



Improving Students' Metaphor Interpretation: A Conceptual Metaphor Approach to Interpret Metaphors in the Song *Titanium* (2011)

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Abstract

This research is conducted to measure how participants' understanding to a source domain of metaphor will help them to better interpret metaphor in "Titanium" song by using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). The CMT approach is introduced by explicitly explain the characteristic of source domain of metaphor to participants. The participants of this research are 10 students of semester V of Faculty of Letters – University of Balikpapan, all native Indonesian speakers. This research is qualitative research, and uses the participants' written answer as data source. Based on the data analysis, it is concluded that by understanding the source domain of metaphor, participants have a better and improved understanding in interpreting metaphor. In other words, the participants' comprehension to the intended message of metaphor is improved.

Keywords: metaphor interpretation, conceptual metaphor, source domain

Introduction

Different from traditional view of metaphor that considers metaphor as merely poetic device, the last two decades since the emergence of cognitive linguistics, metaphor has been treated as an integral part of everyday utterance, since the cognitive linguists view linguistics expression (word to sentence) is the surface realization of cognitive level, the utterance produced is the reflection of how speaker conceptualized world around them including in metaphor, where from

cognitive linguistic perspective, it is produced in mental domain, not in language level domain.

Over the past few years after the emergence of conceptual metaphor theory, the study on metaphor has gone through to cross-field of study, as described by Ortony (1993) in *Metaphor and Thought* he agreed that the study of metaphor is important for two basic reasons. First, because, language speakers are using metaphors all the time whether they are conscious or not, Second, the study on metaphor are now put a greater emphasis on situating metaphor studies within a comprehensive models of human cognition, communication, and culture.

As metaphorical expressions are shown to be more difficult than ordinary lexical expressions, it is the researcher's intention to introduce how conceptual metaphor theory can help students to better understand the metaphor. By knowing the source domain of metaphor and understand the target domain, it is expected that the students will use this knowledge to have an improved way in interpreting metaphor.

Researcher wants to identify how students' interpretation of metaphor is improved by introducing the conceptual metaphor theory. The result of this research is expected to be useful not only for students to have a better strategy to interpret metaphor, but also for teacher to have a reference in teaching metaphor and other idiomatic expressions.

Literature Review

Metaphor

Metaphor has become an object of interest for philosophers who for centuries consider metaphor as part of "rhetoric", a subject of literary study concerned with figurative language. It is therefore, in any study of metaphor, any researcher should look back and must consider what metaphor is from the works of Aristotle as cited by Ortony (1993:3) acknowledges that:

"He (Aristotle) believed metaphors to be implicit comparisons, based on the principles of analogy, a view that translates into what, in modern terms, is generally called the comparison theory of metaphor, as to their use, he believed that it was primarily ornamental"

Murray & Moon (2005:8) further explain other terms used in traditional approach to metaphor, which is vehicle, topic, and grounds. The ex-ample below as provided by Murray & Moon (2005):

Mountain

- context : *Be prepared for a mountain of paper work*
- metaphor/vehicle : *mountain*
- meaning/topic : *a large amount*
- connection/grounds : *ideas of size, being immovable and difficult to deal with*

Since the emergence of the cognitive linguistics, the study of metaphor from cognitive aspects has then developed, As Ortony (1993) refers this new approach as “constructivist” which view metaphor important not only in language but also in thought and view metaphor as a creativity in language. Since early 1980s, interdisciplinary study of metaphor has repositioned the study of metaphor in related to human thought, it was not merely viewed as only poetic or politician device as literary and rhetoric function, as Gibbs (2010) affirms that study of metaphor is reoriented since the emergence of cognitive linguistic research in early 1980 and brings awareness on the possibility of the systematic relationship between metaphorical language and metaphorical patterns”

The view that human thought affects the metaphorical thinking either in production and interpretation of metaphor has given birth to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which was first time advocated by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson on his publication *Metaphor We Live By* (1980).

Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (further written as CMT) is a cognitive approach to metaphor and asserts the view of that metaphorical expression is a surface realization of conceptual level.

This theory of metaphor is first proposed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980:1) who explicitly confirm their rejection of the traditional view of metaphor and state “that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action.”

