Conceptualization of Women through Metaphor by Bilingual Lukabras-English Speakers

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study employs the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to investigate bilingual conceptual representation. The study analyses the metaphorical expressions commonly used among Lukabras-English bilinguals in Western Kenya in conceptualizing feminine terms when they speak English. This was motivated by the fact that cognitive linguistics research on human mental representation tends to focus on evidence from monolingual populations. Therefore, the study analyses bilingual figurative language in order to correlate bilingual conceptual representation with the native cognition. A combined method of data elicitation from Lukabras-English bilinguals and the native speaker's intuition was used to collect conventional metaphorical expressions of women metaphors from the respondents. Conceptual metaphors that are believed to underlie the metaphorical expressions of women were then inferred for analysis. The bilingual metaphors were correlated with conventional metaphors of feminism among native speakers of Lukabras. Findings from this study support the assertion that the bilingual's conceptual structure is not just a simple addition of the cognitive processes associated with each of their languages but rather a product of a complex process of conceptual restructuring in the languages involved.

1. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study is to use linguistic data as evidence in order to establish how bilingual mental representations in two languages can influence conceptual representation of concepts and variation in language use. Several studies from psycholinguistic research (Rose, Caroll 1974 & Baker, 2006) have shown conflicting findings on whether the bilingual mental representations of two languages are stored in separate storage systems or a shared storage system. To Rose and Caroll (1974), the bilingual linguistic expressions in each language are believed to emanate from language-specific memory stores. In contrast, Baker (2006) refers to such assertions as the naive view of bilingual mental representation in view of recent research (Bialystok, 2001) which suggests that the bilingual's languages seem to interact beyond mere translation and corroborating the shared storage hypothesis However, what is of interest to the present study is correlating the metaphorical expressions about the conceptual domain of native speakers as conceptually represented among bilinguals when they speak only one of their languages. The paper analyses the metaphorical expressions commonly used among Lukabras-English bilinguals in Western Kenya to talk about women when they speak English. Moreover, since metaphors vary cross-culturally, (Kövecses, 2005), the current investigation is premised on Feng's (1997,1) assertion that a cross-cultural research in metaphors remains: "a vast piece of virgin land to be explored" (p.132).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) define the term metaphor as the mapping or set of correspondences between two conceptual domains to which they refer as the source and target domains. The major contention in this paper is that feminine metaphorical expressions ideally represent the patriarchal culture. Kabras being one of the patriarchal societies promotes the domination of men over women. In such patriarchal societies, there is the concept of hegemonic masculinity and femininity which legitimizes the dominant position of men and the subordination position of women

(Schippers 2007). Therefore men are seen as authority figures who hold the power, and this is seen as legitimate or largely inherent (Connell, 1995).

Gender , according to Montgomery (1986), is defined as a set of socially acquired attributes and patterns of behavior allotted to each of the members of the biological category of male and female,. However, as observed by Almudena and Rosa (2003), what these attributes and patterns of behavior mean varies according to societies and eras and may convey the norms to be fulfilled as well as models to be followed by their members. It can therefore be axiomatic to assert that these norms are reflected in the way language is used in a given speech community. Furthermore, gender can be understood as a metaphor by means of which people express things in terms of something else. When considering feminine metaphors, it is necessary to pay attention to how different speech communities perceive and understand the world, and link their conceptualization of gender roles to the language they speak. Furthermore, metaphor seems to be a tool of understanding the way human cognition perceives concepts. This argument is echoed by Unger and Schmid (1996) who note that "metaphor is not just a way of expressing ideas by means of language, but a way of thinking about things" (p.118). Metaphor, in this view, is seen not as a literary form or as a deviation from some supposedly literal language, but rather as one of the building blocks of our thinking, at both the level of language acquisition and language-use (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Attention must also be paid to the contention that different cultures will have different conceptualizations for the same concepts because each culture gives concepts its unique socio-cultural salience. Furthermore, evidence from cross-cultural studies on the conceptualization of basic human abstract concepts (Kövecses 2005; Maalej 2004) suggests that indeed, different cultures attach different cultural salience to specific realizations, elaborations to conceptual metaphors. Therefore, one would expect cultural variations in the way people in bilingual speech communities conceptualize abstract concept in a given speech community. In this respect, there was need to compare the bilingual representations with the conventional conceptual representations of feminine metaphors in monolingual Lukabras and English which are believed to be accessible to fluent Lukabras-English bilinguals. It has been established by Mudogo (2017, 2018) that some English lexical items do not

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have a one to one English equivalence. Therefore, a comparison between the native representations and the bilingual ones would help to determine whether the bilingual representations conform to or are different from any or both of the native representations.

