



WHERE METAPHORS COME FROM



Reconsidering Context in Metaphor

ZOLTÁN KÖVECSES

Where Metaphors Come From

Where Metaphors Come From

RECONSIDERING CONTEXT IN METAPHOR

Zoltán Kövecses

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide.

Oxford New York
Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in
Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by
Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

© Oxford University Press 2015

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, by license, or under terms agreed with the
appropriate reproduction rights organization. Inquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kövecses, Zoltán, author.

Where metaphors come from : reconsidering context in metaphor / Zoltán Kövecses.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-19-022486-8 — ISBN 978-0-19-022487-5 — ISBN 978-0-19-022488-2

1. Metaphor. 2. Language and languages—Variation. 3. Language and languages—
Discourse analysis. 4. Cognitive grammar. I. Title.

PE1445.M4K68 2014

808'.032—dc23

2014025386

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

To the memory of my parents

CONTENTS

Preface ix

Acknowledgments xiii

- 1. Metaphor, Embodiment, and Context 1**
- 2. Meaning Making 16**
- 3. The Conceptual System 31**
- 4. Contextual Factors 49**
- 5. Metaphor and Culture 73**
- 6. Context and Metaphorical Creativity 97**
- 7. Context and Poetic Metaphor 117**
- 8. The Conceptual Context of Linguistic Humor 132**
- 9. Happiness in Context 155**
- 10. Metaphor and Context 176**

References 201

Index 213

PREFACE

The work on metaphor that started with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) ground-breaking *Metaphors We Live By* showed in a very clear and powerful way that metaphors are part and parcel of everyday language and thought. Both everyday language and the conceptual system we use for everyday purposes make use of linguistic metaphors and the corresponding conceptual metaphors that underlie them. Lakoff and Johnson's early work and also its later developments indicate that the human conceptual system is heavily metaphorical in nature and that we use metaphors spontaneously and with ease in the course of everyday communication. What makes this possible, on this view, is that conceptual metaphors consist of sets of systematic correspondences, or mappings, between two domains of experience and that the meaning of a particular metaphorical expression realizing an underlying conceptual metaphor is based on such correspondences. Since the conceptual metaphors and their mappings are readily available, the meanings that are based on the mappings can be readily used by speakers/conceptualizers in the course of everyday communication whenever there is a need for those meanings to be utilized.

This view makes it appear as though communication by means of metaphors was only a matter of our knowledge of conceptual metaphors and their mappings stored in the mind. It would seem that communication and conceptualization by means of metaphors results from a preexisting set of conceptual metaphors giving rise to a preexisting set of metaphorical meanings that are readily available for use. However, such a view would be just a version of the folk theory of communication characterized by the CONDUIT metaphor, as described and rightly criticized by Michael Reddy (1979), who pointed out that communication works very differently than just sending prepackaged and preexisting meaning-objects in linguistic containers to other mind-containers. Scholars in a variety of disciplines have proposed much more sophisticated theories of how human communication and meaning making operates. Cognitive linguists in particular assume a(n almost consensus) model of meaning making that can be described as follows.

People acquire knowledge and build concepts about the world based on their bodily experiences. The mental representations that arise from such bodily experiences are embedded in our social activities in the course of which our representations make it possible for us to share (aspects of) the world with others. What happens in the course of sharing the world with others (by means of our representations of it) can be characterized as "someone directing someone

else's attention to something." This "sphere of shared attention" (Sinha, 2007) directs the communicative partner's attention to another scene: the "referential scene." The two constitute an intersubjective situation, which is called the "world of discourse," in which the speaker/conceptualizer 1 directs addressee/conceptualizer 2's attention to a referential scene by means of the use of linguistic (or other) symbols.

A crucial property of the linguistic symbols used in communication is that they impose a perspective on presenting the world. This property distinguishes linguistic signs from nonlinguistic signs. Linguistic symbols inherently construe the world in a particular way, that is, they present it from a given perspective. Therefore, their selection in the communication process always goes beyond the narrow referential relation between linguistic signs and aspects of the world. The choice of perspective depends, essentially, on two reference points, or centers of orientation, in communicative situations: the "referential center" and the "subject of consciousness." We can view a situation from the perspective of the referential center that yields the spatial, temporal, and social relations for our construal of a referential scene. The other reference point is the "subject of consciousness," that is, the active agent of consciousness who perceives, desires, thinks, and speaks. Similar to the referential center, this reference point, in the default case, is the person who produces the utterance. The meaning of linguistic symbols emerges only in an intersubjective context, that is, in a sphere of shared attention.

