

Conceptual blending theory, Surgeon is a butcher: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract:

Conceptual blending theory falls under cognitive science. This paper first examines a metaphor or blend, this surgeon is a butcher! The aim of this study is to find out the reason behind the surgeon butcher relationship and also the ground of their comparison. It has always been a popular metaphor around the world. It has seen surgeons are always compared to butchers and there is no clear explanation why only these two professions are consistently compared. A survey is conducted among twenty Chinese and Bangladeshi students by using a semi-structured interview. It is argued that this sentence has two possible meanings. In the Chinese context it shows a positive and in the Bangladeshi context it shows a negative meaning and this study will discuss about the blend and both of the meanings.

Keywords: Conceptual blending theory, cognitive science, metaphor, blending.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002) aims to provide a general cognitive model for meaning-making and for how novel concepts emerge. In cognitive linguistics surgeons are often compared to butchers. Firstly, it can be asked what is a surgeon? A surgeon is a physician who is trained to perform surgical procedures. It is a profession that demands exceptional manual dexterity and fine motor skills to carry out the techniques needed to investigate disease, repair or remove damaged tissues, or improve the function or appearance of an organ or body part and a butcher is a person whose trade is cutting up and selling meat in a shop. Often it is heard that "This surgeon is a butcher!". This paper examines a well-known metaphor or blend, 'surgeon is a butcher' in a positive and a negative meaning which will show two different countries, China and Bangladesh's context. It has two meanings. In Chinese context it has a positive meaning but in Bangladeshi context it has a negative meaning. "Butcher" is the one that kills animals to sell the flesh also a cruel murderer and on the other hand, "surgeon" is someone who heals people. Each profession is quite different. However, these two professions have a relationship. That is both work with flesh. From here the comparison starts. This paper discusses connections between blending theory and conceptual metaphor theory, for example "surgeon is a butcher". The questions of the research are mentioned in the following sections (i) Why surgeon is always compared to a butcher? (ii) Where does the negative meaning come from?

The significance of this study is to find out the reason behind the Surgeon-Butcher relationship. This study will examine the positive and negative perspectives of both Chinese and Bangladeshi cultures. Why is it seen negatively in Bangladeshi culture and positively in Chinese culture, this will be discussed. Also, this paper examined why only this specific profession is compared to surgeons.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

'Surgeon is a butcher' is simply the review of a well-established feature of ancient Latin culture which was expressed first in Latin and finally in English by means of two French words which from the very beginning held the old figurative meanings. "This surgeon is a butcher" is undeniably some sort of reproach: the surgeon is being criticized. In the Grady, Oakley & Coulson analysis, the surgeon is said to be criticized for being incompetent. In Glucksberg 1998, the surgeon "is a member of the category of people who botch jobs in reprehensible and often appalling ways" no accounts of the meaning of the butcher-surgeon metaphor excludes the interpretation of it as a criticism. In their research it has been argued that the surgeon is criticized for having acted in an ethically indefensible manner. However, setting the issue of the specific content of the criticism aside, the fact remains that it is a part of the meaning of the utterance; one has not understood the semantics of the utterance if one does not conceive of it as expressing a criticism. It is not possible to understand the meaning of this metaphor without applying a normative schema of some sort. What "This surgeon is a butcher" meant in their

