Sea, Culture and Conceptualization

Anuška Štambuk
Faculty of Shipbuilding,
Machine and Electrical Engineering
University of Split

Analyzing the lexis of the Croatian coast of the Adriatic Sea, I will point out the way in which the features of a geographic and historical environment of a particular region become integrated into the conceptual and lexical categories of its inhabitants over the course of time, becoming closely interwoven with life values through meaning construction and cross-domain mappings, from simple meanings of everyday life to deeper-level reasoning, including basic truths, wisdom, art and culture.

1. Introduction

Applying the procedures and principles used to explore meaning construction (Fauconnier 1997), I will try to trace some of the ways in which language reflects specific conceptualization resulting from the powerful conceptual blend between configuration, climate and cultural heritage of a particular geographical and historical region and the way in which its inhabitants categorize their world. I will take the example of the Mediterranean Adriatic Sea, and analyze the conceptualization of its basic word: *more* - 'sea' in Croatian, the language of the inhabitants of its coast.

We are challenged to unravel the secrets of language, to explore its dependence on cultural, social, biological and geographical features of an area, thus revealing the development of meaning construction through time and its back-effect on language and culture. It is an established fact that this interaction between language and thought is by no means direct, but is based instead on elaborate cognitive processes. By applying the mechanisms of cognitive semantics we are now attempting to trace the organizing principles of these processes in order to understand the hidden background laws that determine our mental and linguistic functioning and are, at the same time, shaped by it.
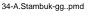
495

The instruments at our disposal in tracing the conceptualization process of meaning construction and its continuous change are revealed in terms of cross-space mappings, conceptual blends, metaphor, metonymy. These cognitive mechanisms provide access to mental-space configurations that occur through a number of multiple correspondences among domains, frequently connecting concrete images to the abstract schemas issuing from them and creating the superstructure of reasoning and thought within a particular language. New meanings and new conceptualizations created in this way are usually closely grounded in the environment of their origin thereby reflecting the specific background of an area and its cultural models. This meaning construction system lies at the very essence of the particular languages and is manifested in terms of both synchronic projections and diachronic change.

The amazing suite of cognitive skills, including the language skills occur, according to Tomasello (2001:5-6), through "cumulative cultural evolution" in which human beings pool their cognitive resources through powerful forms of cultural and social transmission and learning by means of creative and inventive "processes of sociogenesis in which multiple individuals create something together that no one individual could have created on its own." According to Tomasello, this biological mechanism of social or cultural transmission works on time scales many orders of magnitude faster than those of organic evolution, thus enabling individual organisms to save much time and effort by exploiting the already existing knowledge and skills of their progenitors.

The sea (*more* in Croatian) – a powerful primeval element, is a driving force in the life of the inhabitants of its coast, their door to the world, their feeder, the eternal source of beauty and constant change. The sea is one and unique and yet it appears in a number of different varieties through its amalgamations with each particular coast and each particular climate. We shall follow the construal of the meaning of the word 'sea' through the experience of the inhabitants of the Croatian side of the Adriatic Sea, usually described as a 'coast of a thousand islands'.

The conceptualization process is analyzed on several levels. I will first try to trace the way in which the sea itself is experienced and conceptualized by analyzing data from the Croatian National Corpus.[1] The Corpus is not completely finished yet and is still being worked on. However, since it provides a compilation of a fairly representative choice of texts from most areas of the written word, from books to newspapers, journals, etc., and also a choice of some spoken text, it can be assumed that data from the concordances of the word 'sea' should prove valid for the purpose of our research by providing a comprehensive reflection of the conceptualization of the concept 'sea' and the way the inhabitants of the Adriatic coast see and experience it.

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[1] According to Tadić (1997, 1998), the Croatian National Corpus consists of two components: a 30-million corpus of contemporary Croatian with texts created from the year 1990 up to the present day, and the Croatian Electronic Text Archive containing the texts older than 1990.

496

I will further use examples obtained from the Corpus to show how the concept of 'sea' is used in the process of cross-domain mappings in order to create new meanings.

The analysis will also be extended to the proverbs related to the sea to show the extent to which they communicate accumulated folk wisdom.

2. The way the sea (*more*) is seen and conceptualized

The Croatian word *more* originates from Indo-European *mori* that used to mean 'the sea' in ancient European dialects of Indo-European. We can therefore conclude that it was conceptualized when people speaking these dialects were living for some time together in the vicinity of a sea (according to different theories, it might have been the Baltic, but also the Black Sea). However, probably due to different geographical environments some other people were living in, in other Indo-European dialects, the word did not denote the sea but another water surface such as a lake, swamp or marsh. This second meaning is reflected in the English word *marsh* which apparently originates from the same root as the Croatian word *more* (Gluhak 1993: 422).

