

Plant Metaphors in English Economic Newspaper Texts

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1. Introduction

The theory of cognitive linguistics outlined over the last couple of decades claims that metaphor permeates daily conventional language and that this same process underpins the language of all abstract reasoning. If metaphor is “the omnipresent principle of language” (Richard 1936:92), if it is “a highly revealing instance of the human capacity for making sense” (Steen 1994:3), if it is “the main mechanism through which we comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning” (Lakoff 1993:244), then in an abstract discipline like economics, one should expect to find its use ubiquitous. But metaphor on economic discourse, as a branch of metaphor, did not arouse linguists’ special attention until the past 20 years.

With a view to apply the contemporary theory of metaphor, it is necessary to investigate metaphor use in non-literary works with special reference to economics, especially in economic newspaper texts in which metaphors are often overlooked.

“The grounding of metaphors is our basic experiences”. (Ungerer & Schmid 2001:126) And one of the most fundamental human experiences is that of agriculture. In English economic newspaper texts, a variety of metaphors are motivated by this experience. This study is to investigate how the plant metaphor is used to illustrate economic phenomena and actions using the material that are taken from *The Economist online*. Six different stages of plant growth (seed, sprouting, budding, flowering, fruition and withering) and three kinds of plant development (branch, prune, growth) are systematically mapped onto different economic phenomena and actions.

1.1 Aim

This study aims to explore the use of the plant metaphor in English economic newspaper texts by applying the conceptual theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and investigate

how phrases and expressions are metaphorically used in different economic texts in the English newspaper. This essay also offers a cognitive analysis of conceptual metaphors dealing with how abstract economic concepts are structured in terms of the plant metaphor in the special field of economics and the functions of the metaphorical expressions in economic newspaper texts.

1.2 Material

The material are taken from *The Economist online* due to its popularity all over the world, and authority in economic aspect and also its easy access for news readers, including the writer of this paper for collecting this kind of material as much as possible through the Internet. The source have basically been *The Economist online* over the second half year of 2010, it serves the objective to investigate how the plant metaphor is used in daily English economic newspaper texts. To make sure the data for this essay is most recent, all the examples are from July to December in 2010 within the area of business and economy. According to the nine subcategories of the plant metaphor, i.e. six stages of growth (seed, sprouting, budding, flowering, fruition and withering) and three kinds of development (branch, prune, growth), 31 examples using these plant metaphors are chosen randomly from the area of business and economy and classified into different subcategories according to different source domains they belong to. Then each metaphorically phenomena and actions has been analyzed and discussed carefully guided by the theory.

1.3 Method

Metaphor is a mapping or projecting from concrete, tangible concepts to abstract, intangible concepts and through which, human beings structuralize concepts and know about the world

around them. Based on Kövecses's definition of metaphor, this study investigates how plant metaphor is used to illustrate economic phenomena and actions. Firstly some examples containing the plant metaphor from *The Economist online* are categorized according to six different stages of plant growth (seed, sprouting, budding, flowering, fruition and withering) and analyzed, i.e. how these plant metaphors are reflected in correlation to economic phenomena and actions. Then how the biological growth of the plant corresponds to the abstract nonbiological development of the economy is analyzed, like an economic system becoming larger is a plant branching, reducing economic system is making plants prune, and growth corresponding to some abstract development in the economy.

2. Theoretical Background and Previous Research

Metaphor, as a tool of language use and cognition, has something to do with the understanding of how language and thought are structured. This section will mainly deal with theoretical issues on the general description of metaphor in the cognitive linguistic view, the definition of the plant metaphor, the feature of economy and discourse and the previous studies. The first thing among all these issues that should be made clear is what metaphor is.

2.1 Theoretical Background

The theoretical background includes three parts, first introduces Aristotle and I.A. Richards's attitude toward metaphor, and then the modern definition by Lakoff and Johnson, and at last comes the cognitive function of conceptual metaphor.

2.1.1 Aristotole and I.A. Richard

The study of metaphor witnesses a very long history. It may be traced back to the ages of Aristotole (384-322 B.C.), who suggests that “ metaphor is the transference of an alien term: transference from genus to species, from species to genus, from species to species, or by analogy” (Aristotle 1954:21). Guided by Aristotle’s view, scholars for a long time regarded metaphor as a matter of language, especially a rhetorical device utilized for solely ornamental reasons.

