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Cognitive Semantics

Assignment to

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2024 -2025

Introduction

A major resemblance between cognitive semantics and historical philological semantics: both embrace a psychological, encyclopedic conception of linguistic meaning, and both have a primary interest in the flexible dynamism of meaning. At the same time, the diachronic perspective is not as dominant in cognitive semantics as it is in historical-philological semantics: the cognitive mechanisms of meaning extension, like metaphor and metonymy, are now primarily analysed as synchronic phenomena.

Metaphor, in particular, constitutes a major area of investigation for cognitive semantics. After all, **metaphor is the mechanism par excellence for ‘seeing one thing in terms of another’**

5.2 Conceptual Metaphor theory

Conceptual Metaphor Theory rests on **three essential propositions**:

first, Metaphor is a cognitive phenomenon, rather than a purely lexical one;

second Metaphor should be analysed as a mapping between two domains; and

third, the notion that linguistic semantics is experientially grounded.

The pillars of Conceptual Metaphor Theory:

1. The cognitive nature of metaphor involves the fact that it is a deep-seated conceptual phenomenon that shapes the way we think (and not just the way we speak).

Conceptual Metaphor Theory systematically presents various kinds of evidence for the conceptual:

First, metaphor comes in patterns that transcend the individual lexical item. The typical example in the following:

THEORIES AND ARGUMENTS ARE BUILDING

Is that the foundation for your theory? The theory needs more support. The argument is shaky. We need some more facts or the argument will fall apart. We need to construct a strong argument for that.

Second, metaphoric images may be used creatively. An expression like *to walk on cloud nine* ‘to be very happy’ may be expanded in non-conventional ways: *You may be walking on cloud nine now, but don’t forget there’s a world with other people underneath*. Such extensions show that the image contained in *to walk on cloud nine* is alive one.

Third, metaphoric patterns occur outside language. A simple case is a ‘*thumbs up*’ gesture: if *good is up and bad is down* (Things are looking up.

We hit a peak last year, but it’s been downhill ever since. Things are at an all-time low), then a ‘*thumbs up*’ gesture is straightforwardly motivated by the metaphoric pattern. Pointing upward is a sign of positive affect, just as the expression up is correlated with the positive end of an evaluative scale. Non-linguistic metaphors have been identified in many areas, including advertising, gesture, sign language.

2. The second pillar of Conceptual Metaphor Theory is the analysis of the mappings inherent in metaphoric patterns.

Metaphors conceptualize a target domain in terms of the source domain, and such a mapping takes the form of an alignment between aspects of the source and target. e.g.

LOVE IS A JOURNEY

| SOURCE | TARGET |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| the travellers | the lovers |
| the means of transport | the relationship itself |
| the journey | the evolution of the relationship |
| the obstacles encountered | the difficulties experienced |
| decisions about which way to go | choices about what to do |
| the destination of the journey | the goals of the relationship |

The mapping relation between source and target may be used to distinguish between different types of metaphor. For one thing, Conceptual Metaphor Theory distinguishes between simple and complex metaphors.

Another classification introduced by **Lakoff and Johnson** distinguishes between *structural metaphors*, *ontological metaphors*, and *orientational metaphors*.

**Structural metaphors* are based on mappings to provide a rich structure of correspondences between the domains

LOVE IS A JOURNEY.

* *Ontological metaphors* assign broad categories, with a less clearly marked internal structure. *Personifications*, for instance, conceptualize a wide variety of non-human entities in terms of human characteristics;

Oriental metaphors are of the **more is up** type: they apply a spatial or sensorimotor image schema (like vertical orientation) to an abstract domain.

3. *The third pillar of Conceptual Metaphor Theory is directionality in metaphor.* we structure less concrete and vaguer concepts in terms of more concrete and more sharply delineated ones.

4. Conceptual Metaphor Theory attracts a tremendous amount of research, but at the same time, it has a methodological facility that many find disconcerting .

The problem of finding the right metaphoric pattern may be specified in two different ways:

First: each metaphoric pattern will have to be compared to competing patterns. Following the example; ARGUMENT IS WAR include win, defend, and on target.

Second: Conceptual Metaphor Theory tends to distinguish metaphors by comparing figurative readings with the basic meaning of a word, Conceptual Metaphor Theory should take into account the existence of dead metaphors,

i.e. expressions that may be metaphoric from a diachronic point of view, but that have lost their metaphoric motivation for the average contemporary language user. To give birth to in the theory of relativity gave birth to an enormous number of ideas in physics is interpreted metaphorically in terms of the metaphor IDEAS ARE PEOPLE.

5.2.2 *Mental spaces and Blending*

The descriptive model of conceptual integration (or blending, as it is

Commonly known) involves *four spaces*, instead of the two conceptual domains of standard Conceptual Metaphor Theory. **Two of the four spaces, the input spaces**, correspond to **the source and target domain** of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The crucial addition of blending theory is the **blend space**, which represents the interaction of the input spaces: in

the blended space, knowledge of source and target inputs combines into a coherent information structure that is temporarily activated in the mind of the language user. **The fourth** space in Fauconnier and Turner's analytic schema is the **generic space**, which contains schematic material shared by the two input spaces.

