Introduction: Defining and illustrating creativity, metaphor, and metonymy

The power of metaphor and metonymy as resources for the creation of novel linguistic and other semiotic meanings is well known and goes back in time to Aristotle (see, for example, Cockroft et al., 2014). However, the complexities involved in the creative potential of metaphor and metonymy in actual language use have received the attention of scholars as a widespread phenomenon only during the last decades. Thus metaphor and metonymy are presently in the limelight of linguistic enquiry not only as prototypical enablers of creative thought and language use, but also because of the pervasiveness of these phenomena in language itself. As is discussed in the sections that follow, one of the hot issues in current scholarly debates is precisely the question of the alleged distinction between literal and figurative forms of language (see, for example, Glucksberg & Keysar, 1993 [1979]; Searle, 1991 [1977]). The amount of scholarly research produced in the last two decades bears witness to the interest that these phenomena are drawing not only within the discipline of linguistics, but also in other related fields, such as psychology, artificial intelligence (for example Barnden, 2010), anthropology and sociology, critical discourse analysis, and language teaching and learning, among others. Indeed, current approaches to the study of metaphor and metonymy show a tendency to interdisciplinarity and fertilisation across disciplines, which has enormous potential for the development of further research in the field. This fascinating situation has its disadvantages, however, in that interdisciplinary studies, although enriching, bring about complexities and questions regarding theoretical standpoints and methodological issues that were not at stake years ago.

Key concepts

Let us start by defining briefly the key concepts approached in the present chapter: creativity; metaphor; and metonymy.

Creativity

Creativity is a slippery concept, which has undergone various revisions and reformulations over the history of human thought. Within the field of linguistics, there has been a shift
from the Romantic prototype of creativity as being associated with the innate talent of an individual, such as the gifted artist or scientist, towards a view of creativity as a quality innate to all human beings, which can be manifested in all types of discourse (for example Carter, 2004; Gibbs, 1999; Jones, 2010, 2012; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Maybin & Swann, 2006; Swann, Pope, & Carter, 2001). Thus creativity is currently considered as much a feature of everyday language use and social practices as a feature of significant works of art, scientific discoveries, or world-changing theories. This distinction has been referred to as “small c” creativity (everyday creativity) and “big C” Creativity (world-changing creativity) (Cameron, 2011; Jones, 2012). For the purposes of the present discussion, I find the following definition of creativity particularly enlightening:

the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e. original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e. adaptive concerning task constraint).

(Sternberg, 1999: 1)

According to Sternberg’s (1999) definition, creativity involves novelty and appropriateness. These two concepts are crucial for the understanding of the creative and metaphorical-metonymic processes, since novelty, understood as original and unexpected, and appropriateness, understood as adaptive concerning a specific task, point to the contextual nature of metaphoric and metonymic creative acts, and to the fact that such acts receive the ‘value’ of being creative by specific social communities.

A further interesting concept in the understanding of metaphorical and metonymic creativity is the notion of ‘incongruity’. Thus this term has been used by numerous scholars to define the process by which individuals attempt to find a creative solution to an apparently ‘incongruous’ situation and to the way in which the two domains are related in terms of an ‘incongruity’ between spaces, which requires a ‘congruous’ solution (for example Forceville, 2012; Kövecses, 2005). Within this line, humour in particular has been analysed extensively in terms of incongruity theory (Attardo, 2001; Hidalgo-Downing, 2000). Following this line of thought, Norrick (1986: 226, quoting Koester, 1964) argues that humour as a form of creativity is characterised by what he defines as ‘bissociation’ – namely:

The perceiving of a situation or idea L, in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference M1 and M2. The event, L, in which the two intersect, is made to vibrate simultaneously in two different wavelengths, as it were. While this situation lasts, L is not merely linked to one associative context, but bисociated in two (Koester, 1964: 35).

(See also Hidalgo-Downing, 2000; Forceville, 2012.) This concept of bissociation is extremely relevant for the understanding of the creative process, in particular when such a process involves the interaction of two (or more) domains or scenarios, such as metaphor, metonymy, humour, irony, opposition, and contradiction, among others. At this point, the concept of ‘cognitive synergy’ used by the psychologist Apter (1989) completes this view of creativity as a complex, dynamic, and unstable process. In his theory of psychological reversals, Apter puts forward the idea that human personality is not a stable entity as assumed traditionally, but rather inconsistent regarding crucial aspects of experience that characterise phenomena such as art and humour (that is, creative acts). By ‘cognitive synergy’, Apter refers to situations in which two incompatible meanings coexist:
Situations arise... in which an entity may be said to have opposite characteristics... The idea is that the opposite characteristics may coexist in the sense that one is aware of both in consciousness, in relation to a given identity, and that these opposites both contribute something to the full meaning of the identity, or contribute alternative meanings to the identity.

(Apter, 1989: 141)

Thus the term ‘synergy’ is used in various disciplines, such as medicine, to refer to the combined and often unpredictable effect that may arise when mixing or combining two substances, entities, concepts, etc., such as the simultaneous intake of medicines and alcohol. According to Apter (1989: 141), cognitive synergies involving two domains, concepts, etc., ‘work together to produce an effect they could not produce separately’. This view can be applied to phenomena such as metaphor, metonymy, humour, irony, and opposition, as suggested above, in the sense that the relationship between the two domains or frames of reference need not be a stable one with one single solution.

