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Organ Transplantation Metaphors

A Comparative Corpus-Based Study of Life Depictions in Newspapers

(臓器移植のメタファー

―コーパスに基づいた、新聞における命の表現に関する比較研究―)

In our contemporary society, organ transplantation finds itself in a peculiar position. Due to its continuous development since the middle of the last century, thousands of deaths have been avoided every year, and many patients have seen their diminished quality of life improve exponentially. However, beyond being a therapy, it constitutes a complex system. Any organ transplantation system is built in a specific society, which means it will be tangled up with various legal, economic, ethical, medical, and political aspects during its operation. As such, organ transplantation is an intricate phenomenon, deeply rooted in a determinate sociocultural context, thereby making it an object of public involvement. In other words, rather than being a mere medical treatment, a system-based definition of organ transplantation reveals it to be a social issue open to continuous public discussion. In particular, it is important to pay attention to the media's role in the normalization process of this treatment. As one of the fundamental pillars for providing information about how the transplantation system functions, the media directly influences public opinion regarding transplant therapy.

This last point is critical. The shortage of available organs for transplantation is a pressing issue worldwide, with refusals to donation as its leading cause. In this sense, any transplantation system needs to appeal for organ donation by convincing the public opinion of the benefits this therapy encompasses to normalize it. The need, therefore, gives rise to a process of legitimization in which the institutions involved and their actors inevitably seek to convince potential donors and next of kin. As a result, organ transplantation must be approached and evaluated in a positive light at the heart of each society in which transplantation therapy operates. Namely, the media must offer a plausible and convincing account of the organ exchange, properly outlining transplantation discourse in a determinate local setting.

In this regard, negative and positive news, rather than organ donation campaigns, directly affect the number of people who decide to donate. Moreover, reinforcing the good or bad image of organ transplants in the media is equivalent to assessing their moral implications, either implicitly or explicitly. Here, metaphors hold a prominent place. As a point where discourse, ideology, and culture intermingle, metaphors constitute a critical element that allows us to delve into the different processes underlying the normalization of transplantation therapy. The repeated choice of a particular metaphorical expression to allude to organ transplantation is not trivial. It offers a distinctive interpretative layout for assessing this therapy's ethical and moral implications. In this sense, metaphor, rather than a simple rhetorical embellishment, acts as a conceptual mechanism that shows and reinforces one side of reality at the expense of hiding others. However, this process of reinforcement and concealment is not fortuitous but has a history bounded in a specific

sociocultural context, a history that, in turn, is the product of a constant dialogue between different actors, individuals, and institutions in the public sphere.

The main objective of this research is thus twofold. First, it aims to reflect in a reliable way to what extent what is meant by 'organ transplantation' is not restricted to a single interpretation. Second, it seeks to understand in detail how these possible interpretations take place by observing the different principles behind this therapy and their relationship with culture when it is established as a system in a concrete society. This study adopts a comparative approach to achieve these objectives, contrasting the media's distinctive use of particular metaphors in four representative countries: the United States, Spain, Japan, and South Korea. Specifically, this dissertation focuses on the notion of life as a primary locus of meaning for metaphorical representations of organ transplantation. It also pays particular attention to religious traditions as providers of pervasive imagery regarding the notion of life and tries to determine, on a case study basis, how discourse on organ transplantation changes and adapts to the sociocultural reality of the above-listed countries.

Furthermore, to study how transplantation therapy is normalized through its metaphors by the media in each of these countries, this work breaks that issue down into three more minor inquiries, which it attempts to answer in each of its chapters: (1) The first one is about the different metaphors used by the press in each country to allude to organ transplantation. (2) The second looks at the trends shown by the most recurrent metaphors in each country. Since this research aims to understand how transplantation discourse has become what it is now in each selected country, both questions are answered by adopting a diachronic point of view. Only in this way is it feasible to highlight the different changes in the use of metaphors for each setting and establish relationships between those changes and the sociocultural background in which they occur. (3) Finally, from an interpretative point of view and with a permanent reference to the historical development of transplantation therapy in each studied country, the last inquiry turns its attention to understanding the reasons underlying the use of the most recurrent metaphors in each case.

