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Cognitive-linguistic comments on metaphor identification

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Especially impressive are Heywood et al.'s analysis of sentence 6 of the Maitland passage and 2 and 3 of the Rushdie, Steen's analysis of line 3 of the Browning poem, and the use to which Crisp et al. put their taxonomy (2002: section 6). However, I think the research project needs a more comprehensive theory, including a more critical approach to the Lakoffian framework on which it is founded.

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Cognitive-linguistic comments on metaphor identification

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In my comments I will limit myself to the examination of the relationship between the approach to metaphor as described in the four articles in the present

issue and the 'standard' cognitive semantic/linguistic approach as initiated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and further refined by Lakoff (1993).

All four articles build on the 'Lakoffian' approach, as can be seen, for example, in the following two quotes: 'The criterion for metaphorical usage is the well-known Lakoffian one of a conceptual mapping between two domains' (Steen, 2002: 18) and '... we are definitely not ruling out the validity of the cognitive semantic approach to metaphor' (Crisp, 2002: 12). While the authors build on this approach, they are also critical of it for a variety of different reasons, such as the following:

Until now the study of conceptual metaphor has been based mainly on the evidence of invented linguistic examples. (Crisp, 2002: 7)

[A]lthough it is easy enough to construct linguistic examples to illustrate hypothesized conceptual metaphors such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY, it is not always so easy to determine precisely what mapping might be associated with any given naturally occurring linguistic metaphor. (Crisp, 2002: 9)

What is needed is some means of characterizing the potential cognitive reality of metaphor that is less 'filled out', less ambitious, than that of fully specifying a potential cross-domain mapping. (Crisp, 2002: 11)

The cognitive bias in metaphor research over the last two decades has resulted in a general tendency to ignore the *linguistic* dimension of metaphor in texts. (Heywood et al., 2002: 35, emphasis in original)

Most of this article is concerned with trying to identify in a precise and recoverable way the possible metaphorically used words in two short textual extracts. (Heywood et al., 2002: 51)

The exact nature of this complex verbal play becomes clearer as a result of our attempts to be analytically precise. This shows that the methodologies we are exploring are not just a necessity for connecting the analysis of linguistic metaphors in texts with the abstractions of cognitive metaphor theory. (Heywood et al., 2002: 52)

We have also highlighted some of the issues that need to be addressed in order to arrive at an explicit and exhaustive procedure for metaphor identification in language. (Heywood et al., 2002: 53)

I suggest that these observations are not justified as criticisms of the Lakoffian view, but that they are nevertheless valid if we take them to be a characterization of a particular level of metaphor analysis that the Lakoffian paradigm (especially in its earlier versions) does not attempt to describe. I propose that both types of analysis are required and that the two approaches complement, rather than clash with, each other.

The authors working within the 'metaphor identification' project analyse metaphors on three 'levels': metaphorical language, metaphorical proposition and cross-domain mapping. Metaphorical language and cross-domain mapping are, of course, part and parcel of the 'standard' view. The new element here is the metaphorical proposition. The analysis of metaphor at the propositional level is

seen by the authors as having several distinct advantages. First, when we look at natural discourse, the working-out of underlying propositional structures makes metaphorical relations in the discourse explicit. Second, propositional structure can also serve as the basis for a taxonomy of metaphor. Without taking propositional structure into account, various patterns of metaphor (such as multiple, complex, mixed) could be 'overlooked'. The analysis of propositional structure is recommended in the metaphor identification project when we deal with metaphor in natural discourse.

Most cognitive linguists in the 'Lakoffian' tradition do not, however, work with natural discourse most of the time (but, see e.g. Lakoff and Turner, 1989); they deal with decontextualized and largely conventionalized metaphorical expressions, as found, for example, in dictionaries, thesauri or their own 'mental lexicon'. They collect examples, group them together according to source and target domains, and work out the mappings that constitute conceptual metaphors. This is a legitimate activity; to it we owe the ideas that metaphors are sets of systematic correspondences between a source and a target, that many mappings are hierarchically related, that sources have a wider or narrower scope, that metaphors form larger systems, etc. At this level, certain hypotheses can be formulated concerning the psychological reality of these metaphor structures, which can then be tested in, for example, various experimental situations. Do we need a propositional level for this kind of analysis? I do not think so. However, the propositional level is needed when we want to describe metaphors in naturally occurring discourse.

