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English Metaphors for Language: Motivations, Conventions, and Creativity

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Abstract   In 1987 I described a set of metaphors for language and thought which have shaped semantic histories of speech verbs and epistemic verbs in the Indo-European language family at large, as well as specifically in English. This paper analyzes the motivations for the basic speech metaphors involved in English polysemy structures, as elucidated by the broader data base of conventional but unlexicalized metaphors for linguistic interaction. A fairly restricted set of basic structures is shown to account for most of our metaphors of speech: essentially the same metaphors which were important to polysemy and to meaning change. This study sheds further light on the important issue of the contrast between literary and everyday metaphor, arguing (contra Chana Kronfeld) that conventional, everyday metaphors are far more basic to human metaphorical abilities and to processing than are innovative literary ones.

Our language about language presents a rich source of data for analysts of metaphorical systems. This paper will set forth some of the basic metaphorical models of linguistic activity instantiated in English, and will suggest possible cognitive and experiential motivations for these metaphors. The goal will be to add to the dialogue on the relationship between cognition and metaphor. An additional goal will be to examine the close interrelationship between creative and entrenched uses of these metaphors; the available data seem to strongly support the unity of everyday language and poetic metaphorical structures. My discussion will be developed against a background of cogni-

tive linguistic theory, so I will begin by discussing my understanding of artistic language use and of cognitive motivation for linguistic form in terms of that theory.

Art and "Ordinary" Usage

As a linguist, I am impressed, sometimes humbled, by the complex network of contrasts among the various registers of spoken and written language, and in particular between consciously artistic or literary language and less self-conscious or aesthetically motivated everyday usages.[1] But fortunately the literary language is not "another language" from everyday language. The two coexist as aspects of the varied language use of a single community. In analyzing language, we try to disentangle artistic convention and invention from what we perceive as more general linguistic structures in such cases; that is, we assume there is some commonality to be grasped at the basis of the contrast between the literary and the nonliterary. When we do historical linguistics using written sources (that is, for any period preceding voice recordings), we rely on some underlying unity of this kind: other than personal letters, which may be missing or sparse for early periods, the closest thing we have to naturalistic language use in our sources is literary language.[2]

More importantly, if such an underlying unity did not exist, there could not be a literary language in the sense that English speakers have one. If authors use a language so far from the spoken forms that they cannot constantly draw on (and play with) their readers' knowledge of everyday language, then the relationship between everyday and literary language is more like the situation of Medieval Latin literature in a Romance language setting (rather than like medieval or modern vernacular European literature): literature truly cast in a non-spoken language. Even in such a situation, basic cultural structures, including metaphorical ones, are usually common to the two divergent linguistic strata (as was certainly the case in medieval Europe). But English lacks such a radical separation of linguistic forms; instead, there is a long and complex continuum between spoken dialects and the most formal

1. I do see this contrast as a cline, not a strict dichotomy; but it is nonetheless not difficult to identify clear examples of each end of the spectrum. A scholarly paper, for instance, may be seen as relatively self-conscious but as normally having few artistic pretensions, thus fitting into the middle between, say, a note left on the breakfast table to tell a housemate about the day's plans and a sonnet written for publication.
2. Account books and inventories, legal documents, official inscriptions, religious-ritual texts (some of which may be simultaneously literary)—none of these comes as close to spoken language as narratives or plays do, for example. That may not be very close, but it's the best we have in such a case.

literary usage, and that entire continuum forms the basis of new artis-
tic and literary uses. English speakers may learn the literary usage as
a new dialect, but most of them do not learn it as a new language;
rather, their literary-language use and comprehension are rooted in
their knowledge of spoken forms.

In general, when the novelty or beauty of a consciously artistic lan-
guage use is understood, it is understood precisely because of the
familiar linguistic usages relative to which it is novel, or which allow
us to see it as beautiful. When a nineteenth-century critic and re-
viewer looked at a brand-new Renoir painting showing a sun-dappled
nude woman, he saw the shaded patches as "purplish-green splotches"
of "decomposing flesh." He lacked an idiom within which to see the
romantic sensuality which is so apparent to the modern viewer.[3] A
new usage may eventually create a convention, but preexisting conven-
tion combined with universal human perception is the only possible
grounding for any new usage, whatever the medium of expression.
Returning to literature, we have overwhelming evidence (as Lakoff
and Turner [1989] have argued) that literary metaphors are creative
uses of precisely those metaphors that shape our everyday language
and thought and that such metaphors are largely based on a shared
human perceptual experience of the world. By this I do not mean an
experience shared because it is the objective nature of the experienced
world, but one shared because we share human faculties of interpreta-
tion and categorization of our perceptual input. My viewpoint is thus
neither objectivist nor subjectivist, but "experientialist," like those of
George Lakoff (1987), Mark Johnson (1987), Mark Turner (1991),
and Lakoff and Turner (1989).