It is in the 20th century that Richard, I.A. proposed his famous Interactive theory and he is the leading exponet of the second stage of metaphor study, the transition from rhetoric device to cognitive device. The role of metaphor was shifted from a matter of figurative device to a matter of language and a matter of ideas to some extent. (I.A. Richard, 1963)

2.1.2 Conceptual metaphor

In the year of 1980, the study of metaphor turned to a new page, shifting away from the linguistic aspects of metaphor and the ornamental function of metaphor to the coginitive nature of metaphor. The representative figures are Lakoff & Johnson with their Conceptual Metaphor theory. Lakoff and Johnson claim that “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.” They claim that

Many aspects of our experience cannot be clearly delineated in terms of the narually emergent dimensions of our experience. This is typically the case for human emotions, abstract concepts, and mental activity. Though most of these can be experienced directly, none of them can be fully comprehended on their own terms. Instead, we must understand them in terms of other entities and experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

For the sake of better understanding conceptual metaphor, we should make a distinction between conceptual metaphor and linguistic metaphor. Conceptual metaphors or metaphorical concepts refer to abstract notions such as ARGUMENT IS WAR, TIME IS MONEY, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, etc. While linguistic metaphors or metaphorical expressions refer to the

specific linguistic expressions that reflect, or make manifest, those conceptual metaphors in one way or another such as “Your claims are indefensible”, “You’re wasting my time”.

2.1.3 Cognitive function of metaphor

One of the most significant contributions of the Conceptual Metaphor theory is to be an important means and method in the cognition of human beings. It lies in three aspects: an important means of understanding the world; an essential way of conceptualizing experience; a cognitive tool in creating new meaning.

2.1.3.1 An important means of understanding the world

Departing from the traditional view, Lakoff and Johnson claimed that the primary function of metaphor was to understand difficult, complex, abstract concepts. They point out that:

“the metaphor comes out of our clearly delineated and concrete experience and allow us to construct highly abstract and elaborate concepts...” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:105)

In our daily life, we are always inclined to understand and experience unfamiliar, intangible, abstract concepts in terms of familiar, tangible, concrete ones. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), our normal conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. They state that metaphorical concepts arise from our physical and cultural experience and structure our basic everyday activities in a very profound way and that human conceptual system which guides the thought and action of individuals is constructed metaphorically in nature. So metaphor is an important means of understanding the world.

2.1.3.2 An essential way of conceptualizing experience

Human conceptual systems are in large measure structured via metaphor, mapping the concrete and physical onto the abstract and nonphysical. Such metaphorical mappings are

not arbitrary, but constrained by our embodied nature. That is to say, metaphor is deeply rooted in our bodily experience—how our bodies function and interact with the world. (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987). So in this sense, we can say that metaphor is an important cognitive means to conceptualize our experience.

2.1.3.3 A cognitive tool in creating new meaning

Cognitive linguists emphasize that in many cases metaphors are conceptual devices used for understanding or creating reality, rather than merely describing. It is called new metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson. By means of creating similarities, new metaphors make us notice aspects of things we never notice before. They can give new meanings to our daily activities, and to what we knew and believed.

2.2 Plant Metaphor

As pointed out by the modern cognitive linguists, “metaphors are not just a way of expressing ideas by means of language, but a way of thinking about things” (Ungerer & Schmid, 2001:118). Metaphor is a mapping or projecting from concrete, tangible concepts to abstract, intangible concepts and through which, human beings structure concepts and know about the world around them. In Kövecses’ view, metaphor is not simply a matter of words or linguistic expressions but of concepts, of thinking of one thing in terms of another. (Kövecses, 2002:preface)

“The grounding of metaphors is our basic experiences”. (Ungerer & Schmid, 2001:126) And one of the most fundamental human experiences is that of agriculture. Plants we grow provide our basic needs in shelter, food, medicines, clothing and so on. All the merits and

demerits of human beings can be found in plants. It is natural thing for human beings to find similarities between plants and themselves.

