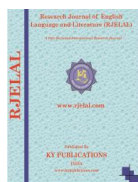**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

A COGNITIVE INTERPRETATION OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN
"WAITING FOR GODOT"

JINGYI YE

Master Candidate, Department of Humanities and Communication, Zhejiang University of Finance &
Economics, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China
Email:yjy459655554@163. com

Abstract

This paper studies the text of "Waiting for Godot" from the perspective of cognitive language, focusing on three aspects of conceptual metaphor: structural metaphor, orientation metaphor and ontological metaphor. In terms of structural metaphor, the target domain and the source domain are distinguished. Distinguish positive factors and negative factors in azimuth metaphor, and make statistics of up, down, off. In the ontological metaphor, distinguish the difference between anthropomorphic metaphor, container metaphor, and entity metaphor.

Key words : conceptual metaphor, structural metaphor, orientation metaphor, conceptual metaphor

Introduction

Aristotle, the famous philosopher of ancient Greece, was the first to study metaphor. He found that metaphor played a great role in enhancing the appeal of texts and put forward the concept of classical metaphor, then applied it to the study of poetic vocabulary. Aristotle thinks that text is used in the metaphor, then its expressiveness and appeal will be far more than before. However, his consideration is not comprehensive enough. He limits metaphor to the scope of vocabulary and does not realize its significance for the whole sentence. In the traditional theory of linguistics, metaphor is defined as a kind of rhetorical device. This understanding is rather one-sided and fails to see the complexity of metaphor.

Lakoff &johnson put forward the concept of "Conceptual Metaphor Theory" in The Metaphor We Live by. One of the innovative theories in the book is that"metaphor is not a problem of language but a problem of thinking". They proposed that the research should not be limited to the study of words, which led people to break through the scope of language vocabulary and move towards the field of cognitive language. Lakoff & Johnson firmly believes that the common conceptual system on which thinking and action are based is metaphorical in nature, and most of our conceptual system is metaphorical. Metaphors are ubiquitous in our lives, and everything we experience every day is filled with them. Therefore, Lakoff & Johnson believed that metaphor is a cognitive mechanism, which includes the original domain, the target domain, the mapping, the image schema, and the ideal cognitive model. The metaphor refers to the mapping of the simple and easy-to-understand source domain to the complex and difficult-to-understand target domain in a conventional way.

The significance of metaphor analysis

"Waiting for Godot" is a work handed down by Samuel Beckett, a representative of the absurd drama of the 1950s. Many people in the world want to have salvation, and "Godot" is the salvation of Vladimir and Estragon. They were poor and even incoherent, but they were still waiting for Godot. No one knows whether Godot will show up tomorrow or not, but at least there is some hope for Vladimir and Estragon, who have been fighting against fate with their small strength. In contrast, although Lucky's name means happiness, it is a poor man who has been crushed by society. He has no fighting spirit of resistance, can live panting breath is his goal. Beckett used the character image of "Lucky" to ridicule those farmers who abused others, which is a wake-up call to society after World War II. The status of "Waiting for Godot" in the theater industry is unquestionable. In recent years, research works in the field of literature have continued to emerge. But in cognitive language text analysis and lack of system, from the view of conceptual metaphors of "Waiting for Godot" sentence segment analysis has a certain significance.

Modernist philosophy always believes that life is meaningless, and emptiness and eternity accompany existence. As a world-famous drama work, Beckett's refined brushwork and the language used in portraying characters are worthy of appreciation. A conceptual metaphor has been widely concerned in philosophy, logic, linguistics, and other fields. In recent years, numerous scholars have studied Shakespeare's plays from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, and the research papers have sprung up like a spring. Beckett is also a world-renowned playwright, and his works themselves have a high research value. Metaphor is a complex process of thinking. It is of great significance to study this immortal work with the conceptual metaphor theory under cognitive linguistics. Conceptual metaphor theory has formed a relatively systematic and scientific theoretical system, as a persuasive cognitive system. The study of metaphor not only improves people's ability to understand the content but also provides a new way of thinking and a new method for the study of the text.

