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**A Study on Ontological Metaphors in Economic
Contexts**

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Abstract

With the rapid development of human-centered society, linguistics and cultural studies have been combined in modern research. In particular, the study of metaphors has been considered closely in the cognitive context rather than as a linguistic ornament. Metaphors reflect processes of thinking and therefore require a rethinking of notions of meaning, concept, and reason. Consequently, the paper aims to study a model of Conceptual Mapping (map relation between a concrete source domain and an abstract target domain) focusing on ontological-based metaphors that are deployed in economic reports. In order to achieve the aim, these research objectives were raised; 1) to design a model of economic metaphor processing which is formed through conceptual mapping and 2) to describe national identity through the context of ontological metaphors. We found support for our research method in work by Lakoff (1993). The metaphorical expressions that describe the modern socio-economic situation were selected from official media such as journals, magazines or news websites in Mongolia. The research data were analyzed and described by qualitative methods.

Keywords: Ontological metaphor, conceptual mapping, economic context, national identity

Introduction

Articles related to the economy are often flooded with metaphors. Here, metaphors can be seen in a new light, exceeding their primary function of being used only as ornamental tropes, and can become powerful instruments of expressiveness, rendering their study through cognitive linguistics, culture and other fields interesting. Lakoff and Johnson claimed that the metaphor is not just a matter of language, but that it governs our ordinary conceptual system. According to their view, human thought processes are largely metaphorical and the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined (Lakoff 2003). Lakoff (1980) and Turner (1993) both suggested that conceptual metaphors are related to our daily language and life since they can generally be divided into three main types: Structural (medicine, health), orientational (up-down) and ontological (human, container).

The aim of this paper is to address how ontologically-based metaphors construct the current economic condition as cognitive tools that are based on human emotion, specific objects or materials, or on cultural experiences with cultural values in terms of national identity.

The method of our research is based on Lakoff and Johnson's theories of the conceptual metaphor. Thus, metaphor is the mental process occurring when human activity, model, lifestyle, and notion of mapping have an intention, at which time the person uses expressions which are not in line with their denotative meaning. In this case, humans engage in using and understanding the target domain бай, which has an increase in abstract nature. The metaphor is one important example of economic rhetoric and is an essential device in economic thinking, including in the process of conceptual mapping, and assists to describe national identity (Turner 1993).

Scope of the Study

During the 1970s, as a result of the attention by linguists led by George Lakoff, the metaphor was seen as a mechanism operating in everyday language, and that creates and shows our way of understanding reality (Lakoff 1980). The aim of this paper is to address how ontology-based metaphors construct current economic conditions as cognitive tools that are based on human emotion, specific objects or materials, and cultural experiences and values in terms of national identity.

The method for this research is based on Lakoff and Johnson's theory of the conceptual metaphor. We present a model of metaphors illustrating how they are formed showing national identity and cultural interpretations of the source and target concepts. These include ontological metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson pointed out that the conceptualization of our experience under the conceptual domain of material or tangible things helps us to extract abstract experiences and ideas and to see them as objects or concrete substances (МӨНГӨ БОСГОХ 1990). In the view of cognitive linguistics, the metaphor can be illustrated as a mapping between a source and target domain. The metaphor allows people to comprehend a relatively abstract or inherently unstructured subject matter in terms of a more concrete, or at least a more highly structured, subject matter. B.Purev-Ochir describes that metaphor is mind mapping that is related to the experience of audiences who are addressed and who interpret them through national identity in the context of cognitive perspectives (Пүрэв-очир.Б, 2013). The ontological conceptual metaphor originated from human thoughts within a particular culture. Linguistically, this will result in an item of vocabulary or larger stretch of text being applied in a unique way. Hence, researchers tend to study ontological metaphors within different cultures, places, times, and social and economic life, owing to rapid social and economic developments.

The article focuses on how conceptual mapping works for ontological metaphor occurring in economics articles, and attempts to describe national identity through human thinking and experience on lifestyle. We attempt to explain metaphorical linguistic expressions frame 1) semantic 2) metaphor model 3) national identity within economic context in order to analyze the hypothesis by conducting sampling from news articles and Mongolian economic websites. We selected metaphorical phrases such as offshore (оффшорчин), to build money (мөнгө босгох) and to damp the fire (гал унтраах) are mental images grounded deeply in expressions common in current economic conditions in Mongolia.