In English, a variety of metaphors are motivated by this experience; some have been analyzed by cognitive linguistics. Lakoff and Turner (1989:172) point out that Great Chain of Being Metaphor is "...a tool of great power and scope because... because it allows us to comprehend general human character traits in terms of well-understood nonhuman attributes...". A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING is a typical conceptual metaphor. Based on this conceptual metaphor, a lot of metaphorical expressions are created, such as "*a white lily*" (beautiful and innocent young girl), "*couch potato*" (person watching TV for a long time in sofa), "*apple of one's eye*" (a pearl in the palm). In fact, all these plant metaphors are based on the same conceptual metaphor, A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING.

The IDEAS ARE PLANTS metaphor has been analyzed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:47). They give the metaphor and a list of ordinary expressions that are special cases of the metaphor in their book: "

His ideas have finally come fruition.
That idea died on the vine.
That's a budding theory.
It will take years for that idea to come to full flower.
He views chemistry as a mere offshoot of physics.
Mathematics has many branches.
The seeds of his great ideas were planted in his youth.
She has a fertile imagination.
Here's an idea that I'd like to plant in your mind.
He has a barren mind."

Moreover, Kövecses (2002) gives us a detailed account of the metaphor, COMPLEX ABSTRACT SYSTEMS ARE PLANTS in his work. He claims that in English, the plant domain is mapped onto a variety of target concepts such as: social organizations, scientific disciplines, people, economic and political systems, human relationships, sets of ideas (2002:98-101).

2.3 Economy

Economy was intimately connected with a single household and the management of its resources in its Greek origins. This definition has extended to the inter-relationship between resources and collective humanity. A standard contemporary definition runs as follows:

Economics = A social science concerning behavior in the fields of production, consumption, distribution and exchange. (Isaacs, 1990a : 125)

Economic concepts involved in the above definition are of a largely abstract nature, namely, production, distribution, consumption and exchange. But these abstract concepts become more manageable and comprehensible when associated with concrete items. White (2003) gives a further explanation as follows:

application of quantitative and numeric variable to the production, distribution, consumption and exchange of such items as bread, coffee, rice, potatoes, cars and computers gives us a very tangible physical picture. What we are faced with are simple cases of concrete weighing, measuring and counting- perhaps the most characteristic activities at the micro-economic level while at the same time the most basic experience of human beings in daily social and economic interaction.

When considering economy to be a composite of goods and services, the task will involve greater conceptual and linguistic challenges. The reason for this may simply be due to the increase in complexity, given the leap in scope from micro- to macro- economics. However, it may stem from the fact that while macro-economics is an aggregate of micro-economic activity, it confronts us with variables which firmly place us in a more abstract world and which consequently require a different type of yardstick.

2.4 Previous Studies

Previous studies are divided into two parts, one is on metaphor in economic discourse, the other is on the plant metaphor.

2.4.1 Previous studies on metaphor in economic discourse

Metaphor is a topic of some methodological significance, but it is only recently that the attention of the economics profession has been drawn to metaphor.

According to Lakoff, we understand economic processes through a variety of metaphors, and every metaphor highlights some aspects of the target, but leaves the other aspects in the dark. Moreover, the logic associated with the source is generally preserved in the metaphorical understanding of the target (Lakoff, 1990).

McCloskey (1986) gives his attention to metaphor in economics through literary theory, sometimes seeing metaphor and narrative as having alternative roles in the context of economic argument, sometimes linking metaphor with questions of style examined at the level of the sentence.

Mirowski (1989), in his exploration of metaphor within the context of nineteenth-century economics writing, sees metaphor at many different levels of the text, i.e. as a universal features of written language and also in terms of specific analogies drawn from nineteenth-century physics.

Later Henderson broaches the subject of metaphor in economic discourse. Henderson writes *Metaphor in Economics* in 1982 and *Metaphor and Economics* in 1994, in the latter article after introducing metaphor and the tropes and providing a brief outline of the history of metaphor, he then examines the interactions between economics discourse and metaphor in two contexts: that of the textbook and that of metaphor in the context of research and research literature.

In more recent years and at the moment, work on the metaphoric dimension of economic discourse is showing a dramatic increase. Like Mason (1990), Lindstromberg (1991), Jäkel (1993), Wilson (1995), Boers (1997a), Boers (1999), Charteris-Black (2000), Boers (2000),

White (2001) (2003) and Rafael (2010). Such a proliferation of work is in itself indicative of how metaphor is felt to permeate this kind of discourse.