In addition to the use of the word 'level' in the sense in which we talk about metaphorical language, proposition, and cross-domain mapping, we can also distinguish between 'levels' of metaphor according to its ontological status relative to the real people (individuals) who actually use the metaphors. This gives us the 'supra-individual', 'individual' and 'sub-individual' levels of metaphor. (For the distinction, see Kövecses, in press.)

Let me call the level where linguists work with decontextualized metaphorical expressions the 'supra-individual' level. This is the level where, as indicated above, cognitive linguists identify sources and targets, work out mappings in the abstract, and so on. By contrast, the level where linguists typically work with highly contextualized metaphorical expressions produced by real people in natural discourse can be called the 'individual' level. At this level, we want to find out about such issues as whether the metaphor structures hypothesized at the supra-individual level really exist in individual heads, how the communicative context determines the use of metaphors by individuals using language, how people construct categories on-line in natural discourse, how blends are created and made sense of by people, how people and/or analysts may be unsure about the interpretation of the status of particular expressions in discourse (are they metaphors, metonymies, or literal?), how people and/or analysts may not be sure about the particular mapping evoked by a metaphorical expression, how people and/or analysts may be unsure about what the source or target domain of a

particular metaphorical expression is, and so forth. In other words, this is, in the main, the level of on-line thought – either in its theory or process version (to use Cameron's 1999, useful distinction). It is these issues, and especially the last three, that the authors of the articles in this issue address.

Finally, there is a third level of metaphor analysis, which I should like to call the 'sub-individual' level. At this level, scholars are concerned with what motivates the existence of metaphors that we find either at the level of decontextualized language (the supra-individual level) or the level of on-line thought and communication in individual speakers (the individual level). Our interest here is in certain 'preconceptual structures' that make linguistic and conceptual metaphors natural for us. This is, of course, the level where we are concerned with the issue that we tend to refer to with the term 'embodiment' in cognitive linguistics (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999).

As we just saw, the metaphor identification project fits neatly into the general framework that I outlined earlier in a sketchy way. The goals, methods and activities of the project can be placed at what I called the 'individual' level of metaphor. The project raises a host of new issues and questions for the (extended) 'standard' cognitive semantic view of metaphor, and thereby it brings a very important new dimension to the study of metaphor in general. What we all should work on from now on is trying to build a coherent integrated framework in the cognitivist study of metaphor. However, this does not promise to be an easy task. For example, let us take one of the most interesting results of the metaphor identification project: a typology that is based on the notion of proposition. The typology arrived at by the authors in this issue includes types of metaphor such as multiple, complex, extended, etc. How does this typology mesh with that based on the sub-individual level offered by Grady (1999), in which we have metaphors based on correlations in experience and various kinds of resemblance metaphors? In general, can the 'syntax' of metaphor as approached by the authors be unified with the 'semantics' of metaphor in cognitive linguistics within a coherent framework?

In conclusion, I believe that much of the (explicit or implicit) criticism by the authors directed at the 'standard' cognitive semantic approach to metaphor does not really apply; they are simply working at a different level of metaphor analysis than those who are in the business of attempting to identify various kinds of metaphor structures on the basis of decontextualized language or those who work on various (philosophical, psychological, neuro-scientific, etc.) aspects of embodiment in metaphor. This is not to suggest that the work done by the metaphor identification project is unimportant. On the contrary, I believe that the work described in this issue is one of the most important recent developments in our search for the complete 'picture' because it brings into the foreground an inevitable new dimension of the cognitive-linguistic study of metaphor.

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Psycholinguistic comments on metaphor identification

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One of the most difficult challenges in poetics is to define what characterizes metaphor. A quick view of the vast literature on metaphor over the last 30 years reveals little agreement on the essential properties of metaphorical language, and there are even more heated debates on the relations between metaphor and thought. Many dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and handbooks of literary terms attempt to concisely define metaphor. Yet these rough definitions are not really useful to scholars who study metaphor in real-life spoken and written discourse. Despite these difficulties, metaphor scholars have bravely marched forward and published thousands of papers on how metaphors are used, learned, understood, and, more generally, reflect key aspects of human conceptual structure. But nobody has offered an explicit procedure for metaphor identification that then demonstrates how these linguistic expressions are grounded in cognitive mappings – until now.

The four articles published in this issue of *Language and Literature* offer several ideas for identifying metaphors in real-life texts and speech. These articles