TANKE, SARAH: Conceptual metaphors and the Japanese Cognitive Linguistics Association: Construction of knowledge, discourse communities and internationalization

This article discusses the socio-cultural constitution of reality and metaphors in general and the case of the Japanese Cognitive Linguistics Association (JCLA) as well as its international relations in particular. It aims at contributing to cognitive linguistics and metaphor research by presenting and analyzing the JCLA and its metaphor discourse from 2001 to 2010. After a short introduction to cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphors this article therefore mainly investigates the following research questions: How is the JCLA integrated in the international context? Which are the thematic key issues in the JCLA’s metaphor discourse and are there specialized discourses? How is knowledge (and thus reality) constructed, with which methods? Who are the main actors, who is at the center of the discourse, who has discursive power, and how is the discursive community organized?

Cognitive linguistics

The relation of language and thought is central to cognitive linguistics and looks back to a long research tradition on philosophy of language (Leiss 2012: 2-3). Unlike structuralism, cognitive linguistics focuses on semantics in its research (Kemmer 2012). Language is seen as a tool to organize and process information which not only stores our world knowledge, but also reflects our conceptualizations, categorizations and experiences with our environment. A central function of language from a cognitive linguistic point of view is the categorization of the world. Moreover, language in cognitive linguistics is flexible and perspective, it does not reflect the world in an objective way, but structures and builds it and changes as our world does. Individual, socio-cultural and historic aspects as well are reflected in language (Geeraerts/Cuyckens 2007: 3-5). “[W]hat holds together the diverse forms of Cognitive Linguistics is the belief that linguistic knowledge involves not just knowledge of the language, but knowledge of the world as mediated by the language” (Geeraerts/Cuyckens 2007: 7).

Conceptual metaphors in cognitive linguistics

In this theoretic environment – which is rather just a “flexible framework” – different research areas such as frame semantics, cognitive grammar or conceptual metaphor theory
(CMT) have arisen (Geeraerts 2006: 2). CMT is one of the key areas in cognitive linguistics, since metaphors uncover the conceptual structure which people use to perceive the – historically, socially, culturally influenced – world. In this way, on the one hand metaphors structure our perception of reality but on the other hand figure as a tool to constitute (socio-cultural) reality. Metaphors are “important elements of conceptual structure and reflections of ways in which humans experience the world” (Grady 2007: 192).

Compared to earlier research, metaphor nowadays (and especially in cognitive linguistics) is considered and analyzed more and more as an ordinary phenomenon in everyday speaking and thinking (Gibbs 2008: 3). In their book Metaphors we live by published in 1980 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson develop CMT as a theory about the mapping of the source domain’s concept onto the target domain. (Lakoff/Johnson 2003). Here metaphor means “understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain” (Kövecses 2010: 4). For instance, in argument is war the concept of the source domain war is mapped onto the target domain argument. This can be seen in expressions such as ‘I defend my argument’, ‘she won the argument’, ‘he attacks my argument’, etc. According to CMT, these concepts (may) influence one’s behavior in a discussion (Lakoff/Johnson 2003: 4-7). Other examples of conceptual metaphors include life is a journey: ‘we are at a crossroads’, ‘our ways part’, time is money or theories are buildings: to build a theory, the foundations of a theory. Usually the source domain is more illustrative, tangible and is used to conceptualize the more abstract target domain (Kövecses 2010: 4-6).

The ‘mapping’ process of the source domain onto the target domain highlights certain key characteristics of both domains; like a filter focusing on certain aspects that are emphasized in reality perception (Kövecses 2010: 7). The ‘experiential basis’, i.e. an ‘embodied experience’ links both domains (Lakoff/Johnson 2003: 19-21). This experiential basis is related to a certain socio-cultural environment, so sometimes a metaphor is only understood when both speakers have a common (social, cultural, historic) background knowledge (Lakoff/Johnson 2003: 14). For instance, the conceptual metaphor life is a sport may take on different shapes according to its environment, using concrete expressions from baseball in the United States and from sumo in Japan (Hiraga 1991: 151-154).

Since certain elements of the source domain are linked to certain elements of the target domain, Zoltán Kövecses claims that it is the projection of this structural system of the source domain which actually ‘creates’ the target domain in a certain sense. For instance, regarding
LOVE IS A JOURNEY, “in a way, it was the concept of journey that ‘created’ the concept of love” (Kövecses 2010: 9). Critics of CMT doubt, among other things, that the mappings are really systematic and wonder if so-called metaphoric meanings are not just abstract literal meanings (Grady 2007: 195-198).

