

Contrastive analysis of weather metaphors in Russian and English sport discourse

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Abstract

The study aims at describing the mechanism of weather metaphors formation and functioning in sport discourse in the Russian and English languages. The problem of the nature of metaphor is presented for the purpose of introducing conceptual foundation of the phenomena. Weather as a conceptual area appeals to human cognition as a natural phenomenon and forms particular conceptual connection with human activity. Conceptual Blending Theory is utilised in the study to demonstrate particular result of weather metaphorisation that is blended or integrated conceptual structure – mental space. Blended spaces in weather metaphor are regarded as a unique conceptual structure with their own frames and scenarios inherited from the basic mental spaces. Russian, British and American sport media sources have provided material for the study. Several types of metaphors are distinguished, each with particular blending mechanism. Allomorphic and isomorphic features are identified in the blended space and analysed in terms of their conceptual and verbal representation.

Keywords: sport discourse, weather metaphor, blended mental space, conceptual features, allomorphy, isomorphism.

1. Introduction

Metaphorization has been for a long time considered the key to deciphering fundamental patterns of human cognition. Several decades have passed since the switch from “metaphor as a stylistical device” conception to “metaphor as a cognitive mechanism” conception. Not only did it alter the direction of many disciplines (Cognitive Psychology,

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Language and Cultural Studies, Political Studies, etc.), it also redefined the understanding of text construction and discourse formation.

Lakoff & Johnson (2003) define metaphors as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another”. Joseph E. Grady writes that “[i]f cognitive linguistics is a study of ways in which features of language reflect other aspects of human cognition, then metaphors provide one of the clearest illustrations of this relationship” (Grady 2007). Metaphor is a vital cognitive process, a key link between conceptualization and language (Fauconnier 2003). Cognitive structures are deeply embedded into our understanding of the world, it is our duty to “dig” them up, analyze them and categorize according to their properties. When analyzing sport discourse, we find: 1) war metaphors that highlight opposing attitude of athletes; 2) economical metaphors that establish “offer&demand” relations inside the sport community; 3) religion metaphors that create particular “mythology” of sports, and others.

Weather as an essential conceptual area makes a considerable contribution to the process of metaphorisation: when we “storm out” or when our exam is a “breeze”, when we “flood” with tears or we are “snowed” under a lot of work. Relation with weather conditions is defined by our inescapable dependence on the powers of nature.

There is a certain number of studies on the weather as a domain for metaphorisation: by Isabella Żołnowska (2011) on the weather metaphors in everyday lives, by Edita Valiulienė (2015) on the temperature metaphors and by Maria Lorenzetti (2010) on the metaphorisation of temperature terms. Sport discourse, however, is yet to be analysed that defines the importance of current study.

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines weather as “the state of the atmosphere with respect to heat or cold, wetness or dryness, calm or storm, clearness or cloudiness”. In our research we shall denote any meteorological phenomena as weather. There is a demarcation required for our study: weather metaphor is distinguished from the nature metaphor. Nature metaphor is also represented in sport discourse with zoomorphic and phytomorphic metaphors (Kudrin 2011). J.R. Sladkevich (Sladkevich 2012), for example, considers weather metaphors as part of nature metaphors, however, in our study we shall only use weather metaphors as they alone contain a sufficient amount of material.

2. Methods

In the field of cognitive linguistics, the priority is given to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. It is their book “Metaphors We Live By” that demonstrated potential of cognitive approach to unveil the culture-specific patterns of thought. By establishing connections between key domains of culture Conceptual Metaphor Theory manages to determine regularities in speech extending the object of discursive studies.

