Figures of Speech

Christina Alm-Arvius

Christina Alm-Arvius

Figures of Speech

Abstract

The aim of *Figures of Speech* is to exemplify, analyse and describe the character and function of both tropes and rhythmical schemes in natural verbal language. It focuses on the occurrence of figurative language in standard English, but the theoretical considerations and descriptions presented in this work should be applicable to verbal languages in general.

   A number of different types of tropes and schemes are examined and described. However, the main part of the study deals with two central categories of tropes: metaphor and metonymy, including synecdoche, which can be considered a specific kind of metonymy. An overview of research perspectives and explanatory models aiming at revealing the character of these tropes is given, although a new kind of analytical conclusion is argued for. It integrates the construction and use of tropes into a comprehensive model of semantic variation and dependencies comprising also non-figurative sense relations.

   Metaphorisation is an imaginative generalisation of a source meaning. A metaphorical extension cancels criterial properties in the source, and the relation between the source content and a generalised metaphorical reading is thus similar to that between a more specific hyponym and a superordinate sense in a hyponymic hierarchy. A metonymic shift builds instead on habitual co-occurrence of things within a given type of scenario. Accordingly, metonymic meanings can be compared to the kind of lexical relation called meronymy.

'The best things in life are free' (Parts of the lyrics of a popular song by Sylva, Brown and Henderson)

'… Language is worth a thousand pounds a word.' (Lewis Carroll 1977, *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*, p 38)

'When I make a word do a lot of work like that,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'I always pay it extra.' (Ibidem, p 75)

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Figures of speech and verbal language

In the last two decades or so, that is from the 1980s and onwards, both linguistic semantics and other, related disciplines that deal with meaning and thinking have seen a steadily increasing interest in **figurative** language. More specifically, this interest has centred on the occurrence of words and formulations that have some kind of extended or transferred meaning. **Tropes** is a cover term from traditional rhetoric for language uses with some kind of **secondary** meaning.[1] In other words, the meaning of a trope has come about through some obvious shift from a more basic type of understanding of a language element.

Such non-literal uses are common, and the following two sentences, (1) and (2), contain examples of quite typical figurative shifts. For the most part such changes in meaning constitute no interpretative difficulties at all for proficient speakers of (in this case) English, either because they are established in the language, or because it is easy to calculate their intended import within a specific language context or communicative situation.

(1) I was beginning to *reap the benefits of* my long daily walks in the woods.

For instance in the idiomatic construction *reap the benefit(s) of something* the meaning of the verb *reap* has been widened to represent a more general notion than that evoked by its basic and literal kind of

---

1 Cf Crystal (2001:116f & 1992:135); Wales (1990:468); Leech & Short (1981:78f,81f,139–144); Mooij (1976:3,6–7).

application, which is only appropriate in contexts concerning agricultural work and proceeds. Proficient speakers of English know that primary sense occurrences of the verb *reap* are restricted to taking direct object phrases headed by nouns like *crop*, *harvest* and *corn*. By comparison, *benefit(s)* has a more general sense that can also be used to describe fairly abstract matters.[2]

Accordingly, the use of a word in **syntagmatic** combinations, or **collocations**, that violate its basic semantic value will signal that its meaning range is no longer the same.[3] In other words, a figurative shift makes it possible to give a language element another semantic function than that directly associated with its **primary sense**.

(2)   The British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain resigned in May 1940 when *Hitler* had invaded France.

It stands to reason that one man, named Adolf Hitler, could not on his own have invaded a country. This would be clear also to an English-speaking person who knew nothing about the Second World War, because the subject of (the literal sense of) the verb *invade* should represent a whole group of armed people, typically military forces strong enough to carry out such an operation. So the name of the German dictator must here be taken to stand for that part of the German army that invaded France. This widened interpretation is quite natural, since Hitler was chiefly responsible for commanding a military attack on France.

In addition, formal regularities, including straightforward repetitions of single or complex forms[4] in language strings, or even

---

2   Actually, there is some variation in the realisation of the direct object constituent of this construction type. It can be headed by a number of nouns with similar meanings: *benefit*, *fruit*, *result*, and *reward*, and they can occur either in the singular or in the plural form. They are also sometimes modified, as in *reap the economic benefits of one's work*. See e g *Collins Cobuild* (1995:1372); *Longman* (1995:1182); *ALD* (1989:1045); the *BNC*.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that although *fruit(s)* is largely synonymous with *benefit(s)* in this construction, it is also no doubt basically metaphorical—like *reap*. Similarly, the whole predication *reap the harvest* can be given a metaphorical meaning.

3   Cf Cacciari & Glucksberg (1994:449).

4   *Form* is here contrasted with *meaning* or *semantic content(s)*, that is the conceptual side of a linguistic sign, called the **signified** in Saussurean terminology. In other words, *form(al)* is here used about entities and constructions at the **signifier** level of linguistic elements. (Cf Saussure 1966:65ff)

longer stretches of text, have also been considered figures of speech, in particular by rhetoricians. Such arrangements with recurring phonological, syntactic, or lexical properties are now usually called **schemes**.[5] The italicised part of (3) is an idiomatic English construction, whose meaning is also figurative. The next sentence is part of a headline. A number of common schemes will be outlined below in section 1.4, and they will be further described and exemplified in Chapter 6.

(3) I wouldn't trust him. He tends to *run with the hare and hunt with the hounds*.

(4) The *big banks* have been on a *go slow*. (*The Sunday Telegraph*, March 18 2001, Money: 2)

Figures of speech
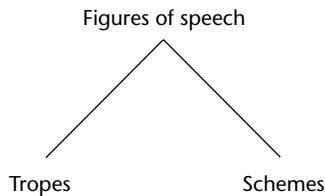
Tropes   Schemes

Tropes and schemes are thus sub-categories of the more comprehensive category figures of speech.

The current interest in figurative language is however chiefly concerned with motivated, but not always predictable[6], shifts in the meaning of words and longer constructions. Language researchers working within the interdisciplinary field of cognitive science have pointed out how central and important **metaphors** are in human language and related thought structures.[7] The use and characteristics of **metonymy** are also being discussed, though not to the same extent as metaphorical extensions, which indeed appear to be more frequent.[8] The interpretation of *reap* in the idiomatic expression

---

5   Crystal (2001:116f & 1992:135); cf Abrahams (1993:66,184).
6   Cf Lakoff (1987:65); Langacker (1987:157f).
7   E g Lakoff & Johnson (1999:45ff); Langacker (1987:38–40).
8   When we want to assess the relative frequency of metaphor and metonymy respectively, we must look at longer stretches of language use exemplifying different types of written text or spoken discourse. Cf e g the text extracts in the Appendix.

reap the benefits of something illustrated in (1) above is a result of metaphorical widening, while *Hitler* in the temporal subclause in (2) is an example of a metonymic shortcut.

In figurative uses involving the meaning side of language, certain words—or in some cases rather some syntagmatic construction—do then not have their primary or literal senses, that is the senses that we first and foremost associate with these language elements, especially out of a particular language context or discourse situation. Instead they represent some idea or reaction that is distinguishable from this basic meaning, although it is also clearly related to it, at least originally. In other words, figurative meanings of various sorts cause the semantic variability in the use of language elements that we speak of as **polysemy**.

(5) The baby started to *howl*. (primary and literal sense)

(6) Outside the wind *was howling*. (secondary, metaphor-like sense)

(7) Her whole *body* was aching. (literal sense)

(8) This dark porter has a rich malty *body*. (secondary, metaphorical sense)

(9) The best thing is to turn to a professional *body* that can give qualified advice on legal mattes. (secondary, metaphorical sense)

(10) The British Prime Minister lives at No 10 *Downing Street*. (literally the name of a street in London)

(11) *Downing Street* emphasised that the couple had been honoured for their charitable work. (secondary, metonymic use)

In actual language use, utterances, or the particular words and constructions used in them, will say something about a specific **universe of discourse**: a real realm of experience *or* a fictitious world that the participants in a verbal exchange have information about.[9] Moreover, people usually receive new information about the matters dealt with as they are engaged in a stretch of spoken or written language use. Quite generally speaking, specific, possible aspects of

the things or settings constituting a universe of discourse are brought to the fore, while others remain in the background or even go unnoticed by (at least some of) those partaking in a communicative exchange. Accordingly, one useful aspect of the notion universe of discourse is that it can make us aware of how particular circumstances and language contexts may influence the interpretation of lexical items and the composite syntagmatic structures that they occur in.[10]

The following extract from the beginning of an article in an English newspaper, including the headline, exemplifies how efficient language usage typically both connects to things that the addressees already know and aims at giving new information of some kind. The headline indicates clearly what the universe of discourse is, and in the very first sentence readers are given a short summary of the contents of the article.

(12) Revealed: how purrs are secret to cats' nine lives
By David Harrison
Environment Correspondent

Scientists have discovered that the purring of cats is a "natural healing mechanism" that has helped inspire the myth that they have nine lives.

Wounded cats—wild and domestic—purr because it helps their bones and organs to heal and grow stronger, say researchers who have analysed the purring of different feline species. This, they say, explains why cats survive falls from high buildings and why they are said to have "nine lives". Exposure to similar sound frequencies is known to improve bone density in humans. (*The Sunday Telegraph*, March 18 2001:3)

---

9   See e g Stubbbs (2001:7); Ljung (2000:133); Jakobson (1996:11); Hurford & Heasley (1983:59–61); *A Dictionary of Philosphy* (1979:334). Cf Langacker (2000:262).

Moreover, there exists a specific and more rigorous definition of the term *universe of discourse* in formal logic. In this framework it stands for the range of objects that can be within the scope of a quantifier. (Lacey 1986:195) Consequently, the term is polysemous, as it has two senses that appear to be semantically or conceptually related: the one defined and used in the main text above and this other sense in formal logic.

10   Langacker (1987:37f,147,156–158,369ff).

In short, acquired and **shared** knowledge about language senses as well as various things and experiences that they can be used to comment on is what makes language communication between people possible.

The understanding and use of a language is thus not merely to do with inner mental representations and processes. A language, say standard English, is also a **social** or **cultural** phenomenon, employed and developed within a given speech community. It is a complicated set of habits shared by the members of such a community which enables them to communicate with each other in speech, and also in writing, provided that the people using the language are literate[11]. Linguistic capacities involve or interact with many aspects of human behaviour. In addition, geographical and climatic conditions may in part influence the lexical inventory of a language.

So the meanings conveyed by a language are connected with cultural and environmental circumstances of various kinds as well as with how its users deal with their experiences psychologically or cognitively. Language meanings are to do with human cognition, but they depend on **collective categorisation** tied to the semantic combinations and networks of a given language rather than on individual reactions and personal organisation of perceptual information.

More specifically, I would suggest that we distinguish terminologically and analytically between cognitive representations of different types of **experiential domains**[12] and the—of course related—**language senses** that make it possible to communicate verbally about them. Ideas about and reactions to various aspects of experiential domains can be expected to vary more among individuals using the same language than the semantic structures that they share through habitual language usage. Conventional senses are

---

11 A language that is nowadays regularly used in the written mode is usually **codified**. This means that there are established principles for spelling words and for presenting written texts to readers, on paper or on a computer or film screen, for instance. (Cf Finegan 1994:27f,494–498; Halliday 1989:29f)

12 Cf terms like *cognitive model*, *frame*, and *script* which stand for similar notions. (Langacker 2000:4f,262 & 1987:147ff; Saeed 1997:186f; Ungerer & Schmid 1996:46–55,120–129, 188ff; Fillmore & Atkins 1992:75–81; Fillmore 1985:222ff; cf Searle 1999:152–156 & 1969:50–53)

necessarily tied to formal expression sides within a given language. In addition, language senses constitute parts of intricate networks that no doubt draw on and associate to encyclopaedic experiences and cognition, but in spite of this the systematic senses within a language can hardly be equated with inner representations and cognitive perspectives, including their emotive associations.

Paraphrases of strings within the same language show that there are different ways of presenting information and personal reactions verbally, even if it should also be acknowledged that such formal changes tend to involve—mostly minor—meaning changes as well. Similarly, translations between different languages are usually possible, but again they are hardly ever perfect. In fact, the same person commonly finds it impossible to package information in equivalent ways in different languages, simply because the formulations chosen must adhere to the idiomatic patterns and selections of each individual language. In addition, most of us have, at least on occasion, found it difficult to come up with adequate words for certain impressions and feelings, and this kind of observation also indicates that we must distinguish meanings conveyed by language from thoughts and emotive reactions.

As regards the influence of living conditions and culture on the language of a group of people, we can note that, for instance, the seafaring experiences of the British have left traces in the English language. All the same, English functions well as a means of communication also within communities in other places on earth that have different historical backgrounds and cultures. Indeed having language we can learn about things and activities—say sailing, rowing and travelling by boat—without having direct personal experience of them.

(13) We *sailed through the Channel*.

(14) Some people seem just to *sail through life*.

The second example above shows that the predicative construction *sail through something* can also be used to convey a figurative sense. More specifically, the italicised part of (14) is a metaphor, and its figurative character is explicitly signalled by the use of *life* as the complement of *through*. In this construction type a prepositional phrase headed by *through* collocates with the verb *sail* in an

adverbial slot describing a passage of some kind. Life is not a water passage like a channel or a sound, however, and as a result the whole predication "sail through life" must be understood figuratively.

Toad-in-the-hole is also a metaphorical expression. It is a traditional British dish consisting of sausages cooked in batter.

(15) William threw the dead *toad into the hole*. (primary and literal senses)

(16) We had *toad-in-the-hole* at the local pub.

Moreover, a language is of course not static and closed, even if it is a set of systematic habits and knowledge. Instead a living language is dynamic and open to changes and additions, as long as they do not interfere with its communicative capacity. In fact, it seems as though this partial flexibility of a language is a prerequisite for its functioning well in human communication and in relation to psychological processes and experiences of various kinds.

The occurrence of **novel** figures of speech is one effect of the creativity of a language, although there is of course also a host of established figurative uses. More specifically, the construction of novel figures of speech shows that the need to express thoughts and impressions that have no conventional verbal representations can make us invest words with new meanings. However, if a novel figure of speech is repeatedly used by the members of a speech community after it has been introduced in their language, it becomes a **conventional** part of it. So both conventionalised and merely **incidental** polysemous shifts reflect the flexibility of verbal languages in dealing with the infinitely complex nature of human experiences, thoughts and reactions.[13]

In semantics we are interested in the nature of the sense carrying elements in a language, and how they can interrelate structurally within this linguistic system. In addition, it has been considered important to investigate and describe how human languages can be used to say things about the world we live in. Our knowledge of reality is however necessarily connected with how we perceive or take in information about things around us, and how we interact

---

13   Cf Blakemore (1992:163); Green (1989:120–124); Mooij (1976:12–17).

with them physically and psychologically. In recent years a predominantly **cognitive** perspective has come in focus in much language research. The study of figures of speech is nowadays typically part of this **experiential** approach to the meaning side of our language capacity. Moreover, questions concerning the interconnection between socio-cultural matters and language are also most relevant.

However, it must be recognised that even if semantic structures are part of the linguistic capacity of individual speakers, they can only be upheld through consensus among those who know and use a given language system, like standard English or some other English dialect. Such considerations prompted the claim, elaborated in the last few pages, that we should distinguish between language senses, on the one hand, and cognitive and cultural notions, on the other hand, even if there are without a doubt important connections between them.

In order to give a comprehensive view of the meaning potential of human verbal languages, the different research perspectives mentioned above must be integrated. We should keep the valid parts of the more traditional or classical approaches that are oriented either to the structural build-up of the semantics of a language or to our descriptions of things and situations out in the world, and see how they can work with useful aspects of the more recent cognitive paradigm to give a substantial and defensible picture of language semantics, including the use of figurative language. The nature and groundings of different types of semantic theories or research paradigms are further outlined in section 2.2 below.

The present work focuses on figures of speech in standard English[14], but it is hypothesised that the set of theoretical standpoints and methods advocated here can be used to study these phenomena in other variants of English as well as in any human verbal language—say Swedish, Hindi or Zulu, to mention but a few of the languages spoken by different speech communities on this earth. In other words, it is assumed that the general principles behind the use and character of figures of speech are quite similar across lan-

---

14 On the identification and characterisation or definition of standard English, see e g Trudgill (2000:5–8,30f,94–96,198–203) and Quirk et al (1985:7–10,15–33).

guages. At any rate, the occurrence of figures of speech appears to be a **universal** property of natural human languages.

This is not to say that actual examples of figures of speech are comparable and largely identical in different languages. Instead it is clear that for instance conventional metaphors are often **language specific**, and their **idiomatic** status sometimes makes it difficult to translate them adequately into other languages.

A case in point is the informal Swedish coinage *yuppienalle*, now usually abbreviated to *nalle*. It is denotationally synonymous with *mobiltelefon*, but the latter is stylistically and attitudinally more neutral, even in the clipped version *mobil*, as it lacks the metaphorical association to a toy, a *teddy bear*. The British English translation equivalent of *mobiltelefon* is *mobile phone*, while *cell phone* is used in American English. The compound *yuppienalle* appeared around 1990 or at about the same time as mobile phones started to appear on the market. To begin with it had an obviously jocular or even ironic semantic value, since it suggested that this new technical gadget was a toy that yuppies played with. The second element in the compound, *nalle*, is an informal word for *bear* or *teddy bear* which is typically associated with contexts involving children. Even if some of the more specific humorous and mildly disparaging associations connected with the now seemingly less noticeable class of yuppies have largely faded away, and the usual form is just *nalle*, the polysemous connection to the primary sense of *nalle* is still there.[15] There is no corresponding word sense in English, and as a result English-speaking people simply do not connect mobile phones with toy bears the way speakers of Swedish are invited to do because of the secondary "mobile-phone" sense of *nalle*.

The language specific character of many metaphorical senses means that developing **metaphorical competence** in another language is an important part of foreign language acquisition.[16] Moreover, figurative shifts that are restricted to one or a limited number of languages are useful reminders of the fact that the semantic set-ups of languages partly differ, and that translations are hardly ever

---

15 While *nalle* has acquired this specific secondary sense in present-day Swedish, the tautological compound *nallebjörn* is not used to speak of a mobile phone.
16 Kecskés & Papp (2000:104ff); cf Newmark (1981:25,49–51,87–96,109); Nida (1964: 219–221).

perfect in the sense that they tend to tamper with the meanings conveyed more or less noticeably.

As this work is written in standard English, most examples illustrate figures of speech occurring in this language. Occasionally figurative uses from other languages are presented and discussed. All examples from other languages will be provided with English glosses or explanatory meaning descriptions.

Furthermore, the examples in this study have usually not been directly taken from specific, authentic pieces of language use, because this is not a corpus-based investigation where quantification of the data found in a restricted body of empirical material constitutes a central part of the methodology. Instead, the aim is to analyse and describe the character of various types of figures of speech and the principles that seem to underlie or motivate their occurrence in actual language use.[17] All the same, certain examples have been excerpted from authentic texts, and in each such case both the textual source and the page(s) where the example occurs are given within round brackets after the example.

1.2 More on tropes and types of meaning

1.2.1 The basic characteristics of metaphor and metonymy

As was pointed out in section 1.1 above, the last two decades or so have seen an increasing interest in the occurrence and character of tropes, especially metaphor, in natural language semantics. Earlier this area of language use was in the main left to the attention of literary scholars and practitioners within the fields of stylistics and rhetoric.

