, which supports the view that hidden motivation for metaphor choice is to establish common ground with the voting public by resorting to familiar domains of personal experience and social activity. He further compares the metaphor types in British Party Political Manifestos and American Presidential Inaugural Speeches and is able to conclude that the domain of conflict is even more resonant in the British Party Manifesto Corpus than the US Inaugural Corpus. His explanation is as follows: in both corpora conflict metaphors play a very important role in emphasizing the personal sacrifice and physical struggle needed to achieve social goals; the reason why in the British Party Manifesto Corpus conflict metaphors have a higher frequency than those in the US Inaugural Corpus is that in the British Party Manifesto conflict metaphors are employed to give a positive assessment of their own party ideology or to present a negative evaluation of the party of the opposition.

Koller (2006) investigates a corpus of business magazine texts on mergers and acquisitions. The research is based on a corpus of 164,509 words of magazines and newspapers published between 1997 and 2000 from the following

four sources: *Business Week*, the *Economist*, *Fortune* and the *Financial Times*. Clearly, the media discourse on mergers and acquisitions is mainly dominated by a selectively used cluster of FIGHTING, MATING and FEEDING metaphors, which combine into a scenario of evolutionary struggle. The analysis uncovers how an ideologically vested metaphoric model of evolutionary struggle is prevalent in a particular discourse so as to illustrate the point that metaphoric models play a salient role in the constitution of ideology in discourse.

López (2010) conducts a comparative study of the conceptual metaphors of the Global Systemic Crisis in English and Spanish. Through the corpus approaches to metaphor analysis of English and Spanish financial articles which are selected from those published during 2007 and the end of 2008 in the English journal *The Economist* and the Spanish newspaper *El Economista*, this analysis reveals that the same economic reality may be conceptualized in a different way due to different socio-political and historical factors. For instance, the Government chose to keep the public from realizing the grim state of affairs of the national economy as a result of the coming of national elections. Consequently, this research reveals the important role of metaphors to frame economic issues and sever certain political interests.

Mohamed (2014) investigates the metaphors of natural phenomena in the Holy Quran under the framework of Critical Metaphor Analysis put forward by Charteris-Black (2004). The research extracts five classifications of metaphors of natural phenomena: RAIN, MOUNTAIN, WIND, LIGHT, and DARKNESS, and provides an analysis and understanding of these metaphors. For example, the word rain has been used sixteen times as metaphor, regarded as a tool for giving pain and torture as well as punishment and curse for disbelievers so as to urge them to accept God and have faith and belief in God's teachings, religions, and messengers.

Lee (2015) carried out a critical metaphor analysis on 58 speeches delivered by Singapore government leaders on the necessity of national education for national survival. This research summarizes eight metaphoric themes: CONTAINER, BUILDING, JOURNEY, REMEMBERING, SEEING, MORALITY, CULTIVATION and LABOR and focuses on exploring four salient types of metaphoric themes: CONTAINER, BUILDING, REMEMBERING and MORALITY. Her research reveals the ideational dominance of the government in citizenship education discourse and proves again the helpfulness and value of critical metaphor analysis for critical public relations practitioners and researchers to bring out the hidden propositions in natural discourse.

In China, if we use "Critical Metaphor Analysis" as the key word to search the papers in www.cnki.net, we can find that there are 3 key journal papers about the research of CMA. Ji Yu-hua & Chen Yan (2007) focus on the introduction of the framework of CMA and an analysis of the speeches made by UK/US politicians in intercultural contexts. Feng Qun (2013) investigates the metaphors in four American presidents' speeches, which reflect their political myths and therefore is able to reveal the ideology hidden behind the political discourse. Weng Qingqing (2013) applies critical metaphor analysis to compare the metaphors used by the UK, Canada and China in their speeches about climate change and makes a further analysis of how each side makes efforts to construct an ideological identity of "Self and Other" through particular metaphor choices.

5. Problems with Critical Metaphor Analysis and Solutions

Firstly, based on the finding that metaphors have played a salient role in political construction, CMA of political discourse has long been the mainstream in the interface between CDA and CMT. Furthermore, the CMA of political discourse mostly concentrates on speeches delivered by political leaders and news report. Apart from the political texts, the researchers have extended their research to metaphor analysis of financial discourse, such as Charteris-Black (2004), Koller (2006) and López (2010). Besides, the framework of CMA has also been employed in religious discourse, such as Charteris-Black (2004) and Mohamed (2014). The reason why CMA has mainly been concerned with political discourse is that the tradition that CDA has long concentrated on political discourse has exerted influence on CMA. Yet in order to further examine the validity of CMA, analysts need to incorporate other types of discourse, such as educational discourse, medical discourse etc., into the corpus data of CMA. Besides, the seemingly "objective" discourse may carry ideological inclinations so as to exert influences on the social cognition of the public. Hence, the corpus data of CMA need to be broadened to examine metaphor choices to facilitate the validity of CMA.

Secondly, due to the fact that corpus data can provide convincing proof of scholarly research on metaphor, the corpus approach has been the popular method in metaphor analysis. In Charteris-Black's three-step analysis, through metaphor identification which is based on the presence of incongruity or semantic tension—either at linguistic, pragmatic or cognitive levels (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 35), analysts are able to identify candidate metaphors. Yet the process, to some degree, can be varied due to individual differences, which shows that the subjectivity in the process of metaphor identification is inevitable. Fortunately, the Pragglejaz Group, which is a group of ten metaphor researchers, namely Peter Crisp, Ray Gibbs, Alan Cienki, Graham Low, Gerard Steen,

Lynne Cameron, Elena Semino, Joe Grady, Alice Deignan, & Zoltán Kövecses, developed a tool called MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure), which consists of a brief set of instructions for the discourse analysts who aim to find metaphoric expressions in a stretch of discourse (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). MIP is more specific and operational, therefore it can reduce the subjectivity of individuals in the process of metaphor identification.

Thirdly, CMT and CDA, can be said to suffer a number of theoretical tensions or inconsistencies (Hart, 2008, p. 93), that is, the problem of focus, the problem of motivation, and the problem of relation. CMT argues that metaphor is a matter of language and knowledge and addresses the cognitive dimensions of metaphor while CDA is concerned with discourse on topics within the social and political boundary. In addition, the experientialist commitment of CMT contradicts CDA because for CDA metaphors are “chosen by speakers to achieve particular communication goals within particular context rather than being predetermined by bodily experience” (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 247). Besides, in the framework of CMT, linguistic metaphors are regarded as the surface representation of underlying conceptual metaphors while in CDA linguistic metaphors in discourse can determine, to some extent, conceptual representation (Hart, 2008, p. 94). Hart (2008) then proposes that Conceptual Blending Theory can be adopted as the apparatus to solve the incompatibility problems between CMT and CDA since CBT, a theory of online meaning construction, can explain and elaborate some of the conceptual operations conducted in discourse.

6. Conclusion

CMA is an approach to discourse that enables us to challenge existing ways of thinking and feeling about human behavior and its relation to language (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 252). A comprehensive examination of metaphor choices in a certain discourse can help the readers figure out the hidden intentions of language users and further develop the readers’ awareness of social relations that are loaded in metaphoric expression. The formation of CMA has enriched and brought new insights into the research fields of both CDA and CMT. In other words, handling the cognitive factors of discourse can enrich the CDA analytic framework and render the interpretation and explanation more reasonable, and adopting a critical discourse perspective brings attention to the social and ideological dimension of metaphor. In further research, it is necessary to extend the experiential studies of CMA and develop a coherent theoretical framework of CMA.

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