So far, an outline of creativity has been provided as the production of something that is novel and contextually adaptive— which undergoes constant re-contextualisation—and which involves the perception of two or more incongruous domains in an unstable relationship that requires a higher-level resolution and receives ‘social value’. More specifically, it has been pointed out that, in current scholarly research, a distinction is made between ‘everyday creativity’ and ‘world-changing’, or artistic, scientific, etc., creativity. Having said this, I now turn to the definitions of metaphor and metonymy, and how these phenomena relate to the creative process outlined so far.

Metaphor and metonymy

The concepts of metaphor and metonymy are here defined jointly because of the close relationship that both phenomena tend to display, especially in actual language use. While metaphor has been the centre of attention of scholars for decades, metonymy and related phenomena, such as synecdoche, have received adequate attention only over the last few years (for example Benczes, Barcelona, & Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, 2011; Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Díez Velasco, 2002; Steen, 2005). As is argued throughout the present chapter, the nature of metonymy as enabler of metaphor is crucial for the creative process to take place (see, for example, Hidalgo-Downing & Kraljevic Mujic, 2011; Urios-Aparisi, 2009).

METAPHOR

Semino (2008: 1, 2011: 1) defines metaphor as ‘the phenomenon whereby we talk and, potentially, think, about something in terms of another’. We can observe this process in example (1), which is a notice hanging on the door of the office of a colleague and friend from the University of Hawaii at Manoa:

Monolingualism can be cured.

In the first place, this example illustrates what has been defined as ‘everyday creativity’: the use of metaphorical expressions that make use of already existing or familiar scenarios
(which are adaptive and appropriate for the context – in this case, the familiar concept of illness) and at the same time give rise to a new way of seeing, thinking, or talking about a particular phenomenon (monolingualism). In terms of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), an underlying conceptual metaphor can be identified in example (1), which is activated by the word ‘cured’: **MONOLINGUALISM IS AN ILLNESS.** Thus, in terms of CMT, the properties of a source domain, **ILLNESS**, are mapped onto a target domain, **MONOLINGUALISM** (see Figure 6.1).

As pointed out by metaphor scholars (including Cameron, 2011; Cameron & Low, 1999; Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009; Gibbs, 1994, 2008; Koller, 2004; Kövecses, 2002, 2005; Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Lakoff, Espenson, & Schwartz, 1991; Musolff & Zinken, 2009; Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Pérez Hernández, 2011; Semino, 2008; Turner, 2014), the mapping of properties from source to target domain is carried out as a whole structure, but is partial, so that only certain features of the source are mapped onto the target. This is known as the process of ‘highlighting and hiding’ specific features in metaphorical and metonymic processes, in such a way that a particular perspective is provided on the target domain. This process of highlighting and hiding may have ideological motivations and implications, as we will see below. In example (1), the fact of being monolingual is represented as an illness and not as a skill or another positive property, and it thus implies that there is something negative about monolingualism. The attributes of the concept **ILLNESS** that are mapped onto the target involve assumptions – typically evaluative – such as:

- monolingualism is bad (**illness as negatively evaluated**);
- monolingualism restricts your possibilities of moving around the world (**illness as impeding**);
- monolingualism indicates that your mind/body is not functioning adequately (**illness as restricting bodily and brain adequate functions**); and/or
- monolingualism indicates the person affected lacks something (**a medicine**).

This perspective on monolingualism highlights the phenomenon as a restriction and impediment on what are considered to be ‘normal’ bodily and mental functions, and as needing a ‘cure’ – in this case, the learning of further languages. The notice is slightly humorous, because it plays with the incongruity of being able to speak one language as an illness, and the implied cure as bilingualism or multilingualism – skills that are more complex than monolingualism. The metaphor is contextually driven, since it appears in the sociocultural context of a world that tends towards globalisation, accompanied by multiculturality and multilingualism. More specifically, it appears on the door of a university teacher of Latin languages and literatures, thus bringing to the reader’s attention (students and other scholars)

![Figure 6.1 Mapping of source domain onto target domain in CMT](image-url)
the fact that linguistic and cultural hybridity such as that of the Latin countries is something to be valued, contrary to what has been historically the case.

**METONYMY**

While, in CMT, metaphor involves the mapping of features across two different domains, metonymy is described as a process in which the mapping occurs within the same domain (for example Barcelona, 2002; Benczes, Barcelona, & Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, 2011; Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Díez Velasco, 2002; Steen, 2005). According to Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Díez Velasco (2002: 493), while, in metaphor, a schematic structure belonging to a source domain is mapped onto a different schematic structure, the target, ‘metonymy is used primarily for reference: we refer to an entity by means of another entity’. The highlighting function pointed out with regard to metaphor is even more prominent in metonymy, as argued by Barcelona (2002: 226, emphasis original): ‘The metonymic source projects its conceptual structure onto that of the target, not by means of a systematic matching of counterparts, but by conceptually *foregrounding* the source and *backgrounding* the target.’

Thus, in the metaphor identified in **MONOLINGUALISM CAN BE CURED**, a correspondence or structural matching between counterparts can be identified:

- monolingualism is an illness;
- monolingual people are ill people;
- the cure to an illness is a medicine;
- the cure to monolingualism is bilingualism or multilingualism;
- illness is restrictive of bodily and mental functions; and
- monolingualism is restrictive of bodily and mental functions, etc.

The main difference between metaphor and metonymy, according to numerous scholars, concerns ‘the domain-internal or domain-external nature of the mapping’ (Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Díez Velasco, 2002: 496). Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Díez Velasco (2002) distinguish between two main types of metonymy: one in which a main, or matrix, domain stands for one of its subdomains (‘I don’t like Shakespeare’, meaning, for example ‘I don’t like Hamlet’); the other, one in which one of the subdomains stands for the main or matrix domain (‘the head of the department’, where ‘head’ stands for the whole person or even the department itself). The authors name the first type of metonymy ‘target-in-source metonymy’ and the latter, ‘source-in-target metonymy’ (Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Díez Velasco, 2002: 496). It is also interesting to point out that metonymies often appear in connected chains in discourse and motivate metaphors, especially ontological metaphors. The difference between the two types of metonymy is represented in Figures 6.2 and 6.3, which Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Díez Velasco describe as processes of reduction and expansion, respectively.

