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Metaphor use in aphasia

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Chapter 2 Metaphor theories and metaphor identification

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, we have discussed what aphasia is, the taxonomy of aphasia, metaphor and metaphor theories. The emphasis of this chapter is how to identify metaphors. It provides requisite theoretical background for subsequent studies. We will differentiate between linguistic metaphors and conceptual metaphors. In addition, there are different methods to identify them in texts, which will be presented in this part.

2.2 Conceptual metaphor and linguistic metaphor

The conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) helps differentiate between conceptual metaphors and linguistic metaphors. Linguistic metaphors are metaphorically used linguistic expressions, including words (or lexical units) or phrases (e.g. phrasal verbs) in terms of a semantically unrelated domain (Thibodeau et al., 2017). They can be considered to be words (lexical units, or lexical items) or other linguistic expressions from source domains, that is, they are the realization of the conceptual metaphor on the linguistic level. Conceptual and linguistic metaphors are not an either-or division of metaphors. Instead, they are notions that are relating to metaphor study from two perspectives.

According to Lakoff (1993), metaphor is fundamentally conceptual in nature, and linguistic metaphor is a surface manifestation of conceptual metaphor. Similar viewpoints have been expressed by other scholars (Gibbs, 2008; Kövecses, 2003; Ortony, 1993). Steen (2011a) stated that metaphors can be studied as part of language or thought, and a three-dimensional model was proposed for metaphor study (Steen, 2008, 2011b), that is, “metaphor in language”, “metaphor in thought”, and “metaphor in communication”. These three dimensions correlate with three approaches in metaphor study: semiotic, psychological/cognitive, and social. Under this framework, the first and the second dimensions correspond roughly to linguistic metaphors and conceptual metaphors, and our studies place emphasis on these two kinds of metaphors.

For a conceptual metaphor, usually, people can find more than one linguistic metaphor pertinent to it. Take the conceptual structure TREATING ILLNESS IS FIGHTING A WAR as an example, speakers and recipients have encyclopaedic knowledge about the source domain (FIGHTING A WAR) and the target domain (TREATING ILLNESS), and there is a mapping from the source domain to the target domain. This is a consideration from the conceptual or cognitive perspective. As for the concrete and specific realization of this metaphor, there can be a tremendous number of linguistic metaphors: “the so-called cure is no magic bullet”; “beating measles takes patience”; “he was attacked by an unknown virus”; etc. Three words “bullet”, “beating”, and “attacked” in these sentences are linguistic metaphors related to the source domain “FIGHTING A WAR”.

2.3 Metaphor identification

Methodologically, the indispensable and logical step before beginning a process of metaphor analysis is to decide which linguistic expressions are potentially used metaphorically. It is practical and necessary to discriminate between metaphors and non-metaphors, since linguistic metaphors are the realization of conceptual metaphors in the linguistic form. Researchers on metaphors have formulated procedures to identify or extract metaphors. For instance, Barcelona (2002), Cameron (1999), Charteris-Black (2004, pp. 35-37) and Stefanowitsch (2006) searched for metaphors under the framework of CMT, namely, the presupposition being the existence of certain conceptual metaphors, with metaphorical mappings from one domain to another, or interaction between more conceptual spaces. The process involves identifying domains and mappings, or conceptual metaphor explanations. “My career is on the rocks” is determined to be metaphorical because of its relation to the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY (Gibbs, 2017, p. 58; Steen, 2007, pp. 284-289). Some methods for identifying linguistic metaphors are not performed in this deductive way, like MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure) designed by Pragglejaz Group (2007) and MIPVU, a procedure developed from MIP by Steen et al. (2010). These procedures work in a more bottom-up fashion (and the basic analysis unit is the lexical unit), without so much consideration on the conceptual structure.

In this study, MIPVU and the method to extract metaphors from corpora developed by Stefanowitsch (2006) are adopted to detect metaphors in given texts, especially in corpora.

2.3.1 Identifying linguistic metaphors via MIPVU

MIPVU provides a step-by-step protocol for identifying metaphors in discourse. The word is the unit of analysis when performing MIPVU, and MIPVU adopts the term “lexical unit”, following the Pragglejaz Group (2007). The British National Corpus (BNC) has a special word category for so-called polywords, like “of course” and “by the way”, which are regarded as single lexical units, and MIPVU follows this tradition. Given this starting point, MIPVU advocates the use of corpus-based dictionaries as tools to help identify metaphor related words (MRWs), in the following way (Steen et al., 2010, pp. 25-26):

- ① Find MRWs by examining the text on a word-by-word basis.
- ② When a word is used indirectly and that use may potentially be explained by some form of cross-domain mapping from a more basic meaning of that word, mark the word as metaphorically used (MRW, indirect).
- ③ When a word is used directly and its use may potentially be explained by some form of cross-domain mapping to a more basic referent or topic in the text, mark the word as direct metaphor (MRW, direct).
- ④ When words are used for the purpose of lexico-grammatical substitution, such as third person personal pronouns, or when ellipsis occurs where words may be seen as missing, as in some forms of co-ordination, and when a direct or indirect meaning is conveyed by those substitutions or ellipses that may potentially be explained by

some form of cross-domain mapping from a more basic meaning, referent, or topic, insert a code for implicit metaphor (MRW, implicit).

⑤ When a word functions as a signal that a cross-domain mapping may be at play, mark it as a metaphor flag (MFlag). Lexical flags include “like”, “as if”, “metaphorically”, “resembling”, etc.

⑥ When a word is a new-formation coined, examine the distinct words that are its independent parts according to steps 2 through 5.

