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Zoltán Kövecses
Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

ASPECTS OF METAPHOR IN DISCOURSE[1]

Abstract. If we assume metaphors to be deeply entrenched correspondences between two conceptual domains that are manifested by highly conventional linguistic expressions in the lexicon, we cannot account for two aspects of metaphor that are crucially important. First, if we identify metaphors with isolated conceptual structures that find expression in the lexicon, we cannot appreciate the role of metaphor in real discourse. Second, if we view metaphors as a set of entrenched conceptual correspondences that give rise to conventionalized linguistic expressions, it is not possible to account for much of the creativity of metaphors. The paper argues that we can, and should, go beyond these difficulties in conceptual metaphor theory. First, I argue, together with others, that conceptual metaphor theory must recognize the discourse-organizing force of metaphors. To this effect, I point out both the intertextual and intratextual effects of conceptual metaphors in real discourse. Second, I argue that there are several distinct types of metaphorical creativity that appear in discourse, including source-related creativity, target-related creativity, and creativity that is the result of "context-induced" metaphors. Of these, I discuss source-related and target-related creativity in the present paper.

In recent years, a large number of scholars have criticized the theory of conceptual metaphor for a variety of reasons (for example, Cameron, 2003, 2007; Clausner and Croft, 1997; Deignan, 1999; Dobrovolskij and Piirainen, 2005; Gevaert, 2001, 2005; Pragglejaz Group, 2007; Rakova, 2002; Ritchie, 2003; Semino, 2005; Steen, 1999; Stefanowitch, 2007; Zinken, 2007). Perhaps the most significant element of this criticism was the suggestion that conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) ignores the study

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of metaphor in the contexts in which metaphorical expressions actually occur; namely, in real discourse. The claim is that the practitioners of "traditional" conceptual metaphor theory (i.e., Lakoff and Johnson and their "ardent" followers) set up certain, what they call conceptual metaphors and exemplify them with groups of (mostly) invented metaphors. In this way, traditional researchers in CMT fail to notice some essential aspects of the study of metaphor and cannot account for phenomena that can only be accounted for if we investigate metaphors in real discourse.

I have responded to several aspects of this criticism in some previous publications (Kövecses, 2005; Kövecses, forthcoming, a, b, c), and I do not wish to repeat my response here, though it will be necessary to briefly bring some of that work into the present discussion. Instead, I will take the advice of the critics seriously, look at some pieces of real discourse where metaphors are used, and see how "traditional" CMT can and should be modified and changed to accommodate at least some of the criticism. As I see it, the result will be a substantial addition to the edifice of CMT – with the basic ideas of conceptual metaphor theory remaining intact, however.

Two kinds of metaphorical coherence in discourse

Most researchers who work on metaphor in real discourse would agree that a major function of the metaphors we find in discourse is to provide coherence (see, for example, Cameron, 2003; Charteris-Black, 2004; Chilton, 1996; Chilton and Ilyin, 1993; Deignan, 2005; Eubanks, 2000; Koller, 2004; Musolff, 2000, 2004, 2006; Ritchie, 2004a, b; Semino, 2008). The coherence metaphors provide can be either intertextual or intratextual; that is, metaphors can either make several different texts coherent with each other or they can lend coherence to a single piece of discourse.

Intertextual coherence

In some cases of intertextuality, intertextual coherence is achieved through inheriting and using a particular conceptual metaphor at different historical periods. One of the best examples of this is how several biblical metaphors have been recycled over the ages. Shortly after arriving in

Durham, where I did the research for this work, I was given a bookmark in Durham cathedral with the following text on it:

> Almighty God
>
> Who called your servant Cuthbert
> from keeping sheep to follow your son
> and to be shepherd of your people.
>
> Mercifully grant that we, following his
> example and caring for those who are lost,
> may bring them home to your fold.
> Through your son.
> Jesus Christ our Lord.
>
> Amen.