The production and comprehension of utterances, that is, the construction of meaning, is always influenced by and emerges in a larger context as well. The larger context involves, in addition to the speaker and addressee, the circumstances under which the utterance is made (including who communicates, with whom, when, where), the circumstances of the action of which the utterance is a part (the intentions and other mental states that provide the motivation for making the utterance, i.e., that respond to the question of why communication takes place), as well as the background knowledge attaching to the topic of communication (i.e., answering the question of "about what"). These are represented in our conceptual system in the form of a variety of mental structures. (For a detailed discussion, see, e.g., Verschueren, 1999.)

Not all information that is present in a communicative situation plays a role in the production and comprehension of particular utterances, that is, in meaning construction (see, e.g., Van Dijk, 2009). It is the participants of the communication process who must decide which factors are relevant or not in meaning construction. This means that context is never predetermined and objectively existing; it must be created (and recreated) in the course of the communicative process. This view of the nature of context implies that meaning construction is heavily context dependent and that even the formally same utterance may have very different meanings in different contexts. In other words, meaning construction is a dynamic and creative process that results from the

interaction of (more or less) conventional meanings of (linguistic) symbols based on embodied experience, on the one hand, and the contextual factors deemed to be relevant, on the other.

Despite the heavy emphasis on the importance of context in meaning making in pragmatics and many branches of the humanities and social science (see, e.g., Duranti and Goodwin, 1992; Verschueren, 1999; Mey, 2001; van Dijk, 2008, 2009, 2014), the by now dominant view of metaphor—conceptual metaphor theory—still suffers, in general, from a lack of integrating context into its model of metaphorical meaning making. This situation has given rise to a great deal of criticism of conceptual metaphor theory from a variety of different authors and disciplines over the years (see, e.g., Leezenberg, 2001; Cameron, 2007a, Cameron and Low, eds., 1999, Brandt and Brandt, 2005; Steen, 2011; Deignan, 2010; for a general survey, see Gibbs, ed. 2008). But it has been clear all along that context is crucial to the production and comprehension of metaphors in the real world (see, e.g., Goatly, 1997, 2007; Musolff, 2004; Charteris-Black, 2004; Kövecses, 2005; Pragglejaz Group, 2007; Semino, 2008; Musolff and Zinken, 2009; MacArthur et al., 2012; Schmid, 2012).

There were attempts, though, on the part of a number of researchers sympathetic to conceptual metaphor theory to show that a theory of context is essential to an account of metaphor emergence and metaphorical meaning construction (see, especially, work by Gibbs and his colleagues, e.g., Gibbs, 1987, 1994, 2012; Gibbs and Gerrig, 1989; Ritchie, 2004, 2006). Furthermore, several scholars have proposed theories of metaphor that are compatible with the view of conceptual metaphors and that do take the role of context into account in a dynamical systems theory framework (see, e.g., Gibbs and Cameron, 2007; Gibbs, 2011, 2012). And scholars less favorable to conceptual metaphor theory have also suggested frameworks within which to account for the phenomenon of metaphorical meaning making in context—of these probably the most influential being Sperber and Wilson's (1986/1995) relevance theory.

In the present work, I will discuss and rely on some of this previous research on context. And, just as important, I will try to respond to much of the criticism leveled at conceptual metaphor theory. In the final chapter of the book, I will make an attempt to integrate several of the ideas proposed by others into the new framework I develop in the chapters ahead and also show how we can expand conceptual metaphor theory in specific ways to accommodate most of the criticism. My main suggestion will be that it is not possible to account for the emergence and use of metaphor without taking seriously the close dependence of the metaphorical mind on the surrounding physical, social, and mental environment. Clearly, and unsurprisingly, the surrounding environment consists of the situational context and the linguistic context, or cotext. But less obviously, and more importantly, I claim that it also involves the body as context. In other words, I consider the embodiment of metaphor as a contextual feature, which is a reinterpretation of the bodily basis of metaphor. Finally, and

perhaps most radically, I suggest that the conceptual system simultaneously produces metaphors and parts of it function as context for this production. I call this part of the conceptual system “conceptual-cognitive context.” The heavy dependence of the metaphorical conceptual system on the situational, discourse, bodily, and conceptual-cognitive contexts fits a theory of mind in which cognition is not only embodied but also grounded in multiple ways.

Structure of the Book

The book consists of thematic units.

