

КОГНИТИВНАЯ МЕТАФОРА: ЭКСТЕРНАЛИЗАЦИЯ ИНДИВИДУАЛЬНОГО БЛОГГЕРА

Хорикова В.С. (vera.khorikova@gmail.com)

Московский государственный университет имени М. В. Ломоносова, Россия

Ключевые слова: блоги, личность пользователя, экстернализация, метафоричность мышления

COGNITIVE METAPHOR: EXTERNALIZATION OF INDIVIDUAL BLOGGER

Khorikova V. S. (vera.khorikova@gmail.com)

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia

The paper tackles the challenging matter of linguistic behaviour of the modern English-speaking online bloggers taking into consideration their creativity and individuality. Thanks to the inborn human ability to express abstract matters in a linguistic form, online bloggers successfully apply the powerful tool of cognitive metaphor to externalize ideas, thoughts and dreams unconsciously. The research is based on writing of various individual bloggers, seen as a possibility to express own thoughts based on individual experience and perception of the surrounding world. The major focus was placed on the role of cognitive metaphor traced in individual blogs as well as its frequency and models. Systematization thorough comparative analysis of metaphorical models used by online bloggers as well as parallels to peculiarities of the bloggers' cognition and psychological traits have resulted in significant results to postulate that the inner world of the online blogger can be observed by analysis of the metaphorical expressions used in individual blogs.

Key words: blogs, user's personality, externalization, metaphorical cognition

Project goals.

Based on the recent research in the field of psycholinguistics and pragmatics, the study applies these findings to online discourse, as well as draws parallels with socio-cultural, psychological and pragmatic aspects of online behaviour of bloggers. The research aims at tackling the challenging subject of online discourse in combination with sociocultural, cognitive background of the users of online journals (blogs) as well as exposure of their personality to the readers of blogs.

The given study is a part of broader project dedicated to analysis of linguistic behaviour of online bloggers, individual aspects in their extralinguistic behaviour and motivations to openly disclose their individual experiences and feelings. It is essential not only to focus on pure linguistic data of the online community but make an attempt to interpret the personal implications and creativity of the users exposed by linguistic means. Such a research reveals recent trends in the modern blogger society and impact of personal traits of a blogger on the language used in individual blogs.

Context.

Modern technology provides individuals not only with possibilities to exchange information in the most efficient and constructive manner but also to express personal views, ideas and experiences. No wonder that many scholars see online discourse as an inspirational source for further research targeted at linguistic, socio-cultural, psychological and pragmatic aspects of online behaviour. The most striking feature of Internet behaviour is constant exchange of information in written, spoken or visual ways, which provokes individuals to constant

participation in the communicative process, procession of vast amount of information and deliberate choice of information to react to.

According to D. Crystal, “On the Internet, as with traditional speaking and writing, the language that individuals produce is far exceeded by the language they receive; and as the Internet is a medium almost entirely dependent on reactions to written messages, awareness of audience must hold a primary place in any discussion. The core feature of the Internet is its real or potential interactivity” (Crystal, 2001). Agreeing with Crystal on the thesis that the core feature of the Internet is interactivity, it is essential to provide a definition of such a phenomenon: “the involvement of users in the exchange of information with computers and the degree to which this happens” (Cambridge Dictionary). Supported by the fact that language is not only and informational but also and interactional system, it makes it possible to assume that such communicational models lead to externalization of individual cognition.

Hypothesis.

The modern technology provides an outstanding ability for interaction to users from various cultural, linguistic and social environments, as well as triggers the online users to externalize their cognition and make an explicit statement. It is natural for a human to express own thoughts based on the individual experience and perception of the surrounding world.

Agreeing to the postulate of Lakoff (1975) that it is not just *how* an individual says or writes something, it is *what* they say or write. I assume that the key concept *what* can be traced through cognitive metaphors in the corpora of individual blogs, serving as a tool of externalization of individual qualities and cognition. The term “externalization” originates from Freudian psychology and is described as “an unconscious defence mechanism, where an individual "projects" his own internal characteristics onto the outside world, particularly onto other people” Sandler, Joseph (1988).

