

DOI: 10.12731/2218-7405-2013-8-10

MORBIAL METAPHOR IN UK MASS MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Purpose

To investigate the peculiarities of the metaphorical modeling of the UK educational system image.

Methodology

The classification of frames and their slots reflecting mental representations of the educational system is carried out by means of the cognitive analysis of the metaphorical word use in the journalistic discourse.

Results

It is the morbial metaphor which identifies various aspects of the educational system with frames of an organism, medicine, illness and an afflicted person.

Practical implications

This paper contributes to investigations of processes of human conceptualisation and categorisation of the entire world within the national English-speaking perception.

Keywords: metaphorical modeling; morbial metaphor; conceptualisation; frame; slot.

МОРБИАЛЬНАЯ МЕТАФОРА В ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИИ СИСТЕМЫ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В БРИТАНСКИХ СМИ

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Цель

Изучить особенности метафорического моделирования образа системы образования в Великобритании.

Метод или методология проведения работы

Посредством когнитивного анализа метафорических словоупотреблений, используемых в публицистическом дискурсе, производится классификация фреймов и составляющих их слотов, отражающих представление о системе образования.

Результаты

При помощи морбиальной метафоры различные аспекты системы образования отождествляются с вербальными единицами фреймов организма, лекарства, болезни и больного.

Область применения результатов

Исследование вносит вклад в изучение процессов концептуализации и категоризации окружающего мира человеком в отношении национального англоязычного сознания.

Ключевые слова: метафорическое моделирование; морбиальная метафора; концептуализация; фрейм; слот.

Metaphorical modeling investigation in the current cognitive linguistics is a way of national conscience reflection including political reality and social conditions of a state.

American investigators G. Lakoff and M. Johnson were the first who represented metaphorical nature of world conceptualisation by means of language

units in their book “Metaphors We Live By” [2]. The scientists found out that human reverberation of environment is presented in mentality by conceptual metaphors unconsciously and automatically.

Metaphorical modeling of the modern linguistic world-image frequently occurs and is rendered through mass media discourse. Nowadays mass media texts represent one of the most widespread forms of the current language. In particular, it concerns English media texts. The total volume of English mass media texts significantly exceeds the volume of media texts in other languages due to the range of political, economical and social-cultural reasons [3, 14].

Taking into account the role of English media in social reality conceptualisation, it is of urgent importance to consider metaphorical modeling peculiarities in British media texts by the example of educational system cognitive representation. Cognitive analysis of mass media texts makes it possible to examine widespread metaphorical models in UK educational system language representation and therefore distinguish peculiarities of UK educational system conceptual interpretation.

The principal of metaphorical modeling is concerned with representation of one phenomenon's nature in terms of another phenomenon's nature. Thus, the represented phenomenon is named as the source of the mapping, and the representing phenomenon is named as the target. For example, in a conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT is WAR *argument* is the source of metaphorical modeling and *war* is the target. The scheme by which the given metaphorical model is constructed exists in intellectual system owing to the conventional way of having an argument [4, 170-171]. An argument is described in terms of a war as it represents a similar opposition while its members attack, defend or give up as opponents of each other. A model of a complex educational system concept is constructed according to the same principal of schematisation.

The results of the cognitive analysis of English media texts disclose the morbid metaphor being a common way of encoding social problems. Thus, a

metaphorical model EDUCATION is MEDICINE is prevalent in British mass media texts.

It was determined that the morbid metaphor in educational system conception is represented by 4 basic frames: “Organism”, “Treatment”, “Illness” and “Invalid”. The examples of the discovered verbalised frames are given below.

The metaphorical model analysis of the frame “Organism” demonstrates that educational system aspects are described by means of the vocabulary used to define living organism’s conditions. Educational establishments are often identified with living organisms which are characterised by the level of their physical state. Abstract non-material educational system aspects also fall under the terms of an organism:

It's a very strong school academically ... (Moorhead J. “The Guardian”);

It's a very academically strong school and will give her a better chance of getting into a good university (Moorhead J. “The Guardian”);

Scotland has not lacked good ideas for reform, it says, but implementation of them has often been weak and slow. (MacKinnon S. “BBC”);

... competition has increased and countries with the weakest track records for educating its young people are likely to fall behind ... (MacKinnon S. “BBC”);

Calling for better education research, it says some reforms have been weak because they have been based on "informed hunches" (MacKinnon S. “BBC”).