The immense power of everyday cognitive structure, language, and
thought is that they shape and frame all of our experience, pervasively.
The immense power of artistic usages is that they can draw on these
everyday structures to make us notice them and perceive them differ-
ently. It is hard to see how it would be possible, let alone useful, to
study one of these phenomena in principled isolation from the other.
Yet that, of course, is what generative linguistics has largely done: it
has intentionally rejected input from the structure of the written lan-
guage, using a valid concern about the influence of prescriptive norms
in an invalid way. Prescriptive norms are indeed a problem for lin-
guistic investigation, but they influence the spoken language as well

3. A modern taste might even accuse this painting of excess romantic sentiment,
but never of lacking warmth and vitality. Two separate reviewers of the same paint-
ing, in 1876, were repelled by the rotting corpse-like look of its greens and purples
(see The New Painting: Impressionism 1874–1886, published by the National Gallery
of Art, Washington, DC, and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco [1986], 184).

as the written one: in short, they cannot be pushed aside; they must instead be taken into account. Even less validly, it is still frequently held that we must investigate the "simpler" principles of language, without artistic frills like metaphor, before we can apply ourselves to language in its literary setting. Fortunately or otherwise, no such separability is possible: metaphor and metonymy, far from being "merely" literary tools, are powerful artistic structures precisely because they are generally basic to our cognitive and linguistic structures. We can't study semantics without studying metaphor, and we can't understand literary metaphor outside of its context in language structure.

It has often seemed to me that the fear of entering into the subjective realm of art and aesthetics is an important factor in the generativist rejection of linguistic art as a subject of linguistic study. But it is certain that differing goals and methodologies have often separated researchers who should be working more closely together. Few literary analysts would deny that close attention to language structure is one of their most central tools; therefore, linguists should seem useful to them, at least if their energy were rightly focused. Similarly, few linguists could reasonably deny that centuries of literary insight into metaphor, for example, are relevant to the basic work of synchronic linguistic analysis. Many linguists nevertheless ignore such work, but I think they are the primary victims of their own mistake.[4]

There is a natural division of interests between linguists and literary analysts, which leads them to focus on different aspects of metaphor as central. As Chana Kronfeld (1981) observes, linguists have a natural bias in favor of analyzing everyday use, while literary analysts are more interested in the examples of metaphor which make up great art. Kronfeld goes on to argue that, precisely because conventional, everyday metaphorical usages are conventional, they should be treated as peripheral examples, and striking or novel metaphors should be taken as central to the category. She maintains that conventional metaphors are no longer cognitively relevant to processing and that it is therefore necessary to examine metaphors which require some processing effort, or conscious metaphorical connections, in order to understand metaphor as a cognitive phenomenon.

However, more recent work on processing conventional and idiomatic metaphors has shown that although speakers need not assess and reject a literal interpretation, they nevertheless process even such con-

4. Some classic examples of areas where traditional boundaries have been broken down, and researchers from both communities have together brought new light to bear on old issues, are the study of narrative structure and (related to it) the study of the expression of viewpoint in written language. Salient examples include Ann Banfield (1982), Suzanne Fleischman (1990), David Zubin, Soon Ae Chun, and Naicong Li (1990), and Ronald W. Langacker (1985).

ventional metaphors metaphorically: they evoke images of the source domain, reason about the target domain in terms of the source domain, and so forth (Gibbs 1980, 1984). In other words, even quite automatic processing can be metaphorical.[5]

Furthermore, it is worth inquiring how speakers acquire the ability to produce and process novel and difficult metaphorical language. One possibly reasonable answer is that this ability is simply a natural manifestation of the network of everyday, mundane metaphorical connections which are constantly accessed in the process of thinking and speaking. If we really want to understand how metaphors work, says this theory, we should look at the mundane examples first and use them as a basis for analyzing the complex ones.

Cognitive Linguistics, Experientialism, and Metaphor

Certain aspects of our cognition, and hence of our linguistic structure, seem to be universally built into our bodies; other aspects obviously vary from person to person and from culture to culture. Although relativism is currently in fashion in many areas of the humanities, some linguists have returned to it more cautiously, having seen it obscure genuine linguistic universals in earlier eras. The question, to a linguist, is an empirical one: Which aspects of language and cognition do in fact vary with culture, and which do not?

An area that was once considered a showcase of cultural relativism, but is now a showcase example of cognitive and linguistic universals based on human perception, is color terminology. Researchers who knew little about the nature of visual processing, but who had access to plenty of linguistic data, had long known that color systems varied cross-linguistically: while many languages have only one basic word covering the blue/green/gray color range, English (for example) has three basic terms for this range.[6] Given only these data with which to work, scientists once speculated that speakers of such languages had less complete color perception than English speakers. However, when the actual color systems of a wide sample of the world's languages were carefully studied (Berlin and Kay 1969) in the light of data on human

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5. For lack of space, I will not here enter into the debate on the cognitive reality of metaphor per se. Beyond the various works cited elsewhere in this paper, Dedre Gentner and Donald R. Gentner (1983) deserves special notice as a strongly supported case for metaphor's guiding reasoning.

