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Studies in Conceptual Metaphor Theory
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Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is a vital sub-discipline of Cognitive Linguistics which focuses on the cognitive processes behind language representation and particularly on the conceptual motivation behind figurative meaning. In this book, I gather into a single volume a number of studies on this topic which I have developed over the years and through which I attempt to trace a coherent and comprehensive picture of how CMT can be applied to the analysis of various discourse types.

The volume consists of nine chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to Conceptual Metaphor Theory which attempts to present a clear and schematic overview of the essential premises of CMT in order to enable beginning students of English Linguistics to understand the theoretical perspectives and methodological applications of the subsequent eight research-based chapters.

Some of these chapters stem from studies published previously and revised for this volume. The main focus of the volume is the description of the presence of Conceptual Metaphor (CM) in various domains of English discourse. It poses the question of the role of CM in the organization of text, where text is intended as a genre-specific and topic-specific communicative event, occurring in a unique context-framed moment in which interlocutors represent, communicate and negotiate discourse meaning. In that way, the volume works on the interface between discourse and cognition in an effort to show how metaphorical conceptualization is encoded in text representations.
Chapter 1

Conceptual Metaphor Theory: An Introduction

1. Cognitive Linguistics

The term "Cognitive Linguistics" refers to the branch of linguistics which emerged in the 1970s in opposition to previous structural and generative approaches to language description. Focused on the relationship between language and the mind, it attempts to explain the mental processes that underlie the acquisition, storage, production and understanding of speech and writing. Cognitive linguists hold that language is based on the human subject's experience in, and interaction with, the world. Language form and use emerge from conceptualization, from the way in which human experience is perceived and conceptualized. As explained by Kemmer (2002) on the cover page of the International Cognitive Linguistics Association website:

Rather than attempting to segregate syntax from the rest of language in a 'syntactic component' governed by a set of principles and elements specific to that component, the line of research followed instead was to examine the relation of language structure to things outside language: cognitive principles and mechanisms not specific to language, including principles of human categorization; pragmatic and interactional principles; and functional principles in general, such as iconicity and economy.

The linguists associated with the birth and development of this cognitive shift in linguistics were Wallace Chafe, Charles Fillmore, George Lakoff, Ronald Langacker, and Leonard Talmy, each addressing a specific problem within the relation between language and cognition.
and all developing new theoretical frameworks and methodologies for linguistic investigation and description. Ronald Langacker is noted in particular for his proposals of a new theory of language description, called "Cognitive Grammar". His 1987 book, entitled *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*, presents a particular conception of grammatical structure which emerges organically from a comprehensive and unified view of linguistic organization characterized in terms of cognitive processing. This new perspective on grammar which developed within Cognitive Linguistics is in disagreement with the dominant trends in the “generative Chomskyan tradition” and advances three basic premises:

- Semantic structure is not universal; it is language-specific to a considerable degree. Further, semantic structure is based on conventional imagery and is characterized relative to knowledge structures.

- Grammar (or syntax) does not constitute an autonomous formal level of representation. Instead grammar is symbolic in nature consisting in the conventional symbolization of semantic structure.

- There is no meaningful distinction between grammar and the lexicon.

All scholars referring to a cognitivist paradigm share some basic assumptions. Besides the focus on conceptualization, cognitive linguistics foregrounds the role of meaning in language.\(^1\) As explained by Kemmer (2002):

\(^1\)Note that in the most accredited theory of the previous phase of linguistics, Chomskyan linguistics, language was considered to be governed by an autonomous system of syntactic rules, which were claimed to be independent of meaning. Thus, in Chomskyan linguistics, semantic structure was excluded.
One of the important assumptions shared by all of these scholars is that meaning is so central to language that it must be a primary focus of study. Linguistic structures serve the function of expressing meanings and hence the mappings between meaning and form are a prime subject of linguistic analysis. Linguistic forms, in this view, are closely linked to the semantic structures they are designed to express. Semantic structures of all meaningful linguistic units can and should be investigated.

