

A Comparative Study of French and Myanmar Metaphors Referred to Animals

Mi Mi Soe¹, Su ThetPaing²

Abstract

Like other language, metaphor is very common in French language. This study focuses on the comparative analysis of metaphors referring to animals in French and Myanmar. The data were collected from French dictionary, Myanmar dictionary, books about Metaphors written in French as well as in Myanmar, and researches from the Internet. This study aims to present animal metaphors in French and Myanmar, to improve language skill from the perspective of vocabulary. It can be assumed that metaphors in French and Myanmar has similar characteristic as the metaphors used are easily seen in daily life and the feature, habit, significant characteristics of those animals are the primary factors to metaphorize in both languages. It is hoped that this study will be a reference for Myanmar language learners from French as well as French language learners from Myanmar.

key words: metaphors, comparative, animal, compare, similes

Introduction

Metaphors are ornaments that have characteristics of decorative function and they are important not only in literature but also in language. It is important to understand the meaning of vocabulary when learning a language. It is not enough to understand the original meaning of a word. It is necessary for language learners to understand metaphors for language learners so that they can be as proficient as native speakers. For daily use of language, metaphors are used to decorate a word or convey the meaning of that word from the original meaning. For example, in Myanmar language, a very playful child is described as a monkey and in French Language, a bravery one is described as a lion, therefore the words monkey and lion have implied meaning. So, metaphors referred to animals in French and Myanmar are compared and analyzed focusing on the factors such as changes in meaning, similarity in metaphorization and importance of these metaphors in daily life.

Aim

This study aims to highlight the animal related metaphors in French and Myanmar, to improve language skill through vocabulary for both Myanmar students who are learning French language and French students who are learning Myanmar language.

Research Questions

1. Which animals are used as metaphors in French and Myanmar?
2. How are metaphors related to animals in French and Myanmar similar? How are they different?

Related Researches

Metaphors in Myanmar Language are described in "Introduction to Semantic" by SayarGyee Dr. Khin Aye (2004) and "The World of Metaphor and Perception of Linguistic and Literature (2006) and Myanmar Dialects" by SayarGyee Mg Khin Min (DaNuPhyu). Metaphors in French Language are described in "Expressions françaises" by Pascale Cheminée (2011), "De Bouche à L'Oreille" by centre d'éducation des adultes (2009) and "Les expressions idiomatiques" by Isabelle Chollet (2008).

¹ Daw, Lecturer, Department of French, Mandalay University of Foreign Languages.

² Daw, Lecturer, Department of French, Mandalay University of Foreign Languages.

In the research paper “A Study of Myanmar Idioms”, Research Journal (YUFL) Vol.2 No.1, December 2010 by DawThan ThanHtay (Lecture, Department of Myanmar, YUFL) Myanmar metaphors are highlighted.

According to the scholars, the aspect of metaphors is important not only in literature but also in language. Apart from original meaning, a word may have implied meanings and extended meanings according to metaphors. From literature point of view, metaphors are defined as the imaginative fantastic meanings of words. Metaphors are ornaments as they can decorate the meaning of a word. According to language point of view, metaphors are those that have already existed and they may have extended meanings that can decorate the speech. So, in literature it is called ornament and in a language it is called metaphor.

Metaphor (ဝယျာဓိ) means U Pa Sa Ya (ဝယျာဓိ) derived from Pāli Sanskrit. In Myanmar Dictionary, it is defined as decorative language. Decorative language means the quality of someone or something which is compared and described with the quality of other thing.

In the book by SayarGyee Mg Khin Min (Da Nu Phyu), it is mentioned that scholars believed that “Decorating with metaphors is specific as it means not only describing with other meanings but also describing as a conceptual meaning”.

According to Dr. Khin Aye, using metaphor is a process of substituting one word with other that is similar or have common characteristic.

In French dictionary, it is stated that metaphor (la métaphore) is derived from Latin and Greek (metaphora: le changement du sens). Changing meaning according to referring and similarity is called metaphor.

Pierre Fantanier (French linguist, 1968) stated that metaphor is changing similar meaning although a word may use in different condition with different meaning.

