

METAPHORIC CONCEPTS AND LANGUAGE*

E. Romero and B. Soria

eromero@ugr.es and bsoria@ugr.es

Granada University

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays it is usual to talk about metaphoric concepts. In the literature about metaphor there are, at least, two notions of metaphoric concepts. One of them is used to explain the meaning of the metaphoric use of language. The other is used to describe human cognition. Although it might be thought that the two notions of metaphoric concept that are involved in these explanations are the same, we will show that they only have the metaphoric mechanism in common. And it is precisely this feature that brings to light the fact that when we are talking about metaphoric concepts in any sense, we are really talking about conceptions of concepts and not about concepts, in case conceptions are not themselves concepts.

Taking this into account, one of the objectives of this talk is to show how our comprehension of the metaphoric use of language affects our understanding of the view of our conceptions of concepts. The metaphoric use of language¹ affects our understanding of the view of our conceptions of concepts because this use is possible only if we understand that our conceptions of concepts are structured in a way which allows their metaphoric restructuring by means of conceptions of other concepts, they are structured in a way that permits the application of the metaphoric mechanism. The metaphoric mechanism results in a reconceptualization of a target concept that serves as a new context of interpretation. This new context of interpretation allows speakers to associate metaphoric concepts or, as we prefer to call them, ‘metaphoric provisional meanings’ with the words included in the

* Financial support for this research, which has been carried out in the Project ‘Metáfora, Significado y Comunicación verbal’, has been provided by DGICYT, code number BFF2000-1528. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Granada-Bolonia Workshop on Concepts held in the University of Granada (September 2003). We are grateful to the participants of this Meeting for their questions and remarks.

¹ ‘The metaphoric use of the linguistic meanings of words’ or ‘the metaphoric use of the conceptions of concepts associated with the words used metaphorically’ are alternative phrases to the phrase ‘The metaphoric use of language’.

metaphoric utterance.

The second objective is to show that the same restriction about the structure of our conceptions of concepts we have just pointed out is operative when we want to explain in what sense it is said that our conceptual system is to a large extent metaphorical in nature. There are concepts in our conceptual system whose conceptions have been metaphorically originated; there are metaphoric concepts in our conceptual system.

But let's see a pair of examples in order to make the two uses of 'metaphoric concept' clearer. One is reflected if we consider the meaning of 'cat' included in the metaphoric utterance (1).

(1) [Sarah asks Marian where her one-year-old son is and she answers:] My cat is on the mat

Although 'cat' means CAT, in this occasion it acquires the metaphoric provisional meaning or the metaphoric concept elaborated in order to interpret the utterance rightly. This metaphoric concept can be elaborated by means of a metaphoric restructuring of the target concept, INFANT, from the source concept, CAT. The target concept metaphorically restructured from which the metaphoric concept of 'cat' is determined in (1) is INFANTS ARE CATS. Nevertheless, this target concept restructured metaphorically is usually considered a metaphoric concept, but this is the other notion of 'metaphoric concept'. This notion is relevant in some of the studies that describe human cognition, although these studies focus on conventional metaphoric concepts rather than on new metaphoric concepts. One example of conventional metaphoric concept is (2),

(2) LOVE

or our concept LOVE. It is said that our conception of LOVE is metaphorical because it was produced at least by means of the metaphoric conceptual restructuring LOVE IS A JOURNEY. In this case it is said that we have the conventional metaphoric concept LOVE in our conceptual system.

2. SOME REMARKS ON CONCEPTS, CONCEPTIONS OF CONCEPTS, AND LANGUAGE

Before clarifying the two notions of metaphoric concepts mentioned in the introduction, we would like to add some features of concepts in general and to specify the relations between concepts, conceptions of concepts, and language.

2.1 Concepts and conceptions of concepts

Concepts are the constituents of thoughts and they are stable. These concepts are associated with distinct kinds of information or with the thinker's conceptions of these concepts and are commonly expressed in a language.² But concepts remain constant even though the thinker's conceptions of them may change. Still, a conception of a concept is capable of playing different discriminatory or inferential roles on different occasions.

The distinction between concepts and conceptions of concepts parallels Burge's (1993, p. 316) between two types of word meaning: (i) translational meaning (concept) and (ii) lexical meaning (conception of concept). Conceptions of concepts, as we learn from Burge too, are the lexical meanings of the words that express them and must be understood as a complex idealization of the understanding of the words when used.

The information that may be stored in the memory of the thinker at a certain conceptual address within this complex idealization falls, following Sperber and Wilson (1986, pp. 86-93), into three types: logical, encyclopaedic and lexical. The logical content is characterized by a set of inferential rules which capture certain analytic implications of the concept. The encyclopaedic knowledge includes commonplace assumptions, scientific information, culture specific beliefs and personal, idiosyncratic observations and experiences. The lexical properties specify the phonetic form as well as phonological and syntactic properties of the linguistic form that encodes the concept. For example, the concept CAT is associated with a conception which falls into a logical entry such as the inference rule whose output is ANIMAL OF A CERTAIN KIND; an encyclopaedic entry which includes general

² Nevertheless, there are also non-lexicalised concepts. As Sperber and Wilson (1998, p. 88) argue, it is possible, for example, to have a proper concept of a certain kind of smell, which allows us to recognise new occurrences, and draw inferences on the basis of this recognition, even though you cannot linguistically express this concept, or bring others to grasp and share it.

knowledge about the appearance and behaviour of cats, scientific knowledge about cats (such as their anatomy, their genetic make-up, their relation to other feline, etc.) as well as personal experiences of particular cats; and a lexical entry which takes account of the phonetic structure and grammatical properties of the word 'cat'.

