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CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATION OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN RUSSIAN AND CHINESE

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Abstract

This article is devoted to cross-cultural variation of the WAR conceptual metaphor in Russian and Chinese languages, the main purpose is to clarify the mental concept of WAR in two cultures. The research methodology is based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the conceptual mapping method, which allows to analyze, and to calculate the perception level of conceptual metaphor speech forms. To conduct research 6 most common source domains were identified for one target domain of WAR, and for each source domain 4 sentences with metaphor within were compiled. It became the material for the survey of Russian and Chinese military personnel, who were asked to mark each sentence according to personal linguistic sense as complying the language norm or not. The results indicate rather significant differences in conceptual understanding of the war phenomenon between two nations. Besides, during the study, it was possible to identify the stability of each metaphorical model. To do this, a special indicator is introduced in the article - the dispersion of the conceptual metaphor, which is calculated by comparing the level of perception of the implicit level of the metaphor, which expressed in specific sentences, and the explicit level, that is the metaphorical model according to principle A - this B. The study showed that for Chinese culture there are no problematic issues related to the understanding of warfare and its nature, while in Russian culture, the comprehension of war in some source domains is extremely unstable.

1.   Introduction

War as a special specific type of human activity has existed throughout the history of mankind. The results of natural science researches converge on the thesis of "struggle for existence" as the basis of evolution. In this regard, it seems reasonable to assume that the nation's conceptual idea of WAR largely reflects the fundamental understanding of good and evil, life and death on which a national character, called a mentality, is formed. Of course, war cannot be the only indicator of the national picture of the world, but the study of this sphere of life seems to be very revealing to get some idea of national character.

That's why it seems actual to study the concept of war in different cultures more detailed using the achievements of modern conceptual linguistics and metaphorology for in-depth research of the concept "WAR". Nowadays the study of the conceptual metaphor of WAR and ARMY, both as a source domain and as a purpose domain, cause genuine interest of scientists from different countries. A lot of research devoted to the war metaphor in public political discourse (Budiman, 2019; Flusberg, Matlock, & Thibodeau, 2018; Logachev, 2014), some analyze the implementation of WAR metaphor regarding to economics, trade, medicine and other spheres (Hu & Xu, 2017; Wiggins, 2012). Studying metaphor models of the Armed Forces is also quite popular (Izdebska, 2016; Kalinin, 2018; Mavleev & Fomin, 2019).

In the light of foregoing the analysis of the concept of WAR in the light of Russian and Chinese cultures seems especially appealing, as the historical experience of peoples in Russia and China shows a different approach not only to the ways and methods of warfare, but also to the very essence of war as a form of activity.

The previous research in this field presents the results of the classical conceptual-definition analysis of the WAR concept in Russian and Chinese cultures, which showed the existing similarities and differences in language forms representing war essence. Besides, the results of the psycholinguistic experiment conducted in the form of a survey allowed to show some features of the cognitive component of the studied concept (Kalinin & Mavleev, 2020).

In this paper, the study of the WAR concept will be continued from a different perspective. This approach is based on the analysis of the perception of speech implementations of different conceptual metaphors. Such methodology allows to supplement the understanding of the studied concept content, as it focuses on the analysis of the speech form of the conceptual metaphor.

The research methodology we propose is a kind of research in the context of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), it regards the dependence of conceptual metaphors on culture and history if the nation (Kövecses, 2005, 2017; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

2.   Problem Statement

Our study is based on the main provisions of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (further CMT), as described in the works of (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 2008). Briefly recall that, according to this theory, the process of interaction between knowledge structures, usually called as conceptual domains: source domain and target domain, is the most important characteristic of the mental conceptualization of the surrounding reality. Technically, the conceptual metaphor is a transfer of the meaning of the source

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domain to the target domain. This transfer is possible only as a result of human interaction with the surrounding world and of course it reflects this interaction.

Based on these postulates of classical CMT, we can draw the reverse conclusion that if a metaphor is the result of human interaction with the surrounding world, then, analyzing the metaphor, we can understand what this interaction was like. At the same time, we can assume that the interaction with the surrounding world of different peoples was different, so the perception of the content of conceptual metaphors will differ.

In modern cognitive linguistics, the fact that particular speech manifestation of conceptual metaphors depends on cultural and historical features of speakers is considered reasonable. As Kövecses (2005) pointed out, "Metaphors can vary and they differ in two main dimensions: intercultural and intracultural" (p.13).