**The Japanese Cognitive Linguistics Association**

The Japanese Cognitive Linguistics Association [JCLA, *Nihon ninchi gengo gakkai*, 日本認知言語学会] was founded in 2000 at the Keiō University in Tokyo by 29 scholars, their president being IGEKAMI Yoshihiko 池上嘉彦 (JCLA 2012c). Ikegami based this association on one of his seminars on English linguistics, so the association has been linked to Western metaphor research from the start (Takahashi 高橋 2012).

The JCLA organizes an annual conference in September at different universities across Japan and publishes those contributions afterwards as ‘Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Japanese Cognitive Linguistics Association’ [*Nihon ninchi gengo gakkai ronbunshū*, 日本認知言語学会論文集]. The JCLA’s declared goals are to advance research in cognitive linguistics in general and to promote the exchange and coordination among researchers within Japan and on an international level. Furthermore the JCLA hopes to apply and adapt English language models to the Japanese context (JCLA 2012c).

In 2012 the JCLA had around 700 members (JCLA 2012b). The board started with ten members in 2000 but has grown to 20 members in 2005, indicating a growing interest in cognitive linguistics (JCLA 2012d). Except for this enlargement the board members kept their posts and the inner circle of the JCLA seems to be an established group and not subject to a lot of change (JCLA 2012c). Mainly these board members are male Japanese scholars and concentrated in the Tokyo area. Eight of the JCLA board members engage in metaphor research and four others are a regular reference within the JCLA metaphor discourse.

The volume of the annually published conference proceedings grows as well: while the first publication in 2001 contained only 200 pages, the proceedings of 2010 were four times as long, with 800 pages of contributions (JCLA 2011). The JCLA also announced the publication of a journal of its own (JCLA 2012a).
The JCLA’s international relations

With regards to its international integration and network, first of all the JCLA is a member of the ICLA, the International Cognitive Linguistics Association, since 2005 (JCLA 2012c). Moreover, a significant number of the JCLA board members have been to universities in the United States or the United Kingdom (e.g. Berkeley, Harvard, Oxford, Yale, etc.). One can therefore suppose a certain influence of international research institutions on the JCLA. At the same time there is little information on the international (English) version of the JCLA website, more information can be found on its Japanese version (JCLA 2012b).

Each year there are English contributions to the JCLA conference, but presentations in Japanese language remain fare more frequent. Nevertheless the JCLA usually manages to invite eminent cognitive linguistics scholars from around the world, showing the active link of the JCLA to the international cognitive linguistics community (JCLA 2012c). Contributions in the other direction, i.e. of Japanese scholars on the international level are less visible. On average there is one Japanese contribution per year to the ICLA journal ‘Cognitive Linguistics’. The journal’s editorial board as well is dominated by US and European scholars, with only one or two Japanese out of 40, depending on the year.

Compared to other national cognitive linguistics associations, the JCLA seems to be one of the leaders in the Asian area, judged by the current developments, but seems less internationally orientated than some European associations.

Discourse analysis

The analysis of the JCLA’s metaphor discourse first requires some words on discourse analysis in general. The notion of discourse in this article refers to Michel FOUCAULT (Foucault 1971: 66-67, 141) and emphasizes a common discourse topic shared by all discourse texts as well as intertextuality between these texts (Busse 2009: 128, Warnke 2008: 37). Like metaphors, discourses store (socio-cultural, historic) knowledge which is represented and influenced by the discourse. According to Foucault (1971: 133-134), certain messages emerge during a discourse process and by repeating these over and over again in the discourse, they start to appear natural and at some point true. In this way discourses, like conceptual metaphors according to Kövecses, form the objects they talk about. Within the idea of the constitution of reality by language, one can distinguish three sub-areas: construction of knowledge,
argumentation of actors of knowledge, and distribution of knowledge (Spitzmüller/Warnke 2011: 46-47).

**The JCLA metaphor discourse**

While metaphors can be used as a tool for discourse analysis as well, for instance by looking into the different or most frequently used source domains in a certain discourse, this process is not what this article investigates. Here metaphors are ‘just’ the thematic link between the single discourse texts and therefore the object of the discourse analysis, but not its analyzing tool. This article aims to examine the constitution of reality in the JCLA metaphor discourse. Therefore the discourse authors’ messages are seen as ‘construction of knowledge’, their methodological approach in their discourse text as ‘argumentation of actors of knowledge’ and their publication in the JCLA proceedings as ‘distribution of knowledge’.