6. We eliminate from consideration various linguistic structures which are not "basic" color terms. For example, English *scarlet*, which is a color term but refers to a kind of red (anything scarlet could also be called *red* and would be so called more colloquially); *fire-engine red*, which is not only a kind of red, but is also a phrase (not a single lexeme) containing the word *red*; or *ruby*, which basically refers to a kind of object and only secondarily to a color (see Berlin and Kay 1969).

and monkey visual perception (De Valois and Jacobs 1968), the results were startling. It now seems clear not only that all humans do (with a few exceptions, such as those with red/green color blindness) perceive and process color in the same way, but also that this perceptual structure radically restricts our possible range of linguistic color categories. We are keyed to centering categories on yellow, blue, red, and green (the bright "central" colors of these ranges), and dark and light. While some human languages may have a single word covering blue/gray/green, no language that names less perceptually basic categories (e.g., brown, pink, orange) will fail to give blue and green independent terms (Kay 1975). Understanding our perception of color can essentially allow us to predict much of what is possible or impossible with respect to linguistic color systems. Within the limits imposed by our bodies, variation can occur, as when languages vary in the number of possible human color categories they name.

Color is neither an objective nor a subjective domain; it is experiential. It turns out that it matters what external color stimulus we perceive, but it also matters crucially what kinds of categories our bodies are built to make. The same appears to be true of certain domains of metaphor in human languages. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that many metaphors have some *experiential correlation* between the source and target domains: not an objective similarity, but a connection in human experience. For example, MORE IS UP is a common metaphor which motivates usages as abstract as *taxes rose* or *Smith claims he will lower the inflation rate*. But it has its basis in a salient human experience: When more of some physical substance, or a larger number of objects, is accumulated, the resulting quantity is often relatively taller than a less massive accumulation. That is, if I pile more books on a stack, the top of the stack rises, or if I pour water into a glass, the level of the water's surface rises. From this salient correlation, we extend the language of verticality to refer to cases of MORE such as *higher taxes*, where no physical verticality correlates with the increase in quantity.

Another example of a metaphor whose universal status comes from an experiential correlation is the metaphorical use of spatial words to refer to time. It is universally the case that the primary historical source of temporal vocabulary in the world's languages is spatial vocabulary. The experiential correlation in question appears to be our simultaneous experience of temporal and spatial linearity whenever we traverse a path in space: at time A we are at point A, at time B we are at point B, at time C we are at point C. And just as we cannot get from the initial point (A) to the final point (C) without traversing the intermediate points along the path (e.g., point B), so we cannot get from the initial time (A) to the final time (C) without passing through the intermediate temporal points. Of course, if we sit still in space,

time will still happen to us. So this is only a partial experiential correlation, albeit a salient one. But this and other motivations seem to be so important that they structure every child's understanding of time: children regularly learn spatial terms before temporal terms, and basic spatial senses before extended temporal uses of spatial terms. They gradually extend their general semantic coverage, and specific lexical items, from spatial usages to temporal ones (E. Clark 1971; H. Clark 1973; Clark and Carpenter 1989). They also overextend spatial terms to produce metaphorical expressions of time beyond those which happen to be conventions of the adult language, such as saying *behind dinner* to mean "after dinner" (Bowerman 1978). All of this seems to show that a close but asymmetric relationship between spatial and temporal cognition is built into human minds.

In all of the examples above, human experience of the world, rather than the world's objective features, seems to shape our linguistic usages and categories. In the cases of spatial vocabulary being extended to time and verticality being extended to quantity, the nonobjective link which shapes our usage is a metaphorical mapping. Given two domains with partially parallel schematic structures, one of which is much better understood or more immediately experienced than the other, no objective similarity is needed to link the two domains in this way.

Metaphors for Language

Many researchers have remarked on the overwhelming tendency of metaphorical semantic shifts to proceed from more concrete senses to more abstract ones. Elizabeth Closs Traugott (1974, 1982, 1989) stresses the factors of subjectification involved in this process, particularly when grammaticalization accompanies the semantic shifts. In commenting on Traugott (1991) and on Traugott and Dasher (1985), I argued (Sweetser 1987) that some basic metaphors for speech and thought motivate the transfer of English vocabulary from the domains of physical motion, object manipulation, and location to the less physical domains of speaking and thinking.[7] Here, I would like to examine some of the motivations underlying several basic metaphors for speech in English. Some of these metaphors have considerable currency in a broad range of languages; although further cross-linguistic comparison (which is my intended goal) must await another paper, this sketch may perhaps help to promote dialogue on the subject. I will thus refrain from making claims about universal motivation, while presenting hypotheses for future verification.