In this regard, this dissertation bases its methodology mainly on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which has played an essential role in studying metaphors as a cognitive phenomenon since the early eighties of the last century. According to its classical tenets, metaphor is not a mere resource to be used solely for rhetorical purposes. Instead, it is a widespread cognitive phenomenon that reflects how a semantic area or target domain is conceptually represented and understood through a series of systematic correspondences or mappings in terms of another semantic area, the source domain. Framed into CMT, this research opted for creating a specialized news corpus while relaying in a quantitative approach that combines the analysis of metaphorical patterns within the corpora and the subsequent compared study of the different reasons underpinning the variations in metaphorical production between the countries examined. Such an approach can be outlined as follows: (1) Creating a specialized news corpus to obtain a representative sample of the language deployed by media to refer to transplantation therapy. (2) Implementing the so-called metaphorical pattern analysis (MPA) to all the news items in the corpus to understand how organ transplantation and life at its center are metaphorically depicted. (3) Analyzing the main elements differing among the metaphorical topics extracted and understanding the possible causes underlying them in each country in order to describe the distinct strategies adopted to promote the normalization of transplantation therapy throughout its metaphors.

This research is strategically divided into two parts to effectively address the points mentioned above. The first part establishes the framework of this research, while the second part delves into the analysis of its results, ensuring a systematic and comprehensive

approach.

The first part includes the introduction and the presentation of the theory and methodology used in this work. The theory contains three sections. (1) The first one describes the main characteristics of CMT, focusing on the notion of projection and its typologies. Also, it gives an account of the conceptual functions that metaphors perform and the cognitive mechanisms underpinning this phenomenon. (2) The following section highlights and explains the cultural basis on which metaphors operate. Here, after briefly outlining the two main viewpoints regarding the study of the relationship between metaphor and culture, Kövecses' work is introduced to describe the different degrees of interaction between the two and explain how cultural models contribute to the production of metaphors. (3) The last section then accounts for constructing metaphors within discourse in direct allusion to transplantation therapy, pointing to the interaction between ideology and culture. Concretely, on the one hand, it explains how the cultural context must adequately frame metaphorical production, and, on the other, it describes how the ideology underlying metaphors must fit coherently inside this cultural context. Finally, it details how organ transplantation and, more specifically, the idea of life as a metaphor alluding to the transferred organ becomes the cornerstone for transplant-related metaphors and, thus, the main focus of this research.

The methodology is divided into three sections. (1) The first one positions the current research among the works committed to studying metaphors resorting to corpora. Also, it details the various steps followed for constructing the news corpus used to look for organ transplantation-related metaphors for the selected countries in this study. More specifically, it introduces the publications chosen and the criteria followed for their selection. (2) The second section explains the system of analysis followed to find the different metaphors alluding to organ transplantation within the corpus. More concretely, it presents the main ways of finding metaphors in a corpus and describes and exemplifies what is known as the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), the method employed to identify metaphors in this study. (3) Finally, the third section describes the procedure to analyze the results obtained. It includes identifying the main topics on which the metaphors found are grouped, determining the contextual factors that can explain the use of the different metaphorical topics, and a critical reflection on the strategies underpinning them to normalize organ transplantation discourse in the countries studied.

The second part of this study analyzes the systematic use of metaphors for organ transplantation discourse in the United States, Spain, Japan, and South Korea. A chapter is devoted to each country, and each case has the same structure. (1) An outline of the historical development of transplantation therapy in that country is detailed. (2) Then, it follows an analysis of the previous literature directly related to the transplantation discourse in that country, with particular attention to the metaphors used there. (3) Next, the methodological adjustments according to each are briefly described, and the results are presented, identifying those metaphors most frequently used to refer to organ transplantation in each country. (4) Finally, the results are discussed in light of their respective sociocultural context.