The scope of the discourse to be analyzed in this article is set by keywords: Texts are only part of the JCLA metaphor discourse as defined in this article if they use the notion ‘metaphor’ (or one of its Japanese/English counterparts: *hiyu* 比喩, *in’yu* 隠喩, *metafa* メタファー, *metafa* メタファー, metaphor or metaphorical) explicitly in their title and thus intentionally classify themselves as belonging to the metaphor discourse. In this way 58 articles have been selected from the JCLA’s proceedings between 2001 and 2010 (JCLA 2001, JCLA 2002, JCLA 2003, JCLA 2004, JCLA 2005, JCLA 2006, JCLA 2007, JCLA 2008, JCLA 2009, JCLA 2010). Fifty-one of these articles are written in Japanese and seven in English. In each annual publication there are between four and ten articles on metaphors, showing the significance of this particular research topic. A list of these 58 conference articles can be found at the end of this article.

**Construction of knowledge**

Frequent thematic issues in this discourse are Nomura’s findings on ‘liquid language/communication’ in Japanese compared to ‘solid language/communication’ in English, Williams’ unidirectionality hypothesis on synesthetic metaphors and whether similarity or co-occurrence is the most important (or only) connection between source domain and target domain.

There is no emphasis on cultural aspects, but especially in the first two groups of specialized discourses a popular topic is the questions whether a conceptual metaphor is unique to a certain language/culture or not. A large majority of the discourse texts is written in Japanese
and more than half of the texts deal with issues related to the Japanese language. English and a comparison between English and Japanese are rated second and third.

**Typology of specialized discourses**

As a typology of the JCLA metaphor discourse, I categorize the 58 articles in six specialized discourses: 1) concrete metaphors, 2) synesthetic metaphors, 3) understanding (process) of metaphors, 4) metaphor as a tool, 5) conditions for metaphors, and 6) general cognitive linguistic topics.

The articles of the first specialized discourse on ‘concrete metaphors’ deal with one particular (conceptual) metaphor, for instance on ‘water’. They differ however with regard to their methods and research questions.

The articles of the second type on ‘synesthetic metaphors’ analyze metaphors between different sensory pathways, e.g. sight and hearing (Takada 田 2008: 256), or onomatopoeia. These contributions could be seen as a sub-type of the first specialized discourse, but their sheer number favors the creation of a group of their own. Moreover the articles in this sub-discourse frequently refer to theories closely associated to synesthetic metaphors (like the unidirectionality hypothesis), which usually is not the case in the first specialized discourse.

The third type of articles on the ‘understanding (process) of metaphors’ investigates how people process metaphors, often psycho-linguistically. They also examine the link between vehicle and topic, as well as the role of the context.

The fourth sub-discourse on ‘metaphor as a tool’ tries to explain other linguistic phenomena by using metaphors, e.g. reflexive pronouns or the perception of space. Instead of concentrating on (conceptual) metaphors as such, the articles of this type use metaphors as a means of research, showing thus that they are more than just rhetorical figures (Sudō 須藤 2004: 249).

The articles of the fifth specialized discourse on ‘conditions for metaphors’ analyze the mapping relation between source domain and target domain. Of particular interest for this type of contributions is the question of the motivation of metaphors, i.e. of similarity or co-occurrence (Taniguchi 谷口 2003: 23-24) and why certain metaphors do (or do not) exist.
The sixth and last sub-discourse deals with general cognitive linguistic topics, such as metaphor vs. metonymy vs. synecdoche, subjectivity, theoretical questions on CMT, artificial intelligence, etc.

Comparing this typology to the one of Raymond W. Gibbs (2008: 5-6), who distinguishes 1) origins of metaphors, 2) understanding of metaphors, 3) metaphors in language and culture, 4) metaphors in thought and understanding, and 5) metaphors in nonverbal expressions, shows a certain similarity concerning the understanding of metaphors and the conditions for/origins of metaphors. However, Gibbs’ domains of metaphors in language and culture or metaphors in nonverbal expressions are not explicitly considered a fruitful research topic within the JCLA metaphor discourse.

**Argumentation of actors of knowledge**

With regard to the way of argumentation Josef Klein (2009: 2115) distinguishes several topical patterns such as the data topos (basing one’s argumentation on data as proof), the exemplum topos (basing one’s argumentation on own analysis of metaphor examples as proof) or the authority topos (basing one’s argumentation on eminent scholars’ work, reviewing previous research).