The current interest in figures of speech has in particular been directed at exploring the nature and significance of **metaphors** in human cognition and communication, but more recently the

---

17   Cf Johannesson (1990:8f,64–68).

special interpretative mechanisms at work in **metonymy** have also started to attract a fair amount of attention. These two terminological notions are by no means clear-cut and discrete, although **prototypical** examples of metaphor and metonymy are easy to distinguish.

In a typical metaphor the literal description of a concrete, that is a directly perceptible, phenomenon or type of experience is used to outline something more general and abstract.[18] The cognitive connection between the more specific literal meaning and such a more complex and elusive metaphorical reading is a result of language users being able to connect the two in their minds.

Accordingly, we should ask what constitutes the basis of this connection between a literal source meaning and the broadening of the understanding of a word or multi-word string that we find in a live metaphor. The most common kind of explanation is that language users can see some **similarity** between two (types of) things, or between two **experiential domains**, which are also clearly different in prototypical cases of metaphorisation.[19] I shall also argue along these lines in my analyses and explanations of language uses that can be termed metaphorical. The perceived similarity between the source meaning and the metaphorical interpretation, including their cognitive connections to particular experiential domains, makes it possible to use the same word or syntagmatic construction about both these things, while at the same time the **difference** between them makes it easy to distinguish the literal and the metaphorical meanings, either practically and spontaneously as in ordinary language communication, or in a deliberate semantic analysis. (Needless to say the latter is comparatively uncommon.) This way of explaining the nature of metaphor is typically felt to agree with our intuitive conception of such language uses. In fact, also Aristotle described metaphor in a similar way. More specifically, Aristotle pointed out that appropriate metaphors would be based on **analogy**.[20]

Moreover, it has been observed that a metaphorical relaxation in the application of a lexical item or longer language string for the

---

18   Cf Platzack (1998:253f).
19   Cf Ortony (1993b); Black (1962:35–37); Richards (1965:127).
20   *Aristotle on Rhetoric* (1991:229f,250–252,295f).

most part draws on more **peripheral** meaning qualities in the source.[21] Actually, I am going to claim that metaphorisation is an imaginative **widening** or **generalisation** of the semantic contents of some word(s) or longer stretch(es) of language use. This type of figurative extension thus involves the **suppression** of ordinarily quite central characteristics in the source contents; that is characteristics that are particularly important for distinguishing the source from other senses and cognitive structures in the language in question. As a result, a **live**, **transparent** metaphor spans both the basic, literal understanding and the metaphorical generalisation at the same time, although many aspects of the former are pushed into the background or completely disregarded in the metaphorical interpretation.

In addition, it should be pointed out that the qualities that are foregrounded in a metaphorical application are comparatively often **attitudinal** rather than **factually descriptive**. So the meaning features that dominate in many metaphors seem merely connotative[22]—or not strictly needed—in a prototypical understanding of the source contents.

(17) That man is *a fox/pig/rat.*

When a human being is metaphorically described as a fox or a pig or a rat, as in the example above, quite a few of the most conspicuous and concrete characteristics of real foxes, pigs, or rats are suppressed, for instance physical characteristics like having four legs, a coat of fur or hair, a snout, and a tail. Instead such a metaphorical characterisation focuses on attitudinal reactions to behavioural traits and personality qualities that are considered pig-like (etc)—although this need strictly speaking not be correct. These qualities are typically of a somewhat inexact and even variable character, but they tend to be shared by the members of a speech community. In fact, the metaphorical use of words denoting animals often connect to culturally wide-spread attitudes to these animals, or even to myths of a fable-like character concerning their

---

21 Cf e g Cacciari & Glucksberg (1994:459); Langacker (1987:157); Levinson (1983:150).
22 Cf Alm-Arvius (1993:12); Wales (1990:89f); Leech (1981:12f); Lyons (1977:175f,220, 278)

psychological constitution and behaviour. No doubt we can discern a similar cultural bias in many other types of metaphor as well.[23] At any rate, metaphorical uses of language elements will connect to and exploit common human experiences of a physical, psychological or social nature.
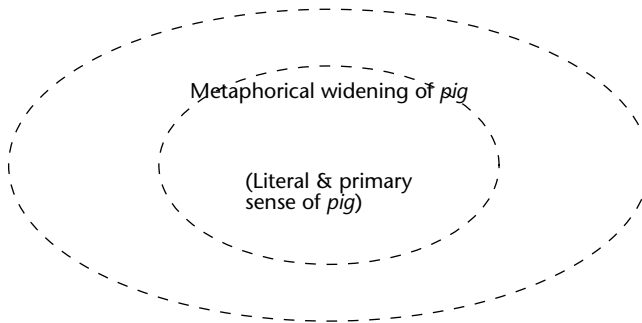
*The dotted lines indicate that the boundaries for what features can be included in the interpretations of the lexeme **pig** in various language contexts and communicative situations are not fixed.*

In fact, the claim that metaphorisation builds on some perceived resemblance between the **source** and the **target**[24] has been questioned by some analysts. It has been suggested that this connection is instead based on the co-occurrence of the kinds of experiences represented by the literal and metaphorical uses in our early childhood. This established cognitive connection would thus make it natural to speak of one thing in terms of another. For instance: big people and also many big things are important to children, so importance can naturally be spoken of using words that literally stand for physical size, as in the expression *a big day.*[25] I shall discuss

---

23 Cf Cacciari & Glucksberg (1994:454,463); Black (1962:39ff).
24 The terms *source* (*domain*) and *target* (*domain*) for respectively the basic contents and the figurative result of a metaphorical mapping are used in cognitive semantics. See e g Barcelona (2000a:3); Lakoff & Johnson (1999:58); Fauconnier (1997:168–171); Lakoff (1987:276).
25 Lakoff & Johnson (1999:45ff); cf Blakemore (1992;160f); Levinson (1983:155–161); Richards (1965:118).

these questions in more detail in Chapter 3, which is devoted to exploring the character of metaphor and related tropes.

In examples like the following in (18) to (20) below we also see how a metaphorical widening of a concrete sense helps us both to express and understand a more immaterial observation or experience. Without a doubt, the **reflection**[26] of a literal image tends to make such descriptions more **vivid** and **expressive** than non-figurative characterisations, which lack the multi-dimensional potential of fresh or at least quite obvious metaphors.

This is of course why metaphors cannot usually be written off as nothing but fancy substitutions[27] for literal words and formulations. Instead it is typically difficult to paraphrase metaphors adequately, unless we can resort to a longer and more explicit simile that somehow spells out the perceived similarity between the source and the metaphorical target.[28]

Moreover, this **associative link** to a more specific literal source is also important for the claim that metaphorical readings are non-propositional.[29] In other words, metaphors cannot be said to describe verifiable factual circumstances. Indeed, in the following three examples, numbered (18), (19) and (20), literally impossible **collocations** show that the italicised elements are to be given metaphorical understandings.[30]

> (18) The Renaissance *is echoed* in the decoration of the walls of the castle.

The metaphorical application of the verb *echo* in (18) above has come about through conceptual connections between a concrete kind of perceptual experience and a dynamic complex of aesthetic

---

26 Cf the notion of **reflected meaning** in Leech (1981:16f). It "is the meaning which arises in cases of multiple conceptual meaning when one sense of a word forms part of our response to another sense". In other words, our understanding of one sense of a polysemous lexeme or grammatical construction may be influenced by some other established sense of this language element.

27 In his influential chapter on metaphor in *Models and Metaphors* Black (1962:31f) firmly rejected what he termed the *substitution view of metaphor*. See section 3.2.1 below. Cf Kittay (1987:18).

28 Searle (1993:87f,109–111); *Aristotle on Rhetoric* (1991:229f,252).

29 See e g Alm-Arvius (1999:36f, 1993:135f); Davidson (1979:30,32,42ff).

30 Cf the distinction between *internal* and *external metaphors*, which is described and analysed in section 3.2.7 below.

judgements and conclusions. Surely, it seems intuitively plausible to suggest that this metaphorical application of the verb establishes a set of similarities between two also quite distinct human experiences. Hearing actual sounds repeated—because of the acoustic environment in which they are produced—is here in an imaginative way equated with the observation that certain wall decorations are similar to and thus probably also influenced by Renaissance paintings. So this extended or semantically generalised use of *echo* brings together perceptual impressions from two different sense modalities: hearing and sight. The echoing of a sound is an auditory experience, but wall decorations are instead visually perceived. Accordingly, this is a **synaesthetic** metaphor.[31]

(19) The winner is a man who has *leapt to* prominence this year.

(20) We are indeed a nation of *iron* men.

The metaphorical interpretations of *leap to* in (19) and *iron* in (20) above also deal with more abstract matters by associating them with particular concrete experiences or language senses. The metaphorical use of these elements means that their meanings are generalised to cover a wider range of things than their more specific literal senses. As has been pointed out above, generalisation appears to be a key feature of metaphorisation, and it means that certain, usually quite central meaning features of the source sense are suppressed.

In (21) there are several metaphors, and they exploit different concrete experiences and the literal senses that denote them. Prescriptive tradition frowns upon such **mixed metaphors**.[32]

(21) When buying Christmas presents we feel *burdened by inflated expectations which cloud our judgement.*

All the same, these figurative uses work well together, presumably because the combination of them indeed makes sense in this outline of a complex type of psychological reaction. More precisely, the generalised character of the metaphorical readings of basically con-

---

31   Cf Barcelona (2000b:35–43); Taylor (1995:39f,60f).
32   White (1996:137—145); Fowler (1994:350–352); Black (1962:43); cf Searle (1993:93f).

crete words like *burden*, *inflate* and *cloud* would appear significant for our impression that they are here used together in a coherent way to sketch this kind of more intangible affective experience. It does not matter that their source senses represent aspects of different experiential domains: that *burden* is to do with carrying something heavy[33], that *inflate* means to increase the size of something by filling it with air or some other gas, and that *cloud* is about weather conditions.[34] It is enough that they help us to form a general idea of the kind of strain we may experience when looking for Christmas presents, a specific sort of psychological pressure that can then make us, and other people, act in a confused or somewhat irrational way.

Indeed, Shakespeare also mixes metaphorical images in an aesthetically and psychologically effective way for instance in Hamlet's most famous soliloquy, when he suddenly introduces and exploits our impressions of the vastness, depth, and potential dangers of the sea in the midst of a sequence of metaphors connecting to suffering and fighting on the battle field.

> (22) To be, or not to be—that is the question:
>   Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
>   The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
>   Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
>   And by opposing end them? …
>   (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act three, Scene I) [35]

The complex experience described in (21) is not represented by any particular **lexicalised** expressions in English, but an incidental metaphorical formulation makes it possible to describe it. In other cases something new is given a metaphorical label, and this figurative extension[36] of the application of a word or longer expression appears thus to be based on some perceived analogy between this

---

33 The use of the past participle *burdened* in this example is compatible with Lakoff's claim that "In English, it is common for responsibilities to be metaphorized as burdens" (1987:396).

34 It seems likely that, for the most part, *burden* and *cloud* are primarily felt to be nouns. Accordingly, their occurrence as (polysemous) verbs can be considered lexicalised examples of the type of word formation process termed conversion or zero derivation. See e g Quirk et al (1985:1558–1567).

35 The Players Edition (1951:1047); cf Abrams (1993:68).

new thing and something else in the environment of the speakers of the particular language in which the metaphor is created. In more everyday terms we can simply say that a metaphorical extension is possible because language users see some connection—mostly described as some similarity or resemblance—between the notion represented by the basic meaning and their subjective experience of the thing described by means of the metaphorical application. Computer terms like *archive*, *file*, *mouse*, and *window* are examples of metaphorical extensions of already existing lexical words to phenomena which were new at the time of these coinages, but they are now all established secondary senses of these English lexemes.[37]

Furthermore, we can note that this metaphorical sense of *mouse* represents something concrete just like the primary sense—or the source sense—of this noun. Other examples of concrete metaphorical targets are *pigtails* and *ponytail* used to describe hairstyles, and *pigeon holes* for a set of boxes in a frame where letters, other messages, and papers can be left. Similarly, *foot* in *the foot of the mountain* or *the foot of the stairs* cannot be said to be an abstract application of this noun, although the area denoted by such phrases is more inexact compared to the solid and determinate shape of a real, human foot. So even if metaphors commonly stand for something more abstract, this is by no means a necessary property of metaphorical uses of words or complex strings.

Moreover, it is interesting that audible phenomena are often described by means of metaphorical applications of words that basically stand for visible things or things that can be experienced through the sense of touch, including temperature sensations. In other words, audible impressions are quite often dealt with by connecting them metaphorically in a synaesthetic way to spatial concepts that depend on visual and tactile impressions of concrete matters and events in our environment.[38]

---

36 The reader should be aware of the fact that **extension** has *two different terminological senses* in semantic theory. It is, on the one hand, used in the sense of *figurative extension*, but in logico-descriptive semantics *extension* stands, on the other hand, for all the phenomena in the world that are represented by a given sense in a specific language system. Cf note 39 below.
37 Cf Langacker (2000:100,107f).
38 See e g Gabriel Johansson's third-term essay *I See a Voice. A Study of Descriptions of the Singing Voice in Music Reviews*, English Department, Stockholm University, autumn term 1995. Cf Viberg (1984:136ff).

(23) William bent down to her and *dropped* his voice.

(24) The other man spoke in a *high*/*low* voice.

(25) Both singers had *large* and *deep* baritone voices.

(26) We heard a *soft* tapping outside the bedroom window.

(27) There was a *light* knock on the door.

(28) The bundle fell to the ground with a *hard* thud.

If we then turn to metonymy, another central type of trope, we can observe that such uses can be explained as descriptive **shortcuts.** In other words, a metonymic shift means that a word or complex expression that basically stands for one thing is also used about something else that the primary **denotata**[39] are regularly connected with in our experience. For instance, the name of the playwright *Shakespeare* can also be used about his plays and sonnets, and the name of the citadel *Kremlin* in Moscow is regularly used to represent the government of the former Soviet Union or present-day Russia which had or has its offices inside it. Similarly, an *angry discussion* is 'a discussion in which the participants were angry', and *happy days* means 'days in which (certain) people were happy'.

(29) Being a great actor does not mean that you can direct *Shakespeare*.

(30) *The Kremlin* had no choice but to reconsider its policies.

---

39 The *denotata* of a specific use of a linguistic sign are the things out in the world that it stands for. *Denotatum* is the singular form of this technical term, and it can be used when we talk of a word or longer expression which has one particular referent. This notion is clearly related to those of *extension* and *reference*. The extension of a language sense comprises all the phenomena out in the world that it can be taken to represent. By an act of *reference* a language user can employ a referring expression containing a specific sense to pick out one or several members within its extension. The extension of a sense is accordingly stable at a given synchronic stage in the development of a language, while reference is utterance specific, and thus variable. The term denotatum/denotata is a near synonym of extension, but can be more loosely applied to cover both stable denotational relationships between language elements and things in the world and more incidental connections. (Cf Saeed 1997:23–28; Cann 1993:10–12; Hurford & Heasley 1983:25–41,76,88; Lyons 1977:174–229; Mooij 1976:39ff)

It is also clear that the phrase "the whole bottle" in the next example should be taken to refer to the *contents* of the bottle, not to the bottle itself. We understand that a person who utters this in an actual communicative situation has seen that a bottle which was earlier filled with some liquid, say spirits or some non-alcoholic fizzy drink, is now empty.

(31) They have drunk *the whole bottle*.

Metonymic shifts in the understanding of words and phrases are most convenient, and allow us, as it were, to abbreviate messages in a non-literal but still succinct way. Formulations containing metonymic uses draw on or **presuppose** generally shared knowledge of things and circumstances out in the world, that is various experiential domains. So again we see how semantic considerations in the composition of language strings **interface** with general cognition or **encyclopaedic knowledge**.[40]

Metaphor and metonymy can be considered the two central types of tropes within verbal language. Significantly enough, they also often appear relevant when analysing other kinds of signs in human societies, which are studied within the wider field of semiotics. (See section 1.2.2 below) In short, it follows from what has been said above that our general, theoretical descriptions of different figures of speech must be seen as **idealised** types of explanations, centred on prototypical examples of, for instance, metaphor and metonymy.

As is well known, there are additional types of semantic changes in verbal messages, like the use of irony or symbolic language as well as word play—as in puns and ritualised insults and verbal contests, notably among African American young people, especially in urban communities.[41] However, many other traditional tropes tend to be directly connected with either metaphor or metonymy, the two most obvious types of figurative meanings. Most examples of oxymoron and personification have a metaphorical character, and instances of language use that can be characterised as hyperbole or

40 Cf Cruse (2000:96f).
41 Cf Crystal (1988:109).

understatement also commonly overlap with the category of metaphor. Similarly, synecdoche can usually be seen as a specific kind of metonymy.

1.2.2 Semiotics, semantics, and pragmatics

Semiotics, the general study of signs, includes **semantics**, the inquiry into meaning in natural verbal language, as well as the investigation of other signs for transmitting information of some kind.[42] Actually, there is an ongoing debate concerning the relation between meaning conveyed by means of verbal messages and other, non-verbal sources of information like pictures, dress, hair style and make-up, and so-called body-language, involving body movement, gestures, facial expressions, gaze, and ocular reactions. When such features interact with and modulate language meanings, they are commonly talked of as **paralinguistic** devices.[43]

In addition, natural language semantics can be taken to include also the field of **pragmatics**, that is meaning in language communication that is directly dependent on the situation of use: the interlocutors and other people who may be involved, and also the particular time(s) and place(s) they find themselves in. To see pragmatics as a sub-discipline of semantics seems reasonable and defensible considering that it is difficult to set up consistent and natural boundaries between aspects of language meaning that have been labelled semantic and pragmatic respectively.[44]

In short, semantics has typically in the main been felt to encompass more stable usage principles and sense relations, often with a focus on logico-descriptive content, while more fleeting and situationally induced meaning aspects have been relegated to the field of

---

42 Cf Cruse (2000:7f); Sonesson (1989:14ff); Jakobson (1974:135); Malmberg (1973:9,29f).
43 Lyons (1995:14f & 1977:63–67).
44 On the relation between semantics and pragmatics see Lyons (1995: xii,283,290,308); Taylor (1995:131f); Alm-Arvius (1993:121ff); Hopper & Traugott (1993:67–69); Blakemore (1992:39–48); Johnson (1987:57); Kittay (1987:10f,308f,327); Langacker (1987:147,156f); and Cruse (1986:19,22). On pragmatics especially, see Leech (1983:6) and Levinson (1983:1–35). As regards other meanings of *pragmatic* and the use of the nouns *pragmatism* and *pragmatist*, see Williams (1983:240f) and Carnap (1947:233–247) .

pragmatics. This distinction is however problematic, both from an idealising, theoretical perspective and when it comes to categorising actual language uses—for instance when we discuss the characteristics of particular examples of figurative language.

As a result, it seems most appropriate to say that semantics deals with language meaning in general, although some meaningful aspects of language use can more specifically be called pragmatic, since they are influenced by or directly dependent on the particular situation in which they are employed. In this way it is possible both to recognise the interdependence between more stable meaning factors and changeable parts of language use, and to try to analyse and describe them together so as to create a valid model of the potential and occurrence of language meaning.

