

STOCKHOLM METAPHOR FESTIVAL 2015

WORKSHOP ON METAPHORICITY

Andrew Goatly

ABSTRACT

It has long been recognised that some metaphors might be more metaphoric than others by observing that they may become conventionalised, lexicalised and institutionalised as part of the lexicon or dictionary of a language (Gentner and Bowdle 2001). However, besides this scale of conventionality, there may be other scales (Mooij 1976), perhaps involving contradictoriness (MacCormac 1990), explicitness, degrees of marking (Goatly 2011), deliberateness (Steen 2013), and so on.

This workshop will be of a practical investigative kind where participants are involved in discussion or examples of texts which may contain metaphors. Participants will be asked to identify what they think might be metaphors and to rank them on scales of metaphoricity. This individual work will be followed by small group discussion on metaphor identification and scale ranking and the criteria which affect perceived metaphoricity. Group leaders will report back to the full session.

A summary and afterthoughts section will consider whether discussion feedback supports the notions of metaphoric scales, what these might be, whether the scales reinforce each other or are inversely related.

Texts for discussion will be made available on the conference web-site for consideration in advance of the workshop, to facilitate intelligent and informed discussion.

References

- Gentner, D. and Bowdle, B.F. (2001) 'Convention, form and figurative language processing', *Metaphor and Symbol* 16: 223-248.
- Goatly, A. (2011) *The Language of Metaphors* (2nd edition) Abingdon: Routledge.
- MacCormac, E. R. (1990) *A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor*, London: MIT Press.
- Mooij, J.J.A. (1976) *A Study of Metaphor*, Amsterdam: North Holland.
- Steen, G. (2013) 'Deliberate metaphor affords conscious metaphorical cognition', *Cognitive Semiotics* May 2013: 179-196.

WORKSHOP MATERIALS APPEAR BELOW

Please consider the following examples and answer these questions applying them to all the sections A to E:

- I Do you think all the bolded units of text are metaphorical uses of language?
- II Are the factors in the letter headings, Conventionality etc., important in deciding on relative metaphoricity? If so, can you rank the bolded text units in terms of degrees of metaphoricity?

If you would like to consider some supplementary questions specific to each section then please refer to pages 4-5 of the document.

A Conventionality

1. Various strategies **aim to raise** profitability levels for capital. (Holborow)
2. The algebra was **glue** they were **stuck** in. (Golding's *Darkness Visible*)
3. Sex is only **the liquid centre** of the great **Newberry Fruit** of friendship. (Jilly Cooper)



Newberry Fruits

4. Chastity faces them, **a destination** for which their whole lives were a preparation. (Elizabeth Jennings)
5. We roll back the lid of **the sardine tin** of life. (Alan Bennett)

B Deliberateness

6. I **slapped** on the brakes, but I couldn't stop in time (adapted from *A Corpus of English Conversation*).
7. And while the rising standard soon led to the discovery of very **dark spots** in society, **spots** which men were no longer willing to tolerate. (Hayek *The Road to Serfdom*)
8. Many of those socialist refugees are now, helping to **lead** their adopted country **the way** which Germany has **gone**. (Hayek *The Road to Serfdom*)
9. Most holiday makers **steered** well **clear** of the coast as the May Day weekend maintained its usual chill. (*Daily Telegraph*)
10. Dost thou not see **my baby** at my breast that sucks the nurse asleep? [referring to the snake which is poisoning her] (*Antony and Cleopatra* Act V Scene 2 308-9)

C Semantic distance (rather than approximation)

11. My mother was as near **a whore** as makes no matter, for she took gifts of food from a succession of lovers (adapted from Golding's *Free Fall*)
12. The distance between Oslo and Stockholm by air is **260 miles** [in fact it's 259 miles]
13. Life is **a box of chocolates**—you never know what you are going to get (*Forrest Gump*)
14. Thatcher was Reagan's **poodle**.
15. Ginseng is **a carrot**, kind of

D Contradictoriness

16. The child is **father** of the man (Wordsworth 'My heart leaps up')
17. The building was **a barn**. (Golding's *The Spire*) ['building' refers to a cathedral undergoing building work]
18. The apparition of those faces in the crowd, **Petals on a wet, black bough** (Ezra Pound 'In a Station of the Metro')
19. I am poised eighteen inches over the black **rivets** you are reading. I am in your place, shut in a bone box and trying to fasten myself on the white paper (Golding *Free Fall*).
20. The air was **thick** with a bass chorus (Seamus Heaney, 'Death of a Naturalist')
21. Nudity is **a form of dress**.
22. He still had years of living **death** to endure (adapted from Golding's *The Spire*).

