

Metaphorical Thinking About Culture's Adaptation

Gábor Réthi

University of Miskolc, Institute of Management Science

E-mail address: szvregab@uni-miskolc.hu

Abstrakt

This paper presents metaphors. I would like to present the duality of this tool. It is very useful in many aspect of life. We have to recognize that we are thinking in metaphorical way. It means that our thoughts have 2 dimensions: a tangible dimension and an intangible dimension. That is why it is a real challenge how we should reach the consumers or our partners in different situations.

We can use in 2 kinds of ways the metaphors: for generalizing and for specifying something. But the reason is same in both situations: making understand a phenomenon, an institution or other complex things. The question is: generalizing or specifying? Which is useful?

Key words: metaphor, organizational culture

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Introduction

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye."

(Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: Little Prince)

In the well-known book of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Little Prince*, we can read the sentence cited above. With this thought we can understand the dilemma of metaphorical thinking. It is very hard to force into numbers the behavioural patterns and the consumers' perceptions. We need our empathy too and even more tools with which we can measure their influence.

Heathrow: posters advertising the global bank HSBC that show a grasshopper and the message "USA – Pest. China – Pet. Northern Thailand – Appetizer" (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004)

In the globalisation context, it's difficult to decide whether it's a pest or a pet, an appetiser or an energiser! An organisation's cultural intelligence will play a big role in driving change by ensuring its constituents display the will and stomach to digest it in order to forge ahead. This cultural intelligence is important when we entering in a new cultural environment, too.

1. Cultural comparison models

The cultural comparison model makers are usually classified into two camps: the first contain the universalistic models (Trompenaars, Hofstede, GLOBE) and the other is the group of dynamic models. According to the used way of research, we can distinguish these models: quantitative or qualitative methods. The quantitative study focused on the quantitative relationships (statistical procedures, numerical relationships), in contrast to the qualitative test. The model-makers often use the quantitative analytical methods, because it is generally easier to interpret and analyze. When comparing cultures, we examine "soft" factors and it is very complicated to give a full description of their effect with quantitative methods.

The categories – established by universalistic scientists – allow comparing the different national cultures. These models are well-known in the corporate sector. It has been found that these models often use quantitative research methods. Hofstede's model is the most widely used model in corporate life. Therefore, this model is the most criticised.

1.1. *Criticism of universalistic cultural comparison models*

One of the biggest criticisms of the universalistic models in point of view comparing and understanding between the different models in corporate life that they can not be clearly made. These models do not give a complete answer to the questions raised, in part because it is not a common, agreed basis come from, and partly because of the typologies outlined is not exhaustive. Also, they do not give a precise description of the forms of social relations, how we form our behaviour patterns in a given situation; which preferences and interests are important for us. The various models' number of dimensions are also criticized in both directions: Hofstede's model has four dimensions which are not able to respond all question, while another 9 or 10-dimensional models becomes difficult to manage precisely. (McSweeney, 2002; Patel, 2007; Primecz, 1993)

2. Culture in Companies

A number of factors influence the culture of organizations, from the environmental conditions and industry characteristics to the national cultures. The main difference for the consumers between the producer company and service provider company is the product which they offer. The tangible product of corporate activity is clearly recognizable in case of the producer company. In contrast, the service organizations' products are often difficult to recognize, identify for the consumer (this is certainly not general, for example, just think of the McDonald's fast food network). (Heidrich, 2001)

The concept of organizational culture is as important to the management of an organization as are strategy and structure. As the system of shared beliefs and values that guide and direct the behaviour of members links to macro-level national culture, this level of culture can have a strong influence on day-to-day organizational behaviour and performance. There are connections between organizational culture and national culture but each organizational culture is unique despite being embedded in a national culture. (French et al., 2008)

There is very considerable scope for macro-social factors to affect organizational culture. In this respect national culture is itself a major influence on any organization operating within its boundaries. Societal-level culture can impact on workplaces in the following ways:

- Attitudes towards such things as individual responsibility, group harmony, ambiguity, displaying emotion openly and status will be embodied in workplace by organizational actors, including those in positions of influence. These attitudes are culturally derived so that an organization will have its organizational culture influenced by wider society through its members' values.

