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CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS? CLEAN AND DIRTY METAPHORS IN ENGLISH AND SERBIAN¹

Abstract

The current paper explores how the bodily experience of physical cleanliness is used in reasoning about abstract notions in English and Serbian. The focus is on adjectives and nouns in the two languages describing the state of cleanliness or its absence and the way they extend their meaning into abstract domains. Analysis is performed within the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, with examples collected from representative linguistic corpora of English and Serbian. Due to the high presence of cleanliness in ordinary experience, it serves as the source domain for structuring various abstract concepts, which predominantly pertain to morality. The concluding part discusses identified conceptual mappings and contrasts English and Serbian with respect to these.

Key words: conceptual metaphor, cleanliness, embodiment, English, Serbian

1. Introduction

The well-known English proverb *Cleanliness is next to godliness* equates the state of physical cleanliness with being godly. A scholar well-versed in

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cognitive linguistics can easily discern the underlying conceptual metaphor, that is, the conceptual mapping from the source domain of cleanliness to the target domain of godliness, here signifying morality or virtue. Namely, one of the tenets of cognitive linguistics is the emphasis on the link between language and experience, primarily embodied experience. Gibbs argues that "people's subjective experiences of their bodies in action provide part of the fundamental grounding for human cognition and language" (Gibbs 2006: 2). In other words, embodiment serves as the foundation for how people interpret their lives and the world around them. Human language and thought emerge from recurring patterns of embodied activity, which signifies that there is no self without the body (Gibbs 2006). Additionally, embodied experience determines and restricts the range and nature of concepts that can be represented (Evans and Green 2006).

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which serves as the theoretical framework for this research, also emphasises embodiment of lexical meaning. According to Geeraerts (2010: 204), this theory rests on three pillars: that metaphor is a cognitive phenomenon rather than a purely lexical one, the view that metaphor should be analysed as a mapping between two domains and the notion that lexical semantics is experientially grounded. People tend to "structure the less concrete and inherently vague concepts (like those for emotions) in terms of more concrete concepts. which are more clearly delineated in our experience" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 112). The key role in this process is given to conceptual metaphor as a mechanism for structuring abstract concepts. Metaphors are not simply linguistic features or embellishments of literary texts. The human ordinary conceptual system is "fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3). The set of mappings is established between the source domain, which is more concrete, and the target domain, usually more abstract, and they take form of an alignment between aspects of the source and the target (Geeraerts 2010). This process occurs in one direction, from the source into the target domain, which implies metaphors are unidirectional. Conceptual embodied experiences serve as the foundation for some mappings, while "others build on these experiences in order to form more complex conceptual structures" (Evans 2007: 35). Research on conceptual metaphors is important since it can reveal rich evidence about the ways in which some aspects of our experience are associated with others (Grady 2007).

Cleanliness can be considered a basic domain of experience, due to the human need for being clean in order to preserve health and basic hygiene. This domain has been the topic of a number of studies in social anthropology, focusing on understanding what cleanliness implies across different cultures. For example, Douglas explains the human tendency to keep clean by saying that our classification of certain objects as dirty or clean is a culturally determined way of creating a symbolic order in the world, since "dirt offends against order" (Douglas 1966: 2). People do not eliminate dirt only to rid themselves of disease, but in a positive effort to organise their environment. Bearing in mind that the experience with physical cleanliness and dirt figures as basic since early childhood, it can be assumed that it plays an important role in talking and reasoning about abstract concepts.

2. The link between cleanliness and abstract domains

Previous research on the topic of productivity in the domain of cleanliness in structuring abstract domains mainly focuses on morality (ethics) and sexuality (desire). Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 290-291) claim that "virtually all of our abstract moral concepts are structured metaphorically", while "the source domains of our metaphors for morality are typically based on what people over history and across cultures have seen as contributing to their well-being". Among a number of source domains used to structure the concepts within morality (MORALITY IS STRENGTH, MORAL AUTHORITY IS PARENTAL AUTHORITY, THE MORAL ORDER IS THE NATURAL ORDER et al.), these authors formulate the metaphor Purity IS CLEANLINESS, claiming that substances that are pure are typically clean, while dirty ones are usually impure. Since morality is conceptualised as purity, and purity as cleanliness, the derived metaphor is MORALITY IS CLEANLINESS (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 307). In most cases, it is the body that figures as a source of impurity.

