

METAPHOR IN LOGISTICS TERMINOLOGY

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to attempt to present a systematized view on the contemporary understanding of metaphor, its essence, structure and manifestations in the discourse of logistics. Various classifications of metaphor are reviewed, and a new one is offered using the lexico-semantic method as well as based on and supported by the examples excerpted from a large corpus compiled especially for the study. It is worthwhile noting that metaphor can be viewed in many different ways, however, it will be explored here with regard to its manifestations in logistics terminology. The topic is worth discussing as metaphor provides better term recognition and comprehension. The findings can be relevant when teaching English for Logistics.

Keywords: metaphor; metaphorical term; classification logistics terminology

Introduction

This article aims to focus on the manifestations of metaphor in the English and Bulgarian terminological system of logistics based on several criteria. It is part of a larger study dedicated to the tendencies in the development of logistics terminology with regard to the processes evolving in it (Velikova, 2017). The study itself is centered on a corpus of terms excerpted from existing dictionaries, online glossaries, related websites and course materials created for students in the specialty “Logistics”, M.Sc. at the Naval Academy in Varna. It includes 2600 words and phrases, therefore the conclusions based on it can be representative of the domain it is used in.

What is Metaphor?

According to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. It is also a cognitive mechanism whereby one experiential domain is partially mapped or projected onto a different experiential domain, so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first (Barcelona, 2003). The domain that is mapped is called the source domain, and the domain onto which it is mapped is called the target domain. The two definitions above point to two extreme approaches on metaphor – the traditional

one (Halliday, 1985) and the cognitive one (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010). In their study “Metaphors We Live by” Lakoff and Johnson (1980) affirmed that, “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one type of thing in terms of another”. They also proved the all-pervasive nature of metaphor both in thought and everyday life.

In Bulgarian terminology metaphor as a means of terminological nomination has also been a centre of attention. In Popova’s view “the meaningful mechanism of a nominative metaphor is a mental operation in which two meanings interact on the basis of contiguity whereby the primary meaning of the word already exists in the language and the other new meaning, which has emerged in the professional sphere, is named with the same word” (Popova, 2012)¹. Metaphorical transfer may be conducted “either from a physical to an abstract domain, or from a less clearly delineated physical domain onto a more clearly delineated one” (Alexiev, 1998). According to Alexiev using an existing general language word or expression is one approach to designating a special referent by metaphorical transfer (Alexiev, 2005). In scientific and technical texts metaphors can appear, for instance when the meaning of the polysemous words of the general language is extended, in order to designate a concept in the special language denoting properties, objects, places, activities, states, etc.

Classification of Metaphors and Metaphorical Terms

If we follow structural criteria, depending on whether all elements in a term are metaphorical or not, we can make a distinction between fully metaphorical terms and partly metaphorical terms. For instance, *crow’s nest* – *марсова площадка* and *monkey island* – *летен мостик* which refer to different parts of a ship’s structure illustrate the former type of terms while *потребителска кошница* rendered in English as a *consumer basket* or *shopping basket* and *transport corridor* – *транспортен коридор* represent the latter. Based on the number of elements, single-word terms (e.g. *float* – *резерв от време*) and multi-word terms (e.g. *dead mileage* – *курс без товар*) can be differentiated. Multi-word terms are further subdivided into identifying (objective) and attributive (predicative) types suggested by Arutyunova (as cited by Shelestiuk, 2006). Identifying metaphorical terms feature a metaphorical nucleus (head-word), e.g. *roadbed* – *основа на пътно платно*) while characterizing metaphors have a metaphorical determiner (modifier), e.g. *floating motorway* – *плаваща магистрала* (Alexiev, 2000).

Another important consideration here is identifying the most common source domains for metaphorical transfer/mapping as well as target domains. On account of Collins Cobuild Metaphor Dictionary Kövecses lists the following source domains: Human Body, Health and Illness, Animals, Plants, Buildings and Construction, Machines and Tools, Games and Sport, Business, Cooking and Food, Heat and Cold, Light and Darkness, Forces, Movement and Direction. In the same way

as source domains apply to several targets, the targets also have several sources. Target domains are abstract, diffuse, and lack clear delineation; as a result they need metaphorical conceptualization to be defined properly. Here he adds Target, Emotion, Desire, Morality, Thought, Society/Nation, Politics and Economy, Human Relationships, Communication, Time, Life and Death, Religion, Events and Actions, etc. (Kövecses, 2010). Overall, target domains fall into higher groups such as psychological and mental states and events, social groups and processes, and personal experiences.

In short, when trying to identify metaphors we should be guided by the following criteria proposed by Schmitt (2005):

1. A word can be understood beyond the literal meaning in context of what is being said;
2. The literal meaning stems from an area of physical or cultural experience (the source area);
3. It is transferred to a second, often abstract, target area.

So after checking the literal against the specific scientific meaning of a word or expression, we need to decide whether the scientific meaning provides more information than the basic meaning and whether it is context-bound or not.

Classification of Metaphorically Designated Terms in Logistics

An attempt at a classification of metaphorically designated terms will be made clarifying the mechanism of semantic nomination which according to Popova requires establishing the nominative feature whereby the meanings of the existent word and the newly assigned sense meet and the relation between the source and target domain is established (Popova, 2009). Three parameters will be taken into consideration: the new meaning which is a result of metaphorical transfer, the primary (source) meaning of the word already existing in the language and the motivational characteristic. A type and subtype will be understood to be the property two interacting units share or have in common, the former being compulsory and the latter – optional. A model will be understood to be the various combinations between the source and target domains (Petkova, 2009).

Typology of Metaphors in Logistics Terminology

1. Appearance

1.1. model: '(part of) living organism → object'

e.g. *tail lift* – *заден товароподъемен борд*. The similarity based on tail or rear which is where this particular handling equipment is attached (mainly) to delivery vehicles to enable a driver (single-handed) to load/off-load consignments is lost here for a literal target language (TL) equivalent. Likewise

dolphin – *пилон, бочка* but compare *nose* and *tail* of a plane which are rendered *нос* and *опашка* respectively, i.e. the metaphor is kept in Bulgarian, as well.

1.2. model: '(part of) object → (part of) object'

This model is frequent with geographical features named after body parts, therefore a kind of personification of objects is observed here, e.g.

bar – *праз, наносна ивица (при устието на река, в пристанище)*

head – *сравнително висок нос, стръмен към морето*

river mouth – *устие на река*

The metaphorical meaning in the TL is either closely preserved or replaced with a different TL metaphor.

1.3. model: '(part of) living organism → (human) activity'

bee line – *курс по права линия*

crocodile cracking – *напукване на асфалта*

In all of the examples given above the TL offers a non-metaphorical rendering.

2. Form

2.1. model: '(part of) object → (part of) object'

логистична верига – *logistics chain*. This is a metaphor widely used in logistics, business and technology to describe organizations, therefore it has been in use in the TL as well in a number of collocations, e.g. *верига магазини* – *chain store*, *планинска верига* – *mountain range*, *котвена верига* – *anchor chain*, etc.

apron – *кейов праз, разтоварна площадка*

детелина – *cloverleaf* which here means a multi-level junction in the form of cloverleaf.

2.2. model: '(part of) living organism → (part of) object'

belly cargo – *товар в корема на самолета* which is carried in the cargo area of passenger aircraft

товарно рамо – *loading arm*.

3. Appearance and Position

3.1. model: '(part of) living organism → (part of) object + position'

headlights – *фарове*

headquarters – *управление, дирекция, център*

railhead – *крайна ж.п. гара*

As the examples above show the metaphorically used component can be used both as a determiner and a nucleus, in the former case characterizing a spatial relation, and in the latter – identifying the point. Toncheva (2003) pays particular attention to specific collocations that may be considered created by metaphorically used lexical units in designating concepts, which have later preserved their status as terms. The illustrations given to support her proposition are *bottom* collocations, e.g.

bottom lift – *захващане на контейнера отдолу*

~ *plating* – *обшивка на дъното*

~ damage – повреда по долната част на кораба

~ stowage – подреждане на дъното

~ discharge – разтоварване (на танк-контейнер) отдолу

3.2. model: '(part of) object → (part of) object + position'

river front – крайбрежна алея до река

back office – бек офис; складово работно място; оперативен отдел.

Clearly, the TL translation variants are literal and do not convey the idea of not working with customers, therefore at the back, hidden.

benchmark – база за сравнение. The source of this term is a permanent mark cut on a wall, rock, etc. by a surveyor to record the exact height of that place above sea level, i.e. *геодезичен репер, точка с известна височина* which has been transferred into the target domain as an estimate based on certain parameters.

3.3. model: '(part of) object → (part of) object + position + activity'

channel conflict – конфликт в рамките на разпределителния канал
изчисления в облака – *cloud computing*

4. Property

It should be specified here that a distinction is made in the classification between a property and a feature with property characterizing objects and feature – human beings.

4.1. model: 'object → distinctive feature':

shop floor – цех, i.e. this part of a factory housing the machines and men directly involved in production

ceiling – настил (в товарен трюм). Somehow the Bulgarian term does not express the relation with the double bottom and the ceiling top position with reference to it.

4.2. model: 'object property → physical property', e.g.

cold chain – студена верига

dry port – вътрешно пристанище (непосредствено свързано с морското пристанище) с интермодален терминал за претоварване на контейнери

Interestingly enough, there is an asymmetry with the Bulgarian term *сухо пристанище* – складова база за насипни и генерални товари. It is definitely not related to containers and their handling which is an inseparable part of the English term. It is invariably understood as an inland intermodal terminal directly connected to seaport(s) allowing consolidation and distribution, temporary storage, custom clearance, connection between transport modes and facilitating the interactions between different stakeholders along the supply chain.

самоходни товари – *high and heavy cargo*. Both terms are used to signify self-propelled cargo – buses, trucks, agricultural machinery and road building as well as construction equipment but the source language (SL) metaphor is replaced with a different TL metaphor.

4.3. model: ‘living organism/human feature → object physical property’

agility – *гъвкавост* (of supply chain management)

transparency – *прозрачност* (of data, business relations, etc.)

ageing – *стареене* (of machinery, etc.)

It is common in all these cases for the feature to become a concrete property and vice versa – a specific property to become abstract.

4.4. model: ‘living organism / object → phenomenon’

blind alley – *задънена улица, глуха линия (и прен.)*; *безперспективна ситуация*

black tide – *прилив при нефтен разлив*

5. Personal quality

5.1. model: ‘human quality → object physical property’

flexibility – *гъвкавост* (of capacity, of structures)

volatility – *непостоянство, променливост* (of costs)

sustainability – *устойчивост* (of transport usually related to green issues)

5.2. model: ‘object physical property → human activity’

streamlined supply chain – *рационализирана верига на доставките*

lean supply chain – *стегната верига на доставките*

resilient supply chain – *устойчива верига на доставките*

robust supply chain – *стабилна верига на доставките*

5.3. model: ‘object physical property / human quality → position’

foul ground – *лош грунд, неподходящ за закотвяне*

foul lead – *канал с опасно дъно*

The latter two models once again highlight the motivation for metaphorical designation in logistics is generally related to a human activity – movement from and to certain positions. A point to consider is the adjective *foul* which in Maritime English is connected with any circumstance to define improper, unfavourable, even not clean, e.g. *foul anchor* – *нечиста котва*, *foul area* – *район, неподходящ за котвена стоянка*, *foul ground* – *лош грунд (неподходящ за закотвяне)*, *foul weather* – *лошо време*, etc. No such word exists in logistics denoting bad in almost all conditions except for *poor* but it does not impart a metaphorical sense.

6. (Manner of) Function:

6.1. model: ‘object 1 → object 2’

апарат на въздушна възглавница – *air cushion vehicle* where the structural part provides for propulsion

deadlight – *глух филистрин (който не се отваря)* – a metaphorical though incorrect TL rendering of a SL metaphorical term signifying a disc, that is dogged down over a porthole to secure against breakage of the glass and to prevent light from showing through.

6.2. model: 'living organism → object'

съединение лястовича опашка – dovetail

running rigging – подвижен такелаж

donkey engine – спомагателен двигател,

donkey boiler – спомагателен котел

Apart from the fact that the above metaphors are zoomorphic depending on their source domain it is curious to note that *donkey* as an attributive has come to mean *auxiliary*, i.e. supporting another piece of machinery.

6.3. model: 'object → position'

bottleneck – задръстване, заприщване

hub – разпределителен възел

6.4. model: 'object – activity'

bullwhip effect – ефект на камшика

dog leg – остър завой, рязко изменение на курса

6.5. model: 'object (pl) → activity'

tiering – интеграция на участниците във веригата на нива

bundling – комплектоване на изделия

As mentioned before this model is very productive in Maritime terminology and Logistics and usually denotes place, function or purpose.

6.6. model: 'living organism → object + form'

ребро (на самолет, кораб) – frame

skeleton bucket – решетъчна кофа

The model includes two motivating characteristics – function and form which are fairly identifiable in the TL equivalents.

7. Purpose

7.1. model: 'object 1 → object 2'

pipeline – снабдителен канал which includes the storage facilities and transportation links through which supplies move from manufacturer to consumer and is regarded as a channel

feeder – жп разклонение на линия; страничен път (на главна артерия) which may be a route or service with low traffic levels that feeds into a trunk operation (e.g a local parcels collection service which feeds into a long-haul night trunk service or a railway branch line feeding passengers or cargo)

feeder vessel – кораб, доставящ контейнери към и от главни контейнерни терминали which in terms of logistics is a short sea vessel used to fetch goods and containers to and from vessels operating on a hub-and-spoke basis.

7.2. model: 'state → object'

lights-out warehouse – напълно автоматизиран склад. It is usually automated technologies that function in both darkness and in non-heated environments, so

lights-out transpires as automated and is transferred into the Bulgarian term but the metaphor is lost.

catch ball – *прехвърляне на топката*. From the sports domain the game of tossing a ball back and forth is transferred to business meaning a process of floating ideas and comments around in an iterative manner.

7.3. model: ‘living organism → object’

supply chain partner – *партньор във веригата за доставки*

running expenses – *текущи разходи*

milk(man) run – *разносен курс*

While the first two metaphors are fairly transparent, “milk run” originates in American culture, with the distribution of milk bottles by the milkman. The term used in logistics describes a delivery method for mixed loads from different suppliers. Instead of each of several suppliers sending a vehicle every week to meet the weekly needs of a customer, one vehicle visits each supplier on a daily basis and picks up deliveries for that customer (cf. <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/milk-run.html>).

8. Position

8.1. model: ‘part of the body → part of an object’

arm – *ръкав (на река)*

пета на котвата (because it bites into the ground) – *crown*

feature (‘лице, физиономия’) – *картографски детайл за особеностите на релефа, които са обозначени върху лицевата страна на картата*

ship’s eyes (hawse-pipes are located at the head where the eyes are usually) – *котвени ключове*

eyebolt (there is an eye at the end for attaching a hook or ring) – *шарнирен болт*

As can be seen from the examples, there are few cases where the English anthropomorphic metaphor is directly translated into Bulgarian. There are others where two metaphors are employed both in the SL and the TL terms. Obviously, there is a third group where the term is not rendered metaphorically. Apart from the main motivating characteristic of positioning, form is also discernible.

8.2. model: ‘position → human beings’

head of department – *шеф на отдел*

front office – *служители на рецепция*

forwarding agent – *спедитор*

8.3. model: ‘position1 → position2’

upstream – *нагоре по веригата (към доставчиците)*

downstream – *надолу по веригата (към клиентите)*

forward – *напред в посока на потребителя*

backward (flow) – *назад в посока към доставчиците*

8.4. model: ‘position → activity’

insourcing – инсорсинг (бексорсинг) (обратно привличане на производствени процеси и функции в изходящата страна)

outsourcing – аутсорсинг (прехвърляне на странични за фирмата дейности към друг изпълнител)

onshoring – оншоринг (пренасяне на производствени капацитети във вътрешността на самата държава)

offshoring – офшоринг (общо понятие за преместване на производствени капацитети в друга държава)

ниършоринг – *nearshoring* which is a derivative of offshoring. It may occur from West European to East European countries, or even reach out to other continents such as Africa – still geographical closeness is implied.

The last two models are very typical in logistics terminology. However, the TL equivalents are non-metaphorical because they are frequently direct borrowings or literal translations.

8.5. model: ‘activity1 → activity2’

drawback – отстъпка (в цената)

login – влизане (в мрежата)

9. Activity

9.1. model: ‘activity of living organisms → activity on an object’

въглероден отпечатък – *carbon footprint*

kissing tyres – докосващи се сдвоени гуми

marshalling – подготовка (на стоки, пътници) за път

hug the shore – плавам в близост до сушата

hug the road – усещам пътя (*ride smoothly without swinging*) The association that “hug” imparts of *close* and *safe* is better conceptualized in the second expression, still there may be a difference in the translation equivalent depending on whether the driver or the vehicle hugs the road.

9.2. model: ‘activity of an object → activity on an object’

bleeding bag – течаща торба (i.e. losing contents)

skin – обшивка (на корпус на кораб)

set sail for a greener horizon – отплавам/поемам към по-зелени хоризонти.

The TL equivalent contains two metaphors – *set sail* signifying *start a trip* and *green* – *eco-friendly*.

9.3. model: ‘activity of living organisms → object’

rolling warehouse – склад на колела (за запаси в път)

catwalk – преходен мостик на танкер

10. State

10.1. model: ‘(part of) living organism → state’

piggyback – вагони, превозващи автомобили заедно с товара им (*combination of road and railway transport*)

birdyback – превоз на сухопътни контейнери със самолет (combination of road and air transport)

fishyback – превоз на натоварени ремаркета с кораби (combination of road and water transport)

cat's paw – внезапен порив на вятъра, образуващ леки вълнички

10.2. model: '(part of) object → state'

shelf life – срок на годност

the bitter end – последна възможност; вътрешен край на котвена верига (the anchor chain end that is secured to a pad eye in the chain locker)

10.3. model: 'activity of a human being → state'

married gear – работа на телефон (designates a system of handling cargo involving two connected derricks working in tandem)

date of maturity – дата на надеж

11. Appearance and Function

транспортен коридор – *transport corridor* where *corridor* is metaphorized and the whole compound is now related to combined transport and facilitation of trade in Europe.

trunk leg – *среден етап от прехода* (trunk being the main artery of a network, e.g. a motorway or main rail line).

rolling stock – парк от транспортни средства

12. Appearance and Manner of Activity

совалков влак – *shuttle train*

overhead – *режиен (за разноски)*

13. Time

13.1. model: 'time event – activity forward'

time bucket – *времеви цикъл в планирането* (a time increment or interval used in planning, scheduling, and reporting)

13.2. model: 'time event – activity backward'

backorder – *закъсняла (неизпълнена) поръчка*

13.3. model: 'time event – activity delay'

time postponement – *отлагане на индивидуализацията на продукта във времето*

dwell time (the time when a vehicle is waiting at a terminal) – *време на изчакване; време на прекъсване на работата на машина*

13.4. model: 'time event – activity evolving'

work-in-progress – *незавършена продукция*

lead time – *време за изпълнение на поръчката, водещо време, време на изпълнение на заявка*

in-transit – транзитен

Time is vital in planning activities, it is a limited resource, a valuable commodity. Logistics is about (just-in) time, and it is most definitely about (global) space. Therefore, I have differentiated four types of time events and metaphors respectively and illustrated them with examples from the corpus.

14. Structure / Composition

14.1. model: '(part of) object – position'

пета на мачтата – mastbed

anchor arm – рог на котвата

14.2. model: '(part of) object – purpose'

изпитателна площадка/стенд – test bed

tipping body – самосвал

15. Colour

Colour words abound with figurative meanings which have been systematized in the so-called colour coding. Colour words may give rise to both metonymy and metaphor which is why colour terms are difficult to analyze. Hamilton (2016) concludes that while a colour phrase has a clear and traceable metonymic motivation, it is extended in some way, moving into the area of metaphor. Colour as a source of metaphor for conceptualizing reality is frequent especially in multi-word terms. The predominant colours in logistics appear in the following phrases:

green subcontractor – подизпълнител, използващ екологосъобразни технологии и техники

green logistics – зелена, екологично съобразна логистика

green transport – зелен транспорт

green field investment – инвестиции на зелено (entering into developing countries to build new factories and/or stores)

red goods – бързооборотни стоки с кратък живот, изискващи бърза промяна (например храна)

red zone – зона за съхраняване на такива стоки

black box – черна кутия

white van man – шофьор на бял ван (an aggressive driver who is a threat for road safety)

Obviously **green** is mostly associated with the environment and how to minimize the ecological impact of logistics activities but when it is part of a collocation it may acquire the meaning *uncultivated*, cf. *green field investment*. **Red** in the two examples refers to *low-price, perishable* therefore posing a high risk. So the colour code here may be interpreted as a warning. The meaning of **black** is also clear, it means secrecy highlighting *lack of knowledge of*

its internal workings. As a matter of fact, its shipboard equivalent, the so-called *voyage data recorder*, is rendered in Bulgarian as *черна кутия* based on similarity of operation. As for a *white van man*, this is a culture-bound stereotype used in the UK of a male van driver, often of a *white van*, whose driving is selfish and aggressive. The corresponding Bulgarian phrase would probably be *черен джип*.

When metaphorical terms in the TL are coined by analogy with the initial term a word-for-word translation approach is very often justified, e.g. the use of *зелен* in Bulgarian to mean *ecological* or *бяла техника* for *white goods*. There may be cases when a SL metaphor is replaced with a different TL metaphor as in *brown goods* rendered with *черна техника* probably because electronic goods such as TVs, DVDs, phones and computers tend to come in black in Bulgaria. Most commonly literal translation of the term is applied to interpret the metaphor, e.g. *black tide* – *прилив при нефтен разлив*, *blackout* – *затъмнение*, etc.

Conclusions

The examples provided here prove the relatively high level of metaphoricity in logistics language, compared to other types of discourse. From a linguistic point of view the highest number of metaphorically used terms is that of nouns and noun compounds. Next in order come simple adjectives.

The classification used shows that the meanings of the existent word and the newly assigned sense meet and the relation between the source and target domain is established with a motivational characteristic. It is founded on the main types, subtypes and models such as appearance, form, property, purpose, function, etc. However, the classification has been extended and enriched with several more types typical of logistics terminology – activity, state, position, time and colour. Time, for instance, which is critical in logistics, yields four distinct types of time events and metaphors not discussed before. Sometimes two motivational characteristics may be found at work – appearance and function, appearance and position, appearance and manner of activity.

Recurrent source domains used in logistics terminology are the human body, animals, household objects, human physical properties, social experience, human activities, the anthropomorphic ones being the most predominant. When translated in Bulgarian metaphorical logistics terms rarely retain their metaphorical meaning which points to a clearly manifested process of demetaphorization.

The topic of this study is worth discussing as metaphor provides better term recognition and comprehension. The findings can be relevant when teaching English for Logistics because when students are aware of the metaphor underlying a term, they will make a proper use of it.

NOTES

1. Citations from sources not written in English as well as examples throughout the study are provided by the author.

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МЕТАФОРАТА В ЛОГИСТИЧНАТА ТЕРМИНОЛОГИЯ

Резюме. Целта на настоящото изследване е да се опита да представи систематизиран поглед върху съвременното разбиране за метафората, нейната същност, структура и прояви в дискурса на логистиката. Разглеждат се различни класификации на метафората и се предлага нова, базирана и подкрепена от примерите, извлечени от голям корпус от примери, съставен за подробно изследване на логистичните термини. Заслужава да се отбележи, че метафората може да се разглежда по много различни начини, но тук ще се изследва по отношение на нейните проявления в логистичната терминология. Темата си струва да бъде обсъдена, тъй като метафората осигурява по-добро разпознаване и разбиране на термина. Резултатите могат да бъдат използвани при преподаване на английски език за логистика.

Ключови думи: метафора; метафоричен термин; класификация; логистични термини

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