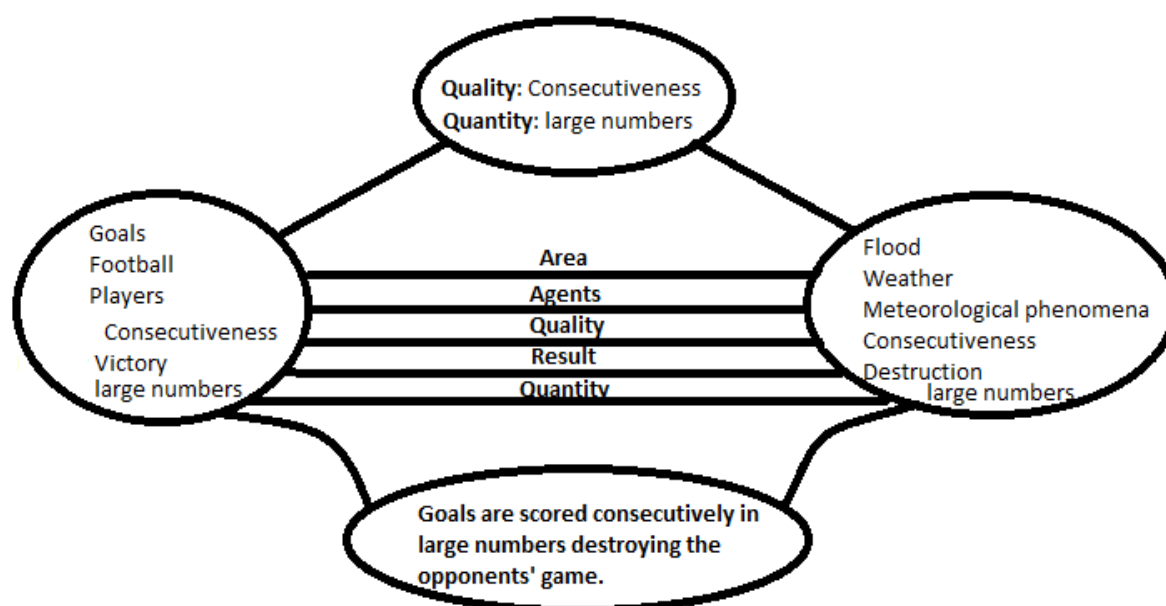
The methodology of CMT includes two conceptual domains connected with frames of knowledge – particular categories which are actualized in speech. Obvious advantage of this theory is broad methodological applicability. Categorization serves for distinguishing peculiarities in patterns that present interest to contrastive studies in linguistics.

This theory evolved into the Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) developed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner. Unlike CMT with two conceptual domains, CBT has several domains called mental spaces: two mental spaces are basic domains the elements of which are integrated. So called generic mental space is the one that serves as a mediator between basic

mental spaces and contains common features of the two spaces (Kireeva 2012). The other space is called blended – it is comprised of the elements of basic domains that make a new integrated space. The mental space with common features is called generic - This space is a newly formed conceptual structure and presents interest to linguistics as the basis of such integration lies in human creativity. We shall claim the advantage of CBT over CMT for the purpose of our research which is to define significant allomorphic and isomorphic features of weather metaphors in English and Russian sport discourses. CBT provides “one of the most advanced and promising studies of metaphor” (Kovalchuk 2011; Bachev, 2021; Bahhouth, Gonzalez, & Thomas, 2022).

3. Results and discussion

In our research, we are using various Internet resources in the Russian and English language with over 500 articles each as the material. Weather metaphor establishes itself verbally in an explicit form:



“Liverpool stayed patient and eventually the flood of goals came.” (<https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/keita-nets-liverpools-third-v-155809868.html>) The following model is presented:

The two mental spaces “goals” and “flood” are defined as process of consecutive actions: a large number of goals by one team “flooded” the opponents, rendering them hopeless, leaving them no space. Destruction is the element that defines the victory of the team. Thus, “destruction”, “large number” and “the consecutive process” are definitive features of the blended space.

Other examples of “goals are flood” model:

“Spurs put Burnley to the sword at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, scoring a flood of world-class goals in a 5-0 romp.” (<https://www.nbcsports.com/video/extended-highlights-tottenham-5-burnley-0>)

“It is typical of Rooney to respond to a goal drought with a sudden flood of goals, but he can legitimately claim he has not received this much service in his four previous

appearances *this* season.”
(<https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2015/aug/26/manchester-united-louis-van-gaal-wayne-rooney-analysis>)

“Destroying” opponents is what makes this weather metaphor conceptually close to the war metaphors: dehumanizing your opponents and leaving no chance for them to win.

