

On the function of Metaphors in Business News

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Abstract

Metaphors in business news are often neglected when more attention is paid to literary works instead. This thesis intends to identify metaphors of animal, food, color, etc. in business news based on the traditional research in literature. In the study, metaphors are classified in accordance with the existing theory and exemplified with cases in business news in an attempt to help business people better understand business news and avoid the mistakes in business activities.

Keywords

News, Business English, Metaphor.

1. Introduction

News about certain topics like business is sometimes difficult for readers, because not all the readers have the proficiency in reading and understanding business news. Readers are not like the reporters, who are equipped with the basic knowledge about business and familiar with what they report on. As a result, business news is made even more complex and difficult for common readers when metaphors are involved in it.

2. Significance of Metaphor in Business English

Metaphor is everywhere in our life to make it full of fun and implication. But to understand the purposes of metaphor in different contexts, the most important thing is to understand the cognitive characteristics of metaphor.

As a cognitive model, metaphor has been widely used in various fields such as economy and science. It is generally accepted that recognizing the role of metaphor in human thinking does not impair the precision and logic of language; on the contrary, it can rationally make language richer and expressive. Under this premise, this paper classifies metaphors from business news, and analyzes their cognitive mechanism. However, the classification of English metaphors in business news cannot be exhaustive. Therefore, this paper only selects the typical cases for analysis.

3. Components of Metaphor

Etymologically, the meaning of the word “metaphor” can be traced back to the ancient Greek word composed by the prefix “meta,” implying a change, and the suffix “pherein”, meaning “to carry, to bear.” In modern Greek, the word “metaphor” also exists and can be translated as “transport” or “transfer.” In general, a metaphor transitions from a comparison to an identification or fusion of two objects. Thus one thing is not said to be *like* something else, but it *is* something else.

In the cognitive linguistic view, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of the other. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand the other domain is called the source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain[1] or topic domain[2].

The cognitive process of metaphor can be divided into three main stages: 1. Being aware of what is already known makes it easier to fully understand the original domain. 2. Locating correlations with novel or similar concepts known to the speaker. 3. Selecting the original domain of one or more semantic elements to be transferred to other semantic categories belonging to a word.

The metaphor is intended for a kind of psychological association. An American psychologist believes that human cognitive processes allow one to use a familiar concept to understand the otherwise incomprehensible, complex, or abstract concepts[3]. Metaphorical language is a reflection of one's metaphorical thinking, and the metaphorical concept system is the basis of human cognition, thinking, language, and behavior[4].

4. Analysis of Metaphors in Business News

Business English is based on daily language. In order to improve the operation of economic life, people often use metaphorical phrases chosen from everyday language to describe and discuss abstract concepts and events related to business. Metaphors come in all syntactic shapes and sizes. But usually metaphors are found in the form of nouns and verbs.

4.1. Animal metaphor

The unique features of animals make it convenient to use animal metaphors to describe business activities. "Bull" and "bear" are two typical examples. Bull is often taken as a symbol of strength, confidence and belligerence. When the stock exchange market booms in company with optimistic scenario and active trading, the market conditions are called "bullish". On the contrary, if the market drops and trading shrinks, this situation is called "bear market".

For example:

(1) *Even after Black Friday, most bulls remained, well bullish.*

(2) *Mr. Greenspan cannot prevent a bear market with a mere wave of his wand.*

4.2. Food Metaphor

Food is one of the most important necessities for humans. Food metaphors are common in both English and Chinese. So, the word "food" is always used as a source domain to understand abstract concepts in some cases. Things related to the enrichment of one's mind are often referred to as "mental nourishment". The Chinese proverb "Life is full of sweetness and bitterness," is close in meaning to the English counterpart "Life is a box of chocolates". So people can rely on "food" as an aid to access the cognitive world. The concepts relating to food are widely used to understand abstract business concepts or business activity.

For example:

Indeed, global investors' appetite for the stock has reached such a fever pitch that just days before Mr Li spoke, the IPO of China Green Holdings, a smaller vegetable exporter, was 1.600 times oversubscribed. The success of China Life Insurance and other big listings was touted as an appetizer before a Chinese listing feast was started.

China's rapid economic development drives foreign investors to participate in the Chinese stock market. In this example, "appetizer" and "feast" vividly depict the craze for Chinese stocks, and the success of large corporate stocks such as China Life Insurance.

4.3. Color metaphor

The development of human perception and language cannot separate from human sensation of the external world. Therefore, human perception of color, as an important part of human experience, is actually the perception of the outside world, and is formed on the basis of human physiological mechanism, natural environment, social culture and other factors. Metaphorical

cognition of color is realized when we use the basic category of color to express and explain the scope of other cognitive domains. Color is a kind of visual instrument. Color metaphor makes our cognition of things clearer and more vivid. Color words are one of the most important rhetorical devices in literary works and play an important role in news writing.

For example:

This is a sickening debate, full of strange commitment and historical fiction. Worst of all, they agree that the deficit is fundamentally bad, and that the UK government's high level of debt makes it unsustainable for the government to be in the red for much longer. The truth, however, is more nuanced than that.

“To be in the red” usually describes someone wearing red, but this reference to Britain's deficit has led some to believe the situation is getting worse and the government can't fix it any more.

4.4. Marriage metaphor

Marriage is an abstract concept, rooted in thousands of years of human genes; People always use marriage to describe the relationship between countries, for better or worse.

For example:

While the relationship in the Western world is typically a master-servant relationship led by the United States, the relationship between China and Russia is another kind of husband-wife equal relationship. The latter is so powerful; It involves open possibilities.

Husband-and-wife relationship means that the relationship between China and Russia is as close and reciprocal as the relationship between the husband and the wife.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of modern theories about metaphor, this paper classifies metaphorical expressions in business news, then discusses and analyzes the cognitive basis of metaphor, and finally explains the universality of metaphor in business news. It is helpful to analyze the effect of metaphor on human thinking and behavior and to understand the linguistic characteristics of business news.

Metaphor is essentially a tool for human beings to understand and construct the world. As a cognitive model, metaphor is very common in business news. A large number of metaphorical words in business news discourse make abstract and complex business activities vivid and easy to understand.

References

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