research, when it was uttered, was what the speaker of the sentence intended for the addressee to understand by it. As meaning can be shared, what is captured in the analysis is this shared meaning, shared by the speaker, the addressee, and by whoever has read the description of the communication taking place and understood it. A post-surgery patient intends to predicate something of the surgeon who performed the surgery and creates a metaphor. This metaphor is intended to express an evaluation of the surgeon. The scar indicates the negative evaluation of the surgeon. The speaker's gesturing to a scar makes it clear to the addressee that it is not the speaker's intention to categorize the surgeon or to bring attention to a hobby of his. The blending by which two categorial determinations merge into one item is metaphorical only if it does not simply express that the item in question should be recategorized. Surgeon is in fact not a surgeon, but a butcher") or that it is to be categorized in both ways ("this surgeon has two professions; he is also a butcher"). The attentional focus on the scar makes it clear that the sentence refers to the causal agent of a surgical operation on the speaker's body. This framing of the surgeon in turn affects the framing of the butcher. Grady et al. (1999) interpreted his analysis on the semantic interpretation of the expression put forward in an unpublished paper by T. Veale (1996), which was a statement about an incompetent surgeon. They claim that the analysis in terms of Conceptual Metaphor Theory fails to provide a reason for the equation "incompetent surgeon = butcher", as butchers are usually competent at what they do. They introduced the main concepts of Blending Theory and posit a much more complex explanation using four spaces instead of CMT's two domains: a first input space including information on the role, identity, tools, goals and means of a surgeon; a second input space with the equivalent information on butchers; a generic space with the abstract elements included in both input spaces, and a blended space with the concrete details of both inputs. A mismatch occurs: the surgeon's goal is healing but the means used belong to the butcher's space: butchery. Therefore, the surgeon is incompetent because he acts as a butcher, not as a surgeon. The surgeon is said to be criticized for being incompetent. In Gluksberg (1998) the surgeon is a member of the category of people who botch jobs in reprehensible and often appalling ways. The meaning of butcher- surgeon metaphor omits the interpretation of it as a criticism. In their analysis, they shared an incident of a patient who had gone through a surgery and was recovering in the hospital. the post-surgery patient was not happy with the scar which the surgeon had done, added a more dramatic appearance than she has expected. Which she showed to her visitors and commented that the surgeon is a butcher! She felt the surgeon should have been more careful with he stitches, since she will have to live the rest of her life with a noticeable scar. Which indicated that the surgeon has acted in an unethical manner (whether due to lack of skills or not) and supposedly there are contexts in which the same utterance would mean the surgeon is unskilled or incompetent. Brandt & Brandt's analysis shares with many linguists and cognitive scientists the view of language as embedded in a situation, as a form of interaction. A view that does not seem to be acknowledged by mainstream metaphor and blend analysis. But in both analyses another element is left out of consideration. This definition of butcher does not include anything that might be useful when someone wants to disqualify a surgeon, thence the problem these papers tried to solve. The speaker builds the metaphor or blends the concepts involved and uses the result with a certain goal in mind.

Another example of analysis by Line Brandt and Per Aage Brandt (2005) they followed a different path. Instead of three mapped into the blended space, they used a more complex format. A presentation space with the butcher, the activity to cut and the object of cutting meat, a reference space, with the surgeon, the activity to cut, the patient and the result of the surgeon's activity on the patient; a scar. These two spaces blend or merge into a virtual space with "surgery on patient virtually performed by a butcher." An additional and fairly complex semiotic space is then combined with the two initial spaces and the virtual space leading to the metaphor, whereby the surgeon is criticized for butchering the patient. In their approach not one single speaker is involved, but a number of them in interaction, and the fact that interaction exists has necessarily to be taken into account if one want to understand the meaning of This surgeon is a butcher! and why it can be used in certain conditions with the particular meaning of accusing the surgeon to be, in one way or another, a bad professional. They have used an example, The speaker was a woman who had just undergone surgery and was recovering in the hospital. The post-surgery patient was not happy with the scar which had a more dramatic appearance than she had expected. She showed the scar to her visitor and told him she had not been warned it would look like this. Emphasizing her dismay she said "This surgeon is a butcher!". The addressee took this utterance to mean that she felt the surgeon should have been more careful with the stitches, since she would now have to live the rest of her life with a noticeable scar.

This definition of butcher does not include anything that might be useful when one want to disqualify a surgeon, thence the problem these papers tried to solve. There is no clear definition why this sentence can have a negative and positive meaning. Krikmann (2007), "In cognitive metaphor theory the amount of analyzable empirical material is reduced to a quite small number of favourite examples, reiterating tens or hundreds of times and wandering from works to works again and again. There are the favourite examples of blends as well." He claims that it is unnecessary to use Blending Theory to understand the sentence, as the elements of the comparison have been around and alive for a long time. The very negative meaning of the word butcher and negative view of butchers in certain respects has been around, especially in Western Europe. It is so well established that it included

