

Sweet Songs and Soft Hearts: Metaphor in Cuzco Quechua

Rosalind Owen

rosie.owen@mail.utoronto.ca

Department of Linguistics, University of Toronto

BACKGROUND

- Runasimi “the people’s language” is also known as Quechua. The language family consists of three languages and has 8-10 million speakers in the Peruvian Andes, Bolivia and Ecuador. Quechua II is the language of study.
- Conceptual Metaphor Theory views metaphor not only as a linguistic expression but also as a result of cognitive connections between conceptual domains, applying concrete concepts to abstract entities.
- Space-time metaphors use spatial orientations (e.g. “in front of”) to describe time (e.g. the future), and not all languages describe time in the same manner.
- In Ecuadorian Quechua I, “k’ipa” is future/behind and “ñaupa” is past/front.
- An ancient form of record keeping, called khipus, consisted of complex systems of knotted ropes and was used to track numerical information.

QUESTIONS

- In which domains do metaphors manifest?
- Have epistemic traditions influenced the conceptualization of time and space into a single unit?
- Do space-time metaphors orient the speaker with past-as-front (as in Ecuadorian Quechua I) or past-as-behind (as in English)?

METHODS

The speaker was interviewed with questionnaires (1) and (2) and contributed other metaphors. Additional metaphors were found in storyboard elicitations and translated myths and poems.

(1) Typological Aspects of Figurative Language (Shen & Gil, 2008)

(2) Time Questionnaire (Levinson et al., 1970)

SENSES AND THE HEART

Taste can describe the quality of one’s character, a beautiful sound, or the process of experience itself.

- (1) warmi sumax-mi
woman delicious-EV
“nice woman, inside and outside”
- (2) mijki taki
sweet song
“beautiful song”
- (3) poka-n maʎi-ni kelkan-ta
1sg-NOM taste-1sg.PRES letter-ACC
“I know the book; I read the book”

The heart is described in terms of its texture and as a local for emotion:

- (4) ʎampu soŋko
soft heart
“gentle person”
- (5) tʃosax soŋko
empty heart
“loveless person”
- (6) soŋko-mi kara-ʃan
heart-EV sting-PROG
“upset/angry”

SPACE AND TIME

The “tying” in clocks may be a reference to khipus.

- (7) a. ti-wata b. inti-wata-na
ti-tie sun-tie-NOM
“clock” “solar clock”

Time moves, flowing towards the speaker.

- (8) hamo-x wata
come-x year
“next year”

Expressions for the past use a spatial metaphor orienting the past “ahead” of the speaker. /ɲawpa/ may function similarly to words like English “before,” as it can refer to both past time (9a) and space in front of the speaker (9b).

- (9) a. ɲawpa kawsa-j b. ɲawpa-j
before live-INF before-INF
“old times” “go ahead”

The word for “here” (10b) is simply a demonstrative. “Now” is referred to with a unique word (10a). However, it can also describe space (10c), showing a cross-linguistically rare time-space metaphor.

- (10)a. kuna b. kaj c. kuna-n patʃa
now DEM now-n under
“now” “here” “floor; ground”

The future is a derivative of “hide” (11a), while /k’ipa/ (11b) does not hold any direct future meaning in this language. When asked where a future event is, /ɲawpa/ can again be used (11c).

- (11) a. paka-riŋ b. k’ipa c. ɲaŋ ɲawpa-ri wantʃi-ʃna
hide-riŋ “re-sprouted potato crop” already before-TOP wantʃi-PRES.CONT
“future” (derogatory: “step-child”) “(the event is) already in the future”

DISCUSSION

- The sense of taste may hold cultural significance, given its prominence in metaphors.
- Metaphors of the heart draw on cross-linguistically common conceptual connections.
- Time expressions show potential influence from historical models of record-keeping.
- Space and time are only sometimes distinguished.
- Space-time metaphors suggest the time model may have remnants of the orientation used in Ecuadorian Quechua I.
- Some loss may be due to change over time, influence from the colonial language Spanish, or influence of the metalanguage English.
- Investigation of co-speech gestures may clarify the organization of time.

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