Conceptual Metaphor of "Waiting for Godot"

Lakoff & Johnson divided conceptual metaphors into three categories: structural metaphor, orientation metaphor and ontological metaphor. The structural metaphor refers to using one concept to construct another concept, such as "time is money". The orientation metaphor refers to that one concept constructs another concept through a complete system, such as "happiness is top" and "control is top", which leads to "emotions are high" and "under my control". Ontological metaphor is to understand experience in terms of objects and substance , and treat them as discrete entities or substances in a unified category, such as "mountainside." There is no clear boundary between "night and night", but we all regard it as discrete. Some scholars use these three metaphor theories to analyze texts, among which the more famous is Shakespeare's drama studies.

Orientation metaphor

The orientation metaphor is a kind of schematic metaphor, which is also closely related to real life. Most of them come from physical behaviors, like people's eyes are always facing the front, so like "front", "foreground", "road ahead", etc.

1. Examples of azimuth Orientation metaphor

Lakoff & johnson believes that being healthy, happy, beautiful, positive, etc. are positive factors, and the corresponding ones have different meanings. In conceptual metaphor theory, positional metaphors are usually expressed as up and down, high and low, front and back, etc.

(1) Estragon, sitting on a **low** mound, is trying to **take off** his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again.

Estragon sat on a low mound, struggling to take off his boot, which made him uncomfortable. "Take off" is a negative meaning. In this sentence, Estragon ostensibly wants to get rid of shoes, but really wants to get rid of this bad life. This is also the reason why Estragon wants to sit there waiting for Godot. He

firmly believes that Godot can take him out of trouble and get a new life.

(2) ESTRAGON: (giving up again). Nothing to be done.

VLADIMIR: (**advancing** with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart). I'm beginning to **come round to** that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. (He broods, musing on the struggle. Turning to Estragon.) So there you are again.

Estragon moved forward with short, stiff steps, though he was stiff at the time, still trying to wait for Godot. The "forward" in the orientation metaphor is the positive meaning, and the original domain of "forward" is used to reflect Estragon's indomitable.

(3) VLADIMIR: I'm glad to see you **back**. I thought you were **gone** forever.
ESTRAGON: Me too.
VLADIMIR: Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? (He reflects.) **Get up** till I embrace you.

In this sentence, these words belong to the state domain. When Estragon comes back, Vladimir is very happy and makes him stand up to give Estragon a big hug. "Gone" in this case is negative. Vladimir had thought Estragon would never return.

(4) VLADIMIR: Hand in hand from **the top of** the Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were respectable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even **let us up**. (Estragon tears at his boot) What are you doing?

Vladimir wanted to jump from the Eiffel Tower hand in hand with Estragon. "From the top of" and "let me up" are emotional orientation domains. Vladimir and Estragon were already in a state of collapse at the time, and Godot, who had never come, shattered their last hope in life.

2. A summary of off, up and down

Location metaphors appear in "Waiting for Godot" mostly in the form of up, down, and off, and part of the data is presented in the form of tables.

1) Off

Pozzo takes off his hat. (POZZO)

He takes off his glasses. (POZZO)

Taking off my boot. （ESTRAGON）

But take the weight off your feet. (ESTRAGON)

Estragon is trying to take off his boot. (ESTRAGON)

Boots must be taken off every day. (VLADIMIR)

Estragon with a supreme effort succeeds in pulling off his boot. （ESTRAGON）……

2) Up

Get up till I embrace you. (VLADIMIR)

They wouldn't even let us up. (VLADIMIR)

He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. (ESTRAGON)

Noise of Lucky getting up and picking up his baggage. （LUCKY）

Vladimir watches him, then goes and picks up the boot. (VLADIMIR)

That's why they shriek when you pull them up. (VLADIMIR)

……

3) Down

Pozzo sits down. (POZZO)

Lucky puts down the bag. （LUCKY）

Lucky puts down bag and basket. （LUCKY）

Goes and sits down on the mound. (ESTRAGON)

He drinks from the bottle, puts it down and begins to eat. （LUCKY）

You want to know why he doesn't put down his bags, as you call them. (POZZO)

…..

Key words	Number	The proportion
Off	24	21. 8%
Up	53	48. 2%
Down	33	30%

As can be seen from the above table, UP accounts for the largest proportion, up to 48. 2%. In combination with the examples cited, it can be seen that Vladimir is the most used person. The proportion of OFF was the least, with only 21. 8%, and Estragon used OFF the most times. Lakoff & johnson listed 11 daily languages and common orientation metaphors in life and summarized the number of up/down metaphors. In the cognitive mechanism, "up" represents the meaning of positivity, while "down" and "off" represent negativity. Although "up" appears the most frequently, the sum of "down" and "off" far exceeds him. Generally speaking, most of the characters are profile portraits of the miserable people of that era. The characters portrayed in "Waiting for Godot" are negative and lonely.