Tracing the synchronic use of this word, I will show the way in which *more* ('sea') is conceptualized in Croatian. I believe that the words collocating with *more* and the frequency of their use in the Croatian National Corpus can provide a fairly reliable basis for the analysis of our mental picture of the sea.

The sea is most frequently described in the Corpus in terms of colour as *plavo, plavetno, modro.* None of these colour terms has a one-word correspondent in English: *plavo* is translated as 'light blue', *plavetno* 'bluish' and *modro* 'dark blue'. Note that in relation to *plavetno* Croatian has the noun *plavetnilo* that is used to refer mostly to the sea and sky, and could awkwardly be described as 'blueness' in English.

Still another colour term describing the sea in Croatian is *sinje,* meaning 'grey-blue' and in this meaning collocating only with *sea* and *sea-gull: sinje more, sinji galeb.*[2]

We should note that Russian has the colour term *синий*, of the same origin as the Croatian *sinje*, but having the meaning close to 'dark blue' and collocating not only with the sea but also with other words, e.g. sky, flowers, eyes, etc.

The correspondent of the Croatian term *sinje* does not exist in the colour system of English. However, we can find conceptualizations similar to *sinje* in languages of Mediterranean countries such as French: *glauque* and Italian: *glauco,* meaning 'blue--green' (as we have seen, in Croatian it is 'grey-blue') and not restricted only to the sea. It is with these words that the Croatian *sinje* is usually translated in dictionaries and elsewhere, although they do not fully correspond.

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[2] The word *sinji* is also used in a different meaning, in the phrase *sinja kukavica,* meaning 'a wretched, unfortunate person'.

497

The colour term similar to the Croatian *sinje* can evidently be found in some other languages. However, unlike these other languages, in Croatian it is applied exclusively referring to the sea and sea-gulls. This is perhaps the reason why its meaning has been construed in terms of a different colour or at least a different shade of colour and its conceptualization has come to differ from e.g. the Russian term in spite of the fact that both terms originate from the same root and are almost identical in form.

The notion of the particular colour of the sea frequently appears in examples in the Corpus as a basis for comparison: 'her eyes blue like the Adriatic'; 'her eyes glistened as if someone by mistake let the sea into this room'; and, interestingly, 'her hair blue like the sea[3]' (*oči plave kao Jadransko more; oči su joj se caklile kao da je netko greškom pustio more u ovu sobu; kose plave kao more*).

The sea is further described, as 'free, vast, broad, heaved, immense, immeasurable, silver-gilt glittering, shining, warm, splendid, brilliant, clear, wonderful, evening-quiet, rippled, hidden, Croatian, perfumed' *(slobodno, ogromno, uzbibano, nepregledno, beskrajno, posrebreno, svjetlucavo, svijetlo, toplo, divno, blistavo, bistro, mirno, najljepše, mirno večernje, namreškano, skriveno, hrvatsko, mirisno)*.

We also frequently find metaphor in these descriptions, where the sea is seen as 'red, white, round, fat, live, free, mild, heavy, open, mysterious' *(crveno, bijelo, okruglo, debelo, živo, slobodno, blago, teško, otvoreno, tajanstveno)*.

However, the sea can sometimes (much less frequently, judging by the Corpus data) also be 'tempestuous, turbulent, nocturnal, foaming' *(olujno, nemirno, noćno, raspjenjeno)*. Or, transferred to the level of metaphor, it is described as 'heavy, wild, furious, agitated' *(teško, podivljalo, bijesno, usplahireno)*.

It can also be 'dead', in the phrase 'dead sea' (*mrtvo more*), meaning sluggish waves occurring without the wind, but also, on the metaphorical level, meaning a stale or uneventful state.

As for our relationship with it, we are 'attracted to and relaxed by it, we respect it, dream of it, love it, watch it, open it, sit by it, jump into it, throw little pebbles into it, grow up by it, and we are tied to it for life'.