Cambridge English Dictionary: 1. Offshore ['ɒfʃɔː, ɒf'ʃɔː] Off + shore (off + shore- land, as opposed to sea or water); 2. Offshore-adjective: offshore; adjective: off-shore; adverb: offshore ['ɒfʃɔː, ɒf'ʃɔ] 3. situated at sea some distance from the shore: "offshore islands" (Cambridge English Dictionary, 1993); 4. Offshore financial institutions: can also be used for illicit purposes such as money laundering and tax evasion. Offshore is a word in Mongolian as a borrowed

(Cambridge English Dictionary, 1993). The Mongolian dictionary points out that offshore (оффшор) means “old, outside”, offshore account (оффшор данс) 1. Татвар ихтэй болон валютын хяналт ихтэй орны харилцагчдад open the account (нээсэн данс) in tax free country; 2) Тухайн нутаг дэвсгэрт бүртгэлтэй ч оршин суугч бус этгээдэд үзүүлэх банкны үйлчилгээний нэг гэж тусгажээ—the banking service which belongs to overseas (<https://www.investopedia.com>, 2000). But “offshore” is familiar to Mongolians through politicians who take some money from the state budget in order to save abroad.

Extracts from articles addressed:

“...The Minister of Foreign Affairs, offshore Tsogtbaatar.D has visited to China...” (“Оффшорчин» гэгдсэн Гадаад Харилцааны сайд Д.Цогтбаатар анхны айлчлалаа Хятадад хийжээ” (24 цаг. мн сайт, 2017.4).

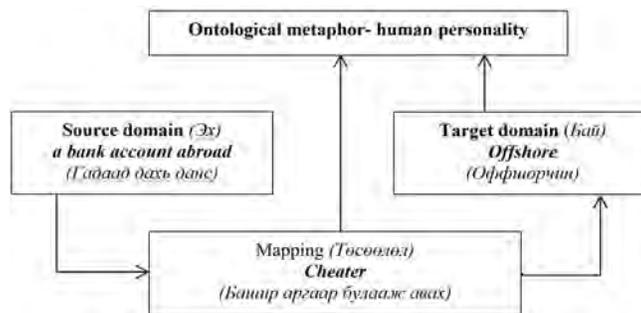
“...Somewhat surprisingly, the Republic party proposed a project of law amendment titled “Offshore politicians goodbye” through the Spring Session of the Parliament...” (Хамгийн сонирхолтой нь энэ удаагийн хаврын чуулганаар МАН-ынхан “Оффшорчин улстөрчид баяртай” гэх хуулийн төслийг батлахаар хэлэлцэж эхэллээ” (24 цаг. мн сайт, 2017.4).

“...At present many rumors in the public about the offshore issues that you may be titled as an offshore. Most people may have a mind that if somebody has an account abroad, they may be called as a cheater...” (Сүүлийн үед оффшор данстай холбоотойгоор нийгэм даяар шуугьж байна. Таныг ч бас оффшорчин гэж цоллох боллоо. Ихэнх иргэдэд оффшор данстай холбоотой л бол луйварчин мэт ойлголт төрж байх шиг” (24 цаг. мн сайт, 2017.4).

According to the Mongolian thesaurus dictionary Cheater (булааж авагч) is explained that a person who acts dishonestly in order to gain an advantage. Through the dictionary Cheater is explained in the ways of that 1. бусдын юмыг гүжирлэн мэхлэх, булааж авагч; 2. Булхайцах, булхайлах, луйварчин-бусдын юмыг гүжирлэн булааж авагч, Pilferer” (луйварчин) “Луйварчин” гэдэг үгийг өдрийн луйварчин, улаан цайн луйварчин мөн башир муу аргаар тонон дээрэмддэг этгээд, хулгайч худалчид; бусдын юмыг гүжирдэн булаан авагч, луйварч, луйвард гаршсан этгээд; бузар луйварчин (муу мөртэй хулгайч, худалчид), луйварчин этгээд (башир муу аргаар тонон дээрэмдэгч этгээд), улаан луйварчин (луйвард гаршсан хүн, мэхт арганд гаршсан этгээд) (Хүрээлэн, 2015).

The word metaphor has come to mean a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system. Therefore, the analysis of a conceptual metaphor demonstrates how human reasoning and behavior are organized as one of the tenets that can be derived from conceptual metaphor theory that suggests metaphors of structural thinking.

