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Research Article

Crossing between Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Text World Theory

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The paper to seeks demonstrate that the academic notion of conceptual metaphorization on its own cannot account sufficiently for whole-text organization and structuring. The main line of argumentation is that, to achieve a better explanation of how whole text structuring happens in cognitive terms, we also need to account for the presence or absence of TW and DW overlap. The paper offers analysis of samples from political speeches, which confirms that the two theoretical systems (i.e. Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Text World Theory) are principally compatible, and that they are possible to cohere not only theoretically but also analytically. In sum, the paper argues in favour of harmonizing selected principles from the two theoretical cognitive frameworks and, hopefully, provides a step towards achieving greater cross-fertilization in text- and discourse-oriented cognitive research.

1. Introduction

In the 1980s, Lakoff et al.'s redefinition of metaphor as more than simply a stylistic device famously shifted the linguistic viewpoint deep into the human cognitive perspective. Lakoff and Johnson also revised 'a basic confusion' (1980, p. 129) – the assumption that the things that dominate human cognition are those that are conscious and conspicuous. Lakoff et al. put forward the opposite view – those cognitive mechanisms that are 'most alive and most deeply entrenched, efficient, and powerful are those that are so automatic as to be unconscious and effortless' (Lakoff and Johnson *ibid*.). For instance, the so-called trite metaphors turn out to be most powerful and culturally significant: they appear with the greatest frequency; they are believed to be 'natural'; they are so deeply entrenched in everyday thought (and, consequently, in language) that we do not consciously notice them functioning. In other words, a surprisingly big portion of our lives turns out to be governed by the

subconscious co-functioning of cognitive processes, our political and social behavior being no exception.

In this relation, the point of greatest interest for me concerns one of the questions that have remained open since the times Lakoff et al. propelled their reformulation of conceptual metaphor. The question concerns the way various conceptual tools – and not only conceptual metaphor in isolation – co-function and blend in 'a pervasive, irreducible, imaginative structure of human understanding' which 'influences the nature of meaning and constrains our rational inferences' (Johnson 1987, p. xii). Thus, the present paper aims to build on research on conceptual metaphor but to do so by focusing on its co-functioning with other cognitive processes. The aim is not to establish a hierarchical organization between the two processes; on the contrary, the aim is to demonstrate an absence of supremacy of conceptual metaphor. The second process, or rather, set of cognitive processes, concerns the 'creation' of Text Worlds (TWs) and Discourse Worlds (DWs).

The choice of interest in TW and DW creation is conditioned by my previously conducting analyses on a dataset of political speeches (Tincheva 2013, 2015). The dataset texts represent a wide range of topics, types of audience and differences in political orientation. The analysis conducted is qualitative. The results from the analysis selected for presentation here strongly support the theoretical malleability of amalgamating research on conceptual metaphor with research on cognitive text- and discourse world creation.

2. Metaphorizing conceptually

As is well known, a keystone in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is the principle of metaphoric mappings. The notion refers to the the fact that, in order to think and talk about some domains ('target' domains), we use structure (s) from other domains ('source' domains). Generally, a metaphoric mapping is a cognitive procedure of transferring the structure of a source domain onto a target domain on the basis of perceived similarities between the two domains.

An example relevant to the present discussion is provided by Lakoff and Johnson in their discussion (1980) of the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor. They claim that nothing in the nature of an argument suggests hostility. However, based on perceived similarities (e.g. in both the ARGUING and the WAR domains, there exist two separate, 'opposed' persons/groups of people as well as two divergent views they 'defend'), the domains become associated. For that reason, arguing is not construed as, for instance, SNOWING. Instead, any differences in opinion are interpreted as AGGRESSION. Confirmation

of the existence of that mapping can be found in the linguistic expressions used to describe the situation: a person who disagrees with you is said to be your *opponent*, who may *attack* or *demolish* your arguments. As a consequence, it is considered socially plausible to understand political disagreement as a WAR against an ADVERSARY – an interpretation of far-reaching social, i.e. post-conceptual, consequences.

