Cognitive Metaphor Theory Revisited[*]

ESTHER ROMERO AND BELÉN SORIA

Abstract

This paper provides a framework which, being compatible with Lakoff and Johnson's theory (1980), allows a description of metaphoric verbal utterances. The development of this theoretical expansion is encouraged by Lakoff and Johnson's distinction between nonliteral and literal metaphoric expressions, and by the fact that they do not provide an explanation of the nonliteral metaphoric use of expressions as distinct from the literal metaphoric one. They simply say that metaphoric expressions are nonliteral when they are parts that are not used in our normal metaphoric concepts. This suggestion is included in our model, in which a metaphoric utterance is identified when the speaker perceives both a contextual abnormality and a conceptual contrast, and it is interpreted using, among other things, a pragmatic process of mapping to derive subpropositional metaphoric provisional meanings. This explanation of the metaphoric mechanism allows an explanation of the utterances in which nonliteral metaphoric expressions intervene without having to resort to a previous literal interpretation of these utterances.

1. Introduction

In *Metaphors We Live By,* Lakoff and Johnson (1980) introduce a powerful theory for the study of the role of metaphor in our ordinary conceptual system. This theory has been developed by Johnson (1987), Lakoff (1987), and Lakoff and Turner (1989), and followed, although not always in complete agreement, by many other authors such as Gibbs (1990, 1992), Way (1991), Steen (1994), and Kövecses (2002), to mention only some. Lakoff and Johnson's main concern is with why our everyday concepts are structured in one way rather than another. In particular, it is with conceptual metaphors, that is, conventional concepts elaborated metaphorically that may take public form in metaphoric expressions. But these metaphoric expressions, which represent these conventional metaphoric concepts, do not need to be interpreted metaphorically.

Our purpose in this paper is not so much to specify the achievements of cognitive metaphor theory for the description of human cognition as to state some limitations of it for the analysis of the metaphoric use of language or, in other words, for the analysis of imaginative metaphoric utterances, which must be interpreted metaphorically. These limitations are related to the identification and interpretation of metaphoric utterances. We provide criteria for both of these, and this allows the characterisation of imaginative metaphoric utterances which express the non-conventional part of a metaphoric concept. Being compatible with cognitive metaphor theory, our account grants access to a description of the metaphoric use of language. If we want an explicit model for the analysis of metaphoric utterances in general, we need to amplify cognitive metaphor theory. This expansion is also acknowledged in some recent works such as Maalej (2001: 108) who argues that a pragmatic component should be added to the cognitive metaphor approach in order to account for metaphor processing.

In the present framework, we argue that a metaphor is identified when the speaker perceives both a contextual abnormality and a conceptual contrast, and this identification of the metaphoric utterance triggers the metaphoric mechanism for its interpretation, it triggers a pragmatic process of mapping to get provisional metaphoric meanings.

To achieve our purpose, we first recall some relevant features of cognitive metaphor theory. In particular, we examine, in section 2, the relations between metaphoric concepts and expressions from a cognitive metaphor perspective. This exposition will show that Lakoff and Johnson's distinction between literal and nonliteral interpretation does not parallel the distinction between literal and metaphorical. In the later, the distinction is about concepts, and there are expressions of metaphoric concepts that must be interpreted literally; while in the former the distinction affects interpretation directly. The terminological distinctions used by cognitive metaphor theorists are not the traditional ones; these theorists introduced a terminological shift that should be clarified to avoid misunderstandings when we open a discussion among different theories. This leads to two assumptions in cognitive metaphor theory which are incompatible with the task of explaining the interpretation of nonliteral metaphoric uses of language. In particular, some of Lakoff and Johnson's followers argue that all types of utterances that include metaphoric expressions are interpreted in the same way and they reject any criterion for the identification of metaphoric utterances. Precisely to deny these assumptions, in section 3 we show that if we want to study metaphor in language we have to go from metaphoric expressions to metaphoric utterances, utterances that are always nonliteral or imaginative. And finally, in section 4, we provide a model which, being compatible with earlier versions of cognitive metaphor theory although not so much with subsequent developments, allows the characterisation of the identification and interpretation of metaphoric utterances as distinct from literal ones. We propose that if we become aware of the lack of parallelism between the conceptual and linguistic levels and accept the distinction

literal/noliteral when applied to metaphors (a distinction that was used in earlier versions of cognitive metaphor theory), our way to expand their theory is a natural way to explain imaginative metaphoric uses of language.

2. Metaphoric Concepts and Expressions from a Cognitive Metaphor Perspective

The most basic assumption in cognitive metaphor theory is that there is a set of ordinary metaphoric concepts –conceptual metaphors– around which we conceptualise the world. The concepts that our ordinary conceptual system includes structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Most of them are metaphorical, and their essence is understanding and experiencing partially one kind of thing or experience in terms of another.