- Institutional factors, for example the relative importance of trade unions in a particular society – itself deriving from a country's economic/political context, will set limits on how an organization operates in important ways, including aspects of its culture. For example a litigious cultures that stress the protection of individual rights and formalized health and safety policies.

The links between national and organizational culture are made more complex when you consider the multicultural makeup of workforces within any one society. We are here looking at issues of imported cultures and cultural diversity.

Every large organization imports potentially important subcultural groupings when it recruits employees from the larger society. There is a range of strategies for dealing with this phenomenon. At one extreme, senior managers can merely accept these divisions and work within the confines of the larger culture – in other words informing staff that they will have to fit in to the overriding national culture and do things 'our way'.

3. Metaphors

Until this part, we can read the difference between organizational culture and national culture. Now, I present the source of metaphorical thinking.

It was discovered in the late 1970's that the mind contains an enormous system of general conceptual metaphors – ways of understanding relatively abstract concepts in terms of those that are more concrete. Much of our everyday language and thought makes use of such conceptual metaphors. (Lakoff, 1993)

In general, it can be suggested that a conceptual metaphor consists of a source and a target domain and that the source domain is, at least in the everyday cases, typically a better understood and more concrete domain than the target domain. (Kövecses, 2009)

A cultural metaphor is any activity, phenomenon or institution with members of a given culture emotionally and/or cognitively identify. As such, the metaphor represents the underlying values expressive of the culture itself. Frequently, outsiders have a difficult time relating to and/or understanding the underlying values of a culture. (Gannon, 2009) With this tool, we can interpret easier the relationship between organizational and national culture. It is a simplification too, but it is necessary for introducing and understanding the complexity of its nature.

I would like to emphasise the duality of using metaphors. There are 2 ways: (1) using metaphors for generalizing and (2) using metaphors for specifying. We can mention Morgan's metaphors as generalization of understanding organizations and Gannon's metaphors as specification of

understanding cultures. The goals are same in both case (understanding something), but the ways are different. It is similar to the duality of culture and cultural comparison models.

4. Complexity of Metaphors

The contemporary theory of metaphor is revolutionary in many respects. (Lakoff, 1992) We are thinking in metaphors independently that we belong to low context culture or high context culture. Our mind-set is very abstract. To understand the culture, the human behaviour and the way of thinking, it is a very useful approach to use cultural metaphors.

4.1. The Nature of Metaphor

Metaphor is the main mechanism through which we comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning. Much subject matter, from the most mundane to the most abstruse scientific theories, can only be comprehended via metaphor. Metaphor is fundamentally conceptual, not linguistic, in nature. Metaphorical language is a surface manifestation of conceptual metaphor. Though much of our conceptual system is metaphorical, a significant part of it is non-metaphorical. Metaphorical understanding is grounded in non-metaphorical understanding. Metaphor allows us to understand a relatively abstract or inherently unstructured subject matter in terms of a more concrete, or at least a more highly structured subject matter.

4.2. The Structure of Metaphor

Metaphors are mappings across conceptual domains. Such mappings are asymmetric and partial. Each mapping is a fixed set of ontological correspondences between entities in a source domain and entities in a target domain. When those fixed correspondences are activated, mappings can project source domain inference patterns onto target domain inference patterns. Metaphorical mappings obey the Invariance Principle: The image-schema structure of the source domain is projected onto the target domain in a way that is consistent with inherent target domain structure. Mappings are not arbitrary, but grounded in the body and in everyday experience and knowledge. A conceptual system contains thousands of conventional metaphorical mappings, which form a highly structured subsystem of the conceptual system. There are two types of mappings: conceptual mappings and image- mappings; both obey the Invariance Principle.

4.3. Some Aspects of Metaphor

The system of conventional conceptual metaphor is mostly unconscious, automatic, and is used with no noticeable effort, just like our linguistic system and the rest of our conceptual system. Our system of conventional metaphor is alive in the same sense that our system of grammatical and phonological rules is alive; namely, it is constantly in use, automatically and below the level of consciousness. Our metaphor system is central to our understanding of experience and to the way we act on that understanding. Conventional mappings are static correspondences, and are not, in themselves, algorithmic in nature. However, this by no means rules out the possibility that such static correspondences might be used in language processing that involves sequential steps. Metaphors are mostly based on correspondences in our experiences, rather than on similarity. The metaphor system plays a major role in both the grammar and lexicon of a language. Metaphorical mappings vary in universality; some seem to be universal, others are widespread, and some seem to be culture- specific. Poetic metaphor is, for the most part, an extension of our everyday, conventional system of metaphorical thought.