This picture of outstanding beauty, brightness, vastness and power and this relationship of immense respect and deep love are completed by the nouns most frequently used with the word 'sea' in the Corpus, such as: 'the sun, the sky, pine trees, quay, tamarisk rows, salt, open sea, Earth, boat, man, devotee, shore, strand, body, murmur, stone, fishermen, peace, dream, depth, underground beauty, love, eternity' *(sunce, nebo, borovi, riva, aleje tamarisa, sol, pučina, Zemlja, brod, čovjek, zaljubljenik, kopno, žal, tijelo, šum, kamen, ribari, mir, san, dubina, podzemna ljepota, ljubav, vječnost)*.

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[3] This apparently strange comparison comes from the fact that the English words *blond* or *fair* translate as *plava* ('blue') in Croatian in collocations with hair (*plava kosa*).

498

People living in non-coastal areas often speak of the sea in terms of the phrase frequently appearing in the Corpus as 'going to the sea' *(ići na more)* meaning 'spending their holidays there'.

On the other hand, those born by the coast and living far from it have the sea with them wherever they go: 'Since my first day in Zagreb[4] I hear and I see the sea... Man does not live on geographic maps. One cannot… come into immediate contact with it… But yet, after a short pause I would say: Zagreb is by the sea'.[5]

3. Metaphorical use of the concept 'sea'

Following one of the basic linguistic laws according to which concepts and words expressing them are motivated by our cultural, social, mental, and physical experience to acquire multiple synchronic senses, the concept of *more* ('sea') is used in the process of cross-domain mappings in order to create new meanings. These new meanings are grounded in the way in which we understand and experience our world, in such a way that the new, usually abstract, meaning structures are derived from conceptualizations in more concrete domains. It is this meaning construction system, based on mappings, frames and spaces, that makes the essence of language; words are only a surface manifestation of this complex activity (cf. Fauconnier 1997 : 190).

Theory of metaphor had developed through centuries in a number of different approaches[6], but it is only with the development of the ideas of cognitive linguistics that it started to be considered one of the basic structural principles of our conceptual system that governs our reasoning and behavior and provides us with a possibility of understanding novel extensions in terms of the conventional correspondences (cf. Lakoff 1996). The mappings between domains are considered to be a fundamental human cognitive faculty, thus one of the basic questions of cognitive semantics is to reveal the sorts of connections between domains that allow us to use a word or expression from one cognitive domain as a trigger to refer to another target entity in another cognitive domain (Sweetser and Fauconnier 1996).

These mappings can occur globally, on a crosscultural level, or can be restricted to the particular language and the particular culture, reflecting the experience and background knowledge of its speakers. Žic Fuchs (1991 : 30) speaks of the close connection between the conceptual metaphors and the way in which experience has been conceptualized within a particular culture:

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[4] The capital of Croatia, a continental town, some 350 kilometers away from the coast.

[5] I am not specifying the sources of the particular quotations, since they are all given just as quotations from immediate or additional (end-of-line) environment of the word *more* in the Croatian National Corpus.

[6] Let us only mention the names of Aristotle, I. A. Richards, M. Black and P. Ricœur.

499

"Thus, we can say of metaphors that they reflect the values established in a particular culture, i.e. the basic values will be in accordance with the structure of the very concepts that make the framework of metaphor…"

The examples we are going to analyze will include metaphors of both crosscultural and unicultural provenance. Here, again, the Croatian National Corpus will be searched to provide data that can be used to analyze and classify the particular meaning constructions. A number of examples will be taken from the books on folk proverbs, and an additional example will also be taken directly from literature[7], i.e. from poetry.

Taking into consideration diversity of sources used in the Corpus compilation, we can consider the following metaphors as representing the cross-section of common usage. Some of them are quoted from literature. However, most of them can be found in everyday communication.

Most of these metaphors are grounded on the feature of the immensity of the sea to yield conceptual metaphors of quantity, remoteness and time. The source domain is the same in all the three cases. The conceptual potential of the sea and in particular the feature of its immensity is so wide that it provides the ground for multiple mappings.

Other outstanding metaphors are those of the sea as the door to the world or the sea as a living being.

3.1. Quantity

In a number of the Corpus examples the concept of 'sea' (*more*) is used to denote a vast quantity of something, e.g.:
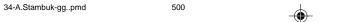
'sea of bliss, of mercy, of the hungry, of mist, of questions, of problems, of suffering; of tears; of perfection'; 'in the sea of colours; of sad news; of praises' (*more blaženstva; more milosti; more pregladnjelih; more magle; more pitanja; more problema; more patnje; more suza; more savršenosti; u moru boja, u moru tužnih vijesti; u moru hvalospjeva*).