The intracultural variation of metaphor is traditionally in the focus of the attention of various researchers. (Kovář, 2019; Littlemore, 2019). Metaphorical models can have diachronic changes, i.e. undergo serious transformations over time (Gevaert, 2002). Kövecses (2005) notes that the intracultural variation is subject to different factors and can be divided into social, religious, subcultural, ethnic and others (p. 83). There are a huge number of examples of intracultural metaphorical variation, and we encounter them everywhere: men of different social backgrounds metaphorize their relationships with women in different ways, representatives of different subcultures have different perceptions of honor, dignity, and morality. These variations are due to the different life experiences that people have throughout their lives.

In one of the previous studies, the relationship between the perception of the WAR metaphor for representatives of the Russian culture with different social and personal experiences was analyzed. The same metaphorical models were offered for analysis to military personnel with combat experience, soldiers with no combat experience, and civilians unrelated to the army. The study results showed that the conceptual metaphor models primarily depend on the personal experience. (Kalinin, 2020).

Cross-cultural variation of metaphorical models mainly consists in the difference in conceptualization and categorization of the surrounding reality from the point of view of different cultures. There is quite a lot of research in this direction, most of them are devoted to the differences in cognitive models of one phenomenon (Baranyiné, 2018; Boroditsky, 2001; Mussolff, 2016; Toyota, 2018).

As an example, I will give Boroditsky's (2001) research on the concept of time in Chinese and English. In her work, Boroditsky (2001) demonstrates that in the Chinese language there are time words with spatial meaning on the vertical axis (上个月 shànggèyuè - last month, literally "the upper month"), and it forms a specific for the Chinese culture and mentality spatial format of perception of time - "vertically", in contrast to the existing perception of the Western culture "horizontally" (for example, "before the weekend").

According to Kövecses (2005), the cross-cultural variation of metaphorical models can occur in three different types:

1. Different cultures have different source domains for the same target domain or vice versa.

2. In different cultures, source domains for the same target domain are almost the same, but one language/culture shows a clear preference for some of the conceptual metaphors that are employed, and this preference differs from culture to culture.

3. A certain conceptual metaphor may be unique and specific to only one culture. In this research, we rely on the second type of cross-cultural variation, which is reflected in the research methodology. We will investigate the Russian and Chinese culture preference to a set of certain source domains for one target domain of WAR.

In addition to the theoretical understanding of the cross-cultural variation of conceptual metaphors, this paper also investigates the problem of perception of conceptual metaphors in the minds of representatives of a certain culture.

As it is known, all conceptual metaphors have a simplified formula based on the principle "A is B", where A is the target domain, and B is the source domain. For example, ARGUMENT is WAR, LIFE is ADVENTURE, TIME is FOLLOWING LINE, and so on. These formulas are implemented in a speech in the form of word combinations and sentences using lexemes from relevant semantic areas. For example, "*I won the argument*", "*He rushed through life without looking back*", "*Our time was extremely limited*".

In this study, we call simplified formulas for conceptual metaphors an implicit level, while metaphors verbalized in sentences perform as an explicit level. Our theoretical assumption is based on the fact that if we analyze the different perception levels, both implicit and explicit, of the same metaphors, we can get some new understanding of metaphor stability. If the perception in explicit and implicit levels will be approximately the same, we can conclude that the studied conceptual metaphor is stable. If we come across obvious differences in implicit and explicit levels, we must look for the reasons for such differences.

3. Research Questions

Based on the CMT in its classical form, as well as on research in the field of cross-cultural variation of conceptual metaphors, we set ourselves the task of exploring two major theoretical problems:

1. Intercultural variations of metaphor;
2. Perception of implicit and explicit levels of conceptual metaphor.

Our research is based on several initial hypotheses:

1. Social and political life phenomena's conceptual comprehension manifested in a certain set of cognitive metaphorical models may differ within different languages and culture groups.
2. The explicit and implicit levels of the conceptual metaphor do not always coincide.

Comparative analysis of the perception of speech forms of metaphorical models, as well as analysis of the perception of the implicit level of conceptual metaphor, is an effective tool for in-depth analysis of multi-level mental concepts.

The object of the study is a speech form of WAR concept in Russian and Chinese cultures, expressed in conceptual metaphors with the WAR target domain. The subject of the research is the perception of specific linguistic forms of conceptual metaphors with the WAR target domain and different source domains.

4.   Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the verbal form of the WAR concept in different cultures.

To achieve this goal, a number of sequential tasks need to be accomplished:

1. to conduct a comparative analysis of the perception of speech forms of the WAR conceptual metaphor in Russian and Chinese cultures;

2. to conduct a comparative analysis of the dependence of the explicit and implicit levels of the WAR conceptual metaphor in Russian and Chinese cultures.