Example (2) illustrates the interaction of metaphor and metonymy in actual discourse use. The example is taken from graffiti in the female bathrooms of the Universidad Complutense, Madrid, Spain:

*Podrán cortar* (They can cut)  
*todas las flores* (all the flowers)  
*pero nunca podrán parar la primavera.* (but they will never stop the spring.)  
*Wold Revolution! [sic]* (World Revolution!)  

(2)
We can first identify the metonymic relation between ‘flowers’ and ‘spring’ of the type that we have defined as target-in-source, or expanding, metonymy, in which flowers stand for spring (entities stand for a related event). Furthermore, the metonymy enables conceptual metaphors such as spring is world revolution (triggered by the linguistic expressions ‘[T]hey will never stop spring/We[r]ld revolution!’), flowers are protesters, and cutting is silencing or killing, followed as a consequence by the metaphor cutting flowers is killing or silencing protesters, triggered by the linguistic expressions ‘They can cut/all the flowers’. As mentioned above, both the metonymy and the metaphors are contextually motivated by the current sociohistorical situation of economic crisis and social protest. Thus the word ‘spring’ resonates with its previous uses in the media and in everyday language to refer to the Arab Spring as a social movement of protest, or the 15-M Spanish movement of protest, which had the sun (again metaphorically and metonymically associated with spring) as its symbol and which protesters gather in the ‘Puerta del Sol’ (Sun Gate) in Madrid, or numerous slogans making reference to social protest as spring. The resonance of spring as revolution goes even further back in history to the ‘Carnation Revolution’ in Portugal in April 1975 and the ‘Prague Spring’ of 1968, thus showing that the metaphoric and metonymic associations between the source domain spring and the target domains social protest and revolution in metaphor, and other domains such as flowers in metonymy, are recurrent in recent history.
and have been recontextualised and reused in various ways in order to produce new meanings by adapting already existing metaphors in order to conceptualise and understand new situations. A well-known example is graffiti artist Banksy’s image of a protester throwing a bunch of flowers instead of a weapon, as illustrated in Figure 6.4.

As in the previous examples on the metaphoric and metonymic relation between flowers, spring and revolution, Banksy’s graffiti recontextualises this concept, adapting it to social street protest, resonating with the images of numerous real photos of protesters throwing stones or weapons at the police or other authorities. The image activates a reversal of the concept of social protest, from violence to peace. This example is also interesting because it illustrates the activation of an implicit shared narrative activated by a metaphorical frame. Metaphorical frames may be verbal or visual; in this case, even if the example is a visual image, it is significant that the verbal narrative is activated in the viewer’s mind, providing a coherent solution to the apparently incongruous image. This example provides a revision of the concept of linguistic creativity as crossing the strict boundaries of the written or pronounced word.

The paradoxical and collaborative nature of metaphor and metonymy in real discourse

Numerous scholars have pointed out what seems to be the ‘paradoxical’ nature of metaphor and metonymy, which are both pervasive in the understanding of everyday experiences, and

Figure 6.4  Banksy graffiti

Source: The freedom to reproduce the image is gratefully acknowledged.
are also the tools for the creation of new ideas, language, and ideologies. Thus cognitive linguists (including, among others, Gibbs, 1994, 2008; Kövecses, 2002, 2005, 2010; Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, Espensen, & Schwartz, 1991) have pointed towards the pervasiveness of metaphorical thought as a feature of human experience. As argued by Gibbs (1994: 1): ‘Metaphor, metonymy, irony and other tropes are not linguistic distortions of literal mental thought but constitute basic schemes by which people conceptualize their experience and the external world.’ This is illustrated in example (3), which is from an email written by a friend from whom I had not heard for a long time:

Hola del pasado lejano. (Hi from the distant/far away past)  

This example illustrates the typical conventional conceptual metaphor time is space, by means of which we understand a complex abstract concept such as time in terms of a more basic concrete concept such as space. Thus time is understood as something that is perceived as far away or close to the speakers. Once my friend and I met, and had caught up on what had happened over the past twenty years, my friend’s emails’ subject heading changed to:

Hola del presente continuo. (Hi from the continuous present)  

The second metaphor in example (4) is a playful extension and recontextualisation of the meaning of time used in previous emails by changing ‘past’ for ‘present’ and ‘distant/far away’ for ‘continuous’. Additionally, ‘continuous’ not only makes reference to the fact that the concept of time is now ongoing and dynamic, but also makes a subtle reference to my own profession as a teacher of English and to a feature of the English tense system. This example shows that metaphor is a dynamic process that changes motivated by contextual cues.

Turning to example (2), the graffiti in the female toilets, the initial inscription was typically further expanded by the writings of other students who visited the bathrooms. The following are some of the notes added to the initial graffiti.

An ‘r’ is added to the word Wold, together with the expression idota! (idiot!)  

As example (5) illustrates, the original graffiti is ‘corrected’ by a further participant. It is later expanded on humorously by another student, who uses the winter metaphor to playfully oppose or question the idea of world revolution:

Con lo que mola el invierno! (But winter is so cool!)  

