
Language as a primary vehicle: The role of human characteristics in anthropomorphism

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Annotation *This paper explores the phenomena of anthropomorphism, tracing its origins from animistic beliefs to its contemporary psychological and literary uses. The term anthropomorphism means the attribution of human traits, emotions and intentions to non-human beings. The article claims that our use of language is a primary source for understanding and describing anthropomorphic thought. Rather than focusing solely on psychological or anthropological sides, this study argues that language plays a pivotal role serving as an only vehicle that enables us to transfer human-like concepts to non-human entities, specifically delving into how our choice of vocabulary, and figurative language shape our perception of the world beyond ourselves. It presents scholarly perspectives on the emotional and agency dimensions of anthropomorphism. Through examples and analysis of anthropomorphic language, the article demonstrates its role as a creative device to make more relatable stories and convey complex ideas through humanizing non-human agents.*

Keywords *Animism, anthropomorphism, non-human entities, emotions, metaphor, personification*

Язык как основной инструмент: роль человеческих характеристик в антропоморфизме

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Аннотация *Эта статья исследует феномен антропоморфизма, прослеживая его истоки от анимистических верований до современного психологического и литературного использования. Термин "антропоморфизм" означает приписывание человеческих черт, эмоций и намерений нечеловеческим*

существам. В статье утверждается, что наше использование языка является основным источником для понимания и описания антропоморфного мышления. Вместо того чтобы сосредотачиваться исключительно на психологических или антропологических аспектах, данное исследование утверждает, что язык играет ключевую роль, служа единственным средством, позволяющим нам переносить человекоподобные концепции на нечеловеческие сущности, конкретно углубляясь в то, как наш выбор лексики и образного языка формирует наше восприятие мира за пределами нас самих. В ней представлены научные взгляды на эмоциональное и деятельностное измерения антропоморфизма. Через примеры и анализ антропоморфного языка статья демонстрирует его роль как творческого приема для создания более понятных историй и передачи сложных идей посредством очеловечивания нечеловеческих агентов.

Ключевые слова

Анимизм, антропоморфизм, нечеловеческие сущности, эмоции, метафора, персонификация

**Til asosiy vosita sifatida:
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Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola antropomorfizm hodisasini o'rganadi, uning kelib chiqishini animistik e'tiqodlardan tortib to zamonaviy psixologik va adabiy qo'llanilishigacha kuzatadi. "Antropomorfizm" atamasi insoniy xususiyatlar, hissiyotlar va niyatlarni inson bo'lmagan mavjudotlarga nisbat berishni anglatadi. Maqolada ta'kidlanishicha, bizning tildan foydalanishimiz antropomorfik tafakkurni tushunish va tasvirlashning asosiy manbai hisoblanadi.

Ushbu tadqiqot psixologik yoki antropologik tomonlarga alohida e'tibor qaratish o'rniga, til insoniy tushunchalarni inson bo'lmagan mavjudotlarga o'tkazishga imkon beradigan yagona vosita sifatida hal qiluvchi rol o'ynashini ta'kidlaydi, xususan, bizning so'z tanlashimiz va majoziy tilimiz o'zimizdan tashqari dunyoni qanday idrok etishimizni chuqur o'rganadi. Unda antropomorfizmning hissiy va agentlik o'lchovlariga oid ilmiy nuqtai nazarlar taqdim etiladi. Antropomorfik tilning misollari va tahlili orqali maqola uning inson bo'lmagan agentlarni insoniylashtirish orqali yanada tushunarli hikoyalar yaratish va murakkab g'oyalarni yetkazish uchun ijodiy vosita sifatidagi rolini namoyish etadi.

Kalit so'zlar

Анимизм, антропоморфизм, inson bo'lmagan mavjudotlar, hissiyotlar, метафора, персонификация

Introduction

In the recent years the interest in understanding the people's inclination to project human like traits onto non-human agents has intensified significantly. (Bering, 2006; Epley et al., 2007; Kwan & Fiske, 2008). From a broader perspective the inquiry into anthropomorphism predominantly resided within the domains of philosophy and psychology. A pioneer figure in developmental psychology Jean Piaget laid foundational work for numerous investigations into the understanding of cognitive development. Specifically, Piaget provided initial insights about the phenomena of animism within the boundaries of children's perspective. Before analysing his concept, it is worth to mention that animism is a broader domain of inquiry, which encompasses various analytical methodologies, whereas anthropomorphism is considered to be a particular lens within this larger conceptual framework. Piaget defined animism as the attribution of characteristics of animacy to non-living things and events.

Based on the preceding, anthropomorphism, as a key cognitive tool, means the attribution of human traits to the world around us, which is deeply ingrained in the way how we think. Having an affirmation from psychological investigations anthropomorphism is an automatic response, inherently fixed in the human tendency to judge (Guthrie, 1993; see also Mitchell, Thompson, & Miles, 1997).