7. Sweetser (1988) and (1990) further analyze ways in which metaphor creates paths leading to more abstract senses.

Language is both concrete and abstract, just as it is both innate and cultural. We apparently have a built-in cognitive ability (or group of abilities) which allows us to acquire language naturally if exposed to it. But exposure is necessary, and the language learned will vary depending on the one heard; social and cultural context is also an indispensable part of the language acquisition process. Language is thus very much part of the shared, intangible knowledge of culture. But language is also concrete, in that we must physically *do* something tangible to use it: we must make audible noises, use our hands to form Sign Language words, or write the symbols corresponding to these noises and gestures. And yet such concrete actions are naturally meaningless outside of a network of interpretive conventions. Kicking a human being or a lizard may be a similar act, but talking to a human being or to a lizard is not: the human listener, if equipped with shared conventions, may be profoundly affected by the linguistically conveyed content. The lizard will be unaffected by the same noises.[8] As we shall see, both the more concrete and the more abstract aspects of linguistic exchange are relevant to the structure of metaphors for speech. But the intangible communicative aspects of language are the things we try to express metaphorically, while some of the concrete aspects are called into play to help with this expression. An example is *the words stuck in my throat*, where physical language production is used as part (but only part) of an expression of social-communicative difficulty.

Beyond the physical production and reception of speech (that is, the vocal tract and the ears themselves), certain prominent aspects of linguistic events seem to shape much of our language about language. First, the idea of a prototypical speech event includes two face-to-face participants: talking to oneself or over the telephone does not exemplify our basic concept of linguistic interaction. Second, speech expresses our internal cognitive and linguistic states (not necessarily accurately, of course): our folk understanding, which probably does correctly reflect experience, is that a speech exchange is the closest we can come to a "meeting of minds." This means that there will be some interaction between our metaphors for cognition and our metaphors for speech: we should expect such interaction especially in describing aspects of speech as a means for communicating content and for in-

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8. A Gary Larson "Far Side" cartoon capitalizes on this fact, showing a human uttering insults about an addressee's sister via microphone to a fish in a tank. The caption states that this portrays research on the question of whether fish have feelings. The viewer is left wondering which is more improbable: the idea that fish understand human linguistic signs as a concept, or that they could relate to the cultural content. Most crucially, the issue of their having feelings remains unaddressed since the input being offered as an experimental stimulus is not what we would expect to affect their cognitive or emotional (if any) processes.

fluencing other speakers' reasoning. Third, since speech is used in a variety of social activities, the metaphors appropriate to those activities may be expected to affect our language about speech as well.

Michael Reddy's (1979) now well-known Conduit Metaphor, discovered in the course of examining teachers' comments on papers, seems to be based on the first and second of the three factors mentioned above. In this metaphor, we construe LINGUISTIC EXCHANGE as EXCHANGE OF OBJECTS, which are containers for thoughts: the hearer receives a parcel (prototypically handed over by the speaker) and removes the packaging of linguistic form to get at the *content*, the meaning. The relationship between container and content is emphasized by such forms as *you're trying to squeeze too much into this sentence* or *his talk was empty/vacuous* or *I didn't get much out of that paper*. The object-exchange between face-to-face interlocutors is expressed by *she managed to get the point across to them* and by *they exchanged greetings*. These examples have been widely discussed and analyzed since Reddy's article appeared (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

Another important metaphor for language views linguistic interaction as a shared journey through a mental landscape. We can thus say: *How far had we gotten when we were interrupted? I'll be getting to that point in a moment. Are you keeping up with this? I'd like you to go back over that explanation.* I have argued elsewhere that thought itself is modeled as a journey (one *reaches a conclusion*, from premises that one *started out at*). In this respect, as Traugott (1985) and Traugott and Dasher (1985) have observed, there are major commonalities between the metaphorical sources for our vocabulary of speech and our vocabulary of thought.

There are other familiar metaphors for language, some of them either more restricted in domain or simply less frequently used. For example, argumentative speech exchange is readily (indeed, almost inevitably) metaphorically viewed as combat: Lakoff and Johnson (1980) call this metaphorical mapping ARGUMENT IS WAR.[9] Words are weapons in this verbal combat: *sharp-tongued* people make *cutting* remarks, for example, and *sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me* seems to be a formulaic attempt to assert the metaphorical rather than literal status of such weapons. In a distinct but related metaphori-

9. This mapping is so pervasive that students in Lakoff's first experimental class on metaphorical linguistic structures had difficulty even seeing it as a metaphor: they viewed "she cut his argument to pieces," "he shot down her idea," and "after a long battle, they finally won the argument" as the normal language of reference to argument, and hence as necessarily literal. Part of the power of Lakoff's approach lies in its having exposed pervasive regularity and structure in areas of the lexicon and idiom which are not consciously poetic or figurative, but which are nevertheless synchronically part of lively and productive metaphorical systems.

cal mapping, language is also seen as play, in particular as a ball game: we can *toss some ideas around*, and we need to *keep the (conversational) ball rolling*.

