Edita VALIULIENĖ (Šiauliai University)

THE METAPHORIC USE OF THE ENGLISH *COOL* AND ITS CULTURAL BACKGROUND

METAFORISKAIS *COOL* LIETOJUMS ANGĻU VALODĀ UN TĀ KULTŪRKONTEKSTS

Balstoties uz konceptuālās metaforas teoriju, rakstā tiek analizēts metaforiskais angļu valodas īpašības vārda *cool* lietojums un aplūkots tā kultūrkonteksts. Angļu valodas teksta korpusu (*The British National Corpus* un *The Global Web-based English Corpus*) dati liecina, ka ar analizējamo īpašības vārdu tiek izteiktas divu tipu metaforas. Pirmais tips atspoguļo temperatūras metaforu sistēmiskumu – ar vēsuma metaforām izsaka pazīmes, kas ir pretējas karstuma vai siltuma metaforām. Kā vēsa angļu valodā tiek raksturota nesavaldīgumam un straujumam pretēju emociju vai to izpausmes neesamība (zema intensitāte), kas saprotama kā racionālums, atturīgums, savaldīgums, resp., pozitīvas iezīmes, kas tradicionāli tiek piedēvētas nacionālajam britu raksturam. Ar īpašības vārdu *cool* izsaka arī vienaldzību, nedraudzīgas attieksmes kā opozīciju siltiem, tuviem kontaktiem, ko metaforizē siltuma koncepts.

Lielākā metaforiskā *cool* lietojuma daļa (56 % un 88 % minētajos tekstu korpusos) – otrā tipa vēsuma metaforas – atspoguļo specifiskas *cool* nozīmes, kas nav raksturīgas citiem temperatūras īpašības vārdiem. Bieži sastopami dažādi savienojumi, kuros *cool* raksturo to, kas ir moderns, pievilcīgs, lielisks, runājot par cilvēkiem, viņu izskatu, uzvedību, izklaidēm u. tml. Citos metaforiskajos izteikumos *cool* nozīmē abstraktākas lietas – vispārīgu pozitīvu vērtējumu vai atbalstu, piekrišanu (viss, kas ir labi, ir *cool*). Atsevišķa lietojumgadījumu grupa ir savienojumi, kuros *cool* uzsver lielu naudas daudzumu.

Šī tipa *cool* lietojums atspoguļo nozīmīgu kultūrkonceptu, kas izveidojies angļvalodīgajā sabiedrībā, bet vispirms – amerikāniskajā kultūrā.

Pirmsākumi skatījumam un uzvedībai, ko raksturo ar īpašības vārdu *cool*, saistāmi ar afroamerikāņu kultūru, īpaši ar džeza pasauli, kurā *cool* nozīmēja savdabīgu emocionālu stāvokli kā zināmas norobežošanās un protesta formu. Vēlāk *cool* kļuva par vārdu, ar ko pusaudži pauda pretestību pieaugušajiem (ar savu izskatu, izklaidēm). Sabiedrībai kļūstot liberālākai, dumpīguma aspekts *cool* jēdzienā pamazām izzuda, un šodien vārds *cool* vispirms asociējas ar to, kas ir pievilcīgs, stilīgs, interesants. Tā kā šīs iezīmes visvairāk izpaužas lietu un priekšmetu ārienē, mūsdienu kontekstā ar anglisko *cool* izteiktais pievilcīguma jēdziens tiek saistīts ar materiālismu un patērētāju kultūras tendencēm.

Introduction

In addition to multiple meanings and frequent use, *cool* stands out in the English language as a special word with a cultural aura around it. As David Skinner (2014, 1) puts it, 'It's more than a word. It's an attitude and a lifestyle'. For this reason, plenty of previous research has centred on *cool* as a cultural concept, for example, it has been analysed from cultural and historical points of view (Stearns 1994, Dinerstein 1998, Skinner 2014, etc.), as well as in the light of marketing and consumer behaviour (Rahman et al 2009, Rahman, Cherrier 2010,

etc.). In this research an attempt is made to combine different insights regarding this word and its cultural load in the analysis of *cool* as a metaphoric expression – metaphoric uses of *cool* are considered manifestations of conceptual temperature metaphors, treated systematically in the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. So the aim of the research is to present the metaphoric use of the English adjective *cool* in relation to other temperature metaphors as well as reveal its cultural background.

