

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 200 (2015) 574 – 578

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

THE XXVI ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CONFERENCE, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, 27–30 October 2015

Metaphors for Language and Speech in Russian and Chinese: a Comparative Study

Dai Yingli^a, Zoya I. Rezanova^b, Konstantin S. Shilyaev^{b,*}^a*Tsinghua University, Haidian, 双清路 30 号, Beijing, P.R. China*^b*Tomsk State University, 36, Lenin Ave., Tomsk, 634050, Russia*

Abstract

The study focuses on the ways of modeling the figurative component of the concept of “language” in Russian and Chinese. The concept is represented in lexical metaphorical nominations of speech, talking and the talking person. Basic metaphorical models are defined, as well as the degree of their commonness between the two languages. The ways of specific figurative modeling of formal and content aspects of speech are outlined.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of National Research Tomsk State University.

Keywords: metaphor; concept of language; Chinese culture; Russian culture; linguistic worldview

1. Introduction

The language faculty, being one of the principal characteristics of a human being, is also a means of his/her social, cultural and ethnic identification. This explains the interest that the concept of “language” has provoked among linguists. For example, in the field of Russian language studies two important collections of works have been edited in recent years: “Yazyk o yazyke” (2000) and “Kartiny russkogo mira: obrazy yazyka v diskursakh i tekstakh” (2009). These works represent the results of exploration in the various aspects of linguistic interpretation and formalization of conceptual notions in the language system that manifest themselves in different functional variants and styles of the Russian language. A number of works interpret these problems within the framework of conceptual

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +7-983-237-8234; fax: +7-3822-53-4899.

E-mail address: shilyaev@gmail.com

and semasiological studies (N. N. Boldyrev, Yu. N. Karaulov, Z. D. Popova, I. A. Sternin, G. N. Sklyarevskaya, I. B. Levontina).

The research devoted to the concept of “language” has revealed the important role of metaphorical modeling in the general system of linguistic interpretation. This aspect has been the focus of a number of studies (N. A. Mishankina 1998 in the Russian language, D. Yu. Polinichenko – in the English language). However, we do not know of any studies of linguistic representation of the concept of “language” in Chinese. No comparative analysis of the way this concept is manifested in the language worldviews of various peoples has been undertaken yet. Such an analysis would allow to resolve the theoretical problem of the interrelation between the universal and ethnical components in the modeling of key cultural concepts.

In the present article, the authors’ aim is to characterize the interrelation between the universal and the ethnical and the ways of its cognitive modeling. We do it by modeling the concept of “language” in the Russian and Chinese linguistic worldviews.

2. Material

The material of the study is the lexemes that contain the semes “language”, “speech”, “talking” in their literal or metaphorical sense and possess the property of semantic dualism.

The material was collected by applying the method of complete sampling to dictionaries of the Russian and the Chinese language: *Slovar' russkogo yazyka* (1999); *Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo yazyka, 1950-1965*; *Sovremennyy tolkovyy slovar' kitayskogo yazyka* (2005). The conclusions that were reached are based on the analysis of more than 1000 lexical units in Russian and Chinese.

We take into account the fact that all elements of the semantic structure of metaphor possess modeling potential. The resulting image (metaphorical meaning proper), reference image (direct nominative meaning which is the source of the metaphorical image) and the aspect that relates the source meaning and the resulting meaning. In the analysis we included the lexemes that have the semantics of a person’s verbal expression. This semantics can have the status of direct nominative meaning (Russian: *sheptat'*: 1. whisper → 2. make soft, murmuring sounds (*Shepchut list'ya*, leaves are whispering); Chinese: *kōnghǎn* 1. cry in vain → 2. only talk without doing anything). Alternatively, the semantics of the lexeme may have metaphorical meaning (Russian: *raskarkatsya* 1. start to croak loudly → 2. start to talk excessively, at length, foretelling unpleasant things to come (disappr.); Chinese: *zhāngzǔi* 1. open one’s mouth in preparation to speak → address sb with a request).

