

# VARIATION IN METAPHOR

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## **Abstract**

Cognitive linguists have so far paid a great deal of attention to the remarkable universality of many conceptual metaphors. However, their theories fail to account for the equally impressive diversity of metaphorical conceptualization both across and within cultures. The present paper is an attempt to lay down the foundations of a theory of metaphor that is capable of simultaneously accounting for both universality and variation in metaphor.

**Keywords:** universality of metaphor, variation in metaphor, dimensions of metaphor variation, causes of metaphor variation.

## **1. Introduction**

The general question that I will be concerned with in this paper is the following: *To what extent and in what ways is metaphorical thought relevant to an understanding of culture and society?*

Clearly, any answer to this question forces us to consider issues typically discussed in two broad ranges of disciplines: cognitive science

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and the social sciences. Typical representatives of the former include contemporary cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics, whereas a chief representative of the latter is anthropology in its several forms (symbolic, cultural, semantic, etc.). Metaphor has always been of great interest to many anthropologists since the very beginnings of the field (see, for example, Fernandez, 1986, 1991). The general difference between the two ranges of disciplines in the handling of metaphor seems to be a slightly different focus on what they find most important in the study of metaphor. While scholars in cognitive science tend to ask “What is metaphor?” and “How does it work in the mind?”, scholars in the social sciences tend to focus on the issue of “What does metaphor do in particular social-cultural contexts?”

Many anthropologists working on issues related to metaphor had found new inspiration for their work in the cognitive linguistic theory of metaphor that was first developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their widely read book *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). But it soon became clear that, although in many ways inspirational, this book (and much of the research that grew out of it; see Kövecses, 2002) does not in every way meet the needs of anthropologists. One major reason for this was that, as a general tendency, cognitive linguists have overemphasized the universality of some of the metaphorical structures that they found, and they ignored the many cases of non-universality in metaphorical conceptualization (Fernandez, 1991).

This situation presents cognitive scientists and linguists working on metaphor with a challenge: *Can the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor simultaneously explain both universality and diversity in metaphorical thought?* I wish to take up this challenge and argue on the basis of a wide range of data that the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor can successfully perform this job. To be sure, in order for it to accomplish the task, it needs to be modified, revised, and supplemented in several ways. My major goal in this work is to develop such an “updated” and relatively comprehensive theory of metaphor that makes the theory more readily useful to people working on issues in the social sciences.

In other words, this paper is an attempt on my part to bring one possible version of the cognitive linguistic theory of metaphor closer to those who have an interest in studying the role of metaphor in complex social-cultural phenomena, such as emotions, politics, thought, morality, as well as highly abstract cultural processes and entities such as time, life, and personhood. This way, I hope to continue the “debate” or dialog between cognitive linguists and anthropologists that was called for by James Fernandez more than ten years ago (Fernandez, 1991, p. 8). I do not intend to do this by surveying the huge anthropological literature on metaphor; that would be a huge task in itself. Instead, I try to offer a reasonably comprehensive metaphor theory of what I take to be issues relevant to social scientists on the basis of the data that I have collected or that have been accumulated by other cognitive linguists interested in the issue of metaphor variation. Anthropologists and other social scientists can then judge whether the theory I arrive at is valid when compared with their theories based on their own data. This way we can begin to work together toward building a better account of the role of metaphor in understanding our own cultures and those of “others.”

## 2. Universality in metaphor

Metaphor is linguistic, conceptual, neural, bodily, and social all at the same time. Since cognitive linguists claim that metaphor is of the mind, the brain, and the body, many people who are familiar with the view of metaphor that originates from Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) *Metaphors We Live By* often expect that what we call “conceptual metaphors” are largely or mostly universal. They also often criticize this view for ignoring the obvious diversity of metaphors across and within cultures. My major goal in this paper is to offer a balanced view that takes into account both the universality and diversity of metaphor. In this view, we have to be able to answer the following questions:

- (1) Which metaphors are universal and why?

- (2) What are the dimensions along which metaphors vary?
- (3) Which aspects of metaphor are affected by metaphor variation?
- (4) What are the main causes of variation?
- (5) How do the causes that produce variation interact with the causes that produce universality?

In this paper, I will try to outline my best answers to these questions. However, before I begin, it will be useful to briefly look at an example of universality in metaphorical conceptualization.

It seems that several unrelated languages may share several conceptual metaphors for particular emotion concepts. One of these emotion concepts is happiness. There are a large number of conceptual metaphors for happiness in English (Kövecses, 1991), but three of them stand out in importance: HAPPINESS IS UP (“I’m feeling *up*”), HAPPINESS IS LIGHT (“She *brightened up*”), and HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER (“He’s *bursting* with joy”).

