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## Section IV Introduction

### Metaphor, metonymy and blending

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In this section we turn to a subfield of cognitive semantics, namely the study of figurative language, in particular metaphor and metonymy. Two influential theoretical frameworks have emerged from this field: Conceptual Metaphor Theory, initiated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) (see Lakoff 1993/this volume), and Blending Theory (Fauconnier & Turner 1998/this volume).

Although a subfield of cognitive semantics, the cognitive linguistic study of figurative language has been one of the most influential areas of research in early cognitive linguistics. A conference series, *Researching and Applying Metaphor (RaAM)*, has been established that is dedicated to (cognitive) linguistic approaches to figurative language. Sessions on figurative language, especially metaphor, and, more recently, blending, retain a high profile at cognitive linguistics conferences.

The continuing development of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (hereafter CMT) can, with some simplification, be divided into two phases: the 'classical' version and the 'primary metaphor' version. The classical version has its beginning in Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and has been presented most explicitly and with the greatest technical detail in Lakoff (1993/this volume). In its classical version, CMT is a prime example of the Generalisation Commitment in cognitive linguistics: Lakoff and Johnson (1980) observed that many conventional expressions in English which, upon reflection, are apparently not used in their literal meanings, seem to form thematic clusters. For example, utterances such as 'look how far we've come', 'we should go our separate ways' or 'our relationship is on the rocks' all seem to express ideas about relationships in terms of travelling. The main claim of CMT is that such patterns in language exist precisely because people do think about relationships in terms of journeys, i.e., a conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY is stored in long-term memory. Such conceptual metaphors are not linguistic entities, they are a type of conceptual structure. Linguistic expressions such as 'we should go our separate ways' are symptoms, as it were, of conceptual metaphors.

Lakoff (1993/this volume) discusses three kinds of generalisations that lead to the identification of conceptual metaphors: Generalisations over polysemous words, generalisations over the patterns of inference of such polysemous words in their different contexts, and generalisations over conventional and novel metaphors.

The 'primary metaphor' version was developed by Grady (1997; 1999/this volume; Lakoff & Johnson 1999) when he investigated reasons for the restricted productivity of some conceptual metaphors that had been proposed earlier (see also Clausner & Croft 1997). It is, for example, quite usual to read about the '*basis*' or the '*foundations*' of a theory. However, talk of the '*windows*' of a theory would require considerable context to be interpretable. It seems, therefore, that it is not all of our rich knowledge of houses that is relevant in our thinking about theories. Based on this observation, Grady (1997) suggests that the conceptual metaphors that ground linguistic meaning are indeed much more schematic, and relate to knowledge about patterns of early non-verbal experience. Correlations in everyday experience, such as the correlation between the sensori-motor experience of physical structure and the subjective experience of the organisation of an object result in so-called 'primary metaphors': ORGANISATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE. These 'primary' conceptual metaphors are unlimited in their productivity, and they guide meaning constructions in many more specific domains, e.g., talk about the *weak foundations* of a *collapsing* theory. Grady's work on 'primary metaphor' illustrates the focus on the idea of 'embodied cognition' (see Evans, Bergen & Zinken, this volume) in some cognitive semantic theories, especially CMT: 'primary metaphors' are thought to be universally acquired prior to language as a natural function of the way the human body interacts with the material environment (see the new afterword in Lakoff & Johnson 2003). In his article on a typology of motivation for metaphor, Grady (1999/this volume) compares such 'correlation metaphors' with a more traditional kind of metaphor, which he calls 'resemblance metaphors', an example of which is '*Achilles is a lion*'. 'Resemblance metaphors' are understood on the basis of stereotypical impressions about the source concept, not unlike Black's (1993 [1979]) notion of systems of associated commonplaces involved in the interpretation of metaphor.

