



Multi-functionality of Metaphors in the Eco-Moral Discourse of the British Press

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Abstract

Authentic news articles are a valuable source of didactic material for EFL teaching. This paper deals with the analysis of multi-functional metaphors in the eco-moral discourse of the British press through an example of a news article. The research shows the importance of background knowledge that makes it possible to understand a particular use of metaphors. Some functions are focused on: attention-grabbing, descriptive, interpersonal, cohesive, rhetoric, personifying, and persuasive, in order to manifest a huge potential of metaphors. It is shown that the rhetoric of text rises in a conflicting frame. Some examples of the conceptualization of metaphoric use are given to highlight the author's visualization of things as well as his civic stance. It is pointed out that the figurative application of words, collocations, phrases, sentences-aphorisms, leads to text integrity.

Keywords: eco-moral discourse, background knowledge, topic-triggered, interpersonal function, persuasive function, conflicting frame

Apstrakt

Autentični novinski članci dragocen su izvor obrazovnog materijala za učenje engleskog jezika kao stranog. U ovom radu bavimo se analizom multi-funkcionalnih metafora u eko-moralnom diskursu britanske štampe kroz primer jednog novinskog članka. Istraživanje pokazuje značaj prethodno stečenog znanja koje nam omogućava da razumemo određenu upotrebu metafora. Neke od funkcija baziraju se na: privlačenju pažnje, opisima, međuljudskim odnosima, koheziji, retorici, personifikaciji, ubeđivanju, a sve kako bi se predstavio ogroman potencijal metafora. Prikazano je da se retorika teksta povećava kroz jedan okvir sukoba. Neki primeri konceptualizacije upotreba metafora dati su kako bi se podvukla autorova vizualizacija stvari kao i njegov građanski stav. Naglašeno je da figurativni pristup rečima, kolokacijama, frazama, rečeničnim aforizmima, dovodi do jedinstva teksta.

Ključne reči: eko-moralni diskurs, prethodno stečeno znanje, okidač teme, međuljudska funkcija, funkcija ubeđivanja, konfliktni okvir

1. Introduction

In EFL teaching, news articles play a crucial role in the development of students' linguistic, cultural and cross-cultural awareness. Teachers of English come across as intermediaries who bridge the

gap between different cultures. From this perspective, the use and considerable analysis of breaking news and burning issues, which concern different spheres of life, is an overriding priority of the modern educational process.

Richards (2006) in *Communicative Language Teaching Today* quotes Clarke and Silberstein (1977: 51) who argued that: "Classroom activities should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible. Arguments in favor of the use of authentic materials include as follows:

1. They provide cultural information about the target language.
2. They provide exposure to real language.
3. They relate more closely to learners' needs.
4. They support a more creative approach to teaching".

This research presents a case study of the use of an authentic news article – the result of collaborative work with students. Guided by the teacher, the students were asked to look for metaphors in the selected text with the view to analyzing their functions. The theme had been chosen by mutual consent. Apart from the analysis of the functional use of metaphors, the issue within the text had to be investigated. In particular, it was recommended that the students should suggest solutions to the problem under consideration: poaching and illegal animal trade. Therefore, the news article was supposed to develop critical thinking as well as the following competences: linguistic, cognitive, analytical, practical,

communicative, and social. The results of the work are given below.

2. Methods and materials

It is inarguable that Black, Gibbs, Grady, Johnson, Lakoff, Ortony, Turner and many others should be regarded as linguists that have made a great contribution to the research of metaphors. Published sources indicate that modern works about metaphors can be divided in two groups: methodological and applied research. The former deals with description, functions, classification of metaphors, whereas the latter implies the analysis of metaphors in different types of discourse, e.g. academic discourse, learning interaction, speaking discourse, etc. (Scorcynska, 2001: 46).

The purpose of the presented research is to show the use and function of metaphor in the eco-moral discourse through the example of an article from *The Guardian*, a British newspaper. It must be stated that a large host of metaphors in this one text accounts for my decision to limit the choice of material to be analyzed. The novelty of the paper consists in revealing the fact that the conflicting frame tends to enhance the author's rhetoric by using metaphors.

The main method of research is a case-study relying on the evidence that has been derived from the selected material

and analyzed by means of theoretical underpinning. The empirical method has been employed by collecting, systematizing and analyzing data.

The point to be emphasized is that despite an overwhelming research mix and envelope, the metaphor in the eco-moral discourse has still not been studied carefully.

It has already been mentioned that the idea of writing about the multi-functionality of metaphors arose in the process of preparing teaching materials and resources for English classes. It is worth noting that students show a special interest in environmental problems. However, their awareness of the metaphors being used in such discourses leaves much to be desired.

3. Background information

As primary attention is focused on written English in this work, it is vital to single out some differences in the use of metaphors in the scientific discourse and periodicals. Firstly, metaphors in the scientific discourse are of “significant cognitive value while in periodicals communicative functions are prior to others,” (Scorcynska, 2001: 57). Secondly, scientific texts are meant for narrowly focused specialists, news articles – for event log readers.

However, both text types mould views of problems: scientific discourse – with the aim of contributing new knowledge to the field of study, periodicals – providing a simpler and more familiar view of current business events” (Scorcynska, 2001: 57). According to Zanina (2013: 36-38), the most successful scientific terms are metaphors. Galkina (2004) suggests that metaphors make it possible to judge about something or somebody from a new perspective, making use of previous experience.

It seems fair to point out that the assembled material for this paper is of some ideological nature. Linguistics and ideology are integrated: the former is a means of expressing ideas verbally, i.e. by way of various linguistic means. It is reflected on how writers apply linguistic variables with different connotations in order to either underscore the significance of an event or condemn it. By reference to Bourdieu (1991), Ben (2013) argues that “any language use has to operate within a habitus – a socialised subjectivity which defines a common ground between individual agency and structural ideology. The habitus guides the individual in making language choices. The habitus should manifest in embodied actions such as manners of speech production, and these actions may be enacted by the speaker at a conscious level.”

Consequently, the news article dealing with ecological and moral issues is likely to reflect the author's civic position.

Ferrari (2007: 614) introduced the term *conflicting frame* that implies two-sidedness of discord or tension. It can develop as a fairy tale (Lakoff, 1991: 2-3) that presents a protagonist – at one extreme, a scoundrel – at the other extreme. Acrimonious relations can be further escalated to social unrest or protest.

Ben (2013: 110-111) makes much of metaphors in the political, moral and social discourse and substantiates his statement by Andriessen's concept (2010: 59-66) of the appropriate use of metaphors. The latter remarks that "the context, the position of the person using the metaphor, overall values" are a basis for judgments or condemnation that make metaphors be tailored to this particular discourse.

It is apparent that the cultural context and cross-cultural differences matter a lot in the conceptualization of metaphors. For example, in some countries, animal slaughter, cruelty or outrage are looked upon as fatal to spiritual progress, as a criminal offence, by analogy with crimes against people. What is more, to show their loyalty to animals and their rights, many people refuse to wear or use non-

animal friendly things. They do not consume animal food either.

However, in other cultures, objects made of ivory, leather, tiger bone, rhino horn and other derivatives are not associated with animal bloodshed. On the contrary, people seem to relish and esteem these kinds of knick-knackery, souvenirs and similar things. In China, things made of ivory are a high status symbol. (Largely, there appears to exist many other reasons for such human behavior: deep-rooted traditions, or religious beliefs for example, but it is beyond the theme under consideration.)

In human society, such gulfs both in public opinion and social standing – within countries and outside them – can cause serious conflicts due to differences in human perception and mentality. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 24-25) put this idea explicitly, "which values are given priority is partly a matter of the subculture one lives in and partly a matter of personal values. The various subcultures of a mainstream culture share basic values but give them different priorities".

The copestone in the background information is the mention of the global eco-moral long-lasting social conflict, or rather resistance against illegal

commercial animal poaching and trading. Above all others, it concerns elephants.

As is known, The Duke of Cambridge Prince William is an active animal advocate. His father, Prince Charles, made a decision to remove the invaluable collection of ivory work to a repository. He did not mean to eradicate it, whereas Prince William assumes it ought to be done in protest against cruelty to animals.

As reported by the World Wildlife Fund, the damage caused by poaching comes to billions of dollars annually, let alone the emotional distress, pain and suffering that are beyond any calculations.

4. Results

There appears to be a widely-held view that material things make the world go round. To many, it looks as if people have become pragmatic, indifferent and insensitive to evil and hardships. Moreover, virtue, clemency and benevolence are looked upon as obscure and abstract concepts. At the same time, realities of life show that environmentally related moral issues stir up public opinion all over the world. No doubt, mass media are designed to reflect these concerns by means of the vivid written word. In this way, journalists and writers are able to persuade people of all age groups to take an uncompromising stance and become

civic-minded and straight-faced towards virtue.

The metaphor is a unique artistic trope that enables brings into effect the author's intention (Ivanyuk, 1999: 7). The metaphor has become a highly attractive target research over the past decades. It can be argued that cognitive insights into this figure of speech are linchpins between various academic pursuits in the field of metaphors and take psychological and linguistic factors into consideration (Scorcynska, 2001).

The research of the article "Prince William will take plight of Africa's elephants 'behind enemy lines' in China" (Campbell, 2015) will start by analyzing its heading. As a rule, the heading is a teaser headline that is both striking and appealing. The reason is that the author attempts to touch a sore point. Semino (2008: 222-223) assumes that the *topic-triggered* metaphor is characteristic of the beginning of a news article. It is designed to grab readers' attention and serve as a hook.

In the heading, the syntagm '*behind enemy lines in China*' exemplifies the substance of the metaphor use. '*Enemy lines*' is associated with hostile boundaries, i.e. the place where elephants are delivered to be slaughtered for ivory. Illegal commercial trade of elephants from

Africa to China has turned into a real war against animals: “*in Africa a blood drenched war on wildlife is raging*”, against the reign of law, against animal advocates.

It is particularly remarkable that Prince is word number one in the heading, which is a very successful literary device. In this way, Prince William’s mission as an animal defender is brought into focus. Meanwhile, a typical conflicting frame is developing: Prince is determined to conquer the enemy; evil and human narrow-mindedness.

The metaphors, being descriptive devices, present elephants as *intelligent, complex and self-aware beings* as if they were not animals at all. Anyway, *human beings and self-aware beings* are regarded as peers by the author.

According to Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Animal Rights, “every animal has the right to be respected. Man, like the animal species, cannot assume the right to exterminate other animals or to exploit them, thereby violating this right. He should use his conscience for the service of the animals”.

Unfortunately, real-life events are much more severe than people might think: baby elephants are also hunted “*from the wild to sell to the ghastliness of Chinese zoos*”.

Ghastliness – something that macabre or grisly – that is what adds to the tragic element in the text.

It is unlikely that the newspaper discourse involves any direct contact between the author and readers. As a rule, they are not acquainted, and the only way to give feedback is to write letters or e-mail messages to the editor (Krennmayr, 2011: 84-86). Unlike face-to-face communication, interpersonal relations are restricted in this case. So, the author’s positive or negative, adamant or yielding stance towards miscellaneous news may be expressed through the *interpersonal function of metaphors* (Krennmayr, 2011: 84-86).

For example, in the news article, the author alludes to a certain Mr. Hunt, a friend of his. The Collins dictionary (2001: 711) explains that ‘*hunt*’ means ‘*seek out and kill animals for food or sport*’. It may be that the man’s family name has been created by the author in order to manifest his negative attitude to hunting in a figurative way. The reader learns about Hunt’s queasiness at the thought of “*one particularly ornate gift he received at his wedding in China*”. Mr. Hunt is a generalized character that embodies the idea of the perception of poaching as something disgusting. At the same time,

he is a person conveying a message about the author's own feelings.

Metaphors in the text under consideration are both a *linguistic means of description* and a *cohesive device*. They are not grouped in clusters but scattered throughout the whole text at a steady pace. It contributes to interconnection of ideas in the text at a sentential level – within paragraphs, which leads to text integrity. The first paragraph is devoted to Prince William and includes metaphors characterizing his personality: “*a man with a passionate mastery of a bleak situation*”. In the text, he is a leader both due to his origin and action. He is portrayed as a powerful, high-minded person driven by high-principled ideas: (*his power*) *is a higher purpose*. Further, the story told is about the parties that are involved in animal crimes: the “*political elite, which... is complicit in the slaughter*”, Chinese investment in Africa that resulted in the flora and fauna extinction: “*the continent's forests are being emptied and the savannahs cleared of wildlife. For too many, an encounter with majestic beauty isn't a precious moment; it's a precious ornament*”. Overall, the author's deprecation regards those who are accessories to animal crimes.

The results of the research point to a remarkable trend, i.e. as soon as the

information reported concerns cruelty and callousness of hunting, the metaphors become stringent and posts bearing a definite sign, for example:

1. *denunciation*: barbarous and butcherly attitude to animals, hunting via use of deadly weapon are unveiled in the following way: “*helicopter gunships, Kalashnikovs and night vision goggles*”;
2. *generalization*: “*Mugabe's thugs have just stolen dozens of young elephants from the wild to sell to the ghastliness of Chinese zoos*”.

Increasingly, the auctorial rhetoric of outrage is enhancing when it comes to the ivory industry which is called a ‘*murky business*’. So, the metaphors integrate different parts of the whole text by airing the exposé on the illegal business.

Another important function of metaphors in the text is a *means of comparison*. For instance, Prince William's mission in China, a negotiated settlement about the survival of elephants, “*has to be sotto voce diplomatic egg-shell walking*”. As is known, egg shell is fragile, so is the Prince's assignment. It implies the delicacy of the situation as any moral judgments against possession or wearing of ivories are inherent in people, which generates discrepancy and misunderstanding.

The author actively uses the metaphor as a *means of personification*, e.g. he vividly depicts the illegal animal business in an accusatory way by putting it on the same footing as devices of the devil: *“the image of poaching can conjure up a couple of Dickensian ruffians hauling a stag over the moor”*. In other words, poaching is *barbarism*. The consumer economy is characterized as *ravenous*, which is associated with a greedy, gluttonous person. In large part, excessive appetite is

metaphorically featured as something that is exceptionally abominable and mean: *“with tongues out for crumbs”*– it is about supporters of animal illegal trade.

It is significant to point out that Lakoff (1980: 79-85) emphasized the conceptualizing nature of metaphors. The following table exemplifies some concepts embodied by the metaphorical expressions from the news article:

Table1. Concepts and metaphors.

concept	metaphoric expression
poaching	egregious sin of omission
life of elephants	foreseeable demise
imperialism	a road to a self-fulfilling catastrophe
Prince’s mission	labyrinthine
negotiations for protection of game animals and illegal trade	convoluted cultural complexities
nonchalance	whirlwind of confetti
wildlife	majestic beauty
ivory	precious ornament
official public approval	soundtrack of assurance and platitude

As is clear from the table, there is an obvious trend toward the use of conceptualized metaphors throughout the whole article with the aim of personifying the concepts as well as associating them with definite highlighted objects or characteristics.

The rhetoric function of metaphors is used by the author to introduce his watchword

and view on a definite issue. By virtue of it, the reader can interpret the facts and move beyond the context. This role of metaphor is called crucial “in the construction of social and personal selves and through its linguistic mediation facilitates both the creation of, and adaptation to, a changing world” (Charteris-Black, 2005: 39).

This study reveals the fact that the article at hand is replete with metaphoric sententious statements. They are designed to raise awareness to the evidence provided by the author and make readers reflect on it. There are two ways of how the aphorisms are located in the narration:

1. being the gist of the whole context, they stand out for their importance, e.g. *“The elephant in the room is a domestic ivory ban as soon as possible – but he knows we can’t point fingers, we can only cross them”*;
2. being singled out and structured as separate paragraphs, e.g. *“Anthropomorphism isn’t the problem here, it’s anthropocentrism. It’s all about us. It’s all about the price of everything and the value of the next consignment of ivory smuggled out of Mombassa. Oh, and here’s a few gorilla hands for your designer ashtray business”*.

In both cases above, the author appeals to people as a citizen by giving particular prominence to the rhetoric and pathos of the sample sentences.

It should be added that the penult sentence, which is also a metaphoric aphorism, outlines the ideas of the whole article: *“Ivory is said to bring you good*

fortune. The aspirant and opulent cherish its beauty but what a terrible beauty”.

There is a need to look upon *persuasion* as an integral part of the author’s rhetoric. The text analysis shows that he encourages readers to take action in order to solve the problem by accenting the moral standards: *“The moral case against ivory is unanswerable”*. Between the lines, there is a frantic appeal for assistance in animal survival. The author resorts to persuasive metaphoric strategies:

- identifying people with species: *“When it comes to elephants we are shamed as a species”*. It can be understood so: treat others as you would like to be treated;
- using foreign words: *Loxodonta Africana, quid pro quo, sotto voce, jeunesse dorée*.

In this way, the matter of international concern is presented as a call for an immediate action all over the world. Additionally, readers might not know the above words as they are derived from scientific or special jargon. Therefore, there is a need to look them up in the dictionary, which may make you conscious of the issue.

5. Conclusion

This study has raised important questions about the role of authentic news articles of

current interest in EFL teaching in terms of enhancing students' linguistic, cross – cultural awareness, with their civic stance being molded, which requires critical thinking. The results of my joint effort with students have firstly denoted their zest to morality issues and emotional outlook on elephant deaths from poaching. Secondly, taken together, our findings suggest that metaphors are multifunctional devices in the eco-moral newspaper discourse, used for drawing readers' attention, encouraging them to accept a certain line of thought, generalizing, enhancing rhetoric, tying the ideas together as well as maintaining contact with readers by a range of the author's sole literary devices.

Thirdly, the rhetoric of text turns out to rise as long as the author reveals his civic attitude. Arguably, the conceptualization of metaphoric use is another unique and creative approach to language aimed at highlighting how the author comprehends things.

As has been shown, the metaphors in the news article under discussion are persistently used as words, collocations, phrases, sentences-aphorisms and ultimately lead to text integrity. Such coherence constitutes a specific style of the author's dialogue with readers.

It is unlikely to show overall many-sidedness of metaphors on account of their inexhaustibility. That is why the present research is not by far complete. Besides, further analyses of related eco-moral articles could add to the insight into the matter of concern.

All in all, using news texts in EFL teaching involves various activities and allows developing cognitive, moral, educational and linguistic skills. It is an incontrovertible fact that motivation via highly moral discussions based on real facts is irreplaceable in communicative language teaching.

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