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The Analysis of Metaphorical Domain on English “Stab Verb” in Corpora

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Abstract

Metaphor as part of language is taking special place on Semantics studies which is unique and needs more logical thinking in interpretation. The objective of this research was to ascertain the kinds of metaphorical domains of English stab verb in corpora. The data of this research consist of American English and British English which were mainly taken from two corpora, Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and British National Corpus (BNC). The result of this research indicated that, there were source domain and target domain that were employed on the semantic construction of English Stab verb. Source domain ascertained from the semantic roles which lied on the construction of stab verb, they are Agent, Target and Manip, while target domain consists of twenty noun phrases they are: eyes, looks, words, voice, question, guilt/ remorse, sadness, anger, pain, memory, fear, panic, light/ flash, ray, dark, air, sound and directions. Most of these nouns were mapped as Manip or stabbing instrument while dark, air, and direction were mapped as the stabbing target.

Keywords: Metaphor, Construction, Domain, Semantic Role

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1. Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in human communication. The transmission and reception of thought and feeling arisen during the communication process needs language to endorse the effectiveness. According to Yassi (2016), language becomes a very effective medium to shape and to express thought and feelings of people during communication. Language becomes a very effective medium to shape and to express thought and feelings of people during communication. In making their communication effective, people sometimes use metaphor intention or unintentionally to achieve the effectiveness through language. In this respect, metaphor become a common feature in people communication (Azabdaftardi, 2015).

A metaphor is the way to understand an abstract concept of something in concrete one. It always delivers in every discourse of human as the speaker based on their conceptual system about knowledge and experience. Every speaker compares something similar with other word to figure out something in the same sense. In other word, metaphor seems to be represented as feature of communication by which ones perceive something in terms of another (Azabdaftari, 2015).

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Metaphor is a kind of expression that reflects a very meaningful expression which is unique and needs more logical thinking in interpretation. Metaphorical expressions very often involve words referring to physical entities and experiences. Yet, figures of speech such as metaphors are not intended to be understood literally, word-by-word (Forgács et al, 2015). This statement seems in line with Lakof and Johnson' theory who become the founder of metaphor study. Metaphors are often obtained in everyday life, which can be represented in the form of experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The metaphorical concepts which they provide include three things: (1) the idea (meaning) to sign something in the form of objects, (2) linguistic expression in the form of words as container, and (3) The way the speaker conveys the meaning figuratively.

Study about metaphor means study about language meaning. Studying the relationship between language and meaning is the main purpose of most language studies (Seyedvalilu & Ghafoori, 2016). Since metaphor becomes part of language, it does also have structure. Dealing with the relationship between the importance of language structure and its meaning, Dixon develops an approach namely Semantic approach to language grammar. It is one of the approach that studies grammar from the frame of semantics. According to him, in determining the grammatical properties of a sentence, verb is the most important element for his approach. As stated by him that clause has an internal structure, consisting of a predicate (which typically relates to a verb) and a number of arguments (Dixon, 2010).

Verb, according to him, can be divided into two, primary and secondary verb. Primary verb reflects an obvious sentence by themselves with the appropriate NP, while secondary verbs refer to those types of verbs which provide 'semantic modification of some other verbs. Either primary or secondary types are grouped into some very specific types which comprise into some particular verbs which has similar meaning in common. One of them is the Stab subtype which become the member of the Affect verb type. It refers "to a pointed or bladed manip penetrating below the surface of the Target" (Dixon, 2005). This theory reflects that the verbs can be comprised into three basic semantic roles, Agent, Manip, and Target which always filled by any concrete entities. This current study, however, will only concern with the stab verb especially which occur in metaphorical condition.

Some researchers had been conducted studies under the topic of metaphor. The studies that were conducted are concerned to study metaphor as the complex unit which lies on many particular contexts, such as news, emails, etc. To mention only a few, such as: Kazemian et al (2013), who conduct a study focusing Ideational Grammatical Metaphor in a corpus of 10 authentic scientific texts drawn from very influential magazines. Krisnawaty (2014), analyzed a cognitive view on metaphors found in Indonesian soccer news published in two Indonesian newspapers. Gao (2016), conducted a study which is aiming to comparatively analyze metaphors in English and Chinese economic news headlines, especially to find out the similarities and differences of conceptual metaphors between English and Chinese. Memary (2016), who investigating the frequency of grammatical metaphor (GM) use by native speakers of English in request emails compared to non-native speakers of English. No one of these studies which seeing the verb as the core topic in conducting metaphor study.

