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# Introduction

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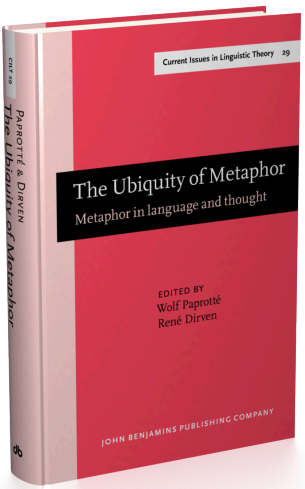


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**The Ubiquity of Metaphor: Metaphor in language and thought**
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# INTRODUCTION

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## 1. Prefatorial remarks

Few subjects have proved more elusive than metaphor. In more than 2ooo years of study, it has withstood all attempts at developing a stringent theory. For all we know, it will continue to resist explanation. If this were not already challenging enough, the study of metaphor is appealing because we participate in a change of paradigms. Today, metaphor is no longer deemed illicit and a violation of the scientific discourse principles of clarity, precision and verifiability. It is no longer rejected as a metaphysical statement of purely emotive import or considered a "Scheinsatz" of the type *Caesar ist eine Primzahl*, syntactically and semantically violating sortal correctness. Rather, it is recognized as one of the deepest and most persisting phenomena of theory building and thinking.

The classical distinction between literal and figurative use to which the traditional paradigm of the Vienna Circle and the logical empiricists owed much was never repudiated. But the apparently obvious merits of literal speech shrivelled upon closer study. Quine, in 1968, argued the inscrutability of reference. Worse than that, the question of what sorts of things meanings are, - extensions, intensions, senses, features, concepts, prototypes, ICMs, - lost its philosophical touch and was narrowed down to the problem of delimiting semantics and pragmatics (Bar-Hillel, 1954; Carnap, 1959; Montague, 1968). Whatever the answer given, after one turn of the wheel, the legitimacy of an inspection of the literal/figurative distinction was indirectly proven. And with Black (1962), an awareness of metaphor as a phenomenon deserving linguistic and philosophical attention grew.

The past ten years, now, have seen an outburst of articles and books on metaphor (cf. Van Noppen, De Knop & Jongen, 1985). In Ortony (1979), a multidimensional perspective on metaphor from the point of view of linguistics, psychology, the logic of science, and education was discussed. As a result, the conviction grew that metaphor is deeply engrained in cognitive processes, social acts and verbal usage, that metaphor in fact is a constitutive factor of all mental constructions and reconstructions of reality. In Honeck & Hoffman (1980), the importance of figurative language for theories of cognition and meaning was again documented. But perhaps the most pronounced ideologues of a cognitive approach to metaphor were Lakoff & Johnson with their monograph *Metaphors we live by* (1980). The framework of their research has come to be known as 'cognitive linguistics', i.e. an approach to linguistics and the humanities which does not separate the categories set up by any human language from those set up by our general cognitive faculties for abstraction and imagistic representation, but rather sees the integration of both in a specific socio-cultural environment (cf. Lakoff, 1982).

Somehow, the pendulum has now swung back to the other extreme: instead of ostracising metaphor, based on radical positivist and empiricist convictions, it is now seen as being situated in the deepest and most general processes of human interaction with reality, in assimilating and adapting to the world; and it is claimed that whatever we know about the world, we know on the basis of our constructive activity and through the "distorting" influences of cognition and language. Our knowledge is seen relative to this basis and metaphor as helping in the construction of a conceptual world with its own laws.

Besides this relativist and constructivist outlook, Lakoff's descriptive tools and terms, such as the distinction between "conceptual metaphors" and "linguistic metaphors", may have contributed to a renewed and intensified research on metaphor. Last but not least, the concept of "motivation" in the creation of ever new linguistic signs seems to offer an attractive counterweight against too blind an acceptance of

the Saussurean principle of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign: if cognition and language are seen as intertwined faculties, then a large number of linguistic signs, especially all those that are relatable to any possible form of metaphor, appear to be highly systematic and hence motivated.