Critics of CMT have pointed to the problem of circularity: conceptual metaphors are inferred from linguistic metaphors and these are then 'explained' by appealing to the conceptual metaphors. A current concern relates to research that would provide independent evidence for the existence of conceptual metaphors. At present, it is contentious whether these exist, or whether patterns in figurative language are relics of semantic history. Some psycholinguistic research finds positive evidence for a role of conceptual metaphors in the interpretation of idioms (e.g., Gibbs, 1994). Other psycholinguistic research suggests that conceptual metaphors are not necessary for people to understand conventional figurative expressions (Gentner et al. 2001; Glucksberg & McGlone 1999; Keysar & Bly 1999; see also Gibbs, this volume).

Irrespective of this debate, CMT is a prime example of an innovative aspect of cognitive linguistics that is also characteristic of other areas of research such as Blending Theory or Construction Grammar(s). This is the attention that is being paid to aspects of language that had previously been marginalised as irregular. In traditional rule-based approaches to meaning, committed more to the concerns of formal logic than to psychological realism, 'rules' for meaning construction were formulated on the basis of

certain forms of (usually written) language use. Supposedly 'higher' forms of language use were interpreted as breaching those rules (see Searle 1993 [1979], for such an approach to metaphor). In cognitive linguistics, it is common to take the opposite approach: 'interesting' (unusual, seemingly irregular) forms of language use are taken as the point of departure. Explanations developed on that basis are then applied to an account of seemingly more 'ordinary' forms of language use. CMT was one of the earliest theories in cognitive linguistics to adopt such a perspective.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) reframed both metaphor and metonymy as primarily conceptual, rather than linguistic, phenomena. However, as in that book, the study of metonymy has so far been less prominent in cognitive linguistics than the study of metaphor. Nevertheless, a group of researchers (see Barcelona 2000) has developed a distinctive cognitive linguistic approach to metonymy over the past two decades. The article by Radden and Kövecses included in this volume gives one synthesis of these research efforts. By providing an extensive typology of metonymic relationships, the authors show the pervasiveness of metonymy in everyday language.

Blending Theory (hereafter BT) takes the interest in Cognitive Semantics in 'imaginative' language and thought one step further. BT developed out of Fauconnier's research on mental spaces (e.g., Fauconnier 1985) and Turner's research on figurative language (e.g., Turner 1991, see also Coulson & Oakley 2000). Initially, BT was primarily interested in the surprising effects that some forms of language use, such as figurative language, but also, e.g., counterfactuals, often have. Developing BT further, Fauconnier and Turner (1998/this volume; 2002) noted that the complexities involved in conceptual integration might apply not only to spectacular and novel forms of language use, but also to perfectly 'ordinary' language use, such as category attribution, as well as non-linguistic symbolic activity. In a way, this development is a reverse mirror of the study of figurative language in psycholinguistics. In that field, Glucksberg has built his theory of metaphor comprehension in part on the finding that figurative language comprehension does not take significantly longer than literal language comprehension (Glucksberg, 2001). He interpreted this finding as showing that figurative language comprehension involves processes that are not much more complex than those involved in literal category attribution. One way to put the perspective of BT in a nutshell would be to say that literal category attribution is not much *less* complex than figurative meaning construction. The paper by Fauconnier and Turner included in this volume, *Conceptual Integration Networks*, is the most complete technical exposition of BT to date (but see also their book-length treatment in Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, which has a more popular-scientific orientation).

Finally, Grady, Oakley and Coulson (1999/this volume) discuss the possibilities of integrating the perspectives of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Blending Theory. While CMT can describe regularities in figurative language use, BT might be better suited to account for the novel insights emerging from figurative language comprehension. Consider the metaphorical expression 'this surgeon is a butcher'. The evaluation of incompetence that is expressed here is not part of what we know about the vehicle, 'butchers'. Butchers are perfectly competent for their job, just as surgeons are for theirs. The evaluation of incompetence seems to arise from 'blending' the two in a new mental space. BT suggests that such forms of language use cannot be explained as a mapping of

knowledge from one domain to another. Rather, several 'input spaces' seem to provide fragments of knowledge that become integrated in the 'blended space'. As Grady et al. argue, BT complements CMT, as it accounts for data that are not easily accommodated in a two-domain framework.

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