Taking into account the opinion of Lakoff proving that metaphor is based on individual’s experiences and is mainly unconscious, it is a tool to comprehend and express abstract concepts (Lakoff, Metaphor and Thought, 1993: 203), I suggest that metaphor can be indicated as a marker of individual’s externalization and express individual’s world perception in an unconscious way. Assuming that an online blogger unconsciously uses metaphorical expressions to externalize his/her internal characteristics in its full spectrum, I state that result of such unconscious activity is still regulated by the inborn cognitive ability to turn thoughts and feelings into words.

Thus, the inner world of the online blogger can be observed by analysis of the metaphorical expressions, especially newly created. A modern online user is fully integrated into the online community which serves not only the informative function, as it was initially designed but turned into a more complex way of communication with various layers which provokes users to express themselves.

Research objectives.

1. To analyze individual blogs in terms of its richness in metaphoric expressions.
2. To summarise and systemise variety of metaphoric expressions used by online bloggers.
3. To analyse metaphorical expressions in terms of unconscious externalization of online bloggers by linguistic means.

Research data and primary results

Deliberate choice of online community has been made due to the nature of the online blog, or online diary in the English language, where individuals express their ideas, thoughts and opinions, as well as personal experiences and emotions. The most striking feature of the individual blogs is the amount of metaphoric expressions used by various users in numerous blogs. The blogs were chosen disregarding interests, age, gender or nationality, simply following the suggestion of the webpage Blogger to read the individual blog of the following user. Such a way of gathering research data is the most independent way, where the decision of choosing the user is absolutely impersonal as it is suggested by the webpage. 100 individual blogs belonging to 100 various users, which all were written on the same day were analyzed in the initial stage of the research. The individual blogs written in January 2012 were deliberately chosen to provide most impersonal data and view the blogs of the individuals who wrote them live in the same timeframe but various socio-cultural environments due to global character of the project. Several examples will provide convincing evidence that individual blogs are rich in metaphoric expressions.

The below mentioned abstracts from two different individual blogs have been deliberately chosen to be placed as the first ones due to distinctive psychological tint in almost every sentence. Looking back at systemized models of personalities developed by Hans Eysenck (1947, 1976) as well as the “Big Five Model”, based on behavioural traits developed by several independent sets of researchers (Digman, 1990), we can draw parallels between linguistic portrait of the individual blogger and the levels of "conscientiousness", "agreeableness", "neuroticism", "openness to experience" and "extraversion" (OCEAN)

1. (1) ¹

Individual blog “Bohemian Musings”

Sunday, 8 January 2012

the real world has become a blurry picture that I let myself fall into like a pastel spiral.
I lost some thing along the way I can't remember and am trying to remember myself of the things I will find. they will smell of lavender and summer winds and warm skin at night.
now I'm talking to the grey winds for them to take my restless thoughts away but they turn and blow them all back to me with skeleton leaves.
in this dream I was running in a long silk dress with glittering hair.
I was running but I was never making a step forward and when I opened my eyes I realized it was not a dream at all. you cannot outrun the things you don't really want to escape.

1. (2)

Individual blog “Walking in High Heels”

Sunday, January 22, 2012

People Are Strange (Part 1 of Series)

Her fourteen-inch width of shoulders looked even tinier while she hunched over at the bar counter as she furiously scribbled in her leather bound notebook. It was a weekday night and the crowd in this cafe was thin on this aloof cold night. A glass of burgundy wine was placed on the right side of her moving wrist. Every once in a while, she gave it rest to pick up the wine and

¹ Underlined are sentences which have distinctive metaphorical meaning

resumed writing with her left hand. Rest of the times, this rhythm broke only when the noisy door of cafe opened and cold stab of wind hit her on the left ear.

Suddenly, she felt an abrupt sensation at the back of her neck. As if someone's eyes perforated right through her. She didn't want to turn. She almost had to hold herself back. But she had to halt the kinetic energy of her pen.