Cognitive linguists are in agreement that language may be a window onto human cognition and that linguistic expressions in part reflect cognitive processes. For instance, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) observe that "metaphor is pervasive in ordinary, everyday life, not just in language but also in thought and action and that concepts structure how people perceive the world" (p. 3). However, since people are normally not aware of their conceptual system, Lakoff and Johnson (ibid) propose that linguistic structure may be a good evidence of what people's conceptual system looks like based on the same conceptual system they employ in thinking as well as other non-verbal behaviour. It can therefore be inferred that metaphorical language is a manifestation of metaphorical thought and the fact that there is strong relationship between linguistic structure and conceptual organization. However, in bilingual speech communities, there is need to explore the nature of the bilingual conceptual representation within the framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This means that the linguistic structure may be a good evidence of what our conceptual system looks like. Therefore, the findings of the study may add knowledge in the area of bilingual cognition.

2.1 Bilingualism and cognition
Bilingualism may be defined as the ability to use more than one language. However, different linguists have offered conflicting views of the concept. Sociolinguists for instance base their definitions of bilingualism on the functions of the two languages involved (Mackey 1970), while theoretical linguists such as Bloomfield (1933) base their definitions of the concept on the linguistic competence of the bilingual. Moreover, Ansah (2008) has rightly observed that most studies on human cognition have been drawing inferences from linguistic evidence by mostly relying on native language users to draw conclusions on human conceptual representation. Her assertions are also echoed by De Groot and Kroll (1997), who argue that bilingualism is a common human condition, and to be able to "gain a genuinely universal account of human cognition will require a detailed understanding of how both monolinguals and bilinguals use language

as well as the representations and processes involved (p.2).

2.2 Construction of women metaphors in Lukabras

Lukabras is one of the Luhya clusters of languages spoken in Western Kenya. Studies on women metaphors in Luhya in general are scanty. Except for Barasa and Opande (2017), who have examined the use of animal metaphors in the construction of women in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs in Kenya. Lubukusu, like Lukabras belongs to the Luhya language group. Barasa and Opande (ibid) established that Lubukusu metaphors portray women as inferior, worthless and weak. The implication drawn from these findings is that women are marginalized, discriminated in issues of decision making, participation, resource distribution, policy formulation and in politics because of the prejudices. It is worth noting that, different speech communities metaphorically attach human features to certain concepts in order to better understand their behavior. Moreover, it is popularly believed that entities have special properties which are the most salient or prototypical ones when describing them. This is what Lakoff and Turner (1989) calls "the quintessential property" (p.196). For the present study, there was need to establish how bilingual Lukabras-English speakers tend to metaphorically link some of the quintessential property of certain concepts to women.

2.3 Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

A conceptual metaphor is generally defined as the systematic structuring or restructuring of one conceptual domain (the target domain), a coherent organization of experience, in terms of another conceptual domain (the source domain), through the projection of knowledge structures of one aspect of experience to reason about a different aspect of experience (Kövecses 2005). Conceptual metaphors are often expressed in language (linguistic metaphors). As a result, CMT claims that metaphorical expressions in language point to underlying conceptual metaphors, i.e. linguistic metaphors or metaphorical expressions allow us access to the human conceptual system and organization because they are the surface realization of cross-domain conceptual mappings. CMT theorists such as Lakoff (1993) claim that, "the generalizations governing metaphorical language are not in language, but in thought: they are general mappings across conceptual domains" (p.1). This assertion points to a

solid link between linguistic metaphors and the underlying conceptual metaphors.

In CMT, a conceptual metaphor involves two conceptual domains, a source domain and a target domain, where the target domain is understood in terms of the source domain. While the source domains capture more familiar, concrete and clearly delineated domains of experience, target domains represent less familiar, less clearly delineated and more abstract conceptual domains. Cognitive linguistics basically assumes that thought is metaphorical, i.e. various figurative processes fundamentally shape human cognition. This is believed to reflect in metaphors - the ways in which more concrete concepts are systematically used to reason about or structure less concrete, more abstract concepts (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Thus, metaphor is believed to be a central feature of human language because figurative language reflects figurative thought, conceptual organization as well as certain fundamental properties and design features of the human mind.

3. METHODOLOGY

Firstly, based on the researchers' native speaker's intuition, conventional linguistic feminine metaphors in Lukabras were intuitively generated based on popular sayings and clichés such as are found in ordinary, everyday expressions about the conceptual domain of women. Secondly, words and phrases that belong to feminine metaphors were systematically elicited from fluent Lukabras-English bilinguals. Focus Group Discussions were used to compare the bilingual data with the native conceptualizations. The analysis focused on how the various metaphors are structured in the source domain, in terms of the salient features related to features mapped onto the target domain.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section analyzes example of feminine terms as conceptualized by Lukabras-English bilinguals. It is important to investigate whether meanings are imposed, negotiated over, or struggled over.

