An extended view of conceptual metaphor theory

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A major insight of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is that it added a strong, empirically testable cognitive dimension to the study of metaphor that is capable of changing the way we think about metaphor not only in language, but also thought and action, and, ultimately, the way we do philosophy (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999). In the paper, I argue that CMT itself needs to be changed in several ways. In particular, I suggest (1) that it has to be given a much more elaborate contextual component than is currently available, (2) that even its cognitive dimension needs to be refined, (3) that it requires a component that can explain the actual usages of metaphors in natural discourse, and (4), and most significantly, that it needs to be changed in such a way that the modifications under (1), (2), and (3) can be integrated into a unified and coherent theory of metaphor. The paper is based on my forthcoming book Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Kövecses, 2020).

Keywords: extended CMT, contextual factors, schematicity hierarchy, mental spaces in CMT, metaphorical meanings, social-pragmatic functions of metaphor

1. Introduction: Some outstanding issues in conceptual metaphor theory

In the past 40 years conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) has become the most influential theory of metaphor. This does not mean however that CMT researchers can now sit back and enjoy a state of bliss. There are still many issues that we need to resolve as the theory continues to evolve. These include at least the following:

a. It is reasonable to problematize even a basic assumption of CMT: the idea that there is such a thing as literal meaning. Is it indeed the case that we can and do base our understanding of figurative meaning on literal meaning?

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b. What is the appropriate conceptual level at which we can, or should, identify conceptual metaphors? Is it that of domain, frame, scene, schema, space, or something else? Most of these have been mentioned in the preceding discussion, but there is no consensus, even within the same author, which one it is.

c. Though it is true that theories of metaphor *comprehension* make extensive use of the notion of context, theories of metaphor *production* within CMT have almost completely ignored the notion. Is it possible to propose a theory of conceptual metaphors within the cognitive linguistic paradigm that would integrate the context of metaphor production into CMT?

d. How can the recently proposed view of deliberate metaphors be incorporated into a CMT framework?

e. How can we account for the socio-pragmatic function of metaphorical linguistic expressions in naturally occurring discourse? What would a theory of conceptual metaphors look like that is capable of explaining the conceptual structure of metaphors, as well as the discourse functions of metaphorical expressions realizing them within a unified framework?

f. Should we think of metaphor as a cognitive process that is happening online or as a product that is somehow a part of a more or less stable conceptual system in long-term memory?

g. If we think with the help of conceptual metaphors, as we like to claim, it is reasonable to ask why we use mixed metaphors in the actual production of discourse. Wouldn’t it be easier and more efficient to use the same conceptual metaphor throughout a given discourse?

h. Cognitive linguists (including the present author) like to think of metaphors as “conceptual metaphors,” ignoring the diversity of phenomena we call metaphor. What other kinds of metaphor are there, how can they be characterized, and what is their relationship to conceptual metaphors?

Among many others (see Kövecses, 2020), these are some of the outstanding issues that CMT needs to be able to provide an answer for. Since it would be impossible to deal with all of them within the limits of the present paper, I focus on those that I take to be core issues for the theory; namely, (b), (c), and (e) above, where, as stated in the Abstract, (b) concerns the need for refining the cognitive dimension of CMT, (c) concerns the need for taking context seriously within CMT, and (e) concerns the need for an overall account of metaphor as not just an offline phenomenon but also as a simultaneously online one that can fulfill various communicative functions in natural discourse.
2. A brief demonstration of the new view: An example

Let me begin the description of the new view by analyzing an example that I first discussed in a 2010 article (Kövecses, 2010). Following hurricane Katrina that devastated New Orleans in 2005, a journalist did an interview with Fats Domino, a now elderly American rock musician living near New Orleans. The journalist writes:

> The 2005 hurricane capsized Domino's life, though he's loath to confess any inconvenience or misery outside of missing his social circle ... (USA TODAY, 2007, September 21, Section 6B). (taken from Kövecses, 2015, p.103)

The interview was largely about how Domino's life was affected by the hurricane. Its very negative effect is expressed by the unconventional linguistic metaphor capsize, which is an instance of the applicable conceptual metaphor: LIFE IS A (SEA) JOURNEY. At the time of the interview, there were still many noticeable signs of the devastation, as the newspaper article about Domino indicates. In his article, the journalist continues the quote above as follows: “... in the Lower Ninth Ward, still destroyed and deserted despite some signs of renewal.”