The first thematic unit includes Chapters 1, 2, and 3, and it functions as an introduction to some basic issues in the figurative mind, including the discussion of construal operations that are used to create abstract concepts and the resulting conceptual system.

The second thematic unit, Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, examines through a large number of examples in real discourse the intimate relationship between metaphor production (and comprehension) and context. I discuss here the most common contextual factors that lead to metaphors in discourse and the issue of metaphorical creativity in both everyday and poetic language.

The third thematic unit, Chapters 8 and 9, deals with two more detailed case studies: a specific mental action, or process (humor) and a specific concept (happiness) that both rely heavily on metaphorical conceptualization. The study of both the process and the concept allows us to see further complexities in the nature of context and its impact on metaphorical conceptualization.

The fourth thematic unit, Chapter 10, brings together the various threads in the interaction of metaphorical conceptualization and contextual factors. I make an attempt to offer a coherent account of the relationship between metaphor and context that is consistent with some recent views on grounded cognition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several people have read and commented on various parts and versions of the manuscript for this book. Among the colleagues, I am especially indebted to Ray Gibbs, Ning Yu, and Teun Van Dijk for generously offering me their ideas. Without their constructive criticism, I would probably feel less confident about my reconceptualization of the notion of context.

As with previous books, my students have also been instrumental in shaping my views on the issues discussed here. In Budapest, Orsolya Putz, Orsolya Farkas, Erzsébet Tóth-Czifra, Judit Pethő-Szirmai, Mohsen Bakhtiyar, and Kou Danyang have helped me stay more focused on the main issues that were raised in the various chapters. In Heidelberg, Stefanie Vogelbacher and Olga Boryslavska have made especially valuable suggestions regarding both content and form of presentation. I also thank participants of my winter 2013 Metaphor and Culture class for their many useful comments. My special thanks go to the English Department in Heidelberg, and especially Sonja Kleinke, for creating a friendly atmosphere while working on the final version of this book.

I also want to thank Peter Ohlin and Hallie Stebbins of Oxford University Press for their superb job as editors. I am particularly grateful to Peter for his continued interest in my work and the encouragement he provided me for more than a decade now.

Finally, I offer this book to the memory of my parents.

Zoltán Kövecses
Budapest and Heidelberg
May, 2014

Where Metaphors Come From

Metaphor, Embodiment, and Context

Conceptual metaphor theory can be considered a view of metaphor in which metaphorical meaning construction is simply a matter of how our metaphors arise from correlations in experience (for correlation metaphors) or from similarities between experiential domains (for resemblance metaphors) (see Chapter 2). In both, metaphorical meaning can be taken to derive from a set of systematic correspondences, or mappings, between these two aspects of experience. Evidence from both previous and more recent work, however, indicates that this view is simplistic and inadequate, and that a more refined perspective is needed. The aspect of metaphorical meaning construction that needs to be addressed centers on the issue of context and how it plays a role in the comprehension and creation (production) of metaphors. I show in this chapter that metaphorical meaning in language use (or other types of communication) does not simply arise from conceptual metaphors, the mappings that constitute them, and the metaphorical entailments that they may imply. I show that metaphorical meaning construction, in addition, is heavily dependent on context and involves two closely related, if not identical, issues concerning context, taken from different perspectives: one from that of the person who tries to comprehend a metaphor in context (conceptualizer 2) and another from that of the person who produces or creates a metaphor in context (conceptualizer 1).

It is my goal here to begin the discussion of the notion of context in relation to metaphor, though I will be able to offer only a very rudimentary idea of it at this stage—after all, the characterization of the role of context in metaphorical meaning construction is the main and ultimate goal of the book. The definition of context that I find most useful for my purposes at this early stage of the discussion comes from Van Dijk (2009: 5): “. . . a context is what is defined to be relevant in the social situation by the participants themselves.” In the last chapter, I offer a more detailed and complete description of context in relation to metaphor.