"Is this place taken?" a voice spoke from her right side. She said "No" without moving a muscle.

Let us start with the first sentence of example 1.(1) *the real world has become a blurry picture that I let myself fall into like a pastel spiral and they will smell of lavender and summer winds and warm skin at night* where the blogger expresses sensation and intuition by linguistic means. The choice of vocabulary is deliberate and sensuous, it makes a deep impression and triggers the reader to visualize *a pastel spiral*, sense the touch of *summer winds*. The sentence *you cannot outrun the things you don't really want to escape* serves an example of two traits of the "Big Five Model", i.e. "openness to experience" and extraversion". When reading the blog of the user "Bohemian Musings" such a trait is traced and gives significant grounds to consider the user be a certain psychological type. Such an assumption can be made on the metaphoric expressions used. For better understanding how psychological aspect of metaphorical usage can be traced, I suggest to concentrate on example 1. (2). The blog "Walking in High Heels" is an opposing example of individuality of the blogger and as a result a completely different type of metaphoric expressions are being used. A sentence *she furiously scribbled in her leather bound notebook* undoubtedly creates a picturesque image, which has an introverted and neurotic touch. Further, we read *the noisy door of cafe opened and cold stab of wind hit her on the left ear* carries the reader's thought away towards an idea of thriller with a distinctive anxious character. *Suddenly, she felt an abrupt sensation at the back of her neck* demonstrated the ability of the blogger to build the tension and *As if someone's eyes perforated right through her* adds the list of metaphoric expressions creating a dangerous and thrilling effect.

Metaphorical thinking of online bloggers is obvious and not only enriches the writing but also helps both the occasional reader and subscriber of the given blog to develop imagination and provokes them to further analysis of metaphoric expressions, be it a word combination or a sentence. Often bloggers use various metaphoric expressions, a lot of which stand out and depict the personality behind the writing. Unconsciously bloggers refer to understanding of one domain by the means of another and apply descriptive metaphoric expressions which not only shape the content of their individual blog but also the way the user presents him/herself in the online community and furthermore influences the perception and cognitional models of occasional readers or subscribers of individual blogs. Even as an anonymous reader the communicational process is obvious, as while reading the information presented by the blogger is analyzed in the brain of the reader and immediate reaction to the information is traced. Such unnoticeable almost unconscious analysis is an inborn ability of a human to instantly distinguish interesting subjects and either keep on reading or click away to the following blogger.

Another aspect taken into the research is the mental models of the context. The below mentioned abstracts are examples to picture so-called "dead" and "live" metaphors, where the distinction is based on how often the metaphoric expression has been used and therefore received a fixed meaning.

2. (1)

Individual blog "Just call me Ryanne"

Sunday, January 01, 2012

Get At Me 2012

I loved 2011. LOVED.

What an amazing life I have. I am so blessed.

But true to form I am ready for the new year to begin. I love a fresh start. I love a fresh perspective. I love a fresh look on life.

For those of you who know me - this is probably comical to you. Because even though I love all those things. What I don't love is...change. So even though the new year always arrives like a breath of fresh air, it also causes some unwarranted anxiety. Am I alone in this?

I have decided this year to welcome the new year anxiety with open arms {Get over here, you}. So...get at me 2012. Let's see what you got.

A sentence *I love a fresh start* or *breath of fresh air*, for example, are outstanding examples of “dead metaphors”, expressions well rooted in everyday life and used on daily basis. At the same time we can consider *welcome the new year anxiety with open arms* as a “live” metaphor, as welcoming anxiety with open arms is not a well-rooted expression that definitely has an additional individual conceptualization behind it. The concept of “dead” and “live” metaphors has received an essential position in the systematization of metaphoric expressions used by online bloggers.

