A Contrastive Study of some Lakoff and Johnson's Metaphorical Expressions from LOVE IS A JOURNEY Metaphor and their Croatian Equivalents

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Abstract

Many people would argue that metaphor is a characteristic of extraordinary rather than ordinary speech. However, Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 8) strongly disagree, claiming that our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in its nature. Moreover, metaphors do not only shape our communication but the way we think or act. Occurring primarily in thought, metaphors are grounded in culture; hence they serve as a valuable resource for cross-cultural linguistic research. This paper aims to study similarities and differences of the English and Croatian perspectives on love in terms of a journey. For the purpose of this research, Lakoff and Johnson's eight metaphorical linguistic expressions of the LOVE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor from *Metaphors We Live By* (2003) were used in a survey and offered to 28 native Croatian speakers and former English language and literature students majoring in the field of translation studies who were asked to provide their Croatian equivalents. After the survey was conducted, the research has shown the great similarity of metaphorical linguistic expressions in English and Croatian language. However, it has shown that, in order to maintain the same effect, sometimes different tenses or voice perspectives have to be used. Furthermore, it has shown the existence of the same metaphorical expression in the respective languages, yet used within different conceptual metaphors. Moreover, the research has shown not only interliguistic but also intralinguistic differences, i.e. synonimical options that the Croatian language has due to close geographical, historical, cultural and linguistic contact with Serbian language. In conclusion, it has been proved that even though two languages might share the same conceptual metaphor, the actual linguistic expressions underlying the conceptual metaphor may be coined on the basis of cultural-ideological differences, thus referring to metaphors being both cognitive as well as cultural entities.

Key words: metaphorical expressions, love, journey, cross-cultural linguistic comparison

Introduction

Many people would argue that metaphor is a characteristic of poetic expressions. Moreover, it is usually understood as a characteristic of a language *per se* rather than thought or action. Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 8) strongly disagree with this notion, claiming that our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in its nature. Furthermore, metaphors do not only shape our communication but the way we think or act, making our conceptual system the core in defining our everyday realities. Since the way we speak is based on the same conceptual system used for perceiving, thinking or acting, linguistic study is a good resource for proving the nature of the system.

Aim

This paper aims to study similarities and differences of English and Croatian perspective of love in terms of a journey, examining Lakoff and Johnson's subset and Croatian translation equivalents. The objective is to find out how the figurative meaning of love is expressed in the respective languages and to investigate interlinguistic and intralinguistic differences together with the cultural involvement in the linguistic expression of this metaphor.

Material and method

For the purpose of this research and due to length restrictions, Lakoff and Johnson's eight metaphorical linguistic expressions of the LOVE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor from *Metaphors we live by* (2003) are selected. The selection was based with respect to different subdomains representation. Then, 28 former English language and literature students majoring in the field of translation studies who are native Croatian speakers were asked to provide their Croatian equivalents. The survey was done using the Googledocs tool, which offered efficient and fast data analyses. Furthermore, the questions/examples were composed in open-ended form, offering the interviewees liberty in their translations. Given the small number of variations, all provided translations will be used based on their frequency, starting with the most frequent (marked with a) examples) and ending with the least frequent (marked with d), where possible, examples). The examples that might be understood by native Croatian speakers, yet are not used as such in the language will be marked with ? and the examples that clash with any level of Croatian language will be marked with *, thus implying their incorrectness. Bearing the small number of interviewees in mind, it must be noted that the results might have been different with a larger number of interviewees, which is the limitation of this study.

Theoretical background

Jakobson and Halle's book *Fundamentals of Language* in 1956 marks the beginning of linguistic-metaphor research, prior to which only literary research was applied. However, the turning point was Lakoff and Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, which offers very precise methodological instrument for linguistic metaphor researches. They established three major theses: metaphors are omnipresent and should not be limited to literary contexts; metaphors show high level of systematicity and coherency; and they are not just a figure of speech, but a way of thinking. Keeping that in mind, cognitive linguistics establishes conceptual metaphor.