Boers (1997a) offers a cognitive semantic analysis of a few conceptual metaphors as instantiated in popular economic discourse advocating a free market ideology. Main attention of his article is given to a cluster of metaphors related to the notions of health, fitness and racing. He argues that the use of these metaphors may reflect and consolidate certain thought patterns about general economic processes.

White (1997) examines the use of metaphor in a body of journalism dealing with a specific economic topic, i.e. a currency crisis. The examination provides extensive empirical evidence of the widespread and systematic use of metaphor in press discourse. On a basis of this evidence, it is claimed that metaphor plays a key role in articulating textual cohesion and coherence and, furthermore, that it makes an essential contribution to the communicative nature of press discourse.

White (2003) investigates how variation in economic aggregates is put across in discourse and concludes that the concept of GROWTH plays a key role in this respect. He finds GROWTH to be a concept of particular interest, both for metaphor studies and for economic discourse and he gives strong support for taking it to be lexicalized and as an example of dead metaphor. He gives example from both journalistic economic writings and formal economic texts about two metaphors THE ECONOMY IS A LIVING ORGANISM and THE ECONOMY IS A MECHANICAL PROCESS, and he divides the former metaphor into two subcategories THE ECONOMY IS A PLANT and THE ECONOMY IS AN ANIMAL OR A HUMAN for further analysis.

Rafael (2010) attempts to bring together both economists and linguists' perspective to analyze the CONTAINER metaphor in economics textbooks. He suggests that the

CONTAINER metaphor is a rhetorical device, like the passive voice or hypotheticality, used to convey the idea of depersonalization and objectification.

2.4.2 Previous studies on the plant metaphor

Being an important part of ecosystem, plant interacts with the around world all the time and can not separate from it. Since plants have countless ties with human beings' lives, there are large numbers of plant metaphors in English.

M. Ettliger (2002) studies metaphors of Ancient Hebrew and states, among other things, that in this language happiness is conceptualized as vegetation. According to the author, English does not have a similar emotion metaphor.

Ahrens (2000) investigates what words map from the source domain of PLANT in Mandarin Chinese. In particular, the author examines how different aspects of the source domain of PLANT are mapped onto the different target domains of LOVE, MARRIAGE, HAPPINESS, and BELIEFS. And the author finds that mapping principles can account for the different mappings.

Esenova (2007) studies how emotion metaphors motivated by human experience of plants. The author focuses on four aspects: an intensifying emotion as a plant growing bigger; a strongly felt emotion as a deeply rooted plant; the heart as a plant and emotional pain as physical pain caused by thorns.

3. Analysis and Discussion

In the economic newspaper articles, there are a considerable number of metaphorical expressions in which economic phenomena and actions are conceptualized in terms of plants or their parts.

3.1 Six Stages of Plant Growth

In this section, six different stages of plant growth: *seed, sprouting, budding, flowering, fruition and withering* mapped onto different economic phenomena and actions are examined.

3.1.1 Seed

As known, the life cycle of a plant starts from a seed. There is a set of metaphorical expressions in which the seed represents the initial stage or source of an economic phenomena and actions. Here are some examples:

- 1) *The boss of 500 Start-ups, a fund that provides seed capital to entrepreneurs, Mr McClure had the shirt designed to ridicule an accusation that he and several other financiers have been colluding.*
- 2) *And competition is certainly getting stiffer. Established firms have rediscovered their appetite for seed funding: Greylock Partners, a well-known venture firm, this week said it had launched a \$20m seed fund.*
- 3) *This year Embrapa won approval for its first GM seed.*
- 4) *At the moment, the most plausible way of making the sea absorb more of the gas is to seed it with iron.*

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, seed is “that which is or may be sown; the ovules of a plant or plants especially as collected for the purpose of being sown. Also, in Agric. and Hort., applied by extension to other parts of plants (e.g. tubers, bulbs) when preserved for the purpose of propagating a new crop.