The Chinese cognitive linguist Ning Yu found the same conceptual metaphors in Chinese (Yu, 1995, 1998). Let us take HAPPINESS IS UP as our example. (Ning Yu used the following grammatical abbreviations: PRT = particle, ASP = aspect marker, MOD = modifier marker, COM = complement marker, CL = classifier, BA = preposition *ba* in the so-called *ba*-sentences.)

HAPPY IS UP

Ta hen gao-xing.  
he very high-spirit  
He is very high-spirited/happy.

Ta xing congcong de.  
he spirit rise-rise PRT  
His spirits are rising and rising./He's pleased and excited.

Zhe-xia tiqi le wo-de xingzhi.  
this-moment raise ASP my mood  
This time it lifted my mood/interest.

Hungarian, a Finno-Ugric language, also has the same conceptual metaphors, as can be seen from the examples below:

HAPPINESS IS UP

Ez a film feldobott.  
this the film up-threw-me  
This film gave me a high.-This film made me happy.

Majd elszáll a boldogságtól.  
almost away-flies-he/she the happiness-from  
He/she is on cloud nine.

It is a remarkable fact that the same metaphor exists in the three languages. After all, English, Chinese, and Hungarian belong to very different language families and represent very different cultures of the world, which presumably did not have much contact with each other when these conceptual metaphors evolved. The question arises: How is it possible for such different languages and cultures to conceptualize happiness metaphorically in such similar ways? Three answers to the question suggest themselves: (1) it has happened by accident; (2) one language borrowed the metaphors from another; and (3) there is some universal motivation that enables the metaphors to emerge in these cultures.

If it is true, as cognitive linguists claim, that “simple” or “primary” metaphors (Grady, 1997; Kövecses, 2002) are motivated by universal correlations in bodily experience, we can be pretty sure that it is the third explanation that gives us the correct answer to the question. Indeed, when we are joyful, we tend to be up, moving around, be active, jump up and down, rather than down, inactive, and static. These are undoubtedly universal experiences associated with happiness (or more precisely, joy), and they are likely to produce universal (or near-universal) simple or primary metaphors.

The HAPPY IS UP metaphor is a generic-level metaphor. We know that metaphors tend to be universal or near-universal at this level. Specific-level metaphors tend to be different cross-linguistically. For example, a specific-level version of the metaphor HAPPY IS UP in English is HAPPINESS IS BEING OFF THE GROUND. As Ning Yu (1995, 1998) observed, this specific metaphor does not exist in Chinese.

### 3. Dimensions of metaphor variation

I will distinguish two kinds of dimensions along which metaphors vary: the cross-cultural and the within-culture dimension.

#### 3.1 *Cross-cultural variation*

The most obvious dimension along which metaphors vary is the cross-cultural dimension. Variation in this dimension can be found in several distinct forms. One of them is what I call “congruence.” This is what obtains between a generic-level metaphor and several specific-level ones. Another is the case where a culture uses a set of different source domains for a particular target domain, or conversely, where a culture uses a particular source domain for conceptualizing a set of different target domains. Yet another situation involves cases where the set of conceptual metaphors for a particular target domain is roughly the same between two languages/ cultures, but one language/ culture shows a clear preference for some of the conceptual metaphors that are employed.

Finally, there may be some conceptual metaphors that appear to be unique to a given language/ culture. I will demonstrate congruence and alternative metaphorical conceptualization with some examples.

### 3.1.1 Congruent metaphors

There is some evidence that THE ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER metaphor may be near-universal (see Kövecses, 2000a). What is especially important about this conceptual metaphor is that it functions at an extremely general level. The metaphor does not specify many things that *could* be specified. For example, it does not say what kind of container is used, how the pressure arises, whether the container is heated or not, what kind of substance fills the container (liquid, substance, or objects), what consequences the explosion has, and so on. The metaphor constitutes a generic schema that gets filled out by each culture that has the metaphor. When it is filled out, it receives unique cultural content at a specific level. In other words, a generic-level conceptual metaphor is instantiated in culture-specific ways at a specific level. This is one kind of cross-cultural variation.

Consider the following three special cases. In one, Matsuki (1995) observes that all the metaphors for anger in English as analyzed by Lakoff and Kövecses (1987) can also be found in Japanese. At the same time, she also points out that there is a large number of anger-related expressions that group around the Japanese concept of *hara* (literally, 'belly'). This is a culturally significant concept that is unique to Japanese culture, and so the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS (IN THE *HARA*) is limited to Japanese.