In the Russian language, though, the weather metaphor for victory is constructed in a different way:

“С одной стороны, такой град голов за два матча — это хорошо.”
(<https://www.sport-express.ru/football/rfpl/news/denis-macuev-schitaet-cto-sobolev-sposoben-oboyti-dzyubu-v-spiske-bombardirov-v-novom-sezone-1812327/>) Translation: “On the one hand, this blizzard of goals is good thing”.

In the Russian language it is the quantitative element that prevails in the metaphor: unlike flood, hail doesn't cause massive destruction, it is the amount of hailstones that is highlighted in the blended space. Destruction itself is a secondary feature that is proved by the following examples:

“Второй матч ознаменовался градом голов — 6:6...” (<https://www.sport-express.ru/futsal/reviews/mini-futbol-chempionat-rossii-parimatch-superliga-1-2-finala-1797381/>) - “the second match was marked with a hail of goals – 6:6...”

“Вы что, в такой ситуации ожидали града голов и моментов?”
(<https://www.sport-express.ru/football/rfpl/reviews/spartaku-nechego-delat-v-lige-chempionov-vyacheslav-korotkin-ne-soglasen-s-kritikoy-krasno-belyh-1787787/>) - “Were you expecting a hail of goals in this case?”

Metaphors with frame “quantity” are specific to particular types of sports. The above mentioned model “goals are flood” are typical to football discourse, and, for instance, “punches are rain” is characteristic of MMA fighting discourse:

“Garcia had to work through another close call in Round 2 but this time he got the takedown, moved into the mount position and then started raining down punches until Ontiveros was clearly compromised and could not continue.”
(<http://medofy.blogspot.com/2021/10/ufc-vegas-39-video-steve-garcia.html>)

“Dern dismantled Rodriguez's defense to move into the mount where she began raining down punches but also making sure she maintained control on top.”
(<https://www.mmafighting.com/2021/10/9/22718363/marina-rodriguez-striking-clinic-against-mackenzie-dern-to-win-decision-in-ufc-vegas-39-main-event>)

Typical metaphors always acquire a fixed verbal form of expression. In the given example, “rain down” is a fixed syntax construction that has been incorporated into sport discourse by constant use.

Wind as a weather phenomenon presents opposite conceptual features in sport discourse. In the Russian language, it is the “gust” that is commonly metaphorised in sport discourse as a model “attack is a gust of wind”:

“Россия с первых минут обрушила шквал атак на ворота финской команды...”
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(“Russian team unleashed gust of attacks on the Finnish team...”) (<https://www.sport-express.ru/hockey/juniors/reviews/finlyandiya-rossiya-5-6-obzor-pressy-o-matche-polufinala-yuniorskogo-chempionata-mira-po-hokkeyu-chto-pishut-zhurnalisty-1786090/>)

“Ярославцы начали в привычной скоростно-силовой манере, дополняя ее нехитрыми комбинациями в атаке и шквалом бросков.” (“Players from Yaroslavl started in their common powerful and rapid manner with simple attacking combinations and gust of shots”) (<https://www.sport-express.ru/hockey/khl/reviews/spartak-pod-rukovodstvom-olegazanarka-posle-razgroma-v-helsinki-snova-proigral-lokomotivu-1-2-ot-1717637/>)

Simultaneously, in the English language the model “victory is a breeze” prevails. Unlike “attack is a gust of wind”, this model features the lack of speed and power, as they are not required for the victory: the game is so easy that the team spends minimum efforts to achieve it. Projecting “slow speed” and “low intensity” features into the blended space defines this metaphor as “atypical” for sport discourse as it doesn’t enhance the features of sport agents of sport events but decreases them. Nevertheless, it must be stated that this model is regularly represented in sport articles:

“Chris Simms explains why Josh Allen and the Bills “are going to be unstoppable” after breezing past Washington.” (<https://www.nbcsports.com/video/josh-allen-emmanuel-sanders-light-it-bills-vs-washington-week-3>).

“Southampton breezed past Norwich City to restart their Premier League campaign.” (<https://www.nbcports.com/video/extended-highlights-norwich-city-0-southampton-3>).