I suggest that this salient perceptual property of the physical situation plays a major role, together with some properties of the situation that belong to other types of context (see Kövecses, 2015), in the metaphorical conceptualization of Domino’s life by the journalist: the still visible sight of the devastation caused by the hurricane (situational context), the memory of the overturned boats (conceptual-cognitive context), the topic of the conversation with Domino (discourse context), and the universal experience of falling down and not being able to function (bodily context) prime the conceptualizer (the journalist) to use the verb capsize, which assumes (and evokes) the primary metaphors of ACTION IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION and PERSISTING OR FUNCTIONALITY IS REMAINING ERECT. Simultaneously, since the topic of the interview is Domino’s life, the LIFE and TRAVEL domains are evoked, resulting in the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS TRAVEL. An aspect of this metaphor is the correspondence between leading one’s life and journeying, that is, the metaphor LIVING A LIFE IS JOURNEYING. (As noticed by Framenet, journeying is the activity aspect of travel, which is a more inclusive category than journey.) And since the journalist’s immediate idea at this point in the discourse concerns how Domino’s life has suddenly changed for the worse, a very specific metaphor is evoked – that of a SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS FOR THE WORSE IN DOMINO’S LIFE IS THE CAPSIZING OF DOMINO’S BOAT IN THE COURSE OF HIS SEA JOURNEY, as expressed by the verb capsize.
In other words, primed by the context, a *schematicity hierarchy* (see Kövecses, 2017) is constructed online, which can be represented as follows:

**Image schema:** ACTION IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION + PERSISTING / FUNCTIONALITY IS REMAINING ERECT

**Domain:** LIFE IS TRAVEL

**Frame:** LIVING A LIFE IS JOURNEYING

**Mental space:** A SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS FOR THE WORSE IN DOMINO’S LIFE IS THE CAPSIZING OF DOMINO’S BOAT IN THE COURSE OF HIS SEA JOURNEY

The idea of a metaphor hierarchy based on schematicity has been proposed under various names\(^1\) by several authors in the cognitive linguistic literature, including Lakoff (1993), Kövecses (1995), Clausner and Croft (1997), Dancygier and Sweetser (2014), David, Lakoff, and Stickles (2016), and others. What is new here is that the mental space level was not recognized as a part of the hierarchy. The conceptual metaphor at the mental-space level is detailed, rich, and specific. It is essentially an explication of the metaphorical meaning of *capsize* in the discourse in which it occurs.

The metaphorical conceptualization that is expressed by the phrase “capsized Domino’s life” results from the priming effect of one or several contextual factors that trigger the setting-up of a schematicity hierarchy online in the situation of discourse. This way, the proposed extended CMT successfully combines the major features of the embodied and discourse metaphor views (Evans, 2013; Zinken, 2007; Gibbs, 2017): embodiment as based on experiential correlations, on the one hand, and context, on the other. But, of course, this suggestion is only applicable to those conceptual metaphors that are embodied in the sense of the standard CMT view (only they can have a schematicity hierarchy associated with them). What about those metaphors that are viewed by several researchers as “discourse” metaphors but that are based on resemblance (see Grady, 1999), rather than correlation? I discuss this issue in the subsection below.