As we can see in Table 1, according to Lakoff and Johnson, three types of metaphoric concepts can be distinguished, marginal metaphoric concepts (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 55), conventional metaphoric concepts (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 4), and new metaphoric concepts (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 145). Metaphoric concepts take public form in metaphoric expressions, also called "metaphors". For Lakoff and Johnson,

> Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person's conceptual system. Therefore, whenever in this book we speak of metaphors, such as ARGUMENT IS WAR, it should be understood that *metaphor* means *metaphorical concept*. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 6)

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In this quotation, we can see that they are using the term "metaphor" to refer to both concepts and expressions indistinctly. The different types of metaphoric concepts and their relations with metaphoric expressions can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. *Metaphoric concepts and metaphoric expressions in Lakoff and Johnson's approach*

Metaphoric Concepts or metaphors	Metaphoric Expressions or metaphors		
Marginal metaphoric concepts or marginal metaphors	Literal metaphor	Dead metaphor	Literal dead metaphor (such as (4) below)
Conventional metaphoric concepts or Conceptual metaphors		Live metaphor	Literal live metaphor (such as (1) below)
	Imaginative or nonliteral metaphor		Imaginative live metaphor of type (a) (such as (2) below)
			Imaginative live metaphor of type (b) (such as (3) below)
New metaphoric concepts or new metaphors		Novel metaphor	Imaginative novel metaphor (such as (5) below)

Metaphoric concepts are expressed through terms that express explicitly the two concepts that play a part in a metaphor, and are represented in small capital letters. Among these concepts only conventional metaphoric concepts are systematically called "conceptual metaphors". Conceptual metaphors or conventional metaphoric concepts are normally used when we think and the expressions that represent them in a conventional way are systematically used in the everyday language; they are concepts that we usually and systematically conceptualise in terms of others. An example of conceptual metaphor is the metaphoric concept THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS, where we partially conceptualise THEORIES in terms of BUILDINGS. Marginal metaphoric concepts are 'relatively uninteresting' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 54). They are isolated and unsystematic cases that do not systematically interact with other metaphoric

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concepts because so little of them is used. An example of these is A MOUNTAIN IS A PERSON (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 55). New metaphoric concepts constitute a new way of thinking, they have the power to create a new reality, to alter the conceptual system. They are not part of our conceptual system. An example of these concepts is THEORIES ARE PATRIARCHS.

With respect to expressions, they basically make two distinctions (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 53-55): first, they distinguish between literal metaphors, and imaginative or nonliteral metaphors; second, they distinguish among dead metaphors, live metaphors, and novel metaphors.

The second distinction among metaphoric expressions parallels the one drawn for metaphoric concepts. Dead metaphors are expressions of marginal metaphoric concepts, live metaphors are expressions that arise from conventional metaphoric concepts, and novel metaphors come from new metaphoric concepts. This parallelism, however, peters out when the distinction literal-imaginative comes between these distinctions (see Table 1 above). The result of blending the two distinctions for the metaphoric expressions produces a third one by which Lakoff and Johnson distinguish among literal dead metaphor, literal live metaphor, imaginative live metaphor (subtypes (a) or (b)), and imaginative novel metaphor.

Let us begin with the description of the metaphoric expressions that come from conceptual metaphors. These expressions are called "live metaphors", and there are two types: literal and imaginative. Literal live metaphors are the used part of a conceptual metaphor, for example, "foundations" in (1)

(1)   The *foundations* of my theory are sure.

is one of the parts commonly used of the conceptual metaphor THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 53) and, therefore, (1) is a case of literal live metaphor. By contrast,

imaginative live metaphors are either (a) instances of the unused part of a usual conceptual metaphor as "thousands of little rooms" in (2)

(2)   His theory has *thousands of little rooms*. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 53).

which is a case of an unused part of THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS, rooms are parts of a building which are not normally used as part of the concept THEORY, or (b) extensions of the used part of a conceptual metaphor, such as "bricks" in (3)

(3)   These facts are the *bricks* of his theory. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 53).

which is an extension of one of the used parts of that metaphoric concept: "the outer shell". This is used to structure the concept of a theory, but that is not the case of the material used to construct the outer shell, the bricks. Examples (1)-(3) are "metaphorical" because they have some expressions that are metaphorically attributed to what we are talking about, to wit, a theory; they have metaphoric expressions (in italics) within the conceptual metaphor THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS. This metaphoric concept is conventional. The metaphoric expressions of this metaphoric concept are *foundations* in (1), *thousands of little rooms* in (2), and *bricks* in (3). These metaphoric expressions can be literal as in (1) or imaginative as in (2) or (3). The latter are interpreted metaphorically while the former is not. Let us see this proposal in some more detail.

Since Lakoff and Johnson's purpose is the study of the metaphoric structure of the conceptual system, they are interested in the study of conventional metaphoric concepts or conceptual metaphors we live by. In addition, they say:

Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what that system is like. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3)

Thus, their study of conventional metaphoric concepts is focused in the study of metaphoric expressions that come from these concepts; it is focused in examples such as (1)-(3). These metaphoric expressions are all live metaphors. Conceptual metaphors or conventional metaphoric concepts may materialise in examples of what Lakoff and Johnson call "literal metaphors" and in examples of what they label "imaginative metaphors". In fact, they say explicitly

literal expressions ('He has constructed a theory') and imaginative expressions ('His theory is covered with gargoyles') can be instances of the same general metaphor (THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS). (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 53)