MIPVU hence identifies three types of metaphor in language use: indirect metaphor, direct metaphor, and implicit metaphor:⁸

① Indirect metaphor occurs when there is contrast and comparison between the contextual and a more basic meaning.

In the sentence “There are always the twin problems of how to get the information and how to present it”, the adjective “twin” is identified as an indirect metaphor. The contextual meaning is “closely connected”, and from the *Macmillan Dictionary*, we can refer to the basic meaning of “twin”, which is “forming a pair of two similar things”. It shows a contrast between these two meanings.

② Direct metaphor occurs when there is no contrast between the contextual and a more basic meaning.

“He turned on me, like a snake”. Here, the contextual meaning of “snake” is also the basic meaning, that is, a long and thin reptile without legs. So, there is no contrast or comparison between the contextual meaning and a more basic meaning, only a direct mapping from the source meaning “a long thin animal with no legs and a smooth skin, and some have a poisonous bite that can kill” to the target meaning “attacking suddenly and fiercely as a snake”.

③ Implicit metaphor is due to an underlying cohesive grammatical and/or semantic link in the discourse which points to recoverable metaphorical material.

As for deciding implicit metaphors, the first step is to find the underlying cohesive link, usually substitution or ellipsis; the second step is to see whether the cohesive device is related to any MRW (Steen et al., 2010, pp. 39-40). The lexical unit “one” in “The line between art and life is a particular hard one to draw in Kahlo’s case” is tagged as an implicit metaphor, because “line” is a word related to metaphor, and “one” is a substitution of this metaphorically used “line”.

The VU Amsterdam Metaphor Corpus⁹ adopted this method to categorise metaphors into indirect, direct, and implicit. Resources in it can serve as useful references in our research.

In addition to the above main categories for metaphor, MIPVU also has two special categories called WIDLII (When In Doubt, Leave It In) and DFMA (Discard For Metaphor Analysis). WIDLII can be tagged on cases that are borderline. For

⁸ <http://www.vismet.org/metcor/manual/index.php>

⁹ <http://www.vismet.org/metcor/search/>

example, people with aphasia often use percentages when talking about their recovery, “it (speech)’s eighty five percent”. According to the *Macmillan Dictionary* of American English, the basic meaning of “percentage” is used in mathematics: “an amount or rate that is equal to a particular part of a total that you have divided by 100”, and examples are about expressing the amount of more concrete things like land, population, money, etc. Percentages to evaluate recovery may be labelled “WIDLII” as borderline cases, because raters of the database could not reach a consensus on whether the contrast between the two situations was big enough.

As for DFMA, let’s examine the following example: “And I just was starting to feel more back to normal, you know. I was feeling good about, you know, how I felt, you know, then...”. Here, “I was feeling good about, you know...” is incomplete, and we do not know what the speaker’s intention is after “about”. So “about” should be tagged as DFMA.

2.3.2 Identifying metaphors based on CMT

For MIP and MIPVU, it is necessary to follow a word-by-word procedure to detect MRWs, which is time consuming. Compared with the close reading on texts, proposals in Stefanowitsch (2006) are more practicable and applicable when the size of sample is large, such as novels or data from large corpora. What is more, for this method, there must be a prerequisite: it is assumed that conceptual metaphors exist in the data. For corpora with no semantic annotations, there are four means of identification:

① Searching for source domain vocabulary

The precondition is that we have already known a certain semantic domain play a role in metaphorical expressions. The choice of the source domain vocabulary is based on the research goal. It can be selected according to a priori decisions; it can be all members on existing exhaustive lists; and it can be about a keyword analysis of texts. For example, when the researcher planned to probe into orientational metaphors like UP-DOWN and FRONT-BACK, “forward(s)” and “toward(s)” were chosen as keywords to see their lexical collocations in corpora (Partington, 2006). Then, the researcher needs to identify target domains where these lexical items appear.

② Searching for target domain vocabulary

If the research is concerned with the target domain in metaphorical mapping, the first approach is not adequate, as it only seeks words in the source domain that are likely to be relevant to the target domain. If we need to search for target domain vocabulary, in the first step, words relating to the target domain concept are chosen and searched for in the database; in the second step, it is necessary to check whether these items have embedded in the metaphorical mapping which is from the source domain to the target domain. One limitation of this strategy is that if the linguistic form of the target domain concept does not appear, we will miss that metaphor, for example, as for the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, “He’s headed for great things” is more possibly to be excluded compared with “She’s at a crossroads in her life”.

③ Searching for sentences containing lexical items from both the source domain and the target domain

The tactics are the combination of the preceding methods. In order to search for sentences containing words of the source and target domain concepts, the prerequisites are that the corpus is well annotated for sentence boundaries, and exhaustive lists of vocabulary from both domains are available. However, to identify metaphors in this way has some shortcomings: it may be impossible to have exhaustive lists; this method can only locate expressions that manifest the known metaphor mappings, which may lead to a circular argumentation, like the aforementioned example “My career is on the rocks” in Gibbs (2017, p. 58).

④ Searching for metaphors based on ‘markers of metaphor’

The so-called ‘markers of metaphor’ are equal to metaphor flags or signals in MIPVU. They are words or phrases to signal the comparison or analogy explicitly, such as “like”, “as”, “as if”, and so on. It seems to be a promising and effective way to search for metaphorical expressions with these markers, although clearly it cannot reveal the existence of all metaphorical expressions in discourse.

To sum up, linguistic metaphors and conceptual metaphors are not mutually exclusive, and researchers have differentiated them by way of inspecting metaphors from two viewpoints (language and cognition). For linguistic metaphors and conceptual metaphors, we will identify and label them according to different procedures, viz. MIPVU (Steen et al., 2010) and the method in Stefanowitsch (2006).

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