Theoretical and methodological considerations

In the view of Conceptual (or Cognitive) Metaphor Theory, metaphor is essentially a mental phenomenon – 'understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, 5). It is thus a conceptual mapping involving two conceptual domains: the source domain, which is used to understand another concept, and the target domain, which is conceptualised through the source (Kövecses 2002). At the level of language, conceptual metaphors are manifested by metaphoric expressions, which are grouped according to the meaning, revealing the the target domains of metaphors under analysis.

To establish the metaphoricity of particular expressions (different uses of the adjective *cool* in this case), the well-known Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), proposed by the team of international metaphor scholars known as the Pragglejazz Group, was applied. In this procedure, the identification of metaphoric uses is based on the relationship between the different meanings of a lexical unit: 'the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning, but can be understood in comparison with it' (Pragglejaz Group 2007, 3). The basic meanings are usually more concrete and related to body – what they evoke is easier to imagine or sense in one way or another.

Similarly, the basic meaning of *cool* refers to the physical property and/or sensation of temperature. It denotes a temperature value between warmth and cold describing something that is 'rather cold, often in a pleasant way', e.g. *The water was wonderfully cool and refreshing* (Macmillan). As other temperature adjectives, *cool* is used to express different types of temperature evaluation (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2015): tactile temperature (the temperature of things we touch – food, drinks, surfaces, etc.), ambient temperature (temperature in a certain environment determined by time and place), clothing temperature (the effect of clothing on the personal-feeling temperature of the human being) and the subjective temperature of our body or its parts, cf. *put a cool flannel on his head* (GloWbE), *a sunny but refreshingly cool Delhi day* (BNC), *this gives a good effect for a cool summer top and should look fine* (BNC), *the porous nylon keeps the toes cool and refreshed* (GloWbE). In contrast, the uses of *cool* in phrases such as *she came over as cool, unemotional* (BNC) or *looking super cool in a Tom Ford suit* (BNC) manifest other meanings referring to abstract qualities of people, their character, appearance, activities, which are metaphorically perceived through the concept of coolness as a temperatures value (the basic meaning of *cool* and the source domain of conceptual metaphors).

To ensure a sufficient number, diversity and authenticity of the metaphoric uses of *cool* in the English language, the analysis is based on corpus methodology – a corpus linguistic approach that has established itself as a promising trend in contemporary linguistics. Two corpora of the English language were used for data collection in this work – *The British National Corpus* (BNC, 1980s–1993) and *The Global Web-based English Corpus* (GloWbE, 2012–2013), representing a more recent usage of the English language. Samples of 500 concordance lines as different uses of the adjective *cool* were analysed in each corpus, showing a clear dominance of metaphoric uses – 61 per cent in the BNC and 87 per cent in the GloWbE.

Research findings

Having selected and grouped metaphorical expressions with *cool*, the features metaforised through the concept of coolness were identified as the target domains of conceptual metaphors. They show two types of coolness metaphors regarding other temperature values, which are also frequently employed in metaphorisation processes.

Metaphoric expressions of the first type reveal the systematicity of temperature metaphors (see Table 1) – features metaphorised as cool stand in opposition to the target domains of heat and warmth metaphors (e.g. cool-headed people are contrasted with hot-headed ones, cool colours are opposed to warm ones), while others (see Table 2) employ coolness as a single temperature value in metaphoric mappings, i.e. *cool* has specific meanings not related to the metaphoric uses of other temperature adjectives (as in *a cool kid, a cool 2.6 million*, *a lot of cool stuff going on*, etc.).