Another example relevant to the present discussion details how domains become associated through bodily experience. When an infant detects a toy lying at some distance and s/he desires it, s/he starts crawling toward the toy in order to obtain it. The baby starts from a STARTING POINT (in which s/he does not possess the desired object), then moves crawling (along some kind of TRAJECTORY through TIME and SPACE) to the toy. The END POINT of the movement is the PLACE where the baby possesses the toy (i.e. the place where the PROBLEM is solved). As the desired change is brought about by the baby's crawling toward the desired object, crawling becomes associated with change. Subsequent repetitions of the same pattern will endorse the infant's perception of MOVEMENT as a – to resort to another metaphoric construal – 'way' of achieving a GOAL. From then on, throughout the person's life, the analogy in the structure (INITIAL POINT \rightarrow SOURCE; MOVEMENT TOWARD THE TOY \rightarrow PATH; END POINT \rightarrow GOAL) will forever determine the person's perception of how goals can be achieved – by 'moving towards them'.

In a similar vein, POLITICAL GOALS will always be understood as DESTINATIONS. INITIAL STATES in which the goal is not attained are understood as STARTING POINTS and DESIRED STATES are understood as END POINTS in MOTION. What stands in the middle – the trajectory linking the INITIAL POINT to the END one – will be interpreted as a POLITICAL PATH along which it is possible to reach the POLITICAL GOAL (Tincheva 2013). Nothing, it should be noted, in the objective nature of any political issue requires that it be thought of as the end point of movement. Purposeful motion, freed from human conceptualization and metaphoric mappings, is not objectively analogical to human political behaviour. It is conditioned by the nature of our bodily, sensimotor, perceptions.

Another aspect of metaphors we need to note is their analyzability into primary, i.e. *simple*, or *complex metaphors* (Grady et al. 1996). A primary metaphor – such as the one of the crawling infant above – has a minimal structure and is grounded, i.e. it directly draws on bodily experience. A complex metaphor, in contrast, is formed out of primary ones by conceptual blending, which is a mechanism proposed and investigated by Fauconnier (1997) and Fauconnier and Turner (2002). A complex metaphor,

moreover, adds forms of commonplace knowledge, cultural models, folk theories, generally-accepted beliefs, etc. (for a discussion see, e.g., Kövecses 2020).

An all-important example of a complex metaphor is A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY (Grady *ibid*.), which pre-defines 'good' behaviour and castigates a person as 'lost', 'without direction' and not knowing 'which way to turn', if that person does not impose a sense of purpose on his or her life. This complex metaphor, which operates extremely powerfully on a daily basis, stems out of the two primary metaphors PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS and ACTIONS ARE MOTIONS. Drawing on those two metaphors, there arises the A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY complex metaphor, which is made up of four submetaphors:

A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY

A PERSON LIVING A LIFE IS A TRAVELLER

LIFE GOALS ARE DESTINATIONS

A LIFE PLAN IS AN ITINERARY (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, p. 61)

Confirmation of the actual existence of simple and complex conceptual metaphors has come from the Neural Theory of Language (Feldman 2006; Feldman and Narayanan 2004) and Lakoff's Neural Theory of Metaphor (2009). According to that theory, 'every action our body performs is controlled by our brains, and every input from the external world is made sense of by our brains' (Lakoff *ibid.*, p. 1). 'Thought is physical', Lakoff argues there, in that all concepts and metaphors are physically processed by brain structures. That processing happens through the activation of certain neuronal groups in the brain. Another basic tenet of the theory is that when two neuronal groups fire at the same time, what ensues is spreading activation, which connects the network links and we experience a chain of thought. When two activation-spreading processes lead to the stabilization of the emergent link. As Lakoff claims, it is precisely that mechanism which forms and perpetuates primary metaphors.

The Neural Theory of Metaphor, Lakoff suggests, also provides scientists with a methodological tool, or, in his words, it 'clarifies what the study of metaphor is about', namely:

- Showing how metaphorical understanding is grounded in basic human experience via primary conceptual metaphors;
- Showing how primary metaphors contribute to complex conceptual metaphors;

- Showing how both primary and complex metaphors contribute to the meanings of words, complex expressions, and grammatical constructions;
- Showing how conceptual metaphor plays a role in abstract concepts and overall conceptual systems (as in politics, philosophy, and mathematics);
- And, finally, showing how conceptual metaphors contribute to the understanding of language and other uses of symbols. (Lakoff 2009, p. 30)