The ordinary expressions of conceptual metaphors such as "He has constructed a theory" and (1) are literal expressions, they are literally interpreted. Imaginative metaphors such as "His theory is covered with gargoyles" and (2)-(3) are *nonliteral metaphors*, metaphors that are interpreted metaphorically. Thus, live metaphors can be either literal, as in (1), an expression interpreted literally, or imaginative, as in (2)-(3), expressions interpreted nonliterally. It is in this sense that Lakoff and Johnson argue that parts of conceptual metaphors such as TIME IS MONEY, or THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS are not literal and that

only part of them is used to structure our normal concepts. Since they necessarily contain *parts that are not used* in our normal concepts, they go beyond the realm of the literal. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 53-54. Our emphasis in italics)

Saying that for a concept to be considered nonliteral it has to 'contain *parts that are not used* in our normal concepts' entails that it must take public form in an unusual way. This entails that an expression can be used in an unusual way when it represents a conceptual metaphor. So, in Lakoff and Johnson's approach, the nonliteral or imaginative live metaphor is possible only when we have expressions used in unusual contexts, in a context in which these expressions are not normally used.[1] This is the way in which we know we are facing a metaphoric expression that must be interpreted nonliterally. Moreover, this quotation shows that it is its potential to be revealed as a case of imaginative metaphor that enables the conventional metaphoric concept to go beyond realm of the literal. This is due to the fact that the metaphoric conceptualisation of one concept in terms of another is always partial. The quotation also shows that it is the non-conventional or unusual use that makes an expression become nonliteral, and this is the case even when the metaphoric concept is conventional.

In addition to live metaphors, there are expressions that, being classified as literal metaphors, are not a part of a metaphoric system. In this case, the metaphoric concept of which they form a part is not used systematically in our language; it is marginal. Expressions such as the one illustrated in (4)

(4)   We reached the *foot* of the mountain

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[1] This is the motivation of what we call "contextual abnormality", see section 4 in this article and also X (1997/1998).

are isolated instances of marginal metaphoric concepts. "The foot of the mountain" is the only expression used of the marginal metaphoric concept A MOUNTAIN IS A PERSON (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 55). These metaphors are marginal in our language and culture, their used part may consist of only one conventionally fixed expression of the language. Lakoff and Johnson argue that examples such as (4) are literal metaphors in so far as these expressions are interpreted literally. If we consider examples such as (1) and (4), we can say that our conventional ways of talking about some things presuppose either a conventional metaphoric concept or a marginal metaphoric concept and we are hardly ever conscious of their use. Nevertheless, both concepts can be extended in imaginative ways.

Finally, novel metaphors are nonliteral metaphors that come from new metaphoric concepts; they represent a new way of thinking. They are not used systematically to restructure part of our conceptual system. This is the case with the expression in italics in (5)

(5)   Classical theories are *patriarchs who father many children most of whom fight incessantly*. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 53)

The metaphoric concept called forth in (5), THEORIES ARE PATRIARCHS, is new, and (5) must be interpreted metaphorically. Examples (4)-(5) are metaphorical too, they have expressions (in italics) that are metaphorically attributed to what we are talking about: in (4) about mountains, and in (5) about classical theories. These expressions are *foot* in (4), and *patriarchs who father many children* in (5). The metaphoric concepts involved in these examples are different in nature from the metaphoric concept involved in (1)-(3), THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS. Only the latter forms a part of our conceptual system.

Within *nonliteral metaphors* we must not only include imaginative live metaphors but also imaginative novel metaphors, expressions that must be interpreted metaphorically and

which do not depend on a conventional metaphoric concept. Lakoff and Johnson characterise "imaginative novel metaphors" as:

> Instances of novel metaphor, that is, a metaphor not used to structure part of our conceptual system but as a new way of thinking about something. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 53)

Until now, we have expounded not only the features of the different types of metaphoric concepts and their metaphoric expressions but also the relations between them. This exposition, nevertheless, shows that cognitive metaphor theory presents several problems. First, for Lakoff and Johnson, (1)-(5) are all examples of metaphors but (1) and (4) must be interpreted literally while (2), (3) and (5) nonliterally. Thus, their distinction between literal and nonliteral interpretation is not related to the distinction literal vs. metaphorical even though it should be, at least, in a theory which intends to explain the metaphoric use of language. The assumption that metaphors are metaphors because they give expression to a metaphoric concept does not entail that this is useful to explain how we relate linguistic utterances with interpretation, especially those which require a metaphoric or nonliteral interpretation.

In addition, Lakoff and Johnson change the traditional senses associated with the terminology as we can see in Table 2.

Table 2. *The terminological shift in cognitive metaphor theory*

Traditional terminology	Cognitive metaphor terminology	
Dead metaphors or conventional metaphors	Literal metaphor	Dead metaphor
		Live metaphor
Live metaphors or novel metaphors	Imaginative or nonliteral metaphor	Novel metaphor

Traditionally (see Leech 1969; Ricoeur 1975; Searle 1979; or MacCormac 1985) it is considered that, as far as expressions are concerned, dead metaphors are opposed to live metaphors.[2] This distinction is equivalent to the distinction in cognitive metaphor theory between literal and imaginative metaphors. Traditional live metaphors correspond to Lakoff and Johnson's imaginative or nonliteral metaphors; traditionally dead metaphors are lexicalised metaphors and correspond to literal metaphors in cognitive metaphor theory which means that they are called in most of the occasions "live". Lakoff and Johnson change the sense in which it is said that a metaphor is "live". From a traditional point of view, "live" refers to a non-conventional metaphor, an expression which is not lexicalised. Indeed, this terminological change is clearly appreciated in the following quotation:

> Expressions like 'wasting time', 'attacking positions', 'going our separate ways', etc., are reflections of systematic metaphoric concepts that structure our actions and thoughts. They are 'alive' in the most fundamental sense: they are metaphors we live by. The fact that they are conventionally fixed within the lexicon of English makes them no less alive. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 55)

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[2] The distinction between conventional and novel metaphor parallels this one (see, for example, Indurkhya 1992, and XX 1998).