Motivations for the Metaphors

1. Directionality and the Face-to-Face Encounter

As discussed above, our language about language is deeply directional. Even the uses of *to* and *from*, as when we say things *to* other people and hear things *from* them, is motivated by the metaphor of speech exchange as directional (though in alternating directions) transfer of objects. The normal speech setting is with speakers facing each other and at a distance quite appropriate for physical object exchange. This is a good arrangement for hearing each other and for observing each other's extralinguistic behavior as well (often crucial to the actual interpretation of language).[10]

The physical setting of the prototypical speech exchange combines with its directionality (any given utterance involves sound waves with a source at one speaker, reaching the other speaker physically) to make a schematic structure of object exchange that is readily mappable onto linguistic activity. The metaphorical mapping occurs even when the exchange is far from prototypical, such as when there is a large number of interlocutors (so that direction is not clear), or when there is no physical encounter and no exchange of objects (letters on paper are physically exchanged, but electronic mail, for example, is more insubstantial, as are telephone calls). The president can speak *to* the public on television or on the radio. One can even *direct* a comment at someone by including it in a book or an article, imagining that someday the person in question will read it or hear about it.

These abstract uses of directional language, without any necessity for physical-directional motion, belong to an extremely broad and productive metaphorical system which is deeply entrenched in the structure of many languages. The metaphor THE MIND IS A BODY IN SPACE has been identified as underlying the historical development and polysemy structures of motion and perception vocabulary (Sweetser 1987, 1990), as well as many other linguistic usages (Lakoff 1987; Johnson 1987; Turner 1987; Lakoff and Turner 1989). In this metaphorical

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10. Because of the location of our major communicative and sensory equipment, the front, particularly the face, is the appropriate encounter surface to present socially. If you show me a picture of your daughter's face, for instance, you will have shown me a picture of her, while it would be odd to say that you had shown me a picture of her if the picture showed only her feet. (A "Family Circus" cartoon portrays a little girl saying, "Mommy, help! The buttons are in the back of the dress and I'm in the front!")

mapping, the mind is seen as interacting with its mental environment (ideas, information, emotions) as a body interacts with a physical environment of objects and locations.

Reddy's Conduit Metaphor, which treats ideas as objects traded between minds, is one particular sub-instance of the broader Mind-as-Body mapping. Such a treatment is particularly well motivated cognitively by the fact that much information exchange takes place in the same physical setting as face-to-face object exchange. It also captures quite successfully the fact that a speech act (e.g., informing) may place a previously unavailable resource (e.g., information) at the listener's disposal, just as receiving an object might well place a new resource at the disposal of the recipient. As we shall see, there are other aspects of the object-exchange model which are less ideal for talking about language: for one thing, a linguistically exchanged idea (metaphorically viewed as an object in linguistic packaging) is not lost to the giver when it is given. Other metaphors may better express the shared, not merely directional, aspects of linguistic experience, as we shall see below.

2. Journeys in Language and Thought

The parallel between our metaphors for language and for thought was mentioned above as well. As discussed in Sweetser (1987), there is a very general metaphor for thought as a journey through a mental landscape, which may in turn be motivated by the broad PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES ARE JOURNEYS mapping discussed by Lakoff and Turner (1989). But we must dig even deeper to get at the universal cognitive underpinnings of this metaphor.

The universal construal of time in terms of space was cited earlier in this paper as having a plausible perceptual motivation in our intertwined experience of spatial paths and temporal unidirectionality. Such a perceptual explanation involves the correlation of the back/front asymmetry of the human body and its motion patterns with the asymmetry of time. Once such a mapping becomes productive, any activity performed in time will be potentially subject to metaphorical mapping onto a spatial path. Thus we find LIFE IS A JOURNEY (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) reflected in *I'm not getting anywhere in my life*, *I'm at a crossroads*, *I need to find a new direction*, and *I feel like I'm really getting ahead*. And LOVE IS A JOURNEY, a joint or shared journey, since it demands two members of the relationship: this is reflected in *look how far we've come*, *we're at a crossroads*, and *this marriage is a dead end*.