The nomadic lifestyle is still practiced today in rural areas of Mongolia. Thus, Mongolian families move from place to place for their animals to graze. When they move from a cold place they leave their heavy furniture and other extras in their winter camps. Rarely, others steal and use these items. These people and phenomena are conceptualized abstractly as “cheater”(луйварчин). This negative etalon is used in modern language in the economics context. That is, the mental process occurs when one has an intention, and he or she uses expressions. A large part of our everyday language is motivated by conceptual metaphors that we take for granted.



Model 1. Offshore metaphorical mapping

Meanwhile, some economists describe phrases as “build money” (МӨНГӨ БОСГОХ), which is a very common expression in the field of economics. In business, the text “Millions of Ideas to Build Money” (Мөнгө босгох мянган санаа, the bestseller, was published recently is predominant.

Phrases with ontological metaphors in the following examples are taken from the media:

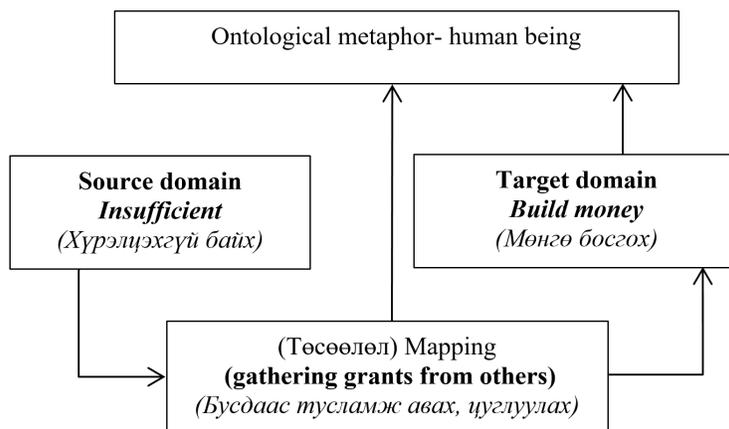
“If you borrow some money from a financial institution then there is a big problem with collateral. You need to create a productive project to build money...” (Банк санхүүгийн байгууллагаас зээлье гэвэл барьцаа гэх айхтар асуудалд тулна. Гэтэл дэлхий хэт хурдан эргэж, хөгжиж байгаа энэ үед сайтар боловсруулсан, шинэ санаа, төсөлтэй л бол барьцаа хөрөнгө шаардахгүй мөнгө босгох боломжтой болжээ)

“The speaker said that it’s possible to raise salary and build money ...” УИХ дахь бие даагчдын зөвлөлөөс өнөөдөр намрын чуулганы хугацаанд ямар байр суурь илэрхийлж ажилласан талаар мэдээлэл хийв. Цалин тэтгэвэр нэмэх мөнгө босгох бололцоо бий гэв (www.business radio.mn, 2016).

“It is a big support for our future if we could build money and implement innovative projects in creative ways...” (Инновацийн төслүүдээ энэ замаар мөнгө босгож, хэрэгжүүлбэл эдийн засагт томоохон дэмжлэг болох ирээдүй байгаа юм) (Р.Оюунцэцэг, 2016).

According to the Mongolian thesaurus dictionary (Монгол хэлний их тайлбар толь) initiated by President Elbegdorj, the metaphorical phrase “to build money” (МӨНГӨ БОСГОХ) means having sufficient money (МӨНГӨӨ НИЙЛҮҮЛЖ ХҮРЭЛЦЭХҮЙЦ ХЭМЖЭЭНИЙ МӨНГӨТЭЙ БОЛОХ) (хүрээлэн, 2015). In our point of view, this phrase is a new concept or notion in the economic field as we could not find this phrase in other Mongolian dictionaries. Consequently, the metaphor is created in Mongolian everyday life, even in our country’s developing process. Overall, many expressed some phrases “...МӨНГӨ БОСГОЖ БАЙГААД ШИНЭ АЖИЛ ЭХЛЭХ САНААТАЙ, МӨНГӨ БОСГОЖ БАЙГААД ЗЭЭЛЭЭ ТӨЛНӨ...” when money is built, then starting a business, when building money and then paying off loans...” and so on.

Ontological metaphors are grounded in our experience with physical objects and substances. That is, human thought is primarily metaphorical in nature and this is revealed through language. People understand complex and intangible phenomena (i.e. the target domain) in terms of something else (i.e. the source domain), which is usually grounded in bodily experience. It can be illustrated as a mapping between a source domain and a target domain.



