

Text 1

Metaphor: A Practical Introduction

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In the cognitive linguistic view, a conceptual metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain.

The two domains that participate in conceptual metaphor have special names. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain. Thus, the abstract concepts, such as life, arguments, love, theory, ideas, social organizations, and others are target domains, while the concrete concepts, like journeys, war, buildings, food, plants, and others are source domains. The target domain is the domain that we try to understand through the use of the source domain.

1. Common Source Domains

In studying the most common source domains, I found that the most systematic comprehensive survey is provided by the *Cobuild Metaphor Dictionary*. I have supplemented the list of sources offered by this metaphor dictionary with some additional ones from my survey of metaphor research. Below, I will briefly mention the most frequent sources.

1.1. *The Human Body*

The human body is an ideal source domain, since, for us, it is clearly delineated and we know it well. This does not mean that we make use of all aspects of this domain in metaphorically understanding abstract targets. The aspects that are especially utilized in metaphorical comprehension involve various parts of the body, including the head, face, legs, hands, back, heart, bones, shoulders, and others. Some examples follow:

the *heart* of the problem

to *shoulder* a responsibility

the *head* of the department

1.2. *Health and Illness*

Health and illness are, of course, aspects of human body. Both the general properties of health and illness and particular illnesses frequently constitute metaphorical source domains. Some examples include:

a *healthy* society

a *sick* mind

She *hurt* my feelings.

1.3. *Animals*

The domain of animals is an extremely productive source domain. Human beings are especially frequently understood in terms of properties of animals. Thus, we talk about someone being a brute, a tiger, a dog, a sly fox, a bitch, a cow, a snake, and so on. But the metaphorical use of animal terms is not limited to human beings, as indicated by the example “It will be a bitch to pull this boat out of the water.” In this instance, the term bitch denotes any difficult situations. The body parts of animals are also commonly used in the metaphorical conceptualization of domains. This way of understanding nonphysical domains is also very common in languages of the world, as Hein and his colleagues show.

1.4. *Plants*

People cultivate plants for a variety of purposes: for eating, for pleasure, for making things, and so on. In our metaphorical use, we distinguish various parts of plants; we are aware of the many actions we perform in relation to plants; and we recognize the many different stages of growth that plants go through. Here are some examples:

a *budding* beauty

He *cultivated* his friendship with her.

the *fruit* of her labor

Exports *flourished* last year.

1.5. *Buildings and Construction*

Human beings build houses and other structures for shelter, work, storage, and so on. Both the static object of a house and its parts and the act of building it serve as common metaphorical source domains. Some examples follow:

a *towering* genius

He's *in ruins* financially.

She *constructed* a coherent argument.

1.6. *Machines and Tools*

People use machines and tools to work, play, fight, and for pleasure. Again, both the machines and tools and the activities related to them show up as metaphorical expressions, as illustrated by the examples below:

the *machines* of democracy

conceptual *tools*

She *produces* a book every year.

1.7. *Games and Sport*

People play and they invent elaborate activities to entertain themselves. Games and sport are characterized by certain properties that are commonly utilized for metaphorical purposes. For

example, many games have rules and this property occurs in examples such as “He *plays by the rules*” and “We want an *even playing field*.” Additional examples from the domain of games and sport include:

to toy with the idea

He tried to *checkmate* her.

He’s a *heavyweight* politician.

1.8. *Money and Economic Transactions (business)*

From very early on, people living in human society have engaged in economic transactions of various kinds. These transactions often involve the use of money and commodities in general. The commercial event involves a number of entities and actions: a commodity, money, handing over the commodity, and handing over the money. Our understanding of various things is based on this scenario or parts of it. Below are some examples:

Spend your time wisely.

I tried *to save* some energy.

She *invested a lot* in the relationship.

1.9. *Cooking and Food*

Cooking food as an activity has been with us ever since the beginning of humanity. Cooking involves a complex process of several elements: an agent, recipe, ingredients, actions, a product, just to mention the most important ones. The activity with its parts and the product serve as a deeply entrenched source domain. Here are some examples:

What’s your *recipe* for success?

That’s a *watered-down* idea.