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1. These include the concepts of primary, low, and high-level metaphor and the explicit recognition of a continuum from the former two to the latter (Ruiz de Mendoza & Pérez, 2011; Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera, 2014). More recently, Ruiz de Mendoza (2020) has suggested that correlation metaphor is a form of high-level resemblance metaphor.
2.1 Resemblance metaphors

Resemblance metaphors, or metaphorical analogies, are usually seen as multiple mappings between two frames or domains. Consider the expression *gut the building*, as used in the following example:

Kirk E. Kreuzwieser, vice president of Strollo Architects, says much of the interior of the 96-year-old Wells Building needs to be gutted. He and Gregg Strollo, company president, believe the $4 million-plus rehabilitation project could be completed in less than nine months after financial issues are resolved. (http://www.vindy.com/photos/2013/jun/17/68965/)

This is a domain- or frame-level metaphorical analogy that is constituted by multiple mappings. The mappings are:

- the person who disembowels a dead animal → the person who removes the interior of a building
- the animal body → the building
- the bowels → the interior
- the action of disemboweling → the action of removing the interior

The mappings are based on a structural analogy between two frames or domains, which means that the propositionally-explicated mappings between the two frames or domains (here, animal and building) share an image-schematic structure, an image schema, like in Figure 2.

Thus, structural analogy (or resemblance) means that the source and the target share some image schema (here, internal container (or object) moved out of external container). Of the four mappings above, the last one appears at the mental-space level. This kind of metaphor could be represented as in Figure 2.

In this case, unlike correlation metaphors, there is a shared image schema (not an image-schema metaphor) and there is only a single set of mappings between the elements – either on the frame or domain level (instead of the three sets of mappings at the image schema, domain, and frame levels). At the mental-space level, the mapping will be limited to one, which conveys the intended contextual

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2. Many cognitive scientists and philosophers reserve the term “analogy” for structural relations of the following kind: A IS TO B AS C IS TO D, so A IS C and B IS D. Ruiz de Mendoza (2020, p. 25) makes a distinction between property-based resemblance and low-level structural resemblance (see also Kövecses, 2020). They give rise to different kinds of metaphor (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2020): *Your teeth are pearls*, where one or more properties of teeth are seen as corresponding properties in pearls; *The heart pumps blood throughout the circulatory system*, where the heart is to the circulatory system as a pump is to a hydraulic system (therefore, the heart is a pump). Not all analogies can be clearly converted into metaphors.
mental-space level metaphor
↑
frame-level metaphor
or
domain-level metaphor
↑
ELEMENT A – ELEMENT A
ELEMENT B – ELEMENT B
ELEMENT C – ELEMENT C
etc.
↑
STRUCTURAL RESEMBLANCE (based on a shared image schema)

Figure 2. Mapping at the mental-space level

meaning. This is the general representation of resemblance metaphors, such as *gut the building*.

If we employ a broader definition of conceptual metaphors as any case of multiple mappings from a source to a target (and not just those that are correlation-based), many metaphors that are resemblance-based (those that map entire conceptual structures, and not just a single feature) would also qualify as conceptual metaphors (such as the metaphor above or, say, the *an atom is the solar system* metaphor). These are usually called resemblance metaphors, or metaphorical analogies. But, when they talk about conceptual metaphors, cognitive linguists
typically mean correlation-based metaphors, and, as I suggested, these come with schematicity hierarchies with typically four levels of schematicity (as discussed above).

3. Components of the new view

The vision of CMT I am describing here builds on a number of distinctions concerning meaning, conceptual structure, memory, ontological level, and context. In this section, I would like to briefly review these, and then suggest a general outline of how they are related to one another.

As regards the issue of metaphorical meaning, my proposal is that in metaphorical meaning making three different types of meaning can be distinguished: meaningfulness, decontextualized meaning, and contextual meaning. They all participate in the use of conceptual metaphors proper (i.e., correlation-based metaphors).