in some dictionaries as well. English borrowed the word from French and it was already imposed as the meaning 'brutally, bloodshed'. Also butchers cut off pieces of blood, which implies destruction of bodies, lots of blood, etc. People know perfectly well what butchers do and they have known it for hundreds of years. This is not only a profession; one can also say an upsetting action. It can be interpreted in the sense that going from a reference to animals to a reference to humans, or from butchers to surgeons is not that complicated. In the Ancient world and later and in many places nowadays, the similarity between a butcher's and an executioner's activities was fairly clear. For centuries, it was the barbers and butchers who were the charge of most of the surgeries, and surgery was linked to terrible pain, loss of blood, cutting off limbs and in many cases, death. A barber surgeon was a person who could perform surgical procedures including bloodletting, cupping therapy, pulling teeth, and amputation. Barbers could also bathe, cut hair, shave or trim facial hair, and give enemas. During wartime, the barber surgeons served in the army but during peacetime they could practice among civilians. In 1756 the French effectively separated surgeons from barbers by requiring a master of arts degree for surgeons. Popular literature and also in proverbs the negative values used to connect to surgeons and physicians. 'Synonyms' of physician or doctor in several languages meant 'killer of healthy people' have kept this very negative sense up to now. Popular narratives present surgeons as poorly educated men who performed invasive operations on unlucky and unanesthetized patients using unsterilized instruments, which lead them to address and compare as a "butcher". The relation does not seem to exist in other languages. In those languages butchers is only the one who sells meat or kills animals. In these cultures, with the exception of China it is just a profession and also in few Western European languages, the dictionary entries for butchers include no negative implications. It is neither novel nor problematic and just shows a stable link created over two thousand years ago. This means that their analysis exclusively in present-day terms is not valid for such an old association. There were thus no more cultural and historic bases for metaphors as Sharifian (2010) writes "Language acts as a carrier and repository of culture conceptualizations".

III. METHODOLOGY

A survey is conducted among ten Chinese and ten Bangladeshi students by using a semi structured interview. The participants attended and had to answer 5 questions for the interview. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the semi-structured interviews were conducted online. The participants were asked about the Surgeon-Butcher relationship, similarity of these two professions, the positive and negative meaning in their culture and from where these meanings came from. The interviews were recorded and at the end of the interview's participants will be given an opportunity to review their responses for clarifications. They will also be assured that their names or identifying information will not be included in the data report. A qualitative method was adopted to analyze the data. The researcher could conduct 'informal' oral interviews with the participants in various real-life contexts (i.e., WeChat and phone calls) and helped to obtain additional authentic information.

IV. RESULTS

The focus of this paper is the findings of the surgeon-butcher relationship, and analyze the positive and negative meanings of both the Chinese and the Bangladeshi cultures. The researcher took an interview with the students. First of all, they were asked that what comes in mind after they take in this term "Surgeon is butcher". Some of the students answered all they think was cutting meat, some answered a skillful surgeon like butchers; as butchers are very competent at what they do. Few students answered it is a term that is familiar to anyone who had bad experience in hospitals and all they think about slaughtering, killing people or animals. One cuts into living bodies in order to heal the other mainly cuts up dead animals to be eaten. Also some answered similar process but different body. They both cut meat, one is to heal and other to kill. When they were asked why surgeon is always compared to butcher, 60 percent of students answered almost the same. As they both cut on bodies, people compare these two professions always. A surgeon cuts into human flesh to operate and a butcher cuts into animal flesh to tear it apart. Both occupations are highly contrasting. However, throughout history, there have been instances where a doctor was too eager to cut into humans which earned the bad doctors the title of the butchers. Some of the students answered that people who chose the profession 'butchery', is less educated, shows no feelings while killing and slaughtering animals they become very emotionless. Also intentional harming a patient under anesthesia while performing makes a surgeon no less than a butcher. When a surgeon is not that skillful and shows no emotion on patients they often compared to butchers. Some answered butchery is a very skillful profession and that is why surgeon is always compared to butchers. In the 1970's in England and probably other countries, butchers were the first surgeons. That is one of the other reasons why they are sometimes compared to butchers.

They were also asked if they have a positive or negative meaning in their culture. It certainly has a negative meaning in Bengali and also the Western culture, as such the students from Bangladesh responded they have a negative meaning and the students from China replied they have a positive meaning in their culture.

The negative meaning comes from as the doctors were supposed to be healers, However when a doctor seems to be