3. Creating mental worlds

The first issue which needs clarification as far as the interpretation of the notion of 'worlds' adopted here is concerned, is that 'worlds' here bears little in common with the philosophical or logics notion of 'possible worlds' (e.g. Kripke 1972; Lewis 1973). First of all, the related, philosophical and fundamental understanding of an 'actual world' can hardly be deemed compatible with cognitive principles and, consequently, it can hardly be deemed compatible with the precepts of CMT discussed above. The main reason for that is the discrepancy between the two theories concerning the ontological status of the entities in question: are 'worlds' cognitive in nature, or do they exist objectively 'out there' regardless of the human mind and its cognitive capacities? Even more importantly, is it theoretically sound to amalgamate 'real worlds', which exist objectively 'out there', with mental 'worlds', which exist 'within' the human mind, and then to assign the two types of 'worlds' the same theoretical status? Not only are answers to these two questions rarely available throughout the literature but posing the second question, especially, seems to have been avoided.

The notion of a text-relevant world, which appears in de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) in the form of a 'textual world', was strictly cognitive in nature as it was used to explain how coherence emerges in the process of communication. 'Coherence', to de Beaugrande and Dressler, exists due to and depends on the cognitive peculiarities of the human mind. As they define it, coherence should be "envisioned as the outcome of combining concepts and relations into a network composed of knowledge spaces centred around main topics" (1981, p. 59). Throughout their book, de Beaugrande and Dressler adopt a viewpoint 'from within' the human mind and repeatedly clarify that the theoretical model they propose aims to describe only how text unfolds procedurally in the mind. In other words, they do not concern themselves with a (possibly) objectively existing reality outside the human mind, which is also the interpretation to 'worlds' adopted here. However, it should

emphasized that de Beaugrande and Dressler's theoretical model does not include the notion of 'discourse world' but only that of 'textual world'.

In contrast, Werth (1999) employs both the notions of TWs and of DWs. As defined by Werth (*ibid.*), a TW is a deictic space delimited through the operation of spatio-temporal parameters. It is "peopled by entities" and represents a situation "distinct from the immediate one of the language event. More precisely, it is "the 'story' which is the subject of the discourse, together with all the structure necessary to understand it" (1999, p. 87). Thus, in Werth's viewpoint, while a DW 'contains' participant roles (i.e. speaker and hearer), a TW 'contains' people and objects as characters (1999, p. 82). Moreover, it is quite possible for a DW and its corresponding TW to coincide and such instances are interpreted by him as "discourses about the discourse world itself" (1999, p. 86). In cases like that, Werth maintains, the TW is "the conceptualization of that part of the discourse world which is 'in focus' for the purposes of discourse" (*ibid.*). Actualizations of that possibility are everyday conversations at home, in the street, at the office, etc., which concern interpersonal relations in the family, company, etc. Consequently, it is safe to argue, as Werth does, that participants in a DW can be constructed as characters in its corresponding TW. In such cases the two types of Worlds overlap to various degrees.

A related point of importance that might seem somewhat problematic is that, to Werth, a TW is also a result of the "deliberate and joint effort on the part of producer and receiver to build up a 'world' within which the propositions advanced are coherent and make complete sense" (1999, p. 95). Arguably, Werth's idea of 'worlds' making 'complete sense' is difficult to support as is his idea of a complete match between a text producer's TW and text receivers' TWs. Cognitively, it is impossible even for two TWs evoked by the same text and constructed by the same person at different moments in time to be identical.

The main issue with Werth's interpretation, however, seems to be that, in Werth's theory, creating a TW resembles creating a mutual brain-child: it is negotiated, it is co-produced, and it has a life of its own 'outside' the participants' thoughts, cognitive processes, etc. The locus of a TW, therefore, is not clearly specified by Werth and his TWs exist somewhere 'out there'. In accordance with that premise, analyzing a TW, from Werth's perspective, does not imply dealing with each participant's cognitive processes; it only involves dealing with the result of those processes. Admittedly, in his definition, that result is cognitive in nature; still, the viewpoint actually adopted by him is not one of looking at TW construction through participants' minds but one of adopting a vantage point from some place

beside those minds. As a consequence, how all participants' cognitive constructs function jointly to 'produce' the final output is not clarified in his works.