Second, Ning Yu (1998) studied the PRESSURIZED CONTAINER metaphor in great depth, and points out that Chinese uses a version of this metaphor in which the excess *qi* (i.e., energy that flows through the body) that corresponds to anger is not a fluid, like in English, but a gas. The gas is neutral with respect to heat, but it is capable of exerting pressure on the body-container. The most remarkable feature of the Chinese anger-metaphor is that it employs and is crucially constituted

by the concept of *qi*—a concept that is deeply embedded in the long history of Chinese philosophy and medicine.

Third, Zulu shares many conceptual metaphors with English (Taylor & Mbense, 1998). This does not mean, however, that it cannot have metaphors other than the ones we can find in English. One case in point is the Zulu metaphor that involves the heart: ANGER IS (UNDERSTOOD AS BEING) IN THE HEART. When the heart metaphor applies to English, it is primarily associated with love, affection, and the like. In Zulu it applies to anger and patience-impatience, tolerance-intolerance. The heart metaphor conceptualizes anger in Zulu as leading to internal pressure since too much “emotion substance” is crammed into a container of limited capacity. The things that fill it up are other emotions that happen to a person in the wake of daily events. When too many of these happen to a person, the person becomes extremely angry and typically loses control over his anger.

In all of the three cases, there is a generic-level metaphor and a specific-level one. The specific-level metaphors are instantiations of the generic-level one in the sense that they exhibit the same general structure. The lower-level instantiations are thus congruent with a higher-level metaphor. Where they differ is in the specific cultural content that they bring to the metaphor.

### 3.1.2 *Alternative metaphors*

There can be differences in the *range* of conceptual metaphors (or, more precisely, the range of source domains) that languages and cultures have available for the conceptualization of particular target domains. This is what commonly happens in the case of emotion concepts as targets.

Chinese shares with English all the basic metaphorical source domains for happiness: UP, LIGHT, FLUID IN A CONTAINER. A metaphor that Chinese has, but English does not, is HAPPINESS IS FLOWERS IN THE HEART. According to Ning Yu (1995, 1998), the application of this metaphor reflects “the more introverted character of Chinese.” He sees this conceptual metaphor as a contrast to the (American) English metaphor BEING HAPPY IS

BEING OFF THE GROUND, which does not exist in Chinese at all and which reflects the relatively “extroverted” character of speakers of English.

As another illustration, let us take the concept of life as target. Later in the paper, we will see that life is commonly and primarily conceptualized as STRUGGLE/ WAR, PRECIOUS POSSESSION, GAME, JOURNEY, and in several other ways by Americans and Hungarians. However, as work by Elizabeth Riddle (2001) shows, speakers of Hmong, a language spoken mainly in Laos and Thailand, conceptualize it very differently. They view life as a “string” that can be cut and broken. The word meaning ‘cut,’ *tu*, can also mean ‘to give birth,’ ‘to die,’ and ‘to kill.’ Riddle presents evidence for the existence of the conceptual metaphor not only from language but also from social behavior. Although the Hmong metaphor LIFE IS A STRING resonates as at least vaguely familiar to members of the European cultural sphere who have a similar metaphor in Greek mythology (the three Fates spinning, weaving, and cutting the thread of life), the Hmong metaphor is much more clearly present among speakers of this language and seems to guide much of their linguistic and nonlinguistic behavior.

### 3.2 Within-culture variation

We know from work in sociology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, etc. that languages are not monolithic but come in varieties reflecting divergences in human experience. It makes sense to expect metaphor variation in the varieties of language most commonly identified by these researchers. I will present evidence that, I believe, supports the idea that metaphors vary not only cross-culturally but also within cultures. This variation can occur along a number of dimensions including the social, regional, ethnic, style, subcultural, diachronic, and individual dimensions. I conceive of this approach to metaphor variation as the cognitive dimension of social-cultural diversity. I will demonstrate with some examples how metaphors vary along these dimensions.

### 3.2.1 *The social dimension*

Social dimensions include the differentiation of society into men and women, young and old, middle-class and working class, and so forth. Do men, the young, or the middle-class use different metaphors than women, the old, or the working-class? At present we do not have systematic studies from a cognitive linguistic perspective. But we do have some indication that some of these social factors might produce variation in metaphorical conceptualization.