Meaningfulness is based on the image schema level, where image-schema metaphors provide naturalness and bodily motivation for particular cases of metaphorical conceptualization (such as action is self-propelled motion in the example “capsized Domino’s life”). This is achieved by means of highly schematic metaphors – often, primary metaphors, although, as Grady (1997) notes, not all image-schema metaphors are primary metaphors (but many are, e.g., states are containers, more is up, action is motion) and not all primary metaphors are image-schema metaphor (e.g., purposes are destinations). Several primary metaphors are at the level of domains or frames (such as understanding is seeing, purposes are destinations). Image schemas constitute the level of meaning that in previous work I called the “subindividual level” (Kövecses, 2002/2010). Image-schema metaphors make particular metaphor hierarchies (such as for capsize above) embodied, and hence lend them a feel of naturalness. In other words, they make them meaningful.

Decontextualized meaning is based on the domain and frame levels in the schematicity hierarchy. Here, meanings are based on more specific conceptual metaphors (than the image-schematic ones) and the mappings that constitute them. The elements of two domains or frames are in a conventional relationship. These are the mappings, or correspondences, that typically define the conventionalized meanings of metaphorical expressions (e.g., “inability to continue journey → inability to go on with one’s life,” “body heat (in anger) → intensity (of anger)”). Very often, such conventionalized meanings are lexicalized for the source domain term (e.g., for burn, but not for capsize). Decontextualized meaning is, therefore, located at the “supraindividual level” and it is shared, to a large extent, across individuals in a speech community (Kövecses, 2002/2010).
Contextualized, or rather, contextual meaning can be found on the “individual level” of metaphorical conceptualization (Kövecses, 2002/2010). This is the level that corresponds to the level of mental spaces in metaphorical schematicity hierarchies. At this level, the decontextualized conceptual structures and the decontextualized meanings that rest on them become fully individuated, specific, detailed, and rich in conceptual content. This can happen in large part due to narrowing down full-blown domain and frame-level structures to one or a few of their aspects and expanding on these aspects in several ways. This is what we saw above in the example of capsize. Capsizing is just a small part of the sea journey frame. Its contextual meaning is “changing for the worse.” But it (capsizing) has its own conceptual potential to expand by means of drawing out its implications, such as one’s life being normal before it happens, the change being sudden and unexpected, uncertainty about the future following the change, the change for the worse evoking empathy and compassion, and others. It can be suggested that a particular contextual meaning is introduced in order to enable a variety of social, pragmatic, emotive, rhetorical, etc. functions and effects.

It is this last type of meaning construction (i.e., the one on the level of mental spaces) that is the true “element” of conceptual integration; it is here that conceptual integration can break up conventional conceptual structures, reassemble them in new ways, and can construct novel meanings (see Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). And the same applies to deliberate metaphors that are based on conceptual metaphors and come with a schematicity hierarchy (see, e.g., Steen, 2011). However, this is not to claim, of course, that either blending or deliberate metaphors can only rely on conceptual metaphors proper (that is, those that are based on correlations in experience). But in the case of conceptual metaphors based on correlations in experience, the three kinds of meaning are jointly present in every use of a metaphorical expression. We can represent the various types of metaphorical meaning with the example of capsize in Figure 3, as discussed above:

Example of capsize: MEANING

**Meaningfulness** provided by:
- ACTION IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION; FUNCTIONALITY IS REMAINING ERECT

**Decontextualized meaning** by:
- LIFE IS TRAVEL
- LIVING A LIFE IS JOURNEYING (LIFE IS A JOURNEY)

**Contextualized meaning** by:
- A SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS FOR THE WORSE IN DOMINO’S LIFE IS THE CAPSIZING OF DOMINO’S BOAT IN THE COURSE OF HIS SEA JOURNEY

Figure 3. Three types of meaning in conceptual metaphors
As regards the *conceptual structures* that make up conceptual metaphors (image schema, domain, frame, mental space), they are all constitutive parts: a conceptual metaphor consists of image-schema, domain, frame, and mental space metaphors. They form an interlocking hierarchy that is based on decreasing (or increasing) degrees of schematicity – with the endpoints of image schema and mental space metaphors. Image-schema level metaphors (including primary metaphors) define the generic-level meaningfulness of a conceptual metaphor. Domain- and frame-level metaphors (with their mappings) are responsible for the decontextualized meanings that are associated with them and are based on them. Mental space metaphors allow for and capture the contextual meanings in a piece of ongoing discourse. This kind of conceptual hierarchy can again be demonstrated by the example of *capsize* in Figure 4.

CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURE: schematicity hierarchy

**Image schema** level metaphor:
– ACTION IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION; FUNCTIONALITY IS REMAINING ERECT

**Domain** level metaphor:
– LIFE IS TRAVEL

**Frame** level metaphor:
– LIVING A LIFE IS JOURNEYING (LIFE IS A JOURNEY)

**Mental space** level metaphor:
– A SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS FOR THE WORSE IN DOMINO'S LIFE IS THE CAPTIZING OF DOMINO'S BOAT IN THE COURSE OF HIS SEA JOURNEY

**Figure 4.** The schematicity hierarchy for *capsize*

The issue of *memory* is relevant and important because the different metaphors in the schematicity hierarchy are located in different types of memory: long-term and working memory. Long-term memory stores image-schema-, domain-, and frame-level metaphors. Working memory is the site where mental-space-level metaphors occur. Moreover, image-schema metaphors are stored in long-term memory in the form of analogous conceptual structures, as opposed to the other three metaphors (domain, frame, mental space) that have a propositional format. Finally, it is only working memory that can give rise to conscious and deliberate metaphors (á la Steen). The connection between memory and the metaphors on the different levels can be shown in Figure 5.

In previous work (Kövecses, 2002/2010), I distinguished various *ontological levels* where conceptual metaphors can exist: the subindividual, supraindividual, and individual levels. The subindividual level is the ontological level where meaningfulness resides in long-term memory in the form of image schema metaphors. At the supraindividual level, we find domain- and frame-level metaphors in long-term
MEMORY
- **Long-term memory:**
  - ACTION IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION; FUNCTIONALITY IS REMAINING ERECT (analog structure)
  - LIFE IS TRAVEL (propositional structure)
  - LIVING A LIFE IS JOURNEYING (LIFE IS A JOURNEY) (propositional str.)
- **Working memory:**
  - A SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS FOR THE WORSE IN DOMINO’S LIFE IS THE CAPSIZING OF DOMINO’S BOAT IN THE COURSE OF HIS SEA JOURNEY (propositional structure)

**Figure 5.** Types of memory and types of metaphor

memory with their decontextualized meanings. At the individual level, mental-space level metaphors are used to generate contextual meanings in working memory. This is illustrated in Figure 6:

**Figure 6.** Three ontological levels for metaphor

We can summarize these key components of the extended view of CMT as discussed so far, together with their interrelations, in Table 1:

**Table 1.** Summary of key ideas of the extended CMT view

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of meaning</th>
<th>Kind of conceptual structure</th>
<th>Kind of memory</th>
<th>Kind of ontological level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfulness</td>
<td>Image-schema metaphor</td>
<td>Long-term memory</td>
<td>Subindividual level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Analog structure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decontextualized</td>
<td>Domain metaphor</td>
<td>Long-term memory</td>
<td>Supraindividual level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>Frame metaphor</td>
<td>(Propositional structure)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>Mental-space metaphor</td>
<td>Working memory</td>
<td>Individual level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>(Propositional structure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the above cognitive characteristics of conceptual metaphors, there is another major ingredient of the view I am proposing; it is the notion of context. The extended CMT I envision does not only have a rich cognitive part, as specified above, but it also has a rich contextual component (see Kövecses, 2015). Admittedly somewhat radically, I distinguish four types of context: the situational, discourse, bodily, and conceptual-cognitive context. Each one of these comes with a number of empirically established contextual factors (for a detailed description, see Kövecses, 2015). Table 2 below lists the major contextual factors I have found in instances of real discourse that constitute the four context types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Four context types and their contextual factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situational context</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main suggestion concerning these context types and contextual factors is that any one of them or several of them together can prompt a speaker to use a particular conceptual and linguistic metaphor that matches a contextual factor (or a group of factors); that is, I propose that they all have a potential priming effect for metaphorical conceptualization.