Live metaphoric expressions are, in the traditional terminology, nonliteral or non-conventional expressions and, in the cognitive terminology, some of them are literal or conventional expressions that come from metaphoric concepts we live by. The terminological shift is possible because, in the former, it is the expression that is "live" and, in the latter, it is we (and not the expression) that live by the metaphoric concepts. From the perspective of cognitive metaphor theory, live metaphoric expressions give expression to conventional metaphoric concepts either literally or nonliterally. They distinguish between dead, live and novel metaphors; but although they use two of the labels traditionally used to distinguish metaphor, those labels are not used in the traditional way. In the traditional terminology, there are neither two different types of literal metaphors as in Lakoff and Johnson (dead and live) nor two types of imaginative metaphors (live and novel). For authors outside the cognitive frame, there are only dead (literal) metaphoric expressions or live (imaginative or nonliteral) metaphoric expressions. This terminological clash has entailed an added difficulty to the distinction between imaginative and literal metaphors.

Surely, the proposal that metaphors are metaphors because they give expression to a metaphoric concept, together with the idiosyncratic variations in the terminology introduced by these authors have generated problematic assumptions in the task of explaining such basic aspects of metaphor as how to identify verbal metaphors and how to relate them to their interpretation, an interpretation which must be metaphorical and thus nonliteral. Among these problematic assumptions, we wish to highlight two. First, the view that all types of metaphor, imaginative or not, are interpreted in the same way, or that all the utterances that involve expressions of metaphoric concepts are interpreted by the same mechanism. Second, the rejection of any criterion for the identification of imaginative metaphoric utterances. These assumptions contrast with our position since we find it right to speak about imaginative metaphor as a different phenomenon from literal metaphor. This, in our opinion, coincides

with Lakoff and Johnson's former proposal (Romero and Soria 1997/1998). In Lakoff and Johnson (1980) there is no account of how to identify or interpret metaphoric utterances, but they recognise that some metaphors are parts not used of our concepts and that these parts must be interpreted nonliterally.

Although in section 4 we will see in what sense the assumptions mentioned are not acceptable, we need first to point out that some adjustments are required so that the terminological clash between theories is overcome and we can avoid misunderstandings.

3. From Metaphoric Expressions to Metaphoric utterances

In our opinion, if we are to talk about interpretation, we have to make various changes to this view. First, we must speak about utterances and not about expressions. Theoreticians from a cognitive metaphor perspective normally talk about concepts or expressions, but we want to characterise utterances as, in our opinion, these are the only interpretable units. If we want to provide a model as an aid to an explanation about the interpretation of certain metaphoric uses of expressions, we must account for utterances and not for the concepts that the reader has in his mind or for expressions that are out of context. The relevant unit for assigning meaning is the utterance, and not the sentence or any other expression out of context.

In this sense, a second change in cognitive metaphor theory must be introduced: we have to establish the distinction between different types of metaphors as regards the interpretation of language in use. Thus, the distinction between literal and nonliteral can and must be made and the features that allow drawing the line between them form an explicit part of the model that will allow us to analyse all types of metaphoric utterances. If we want an explicit model for the analysis of metaphoric utterances in general, we need to amplify the model provided by cognitive metaphor theory. We have to account for metaphoric utterances,

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utterances that are interpreted nonliterally. As our interest is not to describe concepts but metaphoric utterances, any use of what Lakoff and Johnson call "literal metaphors", which are not metaphoric utterances but literal expressions, will not be the focus of our approach. An utterance of these expressions in a normal context will be a literal utterance. A metaphoric utterance is possible only if an expression is used in an imaginative way, that is, in an abnormal context that leads us to contrast two concepts in a new way. Metaphoric utterances are always nonliteral.

A model to account for metaphoric utterances must include the features that characterise imaginative metaphor, features of metaphoric identification and interpretation that will be explained later, and with which we would be able to characterise the metaphoric use of language when it involves both the non-conventional part of conceptual metaphors, and new metaphoric concepts. Nevertheless, before facing this aim we consider it necessary to expound the general sense in which *conceptual system* will be used here.

A competent speaker knows the conventional codes that shape communication. By the linguistic competence of individuals we understand the phonetic, lexicogrammatical and semantic conventions shared by the members of a linguistic community in a certain stage of the language. Our use of the term "linguistic competence" differs from the Chomskyan sense. We add "of individuals" to underline the fact that although the code is the central matter in this notion, it must refer to the conceptual system of speakers. "(…) individuals become habituated to a code-like predictability of usage, forms, and meanings" (Toolan 1996: 9) which it is dependant on their linguistic and non-linguistic past experiences. Indeed, the conceptual system of a competent speaker includes the individual's encyclopaedic knowledge (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 142) and the context of culture. In addition, it involves the mechanisms of interpretation of possible utterances and the contextual potential of the lexical units comprised in the vocabulary of a language. This means that, depending on our linguistic

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competence, there is some habitual or expected occurrence of words or concepts in context that is characteristic of semantic or lexical behaviour in language, testifying to its predictability of use.