According to Lakof & Johnson (1980), the basic understanding of metaphor which states that metaphor can be generally understood via conceptual metaphor, according to him conceptual metaphors mean the domain of concept A (source) is the domain of

concept B (target). In this case, the semantic roles of English Stab verb are termed can serve as the source domain for other types of noun which considered involve in target domain to construct a metaphorical meaning.

By combining Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff – Johnson and Semantic Approach to English Grammar that proposed by Dixon, this study attempted to draw metaphorical mapping from the source to the target domain onto the English Stab verb construction. Therefore, this study arises to fill the gap by concerning with the metaphorical expressions that occurs with the English Stab verb by which the data mainly taken from two corpora, COCA and BNC. In regard to this case, the objective of this research is to ascertain the kinds of metaphorical domains of English stab verb in corpora.

2. Research Method

This research is a qualitative research that in collecting, analyzing and presenting the data will be done descriptively. In regard with the nature of this current research, the descriptive qualitative design matches the aims of this research, that is, to describe how the metaphorical construction of the stab verbs is characterized based on the data from corpus.

2.1. Data Collection

The data of this research is the English data that is primarily taken from COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American) and BNC (British National Corpus) which focused only to the metaphorical discourses from the stab verb. In collecting the data this current study employed several steps, they are: 1) The metaphorical discourses that containing English stab verb will be searched carefully through the searching bar of the COCA and BNC; 2) Those discourse will be looked carefully at the participants roles of the verb's member (Agent, Manip, and Target). In deciding whether or not the discourses are metaphor, Participants roles will be examined under some considerations, i.e. abstractness of the noun phrase and sharpness of the manip (pointed or bladed); 3) If the utterances employed such phrase, then data tabulation is used aiming to make easy the data analysis.

2.2. Data Analysis

The data analysis of the current research makes use the qualitative approach. The former is done through a content-based analysis aiming to find out the metaphorical context of English Stab verb by considering its semantic roles and its construction. To analyze the data, the researcher used some technique: firstly, the identified data from corpora is firstly put into the data tabulation. Secondly, the metaphorical discourses are then classified into a tabulated table comprising two aspects: the metaphorical domain and semantic construction. Metaphorical domain consists of source and target, while semantic construction consists of such aspects: Affect construction and semantic roles that comprised of Agent, Manip and Target. Thirdly, the presented data will be analyzed using Dixon's semantic principles. Furthermore, the researcher will determine the meaning of semantic roles of the stab verbs literally by referring to Cambridge and Oxford Dictionary, whereas the meaning of metaphorical discourse will be concluded based on the information gained.

3. Findings

There were some metaphorical domains of English *Stab* verb that had been investigated in this study. The domains were comprised into two basic domains, source domain and target domain. From the characteristic of the data and support from some founder theories, in this study, the researcher determined *stab* verb as the parent of the source domain where it was well organized in human being's experience. In this case *Stab* verb which determined had a number of participants (semantic roles) which taking part in the activity together constituting a meaningful clause. The semantic roles such Manip, Target and Agent that constituted in this investigated verb were well known and shared a common understanding by whom heard or uttered this verb. As Dixon stated that literally, *Stab* verb is the activity that refer to pointed or bladed Manip penetrating below the surface of the Target. It was obviously can be stated that *stab* verb was considered had three concrete semantic members, such Agent which literally filled by human being, Target commonly filled by the object that has a physical surface and Manip which literally filled by pointed or bladed instrument (mostly well known as a knife), were mapped metaphorically as the source domain. By combining Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff – Johnson and Semantic Approach to English Grammar that proposed by Dixon, this study attempted to draw metaphorical mapping from the source to the target domain onto the English *Stab* Verb construction. The findings in the following table presented how the target domains were applied to fill semantic role as like the source domains.

