

On the Subjectivity of Translator During Translation Process From the Viewpoint of Metaphor

LIN Haixia^{[a], *}

^[a]School of Foreign Languages, Nantong University, Nantong, China.

*Corresponding author.

Received 9 April 2015; accepted 15 June 2015

Published online 26 August 2015

Abstract

This paper aims at giving suggestions to the metaphor constructor for ideal interpreting from the viewpoint of translator's comprehension. In order to lead to the ideal interpreting from the translator, metaphor constructor is supposed to take more factors into consideration which will help to bring forward the ideal interpreting expected by the metaphor constructor and which seems more difficult than the common way to express their idea.

Key words: Translator; Metaphor constructor; Subjectivity

Lin, H. X. (2015). On the Subjectivity of Translator During Translation Process From the Viewpoint of Metaphor. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 11(2), 54-58. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/7370> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7370>

INTRODUCTION

Metaphor is a basic cognitive way in which people understand the world. Subjectivity on the part of metaphor constructor can be focused on in terms of three aspects, the subjective cognitive embodiment, multi-perspective and creativity. The inter-subjectivity on the part of metaphor interpreter is realized correspondingly in three aspects: dynamic and open interpretation, fusion of horizons by metaphor constructor and interpreter as well as the re-creation of metaphor by the interpreter. The fusion of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity constitutes an ideal way of constructing and interpreting metaphor.

Metaphor is linguistic phenomenon, as well as cognitive phenomenon. As a user of construction, it embodies its main effect. It shows that people are the user of metaphor, and bearing. People exert a main effect on metaphor. Interaction and mapping theory both intend to explain the process of generation of the metaphor, which in fact is the product of interaction of two concepts from two distinct domains. During the mapping from one domain to another, the concept is mapping to another domain, producing the meaning which is based on the similarity of the two domains. The effect of metaphor constructing relies on the interpreting of receptor. But knowledge and cultural background usually constrict the understanding of metaphor. Except for consideration of subjectivity, the receptor's receiving the information, affirmation and justifying its interpreting is the whole necessary process. Metaphor is a conceptual mapping. It is not a linguistic one, but from one domain to another (source domain, to target domain), not a word to another. Metaphors are actually cognitive tools that help us structure our thoughts and experiences in the world around us. On's living background and culture knowledge contribute a lot to his cognitive model forming, so a special cognitive model is constricted by cultural models.

Conceptual metaphor was first put forward by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), in the book *Metaphors We Live* published by University of Chicago Press. According to George Lakoff, Metaphors are actually cognitive tools that help us structure our thoughts and experiences in the world around us. It is a conceptual mapping, not a linguistic one, from one domain to another, not a word to another. And the two domains mentioned above in the definition refer to the two as following: Target domain—what is actually being talked about; and Source domain—the domain used as a basis for understanding target. According to Shu Dingfang, Interaction and mapping theory both intend to explain the

process of generation of the metaphor, which in fact is the product of interaction of two concepts from two distinct domain. During the mapping from one domain to another, the concept is diverted to another domain, producing the meaning which is based on the similarity of the two domains (*On the Mechanism of Metaphor Functioning*). According to this theory, since metaphor is constructed, how to interpret still varied a lot according to different knowledge background and different cultural foundation.

1. THE DEFINITION AND THE MECHANISM OF METAPHOR CONSTRUCTION

Conceptual metaphor was first put forward by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), in the book *Metaphors We Live* published by University of Chicago Press.

According to George Lakoff, metaphors are actually cognitive tools that help us structure our thoughts and experiences in the world around us. It is a conceptual mapping, not a linguistic one, from one domain to another, not a word to another. And the two domains mentioned above in the definition refer to the two as follows:

a) Target domain—what is actually being talked about.

b) Source domain—the domain used as a basis for understanding the target.

What should be emphasized is that: Conceptual metaphor is a kind of linguistic using phenomenon, which can only be produced under peculiar circumstance. One word can't be a metaphor. We can't find metaphor in the dictionary, which is changed by the transformation of language community and distinct thinking realm.

Here is an example to illustrate what mapping between two domains is:

Time is money!