E Marking

23. I've heard that cancer is like **opening a bag of feathers in the wind**. (COBUILD Bank of English)
24. It's Tom Walker's own **field**, as it were, so to speak. (*Corpus of English Conversation*) [talking about areas of academic expertise]
25. I had seen her once before at a Royal Academy Private view, hopping like **a raven** in a black feathered hat from one gallery to another. (Byatt *Virgin in the Garden*)
26. "I have no relish for the country; it's a kind of healthy **grave**". (COBUILD Bank of English)
27. She lives in a company-owned penthouse and she's literally **their wholly owned subsidiary**. (COBUILD Bank of English)
28. A little boy **comes to grips with** his sex very early, literally every time he urinates. (COBUILD Bank of English)

Extra questions

A.

Comparing 2 and 3, can 2a), **glue**, be regarded as an unconventional metaphor, or is it, in fact, no less conventional than **stuck**?

Can we really say that **aim**, **raise** (level) in 1 are metaphorical any more? Are they so lexicalised and institutionalised that they simply represent a second polysemous meaning for those word forms? Do we process them any differently from polysemous or homophonous words which never relied on metaphor?

B.

What is the relationship between deliberateness and unconventionality?

Are unconventional, i.e. innovative metaphors, necessarily deliberate? 6, which I take to be a performance mistake for 'slammed on the brakes', looks innovative from a reader/listener perspective, but if it is a mistake, then hardly deliberate. But if it is not intended as an innovative metaphor, then are we justified in treating it as innovative in the first place?

Presumably non-deliberate metaphors tend to be conventional ones. But is conventionality a necessary rather than a sufficient condition for non-deliberateness?

Are repetition as in 7, extension as in 8, or using a conventional metaphor with both literal and metaphorical meanings as in 9, clear evidence of deliberateness?

C.

If, as Relevance Theory claims, approximation and metaphor are endpoints on a scale, then how do we draw the line between approximation and metaphor? Consider 11, 12 and 15. Is it the case that the greater the semantic distance between source and target the more metaphorical it is? So 15 is more metaphorical than 12, and 13 is more metaphorical than 15?

What is the relationship between semantic distance and conventionality? Are metaphors with a large semantic distance between an abstract target and concrete/physical source (as with most conceptual metaphors), more likely to be conventional in lexis (cf. **aim** in 1), or depend on conventional conceptual metaphors (cf. **glue** in 2)?

D.

Contradictoriness might be seen in semantic terms, for example oxymoronic metaphors are highly contradictory (22), and/or in terms of syntax, where copula constructions express the contradiction most forcefully as paradoxes (16, 21).

Which of the other syntactic choices for expressing metaphor exemplified in 18, 19, 20, and 22 convey the most contradictoriness?

How does a contradiction (an apparent paradox or oxymoron) need to be processed for us to regard it as metaphorical?

How does the scale of contradictoriness relate to the scale of semantic distance (C)? Are they inversely related? Do opposites need to be in the same semantic domain?

If so, would conceptual metaphor theory, that insists that metaphors involve *cross-domain* mappings, allow any place for paradoxical or oxymoronic metaphors?

E.

Do some markers of comparison, such as *like*, preclude or 'kill' metaphor, because they turn it into a simile? And is this related to a lack of contradictoriness—if everything can be like anything else in some respect, copula similes are more likely to be tautologies than contradictions?

Are some markers of metaphor less likely to kill metaphor than *like* similes? Does the positioning of the marker after the metaphorical term (24) make a difference here?

What about *literally* as a marker of metaphor (27, 28)? Does this reduce the metaphorical effect or enhance it? Especially when the term conveys both a metaphorical and literal meaning simultaneously (28)?