In line with this, Lizardo (2012) argues that experiences with dirt and cleanliness serve as the foundation for conceptualisation and reasoning about moral propriety. More specifically, the grounding in this case is an idealised cognitive model in which dirt is generally conceptualised as MATTER OUT OF PLACE and clean as ORDERED ARRANGEMENT (Lizardo 2012: 368). Metaphors of dirt and cleanliness in this argument are hence observed as categorisation devices since metaphors of cleanliness indicate an expected order, while those of dirt imply an object's dislocation.

To corroborate the findings obtained using linguistic data, we will present an interesting line of research in psychology dealing with the relation between cleanliness and morality, i.e. virtuous behaviour. These studies experimentally establish the link between ordinary experience with clean and dirty objects and the abstract domain of morality. Zhong and Liljenquist (2006) start from the importance of physical cleansing in religious ceremonies, claiming it suggests a psychological association between bodily purity and moral purity. The authors explored the so-called "Macbeth effect", studying whether a threat to one's moral purity caused the need for physical cleansing. When the respondents were exposed to unethical situations, they showed a greater preference for cleansing products afterwards, as well as the tendency to take antiseptic wipes as a reward rather than a pen, implying the need for cleaning. Based on this, the authors argue that physical cleansing can diminish the harmful consequences of unethical behaviour and reduce threats to one's moral self-image. Schnall et al. (2008) continue along these lines by conducting two experiments in which, after their cognitive concept of cleanliness was activated or after they physically cleansed themselves after experiencing disgust, participants assessed certain moral actions as less wrong than those who were not exposed to the evocation of the concept of cleanliness. The authors state that because of its potential to lead people to regard moral actions as pure and good, cleanliness might really feel as if it were "next to godliness" (Schnall et al. 2008: 1222).

Other authors explore the link between cleanliness and morality by analysing colours and smells associated with cleanliness and dirt. Sherman and Chlore (2009) claim that ideas of dirtiness and impurity are themselves grounded in the perceptual experience of the colour black, which is seen not just as the opposite of white but also as a potent impurity that can contaminate whiteness. Hence, a white object is universally understood to be something that can be stained easily and that must remain unblemished to stay pure. As an example they mention the cultural practice of dressing brides in white, which alludes to the experience of physical purity and at the same time stands as a symbol for moral purity. The authors argue that sin is not just dirty, but black as well, and that moral virtue is not just clean, but also white. Based on these claims, they conclude that "more than merely a rhetorical device for moral discourse the moral purity metaphor is a deeply embodied phenomenon covertly shaping moral cognition" (Sherman and Chlore 2009: 1025). Liljenquist et al. (2010) focus on smells associated

with cleanliness, starting from the assumption that clean smells might not only regulate physical cleanliness but also motivate virtuous behaviour. Participants who were situated in the clean-scented room tended to offer charitable help more often, which leads the authors to the conclusion that clean scents not only motivate but also promote virtuous behaviour by increasing the tendency to reciprocate trust. The link from cleanliness to virtuous behaviour seems to be non-conscious.

There is another domain frequently associated with the realm of physical cleanliness, namely, that of Desire and Sexuality. Deignan (1997) focuses on clean/dirty metaphors as part of her research on desire and the way this topic is constructed by language. The metaphors based on this experiential domain proved to be the ones involved in evaluation of different manifestations of desire. An important finding is that, in the corpus of Deignan's research, dirty was used more frequently than clean as a metaphor – approximately 35% of citations for dirty were metaphorical, with 10% alluding to sexual desire and behaviour. Only 7% of citations for clean proved to be metaphorical, and less than 15% alluded to sexual desire or behaviour, yielding the conclusion that the negative form in clean/dirty metaphor is employed proportionately more frequently as a metaphor. Clean was used to describe behaviour, talk and texts which did not deal with sexual desire, with usually positive evaluation, while dirty and filthy expressed negative judgements about sexual desires and behaviour. The most frequent collocations in this corpus were dirty stories and dirty talk, which according to Deignan, are taboo words for sexual behaviour. Evaluation was more negative when filthy/filth was chosen, the most frequent collocation being filthy language, describing any kind of sexual behaviour which is not approved of.