In communication, people need a mutual cognitive environment to understand each other successfully (Sperber and Wilson 1986). The conventional meanings of the words in a language are the community's store of established knowledge. This knowledge is achieved by experience (linguistic or extralinguistic). Nevertheless, we would like to point out that language also has some resources capable of breaking the stability. One of them is the metaphoric use of language; a fresh use of language must be interpreted metaphorically.

The imaginative use of language shows a provisional metaphoric restructuring of a concept (Romero and Soria forthcoming(a)). This provisional metaphoric restructuring of a concept starts from conventional meanings to create metaphoric provisional meanings which do not belong in the code but for which the code is its condition of possibility. This is the kind of meaning Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 139) took into account in their chapter 'New Meaning', and yet, this has been ignored by many of their followers who have even argued that there is no difference between the literal and the metaphoric interpretation. In addition, the concepts these meanings represent do not need to be included in the conceptual system, they are not concepts we live by or concepts we will live by in the future. Provisional metaphoric concepts permit generating notions that were not available before and may not become conventional and, in this sense, not only do they reflect a certain world-view but also allow modifying it provisionally. Imaginative metaphor can break conventional coding and promote a new or fresh relation between language and meanings. These and other characteristics of imaginative metaphor will be considered in the next section of this paper.

4. Some Characteristics of Imaginative Metaphoric utterances

From our point of view, unlike literal utterances, metaphoric utterances are identified when the speaker perceives both a contextual abnormality and a conceptual contrast. These are the two conditions for the identification of the metaphoric use of language. Metaphoric interpretation is achieved when the speaker applies, among other things, the metaphoric mechanism; a mapping mechanism between two domains so that we can construct a provisional metaphoric concept that links the two domains (Romero and Soria forthcoming (a)). Unlike what happens with the application of the literal mechanism, through the application of the metaphoric mechanism the addressee obtains at least a metaphoric provisional meaning. But let us see what this means resorting to examples of both literal and metaphoric uses of language.

To identify a certain use of language as literal, we have to resort to, in the same way as to identify the metaphoric use of language, both the linguistic competence of the interlocutors and the context in which the language is used. In the linguistic competence of individuals, possible contexts of use, linguistic or extralinguistic, are predicted for lexical items. The literal use of language is characterised as that in which linguistic expressions appear in normal linguistic and extralinguistic contexts. If nothing indicates that the utterance must be interpreted in a different way, it will be identified as literal. Let's take (6)

(6)   [Sarah asks Marian where her pet is and she answers:] My cat is on the mat.

as an example of literal utterance. As an utterance, this example includes part of its context which is represented in square brackets. Although the context of interpretation would be much richer, we find it important to include some relevant features about the context and assume that

the rest would be the most normal and available ones without further specification.

In (6) Sarah perceives that both the linguistic and the extralinguistic context in which every word included in the sentence "My cat is on the mat" appears coincide with one of the potential contexts fixed for them in the linguistic competence of the speaker. If a speaker does not transgress any of the norms in which the combinatorial potential of lexical items take shape when used, a literal use of language is made. The same can be said about a usual utterance of (1), which is an utterance of what Lakoff and Johnson call "literal metaphor". The linguistic context in which every word included in the sentence "The foundations of my theory are sure" coincides with one of the potential contexts fixed for them in the linguistic competence of the speakers. With a usual utterance of (1), a literal use of language is made. Thus, the usual utterances of (1) must be called "literal utterances" and must be interpreted literally. Conventional metaphors are, in our opinion, interpreted literally. This is something maintained also by the subsequent development of cognitive metaphor theory (see Lakoff and Turner 1989; Way 1991; Keysar and Gluksberg 1992; and Gibbs 1994). But we say so because we think that they have become literal, not because we argue, as they do, that metaphors (in general) are interpreted in the same way as literal utterances. We think that literal and genuine metaphoric meanings are of a different nature: the former are conventional and interpreted literally; the latter are provisional and interpreted metaphorically. Only, in some cases, the metaphoric meaning begins a process of conventionalisation. It is after this process that the use of an expression ceases to be genuinely metaphorical and thus a metaphoric interpretation is not required. Many of the concepts that conform our conceptual system have been structured metaphorically, but with time they have passed to form a part of our conventional conceptualisation of the world. Thus, when our utterances make reference to these concepts, the utterances are not metaphorical. From a synchronic point of view, they should be described as literal utterances (Romero and Soria 1998).

