

Cultural Values in Mass Media Metaphors

Ludmila A'Beckett
Monash University
Ludmilla.ABeckett@arts.monash.edu.au

1. Introduction

This paper is an attempt to approach cultural values from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. This task requires reviewing both the concept of value which may be used in different senses and the inventory of relevant linguistic tools. It is generally accepted that "the consequences of human values will be manifest in virtually all phenomena that social scientists might consider worth investigating or understanding." (Rokeach 1973:3, Hechter 1993). Nevertheless linguistics was not mentioned among the subjects which may contribute to a theory of values: "the value concept should occupy a central position across all social sciences--sociology, anthropology, psychology, psychiatry, political science, education, economics and history"(Ibid.)

It is hard to accept that linguistics in that context was ignored, given that, at the beginning of the 20th century Saussure's ideas on bringing together values in the sense of meanings of words and other values, had an enormous impact on Anthropology. Saussure's arguments were conducive to understanding the nature of values. His suggestions of making conceptual distinctions and ranking them in different types of social context were looked upon as a revolution in the methodology of the social sciences.

The absence of linguistics in the list of social sciences contributing to the theory of values, can be understood given that "values can be measured either by asking people to describe their own values or by imputing their values from observed behavior" (Hechter 1993: 10). Neither method is much perceived as the core task of linguistics. However when human behavior is analysed in a broad meaning as any text producing and text interpreting activity, then it is possible to impute values from concepts offered through text.

2. Cognitive Linguistics Insight on Values

2.1 Metaphor Prototypes and Underlying Beliefs

A widely accepted linguistic approach to examining values and beliefs is George Lakoff's suggestion to view metaphors as a cognitively-realised agency that organises our thoughts, shapes our judgements and structures our language (Lakoff 1980). Hence, the metaphor introduces a cognitive device which links new experience with previous knowledge and therefore highlights prevalent models of perception. It is arguable whether these models of perception can be called values. For this purpose they have to be tested against a conventional definition. "Value is an endurable belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence"(Rokeach 1973:7). Ubiquitous metaphors may represent socially accepted patterns of behavior, their underlying beliefs can be easily relegated to desirable states of affairs, modes of conduct and an affiliated notion of personal traits (Ibid.) The only problem is how to find that metaphoric models introduce

personally or socially preferable views to an opposite or converse view. If an election campaign is compared to a war between candidates, would this perception with all entailed associations prevail over the view that the campaign is a long-distance race? It might be that both conceptual systems coexist and are employed in different conditions. However, it is hard to develop a measurement technique and criteria of ranking models. The predicament with value status is that metaphoric prototypes are directed towards a specific situation, while values are transcendental and immanent. An extensive deployment of 'War' metaphors does not necessarily imply that a society encourages to approach all conflicts with the rules of military engagement, although it may be an evidence of existing norms in society as well. Therefore, metaphors initiate an attitude which "refers to an organisation of several beliefs that all are focused on a given object or situation"(Rokeach1973:18).

The difference between values and attitudes is that attitudes are an organisation of beliefs focused on an object, but value is a single belief, a standard which measures attitudes and guides our conduct. Persistent application of attitudes of the same kind to a wide range of situations might be a signal about formation of a value.

2.2 Source and Target Domains -- Beliefs and Objects in Focus

The study of the correlation between the semantic structure of metaphors and organisation of beliefs leads to a further review of Lakoff's approach. Lakoff's cognitive metaphor theory is based on the suggestion of grouping metaphors into metaphor families such as "Argument is War" or "Love is Voyage"(Lakoff 1980). Lakoff (1988) also suggests that metaphors project the cognitive map of the source domain (vehicle) into a target domain (tenor). However, within this approach it is not always possible to analyse target domains of metaphor families under a single generic name. For example the metaphor '*war*' can be cast onto various types of conflicts, not only arguments. The argument is a verbal conflict though. Within this metaphoric system the target domain may have different subcategories (such as argument, collision, opposition, quarrel and others). Thus domains can be categorised under different levels of generalisation.