As well known, it's common to say we have money, use money, waste money, spend money, budget money ..., so if time is money, the following sentences are right.

How do you spend your time?

Can you give me more time?

You are running out of your time!

You need to budget your time!

Do you have much time left?

Through this example, we can understand that, initially "time" and "money" belong to two different domains according to the concept and the meaning, but with the coherence and similarity principles, we construct the metaphor as "Time is money." This is a kind of mapping of two conceptual domains, between which there is similarity, and through the psychological construction of the metaphor user, the sentence can be cohered to others and can be understood. This is called the mechanism of the metaphor construction.

Currently more and more attention has been paid to the interaction of the two aspects of subjectivity, attracting more importance to the translator's activity instead of ignoring the interpreter's factors to ideal interpreting which is aimed at being produced since the metaphor is constructed.

There exists intersubjectivity between the addressee and the addresser in the process of metaphor interpretation, which guarantees the realization of intermetaphoricity. What is important here is that only when intermetaphoricity is fulfilled, can a metaphor be successfully understood. The main idea held in this research is that the existence of intersubjectivity is a necessary condition for the realization of intermetaphoricity which in turn is the ultimate goal of the existence of intersubjectivity (Wang, 2007).

People tend to attract their attention to the interaction of the multi-aspect of subjectivity in metaphor construction, which is more comprehensive in the understanding of metaphor construction, and which will help to construct the metaphor, then in turn help to interpret the metaphor, which is a basic cognitive way in which people understand the world. Subjectivity on the part of metaphor constructor can be focused on in terms of three aspects, the subjective cognitive embodiment, multi-perspective and creativity. The inter-subjectivity on the part of metaphor interpreter is realized correspondingly in three aspects: dynamic and open interpretation, fusion of horizons by metaphor constructor and interpreter as well as the re-creation of metaphor by the interpreter. The fusion of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity constitutes an ideal way of constructing and interpreting metaphor.

According to Shu Dingfang, Interaction and mapping theory both intend to explain the process of generation of the metaphor, which in fact is the product of interaction of two concepts from two distincts domain. During the mapping from one domain to another, the concept is diverted to another domain, producing the meaning which is based on the similarity of the two domains (*On the mechanism of metaphor functioning*). As Ungerer & Schmid (1996) pointed that: The forming of cognitive model relies on the cultural background, so it is under the limitation of one's cultural model. Generally speaking, metaphor can be divided into three classifications, ontological metaphor, orientational metaphor and structural metaphor.

1.1 Ontological Metaphor

An ontological metaphor is a metaphor that characterizes a non-physical object as a physical entity. According to Lakoff, ONTOLOGICAL METAPHOR means that human experiences with physical objects provide the basis for ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances. Ontological metaphors can serve various purposes.

eg: LIFE IS A JOURNEY

source: JOURNEY	target: LIFE
STARTING POINT	BIRTH
TRAVELER	PERSON
PATH	AGING
DESTINATION	DEATH
OBSTACLES	PROBLEMS IN LIFE
CROSSROADS	CHOICES

By ontological metaphors we give bounded surfaces to less clearly discrete entities (mountains, hedges, street corners) and categorize event, actions and status as substance. Take the experience of rising prices as an example, which can be metaphorically viewed as an entity via the noun inflation. This gives us a way to refer to experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

1.2 Orientational Metaphor

An orientational metaphor is a metaphor in which concepts are spatially related to each other. Orientational metaphors that are strongly cultural in content form an internally consistent set with those that emerge most directly from our physical experience. The up-down orientational metaphor can apply to situations that contain both physical and cultural elements, such as: He's at the peak of health. Here good health is associated with "up", in part because of the general metaphor that "Better is up" and perhaps also because when we are well we are on our feet, and when we are more likely to be lying down.