Thought is also an activity which can be purposeful and is engaged in over time, so it should come as no surprise to us that, metaphorically, THOUGHT IS A JOURNEY. Here, especially, we should recall the Mind-as-Body metaphor, which suggests that both our psyche's experience of life in general and our mind's experience of thought will

be modeled in terms of spatial interaction. In particular, it is reasoning (perhaps the most purposeful mode of thought?) which is most saliently so modeled. We reason *from* premises *to* conclusions, which we eventually *reach* or *arrive at*. The inventory goes on endlessly, with different spatial relations in the traveler's path representing different relationships between thinker and thoughts. Thinking something *over* implies "coverage" or completeness (literally, *over* has such meanings in the physical domain: if you have traveled *over* an area, you have seen more of it than if you have just traveled *through* it; not to mention such uses as *put the cover over the couch* or *tar over the pothole*). Thinking something *through* means that you have reached a conclusion and no longer need to think it *over*; in the literal domain, *through* has such senses as traversing a path from one end to the other of a bounded area or container, as in *she went through the garden into the house*. If you are no longer "in" a particular reasoning space, it may be because you have finished the reasoning process and reached a conclusion. Presumably, the conclusion could not have been reached without the thinking, just as you might not be able to reach a location without traversing the intervening space between your present location and the desired one.

In this mapping, MENTAL STATES ARE LOCATIONS (cf. Lakoff and Turner 1989). This is an extremely general mapping; indeed, almost all states can be metaphorically described in terms of location. A newspaper headline from 1990 announces: "Bush *shifts* again on tax issue— now has no *position*." This might have been rephrased, assuming that it is really proclaiming Bush's public position (not his private opinion) to be nonexistent, as "Bush won't say *where he stands* on the tax issue." Thinking, or changing opinions, is moving from one mental state (set of beliefs or thoughts) to another.

If linguistic exchange is as close as we can come to sharing thought processes, then we might expect our metaphors for thought to be reflected in those for language. And indeed, it seems that (just as relationships are joint life-journeys) conversation is seen as a joint thought-journey. We might label this metaphor SPEECH EXCHANGE IS A SHARED JOURNEY: *Do you follow me? Have I lost you? I'm right with you. Where were we when we were interrupted? Would you take me back over that point?* are just a few of the many examples we could cite. All of them express the extent to which, thanks to conversation, the interlocutors can engage in shared or common thought processes. The speaker is the guide, controlling the direction of the mental journey: this corresponds well to the idea that it is the speaker who decides what is being said and who actively influences the hearer's mind, rather than the other way around. When speaker and hearer understand each other, they are thus in a (partially) shared mental state, which is metaphorically mapped onto a shared location. When they continue to under-

stand each other through a shifting sequence of mental states, they metaphorically travel from location to location together, remaining co-located throughout a shared journey.

I have argued elsewhere (Sweetser 1987) that the etymology of *re-fer* (its Latin roots meaning "carry back") might plausibly be attributed to this metaphor of mental co-location through speech exchange. When we "refer" to something, we ask our interlocutor to "carry back" our joint mental location to some entity in our previously shared experience. If this suggestion is correct, *refer* has been historically shaped by the joint-mental-journey metaphor for speech.

3. Games, Combats, and Other Interactions

It was mentioned above that speech exchange is also metaphorically modeled as game-playing and (when argumentative) as combat. Let us first note that these metaphors emphasize the interactive, two-participant (or more) nature of speech exchange. Once again, as in the face-to-face object-exchange model for language, we see that dialogue, not monologue, is the central object of metaphorical description.

The game models are typically multi-participant ball games or card games. When one speaks of *keeping the conversational ball rolling*, one is treating conversation as having not only multiple participants, but also conventional codes (e.g., not letting silence take over), just as a ball game has rules. Further, the "floor," or role of speaker, is unique at any given time, but can pass from speaker to speaker as a ball is passed from player to player. Again, this reflects conventions: just as ball games are normally played with only one ball, so this model of conversation does not allow for overlap between speakers.

The card-game model, on the other hand, is really a model of the information-exchange component of conversational structure, rather than of the verbal exchange itself. This is reasonable, since card games (as opposed to ball games) are saliently concerned with the sharing and the withholding of information. You can *lay all your cards on the table* (be direct and honest) or *play them close to your chest* (be secretive). A card-player's revelation or retention of information about the cards in a hand is thus mapped onto a speaker's revelation or retention of the contents of his or her mental state. Pragmatically, we know that in a card game it is often advantageous to withhold information about your hand: this is mapped onto situations in life when a speaker might find it advantageous not to reveal knowledge in general. The card-game model, like the ball-game model, represents an interactive exchange, but of content, not of words specifically, while the ball-game model represents an ongoing exchange of linguistic forms in appropriate order.