The ability of a linguistic unit to serve as the basis for metaphorical nomination of other linguistic units that belong to other semantic spheres is based, first and foremost, on the figurative understanding of this unit. Its semantics form the symbol of the metaphor, according to G. Sklyarevskaya (1993), the basis of the metaphorical image. Such an approach has proved its effectiveness in a number of studies (Mishankina, 2002, Rezanova, 2003).

3. Method

The present study is based on the theories and methods of cognitive linguistics. The main methodological point is the principle of combining the techniques of structural semantic analysis (componential and distributive analysis) and the techniques of cognitive modeling. The latter include the description of metaphorical models and subsequent reconstruction of the cognitive model of a linguistic worldview. Additionally, in every stage of the study we applied the technique of comparing the linguistic structures of the languages studied.

4. Discussion

The analysis showed that metaphorical lexical and derivational systems of languages that have different structure present common principles of organizing the figurative component of the concept of “language”. These principles are as follows.

The figurative component of the concept is structured when the corresponding cognitive domain functions as a source or as a target of metaphorical mapping. In Russian linguistics the following semantic classes are distinguished, according to the way they characterize speech: 1) its external expression; 2) its content, directed at a)

the object, b) at the expression of the speaker's state, c) at influencing the listener; 3) its communicative aspect; 4) the type of speech contact (Vasil'ev, 1981: 6-33).

In the modeling processes both in the position of source domain and target domain, speech is perceived and figuratively named as a certain action, process or a dynamic situation. In the perception of speech its two-way essence is of extreme importance: it is both substance and form.

4.1. Metaphoric modeling of speech, the concept of "language" as target

The analysis of metaphorical nominations of speech in the Russian and Chinese language showed the importance of five source domains used in metaphorical modeling of speech:

- 1) dynamic situations of sounding: a) of animals (*zhuzhzhhat'* – produce a monotone and raspy sound by wings in flight (of insects) → repeat sth annoyingly; *gāgā* – onomatopoeic. croaking, croak → of a man talking with a strange voice or talking rapidly or a lot), *jī* – sound made by insects → *jinong* – whisper to each other, gossip; as well as material objects: *dūdū* – fife, hoot, signal (e.g. of an automobile) → *dūnang* – mutter;
- 2) actions, processes, states not related to sound: *raskryvat'* – open doors, shutters, lids (of a room or a container) → explain by revealing the hidden meaning; *vystupat'* – march forward from somewhere separating oneself from sth, sb → communicate sth by publicly voicing one's opinion, thoughts, judgements or openly expressing one's attitude to sb, sth; *chén* – arrange, set up → expound, inform; *pīlù* – open, unseal, cut open, *tòulù* – be discovered → disclose, tell, state; *hépántuōchū* – lay out everything, even the dishes → tell without concealing anything, without reservations; *izlivat'* – pour out, spill → tell, express, display (feelings, thoughts, emotions); *màn* – flood, overflow, spill → talk in a relaxed, free manner; *xiè* – pour out (liquid); let out (gas) → disclose.

In the languages analyzed, the system of metaphorical nominations gives a figurative interpretation of the following:

- 1) Speech form (phonation, tempo, timbre): *barabanit'* – hit a drum, play the drums; knock in an abrupt and rapid manner → speak or read in a quick and expressionless way; *gremet'* – make loud, thundering sounds → speak loudly and excitedly, chiding or blaming sb or sth; *treschat'* – crackle → talk without stopping, chatter; *háo* – jackal's or wolf's howl → speak loudly, rudely, impolitely; *guāguā* – onomatopoeia for duck's quack or frog's croak → speak loudly and without stopping.
- 2) Speech content: *bichevat'* – lash, whip → criticize harshly, severely, mercilessly (*bichevat' nedostatki* – criticize faults); *uyazvlyat'* – wound → insult, cause pain; *pilit'* – saw various materials (wood, metal) → exasperate, vex sb with continuous reproofs, fault-finding, insults; reprobate, reproach for sth; *chuōchuān* – pierce, stab → expose; *pēng* – click, flap (e.g. with a carpenter's line); *jī* – hit, strike; attack, assault → *pēngjī* – subject to harsh criticism, denounce, reproach; *hánxuèpēnrén*, *hánxièpēnrén* – spray people with blood → drag sb through the mud, slander.
- 3) The place of a speech act in the structure of communication: *bakhat'* (*bakhnut'*) – make a loud low sound (usually of cannons, mortars) → unexpectedly say sth inappropriate, unnecessary; *gudet'* – make a prolonged monotonous sound → talk (of a multitude of people talking simultaneously), make noise; *fēngyánfēngyǔ* – spread unfounded rumors, talk behind one's back.