Conceptual metaphor

Conceptual metaphor is a cognitive mechanism that provides for highly abstract entities to be conceptualized through concrete ones, i.e. the source domain A is understood in terms of the target domain B. In addition, it is necessary to distinguish conceptual metaphor from metaphorical linguistic expression as Kövecses (2002: 4) suggests. To paraphrase, metaphorical linguistic expressions are manifestations of underlying conceptual metaphors. Additionally, conventional metaphors can be categorized according to conventionality, function, nature, and level of generality of metaphor (Kövecses 2002: 29) into three categories, namely structural, ontological and orientational metaphors. Considering the nature of the paper, the concept of structural metaphors will be presented.

Structural metaphors

Structural metaphors allow us to use highly structured concept to structure another one (Lakoff, 1992: 61). Similarly, Kövecses (2002: 33) indicates that the source domain provides a relatively rich knowledge for the target domain. Like their ontological and orientational counterparts, structural metaphors are grounded in our experience. For example, we metaphorically view time as money based upon correlation with people's everyday busy lives where they struggle to earn money, leaving them with no time for their families. Being a universal bodily experience, we use metaphors automatically, which makes them universal as well. However, next to universality, metaphors might also be culture-related.

Cultural variation in metaphor

As Kövecses (2002: 183) suggests, there are two types of cultural variation: intercultural and intracultural. Considering the nature of this paper, both intercultural and intracultural variations, where possible, will be studied. Kövecses (2005: 231) goes on to identify two large categories of causes for cultural variation: differential experience and differential cognitive preferences and styles.

Differential experience

As Kövecses (2005: 232) suggests, there are several causes influencing differential experience, namely physical and social environment (which, due to length restrictions, will not be elaborated on) and cultural context.

Cultural context includes a broader context that a culture provides for an understanding of its concepts. A well-known example of a correlation between language and culture is the Eskimo language. Due to inevitable need, Eskimos have more than a dozen expressions for snow. By comparison, Slavic languages have only one term for snow due to inexistence, hence lack of need. The same phenomenon applies to metaphors. Frank Boers and Murielle Demecheleer (in Kövecses, 2005: 236) elaborate on concepts of *hat* and *ship* being more metaphorically productive in English and concepts of *sleeve* and *food* in French because they are more salient to the respective languages.

Different cognitive preferences and styles

Cognitive processes such as elaboration, conceptualization, specificity and transparency can be found in all languages and cultures; however, the degree of their application varies from culture to culture (Kövecses, 2005: 246). In addition, there are some cognitive preferences.

a) Experiential issues

Cognitive linguists have always claimed that humans use a great deal of bodily experience to build metaphors. Kövecses (2005: 247) answers the question of whether bodily experience can be universally applied to metaphors or is culture-related by comparing English and Japanese anger metaphors. In English language and culture, the metaphor ANGER IS HEAT is associated with high blood pressure and increasing skin temperature, whereas in Japanese it is only associated with pressure. This indicates different metaphorical conceptualization of anger depending on the culture.

b) Viewpoint preference

Sometimes metaphors depend on a culture's viewpoint preference. For example, different cultures view time differently. In some cultures, the future is viewed as something yet to happen, i.e. events move from past to future in cases where we are dealing with ego-moving metaphors, whereas in others, events move from future to past, which are time-moving metaphors. To be more precise, as Boroditsky (2000: 6) suggests: "In the ego-moving metaphor, front is assigned to a future or later event." He continues (2000: 6) "In the time-moving metaphor, front is assigned to a past or earlier event."

Analysis and discussion

Some of Lakoff and Johnson's metaphorical linguistics expressions of the LOVE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor in the English language will be presented in this chapter alongside their translated Croatian counterparts. The selected examples will be classified into subcategories on the basis of different source subdomains. Furthermore, ways of understanding and interpreting love in terms of a journey will be discussed in the major themes and mappings subchapter.

Love is a journey

Not many people would associate love with a journey, yet the two concepts share numerous similarities. However, even though two languages may share conceptual metaphors with metaphorical linguistic expressions overlapping, the cultural-ideological background in which the conceptual metaphor functions might be used to express subtle differences based on the expressions, as Kövecses (2005: 155) states.

A relationship is a vehicle

When two people decide to go on a trip to a destination they have never visited before, they may stop in order to check the map, find out where they are and how long will it take to their final destination. These mental images can be mapped onto love: when two people decide to start a romantic relationship, after a certain period of time at least one of them will want to clarify the status of the relationship: Are they just having fun, not thinking about the future, or is the relationship eventually going to develop into marriage? So, the mappings obviously serve as the grounding for the following metaphorical expression.