We can raise many questions about this picture of conceptions of concepts, but now we are only interested in two of them: (i) what entry or entries intervene in a metaphoric restructuring of a concept and (ii) how this entry or these entries must be represented in order to explain the possibility of performing a metaphoric restructuring of a concept.

The answer to the first problem is that the metaphoric restructuring of a concept is based essentially on the encyclopaedic entry. Indeed, according to many authors such as Black (1954, 1977), Indurkha (1986, 1992), and Way (1991), commonplace assumptions that competent speakers associate with the concepts are the aspects that intervene in the metaphoric restructuring of a concept.

The second question will be treated falling back on the notion of *domains*. The domains are representations of a part of a conception associated with a concept. Our conception of a concept can be represented by words and their relationships in the description of one domain. And these relationships depend on habits and conventions. It is through the latter that we know which conceptual domains may help us to describe a word, to which other words it relates in this description and how it relates to them - all this determines their lexical meaning.

The conceptions of concepts, the lexical meanings of some words, rather than concepts themselves, serve to study the features that characterize the conceptual system of the individuals of the same linguistic community and its relation with the use that the speakers of this community make of this system, in particular, its metaphoric use. The relation between the conceptual system and its use leads to the search for the link between the terms and the concepts associated with them.

2.2 Concepts and their verbal expressions

There is not a one to one relationship between concepts and words. Neither all words mean concepts (e.g. 'it') nor all concepts are meant by words (e.g. non-lexicalised concepts such as UNCLE-OR-AUNT which are encodable only by a phrase in English). Only a fraction of

the conceptual repertoire is lexicalised.

In general, there are different types of connections between words and their meanings. One of them is the conventional relation. But we can also revise the conventional meaning of a word when used (e.g. in metaphoric utterances).

If 'water' means WATER, it is because we have been brought up to use this word both as a conventional term of the concept WATER and as a conventional term of our conception of water. A competent speaker knows the conventional code that shape communication. By conventional code we understand the phonetic, lexicogrammatical and semantic conventions shared by the members of a linguistic community in a certain stage of the language. The conceptual system of a competent speaker also includes the individual's encyclopedic knowledge and context of culture.³ In addition, it involves the mechanisms of interpretation of the possible utterances and the contextual potential of the lexical units comprised in the vocabulary of a language. This means that, depending on our linguistic competence, there is some habitual or expected co-occurrence of words or concepts characteristic of semantic or lexical behavior in language, testifying to its predictability of use.

In communication, according to Sperber and Wilson (1986), people need a mutual cognitive environment to understand each other successfully. The conventional meanings of the words in a language are the community's store of established knowledge. This knowledge is achieved by experience (linguistic or extralinguistic).

Not all conventional linguistic signs are of the same type. Depending on the relationship between a term and its lexical meaning, we can draw a distinction between arbitrary, onomatopoeic, figurative.

But the words are normally used to convey not only the conceptions they conventionally mean, but also many other related conceptions to which they might point in a given context⁴. Language also has some resources by means of which new senses may be constructed in context; one of them is the metaphoric use of language.

We are capable of using old words in new ways, giving expression to conceptions of concepts which do not have conventional verbal expressions associated. Speakers usually communicate conceptions of concepts that are not lexicalised or that are not encoded by

³ This idea derives from Sperber and Wilson's (1986, p. 142) emphasis on relevance-to-an-individual.

⁴ This idea, which is often referred to by the term 'ad hoc concept', is defended by authors from different theoretical perspectives such as Barsalou 1987, Gibbs 1994, Franks 1995, Recanati 1995, Nunberg 1995, and Carston 2002, among others.

words. This is the other type of connection between words and lexical meanings: a non-conventional relation. If this conception does not become a familiar form of expression, it will not have the kind of stability that we consider a condition for its conventionalization. That is, the link between the word or expression and the conception of the concept will not become a part of the community's store of established knowledge.

By contrast, the hearers' grasp of the conception of a nonlexicalised concept that speakers are invoking may eventually get a permanent lexical entry. In general, polysemy is the outcome of a pragmatic process whereby intended senses are inferred on the basis of lexicalised concepts and contextual information. When the link between a term and a meaning is conventionalized and the relation has been produced by means of a figure of speech, the signs are known as *figurative*. Depending on the figure of speech used to give expression to these now lexicalised meanings, they are called 'metaphoric' or 'synecdochic' and so on.