In the prayer, the basic conceptual metaphor is the one in which the shepherd is Jesus, the lost sheep are the people who no longer follow God's teachings, the fold of the sheep is people's home with God, and for the shepherd to bring the sheep back to the fold is for Jesus to save the people. We can lay out these correspondences, or mappings, more explicitly as follows:

Source:	Target:
the shepherd →	Jesus
the lost sheep →	the people who do not follow God
the fold of the sheep →	the state of people following God
the shepherd bringing back the sheep →	Jesus saving the people

This metaphor was reused later on when God called a simple man, called Cuthbert, to give up his job (which, significantly, was being a shepherd) and become a "shepherd of people." Here it is Cuthbert (not Jesus) who saves the lost people (a set of people different from the ones in Jesus' times). Finally, in the most recent recycling of the metaphor in the prayer said on St Cuthbert's day, 20th March, 2007, the particular values of the metaphor change again. It is the priests who live today who try to bring people back to the fold – again, a set of people different from either those who lived in Jesus' or Cuthbert's times.

This type of intertextuality characterizes not only Christianity (and other religions) through time but many other domains within the

same historical period. Thus a metaphor can provide coherence across a variety of discourses both historically and simultaneously.

Intratextual coherence

In a similar fashion, the same conceptual metaphor can lend coherence to a single text. The metaphor that structures the discourse does not necessarily have to be a deeply entrenched conventional conceptual metaphor – it can be what we can call a metaphorical analogy of any kind. Consider the following three paragraphs, taken from the very beginning of a newspaper article:

> Performance targets are identical to the puissance at the Horse of the Year Show. You know the one – the high-jump competition, where the poor, dumb horse is brought into the ring, asked to clear a massive red wall, and as a reward for its heroic effort is promptly brought back and asked to do it all over again, only higher.
>
> I've never felt anything but admiration for those puissance horses which, not so dumb at all, swiftly realize that the game is a bogey. Why on earth should they bother straining heart, sinew and bone to leap higher than their own heads, only to be required to jump even higher? And then possibly higher still.
>
> Hard work and willingness, ponders the clever horse as he chomps in the stable that night, clearly bring only punishment. And so next time he's asked to canter up to the big red wall, he plants his front feet in the ground and shakes his head. And says, what do you take me for – an idiot? (Melanie Reid, *The Times*, Monday, February 4, 2008).

Here puissance horses are compared to people, riders to managers, the red walls as obstacles to the targets people have to achieve, having to jump over the obstacles to being subject to assessment, clearing the obstacles to achieving the targets, raising the obstacles to giving more difficult targets, the Horse Show to a company, and so on and so forth. This elaborate metaphorical analogy provides a great deal of structure for the text. As a matter of fact, most of the structure of the text is given in terms of

the metaphor up to this point in the article, with only the first two words ("performance targets") suggesting what the analogy is all about.

But then in the fourth paragraph the author lays out the correspondences for us, probably to make sure that we understand precisely what she has in mind:

> Thus it is with work-related targets. Most of us will in the course of our careers be subject to performance assessments, where we are examined against the objectives we were set the previous year, then tasked with new ones.

From this point onward, the article uses predominantly literal language with some of the metaphorical language of the Horse Show interspersed in the text. At the end, however, the metaphor comes back in full force:

> Oh, the bar may be set at what the politicians regard as a reasonable height. Aspirational enough to keep them all in power. From the perspective of the weary horse, however, we've reached the point where whipping doesn't work, but a carrot and a short rest just might.

Clearly, the metaphor is used here at the end of the article to make a point emphatically. This is a common rhetorical function that metaphors are assigned to perform in discourse. Thus, in addition to providing some of the internal coherence of the text, metaphors are often exploited for such and similar rhetorical functions (see, for example, Goatly, 1997).

What I would like to underscore here is that, in many cases, once introduced, conceptual metaphors (or metaphorical analogies) appear to have the effect of taking over what one says or thinks about a particular subject matter. We push the metaphor as far as it fits the target for our purposes. This way, on such occasions, conceptual metaphors or metaphorical analogies can predominate, or "rule," an entire discourse or a stretch of it. I will return to this topic below.

However, often, we are not aware of potential further "usurpations" of the metaphor against our intentions. This situation has its dangers and can be the source of other people turning a metaphor against us in a debate over contentious issues. A particularly apt illustration of this happening is provided by Elena Semino (2008). Tony Blair used the following metaphor in one of his speeches:

> Get rid of the false choice: principles or no principles. Replace it with the true choice. Forward or back. I can only go one way. I've not got a reverse gear. The time to trust a politician most is not when they're taking the easy option. Any politician can do the popular things. I know, I used to do a few of them.

Obviously, Blair tries to present himself here as a forward-looking politician who has clear and, what he takes to be, progressive goals and wants to reach those goals. In setting up this image, he uses the conventional conceptual metaphors PROGRESS IS MOTION FORWARD and PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES ARE JOURNEYS, but he also employs a little trick to achieve this: he portrays himself as a car without a reverse gear. In the same way as a car without a reverse gear cannot move backward, only forward, he, the politician, can only move forward and can only do things in the name of progress. That is, he uses knowledge about the target domains to effect changes in the source domain that he employs to achieve his rhetorical purpose in the situation. (We could analyze this situation as a case of conceptual integration, a la Fauconnier and Turner, 2002.)

So we have in the source domain a car without a reverse gear that cannot move backward, only forward, and we have in the target a politician who can and wants to achieve progressive goals alone. However, the source image can be modified somewhat. Let us suppose that the car gets to the edge of a cliff. Wouldn't it be good to have a reverse gear then? Semino (2008) found an example where this is precisely what happens. Following the speech in which Blair used the "car without reverse gear" image, an anchorman on BBC evening news remarked:

> but when you're on the edge of a cliff it is good to have a reverse gear.

The "edge of a cliff" in the source symbolizes an especially difficult and dangerous situation, where it is a good thing to have a car with a reverse gear. In the target, the dangerous situation corresponds to the Iraqi war, where, in the view of the journalist and others, it would have been good for Blair to change his views and withdraw from the war, instead of "plunging" the country into it.

In other words, as Semino points out, a metaphor that a speaker introduces and that can initially be seen as serving the speaker's interests in persuading others can be slightly but significantly changed. With the

change, the metaphor can be turned against the original user. This often happens in political debates.

Metaphorical creativity in discourse

One of the criticisms of the CMT view is that it conceives of metaphors as highly conventional static conceptual structures (the correspondences, or mappings, between a source and a target domain). It would follow from this that such conceptual structures manifest themselves in the form of highly conventional metaphorical linguistic expressions (like the metaphorical meanings in a dictionary) based on such mappings. If correct, this view does not easily lend itself to an account of metaphorical creativity. Clearly, we often come across novel metaphorical expressions in real discourse. If all there is to metaphor is a fixed set of static conceptual structures matched by highly conventional linguistic expressions, it would seem that CMT runs into difficulty in accounting for the many unconventional and novel expressions we find in discourse. I will discuss various types of metaphorical creativity in this section.

Source-related metaphorical creativity in discourse

If all CMT is about is a fixed set of static mappings, we can easily run into difficulty when we try to explain the presence of metaphors in real discourse. Consider the Horse of the Year Show metaphor discussed in one of the texts above. The Horse of the Year Show metaphor is a novel mapping for the target domain of company. The conceptual metaphor A COMPANY IS THE HORSE OF THE YEAR SHOW is anything but a conventional mapping for this target. Conventional source domains for COMPANY include BUILDING, PLANT, MACHINE, etc. Much of what we know about companies can be conceptualized by means of such conventional source domains. But THE HORSE OF THE YEAR SHOW metaphor is highly unconventional and allows us to conceptualize novel aspects of the target. This is a phenomenon that I called "the range of the target" (as opposed to "the scope of the source") in *Metaphor in Culture* (2005) and this is a way of creating new conceptual metaphors.

Target-induced metaphorical creativity in discourse

Now let us see another way in which certain unconventional and novel metaphors in discourse can be handled with the help of a modified

version of CMT. In the "standard" CMT view, a part of our conceptual system consists of abstract concepts that are metaphorically defined. The definition of abstract concepts by means of metaphor takes place automatically and unconsciously. This is the case when emotions are viewed as forceful entities inside us (EMOTIONS ARE FORCES), when we think of abstract complex systems as growing (= developing) (ABSTRACT COMPLEX SYSTEMS ARE PLANTS), when we define our goals as "goals" (to be reached) (PURPOSES ARE DESTINATION), and when we believe that marriage is some kind of a union (MARRIAGE IS A PHYSICAL UNITY). We take these metaphorical "definitions" as givens that are literal. There are many concepts, such as the ones just mentioned, that are defined or constituted by conceptual metaphors. And they are so constituted unconsciously and without any cognitive effort. I believe that this kind of definition of abstract concepts takes place at what I call the "supra-individual" level of conceptualization (see Kövecses, 2002, chapter 17). It is the supra-individual level in the sense that it consists of a static and highly conventionalized system of mappings between physical source and abstract target domains. Because of the automatic and unconscious nature of the mappings, we tend to think of these abstract concepts as literal.

As an illustration, let us consider an example taken from Chilton & Lakoff's (1995) work on the application of the BUILDING metaphor to the political domain; in particular, former Soviet communist party general secretary Gorbachev's metaphor in the early 1990s of the COMMON EUROPEAN HOUSE, or in its full form, EUROPE (A POLITICAL STRUCTURE) IS A COMMON HOUSE. A more general conceptual metaphor of which the HOUSE metaphor is an instantiation is ABSTRACT COMPLEX SYSTEMS ARE BUILDINGS (Kövecses, 2000; 2002). This metaphor has several mappings that can be given as submetaphors within the general metaphor; specifically:

> THE CREATION OF ABSTRACT STRUCTURE IS BUILDING
>
> ABSTRACT STRUCTURE IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE (OF THE BUILDING)
>
> ABSTRACT LASTINGNESS IS THE STABILITY OF THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE (TO STAND)

According to CMT, the source domain of BUILDING and the target domain of, in this case, POLITICAL STRUCTURE is characterized by these mappings (see, e.g., Kövecses, 2002; Grady, 1997). My claim, in line with the argument above, would be that the abstract target concept of POLITICAL STRUCTURE is constituted by these mappings. That is to say, the notion of political

structure (as in the discussion of the unification of European countries into a single political entity) is in part defined by the metaphors below:

POLITICAL STRUCTURES ARE BUILDINGS
ABSTRACT COMPLEX SYSTEMS ARE BUILDINGS

And indeed, we find numerous examples that are based on these mappings in the discourse on the integration of Europe in the 1990s, as analyzed by Musolff (2000, p. 222):

> "We want a Europe that's not just an elevated free trade area, but the construction of a house of Europe as laid down in the Maastricht treaty" (*The Guardian*, July 6, 1994)
>
> "The common currency is the weight-bearing pillar of the European house." (*The Guardian*, June 3, 1997)

The first example is based on the submetaphor THE CREATION OF ABSTRACT STRUCTURE IS BUILDING (construction), while the second is based on both ABSTRACT STRUCTURE IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE (OF THE BUILDING) (pillar) and ABSTRACT LASTINGNESS IS THE STABILITY OF THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE (TO STAND) (weight-bearing). These examples show that political structure is thought about in terms of the BUILDING metaphor, and, more importantly, that certain aspects of this abstract entity (and of many additional ones), such as construction, structure, and strength, are inevitably constituted by metaphor. (Notice the unavoidably metaphorical character of the words *construction, structure, strength* in relation to political structure.)

But in the course of the debate about the unification of Europe at the time many expressions other than those that fit and are based on these submetaphors were used in the press. Musolff (2000) provides a large number of metaphorical expressions that were *not* supposed to be used (according to the "standard" CMT view). There was talk about the *roof*, the *occupants*, the *apartments*, and even *caretakers* and *fire-escapes*. If the BUILDING metaphor is limited to the previously mentioned highly static and conventional aspects of the target domain, then speakers should not talk about any of these things in connection with political structure. But they do. Here are Musolff's (2000, p. 220-1) examples:

> "We are delighted that Germany's unification takes place under the European roof." (Documentation by the Federal press- and information office, Bonn)

> "At the moment, the German occupants of the first floor apartment in the 'European house' seem to think that foreigners from outside the continent should be content with living in the rubbish bin." (translation from *Die Zeit,* 10 January 1992)
>
> "What does he [Chancellor Kohl] need this house for, after so many years as Chancellor? – Well, it's obvious, he wants to become the caretaker." (translation from *Die Zeit*, May 16, 1997)
>
> "[the European house is] a building without fire-escapes: no escape if it goes wrong" (*The Guardian*, May 2, 1998)
>
> "[it is a] burning building with no exits" (*The Times*, May 20, 1998)

Given these examples of metaphor usage, it seems that metaphors can do more than just automatically and unconsciously constitute certain aspects of target domains in a static conceptual system (i.e., at the supra-individual level). Once we have a source domain that conventionally constitutes a target, we can use any component of this source that fits elements of the target. Notice that there is a reversal here. In a dynamic discourse situation the activated target domain (such as political structure) in the discourse can indeed select components of the source (such as building) that fit a particular target idea or purpose. For example, if one has a negative view of the unification of Europe and has problems with, say, the difficulty of leaving the union in case it does not work out for a particular country, then the speaker can talk about a "*building without fire-escapes*"—a part of the source that is obviously outside the conventionally used aspects of the source but that fits the target nevertheless.

In other words, the examples above demonstrate that in real discourse unconventional and novel linguistic metaphors can emerge not only from conventionally fixed mappings between a source and a target domain but also from mappings initiated *from the target* to the source. This mechanism can also account for the examples from Semino's work that were discussed in the previous section. The novel example of *having no reverse gear*, as we have seen, is initiated from the target domain, and the second example of how *it is good to have a reverse gear on the edge of a cliff* is actually motivated by both the target and the source. However, the selection of the unconventional and novel metaphorical expressions is somewhat limited in this type of metaphorical creativity.

It is limited because these expressions come from a source that is already constitutive of the target. The initial and original constitution of the target by a particular source puts limitations on which new metaphorical expressions can be created on the basis of the source and then applied to the target. Albeit limited in this sense, this mechanism seems to serve us well in accounting for the creation of many unconventional and novel metaphorical expressions in real discourse.

Conclusions

Metaphors can ensure the coherence of discourse. Two basic types of coherence have been identified: intratextual and intertextual coherence. This means that the same conceptual metaphor or metaphorical analogy can make a single discourse (intratextual) or a number of different discourses (intertextual) coherent.

The "standard" version of CMT operates with largely uncontextualized or minimally contextualized linguistic examples of hypothesized conceptual metaphors. The conceptual metaphors are seen as constituted by sets of mappings between the source and the target domains. The mappings are assumed to be fairly static conceptual structures. The linguistic metaphors that are motivated by such static correspondences are entrenched, conventional expressions that eventually find their way to good, detailed dictionaries of languages. Dictionaries and the meanings they contain represent what is static and highly conventional about particular languages. In this view it is problematic to account for metaphorical creativity. How does this somewhat simplified and rough characterization of "standard" CMT change in light of the work reported in this paper?

If we look at metaphors from a discourse perspective and if we try to draw conclusions on the basis of what we have found here, we can see two important sources of metaphorical creativity. The first is the type of creativity that arises from the source domain and the second from the target domain. (A third type is context-induced metaphorical creativity, but I did not discuss it here.)

I examined the second type of metaphorical creativity under the heading of "target-induced" creativity. As we saw in the analysis of the BUILDING metaphor, what seems to happen in this case is that the conceptualizer's knowledge of the target causes him or her to pick out

additional materials from the source that fit the target. I take this process to be equivalent or, at least, similar to what Lakoff and Turner (1989) call "elaboration" and "extending." Lakoff and Turner suggest that these are two of the ways in which poetic metaphors are created from conventional, everyday conceptual metaphors. If the example of the BUILDING metaphor that is described in the paper is indeed like elaboration and/or extending, then the Lakoff-Turner claim that elaboration and extending are characteristic of creating poetic metaphors is called into question for the simple reason that the discussion of the BUILDING metaphor in relation to European unification is simply not an instance of poetic language. This conclusion would mean that two early critics of Lakoff and Turner's 1989 book, *More Than Cool Reason*, Jackendoff and Aaron were (are) right (Jackendoff and Aaron, 1991). Be that as it may, the achievement of Lakoff and Turner in connection with the issue under discussion is that at least they tried to tackle the problem of metaphorical creativity. What the present paper adds to this debate is a more precise formulation of the cognitive process underlying elaboration and/or extending.

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