Not only TWs are constructed in that way according to Werth. He defines a DW as "the situational context surrounding the speech event itself" (1999: 83), which makes Werth's 'DW' considerably more objectivist than Lakovian ones and de Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981). Werth's line of argumentation relies heavily on the existence of an objective reality (in his term, *the shared speech situation*), which is a premise still fundamental to Text World Theory and Cognitive Poetics (e.g. Gavins 2007; Gavins and Lahey 2016; Stockwell 2020). On that basis, Werth's investigations focus on how different possible realities emerge in the process of text construction, those realities being associated with the use of negation, modality, etc.. In practice, Werth's discussions may be argued not to be completely removed from logics' possible-world theories as he elaborates on types of worlds such as *want* worlds, *belief* worlds, *intent* worlds, *desire* sub-world, *dream* sub-worlds, etc.

In sum, the interpretation of 'a world' expounded in the present paper lies close to de Beaugrande and Dressler's version of a TW but it also incorporates Werth's breakthrough notion of the existence of both TWs and DWs as well as their possible overlaps. 'A world' is seen here as a cognitive structure, or a network; it is believed to emerge from humans' recurrent bodily interactions with a (possibly objective) reality.

4. Why cross between conceptual metaphor theory and text world theory: political speeches

Previous analyses I conducted (Tincheva 2013, 2021) reveal that political discourse genres display TWs containing the prototypical (term as in Lakoff 2007) slots of **(social) issue, leader, led, time,** and **space**. Different genres within political discourse, however, are revealed to employ different whole-text structures to organize the said slots and that the 'organization' happens through conceptual metaphoric mappings. Political speeches, for instance, map the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema to configure their structure in terms of Introduction, Body and Conclusion, with each of the three parts explicating **leader, led, time, space** and **issue** slots. News items, in contrast, do not display a three-part structure and do not employ this particular image schema; instead, they map the CENTER-PERIPHERY image schema (Tincheva 2015). Thus, political speeches are particularly interesting as they follow closely the LIFE IS A JOURNEY complex metaphor discussed in the previous section.

As a result of the conceptual metaphor mapping, the structure of a political speech tends to follow this pattern:

INITIAL STATE (containing slots: leader, led, issue, time, space)

STEPS (containing slots: leader, led, (sequence of) activities, time, space)

DESIRED STATE (containing slots: leader, led, (absence of) issue, time, space)

A political speech prototypically begins with the construction of a mental space seen as an INITIAL STATE (in which there is a problematic issue and characters related to the issue), then moves through the creation of a number of STEPS along a political PATH (frequently, that 'movement' is expressed linguistically though separate paragraphs) and ends by explicating a DESIRED STATE (in which the problematic issue is solved by some character/s). Clearly, not each political speech conforms fully to this structure; thus some political speeches represent better examples of it as compared to others.

Employing conceptual metaphorization to achieve whole-text structure is not the only 'level' at which conceptual metaphor operates in political speeches. As the following example demonstrates, *crossroads, paths, ways forward*, etc. can confirm the cognitive mechanism's simultaneous operation at the lexical level, too:

(1) 'We stand at the crossroads of our future. Not only our future but those of generations to follow us depend upon choosing the right path. We ask you only to think carefully before you make your decision to ensure that the way you choose is right.' (Michael Ancram 2001)

The presence of metaphoric mappings at various levels, however, does not suffice in explaining all peculiarities related to the filling of the prototypical slots in political speeches. A case in point in (1) above would be the use of *we* and *us* to explicate slots **leader** and **led**. Do *we* and *us* there express reference only to the people who 'stand at the crossroads', who will be 'followed' by 'subsequent' generations, who are to choose the 'path' 'before them', etc.? Or do *we* and *us* express reference to the speaker delivering the speech and his or her addressees? In other words, do *we* and *us* evoke the speech's TW or its DW? Resulting from the overlap between a TW and a DW (discussed in the previous section), such ambiguity can be dependent on the explication of another of the prototypical slots, namely **time**, as evident in:

(2) 'Tonight we come together bound by our faith in a mighty God, with genuine respect and love for our country, and inheriting the legacy of a great party, the Democratic Party, which is

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the best hope for redirecting our nation on a more humane, just and peaceful course.' (President Jackson 1984)

In (2), the ambiguity in the association of *we* and *our* with either the TW or the DW may seem resolved by the presence of *tonight*, which seems to tip the balance in favour of the DW over the TW. However, while *we* in *we come together bound…* and *our* in *our faith* could be interpreted as also restricted to the DW, *our* in *our country* and in *our nation* is more likely to be seen as more inclusive and as extending to a whole country's population and not only to the audience present at the time of speech delivery. Therefore, *our* can be seen as evoking a TW. In other words, (2) also demonstrates the presence of TW– DW overlap, only the overlap happens to a different degree than in (1).