One paradigmatic context in which new senses are constructed is the metaphoric context at which a metaphoric utterance aims. We want to argue that metaphor is a mechanism used to generate new conceptions of concepts, a mechanism which opens new paths to otherwise inaccessible end-points. The verbal representation of metaphor makes it possible to communicate these conceptions that were not linguistically encodable in the public language. The metaphoric use of language, a use that depends upon the conventional meanings of the words of this language, extends the range of communicable conceptions of concepts, it allows a provisional revision of lexical meanings. In this sense, when the speaker uses the language metaphorically, he elaborates provisional conceptions of concepts which give way to provisional meanings of the words used. The examples of verbal metaphors show how a word which encodes a given conception of a concept can be used to convey a conception of another concept which is neither encoded by this word nor by any other expression in the language at a given moment. These and other characteristics of imaginative metaphor will be considered in the next section of this paper.

3. METAPHORIC CONCEPTS AS METAPHORIC PROVISIONAL MEANINGS

In this section we are going to expound the notion of *metaphoric concept* that serves to explain the meaning of some of the words used in a metaphoric utterance. To understand this

notion, we are going to show how metaphoric provisional meanings or metaphoric concepts are produced. These meanings or concepts are generated pragmatically by interlocutors in utterances and they have been called 'metaphoric' because they are brought about by means of the metaphoric mechanism. The metaphoric mechanism allows us to solve the puzzle of how the concept conventionally associated with a word used in a metaphoric utterance gives rise to a metaphoric one which is not conventional. It also allows us to know how certain words can change their meanings and what meanings they take on.

First of all, we must explain how the metaphoric mechanism is triggered. In the identification of both the literal and the metaphoric use of language, we have to resort to the linguistic competence of interlocutors and the context in which the language is used. In the linguistic competence of individuals, possible contexts of use, linguistic or extralinguistic, are predicted for lexical items. If the prediction is confirmed in the context of utterance, the conventional relation is maintained, words are used in their usual way. By contrast, the metaphoric mechanism is triggered because, unlike other utterances, metaphoric utterances are identified when the speaker perceives a contextual abnormality and a conceptual contrast. These are the two conditions for the identification of the metaphoric use of language. The metaphoric use of language is characterized as that in which linguistic expressions appear in abnormal linguistic or extralinguistic contexts and in which the hearer detects a target concept and a source concept. If we consider (1) again,

(1) [Sarah asks Marian where her one-year-old son is and she answers:] My cat is on the mat

we perceive that it is an anomalous way of talking about Marian's son. The contextual abnormality is produced by the occurrence of a lexical item in an unusual extralinguistic context. The extralinguistic context alludes to a child, Marian's son. We are not talking about a cat in any of the conventional senses of the term 'cat'. In (1), we perceive a contextual abnormality, as infants are not the kind of thing that we call 'cats' according to our conceptual system. The possible occurrences of lexical items, such as 'cat', in their different contexts of use are comprised in the conceptual system that shapes our linguistic competence. So, if the context of utterance does not fit into the prediction of use of the concepts fixed in our linguistic competence, we will be facing an unusual context that will lead us to think that the utterance might require a revision of some of the conventional meanings of the

expressions used. But the abnormality, though being a necessary condition for the metaphoric identification of an utterance, does not even serve to delimit the nonliteral use of language from other uses, as we also argued in Romero and Soria (1997/1998, 1998). For this reason, only if this abnormality leads us to recognize that in this utterance two concepts are involved and that one of them acts as target concept, the concept we are talking about, and the other one as source concept, the concept attributed to the one we are talking about, can we identify the utterance as metaphorical. This condition is called 'conceptual contrast'. This contrast is found in (1) because calling a child, Marian's son, 'cat' involves a conceptual contrast between the concept INFANT, the target concept, and the concept CAT, the source concept, taking into account that among the senses of 'cat', the one that serves to classify the infant nonliterally is the sense of 'cat' in which it is conceived as 'a small domesticated feline mammal', dismissing the other senses of this term. Now, we can say we are facing a metaphoric utterance.

The problem now is which concepts or word meanings intervene in (1), if (1) is metaphorical.⁵ To generate the metaphoric provisional meanings the hearer must establish the metaphoric relation between the conceptions of the concepts involved in (1); she must establish the metaphoric restructuring or recategorization. So, once an utterance is identified as metaphorical, the hearer applies, among other processes, the metaphoric mechanism for its interpretation. The metaphoric mechanism consists, following Black (1954) and Indurkha (1992), in the description of a domain through another, selecting, highlighting, omitting, and organizing certain features of the former, in addition, some features will be often created within it. Doing so is but linking two separate cognitive domains, by using the language appropriate to one of them as a lens through which to observe the other. The hearer, who has detected a conceptual contrast, that is, a source domain and a target domain, applies a mapping from the source domain, D_s , to the target domain, D_t , domains that represent part of the conventional conceptions of the two concepts involved in the metaphoric utterance. The target domain represents the conventional conception of the target concept, and the source domain represents the conventional conception of the source concept. These conceptions are represented by domains which consist of a set of terms which make up its vocabulary and a set of structural constraints which specify how these terms are related to the information associated

⁵ This problem only appears in those approaches on metaphor in which the existence of metaphoric meaning is claimed. In proposals such as Davidson's (1978), in which the existence of metaphoric meaning is denied, this

with the concept.