Examples (5) and (6) illustrate the collaborative nature of discourse in general, metaphorical creativity in particular, and the nature of graffiti as an interactive genre (see Carrington & Dowdall, Chapter 26). Thus, while the original graffiti enhances the power of spring as a source of social change and revolution, the writer in example (6) downplays the importance given to this phenomenon by praising winter. The result is an ambiguous and unstable relation between the concepts spring and winter, since it remains unclear whether the second writer is being ironic about the initial enhancement of spring as revolution, is just not interested in the social protest movement, or simply literally likes winter. In any case, the use of the term ‘winter’ is an example of everyday creativity in the sense that the writer uses a previous conceptual metaphor, spring, in order to deconstruct it by means of reversal and opposition.
A further example of recontextualisation can be observed in example (7), taken from a poster at the stand of the political party Izquierda Unida during the festivities of Las Rozas, a suburb of Madrid, in September 2014:

No hay planeta B. (There is no planet B.)

This example plays with the already existing metaphor PLAN B IS ALTERNATIVE ACTION and recontextualises it in the light of ecological considerations, thus activating two metaphors – PLAN B IS NO ALTERNATIVE ACTION and PLANET B IS NOT A SOLUTION FOR ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS – thus suggesting that it is becoming too late to control the social crisis (‘plan B’) and additionally that there is no other place to which humanity can turn if we destroy our natural resources (‘planet B’).

These observations lead to a last important point to be mentioned in this section – namely, the performative nature of metaphor and metonymy as instigators of social action and change, as the above examples have shown. As argued by Jones (2012: 7), making reference to Fairclough, creativity involves:

complex chains of action . . . which [Fairclough] describes as the sociocognitive processes by which the producers of texts draw upon and transform past conventions and prior texts to create new meanings, and the consumers of texts appropriate and adapt these meanings based on their past understandings and experiences and their present circumstances. And so again, the tension between the old and the new, the borrowed and the original, the conventional and the subversive arises at the centre of a discourse analytical approach to creativity.

The examples discussed so far illustrate what are known as ‘conventional’ (TIME IS SPACE), and ‘recontextualised’ (SPRING IS REVOLUTION) metaphors. A few words need to be said about novel metaphors and how they become conventionalised.

A good example is the SPRING metaphor for social protest and revolution. This metaphor was created some time in the past, when it was novel, and has now become conventionalised and extended worldwide to refer to a specific historical form of social movement.

A similar kind of phenomenon is found in the metaphors that are used to name scientific discoveries and technological inventions (for example Nerlich, Elliott, & Larson, 2009). Thus a current example of metaphor in biogenetics is illustrated in example (8):

Apoptosis or programmed cell death is the process by which cells commit suicide for the benefit of the organism as a whole (personal communication).

This definition involves three different metaphors to describe the same phenomenon: APOPTOSIS, PROGRAMMED CELL DEATH, and SUICIDE. The first term, APOPTOSIS, is an opaque metaphor, used by professionals in the field of study and deriving from the Greek, meaning ‘the dropping of leaves in Autumn, or of petals from a flower’. In this metaphor, the cell is talked about in terms of a plant; it thus gives rise to the conceptual metaphor A CELL IS A PLANT.

The second linguistic expression, PROGRAMMED CELL DEATH, is also a technical term used by experts and foregrounds a different metaphor, THE BODY IS A MACHINE, by which certain processes such as that described above are part of a complex mechanism.
Finally, the term suicide is a non-expert term used to make accessible the novel complex scientific concept to a broader audience by means of the personification a cell is a person who commits suicide.

This distinction between expert metaphors and metaphors addressed to a more general audience has been designated, respectively, ‘theory-constitutive’ and ‘pedagogical’ metaphors (Boyd, 1993 [1979]). The coexistence of different metaphors to describe the same phenomenon has been pointed out by numerous scholars (such as Low, 2005), and provides the means for speakers to understand a phenomenon from complementary perspectives and different domains of experience. Finally, although the three scientific metaphors were novel when they first appeared in 1977, they have now become conventionalised, as have numerous scientific metaphorical expressions such as ‘black hole’, ‘cosmic soup’, ‘big bang’, etc.

**Historical perspectives**

Metaphor and metonymy have been at the centre of the Western tradition of the study of poetics, literariness, and rhetoric since the times of Aristotle (see Cockroft et al., 2014). Aristotle’s view of metaphor as an implicit comparison has had a great influence in the definition and understanding of metaphor well into the twentieth century. Furthermore, metaphor and metonymy have, for centuries, been approached as poetic resources used by writers and rhetoricians to embellish speech. Understood in this sense, both metaphor and metonymy have been conceived of as exceptional, or even ‘deviant’, uses of language and prototypical instances of the individual creative mind (see Ortony, 1993 [1979]: 3). This view has, in a way, persisted in initial approaches to the study of linguistics throughout the twentieth century, during which phenomena such as metaphor, contradiction, or irony have been interpreted as anomalies of semantic meaning and exceptions in the management of pragmatic meaning – namely, the ‘flouting’ of maxims (Grice, 1977 [1975]) or the utterance of indirect speech acts (Searle, 1977 [1975]) – thus implying that insincerity or failure to tell the truth is involved in these phenomena.