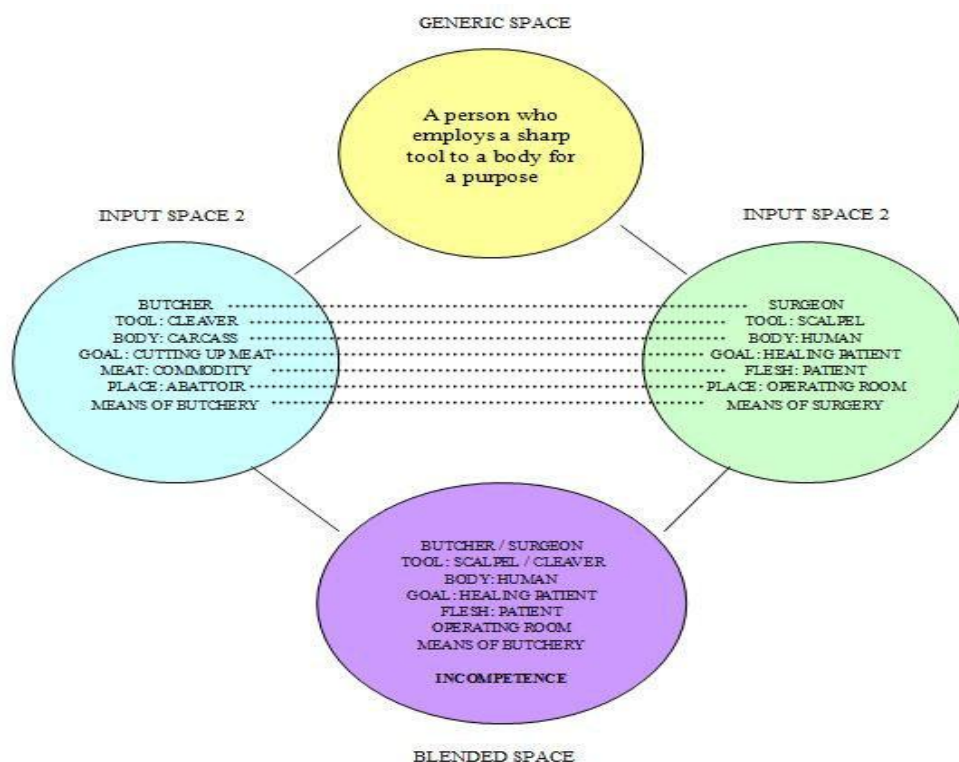
too eager to perform major surgeries where a simple diagnosis and prescribing of proper medication would work; they become evil in the eyes of the society. They are then compared to the butchers who also have a knack of cutting into flesh. Majority of the students did not find any similarity in this profession.

Some students found the comparison quite offensive. A surgeon spends 8–12 years just receiving his/her education, then another 4+ years honing their skills. They don't just cut and chop. Their work is not similar as one tries to heal the flesh and bones and the other tears it apart. Surgeons, they work for years learning how to perform surgery and minimize a patient's pain and save life. A butcher breaks down edible meat into usable portions suitable for meal. However, the bad reputed doctors have earned the name quite deservedly. But a few students agreed that they have found some similarities. They both cut meat and both profession needs proper skill to cut the flesh. They believe it is a very skillful job.

In Chinese context surgeons are compared to butcher and why only this specific profession, it is because they believe butchery is a very skillful profession. Butchers are usually competent at what they do and it takes a lot of skill to be a butcher. To be a surgeon one need to have just enough arrogance to bring themselves to pick up a very sharp knife and cut a person open, same goes for butchers but the only difference is they perform on animals. They can do slaughter, break carcasses, and then take the primal they broke and make recognizable cuts out of it. They need to be familiar with not only one species, but many. Every animal is broken down differently. This also requires a broad knowledge. This could be one of the reasons of comparing them. In Bangladeshi context this has a negative meaning. In these languages a butcher is simply “the one who sells meat or kills animals”, and a surgeon is “the one who heals”. If someone call a man a butcher, they mean that he has committed a lot of cruel murders or if someone butchers people, they kill them cruelly. It is because butchery comes in relation with brutality, bloodshed etc., and the negative evaluation of surgeons, have been well-established not only in Bangladesh but also Western European languages for many centuries. Chinese culture fails to show any relation between the terms for meat – butcher – killing; and in most of these languages, surgeons are in no established relation to butchery. Contrary to what we have just seen for a few countries or Western European languages, the dictionary entries for butcher include no negative implications. In these cultures, with the exception of China, professional butchers, if they existed as such, were just members of the community with a certain professional activity. Also, physicians or surgeons in our modern sense did not exist and their equivalents were feared if they were for their spiritual, magic powers but not for their bloody activities. In Bangladesh they are compared to butchers, as butchers do not have a proper educational background which presents surgeons as poorly educated men and indicates the reputation of his career. If a surgeon is called a butcher, then he or she must be very unskilled in his profession and does not care about patient which leads to a negative meaning. Medically wise, some surgeons in a hospital might get that reputation based on their operating style as in rough and not so aesthetically pleasing.

V. DISCUSSION

Conceptual blending network consists of four connected mental spaces: two partially matched input spaces, a generic space, and the blended space. The two input spaces go through cross-space mapping, through which the cognitive relationship between the counterpart elements of the two inputs can be reflected. The generic space is composed of whatever structure that is recognized as common to both of the two input spaces. The blended space provides a new space in which the selective structures and elements projected from the inputs are manipulated.