4. How do the cognitive and contextual components of metaphor work together?

A major issue in the extended view of conceptual metaphors is how the cognitive and contextual aspects of metaphors can be put together in a coherent framework. This issue requires the formulation of a hypothesis to explain how the speaker comes up with a metaphor to begin with and how the hearer can understand this metaphor.

Conceptual metaphor theory started out as, and remained for a long time, an essentially offline theory of metaphor. What this means is that conceptual metaphors were regarded as static connections (mappings) between two domains.
(such as *life is a journey*) in long-term memory. Metaphors were described predominantly as products of the operation of the conceptual system, rather than the processes that generate the products. In the course of studying conceptual metaphors, hundreds and perhaps even thousands of such product-like mental structures (i.e., conceptual metaphors) were identified and described in detail. In a way, the theory of schematicity hierarchies (see, e.g., Kövecses, 2017) and cascades (see, e.g., David, Lakoff, & Stickles, 2016) does the same: it continues to describe offline metaphorical structures at the level of image schemas, domains and frames in long-term memory. Of course, these new structures are more complex (e.g., they can be found on several levels, not just on one, say, that of domain), they integrate aspects of metaphor not seen as working together before, and they offer elegant explanations of how certain metaphor-related phenomena work (e.g., how lower level metaphors inherit information from higher levels).

As a result of this still dominant “standard” view, critical reaction was bound to happen. Proponents of conceptual integration theory suggested that CMT lacks a component that could capture the dynamic processes that occur in the course of the actual use of metaphors (see Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). To remedy this, they offered the network model. Such processes include projections that go not just from source to target but also from target to source, from source and target to the blended space, and from the blend to source and target. These processes cannot take place between frames and domains in long-term memory; they must take place in mental spaces. Mental spaces and the networks of which they form a part are built online at the time of the communicative events that include a metaphorical blend. Similarly, discourse-oriented work on metaphor showed that in real discourse “metaphoring” is not happening at the level of frames or domains. Some researchers offered the notions of scenario, scene, and mental space as the level where metaphors are actually used (see, e.g., Musolff, 2006). Still others, like those concerned with the pragmatic and rhetorical uses of metaphor, complained that CMT has no way of handling the pragmatic-rhetorical functions of metaphor in natural discourse (see, e.g., Goatly, 1997; Semino, 2008; Steen, 2008, 2011). It gradually became clear that something important was missing from CMT as a general theory of metaphor.

The question for us now is: How can we maintain all the achievements of CMT and at the same time accommodate these criticisms? As I attempted to show so far in the paper, my solution to this dilemma is to extend the schematicity hierarchy to include the level of mental spaces (or scenarios) that function in context. Instead of the usual three-way distinction between image schema metaphors, domain metaphors, and frame metaphors, I suggest a four-way distinction that includes mental space level metaphors. The new schematicity hierarchy goes from the most schematic to the least schematic (or most specific) level: to that of mental spaces.
Mental space level metaphors assume all the higher level ones in a hierarchy. This way, we can turn CMT into a theory that can combine the idea of an offline schematicity hierarchy and its online functioning in a unified view of metaphor as both a product and a process.