1.3 Structural Metaphor

A structural metaphor is a conventional metaphor in which one concept is understood and expressed in terms of another structured, sharply defined concept. In the structural metaphor ECONOMIC ACTIVITY is WAR, concepts from the source domain WARFARE are transferred to the target domain, because physical conflict is ubiquitous in human life and therefore quite well-structured and more readily understandable. It coherently structures the relations between the various factors in economic activity: business is war; the economy is a battlefield; competitors are warriors or even armies fighting each other, and economic activities are conceptualized in terms of attack and defense, as illustrated in the following example: As a result of the crisis, the Asians will strike back; they will launch an export offensive. (*Wall Street Journal*) The WAR metaphor is realized in the following schemata: ATTACK and DEFENSE as causes and WIN/LOSE as the result: "Successful attack and defense result in victory; unsuccessful attack and defense result in loss...." That is the cognitive typology or image-schema structure of the source domain in a way consistent with the structure of the target domain. In their "contemporary theory" of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson put forward three fundamental ways different from "classical theories" in which metaphor was only seen as a matter of language, not thought (202): (a) Metaphors are not linguistic

expressions but cross-domain mappings in the conceptual system. One domain, the source, is used to "conceptualize" a second. A metaphorical expression is simply a linguistic expression (word, phrase, and sentence) that is a surface realization of such a cross-domain mapping. (b) Metaphors are not restricted to novel or poetic linguistic expressions. Instead everyday abstract concepts like time, states, changes, causation, and purpose also turn out to be metaphorical. Because these metaphors are ubiquitous, automatic, and often communally shared in ordinary language which is called conventional metaphors by Lakoff and Johnson. (c) Metaphors are conceptual rather than linguistic. There is many complex and systematically organized networks of metaphorical expressions with which we talk about domains.

What's more, the effect of metaphor constructing relies on the interpreting of receptor. But knowledge and culture background usually constrict the understanding of metaphor. Except for consideration of one aspect of cognitive subjectivity as metaphor constructor, the receptor's receiving the information, affirmation and justifying its interpreting is the whole necessary process. And we should also pay attention that, due to the distinction between metaphor user and receptor which tend to have different interpreting and for the changeability and polysemy of metaphor, culture background and the dissidence of thinking domain should be mainly considered.

Before I wrote this essay, I have finished two important academic research reports as follows:

Completing the whole essay, we can find from the lines of the words it is emphasized on the "users" here refers partially to metaphor constructor, while in fact subjectivity is supposed to include two aspects: constructor and interpreter. In this way, taking another aspect into consideration to construct the metaphor in a better way, it will help to lead to an ideal interpreting (Gao, 2008).

This essay focused on cognitive subjectivity as metaphor user in the process of metaphor construction; Metaphor constructor is more often seen in this article, while the other aspect of cognitive subjectivity—interpreter is seldom mentioned. Mr. Wang emphasized partially on one aspect—metaphor constructor which I believe, is somehow inequitable and which will contribute to more limitations to ideal interpreting, because metaphor is a kind of interaction between metaphor constructor and interpreter, the lack of which will act as a barrier to ideal interpreting (Wang, 2007).

2. CASE ANALYSIS WITH THE GUIDING THEORIES

Metaphor is a kind of linguistic phenomenon, as well as a cognitive one. As a user of construction, it embodies its main effect. It shows that people are the users of

metaphor, and bearing. People exert a main effect on metaphor. However, the creativity of this essay relies on the different aspect of the research point. The preceding researchers have attracted much importance and significance of the subjectivity of metaphor construction, while much more attention was attracted to one aspect of metaphor user, ignoring the translator's factors as barrier to ideal interpreting.

In this section, I'd like to analyze the barrier to ideal interpreting from the aspect of interpreter, then demand the metaphor constructor to construct the metaphor in a different way. The typical examples of the different interpreting to the same metaphor construction because of the difference between Eastern and Western countries.

2.1 Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day

Analysis of this sentence: When reading this sentence, the Chinese maybe a little puzzled, for the Summer's day in China is often too hot with unpleasant climate and uncomfortable weather, while in England where Shakespere –the writer of this sentence, it is comfortable and pleasant, so it's common to those who get known about the Western culture to comprehend Shakesper's comparing his lover to the Summer's day which is enjoyable to stay with or stay in. In this way, to take this point into consideration, and to make some notes is better for the interpreter to understand what the metaphor constructor means by saying in this way.