Moreover, cognitive linguistics holds that both language and cognition are embedded in the experiences and environments of their users. In other words, in opposition to traditional views in philosophy which consider the body to be peripheral to understanding the nature of mind, cognitive science considers cognition to be "embodied". As clarified by Wilson and Foglia (2011):

Cognition is embodied when it is deeply dependent upon features of the physical body of an agent, that is, when aspects of the agent's body beyond the brain play a significant causal or physically constitutive role in cognitive processing.

Thus, for cognitive linguistics, language is both embodied and situated in a specific environment. This premise has led to research on interesting and significant questions concerning the relationship between language and thought, of which one of the most important regards the nature of metaphor, which is the object of investigation of this book. To mention the myriad of topics studied in Cognitive Linguistics, we can cite Geeraerts (1995:111-112):

from linguistic investigation which consequently focused exclusively on syntax.
Because cognitive linguistics sees language as embedded in the overall cognitive capacities of man, topics of special interest for cognitive linguistics include: the structural characteristics of natural language categorization (such as prototypicality, systematic polysemy, cognitive models, mental imagery and metaphor); the functional principles of linguistic organization (such as iconicity and naturalness); the conceptual interface between syntax and semantics (as explored by cognitive grammar and construction grammar); the experiential and pragmatic background of language-in-use; and the relationship between language and thought, including questions about relativism and conceptual universals.

We can conclude with this clear definition given by Evans and Green (2006:5):

Language offers a window into cognitive function, providing insights into the nature, structure and organization of thoughts and ideas. The most important way in which cognitive linguistics differs from other approaches to the study of language, then, is that language is assumed to reflect certain fundamental properties and design features of the human mind.

2. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT): basic premises

Within this cognitive shift in language, description, some linguists began to approach the question of figurative meaning by suggesting the existence of stable knowledge structures which are held in the human memory system. Some scholars have hypothesized that these knowledge structures which have psychological reality are basically metaphorical. The major reference points on this topic were initially
George Lakoff and Mark Johnson who in 1980 produced a book on this question entitled *Metaphors We Live By*. The title itself was in a certain sense revolutionary in that it immediately suggested that metaphor was not only a question of language but of thinking and consequently of behaving. *Metaphors we live by*, which was the seminal study for what has now taken shape in linguistics as "Conceptual Metaphor Theory", has provided the theoretical framework for most of the theorizations, applications and empirical investigations which thereafter ensued.

2.1. The seminal study: *Metaphors we live by*

Therefore, what can today be considered the contemporary theory of metaphor originated with the first reflections by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson on the conceptual nature of metaphor. No longer a property only of language, metaphor was now conceived to be a mental structure, a question of conceptualization, of how the mind structures and organizes concepts in order to express thought linguistically.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that figurative language emerges from knowledge structures which reside in long-term memory. These knowledge structures are termed "Conceptual Metaphors (CM)". Lakoff and Johnson suggest that there exists a set of primary conceptual metaphors, which are pre-linguistic and universal, along with a set of conceptual metaphors which are language-specific. The interaction be-

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tween universal and language-specific metaphors produce figurative language. This happens through a process which maps aspects of concrete domains of human experience onto aspects of abstract domains of conceptual structure. In other words, human conceptualization is based on analogical processes which use more readily accessible experiential knowledge to understand, represent and express complex abstract concepts. For example, a complex emotional experience like love is often represented through a simpler, physical experience like a journey. Thus in English in order to express difficulties in an intimate relationship, we can use an expression like: *This relationship isn't going anywhere*. This is a figurative rather than literal use of the word "go". Technically, the concrete domain is referred to as the "Source Domain (SD)", while the abstract domain is referred to as the "Target Domain (TD)". From the concrete domains, literal words and expressions are drawn to represent abstract concepts; in the previous example literal terms from the domain of journey (go, arrive, at the crossroads, on the rocks, we've gone our separate ways) are used figuratively to express the various phases, successes or failures, hopes or disappointments of love. The theory, known as "Conceptual Metaphor Theory" (hereafter CMT), aims primarily at understanding the extent of the cognitive representations behind figurative language and how exactly they manage to structure target domains in terms of source domains.

Their argumentation is very straightforward. Let us take the example of the figurative expression:

- She drives me out of my mind,

spoken in a context of an intimate relationship like LOVE. The question which can be posed about this expression is: "How is it that speakers/hearers interpret this expression figuratively, i.e. not as a physical state of insanity but as a description of love and sexual attraction? To give another example, let us take the expression:
• I'm on cloud nine.

How is it that this expression is understood immediately as referring to the emotion of HAPPINESS?

Are these simply conventionalized expressions, which have come arbitrarily to signify emotional states? On the other hand, could they point to a more basic process of human thought?

To answer this question, in *Metaphors We Live By* Lakoff and Johnson look closely at non-literal language and note that the numerous figurative expressions related to a given aspect of thought or experience can only point to the presence of a conceptual structure which organizes and governs them. In other words, a speaker is first and foremost a "conceptualizer".

For example, when talking about argumentation (arguments, discussions, debates, etc.), we find in English the following expressions:

• Your claims are indefensible.
• He attacked every weak point in my argument.
• His criticisms were right on target.
• I demolished his argument.
• I've never won an argument with him.
• You disagree? Okay shoot!
• If you use that strategy, he'll wipe you out.

What is common to all these expressions is the use of war and battle terms to express the experience of argumentation. In other words, lit-

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4 Basic examples for the discussion of this chapter are taken primarily from Lakoff and Johnson (1980:4) and from Kövecses (2002a).
eral terms from the semantic field of war are used to describe argumentation. We can highlight those terms:

- Your claims are *indefensible*.
- He *attacked* every weak point in my argument.
- His criticisms were right *on target*.
- I *demolished* his argument.
- I've never *won* an argument with him.
- You disagree? Okay *shoot*!
- If you use that strategy, he'll *wipe you out*.
- He *shot* down all my arguments.
- He *fired* questions at his opponent.
- She *challenged* his claims.
- They *fought* for every single concession.
- His position was *defeated*.

Since we do not mean the words (*indefensible, attack, on target, demolish, win, shoot, wipe you out, fire, fight, defeat*) literally, we are dealing with figurative uses. War terms are used figuratively to represent arguments. This means that there is a consistent pattern behind this representation, which Lakoff and Johnson (1980) consider to be conceptual. Since, as the expressions suggest, we are talking about one concept in terms of another, i.e. argument in terms of war, this conceptual structure can be said to be metaphorical. In this case the conceptual metaphor (CM) is ARGUMENT IS WAR. This is why we can say that conceptual metaphors structure our everyday activity: thinking, reasoning, behaving, doing and speaking. In their own words, Lakoff and Johnson (1980:5) explain:
This is an example of what it means for a metaphorical concept, namely ARGUMENT IS WAR, to structure (at least in part) what we do and how we understand what we are doing when we argue. The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. It is not that arguments are a subspecies of war. Arguments and wars are different kinds of things - verbal discourse and armed conflict - and the actions performed are different kinds of actions. But ARGUMENT is partially structured, understood, performed and talked about in terms of WAR. The concept is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured.

Thus, the fundamental and foundational claim made in *Metaphors We Live By* is that metaphor is not merely a question of language. Metaphors in linguistic expressions are possible because there are metaphors in the human conceptual system. Metaphor is possible in language because it is present in the mind.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, the authors document several sets of conceptual metaphors with the figurative expressions they seem to structure. In order to have an idea of how specific conceptual metaphors can structure specific aspects of our everyday experience, we refer the reader to the lists found in Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which detail the most basic metaphors and the linguistic expressions claimed to be structured by them.  

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5 These lists of CMs and the expressions motivated by them can be considered a basic database for the comprehension of theory and method in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Therefore, due attention should be paid to this English language data. Moreover, the wide-ranging set of linguistic expressions is very important for students of English as a second/foreign language, since figurative and idiomatic expressions are presented through a