Metaphor, Transitivity, and the Literary World - How Dickens and Hardy represent their world through metaphor.

Metáfora, transitividad y el mundo literario - Cómo Dickens y Hardy representan su mundo a través de la metáfora.

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Abstract

Combining the approaches of Systemic Functional Grammar and Corpus Linguistics, the aim of this investigation is to provide a *transitivity analysis* of *metaphor clusters* within collected works by Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy. This research tries to determine, using metaphorical instances of *head* and *thought*, what types of processes are used for metaphor, and what constituent these nouns form within the processes. The results will determine what transitivity and a literary analysis can add to a lexico-grammatical approach to metaphor and subsequently what this means for language learners and how they acquire knowledge of metaphors.

Key words: metaphor, transitivity, SFL, Dickens, Hardy, corpus linguistics

Resumen

Este artículo discute la manera como la teoría de la transitividad puede influenciar y mejorar nuestro acercamiento a cómo entendemos y, por lo tanto, enseñamos la metáfora. Combinando los enfoques de gramática sistémica funcional y lingüística de corpus, el objetivo de esta investigación es proporcionar un análisis de transitividad de grupos de metáforas en las obras de Charles Dickens y Thomas Hardy. Esta investigación trata de determinar, usando ejemplos metafóricos de las palabras 'cabeza' y 'pensamiento', qué tipos de procesos gramaticales se usan para la metáfora y qué constituyentes forman estos sustantivos en los procesos. Los resultados determinarán lo que la transitividad y el análisis literario pueden agregar a un enfoque léxico-gramatical de la metáfora y, posteriormente, lo que esto significa para el aprendizaje del inglés y la adquisición del conocimiento de frases metafóricas.

Palabras clave: metáfora, transitividad, gramática sistémica funcional, lingüística de corpus

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1. Introduction

A comparison of metaphor use between two 19th century authors, Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy, will be explored within this article. The research will explore the lexical choices and grammatical constructions associated with the nouns *head* and *thought* when used in metaphorical constructions. The aim is to show how creative language choices can provide us with extra contextual information both inside and outside of the actual text. This has an impact on how we learn language and what our language choices can reveal about us or our ideologies. Each metaphorical phrase will be analysed using the Transitivity model (see Halliday, 1994) and will be carried out on two levels – the literal level (Target Domain), and the metaphorical level (Target Domain). The use of metaphor in this way often reflects broader implications associated with the text, allowing one to see how the world is represented through language according to a particular writer (Patterson, 2015). As claimed by Fowler: "linguistic codes do not reflect reality neutrally; they interpret, organise, and clarify the subjects of discourse" (1986: 27), thus allowing for a broader exploration into a writer's ideology.

2. Metaphor

2.1 Manifestations of metaphor in grammar and lexis

Much research has been undertaken into language learning and conceptual metaphors. As an example, L2 students' improved awareness of the conceptual metaphor is beneficial in understanding and retention, and increases their awareness of the semantic motivation underlying figurative expressions. (Littlemore & Low, 2006). However, there is less research on metaphor at the level of the lexis. As metaphor is pervasive in language, I have argued that a lexico-grammatical approach to metaphor that incorporates levels of meaning such as cohesion, connotation, and pragmatic factors, can have major implications on our understanding of the phenomenon (see Patterson, 2016; 2017). In the past, I have urged that EFL teachers should take these factors into consideration when teaching metaphor to second language learners. This study argues that a transitivity analysis of metaphor can reveal extra-linguistic information regarding writer choices.

Lexical metaphor concerns the semantic association of words within a given context. Wikberg (2008) further defines lexical metaphor as: "a way of seeing something in terms of something else, a process which involves a linguistic expression referring in an unconventional way to people, animals, things, events or concepts on the basis of some similarity, correlation, or analogy" (34). An example is given below from the Thomas Hardy data: "the time of deeds was quietly melting into the time of thought".