Furthermore, using the metaphor more elaborately, '**we jump headlong** into the sea of passion'; '**we are lost** in the sea of corn'; '**we are drowning** in the sea of rotten deals'; '**our enterprises have sunk** into the sea of banking credits' (*naglavce skačemo u more strasti; izgubljeni u moru kukuruza; utopljenici u moru trulih nagodbi; naša su poduzeća potonula u more bankarskog kredita*);

or: 'my soul is the sea'; 'you are a big, huge sea' (*duša mi je more; vi ste veliko, ogromno more*).

When reversed, this mapping also helps to express:

a. small quantity: 'a drop in the sea' (*kap u moru*);

b. the impossible: 'he is decanting the sea into a hole' (*on prelijeva more u jamicu*);

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[7] I say 'directly' since the Corpus itself also relies on literature as one of its sources.

c. isolation: 'island in the sea of democracy'; 'I am the island in the middle of the sea – nameless' (*otok u moru demokracije; otok sam usred mora – bez imena*).

The same feature of the source domain, i.e. the vastness of the sea is contrasted in the given examples with the new concepts (a drop, a hole, an island) to create the new and expressive mappings.

3.2. Remoteness

The feature of the immensity of the sea is also mapped onto space to denote a great or even immeasurable distance, e.g. in phrases contained in the Corpus:

'it is over the sea'; 'it is not even over the sea'; 'who will go over the sea for us'; 'when hills and planes, lands and mountains, and faraway seas separate me from…' (*to je preko mora; nije ni preko mora; tko će za nas poći preko mora; kad me brda i doline, zemlje i planine i daleka mora dijele od…*)

3.3. Time

An additional feature of the source domain is used here as the basis of metaphor - the mapping is established both by the feature of vastness and that of flowing: 'as the time flew and, filling the river of duration, entered the sea of eternity' (*kako je vrijeme teklo i puneći rijeku trajanja ulazilo u more vječnosti*).

3.4. The door to the world

This mapping has become so integrated into the Croatian conceptual system that it is hardly recognized as a metaphor, e.g.:

'The sea is our door' (*More su naša vrata*).

3.5. A living being

In a number of examples the sea acquires the features of a living being. It can come to life in a benign form. We have already seen that it can be 'live, 'round, fat, free, mild, heavy, mysterious'. It can also come into action:

'as the sea got fatter'; 'the sea poured out from her eyes, flew over her face, down this whole room, it flooded Vukota and all of them' (*kako bi more više debljalo; more se razlijevalo iz njenih očiju, poteklo niz lice, niz cijelu ovu sobu, potopilo je Vukotu i sve njih*).

However, it can also be 'wild, furious, agitated' and act in a dangerous way:

'he was swallowed by the sea'; 'Atlantis was swallowed by the sea'; 'as if this foreign language and this foreign town were the sea that will swallow me sooner or later',

501

(*progutalo ga je more; Atlantidu proguta more; kao da je ovaj tuđi jezik i ovaj tuđi grad more koje će me kad tad progutati*).

It also 'roars, climbs, rears up' *(huči, penje se, propinje),* taking the form of a powerful and threatening being.

This being acquires the human shape in one of the most beautiful Croatian poems describing the sea, where the poet and the sea laugh together in a joyous and affectionate embrace:

"...and I watch the sea climb up to me
good morning I say, **golden sea**
good morning sea, says sea
and it puts its arms around me
and the sea and I and I with the golden sea
we sit together on the pebbly beach
and we laugh and we laugh at the sea".[8]

4. The sea (*more*) in proverbs

Another source that was analyzed in the attempt to trace the conceptualization of *more* are the Croatian folk proverbs. Surprisingly, although a number of sources were consulted from which the proverbs containing the word *more* as well as those referring to the sea were extracted, not many proverbs related to this topic were found.

Created through oral tradition, the proverbs reflect and hand down the accumulated and condensed folk wisdom. Frequently based on metaphor and metonymy, these short and concise forms usually mirror the collective experiential context while attempting to communicate the basic truths of a particular community. It is therefore not surprising that the proverbs dealing with the sea were found to have built up their message and their judgments predominantly on the basis of the same meaning constructions developed in basic conceptual structures described in this article, such as:

·immensity of the sea:
'Neither measure to sea, nor faith in thee' (*Nit' u moru mire, nit' u tebi vire*)
'Spill water to the sea' *(Vodu v more prolivati);*

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[8] This is the author's (A.Š.) attempt at translation of the end-lines of the poem 'Sea' written by Josip Pupačić:

"…i gledam more gdje se meni penje / i **dobrojutro** kažem **more zlato**
i **dobrojutro more** more kaže / i zagrli me more oko vrata
i more i ja i ja s morem zlatom / sjedimo skupa na žalu vrh brijega
i smijemo se smijemo se moru

The poem is not included in the Corpus; it is quoted from Vlatko Pavletić ed. 1971. *Zlatna knjiga hrvatskog pjesništva.* Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske.