Thus, example (1), monolingualism can be cured, would be analysed as follows from the perspective of traditional semantic and pragmatic approaches:

- In terms of Grice’s (1977 [1975]) notion of the cooperative principle and its articulation in four maxims (quantity, ‘tell as much information as is sufficient for the present exchange’; quality, ‘tell the truth’; relevance, ‘be relevant’; manner, ‘avoid obscurity and ambiguity’), example (1) flouts (that is, does not fulfil all of, but creates additional pragmatic meaning to) the maxim of quality – that is, is not strictly speaking true. However, the speaker compensates for the fact of not respecting the maxim of truth by creating an additional pragmatic ‘implicature’, which can be spelled out as: ‘Monolingualism is not strictly speaking an illness but in a way can be understood as some kind of impairment.’
- In terms of Searle’s (1977 [1975]) distinction between direct and indirect speech acts, example (1) would be an example of an indirect speech act, in the sense that the literal meaning cannot be taken as true and is consequently infelicitous from the point of view of the sincerity conditions required for a successful speech act. It can, however, also be interpreted as an utterance or speech act ‘that stands for another’. In other words, as in Grice’s theory, the utterance monolingualism can be cured stands for another, such as the proposition outlined above (Grice’s implicature).
These attempts to account for the properties of metaphor and metonymy as flouting of some pragmatic principle have been further studied from the perspective of relevance theory (for example Pilkington, 2000; Sperber & Wilson, 1995 [1986]). From the perspective of this theory, speakers search for an ‘optimal’ relevant interpretation by means of a complex cognitive procedure of interpretation of implicatures and explicatures. In the case of metaphor, the cognitive process would lead the speaker/reader to interpret the utterance as metaphoric because it would be the ‘optimal’ solution.

At the moment in which these theories were developed, they certainly offered a way of analysing metaphor and metonymy as instances of language use that may not necessarily be limited to poetic language or literary language. However, it is still assumed that only one interpretation is possible (either metaphoric or not; either the maxims are being followed or not; the speech act is either direct or indirect; there is only one optimal relevant interpretation of an utterance). This approach fails to account for the interpretations that have been outlined above – that is, metaphoric and metonymic uses as potentially unstable creative acts that may, or indeed usually, lend themselves to accept more than one interpretation. This view certainly poses problems to centuries of linguistic theory based on Cartesian and Aristotelian assumptions about the ‘logical’ nature of language, and of its semantics and structure.

Present-day approaches to metaphor and metonymy derive from the work of scholars such as Richards (1936), who introduced the terms ‘tenor’, ‘vehicle’, and ‘ground’ to refer to the elements involved in the metaphorical construct, but also pointed to the ‘tension’ present in metaphor (Ortony, 1993 [1979]: 7; also see Charteris-Black, 2004). A second crucial influence has been the work of Black (1993 [1979]), who stressed the important fact that metaphor creates similarities that give rise to ‘new’ ways of perceiving the world. This view is also developed by other scholars such as Reddy (1993 [1979]) and Goatly (2007), among others. Further influence has derived from Glucksberg and Keysar’s (1993 [1979]: 401) view of metaphors as assertions of categorisation.

The work of these scholars leads to the questioning of the ‘uniqueness’ view of metaphor as a creative linguistic resource and as a semantic-pragmatic anomaly, and is fully developed as CMT. Conceptual metaphor theory, influenced by the writings of scholars such as Reddy (1993 [1979]) and Black (1993 [1979]), proposes an approach to metaphor and metonymy as pervasive in human thought and as phenomena that are found in everyday language, not only in literature. As pointed out at the outset of this chapter, metaphor and metonymy are understood as processes of conceptual mappings between a source (what Reddy calls the ‘vehicle’) and a target (what Reddy calls ‘tenor’) domain. While metaphor involves cross-domain mapping (spring is revolution), metonymy involves within-domain mapping (flowers stand for spring). Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Lakoff and Turner (1989), and Kövecses (2002), among others, distinguish between ontological metaphors, structural metaphors, and orientational metaphors.

Orientalational metaphors are perhaps the most basic types of metaphor, since they are based on what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) call ‘image schemas’: the more basic cognitive structures that we use to interpret our basic spatial and embodied experience (up–down, in–out, centre–periphery, path, movement, etc.). Orientalational metaphors such as up–down are typical of discourse such as economics:

Prices have increased/gone up a lot over the last years. (9)

Sales of this product have plunged. (10)
These image schemas and orientational metaphors in turn activate more complex ontological and structural metaphors. Thus an ontological metaphor involves the personification or objectification of an entity, so in example (9) we find the ontological metaphor price is an object – that is, a more abstract concept such as price (the target) is understood in terms of a physical concrete entity (an object that can move up and down).

A further prototypical example of this kind is the life is a journey metaphor, which is based on the path image schema:

I am not sure what direction to take at this point in life. (11)

In example (8) of the scientific metaphors of apoptosis offered earlier in this chapter, we saw complementary examples of ontological metaphors to describe this phenomenon:

- PROGRAMMED CELL DEATH based on the body is a machine ontological metaphor in which an animated entity (the body) is understood as an object (machine); and
- cell suicide, based on the ontological metaphor the cell is a person who commits suicide, which personifies an entity invisible to the naked eye.

Structural metaphors create complex networks of meaning that allow speakers to understand complex experiential domains. For example, the concepts of emotions can be explained in terms of metaphors that refer to the physical embodied and sensorimotor sensations associated to those feelings, as in:

Our relationship is at a crossroads. (love is a journey)
He burst out in anger. (anger is a heated liquid)
She jumped with joy. (joy is jumping)

In love is a journey, for example, the target domain love is interpreted in terms of journey: lovers are travellers; a love relationship is a journey; obstacles in a journey are problems in a relationship; the end of a journey is the end of a relationship, etc.

Similarly, abstract concepts such as time can be interpreted by means of various metaphors that draw from more basic domains of experiences or source domains:

Hi from the far away past. (time is space)
I haven’t got time for this. (time is an object)
You’re wasting my time – please be concise. (time is a valuable object)
As time goes by, life seems to go faster. (time is a moving object)

Each source highlights a different perspective on the target, allowing different complementary understandings of the complex time concept.