If a speaker perceives both a contextual abnormality and a conceptual contrast in an utterance, s/he will think that the use of language is metaphorical. A *contextual abnormality* is produced when an expression is used in an unusual linguistic or extralinguistic context and a *conceptual contrast* is brought about when we identify one concept as source domain and another concept as target domain. If Marian utters "My cat is on the mat" as an answer to Sarah's question about the location of her one-year-old son, Sarah clearly perceives that it is an anomalous way of talking about Marian's son. The contextual abnormality in (7)

(7)   [Sarah asks Marian where her one-year-old son is and she answers:] My cat is on the mat

is produced by the occurrence of a lexical item in an unusual extralinguistic context. In (7) we perceive a contextual abnormality, as infants are not the kind of thing that we call "cats" according to our conceptual system. The possible occurrences of lexical items, such as "cat", in their different contexts of use makes up the conceptual system that shapes our linguistic competence. If the context does not fit with the prediction of use of the concepts fixed in our linguistic competence, we will be facing an unusual context that will lead us to think that the utterance may be nonliteral. Abnormality (or anomaly or deviation or incongruity) has been used by other authors such as Kittay (1987), Ortony (1980), or Bailin (1999) as the main criterion for the identification of metaphor, but we disagree because we do not describe the criterion in the same way (abnormality is not described here as a literal falsehood or as a semantic deviance, rather it is characterised as a case of contextual departure from conventional language usage) and we think that, although it is a necessary condition for the identification of imaginative metaphors, it is not sufficient.

Abnormality does not suffice; it does not even serve to delimit the nonliteral use of language from others; abnormality may be found in non-sense utterances, fictional utterances and in metonymy (Romero and Soria 2003). Thus, to delimit them we have to find an additional criterion, which in metaphor is the conceptual contrast. The abnormality in (7) leads us to recognise that two concepts are involved and that one of them acts as the target concept, the concept we are talking about or the concept INFANT, and the other one as the source concept, the concept attributed to the one we are talking about or the concept CAT, taking into account that among the senses of "cat", the one that serves to classify the infant nonliterally is the sense of "cat" in which it is conceived as "a small domesticated feline mammal". Now we can say we are facing a metaphoric utterance, and metaphoric interpretation is required; a pragmatic process of mapping is needed to obtain metaphoric interpretation which is not in literal interpretation.

Even though the context is always involved and helps to determine what type of interpretation we face, the role of context does not become exhausted in this task. It is nowadays a commonplace in all theories of meaning to admit that context is essential for the processing of utterance interpretation. Where they disagree is in the proposals that specify its function or functions. The characterisation of the different types of pragmatic processes involved in utterance interpretation is an open task that we will not tackle here for obvious reasons of space (see Sperber and Wilson 1986; Bach 1994; Wilson and Sperber 2002; Carston 2002; Recanati 2004; and Romero and Soria forthcoming(b)). In what follows, we will illustrate the type of proposals on the role of context in interpretation that we defend.

If we consider (6) again, we identify a literal use of language that leads us to interpret it literally, to construct the literal informative content that (6) expresses. The speaker's meaning of (6) is specified indicating, among other things, what the speaker says with (6) which, in its turn, depends on both the linguistic meaning of the constituents of the sentential expression contained

in (6) and the syntactic-semantic rules that allow their co-occurrence and which are consistent with the compositional principle. The most basic constituents of the literal content are, in the same way as those of the metaphorical, the conventional meanings of the lexical items that are involved in an utterance. These meanings are the ones available in the linguistic competence of speakers which, as we said, predict possible contexts of use for the lexical items that are learned and stored linked to contexts. The possible contexts associated to a lexical item form a part of the conceptual system of the individual.

The content that (6) expresses will depend to a great extent, and seemingly will (7), on the conventional meaning of "my", "cat", "be", "on", "the" and "mat". Some of these items are far from having only one conventional meaning. They are ambiguous. It is context, linguistic and extralinguistic, that will allow us to choose one of the possible conventional meanings of such terms, we select contextually one of the senses as appropriate. In (6), the conventional meaning of "cat" that we contextually select is that of "a small domesticated feline mammal" dismissing the other senses of this term (e.g. "a woman who gossips maliciously", or *nautical. a heavy tackle for hoisting an anchor to the cathead*"). We choose this sense of "cat" because the extralinguistic context confirms that we are talking about a feline, about Marian's pet.

Nevertheless, the semantic value contextually assigned to a sentence constituent in the process of utterance interpretation is not always merely conventional. Thus, on many occasions we are forced to enrich contextually the meaning of constituents (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 188-191). "My" functions as determiner of "cat" which is the head of the noun phrase "my cat". This phrase is an expression that presents referential indeterminacy to the extent that we do not know what cat we are talking about until we know who the speaker of the utterance is. In this case, when Marian says "my cat" she is talking about her cat, but on other occasions we could be talking about another person's cat by using this expression. At this point, another semantic indeterminacy that we normally eliminate by resorting to context arises, to wit, the

indeterminacy of the type of relation between the speaker and the cat. In a fictional situation, a cat could speak about her offspring by uttering this expression, and the relation between the cat speaking and her offspring would be, in this case, one of progeniture, while in (6) a possessive relation is involved if we accept as a background assumption that Sarah and Marian are human. Any of these uses of "my cat" is a literal use of the expression and they all stem from the same conventional meaning, although–depending on the cases–the object they denote and the possessive relation the speaker has with that object may vary.

The noun phrase "my cat", that functions as subject in (6), is followed by two other phrases, the verb phrase "is" and the prepositional phrase "on the mat", whose meanings depend, in their turn, on the conventional meanings of their constituents and, if it is required, on context. What these phrases mean is combined again until we build what is said with (6). Once we have resorted to compositionality it seems that the process of elaboration of literal meanings is clearly contextual.

But it is not always the case that the semantic value contextually assigned to the constituent is conventional or depends on the enrichment of a conventional meaning; sometimes it is a transformation of one of the conventional meanings, enriched or not, that substitutes for this meaning. We are thinking now about the semantic value that is contextually acquired by some terms uttered in their nonliteral uses such as the metaphorical.