He *cooked up* a story that nobody believed.

1.10. *Heat and Cold*

Heat and cold are extremely basic experiences. We feel warm and cold as a result of the temperature of the air that surrounds us. We often use the heat domain metaphorically to talk about our attitude to people and things.

in the *heat* of passion

a *cold* reception

an *icy* stare

a *warm* welcome

1.11. *Light and Darkness*

Light and darkness are also basic human experiences. The properties of light and darkness often appear as weather conditions when we speak and think metaphorically. Let us see some examples:

a *dark* mood

She *brightened* up.

a *cloud* of suspicion

There was a *cloud* over their friendship.

I do not have the *foggiest* idea.

She was in a *haze* of confusion.

1.12. *Force*

There are various kinds of forces: gravitational, magnetic, electric, mechanical. We see these forces as operating on and affecting us in many ways. The forces take many shapes in the physical world: waves, wind, storm, fire, and agents pushing, pulling, driving, sending another thing. These forces effect various changes in the thing acted on. There are many different effects as there are different forces. The metaphorical conceptualization of several domains in terms of forces is reflected in the examples below:

She *swept me off my feet*.

You're *driving* me nuts.

Don't *push* me!

I was *overwhelmed*.

1.13. *Movement and Direction*

Movement—either self-propelled or otherwise—is yet another basic experience. Movement can involve a change of location or it can be stationary. When it involves a change of location, it is associated with direction: forward and backward, up and down. Changes of various kinds are conceptualized metaphorically as movement that involves a change of location. This is indicated by the examples:

He *went* crazy.

She solved the problem *step by step*.

Inflation is *soaring*.

Our economy is *galloping ahead*.

Obviously, this is not a complete survey of domains that participate in conceptual metaphors as sources. Further sources include various basic entities, such as containers, substances, physical objects, and several others. Common source domains also include the various properties of objects and substances, such as their shape, color, size, hardness, transparency, sharpness, weight, and many more. However, despite the representative nature of the list, we get a sense of the most common source domains and the kind of world that our most common metaphors depict. In this world, it seems, there are people, animals, and plants; the people live in houses, they have bodies, they eat, they get sick and get better; they move around and travel; they live in a physical

environment with all kinds of objects and substances in it; the objects and substances have all kinds of properties; the physical environment affects the people; and the people make tools, work, and engage in various other transactions with other people. This is an extremely simplified world, but it is exactly the simplified nature of this world that enables us to make use of parts of it in creating more ones.

2. Common Target Domains

In the same way as the source domains apply to several targets, the targets also have several sources. Target domains are , diffuse, and lack clear delineation; as a result, they “cry out” for metaphorical conceptualization. I can only survey the most common target domains and their most important sources.

2.1. *Emotion*

The domain of emotion is a part excellence target domain. Emotion concepts such as anger, fear, love, happiness, sadness, shame, pride, and so on are primarily understood by means of conceptual metaphors. The source domains of emotion concepts typically involve forces. Thus, we have examples like:

She was deeply moved.

He was bursting with joy.

He unleashed his anger.

Given that emotions are largely comprehended via force metaphors, it is not surprising that, etymologically, the word *emotion* derives from the Latin *e* meaning “out” and *movere* meaning “to move.”

2.2. *Desire*

As regards metaphorical conceptualization, desire is similar to emotion. It is also comprehended as a force, not only as a physical one but also often as a physical force like hunger or thirst. It is also often understood in terms of heat. Some examples include:

The jacket I saw in the shopwindow *pulled* me into the store.

She is *hungry for* knowledge.

I am *starved for* affection.

He’s *burning* to go.

2.3. *Morality*

Moral categories such as good and bad, as well as honesty, courage, sincerity, honor, and their opposites, are largely understood by means of more concrete source concepts. Among these, economic transactions, forces, straightness, light and dark, and up-down orientation are especially important, as the examples below indicate:

I’ll *pay you back* for this.

She *resisted* the temptation.

He's a *straight* shooter.

He's a *shady* character.

That was a *lowly* thing to do.