1) ***Where*** are we?
a) ?***Kuda*** ovo vodi?
b) ?***Kuda*** ovo ide?
c) ****Gdje*** smo?
d) ****Gdje*** se nalazimo?

In Croatian language there are three translational options for the word *where*, namely *gdje*, *kamo* and *kuda*. Despite being used interchangeably, there are subtle differences in their meanings. Firstly, the question word *gdje* is used when one wants to find out something about a place where a person/thing is located. In addition, it can be used only if alluding to the literal meaning, which is the reason why neither 1c) nor 1d) are grammatically correct, yet they are frequently used. Indeed, they do not underlie any kind of metaphorical expressing. Secondly, *kamo* is used for finding out about someone's intended destination and it perfectly underlies the conceptual metaphor in question. However, probably due to the formal sound in its usage, none of the interviewees chose it. Thirdly, *kuda* is used for the direction of someone's movement, thus conveying literal meaning. However, native Croatian speakers use it equally for both literal and figurative meaning. Moreover, it happens to be their first translational choice for the English expression in 1).

The difference between the examples 1a) and 1b) is in the verb choice. More precisely, in 1a) the verb is *to lead* and in 1b) *to go*, both of which underlie the metaphor in question. However, what differentiates both of them from the English example is the perspective. Namely, by asking the question in 1), a person wants to find out about the current relationship status, whereas by the questions in 1a) and 1b), a person is asking about the future of the relationship. Moreover, the literal translation of the example 1) would not function in Croatian language let alone convey figurative meaning.

2) This relationship ***is foundering***.
a) *Ova veza ***tone***.
b) Ovaj brod ***tone***.
c) Kola su nam krenula ***nizbrdo***.

Bearing the verb choice in mind, in example 2) the relationship is conceptualized as a boat. If the boat is filling with water getting and about to sink, and we conceptualize the relationship as the boat, there is one conclusion left – the relationship is about to end. Example 2a) is a straightforward translation, but even though it would be understood by a native Croatian speaker, it is never used. Additionally, very similar to 2a) is example 2b) where instead of the noun *relationship*, the noun *boat* is explicitly used, thus strengthening the conceptualization connection. However, since

it is mostly heard in politicians' speeches describing Croatia's unpromising future, this is an example of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor.

More interesting is the 2c) example. Even though tourism is Croatia's most productive economic branch, Croatia is not so maritime-oriented. Furthermore, in the region of Slavonia and Baranja, whose residents are mostly farmers, people used a wagon for both work and transport. Moreover, young people in the region, wanting to preserve old customs, tend to choose a wagon for their wedding car. So, possibly due to Croatia's orientation to its roots and appreciation of old customs, an expression using a wagon exists in the language. The metaphorical expression in 2c), if translated straightforwardly, would be *the wagon is moving down the hill*, underlying the same conceptual metaphor as the original.

After some time spent on an unknown road, travelers might realize that they have diverged from the right road. Similarly, after some time in a relationship/marriage, lovers may realize they have involved themselves in irrelevant things just to keep their minds off the important issues. This may seem easier at first, but it is not a permanent solution, so eventually they will have to remind themselves about their priorities.

3) We've gotten ***off the track***.
a) Iskočili smo iz ***tračnica***.
b) Ispali smo iz ***tračnica***.

Both examples 3a) and 3b) correspond to the English version in terms of conceptual metaphor and conveyed meaning. However, there is a slight intralinguistic difference in the verb choice and voice perspective. Namely, the verb in 3a), if literally translated, is *to jump off* and is used in active voice, alluding to the lovers themselves being responsible, whereas in 3b) the verb is *to fall out off* and is used in passive voice, alluding to external factors that are responsible for the lovers getting off the track. Either way, the result is the same; however, in 3a) the lovers blame themselves while in 3b), they blame someone else for their problems.

A turning point in a relationship is a crossroads

A crossroads is a place where roads meet and a traveler has to decide which road to take. With this picture in mind, the metaphorical expression *to be at a crossroads* was coined. The expression refers to a stage in life where a person has to make an important decision that will affect his life either positively or negatively, like being at a crossroads; if you decide to go the wrong way, you will eventually have to return, which will affect the rest of your trip with respect to your timetable. So, everyone is especially careful at a crossroads they approach for the first time, just like a person who does not want to make a mistake is extremely careful when making serious life decisions.