As a final demonstration of how this might work, consider the example of capsizing again. As mentioned above, a journalist interviewed Fats Domino about his life in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In the course of interpreting what happened to Domino, the journalist gets to a point where he wants to say that Domino’s life took an abrupt and bad turn. At the time of the interview all the visible signs of the consequences of the hurricane are still present, such as the overturned boats. He writes: “The 2005 hurricane capsized Domino’s life,...” The perceptual property of what he saw then and remembers now (overturned boats) functions as a contextual factor that activates the image schema metaphors action is self-propelled motion, purposes are destinations, and functionality is staying erect. (I take it that this move in the interpretation process corresponds to Barsalou’s (1992) first step in the formation of object categories: Form a structural description of the entity.) The lack of functionality (of the boat) amounts to (the boat becoming) an obstacle to continue motion: that is, to the further image schema (primary) metaphor: difficulties are obstacles. Since the topic of the conversation is life, these image schema level metaphors activate the domain level metaphor life is travel. This matches the primary metaphors and elaborates on them. The life is travel metaphor evokes the more specific metaphor living a life is journeying at the frame level. Now the journalist is in a position to take the journeying frame and to express the contextual meaning of “abrupt negative change in Domino’s life” through the highly specific mental space level metaphor: an abrupt negative change in Domino’s life is the capsizing of Domino’s boat during his sea journey.

We can represent the connections between the contextual factors and the metaphors in a summary fashion in Figure 7:

The still visible sight of the devastation caused by the hurricane (situational context) – A Sudden, Unexpected Turn of Events for the Worse in Domino’s Life is the Capsizing of Domino’s Boat in the Course of His Sea Journey
The memory of the overturned boats (conceptual-cognitive context) – Living a Life is Journeying
The topic of the conversation with Domino (discourse context) – Life is Travel
The universal experience of falling down and not being able to function (bodily context) prime the conceptualizer (the journalist) to use the verb captize – Action is Motion; Functionality is Staying Erect

Figure 7. Connections between contextual factors and conceptual metaphors
What Figure 7 indicates is a static picture of the components that are involved in the creation of metaphorical meaning in this particular case. A more dynamic, but entirely hypothetical, way of showing the process of meaning creation would be Figure 8 below. It is only through psychological experiments that the validity of this informal and hypothetical processing model could be confirmed.

![Diagram](image.png)

**Figure 8.** Meaning construction for “The 2005 hurricane capsized Domino’s life,...”

More generally, what we can see here is that at a certain point in discourse, the speaker’s communicative intention appears to be best expressible by metaphor. The speaker (unconsciously) forms a contextual meaning that is supported by an appropriate image-schematic metaphor. The contextual factors mentioned above are all active in the speaker’s working memory. One (or a group) of the factors primes the speaker to build a conceptual pathway from the contextual meaning as expressed by a conceptual metaphor at the mental-space level that is supported by the image-schema metaphor. The pathway is completed through the specification of the image-schema metaphor at the frame- and domain-levels and a linguistic metaphor with a particular cognitive content is created.
However, in many cases this content part is created in order to achieve some simultaneous pragmatic effect. The pragmatic effect and the conceptual content emerge jointly – one in the service of the other. Humor, emotion, narrative function, rhetorical effect, etc. can be just as prominent parts of metaphorical contextual meaning as the conceptual content that “carries” this function or effect.

At the image schema, domain, and frame levels, the linguistic metaphors express a particular aspect of the conceptual content of the source domain. The meaning of these metaphorical expressions is based on the topology of the source domain and its mapping onto the target; their meaning is the expression of this conceptual content (such as the cause of the fire-heat being mapped onto the cause of one’s anger). But at the mental spaces level (i.e., where the metaphorical linguistic expressions are used in actual discourse) a lot more can happen as regards meaning, as indicated by the following example:

1 Jimmy: Uh: I was (.) boiling at this stage and 2 I was real angry with Connie ( ). And 3 uh went up to bed ’n (.) I lay on the bed. (Edwards, 1999, p. 274)

Edwards makes the point that this particular use of “boiling” establishes accountability and provides justification for one’s (the speaker’s) actions. The passage is part of an interview in a counseling session, in which Jimmy talks about how his wife’s “provocations” during an evening in a pub led him to leave her in the pub (with the man she was “messing” with) and to go home. The use of “boiling” shows that the intensity of his anger matches the intensity of the “provocations,” thus making his wife accountable for his anger. At the same time, it also shows that the intensity of his anger provides justification for leaving the pub, go home, and, later, even assault his wife. “Boiling anger” presents him as being passive in relation to events in the sense that he appears to believe that such a high intensity of anger justifiably leads to those actions on his part. Clearly, the use of “boiling” here goes far beyond the expression of some metaphorical cognitive content. It fulfills extremely important narrative-discursive functions that constitute another and indispensable part of the expression’s meaning in a particular context.