When applied to economic discourse, the seed capital/fund in example (1), (2) and (3) refers to the money provided to help a business develop an idea, create the first product, and

market the product for the first time, just the same as a seed of a plant. In the example (4), to add iron to the sea is to sow a seed. Thus the conceptual metaphor, THE EMERGENCE OF ECONOMY ACTIITIES IS SEED OF A PLANT, which underlies above metaphorical expressions, is used to help unprofessional economic newspaper readers understand the beginning stage or source of an economic phenomena and actions better.

3.1.2 Sprouting

One thing we know about seeds is that they do not start to grow immediately after they have been sown but they undergo a dormant period. This period continues until there are favorable environmental conditions for plant growth (appropriate soil temperature, oxygen, water and so on). We use this knowledge about seeds when we talk about economic actions.

- 5) *The government will use money from dormant bank accounts to set up a Big Society Bank, which will finance voluntary activities.*
- 6) *An agreement in 1992 set up a body to run this but it has stayed largely dormant.*

The source domain is of plant, with growth suspended, is mapped onto different target domains, as in example (5) the target domain is a savings account showing no activity (other than posting interest) for some specified period, and the agreement is not in operation in example (6).

When the seed is sown and the dormancy period is over, it starts sprouting. In the below expressions, sprouting correlates with the awakening of some economic actions.

- 7) *An internet support group sprouted.*
- 8) *Shanghai may have sprouted dozens of skyscrapers and Beijing may boast half a dozen ring roads, but China's big cities are still surprisingly small.*

As for a plant, the sprouting refers to a new growth developing from a bud into a branch, stalk, sucker, and so on. This kind of common knowledge is applied when talking about the development of internet support group in example (7) and Shanghai's city programming in (8).

We know from our experience of plants that their roots give them anchorage and absorb minerals from the soil. Moreover, in order for a plant ,such as a tree, to get access to minerals

and water, its roots must run deep. Shallow-rooted plants may wither or be blown away by wind. This knowledge of plants is carried over to the domain of economy. For example:

- 9) *No one believes that they will resolve all the deep-rooted difficulties of Ardoyne, but the hope is that marching will no longer provide a ready-made excuse for inflicting injury and destruction.*
- 10) *Unemployment, sadly, may thus have deep roots, with more people this time remaining out of work for longer.*
- 11) *“Vote for Fincher” signs (“It’s time to plough Congress”) are firmly rooted along roadsides all the way down to the border with Mississippi.*

In the above economic expressions, deeply rooted plants correlate with firmly implanted difficulties which are hard to resolve in 9), and so does unemployment as a ingrained problem in 10), and correlates with well-established signs which are hard to fail in 11).

3.1.3 Budding

The next stage in plant growth is budding. This stage too correlates with some economic performance that start developing. This can be explained by the fact that there is a perceived similarity between the process of seed sprouting and budding. A seed swells before sprouting and then the seed shell breaks open and a new plant appears. Buds undergo a parallel process: first they swell, then they split open and a leaf, flower or shoot emerges. These parallels in experience allow us to map these two stages in the source domain onto the initial stage of economic actions in the target. Let’s consider some linguistic examples:

- 12) *To the disappointment of many in both countries, moreover, this budding friendship has failed to kick on.*
- 13) *Too many companies ignore the inhabitants of Heliópolis and the government continues to regard them more as potential victims than as budding entrepreneurs.*

A healthy plant grows rapidly and buds in suitable situations. Budding from the source domain of a plant are extended to describe the successful development of the economy in (13) because the subjective common properties perceived and judged by people through thinking and reasoning motivate the metaphor. It involves understanding and experiencing abstract economic institutions and phenomena in terms of concrete entity.

While in example (12) budding implies the good development of the friendship, same as the action of putting forth buds of a plant.

3.1.4 Flowering

In the next group of metaphorical expressions, the flowering of a plant represents the best stage of economic development.

Below are some metaphorical expressions in which the best stage of economic actions correlates with the flowering of a plant.

14) The blossoming of Sri Lanka's relations with China comes as ties with some of her traditional trading partners have frayed over human-rights and labour concerns.

15) In history, whenever cross-border commerce has flourished, as in medieval Venice, so too have trade lawyers with broad horizons, like the ones pictured above.