5.   Research Methods

In order to confirm the above theoretical assumptions, the study of the perception of conceptual metaphors with a common WAR target domain by representatives of Russian and Chinese cultures was carried out.

Our methodology consists of several interdependent stages:

1. Selection of source domains for the WAR target domain;

2. Development of a verbal matrix of speech implementation of each metaphor;

3. Survey of respondents (servicemen of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the People's Liberation Army of China);

4. Summing up and data analysis.

Each stage involved several steps in sequence. At the first stage, i.e. selection of source domains for the WAR target domain, used the method of conceptual mapping of Ahrens (2010). This research step was described in more detail in the article on the intracultural variation of the WAR metaphor (Kalinin, 2020).

As a result of this stage 6 most common source areas for the WAR target domain were identified: WAR is GAME, WAR is THEATER, WAR is COMPETITION, WAR is GAMBLING, WAR is LESSON, WAR is DEATH.

At the next stage, the specific linguistic content of the selected source domains for the studied target domain was specified in order to create a verbal matrix for practical research (Ahrens, 2010, p. 192). This stage is also based on the previously tried and tested method of conceptual mapping.

It should be noted that the matrix presented below in Table 1 was translated into Chinese by a certified specialist, and the content of the translation was specified from a native speaker. At the same time, some metaphors were slightly modified while retaining their belonging to the semantic field of the source domain.

Table 01. Verbal Matrix for Linguocognitive Experiment

Sentence	Source Domain
1) We lost this battle, but won the war.	GAME
2) This battle did not go according to a planned scenario.	THEATER
3) We hardly managed to win this arms race.	COMPETITION
4) We were so used to fighting that we couldn't stop, the war beckoned us like the best casino.	GAMBLING

5) The enemy has given us difficult homework.	LESSON
6) The war became a mass grave for our entire generation.	DEATH
7) Using chemical weapons is a violation of game rules.	GAME
8) The theatre of warfare covered the whole of Europe.	THEATER
9) As a result of an intense struggle, we managed to score off.	COMPETITION
10) We blew the jackpot by taking over warehouses with enemy weapons.	GAMBLING
11) This fight was the best teacher for young fighters.	LESSON
12) After the fight, we looked at each other like living dead.	DEATH
13) Troops were moving around the battlefield as if they were playing child game catch me if you can.	GAME
14) In this battle we had to play the role of a mosquito barking at an elephant.	THEATER
15) In the battle it felt as if we were running against the enemy, trying to be the first to reach the altitude.	COMPETITION
16) The stakes in this battle were too high.	GAMBLING
17) Heavy losses during yesterday's fight taught us to better prepare for the offensive.	LESSON
18) Our deadly weapon has shocked the enemy.	DEATH
19) Generals moved the regiments and battalions like chess pieces.	GAME
20) During the war, mothers only had to be spectators in the brutal play their children were playing.	THEATER
21) The captured village passed from hand to hand like a ball in volleyball.	COMPETITION
22) In this battle we all put on the line.	GAMBLING
23) We had a difficult task to accomplish in this battle.	LESSON
24) There was a coffin silence on the battlefield.	DEATH

The third stage was a survey of respondents. A total of 107 people aged 18 to 71, mostly males with an average age of 36, took part in the survey. That fully reflects the average military man image. Russian-speaking respondents were represented by 56 people, 23 of whom have combat experience, 51 - Chinese language respondents, no combat experience.

The survey of respondents was conducted by the method of polling for Chinese military personnel and online through Google. Forms for Russian-speaking respondents. The electronic questionnaire and the paper questionnaire were completely identical in content, so the results obtained through both channels will be considered equivalent.

The questionnaire offered two tasks:

Task 1 was devoted to the participants' perception of specific speech forms of realization of different source domains for the WAR target domain. The specific task was according to the language sense assess on a scale of 1 to 10 the adequacy of the sentences we developed. For survey participants, the assignment was as follows: "Estimate between 1 and 10 how likely you could use sentences below, where 1 – "never said that" and 10 – "I used the same or very similar expression". The level of perception of the conceptual metaphor for each source domain was calculated as an arithmetic mean of the perception of all respirators for each of the 4 sentences.

Task 2 was devoted to the analysis of the conceptual metaphor explicit level, in other words, the participants had to agree on a scale from 1 to 5 with the specified expression of the type "WAR is the Game/Theatre/Death" and so on, where 1 – "disagree", 5 – "fully agree". The acceptance rate of explicit form was calculated as an arithmetic mean of this value for all respondents.

