1 Introduction: studying metaphor in discourse

1.1 Some preliminaries

Let me begin by reflecting on the title of this book, *Metaphor in Discourse*. By 'metaphor' I mean the phenomenon whereby we talk and, potentially, think about something in terms of something else. For example, in the expression 'the war against drugs', the attempt to reduce the number of people who take drugs is talked about in terms of war. This may both reflect and reinforce a particular way of thinking about difficult enterprises (and specifically actions and policies relating to drug abuse) in terms of aggression and military action. I will be more precise about the definition of metaphor below. By 'discourse', as the term is used in the title, I mean naturally occurring language use: real instances of writing or speech which are produced and interpreted in particular circumstances and for particular purposes.

In the course of the book, I discuss metaphor as a pervasive linguistic phenomenon, which is varied in its textual manifestations, versatile in the functions it may perform, and central to many different types of communication, from informal interaction through political speeches to scientific theorizing. More specifically, I explore the forms and functions of metaphor in a variety of texts and genres on a range of different topics; I consider the relationship between individual uses of metaphor in specific contexts and conventional metaphorical patterns in language generally; I emphasize the tendency towards an interaction between conventionality and creativity in metaphor use in a variety of different genres; and I reflect on the important but controversial relationship between metaphorical uses of language on the one hand, and mental representations and thought on the other.

The approach adopted in the book is best introduced with reference to a concrete example. On 8 July 2005, an article by James Landale appeared on the website of the UK version of BBC News with the headline 'Half full or half empty?' (see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4665923.stm for the full text). The article is concerned with the aftermath of the G8 summit which had just taken place in Gleneagles in Scotland, and which had been concerned with initiatives to relieve poverty in Africa and to halt climate change. The

summit had received unusually high amounts of media attention due to the involvement of rock stars Bob Geldof and Bono, who had been raising public awareness and lobbying governments to ensure that substantial commitments would be made by the G8 leaders (the article was accompanied by a photograph of Geldof and Bono walking with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan). Geldof and Bono had also organized a series of high-profile pop concerts throughout the world on the eve of the summit (Live 8), in order to mobilize public opinion as with the Live Aid concert Geldof had organized ten years before to raise funds for the victims of famine in Ethiopia.

The article focuses particularly on the customary debate that follows events of this kind, in which different people give different assessments of the outcome of the discussions, some more positive, others more negative. I have chosen it for discussion here because of the prominent role that metaphor plays in it. In the opening of the article, the reporter explicitly states that, after all the activities and negotiations, the summit had finally come down to 'a battle of metaphors':

1.1 In the end, after all the talks, the lobbying and the haggling over words, the G8 summit at Gleneagles came down to a battle of metaphors.

Just how best should the work over the last three days at this Scottish golf course and equestrian centre be characterised?

Was, asked some, the cup half full or half empty?

Indeed, as I will show, the prominent individuals whose statements are quoted in the article use different metaphors to convey their own views and evaluations of what had been achieved. The headline of the article itself also exploits a conventional metaphorical expression ('half full or half empty?') to sum up the way in which the same set of decisions is being presented by some as a success and by others as a failure.

1.1.1 Metaphor and rhetorical goals

The 'story' in the article is represented by the different views expressed by a variety of people about the decisions made by the G8 leaders. In particular, the article includes several direct quotations from statements in which three prominent individuals use different metaphors to express contrasting assessments of the outcome of the summit. In a series of separate quotations, Bono is reported as describing what has been achieved and what remains to be done in terms of the climbing of a series of mountains:

1.2 'A mountain has been climbed,' declared the U2 rock star Bono, who alongside his comrade in alms Bob Geldof, has been lurking on the fringes of this summit.

But, he said, and it was a big 'but' that was echoed by the army of charity workers and aid lobbyists here.

'A mountain has been climbed only to reveal higher peaks on the other side,' continued Bono.

Not wanting to sound too negative, he continued: 'But let's also look down on the valley from where we've come.'