On the basis of these fundamental discoveries rapidly expanding field of study emphasizes the critical function of language units in forming and shaping anthropomorphism. The linguistic underpinnings of anthropomorphism are attracting significant amount of attention from researches across various disciplines. In particular researchers are delving into the analysis of how specific linguistic choices – including lexical items that carry human

connotations, personification of metaphors and similes, the application of human-gendered pronouns and verb-conjugations to non-human entities, actively shaping and reinforcing our human centric comprehension of the non-human realm.

This burgeoning area of study argues that language should not be perceived as a simple tool for describing anthropomorphism but as a dynamic agent in its formation and propagation, offering a valuable lens for analysing the underlying cognitive and cultural mechanisms and stimulating novel research directions. At the same time, one should maintain awareness of the intrinsically bond of the language with the human evolution.

The main purpose of this research is to analyse the specific essence of attributing mainly human emotions and agency to non-human entities, which is the core type of Anthropomorphic language. This work emphasizes the fact that language does not only possess the capacity of giving descriptions but as well as through appropriate usage of Linguistic expressions of emotions, such as phrase's that attribute feelings of happiness, joy, sadness, regret or empathy to non-human beings or technological items, we actively construct and shape our perception of non-human agents in our minds. Specific choice of vocabulary allows individuals and communities to project and develop connections to the world around us.

Many contemporary scholars acknowledged the dynamic role of language as a crucial tool in negotiating and constructing of feeling of other creatures through the semiotic power of language use. Building on this understanding influential researcher Keiko Matsuki stated "language does not only have a heart; language creates a heart." By this arguing that language plays a pivotal role in shaping and communicating a range diverse aspects of

human social interaction, which is intrinsically connected to emotion, through a strategic use of Linguistic means. In this essence the ultimate goal of this research is to analyse the specific choice of vocabulary in attribution of human emotions and agency onto non-human entities with the help of some figurative devices as Metaphor and Personification.

Theoretical Framework

In cognitive Linguistics metaphors are recognised to be conceptual tool rather than Linguistic one (Belkhir, 2021). Metaphors primarily defined as a means of reasoning and talking about abstract concepts in terms of concrete ones (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). With the help of conceptual mapping the correspondence between a source and a target domain can be revealed. From cognitive Linguistic perspective metaphors exist in our mind as a conceptual construct, afterwards being ascribed with concrete forms they are shared by written metaphorical words (Belkhir, 2021). As a type of conceptual metaphor Personification is described as a process that "allows us to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with non-human entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics and activities" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In other words, this type of metaphor involves direct projection of humanlike attributions onto non-human entities, by this deepening our understanding of other creatures existing on this planet beyond ourselves.

According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, conceptual metaphor has a pervasive role in human thought and language. Their work serves as a framework for understanding how and why factors of attributing human related vocabulary and concepts to talk about non-human beings. As they claimed through mapping concrete and familiar domains such as our bodily experiences and social interactions as humans to less familiar domains like the natural phenomena, the economy or arguments, we can attain a more reliable understanding of the non-

human entities. As a result, a language will be employed. Our descriptions of non-human entities are inevitably imbued with terms and structures borrowed from the human realm. This linguistic tendency reveals our inherent drive to understand the unfamiliar by using our own personal experiences and attributes as the primary framework for interpretation. This process in its turn underscores a fundamental anthropocentric bias prevalent in human cognition and language (Gallese & Goldman, 1998; Meltzoff, 2007; Nickerson, 1999). Drawing on the work exploring intuitive mind perception people tend to instinctively interpret and understand other minds with the help of two key dimensions:

- experience (the capacity to feel) and
- agency (the capacity to plan and act)

This two-dimensional framework appears in various research fields including intuitive representations of personhood, illustrating the difference between human nature (emotional responsiveness) and humanness (morality, rationality and civility) (Haslan, N., 2006; Loughnan, et.al., 2007). As well as differentiating the two fundamental dimensions of social evaluation between warmth (corresponding to experience) and competence (corresponding to agency) (Fiske et. al. 2002). The research highlights the fundamental means of comprehending "mind" in others is by considering their perceived capacity to "feel" and act (Waytz, 2016).

By projecting our own feelings, emotions, and sensations onto the non-human we directly parallel the act of anthropomorphism with the experience dimension in mind attribution.

The category of Experience dimension includes expressions, that attribute feelings, responsiveness, expectations, *emotional states* as well as human like sensory experiences to non-human beings. This category mostly embodies the words connected to the human ability to feel different types of emotions to the inanimate

objects or creatures that don't possess such kind of quality to feel in the way as human being does.