The contextual factors that are most commonly distinguished in the literature fall into two large groups: linguistic and nonlinguistic. The linguistic factors are often referred to as “cotext,” and it seems to be the clearer type. It is the discourse that surrounds (mostly precedes) the use of a particular metaphorical expression. The term that is used to denote the nonlinguistic factors is simply “context.” However, the term context is often used for both types of factors, linguistic and nonlinguistic, that influence the production and comprehension of metaphors. I use the term context in this more general sense.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory at a Glance

In conceptual metaphor theory, metaphor is thought of very broadly as conceptualizing one domain of experience in terms of another. The domain of experience that is used to comprehend another domain is typically more physical, more directly experienced, and better known than the domain we wish to comprehend, which is typically more abstract, less directly experienced, and less known. In the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor, originated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*, the more concrete, or physical, domain is called the source domain and the more abstract one is called the target domain. (For a more recent and comprehensive survey of conceptual metaphor theory, see Kövecses, 2010a.) Domains of experience are represented in the mind as concepts given as mental frames, or cognitive models. Hence we talk about conceptual metaphors. The source frame and the target frame are connected by a set of conceptual correspondences, or mappings. Thus, on this view, metaphor is a set of correspondences, or mappings, between the elements of two mental frames. For example, a set of correspondences between a traveler and a person leading a life—the way the traveler is traveling and the manner in which the person lives, the destination the traveler wants to reach and the life goals of the person, and the physical obstacles along the way and the difficulties the person has in life—all comprise a set of mappings that make up the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. A conceptual metaphor typically has a number of linguistic manifestations (metaphorically used words and more complex expressions) to talk about the target domain. In the example, the sentences “I *hit a roadblock*,” “She *wanders aimlessly* in life,” “This is not the *right way* to live,” and so on make manifest, or simply express, correspondences between the elements of obstacle and difficulty, destination and purpose, and path and manner, respectively. Taken together, they indicate that the highly abstract concept of LIFE is partially understood in terms of the more concrete concept of JOURNEY. The meanings of the particular metaphorical expressions are based on the conceptual correspondences, or mappings.

CLASSIFYING METAPHORS

There are several ways in which metaphors can be classified. They can be grouped according to their cognitive function, nature, conventionality, generality, grounding, and others. With respect to cognitive function, conceptual metaphors can be structural (such as *LIFE IS A JOURNEY*) or nonstructural (as when, e.g., we evaluate a concept by assigning a positive or negative value to it—*GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN*) according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980)—a view that the authors modified (Lakoff and Johnson 2003), suggesting that all conceptual metaphors map structure onto the target concept. (However, we can probably maintain that there is a degree to which various metaphors primarily map structure or, e.g., some kind of evaluation.) With respect to their nature, conceptual metaphors can be based on our general knowledge (in the form of propositions) in connection with an area of experience and the images we have of various domains of the world (cf. *THE MIND IS A COMPUTER* vs. *THE MIND IS A CONTAINER*) (see Lakoff, 1993; Kövecses, 2010a). With respect to conventionality, conceptual metaphors can be conventional and unconventional or novel (as in *LIFE IS A JOURNEY* vs. *LIFE IS A BOX OF CHOCOLATES*) (see Lakoff and Turner 1989). With respect to generality, conceptual metaphors can be generic and specific (as in *EMOTIONS ARE FORCES* vs. *ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER* vs. *THE ANGRY PERSON IS A KETTLE*) (see Lakoff, 1993). With respect to grounding, or the basis of metaphor, conceptual metaphors may be grounded in analogical relationships between two domains and on bodily correlations in experience between the domains (as in *LIFE IS A THEATER PLAY* vs. *ANGER IS HEAT*) (see Lakoff, 1993; Grady, 1999). The kinds of metaphors these distinctions yield may combine in particular cases of conceptual metaphors, and the distinctions occur in various degrees between the two extremes of such scales.

Metaphor and Universal Embodiment

Native speakers of all languages use a large number of metaphors when they communicate about the world (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Such metaphorically used words and expressions may vary considerably across different languages. For example, the idea that English expresses with the words *spending your time* is expressed in Hungarian as *filling your time*. The “images” different languages and cultures employ can be extremely diverse, and hence it is natural to ask: Are there any universal metaphors at all, if by “universal” we mean those linguistic metaphors that occur in each and every language? This question is difficult not only because it goes against our everyday experiences and intuitions regarding metaphorical language in diverse languages and cultures, but also because it is extremely difficult to study, given that there are 4–6000 languages spoken around the world today.