The expression 'a mountain has been climbed' metaphorically constructs the G8 summit in terms of a difficult, but ultimately successful mountainous ascent, while the following reference to 'higher peaks on the other side' presents the remaining problems as further mountains that need to be climbed.[1] In the invitation to 'look down on the valley from where we've come' Bono constructs the pre-summit situation in terms of the lower position from which the metaphorical climb began, and suggests that it is now appropriate to experience the same sense of achievement that climbers feel when they look at the valley below from the top of a mountain.

The opinions expressed by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who was one of the G8 leaders, are also presented via quotations in which he describes what has been achieved in terms of movement. On the issue of climate change, he is reported as saying that there is a 'pathway to a new dialogue', and, on the summit generally, as insisting that:

1.3 'Politics is about getting things done step by step, this is progress, and we should be proud of it.'

Here expressions such as 'pathway to' and 'getting things done step by step' positively construct what has been achieved in terms of movement forward ('step by step') or in terms of entities that make movement forward possible ('pathway'). However, these expressions also suggest that what has been done is part of a longer process rather than the final, desired outcome.

In contrast, a representative of an anti-poverty group is quoted as negatively assessing the G8 summit in comparison with the Live 8 concert via a metaphor to do with sound:

1.4 Dr Kumi Naidoo, from the anti-poverty lobby group G-Cap, said after 'the roar' produced by Live 8, the G8 had uttered 'a whisper'.

The reference to 'roar' could be a nonmetaphorical description of the sound made by the crowd at the concert. However, the use of 'whisper' in relation to the summit is clearly a (negative) metaphorical description of the outcome of the discussions in terms of a sound characterized by lack of loudness. Hence, the contrast in loudness between the sounds indicated by 'roar' and 'whisper'

[1] The noun 'summit' itself derives from the Latin 'summum' (which means 'highest'), and can also mean 'top of a mountain' in contemporary English. In other words, the sense of the noun that is relevant in the article (that of a meeting among leaders) is metaphorically derived from the physical notion of an elevated position. We can only speculate, however, on whether Bono's choice of metaphor was partly inspired by the physical meaning of 'summit'.

is used metaphorically to establish a contrast between the strength of feeling and commitment expressed by the concert audiences and the lack of resolve and effectiveness shown by the G8 leaders.[2]

All three quoted speakers use metaphor to contribute to their own rhetorical goals, which go beyond simply expressing their opinions in an effective way. Both Bono and Blair had been heavily involved in the G8 summit, albeit in different ways, and were therefore faced with a fine balancing act when asked to judge its outcome: on the one hand, they had to claim some degree of success, in order not to lose face themselves and not to damage the prospects of future constructive collaboration with others; on the other hand, they had to recognize that success had not been complete, in order to preserve their credibility and to emphasize that those involved needed to be prepared for further efforts. Interestingly, both achieved this rhetorical balancing act via metaphorical references to having successfully completed *part* of a journey. Dr Naidoo, in contrast, had no direct involvement with the summit, and represented an organization whose goal is to put pressure on governments on the issue of world poverty. Her choice of metaphor, therefore, expresses disappointment, and emphasizes the contrast between the decisions of politicians and the aspirations of ordinary people at the concert.

Aristotle famously described 'a command of metaphor' as 'the mark of genius' (Cooper 2005). While we may hesitate to use the word 'genius' in relation to the three speakers quoted in the article, each of them does show skill and experience in using metaphor to convey their views succinctly, vividly and effectively, and to provide the media with easily quotable material. However, the article also shows that the 'genius' Aristotle talked about is not limited to politicians or media personalities. The article's author, James Landale, does not just notice that a contrast in metaphors would make a nice news story, but also effectively uses metaphor himself: for example, he describes the contrasting metaphors used by different individuals as a 'battle' (see extract above), and exploits the conventional metaphorical opposition between seeing a cup as half full or half empty to provide a catchy headline for his piece. In fact, a closer look at the various metaphorical expressions I have discussed reveals that the 'genius' of their producers lies in exploiting to maximum effect some of the metaphors that are commonly used by speakers of English generally.

