

## Conceptual metaphor: A thing of language as well as thought

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According to standard theories of conceptual metaphor, conceptual metaphor is believed to be a means for speakers to understand one thing (target domain) in terms of another (source domain). This entails that, without the help of a conceptual metaphor, the hearer would find it more difficult to understand the concept in question (or even would not understand it at all). For instance, the dead metaphor, “bottleneck,” is useful (in part) because it helps the hearer to understand the narrowest part of a bottle as the neck of a human body. The metaphor is then extended to refer to the part of a road that slows down traffic and later to the delay of the progress of an (or any) activity. In this ripple-like process of extension, one sees a general pattern: The element that a metaphor picks up from a source domain is less abstract and more familiar to the speakers of the language in question. Seen thusly, metaphor becomes a way speakers shape their conceptualization of the things in their lives.

This presentation, however, aims to demonstrate that, while these now well-received notions about conceptual metaphor are valid, they do not exhaust the full range of functions of metaphor. Specifically, we will argue that some metaphors are not used for the purpose of assisting the hearer to understand a concept or to understand it more quickly or easily, but to cause the hearer to see the notion *differently*. Such a metaphor comes about, therefore, not because the concept in question would be difficult to understand without it, but because the concept would not be understood in the way the speaker *wants* it to be understood. To put it another way, conceptual metaphor is also a vehicle for the speaker to *control* the interpretation of the concept, to help herself to drive home her point, and to produce more impact on the hearer of what she intends to convey.

Take the by now famous metaphor, “Argument is war” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: *Metaphors we live by*, Chicago UP) for example. True that the metaphor forces one to see argument as war: Some feature of the source domain (WAR) is projected onto the target domain of ARGUMENT. But why would an English speaker want to ask her hearers to understand argument in terms of war, as they could very well be more familiar with the former than the latter? Our view is that, by saying “argument is war,” the speaker is not saying that her hearers do not know what argument is. Rather, she wants to achieve a particular rhetorical effect by directing the route of their understanding. In other words, conceptual metaphors are as rhetorical and textual (in the general sense of the word) as conceptual (in Lakoff and Johnson’s original sense). For lack of a better word, we term this particular purpose “expressiveness,” the exact definition of which we hope to arrive at by the time we present at the conference. We will also be able to demonstrate our point more fully with examples from a variety of sources such as the media, literature, and everyday conversation.

One of the major successes of the conceptual metaphor theory is its demonstration that metaphor is a way of thought. Our argument in this presentation is that metaphor is a thing of language as well as of thought. Thus, it does not go against the standard theory, but adds to it.