Comparing the results of the acceptance of both forms of conceptual metaphor, explicit and implicit levels, some kind of difference in the indicators of its perception was revealed. I propose to denote this value as a "dispersion of the conceptual metaphor" and calculate it as a percentage. The principle of calculation is very simple: for example, for the GAME source domain the value of acceptance of the implicit level (the specific sentences) will be 5, and the explicit plan (formula of conceptual metaphor "A is B") - 2. That's what we have: 5 is 50% of the maximum value of 10, and 2 is 40% of the maximum value of 5, the total dispersion value is 10%.

6. Findings

Above we pointed out that in this study we have a purpose to study the speech form of the WAR mental concept in two cultures, and we should conduct a comparative analysis of the perception of speech forms of the conceptual metaphor with the WAR target domain and different source domains in Russian and Chinese cultures.

The results of this analysis are presented in the Table 02 below.

Table 02. The results of the survey on the perception of the WAR conceptual metaphor speech forms

	GAME	THEATER	COMPETITION	GAMBLING	LESSON	DEATH
Russian	5,6	4,4	4,4	5,2	5,8	4,7
Chinese	4,5	4,6	5,2	4	5,1	5,6
Difference	1,1	-0,2	-0,8	1,2	0,7	-0,9

In the table, we see the averages for each of the source domains, which represent the arithmetic mean of the answers of all respondents for all 4 sentences that were compiled for each source domain. In the line "Difference" we have shown the difference in average values for two cultures. A positive value means that the metaphor perception is greater for Russian culture, a negative value that the metaphor perception is greater for Chinese culture.

The maximum possible value of speech form perception according to the methodology we developed was 10, which corresponded to full agreement with a similar speech formula and was characterized as "I used a similar or similar expression in the past". We can see that the averages for both groups of respondents are quite far from the maximum and are within the range of values from 4 to 5.8, and this kind of results seems to be more reliable. It is due to the fact that in compiling the verbal forms for each of the source domains, we purposefully divided the sentences into two types: sentences with a conventional metaphor and sentences with a new deliberate metaphor. This approach of selecting speech forms seems to be more reliable for testing the initial hypothesis that the perception of conceptual metaphors' speech forms may indicate the content of a certain mental concept.

To illustrate the analysis of differences in perception of metaphors, let us present data from the Table above in the form of a histogram (Figure 01).
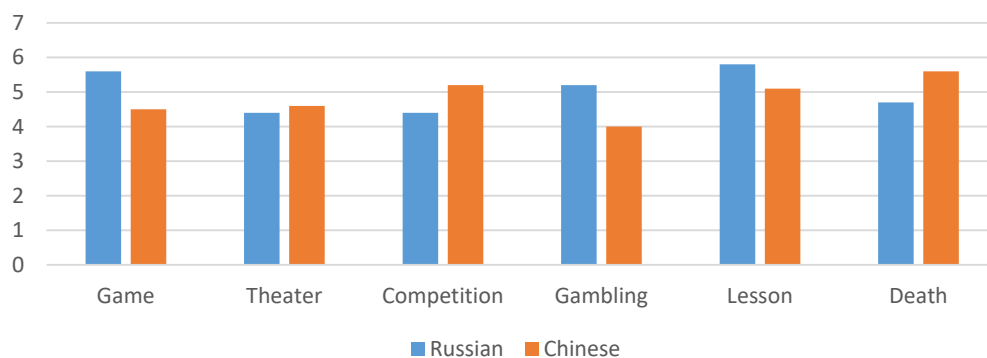
Figure 01. The results of the survey on the perception of the WAR conceptual metaphor speech forms

The main features that were identified as a result of the survey were:

1.The level of perception of the THEATER source domain is almost equally low for both cultures, which tells us that this metaphor type is equally inadequate for both cultures.

2.The most important for the Russian culture were source domains of the GAME, LESSON and GAMBLING, and for the Chinese - DEATH, LESSON and COMPETITION. This suggests that these conceptual areas have become the most significant for each culture. Namely in the Russian culture war is perceived more as a game, often as gambling and partly as a lesson, and the Chinese culture is characterized by the perception of war as a competition which bears death and can be instructive.

3.The biggest difference between the obtained results was the indicators in the perception of the source domain of the GAME (1.2), GAMBLING (1.1), DEATH (-0.9), COMPETITION (-0.8).

As mentioned above, the second goal of the study was to identify the difference in explicit and implicit levels of metaphorical perception. Since this kind of analysis has either not been carried out or its results are not widely known and have not been detected by us, we cannot conclude exactly which dispersion value is normal and which is abnormal. At the same time, it is obvious that the bigger is this value, the bigger is the gap in consciousness between the level of expression. This gap testifies at least to the instability of the investigated conceptual metaphor in people's minds, and at most to some dissonance and problem understanding of the studied mental sphere (Table 03).