The combat metaphor (made famous by Lakoff and Johnson [1980]

as ARGUMENT IS WAR)[11] applies specifically to argumentative linguistic exchange. Combat is of course, like conversation, minimally a two-participant activity, prototypically involving face-to-face (or closer) contact. However, argument differs from prototypical conversation (and resembles combat) in not being centrally oriented toward exchange: although it is often a reciprocal activity, in which each participant attacks the other, the goal is not reciprocity but domination. In combat, the goal is to physically restrain or dominate the opponent, rendering resistance impossible so that the victor can then do whatever the opponent was preventing or opposing. Or, potentially, the goal could be to compel the loser to do something, by physically overcoming his or her ability to resist. Likewise, in argument the goal is mentally, or intellectually, to impose one's viewpoint as the dominant one in the conversational setting, so that the opposing viewpoint ceases to be relevant to the negotiations at hand. The losing opponent will then no longer be able to impose his or her views as countervailing reasons against the winner's intentions. Since the negotiations may concern the future actions of the two interlocutors (although they could as easily concern all sorts of other things, such as the value of *pi* or the date of Charlemagne's coronation), it is perfectly possible for an argument to be a way of forcing someone to do, or to let you do, what you want. That is, an argument's goal may often be very similar to that of combat. Arguments get people to think (or say that they think) what the winner wants them to think; combat gets people to do (or allow to be done) what the winner wants done. We often get people to do what we want precisely by getting them to agree with our reasoning, so that they also agree to want what we want, and thus to do it.

ARGUMENT IS COMBAT, however, is actually a particular subcase of a much broader mapping. In general, interpersonal influence is metaphorically modeled in terms of physical forces (INFLUENCES ARE FORCES). One may verbally and psychologically, without physical intervention, *push someone into doing something, drag someone unwillingly into a situation, pull someone out of trouble, give someone a (verbal) nudge* (= a reminder), *slap someone's wrist* (= reprove someone mildly), and so forth. Behind this complex of metaphors lie a couple of basic structures. First, the broad Mind-as-Body metaphor, mentioned above, is applicable here. The mental influence of one person on another is

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11. I prefer to use *combat*, not *war*, because the most basic instances of this metaphor appear to have as their source domain precisely the two-person physical fight, not the broader military kind of combat stipulated by the word "war." But if someone is said to have *brought out the heavy artillery* in an argument, then, clearly, war is the kind of combat being waged.

modeled in terms of the effects of one body's impact on another: for example, one can psychologically *wound, stroke, be close to*, or *stand be-hind* (= support) another person. Second, as mentioned earlier, mental and psychological states are often modeled not just as any kind of physical state, but specifically as physical location. Thus, one can say that someone is psychologically *wounded* or *hurt*, using the vocabulary of a physical state to describe a mental state. But one could just as easily say that the person in question went *off in a huff* or was *in emo-tional turmoil* or needed to be *pulled out of a depression*, explicitly using the language of spatial location and motion.

Taken together, these models have the consequence that argument (an attempt to influence an opponent's mental state) should be meta-phorically viewed as an attempt to influence an opponent's physical location. Thus we find such phrases as *a forceful argument, a pushy ques-tion, a prodding inquiry*, or indeed, the linguistic term *speech-act force*, referring to the kind of goal an utterance has in an exchange (cf. Searle 1969, 1979, and subsequent literature). When opponents use physi-cal force to influence or limit each other's physical locations, that is combat. Combat is thus an appropriate model for argument.

I have not examined here all of the motivations for the metaphori-cal treatment of the mind as a body; some others are discussed in the works cited above. Leonard Talmy (1988) has also argued that modality and social interaction are understood in terms of physical *force-dynamic* models, which cannot be fully discussed here. I do, how-ever, believe that we have multiple, important cognitive and percep-tual reasons for modeling our mental experience as physical experi-ence. These reasons include (1) the fact that physical experience and perception are both basic and shared between humans, and (2) the fact that our mental states are less readily communicable than our physical ones. What is certain is that, cross-linguistically, the use of vocabulary that refers to the body to describe the mind is a universal, and a deeply entrenched part of every language. That alone is a sufficient reason to demand that it be explained in cognitive terms.

Conclusions

My conclusions are simple, although I am aware that they will be by no means automatically acceptable. An interrelated complex of meta-phors structures much of English speakers' language about speech interaction. These metaphors are in some instances quite coherent with each other, and in other cases quite independent of each other. Some of them—such as language-as-object-exchange or argument-as-combat—potentially have as broad a base in human experience as literal object exchange or combat. Others, such as ball games or card games, may be far more specific to our own cultural and linguistic con-

text. The pervasiveness and systematicity of these metaphors argue for
their cognitive reality, as does their heavy dependence on other, even
more basic and pervasive metaphorical structures (e.g., "the mind as
a body in space").