These source domains display varying activity when modeling different aspects of speech in the languages compared.

For instance, in Russian the timbre characteristic of metaphorical names of speech can be united with the characteristic of the way of speaking or behaving while speaking, e.g. *kudakhtat'* – make sounds similar to "kudakh-takh-takh" (usually of chicken) → speak hurriedly. In Chinese the quality of loudness can be united with the characteristic of the way of speaking: *wāwā*, *guāguā* – onomatopoeia for duck's quack or frog's croak → speak loudly and continuously.

The content aspect of human speech is metaphorically characterized both in Russian and Chinese. However, in

Russian this model is more productive: *chirikat'* – make a chirping sound (of birds) → talk or write with ease about sth shallow and of little importance; *laiat'* (*prolaiat'*) – (of a dog, fox and some other animals) make typical loud, acute and abrupt sounds → scold, reproach sb; *rykat'* – roar → speak rudely and unkindly; *fyrkat'* (*fyrknut'*) – noisily let out air from the nostrils → be angry, grumble, expressing displeasure with sth; *skulit'* – whine, howl plaintively (of a dog, fox, jackal) *Popav v kapkan, lisitsa skulila ot boli.* (The trapped fox whined in pain). → annoy sb with complaints; complain, express displeasure. *Ne skuli, kazhdyi sam dolzhen reshat' svoi problemy* (Don't whine, everyone has to solve their problems on their own); *karkat'* – make acute, guttural sounds resembling “karkar” (of crow's, raven's and some other birds' cry). *Vorona karknula tri raza* (The crow croaked three times). → foretell sth negative (an unfavorable outcome of sth, bad luck or misfortune). *Dovol'no tebe karkat'!* (Enough of your ill prophecies!). In Chinese there are isolated instances of units created within this submodel: *háó* – jackal's or wolf's howl → talk loudly, rudely, impolitely.

4.2. Metaphoric modeling on the basis of the source domain “language”

In the system of metaphorical mappings both the content aspect and the formal aspect of speech gain importance, as well as the moments of speech contact and interaction. At the same time, when different conceptual spheres are interpreted metaphorically, different aspects of communicative behavior turn out to be more relevant and significant.

The dynamic situation of communicative interaction is a complex mental and physical act. As the analysis shows, this type of semantics in the languages that we analyzed is often created in the process of reinterpretation of actions that take place in a physical environment. Material traits, actions, processes which affect the physical nature of a person stimulate the associations for reinterpreting the processes that have a more complex, not only physical, but also mental, psychic nature. After it is created, this semantics is further involved into the processes of metaphorical interaction. It becomes the source domain for interpretation of phenomena that belongs to psychological, mental and social spheres.

The analysis of figurative meanings created on the basis of metaphorical reinterpretation of speech is also a means of bringing forth the content aspects of the figurative component of the concept of “language”. In the course of this analysis the meanings that are basis of figurative likening are revealed.

Nominations of speech as the source domain are involved in the processes of metaphorical interpretation. These are dynamic situations of sounding that include

- 1) the sounds made by animals and lifeless objects: *taratorit'* – speak hurriedly → make sharp, abrupt sounds, cries (of birds, insects); *bormotat'* – mumble → make soft muffled sounds (usually of birds); *vorchat'* – of human: to grumble angrily, expressing displeasure → make short low sounds (of animals, objects); *klikat'* – call, summon loudly → (of certain birds) cry loudly; *wǎnzhuǎn* – beat around the bush, manoeuvre, adjust oneself to the circumstances → harmonic, florid (of a melody, voices, music or birds);
- 2) actions, processes and states not related to sounds. Among these a number of groups are distinguished.

