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Contents

Shackling metaphor <i>Nelly Tincheva</i>	2
Genericity and its challenge(s) for cognitive linguists <i>Daniel Karczewski</i>	6

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Shackling metaphor

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Conceptual metaphors are universally believed to both enable and constrain our perceptions of reality (see references below). In the case of cognitive linguists' perceptions, however, it seems rather reasonable to ask if, of late, conceptual metaphor has been shackling their interpretations, or if cognitive linguists have been shackling metaphor by only approaching it as either a lexico-grammatical or an in-discourse ideology-related phenomenon.

Throughout the literature (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999; Sweetser, 1990; Musolff, 2004; Goatly, 2007; Sullivan and Sweetser, 2009; Kövecses, 2010), conceptual metaphor has been perceived as a phenomenon which, on the one hand, helps us understand reality and, on the other hand, pre-determines our behaviour from the smallest everyday details to our major acts and decisions. Truly, even when metaphoric projections afford us not only one but a whole set of alternative ways of thinking about a target domain (a phenomenon discussed by Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 70) as 'metaphorical pluralism'), we are still bound to select from that limited set only. The domain of POLITICS, for example, can be conceptualized as SPORTING ACTIVITIES, COMPETING, THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES, etc. (Tincheva, 2014), but POLITICS is never and can never be construed as, for instance, RAIN FALLING or BABIES CRYING. In other words, once conventionalized as a 'ready-made', socially-agreed-on way of constructing a domain, a conceptual metaphor invariably provides a set of prescriptions for how people should understand social behaviour within that domain. Doing that, the existing mappings strongly resist newly-devised interpretations which do not derive from them. The question here is if, in similarity to the metaphorization of the domain of POLITICS, linguists' already conventionalized understanding of the domain of CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR has come to a point where it resists further

extensions.

Despite the fact that Conceptual Metaphor Theory practically runs counter to the notion of separate ‘levels’ in language, analysis on metaphor concentrates almost exclusively on either lexically-expressed social-status-sensitive discursive practices (e.g. van Dijk, 1990; Lakoff, 1996; Musolff, 2004; Goatley, 2007; Kimmel, 2009; Ishpekova, 2012) or on clause-related mental-space-building processes (e.g. Fauconnier, 1997). Metaphor, any Bibliographical investigation will prove, is extremely rarely used as a window on the structure of whole texts. Admittedly, Rhetoric elements (such as, for example, types of storylines, narrative patterns, writer’s viewpoint, writer’s persona) have managed to find their place in the research on the all-pervasive and simultaneous operation of metaphors (see e.g. Eubanks, 2004; 2011). However, the oldest, old-fashioned and long out-of-fashion understanding of text structure as Beginning-Middle-End, or as Introduction-Body-Conclusion (terms as in Swales, 1990; Halliday and Hasan, 1985), has done so even more rarely than Rhetoric structures.

A reconciliation between Conceptual Metaphor Theory and research on the mental representation of that kind of whole-text structure (termed by van Dijk (1997) ‘overall text structure’), however, is possible – and revealing. Metaphoric transfer, an investigation of mine confirms (Tinceva, 2012), is the mechanism which controls the operation of overall text structures as cognitive constructs. Political speeches, for example, prove to be structured through the metaphoric transfer of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema, which, when mapped onto the domain of POLITICAL SPEECH, results in the INITIAL STATE-STEPS-DESIRED STATE construct as follows (ibid.):

- initial state (containing slots: leader, led, issue, time, space),
- steps (containing slots: leader, led, (sequence of) activities, time, space) and
- desired state (containing slots: leader, led, (absence of) issue, time, space).

In other words, as the structural pattern above displays, a separate domain of OVERALL TEXT STRUCTURE is possible to isolate analytically. Its existence can plausibly be argued to be metaphor-based. What is more, analyses of the slot positions, slot relations and slot filling instantiations within that domain can also prove revealing about the major Rhetoric

patterns and about ideological and discursual socially-conventionalized constructs expressed by a text (or even by a whole text type).

From a rather cyclic perspective on linguistic development, one can argue that the existence of overall text structure also suggests that the Ancient Greek understanding of three-part texts may have been intuitive, but not too far off the target. It just lacked the present-day understanding of embodied, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL-based, purposeful, online PROBLEM-SOLVING (term as in de Baugrande and Dressler, 1981) structural textual progression. That progression may very likely be instantiated differently and to different degrees in individual genres. Research on the subject, however, is largely unavailable in the literature and yet to be conducted.

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Genericity and its challenge(s) for cognitive linguists

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Generics express generalizations about members of a class. It is widely acknowledged that generics can have a variety of grammatical forms such as e.g. ducks lay eggs, the lion is a predatory cat or a tiger is striped (Carlson and Pelletier, 1995). It is claimed that generics differ in the extent to which they express generality, as well as how many roles within a sentence are generic as opposed to specific (Langacker, 1997, p. 194). Genericity, which has traditionally been the domain of philosophers and logicians, has also attracted the attention of linguists. Recently, there has also been some interest among cognitive linguists concerning generics (e.g. Langacker 1997; Radden 2009).

For our present purpose, it is crucial to note that Langacker (1991, p. 264) and Taylor (2002, p. 359) propose that generic statements in English be interpreted as belonging to an idealized model of the world or, using Langacker's term, a 'structured world model'. Langacker observes (1997, p. 205) that the structured world model is the basic idealized cognitive model (henceforth ICM) which underlies the practices of Western science. Thanks to ICMs that we may organize our knowledge, with category products and prototype effects being natural outcomes of that organization (Lakoff, 1987, p. 68). Turning now to the fact that generics have different forms, Langacker postulates (1999a, p. 254) that these forms translate into four different meanings. Langacker equates plural generics with the zero determiner with plural nouns taking the quantifiers all, most, and some. Singular generics with the indefinite article, on the other hand, are equated with singular nouns taking every and any. Langacker claims that to explain this, we must take into account the semantics of quantifiers. Under his

analysis, all, most, some and Ø are proportional quantifiers, whilst every, any and a are instance quantifiers.

If we, however, attempt to look for converging evidence (Langacker 1999b, p. 26) of such an analysis to show its compatibility with the findings of others, we may encounter a claim that generics are in no sense quantificational (Leslie, 2007). Leslie (2007, p. 379) considers generics to be the manifestation of our most primitive and fundamental generalizations which are not about how much and how many in the way quantificational statements are. According to her, generics are judgments which stem from what she calls System 1. This is to say that such statements are automatic, effortless and cognitively basic. Quantifiers, on the other hand, belong to the higher-level System 2, which means they are rule-governed and extension-sensitive.

Having the aforementioned discrepancy in mind, one may reasonably claim that there is almost no agreement among scholars on very fundamental questions concerning genericity. Generics, which are produced by children as young as two years of age (Gelman, 2003, p. 203), still remain a semantic puzzle for linguists, irrespective of their theoretical persuasions. What might be particularly challenging for cognitive linguists is to show that the variety of forms generics assume, express different meanings.

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