Naming and representation

Cognitive linguists are in agreement that the names people give the world are not mere reflections of reality, nor arbitrary labels with no relation to it. Rather, as argued by Cameron (1990), names are "culture's way of fixing what will actually count as

reality in a universe of overwhelming, chaotic sensations, all pregnant with a multitude of possible meanings" *p.12). The linguistic evidence indicated that women are correlated with things such as vehicles, plants, animals, foodstuffs and technology with different values and ages. Women correlated with these things and rarely do their names get mentioned. Furthermore, the question of whether or not conceptual metaphors in general are universal across cultures has been a matter of research interest in cognitive linguistics and elsewhere (Kövecses 2005; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Maleej 2004). Several views and positions have been expressed in this regard. While earlier studies of emotion concepts in cognitive linguistics (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980), emphasized the potential universality of anger conceptual metaphors across cultures, later studies in both cognitive linguistics and elsewhere (e.g. Kovecses 2005; Mallej 2004) point to variation in the conceptualizations of metaphors across cultures/languages. According to Kövecses (2005), these similarities and variations occur in two major areas: the source domains in terms of which a particular target concept is understood, and elaborations in the conceptual mappings within a particular conceptual metaphor in the case of shared source domains. For the present case, there need to compare and contrast the conceptualization of women in native Lukabras with that of bilingual Lukabrsa-English speakers in terms of the source and the conceptual mappings in the target domain.

1. Women as vehicles

During the Focus Group Discussions, some Lukabras-English bilinguals described women as vehicles of different prizes and age. In all there were 5 linguistic tokens that pointed to this metaphor in the data. The following correspondences are postulated:

Metaphor
Source domain -------------------- **Target domain**
A vehicle ------------------ A woman
    i.   That one is a *Fuso*.
    ii.   Martin dives a *Prado*
    iii.   My wife is a tired *Leyland*
    iv.   He has bought a *tin car*

Thus, as revealed in the data above, women are correlated with different vehicle models. Thus metaphors like *Fuso* (fat), *Prado* (expensive), *Leyland* (old) and *tin car* ((very low quality) are used to describe different women. The examples above also

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show that, both monolingual Lukabras and bilingual Lukabras-English speakers make use of metaphoric principles in their conceptualisations of women in terms of source and target domains. However, unlike monolingual Lukabras speakres, the bilingual Lukabras-English speaker's knowledge of the value of different vehicle types gives rise to metaphorical entailments in the mappings above so that the concept of a vehicle corresponds to value of woman. However, vehicle metaphors appear not to be salient in the metaphoric conceptualization of women metaphors in native Lukabras.

2. Women as fruits
Metaphor
Source domain -------------------- **Target domain**
A fruit ------------------- A woman
    i.   He got a *tomato*
    ii.   That one is a *rotten mango*
    iii.   Her daughter is still a *raw quaver*
    iv.   Try that *lemon* and your teeth will be sick for days
    v.   That *pumpkin* is not being treated well

By regarding women Just like tomatoes, quavers and pumpkins it is implied that they are products to be consumed and have different tastes as depicted by their consumers. For instance, beautiful women were equated to tomatoes and pumpkins, while young girls are referred to as raw quavers. In addition, negative evaluation of women as ill-mannered is highlighted in the metaphors of *rotten mangoes* and *bitter lemon*. It was also revealed that the Lukabras-English bilingual metonymic conceptualization of the women as fruits conforms to the native Lukabras metonymic conceptualization in this respect.

3. Women as animals
Metaphor
Source domain -------------------- **Target domain**
Animal ------------------- A woman
    i.   He married a *squirrel*
    ii.   She behaves like a *hen that wants to lay an egg*
    iii.   He is lucky to get that *Friesian*
    iv.   She is still a *heifer*
    v.   They have dropped the *fish* in the water

Women are associated with animal character**.** The state of cunningness in a woman is metaphorically instantiated by resorting to animal names such as *squirrel or fish in the water*. Correlating a woman with

a hen that wants to lay an egg respond to Lukabras tradition that associates a nagging woman with bird imagery. Furthermore, a woman with many children is likened to a Friesian cow, which is known to produce a lot of milk, while a young woman who has not yet given birth is referred to as a heifer.

With regards to the animal metaphor, the bilingual metaphor has similarities and differences from both the native Lukabras metaphors in terms of the specific animals that are mentioned with woman-bearing characteristics. However, there are differences in the language-specific construals of exact animal in monolingual Lukabras and Lukabras-English bilinguals.. *women as squirrels, a hen that wants to lay an egg and heifer* as having women-bearing characteristics conforms to native Lukabras elaborations, In addition to source domains, variation in the conceptualisation of women across languages/cultures may show in how each language/culture actually construes the shared source domains. For instance, the concept of women as Friesian cow does not conform to native Lukabras conceptualization of the concept.