These are the conclusions that best fit the empirical studies of metaphor conducted over the past decade or so. Though much of it is inconsistent with traditional views, it is by no means all new, and some ideas – e.g., that abstract concepts are comprehended in terms of concrete concepts – have a long history.

4.4. *The Untameable Lion*

We can raise the question: how should we behave in a new environment? It is irrelevant that we are talking about new workplace, new group of friends or other else, because there is an important behavioural pattern what is relevant. It is that we would like to adopt more or less the rules of new culture, but at least we would like to understand it.

So, we have to know the rules and rituals of the new environment. It is a great challenge for the leaders and the employees how they should behave with each other. How the leader can motivate the new employee; and how the employee should adopt the rules? I would like to describe this situation with a metaphor.

In the field of ethology, we can find a similar situation; a vicious circle. Many people were thinking about the process of lion's taming. What is the rule of the successful taming? The conventional theory is the rewarding: if the animal is doing well the trick, the trainer gives reward to it. But with this behaviour, we are simplifying the relation between the animal and trainer. It is very dangerous because we can predict the behaviour of animal only in similar

situations; otherwise we can not know what we should expect from the animal in other situations.

A new point of view emphasise the role of trust. The disadvantage of the conventional theory is described above. In the other approach, we would like to establish a common rule set what is unequivocal for the animals and the human too. In an ethologic experiment, researchers examined the behaviour of wild lions with the humans. In a cage there were 3 lions and 2 researchers. The researchers had rods as weapon, in case if the lions would attack. One of the lions lied in the corner and watched them. The researchers started to move closer and closer to the lion. The animal indicated with body language when it felt uncomfortable because of the human's closeness. The researchers understood this kind of behavioural pattern and they moved back. They held a little break in order that the lion calm down. After few minutes, they started to move closer again; they repeated many times this experiment and they found that the lion allowed closer and closer the researchers because they did not have a threat to the lion. So, they understood and accepted the rules of the lions.

After this kind of artificial experiment, the researchers tried this in the wild world too. So, there the animals would move away if they would like to do; and the researchers could control the circumstances. They found that the flock of lions allowed the researcher to move close. The process duration was 14 weeks and the researchers could approach 3 meters to the flock.

Similar situation can be experienced when we entering in a new environment. When we start to work in a new workplace, it is a great challenge for us and for the leaders too how we should behave with each other. Many managers think that they can motivate their employees with financial instruments (higher salary, more premium, and so on). But they would recognize that if they reward the good practice too with appreciation and trust. They can motivate the employees with these tools too, not only financially.

Of course, there is a power inequality, because the leader has vantage comparing with the employee. But it is mutual interdependence, because they both need the others. So, they have to understand and accept the common rules. In the conventional way, the leader could dictate the rules, but if he/she would like to count on the employee in the long run.

In essence, we can say that it is not only the money what counts, but the emotional leading too.

Conclusion

The better understanding of differences between cultures plays increasingly important role in the companies' life, especially in the multinational companies' life. That is why in this article, I presented the metaphorical thinking about culture and the influence of culture.

So I think it is important to know the models using qualitative research methods and that the attitudes they represent are more easily understood. Most of these models analyses the behaviour with the “active involvement” of questioned persons. As a result, relevant informations are obtained. Of course, however, these methods require a high degree of caution because it is easy to make false results. However, with proper care of the results of the research or in content with other relevant research results, we can also obtain valuable information. It is not an easy task to know corporate culture or national culture, but if we know the origin of behavioural samples in the various transactions, actions, we can easily draw conclusions, or even feature the cultural roots of the situations, we will able to give “prediction” to the partner's behaviour.

This article shows that with the metaphorical thinking how we can make understand the interdependence within the company, when the newcomers meet with the leaders. They have to clarify the rules and expectations. That is why, I showed the example of lion’s taming. And at the end of the process, we can say that the lion is tameable; and the human is tameable too.

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