This research focuses on the adjectives and nouns in English and Serbian language describing the state of cleanliness or its absence and the way they extend their meaning into abstract domains. The main objective is to determine the major abstract domains structured by these lexemes, as well as to contrast the two languages with respect to linguistic realisations of the cleanliness-based conceptual metaphors. The selected lexemes for English comprise clean, unclean, dirty, filthy, cleanliness, dirt, while their counterparts in Serbian are čist, nečist, prljav, uprljan, isprljan, zaprljan, čistoća, prljavština. During the course of research, this list has been supplemented by verbs denoting the state of becoming clean again or removing dirt, namely, wash, clean, clean up for English and čistiti, očistiti,

prati, oprati for Serbian, with the aim of establishing whether abstract concepts labelled as dirty can be restored to cleanliness, which is an option in ordinary experience. The examples have been collected from the British National Corpus for English, and from the Corpus of contemporary Serbian language developed at the Mathematical Faculty of the University of Belgrade for Serbian. After careful examination of corpora examples, it has been established that the majority of metaphorical uses of these lexemes involve the concept of dirt in both languages (adjectives dirty/prljav, nouns dirt/prljavština).

3. Morality is cleanliness in English and Serbian

As indicated by previous studies, the first broad domain delineated in the corpora examples for both languages is MORALITY. The metaphor MORALITY IS CLEANLINESS has already been confirmed for the English language in Master Metaphor List and illustrated by such examples as He has a clean past, His reputation is besmirched or He doesn't want to get his hands dirty (Lakoff et al. 1991). In our corpora, it is linguistically realised mainly by the English adjective clean and its Serbian counterpart čist, expressing an entity free from dirt or impurities, which extends its meaning to denote virtuous behaviour and actions in general. The negative pair (dirty, filthy/prljav) is used with an opposite connotation, implying that immorality is experienced as physical dirt (IMMORALITY IS DIRT). The most frequent collocation is clean conscience/čista savest, obraz, which is overly positive and denotes association of cleanliness with honest and decent moral behaviour, in keeping with the prescribed and widely accepted moral standards. The connection between immoral actions and dirt is usually expressed by the collocation dirty work/business, that is, prljav posao, with a highly negative connotation, for an action which, in the words of Lizardo, "contravenes the normally agreed upon rules of business practice" (Lizardo 2012: 374). Another concept frequently described as dirty in these corpora is *money*, in cases when it has been obtained by illegal means. However, it can be argued that we are dealing with conceptual metonymy here, since money stands for an immoral activity by which it was obtained. The following examples illustrate the afore-mentioned conceptual mappings:

English: (1) an uncontroversial figure with a reportedly *clean* record; (2) you should be thankful that she's got a *clean* name; (3) get your conscience *clean*; (4) these are sometimes known as *clean* money; (5) distinguishing in practice *dirty* money from clean money; (6) the experience to handle any *dirty* fighting; (7) the problem with fighting *dirty* is that some of the dirt sticks to you; (8) I don't let someone else do my *dirty* work for me; (9) what *filthy* business.

Serbian: (10) građani čiste savesti; (11) da ostanemo ljudi čestita srca i čiste savesti; (12) ne bih mogao imati čist obraz da uzmem velike pare; (13) ideološki možeš da ostaneš čist; (14) budući svetitelj vodio je svet, čist i čestit, uzoran život; (15) odraz neke unutrašnje nervoze i nečiste savesti; (16) obraz zdravstvenih radnika je uprljan; (17) umeće da opere sav prljav novac koji je stekao; (18) teroristi na "prljav način" obezbeđuju finansijska sredstva; (19) Nije jasno zašto se saradnja sa Hagom doživljava kao prljav posao.