Here, the abstract concept of time is referred to as *melting*, a verb associated with applying heat to concrete matter such as ice. The notion of similarity or correlation between time and ice is what remains linguistically undefined, or left out of the expression, thus it is up to the reader to make the semantic link: i.e. time is capable of melting and disappearing. Goatly's (1997) definition of lexical metaphor consolidates and develops upon Wikberg's, stating that metaphors can be defi-

ned and identified within any given text by:

> [r]estricting metaphor to cases where an unconventional act of reference or colligation is understood on the basis of some similarity, matching or analogy involving the conventional referent or colligates of the unit and the actual unconventional referent or colligate. (Goatly, 1997: 86)

Thus, any entity referred to metaphorically lacks at least one critical feature possessed by the conventional referents of the word. In the previous example from the Thomas Hardy corpus, the notion of time is unconventionally associated with the qualities of concrete matter, capable of melting.

Secondly, a traditional systemic functional approach to metaphor focuses upon the use of grammatical metaphor. Whereas lexical metaphor relates to the way a particular word is used in a context, grammatical metaphor involves: "comparing different ways of expressing the 'same' meaning" (Thompson, 2004: 221). According to Thompson,: "nouns congruently encode things, and verbs congruently encode happenings" (2004: 222). With grammatical metaphor, a grammatical analysis of the clause suggests incongruence with what is 'meant'. This occurs when nouns can encode happenings or relational states, and a verb can encode a meaning. Thompson gives the example: "the north emerges from every statistical comparison that can be made, as significantly poorer than the south" (2004: 222). Here, the noun is a form of nominalisation (*comparison*), encoding something happening (comparing statistics), whilst the verb (*emerges*) acts more like a noun in that it is encoding a meaning (*is*). In a more congruent phrasing, the noun (*comparison*) would be used as a verb: "as a result of comparing, people find out" (Thompson, 2004: 223). Subsequently, the expression above is metaphorical (grammatically), and the clause is made more dynamic in the imagery of the north *emerging*, rather than *being* poor.

2.2 Transitivity and Metaphor

Goatly's (1997) research into metaphor and language surveys the means by which metaphors are realised through grammatical features. Goatly discusses: "a general tendency to use MATERIAL metaphors for MENTAL processes" (1997: 87). Given the importance of imagery to metaphor, and a dependency of imagery on the senses, Goatly suggests that MATERIAL processes within metaphor should be "highly predictable". An example is shown below:

He stopped, as if again,	(he)	arrested	b y	a thought
ANALYSIS 1:	(Goal)	Pr: MATERIAL		Actor
ANALYSIS 2:	(Senser)	Pr: MENTAL (COGNITION)		

The clause *he was arrested by the Police* is a clear example of a MATERIAL process where the actor (*the Police*) is actively and physically doing something to the goal (*he*) i.e. arresting him. Conversely, the sentence *he was thinking* is a clear example of a MENTAL process, by which the process

is one of thinking. The participant (he) is labelled as a senser. However, in terms of metaphorical clauses, there is a possibility of a double level analysis in which the literal and semantic meanings differ greatly. This has implications for how we teach grammar to language learners. This research argues that grammar and lexis cannot always be separated clearly. The metaphor above: *he was arrested by a thought* combines both of the discussed processes. On a literal level, the thought (actor) is physically doing something to the man (goal) i.e. arresting him. However, on a metaphorical level, the clause can be interpreted as the man realising/conceiving a thought. Subsequently, the process relates to thought, and thus becomes a MENTAL process. As can be done with a literal analysis, the metaphorical realisation of realising a thought cannot be broken down into the same transitivity constituents. When analysed metaphorically, the process itself becomes the whole structure *arrested by a thought*. Referring back to Thompson's (2004) definition, this is also an example of a grammatical metaphor, whereby the process of thinking becomes a nominalisation in the form of the abstract noun *thought*.