The main idea of this theory of metaphor is that the metaphorical expression that is produced by language users is triggered by underlying conceptual level in thought, and the structural mapping from source domain to target domain is systematically occurs in cognitive level.

Lakoff, in the CMT using the cues along the line of “TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN”, suggests new meanings are achieved through a mapping from the concrete source domain to the abstract target domain in the conceptual system – and conventionally written in capital letters. According to Lakoff (1980), metaphor is the system of mapping the target domain onto source domain, while the lexical unit used in an utterance or text is the metaphorical expressions.

Lakoff (1992) provide an example of conceptual metaphor and how it is expressed in metaphorical linguistics expressions. On the metaphorical expressions about love relationship, when a person speaks metaphorically to his/her partner: *We can't turn back now, we're at a crossroads, we may have to go our separate ways, the relationship isn't going anywhere*, all of those metaphorical expressions show that even the expressions are about love relationship but conceptual domain that underlying the metaphorical expressions

is of journey. Thus, the speaker conceptualizes love in terms of journey. The mapping of those metaphorical expressions above is LOVE is JOURNEY

Further elaboration of the target domain and source domain mapping of metaphor is explained by Kovecses (2010) who states that there are two domains that participate in conceptual metaphor. First, the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain, which is called source domain, and the second, the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain.

Alan Cruse (2006) affirms that the central characteristic of Lakoff & Johnson's theory of metaphor is that the metaphor is not a property of individual linguistic expressions and their meanings, but of whole conceptual domains. In principle, any concept from the source domain – the domain supporting the literal meaning of the expression – can be used to describe a concept in the target domain – the domain the sentence is actually about

In this research, Titanium (Ti) acts as source domain with the mapping TARGET-DOMAIN is SOURCE DOMAIN (HUMAN IS TITANIUM), where the characteristic of the source domain is mapped onto the target domain. Therefore, to fully understand the metaphor of Titanium (Ti), one must understand the characteristic of it.

Titanium (Ti)

To differentiate Titanium (Ti) as substance and the song of Titanium, The researcher will use "Titanium (Ti)" to represent Titanium as chemical substance. Titanium (Ti) metal is used as an alloying agent with metals including aluminum, iron. Alloys of titanium (Ti) are mainly used in aerospace, aircraft and engines where strong, lightweight, temperature-resistant materials are needed. As a result of its resistance to seawater, titanium (Ti) is used for hulls of ships, propeller shafts and other structures exposed to the sea and due to their numerous unique properties, are also used in medical, chemical, and military applications, as well as in sporting goods. Titanium (Ti) was discovered in 1791, by Reverend William Gregor, the name is derived from the Titans, the sons of the Earth goddess of Greek mythology

Titanium (Ti) properties are:

atomic symbol : Ti,
atomic number : 22,
element category: transition metal,
density : 4.506/cm³,
melting point : 3034 °F (1668 °C),
boiling point : 5949 °F (3287 °C),
atomic weight : 47.87,

state : solid,
colour : silvery white

The “Titanium” song.

Titanium Song (All rights belong to David Guetta, Sia, Virgin Records and Capitol Records), was released in December 9, 2011, the lyric is written by Sia, while the composers are David Guetta, Afrojack and Giorgio Tuinfort. In this song, there are few metaphorical expressions, such as:

I'm criticized but all your bullets ricochet, I'm bulletproof, You shoot me down but I won't fall, I am titanium.

Methodology

This research is qualitative research, 10 students are randomly chosen as participant, all of them from semester V, Faculty of Letters, University of Balikpapan. They are asked to complete two questions twice, first before researcher explains and gives article about Titanium. Second, after researcher explains and gives article about Titanium. Researcher then analyzes and compares participants answer before and after the explanation about Titanium (Ti). The Data analysis of this research is based on Miles & Huberman (1994) three strategies of data analysis: (1) data reduction, (2) data display and (3) drawing and verifying the conclusion

Result & Discussion

Step I: Participant are asked to answer the questions:

Q1: What do you know about Titanium (Ti) as chemical element/metal and its strength?