First, studying the metaphors used in the American sub-corpus has underscored the salience of rendering organ transfer as a "gift of life." On the one hand, the understanding of life as something that it is given and, therefore, as an exchangeable property between donor and recipient seems to remain to this day the center upon which organ transplantation discourse in the United States revolves. Moreover, as observed in the rest of the chapters of this dissertation, such an understanding goes far beyond the American borders and crosses the depictions of transplantation therapy in many places. Linked to the early development of transplantation therapy in the United States, the gift rhetoric has worked—and still works today—as a local and, in turn, global projection of organ donation and transplantation

as a heroic act. On the other hand, the rendering of life as a game is the other alternative to allude to transplantation therapy in the American news analyzed in this research. Detached from the Christian background of the first and the limiting aspects of gift-giving, such an interpretation especially resorts to the idea of *getting a chance* to shape a distinctive understanding of transplantation therapy within the American news gathered here while at the same time disconnecting from the idea of owning one's body where the gift rhetoric is framed into.

Following the results obtained in the first chapter, the news analyzed in the case of Spain first confirmed the centrality of the conceptualization of life as a possession in organ transplantation discourse and, especially, as an exchanged gift between donor and recipient. Nevertheless, they highlighted another more widespread way to allude to organ donation and transplantation, namely, as an act of solidarity. Beyond the heroism implicit in the altruistic donation broadly framing the American organ transplantation discourse, the encouragement of organ donation and transplantation as a collective endeavor by the press has left the gift rhetoric in second place in the case of Spain. First, as Christian charity and, later, as solidarity, this way of picturing organ transfer does not leave room for the implicit obligations of the gift exchange while reinforcing the individual's responsibility as a member of the collectivity. Hand in hand with overtly proactive institutional support for the enhancement of transplantation therapy since its early beginnings, the Spanish sub-corpus of news shows under a very different angle the implications derived from organ donation and transplantation, an angle morally appealing to the individual, to her identity as a citizen, while conceals the connections with body commodification underpinning the logic of the "gift of life."

Similar to the case of Spain, the results retrieved after the analysis of the Japanese sub-corpus also emphasize the gradual loss of prominence of the gift rhetoric as a main image for representing transplantation therapy in the case of Japan. A corpus-based analysis of the Japanese written press shows that metaphors have also played a central role in normalizing transplant discourse in Japan, determining the symbolic weight of organ exchange and the relation developed amongst its direct participants. In this ongoing dialogue, the notion of life has once more enjoyed a central role, underpinning organ transplantation representations as a possession or as a link and, more concretely, as a gift, baton, or string. Notably, the latter understanding of life as a string has been gaining relevance over the last few years through the expression 'connecting life', which depicts organ transplantation as a way of tying together the donor and recipient's lives. The image of the string roots organ transplantation in a rather culturally and religiously entrenched conception of life, enabling a local interpretation of the ethical implications derived from transplant therapy, which has, over many years, been critically debated within Japanese society.

Finally, the results obtained from analyzing metaphors from the Korean news sub-corpus also highlighted alternatives beyond the gift rhetoric. Among them, the conceptualization of life as a *shared property* stands out, generally expressed through the motto 'life sharing' or *saenmyeongnanum* as an allusion to organ transplantation overtly endorsed by the different actors involved in developing the Korean transplantation system. Differently from the idea of life understood as an exchangeable property or acquired resource, the frequent referral to the idea of sharing it as a result of organ transplantation places the donor and recipient on an equal footing, free from the constraints of the logic of the gift, as it happened with the idea of "connecting" in the case of Japan. Additionally, in a similar sense to that of the notion mentioned earlier of solidarity, it allows for transcending the mere altruism implicit within the idea of giving and, beyond any credo, for the establishment of a distinct relation among both donor and recipient, a relation which origin goes back to the feeling of belonging to the same community through the concept

of *uri*.