As illustrated in Table 1, the opposition to heat metaphors underlies the use of *cool* to denote the lack of emotions. Since heat metaphorises the intensity of emotions – passion, anger, enthusiasm, emotionality in general, e. g. *heat flared in his eyes, hot for an agreement, the hot-blooded Greek* (BNC), *cool* is a metaphor for the low intensity or absence of emotions. It can either mean calmness, rationality (cool-headedness), e.g. *Sarah's got a cool head, she won't panic <...>* (BNC), or refer to the level of expression, i.e. mean little or no expression of emotions as reserve, suppressed emotions, self-control, e. g. *<...> this kid actually cares beneath his cool exterior <...>* (GloWbE).

Table 1

**Coolness metaphors in systematic relation to other
temperature metaphors**

COOL vs. HOT	COOL vs. WARM
LACK OF EMOTIONS IS COOL • Low intensity or absence of emotions: rationality, calmness *<...> a cool head and quick, clear thinking is highly valued <...>* (GloWbE)	LACK OF AFFECTION IS COOL *These cousins are now very cool to me and my wife. We're sure it's because my mother told lies about us* (GloWbE). *Finally, it degenerated into cool dislike* (BNC).

• Little or no expression of emotions: reserve, self-control *<...> outwardly they are cool, calm and collected; inside, however, they are a mass of emotions <...>* (BNC)	Specific colour range is cool (cold): violet through blue to green *Whereas greens and blues are cool and make flowers seem to recede, reds and yellows are warm colours that attract <...>* (BNC)

Coolness metaphor for the lack of emotions, namely rationality, self-control, reserve, is especially productive in English, which might be due to the British reserve as a cultural concept, forming an important part of British identity. The general tendency to restrain emotions (also described as *a stiff upper lip*) is traditionally considered a desirable feature, a necessary element of courtesy. This feature as a part of the national emotional stereotype is said to be diminishing, yet a poll in 2016 revealed that four in five British people aged 18 to 34 admit to putting on a brave face when they feel anxious, and a quarter of them consider showing emotions as a sign of weakness (Geddes 2016). In the same line, reserve as a quality of Britishness is well illustrated with the words of the famous British actor Sir Michael Caine, who said: 'I think what is British about me is my feelings and awareness of others and their situations. English people are always known to be well mannered and cold but we are not cold – we don't interfere in your situation. If we are heartbroken, we don't scream in your face with tears – we go home and cry on our own' (Hechinger 2013).

In addition, the quote above illustrates a significant difference between coolness and cold as distinct source domains of temperature metaphors in the English language. Even though some uses of *cool* and *cold* can be considered synonymous (cf. *cool logic – cold logic*), *cool* typically describes the lack or control of emotions as a positive, desirable quality, while *cold* refers metaphorically to indifference, unfriendliness as the lack of emotions when they are expected, e.g. *<...> wanting to see his cold, impassive face break with ordinary human emotion* (BNC).

Such uses of *cold* as well as *cool* when it refers to the same attribute (presumably less intense than cold) manifest the opposition to warmth metaphors, which describe what is good and pleasant – pleasant feelings, friendly, affectionate relationships, e.g. *warm and loving relatives, a warm and caring mother, offer a warm welcome* (BNC). Frequent metaphoric expressions with *cold* and some uses of *cool* encountered in this research denote the opposite – the lack of affection, some form of worsening relationship or indifference, as in the example *David appeared cool towards her – so cool, in contrast to the friendly relationship they had previously established* (BNC).

Similarly, *cool* and *cold* are used in contrast to *warm* to express the synesthetic metaphor, when temperature values are mapped on the domain of colours, e.g. *Customers will walk towards warm colours and walk away from cold ones* (BNC); *I often feel I don't suit those extremely warm or extremely cool colours* (GloWbE). *Cool* in such expressions refers to a colour range from violet through blue to green, green being the typical cool colour, most frequently

mentioned in the corpora data, e.g. *A very bright, transparent cool green, viridian has a place on many palettes* (BNC).