As we have touched on above, the interest in especially metaphor in recent years is to a large extent connected with new perspectives on language and language meaning which have been inspired by findings in other academic fields, notably psycholinguistics and artificial intelligence. More specifically, it is part of a reaction against perceived explanatory weaknesses in earlier types of theoretical frameworks, especially so-called formalist linguistics and narrowly truth-oriented types of semantics. In other words, the interest in figurative meanings, or tropes, has in many ways been inspired by the kind of approach to human experiences, behaviour, and mental capacities that we find within the general and interdisciplinary field of **cognitive science**. It reaches across and brings together a number of fields of academic research which formerly tended to be more strictly divided, such as anthropology, artificial intelligence, cultural studies, linguistics, literature, neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy.[45]

In this book I make no claims to cover such an extensive field of research. My approach is linguistically oriented, and concerns how language elements and compositional strings can contain and convey various kinds of figures of speech. I am interested in the communicative, aesthetic, and cognitive capacity of tropes and schemes—in short in their semantics.

Moreover, my studies and work within the field of semantics have convinced me that a more **eclectic** approach to language

---

45 See e g Lakoff & Johnson (1999); Fauconnier (1997); Langacker (1987).

meaning is usually preferable, as it allows us to pay attention to and accommodate different sides of natural language semantics—and, not least, to examine how they appear to be related. The research perspectives and contributions of cognitively oriented studies are worth taking seriously, but other types of linguistic paradigms have also provided us with valuable insights into the nature of language communication and language meanings. In fact, it seems to me that we can arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the semantic capacity and nature of verbal language, including its relation to cognition and culture, if we try to integrate **valid** aspects of different theories dealing with human language use.

1.3 Extended and transferred meanings

Furthermore, we must address the insistent impression that secondary readings of words and strings display varying degrees of figurative dependence on some source sense(s). Although some secondary understandings are without a doubt figurative, the figurative character of others appears less obvious or even debatable, at least from an analytical perspective that focuses on the **synchronic**[46] semantic potentials of verbal languages.

When there is a **transparent**—that is a quite obvious—connection between a source reading and another interpretation of a word or a multi-word string, I suggest that we speak of **extended** uses. Many of these are novel polysemous extensions, but quite a few established secondary senses are also figuratively transparent. Actually, new tropes can be divided into two categories according to what happens to them after they have been created. Some new figurative extensions will be merely incidental and transient **nonce**

---

46 The distinction between **synchronic** and **diachronic** linguistics was first made by de Saussure (1966:81ff). Diachronic linguistics studies the historical development of language phenomena of various kinds, while synchronic research only examines and describes linguistic practices at a particular stage in the continuous development of a language system.

uses, while others are repeated and spread and thus become parts of the language system.[47]

In addition, many conventionalised secondary uses of words and complex constructions have developed a more independent semantic status, as they need no longer be interpreted with the help of their source sense(s). In many cases this figurative association tends to be so backgrounded that users of the language do not spontaneously make it, although they realise that it is there, at least historically speaking, once it is pointed out to them. Consequently, such **transferred** uses ought to be distinguished from transparent figurative extensions.

Admittedly, this distinction appears to be blurred in some cases, for instance because the interpretative networks and strategies of language users can differ. All the same, it is useful and unproblematic when applied to prototypical instances of these two semantic categories, here termed **figurative extensions** and **transference of meaning**.

Figurative extensions ———————— Transferred meanings

In any living language the set of tropes is an **open** one, undergoing constant changes and additions. This partial instability in the occurrence and identification of figurative shifts is connected with the gradable character of the distinction between extended and transferred uses. These two analytical categories are thus not discrete; instead they **overlap**, as there is a zone of categorically indeterminate instances in the middle of the cline. However, there

---

47   It is of course impossible to establish for certain that a figurative expression has never been used before in a language. Although a turn of phrase seems new to most users of a language, it may still have occurred earlier, but not so often that it is recognised by at least some group(s) within a larger speech community.

Clearly, the perceived novelty of figurative meanings is related to definitional considerations concerning what can be seen as a variant of a language. When discussing such questions we must consider different diachronic stages in the development of a language as well as the relation between a standard language and various dialects, sociolects and registers, and indeed also the status of different types of idiolects. Should, for instance, more idiosyncratic uses of learners, including young children and adults with some other mother tongue, be thought of as belonging to a given language?

are also many seemingly clear-cut cases, that is uses that are, at least prototypically, either clearly extended or transferred, and they can be placed at a safe distance from each other at either of the two poles of this analytical **continuum**.

1.3.1 Figurative extensions

In constructions with an **extended** meaning, there is accordingly a clear connection between a more basic **source** content and a **secondary**, **figurative** interpretation. The two pairs of sentences below illustrate the character of figurative meaning extension. In such unquestionable figurative applications a secondary reading is transparently connected to or dependent on a specific type of semantic source. In each of these pairs of sentences the italicised part of the first sentence exemplifies the source sense of an English usage, while the second sentence contains an extended, figurative instance of the same word(s). In (33) we have an imaginatively generalised or metaphorical application of *see (straight) into*, whereas *Buckingham Palace* has a metonymic content in (35), as it here stands for the royal family and their staff rather than for the palace itself.[48]

(32) I could *see straight into* the room from where I stood.

(33) I can *see straight into* his mind; I know what he is thinking.

(34) *Buckingham Palace* was built in 1703 by the Duke of Buckingham.

(35) *Buckingham Palace* refuses to identify which handbag belongs to which queen.

The italicised parts in (33) and (35) are followed by—or collocate with –phrases that cannot be used with the corresponding literal applications in the preceding examples. These differences in collocational behaviour are decisive for signalling that these parts of the statements in (33) and (35) have extended meanings. It is

48 Buckingham Palace is the official London residence of the British sovereign. *Encarta World English Dictionary* (1999:230); Room (1987:39).

impossible literally to see into somebody's mind, and a building, an inanimate object, cannot refuse to give information about something. However, users of English appear effortlessly to adjust their interpretations of such extended uses so that they make sense in a non-literal way.

In other words, language competence seems to involve an ability both to construct and to understand figurative extensions, although there must be interpretative restrictions on the use of extended meanings. These restrictions seem simply to be that it must be possible to conceive of a situation that could reasonably be described by a given extended figurative usage.[49] Needless to say, figurative extensions of the understandings of words and longer strings will not tamper with the inflectional networks and the syntactic frames of a language.

As was outlined in 1.2.1, metonymic shortcuts are made possible by an obvious actual and practical connection between the literal referent(s) and the things or situation described by the metonymic extension. In other words: the basic sense and the metonymic understanding denote things that we know belong together out in the world. In (35) above the name of a place is used about the people who live or work in it. This is a common type of metonymic shift, and the connection that it is based on is fully transparent. Accordingly, this is an undeniable example of figurative extension.

By comparison, a metaphorical extension comes about through perceived similarities between phenomena or situations that need not co-occur practically. The association behind a metaphorical extension is instead of a mental, imaginative kind. In the idiomatic expressions *see (straight) into somebody's mind* and *see (right) through somebody* quite complex conclusions concerning another person's intentions, thoughts, or psychological reactions are described by means of a concretising comparison with the experience of seeing into, say, a room, or seeing through an open door or a glass pane of

---

49 Cf however primary and conventional metaphors as presented in Lakoff & Johnson (1999:45ff). See also the more detailed discussion and outline of restrictions on metonymic shortcuts in 5.1.

some kind, or perhaps even a so-called see-through article of clothing. [50]

Actually, I would hypothesise that metaphorical shifts exploiting a source meaning representing a concrete, quite specific and easily imagined scenario stand a better chance of remaining transparent also when they have become conventionalised, in particular if such a figurative reading does not have a substantial set of sense relations within an obvious lexical field which can support a more independent semantic status.

In Swedish the compound *bollplank* stands literally for a fairly high, flat vertical piece of boards, often a part of a solid fence, which can be used to practice throwing and catching a ball. It is, however, also used to speak of a person whom you can discuss plans and ideas with, commonly professionally, and who will assess them and come up with advice that may be useful. This now firmly lexicalised secondary sense of *bollplank* seems still quite transparent, and this is probably connected with the quite specific, concrete and easily pictured type of scenario that the literal source sense denotes.

Finally, it should again be mentioned that all **novel** tropes are transparent figurative extensions, since they are created through a new exploitation of some source meaning. In other words, they are necessarily directly dependent on the source. Moreover, we have seen that some conventionalised secondary senses also appear to belong to this category of "live" figurative uses.

---

50 Cf examples like the following from the *BNC*: I wondered if she could see into my mind, and I didn't care, for during that one short walk I had come to believe that Lili would not harm me. (*G06* 426); The deep-sea eyes never wavered as he gazed directly at her, and she had to force herself not to turn away, aware of the strangest feeling that he could somehow see straight into her mind. (*HA9* 690); Even the bloody maid can see through me. (*ASN* 606); too idle, too stupid, too drunk or too arrogant to see through me … (*HTG* 762)

1.3.2 Transferred meanings

By comparison, **transferred** secondary senses of words or longer constructions are always **conventional** parts of a language. Partly as a result of this, they do not rely on a more basic source reading in the same obvious way, but can be understood directly, in their own right, without a transparent semantic dependence of the kind that we find in extended uses. There is, for instance, no need to reflect on the fact that the kind of household tool called an *iron*, which is used for making cloth(es) smooth and without wrinkles, was given this name because of a metonymic connection. In short: irons used to be made of the metal called *iron*.

A proficient speaker of present-day English can, however, understand the following type of sentence without having to activate this polysemous association. Further, it is clear that the verb *iron*, as in *to iron a shirt*, is a result of conversion—also called zero derivation—from the noun sense of *iron* exemplified below.

(36) The flex of *the iron* ought to be longer.

Similarly, there is usually no need to evoke the literal meaning of the verb *break* when interpreting the italicised idiomatic phrase in the example below.

(37) I cannot *break my word*.

The more independent status of transferred secondary uses of vocabulary elements is connected with them having acquired **sense relations** of their own within the language system. Collocation preferences and possibilities appear to be the fundamental type of semantic association between words—or rather their senses—in a language system.[51] As a consequence, also meronymic sense relations and hyponymic ones, which include synonymy

---

51   Alm-Arvius (1998:46f).

and antonymy of various kinds, are manifested in syntagmatic strings.[52]

In addition, a descriptive lexicalised sense will have an established denotational relation to a set of phenomena out in the world that meet its semantic characteristics.[53] So proficient speakers of English know what kind of thing *iron* stands for in strings like those given in (36), (38), and (39) without having to calculate its intended meaning via the primary "metal" sense of the noun. Indeed, it may even be somewhat cumbersome to do that today for someone who has never seen an old-fashioned iron, because modern electric irons are made of other, lighter materials.

(38) In those days there were no *electric irons*.

(39) *The iron* and *the ironing board* are in the cupboard.

---

52 The term **meronymy** stands for part-whole relations between lexical items or, more specifically, between their senses. In a meronymic relation the word denoting the whole is called the **holonym** and a word representing merely a part of its denotatum is a **meronym**. The relation between *house* and *window* or *door* is meronymic, the former being the holonym, while the latter two are meronyms. In the same way the primary and literal sense of the noun *face* is a holonym in relation to words denoting parts of a face like *eye(s)*, *nose*, and *mouth*.

By comparison, **hyponymy** is to do with semantic category inclusion, and, like meronymy, it can be dealt with from both an extensional and an intensional perspective. A word with a more general sense, for instance *tree*, is a **superordinate term**—or **hypernym**—in relation to a more specific word, a **hyponym**, which represents just a sub-category, say *oak* or *elm* or *beech*.

In addition, **synonymy** and **antonymy** of different kinds can be explained in relation to the notion of hyponymy. In somewhat ideal logico-descriptive terms, synonymy is mutual hyponymic inclusion, and antonyms whose senses incorporate a common superordinate sense are co-hyponyms in relation to it within a hyponymic hierarchy. In other words, *man* (with the sense 'adult human male') and *woman*, for instance, have antonymous senses because they stand for human beings of different sexes, while their common superordinate term *human being* is neutral in this respect. (Cf Cruse 2000:147–196; Alm-Arvius 1998:50–56; Saeed 1997:60–70; Hurford & Heasley 1983:101–129).

See also section 3.4 on the connection between sense relations and world views.

53 Cf notes 36 and 39, and Alm-Arvius (1998:35f); Lyons (1995:44f & 1977:50–56).

Further, we can note that the opposite of *break one's word* in (37) is *keep one's word*. Both these predicative constructions are, moreover, related to *give one's word*, which has a non-figurative synonym: *promise (something)*.[54]

In the preceding section, 1.3.1, I suggested, on the other hand, that the phrase *see into someone's mind* will be felt to be a transparent metaphorical extension, and it is indeed difficult to think of another, synonymous construction which could be substituted for it in a sentence like the one given in (33) above. Similarly, it is not easy to identify superordinate or hyponymic elements of this predicative expression in the vocabulary of English. By comparison, it is easy to visualise the experience of seeing through an open door, or seeing through a transparent object, say a widow or the windscreen of a car. Taken together these characteristics of *see into someone's mind* will help to make the connection to the source meaning, *see into something (concrete)*, more direct and obvious than it is in transferred uses.

Our analysis of transferred secondary senses can be summed up by saying that even if their figurative status is no longer directly or practically obvious, it can be **revived** as long as such a use is felt to be polysemously related to some other sense(s) of the same lexeme. More specifically, language users may in some cases become aware of such a polysemous relation only after it has been deliberately pointed out to them.

In the discussion above of *iron* and *break one's word* we have done just that. However, these two cases differ in that we have to introduce historical information when explaining the semantic roots of *iron*, a houshold tool, and its now rather tenuous polysemous relation to the primary sense of this noun, which denotes a kind of metal.

By comparison, we only have to revive an obvious but ordinarily dormant insight when we consider the semantic origin of *break* in *break one's word*. When analysing the meaning of this idiomatic expression, it is easy to see that it involves a metaphorical generalisation of the verb *break*, whose **literal sense range** deals with concrete events or causal acts, as in *the glass broke* or *someone broke the*

---

54 See e g *Collins Cobuild* (1995:1929f); Clark (1990:57,586); *Chambers Idioms* (1982: 426).

glass. In *break one's word*—and many other idiomatic predicative constructions—it has, however, been widened to include also a more abstract kind of action. [55]

The semantic contribution of the direct object phrase *one's word* seems, on the other hand, to have a synecdochical character, as *word* is here interpreted as a synonym of *promise*. A promise is a kind of speech act, and formulating it normally requires more than just one word.[56] In addition, words are used in all kinds of speech acts, not just in promises, so this noun is here also applied in a more restricted way compared to its primary and literal sense range.[57]

However, when we consider the empirical application of theoretical semantic notions and distinctions, we must keep in mind that they are necessarily idealised abstractions. Each and every actual understanding of a verbal item or a complex construction is personal, and—in addition—likely to be influenced by the language context and the situation in which it occurs. Every utterance is unique also as regards the communicative intentions of the person producing it, even if he or she need not be conscious or in full control of this message. Moreover, people hearing or reading verbal utterances will to a certain extent be guided by their own personal knowledge, experiences, and assumptions when interpreting them. So in spite of the social character of languages, there is always potential variation in the understanding of specific uses.

This is of course also true of conventionalised figures of speech. As long as it is possible to revive a polysemous link to an at least diachronically more basic source meaning, there is typically no definitive or unvarying answer to the question of the semantic status of established secondary uses of words or strings in a language.

---

55 Verbs like *break*, *melt* and *open* can be either grammatically transitive or intransitive, and this variability is related to their potential for being used with a number of symbolic participant roles when describing a process. In an intransitive clause like *the door opened* or *the ice melted* the theme is put in focus—or profiled—as the syntactic subject. In a transitive string like *the cat opened the door* we find instead a semantic agent in subject position, while we have an instrument subject in *the hammer broke the glass*. English verbs which allow the theme to be realised either as the syntactic subject of an intransitive clause or as a direct object are sometimes called ergative. (Cf Langacker 2000:24–43; Crystal 1985:42f,111f; Fillmore 1971; Lyons 1971:350ff).

56 Cf Austin (1975:11,20); Searle (1969:54–71).

57 Cf Cruse (2000:87ff); Alm-Arvius (1998:39–46,95–97); Huddleston (1988: 6f,23f).

Although many of them seem usually to be taken as more inde-
pendent transferred uses, their figurative origin may be revived on
some occasions.

Furthermore, it seems clear that many secondary readings of
prepositions which basically denote spatial relations are transferred
or even obscured metaphorical applications. It has, for instance,
often been pointed out that many prepositions in temporal expres-
sions have transferred meanings. The use of *in* in the second sen-
tence below is an example of this.

(40) They had been out walking *in the woods*.

(41) They should be here *in an hour*.

(42) *Above the table* hung a shabby old lamp.

(43) A colonel is *above a major* in rank.

Clearly, the primary and literal senses of prototypical prepositions
like *above*, *behind*, *below*, *between*, *in*, *inside*, *on*, *out*, *outside*, *over*, and
under denote spatial relations of some kind.[58] More specifically,
such prepositional meanings appear to connect directly to spatial
image schemas, that is generalised cognitive representations
resulting from our bodily experiences of being, moving and acting
in concrete space with its three basic dimensions: length, height,
and width. In other words, image schemas can be understood as
generalisations over a large number of more specific **experiential
domains** involving concrete existence and activities in space—or,
in fact, rather as generalisations over the internalised structured
impressions of very many concrete and specific spheres of experi-
ence. Accordingly, image schemas ought to be important for more
grammatical senses, like those of prepositions, while prototypical
lexical senses also associate to representations of more specific sorts
of experiential domains, as these will be richer in denotational
details or associations. [59]

---

58   Cf Frawley (1992:250ff); Lakoff & Johnson (1980:14–19,25–32).
59   Cf Alm-Arvius (1998:42–46); Hopper & Traugott (1993:80). The notion of image
      schemas was developed and treated at length in Mark Johnson's book *The Body
      in the Mind. The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (1987).

However, through meaning transference this aspect of the meta-phorical association of prepositions that primarily denote spatial relations has now largely faded away for most language users, at least in examples like that given in (41), making it a mainly **diachronic** aspect of their meaning. All the same, it is still funda-mental enough to be revived in a deliberate analysis of such second-ary prepositional meanings.

The preposition *in* is semantically grounded in the container schema, while *above* draws on or presupposes an image schema representing vertical relations among concrete phenomena. Inter-estingly enough, these spatial image schemas may occasionally still be reflected in the altogether conventionalised uses of *in* and *above* in (41) and (43) respectively.

Quite generally speaking, both image schemas and the represen-tations of specific experiential domains appear to be crucial aspects of the semantics of any human language.[60] Human cognition and the understanding of both specific elements and longer stretches of verbal language interface. The nature of this relation between semantics and human psychology is no doubt very complex, how-ever, and the exploration of it has only begun, in particular within the interdisciplinary field of cognitive science and its various sub-disciplines.

1.3.3 An analytical continuum

As has been outlined above, the distinction between extended and transferred uses is not discrete or clear-cut in all cases. Even within a largely synchronic, present-day English perspective, it is not always possible to say for certain whether a given language applica-tion with a secondary, polysemous reading is just transparently extended or a more independent transferred usage. No doubt indi-

---

60 Cf Saeed (1997:308–318); Lakoff (1987:292f,300,313,435,440–444). We should note, however, that in particular Langacker's term *schema(s)* stands for general-ised or typified cognitive representations at many different levels of abstraction. Also lexical senses are schematic, and this is why they can take on more specific interpretations in different, actual contexts (1987:68–71,74f,81,158,189,371f, 378–386,476–480,492). However, Langacker's (2000:24) notion of **conceptual archetypes** seems to include what is here termed image schemas.

vidual members of the same speech community—say that of standard English—sometimes differ as regards their interpretative strategies or their more specific conceptions of the status and connections of distinct uses of words and syntagmatic complexes. Various aspects of particular language contexts, referential circumstances, and communicative situations can also contribute to either **promoting** or **demoting** the polysemous relation between different meanings of the same verbal item or string. An obscured figurative association can, for instance, be revived in a pun. (Cf Chapter 4 below)

As in many other cases of semantic distinction, there appears thus to exist a **gradient** or **continuum** with more indeterminate occurrences in between more obvious, **prototypical** examples of either of these analytical categories.