2.3 Metaphor and worldviews in Dickens and Hardy

One of the aims of this research is to explore the way in which metaphorical patterns within a particular text reflect a writer's views and intentions and the impact of grammatical choices in metaphorical expressions upon the reader. Fowler (1986), Leech and Short (1981), and Semino and Swindlehurst (1996) claim that personifying metaphors may be used to project a worldview that attributes a: "potentially threatening animacy to nature" (Semino & Swindlehurst 1996: 144). In literature, metaphor enables a writer to create such animacy in order to dramatise and characterise certain themes or events. The nouns head and thought will, in most cases, be related to the human process of cognition. Therefore, metaphorical phrases in relation to these nouns may reflect certain animacy on the abstract level of thought. Thompson places *a thought crossed my mind* in the category of dead metaphor (meaning that the metaphoricity is not activated), along with *reach a decision* and *it struck me that*. However, he also claims that in comparison with *understand*, *think* and *decide*, they still preserve some of their MATERIAL force – thus allowing the speaker or writer: "to represent cognition as drama" (Thompson, 2004: 117). Furthermore, mind-style theorists, such as Leech and Short (1981) and Semino and Swindlehurst (1996), claim that at an individual level,: "the systematic use of a particular metaphor or metaphors reflects an idiosyncratic cognitive habit, a personal way of making sense of and talking about the world" (Semino & Swindlehurst, 1996: 144). Idiosyncratic patterns in Dicken's and Hardy's use of certain metaphorical phrases may reflect upon particular character development, and impacts upon the reader.

3. Summary of Analysis

The results of this study have shown some key differences in the choices taken by Dickens and Hardy in their use of metaphors, and these decisions reflect wider issues such as their ideology, main themes in their writings, and characterisation. Below is a snapshot of some of the findings.

As predicted, most metaphorical phrases using *thought* and *head* make use of MATERIAL processes to represent MENTAL processes. An example is given below:

1. *she should take it into her brightly ornamented head to pretend*
    Source Domain: MENTAL: cognition (to decide/make a decision)

However, a main difference lies in the fact that when describing the process of thinking, Dickens uses many more metaphors relating to *head*, whilst Hardy prefer to use *thought*. In the Dickens' texts, in the majority of cases, *head* is grammatically situated as part of a circumstance, whilst in Hardy, the majority of instances of *head* are performing the role of actor. Circumstances can sometimes be a way of a writer grammatically back-grounding certain information (Thompson, 2004). Circumstances appear more peripheral in a clause than participants, and are usually concerned with matters such as temporal and physical setting, the manner in which the process is implemented and other people or entities accompanying the process rather than being directly engaged in it. In light of this statement, *head* as a circumstance foregrounds the participant, which is often an abstract noun or entity such as *emotion/thought/feeling*. This therefore places importance on the abstract concept and process involved with *thinking*, rather than the physical and concrete setting of the *head*. Furthermore, many of the examples of *head* as a circumstance within the Dickens' texts are highly repetitive. Examples include:

come/take/put/get	+	*into/out of*	+	*his/her/your head*

Such results suggest a colligational patterning in terms of the discussed verbs *come/take/put/get*. These verbs are often used as a part of a prepositional phrase, whereby there is a salience of these verbs commonly being used in association with *into* or *out of* the *head*. Where *head* is placed in a prepositional phrase functioning as a circumstance, we see *head* being represented by the conceptual metaphor Head is a container. In such cases, the *head is containing* MENTAL processes such as thoughts:

2. *He   took   it   into his head   that she must be ill*
    Actor   Pr:mat G-   Circ   -oal

Interestingly, in Hardy's work, there are more occurrences of other processes, namely MENTAL, RELATIONAL, BEHAVIOURAL and EXISTENTIAL. Hardy uses *thought* metaphorically in a variety of grammatical phrases and this reflects differences in his writings. Not only are *thoughts* carrying out physical actions, but they are described as having attributes and behaviours. Examples of *thought* as a goal, actor and circumstance in Hardy's writings are shown below:

3. *He   could not bear   **the thought***
    Actor   Pr:mat   **Goal**

4. **a wild thought** *flashed   into Gabriel's mind*
    Actor   Pr:mat   Circ

5. *He only heard…remarks,*   *(he)*   *having fallen*   **into thought**
                                (Actor)   Pr:mat   **Circumstance**

Within these examples, *thought* is depicted as taking on a variety of roles, (similar to what was shown with Hardy's use of *head*): something being done to the *thought* (3), the *thought* doing something to someone/something (4), and the *thought* being the situational location of the metaphorical phrase (5). From the data thus described in Hardy, *thought* appears to take on a wider variety of processes, therefore being represented through various metaphorical action and imagery. In contrast to Hardy, Dickens grammatically foregrounds *thought* much more often i.e. it is often the major lexical item of the metaphor i.e. the subject or object, and thus actor or goal.