One example of this is the man-woman dimension. This dimension seems to be operative in several distinct cases: the way men talk about women, the way women talk about men, the way men *and* women talk about women, the way men *and* women talk about the world in general (i.e., not only about the other). In English-speaking countries (but also in others), it is common for men to use expressions such as *bunny, kitten, bird, chick, cookie, dish, sweetie pie*, and many others, to refer to women. These metaphorical expressions assume certain conceptual metaphors: WOMEN ARE (SMALL) FURRY ANIMALS (*bunny, kitten*), WOMEN ARE BIRDS (*bird, chick, hen-party*), and WOMEN ARE SWEET FOOD (*cookie, dish, sweetie pie*). However, when women talk about men they do not appear to use these metaphors of men, or use them in a more limited way. Men are not called *bunnies* or *kittens* by women. Neither are men characterized as *birds* or *chicks*, but they can be thought of as LARGE FURRY ANIMALS instead, such as bears. And women are more commonly viewed by men as SWEET FOOD than men are by women, although women can also sometimes describe men as FOOD, especially for sexual purposes.

### 3.2.2 *The regional dimension*

Languages often develop new metaphors when the language is moved by some of its speakers to a part of the world different from where it was originally spoken. The spread of English to the United States is one example (see Kövecses, 2000b). Another is Afrikaans

(Dutch spoken in South Africa). Afrikaans was carried from Europe to South Africa, and, as shown by Rene Dirven (1994), it changed its metaphorical patterns. It acquired many new metaphors based on natural phenomena and the animal world.

### *3.2.3 The style dimension*

Style is determined by a number of factors, such as audience, topic, setting, and medium. All of these may influence the selection and use of metaphors in discourse. For example, slang is typically rich in metaphor and may be characterized by metaphors not found in other varieties of language.

### *3.2.4 The subcultural dimension*

Each society and culture consists of a number of subcultures. Subcultures develop their own metaphors, and these metaphors may define the group. There is of course no subculture that defines itself through an entirely new set of metaphors, but some of the metaphors members of the group use may be new relative to the mainstream. For example, we can think of emotionally-mentally ill people as one such group. Although depressed people share many of the metaphors for the concept of depression-sadness that “non-depressed” people have, like DEPRESSION IS DARKNESS, DEPRESSION IS HEAVY, DEPRESSION IS DESCENT/DOWN, they also have metaphors that are unique to the group. One such metaphor is DEPRESSION IS A CAPTOR (McMullen & Conway, 2001).

### *3.2.5 The individual dimension*

Individuals often have their idiosyncratic metaphors. These can be entirely novel or they may be versions of already existing conceptual metaphors. Thus, one can have a view of love relationships as the action of “pushing a wagon uphill,” a metaphor based on LOVE IS A JOURNEY, but adding to it the aspect of requiring an effort to maintain it.

#### 4. Aspects of metaphor involved in variation

In the cognitive linguistic view, metaphor is seen as being constituted by a variety of components that interact with each other. The components include the following:

- (1) Experiential basis
- (2) Source domain
- (3) Target domain
- (4) Relationship between the source and the target
- (5) Metaphorical linguistic expressions
- (6) Mappings
- (7) Entailments
- (8) Blends
- (9) Nonlinguistic realization
- (10) Cultural models

We can conceive of the components as aspects of metaphor. The question for us is: Which one of these aspects are involved in metaphor variation? I suggest that all of them are.

Conceptual metaphors consist of a source and target domain (2 and 3). The choice of particular sources to go with particular targets is motivated by an experiential basis (1). The relationship of the source and the target is such that a source domain can apply to several targets and a target can attach to several sources (4). The particular pairings of source and target domains give rise to metaphorical linguistic expressions (5).

There are basic conceptual correspondences, or mappings, between the source and target domains (6). Source domains often map materials onto the target beyond the basic correspondences. These additional mappings are called entailments, or inferences (7). The bringing together of a source with a target domain often results in blends, that is, conceptual materials that are new with respect to *both* the source and the target (8). Conceptual metaphors often materialize in nonlinguistic ways, that is, not only in language and thought but also in social reality (9). Conceptual metaphors converge on, and often produce, cultural models, that is, structured conceptual configurations (10).

Due to limitations of space, I can only demonstrate some of these in this paper.