However, if we go beyond looking at metaphorically used linguistic expressions in different languages, and, instead of linguistic metaphors, we consider *conceptual* metaphors, we begin to notice that many conceptual metaphors appear in a wide range of languages (see Kövecses, 2005). For example, Hoyt Alverson (1994) found that the TIME IS SPACE conceptual metaphor can be found in such diverse languages and cultures as English, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, and Sesotho. Many other researchers suggested that the same conceptual metaphor is present in a large number of additional languages. Several other conceptual metaphors appear in a large number of different languages. Kövecses (2000) points out that, based on evidence from a number of linguists who are native speakers of the respective languages, English, Japanese, Chinese, Hungarian, Wolof, Zulu, Polish, and others possess the metaphor AN ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER to various degrees. Ning Yu's (1995, 1998) work indicates that the metaphor HAPPINESS IS UP is also present not only in English but also in Chinese. The system of metaphors called the Event Structure metaphor (Lakoff, 1993) includes submetaphors such as CAUSES ARE FORCES, STATES ARE CONTAINERS, PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, ACTION IS MOTION, DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS (TO MOTION), and so forth. Remarkably, in addition to English, this set of submetaphors occurs in such widely different languages and cultures as Chinese (Yu, 1998) and Hungarian (Kövecses, 2005). Eve Sweetser (1990) noticed that the KNOWING IS SEEING and the more general the MIND IS THE BODY metaphors can be found in many European languages and are probably good candidates for (near-)universal metaphors. As a final example, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) describe the metaphors used for one's inner life in English and Japanese. Metaphors such as SELF-CONTROL IS OBJECT POSSESSION, SUBJECT AND SELF ARE ADVERSARIES, and THE SELF IS A CHILD are shared by English, Japanese, and Hungarian (see Chapter 4). Given that one's inner life is a highly elusive phenomenon, and hence would seem to be heavily culture and language dependent, one would expect a great deal of significant cultural variation in such a metaphor. (For more discussion of these self-related metaphors, see Chapter 4.) All in all, then, we have a number of cases that constitute universal or at least near-universal or potentially universal conceptual metaphors.

How is it possible that such conceptual metaphors exist in such diverse languages and cultures? After all, the languages belong to very different language families and represent very different cultures of the world. Several answers to this question lend themselves for consideration. First, we can suggest that by coincidence all of these languages developed the same conceptual metaphors for happiness, time, purpose, and so forth. Second, we can consider the possibility that languages borrowed the metaphors from each other. Third, we can argue that there may be some universal basis for the same metaphors to develop in the diverse languages.

Let us take as an example the HAPPINESS IS UP conceptual metaphor, first discussed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as it is used in English. The conceptual

metaphor can be seen in such linguistic expressions as *feeling up*, *being on cloud nine*, *being high*, and others. Yu (1995, 1998) noticed that the conceptual metaphor can also be found in Chinese. Evidence shows that it also exists in Hungarian (for a discussion, see Kövecses, 2005). English, Mandarin Chinese, and Hungarian (a Finno-Ugric language) belong to different language families, which developed independently for much of their history. It is also unlikely that the three languages had any significant impact on each other in their recent history. This is not to say that such an impact never shapes particular languages apropos of their metaphors (e.g., the processes of globalization and the widespread use of the Internet may “popularize” certain conceptual metaphors, such as TIME IS A COMMODITY), but only to suggest that the reason the particular HAPPINESS IS UP metaphor exists in the three languages is likely not that, say, Hungarian borrowed it from Chinese and English from Hungarian.

How then did the same conceptual metaphor emerge in these diverse languages? The best answer seems to be that there is some “universal bodily experience” that led to its emergence. Lakoff and Johnson argued early that English has the metaphor because when we are happy, we tend to be physically up, active, moving around, jumping up and down, smiling (i.e., turning up the corners of the mouth), rather than down, inactive and static, and so forth. These are undoubtedly universal experiences associated with happiness (or more precisely, joy), and they are likely to produce potentially universal (or near-universal) conceptual metaphors. The emergence of a potentially universal conceptual metaphor does not, of course, mean that the linguistic expressions themselves will be the same in different languages that possess a particular conceptual metaphor (see, e.g., Barcelona, 2000; Maalej, 2004).

Kövecses (1990, 2000) proposed, furthermore, that the (potentially) universal bodily experiences can be captured in the conceptual metonymies associated with particular concepts. Specifically, in the case of emotion concepts, such as happiness, anger, love, pride, and so forth, the metonymies correspond to various kinds of physiological, behavioral, and expressive reactions. These reactions provide us with a profile of the bodily basis of emotion concepts. Thus, the metonymies give us a sense of the embodied nature of concepts, and the “embodiment” of concepts may be overlapping, that is, (near-)universal, across different languages and language families. Such universal embodiment may lead to the emergence of shared conceptual metaphors.