4. Literary Implications

Dickens and Hardy are classed as Victorian Realist novelists, both writing in the latter half of the 19th century. However, there are considerable differences in the themes and context that surround both of their works. The Dickens' texts have shown a more salient use of *head* by Dickens than by Hardy, and furthermore, usually as a metaphorical carrier of thought processes – shown usually as part of a prepositional phrase within a MATERIAL Circumstance. The *head* is seen as the physical situation of cognitive processes, whereby, through the metaphors, the cognition is also seen as physical i.e. thoughts entering the head. The language of Dickens has been popular in linguistic analysis for several decades (Leech & Short, 1981; Fowler, 1986; Mahlberg, 2012, 2013; Stockwell & Mahlberg, 2015). Mahlberg (2013) has carried out research on repetition of language in Dickens' works. The research found that Dickens relies upon heavily reoccurring grammatical sets of work in relation to characterisation. As has been shown in the analysis, Dickens relies are stock phrases in relation to metaphorical phrases also. In relation to Dickens' ideology within his writing, the use of certain colligational patterns has shown to help reflect the importance of characterisation and true to life character depictions.

By contrast, Hardy was writing later in the Victorian period, once Realism had been well established. Many critics, including Elliot (1984) and Chapman (1990) suggest that Hardy, particularly in his later works (those found in the corpora included), lost faith in the ideas surrounding Realism, and instead focused on those of Naturalism. Advances in the field of human psychology fed into the preoccupation with representing and recreating the inner workings of the mind and human consciousness, rather than outward physical appearances dominating Realism. Support from the findings is reflected in Hardy's lack of physical representations, shown through his smaller use of the concrete noun *head*. Instead, *thought* is used much more often than Dickens, and more importantly, in a range of processes and grammatical configurations.

One reason for the grammatical variation of *thought* in the metaphorical phrases, could be accounted for by the fact that *thought* has the lexical flexibility - because of its importance throughout Hardy's novels - to be represented by a variety of processes. *Thought* takes grammatical precedence in most MATERIAL processes within Hardy, as either Actor or Goal. Moreover, *thought* is also used more often by Hardy in RELATIONAL processes than Dickens; meaning *thoughts* are also assigned attributes and qualities, both animate and inanimate. Thus the personification and animacy of thought processes are prevalent in various processes, allowing *thought* the mobility to transcend a fixed, or idiosyncratic positioning. As stated however, the lack of saliency in Hardy's use and construction of *thought* metaphorical phrases inhibit any further discussion of ideological impacts and

literary style seen in metaphor use.

5. Conclusion of Findings

Carter (1982) argues that a principled and systematic approach based on a detailed knowledge of the workings of the language system: "has the capacity to provide insightful awareness of the effects produced by literary texts" (1982: 4). Thus, as shown in this small snapshot from the study, transitivity as a systematic approach to grammar, allows for a discussion of clause patterning based upon process types associated with the main verb in a clause. The results have supported Goatly's (1997) claim that mental concepts are usually realised literally through MATERIAL processes, amongst two 19th century writers. Furthermore, the Dickens' analyses have shown how style and choice in the use of metaphorical phrases reveal two fundamental ideas: firstly, the ways in which grammar and lexical metaphor work together to achieve both the mapping from abstract onto concrete, and secondly and more broadly, how the author's use and choice of metaphor supports a certain level of ideology in terms of literary style. Thus, transitivity is shown to provide insights into language that can help to inform language learners of the more intricate ways in which language is being used.

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