The first group is related to behavior: *myamlit'* – talk in a slow, indistinct and lifeless way → act slowly, indecisively; *dígu* – whisper, talk behind one's back → be undecided, doubt, suspect; *jíyǎnlisè* – rapid speech and angry look → to lose one's temper, become furious; *kōnghǎn* – shout in vain → only talk without doing anything; *chǎojià* – exchange angry words, quarrel → fight.

The second group includes social processes: *golos* – voice, a totality of sounds that appear due to the vibration of the vocal cords → the right to voice one's opinion related to social, governmental issues; this opinion proper; *nashumet'* – cause a large amount of noise by talking much → cause gossip, talk, attract universal attention; *chéngrèn* – admit sth (e.g. error) while speaking → recognize (e.g. a new state); *hōngchuán* – talk noisily → spread widely; *chūkǒu* – leave one's mouth (of words), say (a word), pronounce → export.

5. Conclusion

The metaphorical fragments of linguistic worldviews that were discovered in the present study are *variants of linguistic actualization of a common cognitive model of speech perception, talk and language* in the linguistic

consciousness of those who speak Russian or Chinese. The following factors affect the figurative perception of the meanings of “language, speech, talk”: acoustic characteristics of speech, content aspects of talk, the place of a speech act in the communicative system, the fact that the speech act is embedded in situations of physical, social or mental interactions.

The variability in the structuring of the figurative component of the concept of “language” consists in a) the degree of productivity of the metaphorical models; b) the emphasis on heterogeneous features when metaphorically interpreting homogeneous characteristics, such as form (sound) features, speech content, the place of speech; c) the existence of gaps on the level of single metaphorical models or certain metaphorical nominations in the materials analyzed.

Acknowledgments

This research, carried out in 2015-2016, was supported by “The Tomsk State University Academic D.I. Mendeleev Fund Program” grant № 8.1.37.2015.

References

- Kartiny russkogo mira: obrazy yazyka v diskursakh i tekstakh.* (2009). [Impressions of the Russian World: the images of language in text and discourse]. Tomsk.
- Mishankina, N. A. (1998). Metaforicheskoe osmyslenie sfery neodushchennogo: obrazy zvuchaniya [Metaphorical interpretation of the domain of the inanimate: the images of sound] In *Aktual'nye problemy derivatologii, motivologii, leksikografii* (pp. 176 – 179). Tomsk.
- Polinichenko, D. Yu. (2004). *Estestvennyy yazyk kak lingvokul'turnyy semioticheskiy kontsept: Na materiale russkogo i angliyskogo yazykov* [The natural language as a linguistic and cultural semiotic concept in Russian and English]. Volgograd.
- Rezanova, Z. I., Galimova D., Kobernik L. N., & Nadeina L. V. (2014). *Kartiny russkogo mira: metaforicheskie obrazy traditsionnoy kul'tury* [Impressions of the Russian World: metaphoric images of traditional culture]. Moskva: LENAND.
- Romashko, S. A. (1991). «Yazyk»: struktura kontsepta i vozmozhnosti razvertyvaniya lingvisticheskikh kontseptsiy [“Language”: the structure of the concept and the resources of deploying linguistic conceptions]. In *Logicheskiy analiz yazyka. Kul'turnye kontsepty* (pp. 161 – 163). Moskva: Nauka.
- Sklyarevskaya, G. N. (1993). *Metafora v sisteme yazyka* [Metaphor in the language system]. SPb.
- Slovar' russkogo yazyka.* (1999). [Russian Language Dictionary] (4th ed.). A .P. Evgen'evoy (Ed.). M.: Rus. yaz.
- Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo yazyka.* (1950-1965). [Dictionary of contemporary Russian literary language]. (17 ed.). Moskva, Leningrad.
- Sovremennyy tolkovyy slovar' kitayskogo yazyka.* (2005). [The contemporary dictionary of Chinese]. Pekin.
- Vasil'ev, L. M. (1981). *Semantika russkogo glagola* [Semantics of the Russian verb]. M.: Vysshaya shkola.
- Yazyk o yazyke.* (2000). [Language on language]: Collected articles. N. D. Arutyunova (Ed.). M.: Yazyki russkoy kul'tury.