The examples demonstrate interpretation of an educational process management as an organism by means of a semantic opposition *strong-weak*. Collins English Dictionary suggests the following definitions of the adjectives: **strong** – *having, showing, or able to exert great bodily or muscular power*; **weak** – *lacking in bodily strength or healthy vigor, as from age or sickness* [1]. The dictionary definitions confirm the correlation between the adjectives *strong*, *weak* and definitions of an organism which either possesses physical power and health or lacks it. The given examples of the media texts suggest an especially frequently used characteristics of *weak* educational system reformation acts (*implementation,*

reforms) and *weak* state education rating (*track record*). In the given examples an adjective *strong* serves as frequent characteristics of schools. In addition, the adjective is accompanied by a qualifying modifier *academically*, which points at the theoretical school evaluation. The adjectives *strong* and *weak* characterise object's physical condition, thereby a school is compared either with a *strong* or a *weak* organism.

A semantic opposition *awake* – *asleep* which characterises living organism's states is also represented in verbal units of a frame "Organism":

The kid who is usually asleep ("Miss, shall I wake up Jayden?" "NO!!! Leave him ALONE!") will choose this lesson to be enthusiastically awake and attempt to take over the class discussion with comments ... ". (Bailey A. "The Guardian").

As Collins English Dictionary suggests, **asleep** – *in or into a state of sleep*; **awake** – *waking, not sleeping* [1]. The definitions prove that the adjectives describe conditions peculiar to a living organism (sleep or awaking). The state of school children in the context of an educational process is classified according to the level of their activity by terms describing being drowsy or awake.

Another good example of the presented frame is the characteristics of educational processes by stages of organism's evolution:

Preparing for an exam is a bit like being pregnant, in that you're perceived as being in a delicate condition. (Middleton C. "The Telegraph").

Despite the usage of the direct comparison it determines rich educational system metaphorisation. According to the definition given in a dictionary, **pregnant** – *having a child or other offspring developing in the body; with child or young, as a woman or female mammal* [1]. Educational process is explained as a child-bearing on the basis of the similar cognitive constituents. Thus, a fetus is compared with knowledge which is concentrated in an educational object like in an organism, an exam is compared with a birth when a fetus / knowledge comes up. Thus, the educational process is compared with an organism able to give birth to something new.

The next significant frame distinguished is “Treatment”. The metaphorical model analysis of the frame demonstrates that educational process is determined in terms of medical treatment. The analysed examples show that various ways of education are identified with different aspects of treatment:

So a further dilution of a subject kept within a fixed time-frame was almost unavoidable. (Crace J. “The Guardian”);

We are getting our children through education by anaesthetizing them. (Robinson K. “RSA Edge Lecture”);

And interactive, multimedia online lectures make the old-style lectures look less effective. (Coughlan S. “BBC”);

I'm sure that there are teachers who are struggling with the normal requirements of the role, who aren't effective teachers, who really should not be teachers at all. (The Secret Teacher “The Guardian”);

It said research also suggests grouping by ability had a bad effect on children in the lowest groups. (Harrison A. “BBC”).

The excerpts show that *a subject* is compared with a mortar which is subjected to *a dilution* and injected in *a fixed time-frame*. The semantic structure of a lexeme *dilution* indicates the seme of a medical term. According to its definition the word can be used in a scientific domain and denote a dilution of a liquid in order to make it less concentrated: **dilution** – *the process of making a substance less concentrated by adding a solvent, such as water* [1]. General educational process is characterised as an operation with a usage of *anaesthetizing*. Lectures are defined by an adjective *effective* which denote positive result (**effective** – *producing the intended or expected result* [1]). Teachers, as the most frequently mentioned in media educational actors, are defined by lexemes with a root morpheme *effect* as well. The excerpt gives the notion of teachers who *aren't effective should not be teachers at all*. The utilitarian characteristics defines teachers as a staff that is effective or not, and this criterion is often used in the medical domain for treatment characterisation.

Moreover, any actions regulating educational process may have a good or a *bad effect* which means the characteristics of medical treatment.

Various processes regulating education as a system are also characterised by medical terms defining those processes as ways of treatment:

I'm clear that scrapping the satisfactory judgement and replacing it with 'requires improvement' is injecting a sense of urgency in both schools and local authorities," he said. (Harrison A. "BBC");

Sadly, too many reports like this have in the past treated schools like isolated 'islands of learning', drawing the false conclusion that more school autonomy is the panacea for all the challenges we face. (MacKinnon S. "BBC").

