





Vilnius City Centre

‘Bubbles’, ‘Cocoons’ and the ‘Petri Dish’: Spatial Metaphors and the Pandemic



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In response to the coronavirus pandemic there is a requirement for those interested in the language of public and media communication to consider metaphors based on spatial frames that have contributed to public communication and policy formation as well as critical comment of such policies in the media. This talk will analyse and discuss concepts (metaphors, metonyms and symbols) related to the ‘container’ frame using a corpus of UK press articles (Nexis) collected in the period March to September 2020, supplemented by social media.

Containers – the hazmat suits, masked faces, and plastic bubbles around patients’ heads – have become key symbols of the pandemic. In their quest to control the virus, governments worldwide have sought to protect their populations through metaphors deriving from objects that create spatial separation. People have been instructed literally to remain in their homes and metaphorically to keep to ‘social bubbles’ and those most vulnerable to the disease have been instructed to ‘cocoon’. Such instructions are employed to influence social behaviour by encouraging people to limit the amount of contact they have with others.

Containers, such as houses, or wombs are intended to protect, nurture and save the lives of people within the container – whether literal or metaphoric. I suggest that a conceptual metaphor SAFETY IS STAYING IN A CONTAINER places value on what is in the container because it protects this valued entity from the danger and threat posed by an external entity that is always searching for a secret way in – by subterfuge or guile. By contrast, in other cases social units, such as care homes, universities and prisons are represented as containers strongly associated with spreading the disease within a confined



space where it is trapped. The conceptual frame CONTAINERS ARE BOUNDED SPACES provides the basis for quite different conceptual metaphors such as: CONTAINERS ARE PRISONS and DANGER IS REMAINING IN A CONTAINER.

In analysing this spatial metaphor I consider the function or purpose of the container, what is separated by it, its size and other properties. From a critical linguistic perspective the container sometimes protects the contained entity from external threat, while, paradoxically, at other times the container endangers, and even kills, what is contained. Rhetorical analysis needs to identify agency: is the agent a government that is forcing people against their will into a container and therefore does the metaphor become an image of entrapment, or is the agent people who have voluntarily placed themselves within the container for their own protection? The complex contrasting evaluation of the spatial frame and its close relation to embodiment theory makes the container metaphor a central one for understanding the rhetorical motivation of metaphors during the coronavirus pandemic.

Metaphor and Gesture: What's New?



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Shortly after the publication of *Metaphors We Live By*, the psychologists David McNeill and Elena Levy (1982) were the first to apply Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) work in research on speakers' gestures, by claiming that some uses of gesture could be seen as being motivated by underlying metaphoric mappings. McNeill (1985, 1992) developed this idea more extensively, particularly noting how when introducing a topic (e.g., "it was a Sylvester and Tweety cartoon"), speakers may position their hands open and facing each other in the space in front of them, as if holding something invisible between them. A number of researchers pursued this line of inquiry in subsequent years (e.g., Calbris 1990; Cienki 1998; Müller 1998; Sweetser 1998; Webb 1997), pointing out the diversity of source domains that might be expressed spatially in gesture, and the corresponding variety in target domains that might be referred to.

The volume *Metaphor and Gesture* provided a state-of-the-art overview of such research up to 2008. Since then, investigations have proceeded in a variety of different directions; they include work from the perspectives of cognitive psychology and cognitive science, linguistics, cultural anthropology, organizational studies, educational studies, philosophy, and dance. Against the background of this research, we will consider a number of questions, including the following:

- How is gesture being approached in different studies (as opposed to how language is being analyzed) for purposes of metaphor analysis? What kinds of methods are being used in different fields for researching metaphor in gesture?
- How does the multifunctionality of gesture provide challenges for metaphor analysis? Can they be resolved, or is gesture's multifunctional nature an endemic problem for such research?



- How can gesture analysis contribute to the study of metaphor foregrounding and backgrounding in communication?

The talk aims to provide an introduction for those unfamiliar with this field of research, and an update for those who are already 'old hands' in looking at metaphor in gesture.

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Space to Think



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The metaphoric connection between the domains of space and time has captured the interest of metaphor researchers for many years. We have all heard that temporal metaphors take structure from the domain of space and use it to structure our understanding of time. But what precisely does that mean?

Looking at the semantics of spatial terms, we quickly see the complexity of the domain, with spatial meanings drawing on multiple aspects of knowledge about objects and their interactions. For example, spatial locatives draw upon geometric and functional properties of the Figure and Ground and qualitative physical properties of their potential interaction, while motion language frequently encodes properties of the Figure and Ground along with the Path, Manner, and Cause of the motion event. Furthermore, the properties that are likely to be encoded in a spatial description and the particular ways in which these properties are defined vary across languages. If we are to understand the import of structure from space to time, then, we need to grapple with questions regarding which spatial properties undergird space-time metaphors, and under what circumstances different spatial properties undergo metaphorical extension.

In this talk, I will delve into the question of what it means to import structure from space to time. My point of departure will be the Moving Ego and Moving Time metaphors that have attracted so much attention in the metaphor literature, looking first at the spatial structure of these metaphors before moving on to consider the extra-linguistic factors that have been found to influence their interpretation. Following this, I will bring space back to the spotlight, asking what unites the spatial motivations for the range of effects that have been observed and, by extension, which aspects of spatial meaning underlie these two space-time metaphors.



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The Journey as Central Concept to Structure Goal-directed Activity



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The metaphor PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION TOWARD A DESTINATION, aka the JOURNEY metaphor, is a highly productive one. It may well be the single most important metaphor (Western?) human beings use to conceptualize their personal and professional goals in life.

The metaphor, in turn, builds on image schemas pertaining to movement through space and forces that facilitate or impede this movement, as theorized in Mark Johnson's trail-blazing *The Body in the Mind* (1987). Unsurprisingly, the medium of film is excellently suited to embody and implement the JOURNEY metaphor, for instance in documentaries (Forceville 2006, 2011), public service commercials (Yu 2009), horror films (Winter 2014), and short animation films (Forceville 2013, 2017; Forceville & Jeulink 2011; Forceville & Paling 2018)– since “the movies” by definition flourish if they can depict movement.

In this presentation I will further explore how space and movement (which are key to the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema that informs the JOURNEY metaphor) can be used metaphorically– but this time in *static* photographs and pictures that intend to communicate some sort of PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY.

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