The types of metaphoric expressions discussed so far stand in relation to other temperature metaphors, yet their portion in the total number of metaphoric uses of *cool* is rather small, especially in a more recent data provided by the Global Web-based English Corpus. Only 12 per cent of the metaphoric expressions in the GloWbE and 44 per cent of the metaphoric uses in the BNC manifest systematic metaphors of coolness, while the dominant part of the data (56 per cent in the BNC and 88 per cent in the GloWbE) reveals the use of *cool* as a specific expression with its own meanings. The fact that the period of language use represented in the GloWbE differs from the data in the BNC by two decades might be indicating the dynamics towards the increase of such uses of *cool* in contemporary English.

When used this way *cool* is often described as a multipurpose word whose meaning varies a lot and is difficult to pinpoint. David Skinner (2014) writes in his article: 'Pity the lexicographer who now has to enumerate all the qualities collecting in the hidden folds of cool: self-possessed, disengaged, quietly disdainful, morally good, intellectually assured, aesthetically rewarding, physically attractive, fashionable, and on and on'. In this work, such metaphoric uses of *cool*, not related to other temperature metaphors, were grouped as expressions manifesting two conceptual metaphors, illustrated and exemplified in Table 2: FASHIONABLE, ATTRACTIVE IS COOL and GOOD IS COOL.

Manifestations of the first metaphor refer to what is fashionable, trendy, attractive, amazing, stylish, etc., as in the examples *Oh he's forgotten his cool dude glasses* (BNC) and *Sophisticated and stylish, these earrings have an effortlessly cool look* (GloWbE). The summarised data in Table 2 reveals a wide range of entities that can be described as *cool* – people, their appearance (clothes, hairstyle, accessories, etc.), behaviour, different items or events in the field of entertainment (music, movies, etc.) or technology. Due to the time period represented in different corpora, the latter category (technology) was observed in the GloWbE only – numerous expressions with *cool* here describe technological items abundant in today's world (computers, phones, their models, features or specific programs) as well as things we do online, e. g.: *cool content on Youtube, cool animation and videos, cool websites* and the like.

Table 2

Coolness as a single temperature value in metaphorisation

FASHIONABLE, ATTRACTIVE IS COOL	
People	*He's quite a cool trendy dude and all that <...>* (BNC) *People always want to associate with cool people* (GloWbE).
Appearance	*Oh wow! What a hairstyle! I know it's cool isn't it?* (BNC) *This short sleeved trouser suit looks cool and elegant in pastel pink <...>* (BNC).
Entertainment	*Oh, is it cool to like Abba now?* (BNC) *It's still a fine example of a modern electro-pop song, undeniably cool* (GloWbE).

Technology	*This commercial effect may also explain why it's cool to like Apple, with their sleek designs and eye-watering prices* (GloWbE). *<…> a very cool Facebook app that lets you invite your friends to be your equals <…>* (GloWbE)
Activities, behaviour	*<…> going to race bikes,' confides Blues. 'That's much more cool than playing guitar when you're nine* (BNC). *<…> it's still cool for kids to start smoking* (BNC).
GOOD IS COOL	
Ideas, circumstances, facts	*We all worked and lived at the same place and it seemed pretty cool to me at the time* (BNC). *Still, it's pretty cool she's one of the first women to break into that level* (GloWbE).
Attitude (acceptance, approval)	*You obviously disagree with me which is cool, I just wish you would present your arguments <…>*(GloWbE) *What you just did is just not cool with me* (GloWbE).
A large amount of money	*MADONNA's new contract with Warner Brothers is said to be worth a cool $60 million* (BNC). *George Lucas has sold Lucasfilm to Disney, for a cool $4.05 billion dollars <…>* (GloWbE)

In addition, *cool* is increasingly used as a general term for approval, acceptance and can refer to anything (ideas, circumstances, facts) that is good, acceptable, fine, e.g. *<…> that's ok, Ryan, that's cool, I can handle that* (BNC) or *< … > it must be pretty cool to be young, in a band, and playing in front of friends <…>* (GloWbE). More specifically, *cool* is used to emphasize a large amount of money in phrases such as *a cool $14.2 billion, a cool 56m in cash* (BNC) and the like.