Grady (1997a, b) developed the Lakoff–Johnson view further by proposing that we need to distinguish “complex metaphors” from “primary metaphors.” His idea was that complex metaphors (e.g., THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS) are composed of primary metaphors (e.g., LOGICAL ORGANIZATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE). The primary metaphors consist of correlations of a subjective experience with a physical experience. As a matter of fact, it became evident that many of the conceptual metaphors discussed in the cognitive linguistic literature are primary metaphors in this sense. For instance, HAPPY IS UP is best

viewed as a primary metaphor, where being happy is a subjective experience and being physically up is a physical one that is repeatedly associated with it. Other primary metaphors include MORE IS UP, PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, and INTIMACY IS CLOSENESS. It is the primary metaphors that are potentially universal. In addition, according to Grady, primary metaphors function at a fairly local and specific level of conceptualization, and hence in the brain.

At the same time, we can also assume the existence of much more generic metaphors. For example, in many languages and cultures of the world animals are commonly viewed as humans and humans as animals; humans are commonly conceptualized as objects and objects as humans, and so on. A well-known example of the objects-as-humans metaphor was described by Basso (1967), who showed that in the language of the Western Apache cars are metaphorically viewed in terms of the human body. Furthermore, Heine and his colleagues' work (Heine, Claudi, and Hünemeyer, 1991; Heine, 1995; Heine and Kuteva, 2002) reveals other large-scale metaphorical processes people seem to employ (near-)universally; for example, spatial relations are commonly understood as parts of the human body (e.g., the head means up and the feet means down). These generic conceptual metaphors, in addition to the primary ones discussed previously, also seem to be global design features of the human brain/mind.

It seems clear at this point that commonality in human experience is a major force shaping the metaphors we have. It is this force that gives us many of the conceptual metaphors that we can take to be near-universal or potentially universal. But commonality in human experience is not the only force that plays a role in the process of establishing and using metaphors. There are also countervailing forces that work against universality in metaphor production.

Metaphor and Context

As we saw earlier, in cognitive linguistics metaphor is defined as a set of mappings between two domains. Given such a definition, comprehending a particular metaphorical expression simply involves identifying and relying on a particular mapping of a conceptual metaphor that the expression exemplifies. This view appears to exclude any possibility for context to play a role in the use of metaphor.

CONTEXT AND METAPHOR COMPREHENSION

However, there is a fair amount of consensus in the study of how metaphors are interpreted that the comprehension of particular metaphorical expressions requires familiarity with the context in which the metaphor is used (see, e.g., Gibbs, 1987). In other words, much of the experimental work on metaphor

comprehension indicates that metaphor interpretation can take place only in context; that is, metaphor interpretation varies with context and, thus, metaphor and context are closely linked. Consequently, it can be argued that conceptual metaphor theory is problematic, in that metaphorical meaning does not arise simply from conceptual metaphors, mappings, or metaphorical entailments, or inferences.

To demonstrate the effect of context, consider a recent example of how context can modify the meaning of a metaphorical expression, taken from Ritchie's (2004: 278) work:

(1) "You seem much happier than the last time I saw you. You used to be discontented and easily distracted, but now you seem to be contented and at peace with yourself."

"My wife is an *anchor*."

Given his "connectivist" theory of metaphor, Ritchie (2004: 278) explains the interpretation process in the following way:

In the context of conversation (1), working memory includes a contrast between a previous state of discontentment and distraction, and a current state of contentment and peace. Ideas and emotions associated with security, relaxed vigilance, and safety will connect with the ideas and emotions associated with contentment and lack of worries in the speaker's current life, already activated in the common ground, so will be strengthened and connected to the concept of *wife*, thereby creating or strengthening connections between *wife* and feelings of contentment and lack of worries.

In another context, however, the meaning of the metaphor *anchor* changes. Ritchie (2004: 278) provides a different conversation in which it could be used:

(2) "You sound like you've become bored with life. You used to be so eager for new experiences, but now the old zest for life seems to have become dulled."

"My wife is an *anchor*."

Ritchie (2004: 278-279) offers the following explanation for the interpretation of the second use of the metaphor:

In the context of conversation (2), working memory includes a contrast between a previous zest for life and a current state of boredom, so the pattern of connections will be just the opposite as in the first conversation. In both cases, the ideas and emotions activated during this interpretive process will be connected to the similar ideas and emotions previously activated in the participants' working memories, and will remain as part of each participant's working memory, where it may influence processing of subsequent information (Allbritton, McKoon, & Gerrig 1995).