Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The phenomenon known as metaphor is an extremely complex mental event – we cannot capture its complexity if we tie ourselves to existing standard views on metaphor. This book offers fresh insight into metaphor, updating an established theory, conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), in the context of current cognitive linguistic theory, and clarifying many of the issues that researchers in the study of metaphor have raised against CMT. Starting with an introduction to CMT, the subsequent chapters set out propositions for extended conceptual metaphor theory, including a discussion on whether literal language exists at all, whether conceptual metaphors are both conceptual and contextual, and whether they are both offline and online. Providing a fresh take on a constantly developing field, this study will enrich the work of researchers in areas ranging from metaphorical cognition to literary studies.

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Very much belatedly…, to the memory of my
little sister, Annika.

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Preface

In a way, this is a very personal book. It is personal in the sense that in everyone's life there comes a time when you notice you are getting a little impatient with how things are going and you want to say what's really on your mind concerning a subject matter that is important to you. I want to do exactly that as regards metaphor. I do not want to be particularly concerned with what other scholars will think or say when they read this book. I just want to lay my (metaphorical) cards on the table. I am at an age when people around you die much more frequently than before and when you realize it can happen any time to you. I feel the time has come to make this move in the game of life.

This of course is not intended as a justification for writing another book on metaphor. It can only explain some of the bold suggestions that go against "standard" views on metaphor and the sometimes very straightforward ways of writing and presenting ideas. What would be a much better justification, though, is that over the past almost forty years I have analyzed thousands or maybe even tens of thousands of metaphors in a variety of genres, modalities, ways, and situations, and that these analyses have given me a certain feel for how metaphors work and an idea of their enormous complexity. I realized, and wish to show in a clear way here, that this complexity cannot be captured if you tie yourself to existing standard views on metaphor, including conceptual metaphor theory (CMT).

At the same time, as can be expected, my starting point is what I take to be a "standard" version of CMT. I believe CMT is a theory that can provide powerful and coherent explanations for a variety of aspects of metaphor. In my judgment, no other theory is as comprehensive as CMT. It took almost forty years for CMT to reach this stage. It's been steadily developing thanks to the many great scholars who played key roles in making it what it is today. I see the present book as just another contribution to this line of development – as an organic part of all the efforts that have been put into making it better.

I am making no claim that the ideas put forward in this book are all brand new or that I am the only one who thought of them. But many of them are new and, in addition, I feel I can reasonably claim that no one has put them together

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as I have in this book. This overall new view can be characterized by five bold but tentative propositions:

- It may be that there is no literal language at all.
- It may be that metonymies are, in a sense, "more primary" than primary metaphors.
- It may be that conceptual metaphors are hierarchically linked conceptual structures on different levels of schematicity.
- It may be that conceptual metaphors are not only conceptual but also necessarily contextual.
- It may be that conceptual metaphor is simultaneously an offline and online phenomenon (i.e., it is not only offline).

I will be referring to the new view as "extended conceptual metaphor theory," or "extended CMT," for short.

Structure of the Book

The propositions above are discussed in five chapters of the book under the following corresponding chapter titles:

> The abstract unadestood figuratively, the concrete understood literally, but the concrete understood figuratively? (Chapter 2)
>
> Direct or indirect emergence? (Chapter 3)
>
> Domain, schema, frame, or space? (Chapter 4)
>
> Conceptual or contextual? (Chapter 5)
>
> Offline or online? (Chapter 6)

These five chapters are preceded by an introduction to CMT, or, more precisely, what I consider to be the "standard" view (the core) of CMT. The discussion in the five chapters is followed by two integrative summary chapters. The goal of Chapter 7 is to identify components of an emerging new theory and to outline its general framework. The goal of Chapter 8 is to assess the responses to the five questions above, together with a brief comparison of the extended CMT with its sister theory, the dynamic systems view of metaphor, as proposed by Ray Gibbs.

Acknowledgments

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