Table 03. Explicit and implicit levels of conceptual metaphors

	GAME	THEATER	COMPETITION	GAMBLING	LESSON	DEATH
Rus – Implicit plan	5,6	4,4	4,4	5,2	5,8	4,7
Rus – Explicit plan	2,2	2	2,5	2,1	4,9	4,6
Rus– Dispersion, %	**12**	**4**	**-6**	**10**	**-40**	**-45**
Ch – Implicit plan	4,5	4,6	5,2	4	5,1	5,6
Ch– Explicit plan	2,1	2,2	2,9	1,5	2,4	3,1
Ch– Дисперсия, %	**3**	**2**	**-6**	**10**	**3**	**-6**

In our previous study (Kalinin, 2020), we assumed that the normal dispersion value is between -10 and 10. Values outside the normal may indicate some dissonance in the understanding of conceptual. At the same time, the negative value of the dispersion indicates that the explicit formula of the conceptual metaphor (for example, WAR is GAME) is closer and more understandable to the representatives of the culture than the metaphor expressed in the particular sentences.

The main results of calculating the conceptual metaphor dispersion were:

1.Normal dispersion value for almost all source domains for Chinese respondents. Only for the GAMBLING source domain, the dispersion value was 10, which may indicate a certain error in the translation of the word gambling / gamble into Chinese.

2.High level of dispersion for source domains DEATH and LESSON for Russian-speaking respondents, which demonstrates the instability of these metaphors. In other words, in Russian culture war is a priori perceived as a lesson and death, almost all respondents fully agree with these statements. But at the implicit level of perception based on the particular metaphorical sentences, it is not the same. This indicates an incomplete, fragmented, or even superficial understanding of this conceptual metaphor by Russian-speaking respondents.

7.   Conclusion

Due to the existing historical and cultural peculiarities of the peoples of Russia and China, the WAR mental concept in minds of Russian and Chinese native is a rather complex, multi-level system, so its researching through any means is quite a difficult task.

It was found out, that in Russian and Chinese cultures war is understood notably different. For the Russian culture, the most significant became the source domains of the GAME and GAMBLING, which indicates the attitude to the war as a very specific professional activity, which despite the deadly consequences can be 'interesting as a game'. In Chinese culture, the most significant was the source domain of COMPETITION, which suggests that war is perceived as some kind of rivalry or contest.

The analysis of dispersion in perception of conceptual metaphors has shown that Chinese culture is characterized by more adequate and established understanding of the war phenomenon, while among Russian-speaking respondents obvious dissonance between full agreement that war is a lesson and a death and perception of these conceptual domain sentences can be observed.

It is important to notice that as a result of conceptual-definition analysis and associative experiment conducted earlier (Kalinin & Mavleev, 2020) for the Russian culture the war appeared as "a form of armed struggle and professional detachment with dominant attributes "death, suffering, weapons", and for the Chinese culture - "a form of armed struggle aimed at gaining benefit, with dominant attributes "death, consequences, enemy".

The results of the two studies in general correlate with each other, because the conceptual domain of the GAME and GAMBLING emphasizes the understanding of war as a profession for Russian culture, and the sphere of COMPETITION is interconnected with the understanding of war as a means to benefit from the struggle.

The foregoing results are clearly correlated with the historical experience of both nations. It is well-known, that the whole history of Russia is saturated with a huge number of wars, both defensive and

offensive, in Russia military affairs have always been treated as a respected profession, and political power often belonged to the military men. Therefore, war has become something ordinary, almost daily, standard craft. Therefore, the attitude to war can be like a game, that can bring some fun.

In China, the attitude towards wars is completely different. China never waged offensive wars, preferring to achieve victories without weapons. Any military operations have always been forced and, truly speaking, usually Chinese are not very successful in warcraft. In addition, historically, the military in the state hierarchy has never occupied a leading position, being a step lower after the civil administration. So, we see that war is more associated with death and death-leading consequences.

This study is open to all kinds of criticisms and additions. We are also pleased to continue such research in a comparatively historical way. In our opinion, the application of the developed methodology to compare the perception of conceptual metaphors in different cultures can deepen the understanding of the mentality of different peoples.

In addition, we believe that further research on the compatibility of explicit and implicit plans of conceptual metaphors using modern equipment for neurolinguistic experiments is needed, which will allow us to draw more accurate conclusions.

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