The model below was first presented at the end of the introductory part of section 1.3 of this study. Significantly enough, its explanatory potential draws directly on a most basic and superordinate image schema in human cognition: our experientially based knowledge of living and acting in three-dimensional space.[61]

Figurative extensions ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ Transferred meanings

In other words, this model is also metaphorical, as it describes the differences and connections between transparent figurative extensions and transferred meanings by means of a horizontal expansion in space with end points, or poles, corresponding to the unquestionable instances of each of these two analytical categories. The middle part of the line in this model suggests, however, that they also overlap, because there are language uses that cannot conclusively be placed in just one of them. The more elaborate, but still very idealised figure below illustrates the overlap between the categories of figurative extensions and transferred meanings.

Langacker (1987:386) suggests, for instance, that the conventional use of *star* as a synonym of *celebrity* can either be taken as a metaphor or be interpreted on its own, that is without evoking a

---

61   Cf Lakoff (1987:267ff,282f,302,443–459).

Figurative
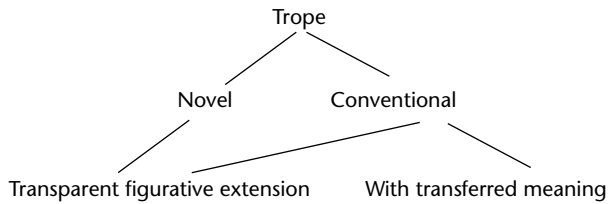extensions

Transferred
meanings
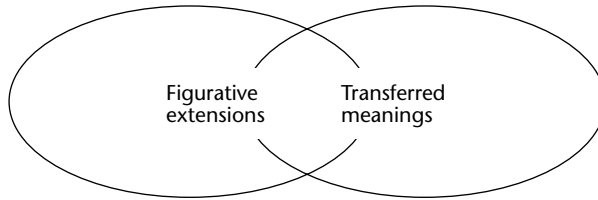
figurative connection with the primary sense of the noun. According to Langacker, the metaphorical understanding means that both these senses of this polysemous lexeme are activated. By comparison, there is no such co-activation of senses when users of English interpret *star* just as 'celebrity' without being aware of its possible metaphorical status.

So in spite of many analytically unclear instances this distinction seems explanatorily relevant and useful. It helps us to recognise a quite important difference between two (partly overlapping) subcategories of tropes. More specifically, it highlights the observation that all novel figurative applications are transparent meaning extension, and that conventionalisation often—but not necessarily—gives a more independent status to an at least initially figurative usage.[62]

---

62 As Leech (1981:225–227) has pointed out, lexicalisation tends to involve both formal fixation—of the expression side, that is—and the narrowing down of the extensional range of a particular word or multi-word expression. This can be compared with the impression that an incidental figurative use has a wider range of possible associations and interpretations, while an idiomatic, transferred application of a language construct will have its own ready-made sense, whose central and prototypical features are shared by the members of a given speech community. (Cf Alm-Arvius 1993:8f,15)

Furthermore, it should perhaps be mentioned that extensional narrowing is necessarily coupled with a more specific and complex sense. Speaking of the extension of non-propositional senses is problematic, and many metaphors build, at least originally, on emotive, merely connotative associations that are not criterial parts of the source sense. (Alm-Arvius 1998: 35f,58,104f; cf Alm-Arvius 1993:12). However, when the extensional range of a lexical item can be roughly determined, it is also relevant to keep in mind that the narrower it is, the more specifying features are associated with its sense. In other words, there is an inverted relation between the sense and the extension of a word or multi-word phrase: a complex sense, like that of *mountain bike* or *coffee-table book*, with plenty of specifying features, means that the extralinguistic extension is comparatively small, while a very general sense, like that of *thing* or *phenomenon*, is denotationally connected with a considerable number of potential referents out in the world.

```
                         Trope
                          /\
                         /  \
                    Novel    Conventional
                     /\            \
                    /  \            \
   Transparent figurative extension   With transferred meaning
```

The use of the verb *wipe* in (44) below is presumably unconventional and new, at least to most speakers of standard English in the year 2001. At any rate, this is clearly an extended metaphorical application, as users of English will have to interpret it in relation to the literal sense of *wipe* in constructions like *wipe the table/floor (with a cloth)*. Indeed, some normatively inclined users may even question the appropriateness—or even the acceptability—of many metaphorical extensions that they have not met with before.

> (44) Digital cameras store images on disks that can be *wiped* and reused.

When it is no longer necessary, but still possible, to connect a given language use with a source interpretation, a once clearly transparent figure of speech is **moribund**. It is arguable that for instance the secondary senses of *paper* and *tart* exemplified below are independent enough to be considered transferred and typically moribund figures of speech. However, if we deliberately analyse these senses, we see that they are related to readings that are usually felt to be more central and basic in the lexicalised polysemous network of these two English nouns.

> (45) Her *paper* on female characters in Shakespeare's plays was brilliant.

The type of (countable) reading of *paper* exemplified above is a synonym of *essay* or *talk*, depending on the more specific circumstances in which it is used.[63] This secondary sense of *paper* is metonymically—or more precisely synecdochically—related to the pri-

---

63   Cf *Collins Cobuild* (1995:1196); *Longman* (1995:1024).

mary (uncountable) sense of the lexeme denoting the kind of material that documents are printed on. This "material" sense of *paper* is found in phrases like *bit/piece/scrap of paper* and *sheet of paper*, and in compounds like *paper doll* and *paper money*.[64]

The offensive use of *tart* in the next example must instead have come about through a metaphorical extension. It is now established enough, however, to be understood without an imaginative dependence on the primary sense of this noun, which we find also in compounds like *strawberry/apple tart*.

(46) That make-up makes you look like a *tart*.

1.3.4 Dead metaphors and severed metonymies

By comparison, a **dead metaphor** or a case of **severed metonymy** no longer retains any interpretative association at all with its etymological source meaning.[65] It seems reasonable to hypothesise that in any language there are uses whose senses were once figurative, although they have later completely lost their interpretative dependence on a historical source content. As the examples described below show, there are different types of dead metaphors and severed metonymies.

When language elements are given new meanings without discarding the old ones, meaning shifts result in polysemy. Most of these semantic changes are either metaphorical or metonymic. As long as members of a given speech community recognise a polysemous connection between two different conventionalised under-

---

64   Langacker (2000:15–18) has observed that the meaning of a complex expression, e g a transparent compound like *pencil sharpener*, is only partially compositional, because it will involve specifying features that cannot be said to be directly inherited from either or any of its parts. See also e g Alm-Arvius (1998:20f,91f,97).

65   Cf Kittay (1987:142). The terms *dead metaphor* and *live metaphor* are of course themselves basically metaphorical. (Black 1977:439) The same is true of *moribund* and *severed (metonymic shift)* in the main text above.

    Moreover, my definition of *dead metaphor* is quite strict. This term is often applied to uses that I would merely label moribund, since a more deliberate examination of them will revive (!) their metaphorical status. (Cf Lakoff & Johnson 1999:84,87,119,124f; Svanlund 1989 & 1999; Martin 1987:220f; Leech 1981:214; Newmark 1981:85–87)

45

standings of the same word or construction, a secondary use will, at least potentially, retain its figurative character, even in cases where it tends to be obscured on most occasions of use. But when there is no longer such a polysemous connection, the figurative status of a usage will also have faded away.

The original metonymic relation between the geographical name *Jersey* and the kind of material or article of clothing called *jersey* seems to have been completely severed in English. Sheep were common on the island of Jersey, and woollen sweaters were knitted from their wool. Nowadays a *jersey* need not be made of wool, however. All the same, there is still a polysemous connection between the material sense of *jersey* and the sense of the noun denoting a kind of garment.

In other cases, a figurative association disappeared with the source sense. In modern English *beads* are small, usually round pieces of wood, coloured glass or plastic which are put together on a piece of string to serve, for instance, as a necklace or a bracelet. A rosary is also a string of beads, and this helps us to explain the etymology of this noun. It meant 'prayer' originally, but through a metonymic shift the word became instead a label for the pieces of a rosary that are touched one after the other to keep count of a series of repeated prayers: five sets of ten Hail Marys, each preceded by one Our Father and followed by a Glory Be.[66]

Similarly, the Swedish compound *lintott* illustrates how changes in the way of life of a speech community can make a source sense inaccessible to most of the users of a language, resulting in metaphor death and **literalisation** of the earlier metaphorical meaning. Nowadays the singular form *lintott* and the plural *lintottar* directly denote children with very blond or even whitish hair. I have been informed, however, by staff at a country museum that originally the literal sense of *lintott* represented a tuft of flax hung to dry before it was made into threads and used for weaving linen cloth.

Furthermore, a figurative origin can be concealed because the expression side of an item has changed. A *daisy* is a small pinkish or white flower, but the noun was originally a metaphorical com-

---

66 Cf Skeat (1993:38); Warren (1992:6–8,10); *COD* (1990:94,1047); Langacker (1987:383f); Ullman (1962:194); Jespersen (1922a:175).

pound corresponding to the modern English phrase *day's eye*.[67] When its compound character was lost, its figurative status also disappeared.

(47) There were lots of *daisies* in the garden.

Window is another English lexeme whose figurative etymology has been completely erased. It was originally a loanword from Old Norse, where it was a metaphorical compound, *vindauga*, the first part of which meant 'wind', while the second element meant 'eye'.[68]

Indeed words normally shed their figurative character when they are borrowed into another language, unless perhaps in special cases where the languages are closely related. In the middle of an eye there is a small round black area, which can be extended or narrowed somewhat depending on the surrounding light conditions. This central part of the eye is called a *pupil* in English. The corresponding Swedish noun *pupill* is spelt in a similar way, although the pronunciation is different. The German translation equivalent, *(die) Pupille*, is also noticeably similar. In all these three Germanic languages this word for the central, black part of an eye is felt to have a literal sense. All the same, their etymological origin was metaphorical in Latin. The Latin word for the *pupil* of an eye was *pupilla*, a diminutive form of *pupa*, which meant 'little orphan girl' or 'female ward'.[69]

In the same way the Swedish noun *pinuppa* means just a woman with sex appeal, typically a young woman in a picture in a newspaper or magazine which reveals her physical assets.[70] This is a loan

---

67 *COD* (1990:291); *Collins* (1979:375).
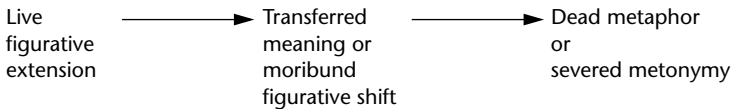68 Cf Skeat (1993:564); *COD* (1990:1405).
69 Ahlberg, Lundqvist & Sörbom (1960:718); cf Skeat (1993:379); *COD* (1990:970); Ullman (1962:98,177,226). The English homonym *pupil*, a near synonym of *schoolchild* and AmE *student*, also comes from Latin diminutive forms: *pupillus* and *pupilla*. The first of these is based on *pupus*, 'boy', and the second is based on *pupa*, 'little girl'. They were used in the sense of 'male/female orphan' or 'male/female ward'. Accordingly, the female diminutive *pupilla* was polysemous, meaning either 'orphan girl/ward' or, metaphorically, the 'black central circle in the eye'.
      Actually, *metaphor* is a loan from Greek, where this word was itself a metaphor. It meant literally "carrying something from one place to another, transference." Kennedy in a note on p 222 in *Aristotle on Rhetoric* (1991).
70 Dahlstedt & Hagervall (1990:117); Malmström, Györki & Sjögren (1988:405); *Ord för ord* (1977: 468).

from English, where the form *pin-up* can apparently still reflect a metonymic association with the verb *pin up*. A *pin-up (girl)* is a picture of an attractive woman that men like to look at and therefore *pin up* on the wall. Alternatively, it is just used to describe a sexy woman regardless of whether she is in a photograph or not. However, there are also *pin-up boys* in English; that is men who are somehow felt to be attractive.[71] As usual, we see that the loanword has a narrower sense range in the borrowing language, including a loss of the original figurative association, compared to how the word is used in the language in which it was coined, which is English in this case.

Consequently, a conventional figurative and polysemous relation is normally tied to a specific language system and the linguistic competence of its speech community. It cannot be borrowed into another language.[72] However, people who know two or more languages well may often be more aware of semantic connections between cognates, including loanwords, in different languages. All the same, it is arguable that such cross-linguistic associations on the part of bilingual or multi-lingual speakers merely have a connotative character.

Live figurative extension	⟶	Transferred meaning or moribund figurative shift	⟶	Dead metaphor or severed metonymy

---

1.4 Schemes

The use of metaphor, metonymy, and other tropes involves non-literal exploitation of the semantic potential of a language, including its connection with general human experiences and cognition. But as was mentioned in the beginning of this book, in section 1.1, **repetitions** of elements that are instead part of the **formal expression side** of a language have also been considered a kind of figure of speech, and they are now usually called **schemes**.

> (48) Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.[73]

Repetitions of phonological elements, notably phonemes or specific phonotactic combinations, as well as the regular re-occurrence of the same type(s) of syntactic structure(s) can create an impression of **rhythm** within a language string or a sequence of textually related strings, and the same can be true of repetitions of word forms. This is exemplified by the proverb above, and by 'The House that Jack Built', a well-known English nursery rhyme. It is expanded from the first short verse to the last and longest one given below by adding one relative clause after another. It also contains several examples of phonological schemes or **rhymes**.

> (49) This is the Farmer who sowed the corn,
>   That kept the cock that crowed in the morn,
> That waked the priest all shaven and shorn,
>   That married the man all tattered and torn,
> That kissed the maiden all forlorn,
>   That milked the cow with the crumpled horn,
> That tossed the dog, that worried the cat,
>   That killed the rat, that ate the malt,
> That lay in the house that Jack built.[74]

Different types of rhyme are prototypical schemes, notably **end rhyme** and initial consonant rhyme, also called **alliteration**. The proverb below contains both these devices. *Feather* and *flock* both

---

73 *Longman Idioms* (1979:19).
74 *Read Me a Story* (1976:25).

begin with the consonant /f/, and the same phonemic sequence is repeated at the end of *(f)eather* and *(tog)ether*.

(50) Birds of a feather flock together.

The next example is a newspaper headline of an article about a lady's "astonishing collection of clothes" which was up for sale. No doubt the descriptive enumeration of "frills, furs and frocks" has been chosen because it contains three words that alliterate with each other.

(51) A life story in frills, furs and frocks (*The Daily Telegraph*, Aug 28 1999: 23)

The Spitfire pilots were mainly responsible for saving Britain during the Blitz in the summer of 1940, and Churchill praised them, using the following now classical formulation in one of his radio speeches. It contains an example of **parallelism**, as there are three examples of *so* with a following quantifier: "so much", "so many", and "so few" (italicised by me in (52) below). Accordingly, parallelism is usually not just a rhythmic device, as it will also involve repetition and variation of some semantic qualities.

(52) Never in the history of human conflict has *so much* been owed by *so many* to *so few*. [75]

Actually, using words which are somehow semantically related to each other close together in an utterance or at structured intervals in a text can evoke a similar sort of impression as the rhythmic recurrence of formal characteristics in prototypical schemes.

(53) Whatever you have opened—box, cupboard, chest, side-board, wardrobe, car boot, trunk or music stool—check before you shut it. There's probably a cat inside. (Vicki Knowles)[76]

Indeed, the use of formal schemes can be combined with the accumulation of semantically related words in a communicatively effec-

75   Quoted on p 57 in Julia Newhouse's *Spotlight on Churchill*.
76   Quoted in *The Cat Notebook* (1985)

tive way. We see this, for instance, in the first stanza of Ted Hughes's poem 'Examination at the womb door' from his collection of poems called *Crow*.

(54) Who owns these scrawny little feet? *Death*
       Who owns this bristly scorched-looking face? *Death*
       Who owns these still-working lungs? *Death*
       Who owns this utility coat of muscles? *Death*
       Who owns these unspeakable guts? *Death*
       Who owns these questionable brains? *Death*
       All this messy blood? *Death*
       These minimum-efficiency eyes? *Death*
       This wicked little tongue? *Death*
       This occasional wakefulness? *Death*
       (Hughes 1974:15)

In this introductory part of the poem meronymically related words describing different parts of a human body are used within recurring clausal and phrasal structures to build up an intricate aesthetic and experiential message. Moreover, the attitudinal pre-modifiers of the "body" words no doubt help to increase the complex force and potential effect of this poetic extract.[77]

Examples like those in (52) and (54) suggest that the categories of tropes and schemes can hardly be considered quite discrete. Instead they appear to overlap in some respects. In fact, this should not really be surprising, given the pervasive interaction of formal and semantic qualities in verbal languages.[78] If we reflect on how our impression of a piece of language use may be influenced by formal schemes, we realise that they can appear aesthetically and emotionally meaningful. Indeed, they may even be felt to contribute to new experiential insights. In other words, the use of formal schemes is to do with how we take in and react to verbal messages, even if their semantics is not clearly symbolic or translatable into other meaning

---

77 Cf illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect, Austin (1975:98ff).
78 It may be useful to know that the term *figure* (*of speech*) has, in fact, been given the same kind of restrictive meaning as *scheme*, for instance in works on rhetoric. In this more dated type of terminology *figure* (of speech) and *trope* are thus an antonymous pair, corresponding to the distinction between tropes and schemes that is used in this work. (Cf Freeborn 1996:66ff; Wales 1990:176f,413; Leech & Short 1981:78,82,89f,95,140,144f)

carrying forms, as it is tied to the expression side of a language. Accordingly, their effect on us may seem primitive and mystifying. Nonetheless, it is arguable that they can work together with more straightforward semantic properties and entities in making a piece of language use coherent and meaningful.

Although phonological, structural, and even lexical repetitions of a schematic, rhythmic character occur also in other text types, they are especially associated with poetry. This has already been exemplified above, and the first stanza of 'The Song of the Jellicats' by T S Elliot from *Cats* also illustrates this prototypical feature of poetic language.

> (55) Jellicle Cats are black and white,
> Jellicle Cats are rather small;
> Jellicle Cats are merry and bright,
> And pleasant to hear when they caterwaul.
> Jellicle Cats have cheerful faces,
> Jellicle Cats have bright black eyes;
> They like to practise their airs and graces
> And wait for the Jellicle Moon to rise.
> (Elliot 1962:25)

Schematic repetitions appear to **foreground** the sounds or formations in question; that is they are made more prominent. As a result, such constructions attract the attention of language users more easily, and they also seem to be easier to remember. Moreover, their rhythmic character tends to be aesthetically attractive, and this typically appealing audible quality is of course connected with their common function as **mnemonic**[79] devices. Schemes often appear to have this function in idiomatic constructions of different kinds, for instance in the proverbs in (48) and (50) above. Similarly, they have helped to make rhetorically effective and famous quotations like the one from Churchill in (52) parts of the knowledge and language competence of many members of different speech communities.