Conceptual metaphor theory draws a distinction between novel and conventional metaphors, and in its initial stages pays particular attention to conventional metaphors such as those illustrated above. These metaphors enable us to make sense of, and interpret, an utterance coherently and, as argued by Kövecses (2005), are ‘culturally congruent’, in the sense that our sociocultural background enables us to interpret the relation between source and target domains as congruous or meaningful in spite of their being apparently incongruous. Many of those metaphors that are deeply entrenched in various cultures are
also known as ‘primary metaphors’ (Grady, 2005), such as purposes are destinations, and underlie more complex structural metaphors (life is a journey). Novel metaphors, on the other hand, are concepts that are used to name new phenomena in our experience, such as scientific discoveries, everyday or artistic inventiveness, and innovation. In the last years, particular attention has been paid to the fact that novel metaphors do not arise ‘from scratch’, but rather make use of old or familiar experiential domains or scenarios in order to provide a ‘twist’ that gives rise to the new meaning in a new context. Kövecses (2010) argues that this process of metaphorical creativity may be related to an expansion or elaboration of the source or the target domains. A further distinction is drawn between universal and contextual metaphors. Thus Kövecses (2010) argues that while universal metaphors are based on embodiment, contextually triggered metaphors vary depending on various factors such as the topic of discourse, the situation, or the sociocultural context.

With regard to metonymy, although this process has received more detailed attention from scholars only in recent years, it is worth pointing out that the same view of conceptual metaphor is applied to this phenomenon — that is, as pervasive in language and part of our everyday language, as well as of more innovative uses. What is more interesting in recent research is the attempt to study the mechanisms by which metonymies and metaphors occur in clusters, and by mixing and combining different sources, thus giving rise to complex processes in which metonymic chains activate ontological and structural metaphors.

A further contribution of cognitive scholars that has been very influential in the understanding of metaphorical creativity is ‘blending theory’, or ‘conceptual integration theory’ (CIT) (see Fauconnier & Turner, 2002; Turner, 2014). According to these scholars, metaphorical creativity can be better understood by means of a four-domain model, comprising a general space, an input space, an output space, and the blend. What is crucial in this view of metaphorical creativity is that the content of the blend — the innovative metaphor — is not a direct result of the mapping of properties from an input to an output space, but rather consists of emergent content.

This idea of emergent content is taken up in recent discourse approaches to metaphor, which emphasise the recontextualising and collaborative nature of ‘innovative metaphors’. This trend in metaphor and metonymy studies, although obviously derived from CMT, pays greater attention to the influence of the actual contexts in which metaphors are used and has received the name of ‘the discourse turn’ in metaphor studies (see, among others, Cameron & Deignan, 2006; Cameron & Gibbs, 2008; Cameron & Low, 1999; Carter, 2004; Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009; Gibbs, 2008; Hidalgo-Downing & Kraljevic Mujic, 2013, Jones, 2012; Maybin & Swann, 2006; Pennycook, 2007; Semino, 2008; Semino, Deignan, & Littlemore, 2013). At present, the situation shows a panorama in which CMT, CIT, and discourse-based studies are being applied to a variety of discourses, and to language as social and cultural practices, thus providing a complex perspective on the way in which metaphor and metonymy, as linguistic and conceptual phenomena, are understood in sociocultural contexts. The combination of these scholarly trends has given interesting results, for example in critical discourse analysis (see, for example, Charteris-Black, 2005; Koller, 2004), in which both CMT/CIT and discourse analysis complement each other.

Indeed, Jones (2012) proposes the question of whether we may be facing a new change of paradigm — namely, the view of metaphorical and metonymic creativity as performative and collaborative endeavours, rather than as products produced by ‘gifted individuals’. That is a view of metaphoric and metonymic creativity as a collective, ongoing phenomenon that is constantly updated and revised, as outlined earlier in this chapter.
Critical issues and topics

Having given an introductory overview of the phenomena of metaphor and metonymy as prototypical resources for everyday and innovative linguistic creativity, I turn to some of the critical issues that are at stake in current research and which pose challenging questions for further research. One of the crucial issues involved in the theoretical interpretation of metaphor and metonymy is to what extent they are primarily conceptual entities (ways of thinking) or contextually driven uses of language (ways of using language and talking about things). While traditional CMT has emphasised the conceptual dimension of metaphoric and metonymic creativity as cognitive tools for the conceptualisation of human experience, recent discourse studies have emphasised the discourse-pragmatic roles of metaphor and metonymy as resources for revealing taken-for-granted ideologies and persuasive goals (Charteris-Black, 2004; Koller, 2004), the joint construction of discursive and social practices (Cameron & Low, 1999; Jones, 2012), and the tendency for metaphor and metonymy to make use of non-verbal, as well as linguistic, resources in current uses of discourse, which are so strongly influenced by multi-semiotic modes of communication (see Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

A second critical issue is the relationship, and even distinction, between metaphor and metonymy, a problem that has led scholars such as Goossens (1999) to adopt the term ‘metaphtonymy’ to refer to a broad set of combinatory relations into which metaphor and metonymy may enter. In the present overview, the traditional distinction between cross-domain mapping and within-domain mapping is maintained.