The difference between the metaphoric and the literal meanings of utterances can be drawn as follows. The literal is a form of expression in which one of the conventional meanings of every lexical unit (or even part of it) is operative until the end of the process of interpretation. In the metaphoric use, once one of the conventional meanings of the most basic components is established, we apply a set of procedures that allows us to elaborate some metaphoric provisional meaning; we elaborate a metaphoric provisional meaning at least for those components that constitute the vehicle of metaphor. The metaphoric meaning

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of the utterances is constructed not only by means of the procedures of literal interpretation but also by means of some procedures of meaning of a different nature.

Once the speaker has recognised that the utterance of (7) is a case of metaphor, s/he interprets it and, doing so is but applying the mechanism that characterises this phenomenon. In particular, it is to link two separate cognitive domains, by using the language appropriate to one of them as a lens through which to observe the other. To put it technically, it is to apply a pragmatic process of mapping from the source domain to the target domain so that we can construct a subpropositional provisional meaning. Metaphors redescribe a domain called the "target domain" in terms of another domain called the "source domain", selecting, highlighting, omitting, and organizing certain features of the target domain (Black 1954; Indurkhya 1986; Gineste, Indurkhya and Scart 2000). In addition, often some features will be created within the target domain. This is coherent with Lakoff and Johnson's idea, pointed out above, that the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing partially one kind of thing or experience in terms of another. The target domain represents the concept we are talking about, and the source domain represents the concept attributed to the one we are talking about. The domains represent the conventional conceptions of the two concepts that we detect in the conceptual contrast, and they consist of a set of terms which make up its vocabulary and a set of sentences which specify how these terms are related to the information associated with the concept.

In (7) a metaphoric use of language is identified and, thus, at least its metaphoric vehicles -the terms metaphorically attributed to what we are talking about- must be interpreted metaphorically. In (7) the vehicles are the terms that are involved in the description of CAT. Thus, the relevant question is: what is the meaning of "cat" in (7)? The extralinguistic context alludes to a child, Marian's son. We are not talking about a cat in any of the conventional senses of the term "cat" and, among the senses of "cat", the one that serves to classify the infant

nonliterally is the sense of "cat" that also intervened in the interpretation of (6), it is the one identified as source domain.

To create the metaphoric provisional meanings we must establish what the metaphoric relation of the concepts involved in (7) is; we must establish the metaphoric restructuring or recategorisation. This is done by mapping a set of sentences from source domain, cat, to target domain, infant. We may coherently transform a set of sentences of the source domain to sentences with terms only of the target domain and this set of transformed sentences will redescribe the concept INFANT through the concept CAT. The result of the metaphoric restructuring, the restructured target domain, provides us with a context of interpretation of the metaphoric utterance provisionally restructured for that occasion. The mapping needed to interpret (7) generates a metaphorically restructured target domain, a conception of infants provisionally modified by those aspects of the concept CAT that influence its restructuring. When the context from which the terms that are involved in a metaphoric utterance changes, the meanings associated with these terms change provisionally. In this way, some terms acquire a metaphoric meaning.[3] The relation between the terms and the originated metaphoric meanings is not established or conventionalised. Hence, in (7) terms such as "cat" acquire a metaphoric provisional meaning. Such meanings are *provisional* because at the moment that the metaphoric utterance disappears, they also vanish (Romero 1990/1991). The metaphoric relation of the concepts involved in (7) consists in mapping a subset of information associated with the source domain, information about the typical features of cats, into the set of information associated with the target domain; in particular, mapping the piece of information that is coherent with the description of the target domain, with the concept of infant. The information mapped is the information that, together with the target domain, composes the metaphoric provisional meaning of "cat". The meaning of "cat" is the meaning that this term

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[3] Some authors such as Davidson (1978) and Cooper (1986) deny the existence of metaphoric meaning.

has in the metaphorically restructured target domain, it is the information that can describe INFANTS coherently when infants are seen as bearing the features typical of cats; it is a question of seeing an infant as a being that needs feeding and care, goes on all fours, plays with anything available, scrutinises things carefully and is unfriendly with the unknown. "Cat" acquires a transferred metaphoric provisional meaning.

This information constitutes the context from which that utterance is interpreted. Thus, this is what allows us to establish what is said through (7). Since "cat" means here provisionally and metaphorically what we have just specified, the infant with the typical features of cats, "my cat" in (7) denotes Marian's son and Marian is the progenitor of the infant that the speaker is denoting when she uses "cat" metaphorically. Once all these changes have been made, what is said with (7) is composed in the same way as what is said with (6). What varies is a process of contextual interpretation that intervenes at the level of constituents, the process of interpretation characteristic of metaphoric interpretation. What is obvious here is that the speaker does not have the literal interpretation of the sentence included in (7) at any moment of the interpretation.

There are not two stages in metaphoric interpretation. When we say that Marian's son is her cat it does not mean that this infant is literally a cat but that this is false; it means that "cat" acquires here a transferred meaning as a result of the mapping from the domain representing the concept CAT to the domain representing the concept INFANT. The new recategorisation produced in this imaginative metaphor by the mapping from a source domain to a target domain shows that metaphor is a mechanism used for producing metaphoric provisional meanings not available in the system of the language. In metaphor old words are used for new jobs (Goodman 1968); it constitutes a cost-effective, practical and creative way of using terms. Metaphoric utterances, regardless of the field in which they are produced, yield a recategorisation of the concept metaphorically restructured.