The conceptualisation of immorality as dirt proves to be especially prominent in the fields of sports, war and politics. This may stem from the fact that these fields are the ones where moral rules are often broken in order to accomplish certain goals, which makes their participants prone to dishonest behaviour (especially war). According to Lizardo, the abstract realm of politics is conceptualised as ordered and rule-governed and disallowed actions are once again structured by the DIRT AS MATTER OUT OF PLACE metaphor (Lizardo 2012: 380). The examples from our corpora reveal that politics itself can be experienced as dirty and hence immoral, causing this "moral dirt" to transfer to politicians and their activities, such as election campaigns. Especially effective in this sense is the collocation dirty laundry/prljav veš, which in this case refers to hidden and unpleasant facts about political rivals that can be labelled as unethical.

English: (20) the sport's struggle to combat its dirty image; (21) dragging the name of football through the dirt; (22) most of them too young to have taken part in the dirty war; (23) 'What a filthy war it is'; (24) a clean campaign throughout the country; (25) Major calls for clean election campaign; (26) "We all have a problem capturing and leading people because they think politics is dirty"; (27) digging up dirt on Clinton; (28) airing

the *dirty* laundry of a rival in public; (29) a particularly *dirty* and scrappy election; (30) They have employed *dirty* tactics.

Serbian: (31) kada se lokalne utakmice igraju pod dejstvom svakojakih prljavština; (32) u vreme najžešćih nacionalizama, etničkih mržnji i prljavština rata; (33) sav prljav veš beogradskog života devedesetih; (34) moralno čist političar, nepotkupljiv i bez sklonosti ka korupciji i kriminalu; (35) a, politika, jedna lepa prljavština; (36) podrazumevapravonapotpunoneargumentovano blaćenje ljudi, partija, politika i da se svaki pokušaj odbrane od tih prljavština (...) smatra gušenjem demokratije (37) iznošenje "prljavog veša" rivala je sasvim "normalna" praksa u ovdašnjim kampanjama.

Experience tells us that dirty items can be washed in order to restore them to their previous state of cleanliness. Hence, it is interesting to see whether "dirty" abstract concepts from this corpus are considered "washable". As argued by Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 308), "the question of moral rehabilitation amounts to the question of whether it is possible to clean up one's act and restore purity of will". As mentioned previously, for those purposes, several verbs were included in the analysis, namely wash, clean, clean up for English, and čistiti, očistiti, prati, oprati for Serbian. Both corpora were searched for instances where these verbs were used metaphorically in the domain of morality. The concepts that are most frequently mentioned as being washed or cleaned in that sense are consciousness and hands (wash his consciousness, pranje obraza; washed your hands of it, pranje ruku, oprati ruke). In the case of the latter, we are dealing with conceptual metonymy, HAND FOR AN ACTION, which allows us to think of one thing in terms of its relation to something else (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Geeraerts 2010). These describe the attempts to make amends for immoral actions or behaviour. However, unlike our everyday experience, it is dubitable whether these expressions convey the sense of possibility of entirely washing a guilty/dirty conscience. The same applies to the concept of laundering (or, in Serbian, washing) dirty money, i.e. making it appear as though it had been obtained by honest and ethical transactions.

English: (38) the orders of a new hardline leadership out to clean up the gang's image; (39) Fuel firms need to clean up their image; (40) the need to reform the electoral system to clean up the

political system; (41) wash his consciousness; (42) they washed their hands of any involvement; (43) he washed his hands of him; (44) the tireless toiler whose word/image exposés have shown the way that dirty money gets laundered through the art world; (45) a possible outlet for laundering dirty money.

Serbian: (46) optužbe, ostavke i pranje ruku; (47) pranje ruku od Klintonovih "posrtaja"; (48) meni sve to liči na pranje obraza; (49) nema tog donatorskog novca koji će oprati ovu sramotu; (50) Branka Mamulu ne može oprati njegova knjiga; (51) onda se javnost željela oprati od toga; (52) pritiskom na jedno dugme umeće da opere sav prljav novac koji je stekao; (53) uhapšena jedna žena zbog sumnji da je oprala 115.385 dolara zarade od prodaje heroina.