The image has death as a target domain, but there appear to be two source domains involved: that of the reaper and that of a killer. **Death is personified as a reaper**, but the reaper has lost his usual positive connotation. Reapers harvest food, which is a positively evaluated action, whereas the Reaper in the image turns out to be a killer with negative intentions

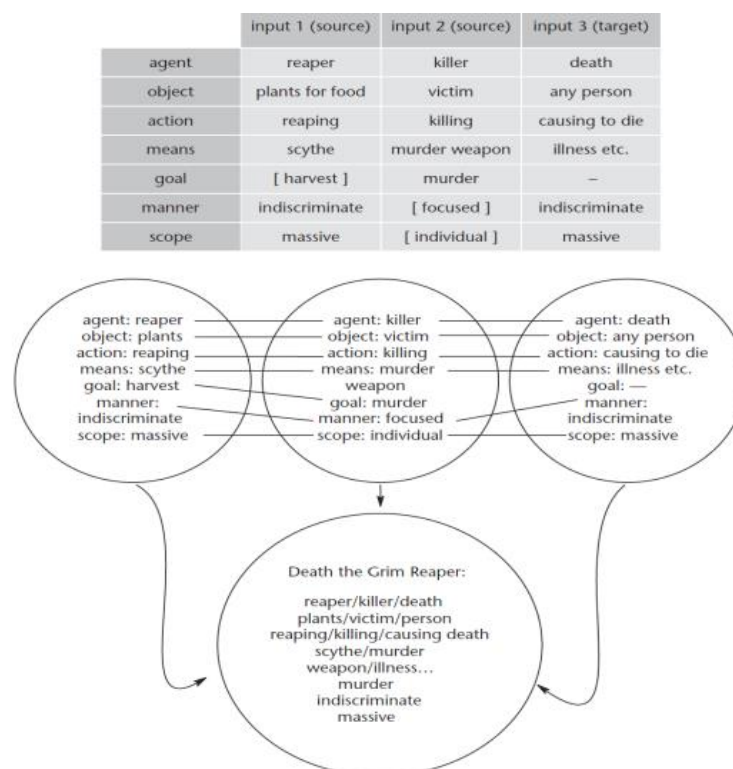


FIGURE 5.6. The Grim Reaper according to Fauconnier and Turner

The advantages of the blending model over a standard Conceptual Metaphor Theory representation:

First, the blending approach highlights the interaction of source and target domains, clarifying that blended spaces contain features that belong to neither of the input domains. The Grim Reaper does not as such belong to the target domain of death, but neither does he reside in the input space of farming and harvesting, because his grim features do not fit there. This emphasizes the constructive nature of metaphors: they do not just exploit perceived similarities, but build meaningful structures.

Second, the blending apparatus provides an insightful tool for analysing more complex metaphors, ones that involve various input domains, like the Grim Reaper example.

Third, blending theorists tend to pay more attention to the way in which metaphoric structures are created adhoc in discourse, where standard Conceptual Metaphor Theory tends to focus on more conventional language, fixed expressions, idioms and proverbs.

5.2.3 Conceptual Metonymy

Metonymy already figured next to metaphor as one of the conceptual mechanisms behind the semantic structure of language. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) list a number of metonymic patterns that might have been taken straightforwardly from a historical-philological treatise on semantic change.

THE PART FOR THE WHOLE

PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT

He's got a Picasso in his den.

OBJECT USED FOR USER

The buses are on strike.

CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED

Napoleon lost at Waterloo.

Lakoff and Johnson emphasize the fact that metonymic concepts like these are conceptual and not purely linguistic

In the first place, we can distinguish a source and target in the description of metonymy just as we can for metaphors.

In the second place, metonymies are systematic in the sense that they form patterns that apply to more than just an individual lexical item.

In third place, metonymic concepts structure not just the language, but also the language users' thoughts, attitudes, and actions. The demarcation of metonymy with regard to metaphor. We will briefly introduce the concept of 'metaphonymy'. With regard to the demarcation of metonymy, the distinguish between a domain-based and a prototype-based view. Both approaches are characteristically cognitive semantic: the domain-based approach to the extent that it defines metaphor and metonymy in terms of larger knowledge structures, and the prototype-based approach to the extent that it applies the principles of categorization to 'metonymy' as such. Metaphors involve two conceptual domains, metonymies only one. If you call an aggressive opponent a crocodile, you metaphorically map the animal domain onto the human domain. Conversely, if you have a crocodile handbag, you stay within the animal domain but metonymically focus on the leather produced from the animal skin rather than on the animal as a whole. The domain approach has also been the object of much criticism:

First, there is no stable and well-established heuristic in cognitive semantics to distinguish one domain from the other or to determine a generally acceptable ontology of domains. **Second**, counterexamples to the domain hypothesis are not difficult to find. The counterexamples work in two directions.

On the other hand, intra-domain mappings that are not metonymical: example is there are **dirty fingers on the window**, referring to a trace left on the window pane. This phrase can be explained metaphorically, if the crucial relationship is the similarity between the fingers and their prints on the window, as well as metonymically, if the fingers are seen as the cause of the visual image. **A distinction between source-in-target and target-in- source metonymies.** The distinction may be illustrated with the sentences *The red shirts won the match* and *This book is utterly boring*. In the shirt example, the source is a subdomain of the target: the gaudily coloured shirts are a distinctive characteristic in the field of football players. With the book example, by contrast, the target is a subdomain of the source: content is a salient property in the domain of books.

2 the interaction between metaphor and metonymy. Goossens (1990) gives a name to the phenomenon, '**metaphonymy**', and recognizes two subtypes: metaphor from metonymy, and metaphor within metonymy/metonymy within metaphor. '**Metaphor from metonymy**' refers to a sequential operation of the two mechanisms, and '**metonymy within metaphor/metaphor within metonymy**' involves a simultaneous, parallel type of interaction. the first is illustrated by the verb giggle. The verb initially means '**to laugh in a nervous way**', Such example(which invariably seem to involve idiomatic expressions rather than single lexemes) are metaphoric in the sense that the hunting scene evoked by catch x is interpreted figuratively. But within that metaphor, the constituent ear gets a metonymic interpretation, as it stands for the per- son's listening attention.