4. **Women as food stuffs**
   Metaphor
   Source domain -------------------- **Target domain**
   Food stuff ------------------- A woman
   i. An in-law is *chicken stew*
   ii. She is ready for *consumption*
   iii. What is left in her brewing pot are just sour *dregs*
   iv. That is a poisoned *granary*

Women are portrayed as food stuffs which exist to be exploited and eaten. In Lukabras, a man can use his wife's sisters or cousins as chicken stew since they can serve his appetite as a potential wife is need be. Additionally, poisoned granary is a metaphor that refers to spoiled female gender. For this reason, the one has to be cautious when dealing with women, lest he get infected with the poisonous ones. A woman with loose morals is correlated with the traditional brewing pot which after serving her many customers has nothing more to offer than the tasteless dregs. The metaphors reveal that women, whether married or not are meant to satisfy men's sexual urge. Food as a source domain also appear to be salient in the

metonymic conceptualization of women in both bilingual Lukabras-English and native Lukabras .

5. **Women as plants**
   Metaphor
   Source domain -------------------- **Target domain**
   Plants ------------------- A woman

   i. Will you manage to climb that *slippery tree*?
   ii. That is a *wasp tree*, climb at your own peril
   iii. She is the *thorny tree*
   iv. She has clung on him like *black jack*

Plants exist to be exploited and eaten. The slippery tree image indicates the tricky woman whom the men find it hard to convince/tame. In the same token, some women who are not tolerated by men are referred to as wasp trees or thorny trees. On contrary, women who stick on men are compared to unwanted weeds such as black jack. It also emerged that the Lukabras-English bilingual metonymic conceptualization of women as plants conforms to the native Lukabras metonymic conceptualization in this respect.

6. **Women as technology**
   Metaphor
   Source domain -------------------- **Target domain**
   Technology ------------------- A woman
   i. Will you manage that *dot com*
   ii. I tell you that is *touch screen*
   iii. He married *Facebook*
   iv. She still behaves like the *black and white television*
   v. His girlfriend is *digitalized*
   vi. I can't stay with that *analog* thing

Due to technological advancement, women are likely to be viewed in such terms. A woman is depicted as a creature that has technological forms and characteristics. Technology was a source domain that was exclusive to the bilingual conceptualizations as it does not conform to the native Lukabras conceptualization of the concept.

From the data collected, it was revealed that some metaphors were common between native Lukabras and bilingual Lukabras-English speakers because they are grounded in shared experience. However, some metaphors used by Lukabras English bilinguals did not

conform to the native Lukabras forms. This can be attributed to the fact that while it is possible for some conceptual metaphors to be universal or near universal because they are grounded in universal human experience, different cultures may have culture-specific realisations of these near-universal conceptual metaphors.

5. CONCLUSION

First, the study concludes that metaphor is a useful cognitive mechanism of conceptualizing women in Lukabras. As pointed out by Ungerer and Schmid (2001),"metaphors are not just a way of expressing ideas by means of language, but a way of thinking about things" (p.118). Indeed, there exist both similarities and differences in the conceptualisations of women in native/monolingual Lukabras and bilingual Lukabras-English. First the following common source domains for women were shared by the two languages: FRUITS, FOODSTUFFS, ANIMALS and PLANTS. These shared source domains may be said to be motivated by the shared conceptualisation of women in both English and Lukabras. Second, there were differences in the language-specific realisations of these general metaphoric conceptualisations of women in Lukabras-English bilinguals. For example, whereas there was linguistic evidence to suggest the metonymic conceptualisations of women in terms of VEHICLES and TECHNOLOGY, in Lukabras-English bilinguals, the data did not suggest any such specific metaphoric conceptualisations in native/monolingual Lukabras. The analysis has also shown that while the bilingual conceptualizations reflect, in some ways, the conventional conceptualizations of women in native Lukabras, it can be argued that the bilinguals conceptualizations go beyond a mere reproduction of linguistic knowledge that the bilinguals have acquired from their two languages about women. Since metaphors of women used by Lukabras-English bilinguals were identified, this paper concludes that metaphor is so pervasive in the expression of women that it appears to play an indispensable role in our understanding of it. Past researches corroborate the finding that metaphor is a basic and indispensable linguistic feature of human understanding (Kövecses, 2002). Moreover, the study concludes that metaphors of women in bilingual Lukabras-English are well accounted for in terms of the conceptual metaphor theory.

Therefore, based on the findings from the analysis of the bilingual data, it emerged that the Lukabras-English bilingual conceptualizations of women point not only to conceptual integration but also conceptual recreation of new conceptual mappings. In this respect, the findings are a corroboration of Pavlenko's (2009) claim that bilingualism leads to conceptual restructuring. Therefore, being familiar with linguistic representations of a concept in two different languages may have subsequent consequences for how such concepts are conceptually represented in the bilingual's mind.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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