4) We’re ***at a crossroads***.
a) Nalazimo se ***na raskrižju***.
b) Nalazimo se ***na raskršću***.
c) Nalazimo se ***na raskrsnici***.

All Croatian counterparts correspond to the English original. However, the Croatian versions offer three synonimical possibilities used according to frequency and usage preference. To be more precise, *raskrižje* in 4a) is neutral and recently the most used option, whereas *raskršće* in 4b) and *raskrsnica* in 4c) are options more used in Slavonia and Baranja region, i.e. precisely in areas where Croatian and Serbian language are in a closer contact. The only thing that distinguishes example 4a) *raskrižje* and examples 4b) *raskršće* and 4c) *raskrsnica* is the root word, namely *križ* and *krst*. Etymologically, *krst* derives from Praslavic and Old Slavic languages (krьstъ), which were ancestor languages of both Croatian and Serbian, hence both languages used the word k*rst*. However, as the consequence of the Croatian War of Independence, there was a linguistic tendency to eliminate all similarities with Serbian language during the 1990s, hence *krst*, being associated with Eastern Ortodoxy and the Serbian language, was to be eliminated and replaced with *križ*, which is associated with the Catholicism that most Croats claim to practice. To summarize, the option in 4a) is neutral and the preferred one, whereas the options in 4b) and 4c) might be labeled as the “Serbian” ones. Further, they are most likely to be used in areas of a close interlinguistic Croatian and Serbian contact; however, all three options can be understood by any Croatian speaker and underlie the same conceptual metaphor as the English one.

Progress in a relationship is advancement in place

Like a journey, every relationship has a beginning, a course to run, and an ending. The experiences lovers gain and the time they spend together might be conceptualized through the distance travelers cover on their journey.

5) Look ***how far we've come***.
a) Pogledaj ***kako smo daleko došli***.
b) Pogledaj ***kako smo daleko stigli***.
c) Pogledaj ***kako smo daleko dogurali***.
d) Pogledaj ***kako smo daleko dospjeli***.

All Croatian translations correspond to the English version. The four Croatian examples used different synonimical verbs, all of which are travel-related, thus perfectly underlying the conceptual metaphor.

Difficulties in a relationship are barriers on a road

As George Lakoff (1992: 208) states, two travelers travel towards a common destination. During their journey, they may encounter some barriers and get stuck. Furthermore, when constructing a road, one has to be aware of geographical obstacles and overcome them. Sometimes, however, due to natural processes, deterioration and poor maintenance, bumps inevitably occur, and a driver has to be very careful when passing them in order not to damage his vehicle or injure himself. If he pays attention, he can overcome obstacles and continue with his journey. These images can be mapped onto love. During a relationship, due to different personalities, priorities and wishes, lovers encounter problems. If they believe in their love, they can work it out and continue enjoying their love. Building on the aforementioned mappings, the metaphorical expression is as follows.

6) It's been ***a long, bumpy road***.
a) ?Bila je to ***duga, neravna cesta***.
b) Bio je to ***dug, neravan put***.

In Croatian, two synonyms can be used for the English word *road*, namely *cesta* and *put*. Despite being used interchangeably, there is a slight difference between them. Precisely, *cesta* refers to a public, asphalt surface, whereas *put* usually refers to a dirt road and is more frequently used in metaphorical linguistic expression than the former option. Furthermore, the adjective *bumpy* defines something that is not smooth and presumably has some obstacles. By comparison, in the Croatian examples the adjective *neravan*, which translationally corresponds to the adjective *bumpy*, has two meanings; on the one hand, it may refer to a bumpy surface, whereas

on the other, it might refer to a surface that has no turns, i.e. a surface that extends in a linear manner and might have no bumps at all.

When travelers get lost on a dead-end street, they can either end their journey or return to where they came from. In other words, there is no possibility for them to advance the journey, which can be mapped onto the love relationship. When lovers come to a point where neither of them wants to make a compromise, the relationship cannot be advanced.

7) This relationship is ***a dead-end street***.
a) Ova je veza ***naišla na zid***.

