

The UP/DOWN Orientation in Language and Music

Elżbieta Górska

Abstract

The paper discusses the up/down orientation from two perspectives. From the perspective of linguistic coding of UP and DOWN as target concepts, body part terms that serve as their most common structural templates are briefly considered. The other perspective takes the concepts of UP and DOWN as the source domains for conceiving various target notions which can be expressed not only via language, but also by means of other modalities such as gesture or music. It is argued that the experientially derived UP/DOWN image schema (Johnson 1987) plays a crucial role in structuring not only verbal metaphors, but also metaphors which are manifested via the musical mode. Providing insights into cross-modal levels of activation of metaphor, this study sheds a new light on the premise of ‘embodiment’ of meaning. When viewed from the multimodal perspective, the centrality of the body-based conceptual templates in semantic change, which is commonly recognized in cross-cultural studies of grammaticalization and lexicalization appears even more natural.

1 Introduction

This paper considers the UP/DOWN orientation from two different perspectives. One is that of the linguistic coding of UP and DOWN as target concepts while the other is that of metaphorical mappings from the source domain of UP/DOWN to a variety of target conceptions, be they well-established or novel. The former perspective is commonly adopted in studies of grammaticalization, when they seek to establish conceptual templates for coding the two deictic notions of UP/DOWN (see, in particular, Heine 1997 and Heine & Kuteva 2002). Since this perspective will be of marginal interest here, only the most common body-part-based templates for coding these two concepts will be briefly presented (section 2). We will then move to one example of a grammaticalization chain in which the concept of UP itself functions as a template, i.e. a metaphorical source domain, for coding a grammatical marker of comparative. This shift in perspective will provide a frame for section 3, which will consider the concepts of UP and DOWN as the source domain for conceiving diverse target notions that can be

expressed not only via language, but also by means of other modalities.¹ The latter perspective is characteristic of a new trend in metaphor research in cognitive linguistics. Until very recently, the numerous proponents of the Lakovian-Johnsonian Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999)² have almost exclusively focused on purely verbal manifestations of conceptual metaphor, which can be classified as instances of a prototypical ‘monomodal metaphor’, whose target and source domains are exclusively rendered in one mode (see Forceville 2006: 383). In the last decade, however, interest in multimodal metaphors, wherein “target and source are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes” (Forceville 2006: 383), has already gained ground (see, in particular, Forceville 2006, Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009, Müller 2008, Cienki and Müller 2008, Zbikowski 2000, 2006, 2008, 2009, and also Górska 2008, 2010).

Given the fact that communication in contemporary society commonly draws on modalities other than language alone, the appearance of this new ‘multimodal’ trend is by no means surprising. Neither is it surprising in the light of the ongoing debate about the nature of metaphor, and its conceptual status in particular. Providing insights into cross-modal levels of metaphor activation, this new trend directly addresses the issue of non-verbal evidence for the conceptual nature of metaphor, and thereby overcomes the circularity of the ‘language—to—thought—to—language’ argumentation of which the proponents of Conceptual Metaphor Theory have often been accused (see e.g. Gibbs and Perlman 2006, Forceville 2006, Müller 2008, Cienki and Müller 2008). The criticism was directed at the standard practice in CMT of hypothesizing about the conceptual nature of a particular metaphor (e.g. HAPPY IS UP) on the basis of metaphorical linguistic expressions (or ‘verbal metaphors’ as they are also called) and then confirming the very same hypothesis on the basis of a larger sample of linguistic data.

It is crucial to also observe that multimodal studies of metaphor which focus on image schematic concepts, such as UP/DOWN, shed a new light on the premise of ‘embodiment’, which lies at the very core of cognitive linguistics (see e.g. Johnson 1987, Gibbs 2006, Maalej and Yu 2011a and the literature cited therein). This premise directly refers to the ‘embodied cognition’ thesis, which states that the kinds of concepts we are capable of forming is (to a large

1 ‘Modality’ or ‘mode’ will be understood here in Forceville’s terms as “a sign system interpretable because of a specific perception process” (2006: 382).

2 As for the proponents of CMT, there have been too many who should be mentioned here, so let me only refer the reader to the literature quoted in Gibbs (2008).