#### 4.1 Source

Different construals of the same source domain may lead to cross-linguistic metaphor variation. Given a particular source, this source may be construed differently in two languages. A case in point is the source domain of motion in space in English and Turkish, as analyzed by Seyda Özcaliskan (2002). Özcaliskan showed that English primarily encodes manner into its verbs of motion (e.g., *walk, run, march*), whereas Turkish motion verbs lack this information concerning motion. Turkish primarily encodes direction into many of its motion verbs (e.g., verbs corresponding to English *fall, come, spread, descend*). This difference in the construal of motion events leads speakers of the two languages to comprehend target domains by means of a shared source domain that, for them, comes in two versions: the manner-centered one (for English) and the neutral or direction-centered one (for Turkish). In this case, the shared source is at a high level of abstraction, whereas the cross-linguistic differences are found at a specific level of conceptual organization. Moreover, as Özcaliskan notes, this built-in difference in the kinds of information that the source domain encodes may predispose the speakers of the two languages to attend to slightly different aspects of not only the source but also of the target domain.

#### 4.2 Entailments

Both English and Zulu have FIRE as a source domain for anger, but speakers of Zulu make use of entailments, or inferences, concerning the metaphor in a way in which speakers of English do not. In Zulu one can *extinguish* somebody's anger by pouring water on them (Taylor and Mbense, 1998). This potential metaphorical entailment is not picked up by the English ANGER IS FIRE metaphor in the form of conventionalized linguistic expressions. Notice, however, that the metaphorical entailment is perfectly applicable to enthusiasm in English, as when someone is said to be a *wet blanket* at a party.

#### 4.3 Linguistic expression

If two languages have the same conceptual metaphor, the linguistic expression of the conceptual metaphor in the two languages may follow a variety of different patterns. Based on the examination of THE TIME IS MONEY metaphor in English and Hungarian, I found the patterns below (see Kövecses, 2003):

	<b>Word form</b>	<b>Literal meaning</b>	<b>Figurative meaning</b>	<b>Conceptual metaphor</b>
Most frequent case	Different	same	same	same
Less frequent case	Different	different	same	same
Least frequent case	Different	different	same	different

The table shows the regular patterns that we get if we keep the figurative meaning constant; that is, if we want to know how the same figurative meaning is expressed in the two languages. Given the TIME IS MONEY metaphor, the most frequent pattern is the one in which a(n obviously) different word form with the same literal meaning expresses the same figurative meaning by making use of the same conceptual metaphor. Such patterns give us a way of systematically studying the differences between languages in the expression of metaphorical meaning.

## 5. Causes of metaphor variation

What causes our metaphors to vary along the dimensions and in the aspects that were discussed in the previous sections? I suggest that the causes can be grouped into two large classes: differential experience and differential cognitive preferences, or styles. In other words, the suggestion is that, on the one hand, many of our metaphors vary because our experiences as human beings also vary. And, on the other hand, our metaphors vary because the cognitive processes we put to use for the creation of abstract thought may also vary.

### 5.1 *Differential experience*

On the whole, it may be suggested that differential experience is constituted by divergences in context, social or personal history, and what I call “human concern.”

#### 5.1.1 *Awareness of differential contexts*

When we use metaphors, we are (mostly unconsciously) aware of the context around us. The contexts that seem to have an influence on the metaphors we use include the physical environment, social context, and the communicative situation. Let us look at cultural context and the communicative situation to demonstrate the point.

##### 5.1.1.1 *Cultural context*

The broader cultural context simply means all the culturally unique and salient concepts and values that characterize cultures, including, importantly, the governing principles and the key concepts in a given culture or subculture. The governing principles and key concepts have special importance in (metaphorical) conceptualization because they permeate several general domains of experience for a culture or cultural group.

To demonstrate the effect of these differences on metaphor, let us first consider in some detail the near-universal PRESSURIZED CONTAINER

metaphor for anger in a variety of cultures. We saw above that, at a generic level, this metaphor is very similar across many cultures. However, at a specific level we can notice important differences in this metaphor across certain cultures. How do these differences arise?

Geeraerts and Grondelaers (1995) note that in the Euro-American tradition (including Hungary), it is the classical-medieval notion of the *four humors* from which the Euro-American conceptualization of anger (as well as that of emotion in general) derived. But they also note that the application of the humoral doctrine is not limited to anger or the emotions. The humoral view maintains that the four fluids (phlegm, black bile, yellow bile, and blood) regulate the vital processes of the human body. They were also believed to determine personality types (such as sanguine, melancholy, etc.) and account for a number of medical problems, together with cures for them (like blood-letting). Obviously, then, the use of the humoral view as a form of cultural explanation extends far beyond anger and the emotions. In addition to being an account of emotional phenomena, it was also used to explain a variety of issues in physiology, psychology, and medicine. In other words, the humoral view was a key component of the classical-medieval cultural context and it exerted a major impact on the emergence of the European conception of anger as a fluid in a pressurized container.