A third critical issue is the difference between novel and conventional metaphors and metonymies. While the capacity for novelty of metaphor in particular has always been at the centre of scholarly research, the interest in the pervasiveness of conventional metaphors and metonymies necessarily raises the question of to what degree there is a difference between the two types. As pointed out by Carter (2004), it may be argued that metaphoric and metonymic creativity, like any other forms of creativity, are a question of degree or clines – that is, there is no point in trying to establish a black-and-white distinction between innovative and conventional metaphors. One of the reasons for this has already been mentioned: the fact that novel metaphors, such as scientific metaphors, often become conventionalised when appropriated by a discourse community.

A fourth critical issue of debate is the assumed deliberateness of metaphor and metonymy. This issue has been discussed in various forums (see Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Díez Velasco, 2002; Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Pérez Hernández, 2011; Steen, 2005), and the answer seems to require a contextual interpretation of the actual use of metaphor and metonymy as creative acts.

A fifth hot issue is to what extent the features of universality/embodiment and variation/contextual adaptation mutually exclude or complement each other. While some scholars tend to focus on the distinction between these two types of metaphor (for example Kövecses, 2010), others claim the possibility of their co-occurrence and combination by means of the activation of sensorimotor experience in both types of metaphor (for example Gibbs, Okonski, & Hatfield, 2013).

Finally, the question remains whether metaphoric and metonymic creativity should be viewed as products or processes, and, similarly, whether there is one interpretation to a creative product or process, or whether ambiguity and instability are at the basis of the creative act, as suggested at the outset of this chapter. We might, for example, consider Forceville’s (2013) notion of a film as offering, not imposing an interpretation, and Gibbons’ (2013) description of multimodal literature as engaging the reader in an interactive process.
Illustration

I now turn to the analysis of an advertisement, applying the view of metaphorical and metonymic creativity outlined in this chapter.

The Sky advertisement

Figure 6.5, an advertisement for the British Sky television channel, is an example of metaphorical and metonymic creativity.

The Sky advertisement shows a mouth, open, displaying bright white teeth, as though laughing, which stands on two small legs and feet. It demonstrates an interesting combination of metonymy, opposition, humour, and metaphor as resources for creativity and attention-grabbing devices. What first draws the reader’s attention is the image of the open mouth, with white teeth, standing on small legs and laughing. This image can be said to activate the pictorial metonymy, **THE SMILING MOUTH STANDS FOR THE SMILING PERSON**, and the ambiguous conceptual metonymy, **THE SMILING MOUTH STANDS FOR THE SENDER/RECEIVER**. The text that
follows disambiguates the metonymy by means of a denial of the image: ‘Don’t laugh. Comedy’s a serious matter for us.’ This implies that the preceding pictorial metonymy is meant to be addressed to the receiver. What is relevant is that, once more, negation, opposition, and reversal are used to manipulate metonymic meanings and introduce the following discourse, which contains several further metonymies and metaphors.

British writers and comedians are described as ‘exercising their funny bones’, an expression that activates the metonymy or synecdoche funny bones stand for comedian (part-for-whole) and the metaphor A COMEDIAN IS A PERSON DOING EXERCISE. A further metonymy is found in ‘late-night laughs’, which can be spelled out as THE LAUGH STANDS FOR THE PERSON LAUGHING (product-for-producer), and a metaphor and a further metonymy in ‘comedians . . . are bringing joy to over ten million Sky homes up and down the country’. Thus the emotion of joy is represented as an object that can be taken to places – to homes: joy is an object and ‘Sky homes’ activates the metonymy THE HOME STANDS FOR THE PERSONS WHO INHABIT IT. Finally, the country is represented in terms of the up–down image schema and the orientational conventional metaphor NORTH IS UP AND SOUTH IS DOWN.

The advertisement can be said to make a creative use of metaphor and metonymy, because even if the metaphors and metonymies are not particularly innovative, but rather conventional, they produce the intended humorous effect that the advertising company wishes to create, triggered by words related to humour such as ‘funny’, ‘laughs’, and ‘comedy’ in addition to the visual image of the laughing mouth.

**Main research methods**

Identifying metaphor and metonymy in discourse, especially when the amount of data is large, is no simple process (see, for example, Gibbs, 1999; Low & Cameron, 2002; Steen, 2007). In the origins of CMT, metaphors were identified as conceptual constructs activated by linguistic expressions, as shown in examples (1)–(11), but these initial studies focused on the analysis of semantic domains, such as emotions, or abstract and complex concepts, analysing decontextualised uses of metaphor and metonymy. Although this procedure served the purpose of raising the awareness of the pervasiveness of metaphor and metonymy as conceptual tools, further methodologies have been developed to allow the analysis of long stretches of real discourse. Discourse analysts working on metaphor theory have contributed two crucial methodological tools for the identification of metaphors in discourse: the Pragglejaz Group’s (2007) metaphor identification procedure (MIP) and the version modified at VU University Amsterdam (MIPVU) (see also Steen et al., 2011); and corpus-based approaches to the identification of metaphorical and metonymic expressions (Berber Sardinha, 2011; Charteris-Black, 2004; Deignan, 2005; Veale, Donoghue, & Keane, 2000).

With regard to the first methodological approach, it is defined by Steen and colleagues (2011: 45) as follows:

> It is based on the idea that metaphor in language exhibits indirect meaning, producing local semantic incongruity, which needs to be connected to the encompassing frame of a text, paragraph, sentence, clause or even phrase by some form of (non-literal) comparison.

This model is based on a five-step identification procedure, developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007: 3) and summarised as follows.
1. Read the entire text-discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
2. Determine the lexical units in the text-discourse.
3. (a) For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in context – that is, how it applies to an entity, relation, or attribute in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). Take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit.
   (b) For each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than that given. For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be:
   - more concrete – that is, what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell, and taste;
   - related to bodily action;
   - more precise (as opposed to vague); and
   - historically older.
   Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit.
   (c) If the lexical unit has a more basic current–contemporary meaning in other contexts than that given, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning, but can be understood in comparison with it.
4. If it can, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical.