In the metaphoric utterance (1) the target domain describes the conception of the concept INFANT and the source domain describes the conception of the concept CAT. So, D_s could have in its vocabulary terms such as 'cats', 'feline', 'walk', 'leg', 'pet', 'play', and structural constraints such as the following:

- [1_s] Cats are small domesticated feline mammals,
- [2_s] Cats have soft fur,
- [3_s] The colour of the fur of each breed of cats varies greatly,
- [4_s] Cats play with anything available,
- [5_s] Cats are pets,
- [6_s] Pets need feeding and care,
- [7_s] Cats walk on four legs,
- [8_s] Cats scrutinise things carefully,
- [9_s] Cats are aloof with the unknown,
- [10_s] Cats are often used to catch mice, etc.

D_t could have in its vocabulary terms such as 'infant', 'human being', 'play' and its structural constraints would be sentences such as

- [1_t] Infants are young human beings,
- [2_t] Infants play with anything available,
- [3_t] Infants need feeding and care,
- [4_t] Infants are often unfriendly with the unknown,
- [5_t] At a certain stage, infants go on all fours,
- [6_t] Infants are at their early stage of their lives, etc.

By describing D_t in terms of D_s , the metaphoric utterance transfers a set of structural constraints from the source to the target domain. The relation between these domains can be explained by the elaboration of a mapping, M . This is composed of (i) a partial admissible⁶ function F from terms belonging to the source domain, arguments of the function, to terms that belong or will belong to the target domain and (ii) a subset of structural constraints of the source domain, S , which is coherently transformable by F to information associated with the target domain. A structural constraint of D_s is transformable by F if each of its terms either belongs to the arguments of the admissible partial function F or belongs to the vocabulary of target domain directly. On transforming this structural constraint, we come across another structural constraint

problem is irrelevant.

⁶ An admissible mapping is one which preserves the type of arguments and values of the function, according to their lexical entries.

only in terms of D_t . If the union of the transformation of S with part of the information of the target domain is consistent, that is to say, if this union is true under at least one model, then F is coherent with S . This coherence is strong if each sentence of S transformed by F is a logical consequence of the sentences of the target domain, and is weak, however, when the transformed sentences of the source domain do not follow on logically from the structural constraints of the target domain. If there is strong coherence in the interpretation of a metaphoric utterance, then nothing new is added to the target domain from the source domain. When the coherence in metaphoric interpretation is weak, something new is added to the target domain. The latter is enhanced by the metaphoric restructuring.

The mapping generates a metaphoricly restructured $D_t' = D_t \cup F(S)$, which is the context from which the metaphoric utterance is interpreted. The result of the metaphoric restructuring, the restructured target domain, provides us with a context of interpretation of the metaphoric utterance provisionally restructured for that occasion. To interpret a metaphoric utterance is to elaborate a D_t' from which to determine what is metaphoricly said, with the result that the metaphoric provisional meaning of the source domain terms becomes the meaning (provisional or not) of the target domain terms.⁷ The provisional meaning of the target domain terms can be used to show the cognitive power of metaphor. This constitutes a way of producing new meanings or new conceptions of concepts in the language system or conceptual system, although these new conceptions may not become conventional.

So, to interpret (1), we may coherently transform a set of sentences from the source domain, CAT, to sentences with terms only of the target domain, INFANT, and this set of transformed sentences will redescribe the concept INFANT through the concept CAT. In the mapping, M, F must include as arguments at least the metaphoric vehicles –the terms of the utterance metaphoricly attributed to what we are talking about. In (1), there is only a term

⁷ The metaphoric provisional meaning of source domain terms is the meaning of their counterparts in the target domain, as F indicates. The meaning of the counterparts of source domain terms may or may not coincide with their conventional meaning. In the latter case, their meaning will also be provisional. To return to example (1), the problem lies in knowing what the meaning of 'infants' is in the restructured target domain. To overcome this problem, we can look into how mappings show that the change of meaning of terms involved in a metaphoric utterance is not always produced in the same way. This change depends on how the target domain is restructured. In particular, it depends on whether the coherency is strong or weak and on the ordered pair in F . In general, the metaphoric provisional meaning of a D_s term can be

- (A) the usual meaning of another symbol in D_t ,
- (B) the metaphoric provisional meaning of another term in D_t ,
- (C) a usual meaning in D_t , or
- (D) a metaphoric provisional meaning in D_t .

that is involved in the description of CAT, to wit, 'cat'. So, F would be a set containing members of ordered pairs that includes necessarily a pair with 'cat' as argument, for example, the pair (cat \rightarrow infant), and includes others such as (walk on four legs \rightarrow go on all fours), (pet \rightarrow infant), and (aloof \rightarrow unfriendly) and S would be a set of sentences embracing [4_s], [5_s], [7_s], [8_s] and [9_s] of the source domain. It is clear then, that this mapping is weakly coherent as it transforms the previous constraints into [2_t], [3_t], [7_t], [8_t] and [9_t]

[2_t] Infants play with anything available,
[3_t] Infants need feeding and care,
[7_t] Infants go on all fours,
[8_t] Infants scrutinise things carefully,
[9_t] Infants are unfriendly with the unknown.

and [7_t], [8_t], and [9_t] are not logical consequences of the target domain. The metaphoric relation of the concepts involved in (1) consists in mapping a subset of information associated with the source domain, information about the typical features of cats, into a set of information which can now be associated with the target domain; in particular, mapping the piece of information that is coherent with the description of the target domain, with the concept INFANT.