4. Manifestation of desire as dirt in English and Serbian

Sexuality is another prominent source domain for CLEAN/DIRTY metaphors and it is verified in corpora examples, however, only for English. The connotations of literal dirt are transferred to language in general, words, iokes, letters and movies that speakers consider indecent in the sense of a manifestation of sexual desire and a perceived morality of these actions. In turn, this stretches to conduct, action, feelings and finally people exhibiting such conduct. Therefore, we can argue that open manifestation of sexual desire can be subsumed under general immorality which in this case "is often seen as a contagion that can spread out of control" (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 291). Although there are no examples in the current Serbian corpus which would confirm drawing on the domain of cleanliness when talking about sexual indecency, there are colloquial constructions such as prljavi um 'dirty mind', prljave reči 'dirty words' or even prljavi snovi 'dirty dreams'. Still, these might be interpreted as a transfer from English, since the Serbian dictionary does not mention any instance of the lexeme prljav for the domain of sexuality.

English: (54) I do not think I ever used the term in my reports, except in parenthesis to denote a sort of *dirty* word; (55) giving the woman a salutation from his vast treasury of *filthy* language; (56) 'We're telling *dirty* jokes'; (57) a *dirty* movie; (58) feeding

the *dirty* sexual desires of the great; (59) The idea was the same *dirty* pleasure; (60) and that gives you the right to do *dirty*, perverted things, does it?; (61) I bet he's having *dirty* dreams about you; (62) Mr Major is having more affairs, a new report into *dirty* weekends has revealed; (63) a reader suggests these titles prove that Mr William Shakespeare had a very *dirty* mind; (64) Mr Berlusconi has appeared less a wily old operator than a *dirty* old man.

Serbian: no examples in the corpus

It is interesting to note that the expression *dirty mind* is interpreted by some authors as an instantiation of the CONTAINER scheme. The mind is observed as a container including disallowed thoughts and "when a disallowed thought *enters* the mind from the outside, the thought and mind both become dirty" (Lizardo 2012: 380). According to this author, the intertwining of the domains of sexuality and morality in this expression is a historical idiosyncrasy, stemming from the Christian ideal that sinful thoughts come from the outside and that thoughts which are usually policed are those associated with sexuality (Lizardo 2012: 381).

5. General purity of both concrete and abstract concepts

Apart from the domains of morality and sexuality, which are dominant in the extension of the meaning of lexemes primarily connected to cleanliness, there is also a large group of examples where cleanliness serves to denote the sheerness of the concept in question, its basic form, essence, clarity, or unambiguity. For Serbian, this is reflected in the use of the adjective *čist*. However, in this case, its counterpart in English would not be *clean* but *pure*, which was originally not included in the list since dictionaries state it denotes something clean, without harmful substances, or the opposite of contaminated, and hence not used for the actual cleanliness of objects (e.g., *clean floor* as opposed to *pure floor*) (e.g. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2010). Still, in order to show the lexical parallels, several examples from the English corpus with the lexeme *pure* are provided. These do not pertain to a particular domain, namely, they denote the sheerness of both concrete (*pure cotton*, *čisto srebro*) and abstract concepts (*pure indulgence*, *čist rasizam*). Furthermore, their opposite is not the concept of

dirt (*dirty separatism as opposed to pure separatism or *prljav promašaj as opposed to čist promašaj). English and Serbian show a high degree of similarity with respect to these, which can be seen in the following examples:

English: (65) unique Healthy Home Cooking apron, made from 100% pure cotton; (66) a wonderful blend of natural, gentle herbs and a hint of pure fruit juice, with added vitamin C; (67) prior to roasting, they're lavishly glazed with pure honey; (68) it was revenge, revenge pure and simple; (69) he also needs pure beauty, which is the bread of his heart; (70) allowing himself a few seconds of pure indulgence in sensation; (71) it had always been a moment of pure magic to him in the theatre; (72) their influence – outside the narrow circle of specialists in pure microeconomic theory – was not great; (73) I want to call this central theme, pure separatism.