Due to this significant shift in perspective, we see the pervasiveness and ubiquity of metaphor to reside both in cognitive and linguistic processes and their products. A variety of disciplines is now involved in the study of metaphor and it seems a foregone conclusion that metaphor is indispensable for man's development and hence of utmost linguistic and cognitive significance. While we wanted to preserve the critical distance of rational sceptics towards mainstream thinking about metaphor, we also wanted to bring together a collection of articles representative of the present outlook and of the work done in several linguistic and psychological domains. What has been achieved within the cognitive paradigm and what may be achieved in future research should also become visible.

One main result of metaphor research in linguistics and psychology has been that the disciplines now find themselves challenged to redefine their scope, their aims and their methods. It is to this aim that we hope to contribute by pointing out that metaphor's presence in the core domains of these two disciplines may affect the formation of new paradigms. For linguistics metaphor research has contributed to break down the divisional borderlines between semantics and pragmatics. Words obtain their meaning in co- and context. The notion of fixed, schematic meanings, still treated as complexes of universal primitives, has lost its attractiveness and with it, explanations of metaphors in terms of feature transfer, verbal displacement and the like. Metaphor is now considered an instrument of thought, and a transaction between the constructive effects of context, imagistic and conceptual representation, and general encyclopaedic knowledge. For psychology, metaphor research has effected a rethinking of the process-product distinction; concepts and representations - as dynamic constructs - are now seen to depend on

and to participate in processes of formal and informal reasoning.

This volume divides into three parts, viz. metaphor and the system of language, metaphor and language use, and metaphor and psycholinguistic processes. It attempts to provide ample illustration for the ubiquity of metaphoric processes and products.

In the first part of this volume, metaphoric processes, which in a truly Peircean sense are iconic and hence motivated signs, are shown to occur by necessity in core areas of language and to be responsible for the dynamic aspects of the linguistic system. For the specialist, dead metaphors are fossils and petrifications of former metaphoric processes; the linguistic lay brother can still infer the motivation behind conventional metaphors. From a synchronic but dynamic point of view, there seem to be strong arguments both for assuming literal meanings to derive from metaphoric ones and for interpreting polysemy and the context-dependent generation of meaning as processes deeply affected by metaphor, or at least by processes that are analogues to metaphor.

In the second part, prototypical structures are brought to bear on the explanation of concepts underlying metaphoric use of prepositions and particles. Furthermore, not only cognitive but also affective, emotive factors are shown to work in the condensed language forms of newspaper headlines and trade names. However, in the translation of metaphor we are made to realize that wider social issues of language use also play a crucial role towards explaining limitations and different possibilities of languages.

The third part of this volume discusses psychological and psycholinguistic aspects of metaphor. We find it in scientific discovery and problem solving procedures; we see the interplay of different kinds and levels of cognitive representations to depend on it, and it should therefore not come as a surprise that two characteristic aspects of metaphor are shown to occur in the earliest stages of language development. In educational processes, both learning to read and learning a second language should not be segregated from metaphorical usage, an argument in favour states that not even aphasia will completely disturb

metaphoric competence. But metaphor is not bound to occur in verbal language: iconicity of sign language effects the occurrence of lexical metaphors and exerts constraints on grammatical processes.

## 2. Metaphor and the system of language

Nöth's paper on semiotic aspects of metaphor opens the discussion not only because it surveys three traditional theories of metaphor, i.e. the substitution, interaction and comparison theory, but also because it tries to refine the notion of similarity within a wider semiotic framework. With Peirce, Nöth does not consider metaphors as direct icons (i.e. representations of objects in pictures, diagrams or models) but as indirect signs. These are mental facts and need not have an objective logical or ontological basis. As also do Lakoff & Johnson (198o), Nöth treats metaphors as experience based mental facts. Hence, similarities depend on cultural codes and are culturally determined. The iconicity of metaphor arises through creative processes whereby any linguistic sign can become a metaphor for any other linguistic sign.