1.1.2 Metaphor, conventionality and thought

The metaphorical uses of language that are attributed to Bono, Blair and Dr Naidoo in the article are sufficiently striking for the reporter to have noticed

[2] It is interesting that here the metaphorical noun phrases 'the roar' and 'a whisper' are the only parts of Dr Naidoo's statement that are quoted directly, via a technique that has been described as 'embedded quotation' (see Semino and Short 2004: 153–9).

their metaphoricity and decided that his readers would be able to notice it too. Indeed, we are also likely to conclude that the various metaphorical expressions were used consciously and deliberately by the three speakers, in order to express their views as effectively as possible. Over the last three decades, however, much attention has been paid to the presence of large numbers of highly conventional metaphorical expressions in language, which we often use and understand without being conscious of their metaphoricity. In a series of influential works, George Lakoff and his colleagues (Lakoff and Johnson 1980b; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Lakoff 1993) pointed out that metaphorical expressions are pervasive in language, and that they tend to form systematic sets such as the following:

1.5 Your claims are *indefensible*.
He *attacked every weak point* in my argument.
His criticisms were *right on target*.
I *demolished* his argument.
I've never *won* an argument with him.
You disagree? Okay, *shoot*!
If you use that strategy, he'll *wipe you out*.
He *shot down* all of my arguments.
(Lakoff and Johnson 1980b: 4; italics in original)

1.6 He got a *head start* in life. He's without *direction* in his life. I'm *where* I want to *be* in life. I'm at a *crossroads* in my life. He'll *go places* in life. He's never let anyone *get in* his *way*. He's *gone through* a lot in life. (Lakoff 1993: 223; my italics)

The italicized expressions in list 1.5 describe verbal arguments in terms of physical aggression, including particularly the kind of armed violence associated with war. The italicized expressions in list 1.6 describe various aspects of life in terms of location, movement and journeys.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980b) famously showed that many such related sets of conventional metaphorical expressions exist in English, and argued that these expressions are not simply ways of *talking* about one thing in terms of another, but evidence that we also *think* about one thing in terms of another. More specifically, in Lakoff and Johnson's view, groups of expressions such as those above reflect conventional patterns of thought, known as 'conceptual metaphors'. Conceptual metaphors are defined as systematic sets of correspondences, or 'mappings', across conceptual domains, whereby a 'target' domain (e.g. our knowledge about arguments) is partly structured in terms of a different 'source' domain (e.g. our knowledge about war) (see also 'basic' metaphors in MacCormac 1985 and 'root analogies' in Goatly 1997). Conceptual domains are rich mental representations: they are portions of our background knowledge that relate to particular experiences or phenomena, and may include elements (e.g. travellers), relations (e.g. that between a traveller and

their destination), and patterns of inferences (e.g. if someone reaches the end of a cul-de-sac they cannot continue to move forward) (see Lakoff and Turner 1989: 63–4).[3] Conventional sets of metaphorical expressions such as those given in lists 1.5 and 1.6 are seen as linguistic realizations of conventional conceptual metaphors: the expressions in list 1.5 are presented as linguistic realizations of the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, where WAR is the source domain and ARGUMENT is the target domain; the expressions in list 1.6 are presented as linguistic realizations of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, where JOURNEY is the source domain and LIFE is the target domain.[4] The ARGUMENT IS WAR conceptual metaphor involves correspondences between participants in arguments and opponents or enemies, strategies in arguments and attack or defence, the outcomes of arguments and victory or defeat, and so on. Similarly, in the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, people correspond to travellers, actions to forward movement, choices to crossroads, problems to impediments to travel, and purposes to destinations. Importantly, new structure can be projected from source to target domain. Consider, for example, the conventional metaphorical construction of time as a resource, and, more specifically, as money, which is linguistically realized by expressions such as 'You've used up all your time' and 'I've invested a lot of time on that project' (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 161–4). Some of the material that is projected from the RESOURCE/MONEY source domains is not necessarily part of the TIME target domain independently of the metaphor. This applies, for example, to the notions that time can be 'saved' or 'wasted' (see Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 252–3). This view of metaphor, which is currently the dominant paradigm in metaphor studies, is known as 'Cognitive' or 'Conceptual' Metaphor Theory (henceforth CMT) (see also Gibbs 1994; Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Kövecses 2002).[5]