Table 1. English *Stab* verb and Its Metaphorical Domain

Data	Metaphorical Domain	
	Source Domain	Target Domain
(1a) Papa's eyes stab her between the shoulder blades. (COCA)	Manip	Eyes
(1b) His cool blue eyes stabbed Kent.		
(2a) Her sisters stabbed her with looks of jealousy. (COCA)	Manip	Looks
(3a) Her words stab at my heart like a thousand daggers.	Manip	Words
(3b) The words stab at something inside of him. (COCA)		
(3c) Dawn's words stabbed into her brain... (BNC)		
(4a) Keisha's voice stabbed me from behind. (COCA)	Manip	Voice
(5a) The engine sounds stabbed his stomach like spoiled whale meat. (COCA)	Manip	Sound
(6a) My daughter's question stabbed me more painfully. (COCA)	Manip	Question
(7a) Guilt stabbed at Elam.		Guilt
(7b) A new sort of guilt stabbed Oliver. (COCA)		
(7c) Remorse stabbed my heart. (COCA)		
(8a) Sadness stabbed through Kate. (COCA)	Manip	Sadness
(9a) Anger stabbed up through the hangover, (BNC)	Manip	Anger

(10a) Pain stabbed into their ears, (BNC)	Manip	Pain
(10b) Pain stabbed at her chest, (BNC)		
(10c) Hot pain stabbed across my sacrum. (COCA)		
(10d) Sharp pains stabbed her side, (COCA)		
10e) Shooting pains stabbed her hands, (COCA)		
(11a) I stab fear in their hearts. (COCA)	Manip	Fear
(12a) Panic stabbed through her. (COCA)	Manip	Panic
(13a) The light stabbed at his eyes, (COCA)	Manip	Light/Flash
(13b) flash stabbed through his eyelids (COCA)		
(14a) The rays of the sun stabbed my tired head. (COCA)	Manip	Rays
(15a) she stabbed the dark with her chin (COCA)	Target	Dark
(16a) she stabbed the air. (COCA)	Target	Air
(16b) His thumb stabbed the air in the direction of Elka's house. (COCA)		
(17a) I stabbed my arm in the direction of his room...(COCA)	Target	Direction
17b) I stabbed my finger in the direction of the brother-in-law. (COCA)		
(17c) I stabbed a thumb in Ethel's direction. (COCA)		

Source: COCA and BNC accessed 2017 from: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>,

Based on the Table 1, the data is considered as metaphor by which the aspects that being metaphoric is determined from the comparison between the noun phrase which filled by any considered noun phrase (eyes, looks, words, voice, question, guilt/ remorse, sadness, anger, pain, memory, fear, panic, light/ flash, ray, dark, air, sound directions) as the target domain and the stab verb as the source. Most of these nouns were mapped as Manip or stabbing instrument as shown in the data (1a), (1b), (2a), (3a), (3b), (3c), (4a), (5a), (6a), (7a), (7b), (7c), (8a), (10a), (10b), (10c), (10d), 10e), (11a), (12a), (13a), (13b) and (14a) while dark, air, and direction like shown in the data (15a), (16a), (16b), (17a), (17b), and (17c) were mapped as the stabbing target.

4. Discussion

The findings show that how the target domains were applied to fill semantic role like the source domain. Target domain is considered by the comparison between the stab verb and its inappropriate noun employed in metaphorical expression. The findings present some noun which associated with the *stab* verb in corpora they are: *eyes, looks, words, voice, question, guilt/ remorse, sadness, anger, pain, memory, fear, panic, light/ flash, ray, dark, air, sound and directions*. Most of these nouns are mapped as the stabbing instrument while *dark, air, and direction* are mapped as the stabbing target. More interestingly, there is no noun from the target domain classified as *the stabbing agent*. This claim was based on three reasons:

First, there is no appropriate instrument for the target noun which take role like human in doing stabbing activity. Since *stab verb* requires human or higher animate that can manipulate a pointed or sharp instrument, target domain has no capacity to act like human or in other word it is difficult to find logical semantic relation between the considered noun and human as the agent of the stab verb. Take for example in the data (7a) "*Guilt stabbed at Elam.*" which took the noun *guilt* to be used metaphorically. If the *guilt* is stated as the agent for the stabbing activity therefore it could be impossible to find

the appropriate instrument. To answer this notion let's consider "knife" as instrument such in the sentence **Guilt stabbed at Elam with knife*. If we think that *Guilt* can hold a knife would be logically unaccepted because *guilt* is kind of abstract noun which shaped unobvious and moreover it is kind of human's feeling which has no hand moreover physical body to manipulate a knife. Based on this idea, therefore, it is wisely to determine *Guilt* as Manip rather than the Agent.

Second, the determination of target domain as Manip in stab verb construction especially in A-slot may rise a question that if we consider *Guilt* as Manip in the data (7a) so what is the appropriate agent of the data? *Guilt* as a kind of human's feeling cannot be manipulated but it does can be stimulated. However, the goal of the activity cannot be reached if it doesn't have the agent to initiate the activity. So, for the data (7a) The researcher claims that the appropriate agent in this data is the "event" which occur somewhere in the context of the considered sentence. Besides that, the *agent* could also be hovering somewhere in the sentence as possessor within the data (1a) "Papa's eyes stab her between the shoulder blades." In this case, the phrase "papa's eyes" which mapped in A-slot is comprised into two morphemes "papa" as the possessor and "eyes" as the Manip to be possessed therefor, "papa" is considered to be the appropriate agent who initiate this activity. The same pattern could also be identified in the data (1b), (3a), (3c), (4a), (5a), (6a), and (14a).

Third, to promote noun in metaphorical condition as the agent in stabbing activity seems to be compulsion. Because the *stab* verb is indicated as the activity which is not only done by mankind or higher animate. In contrary, when noun (target domain) is constructed with the activity or verbs which relate to the five senses, such the verb like *see, eat, feel, taste, etc.* could be possible to be promoted as the *agent*, because only human or higher animate who can act those activities, such for instance like the sentence *the dark eats my room*. In this sentence *Dark* can be promoted as the agent. The application of *Dark* in the *eat* verb shares figurative meaning as Polysemy. In this way *Dark* is deemed has potential to be human-like who performs eating activity.

Focusing on the determination of noun types in the target domain, the relevant types of conceptual metaphor theory that considered to be classified in the research data is ontological metaphor, "...ontological metaphors, that is, ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In this case, the entity which is referred in this theory is a concrete noun. The semantic roles of the stab verb are considered as entities they are *agent* which is filled by human who initiate the activity, *target* as the concrete entity which has physical surface, and *manip* as the stabbing instrument. Further, they also define that, metaphor as "*understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another*" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The mapping of the target domain into the semantic role of the *stab* verb seems to fit this definition. Such for instance, in the data (8a) "Sadness stabbed through Kate", which sadness considered as the entity that has no physical pattern employed as the pointed instrument. From this perspective "sadness" is one example of what Lakoff and Johnson call *objectification* metaphors: it represents states or feeling as objects, things that can be hold and manipulated to reach certain affect from the activity.

5. Conclusion

This study has discussed issues of semantic construction of English Stab verb and

its relation to the conceptual metaphor. It has attempted to show that how the syntactical structure may determine the role of phrase that classified as target domain employed in stab verb construction. In this case stab verb which literally has three concrete semantic roles, such Agent, Target and Manip offer the preferred source domain for the target domain. In relation to the conceptual metaphor theory, the relevant types that considered to be classified in the research data is ontological metaphor, where, the semantic roles rely on the stab verb are considered as the entities. Many other issues concerning the realization of metaphors at the grammatical level still need to be further considered with the use of different types of linguistic data. In this case, the semantic theory proposed by Dixon might be employed in which this approach is considered can provide a new way of addressing the issue of metaphor. Therefore, the researcher suggests for other researcher who aim to conduct a study by taking the topic of semantic approach may try to examine this theory to the other types of verbs especially which occur as metaphor.

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