THE XXV ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CONFERENCE, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, 20-22 October 2014

Social Conflict through Conceptual Metaphor in Media Discourse

Tatiana G. Antonova*

National Research Tomsk State University, 36, Lenin Ave., Tomsk, 634050, Russia

Abstract

The article deals with the problem of metaphorical modeling of social conflict in Russian media discourse. News and analytical texts of newspapers and news agencies, telling about the conflict in Greece are analyzed. The conflict components metaphorically represented in media discourse are sorted out and studied. The ways of social conflict metaphorical interpretation and shaping of its image within the framework of conceptual metaphors are described.

1. Introduction

Social conflict is a complex and very complicated phenomenon, researched in different fields of study, sociology, psychology, legal science etc. It can be defined as a way of interaction between people, parties, social institutions, a clash aimed at preventing the opponents from satisfying their needs or achieving their goals. Social conflict has its structure, the main components of which are its participants (opponents, intermediaries, masterminds), its object and the conflict situation, i.e. the environment in which the conflict is arising and unfolding (Dmitriev, 2000).

Linguists are focused on the verbal representation of conflict, when language is used as a means of interpretation, rendering a conflict in a text or discourse (Danilenko, 2006). A narrative about a conflict can be considered as a piece of reconstruction of social reality, as a fragment of the linguistic "world view".

———

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +7 913 103 91 16 .
  E-mail address: tatgran@sibmail.com

The term "world view" was first introduced by Leo Weisgerber, a German linguist, in 1930s. In 1980s it was adopted by Russian linguists, who have done much research to study the linguistic world view ("picture of the world") over the last few decades (Serebrennikov, Kubryakova, Postovalova, Telija, & Ufimtseva, 1988; Kolshansky, 1990; Kornilov, 2002; Rezanova, Mishankina, & Katunin, 2003; Zaliznyak, Levontina, & Shmelev, 2005). The linguistic world view can be defined as a method of a person's interpretative gnosiological activity directed at the outside world and objectified in language units, in other words, it is the "picture" made by means of language units (Rezanova, Mishankina, & Katunin, 2003), it is the so called "wording" of the world, a linguistic way to model the world view of a people. According to Veronika N. Telija, a linguistic world view serves as a means to convey a conceptual one (1988), a model of people's cognition of reality, while the conceptual metaphor, as a cognitive tool, is one of the main means to model the world view of a people (Rezanova, Mishankina, & Katunin, 2003; Serebrennikov, Kubryakova, Postovalova, Telija, & Ufimtseva, 1988).

This research is aimed at studying how conceptual metaphors serve to linguistically depict a social conflict, its components in media discourse. It is known that a language is a means of storing and transmitting information, and today media discourse is the main "container" of any modern language, the overall extent of mass media texts is much larger than that in any other sphere (Dobrosklonskaya, 2008). As various authors indicate, mass media are not only a means of conveying and transmitting information, but also a very powerful tool of shaping people's opinions and attitudes. Which means that the way we perceive a "reality" is greatly influenced by our exposure to mass media (Macarro, 2002; Volodina, 2003; Macdonald, 2003; O'Keeffe, 2006; Dobrosklonskaya, 2008).

Linguistic reconstruction of a conflict in media discourse is someone's perception and interpretation of the conflict, its parties, the way it is developing etc. Therefore, the way people "see" any conflict greatly depends on how it is represented in the media. Moreover, the further development of any conflict can be influenced by its representation and interpretation in media discourse, which makes use of different "tools" to affect the recipients' opinions and attitudes, metaphors included. So we believe that while living in a modern world with numerous social conflicts generated at any given moment, it seems very important to realize how all these conflicts are interpreted and represented in various mass media and in different cultures. In this way the research can contribute to reconstructing the whole "picture" of the world existing in Russians' minds by reconstructing its fragment. More than that, its results can be effectively used by social sciences, such as, psychology, sociology, conflictology and others. All this makes our research timely, topical and significant.

The research is based on the conceptual (cognitive) metaphor theory (Lakoff, 1992; Lakoff, Johnson, 2003; Chudinov, 2001), developed within the field of cognitive linguistics. The fundamental principle of the theory is that metaphors operate at the level of thought, not language. As George Lakoff indicates, "the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another" (1992). Thus conceptual metaphors link two conceptual domains, the "source" domain and the "target" domain. There are ontological correspondences, according to which entities in the target domain correspond systematically to entities in the source domain. We use our knowledge about source conceptual domain to reason about target conceptual domain. In this way, conceptual metaphors are constituted not by words or linguistic units, but by ontological mapping across conceptual domains. We have one conceptual metaphor, for instance, CONFLICT IS AN ILLNESS, which is a unified way of conceptualization realized in various linguistic expressions (words, phrases or sentences). By this we mean, that entities, attributes and processes in the target domain are lexicalized using words and expressions from the source domain. These linguistic units are called metaphorical expressions. Since metaphor, as a phenomenon, involves both conceptual mappings and individual linguistic expressions, it is important to distinguish between the term "metaphor" to refer to a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system and the term "metaphorical expression" to refer to an individual linguistic expression. At the same time being "the surface realization" of a cross-domain mapping, metaphorical expressions allow us to explore the cognitive model of interpretation of reality by language speakers (Lakoff, 1992; Lakoff, Johnson, 2003; Chudinov, 2001; Rezanova, Mishankina, & Katunin, 2003).