The relations between metaphors and designated objects are not always of direct projection. Metaphors may quite often become an instrument of expressing irony. The irony then creates a specific refraction, as the reference to the source domain is a false reference. Utterance of metaphors in this case may not target the comparison and common characteristics but attempt to highlight differences between two objects. If someone calls an insignificant incident, a mere routine disagreement, *the war*, the objective is not so much to provide a new cognitive setting for understanding the incident but to deride the pretentiousness of involved parties and emphasize the absurdity of the claims. The following Russian newspaper example in which terms of trade between Russia and America are derided, illustrate the comic effect derived from such a comparison.

- (1) *The market war with Bush's drumsticks.*
- (2) *The Government declared war on American chickens. In September the chickens won.*

On the other hand sometimes it is difficult to determine the source domain, prototypes can be rooted in a couple of different domains. E.g. the origin of '*fighting abilities*', a popular subject of Russian newspapers, can be linked both with '*The war*' family or the Sports domain, boxing in particular.

- (3) *The obstinate Frenchman possesses fighting abilities which, for sure, will be more in use: Luc (Besson -L.A) is 43 only.*
- (4) *This monster (the theatre L.A.) was breaking us persistently. If Sasha (an actor-L.A.) was hit so I (his wife-L.A.) was hit at the rebound as well. But likewise boxers in the ring we were able to find sufficient stamina to fend off punches, to get back up and continue the fight.*

There are also cases when one metaphor combines properties of two and more source domains.

- (5) *The assembly line works extremely well and each year it throws out new gladiators--competition - runners.*

In this example the competition in Arts (target domain) is portrayed through prototypes of two domains- *gladiator* (war system with certain reservations) and *assembly line* (technological family or mechanism).

Blurred structure of metaphorical families reveals constraints which cognitive linguists may face in their attempts to capture values through their observations over usage of the words in non-literary meaning. The prototypes quite often have a complex structure which is hard to delineate unless one simplifies it. There is no uniformity in approaches as to how to define the range of situation to which the prototype scene can apply. As my task is to come close to the concept of values via reconstruction of the network of metaphors, I can only carefully observe contingencies within the system without any attempt to design an innovative methodology.

2.3 Mapping procedure

Any attempt to draw a cognitive map would require answers to at least two questions. The first one is what is the central concept which organises and defines the system. The second one is how to group the concepts within the system, e.g. what are the focal points or categories which impose structure on the semantic field. The first question is a continuation of the problem as how to identify and name source or target domains. It is much easier to follow solutions in place than make a personal choice and contemplate alternatives. Thus when mapping the War family it is better to place a reliance on Lakoff's analysis than trying to explain what difference the names '*Aggression*', '*Fight*', '*Military Terms*' would make for the arrangement of the whole system.

There may have been many possible answers for the second question. However, because this paper targets values and beliefs, the best way to deal with it is to borrow criteria suggested in the typology of values (Rokeach 1973). Thus the analysis of the metaphoric system contains the search for terminal values or omnipresent goals and objectives, preferred modes of conduct and desirable traits. This approach allows introducing some uniformity to the study of various groups of metaphors. The adherence to a certain classification assists in finding "meaningful differences" within and by comparison with elements of concurrent systems .

It is worthwhile to note that meaningful differences are values in the Saussurian sense. However, to get closer to the modern understanding of human values, one may need to rank meaningful differences at least. For example, two possible modes of conduct in a conflict are presented in 'war' metaphors; *to attack* and *to wear coat of mail*. The meaningful difference between them in rough terms would be a reliance on offensive or defensive actions. To establish which model is of personal or social value one may need to verify that a particular mode is given preference by language users. There can be various ways to do it, such as to count the frequency of words or analyse the modality of context.

The diversity of possible target domains may be evidence of the prevalence of beliefs. For example *to attack* can be projected onto the target domains of conflicts, health and even seduction.

(6) *Fast food attacks liver*

(7) *Sun attacks holiday-makers*

(8) *Price attack*

Although the examination of possible projections of source domain concepts onto target domains is critical for finding language-based stereotypes, it will remain beyond the scope of this paper.