It should be mentioned that lexeme “breeze” has developed this metaphorical meaning and it is now represented in the vocabulary of the English language. Thus, we can deduce that its nature is not of sport origin, but rather everyday discourse. This metaphor, however, has become a constituent of English sport discourse for it is verbally expressed through a fixed syntactical construction “breeze past”.

Frame “physical characteristics” abounds in metaphors highlighting speed. In both languages, however, there are different models with their own peculiarities. In English sport discourse, “action is a thunderbolt” expresses both power and speed.

“Former Spurs midfielder Paulinho scores thunderbolt for Brazil.” (<https://soccer.nbcports.com/athlete/paulinho/page/9/>)

“He followed up with a head kick that glanced off and shortly afterwards, a thunderbolt of a right hand planted Khashakyan on the mat, forcing referee Mark Smith to jump in and make the save.” (<https://www.mmafighting.com/2017/7/18/15994738/dana-whites-tuesday-night-contender-series-2-results-sean-omalley-earns-ufc-contract-first-round-ko>)

“A thunderbolt of a right hand” from English boxer Pat McCormack against Jonathan Francois of Grenada takes him into the men’s -69kg quarter-finals at the Commonwealth Games.” (<https://www.bbc.com/sport/av/commonwealth-games/43682492>)

In the Russian language, metaphor “sport event is a hurricane” denotes the frame “speed” and is used in fixed syntactic constructions: “hurricane tempo” or “hurricane speed”.

“А во втором тайме сборная России взвинтила темп до ураганного.” (In the second half Russian national team made the tempo of a hurricane) (<https://www.sport-Res Militaris>, vol.12, n°3, November issue 2022

[express.ru/futsal/reviews/uragan-v-schelkove-1766115/](https://www.sport-express.ru/futsal/reviews/uragan-v-schelkove-1766115/))

“От Энтони Джошуа ожидали ураганной скорости в первых раундах...” (Anthony Joshua was expected a hurricane speed in the first rounds) (<https://www.sport-express.ru/boxing/professional/reviews/aleksandr-usik-pobedil-entoni-dzhoshua-chno-pishut-ukrainskie-smi-26-sentyabrya-1839459/>)

“Последние полгода для российских гандболисток пролетели в ураганном темпе...” (Last 6 months Russian handball players spent in a hurricane tempo). (<https://www.sport-express.ru/handball/europe/reviews/rossiya-shveycariya-26-22-obzor-matcha-otborochnogo-turnira-chempionata-evropy-2022-po-gandbolu-sredi-zhenschin-6-oktyabrya-2021-goda-1843328/>)

Thus, various metaphors have different aims as they denote different physical features of sport activity, from single features (“speed”) to several features (“consequences”, “speed” and “manner”). Russian and English languages have different models with their own features and particular verbal forms.

4. Summary

The study reveals the following:

- 1) Weather metaphors are abundant in sport discourse, they have already penetrated particular conceptual areas and acquired typical language expression in the form of fixed syntax constructions.
- 2) Weather metaphors in sport discourse are divided into general (characteristic to several sport disciplines) and specific (typical to a particular sport discipline);
- 3) isomorphism of conceptual blending in weather metaphors of English and Russian sport discourses is defined by the same blend qualities, in the frame “physical features” there are three primary features (power, speed and quantity), and secondary features (consequences, manner, etc).
- 4) allomorphism is found in metaphors with opposite blended features or prevailing of particular features in the given languages: in Russian sport discourse weather metaphors tend to highlight one particular feature (power, quantity or speed), whereas in English sport discourse, weather metaphors tend to highlight several features (power and speed, quantity and consequences, etc)

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, weather metaphors are very useful for sport discourse as they cover the core of sport as a physical activity. Unlike political, war or economical metaphors that define the periphery of sport conceptual domain (relations between agents, ideological basis, etc.), weather metaphors emphasize the physical abilities of the agents or the event. Weather metaphors are able to reflect the motivational aspect of sport and the value of training. Weather as a conceptual domain has a significant potential of expression and should be studied thoroughly in all the areas.

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