Closs-Traugott's approach sides partly with Searle's views on metaphor (1977) and partly with Lakoff & Johnson (198o). With the former she accepts the distinction between innovative and dead metaphors but also stresses the fact that dead metaphors are systematic. That is, they follow constraints on how and which domains, or segments of domains, to use in building new mental representations in different semantic fields. With the latter she shares the view of a transfer of elements from one domain to another. But Closs-Traugott disagrees with them on the status of the conceptual process involved. She considers Lakoff & Johnson's "conceptual metaphor" a "conceptual schema", not a metaphor, since the term designates abstract, semantically underspecified domains at the conceptual level. The three 'sites' or areas in the linguistic system studied by Closs-Traugott are (i) a set of spatio-temporal terms; (ii) a set of performative verbs; and (iii) thematic structure.

Mühlhäusler's view on metaphor is radically opposed to a view that sees metaphor as a marginal type of language use. In his view, metaphorical use is the primary one and literal use is derived from it. This view must be evaluated within the wider framework of a concept of linguistics known as 'developmental linguistics', which claims that only a linguistic theory encompassing language variation, child language development, pidgin language evolution, second language acquisition, and linguistic change can offer an explanatory basis. If one regards metaphor as a way of subsuming a large number of experiental phenomena under one category symbol, then the specification of various meanings by means of different symbols is a later developmental achievement.

In Dirven's paper "Metaphor as a basic means for extending the lexicon", Lakoff's linguistic approach is first set against the wider background of a tradition of thought in psychology, philosophy and anthropology which saw a striking parallel between metaphor and thought in the development of cognitive categories in primitive men. In Dirven's view, four levels of metaphor, i.e. sound metaphor, word metaphor, phrase or sentence metaphor, and text metaphor can be distinguished.

At the level of word metaphor four metaphoric processes have been traditionally recognized, viz. metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor (in the narrow sense) and synaesthesia. An analysis of the numerous readings of the items *cup* and *sweet* shows how these four metaphoric processes are distributed over the various readings and how each process yields specific sets of readings. Further, it is shown that metaphorical processes do not operate in isolation, but that they interact with different morphological processes such as diminutivisation and prefixation.

Jongen's paper on 'Polysemy, tropes and cognition' is placed in the tradition of Lakoff's (1982) views on cognitive linguistics, whereby the descriptive term 'motivation' is especially highlighted, which, as with all linguistic terms, is intended to carry a great deal of explanatory force. The author has a detailed look at motivation in the polysemous structure of the lexical items Fr. *fermer* (close) and its German and Dutch equivalents. In the extensions of the readings of these items,

cognitive categories but not linguistic features impose constraints on the polysemisation process and on possible new readings. These cognitive categories arise from perceptual processes.

Instead of following the folk theory and semantic theories which treat metaphor as an extraordinary, exceptional phenomenon, P. Bosch integrates processes of metaphor production and comprehension into the ordinary mechanisms at work in literal discourse. To this purpose, he argues for context dependent meanings. His notion of "context model" aims at an explication of a successful exchange of messages in a context and without conventionally fixed, stable meanings of expressions. He draws on experimental evidence which shows that the same expression can be used to designate quite different things, or different expressions can designate the same thing in different contexts. In the light of his conclusion that we only have context dependent meanings, the use of metaphorical predications appears as an intensified process of mapping and filtering contextual notions in the subject and predicate positions to the point where they match.

## 3. Metaphor and language use

Radden's paper "Spatial metaphors underlying prepositions of causality" is an exploration in an area of lexico-syntax that used to be seen as having purely idiomatic but no systematic character, nor motivation. English has no fewer than eleven prepositions which can denote causality and each of them denotes a different kind of causality or a different sub-sense of causality. Radden shows that for each of these prepositions the same image schema which determines the spatial sense also underlies the causal sense. Thus the conventional metaphors underlying these causal prepositions have led to a systematic and conceptual differentiation within the category of causality.