Examples taken from the individual blog “Nagel Crew” form an interesting example how an individual blog provoked other users to express their thoughts and feelings in a metaphoric way. The major topic of the individual user was shopping for shoes which is described in a passionate and expressive manner. Although there were no distinctive metaphors in the abstract, three comments of three various users were metaphoric. *I tried on a bunch of boots at a bunch of stores* is an example of a metaphoric expression, even though it is a well-rooted one. *I will settle for a walk in with nice shelves* sounds more original and gives a distinctive image and speaks for the intention of the blogger. To wrap it off, I would like to have a look at the metaphoric expression of the user Lovely Girl who added an interesting metaphor *The sweetest wrap for the feet* to the individual blog.

2. (2)

Individual blog ‘Nagel Crew’

Wednesday, January 4, 2012

LOVE.

I love shoes. Like I REALLY love them. The three pairs above are some of my latest additions from Christmas and birthday. And I love them all! I especially love the closet pictured too, but unfortunately that is not a recent addition.....sigh. One day!!!!

Comments:

The Wade's said...

oooh I LOVE that closet!! One day, one day!! And I love your new boots too, I saw those, but the others look great too. I tried on a bunch of boots at a bunch of stores yesterday and couldn't find a single pair to cover my calf. Oh well, the search is still on....

Jen said...

I love your new shoes and wish I had a closet like that as well. I guess we will all have to wish that one day we will have it. I was watching an episode of selling LA one day and the closet in one of the houses was larger than our house...which is probably taking it to the extreme so I will settle for a walk in with nice shelves.

Mary Ellen said...

Looks like you got your wish for the wonderful closet. And your shoes look wonderful in it as well.

Lovely Girl said...

The sweetest wrap for the feet. Love them

On basis of those few examples it is possible to draw conclusions that bloggers see their individual blogs seriously and use them to externalize personality and share opinions with both occasional and subscribed readers. Possibility to comment to the post and place reactions impact development of information exchange and provoke users move from description of pure physical experiences and touch abstractions. Read, interpret and react passively or actively to blogs and move towards the emotional, metaphorical side of the understanding. Such a shift in communication within the online community in general and to the area of online blogging in English in particular, is noticeable as many individual blogs are focused on expressing thought and experiences and are triggered to shift to the sphere of abstract notions.

If the attention of the occasional reader is caught by a catchy header or an unusual, personalized metaphoric expression the chance is bigger that the reader will stay longer on the page of the individual blogger and will proceed with reading. While reading an appealing the blog, the occasional reader receives the signal of the blogger and literary stays on the same wave just as the radio listener stops tuning as soon as appealing song is found. And even without saying or writing anything, the reader of the blog communicates internal reactions that arose in a form of a thought, emotion or even sometimes a sigh or a ‘wow’. It proves that even such an internal form of communication is a two-channelled process; it is both externalization and perception. An online user externalizes his/her thoughts and feelings in form of words and the occasional reader receives them and gives a reaction first in a passive form and later, if wished, in a form of a comment or desire to become a subscriber of the blog.

At this point we touch the pragmatic aspect of communication and the direct correlation between the cognitive abilities of an individual, ability to express the initially formulated ideas by the means of semantics and the ability to perceive and analyze new information. To provide proof of such a communicational pattern let me invite you to analyze several reactions of occasional readers in an active form of reaction to a post rich in metaphoric expressions.

Out of the 100 blog posts taken into the given research about 52 % had at least 1 metaphoric expression, 22 % had 2 to 3 metaphoric expressions in the text, 9 % of the analyzed blogs were enriched by 4 to 5 metaphoric expressions and the remaining 7 % amounted to 6 and more metaphors, the remaining 10 % were pure descriptive posts exclusively representing concrete physical experiences. Such a brief summary makes it obvious that the personal aspects of contemporary bloggers prevail in their writing.

To recap the above mentioned, metaphorical cognition is traced in the modern online community and can be seen as the key to understanding the major trends in the contemporary blogger follow in sharing their experiences with the world. By expressing themselves in an open and creative way, bloggers externalize their personalities where pragmatic aspects serve the role of exposing unconscious to the world.

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