Alice Deignan, *Metaphor and Corpus Linguistics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005), pp. 174ff. (First few chapters available on Google Books)

Corpus investigation: Plants

Lakoff and Johnson give exx. of plant metaphors that realize the CM ideas are plants, see p. 47.

Kövesces describes mappings from source domain of plants as complex abstract systems are plants (2002, p. 98)

Methodology

“central lexis of the domain of plants were examined in the corpus”; those identified by Lakoff and Johnson as well as others found through searches of collocates, thesauri and WordNet. (Another useful tool: Compleat Lexical Tutor, “Familiser”)

plant plants planting planted (sample 1000)

budding bud buds

flourish (vb) flourishes (vb) flourished

bloom blooms blooming bloomed

blossom blossoms blossoming blossomed

flower flowers flowering flowered

wither withers withering withered

shrivel shrivels shrivelling shrivelled

wilt wilts wilting wilted

offshoot offshoots

fruition

fruit (sample 1000)

fruits

harvest

vine

sow

seed seeds (sample 1000)

root roots (sample 1000)

branch

fertile

barren

CAN YOU THINK OF A PLANT WORD THAT THE AUTHOR HAS NOT INCLUDED?

Investigation produced four main findings

1. Corpus data consistent with the idea that what we know about plants and their behaviour is mapped onto target domains, all having an inherent structure with an element of development.
2. A few metaphorical uses did not fit well. E.g. *withering look* or *withering criticism* do not seem to map a notion of “preventing development”.
3. Some metaphorical uses of plant lexis appear only in one or two fixed expressions, e.g. *nip in the bud* and *in (full) bloom*.
4. The target domain complex abstract systems can be subdivided in several sub-domains: business, relationships, ideas, people. Some plant words strongly associated with one domain and absent from others. For example, people and businesses have *blossom* and *flourish* but not *wither*. Creative projects *flower*.

1000 citations of *plant\** ( \* means that all inflections of the word were studied)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Number of citations | Meaning | Examples |
| Literal uses  515  202  229  18  17  8  6 | Literal, noun  Literal, verb  Factory  Place a bomb  Place other concrete object  Place with intent to deceive  Place a kiss | … buy well-nurtured plants from the garden shop.  In the old days when you planted a crop there were loads of weeds.  The plant will be shut down for two weeks.  No group has yet said that it planted the bomb.  The women planted themselves in front of the stalls and crossed their arms to wait.  They had planted drugs in our bags.  [He] planted a smacker on each of his cheeks. |
| Metaphorical uses  4  1 | Place idea  Spy | What happened planted seeds of doubt in some minds.  He was a plant. |

WHAT CRITERION IS DEIGNAN USING TO DISTINGUISH FIGURATIVE AND METAPHORICAL USES?

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THE USES ARE METAPHORICAL?