2.2 I Can Only Say That He Is Pig-Headed

In China, people tend to translate this phrase as he is stupid, awkward and clumsy like a pig as a fat and lazy animal, but it is actually different in Western country that pig is always considered as a lovely and nice one, so this sentence should not translate as Chinese possibly do, we should understand that this sentence tend to praise this person instead of criticizing or looking down upon sub this sentence mentioned.

And here is another example:

Robert is a cruel wolf.

A wolf usually has multi-features which is difficult for the readers to choose one or many; so "wolf" in this sentence which people can associate with many aspects such as greedy, salacity, cruelty and so on. If only expressed with "Robert is a wolf." clear meaning can't be conveyed to readers. So the adjective "cruel", acts as an attributive word, gives explanation to interpreter, in which ideal interpreting is produced easily.

2.3 Clear Source Domains Resulting in Better Understanding of Target

Since source domain is used to understand target, we should try to use definite, exactly, clear source domain to help interpreters to understand the target. But in fact, metaphor constructors have the tendency to use some controversial source domain.

a) He is another Shylock.

As a source domain, Shylock tends to be thought as two kinds of two characteristics, a victim or a villain, what the author intends to convey, it is not clear.

b) You are just a Satan in modern society.

Is Satan a devil or a hero? With reader's distinct appreciation, this sentence will lead to different interpreting, which results from the controversial source domain.

From these two examples mentioned above, we conclude that when constructing metaphor, we should pay attention to the source domain used to understand the target in order to produce definite and clear target interpreting.

The effect of metaphor constructing relies on the interpreting of receptor. But knowledge and culture background usually constrict the understanding of metaphor. Except for consideration of one aspect of cognitive subjectivity as metaphor constructor, the receptor's receiving the information, affirmation and justifying its interpreting is the whole necessary process. And we should also pay attention that, due to the distinction between metaphor user and receptor which tend to have different interpreting and for the changeability and polysemy of metaphor, culture background and the dissidence of thinking domain should be mainly considered.

According to this theory, since metaphor is constructed, how to interpret still varied a lot according to different knowledge background and different cultural foundation. As Ungerer and Schmid (1996) pointed that: The forming of cognitive model relies on the cultural background, so it is under the limitation of one's cultural model.

CONCLUSION

What should be emphasized is that: Conceptual metaphor is a kind of linguistic using phenomenon, which can only be produced under peculiar circumstance. One word can't be a metaphor. We can't find metaphor in the dictionary, which is changed with the transformation of language community and distinct thinking realm. Metaphor is a basic cognitive way in which people understand the world. Subjectivity on the part of metaphor constructor can be focused on in terms of three aspects, the subjective cognitive embodiment, multi-perspective and creativity. The inter-subjectivity on the part of metaphor interpreter is realized correspondingly in three aspects: dynamic and open interpretation, fusion of horizons by metaphor constructor and interpreter as well as the re-creation of metaphor by the interpreter. The fusion of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity constitutes an ideal way of constructing and interpreting metaphor.

Based on the theory brought by the great cognitive linguistic Lakoff and on the preceding research by well-known experts in China, this essay is directed at important elements as barriers to idea interpreting since metaphor is constructed, taking which into consideration is very beneficial to produce ideal interpreting as expected by the constructor. Instead of focusing on the theoretical definition or classification or more theory, this article is analyzing this subject with practical daily examples from a totally different and new aspect, putting forward the demand to the metaphor constructors from the viewpoint of interpreters, then to construct the metaphor in a distinct way taking these factors into consideration, then ideal interpreting can be expected soon.

REFERENCES

- Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M. (2002). *The way we think*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gao, M. Y. (2008). On main effect of user in metaphor. *Hunan YEJIN Vocational Technological College Academic Journal*, 8(3), 89-91.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Ungerer, F., & Schmind H. J. (1996). *An introduction to cognitive linguistics*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Wang, W. B. (2007). On the subjectivity in metaphor construction. *Foreign Language Research*, (5), 17-22.
- Wang, W. B. (2007). Intersubjectivity and intermetaphoricity involved in metaphor interpretation. *Foreign Languages Academic Journal*, (1), 56-60.