Studies into the cultural aspect of *cool* (Rahman et al 2009, Dinerstein 2017) reveal that the contemporary image of *cool* combining the meanings discussed originated in the African-American culture, where it served as a defence mechanism against the prejudice and a form of detachment from difficult life. The concept of *cool* is particularly linked to the world of American jazz in 1940s, where *cool* meant a relaxed attitude in performance, 'an ideal state of balance, a calm-but-engaged state of mind between the emotional poles of "hot" (excited, aggressive, intense, hostile) and "cold" (unfeeling, efficient, mechanistic)' (Dinerstein 2017, 39). An African American jazz musician with sunglasses on an expressionless face was the image of a typical cool person and *cool* gave a name to a specific type of jazz. The phrase *cool jazz* became lexicalised as a music term for jazz that emerged in the USA in the late 1940s and was marked by subdued feeling, relaxed tempos and lighter tone.

The following decades witnessed the transitional phase of *cool*, which meant a shift from jazz to the mainstream. *Cool* spread as a word for everything that had a defiant anti-conventional quality (in anti-racist, anti-capitalist and other contexts). By the 1960s it became associated with teen culture as a symbol of rebellion against older generation and detachment from the adult culture. Finally, in a more liberal society *cool* was accepted by the mainstream, so what was once a symbol of

a small rebellious community became a widespread attitude and 'a universal term across all walks of life' (Rahman et al, 9).

Recently *cool* and its meanings have attracted close attention in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour. As Kaleel Rahman and Helene Cherrier (2010) point out, the outer layer of *cool*, based on the outward appearance and the display of material items, is closely linked to consumerism, especially through materialism, status concern and brand consciousness. Research into consumer behaviour (Media Tel 2003) reveals that people are increasingly purchasing products of all sorts to achieve coolness and confidence – around 70 per cent of respondents believed it was important or very important for them to feel cool in their lifestyle and be seen as cool by other people. The tendency is not confined to the young – older consumers were also found to actively seek coolness through buying things, especially products that allow them to share a youthful lifestyle and thus be cool. So the concept of *cool*, representing a popular attitude and a lifestyle that many people are striving for, is also very profitable and commercially exploited (Media Tel 2003).

Conclusions

The analysis of the metaphoric uses of *cool* in the corpora data and previous studies into the cultural background of this word lead to the following conclusions.

1. The English adjective *cool*, like other temperature adjectives, is frequently used metaphorically to describe people, their emotions, attitudes, relationships as well as things people do or have. In terms of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, such uses are considered metaphoric expressions manifesting conceptual metaphors as mappings from the physical source domain of temperature (coolness) to more abstract target domains (emotions, relationships, etc.).

2. The metaphoric uses of *cool* express two types of coolness metaphors in regard to other temperature values employed in metaphorisation. The first type reveals the systematicity of temperature metaphors since features metaphorised as cool – lack of emotions and lack of affection – stand in opposition to the target domains of heat and warmth metaphors. The second type, accounting for the dominant part of the data, shows coolness as a single temperature value in metaphoric mappings, since *cool* is used as a specific expression with its own meanings not related to other temperature adjectives. They mostly refer to what is fashionable, attractive or generally good, acceptable.

3. A wide range of meanings manifested in the metaphoric uses of *cool* reveal coolness as a cultural concept and actualise different aspects of the cultural background.

3.1. Rationality, self-control and emotional suppression metaphorised through the concept of coolness associate with the British reserve as part of the national character.

3.2. Numerous uses of *cool* to denote what is fashionable, attractive or show acceptance, approval relate to the American concept of *cool*. Initially linked to Africo-American culture as a form of defiance, *cool* has undergone several phases

to become an English word for anything good, desirable as well as a symbol of popular attitude and lifestyle sought by many people in today's world.

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