Serbian: (74) na tavanicama su visili lusteri od čistog srebra; (75) ovi moji su čista vuna, bojeno u kući, predeno u kući; (76) izlagao je čist anarhizam; (77) gde god je sila na delu blagodat je čist cinizam; (78) Milošu je takva vrsta istraživanja čist izazov, gotovo hobi; (79) a o snegu da i ne govorimo, čist kič; (80) njegova otvorenost za tuđa mišljenja i za sporazumno donošenje odluka preobratili su se u čist oportunizam; (81) čist plagijat izdanja Narodne knjige; (82) dogovorili smo se da je to čist poslovni aranžman; (83) takav odnos prema ljudima druge nacije – čist primitivizam i necivilizovanost; (84) ksenofobija koja se u nekim slučajevima ispoljava kao čist rasizam; (85) sve ostalo je bio čist promašaj.

6. Conclusion

Based on examples from the representative corpora of English and Serbian, it can be inferred that the experience of physical cleanliness is extensively used for structuring abstract concepts in both languages. As argued by Deignan (1997), hearers and readers are invited to apply their knowledge of literal cleanliness (desirable) and dirt (undesirable) to the topic. The research on the corpora of the two languages yielded results in keeping with

the assumptions based on the theoretical framework and previous studies. The results indicate that with *clean*, the evaluation is overly positive, while dirty implies an overly negative evaluation of the proposed concept. For both languages, the negative term in the clean/dirty distinction has more metaphorical examples. Two prominent target domains structured by the concepts pertaining to physical cleanliness are MORALITY and SEXUALITY. The link between cleanliness and generally accepted moral behaviour can be explained by the fact that "morality is fundamentally seen as the enhancing of well-being, especially of others" (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 291), and the state of being clean is something desired on all occasions. There is a surface overlapping in English and Serbian regarding metaphors based on the domain of cleanliness with respect to morality and everything pertaining to it. In the domain of sexuality, it is still not the case, at least in the examples found in the corpus used for the Serbian language, but the existence of colloquial examples confirms that such conceptualisation is possible and acceptable for speakers. There is another large field where physical cleanliness serves to denote the essence of the concept in question. However, bearing in mind that this pertains to both concrete and abstract concepts, we did not discuss this usage as metaphorical in the strict sense.

Since language is largely shaped by human experience, it is only natural that the basic experience of physical cleanliness would play an important role in structuring abstract concepts. Hence, it can be argued that the clean/dirty metaphors tap into the essential domain, common to every human on the planet, and similarities are expected. Metaphorical moral concepts are grounded in aspects of basic experiential morality and tend to be stable across cultures, but each metaphor is additionally developed, in a particular setting, which may vary from culture to culture (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 325). For example, there are cultural variations in the way in which concepts related to cleanliness, or the lack thereof, are observed throughout the world, and this is bound to be reflected in the language they use. In the present research, this is reflected in the nonusage of the concept of dirt to denote perceived immorality in expressing desire, especially sexual desire, in Serbian. Still, further and more extensive research of this topic is necessary to delineate all possible extensions of meaning from an evidently very prolific source domain of cleanliness into abstract domains, for instance, including words and expressions related to various types of dirt and dirt removal, cleansing agents and devices etc.

Only then would it be possible to draw definite conclusions on the nature of metaphorical conceptualisation of abstract domains structured by the experience of cleanliness.

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ДА ЛИ ЈЕ ЧИСТОЋА ЗАИСТА ВРЛИНА? МЕТАФОРЕ ЧИСТОЋЕ И ПРЉАВШТИНЕ У ЕНГЛЕСКОМ И СРПСКОМ ЈЕЗИКУ

Сажетак

Тема рада је концептуализација различитих области апстрактног искуства у енглеском и српском језику помоћу елемената свакодневног искуства физичке чистоће. Предмет анализе су лексеме који се примарно односе на чистоћу и гранање њиховог значења у апстрактне домене. Теорија појмовних метафора послужила је као теоријски оквир рада, док су примери прикупљени претрагом репрезентативних корпуса два анализирана језика. Услед великог присуства елемената из домена чистоће у искуству, ови изрази проширују своје значење како би означили апстрактне појмове, примарно из сфере моралности. У закључку се разматрају појмовна пресликавања потврђена у анализи и утврђују сличности и разлике између енглеског и српског језика.

Кључне речи: појмовна метафора, чистоћа, телесно искуство, енглески, српски