As in the case of Radden, Rudzka's paper "Metaphoric processes in word formation. The case of prefixed verbs" tackles the question of

forming abstract concepts by means of spatial particles. But Rudzka asks a different question: How does a given prefix acquire so many different readings in the verbs it has helped to derive, and more importantly, how are these different readings related and still relatable to each other? Following a method developed by Susan Lindner (1982), Rudzka starts from the spatial image schemata for *out* and then relates them to the far more abstract meanings of the prefix in the derived verbs. She realizes that there is no simple boundary between literal and metaphoric meanings but that any deviation from the most prototypical image schema of *out*-movement constitutes a step towards more abstract schemata and gradually to the metaphorical end of a cline.

The papers by De Knop and Vorlat both deal with innovative metaphors De Knop investigates the role of context in the interpretation of novel metaphors and formulates some linguistic and extra-linguistic strategies for the reconstruction of the metaphoric meaning in newspaper headlines. Among these, recurrence to our stock of conceptual metaphors, which often find expression in novel metaphors, and appeals to extralinguistic prototypical representations figure foremost; but they also combine and interact in ways that clearly illustrate any claim of contextual processing.

E. Vorlat selected one hundred metaphoric trade names of perfumes and tested them along the lines of Osgood's semantic differential. Her results reveal that most of the trade names evoke some kind of positive association and that advertisers make a strong impact on prospective customers merely by the appropriate choice of a metaphoric trade name. Metaphor is thus not only a means shaping thought but also a condition for efficient communication, especially in relation with business transactions.

Newmarks's contribution "The translation of metaphor" discusses various kinds of metaphor and matches these with various translation strategies to choose from for an appropriate translation. The types of metaphor which Newmark considers are: dead metaphors, cliché metaphors, stock metaphors, recent metaphors (or neologisms), and original (or in -

novative) metaphors; these five categories cut across the two categories of conceptual and affective metaphors. Each of these metaphor types may, depending on the more universal or the more culture-specific character of the given metaphor and depending on the given text-type (expressive, vocative or informative texts), require different translation strategies which are then discussed. Finally, Newmark sees metaphor as a pervasive factor in language and literature at the centre of all problems of translation theory, semantics and linguistics.

## 4. Metaphor and psycholinguistic processes

Hoffman presents arguments for the abundance and necessity of metaphor in science. Metaphor is regarded as serving a variety of functions in hypothesis formation, in the prediction, the description and the interpretation of new phenomena and re-interpretation of old theoretical concepts. Insofar as models, images, and analogies have been claimed to be basic to metaphor, he sets out to distinguish metaphor and images, models and analogies. Discussing the epistemological status of metaphors, Hoffman makes a radical point: no theory and no theoretical statement should be rejected on the basis of its metaphoricalness; even if metaphors make some false predictions they can always be used to generate new hypotheses. What is needed then in an empirical philosophy of science is a move away from the search for an ultimate rational foundation of science and a move towards an investigation of all kinds of "intuitive heuristics", and plausible reasoning including metaphor.

Honeck & Kibler examine the notion "representation" in explanations of metaphor and proverbs and draw a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic representations. Mental imagery, and generally all analogue representations are intrinsic while propositional representations presumably qualify as extrinsic. They criticise the assumption that propositions represent all forms of knowledge and point out that for purposes of representing figurative language propositions pose difficulties

as figurative understanding can be compared to solving ill-defined problems. In their Conceptual Base Theory of proverb understanding they postulate four ordered phases and suggest multiple representations for them. A literal, non-imagistic representation of a proverb in the Pre-Problem Recognition Phase may arouse imagery; in the Problem Recognition Phase the literal representation is enhanced by a representation of the supporting context. This will be the input to the literal Transformation Phase in which a literal-to-figurative transition is effected presumably by the computation of an analogy. Its result in the Figurative Phase, will again be an abstract, non-verbal, general, non-imagistic and generative representation. They discuss and criticise competing theories of metaphor and representation of figurative meaning as being essentially single-type-representation theories for the different phases of representation in figurative understanding.