2.4 Language, Culture and Mass Media Effects

The database of metaphors comes from Russian weeklies and therefore reflect concepts which are in active use by members of that language community. This does not mean that I suggest treating newspaper data as an acknowledged source of Cultural Values. Newspapers may present conflicting views on events and reflect different political interests. Impact of Mass Media on individuals may vary. Even so, means of creating attitudes are wrapped in the same language fabric. "Since language is a critical factor shaping perception, interpretation and decision concerning action, the media may have powerful, long-term effect" (Lowery 1995:26)

In this paper the vocabulary of modern Russian newspapers is used as a tool in cultural studies and social norms. Wierzbicka (1997:21) commented "Language and in particular, vocabulary--is the best evidence of the reality of "culture", in the sense of historically transmitted systems of "conceptions" and "attitudes" as a component of their learned behavior which were passed on through generations".

3. Mapping the Military Space

3.1 Scene of Victory- Supreme Purpose

According to my selection the most popular semantic field of deriving non-literary meaning in Russian newspapers is the military field. As it was stated previously, military vocabulary is predominantly used for depicting various conflicts. It is possible to include or exclude marginal cases like "unpleasant events" or "dialogues of artists with their audience", depending on our understanding of the concept of conflict.

- (9) *Experts are talking about an explosion of crimes.*
- (10) *A talented musician who previously conquered a Siberian city, then took Moscow by storm through his artistic performance".*

To understand the specifics of conflicts depicted as a war it should be noted that there is a concurrent line of attitudes - sports and games.

- (11) *The strongest figure on the chess board is M. Kasyanov*
- (12) *Don't have any doubt-the eternal sprinter V. Zhirinovsky will take a part in the presidential race.*

It is also an interesting allusion because military actions are often associated with children's plays in which they can smash toys and destroy their imaginary targets.

Under the comparison of sports and war a variation in perception of the ultimate goal and conflict resolution can be established. The desirable state of affairs (terminal values) is viewed as a situation of several aspects. Achieving the victory will be the most wanted outcome in sports and wars. However the settings vary. War is a major endeavor when a concentration of animosity or a disagreement reaches its peak form.

- (13) *A few words about Kasyanov. He is most likely to become a main target of the future information war.*
- (14) *We are living in the state of new war- information and computer war, war on terrorists, that's why all films have got an open end.*

In sports conventionally the clash of interests does not involve animosity or polarization of opinion. It is based on the spirit of competition, fun atmosphere and challenging goals. Competitors and rivals are perceived as temporary enemies- they act as "opponents" or an obstacle on the way but this perception is valid only in relation to a defined situation (elections, debates). In military engagements opponents are viewed not as competitors but as enemies. Enemies are antagonists in the long run, the attitudes to enemies are persistent and stronger than for rivals. Enemies bring a desire to defeat, destroy and humiliate them.

Thus the core semantic component of victory, gaining superior status, may acquire additional constituents such as obtaining acknowledged control, destruction and humiliation of enemies. Demonstration of superior status in sports is seen as proving the excellence of skills possessed, while in military engagements, where animosity is exhibited, the evidence of victory can be proved through exercising power over the enemy. In Sport and games the skills involved in gaining superior status are in focus, while war type conflicts evoke the underlying question of life and death.

3.2 Preferred mode of conduct- offence or defense?

Various means may serve the purpose. Modes of conduct may be presented in action words or descriptives (through descriptions of clothes, instruments such as weapons, forms of organisation and situations). The borders of the category are fuzzy-- some types of actions can be viewed as personal traits- such as compliance or initiative. It should be also

noted that some concepts, such as compliance, are reconstructed through interpretation of descriptives such as *the life in barracks* and others.

The centre of the category is formed by two types of action- offence and defense. Offensive actions are the most representative members of the 'War' family. They include attack, invasion or occupation. In Russian there are more variances of verbs with the attack semantics, predominantly translated through *to attack*. There are numerous actions which can be associated both with an offence and a defense, such as *counter-attack* (an offensive action under circumstances when you need to defend yourself), *to fight, to combat and to strike*. The semantics of the word *struggle* is linked up with the defensive side. Compare *struggle for peace* or *struggle with AIDS*. The interpretation implies that something should be protected or defended from something or someone.