More creative or poetic-sounding extensions of these metaphors are
also common. Refusal to communicate can be seen as a barrier to
object exchange: One might say, *I can't get through to him*, or slightly
more poetically but still conventionally, *he's built an impenetrable wall
between himself and his colleagues*. More creatively, one might refer to
the *Iron Curtain* separating two hostile, recently divorced partners.
Using a metaphor not discussed here (but treated in some detail in
Sweetser [1990]), one might speak of the cooperative reception of con-
versational content in terms of physically hearing sounds, as in *she
was absolutely deaf to my pleas* or *he didn't hear a word I said*, meaning
that the interlocutor did not seem affected by, or mentally receptive
to, the content of what was said. A recent, creative extension of this
metaphor (which I noticed in a fantasy novel) treats communication as
successful *electronic* transmission of sound to a hearer. Assuming that
the basic model for cognitive influence is physical sound reception, the
electronic medium adds another aspect to the source domain: "noise,"
or static, which makes sound transmission inaccurate. One hears unin-
tended "noise" along with intentionally transmitted "message" sounds;
just so, to extend the metaphor, might one be cognitively or emotion-
ally influenced by unimportant circumstantial factors, as well as by in-
tentional communicative behavior and its content. A confused lover is
represented in a song lyric as appealing to a beloved, "Tell me, please,
what's signal and what's noise" (Bull 1987: 190), meaning, "Help me
understand which things in our relationship are your intentional cog-
nitive influence or 'communication' to me and which things I may be
misunderstanding due to circumstance." Our standard metaphorical
use of a physical-reception vocabulary to talk about the communica-
tion of content does not include static (or, indeed, background noise
or other such difficulties interfering with reception by normal hearing
apparatus) as part of its source domain. This is a poetic extension of
a conventional metaphor.

The cline between everyday and poetic language, analyzed by Lakoff
and Turner (1989), is characterized by the dependence of creative
metaphorical uses on conventional ones, both in generation and in
interpretation. In other words, we interpret "tell me, please, what's
signal and what's noise" through our knowledge of conventional meta-
phors like *she was deaf to my pleas*. This is not to say (nor would Lakoff
and Turner argue) that there is nothing more to a creative meta-
phorical use than a basis in convention. But what cognitive linguistic
examination has brought to light in many cases is the immense com-

plexity and systematicity of the underlying system of conventional metaphorical speech and thought.[12] Even the greatest poetic genius invokes an immeasurably greater number of entrenched cognitive patterns in the process of creating far fewer novel patterns. To the reader of the poem, who is already familiar with the entrenched patterns, the salient and important aspects of poetic structure are the newly created ones. To the cognitively oriented scholar interested in discovering how poetic metaphor is understood, the conventional foundations and building blocks of creative structures are of essential importance.

As I mentioned at the start of this paper, the relationship between everyday and artistic metaphor is important for linguists as well as for literary analysts. Unless linguists are willing to restrict their work to modern spoken languages, they have to work on the assumption that for certain purposes literary language shares much with spoken language, and artistic usage with everyday usage.

Work on semantic change (based, of course, largely on written sources for the earlier stages of a term's senses) clearly shows metaphorical patterns similar to those observed in modern, ongoing processes of change and in extant patterns of polysemy. For example, Fleischman (1982a, 1982b) describes broad metaphorical patterns which map deictic motion verbs, such as *come* and *go*, onto motion through time (see the discussion of the spatial metaphor for time, above). These patterns are evinced in linguistic change: for example, verbs meaning *go* frequently become future-tense markers. The familiar *gonna* periphrasis of contemporary spoken English may not yet be a tense marker, but it is moving in that direction, as have similar structures in many other languages. I have documented a broad tendency, throughout the history of the Indo-European languages, for the vocabulary of physical vision to develop cognitive and intellectual senses (Sweetser 1990). Some words have lost their physical senses along the way—for example, the English word *wit*, which comes from the same Indo-European root as *vision*. But the modern English use of *see* to mean intellectual comprehension ("I see") coexists with its earlier and still more basic physical sense of sight, in a still lively metaphor.

Metaphorical structures are thus apparently part of the regular motivation for the relations among the multiple senses of polysemous words, and for historical changes in lexical meaning. Crucially important are discoveries of strikingly close parallels between the metaphorical patterns evinced by polysemy and change in literary records and in orally attested languages. And (as Lakoff and Turner [1989]

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12. For a far more extensive treatment of the complexity of entrenched systems relative to novel usage, see Turner (1991).

argue) there are similarly ubiquitous parallels between everyday and artistic metaphorical usages. To the extent that these claims for commonality are valid, data from ancient languages become relevant to cognitively and culturally based theories of language and metaphor (including analyses of everyday conventional metaphors); and, just as crucially, the analysis of literary metaphor then becomes part of a broader effort to understand metaphorical language and cognition.

There are thus strong arguments in favor of approaching artistic metaphor together with everyday metaphor, even via everyday metaphor. The special status of artistic usage need not, I trust, be ignored in such an approach to metaphor; rather, we would hope to better understand how that special status is attained, and relative to what less visible norms it is special.

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