Neither of the two competing views on metaphor in language acquisition, the early and the late metaphor view, suits Paprottê. Heuristically reducing metaphor to two aspects, he traces these aspects in spontaneous speech data of young children between 18 and 42 months. Assuming that metaphors are characterized by semantic indeterminacy, which is also a typical phenomenon of 'literal' expressions, and by a specific illocutionary force which Goodman (1968) dubbed "contraindicated predication", he locates these aspects in the multi-purpose-topic function of children's early utterances and in their use of expressions on multiple representational levels. The children's capacity to deal with these aspects, he assumes, nevertheless does not parallel adults' metaphoric capacities as these children have not yet fully mastered the mutuality constraints operating on discourse.

The educational implications of figurative usage are charted out by Pickens, Pollio & Pollio. They criticise the traditional neglect of figurative speech in textbooks and assume identical comprehension processes for literal, clichêd and figurative usage. Their study elucidates a pattern of relationships among figurative competence, context, general reading ability and figurative text comprehension: good young readers

seem to be good at comprehending literal and figurative tasks and poor older readers perform no better or worse in figurative than in literal comprehension and use. For younger children, metaphor comprehension seems to be part of an as yet undifferentiated more general language faculty that incorporates the figurative capacity. Older children, as the authors suggest, develop a specific figurative ability and differentiate their set of linguistic abilities. The authors favour the inclusion of figurative speech into textbooks in order to provide the beginning reader with text materials at least as complex as his or her general language ability, and in order to expose the children to the useful consequences of creative, figurative usage.

Trosborg is one of the first researchers to investigate metaphor in foreign language instruction. Replicating a study by Gardner et al. (1975) with foreign language learners, she confirms a general trend of increasing metaphoric capacity in $L_2$ learners relative to increasing proficiency in the second language. This finding holds both for a production task (story completion) and for the preference task where her Danish subjects had to choose between literal, conventional-, novel-metaphor and inappropriate endings. Differences found with respect to the Gardner study are partially explained by differences in cognitive maturity and sophistication of the foreign language learners. However, some of her results must also be seen against the background of her subjects insufficient lexical knowledge.

A neurolinguistic perspective on metaphor is provided by Stachowiak. He investigates comprehension and production of "prepackaged, prefabricated" idioms with literal and metaphoric readings in aphasic speech. His results indicate that aphasic patients rely on the redundancy of verbal context to make up for lexical and grammatical difficulties. With redundant context, aphasic patients show a relatively good comprehension of idioms and do not differ significantly in their performance from that of a control group. They seem to reconstruct a literal meaning before retrieving the figurative sense, influenced by considerations of pragmatic plausibility and probability.

Context-reduced and context free stimuli significantly lower the aphasics' performance. An important issue in Stachowiak's experiments is whether idioms and metaphors are holistically stored and produced as unitary sememes. His findings, though not conclusive, suggest that figurative comprehension involves both, retrieval of a unitary, holistic information about the figure of speech as well as constructional processes which are put to work once the normal word-by-word processing has failed.

B. Woll discusses visual imagery and metaphor in British Sign Language (BSL) and contrasts arbitrary with iconic and mostly translucent signs. At the lexical level, visual imagery is affected by structural constraints which over time destroy links between sign form and original image. Many signs, therefore, exhibit the properties of dead metaphors of a spoken language. Image types vary as to whether the image of a referent is presented (pointing, grasping or indicating of referents) or depicted. In depiction, there occur direct and metonymic images. As image types also determine grammatical classification and modification patterns of signs, metaphoric signs influence structural properties of BSL. Metaphorical signs also occur in compounding processes, in loan translations from spoken English and in meaning extensions. Creative use of signs shows, that the cognitive processes underlying metaphor in spoken language can be seen at work in sign language.

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