Let us see how this recategorisation takes place in another imaginative metaphoric utterance. In an utterance of the expression represented in (5) such as (8)

(8)   [A professor talking about Chomsky's theoretical developments, says:] Classical theories are patriarchs who father many children most of whom fight incessantly

we recognise the anomalous or abnormal use of "patriarchs" as theories, since they cannot be classified as patriarchs in our conventional conceptual system. The context in which "patriarchs" appears is not predicted as one of the normal contexts fixed for the use of the concept PATRIARCH in our linguistic competence. Thus, we are facing an unusual context that may lead us to a possible conceptual contrast. In (8) we know, by the context, that the topic of the conversation, what we are talking about (the target domain) are theories and this, together with the abnormal use of the concept PATRIARCH leads the hearer to identify the latter as the source domain. Once the hearer has realised that PATRIARCH is used as the concept represented by the source domain and the concept THEORIES as the one represented by the target domain, the utterance is identified as metaphorical and a metaphoric interpretation is required.

But this does not mean that we have to interpret an utterance of the expression "Classical theories are patriarchs who father many children most of whom fight incessantly" in two stages: first literally and then, metaphorically. Quite on the contrary, we think that a literal interpretation of (8) is not available. The utterance is interpreted directly, though not necessarily in the same way as the literal-conventional use of language. The denial of metaphoric interpretation in two stages does not necessarily entail that metaphoric and literal (or conventional) interpretations are achieved in the same way. To interpret metaphoric uses of language, we have to map certain features from one domain to the other in order to elaborate a metaphoric provisional meaning at

least for those elements that constitute the vehicle of the metaphor. In (8), these elements are the subpropositional constituents that are conventionally included in the source domain, patriarch, and attributed to the target domain. To achieve these metaphoric nonconventional meanings we have to apply a pragmatic process of mapping to establish what the metaphoric relation of the concepts involved in (8) is. This relation is established by mapping the piece of information of the description of the source domain, patriarch, that is coherent with the concept of theory. By means of this mapping, the concept THEORY is redescribed through the concept PATRIARCH and as a result we obtain a provisionally restructured target domain which provides us with a context of interpretation of the metaphoric utterance. The metaphorically restructured target domain is, in this occasion, a conception of theories provisionally modified by those aspects of the concept PATRIARCH that influence its restructuring. The context from which the interlocutor interprets the terms that are involved in the metaphoric utterance (8) is different from any of the normal contexts in which they might be used and thus the meanings associated with these terms change provisionally. In this way, some terms such as "patriarchs", "father", "children" acquire metaphoric meanings and the relation between these terms and the originated metaphoric meanings is not established or conventional.

The meanings of "patriarchs", "father", and "children" are the meanings that these terms have in the metaphorically restructured target domain and they acquire a transferred metaphoric provisional meaning. The meaning, for example, of "patriarchs" is the information that can describe THEORIES coherently when theories are seen as bearing the features typical of patriarchs; it is a matter of seeing a theory which originated a set of other related theories as the head of a tribe-like set of theories, and as such the latter can be mutually antagonistic although sharing some of the features inherited from the same theory.

Unlike what happens in the description of nonliteral metaphoric interpretation, when we describe and interpret examples of literal metaphoric expressions such as "foundations" in (1)

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we do not have to resort to the kind of analysis elaborated for (7) or (8). It is not abnormal to use the term "foundations" when talking about theories; we do not have a target domain and a source domain, and so we do not have to map any feature from one domain to the other. We can interpret a normal utterance of this expression literally without the need to contrast two domains. The concept THEORY is structured with expressions such as "construct", "foundation", etc. whose meanings depend on the way in which the metaphoric concept THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS is used to structure the concept THEORY.

5. Conclusion

A linguistic analysis guided by cognitive metaphor theory only specifies what the metaphoric concepts are that literal and imaginative metaphors come from, but from the point of view of identification and interpretation, this approach does not provide a key to metaphor classification keys. It is a theoretical mystery to know when and how expressions are used nonliterally. Thus, cognitive metaphor theory provides us with a limited account of the metaphoric use of language. If the expression used does not entail a conventional use of a metaphoric concept, how do we know that an expression constitutes a non-conventional use of a metaphoric concept? We need criteria not only of identification but also of interpretation. It is necessary to characterise the metaphoric meaning created for the occasion. Contextual abnormality and conceptual contrast are the joint criteria proposed here to identify an utterance as metaphorical, while mapping is the pragmatic process to produce subpropositional metaphoric provisional meanings that take a part in what is said with a metaphoric utterance. In this article, we have developed this aspect about "new meanings" which is overlooked in the theory of cognitive metaphor, showing the characteristics of imaginative metaphor, the characteristics of metaphoric utterances. Even if we were interested in characterizing conceptual metaphors, as is the case in cognitive metaphor

theory, we would have to resort to an explanation such as the one offered here, at least, to give

form to the imaginative part of these conventional concepts.

University of Granada

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Department of Philosophy and Department of English Philology

University of Granada, Spain