---

79 *Mnemonic* can be either an adjective or a noun in English, and *a mnemonic (device)* is a memory aid. (*Collins Cobuild* 1995:1065; *Collins* 1979:946) This English word is etymologically based on the name of Mnemosyne, the Greek goddess of memory. (*Classical Dictionary* 1996:270)

Tony Blair coined the phrase *the people's princess* when talking about Princess Diana on her tragic death in a car accident. I would suggest that the success of the phrase, which immediately caught on, was due to the recurrence of the phoneme /p/ just as much as to its more strictly semantic qualities. A direct translation into Swedish, for instance, does not sound as attractive: *folkets princessa*.

Finally, we can note that playful schemes seem to be the main raison d'être for many nursery rhymes. Actually, I would suggest that schemes in nursery rhymes help young language learners to practice phonological features and syntactic constructions—and perhaps also syntagmatic lexical relations in spite of their often somewhat exceptional or jokey semantic contents.

(56) Hoddley, poddley, puddle and fogs,
    Cats are to marry the poodle dogs;
    Cats in blue jackets and dogs in red hats,
    What will become of the mice and the rats?[80]

Various types of especially formal rhythmic repetition, which must be said to be meaningful in their own special way, are dealt with below in Chapter 6.

---

80 *English Nursery Rhymes* (1997:11).

2 The Grounding of Meanings in Language

2.1 More on non-figurative and figurative meanings

2.1.1 The gradient from non-figurative to figurative meanings

In the introductory chapter above the character of language and language meaning(s) was outlined, especially in section 1.1. In addition, basic characteristics of figurative language were discussed and described in sections 1.2 to 1.4. In this chapter I shall examine the semantic capacity of human verbal language(s) in greater detail, because the significance and nature of different types of figurative uses must be studied within a general explanatory framework. In other words, the semantic character or function of any kind of figurative usage must be compared to applications of language elements that both language users in general and language experts would consider non-figurative and more basic or prototypical at a given synchronic stage of a language system.

However, it is sometimes difficult to say for certain whether a given language example should be considered figurative or non-figurative.[1] To be sure, this distinction is many-faceted and complicated. The following uses of the noun *fire* clearly stand for different meanings, although they are also without a doubt **polysemously** related.

---

1   Cf Levinson (1983:150).

(1) The cottage had been destroyed by *fire*.

(2) The old man was sitting in a chair by *an electric fire*.

(3) His speeches were always full of *fire*.

In the first of these sentences *fire* as an uncountable noun is exemplified. In such applications *fire* represents a mass of flames of larger or smaller dimension. This kind of literal *fire* meaning also occurs as part of idiomatic constructions like *catch fire*, *(be) on fire*, *set fire to*, and *set on fire*.

Moreover, there are literal uses of *fire* as a countable noun. In (4) below the noun phrase "a fire" stands for a spatially delimited and concrete occurrence of fire. More precisely, in this type of context we understand that *a fire* describes a pile of burning material, like twigs or larger pieces of wood and perhaps also dry leaves and grass. Such a fire has been lit by someone who intends to control it and use it, for instance to keep warm or for cooking.

(4) The tramps had made *a fire* in a forest clearing.

However, as we all know, there are also *fires* that are destructive and start or at least develop without anyone controlling them, for instance *bush fires*, *forest fires*, *grass fires*, and *house fires*. Devices like *fire alarms*, *fire escapes*, and *fire extinguishers* are there to help us quench fires or avoid being harmed or even killed by them, and *fire brigades* turn out to fight fires when they are called on to do so.[2]

(5) Several people were killed in *the fire*.

Accordingly, the primary and literal sense of *fire* constitutes a partly open set of more specific understandings that are associated with different **experiential domains**, and which thus occur in diverse sorts of language contexts.[3] The possible understandings within this **literal sense range** of *fire* tend not to be discrete, but rather overlapping or similar types of interpretation. The partly open character of this set of conceivable literal *fire* readings means that it does not just contain conventionalised, recurring types of *fire* uses, but also the potential for new applications of *fire* in constructions that capture other, specific or even unique experiences or conceptions of *fire* in a satisfactory way.

The *fire* example in (3) is however clearly metaphorical, and such **secondary** or **figurative** meanings of the noun do of course not belong within the literal sense range of *fire*.[4]

By comparison, the use of *fire* in the lexicalised compound *electric fire* in (2) is not so easy to categorise. An electric fire is not a real fire, but a fake fire, which nonetheless shares many of the characteristics of real fires in fireplaces and stoves that are lit, controlled and used by people. Electric fires have often been made to look like real ones with reddish colours that imitate those of flames. Their function will also be the same as that of a prototypical real fire in a fireplace: they are both used to keep people and places warm. However, electric fires cannot be used for cooking or for destroying something by burning it. Accordingly, the interpretation of *fire* in *electric fire* can hardly be said to be manifestly metaphorical, although it is also

2   Quite broadly speaking, a set is just a definable collection of things (Cann 1993:44,93; Allwood, Andersson & Dahl 1977:3). Within semantics the notion of sets can be used to describe and analyse meanings, including established senses in a language system, which are related to each other. In a semantic set belonging to a particular language the meanings usually both share specific features and differ from each other in certain respects.

   A closed set does not admit new members, and grammatical senses form sets of this kind—even if it is arguable that no part of a natural verbal language is completely resistant to change. The members of prototypical grammatical sets such as the personal pronouns or different finite and nonfinite verb forms in English are few and discrete. This is obviously a result of grammatical sense contrasts being very generalised as well as firmly integrated in the language system.

   By comparison, interpretations of lexical constructs will be both more specific and more variable, and especially the latter characteristic is directly related to the partly open character of lexical sense sets. New lexical items or new interpretations of existing ones are constantly admitted, and even if also the lexical inventory of a language is subjected to stabilising systematic pressure, it is more changeable than the grammar of a language. This is why the literal sense (range) of *fire* is described as a partly open set in the main text above.

   Moreover, the compounds in this paragraph that have *fire* as either the first or the second element should of course not be thought of as exemplifying different sub-senses within the literal sense range of the noun *fire*. They are separate lexemes, although they are semantically related to literal understandings of *fire*. Usually, the semantic character of a compound cannot simply be said to be a combination of the senses of the words that were used when constructing it. Instead a lexicalised compound will have additional and somewhat reshaped semantic properties, including its own denotation and sense relations. Cf note 64 in Chapter 1.

3   Cf Cruse (2000:119f). Note also the distinction between *experiential domains* and *language senses* proposed on p 14 in section 1.1.

4   Cf Kövecses (2000:84–89).

questionable whether it belongs within the literal sense range of the noun.

The next four examples from Alm-Arvius (1995) illustrate a number of similar stages from a straightforward literal application of a lexeme to an undeniably metaphorical sense. I suggested in this article that more unobtrusively extended uses like those in (7) and (8)—and accordingly also *fire* in *electric fire*—be spoken of as **approximations**. Actually, these two uses of star connect directly to a culturally entrenched way of representing stars in pictures and artefacts. This type of star image is also employed in stereotyped pictorial signs that show, for instance, the different standard levels of hotels or the ranks of army officers. The use of "star signs" in such circumstances is reflected in language expressions like *four-star hotel* and *three-star general*.

(6)   There are *many stars* in the Milky Way.

(7)   They had hung *a metal/paper star* in the window.

(8)   She sat doodling *small blue stars* in her notebook.

(9)   She was once *a famous star* in show business.[5]

In all the examples above, we see that our interpretation of a specific lexical item is influenced by the other words it occurs with in a phrase, clause or sentence. More specifically, the semantic cueing given by such **syntagmatic** combinations appears to interact with our conception and recognition of different types of experiential domains in our understanding of verbal messages.

The following ingenious and very famous example was constructed by Noam Chomsky.[6]

(10) Colourless green ideas sleep furiously.

It shows that words cannot be strung together merely on the basis of their membership in word-class categories like nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs which fit specific slots in syntactic strings. Even if the syntactic functions and relations of all the words in (10)

---

5   Cf Pustejovsky (1995:48,90–93); Langacker (1987:386); Ogden & Richards (1985:103).
6   Chomsky (1965:149).

are easy to establish, the sentence is semantically ill-formed and nonsensical. The reason for this is, as Chomsky pointed out, that the combination of words in (10) breaks selectional rules concerning what lexical items can be used together.

The impression that the sentential string in (10) cannot even be interpreted in a figurative way means that the co-occurrence possibilities of these words are violated in a most flagrant manner. As we have seen in many examples in this study, obvious but still understandable aberrations from basic collocational tendencies are common. In other words, such structures are felt to make sense if they are given some figurative reading, no doubt because they somehow package and comment on human experiences and reactions in a way that is calculable by extending the meaning of a source.

Chomsky's immensely influential book *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* was published in 1965. However, the British linguist J R Firth had earlier introduced the term **collocation** for the syntagmatic compatibility of words.[7] In short, the Chomskyan term **selectional restriction(s)** is to do with the same type of combinatory potential that Firth had in mind when he spoke of collocation(s): that is co-occurrence possibilities and limitations between words in language strings.

Moreover, it is clear that instances of lexical units occurring in predicative or modifying syntactic positions are often semantically adjusted to fit the meanings of words with more independent denotations or a central referential status. The partly different but still literal readings of the gradable adjective *long*, the verb *swim*, and the preposition *in* in the examples below illustrate the character of such **collocational tailoring**. [8]

(11) It's a *long* way to Tipperary.

(12) His ideal woman is tall and slim with *long* legs and flowing hair.

---

7   Wales (1990:76); Firth (1957:194–214). Even if Firth established *collocation* as a technical term in linguistics, it appears not to have been his own coinage, as "the word had been loosely applied in linguistic contexts previously" (Chalker & Weiner 1994:70). (Cf Ullman 1962:98)

8   Alm-Arvius (1998:47f); Allerton (1982:27–29); cf Kittay (1987:135); Hurford & Heasley (1983:111f).

(13) We learnt to *swim* in a pond in the woods.

(14) The dolphins were *swimming* alongside the boat.

(15) The beetles were crawling around *in* the glass jar.

(16) The air *in* the room was stale and smelly.

In other cases it is debatable whether the distinct but still fairly closely related readings of words induced by different types of collocates should be characterised as separate, established senses or sub-senses of a lexeme, or whether the dissimilarity between them should be considered a result of different types of collocational tailoring of a more general sense. The partly distinct meanings of the verb *sing* exemplified in the first two clausal contexts below are cases in point. However, even if these uses of the verb are interpreted in somewhat different ways, it is arguable that they are both **literal**. In other words, we can hardly say that one of them is secondary to or interpretatively dependent on the other.

(17) The birds started to *sing*.

(18) The church choir used to *sing* some of these hymns.

These two typically distinct readings of *sing* are brought together in one and the same instance of the verb in the next sentence, and the question is if this construction is zeugmatic or not.

(19) Both the girls and the birds *were singing* joyfully in the park.

If this coupling of two co-ordinated subjects representing humans and birds respectively with the same instance of the verb *sing* is felt to be inconsistent, this is an example of **zeugma**.[9] As a consequence, *sing* with human subjects and "bird subjects" would appear to be separate, established senses of this verbal lexeme. In

9   Zeugma occurs when one and the same instance of a lexeme or composite phrase is combined with two or more elements that require different readings of this word or phrase, e g ?*He gave me his word and a smile*. (Cf Abrams 1993:184; Trask 1993:309; Wales 1990:484). Because the governing word or expression must be interpreted in two different ways in such a construction, zeugma has also been considered a figure of speech (Crystal 2001:372 & 1992:427). This appears reasonable when it is used in order to achieve a certain semantic effect.

other words, our analytical problem is whether the polysemous variation in the understanding of literal *sing* occurrences illustrated above should be considered a systematic and lexicalised sense distinction, or whether both these literal uses of the verb should be taken to draw on the same more general, primary *sing* sense.

At any rate, it is hard to claim that the construction with two co-ordinate subjects of the predicate phrase "were singing joyfully" in (19) is so deviant that it cannot be used to convey a fully under-standable description of a situation where some girls and some birds were singing at the same time. Instead it would appear to highlight both the similarities and the differences between the singing of birds and the singing of some young human females. Indeed, such deliberate and communicatively effective uses of zeugma can be considered a type of figures of speech akin to punning. (See Chapter 4 below)

Actually, it may well be that we need not choose definitely between these semantic analyses. When we are trying to explain such moderate variations in the semantics of a lexeme, it may not be defensible to force quite discrete definitions and applications of especially the two terminological notions sub-sense and colloca-tional tailoring. [10] Given the gradable character of very many linguistic phenomena, it would instead appear most realistic to allow at least the notions of sub-sense(s) and collocational tailoring to shade into each other. In view of the fact that cognitive catego-ries, including language senses, tend to be built around prototypical exemplars, while they will overlap with other, related categories in their more peripheral parts, the acknowledgement of such inter-sections between analytical notions, and the categories they estab-lish, need not be seen as a theoretical weakness. In other words, insisting on the correctness or explanatory validity of merely one of these possible explanations of the semantic status of these two

10 Cf also variation in the understanding of words or constructions which can be explained as a result of *conversational implicature(s)* prompted by the situation in which an utterance is used, or is supposed to be used. Such an implicature is, however, different from collocational tailoring in that it is in principle defeasi-ble, or deniable in more everyday words. This means that it can be cancelled by adding information that shows that the premise it was based on is false in that situation. Moreover, conversational implicatures are non-conventional, while collocational tailoring depends on the conventional sense(s) of the word(s) inducing it. (Levinson 1983:100ff; Grice 1975; cf Alm-Arvius 1993:121–166)

types of applications of *sing* may simply be succumbing to what Langacker calls the **exclusionary fallacy**[11].

All things considered, we can thus conclude that the occurrence of collocational tailoring is related to the gradable character of the distinction between non-figurative uses and figurative shifts. In short, more pronounced examples of collocational tailoring result in readings of specific lexical items that can be described as approximations. We see this, for instance, in the semantic adjustment of premodifiers in relation to their nominal heads in combinations like *heavy/light rain* and *red/white meat/wine*. Similarly, *white coffee* is in fact brownish, and even the adjective *black* in the directly contrastive expression *black coffee* cannot be said to have a strictly literal descriptive meaning. All the same, such exaggerated—or hyperbolic—descriptive contrasts are no doubt effective in that they accentuate the difference between the denotata of these antonymous pairs.

Metonymic shifts that can at the most be termed approximations are also common and difficult to notice. However, if we really think about it, it is clear that the four applications of *window* below strictly speaking stand for partly different concrete spatial extensions. In addition, it is not easy to say which type of reading is the most central or basic one, although the last one in (23) seems somewhat less literal than the other three. The preceding instances of *window* in (20) to (22) are all directly related to the same literal, **meronymic** concept of this part of a building.

(20) *The windows of the old mansion* were lovely, really artistic masterpieces.

(21) Sarah opened *the window* and called out "It's lunch time!".

(22) "Who smashed *the window*?"

Actually, the kind of sense relation termed **meronymy** and the types of figurative shift that we speak of as metonymy and synec-

---

11   Langacker (1987:28). Baker suggests that speakers may have different cognitive strategies—his expression is "cognitive style"—when interpreting distinguishable readings of polysemous lexemes, as some may tend to keep fairly closely connected readings apart, while others "lump" them together. Similarly, he divides analysts of polysemy into "lumpers" and "splitters" (1999:228f,236f).

doche exhibit similar semantic characteristics. In particular, it is obvious that meronymy and synecdoche both concern part-whole relationships, but all metonymic shortcuts, including those that can be labelled synecdochical, build on experiential connections between different parts of complex entities or scenarios. [12] (See 5.5)

(23) They stayed outside the shop, looking at all the things *in the window.*

In (20), the first "window" example above, the noun phrase "the windows of the old mansion" probably refers to the whole construction of these building parts, including the frames around the openings in a wall, while "the window" in the second sentence, (21), can only be meant to represent the movable part that can be opened and shut. In the third situation, described in (22), it was probably just a windowpane that was broken[13]. By comparison, "in the window" in the last string, (23), must be taken to stand for the space behind the glass of a shopping window where goods were displayed.

Accordingly, figurative and non-figurative language applications can hardly be considered two quite discrete analytical categories. Instead these notions seem to shade into each other to a certain extent. One reason for this overlap is of course the dynamic, changeable character of human language, exemplified, for instance, by the occurrence of collocational tailoring.

In fact, it is the semantic flexibility of human languages that makes it possible for us to use them in innumerable functions in our daily lives. We use verbal utterances to deal with a seemingly infinite set of experiences and reactions. Language uses can represent both real and merely hypothetical situations, specific qualities, and other, more complex phenomena, and they can express feelings and serve as indicators of social relationships of various kinds.

---

12 As regards the connection between meronymy and metonymy see Alm-Arvius (1999); cf also Saeed (1997:78).

13 Concerning these three partly different but also closely related understandings of *window* cf Taylor (1995:265) and Lakoff (1987:417f). Cf also Cruse (2000:111,114–123) for general comments and analytical suggestions regarding uses that seem most appropriately to be placed in a greyish area between outright lexical monosemy and indisputable lexical polysemy.

In addition, the semantic mechanisms behind figurative and non-figurative language uses seem to be partly similar or at least comparable. In particular it is interesting to note the correspondences between hyponymy and metaphor, on the one hand, and between meronymy and metonymy, on the other hand. I shall discuss these further in Chapters 3 and 5 below. All in all, it is thus not surprising that there seems to be an analytical continuum between cases that are clearly non-figurative and clearly figurative respectively. In between these two dichotomous poles we can place examples whose character is not as straightforwardly non-figurative or figurative for some reason.[14]

Non-figurative ———— Approximation ———— Figurative
uses   uses

2.1.2 Literal meaning and source meaning

Whenever we identify a certain use of a specific word or longer construction as figurative, there must also exist a more basic, typically non-figurative type of application of this language element. Indeed

---

14 This analytical continuum can be compared to Cruse's **sense spectra** of different interpretations of lexemes (2000:119f & 1986:71–74,83,164). Cf also Cacciari & Glucksberg (1994:449)

   By comparison, Alm-Arvius's term **polysemy chain** stands for a wider notion (1992b:140f; cf Jackendoff 2002:340f). Within such a polysemy complex all distinguishable recurring readings, or senses, are polysemously related at least to certain other established uses of the same lexeme. However, in some polysemy chains there are senses that seem semantically quite unrelated, although they are both (or all) clearly related to a more central sense. The English noun *box*, for instance, is clearly polysemous, but it is difficult to discern any direct semantic relation between the use of *the box* as a synonym of *televison* or *the televison set* and occurrences of *the box* denoting the penalty area in football (that is the game that is called *soccer* in America). All the same, both these uses of *the box* are without a doubt metaphorically derived from the primary sense of *box*, denoting a kind of container. Cf *Collins Cobuild* (1995:188); *COD* (1990:132)

   The occurrence of polysemy chains can be compared to Wittgenstein's famous claim that the different activities that can be described as *games* are not united by any specific and, as it were, isolable characteristics that are shared by all of them. Instead he suggested that games form a *family* connected by *family resemblances*. (1968:31ᵉ–36ᵉ, cf 3ᵉ & 5ᵉ) These metaphorical (!) notions are vague and intuitive, although explicit definitions are generally preferred in science, but they have still inspired many language analysts.

it is this contrast between **source** meanings and figurative shifts connecting to them that constitutes the defining characteristic of figurative language. A source and a figurative **target** are *both* obviously related *and* different in meaning. This is why it is odd to claim that all language usage as well as the cognitive processes associated with it is figurative, or metaphorical. Terminological categories like metaphor and metonymy require an antonymous relation to more basic non-figurative interpretations in order to make sense.[15]

Furthermore, it is clear that a prototypical source meaning is **literal**, and in figurative uses of a single lexeme the source is also for the most part its primary or dominating sense. This is true, for instance, of the metaphorical use of *stain* in the second example below. The primary sense of this noun, which serves as the source of the metaphorical extension in (25), is exemplified in the preceding sentence.