The context of interpretation of (1) shows our conception of INFANT provisionally modified by those aspects of the conception of CAT that influence its restructuring. When the context from which the terms that are involved in a metaphoric utterance changes, the meanings associated with these terms change provisionally. In this way, some terms acquire a metaphoric meaning. The relation between the terms and the originated metaphorical meanings is not established or conventionalized. Hence, in (1) 'cat' acquires a metaphoric provisional meaning.

The information mapped is the information that, together with the target domain, composes the metaphoric provisional meaning of 'cat'. The meaning of 'cat' is the meaning that 'infant' has in the metaphorically restructured target domain, it is the information that can describe INFANTS coherently when they are seen as bearing the features typical of cats; it is a question of seeing an infant through some of the features typical of cats, we would see him as a small being, that needs feeding and care, goes on all fours, plays with anything available, scrutinizes things carefully and is unfriendly with the unknown. 'Cat' acquires a transferred metaphoric provisional meaning or a metaphoric concept.

This information, as we claim in Romero and Soria (forthcoming), constitutes the context from which that utterance is interpreted. Thus, this is what allows us to establish what is said through (1). If Marian says ‘my cat’ when talking about her son, ‘cat’ acquires a transferred meaning as a result of the mapping from the domain representing the concept CAT to the domain representing the concept INFANT. Since ‘cat’ means here provisional and metaphorically what we have just specified, the infant with the features typical of cats, ‘my cat’ in (1) denotes Marian’s son and Marian is the progenitor of the infant that the speaker is denoting when she uses metaphorically that noun phrase.

The metaphoric use of language, the imaginative metaphor, differs significantly from the literal use. The former is interpreted from the new context generated by applying the metaphoric mechanism. This mechanism by means of which it is possible to produce metaphoric provisional meanings out of the conventional meanings of terms shows that usually metaphoric provisional meanings are not identical to the conventional meanings of other words. Metaphor is a mechanism used to produce non-conventional meanings in a systematic way, meanings or conceptions that are not lexicalized in the linguistic competence of the speakers of a linguistic community at that moment in the language.⁸ In metaphor, as Goodman (1968) said, old words are used for new jobs; it constitutes a cost-effective, practical and creative way of using terms, and so of generating new conceptions on concepts. This is the cognitive power of metaphor.

4. METAPHORIC CONCEPTS AS PART OF OUR CONCEPTUAL SYSTEM IN COGNITIVE METAPHOR THEORY

In this section we are going to specify the notion of metaphoric concept that is used for the description of human cognition. This notion has its natural place in the powerful theory for the study of the role of metaphor in our ordinary conceptual system introduced by

⁸ The provisional character of metaphor has to do with the link between the conception and the linguistic expression but it does not entail the lack of a potential stability needed to consider a conception as a type of concept which though being specific to a linguistic community it is still a concept. A provisional metaphoric meaning is provisional in the sense that it is not part of the community’s store of established knowledge at that particular moment of the language but it may endure if it becomes shared by members of a linguistic community. This is possible because of its latent capability of playing different discriminatory or inferential roles on different occasions.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980).⁹

The most basic cognitive assumption presented by Lakoff and Johnson in their study of 1980 is that there is a set of ordinary metaphoric concepts, conceptual metaphors, around which we conceptualize the world. The concepts that our ordinary conceptual system includes structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Most of them are metaphorical and their essence, following Black (1954), is understanding and experiencing partially one kind of thing or experience in terms of another. From this view, a metaphoric concept is a concept whose conception has been restructured metaphorically in terms of another.

As far as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) are concerned, three types of metaphoric concepts can be distinguished: marginal metaphoric concepts (1980, p. 55), conventional metaphoric concepts (1980, p. 4), and new metaphoric concepts (1980, p. 145). Among these concepts only conventional metaphoric concepts are systematically called 'conceptual metaphors'. Conventional metaphoric concepts or conceptual metaphors are normally used when we think and the expressions that represent them in a conventional way are systematically used in the everyday language; they are concepts that we usually and systematically conceptualize in terms of others. An example of conceptual metaphor is the metaphoric concept THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS, where we partially conceptualize THEORIES in terms of BUILDINGS. Marginal metaphoric concepts are 'relatively uninteresting' (1980, p. 54) because they are isolated and unsystematic cases that do not systematically interact with other metaphoric concepts because so little of them is used. An example of these is A MOUNTAIN IS A PERSON (1980, p. 55). New metaphoric concepts constitute a new way of thinking; they have the power to create a new reality, to alter the conceptual system. Thus, they are not part of our conceptual system. Examples of these concepts are THEORIES ARE PATRIARCHS¹⁰ or the metaphoric concept elaborated to interpret (1), INFANTS ARE CATS.

Only the conventional metaphoric concepts are interesting in order to study the metaphoric structure of the conceptual system. So the objective of cognitive metaphor theoreticians is to characterize exactly this set of metaphoric concepts. And although, from

⁹ This theory has been developed by Johnson 1987, Lakoff 1987, and Lakoff and Turner 1989, and followed, although not always in complete agreement, by many other authors such as Gibbs 1990, 1992, Way 1991, Steen 1994, Kovácses 2002, to mention only some.