In Japan, as Matsuki (1995) tells us, there seems to exist a culturally distinct set of concepts that is built around the concept of *hara*. Truth, real intentions, and the real self (called *honne*) constitute the content of *hara*. The term *honne* is contrasted with *tatemae*, or one's social face. Thus when a Japanese person keeps his anger under control, he or she is hiding his or her private, truthful, innermost self and displaying a social face that is called for in the situation by accepted standards of behavior. The notion of *hara* greatly influenced the Japanese conception of anger over the ages.

King (1989) and Yu (1995, 1998) suggest that the Chinese concept of *nu* (corresponding to anger) is bound up with the notion of *qi*, that is, the energy that flows through the body. *Qi* in turn is embedded in not

only the psychological (i.e., emotional) but also the philosophical and medical discourse of Chinese culture and civilization. The notion and the workings of *qi* is predicated on the belief that the human body is a homeostatic organism, the belief on which traditional Chinese medicine is based. And the conception of the body as a homeostatic organism seems to derive from the more general philosophical view that the universe operates with two complementary forces, *yin* and *yang*, which must be in balance to maintain the harmony of the universe. Similarly, when *qi* rises in the body, there is anger (*nu*), and when it subsides and there is balance again, there is harmony and emotional calm. Without the concept of “*qi*,” it would be difficult to imagine the view of anger in Chinese culture.

Thus the four emotion concepts, *anger* in English, *düh* in Hungarian (the two representing European culture), *ikari/hara* in Japanese, and *nu* in Chinese, are in part explained in the respective cultures by the culture-specific concepts of the *four humors*, *hara*, and *qi*. What accounts for the distinctiveness of the culture-specific concepts is the fact that, as we have just seen, the culture-specific concepts that are evoked to explain the emotion concepts are embedded in very different systems of cultural concepts and propositions. It appears then that the broader cultural contexts that operate with culture-specific key concepts account for many of the specific-level differences among the four emotion concepts and the PRESSURIZED CONTAINER metaphor.

The example of the PRESSURIZED CONTAINER metaphor for anger demonstrates how culturally unique key concepts fill out generic-level schemas in the creation of cross-culturally differential metaphors. We can expect such differences in key concepts to bring about differences not only in the production but also in the understanding of metaphors by speakers of languages that are associated with differential core values. Jeannette Littlemore (2003) shows that when speakers have conflicting core values (such as individualism-collectivism), they are likely to misunderstand each other's metaphors that are based on those values.

### 5.1.1.2 *Communicative situation*

I mentioned earlier that one of the factors in the communicative situation is topic. Take, for instance, the sentences described by Jean Aitchison (1987): “Cougars *drown* Beavers,” “Cowboys *corral* Buffaloes,” “Air Force *torpedoes* the Navy,” and “Clemson *cooks* Rice” (Aitchison, 1987, p. 143). These headlines from articles describing American football games exemplify the case where the author of the headline can create a metaphor for defeat in sports on the basis of certain properties of the characters that participate in the “story.” Since, for example, cowboys are in the business of corralling animals, the author is in a position to create a metaphor for defeat based on this property of cowboys.

### 5.1.2 *History*

One of my students, Niki Köves (2002), showed in a small-scale study that Hungarians primarily use the LIFE IS WAR and LIFE IS A COMPROMISE metaphors for comprehending the concept of life in general, whereas Americans predominantly employ the LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION and LIFE IS A GAME metaphors. Why do Hungarians use the metaphors they do for life, and why do Americans use different ones? The issue obviously has to do with the peculiarities of Hungarian and American history. Hungarians have been in wars throughout their more than one thousand year old history as a nation and state and had to struggle for their survival as they are wedged between powerful German-speaking and Slavic nations. Given this history, it is not surprising that for many Hungarians life is struggle—and less of a game. To point this out is, of course, trivial as far as history is concerned, but it is not trivial as far as the study of the emergence of a particular metaphorical conceptual system is concerned.

Personal history also plays a role in shaping metaphorical conceptualization. This is imperceptibly true of ordinary people but it is much more clearly true of poets and other creative writers. We can suggest that the unique metaphor-based symbolic system that

an author uses may be partially determined by his or her personal life histories. For example, Sylvia Plath's metaphors come in part from the fact that her father was German and that he was an entomologist specializing in bees. Or, take Hemingway's symbolic system. Hemingway did bullfighting in Spain, was a big game hunter in Africa, and was a deep sea fisherman in Florida. All of these activities became symbolic in his novels and short stories. Actually, in Hemingway's case it may be difficult to be sure whether the life story produced the metaphors, the life story was produced by a certain vision of the symbolic system itself, or the life story and the symbolic system envisioned simultaneously influenced each other and jointly emerged.