(24) She could not remove the *stain* from her blouse.

(25) There was not a *stain* on his character.

However, in the next example the whole (italicised) predicate is metaphorical. More specifically, this predicative string is a **mixed metaphor**. The words in it draw on different source domains that are not naturally interconnected. All the same, they can be brought together in a metaphorical way to convey a coherent semantic content. This is possible because the incompatible qualities of the **different source senses** have been suppressed in the metaphorical reading. The generalised meaning features that remain in the metaphorical construction are instead quite compatible. More specifically, this metaphorical complex is dependent on a joint accommodation of the lexical senses in the predicate to the more abstract meaning of the noun *increase*, the head of the subject phrase "the increase in violent crimes". This phrase functions as the subject not just in relation to the finite predicate verb "shows", but also indi-

---

15 Some theorists, notably Derrida and others working within the deconstruction paradigm, reject the distinction between literal and metaphorical meaning. Instead all meaning is metaphorical according to their view (Novitz 1985:101ff). Cf Ortony (1993a:2).

65

rectly vis-à-vis the nonfinite occurrence of the phrasal verb *slow down* within the postmodification of the direct object.

(26) The increase in the violent crimes *shows no signs of slowing down*.

All the same, the source of a figurative shift is not necessarily a single or complex element with literal contents, more strictly speaking, even if this is commonly assumed without further reflection or analysis.

(27) Her brother *saw me in* and told me to wait in the kitchen. I did not realise until later that he was blind.

See in *see somebody out/in* is metonymically related to the primary sense of the verb, which can be paraphrased as *perceive visually* or *perceive with the eyes*. When you see someone in or out of a building, you go with them, and in this process you normally make use of your eye-sight as a matter of course. However, using this kind of secondary *see* pattern with an active subject representing a blind person is quite acceptable, and does not mean that the sense of this type of phrasal *see* construction is tampered with in any significant way. The *see* predication in the sentence below is, on the other hand, a metaphorical exploitation of this secondary, metonymic *see* sense, exemplified in (27) above. [16]

(28) We usually sit up and *see the new year in*.

Actually, it seems as though a conventional figurative use that describes a concrete thing or event, like *see in* in (27), can in its turn serve as the source of yet another figurative exploitation.

Moreover, it happens that idiomatic metaphorical expressions that stand for something more intangible are "reversed" and used to describe some concrete experience, sometimes in a punning way that includes both the conventional non-literal meaning and the "revived" literal understanding. For instance: if a woman has bought a red dress and her husband thinks that they cannot afford it, he could use the idiom *see red* in this way, exclaiming "Now you

16 See Alm-Arvius (1993: 190–205).

have really made me see red!". This kind of sometimes merely partial reversion of figurative idioms can be rhetorically effective, and they are found, for instance, in newspaper headlines, clearly in order to attract attention and make people read the following article.

2.1.3 Literal meaning and concrete meaning

Because of the antonymous relation between *literal* (meaning) and *figurative* (meaning) the former term is also a central one in studies concerning tropes. In section 2.1.1 above the gradable character of the notion 'figurative meaning' was discussed in relation to a few examples that cannot be said to be either straightforwardly literal or obviously figurative. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge that the concept 'literal meaning' is, in fact, analytically somewhat problematic and difficult to define in an empirically valid way.[17] At any rate, several examples given earlier in this work show that it cannot be considered a synonym of concrete meaning.

A **concrete** sense denotes something that can be directly perceived. We take in information about the world around us through our bodily sense modalities. They are in particular the five main senses that people in general are aware of: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell.[18] Words that basically denote natural kinds[19] like *cow* or *oak*, artefacts like *car*, or directly perceptible qualities like *red*, *square*, *sharp*, or *hot* can be said to have concrete primary senses, which are literal as well, although these lexemes also have established secondary senses. However, it is important to keep in mind that there are also figurative uses that stand for concrete phenomena, like the *crown* of a hat or the *singing* of a tea kettle. (Cf 1.2.1 above)

---

17 Cf Kittay (1987:50–55,322); Martin (1987:222); Davidson (1979:39–42); Searle (1993:84–89 & 1978:220–223).
18 This is of course a fairly gross simplification of the perceptual capacities of human beings. The functions of perceptual systems are physiologically and psychologically complex, and so is their interplay with external physical conditions of various kinds.
19 See e g Cruse (2000:55,317).

Factually descriptive lexical words with direct denotational links to sets of concrete phenomena and situations out in the world have obvious literal senses. A number of examples were given in the preceding paragraph, and the primary senses of verbs like *run*, *sit*, and *shout* also illustrate how the literal status of a sense is prototypically associated with the perceptible character of the phenomena that it denotes.[20] By comparison, it may seem more difficult to decide whether words and formations that express emotive or social meanings—say *ouch*, *damn* or *thank you*—have literal senses. An even more acute analytical problem typically arises with language senses that denote more abstract matters, and which cannot be said to be figurative, like the senses of the nouns *analysis*, *relation*, and *structuralism*. Factually descriptive senses representing concrete matters are thus prototypically also literal, and this no doubt explains why the notions 'literal' and 'concrete' tend to be connected. All the same, it is clear that they should not be equated, for instance because some figurative uses describe concrete things and events.

Actually, an interpretation of an utterance can usually be considered literal if it just accepts the words and the grammatical patterns used in it at face value, as it were, taking them to convey nothing except their basic senses—within the present language system, that is. A literal description of a factual situation should be truthful and direct. Similarly, it is arguable that a social expression like *Please come in* or a subjective statement like *It's awful* is understood literally if it is taken to be sincere, or if it just appears intended to convey the basic and conventional meanings of these lexemes. So even if an utterance like the following could be intended or interpreted as an ironic comment, that kind of secondary understanding would not be a result of the literal contents of the words used in this string.

(29) "Good morning, John, nice to see you again."

---

20 Senses of words representing beings like *fairies* and things like *magic wands* have a similar character, however, even if their denotata are merely parts of fairy-tales, sagas, and myths. As a result, they occur, as it were, in directly perceptible form in plays, operas, fancy-dress balls, and carnivals. We also meet with them in human artefacts. They can be seen in pictures and films, and they occur as toys, figurines, and statues.

In other words, literal interpretations avoid "reading between the lines", that is including conceivable but still not ordinarily expected connotative qualities, or the kind of inference called conversational implicature.[21] Even more importantly, a literal interpretation cannot involve any kind of possible figurative extension of the language construction(s) in question, because a figurative use pushes the literal reading into the background, even though it draws on selected aspects of this basic meaning. In other words, literal meanings are not just contrasted with figurative applications. Implicatures and connotative aspects also deviate from what can be considered the literal content of a word or complex language string.

Nonetheless, it can be difficult to agree on all particulars of the literal meanings of words or compositional strings, or to pin them down precisely through some kind of explicit definition. It is generally recognised that especially lexical senses are normally somewhat fuzzy and impossible to delimit exactly, for instance in sense explanations in dictionary entries. Similarly, the compositional meanings of phrases, clauses, and whole sentences will not be exactly delimited either in all conceivable respects. Instead they can often be interpreted in partly different ways, even if they are taken literally, because of specific situational and contextual factors. Consider, for example, how easy or difficult it would be to determine the literal meaning of each of the following English sentences—or any particular part of them—given as they are here out of a specifying language context and/or discourse situation.

(30) The whole of England will be mostly dry tomorrow with sunny spells developing in the afternoon.

(31) The Indonesian dictator who ordered the invasion of East Timor in 1975 was removed by popular protest last year.

(32) Andrew was very young and lean and smoked too much.

(33) "Speak up, please."

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that at least the adverbial form *literally* is sometimes used in a hyperbolic, metaphorical sense. In other words, it is *not* a synonym of *verbatim* or *non-figuratively* in such

21 See section 2.1.6, note 10.

69

contexts. The following example is from Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, and it is quoted and commented on by Göran Kjellmer in his article '*Literally*: a Case of Harmful Polysemy?'.[22]

(34) Our eyes were literally pinned to the curtain.

The next example is from Quirk et al.[23] They call this sort of hyperbolic use of *literally* a metalinguistic comment adverbial, and more specifically an emphasizer.

(35) She *literally* flew out of the room.

I would like to add that such exaggerated and generalised senses in certain subjunct adverbials may appear to constitute a first step in a grammaticalisation process. These secondary adverbial senses are associated with stylistically more informal texts or situations, and they will be used in order to achieve a dramatising rhetorical affect. In strings like *How awfully/frightfully nice of you*, the intensifier function of adverbials like *awfully*, *frightfully*, and *terribly* is quite established, and although this is a separate grammaticalisation paradigm, such instances can still be compared to the type of non-literal (!) emphatic use of *literally* exemplified above. The latter occurrences are also similar to, for instance, *absolutely* in idiomatic—almost clichéd—turns of phrases like *There is absolutely nothing on TV tonight*.

Even if such applications of *literally* are avoided in academic language dealing with semantic questions, it is worth remembering that they occur in standard English. They can be seen as a useful reminder that *literal* and *literally* are not well-defined technical terms, but rather lexical words in everyday, general English. Such vocabulary items typically have somewhat fuzzy senses, which can be modulated and even figuratively extended, if a speaker or writer feels that this serves his present communicative needs. Quirk et al highlight the occurrence and nature of the type of secondary, polysemous use of *literally* exemplified above by pointing out that "in careless and informal speech, and indeed in writing, the adverb comes to be used in ways that are 'literally' absurd".

22 Kjellmer (1981:277).
23 Quirk et al (1985:19).

However, in spite of the difficulties encountered when trying to find criteria for what can be considered a literal sense or interpretation, we should try to sum up this overview by suggesting a general rule of thumb for what can be spoken of as a literal sense in a language. In short, a sense can be said to be literal if it is recorded all in its own right in the lexicon or grammar of a language, without being a figurative extension[24] or even a less transparent, but still traceable transfer of some other, more basic sense. Moreover, the semantic status of a sense must be decided within a synchronic perspective, and it cannot involve other language systems. At the beginning of this section it was pointed out that *literal meaning* is an antonym of *figurative meaning*, and in this collocation *literal* should have its basic and verbatim non-figurative sense, which is directly contrasted with the sense of *figurative*. (Cf 1.3 above)

2.1.4 Figurative meaning and abstract meaning

The English noun *idea* and the adjective–noun collocation *spiritual values* are examples of language elements that have **abstract** senses. Significantly enough, many analysts may hesitate to speak of the standard understandings of *idea* and *spiritual values* as literal senses, but they are not figurative either in present-day English, because they do not connect to a polysemously related source sense.

Actually, more abstract language meanings seem to be of two kinds. The first type represents things that cannot be directly perceived. A couple of examples were given in the preceding paragraph, and a *thought*, a *concept*, or a *memory* are abstract in the same way. The second type of abstraction is to do with semantic **generalisation**. Such a generalising sense brings together categorical sets of concrete phenomena that share some characteristic(s), although they are dissimilar in other respects. For instance *mammal* is thus more abstract than nouns representing specific mammal species like *bear*, *monkey*, *mouse*, *whale*, and *zebra*. Specific specimens of

---

24 However, as I pointed out in section 2.1.2 above, it is arguable that the terms *metaphor* and *metaphoric(al)* would hardly be needed, or indeed make sense, without established sense relations to other lexical items, and the concepts they delineate, like *literal* or *literally*.

71

mammals or particular mammal species can be directly perceived, but they do not in themselves straightforwardly represent the more comprehensive notion of 'mammal'. Instead the latter is a generalisation resulting from the abstraction of certain features that otherwise distinct species have in common. Similarly, examples of *decoration* or a specific *present* or *reward* can be concrete, but as *decorations*, *presents*, and *rewards* come in many different forms, the sense of each of these lexical items cannot be mastered by just linking them denotationally to a set of things with largely the same kinds of directly perceptible characteristics.

As a matter of fact, all linguistic senses are generalisations of the characteristics of the groups of things that they denote. Schematic idealisations of categories appear to focus on **prototypes**, that is particularly characteristic or "good" examples of the kind of phenomena that a language sense symbolises.[25] The semantic qualities *abstract* and *concrete* are thus not discrete, but rather gradable antonyms. It is arguable that all abstractions somehow connect to concrete impressions or personal experiences. Accordingly, it is not surprising that formulations such as the one below occur in actual language use. It shows that an *idea* can be felt to have concrete and actual counterparts out in the world.

(36) She is *my idea of a really good teacher.*

Metaphors typically say something about more abstract matters, and as a result the character of metaphor is easily confused with that of abstract language senses. Nonetheless, it is important to keep the notions of metaphor and abstract senses apart.[26]

The use of a live and transparent metaphor to deal with some more abstract experience can instead usually be considered an attempt at **concretising** it through a "fake" categorical extension of the source contents based on imaginative, partial comparison. A metaphorical characterisation is a fanciful generalisation of the

---

25 Langacker (2000:8–10,26–29,103 & 1987:14,16f,371,492); Ungerer & Schmid (1996: 10ff,264–267); Taylor (1995); Rosch (1878, 1977 & 1975); Rosch & Mervis (1975).
    By comparison, proper names have individual referents, and they cannot be considered lexical items within the vocabulary of a specific language system. (See e g Alm-Arvius 1998:83f; Saeed 1997:27f)
26 Cf Lakoff (1987:268).

source sense(s) which cannot be empirically or factually verified. In fact, it can be claimed that live metaphors are strictly speaking lies. All the same, there is often no other means to communicate about largely non-perceptible matters, including abstracting generalisations. The connection to the source contents of the word(s) given a metaphorical reading can make it easier to handle such intangible experiences or phenomena cognitively, but it is also worth asking to what extent this interpretative link may skew our understanding of more abstract matters. After all, a metaphor can never be said to be straightforwardly or factually true.

A user of English can, for instance, speak of *searching her mind for something*. Significantly enough, *search for* here collocates with *mind* which denotes an abstract complex of psychological capacities and processes such as remembering, thinking, and understanding. Similarly, people can *catch* contagious diseases, *hold* a specific opinion, *fall in* and *out of* love, and *earn* a reputation, even if these secondary senses of the italicised verbal lexemes need not be transparent really for many speakers on most occasions of use.

Indeed many conventional and now moribund metaphorical transfers have developed ready-made senses of their own that can be characterised as largely abstract. This is exemplified, for instance, by the uses of *way*, *view*, and *angle* in the following sentences.

(37) They won't accept the *way* things are at present.

(38) Many Western intellectuals have found it hard to respect the traditional *way* of life in other cultures.

(39) Is this the best *way* to break in a horse?

(40) There are many theoretical *views* of how the environment can affect the development and change of somebody's personality.

(41) These plans must also be considered from an economic *angle*.

So the general distinction between abstract senses and metaphorical meanings is important and empirically valid, even if it is clear that many now abstract senses were originally metaphorical. Obviously, the notions of abstract meaning and figurative meaning

and their relevance for the semantic description of specific vocabulary elements must be considered in relation to a given synchronic stage of the language in question, disregarding now obscured etymological roots, even when these seem recoverable through diachronic findings and analyses. Many lexical items were, for instance, once borrowed from other language systems that were or have been in contact with the language in which they are now used. As is well known, borrowings from other languages—notably Old Norse, French, Latin and Greek—make up a large part of the vocabulary of English, our chief object of study.[27]

Accordingly, the distinction between figurative and abstract meanings is not invalidated by the fact that many now abstract lexical words were once figurative, perhaps in another language. This seems to be true of *idea*, which historically speaking is a loanword based on a Greek word that appears to have been a metaphorical coinage.[28]

As has been concluded, concrete language senses denote phenomena that we have direct perceptual experiences of: physical objects and substances and specific qualities of them like colours, shapes, temperature, or texture, and, in addition, activities, processes, and states like *dancing*, *boiling*, and *sleeping*. By comparison, abstract words represent conceptual complexes that do not correspond directly to things that can actually be perceived. The uses of *way*, *view*, and *angle* in (37) to (41) above, the nouns *intellect, reason,* and *future*, the adjectives *profound* and *extinct*, and the verbs *deduct* and *concern* are examples of words with more abstract senses. Their denotata do not consist of physical matter—at least not straightforwardly—nor do they stand for directly observable types of situations involving physical phenomena of some kind. Instead abstract senses are very obviously human conceptual constructs which try to make sense of more subtle, general experiences.

Actually, it is arguable that all senses in a language, as well as incidental meaning shifts in the use of them, are human conceptions or attempts to categorise our experiences. Obviously, the distinction between concrete and abstract meanings is not discrete, but

27   See e g Rynell (1969:25–42); Strang (1970); Pyles (1971:313–341).
28   Skeat (1993:215); *COD* (1990:585); *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (1966:459,1009). Cf Williams (1983:152); de Man (1979:15f).

rather continuous or **gradable**, because we can talk of meanings as being more or less concrete or abstract. Cases in point are words that describe states-of-affair and processes of various kinds like the nouns *accident*, *change*, *circumstance*, *event*, *incident*, and *state*. They do not stand for physical objects or even specific physical qualities. Instead they denote whole complex types of scenario. [29]

2.1.5 Three analytical distinctions

As the analyses above have shown, the following distinctions no doubt partly overlap[30], but it is also important to realise that they are not identical:

a) **source** meaning—**figurativ**e meaning

b) **literal** meaning—**figurative** meaning

c) **concrete** meaning—**abstract** meaning

Even if prototypical source meanings are literal, examples (27) and (28) above show that the source of a figurative use can itself be the result of a figurative shift. In other words, such a source is in its turn associated with its own, more basic source content.

Moreover, we must distinguish between abstract meanings and figurative interpretations. The difference is that a figurative understanding has been constructed through an imaginative extension of some distinct but still related semantic source, while an abstract sense is not secondary in this way, as it does not constitute a retrievable figurative shift from some polysemously related source within the same language system.

All the same, many language senses that we would now categorise as abstract seem historically to have developed from figurative extensions of some kind. *Recollect* was constructed by adding the prefix *re-* to the stem *collect*. Both these morphological elements come from Latin, and this verb once meant 'gather together'. *Attract* and *abstract* have similar etymologies. They are also of Latin origin. The former comes from *ad-*, meaning 'to', and *trahere*, 'to

---

29   Cf Alm-Arvius (1993:42–44); Lyons (1977:441– 466).
30   Cf Lakoff (1987:268).

draw', and the latter can be traced back to the past participle of *abstrahere*, 'to draw away'.[31]

In addition, many secondary uses of English prepositions, for instance, are comparatively independent of their primary senses which describe concrete spatial relationships. More specifically, such semantic variation may involve an element of grammaticalisation, as the prepositions are often more obviously context-dependent function words in their secondary applications. Their primary, spatial senses—or sense ranges—are, on the other hand, more substantial and independent with antonymous relations like typical lexical words. Accordingly, they can in themselves be said to contribute significantly to the composite meaning of the syntactic strings in which they occur. In the first example below *on* contrasts with other locative prepositions: *above*, *behind*, *in front of*, and *under*. The number of antonymous contrasts is smaller in the temporal phrase in (43), and in the last example *on* can be seen as nothing but a part of the lexical construction *congratulate (somebody) on (something)*.