This is illustrated in the examples hereafter:

1. The clouds gathered angrily before the storm.

The given sentence exemplifies anthropomorphic language through both metaphor and personification. Human like emotion "angrily" which means "feeling or showing strong annoyance, displeasure, or hostility; full of anger" (Oxford dictionary) is attributed to the clouds, which natural phenomenon do not literally possess. The usage of personification in this case created a vivid and emotionally charged image of the impending storm. From a metaphorical perspective, the clouds' movement is likened to a purposeful, human-like assembly driven by emotion, deepening the reader's engagement.

2. ... causing cars in the middle and inside lanes to throw on their brakes and blast out their angry opinions.

This sentence encompasses a vivid anthropomorphic language through metaphor and personification. The cars are personified as agents capable of sudden, intentional actions ("throw on their brakes") and emotional expression ("blast out their angry opinions"), attributing human-like volition and feelings to inanimate objects. Metaphorically, the loud honking served as an expression of anger, which intensifies the emotional impact of the scene. All in all the sentence exemplifies how metaphor and personification transform mechanical traffic behaviour into a human-like drama.

3. And each of them (hogs) had an individuality of his own, a will of his own, a hope and heart's desire; each was full of self-confidence, of self-importance, and a sense of dignity.

This sentence encompasses various human centric concepts such as:

- "individuality of his own" – conveying the state of being self-aware in a human sense.

- "a hope and heart's desire" – conveying complete human emotions.
- "a full of confidence" – conveying human psychological state of being self-confident.
- "of self-importance" – conveying human social trait of one's social status and significance.
- "and a sense of dignity" conveying human related concept of self-respect and worthiness.

The given sentence is full of expressions that exemplifies anthropomorphic language through personification and metaphor. The description uses metaphor to describe the hogs as having human-like inner lives and full of consciousness, rather than simply being animals. As well as personification is used by attributing mental states and emotions of human beings to them, suggesting self-awareness.

The category of agency dimension includes sentences that attribute morality, reasonableness, civility or planning to non-human beings. Mostly the expressions connected to the human ability to act or do something with intentionality prescribed to the human being.

This is illustrated in the examples hereafter:

1. The computer refuses to work when i need it the most.

The word computer in this case is attributed with agency and violation, the ascribed word "refuses" implying that it can make a decision or a choice. By describing the computer's malfunction as "intentional disobedience," a human behaviour, the text personifies it as an entity which is capable to deliberately refuse the given instructions or authority. As well as metaphorically framing the computer's failure, it creates an image of intentional human action, enhancing its relatability.

2. The computer saw an error in the code.

The sentence exemplifies personification of the computer by using the human sensory verb "saw" to describe its ability to recognize or detect

items, implying perception and awareness. As well as the phrase metaphorically equates the computer's error detection with human visual perception, depicting it as an observer capable of comprehending what it "sees."

3. Elevator sighed heavily before ascending to my floor.

The elevator is personified by the human action of "sighing," suggesting emotion or relief, primarily conveying the same meaning of being exhausted as in the case of people's states. This gives the machine a breath-like, emotional quality before it moves. The elevator's movement is metaphorically portrayed as a human emotional response with the aim to make the experience more engaging and easier to relate to.

Emotion encoding

Drawing on the work of Anna Wierzbicka, we can affirm that concepts relating to emotions can be conveyed in a "truly explanatory" way only if we try to portray them with the help of "intuitively understandable" words. It should be mentioned that these words should not be the names of emotions themselves, instead they should be simple and universally accepted concepts such as "say", "want", "feel", "know", "good", "bad" and so on. (Wierzbicka, 1972). As we know most of the words mentioned above are peculiar to the human inherent abilities as for example the word "say" logically cannot be referred to animals or the word "want" is not the specificity of technological items.

Established cognitive theories propose that the main reason for mapping concrete domains such as physical experiences on abstract

concepts like ideas emotions, qualities, and states serves as an underlying mechanism for attaining deeper comprehension of abstract concepts, that we strive to understand.

Conclusion

In investigation of the phenomenon of anthropomorphism, this study traced its conceptual trajectory from foundational animistic beliefs, which posited inherent agency in non-human entities, to its present-day deployment in both literal and figurative uses, highlighting enduring influence of previous scholars' investigations on subsequent scholarly works and their continued relevance. Furthermore, it investigated two key dimensions of anthropomorphic language: the experimental dimension, focusing on the ascription of humanlike sensory experiences and emotions to the non-human entities, and the agency dimension, examining the attribution of morally motivated capabilities to non-human entities. The main aim of this article was to analyse the specific linguistic choice and literary devices through which Anthropomorphic language was employed to describe inanimate objects using terms typically associated with human characteristics, categorizing these choices into two primary groups: experience dimension and agency dimension. Moving forward future researches could delve into the nuanced analysis of specific choice of vocabulary and their potential effects on human perception as well as give some credits for the possible changes in attitudes toward the anthropomorphized non-human world, based on the specific selection of language means.

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