How can this be explained? Human beings have strong positive feelings associated with flowers. They are a source of pleasure and induce feelings of happiness. Flowers are given during the most important events of life: weddings and funerals. We decorate our homes with flowers, we bring them to theatres etc. We spend lots of money on them. The psychologist Gordon H. Orians explains this by the fact that in our evolutionary past, flowers had been associated with food resources. He claims the following:

Because flowers precede fruits, flowering plants provide excellent cues to timing and locations of future resources. In addition, flowers may attract animals that are potential human prey. In species-rich environments, paying attention to flowering plants may particularly enhance resource-acquisition abilities in the future. Until the 19th century, honey was the only natural source of sugar; bee-keeping is an ancient human enterprise.

The blossom in example (14) illustrates the best stage of Sri Lanka's relations with China, this stage is most attractive to both sides just the same way as flower to animals. Flourish is used as a verb to describe the process of the commerce's attaining its full development, which is correlating to the source domain of a plant throwing out leaves and shoots and growing vigorously and luxuriantly.

3.1.5 Fruition

The phrase, economic fruits mean the beneficial consequences of economic activities. For example:

- 16) *Success seemed to mellow Mr Steinbrenner, as, later, did his failing health.*
- 17) *Not everyone thinks such deals are wise. Yet, even allowing for macroeconomic uncertainty, conditions are ripe for a surge in them.*
- 18) *“If colleges were businesses, they would be ripe for hostile takeovers, complete with serious cost-cutting and painful reorganisations.”*

In the above expressions, there are two contrasting fruit image: an unripe fruit and a ripe one. In (17) and (18), “ripe for” implies the good development of economy and business, it means the condition or the college businesses are ready for a surge or a takeover, the same as a fruit ready to be harvested, moun and so on. However in (16), the unripe fruit correlates to Mr Steinbrenner’s unripe state, and the ripe fruit with mature state which is brought mainly by his success. It is the similarity and experiential correlation in people’s mind that relate abstract and complicated economic system and processes to a concrete plant.

3.1.6 Withering

The last stage in a plant’s life cycle is withering. In some economic expressions a withering plant represents a declining business.

Here are some other examples:

- 19) *Among booksellers, all the smaller categories withered in the internet age—save one.*
- 20) *Analysts at Credit Suisse reckon that banks in Ireland may be especially profitable in coming years because competition has withered as a result of the crisis.*
- 21) *In both cases this is bad news for sea creatures, and pictures of choked dolphins and strangled turtles are regularly used to wring the withers of uncaring consumers in the hope that they might use less packaging.*

ECONOMY IS A PLANT metaphor is widely spread in economic newspaper texts. All these abstract developments and its various properties of the economy are derived metaphorically from the notion of physical growth of plant and its characteristics. According to the previous analysis, it's clear that the economy begins to develop at some points and

develop slowly. At the very beginning it may be delicately, and may have to be nurtured, but then can survive adverse conditions. And the last stage in a plant's life cycle is withering. When the withering of a plant is mapped onto the economic domain, it usually refers to economic depression or business decay. In (19), the word "wither" expresses the information as the profit of book selling reduced because of the Internet. "Wither" in (20) describes a positive situation for banks in Ireland as it conveys a message that the rival banks withdraw from the competition due to the crisis. In (21), "wither" expresses the reducing of uncaring consumers. These plant metaphors make the business decay vivid to understand.

3.2 The Growth of the Plant is the Abstract Development of the Economy

All three sub-domains of development share common or overlapping features with six stages of plant growth, so that certain metaphorical expressions could be assigned to two or even three of these. However, certain attributes are more proper to one or other sub-domain resulting in metaphoric expressions more proper to those fields.

3.2.1 An economy becoming larger is a plant branching

For our agricultural experience, we know that when a plant grows it becomes bigger in size.

Here are some of them:

22) Chinese staff will drum up business from local branches.

23) Mr Pugh also identified another intriguing trend: the race for bigger, better weapons is fiercest in peacetime but tends to fall once war actually breaks out.

24) Mr Erbakan's government was pushed out by the army after the so-called "soft coup" of 1997.

Example (22)-(24) show how economic growth can be seen to branch, break out and push out in accordance with the prevailing circumstances in the world of the economy.