The last chapter concludes this dissertation by providing a general reflection concerning the differences and similarities in metaphor usage to allude to organ transplantation for each country. In other words, by reviewing comparatively how metaphors have changed alongside the particular development of each organ transplantation system presented in this work, this final part seeks to understand, first, how transplantation therapy becomes a local reality beyond its global character and, second, the degree of uniqueness of such process of normalization when examined in the light of the results retrieved here. Through this concluding step, this dissertation aims to explore the extent of the framing effect of each context studied over the development of organ transplantation discourse and, more concretely, the different perceptions regarding its most central value, namely, the notion of life.

Conclusions showed that transplantation therapy and, more concretely, organ donation and transplantation are complex phenomena open to diverse interpretations. As a local reality, transplantation therapy becomes a practice filled with many meanings, capable of quickly overflowing the limits imposed by a reductionist definition of what is supposed to be the action of organ transplantation itself, i.e., "transferring (an organ or portion of tissue) from one part of the body, or from one person or animal, to another." Far from being so, this work shows how inadequate this definition is when transplantation therapy becomes an everyday reality, that is, the process it inevitably follows as a medical procedure whose main objective is to save concrete lives or ameliorate the quality of life of all those burdened with the weight of illness. Throughout this process, organ transplantation takes on multiple shapes due to the continuous dialogue between all the actors intervening. Metaphors are an effective way to approach those shapes and thus understand how transplantation therapy seeks to fulfill its aims framed in a determinate society and become a local reality.

Here, life, as a central value in the organ exchange and, on many occasions, as the metonymy of the transferred organ, has a crucial role in such metaphorical interplay. Through its numerous conceptualizations, this research has confirmed that to speak of organ donation and transplantation is to speak of life to a large extent. Whether it is a given present, tied string, regained or shared possession or path one comes back to, each of the different modes of depicting life through metaphors found over these pages recall, in turn, particular representations of organ transfer, in other words, different points of view from which to describe and understand what does organ donation and transplantation implies. Nevertheless, neither of those viewpoints is neutral. Instead, they are potentially ideological, all the more so if their use is recurrent.

In this regard, one must not forget the decisive role played by mass media when shaping public opinion on transplantation therapy's implications. As reflected in the results obtained from each of the chapters, among the strategies they deploy, it is precisely through the frequent use of certain metaphorical representations to allude to organ donation and transplantation that the media carry out a fundamental role in normalizing this therapy. Also, the selection of recurrent metaphors over time to refer to organ donation and transplantation is not independent of the context in which it occurs. The systematic and comparative analysis of their usage in the news items of each country analyzed here highlights the heterogeneity of transplantation therapy's normalization process. Put differently, it offers the opportunity to observe on a large scale how a particular territory explains itself what is meant by "organ transplantation." In this respect, metaphors are a window through which to peer into the everyday life of a society challenged by the advances of technology, to which it needs to respond following its values, history, and vicissitudes. The conclusions arrived as a result of the analysis of the news sub-corpora arranged for

this research contribute to the outlining of such day-to-day life and thus shed light on the respective normalization processes of transplantation therapy over time through the distinctive modes to conceptualize the notion of life.

Thus, the succeeding most frequent forms to allude to transplantation therapy in each of the countries studied point to a relatively straightforward line of argument, which, in turn, is the reflection of different local realities: from life understood as a given property and, therefore, exchanged through organ transfer, to life understood as a property shared among equals or a tied bond, usually to keep together extremes that seem split away. In other words, altruism, heroism, and sacrifice, traditionally encompassed within the idea of renouncing something valuable, have been gradually and in various contexts giving way to community, union, and, finally, solidarity among equals as justification for the same act, namely, organ transplantation. At the center of these changes are the body, the other, and, concretely, life. In this regard, this dissertation accomplished its primary objective, i.e., to reflect to what extent what is meant by ‘organ transplanting’ is not restricted to a single interpretation. Also, it fulfilled its second aim: to detail how these possible understandings take place by engaging with culture when transplantation therapy is established as a system in a concrete society.