The only usable option is the one in 7a); however, the word's literal meaning is not the same. The expression does not refer to any kind of street, but rather refers to a relationship hitting a wall. Hence the two examples carry the same figurative meaning. To clarify, if someone/something hits a wall, he/it cannot advance in the same direction, so retreating to a certain point is the next step, like entering a dead-end street. Further, a dead-end street has one way in and out and on the other end a house or a wall blocking it, so the wall might be a part of the visual dead-end street image; hence the expression underlies the same metaphor.

Spliting up is taking different roads

When two travelers cannot agree on which road to take, they might decide to take different roads. The same thing happens with two lovers; if they do not see eye to eye anymore or have different goals in life, they may decide to end a relationship, i.e. each lover will continue pursuing his own goals.

8) We'll just have to ***go our separate ways***.
a) Morat ćemo ***ići svatko svojim putem***.
b) ?Morat ćemo ***ići svatko svojim putom***.

Both Croatian translations underlie the same metaphor as the English one; however, a closer look reveals subtle differences between them. Croatian noun *put* can take two inflections; either *-om* (putom) or *–em* (putem) but not randomly. If referring to a particular way/road, one should use the inflection *–om* as in 8b). If, on the other hand, one refers to a metaphorical road, like in example 8), one should use the *–em* inflection as in 8a). Since the expression indicates the metaphorical nature, Croatian speakers should not translate expression 8) with the 8b) option because it employs literal meaning. However, since *putem* and *putom* are incorrectly interchangeably

used, both 8a) and 8b) options are equally frequently used, possibly alluding to tight connection between the literal and figurative meaning of a road.

Major themes and mappings

Lakoff (1992: 6) claims that a metaphor is not a matter of a language itself, but a matter of thought and reason. The mapping is primary and language secondary. In addition, the mapping is conventional, i.e. it is one of our conventional ways of conceptualizing something; in this case love relationships. Furthermore, what constitutes love as a journey is ontological mapping from the source domain of journeys to the target domain of love. Based on the examples above, it can be summarized as follows: lovers are travelers on a joint journey with their common life goals seen as destinations yet to be reached. Each traveler needs a vehicle to reach his destination, conceptualizing a love relationship that is promising as long as it allows lovers to make progress towards their goal. However, occasionally travelers arrive at crossroads where they have to decide which road to take, like lovers who must decide whether they still share the same goals. In addition to crossroads, travelers may have to deal with different barriers they encounter along their way. In comparison, lovers may have to face life problems and choose from among several options. They might choose one that will keep them together or they might choose not to solve the problem and go in different directions, thus indicating the end of their relationship – like travelers who choose the latter option, ending their journey.

The mappings associating the source domain JOURNEY and the target domain LOVE are summarized as follows:

SOURCE JOURNEY	TARGET LOVE
a) travelers	lovers
b) vehicle	relationship
c) journey	destination
d) crossroad	life goal
	turning point in a relationship
e) advancement in place	progress in a relationship
f) impediments	problems in a relationship
g) taking different road	splitting up
h) ending of a journey	ending of a relationship

Conclusion

This paper deals with similarities and differences of some Lakoff and Johnson's metaphorical expressions of the LOVE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor in English and their Croatian counterparts. The research has proven that there is a great similarity of metaphorical linguistic expressions in English and Croatian. However, it has indicated numerous subtle interlinguistic differences. To be more precise, it has shown that, in order to maintain the same effect, sometimes different tenses or voice perspectives must be used. Further, it has proved that single word choice in Croatian alludes to either literal or figurative meaning. Equally importantly, it has been shown that the same metaphorical expression exists in the respective languages, yet used within different conceptual metaphor. Simultaneously, to maintain the same effect, different linguistic expressions may sometimes be used. Additionally, Croatian language has been shown to be able to express either literal or figurative meaning through choice of inflexion, while the English language cannot. However, the research has shown not only interliguistic but also intralinguistic differences, i.e. synonimical options that the Croatian language has due to a close geographical, historical, cultural and linguistic contact with the Serbian language. To summarize, even though two languages might share the same conceptual metaphor, the actual linguistic metaphorical expressions underlying the conceptual metaphor may be influenced and coined on the basis of cultural-ideological differences. Therefore, in addition to being cognitively motivated, metaphorical expression is also culturally motivated, thus referring to metaphors being both cognitive as well as cultural entities.

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