¹⁰ This new metaphoric concept can be triggered, for example, by a normal utterance of 'Classical theories are patriarchs who father many children most of whom fight incessantly', example taken from Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 53.

this view, metaphor is rather a matter of experience or everyday life, or as Lakoff (1993, p. 208) said, a matter ‘of thought and reason’ than merely a matter of language, they have recognized that that the best way to characterize the set of metaphoric concepts is to investigate the language, under Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980, p. 3) presumption that communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use when we are thinking or doing something, their works have been directed to the study of language, in particular, to some of the expressions that give form to conventional metaphoric concepts, the so-called ‘live metaphors’. But not all the metaphoric expressions which represent these conventional metaphoric concepts need to be interpreted metaphorically. Some of them must be interpreted literally. Such a radical difference between one type of expressions and the other points out that the former are not interpreted in the same way as we have explained for the interpretation of example (1), a mapping is not required for the interpretation of the former while it is needed for the interpretation of the latter.

Anyway, as we can see in the following table, the description of the metaphoric expressions that come from conceptual metaphors, the description of live metaphors, must be restricted to two types: literal and imaginative (nonliteral).¹¹

Concepts	Metaphoric Expressions		
Conventional metaphorical concepts or Conceptual metaphors	Literal metaphor	Live metaphor	Literal live metaphor such as (3)
	Imaginative or nonliteral metaphor		Imaginative live metaphor of type (i) such as (4)
			Imaginative live metaphor of type (ii) such as (5)

Although, at the level of expressions, the notion of live metaphors parallels the one of

¹¹ At this point, we would like to point out that there has not been always agreement on this terminology. Authors such as Leech 1969, Ricoeur 1975, Searle 1979, or MacCormac 1985 consider that, as far as expressions are concerned, live metaphors are Lakoff and Johnson’s imaginative or nonliteral metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson changed the sense in which it is said that a metaphor is ‘live’. From a traditional point of view it is the expression that is ‘live’ and, in the cognitive perspective, it is the speaker (rather than the expression) who lives by the metaphoric concepts that are expressed by means of live metaphoric expressions.

conceptual metaphors, at the level of metaphoric concepts, this parallelism peters out when the distinction literal-imaginative comes between these distinctions. These two ways of classifying metaphoric expressions result in a third one by which they distinguish among literal live metaphor and imaginative live metaphor (subtypes (i) or (ii)).

Literal live metaphors are the used part of a conceptual metaphor; in particular, they are the used part of a metaphoric concept that would be expressed through terms that express explicitly the two concepts that take a part in it. The example (3)

(3) The *foundations* of my theory are sure.

includes the term ‘foundations’ that is one of the parts commonly used of the conceptual metaphor THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 53) and, therefore, (3) is a case of literal live metaphor.

Unlike what happens in the description of nonliteral metaphoric interpretation, when we describe and interpret examples of literal metaphoric expressions such as ‘foundations’ in (3) we do not have to resort to the kind of analysis elaborated for (1). It is not abnormal to use the term ‘foundations’ when talking about theories; we do not have a target domain and a source domain, and so we do not have to map any feature from one domain to the other. We can interpret a normal utterance of this expression literally without the need to contrast two domains. The concept THEORY is structured with expressions such as ‘construct’, ‘foundation’, ‘outer shell’ whose meanings depend on the way in which the metaphoric concept THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS is used to structure the concept THEORY. If we represent this concept, we need only one domain. This one would have as vocabulary terms ‘theory’, ‘laws’, ‘model’, ‘foundations’, ‘construct’, ‘outer shell’, etc. and sentences such as the followings:

THEORIES

[1] Some theories have laws

[2] Some theories work out models

THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS

[3] Theories have foundations

[4] Theories have a structure

[5] Theories are constructed

[6] The foundations of a theory should support it

[7] Theories can collapse

[8] Theories can fall apart under criticism

[9] Theories are systems of rules

[10] Theories involve abstract knowledge and reasoning, etc.

The linguistic context in which every word included in the sentence ‘The foundations of my theory are sure’ coincides with one of the potential contexts fixed for them in the linguistic competence of the speakers. To interpret a normal utterance of (3) we only have to resort to the conventional meaning of its lexical items. With a usual utterance of (3), a literal use of language is made.

By contrast, the explanation given for example (1) can only be applied to what Lakoff and Johnson call ‘imaginative metaphor’. Imaginative live metaphors are either (i) instances of the unused part of a usual conceptual metaphor or (ii) extensions of the used part of a conceptual metaphor. (4) and (5)

(4) His theory has *thousands of little rooms*.

