Metaphor mixing and domain integration: A case study on BODY metaphors

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Metaphor mixing, the combination of metaphorical uses of different ontologies, has been a phenomenon widely-investigated in various work (Kimmel, 2010; Sullivan, 2018). Instead of looking for the motivations of mixing metaphors, the current study focuses on the contingency of certain metaphors when employed to describe the same topic.

Online news reports about health issues are collected and managed by AntConc, with a total of 522 texts, amounting to 449232 Chinese characters. Metaphors are manually identified and coded with regard to their source and target domain. Although previous studies have identified the frequent source employed to talk about BODY as REPUBLIC, MACHINE, FACTORY, ECONOMIC ENTERPRISE, BATTLEFIELD, FORTRESS, TEMPLE, and LAND (Sontag 1990; O'Neill 1985; Giblett 2008). In our corpus, some of these metaphors are actually scarce. In the same text, the same conceptual metaphor is rarely used solely and consistently. We found that MACHINE FACTORY, COMPUTER, and BATTLEFIELD metaphors have a high chance of co-occurring. On the other hand, organic metaphors such as PLANT and INSTITUTION have the high contingency. Metaphor scenarios (Musolff 2009) and metaphor clustering (Cameron & Stelma 2004) will be employed to explain the mixing of metaphors.

The syntagmatic manifestation of metaphors in discourse provides functional insights instead of the cognitive exploration of metaphors at a paradigmatic level (Kövecses 2017), which certainly deserves further investigation.

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