### *5.1.3 Human concern*

I mentioned above the unique conceptual metaphors used by people diagnosed with episodes of depression. One of them was the metaphor DEPRESSION IS CAPTOR. Why don't non-depressed (i.e., "only" sad) people talk about sadness as CAPTOR? Most people do not normally talk about being trapped by, wanting to be free of, or wanting to break out of sadness, although these are ways of talking and thinking about depression in a clinical context. It makes sense to suggest that people with depression use this language and way of thinking about their situation because it faithfully captures what they experience and feel. Their deep concern is with their unique experiences and feelings that set them apart from people who do not have them. It is this concern that gives them the CAPTOR metaphor for depression.

### *5.2 Cognitive preferences and styles*

Many different cognitive processes are at work in metaphorical conceptualization. These include not only "seeing" some kind of resemblance between two things (metaphor) and/or blending them (conceptual integration) and not only providing access to an entity through another (metonymy), but also elaboration, focusing,

conventionalization, specificity, and transparency. All of these can be found at work in all languages and cultures, but the degree to which they apply to situations in which metaphorical conceptualization occurs can vary from language to language. We can think of these differentially-applied processes as differential “cognitive preferences or styles.” (My use of the term “cognitive style” is perhaps not the conventional one here as compared to the customary usage in cognitive psychology, but this does not in any way affect the argument. On cognitive linguistic work in relation to metaphor understanding using the more customary sense, see Boers and Littlemore, 2000.) In this section, I will discuss some of these: experiential focus, metaphor and metonymy, and blending, or conceptual integration.

### 5.2.1 *Experiential focus*

Cognitive linguists emphasize that human beings share a great deal of bodily experience on the basis of which they can build universal metaphors. The question that inevitably arises is this: Is this universal bodily basis utilized in the same way across languages and cultures or even varieties? In light of the available evidence it seems that the answer is no. The universal bodily basis on which universal metaphors *could* be built is *not* utilized in the same way or to the same extent in different languages and varieties. The notion that I would like to offer to get clear about this issue is that of “differential experiential focus.” What this means is that different peoples may be attuned to different aspects of their bodily functioning in relation to a target domain, or that they can ignore or downplay certain aspects of their bodily functioning with respect to the metaphorical conceptualization of a target domain.

A case in point is the conceptualization of anger in English and Chinese. As studies of the physiology of anger across several unrelated cultures show, increase in skin temperature and blood pressure are universal physiological correlates of anger. This accounts for the ANGER IS HEAT metaphor in English and in many other languages. However, King’s (1989) and Yu’s (1995, 1998) works suggest that the

conceptualization of anger in terms of heat is much less prevalent in Chinese than it is in English. In Chinese, the major metaphors of anger seem to be based on pressure—not heat. This indicates that speakers of Chinese have relied on a different aspect of their physiology in the metaphorical conceptualization of anger than speakers of English. The major point is that in many cases the universality of experiential basis does not necessarily lead to universally equivalent conceptualization—at least not at the specific level of hot fluids.

As a matter of fact, the conceptualization of anger in terms of heat has not always been the case even in English. Caroline Gevaert (2001) found on the basis of a variety of historical corpora that heat-related words accounted for only 1.59% per cent of all the words describing anger before 850. The number of heat-related words for anger dramatically increased in the period between 850 and 950. Then the number of these words decreased between 950 and 1050 to 6.22% and then to 1.71% by around 1200, and then to 0.27% by around 1300. After 1300 the number started growing again, and after 1400 it became dominant in texts that described anger.

These numbers indicate that the conceptualization of anger in terms of heat is not a permanent and ever-present feature of the concept of anger in English. How can this fluctuation occur in the conceptualization of anger over time? Is it because people's physiology changes in anger throughout the ages? This obviously cannot be the case. I believe the answer is that universal physiology provides only a *potential* basis for metaphorical conceptualization—without mechanically constraining what the specific metaphors for anger will be. Heat was a major component in the concept of anger between 850 and 950, and then after a long decline it began to play a key role again at around 1400—possibly as a result of the emergence of the humoral view of emotions in Europe (see Gevaert, 2001; Geeraerts & Grondelaers, 1995). We can notice the same kind of fluctuation in the use of the domain of “swell” noted by Gevaert, which I take to be akin to what we can call the “pressure” component in the conceptualization of anger

today. Pressure was a major part of the conceptualization of anger until around 1300, but then it began to decline, only to emerge strongly again, together with heat, in the form of the HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER metaphor centuries later. The point is that we should not expect any of the *conceptualized* responses associated with anger to remain constant in conceptualizing anger (and the emotions in general) throughout the ages.