(5) These facts are the *bricks* of his theory.

exemplify (i) and (ii) respectively (examples taken from Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 53). (4) is a case of an unused part of THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS. Rooms are parts of a building not used as part of the concept THEORY. Now, to interpret (4) we need to make a mapping between two domains. In our linguistic competence, ‘rooms’ is not a term normally used to talk about theories. It is abnormal to use it in this way. In addition, we have a target domain, THEORY, and a source domain, BUILDING, and so we have to map some feature from one domain to the other. The concept THEORY is structured with expressions such as ‘laws’, ‘model’, ‘construct’, ‘foundation’, ‘outer shell’, but not with expressions such as ‘rooms’, ‘staircases’, ‘roof’. In order to have these expressions attributed to theories, we have to extend the metaphoric concept THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS. If we want to interpret (4), we do not only need to represent this concept, as we do to interpret (3), rather we need to represent the source domain, BUILDING, in order to do the mapping.

<p>THEORIES</p> <p>[1_t] Some theories have laws</p> <p>[2_t] Some theories work out models</p> <p>THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS</p> <p>[3_t] Theories have foundations</p> <p>[4_t] Theories have a structure</p> <p>[5_t] Theories are constructed</p> <p>[6_t] The foundations of a theory should support it</p> <p>[7_t] Theories can collapse</p> <p>[8_t] Theories can fall apart under criticism</p> <p>[9_t] Theories are systems of rules</p> <p>[10_t] Theories involve abstract knowledge and reasoning</p>	<p>BUILDINGS</p> <p>[1_s] Buildings have foundations</p> <p>[2_s] Buildings have a structure</p> <p>[3_s] Buildings are constructed</p> <p>[4_s] The foundations of a building should support it</p> <p>[5_s] Buildings can collapse</p> <p>[6_s] Buildings can fall apart</p> <p>[7_s] Buildings are formed by joining parts or materials</p> <p>[8_s] Buildings have roofs, walls, staircases</p> <p>[9_s] Buildings are made of bricks</p> <p>[10_s] Buildings have rooms</p>
---	--

And M would be formed by $F = \{ \langle \text{buildings} \rightarrow \text{theories} \rangle, \langle \text{rooms} \rightarrow \text{rooms} \rangle \}$ and $S = \{ [10_s] \}$.

Finally, (5) is an extension of one of the used parts of that metaphoric concept: ‘the outer shell’. This is used to structure the concept THEORY, but that is not the case of the material used to construct the outer shell, the bricks. In this sense, we need to make a mapping M that would be formed by $F = \{ \langle \text{buildings} \rightarrow \text{theories} \rangle, \langle \text{bricks} \rightarrow \text{bricks} \rangle \}$ and $S = \{ [9_s] \}$.¹²

Examples (3)-(5) are expressions that are considered, according to cognitive metaphor theory, metaphorical, but while ‘foundations’ in (3) is interpreted literally, ‘thousands of little rooms’ and ‘bricks’, when they are used in (4) and (5), are interpreted metaphorically, and so they mean metaphoric concepts in the sense expounded in section 2. Nevertheless, examples (3)-(5) are metaphoric expressions within the conceptual metaphor THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS. This metaphoric concept is conventional.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, pp. 53-54), only part of our conceptual metaphors such as THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS is used to structure our normal concepts, the part that is literal. So, the study of conventional metaphoric concepts focuses in the study of a kind

¹² These two mappings are simplified and thus they are incomplete. ‘Rooms’ and ‘bricks’ in their respective source domains have to be related with source domain terms that determine part of their meanings. These terms, in turn, have to be included as arguments of the function F of the mapping M . Consequently, it is possible to transform the sentences of the source domain that specify the meanings or part of the meanings of ‘rooms’ and

of metaphoric expressions that come from these concepts: the literal metaphors or examples like (3). If we want to elaborate a correct description of our metaphoric conceptual system, we cannot forget the metaphoric analysis of language, because when we characterize conceptual metaphors, we should not consider their imaginative uses.

Nevertheless, the fact that (3)-(5) are all considered examples of metaphor but that one of them must be interpreted literally and the others nonliterally makes it manifest that, from this perspective, the difference between the literal and nonliteral interpretation is not directly related to the distinction between the literal and the metaphoric expressions. (3)-(5) are all cases of metaphoric expressions but (3) is literally interpreted and (4)-(5) are metaphorically interpreted. The distinction literal-metaphoric is established depending on whether the concept has been metaphorically restructured by another or not at the moment of utterance interpretation. Every expression of the restructuring concept that gives form to the restructured one will be a metaphor no matter whether or not it is interpreted literally, whether or not it constitutes a normal or conventional way of talking about this concept.

5. CONCLUSION: CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO NOTIONS OF METAPHORIC CONCEPTS

Taking the distinction between concepts and conceptions of concepts as the point of departure and considering that metaphoric concepts, in any sense, must be related to conceptions of concepts, we have intended, in general, to provide a model about imaginative metaphor which, being compatible with the cognitive metaphor model about metaphoric concepts, allows a comparison of the two notions of *metaphoric concept* that appear in the literature. We have argued that, when we are talking about metaphoric utterances, metaphoric concepts are the metaphoric provisional meanings that the terms used in metaphoric utterances acquire by means of a mapping. When we are talking about concepts of our conceptual system, metaphoric concepts are concepts whose conceptions had been restructured metaphorically by a mapping as well, although, as they are now lexicalized, the mapping is not required at the moment of interpretation.