Modal 2. Metaphorical mapping 'Build money'

This metaphor is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions. The nomadic way of life encourages people to be self-reliant, and adaptable to outside forces, namely the weather, and engenders a spirit of working together, helping one's neighbor in times of need and offering hospitality. We also have a reputation for being frank, honest. We suggest that the phrase "build money" (МӨНГӨ БОСГО) withing a mapping principle has a positive etalon. The metaphor reveals a variable and the complex nature of conceptual metaphors, and imaginings of a culture in the target domain. In many instances, metaphors describe an abstract entity or an issue in terms of more concrete aspects of human experience.

Therefore Mongolians believe that good deeds with the help from others signify positivity, happiness, and good omens, as well as these tendencies of the Mongolians to build wealth in connection with their daily lives. This becomes the basis of the today's positive economic environment and expresses the traditional aspects of the people in general to do well.

The researchers speak on economic crises through Mongolian media "гал унтраах" (to damp the fire) as a common phrase among the public. According to the Mongolian Great Dictionary (Монгол хэлний их тайлбар толь) to damp the fire (гал унтраах) is down (гал мөхөх), fire extinguisher (унтраагуул) (Я.ЦЭВЭЛ, 1966). That is not such a good method with which to reduce social and economic crises. Undeniably, this has a double meaning that neutralizes, where in quoted press releases, the economist has used the term "putting the fire out" to express improper tactics with which to fight the socioeconomic crisis.

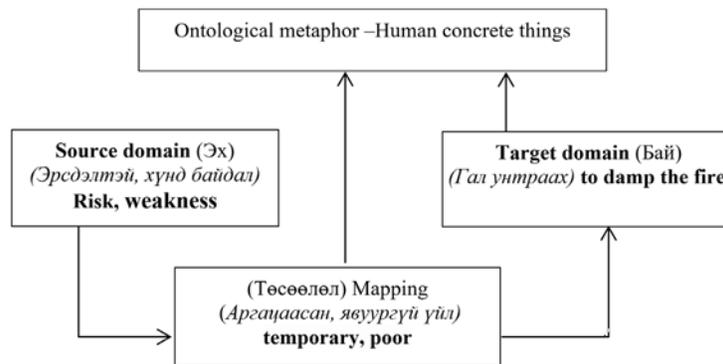
...The country's economic security has been damaged since the emergence of the formulated policy on damping the fire ... (Үргэлж гал унтраах түр зуурын бодлого хэрэгжүүлж ирсний уршгаар улс орны эдийн засгийн аюулгүй байдал алдагдаж, эрсдэлтэй байдалд ороод байна" (news.gogo.mn, 2014).

"...Supplying dollars from the Mongol bank in the market is just a poor damping-the-fire method..." ("Монгол банк шиг зүгээр л зах зээлд доллар нийлүүлээд ханшийг тогтворжуулна гэж байхгүй. Энэ нь түр зуурын гал унтраах л арга" (ярилцлага П. г.-и., 2017)

"...Limitations on loan and savings interest is a short damping of the fire..." ("Зээлийн хүүг хязгарлаж, хадгаламжийн хүүг хязгарлах нь богино хугацаанд гал унтраах арга" (bloomberg.mn, 2017.11.)

At present, the country's economic crises, poor economic policy, and bad consequences

have all caused the poor political situation. Mappings are based on the “main meaning focus” of a source domain. This well reveals the complex interactions of culture, environment, and economic structures. The phrase damping the fire is expressed in the meaning of “temporary” action (түр зуурын). Our everyday economic life style is mapped through (negative thought) the target domain. How this phrase relates to the domain between the source and target domains within the ontological metaphor is shown below:



Modal 3. Metaphorical mapping on ‘To damp the fire’

Many researchers have suggested that metaphor comprehension entails mapping semantic and evaluative connotations of the source (“risky, weakness”) onto the metaphor target (e.g. “to damp the fire”). Thus, “risky” might convey a source of, weakness, decay. Fire has a strong feeling, energy, which is deemed to bring good luck. Therefore, many have hailed fire as generating honesty, correct feelings and force as part of a national symbol. But in this economic case, fire is a mapping which represents the doing of things temporarily, and not such a good path, having a negative value within the target domain. The metaphor, far from being a superfluous yet pleasing linguistic ornament, is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning, based on national identity and cultural core values.

Conclusion

With the rapid development of a human-centered society, the metaphorical framing model provides a basis for understanding economic changes. The main tendency of the modern metaphor is conceptually based on human thought, experience, and way of living in the current market economy. New metaphors in economic contexts originate from Mongolian authentic ways of living, customs, rituals and personalities. The new metaphors in social-economic fields have occurred withing the context of national culture, within its values, and wit views on globalization.

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