From the data, it can be seen that Vladimir is the happier and more positive symbol in Waiting for Godot, while Lucky and Estragon are very negative and downcast. Because Lucky is the most tragic character among them, he has no freedom, and he can only eat the leftover bones of Pozzo while doing coolies every day. But years of suffering have made him lose the courage to fight, for Lucky, survival is also a kind of happiness. Pozzo always treated him like an animal, tying a rope around his neck and making him carry a pile of luggage that Lucky could not put down even when he was resting. Estragon is a tramp, and he has been very decadent. He usually slept in ditches and was beaten up by others. But there was a good friend who comforted and hugged him and even shared his meager food. One of the things Estragon does most often is to sit at the intersection with a good friend and wait for Godot. They don't know who Godot is and where he comes from. But they stubbornly believed that Godot could help them change the status quo, so they dragged their exhausted body and waited. Estragon and Vladimir considered suicide, jumping from the Eiffel Tower or hanging from a small tree by the side of the road. But in the end, they still have a little hope. What is hope? "Godot" is hope.

Ontological metaphor

Ontological metaphor connects the abstract, unfamiliar and intangible with the familiar.

Ontological metaphors are mainly divided into entity metaphors, object metaphors, container metaphors, anthropomorphic metaphors and so on. What appears most in "Waiting for Godot" is the personification of things and activities.

1. *Container metaphor*

Lakoff & Johnson said, "We are a physical being, wrapped in skin and separated from the rest of the world. We see the world outside the body as the external world. Each of us is a container, with a wrapped appearance and an inside-out direction. Even if some objects are boundless, we can still give them a standard boundary. "

(1) VLADIMIR: Adieu.

POZZO: Adieu.

ESTRAGON: No no. **Silence**.

POZZO: I don't seem to be able…(long hesitation)…to depart.

ESTRAGON: Such is **life**.

This paragraph in the script involves a lot of silence and farewell. The container metaphor refers to treating the ontology as a container, giving it a sense of boundary. In this sentence, "life" has become a kind of container, and life is full of "farewell" and "silence".

(2) ESTRAGON: (giving up again). Nothing to be done.
VLADIMIR:All my life I've tried to **put it from me,** saying Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle.

Estragon has been fighting with shoes since he first tried to take them off, which made him extremely uncomfortable. The "shoes" here reflect the "bad life". What he really wants to get rid of is not the shoes, but this miserable life.

(3) ESTRAGON: Ah stop blathering and helping me off with this **bloody thing**.

The "bloody thing" in this sentence has the same meaning as the "tiring life" mentioned earlier. This sentence is also what Estragon said when he was struggling with his shoes.

(4) ESTRAGON:(very insidious). But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? (Pause.) Or Monday? (Pause.) Or Friday?
VLADIMIR:(looking wildly about him, as though the date was inscribed **in the landscape**). It's not possible!

The "landscape" in this sentence is a kind of container, when Estragon and Vladimir began to wonder what day of the week is today. Vladimir kept looking around, as if there was a date stamp in the landscape.

(5) Lucky weeps.

ESTRAGON:He is crying!
POZZO: **Old dogs** have more dignity.
Even though Lucky acts like a wooden man, he has a weak emotional presence. Lucky also has emotions and feels sad.

(6) POZZO: He's stopped crying. (To Estragon.) You have replaced him as it were. (Lyrically.) **The tears of the world are a constant quantity.**

Regarding the "world" as a container, there is a constant amount of tears in the world, which defines a specific value for the fuzzy tears.

2. Entity metaphor

Substantial metaphor refers to the understanding of experience as entity and substance through the latter.

(1) ESTRAGON: Avenged! Vladimir examines the hat, peers inside it.

POZZO: Give me that! (He snatches the hat from Vladimir, throws it on the ground, tramples on it.) There's an end to his **thinking**!

VLADIMIR: His hat?

POZZO: He can't **think** without his **hat**.

The "hat" in this sentence is physical, but Lucky can't think without his hat and becomes a wooden person who can't speak. Here, "think" and "hat" are linked together, which belongs to the category of entity metaphor.