### 5.2.2 *Metaphor and metonymy*

Are there any differences in the way the cognitive processes of metaphor versus metonymy are used in different languages and cultures? The most systematic investigation along these lines is a study by Jonathan Charteris-Black (2003). He examined in great detail how and for what purpose three concepts—mouth, tongue, and lip—are figuratively utilized in English and Malay. He found similarities in metaphorical conceptualization. For example, in both languages, the same underlying conceptual metaphor (e.g., MANNER IS TASTE) accounts for expressions like *honey-tongued* and *lidah manis* ('tongue sweet') and in both languages such expressions are used for the discourse function of evaluating (especially negatively) what a person says. However, he also found that the figurative expressions involving the three concepts tended to be metonymic in English and metaphoric in Malay. In English, more than half of the expressions were metonyms, while in Malay the vast majority of them showed evidence of metaphor (often in combination with metonymy). For example, while metonymic expressions like *tight-lipped* abound in English, such expressions are much less frequent in Malay. It seems that, at least in the domain of speech organs, the employment of these concepts by means of figurative processes is culture-specific.

### 5.2.3 *Blending*

The differential application of the universal cognitive process of blending, or conceptual integration, is likely to produce a great deal of

cultural variation—either within or across languages and cultures. The kind of blending that Fauconnier and Turner (2002) call “double-scope network” is especially relevant here. With “double-scope networks,” the target domain plays an equally important role in contributing to the frame structure of the blend. Selective parts of both source and target make up the emergent frame structure of the blend. We can illustrate this with the ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER metaphor. Take the following sentence analyzed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002):

God, he was so mad I could see the smoke coming out of his ears.

This is a novel elaboration of the metaphor ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER. In it, an element of the source is blended with an element of the target. There are no ears in the source and there is no smoke in the target, but in the blend both are present at the same time as *smoke coming out of his ears*. A frame is created with smoke and ears in it that is novel with respect to both the source frame and the target frame.

What happens here is that an angry person’s head with the ears becomes the container in the source, and the smoke (steam) in the source will be seen as coming out of the ears (and not through the orifices of the container). This is a true fusion of certain elements of both source and target in the blend. Given the new emergent structure, the blend can be developed further. One can say, for example:

God, was he ever mad. I could see the smoke coming out of his ears – I thought his hat would catch fire!

As Fauconnier and Turner note, to understand this sentence, we need the “smoke coming out of one’s ears” frame. But we also need the knowledge based on how intensity is conceptualized in the conceptual network associated with the metaphor. A submapping of the ANGER IS HEAT metaphor is INTENSITY OF EMOTION IS DEGREE OF HEAT. One of the entailments of this metaphor is that a high degree of heat may cause fire (corresponding to “intense anger may cause a dangerous social

situation"). But how does "hat" get into the blend? The fact that it does shows the almost infinite creativity of blends: we can take them further and further, bringing about new conceptualizations that depend on old ones and on the application of systematic cognitive processes. In this particular case the "hat" emerges as we run the previous blend with the "smoke coming out of one's ears." The head-container with the ears metonymically evokes the hat, which is typically worn on the head. Due to the entailment of the INTENSITY IS HEAT metaphor ("high degree of heat may cause fire"), the hat can be seen as catching fire. This would indicate an overall increase in the intensity in the person's anger.

The kind of anger described by the phrase "smoke coming out of one's ears" could occur in any culture that places a great deal of emphasis on heat in conceptualizing anger. Given this extremely general constraint, which of these cultures will actually come up with such an extended form of anger may be a matter of accident. The universal cognitive processes are available to all speakers in all cultures, but they are not put to use to the same extent by all of them.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to outline a view of conceptual metaphor in which the issue of metaphor variation is just as important as universal embodiment. I demonstrated, by means of a few examples, the basic components of such a theory: dimensions of variation, aspects of variation, causes of variation, and the interaction of the causes that produce variation with universal embodiment that produces universality in metaphorical conceptualization. Such a view can be considered as a first step in the direction of a cognitive-cultural theory of metaphor. The cultural-cognitive view is a natural and necessary complement of the experiential view. This is not to say that the experiential view has completely ignored the issue of variation in culture—it did not. Rather, the suggestion is that it has not paid enough attention to it and has not taken into account the minimally necessary components of a more full-fledged cultural-cognitive theory of metaphor.

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