There must be two sources to metaphorize. According to SayarGyee Dr. Khin Aye (2004) the word used for the first or primary source is metaphorize for the second source with the similar characteristic. According to SayarGyee Mg Khin Min (DaNuPhyu), dialects are one of the aspects of metaphors and it can be assumed that dialects and metaphors are similar in characteristics although every metaphor is not dialect.

Aspects of Metaphor

- Metaphors referring to people
- Metaphors referring to animals
- Metaphors referring to things
- Metaphors referring to situations
- Metaphors referring to activities

According to SayarGyee, there are two types of metaphors: metaphors with the aspect of similarity and metaphors with the aspect of relation. This paper highlighted the metaphors related to animals that are similar in characteristics, traits and related meanings in French and Myanmar.

Data and Method

The data for this study were collected not only from French Dictionary, Myanmar Dictionary, researches that related to metaphors, books written in French as well as Myanmar but also from internet sources. Comparative descriptive method is used for this study.

Discussion

It is clear that a large number of metaphors can be found in French and Myanmar. Based on the relationship between human and animals, the names of animals and their parts of body are metaphorized to the things that are similar in features and the features, habits and significant characteristics are metaphorized with the animals that have similar characteristics. The similarities in features, habits, abilities and the related characteristics of human and animal are aspects of metaphors related to animals. Some metaphors related to animals used in French as well as in Myanmar are presented as follow.

Comparison of animal related metaphors with the perspective of similarity in animals' features and their body parts

| | French | Myanmar |
|------------------|--|--|
| Metaphors | - l'aile d'avion - pied de biche | - ဂျိတ် (chicken's tongue) - ဂျိတ် (fish's eye) |
| Original meaning | -the wings of airplane -deer's feet | -the tongue of a chicken -the eye of fish |
| Referred meaning | -airplane's wing -crowbar | -triangular shaped piece of paper that is used to offer Buddha -callus that appear on hands or feet |

According to the comparison of animal related metaphors from the above table, things are metaphorized with the aspect of similarity in feature of animal body parts not only in French but also in Myanmar. So, new words for things are metaphorized with animals' body parts.

Comparison of animal related metaphors with the perspective of referring animals' habits

| | French | Myanmar |
|------------------|---|---|
| Metaphor | - dormir comme un loir - dormir avec des poules | - ဂျိတ် (Naga/Dragon/ Mythical Dragon) - ဂျိတ် (sleep like chicken) |
| Original meaning | -sleep as a mouse like animal that has furry tail -sleep with hens | - mythical dragon -sleep intermittently |
| Referred meaning | -sleep soundly a long time -go to bed early | -the one who found of sleeping (heavy sleeper) - unable to sleep very well |

Sleeping is an important daily activity and human sleeping habit is compared and metaphorized with the significant sleeping habit of animal. In Myanmar, a heavy sleeper is referred to mythical dragon that sleeps long time and it is said to awaken only when a Buddha attains Buddhahood. In French, the heavy sleeper is metaphorized with an animal that hibernate for a long time (about 7 months) called dormouse. Although the referred animals are different, the implied meaning is the same. To metaphorize the first source of heavy sleeper or sleeping soundly, the already existing word (dormir comme un loir/ ၵၢၼ်း*ၵိ) is used to refer to the first source to extend meaning. In Myanmar, the one who is unable to sleep very well is referred to the chickens as chickens do not sleep soundly. In French, the one who goes to bed early is referred to chickens as chickens try to sleep as soon as the sun sets. The referred animals are the same although the implied meaning is slightly differ. To express a new situation, already existing words are used to express the situation by extending meaning.

Comparison of animal related metaphors with the perspective of referring ability and quality of animals

| | French | Myanmar |
|------------------|--|--|
| Metaphor | - se battre comme un lion - être rusé comme un renard | - ၵၢၼ်း (tiger) - ၵၢၼ်း (fox) |
| Original meaning | -attack like a bravery lion -as sly as a fox | - strong tiger - sly fox |
| Referred meaning | -the one who can attack like a bravery lion -the one who can solve a problem tactfully/ a tricky person | - a successful and skillful person in business - the one who can solve a problem tactfully/ a tricky person |

According to the above table, it is clear that the ability of animal is metaphorized to people who has similar characteristic with those animals in French as well as in Myanmar. To highlight a person's characteristic, similar characteristic of animal is used to metaphorize by extending meaning and new meanings appear to learn.