2.4. *Thought*

How the human mind works is still little known. This situation makes it no surprise that people, both lay persons and experts, try to understand the mind by resorting to metaphors of various kinds. Rational thought is comprehended as work—the manipulation of objects in a workshop. Less active aspects of thought are understood in terms of perception, such as seeing. Some examples to demonstrate this follow:

She's *grinding out* new ideas.

He *hammered* the point home.

He *searched for* the memory.

I *see* your point.

2.5. *Society / Nation*

The concepts of society and nation are extremely complex, and this complexity calls for metaphorical understanding. Common ways of comprehending society and nation involve the source concepts of person and family.

What do we *owe* society?

neighboring countries

a *friendly* nation

the founding *fathers* of the country

Other aspects of society are viewed as machines or the human body:

the *machinery* of democracy

the *functioning* of society

the *ills* of society

2.6. *Politics*

Politics has to do with the exercise of power. Political power is conceptualized as physical force. Politics has many additional aspects that are understood by means of a variety of further source domains, including games and sport, business, and war.

They *forced* the opposition out of the House.

The president *plays hardball*.

There was a great deal of *haggling* over the issue.

The *fight erupted* over abortion.

2.7. *Economy*

Economy is usually comprehended via metaphor. Its most commonly used source domains include building, plants, journey (movement, direction), as shown by the examples:

German *built* a strong economy.

the *growth* of the economy

They *pruned* the budget.

China's economy is *galloping ahead*.

2.8. *Human Relationships*

Human relationships include such concepts as friendship, love, and marriage. These and similar concepts are metaphorically viewed as plants, machines, and buildings, as shown by the examples:

Their friendship is *in full flower*.

It's *budding* relationship.

They had *to work on* their relationship.

They *built a strong* marriage.

2.9. *Communication*

We conceive of human communication as involving a speaker and a hearer, a message consisting of some meaning encoded in linguistic expressions, and a transfer of this message from the speaker to the hearer along some channel. Metaphorically, we view the linguistic expressions, meanings, and the transfer of the message as containers, objects, and sending, respectively. Here are some examples to illustrate this:

You are *putting* too many ideas *into* a single sentence.

That's a *dense* paragraph.

She *gave* me a lot of information.

2.10. *Time*

Time is notoriously difficult concept to understand. The major metaphor for the comprehension of time is one according to which time is an object that moves. Many common everyday expressions demonstrate this:

The time will *come* when...

Christmas is *coming up* soon.

Time *flies*.

in the *following* week ...

Time *goes by* fast.

2.11. *Life and Death*

Life and death are concepts that are heavily metaphorical in nature. Their metaphorical conceptualization is pervasive in both everyday language and literary works. Life is understood as a journey to some destination. Moreover, it is metaphorically day, light, warmth, and others. Birth is conceived of as arrival, whereas death is viewed as departure, as well as night, darkness, and cold.

The baby will *arrive* soon.

Grandpa is *gone*.

His father *passed away*.

2.12. *Religion*

Key aspects of religion involve our view of God and our relationship to God. God, similar to the concepts of society and nation, is conceptualized as a person: Father, Shepherd, King, etc. It follows from the metaphor that believers are viewed as God's children, sheep, subjects, etc. Other aspects of religious experience involve the conceptualization of such notions as eternity, life after/before death, and so on which are necessarily metaphorical, since we have no experience of them.

2.13. *Events and Actions*

Events and actions are superordinate concepts that comprise a variety of different kinds of events and actions. For example, reading, making a chair, doing a project in the lab, plowing, or whatever are kinds of actions. Aspects of events include such notions as change, cause, purpose, means, and so on. Here are some examples that show this:

He *went crazy*.

She *turned* thirty last month.

You're *driving* me nuts.

The goal *sent* the crowd into a frenzy.

She has *reached* her goals in life.

As can be seen, these common target domains can be roughly classified as psychological and mental states and events (emotion, desire, morality, thought), social groups and processes (society, economy, human relationships, communication), and personal experiences and event (time, life, death, religion). The superordinate concepts of events and actions are difficult to place in this scheme. Another difficulty is to see exactly how the simplified world, as depicted in the most common source domains, fits and "maps onto" the groups of common target domains described above.

(from Zoltán Kövecses. 2003. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford University Press.)

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