Cognitive metaphor theorists emphasize that target domains typically correspond to areas of experience that are relatively abstract, complex, unfamiliar, subjective or poorly delineated, such as time, emotion, life or death. In contrast, source domains typically correspond to concrete, simple, familiar, physical and well-delineated experiences, such as motion, bodily phenomena, physical objects and so on. This applies particularly clearly to the LIFE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor, where the target domain (LIFE) is relatively more complex and abstract than the source domain (JOURNEY). Moreover, the

[3] Other terms for general mental representations are roughly equivalent to 'domain', such as 'schema', 'script' and 'frame'.

[4] Small capitals are conventionally used to indicate conceptual metaphors and to refer to conceptual domains. The same convention will be used throughout this book.

[5] In this book I do not have the space to discuss in detail the ways in which CMT has been developed in recent years, but see, for example, Grady (1997a), Lakoff and Johnson (1999) and Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 242–76).

JOURNEY source domain has its basis in the simple and fundamental physical experience of moving along a path from one location to another. Within CMT, such basic experiences have been captured in terms of simple, skeletal mental representations known as 'image schemas'. The LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, for example, is related to the PATH image schema, which is a minimal knowledge structure consisting of two different locations, a path between the two locations, and a direction of movement from one location to the other (see Johnson 1987). In the version of CMT proposed by Grady (1997a; 1997b), conceptual metaphors such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY are seen as the result of the combination of several simpler and more basic conceptual mappings such as PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS and ACTION IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION (Grady 1997a). These basic mappings are termed 'primary metaphors' and are claimed to be grounded in systematic correlations between our tangible, sensorimotor experiences on the one hand (e.g. arriving at a destination) and our intangible, subjective experiences on the other (e.g. achieving a purpose). In other words, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor is claimed to derive ultimately from basic experiential correlations between performing actions and moving, reaching destinations and achieving purposes, and so on. In fact, even the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, where the source domain (WAR) is rather complex, can be seen as arising from the basic experience of physical struggle amongst individuals with contrasting goals (Lakoff and Johnson 1980b: 62; 2003: 265). I will return to this particular metaphor in chapter 6.

Within earlier approaches, metaphor was claimed to be based on similarities between unlike entities, even though it was recognized in some studies that metaphors can create new similarities, rather than simply relying on pre-existing, 'objective' ones (e.g. Black 1962). Within CMT, the notion of similarity plays a more minor role, and conventional conceptual metaphors are often explained in terms of recurring correlations in experience, as I have just mentioned. However, it is also recognized that some metaphors cannot be traced back to experiential correlations, but rather have their basis in *perceived* similarities or resemblances, i.e. in the perception of common characteristics or structures between different entities or areas of experience. This can explain, for example, metaphorical statements such as 'Achilles is a lion' (Grady 1999), or conventional conceptual metaphors such as LIFE IS A GAMBLING GAME, which, according to Kövecses (2002: 71–2) is based on the perception that some aspects of life are similar to some aspects of gambling games (cf. expressions such as 'It's a *toss-up*' and 'Those are *high stakes*', 'If you *play your cards right*, you can do it'; Kövecses 2002: 72; italics in original).[6]

[6] In this book, I do not discuss other theories of metaphor, but see, for example, MacCormac (1985), Kittay (1987), Glucksberg (2001), Sperber and Wilson (1995), Stern (2000) and Gentner and Bowdle (2005).