Comparison of animal related metaphors with the perspective of animals' condition and situation

| | French | Myanmar |
|------------------|--|--|
| Metaphor | - être serré comme des sardines. - âge bête - donner de la confiture à un chon | - ၵၢၼ်း ၵၢၼ်း ၵၢၼ်း (pack like sardins) - ၵၢၼ်း ၵၢၼ်း (adolescent) - ၵၢၼ်း ၵၢၼ်း (playing harp near buffalo) |
| Original meaning | -pack tightly as | - pack fish paste/ pickled fish tightly in |

| | | |
|------------------|--|---|
| | sardine -the age of not thinking too much -feed fruit jam to pig | pots - teenage - play harp (Myanmar musical string instrument) near buffalo |
| Referred meaning | -the situation in which no one cannot move -(immature) teenage -without knowing the precious thing/ unwise man | - pack tightly like fish paste /pickled fish in pots -teenage -without knowing the precious thing/ unwise man |

The situation with no vacancy as the place is full with people is metaphorized with the situation in which fish paste and pickled fish are packed tightly in pots in Myanmar. In French, this situation is metaphorized with the sardine that is fully packed in a can. The fully packed situation is similar although the metaphorized animals are different. In Myanmar, an adolescent girl is metaphorized with a bird which replaces its feather to get adult stage. In French, the age of immature is metaphorized with *âgébête*. It is clear that there is no exact animal to metaphorize. The situation in which stupid people are not able to understand precious advice is metaphorized with the situation in which pig are not able to taste delicious fruit jam in French and the situation in which buffalo is not able to enjoy the music come from harps in Myanmar. Similar situations are compared and use as metaphors. The circumstance of the first situation is compared and metaphorized with the similar circumstance for the second situation by extending meaning and appear new usage of words.

Comparison of animal related metaphors with the perspective of animals' actions

| | French | Myanmar |
|------------------|---|--|
| Metaphor | - marcher en crabe. - écrire comme un chat | - ဝဲဝဲဝဲဝဲဝဲဝဲ (walk like a duck) - မလွှမ်းမလွှမ်း (cat's handwriting) |
| Original meaning | -walk like crabs -write as a cat write | -walk like a duck -handwriting that is similar in scratches made by a cat |
| Referred meaning | -waddle (like a crab) -unreadable handwriting as it is too small | -waddle (like a duck) -bad handwriting/ unreadable handwriting |

According to the above comparison table, it is clear that the metaphorizing with the aspect of action of animals is similar in French and Myanmar.

Comparison of animal related metaphors with the perspective of animals' body parts that do not exist in reality

| | French | Myanmar |
|------------------|--|---|
| Metaphor | - Quand les poules auront des dents - un mouton à cinq pattes | - , ဝှက် (rabbit'shorn) - ဘရဲ (tortoise'shair) |
| Original meaning | -only when chicken has teeth -sheep that has five legs | -horn of rabbit -hair of tortoise |
| Referred meaning | -impossible situation -very rarely | - impossible situation -impossible situation |

It is interesting that metaphORIZING the situations that are impossible to happen or exist with the animal body parts that do not really exist both in French and Myanmar according to the above table.

Results

This paper highlighted the comparative analysis of animal related metaphors with the perspective of animals' features, actions, habits and referable situations in French and Myanmar. The influence of animals on human's daily life, the relationship between animal and human's behavior, habit and characteristic are vividly found according to this comparative analysis of animal related metaphors. It is interesting that metaphORIZING can extend meaning and create new words. It can be concluded that metaphORIZING is an important aspect for language learners as metaphors are widely used not only in French society but also in Myanmar society. The data from the comparative analysis of animal related metaphors revealed that the majority of animal metaphors in French are similar with animal metaphors in Myanmar. Implied meanings are in similar although the metaphORIZED animals are different. It can be assumed that metaphORIZING in French and Myanmar has similar characteristic as the metaphORIZED animals are easily seen in daily life and the feature, habit, significant characteristics of those animals are the primary factors to metaphORIZE in both languages.

Conclusion

This paper highlighted the comparative analysis of animal related metaphors in French and Myanmar, so it is helpful for language learners to improve language understanding. All in all, this paper focus only on metaphors related to animals and it highlighted further studies of human related metaphors, things related metaphors and situation related metaphors.

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