(42) The photos are *on* the green box over there.

(43) I can do it *on* Monday.

(44) He *congratulated* me *on* my victory.

2.1.6 Conversational implicature and paralinguistic modulation

Finally, we should note the importance of the kind of meaning variation that Grice brought to the attention of language analysts, and which he termed **conversational implicature**. This kind of addition to the explicit contents of utterances results from the interplay between conventional, more schematic language meanings and situational knowledge and assumptions. In other words, conversational implicatures seem obvious consequences of utterances because of the situation in which they occur. More specifically, a Gricean implicature depends on some seemingly natural

31 Skeat (1993:243f,517).

inference concerning what a speaker means, although s/he has not explicitly said this. Conversational implicatures should be intended, and it should be possible for a speaker either to voice them verbally or to cancel what first seems to be such a natural corollary of a language message by giving additional information. [32]

In addition, utterances can be coloured by non-verbal, **paralinguistic** indications. For example the interrogative clause

(45) Is that your car

can be understood in many different ways depending on when, by whom, and how it is uttered. It could, for instance, be a question asked by a policeman who thinks that the car must be moved, but it could also be an exclamation, signalling that the speaker thinks that the car is really impressive—or, instead, the kind of car that she would not be seen dead in. Indeed, a given utterance containing this interrogative string could be felt to be both a question and an exclamation at the same time, expressing, say, disbelief or shocked amazement. In other words, the theoretical notions of conversational implicature and paralinguistic modulation could both be relevant for explaining the overall impact of this string in a given communicative situation.

Moreover, it is clear that the suggestions given above concerning the possible utterance function of the interrogative string in (45) by no means exhaust its communicative potential. Instead it is reasonable to conclude that it is impossible to predict what implicit or paralinguistic qualities a verbal string can be coupled with, and on many occasions they need not really be intended or controlled by the speaker.[33]

Actually, many conventional figurative senses, notably metonymic shortcuts, incorporate encyclopaedic experiences and expectations in a way that is directly parallel to the kind of inference that can be explained with the help of Grice's model of conversational implicature. Especially in British English the noun *tea* has a secondary 'meal' sense, illustrated in the next two examples. It can be ana-

---

32   Levinson (1983:100ff); Grice (1975); cf Gibbs (1999:67f,70,74); Yule (1996:35–45); see also note 10 above.
33   Alm-Arvius (1998:13–15,27–29,90f); cf Lyons (1995:32–40,169,235ff,272,277–290).

lysed as metonymic—or synecdochical—because we know that in these contexts *tea* stands not just for the drink called *tea* but for a type of full meal had in the late afternoon, typically around 5 pm.

(46) They had *tea* at the Ritz.

(47) Thomas went up to his room after *tea*.

Similarly, if someone is said to be just *in his shirtsleeves*, it is generally understood that this man is wearing a whole shirt, but no jacket. In addition, it is assumed as a matter of course that the rest of his body is dressed as well: that he has also put on trousers and shoes, and probably also socks and some underwear.

However, the notion of conversational implicature does not appear as valid when it comes to explaining the character and function of metaphors that exhibit a clash of collocational possibilities from the point of view of the source contents of the words in a string. I call such uses **internal** metaphors.

(48) The girls *flew* out of the room.

In principle it should be possible to **cancel** a conversational implicature by supplying additional information, but this test could only be applied to **external** metaphors, which could also be given a literal reading. The following sentence could say something about a young bird that is learning to fly, but it could also be a comment on the attitudes and prospects of a teenager. (Cf 3.2.7)

(49) A *fledgling* is preparing for a life of its own away from its parents.

By comparison, it does not appear possible to reject the metaphorical character of internal metaphors like those in (48) and the following example by simply adding some kind of additional explanation.

(50) *Her eyes were snared by* a green silk dress in the shop window.

2.2 Theory and the grounding of language meanings

A **theoretical** model of the semantics of natural verbal language(s) should be an earnest attempt to give a broad and diversified account of how meaning can be contained in linguistic elements and structures and conveyed through actual language use. Existing semantic paradigms are typically based on the accumulation of critical discussions and testing of earlier theories as well as on some novel approach to questions of meaning. In other words, new theoretical hypotheses and the paradigm shifts that they may result in are commonly the outcome of perceived shortcomings in current theories and gradually developing attempts at remedying what seems to be amiss.[34] Unfortunately enough, this has sometimes led to the rejection also of valuable insights in older theories, and/or a somewhat narrow-minded preoccupation with specific aspects of language meaning. The refusal on the part of some behaviouristically oriented linguists to accept that language competence must involve covert mental phenomena is such an unwarranted limitation. To point this out is not to deny that observations of actual language production are important for the scientific study of language. Such empirical evidence is without a doubt essential. All the same, it does not seem possible to build theories of meaning just on the outward, observable behaviour of language users.[35]

Similarly, it seems untenable to claim that propositions are abstract semantic entities that could exist independently of human minds, or which could at least be quite independent of the means for formulating them within specific language systems.[36] It is arguable that we cannot always give equivalent factual accounts of situations in different languages. If language meanings that could

---

34   Cf Cann (1993:1f); Kuhn (1993); Hawking (1989:10–14).
35   Cf Leech (1981:61–73); Ogden & Richards (1985:22); Chomsky (1965:193f,204–206).
36   A proposition is a factual description of a situation out in the world. It is typically conveyed by means of a simple declarative clause, functioning as a statement. If the proposition corresponds to this extralinguistic situation, it is true, but if this is not the case, its truth value is instead: false. (Cf Alm-Arvius 1993:13f; Johnson 1987:3f; Martin 1987:178–182; Hurford & Heasley 1983:19–22; Lyons 1977:141–148,162–173)

79

be called factual directly mirrored the character and build-up of the physical world, language differences of the kind that can be discussed with the help of the concept of **linguistic relativism**[37] would not be so frequent and commonly difficult to overcome, for instance in translation work.

In addition, I question the claim within cognitive semantics that language constructions are regularly somehow secondary to or dominated by cognitive constructions—which are simply called thoughts (of various kinds) in everyday English.[38] Instead I would hypothesise that a language will help mould the cognitive structures and attentions of people who use it to a certain extent, although the semantic potential of a language and the cognitive potential of its users cannot be equated. Rather it would seem as though semantics and cognition interact in intricate ways, in language use as well as in other kinds of psychological processes. For instance, artists usually give names to their paintings and sculptures, and this will no doubt influence how they are interpreted.

If we then return to the general question of the relation between theorising and empirical observations in language studies, I would like to stress more emphatically a basic scientific standpoint that I have already touched on in this study: clearly, all theoretical suggestions should somehow be supported by **empirical observations** of language competence and actual language use. Metaphorically speaking, empirical observations can be seen as building blocks that should be arranged in an explanatorily valid way within a theoretical model. In addition, pieces of empirical evidence serve, as it were, as different types of touch stone against which both more novel hypotheses and more developed theories can be tested.

Some useful observations can be the result of **introspection** on the part of native speakers of a language. However, in order to study how a language is actually used, insights from introspection should

---

37   The view that the language people speak influences how they conceive of things in the world is also known as the **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis**. There are stronger and weaker versions of it, and the latter seem more reasonable, for instance in view of what we know about inter-language communication like interpretation of oral messages and translation of written texts. Cf e g Trudgill (2000:13–16); Sampson (1980:81–102).

38   See e g Lakoff & Johnson (1999:123) or Fauconnier (1997:13).

be complemented with genuine examples of language perform-ance.[39]

In other words, language researchers should collect and analyse both authentic discourse material involving at least two interlocu-tors, and genuine texts constructed by one or several people and directed at readers or hearers who do not actively participate in their production. Conversational material is typically oral, though "chatting" on the Internet, for instance, seems also to belong within this category. Conversational discourse tends further to be spontaneous and unedited, while the production of **non-conversa-tional texts** is often more deliberate and typically written rather than oral.

Accordingly, conversational discourse often displays informal **stylistic** qualities, while many non-conversational texts show a greater awareness of **prescriptive** tradition, because the language in them appears more controlled and "correct". As a result, many non-conversational texts are also felt to be more formal or impersonal. However, it is usually possible to distinguish quite a few different **discourse types** or **text types** within a language like English which is used for many different communicative purposes, and they will be associated with various stylistic characteristics. So we cannot simply say, for instance, that oral language is informal, and that written language is stylistically neutral or more formal. Stylistic judgements and choices are often subtle and intricate rather than ruled by strict and obvious conventions.[40]

The most important characteristic of a semantic theory is what is considered to be the **grounding** of meaning in language.[41] I shall give a short, general outline of different proposals concerning this central question in natural language semantics, including a number of influential theories that basically differ because they have different conceptions of the nature of language meaning. Finally, I shall in very general terms relate my own view of semantics to this overview of approaches to the meaning side(s) of language.

---

39 Cf Ogden & Richards (1985:19–23); Chomsky (1965:8,194).
40 Cf Cruse (2000:61); Quirk et al (1985:13–34); Lyons (1977:67ff); Crystal & Davy (1969).
41 Cf Barcelona (2000a:2); Cruse (2000:10–16,96–102); Langacker (2000 & 1987); Saeed (1997:45–47); Lyons (1995:40f); Rydén (1995); Kittay (1987:121–139); Sampson (1980).

a) Certain theorists view the relation between semantic construc-
tions and objects, substances, and situations out in the world as
the central and constitutive basis of natural language semantics.
Such theories focus thus on the **referential** links or the **denota-
tional** dependence of language meanings; that is the relations
between words, grammatical patterns, and compositional
language strings and the extralinguistic phenomena that they
represent.

Truth-conditional theories deal with the factual contents of
statements about situations in the world—that is propositions—
and the essentially strictly empirical and impersonal factors that
make it possible to decide whether they are true or not.
Similarly, there are theorists who have claimed that utterances
are only meaningful if the accounts they give of real world
situations can be satisfactorily **verified**.

This kind of standpoint concerning what language messages
are important and possible to study scientifically was inspired by
the theory of science termed **positivism**.[42] Thinkers of a more
orthodox positivist bend insist that scientific endeavours of any
kind are necessarily limited to what can be empirically observed
and tested—that is verified or falsified—with the help of strictly
rational, logical or mathematical methodologies. Positivism was
in many ways a reaction against philosophical metaphysics,
which often tended to be connected with ethics or even a
religious outlook on life. As was pointed out above, the tenets
and methodology of **behaviourism** are also built on this type of
view of what constitutes proper science.

b) **Structuralist** semantics focuses on **internal** meaning relations
between different parts of a language system.[43] It has for
instance developed the analysis and description of lexical rela-
tions like synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and collocation.

Structuralist linguistic analyses have often been combined
with a referential perspective involving the study of proposi-
tions, truth conditions, and truth values. Although the basic per-
spectives of these two approaches are noticeably different, they

---

42   Cf Williams (1983:238f).
43   Cf Williams (1983:139f,301–308).

have been combined without apparent inconsistencies in more comprehensive theoretical models. Structuralist notions of systematically dependent language senses can, for instance, be integrated with the identification of the truth conditions of propositional statements. More specifically, the sense of a lexical or grammatical construct could be said to be the contribution it makes to the truth conditions of a proposition.[44] This can be seen as a result of the claim that the sense (or intension) of a language element identifies the phenomena it denotes: that is its extension out in the world. Accordingly, there appear to be a number of natural analytical connections between the internal semantic structures of a language and things out in the world.[45]

Some types of structuralist analysis are mainly **descriptive**, but there are also more **functional** types of structuralism which assume that the use of both formal and semantic aspects can help to explain why they occur in (a) language.

c) An interest in actual language use and pragmatics tends to call attention to the role of **discourse** factors in language under-standing. This is in many ways also a functional approach to linguistics, including semantic matters.

A sociolinguistic orientation is in many respects similar, as it points to the influence of **cultural** and **social** aspects of language usage and interpretation.

In addition, **stylistic** choices are meaningful in themselves, and they are typically dependent on the discourse topic as well as the character of the communicative situation, including the participants and their relationship to each other. Consequently, stylistic variation, in a broad sense, will reflect attitudinal and social factors, and pragmatic considerations of this kind will prompt the selection of stylistic characteristics and complexes.

d) Semantic studies within the recent and diversified field of **cognitive science** emphasise the importance of mental processes and

---

44   Cf Alm-Arvius (1998:69).
45   See e g Hurford & Heasley (1983).

representations like conceptualisation and imagery for language meaning. They reject the distinction between language semantics and encyclopaedic knowledge, and stress the decisive role of bodily experiences, including sensorimotor development, and related subjective reactions in human psychology. According to Johnson (1987) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999) all thought—including language meaning—is embodied. In addition, it is to a large extent **metaphorical**.

Even if Lakoff and Johnson claim that their theorising is based on embodied realism, both they and other cognitive semanticists see meaning as an essentially **mental** phenomenon. Accordingly, they connect in certain respects to ideas within **phenomenology**, a philosophical school founded by Husserl, who maintained that we cannot directly get to know things in the outside world. Instead such experiences are mediated through our consciousness. Langacker writes (1987:5) that "meaning is a cognitive phenomenon and must ultimately be analyzed as such. Cognitive grammar therefore equates meaning with conceptualization (explicated as cognitive processing)."

Cognitive semanticists are thus interested in how specific cognitive processes, cognitive categories, cognitive domains, cultural models, general image schemas, and typically incidental thought structures, termed mental spaces by Giles Fauconnier, are reflected in the use and understanding of language. Categories correspond largely to senses in more traditional semantics, but they are not always conventionally represented by words in a language. Moreover, it is stressed that categories mostly have inexact boundaries, but that they are ordinarily built around **prototypes** that will be shared by those who know a language well.

The interest in extralinguistic matters, and usually mainly in factual truths, means that referential theories first and foremost deal with literal meaning. They have generally found it difficult to integrate figurative uses in their descriptive models, and have for the most part seen them as more peripheral and deviant. Structuralist analyses and descriptions have primarily concerned established, systematic semantic relations and construction types, and this appears commonly to have made them less suitable to handle especially

novel and creative tropes. Practitioners within the field of stylistics have, on the other hand, usually taken an interest in figures of speech, though often without analysing their character in a more penetrating and theoretical way. Cognitive scientists have, however, in many respects tried to change the orientation and character of semantic inquiries, for instance by emphasising the importance and frequency of especially metaphor in human language(s) and cognition. They see figurative configurations as a central aspect of human thinking and, secondarily, of natural language use.

As I have pointed out earlier in this work, my approach to semantic questions in general and to figures of speech in particular is in many ways **eclectic**. I try to integrate insights, theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and terminologies from different research paradigms, provided that they have proved valid and useful when analysing and describing different kinds of meaning conveyed through the use of natural verbal language. In this way I have hoped to be able to build up and elaborate a semantic view of my own. Trying to learn from others is a constructive attitude, as far as I can judge, as long as it is coupled with critical questioning and attempts to contribute one's own proposals for theoretical solutions, as soon as there appears to be room or even a need for such development.

Although I find much of the theorising concerning language questions within the recent field of cognitive science well worth considering, I think that it sometimes focuses on related psychological structures rather than on meanings that are either part of language system or which arise through actual language use. Even if cognition and socio-cultural matters are important for the semantics of languages, I think that the general perspective in studies on language meanings must concern how messages tend to be packed in **idiomatic** constructions in particular languages, and, also, what the semantic structures and functions of languages share as well as how they are different from each other. My approach to semantic aspects of figures of speech is **linguistically oriented**, even if I of course acknowledge the relation between language and other aspects of human experience, knowledge, and behaviour. This should already be clear from earlier parts of this work, where there are more detailed discussions of specific semantic questions associated with the nature of figures of speech.

We shall now continue our exploration into these central linguistic areas, and our interest is mainly directed at standard English, even if this is in many ways just a practical consequence of the fact that this book is written in English for people who use, read, and study English, the dominating international lingua franca in the world today.

3 More on Metaphor and Related Tropes

3.1 Metaphor and semantic theory

Metaphor is the most widely recognised and discussed type of trope, but as I pointed out in the overview of theoretical perspectives on language studies in section 2.2 above more traditional semantic theories have found it difficult to accommodate the analysis of metaphor. The main reasons for this have either been a predominant interest in referential relationships and truth or that a structuralist type of theory has aimed at examining and describing systematic sense relations between, firstly, established language constructs and, secondly, incidental compositional strings containing such elements and patterns.

Literary scholars have of course taken an interest in tropes and imagery, and figures of speech have been of central importance in rhetoric. However, within linguistics the study of metaphor was for a long time largely relegated to the fields of pragmatics and stylistics.[1] These were, for instance, considered theories of **performance** in semantic analyses influenced by the Chomskyan paradigm, and according to this view semantics proper should only study aspects of language **competence**. Metaphor was considered a deviant kind of language use, involving the breaking of basic rules within a language system.[2] The following quotation from Kempson (1977:74)—who argues for a truth-based model of semantics—exemplifies this kind of attitude to metaphor among semanticists:

> Now while it may at first seem strange that semantics should have
> nothing to say about metaphor, it is arguably not counter-intuitive

---

1   Cf Jackendoff (2002:418); Entzenberg (1998:1ff,122ff).
2   Cf e g Langacker (2000:107–109); Taylor (1995:132f); Ortony (1993a:1–3); Kittay (1987:1ff); Newmark (1981:96); Davidson (1979:31).

that metaphor can only be characterised by two levels of interpretation. Though there are undoubtedly many problems in accounting for metaphor adequately along these lines, I shall assume for the rest of this book that there are principled reasons of this type why a semantic theory should not itself contain an analysis of the problems presented by either metaphorical or stylistic interpretations.

In view of the pervasive occurrence of metaphorical extension and transfer in seemingly any kind of language use, this standpoint appears counter-productive, or indeed just strange. The overall aim of the scientific study of language meaning must be to understand and describe how human beings can communicate so many different kinds of information to one another by means of verbal language. Every aspect of meaning in language exchange is of interest to semantics. Accordingly, this discipline should also be taken to encompass all the diverse kinds of meaningful variation that have traditionally been dealt with in text linguistics, stylistics, and pragmatics. In other words, these areas of linguistics are most appropriately considered sub-disciplines of semantics. (Cf 1.2 above)

When it has proved difficult to discuss and account for certain aspects of language meaning within a particular type of semantic theory, it is the theory that should be adjusted and improved. Ignoring some sides of the empirical material because they are hard to handle in a satisfactory way within a theoretical model is not acceptable. This will skew the whole research process, and it can of course not produce valid results.

Pointing this out is of course not to deny that epistemological[3] and methodological considerations are important. They are without a doubt most significant in semantics, as in any other area of scientific endeavour. Instead the recognition that the semantic potential of languages is so many-sided and complex must influence the way it is approached. In short, the existence of different kinds of language meaning requires a variety of research perspectives. Language meaning needs to be studied from a number of viewpoints, each of which is adequate for some particular side of it. All the same, it should be possible to integrate these sub-disciplines,

---

3   *Epistemology* is the mainly philosophical examination of the nature and bases of knowledge.

including the terms used in them, into a consistent explanatory framework constituting a comprehensive theory of semantics.

By comparison, limiting the subject field of a discipline like semantics in order that it meet certain preconceived ideas of what can be considered scientifically manageable is not acceptable. An open-minded attitude to what can actually be communicated by means of natural verbal language is necessary in semantic research.