·its 'remoteness':

'It is the same to him, all the way to the sea' (*Ravno mu je sve do mora*)

·its features of a furious and dangerous entity:

'Praise the sea but stick to the shore' (*Hvali more, drž' se kraja*);

'When the sea boils, even a good sailor drowns' (*Kad more uzavri, i dobar se mornar utopi*);

'The boat said: protect me from the coast, I'll protect you from the sea' (*Rekao je brod: ti mene (učuvaj) od kraja, a ja ću tebe od mora*)

'The sea calls for a hero and master and not a brute' (*More traži junaka i vještaka a ne baka)*

·the idea of danger reversed:

'More people have drowned in a glass than in the sea' (*Više se utopilo u čaši nego u moru*);

·its unfathomable depth reversed:

The sea can be seen through, the human heart cannot' (*More se prozrijet more, a čovječje srce ne more*).

·in an interesting way, the immensity of the sea and some of its other features, such as depth and salinity reversed to indicate foolishness:

'A fool thinks that the sea only comes to his knees' (*Budali je more do koljena*)

'This is (senseless) like salting the sea' (*To je (glupo i besmisleno) kao soliti more*);

'He doesn't know that the sea is salty' *(Ne zna da je mora slano).*

·its immense importance for the coast dwellers and their love for it:

'Woe to the horse without a field and to the sailor without a sea' (*Teško konju bez polja, a mornaru bez mora*)

'One need not live, but sail one must' (*Živjeti se ne mora, ploviti se mora*).

5. Conclusion

The examples analyzed in this article are taken from different sources such as the Croatian National Corpus, folk proverbs, and poetry. They have been classified to show how the features of a predominantly sunny and warm sea have integrated into the conceptual and lexical categories of the inhabitants of its coast over the course of time. The sea is so powerfully rooted both in individual and collective consciousness of the inhabitants, that it has become a part of an all-pervasive backstage cognition that plays an important role in shaping both their modes of thought and their cultural and social values. On the basis of the examples that have been analyzed we can conclude that the sea is experienced predominantly in terms of immense beauty and brightness (reflected also in specific colour terms), but also in terms of a powerful and potentially dangerous entity inspiring deep respect and awe. Above all, it is experienced in terms of love and devotion of the coast dwellers for it, which can help us understand the enormous importance

attached to the relationship with the sea in the popular Croatian saying: 'One need not live, but sail one must'.

In this process basic thought is closely intertwined with both literary mind and folk wisdom. However, not only does everyday thought make literary or folk thought possible, but the influence is exerted in the reverse direction too, i.e. literary and folk tradition participate in the conceptualization process on an equal basis with basic experiential models. Meaning constructions created in literature frequently penetrate into everyday language making the basis for the creation of new language schemas and configurations. The same is true of folk proverbs that, in their pursuit of achieving conceptual compression, rely amply on conceptualizations created in everyday thought. At the same time, however, they also play an important role in the overall conceptualization process.

The analysis performed here is intended to provide the basis that will open the way for further research, i.e. for the comparison of the given examples to conceptualizations emerging on the coasts of some rainier and darker seas, thus revealing the extent of universal traits in the given meaning structures. On the other hand, the comparison will certainly also trace the extent of differences or shades of differences in respective conceptual organizations due to different conceptual blends in different geographical and cultural environments, thus providing insight into the role of cognitive conceptual processes in meaning construction.

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MORE, KULTURA I KONCEPTUALIZACIJA

Raščlanjivanjem leksika hrvatske obale Jadranskog mora ukazuje se na način na koji se osobine određenog geografskog i povijesnog okružja kojeg područja tijekom vremena integriraju u konceptualne i leksičke kategorije njegovih stanovnika, tijesno se ispreplećući s njihovim životnim vrijednostima u procesu konceptualizacije i značenjskog preslikavanja među jezičnim područjima, od jednostavnih značenja svakodnevnog života, do dubljih spoznaja koje uključuju temeljne istine, mudrost, umjetnost i kulturu.