It is interesting to note that English mass media uses *raids* in the offence group quite often, particularly in relation to the tax office work.

(15) *The truth behind the latest tax raids.*

In theory it is credible that Russia would operate with a similar concept. However I do not have such data on hand from my selections.

There are two distinctive semantic components associated with the concept of offence. The first one evokes the restoration of the supreme goal scene. The purpose of the offensive conduct is to destroy an enemy, or to weaken him significantly. The achievement of the purpose results in gaining control over the situation, disarming the enemy and making him panic. The semantics of the group display the variance.

The second component illuminates the specific way of acting in the hostile environment- underlying swiftness, decisiveness and determination and the ability to initiate actions. The initiation is perceived as a prospect of gaining control over the situation. The frequency of the attack model may be an evidence of wide-spread belief that a party in the conflict is at high risk of becoming a victim or losing in the struggle without an attempt to impose their rules and scenarios on other parties. No attempt to tailor events according to own vision means no gains. The counter-attack scenario highlights an ability to pre-empt the strike.

(16) *Chubais' opponents were attacking in a wide and diverse front-line. The spearhead of the attack was a union of Illarionov and Iavlinski.*

(17) *The second line of the counter-attack is a belief of the society that the industry will end up with a failure without reforms.*

If, in a proposition, it is given that one party is involved in offensive behavior then the implication is that the other party retaliates or remains weak and unprotected.

The verbs of the group *to occupy, to invade* usually are not used for the description of interpersonal conflicts or debates. The words highlight a demonstration of power, influence and control -- apparent outcomes of the offensive actions. The utterance brings an observer to the scene to monitor undesirable events. It also relates to an acknowledgement that mighty destructive forces are in action and there is no counteraction to them.

(18) *Italian minister described German tourists as arrogant nationalistic bores who "invade Italy's beaches" every summer.*

(19) *Retailers have occupied all railway approaches to Moscow.*

The concept of defense is presented mostly in descriptions of means of defense such as shields, armor, coats of mail and others. This reference reveals the atmosphere of mistrust and insecurity and evokes a dim impression that the party is not strong enough to impose their code of conduct, be on the offence. The reliance on means of defense is possible to understand as a sign of tension and evidence of the passive role in the conflict. The metaphor, nevertheless, highlights the importance of the preemptive mode of conduct revealed in prudent care of self-protection.

(20) *Despite the emotional heat, nobody has been noticed wearing armor.*

(21) *Zyuganov displayed nervousness. He seemed to wear coat of mail under his suit. Possibly, he was afraid of a stab in his back.*

3.3 Handy weapons

As distinct from sport, military clashes leave more choice in regards to technical support of actions. In sports, participants rely on their own skills and abilities or use some equipment which presumably exhibits the same basic features and thus the belief about equality of parties is reinforced. In a hostile environment participants may develop an advantage in actions and increase their chances in offence by picking up suitable arms. *Weapons* convey the idea of readiness to fight and can be read as a signal of intimidation, aggressive intentions.

(22) *Words are our weapon*

(23) *During the last 10 years it is the ninth attempt of the Parliament to arm (to give weapons in the literal translation- L.A.) society and law-enforcement agencies with such a law.*

A brief outlook on the semantics of 'weapons' group reveals the following. *Bombs* are used when one undertakes a remote control action participating in the fight indirectly and enjoy an extended timeframe of activity.

(24) *Before the New Year Putin planted a real bomb under Russian oil tycoons. He declared that the state will start extracting their excessive profits from usage of natural resources.*

Detonators and explosives stand for the last straw, referring to an event which triggered the outburst of animosity. Their utterance is a warning about an uncontrollable situation (hidden mechanism), unknown adversary.

(25) *Kids of the poor started getting germs of education. Their access to information opened their eyes to the inequality in the world. It became a detonator of hate. The hate and despair generate a wave of radicalism.*

The stick is involved in the conflict of evidently uneven parties. It is a tool of obedience to its master, copying his moves. Presumably the stick does not inflict friendly fire or collateral damage. It may not be useful for the purpose of mass destruction but it is good for an immediate punishment and demonstration of force over an inferior opponent.

(26) *The Americans decided that Iran needs a demonstration lesson of punishment, so that the others would not follow their example. Iraq was suitable for the role of the stick as it was the most powerful state in the territory.*

3.4 Traits Required

The personal qualities which are highly beneficial in war conflicts are fighting abilities and fighter's spirit. It is interesting that artists tend to exhibit fighting abilities (examples 3, 4), while politicians exhibit fighter's spirit. It may relate to the fact that artists should be able to defend themselves and put forward their views while politicians cannot be taken seriously if they are not able to bring fear.

(27) *It is obvious that the conflict with tycoons goes on. The president (Putin) shows a fighters' spirit.*

(28) *Miloshevich was pale and seemed to have lost weight. Nevertheless he demonstrated a fighters' spirit.*

In both cases aggression is a distinctive component of the semantics. The concept of aggression may accumulate semantic components of goal and ways of action which were presented before. There are special requirements for team fighters, however. They are to show compliance, unity and discipline, as they may *live in barracks* and perform their duties in *military units* or reposition in *front*.

In any circumstances war metaphors put across the perception of insecurity, apprehension of possible offences and appreciation of preemptive measures and initiatives.

4. Conclusions

A brief review of different approaches toward the notion of value and an attempt to implement this concept in analysis of Russian cognitive metaphors from military domain have raised following issues:

1. The present understanding of values as endurable beliefs, which are preferred to other beliefs has constraints in application to cognitive metaphor models. Beliefs disclosed in the analysis of cognitive metaphors can be called values only if their preferential status in comparison with other beliefs is established.

2. However, it is possible to make an assumption that non-literal meaning, e.g. the transpositions of qualities from one domain of human experience to other domains, highlights the importance of portrayed beliefs and may thus indicate that they are of value in a certain culture.

3. It should be also noted that the same phenomenon may be perceived through concurrent metaphoric systems, e.g. conflict may be presented in terms of war, sport events, health

problems, musical performance or atmospheric disturbance. Perhaps the comparison of the frequency of their utterance may reveal the preferential status of a certain domain and thus a metaphoric scene will fit the definition of value in modern value theory. Therefore, numerous military metaphors may reflect a trend to project 'War' scenarios on conflicts and their outcomes.

4. The Saussurian notion of value as a "meaningful difference" can be employed as a method of defining metaphorical scenes involved. An identity of each metaphorical scene and its place in the system can be established through the comparison of metaphors within the same group and with metaphors from concurrent domains. Saussurian ideas leads us to the observation that value derives from the notion of identity. Once the phenomenon has been identified and its place in a hierarchical structure has been established, then the value of the phenomenon has been ascertained as well.

5. The 'War' source domain was structured in line with the typology of beliefs presented in the modern theory of values. The categories involved included purposes, preferred modes of conduct and desirable traits. Undesirable events and actions such as *to surrender*, *casualties* that were called by Graeber (2001) "negative values" were left outside the scope of the paper.

The elements of the analysed system have been centered around the goals and means of their achievement and thus the system has been aligned toward future expectations. The 'War' system highlights anticipation of forthcoming development, meanwhile other systems, such as "Health problems" may focus chiefly on reflection of past events (injury, trauma, sickness).

Reference

- Graeber D 2001 *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: the false coin of our own dreams* Palgrave New York
- Hechter M, (ed.)1993 *The Origin of Values* Aldine De Gruyter New York
- Lakoff G 1988 *Women, fire, and dangerous things: what categories reveal about the mind* University of Chicago Press Chicago
- Lakoff G & Johnson 1980 *Metaphors We Live by* University of Chicago Press Chicago
- Lowery S & DeFleur M 1995 *Milestones in mass communication research: media effects* Longman Publishers New York
- Rokeach M 1973 *The Nature of Human Values* Free Press New York
- Saussure F 1983 *Course in General Linguistics* (ed. by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, tr. by Roy Harris) Duckworth London (First published 1915)
- Wierzbicka A 1997 *Understanding Culture Through Their Key Words* Oxford University Press Oxford New York