Q2: What is your interpretation to metaphors in the song “Titanium”?

Step II: Researcher spends 20 minutes to discuss the metallic substance Titanium (Ti) based on the article that also distributed to the participants.

Step III: Participants are asked to answer the same questions as in step I.

On step I, before researcher explains and distributes the article on Titanium (Ti), participants' interpretation to the metaphor in “Titanium” song is helped by the surrounding context, which is the lyrics before and after the words “I'm Titanium”, Some similar response from participant doesn't really reflect a comprehensive interpretation of metaphor, for example, the dominant answer to the Q2 do not depicts how emotionally strength, how powerful, and how invincible the subject is when referring the human as titanium (Ti). This is parallel with their lack of knowledge about Titanium (Ti) as chemical substance or metal. The majority of the participants' response only know Titanium (Ti) as metal and do not exactly describe how strong it is, the use of general words “strong” are common

among participants. The same also occurs in participant's response in Q2, where the response spread from *no idea, the subject is may be strong*, and to *he/she is a metal* where those responses do not reflect the correct interpretation of the metaphor the song Titanium.

After the explanation from the researcher and after participants read article about titanium (Ti) in step II, their interpretation to metaphors in "Titanium" song is significantly improved. Some of the answers that best described the improvement can be seen from participants' response both in Q1 and in Q2, where the participants 's response to Q1 are improved and are able to explain the characteristics of Titanium (Ti), such as, high-resistant to sea water and temperature, very strong but light-weight. Their understanding of these characteristic then help the participant to produce an improved response to Q2 such as:

He / She is very strong and will not be able to be broken emotionally, the human with characteristic not easy to be beaten and emotionally strong, and he/she can stand still however people try to hurt him.

Those responses show how participants' knowledge of the source domain Titanium (Ti) can be used to describe the target domain human by taking the source domain characteristics and apply them to the target domain.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, researcher concludes that the participants' interpretations of metaphor are significantly improved after the participants understand the source domain of metaphor, in this context Titanium (Ti). The used of more specific characteristic of source domain which is mapped to target domain (human), suggests that their conceptual thought play an important role in interpreting the metaphors in "Titanium" song. The way the participants use a more specific words to describe subject or human is significantly vary compare to their description before gaining knowledge about source domain. It is worth noted then, that an understanding and comprehension to the concept and characteristics of source domain will help participant to interpret and comprehend metaphor better and it is a good strategy in teaching metaphor to students.

Interpreting the intended meaning of metaphor is challenging for language learner to cope with; therefore, teacher/lecturer should introduce a better way for them to be able to deal with this issue. Conceptual metaphor approach is one excellent way for this, by implicitly and/or explicitly explains the source domain of metaphorical expressions and highlighting its characteristics that is cognitively transferred to the target domain. This research in particular deals with only a single source domain of metaphor, i.e Titanium; therefore, further research should be conducted to another source domain especially to a culturally dependent source domain.

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Appendix

Titanium – Song Lyric

(David Guetta feat. Sia) - (All rights by Virgin Records and Capitol Records)

[Sia:]

You shout it out,
But I can't hear a word you say
I'm talking loud, not saying much
I'm criticized but all your bullets ricochet
Shoot me down, but I get up

I'm bulletproof, nothing to lose
Fire away, fire away
Ricochet, you take your aim
Fire away, fire away
You shoot me down but I won't fall
I am titanium
You shoot me down but I won't fall
I am titanium

Cut me down
But it's you who'll have further to fall
Ghost town and haunted love
Raise your voice, sticks and stones may
break my bones
I'm talking loud not saying much

I'm bulletproof, nothing to lose
Fire away, fire away
Ricochet, you take your aim
Fire away, fire away
You shoot me down but I won't fall
I am titanium
You shoot me down but I won't fall
I am titanium
I am titanium
I am titanium

Stone-heart, machine gun
Firing at the ones who run
Stone heart loves bulletproof glass

You shoot me down but I won't fall
I am titanium
You shoot me down but I won't fall
I am titanium
You shoot me down but I won't fall
I am titanium
You shoot me down but I won't fall
I am titanium
I am titanium