To conclude this section, we can see that the phenomenon of conceptual metaphor is simultaneously offline and online. In the course of using offline conceptual metaphors, conceptual structures in long-term memory (image schemas, domains, and frames) are put to cognitive work online in mental spaces in working memory. This view enables us to take into account a variety of metaphor-related mental activities that speakers engage in at this level. These include getting primed to use particular metaphors by context, giving metaphorical expressions specific socio-pragmatic functions, creating novel metaphors, using metaphors deliberately, and several others.
5. Conclusions

The view of schematicity hierarchies described in this paper differs from the standard view in two ways. The first is that in my conception the least schematic conceptual structure in a hierarchy is not a frame but a mental space. Mental spaces elaborate on frames, making them as specific as required by the given discourse situation. In other words, I suggest a four-level hierarchy (in addition to the level of linguistic expression):

- Image schema structures (most schematic)
- Domain structures (less schematic)
- Frame structures (less schematic)
- Mental space structures (least schematic)

(Mental expression)

Mental spaces usually foreground a single metaphorical mapping between two frames, but this mapping, which expresses the contextual meaning at a given point in discourse, evokes the entire hierarchy “above” (or “below”) it. This way, it can be shown that the functioning of schematicity hierarchies is not limited to conceptual structures in long-term memory, but is closely linked to how these structures are mobilized in working memory online.

The second way my treatment of schematicity hierarchies is different from the standard view is that I see each and every hierarchy as functioning within a rich context. Various aspects, or components, of the contexts (i.e., the contextual factors) can have an influence on which conceptual metaphor (and the hierarchy that goes with it) is utilized to conceptualize the situation. The same factors can also be crucial in the (unconscious) choice of the linguistic metaphors that can best express the appropriate contextual meaning in a given discourse situation.

These extensions of CMT allow us to account for the online use of metaphors in actual communicative situations. Given that the offline metaphor patterns and the contextual factors that obtain in a situation are mediated by the level of mental spaces, we can see why and how particular linguistic and conceptual metaphors are used in discourse. Offline metaphor patterns are primed and given particular social-pragmatic functions by context. As a matter of fact, contextual priming is also often responsible for the creation of novel metaphors.

The three modifications of standard CMT (refining its cognitive dimension by means of thinking of conceptual metaphors as consisting of four levels, recognizing the creative role of contextual influence, and adding social-pragmatic functions to metaphorical conceptual content) provides us with an especially powerful theory of metaphor (see Kövecses, 2020). The new view is internally coherent given the metaphorical hierarchy based on various degrees of schematicity and
due to its full recognition of large-scale contextual influence on metaphorical conceptualization. The new view is also externally consistent with previous findings and well-established ideas and conceptual tools of cognitive science and linguistics (such as embodiment, working memory, image schema, domain, frame, mental space, contextual influence, priming, schematicity, and conceptual hierarchy). It is important to mention here that there exist other frameworks that have goals very similar to what I have outlined in the paper, such as Gibbs’ (2017) dynamic systems view of metaphor. (On the differences between the two proposals, see Kövecses, 2020).

It should be made clear that the new view as briefly summarized here is not intended to be and cannot be considered the final word on metaphor. It is just a hypothesis, as I have emphasized especially in the discussion of a potential processing model within extended CMT. All I hope for is that researchers will find it interesting enough to apply it to additional cases of metaphor use to see its overall viability, and that they will design and do experiments to test its psychological validity.

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References


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