

**Conceptualizing excessive action through the Water and Sand metaphors as
cultural representation of thought
(the English, Russian and Czech languages)**

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The given paper presents the results of the research into the use of conceptual metaphors used in English and Russian to name excessive action, namely, the Excessive action is Shower metaphor in English, and its equivalent in Russian - the Excessive action is Sand metaphor.

The research started with the English language. Following the conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff, Johnson 2003), and having analysed extensive language data we established a conceptual metaphor - the Excessive action is Water metaphor which in context can be represented by a number of subversions with names of different water forms as sources. The Excessive action is Shower metaphor is one of them. Then the major goal was to model the mechanism of the Excessive action is Shower metaphor's constructing and to reveal how our brain processes both excessive action and the concept of shower for the latter to be used to represent this kind of action on the verbal level. Samples were collected from contemporary English fiction by using corpus techniques (the British National Corpus) and hand-searching, and then analysed using bottom-up and top-down modes of analysis (Kövecses 2017).

First, we analysed the semantic structure of the Shower metaphor (the relations between the source and targets) building metaphorical mappings. As a result, five foci of these metaphorical projections have been singled out:

1) an abundance of small drops → an abundance of objects (big or small, heavy or light, concrete or abstract (time, emotions))

2) moving down/up through the air → downward movement, in a bound current or flying upward and to the sides

3) coming out in bursts and suddenly → coming out suddenly and/or when the container is broken

4) short duration → the movement finishes quickly

5) covering the area → covering the surface with a layer of objects/substance.

Secondly, a classification of nouns collocating with Shower (as targets) to express excessive action was made which fall into three big groups:

- an abundance of heavy or light objects falling down:

(1) *The force of the casual blow was such that Yet was flung back against a bookcase. Books **showered about** him.*

- an abundance of light objects moving through the air and in different directions:

(2) *Clare picked up the shovel and put some more coal on the fire. She poked it and sparks **showered away** into the dark chimney.*

- an abundance of abstract substance (time, emotions, attitudinal words, light, etc):

(3) *Moments **shower away**; the days of our lives vanish utterly, more insubstantial than if they had been invented.*

(4) *Actress **is still showered with** fear after 'Psycho'.*

(5) *I shall never forget the contempt you **showered upon** me.*

Thirdly, the contextual conditions were described - syntactic structures in which the metaphor is regularly used: Subject – Predicate relations (Voice patterns), Objects and the prepositions they go with, accompanying linguistic phenomenon, e.g., the burst of metaphors

(Corts, Pollio 1999) - the use of other Water metaphors in the close context which are subtypes of the general conceptual metaphor Excessive action is Water, like in:

(6) *A torrent of jubilant sound washed over the street, and sprigs of pine and fern showered down. Girls ran out to bestow kisses and men offered bottles of wine.*

As excessive action is an evaluative meaning (Livia Körtvélyessy 2015) our focus was also to define the pragmatic potential of the Excessive action is Shower metaphor which is negative, as in the majority of cases the utterances have negative emotional colouring (Nikolaenko 2021).

Thus, as in English the excessive action is regularly expressed by the Excessive action is Shower metaphor, we can conclude that it is culturally specific.

At the second stage of the research, we found out that in Russian the equivalent used in similar situations is the Excessive action is Sand metaphor – the verb “syat’sya” (used about sand and similar things) is used:

(7) *Na nego posypalis knigi.*

(8) *Eto mgnoveniya moei zhizni, etot pesok vremeni, kak pereschitat ih, kogda oni tak bistro prosypayutsya skvoz paltsy.*

(9) *Iskry posipalis iz kostra.*

Samples were collected from contemporary Russian fiction by using corpus techniques (The Russian National Corpus), hand-searching and the comparative translation analysis. The Sand metaphor was described following the analysis matrix of the Shower metaphor. The results of this comparative study are given in the Table below.

		English		Russian	
		shower	sand	shower	sand
an abundance of heavy objects falling down		+			+
time		+		+(river)	+
emotions (fear)		+		+	
attitude	contempt	+		+	+
	praise	+			+
	love	+			+
objects of material well-being (money, gifts)		+			+
words (claims, questions, congratulations)		+			+
an abundance of light objects moving through the air and in different directions	sparks	+			+
	banknotes, confetti, seeds, powder	+			+

Thus, in Russian it is the Excessive action is Sand metaphor that is culturally specific.

At the third stage, the assumption was made that the Excessive action is Sand metaphor could be typical of other Slavic languages. To verify it we resorted to the West Slavic language, Czech, and found out that in it the both metaphors are used to name excessive action with the Water metaphors prevailing (hrnut, pršet, rozlévat).

Thus, the research revealed the mechanism of naming excessive action through different metaphors in different languages. However, it led us to another fundamental question, namely, what conditioned the fact that English and Russian once began to use different sources to

metaphorically name excessive action. And the same question holds true for the related languages like Russian and Czech. These are the questions yet to be answered and to do this we should resort to the help of historical or archeological linguistics.

References

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