Let me now return to the metaphorical expressions from the G8 article I discussed in the previous subsection. From the perspective of CMT, the metaphorical use of 'battle' in the expression 'a battle of metaphors' is part of the pattern exemplified in list 1.5, or, in other words, a linguistic realization of ARGUMENT IS WAR: the reporter metaphorically describes the use of different metaphors on the part of people who have different opinions in terms of a stage in a war. In doing so, he exploits a conventional metaphorical sense of the noun 'battle', which is normally included in dictionary entries alongside the nonmetaphorical sense of a fight between opposing armies.

The movement metaphors used by both Bono and Blair are reminiscent of the expressions listed in list 1.6 as linguistic realizations of LIFE IS A JOURNEY. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, they can best be explained in terms of a combination of a small set of primary metaphors, including particularly ACTION IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION and PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS (Grady 1997a: 286–7; Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 52–3). Both Bono and Blair metaphorically construct the G8 summit as part of a difficult journey, and the achievements that have been made as movement forward. In both cases, however, further movement forward is needed, and no explicit reference is made to the end point of the journey, which presumably corresponds to the almost unattainable goals of eliminating world poverty and environmental damage. The metaphorical expressions used by Blair ('pathway', 'step by step'), however, are rather more conventional than those used by Bono: in fact, readers may only become aware of their metaphoricity, if they do, because these expressions occur in close proximity to each other, and possibly also because of the explicit reference to a 'battle of metaphors' at the beginning of the article. In contrast, Bono starts off with a rather conventional expression ('a mountain has been climbed'), and then fleshes out the mountain-climbing scenario by using expressions that are much less conventional ('higher peaks', 'the valley from which we've come', etc.). I will return to the creative exploitation of conventional metaphorical expressions in section 1.2.3 below.

Dr Naidoo's metaphorical use of 'whisper' and, to some extent, 'roar' is not as obviously connected to conventional uses of metaphor. This may explain why it is less likely to be perceived as clichéd as compared with Blair's and, to a lesser extent, Bono's metaphors. However, even Dr Naidoo's choice of metaphor is at least consistent with some conventional metaphorical expressions where loudness is positively evaluated and corresponds to effectiveness, as in the saying 'actions speak louder than words'.

It could be argued that the skill of individuals like Blair and Bono as public speakers lies precisely in their ability to exploit conventional conceptual metaphors for their own rhetorical purposes, by creatively stretching and adapting them to convey particular points. More specifically, the kind of creative exploitation of conventional conceptual metaphors exemplified by Bono's statements achieves an important rhetorical compromise: on the one hand, the

conventional basis of Bono's metaphors ensures that they are widely and easily comprehensible; on the other hand, the creative elements add vividness to his statements, and help to convey simultaneously a sense of satisfaction with current achievements and the need to concentrate on future challenges. Within CMT, the different types of phenomena mentioned as evidence for the existence of conceptual metaphors actually include the ability to produce and understand effortlessly creative uses of metaphor such as Bono's 'higher peaks' (see Lakoff and Turner 1989; Lakoff 1993: 205). However, most metaphorical expressions are highly conventional, so that, by and large, we are not consciously aware of their metaphoricity when we produce or interpret them. The G8 article contains many such expressions, such as, for example, the temporal use of the spatial preposition 'over' in 'over the last three days' in extract 1.1 above (I will return to metaphorical uses of prepositions in section 1.2.2 below).