(2) VLADIMIR: (gloomily). It's too much for one man. (Pause. Cheerfully.) On the other hand

what's the good of **losing heart** now, that's what I say. We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties.

The "heart" in here is the content of the entity metaphor. On the surface, it looks like a lost heart, but in Vladimir 's heart, he began to doubt whether Godot exists. The endless waiting had worn them down mentally, and he began to think that if he lost his heart, he could stop the cycle.

(3) ESTRAGON: Don't be stubborn! (Vladimir softens. They embrace. Estragon recoils.)You stink of **garlic**!

VLADIMIR: It's for the kidneys. (Silence. Estragon looks attentively at the tree.) What do we do now?

Garlic, with its pungent and pungent taste, is not popular with many people. Estragon thought that he looked like a garlic, and that he smelled very punishingly.

(4) POZZO: I hope to get **a good price fo**r him. The truth is you can't **drive** such **creatures** away. The best thing would be to kill them. Lucky makes to return to his **burdens**.

Poor Lucky is no longer a person with an independent personality in Pozzo

's eyes, he is like an animal or an object that only belongs. Pozzo felt that he could be measured by price, and even thought he could kill Lucky directly. The "burden" here refers to not only the heavy luggage he needs to take, but also the unspeakable emotions that he bears in his heart.

3. Anthropomorphic metaphor

(1) ESTRAGON: I was. (**Gesture towards his rags.)** Isn't that obvious?

VLADIMIR: Where was I…How's your foot?

Estragon bids farewell to his rags, which gives the emotion of the person wearing them here and reflects a little reluctance in Estragon's heart.

(2) ESTRAGON:Where are the leaves ?

VLADIMIR: It must be dead.

ESTRAGON: **No more weeping**.

The trees here won't cry anymore, and the plants won't cry. It is a lonely tree, and Estragon and Vladimir are also lonely people in this world. It's here that Estragon's emotions transfer to the plants. He felt that the death of the tree was a relief. He felt inside that if people died too, he would not be sad.

(3) VLADIMIR: With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow. That's why they **shriek when you pull them up**. Did you not know that?

ESTRAGON: Let's hang ourselves immediately!

VLADIMIR: From a bough? (They go towards the tree.) I wouldn't **trust it**.

When the mandala is pulled up, the mandala will scream, which gives the emotion of the mandrakes. And when they decided to hang on this tree, Vladimir saw this slender tree, even his largest branch looked fragile.

(4) VLADIMIR: Consult his family.

ESTRAGON: His friends

VLADIMIR: **His books.**

ESTRAGON: **His bank account.**

When the two of them imagine Godot coming later, they expect him to be willing to take them away from their pain. But it is also assumed that Godot may hesitate, he needs to ask his family and friends, as well as his books and bank account. "Books and bank accounts" are all objects that can be asked, and books and bank accounts have emotions.

(5) POZZO: But behind this veil of gentleness and peace, **night is charging** (vibrantly) and will **burst upon us** (snaps his fingers) pop! like that!

Pozzo thought that in this gentle and peaceful environment, the night would still rush towards them recklessly. The night here is a rampage and reckless man.

Structural metaphor

The structural metaphor refers to the construction of a highly structured concept from another concept, which is divided into "source domain" and "target domain". Use the concrete and familiar concepts existing in the source domain to map the abstract and unfamiliar concepts in the target domain. Structural metaphor is based on some conventional concepts in people's lives.

An example of a structural metaphor commonly used by Lakoff & johnson is "life is a journey", which conceptualizes "life". The origin domain is "journey" and the target domain is "life". This example is based on our life experience. The rationale is that the journey will end after all, and a bumpy journey will end in one day even if it takes several years. And a person who has gone through many hardships and experienced all kinds of situations in the world will have a day of old age. The first-level category "life is a journey" has spawned many other examples, such as:

Life is a play.

You are the most beautiful scenery.

Flowers are the messengers of spring.

The most basic pattern of structural metaphor is that "A" is "B", "A" is the target domain, and "B" is the source domain. The working mechanism is through cognitive reasoning, and some of the features in B are applied to A through mapping. The existing structural metaphors in Waiting for Godot are as follows:

(1) ESTRAGON: What do you expect, you always wait till the last moment.
VLADIMIR: (musingly). The last moment…(He meditates.) Hope deferred make something sick, who said that?