Experience shows that branch is a portion of a tree growing out of the stem, in a more

specific sense, it is understood to be a material offshoot, smaller than a bough and larger than a shoot. When it comes to the world of the economy, a branch is one of the portions into which a company is divided according to the differing lines. Break out is used to describe a war which is going to be produced suddenly and unexpectedly.

3.2.2 Reducing economy is making a plant prune

When plants grow, they become physically bigger, and plants are sometimes cut or pruned, which results in a smaller size. Speakers can make use of this additional information in understanding certain features of economic system.

- 25) The red tape that ties down businesses is being modestly pruned around the world. But there is still an awful lot left to cut.*
- 26) But it claims to have pruned management to 30 levels and has a group dedicated to stopping the number from rising.*
- 27) But the government's promises to prune spending and end tax exemptions worth €10 billion (\$12.7 billion) will still draw strong opposition, as policing, teaching and hospital budgets are cut.*

To prune a tree is to cut off or remove dead or living parts or branches of it to improve shape or growth. While in order to boost economic development, the management of companies, or countries may adopt various kinds of measures or policies, including cutting cost, reducing management and pruning spending, which are designed to deal with economic issues. On the basis of this similarity and correlation between the process of the plant and the economy, the meaning of the word is often metaphorically extended to talk of the advantageous economic means of economic area. Such as pruning the red tape has the same positive effect on a business in example (25) and pruning management is also an effective economic means serving the purpose of making the company work better (26) while pruning spending is a way to make the government work better in (27).

3.2.3 Growth in the source corresponding to some abstract development in the economy

Whitle (2003) makes a detailed study on this part, according to him, the use of growth and its frequency is a mark of how the word has become lexicalised in economic discourse as a mainstream term for aggregates of economic activity. Despite this lexicalisation, when economists and journalists deal with economic performance the metaphoric sense of growth is highly active and indeed more complex than what might be expected from a folk understanding of the concept.

In practice, it can be said that the salient feature of a plant is its propensity for growth and this growth may vary widely under different circumstances. There are many realisations of this metaphor as laid out in the following:

- 28) Yet the euro zone as a whole has grown at a decent rate for an ageing continent, thanks to oomph from Germany, the fastest-growing big rich economy in 2010.*
- 29) These big three are heading in very different directions, with very different growth prospects and contradictory policy choices.*
- 30) The result of this could be that American output grows by as much as 4% next year.*
- 31) Some investors, no doubt, see faster growth on the way; but a growing number are worried about the size of America's fiscal hole.*

This use of growth and its frequency is a mark of how the word has become lexicalised in economic discourse as a mainstream term for aggregates of economic activity. But the point is that despite this lexicalisation, when economists and journalists deal with economic performance the metaphoric sense of growth is highly active and indeed more complex than what might be expected from a folk understanding of the concept.

Grow means to increase in size by a natural process, but when it mapped onto the economic domain, it means increase in amount in (28) and degree in (30). Some investor see investing in business to have the higher-than-before increases in revenues and return on the way, but the number of people who are worried about the America's fiscal hole is increasing in number in (31).

4. Summary and Conclusion

This study is an attempt to investigate the plant metaphors applied in a English newspaper texts from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. *The Economist online* is chosen as the data of the study.

Through the analysis of linguistic metaphorical expressions of plant metaphor in newspaper texts, this study sums up six stages and three kinds of development in target domains for the source domains i.e. seed, sprouting, budding, flowering, fruition and withering and how the growth of the plant corresponds to the abstract development of the economy. By classifying and analyzing these metaphorical expressions, it's found that the categories are systematically and naturally connected with the world of economy. Human beings have centuries of agricultural experience and tremendous knowledge about plants. Since plant growth presupposes a huge change, this is a perfect source domain for the conceptualization of economy. In the plant metaphor, stages of plant growth are systematically mapped onto the stages of economy development.

The seed usually represents the initial stage or source of an economic phenomena and actions. The initial stage of an business also correlates with an unripe fruit and later stages with a ripe one. While blossom illustrates the best stage of a economic issue. The last stage in a plant's life cycle is withering which represents a declining business. Furthermore, in some metaphorical expressions, an developing business is conceptualized as a plant growing bigger like branching, breaking out and pushing out. In another group of linguistic metaphors, pruning parts of a company serves the same positive purpose for a business as we do to the plant.

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