Cognitive metaphor theorists do not normally acknowledge any intellectual debt to previous scholarship on metaphor. Rather, they describe the work of earlier metaphor scholars as entirely misconceived, and present their approach as a radical corrective to the errors of the past (e.g. Lakoff and Turner 1989: 110–39). This is rather unfortunate, in my view. CMT is indeed innovative in many crucial respects, and does contrast with a traditional view of metaphor as a mere decorative device, simply involving the substitution of a literal term for a concept with a nonliteral one. However, the insights and tenets of CMT had been anticipated in many previous studies on metaphor, albeit from different perspectives and with different emphases (for overviews, see Jäkel 1999; Cameron 2003). Aristotle, for example, who is often presented as the source of later misconceptions, did in fact recognize the cognitive dimension of metaphor, as well as its rhetorical power (see Mahon 1999; Cameron 2003). The cognitive implications and linguistic ubiquity of metaphor were also discussed by a number of significant European philosophers and linguists over several centuries including, for example, John Locke, Giambattista Vico, Immanuel Kant and Harald Weinrich (see Jäkel 1999). More recently, prominent Anglo-American philosophers and literary critics such as I. A. Richards (1936) and Max Black (1962; 1993) recognized that metaphor can lead to the construction of new meanings by bringing together different ideas and systems of knowledge. In his work on metaphor, Richards also introduced some influential terms that still have wide currency today. These include particularly the term 'vehicle' to indicate the source-domain meaning of a metaphorical expression (e.g. the 'fight' meaning of 'battle' in 'a battle of metaphors'), and 'tenor' to indicate the element of the target domain that is actually being talked about (e.g. a contrast in the use of metaphor in the expression 'a battle of metaphors').

The overlaps between CMT and earlier work on metaphor do not, in my view, detract from the achievements of Lakoff and his colleagues, but rather provide additional support for their claims. The originality of the contribution of CMT lies particularly in its focus on patterns of conventional metaphorical

expressions, its emphasis on the embodied nature of many conventional metaphors, and its account of how metaphors can systematically shape our world-views. On the other hand, classic works in CMT such as Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980b) also have a number of weaknesses which have direct implications for the concerns of this book.

The notions of conceptual domains and image schemata are not always sufficient to explain the metaphorical phenomena that can be observed in language use. Some recent studies have more successfully accounted for the use of metaphor in language by making reference to mental representations such as 'scenes' (Grady 1997a, 1997b) or 'scenarios' (Musolff 2004), which are smaller and less complex than conceptual domains, but richer in content than image schemata. The notion of metaphorical 'scenario' in particular, will be frequently used throughout the book to refer to mental representations of particular situations, and the settings, entities, goals and actions that are associated with them (e.g. a BATTLE scenario as opposed to the broader conceptual domain of WAR). More crucially for the purposes of this book, CMT is primarily concerned with *conceptual* metaphors, while metaphorical expressions in language are seen as secondary. This results in a general lack of consideration for the textual manifestations of metaphor and for the authenticity of the linguistic data that is adduced as evidence. The main proponents of CMT mostly relied on artificially constructed examples to support their claims, and did not develop an explicit methodology for the extrapolation of conceptual metaphors from linguistic data. This casts doubts on the reliability of claims about conventional conceptual metaphors, and on the exhaustiveness of the CMT account of metaphor in language (Steen 1999; Low 2003; Semino *et al.* 2004; Deignan 2005).

In order to address these weaknesses, in this book I retain the main insights and tenets of CMT but I also build on recent work by a number of scholars who have explored the use of metaphor in authentic discourse (e.g. Cameron 2003; Charteris-Black 2004; Musolff 2004; Deignan 2005). More specifically, when making claims about conventional linguistic metaphors and underlying conceptual metaphors, I frequently use evidence from language corpora (singular 'corpus'), i.e. large machine-readable collections of authentic texts (see chapter 6 for more detail). I also give detailed attention to the formal characteristics of metaphorical expressions, and to the textual and intertextual patterns they are part of. My goal is to combine an awareness of the conventional status of many uses of metaphor with a consideration of the uniqueness and specificity of individual occurrences, as I have briefly demonstrated in relation to the G8 article. As Swan (2002) puts it, the 'disciplinary commitment' of CMT 'to describe what is regular, invariant, and generalizable across an open-ended sample of instances' does not necessarily have to 'prevent a cognitive approach to metaphor from joining a description of its systematic structure with accounts of particular, situated, acts of meaning' (Swan, 2002: 450–1).