Metaphoric concepts are the provisional meanings acquired by some terms in the

'bricks' in the source domain to sentences in the target domain.

metaphoric interpretation of an utterance. In this sense a metaphoric concept is the result of a process of interpretation. Thus, we are talking about metaphoric utterances, utterances that are always interpreted nonliterally, and not about expressions. A metaphoric utterance, then, is possible only if an expression is used in an imaginative way, that is, in an abnormal context that leads us to contrast two concepts in a new way. This contrast between D_t and D_s triggers the construction of D_t' from which to determine the metaphoric concepts of the words used in the metaphoric utterances. In this sense, the metaphoric concepts, the provisional metaphoric meanings, are determined by a mapping created for the occasion of the metaphoric utterance. These concepts do not need to be incorporated into the community's store of established knowledge, they are not concepts we live by or concepts we will live by in the future. Imaginative metaphor can break conventional coding and promote a new relation between language and meanings.

Theoreticians from a cognitive perspective, on the contrary, normally talk about conventional conceptions of concepts and expressions, and not about utterances. They explain the conceptions of concepts that the reader has in his mind by means of the expressions that express them out of context. To describe metaphoric concepts we have to consider 'literal metaphors', which are not metaphoric utterances of expressions but literal expressions whose meanings have been originated metaphorically. They are metaphoric figurative meanings. An utterance of these expressions in a normal context will be a literal utterance. In this sense, a metaphoric concept is a conception of a concept of which a part was constructed metaphorically.

REFERENCES

- Barsalou, L. 1987 "The instability of graded structure: implications for the nature of concepts" (in Neisser, U. 1987, ed., *Concepts and conceptual development: Ecological and intellectual factors in categorisation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.101-40).
- Black, M 1954 "Metaphor" (*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* **55**, 273-94).
- Black, M. 1977 "More about Metaphor" (*Dialectica* **31**, 431-457).
- Burge, T. 1993 "Concepts, definitions, and meaning" (*Metaphilosophy* **24**, 309-325).
- Carston, R. 2002 *Thoughts and Utterances. The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication* (Oxford, Blackwell).
- Davidson, D. 1978 "What Metaphors Mean" (*Critical Inquiry* **5**, 31-47).
- Franks, B. 1995 "Sense generation: a 'quasi-classical' approach to concepts and concept combination" (*Cognitive science* **19**, 441-505).
- Gibbs, R. W. 1990 "The Process of Understanding Literary Metaphor" (*The Journal of Literary Semantics* **XIX/2**, 65-79).
- Gibbs, R. W. 1992 "When is Metaphor? The idea of Understanding in Theories of metaphor" (*Poetics Today* **13/4**, 574-606).
- Gibbs, R. 1994 *The poetics of mind* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

- Goodman, N. 1968 **Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols** (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill).
- Johnson, M. 1987 **The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of meaning, Imagination, and Reason** (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).
- Indurkha, B. 1986 "Constrained Semantic Transference: A Formal Theory of Metaphor" (**Synthese** **68**, 515-551).
- Indurkha, B. 1992 **Metaphor and Cognition: an Interactionist Approach** (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers).
- Kövecses, Z. 2002 **Metaphor. A Practical Introduction** (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
- Lakoff, G. 1987 **Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind** (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).
- Lakoff, George. 1993 (2nd ed.) "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor"(in Ortony, A. 1993, ed., **Metaphor and Thought**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 202-251).
- Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. 1980 **Metaphors We Live By** (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).
- Lakoff, G. and Turner, M. 1989 **More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor** (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).
- Leech, G. 1969 **A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry** (London, Longman).
- Mac Cormac, E. R. 1985 **A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor** (Cambridge, MIT Press).
- Nunberg, G. 1995 "Transfers of meaning" (**Journal of Semantics** **12**, 109-132).
- Recanati, F. 1995 "The Alleged Priority of Literal Interpretation" (**Cognitive Science** **19**, 207-232).
- Ricoeur, P. 1975 **La Métaphore Vive** (Paris, Editions du Seuil).
- Romero, E. and Soria, B. 1997/1998 "Stylistic Analysis and Novel Metaphor" (**Pragmalingüística** **5/6**, 373-89).
- Romero, E. and Soria, B. 1998 "Convention, Metaphor and Discourse" (**Altantis** **20.1**, 145-159).
- Romero, E. and Soria, B. forthcoming "A View of Novel Metaphor in the Light of Recanati's Proposals" (in Frápolli, M.J. forthcoming, ed., **Saying, Meaning and Referring. Essays on François Recanati's Philosophy of Language**, Palgrave Studies in Pragmatics, Language and Cognition).
- Searle, J. 1979 "Metaphor" (in Searle, J. 1979, ed., **Expression and Meaning**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 117-136)
- Steen, G. 1994 **Understanding Metaphor in Literature: An Empirical Approach** (London & New York, Longman).
- Sperber, D. and Wilson, D. 1986 **Relevance: Communication and Cognition** (Oxford, Basil Blackwell).
- Sperber, D. and Wilson, D. 1998 "The Mapping between the Mental and the Public Lexicon" (in Carruthers, P. and Boucher, J. 1998, eds., **Thought and language**, Cambridge CUP, pp. 184-200)
- Way, E. C. 1991 **Knowledge Representation and Metaphor** (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers).