

The Concept of Construction in the Description of Interpersonal Relations in British Fiction

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Abstract

The article focuses on the concept construction in the framework of the conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and the frame theory by V. Evans which implements both the categorizing and stylistic functions in the discourse spaces of the novels *The Sandcastle* by Iris Murdoch and *Killing me softly* by French (2008). The construction concept helps to efficiently render the author's message as well as the main characters' feelings and attitudes to the relationships they are involved and themselves. Thus, we come to a conclusion that the construction concept does not only help the readers to understand the authors' ideas and attitudes quickly and efficiently but also contributes to the linguistic creative potential of the above mentioned novels.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor theory; Categorizing Function; Conceptualization.



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1. Introduction

Nowadays people deal with a lot of changes in the world of bewildering transformations. These transformations are mostly reflected in the language of the mass media as their main function is to inform people about what is going on in the world and to reflect the changes (both positive and negative); in spite of all the destructive events of the time people strive to restore what has been ruined, to create something new and stable, to build their future on some foundations. This is reflected not only in the media texts but also in fiction. The theory of metaphor has come a long way from very humble beginnings. Yet, most of the key ideas have been either sustained or developed further by recent empirical research in cognitive linguistics and in cognitive science generally. Metaphoric concepts use one person's life experience to understand a different person's experience. This idea, and a detailed examination of the underlying processes, was first extensively explored by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in *Metaphors We Live By*. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) introduced and developed the basics of the theory of conceptual metaphor and stating that it is wrong to assume that the metaphor is a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Similarly, it is wrong to think that metaphor should be typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), on the contrary, set out to prove that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life. Human conceptual system, in terms of both what people think and how they act is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. The concepts that govern human thought are not merely matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning. Metaphoric concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities (Antúnez, 2015; Kameletdinova, 2012a).

2. Methods

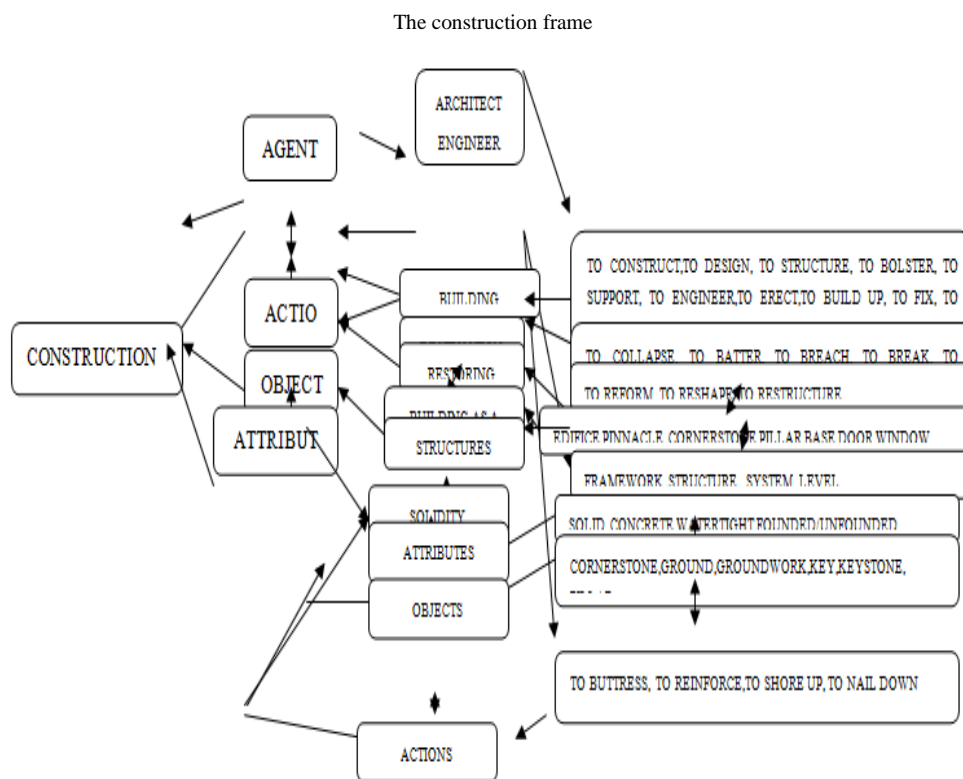
In our research we have employed a combination of the conceptual metaphoric analysis and the frame theory by Vyvyan Evans. A primary tenet of the theory of conceptual metaphor is that metaphors are matter of thought and not merely of language: hence, the term conceptual metaphor. The metaphor may seem to consist of words or other linguistic expressions that come from the terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain, but conceptual metaphors underlie a system of related metaphorical expressions that appear on the linguistic surface. Similarly, the mappings of a conceptual metaphor are themselves motivated by image schemas which prelinguistic schemas are concerning space, time, moving, controlling, and other core elements of embodied human experience. Conceptual metaphors typically employ a more abstract concept as target and a more concrete or physical concept as their source. For instance, metaphors such as the days (the more abstract or target concept) ahead or giving my time rely on more concrete concepts, thus expressing time as a path into physical space, or as a substance that can be handled and offered as a gift. Different conceptual metaphors tend to be invoked when the speaker is trying to make a case for a certain point of view or course of action. For instance, one might associate the days ahead with leadership, whereas the phrase giving my time carries stronger connotations of bargaining. Selection of such metaphors tends to

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be directed by a subconscious or implicit purpose, in the mind of the person employing them (Kameletdiov, 2011; Suiyerkul *et al.*, 2018).

The principle of unidirectionality states that the metaphorical process typically goes from the more concrete to the more abstract, and not the other way around. Accordingly, abstract concepts are understood in terms of prototype concrete processes. The term concrete in this theory, has been further specified by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as more closely related to the developmental, physical, neural, and interactive body. It is well known from research on attention that during perceptual experience, the cognitive system can focus attention on individual components of the stimulus array. For instance, attention can selectively focus on the color of the object, filtering out, for instance, its shape, or texture, and even the surrounding objects. The perceptual components are stored in schematic fashion. This means that it is not individual perceptual states that are stored, but rather commonalities are abstracted across specific instances of perceptual states providing individual memories deriving from sense perception. The perceptual symbol system is a frame. A frame is an information structure consisting of large collections of perceptual symbols, encoding information which is stable over time as well as incorporating variability. Hence, a frame provides a unified, and hence coherent, representation of a particular entity. For instance, a frame involves numerous components that have a perceptual basis, that are related in various ways. In addition, the perceptual symbols that collectively comprise the frame can be combined in a range of ways, giving rise to an infinite variety of simulations. Hence, a system of perceptual symbols gives rise to both a frame: a relatively stable knowledge matrix, and dynamic simulations (Kameletdinova, 2012b).

In broad terms, frames can be identified which relate to things or situations. Further, within each of these broad divisions there are frames which are episodic, relating to specific types of experience and/or knowledge and frames which are generic, relating to schematization over broadly similar aspects of experience and/or knowledge. The concept of construction is a generic term and it can be represented in the following way:



3. Results and Discussion

The heart of metaphor is inference. Conceptual metaphor allows inferences in sensory-motor domains (e.g., domains of space and objects) to be used to draw inferences about other domains (e.g., domains of subjective judgment, with concepts like intimacy, emotions, justice, and so on). Because we reason in term: of metaphor, the metaphors we use determine a great deal about how we live our lives. This idea is clearly developed in the novel *The Sandcastle* by Murdoch (2003) and *Killing me softly* by French (2008). In the novel *The Sandcastle* Murdoch (2003) the title itself reflects the relationship between the main characters of the book: William Mor and Rain Carter. Nowhere in the novel does Murdoch (2003) explain the title, the sandcastle. It is just given to us with the cultural richness that the word brings. The sandcastle has resonances of the foolish man of the parable whose house was built on sand and washed away by rain. We hear the echoes of this in William Mor’s apparently solid domestic life which is swept away by the young woman whose name is Rain Carter, a young artist who came to their town to make a portrait of the former schoolmaster. Only Rain speaks of sandcastles, and that only once, her words almost hidden by Murdoch (2003) in lunch-table chatter. She says that as a child she tried to make sandcastles on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea but mentions the following: «I can recall, as a child, seeing pictures in English children’s books of boys and girls playing on the sand and making sandcastles – and I tried to play on my sand. But a Mediterranean

beach is not a place for playing on. It is dirty and very dry. The tides never wash the sand or make it firm. When I tried to make a sandcastle, the sand would just run away between my fingers. It was very dry to hold together. And even as I poured sea water over it, the sun would dry it up at once». This phrase recurs poignantly when, at the end of the novel, she tells Mor she has lost faith in their proposed future life together: You would be happy with me for a short while, said Rain, but then what would happen? It is all dry and running through the fingers (Kameletdinova, 2013).

Thus the construction metaphor the sandcastle is a doomed relationship reveals itself focusing the readers' attention on the sub-concept solidity, foundation of the construction frame implying that the adulterous love affair between William Mor and Rain Carter has no solid foundation and is bound to end. This metaphor weaves through the novel which is set in the last days of a hot summer term. The heatwave breaks when Rain comes to Mor's house knowing that she loves him. She comes with a thunderstorm at her heels, and it pours with rain when Nan Mor walks in unexpectedly in the morning and catches the two of them together. It is either hot or stormy throughout the book until Rain leaves forever, and Mor wakes in the morning, cold. Thus, we see how clearly the novel title renders the author's message to the reader. In the novel *Killing me softly* by French (2008) Alice Loudon could not resist abandoning her old, safe life for a wild affair. Adam Tallis is a rugged mountaineer with a murky past, she finds a man who can teach her things about herself that she never even suspected. However, sexual obsession has its dark side so the woman is in great danger. In this novel the construction metaphor reveals itself in different aspects. Alice Loudon conceptualizes her obsessive relationship with Adam as a building with a non-solid foundation: "I constructed different scenarios in my head" French (2008), "When he touched me under the table I felt as if my body would crumble into soft fragments". French (2008), "You have built Adam up, I said. Maybe it is time to knock him down" French (2008) "Our whole marriage was built on desire and deception" French (2008) "I had wrecked my old world decisively, and now I was trying to figure out a way of bringing my new world crashing down too, so that I could escape from it" French (2008)

4. Summary

Thus the construction metaphor the sandcastle is a doomed relationship reveals itself focusing the readers' attention on the sub concept solidity, foundation of the construction frame implying that the adulterous love affair between William Mor and Rain Carter has no solid foundation and is bound to end. Moreover, in the novel *killing me softly* by French (2008) we see the development of the main character's personality and overcoming the personal life crisis affected by a devastatingly obsessive love affair via the following conceptual metaphors: A relationship is a building, the image of a beloved person is a building, marriage is a building, and personal worldviews are a building (Laurens, 2018).

5. Conclusions

Having analyzed the conceptual spaces of the above mentioned novels, we may come to the conclusion that the construction metaphor proves to be one of the most efficient and productive metaphoric concepts in rendering the author's message in the novels thus implementing the categorizing and stylistic functions in the fiction discourse.

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