When Estragon asks Vladimir what he is looking forward to, Vladimir suddenly asks who said "Hope deferred make the something sick". In this sentence, Godot is hope. "Godot" is the target domain, "hope" is the source domain, and hope is a positive and energetic thing. In their eyes, Godot is the hope of two people struggling in poverty, and they look forward to Godot's appearance to lead them out of the sea of misery. "Estragon and Vladimir is sick". Godot never showed up, they waited day after day, and their belated hope made them anxious and exhausted.

(2) VLADIMIR: (to Lucky). How dare you! It's abominable! Such a good master! Crucify him

like that! After so many years! Really!
POZZO: (sobbing). He used to be so kind…so helpful…and entertaining…and my good **angel**…and now…he's **killing me**.

In this sentence, "Angel is lucky", "Angel" is the target domain, and "lucky" is the source domain. Pozzo hypocritically praised Lucky, who was dying of his torment, as a kind and helpful person. Because angels have always been symbols of purity and beauty. Pozzo ends by mentioning that Lucky is about to kill him, implying that Lucky has turned from an angel into a demon because demons rob people of their lives.

(3) VLADIMIR: (hurt, coldly). May one inquire where His **Highness** spent the night?
ESTRAGON: In a ditch.

In this example, Estragon is the highness. "highness" is the target domain, and "Estragon" is the source domain. The words are Vladimir's condolence to Estragon, referring to him as "My Highness", which is the mutual care of two poor people.

(4) VLADIMIR: Funny. (He knocks on the **crown** as though to dislodge a foreign body, peers into it again, puts it on again.) Nothing to be done.

The "hat" in this sentence is the target domain, and the "crown" is the source domain, which maps some of the features in the crown to the hat. Vladimir wore his hat as solemnly as if he were wearing a priceless crown. You could see how much he cared about the hat.

(5) ESTRAGON: I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we'll go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon. We'll swim. We'll be happy.
VLADIMIR: You should have been **a poet**.

In this sentence, Vladimir called Estragon a poet, "Estragon is a poet". "Estragon" is the target domain, and "Poet" is the source domain. Estragon thought of the Dead Sea and said that the two would go to the Dead Sea together, but the thought of the Dead Sea made him feel thirsty. At this moment,

Estragon is like a poet with a wild imagination, and he feels that he has romantic feelings.

(6) VLADIMIR: Everybody. It's the only version they know.
ESTRAGON: People are **bloody ignorant apes**. He rises painfully, goes limping to extreme left, halts, gazes into distance off with his hand screening his eyes, turns, goes to extreme right, gazes into distance.

Estragon is still very disappointed with humans, "Humans are apes. "Humans" are the target domain, "Apes" is the source domain. In Estragon's mind, human beings are no different from animals. He is disappointed with the world and has lost faith in human beings.

(7) VLADIMIR: After having sucked all the good out of him you chuck him away like a…**like a banana skin**. Really . . .

POZZO: What can I have done with that briar?
ESTRAGON: He's a scream. He's lost his mind.

Vladimir believed that Pozzo was ruthless and unjust, and Pozzo exploited Lucky. Lucky is like that banana peel or wild rose, thrown away after being used by Pozzo, which highlights Lucky's tragic fate.

(8) POZZO: You must hold him. (Pause.) Come on, come on, raise him up.
ESTRAGON: To **hell** with him!

"Hell is the end", "the end" is the target domain, and "hell" is the source domain. Estragon gradually came to understand the cold-blooded nature of Pozzo. He felt that a man like Pozzo could not go to heaven, and the only hell was his ultimate destination. Lucky will end up in hell because she is too cowardly.

Conclusion

People no longer regard metaphor as a kind of linguistic imagination, but as a part of people's cognitive ability. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, metaphor research in literary works plays an important role in revealing characters' hearts and emotions. Lakoff & johnson's conceptual metaphor is based on empiricism. Empiricism holds that experience is the basic reality, and people's experience of objective things requires a certain cognitive framework. The basic emotion of the play

can be better defined by using the orientation metaphor, ontological metaphor and structural metaphor to analyze the text. In recent years, the development trend of interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary research has made metaphor a new perspective for discourse analysis. The cognitive interpretation of "Waiting for Godot" under the conceptual metaphor theory can enable readers to understand the world constructed and experience the sincere emotions of the author.

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