TW-DW overlap can also create another kind of ambiguity, in which the act of delivering the speech itself (in the DW) can be represented as a 'step' along the political 'path' (in the TW):

(3) Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of the Congress:

I speak tonight for the dignity of man and the destiny of democracy.

I urge every member of both parties, Americans of all religions and of all colors, from every section of this country, to join me in that cause. (President Johnson 1965)

TW-DW conflation can also occur is **slot: issue** (in the TW) and **slot: topic** (in the DW) share the same filler as in:

(4) My fellow Americans, thank you for sharing your time with me tonight.

The subject I want to discuss with you, peace and national security, is both timely and important. Timely, because I've reached a decision which offers a new hope for our children in the 21st century, a decision I'll tell you about in a few minutes. And important because there's a very big decision that you must make for yourselves. This subject involves the most basic duty that any President and any people share, the duty to protect and strengthen the peace. (President Reagan 1983)

In (4) **issue** (in the TW) is signalled linguistically by, for instance, *peace and national security*, and *the duty to protect and strengthen the peace*. They are also overtly signalled the *subject* (in the DW).

(3) and (4) reveal another case in point supporting the premise that conceptual metaphorization on its own cannot account sufficiently for political discourse textualizations and that what is additionally needed is an account of TW-DW coincidence. That case concerns the use of opening and closing expressions in political speeches (e.g. Mr. Speaker; Members of the Congress; Good night; Thank you; God bless you all; May God be with us all):

(5) Good evening.

Just moments ago, I spoke with George W. Bush and congratulated him on becoming the 43rd President of the United States, and I promised him that I wouldn't call him back this time.

And so, we leave with high hopes, in good spirit, and with deep humility, and with very much gratefulness in our hearts. I can only say to each and every one of you, we come from many faiths, we pray perhaps to different gods – but really the same God in a sense – but I want to say for each and every one of you, not only will we always remember you, not only will we always be grateful to you but always you will be in our hearts and you will be in our prayers. Thank you very much. (Al Gore 2000)

Sometimes such expressions are used to demarcate different STEPS along the political PATH within the TW:

(6) Now your role extends beyond the bounds of the Cold War world. The Gulf War was a vivid reminder that evil will always be with us and that dictators will not suddenly become an extinct species. There, your speedy and courageous action ensured that the enemy was defeated. Today, we face new threats and instabilities. Weapons of mass destruction are now available to regimes who have little respect for human life.

My friends, we in Britain are proud to be part of the great Anglo American Alliance – the greatest force for liberty the world has ever known. On this your 50th anniversary, let us learn the lessons from the past so that we may never fail the generations of the future. In the words of Goethe: That which thy fathers bequeathed thee, earn it anew if thou wouldst possess it. (Margaret Thatcher 1997)

Clearly, such expressions serve to evoke DWs. However, analyses I conducted (Tincheva 2021) show that they can also be used to switch from a TW to a DW and vice versa. In (6), for instance, [w] *eapons of mass destruction are now available to regimes who have little respect for human life* elaborates on the TW. Then [m] y friends evokes the DW. Next, we in Britain are proud to be part of the great Anglo American Alliance requires a switch back to the TW.

Such chains of switches from one type of world to another is what proves to create a sense of 'movement' through the texts of political speeches. They help create a sense of 'progression' from INITIAL STATE, through different STEPS, and to a POLITICAL GOAL. Simply put, such chains of switches function simultaneously with and help enact the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL requirements from the metaphoric mapping which governs the whole-text structure of the texts.

5. Conclusion

The present paper sought to demonstrate that conceptual metaphorization on its own cannot account sufficiently for whole-text organization and structuring. It argues that what is additionally needed is an account of the presence or absence of TW and DW overlap. The analysis of samples from political speeches confirms that the two theoretical systems (i.e. CMT and Text World Theory) are principally compatible not only theoretically but also analytically.

The paper employs a framework which is cognition-based in essence and which co-ordinates premises from two cognitive fields of research. It argues in favour of harmonizing selected principles and, hopefully, provides a step towards achieving greater cross-fertilization in text- and discourse-oriented cognitive research.

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