Changes in educational politics are described as *injecting* or *panacea* where two later are pure medical terms.

The frame "Illness" is mentioned in the cognitive representation of such educational aspects as educational management authorities and means of education itself that is evaluation. Such types of educational assessment as an exam, a test, a competitive selection are compared with illness:

The super-sensible, online "exams doctor", to be found on the website run by exams ombudsbody Ofqual. (Middleton C. "The Telegraph");

Christopher Middleton offers a plan to ease the pain of this testing time. (Middleton C. "The Telegraph");

It's a time of nervous tension all round, so how can the candidates minimise their stress levels while maximising their marks? (Middleton C. "The Telegraph").

The metaphorisation is embodied in such words and phrases as *doctor, to ease the pain, nervous tension, minimise stress*. Exams are identified with illness, testing is presented as a source of pain, competitive selection of students is compared to a nervous tension causing stress.

The general situation in the state educational system, reformation, managers at educational institutions are identified with illness as well:

... short-term legacy of the Academies Act ... supported by the supine Liberal Democrats and supposedly a cure-all for the nation's education ills – is distinctly mixed. (Millar F. “The Guardian”);

Unrealistic demands and constantly changing priorities are paralysing the teaching profession. (The Secret Teacher “The Guardian”);

Incompetent heads are causing teachers additional stress. (The Secret Teacher “The Guardian”).

The given examples demonstrate the metaphorical model EDUCATION is ILLNESS through the word-combination “*education ills*”; whereas aspects of educational system reformation (*unrealistic demands and constantly changing priorities*) are defined as *paralysing*; incompetent supervision is regarded as an illness *causing stress*.

The next frame represented can be called “Invalid”. The word *invalid* means a person who suffers from some illness. A model with a source domain “educational object” is rather frequently used:

... summer-born youngsters were ... more frequently diagnosed with special educational needs and more likely to be bullied. (Harrison A. “BBC”);

... pupils are suffering because schools and teachers are under pressure to perform well and meet standards and targets. (The Secret Teacher “The Guardian”);

Many of my students suffer from low aspiration. (“The Guardian”).

In the given excerpts the frequently mentioned identifications are lexemes with a root *suffer* which identify students as persons *suffering* from an illness. A target domain “invalid” in the meaning of a patient appears in the description of *diagnosed* students while their diagnosis is *special educational needs*.

Educational actors which may be represented by teachers, parents, educational employees can be identified by a verbal element *patient* representing target domain “invalid”, which also includes suffering an illness:

... parents were "doing their best" and were "knackered most of the time". (“BBC”);

We have so many priorities and so many different focus areas that we all have stress paralysis. (The Secret Teacher “The Guardian”);

Teachers will ... cry themselves to sleep or over lunch or even in front of pupils, vomit on the way to work, take anti-depressants, drink to excess, resign. (The Secret Teacher “The Guardian”);

Yet some are suffering in all of the ways described above, with no end in sight except on the day they leave or retire. (The Secret Teacher “The Guardian”);

I usually do this in the evenings when I'm knackered, before school or perhaps during a forced half hour slot on an inset day. (The Secret Teacher “The Guardian”);

ATL general secretary Dr Mary Bousted said: "Regrettably teachers and support staff are suffering the backlash from deteriorating standards of behaviour. (Sellgren K. “BBC”).

The examples show that within the frame “Invalid” the lexical-semantic characteristics of educational actors coincides with the lexical-semantic characteristics of educational objects: both educational actors and students are often characterised as *suffering* ones. Another frequently used modifier of parents and teachers is a word *knackered* which refers to a breakdown in the given context. Furthermore, teachers can suffer from such illnesses as *stress paralysis*, drowsy state (*cry themselves to sleep*), *vomit* and depression (*take anti-depressants*).

The distinguished frames undergone to analysis support the conclusion about the fact that the morbid metaphor is a frequently used phenomenon in the UK educational system conceptualisation. Metaphorical word usage makes a complex characterisation of educational system where all its aspects can be represented as an organism, an invalid, illnesses which affect an organism and a kind of treatment of such illnesses. To sum up, we should state that in the British world-image education system is regarded as an absurd structure which is a patient and an illness and a treatment at the same time, thus, it both does harm and tries to treat itself.

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