With regard to the second approach, it is based on corpus tools and, in some cases, more complex computational methods. However, scholars in general point towards the need to consider the qualitative dimension of metaphor identification in addition to the quantitative information provided by the search of metaphorical keywords. In other words, corpus tools and computational methods, and the qualitative identification of metaphorical meanings, need to complement each other, because quantification provides further information regarding tendencies, frequencies, and underlying semantic prosodies in texts once the metaphorical meaning is determined by qualitative means. A good example is the corpus methodology followed by some scholars such as Charteris-Black (2004: 35), who identifies two stages in the identification of metaphors in a corpus of data. It is interesting to note that these two stages are qualitative and that, as in the Pragglejaz Group (2007) methodology, they involve a decision on how to identify ‘metaphor candidates’ (Charteris-Black, 2004: 35) in a sample of data. Thus Charteris-Black (2004: 35) proposes: first, a search of metaphorical candidates related to the topic under study (which are to be considered as potential metaphorical keywords); and secondly, that the metaphorical keywords then be searched in the corpus and examined in their context of use in order to confirm whether ‘each use of a keyword is metaphoric or literal’. In other words, conclusions on the role of metaphorical expressions in particular texts may be obtained by combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

**Recommendations for practice**

When considering recommendations for practice in the research and teaching/learning of metaphor and metonymy as creative processes, several points may be highlighted including, first, the need to develop an awareness of the various theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of metaphor and metonymy as creative processes. This will allow the researcher/learner/teacher to make use of a solid background from which he or she can select a specific orientation. Secondly, it is important to develop an awareness of the need
to consider metaphorical and metonymic creativity as intrinsically linked and contextually motivated, thus paying specific attention to factors such as genre and register, and the age, social status, and social, cultural, and historical background of the participants, among others.

Future directions

Within the possible ideas for future directions, the following paths seem to be particularly interesting options for further research. First, what is the relation between metaphor and metonymy and other cognitive and discourse processes, such as image schemas, narrative, humour, and opposition? How do these articulate the creative process? The relationship between some of these features has been pointed out by several scholars (see, for example, Forceville & Renckens, 2013, for the relationship between image schemas, narrative, and metaphor and metonymy; Giora, 2006, Hidalgo-Downing, Kraljevic Mujic, & Núñez-Perucha, 2013, and Stubbs, 2005, for the relation between metaphor and opposition; El-Refaie, 2009, and Hidalgo-Downing & Kraljevic Mujic, 2013, for the relationship between humour and metaphor). Indeed, the present chapter has proposed that these phenomena share the characteristics of being bisociative, synergetic, unstable creative processes, as described earlier in the chapter, and need further research from this perspective.

A further area of interest is the performative dimension of metaphoric and metonymic creativity, and the consequent relationship between the verbal mode and other modes of communication in the creative process. This has been illustrated by means of the analysis of various linguistic instances of metaphoric and metonymic creativity, which have been modified and expanded, as in graffiti. The discussion carried out in the present chapter has also raised the question of metaphorical and metonymic creativity as collaborative and collective endeavours, not as isolated acts of creation, especially within the domain of new hybrid genres such as advertising, emails, and graffiti.

The importance of metaphor and metonymy as creating, reinforcing, or challenging ideologies has already been mentioned, but certainly deserves further study, especially in the light of cross-cultural and intercultural studies (see, for example, McArthur et al., 2012).

Further studies need to be carried out on how metaphor and metonymy are interpreted and received by different audiences, as Forceville and Renckens (2013) and Gibbons (2013) suggest, and has been observed in the discussion of the process of interpretation of the Sky advertisement (Figure 6.5).

Finally, further attention needs to be paid to the discursive nature of metaphor and metonymy, and further explorations are needed into the way in which processes of mixing and combining metaphors, chained metonymies, and extended metaphor contribute to the understanding of discourse. Diachronic and longitudinal studies will also shed light on the ways in which metaphor and metonymy both give shape to, and reflect, social and cultural change and variation (see Frank, 2009; Hidalgo-Downing, Kraljevic Mujic, & Núñez-Perucha, 2013; Musolff & Zinken, 2009).

Related topics

cognitive stylistics; everyday language creativity; language, creativity, and cognition; literature and multimodality
Further reading


This volume offers an interesting overview of the cognitive and sociocultural motivations of metaphors and metonymies from a diachronic perspective. It draws from data from the *Historical Thesaurus of English*, and explores three of the main concepts used to conceptualise human intelligence, the senses, density, and animals.


This fascinating study provides insights into the way in which scientific ideas and discoveries are conceptualised and communicated by means of metaphor and metonymy. It addresses the debate on the issue of ‘scientific reality’, and the human attempt to understand, conceptualise, and communicate concepts and experiences, mainly by means of metaphoric language.


This volume provides the first complete overview of metaphor in the discourse of economics, from a diachronic and cross-cultural perspective. It shows that metaphors are theory constitutive in the discourse of economics, and thus perform crucial roles in which concepts are created and communicated.


This volume provides a very useful overview of the role that figurative language plays in language teaching, paying specific attention to the understanding, interpretation, evaluation, and incorporation of metaphor into the curriculum and teaching/learning materials.


This is invaluable reading for scholars interested in creativity, and its relationship to metaphor and metonymy. A comprehensive and innovative approach is provided, drawing from diverse sources ranging from literature to scientific concepts.

References