1.1 Image: Surgeon- Butcher conceptual blending theory

For blending to work, at least two input spaces must be present, These input spaces allow the creation of a generic space. That is, a space which captures the similarity between the two input spaces as an agent, (the butcher or the surgeon), a goal (cutting up meat or healing patient), and a place (abattoir or operating room). Input space one has the role and identity of the surgeon, the role and identity of the patient (a human). The procedure has a goal, that is heal the patient, and implies a meaning, which is the actual surgery. The second input space has the role of the butcher, the role of an animal carcass (a piece of meat). The structure in the blend is not simply derived from the sum of these input spaces, also Cross-space mapping between these two input spaces (Figure 1.1) creates new relations. These input spaces particularly project into a blended space. Earlier times the surgeons were not that highly trained professionals as they are now. Before it was barbers and butchers who took charge for most of the surgeries, and surgeries were painful and many cases it caused death. Thus, the profession butchery has a relation with brutality, bloodshed etc and assumed to be common knowledge unless prove of the contradictory is offered. Which shows nothing new in the blend. Although butchery is a highly skilled profession, by conceptualizing a surgeon as a butcher we are evaluating the surgeon as incompetent. This poses a difficulty for Conceptual Metaphor Theory because this negative assessment does not appear to derive from the source domain butcher. While the butcher carries out work on dead animals, there is considerable expertise and skill involved, including detailed knowledge of the anatomy of particular animals, knowledge of different cuts of meat and so on. Given that butchery is recognized as a skilled profession, questions arise concerning the conceptual origin of the negative assessment arising from this example. the negative assessment is obvious and appears to be the driving force behind describing a surgeon as a butcher, yet this negative evaluation seems to be contained in neither of the input domains associated with the metaphor.

VI. CONCLUSION

It can conclude that the surgeon butcher relationship builds because both of the profession works with skill, one in a dead animal and another to heal. Each profession needs proper skill and knowledge. This can be one of the main reasons of the comparison. But the butcher does become a harmer. This happens because the dramatic scene of the blend is construed from the viewpoint of the patient of the act. which is where our sympathy is vested, and this allocation of attention and sympathy carries over into the butchery space. In the blend, the butcher is a harmer, because he is viewed from the vantage point of the patient; who is a dead animal but who is also a living human being. The result shows in both culture it has a different meaning. In Chinese culture they showed a positive meaning and in Bangladeshi culture they showed a negative meaning. The key point in that a medical surgeon has completed years of medical school education. A butcher has no understanding of how the body functions. The operation, is just a small part of the trade. Most would agree that over 70% of being a surgeon

is about planning - when to operate, how to approach the target organ, and perhaps more importantly, when to stop operating and when not to operate. The difference is the training. surgeons do spend a lot of time, high-leverage time, training. after all, mistakes can cost lives. butchers probably don't spend nearly as much time with lower risks. Only if the butcher goes to college 4 years, medical school another 4 years, and successfully completes surgical residency another 6–8 years. At that point he is no longer a butcher, he is a surgeon. In order to perform a successful surgery in a way that most benefits the patient they need to be able to suppress their emotions and completely focus on the task at hand. The complexity and risk involved in a surgery are extremely high and they also have to be able to think fast in the event that something goes wrong. When a failure in surgery can result in death emotions are a burden that surgeons can't afford to have in the operating theater. Surgeon who has to make a split-second decision that is the difference between a patient's life and death, he can't afford to have empathy at that particular moment. So, what he has to do is suppress those emotions for the duration of the operation in order to work at the highest level that he is capable of and give the patient the highest chance of a successful surgery. Then when the surgery is over a great doctor will then show empathy and compassion post-op to help make the patient's recovery be as smooth and painless as possible. The same goes for butchers. Where having emotions for them can result in unnecessary and inhuman suffering for the person or animal by preventing them from focusing entirely on the task at hand. It cannot be said they lose emotions but rather learn to suppress them, because they all work in fields that at a particular time mean that having emotions increase the likelihood of mistakes. This is why some of the most accomplished surgeons also show strong psychopathic tendencies like lack of empathy and remorse.

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Appendix

Dear friends, we are conducting an interview on Conceptual blending theory: Surgeon is a butcher. This interview will take about 30 minutes. Please answer the following questions accordingly. We promise that the information you provide will be strictly confidential and will be used for research purpose only. Thank you very much for your participation.

Questions:

- 'Surgeon is butcher' - what comes in mind after you take in this term?
Why surgeon is always compared to butcher? Why only this one profession?
Does it have a positive or negative meaning in your culture?
What do you think from where does the negative meaning come from?
Do you find their work has a similarity?