The JCLA metaphor discourse shows a clear preference for the data topos with 21 corpus analyses, mainly in the sub-discourses 1) ‘concrete metaphors’ and 2) ‘synesthetic metaphors’, as well as 12 experiments/surveys, mainly in the sub-discourse 3) ‘understanding (process) of metaphors’. Regarding the exemplum topos, 12 texts refer to examples to support their hypothesis, while 17 contributions use the authority topos, mainly in the sub-discourse 6) on general cognitive linguistics topics, referring to cognitive linguistic approaches or previous research.

Thus, the argumentation patterns go well with the previously established typology. It makes sense to use corpus analyses mainly in order to analyze the actual use of concrete and/or synesthetic metaphors, and to use (psychological) experiments mainly regarding the understanding process of metaphors. The same way cognitive linguistic approaches prove useful to analyze ‘metaphors as tools’, and a review of previous scholarly work for analyzing general questions of the discipline.
There are interesting results on the social organization regarding discourse authors and discursive power as well. Almost all of the analyzed discourse texts refer to Lakoff and Johnson’s CMT and Lakoff is the most important discourse reference in general. This emphasizes clearly the international influence on the JCLA metaphor research. Second among the most frequently cited authors is SETO Ken’ichi 瀬戸賢一, third are Joseph GRADY and YAMANASHI Masaaki 山梨正明 (making him the most influential JCLA member). If one only looks at the JCLA discourse authors, KUSUMI Takashi 楠見孝 and TANIGUCHI Kazumi 谷口一美 are referred to most often.

However, concerning the specialized sub-discourses, one can distinguish smaller groups of Japanese scholars referring to each other and building a specialized discourse community. Thus, NABESHIMA Kôjirô 鍋島弘治朗 is at the center of the first sub-discourse on ‘concrete metaphors’, SAKAMOTO Maki 坂本真樹 and MUTÔ (SAKAI) Ayaka 武藤（酒井）彩加 at the center of the second sub-discourse on ‘synesthetic metaphors’ and Kusumi in the third one on the ‘understanding (process) of metaphors’.

There are only very few non-Japanese authors. The discourse authors’ influence outside of Japan seems limited: Even though the scientific exchange seems to work well inside Asia, the fact that most of the articles are written in Japanese should make a worldwide distribution of the JCLA metaphor discourse rather difficult.

**Conclusion**

In cognitive linguistics language is seen as a tool to organize and process information which not only stores our world knowledge, but also reflects our conceptualizations, categorizations and experiences with our environment. Conceptual metaphor theory is one of its key areas, since metaphors uncover the conceptual structure which people use to perceive the – historically, socially, culturally influenced – world. Here metaphor means “understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain” (Kövecses 2010: 4).

The Japanese Cognitive Linguistics Association (JCLA) was founded in 2000 at the Keiô University in Tokyo, organizes an annual conference and publishes those conference contributions as ‘Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Japanese Cognitive Linguistics
Association’. Out of these proceedings 58 contributions have been selected between 2001 and 2010 for a discourse analysis in this article.

Distinguishing three sub-areas of the constitution of reality by language, ‘construction of knowledge’ refers here to the discourse authors’ messages, ‘argumentation of actors of knowledge’ to their methodological approach, and ‘distribution of knowledge’ to their publication in the JCLA proceedings. The 58 selected articles can then be categorized into six specialized discourses, leading to the following typology: 1) concrete metaphors, 2) synesthetic metaphors, 3) understanding (process) of metaphors, 4) metaphor as a tool, 5) conditions for metaphors, and 6) general cognitive linguistic topics. As for the authors’ argumentation patterns, divided into data, exemplum and authority topos, these correspond to the typology of the six sub-discourses. Regarding discursive power almost all of the analyzed discourse texts refer to Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory, and Lakoff is the most important discourse reference in general. This emphasizes clearly the international influence on the JCLA metaphor research. However, concerning the specialized sub-discourses, one can distinguish smaller groups of Japanese scholars referring to each other and building a specialized discourse community. In general, one can say that there is a clear influence on JCLA metaphor discourse by international research, and that Japanese scholars working on metaphors are mainly known in their own specialized discourse field.

**Bibliography**


Chronological list of analyzed discourse texts

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4 2002 1 鈴島 Nabeshima  Generic is Specific はメタファーか：慣用句の理解モデルによる検証 A 比喩
5 2002 6 椎見Kusumi メタファー研究の総括、21世紀に向けて：認知心理学の立場から W 比喩
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*Form: A = article, P = poster session, S = symposium, W = workshop*