Language acquisition, language competence, and both active and passive participation in actual language use are interdependent and interact all the time. The changeable character of all living languages makes this clear. Practically introduced neologisms—which apparently need not be intentional—involve changes in and additions to the language competence of members of a speech community. In other words, anything new within a general language system is necessarily first an utterance product; or, more specifically, an utterance product that catches on and becomes accepted and shared among the users of the language.

The book *Metaphors We Live By* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson was published in 1980. It is now a classic in metaphor theory, and at least in retrospect it can be seen to have been most important for the new insight and acceptance concerning the place of metaphor in human language and thought, and thus also within semantic and psycholinguistic theorising. This is not to say that we must go along with this view of metaphor—which these two scholars have returned to and elaborated with the help of other cognitive researchers in later publications, for instance in *Philosophy in the Flesh* from 1999—but at any rate Lakoff and Johnson and other practitioners within cognitive science should be given credit for having brought the study of metaphor, and thus also other figures of speech, notably metonymy, to the forefront of semantic theory.

So even if we can firmly establish that metaphor is an important part of language meaning both practically and theoretically, the real challenge is to try to understand and explain the nature of metaphorical uses in more detail. This involves trying to see how metaphorisation connects to and contrasts with other recurring principles and types of relations within the semantics of verbal languages, in our case for the most part standard English.

A general rule of thumb in scientific theorising is that a model or explanation should be as simple and general as possible. In other

words, we should look for shared characteristics in different types of semantic constructions and networks, because recognising such factors makes it possible to a give a broader and more comprehensive description of semantic structures. This does not mean that we should not attend to specific details, only that we should try to bring them together into constructive, more general theoretical overviews of the nature and workings of the semantics of natural verbal language(s).

3.2 Further inquiry into the character of metaphor

3.2.1 Metaphor is more than decorative substitution

The difficulties that theorists of various intellectual persuasions have had when characterising metaphor are of course a good indication of the analytical obstacles that such semantic creations raise.[4] The question is how language senses can be extended in this imaginary and strictly speaking untruthful way, so that they stand for noticeably different things than the exploited source senses, which usually denote something concrete. Metaphors are common in language use, and ordinarily it does not seem to require any particular effort to construct and understand them. Instead metaphorisation must be said to be a natural kind of semantic process, although it is true that many at least originally metaphorical items and constructions are learnt by language users as conventionalised parts of their language system. (Cf 1.3) *Flex one's muscles* is an idiomatic expression in English, and it is often used with a metaphorical meaning.[5] The second example is somewhat irregular, and can be considered an instance of idiom breaking.[6]

---

4   I outlined various theories concerning the character of metaphor in Alm-Arvius (1999), and this overview was mainly based on Cacciari & Glucksberg (1994:451–464) and Levinson (1983:147–162), but compare for instance Abrams (1993:67–69), Persson (1990:165–174) and Johnson (1987:66–74) as well.
5   See e g *Collins Cobuild* (1995:644,1088).
6   See e g Alm-Arvius (1998:25).

(1) The nuclear tests were "a typical example of the need of a new head of state to flex his muscles in order that people become aware of how strong a man they have elected. (*The Times*, 25 Oct 1995:1)

(2) Natwest is said to be flexing its financial muscle after the recent merger of Lloyds Bank and the TSB. (*The Times*, 27 Oct 1995:28)

The observation that at least live metaphors are really untruthful has worried semanticists, especially those who think that it is important to be able to decide whether a given description of a situation—that is a proposition—is true or not. Especially novel and "fully alive" metaphors constitute a seemingly insurmountable problem for truth conditional semantics.

However, it has also been assumed that metaphors are chiefly decorative, and, as a consequence, in principle dispensable rather than a necessary sort of semantic device. This more wide-ranging assumption appears to be older than truth oriented approaches to natural language semantics.[7] In other words, metaphor has been regarded as a contrived way of saying something that could just as well be communicated by means of words or composite constructions with literal senses. Speakers and writers would thus use metaphors simply because they want to embellish their language; that is, make it more attractive or rhetorically effective by adding strictly speaking unnecessary verbal ornaments to their messages. Max Black introduced the term **substitution view** of metaphor for this type of explanation and characterisation of metaphorical language.[8]

The idea that metaphors are nothing but substitutions for more basic and direct literal expressions is however without a doubt wrong. As a matter of fact, it is usually difficult to come up with quite satisfactory literal paraphrases of metaphors. This is in particular true of live, transparent metaphors. A literal formulation cannot accommodate parts of the complex and typically somewhat indeterminate contents of a metaphorical extension.[9] Instead

7   Cf Kittay (1987:1–10,141f,310–327).
8   Black (1962:30–34 & 1977:441).
9   See e g Davidson (1979:30); Black (1962:46).

people appear often to employ both new and conventional metaphors because they find it difficult to convey a given message in any other way.[10]

All the same, metaphors may seem aesthetically attractive and imaginatively enticing, presumably because they tend to suggest a comparatively wide range of associations. Some of these may be surprising but still appropriate, while others are vague or variable without being confusing, since they connect to concrete experience via the exploited sense(s). No doubt the metaphorical extension of *sea*—a noun that stands for a most comprehensive, concrete natural phenomenon—makes the Shakespearian formulation "a sea of troubles"[11] far more expressive and richer in **associative potential** than near-synonymous but non-figurative phrases like *a lot of troubles* or *plenty of troubles*.

It should also be kept in mind that the possible **aesthetic** quality of a metaphor is of a mental, imaginary kind, and not ordinarily dependent on rhythmical sound repetition or repetition or rearrangement of specific word combinations, as is the case in the construction of figurative schemes. (See section 1.4 and Chapter 6) Metaphor is a thing of the mind, and new metaphors allow language users to break loose from the conventional semantic structures of a language, including established and systematic sense relations, in order to express some new thought or experience.

3.2.2 I A Richards's metaphor model and attitudinal metaphors

I A Richards's analysis of metaphor, including the terminology he suggested, has been very influential. His acute attempt at explicating metaphor was part of a series of lectures delivered in 1936, and they were published again in 1965 under the title *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

According to Richards there are two types of metaphor. The first comprises metaphors like the conventional expression *the leg of a*

10   Cf Kittay (1987:312f).
11   From Hamlet's soliloquy which begins "To be, or not to be ...", see e g The Players Edition (1951:1047). Cf Newmark (1993:17).

table which build on direct but merely partial resemblance between the thing described, the **tenor**, and the **vehicle**, the metaphorical tool itself: that is the phenomenon that the tenor is compared to as well as the word(s) used to represent it. In *the leg of a table* the vehicle is the metaphorical word *leg*, whose primary and literal sense denotes one of the limbs that living creatures stand on and walk with. The tenor, on the other hand, is one of the parts of a table that this secondary and figurative sense of *leg* stands for. Richards also introduced the term **ground** for the qualities that a tenor and a metaphorical vehicle can be said to share. Accordingly, the vehicle both describes the tenor and works as a contrast to it in a way which may change our conception of both of them. [12]

The other kind of metaphor that Richards recognises is instead said to work through applying the same kind of attitude to the tenor and the vehicle. When someone is called a *duck*, a term of endearment, or a person is abused by being called a *pig*, Richards claims that the ground is a **feeling** rather than some common characteristics.[13]

However, as far as I can see, also attitudinal metaphorical characterisations like *duck* and *pig* will be triggered by perceived similarities between such animals and human beings whom we either like or dislike. Accordingly, I would suggest that both kinds of metaphor outlined by Richards come about through detecting a loose and variable set of similarities, even if they are more factual in the first group and more subjective or emotional in the second one.

Actually, **attitudinal** aspects are often important in metaphorisation, and merely possible but by no means regular emotive connotations are often **promoted** to a central status in metaphorical uses of specific words or whole syntagmatic strings.[14] President Clinton's (in)famous and untruthful statement concerning his relation to Ms Monica Levinsky contains another example of this kind of attitude-based secondary meaning. (Cf 1.2.1 above)

(3)   I did not have sex with *that* woman. (italics mine)

---

12   Cf Ortony (1993a:3 & 1993b:343); Warren (1992:73–99); Newmark (1981:32, 48,85).
13   Richards (1965:96f,117ff); Searle (1993:86–102) overlooks this basis for metaphor.
14   Cf Black (1962:42).

The quite general, literal content of the demonstrative *that* is antonymously related to that of *this*, as they indicate different relative distances between the participants of a language exchange and some thing or individual that they are talking about. In short, *this* is used to refer to something that is comparatively close to the speaker (etc), while *that* points to something that is further away.

This difference in indicated distance may be associated with various attitudes or emotional reactions to the referents that are identified by means of these **deictic**[15] items. In particular, we can note that the "distancing" demonstrative *that* may also be connected with negative feelings like dislike or rejection. This kind of **secondary deixis** has metaphorical qualities.[16] *This* and *that* are grammatical words—or function words—rather than lexical words[17], but their deictic character links them to things out in the world, and this is probably why *that* can take on the kind of secondary attitudinal meaning exemplified in (3) above.

Moreover, it must be pointed out that the notions of tenor and vehicle do *not* correspond to source and target in a more recent and commonly used type of descriptive model connected to cognitive semantics. The tenor is the thing described by a metaphorical vehicle, and although it is often represented within the language construction together with the vehicle—as in (3) above and in (5) below—it need not be explicitly mentioned.[18] In certain cases the tenor must instead be taken to be just the person(s) or thing(s) referred to, as in a metaphorical interpretation of the sentence

---

15 *Deictic* elements have generalised referential senses. They are more fully and specifically understood only in relation to a particular communicative situation, or a given universe of discourse. Grammatical *deictics* mainly concern temporal, spatial, and personal relationships. Tenses, the imperative mood, vocatives, and demonstrative, personal and possessive pronouns are deictic. In addition, some lexical items have deictic semantic components. The contrastive senses of *today*, *tomorrow*, and *yesterday*, for instance, have a deictic character, as the reference of these words is dependent on the time of utterance.

   Social *deixis* is to do with interpersonal meaning. Imperative constructions, vocatives, and some pronouns involve such semantic aspects, and it is also manifested in different ways of addressing people, and in social expressions functioning, say, as greetings, farewells, and thanks. (See e g Alm-Arvius 1998:36f,43f,69,89–95; Saeed 1997:27,115,173–180; Yule 1996:9–16; Wales 1990:112f; Hurford & Heasley 1983:63–68)
16 Lyons (1995:310f); cf Yule (1996:13).
17 See Alm-Arvius (1998:42–46).
18 Cf Lodge (1977:75).

(4)   The old rock has become brittle with age [19]

where the subject phrase "the old rock" refers to a person, the tenor, at the same time as it is the focal part of the metaphorical vehicle, which can here be said to encompass the whole sentence as well as the type of situation that a literal reading of this string would describe. More specifically, this is an example of an **external metaphor**, since it can also be given a literal understanding. Obviously, it is the universe of discourse,[20] as it is manifested in the language context and/or the extralinguistic situation, which decides whether a literal or a figurative reading is intended. (See section 3.2.7 below)

By comparison, the term **source** is used about the cognitive domain—and the related, usually literal language sense(s)—that a metaphor connects to and exploits. According to this kind of explanatory model a metaphorical reading results from **mapping** some—but by no means all—of the features of the source onto a metaphorical **target**. In other words, source and target stand for two different but polysemously related interpretations of a language element, as when *drift*, *sharp*, and *cold* are given metaphorical understandings in the following short extract from *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

(5)   She had *drifted* to the door. She was going without kissing
        him goodnight. He watched her with *sharp*, *cold* eyes.[21]
        (italics mine)

If we instead apply Richards's terminological notions to the metaphorical uses in these sentences, we have to look for the—here merely would-be or fictitious—referents that are characterised by the metaphorical words. In the second sentence we can identify "eyes" as the tenor which is described by means of the vehicles "sharp" and "cold".

---

19   This example is taken from Cacciari & Glucksberg (1994:449), but they seem to
       have found it in an article by Ortony, published in 1980.
20   The *universe of discourse* is the particular set of situations that speakers or writers
       are talking about. It could be part of the real world, but it could also comprise
       imaginary or hypothetical settings, or mix real experiences and fictive
       situations. Cf 1.1.
21   From D H Lawrence's novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1961:145).

In the first sentence the vehicle is the verb "drifted". However, in this case it is open to discussion whether it is the referent of "she" that should be considered the tenor, or whether the tenor is instead the whole referential situation.

In (3) the vehicle "that" functions syntactically as a determiner in relation to the noun phrase head "woman". As a result, the vehicle here helps to pick out the tenor referent of the whole phrase at the same time as it comments on its character.

It is thus clear that the notion of tenor is referentially and cognitively oriented, and that it is not always easy to isolate a certain word or multi-word constituent in a language string that can be said both to straightforwardly represent this part of a metaphorical construction and to contrast it with the vehicle.[22] Instead we have to conclude that the linguistic representations of the vehicle and the tenor may be intertwined. This is a consequence of the in many respects extralinguistic orientation of the characterisations of tenor, vehicle, or ground. This seems also to be connected with a tendency not to distinguish between senses in a language system, ideas, and the things that words denote or are used to refer to out in the world, or in a specific universe of discourse. Interestingly enough, this means that Richards's conception of metaphor is similar to that found in more recent work within the field of cognitive science in that the experiential and cognitive bases of the metaphorical process are given a central place in the analysis.

Actually, this kind of foregrounding of the experiential and psychological aspects of language meanings, in particular those involving lexical items and constructions, makes us consider to what extent the creative capacity of metaphorisation is grounded in such, strictly speaking extralinguistic and non-systematic connections of language interpretations. Many linguists and language philosophers have indeed emphasised the importance of context or the general setting of utterances and longer stretches of spoken discourse and written texts. In addition, cognitive linguists have rejected the distinction between language meaning, on the one hand, and cognition and encyclopaedic experience, on the other.

My own standpoint is that while a verbal language definitely constitutes a system, albeit a partly open one, with a large number of

---

22   Kittay prefers to use the term *topic* instead of *tenor* (1987:26–29).

idiomatic conventions and patterns, shared by the members of that speech community, extralinguistic factors also constantly influence language use. Metaphors appear to arise from imaginative meaning connections and extensions that are not subjected to language internal systematisation and restrictions. It seems that non-linguistic experience associated with various cognitive domains can be integrated into language use through metaphorisation, even if such constructions violate basic and conventional semantic structures both as regards the contents of individual linguistic signs and regarding their co-occurrences in linguistic strings.

This explains why it is so difficult, not to say impossible, to predict what novel metaphors can occur in a language. All we can do is to try to analyse and explain the causes of and the mechanisms at work in metaphorical extension—and the later conventionalisation of some such uses into merely transferred senses, or even the occurrence of outright "metaphor death".

Moreover, it is arguable that this potential to adapt language messages and contents to new impressions and expressive and communicative needs is essential. In this respect the violation of semantic conventions that we find in metaphor, and indeed in meaning change in general, is analogous to evolutionary changes and adaptations in biology. Allowing myself an evaluative comment, I would insist that the unpredictability of metaphorical meaning is not to be regretted; instead it must be seen as a vital potential in the functioning of natural verbal language(s).

3.2.3 Can metaphors be rephrased as more explicit similes?

In addition, metaphor has been compared to **simile**, another but related type of trope containing an explicit indication of figurative comparison. It has even been proposed that metaphors can be expanded into similes by adding an element that directly spells out the comparative quality of the metaphor. This kind of rewording suggests that perceived similarity between a source content and a metaphorical target is essential for the production of metaphors. The italicised parts of (6) and (8) below are metaphorical, while (7) and (9) contain similes.

(6)   The kitchen *was a pig-sty*.

(7)   The kitchen was *like a pig-sty*.

(8)   The other teacher was *a funny circus clown*.

(9)   The other teacher was *as funny as a circus clown*.

However, this explanation is again too simplistic. Clearly, there are many metaphors that cannot be turned into similes in this straightforward way by simply adding *like* or *as (… as)*. More specifically, this appears only to be possible when the metaphorical constituent is a noun phrase. If we try to rephrase some other kind of metaphorical application, say a verb phrase, without losing its non-literal character, this will involve a more extensive reformulation. In addition, such constructions seem often stylistically clumsy or even unidiomatic.

(10)   When she said that, *he exploded*.

(11)   When she said that, it was *as though he exploded*.

In section 3.3, I shall show that the relation between simile and metaphor can be more complex, involving more than this kind of paraphrase relationship between a metaphorical application and an example of simile.

   All the same, the observation that some metaphors can be rephrased as similes can be useful for deciding that a specific figurative example is metaphorical rather than metonymic. The analytical and practical connections between simile and metaphor rest on the impression that both these types of tropes are based on perceived similarity between a usually more concrete and well-known phenomenon and something more complex, abstract, or new to the users of a language.[23] As a result, reformulations of this sort indicate that metaphorisation indeed involves similarity and comparison, although these semantic relations between a source and a metaphorical target need not be factually verifiable. This kind of **"simile test"** for assessing the metaphorical status of a given lan-

---

23   See e g Gibbs (1999:62f); Davidson (1979:38 ff); Jakobson (1974:132).

guage use can be compared to the application of the **expansion test** to a metonymic shortcut. (See section 5.1.1 below)

3.2.4 Metaphor and similarity

As we have seen above, analysts appear generally to have concluded that a metaphorical extension is based on some perceived similarity between the source contents and the secondary, figurative interpretation, as well as the extralinguistic things that these two polysemously related readings represent. However, in their book *Philosophy in the Flesh*, published in 1999, Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphorisation cannot be based on similarity[24], because similarity is a symmetric relation, whereas a metaphorical extension is ordinarily **asymmetric**, with a one-way mapping of attributes from a source domain to a metaphorical target domain.[25]

Curiously enough, they here apply a logical notion to their conception of metaphor, although they otherwise insist that human cognition as well as human language contents are not based on logico-descriptive reasoning of the kind they reject in other paradigms dealing with semantic questions, that is the theoretical stances that they call "objectivist" or "formalist"[26] linguistics and philosophy.

In actual fact, the inadequacies of necessary and sufficient conditions when it comes to determining membership in semantic categories in natural human languages are generally recognised. This widespread awareness explains why prototype explanations were so readily accepted once Eleanor Rosch and her co-workers had presented psycholinguistic results that empirically supported this kind of description of category construction.

It is also well known that a strictly logico-factual analysis based on the truth values of propositions cannot capture quite a few important qualities in the semantics of ordinary verbal language(s).

---

24 Lakoff & Johnson (1999:119–127); cf Searle (1993:86–102); Johnson (1987:11, 185).
25 See also Barcelona (2000a:6f); Taylor (1995:138–141); cf Cacciari & Glucksberg (1994:451–455); Hurford & Heasley (1983:198–200); Allwood, Andersson & Dahl (1977:89).
26 Cf Williams (1983:137–140).

That kind of theoretical and methodological approach to natural language semantics misses out on, for instance, emotive and social meanings and inferences concerning causality and expectation of various sorts.[27]

As a matter of fact, similarity relations appear often to be introduced from a specific **viewpoint** in language strings. This descriptive perspective is simply a result of the dominating tendencies in a language concerning the order in which different pieces of information are presented. In English clauses built around a verb selector[28]

27 I shall here just give a couple of examples of how logico-formal semantics differs from natural language semantics.

The English coordinating conjunctions *and* and *but* are regularly interpreted in different ways, and can thus not be considered synonyms. However, in logical, truth-functional semantics they both correspond to the connective &. In other words, the natural language difference between *and* and *but* is not truth functional, but rather an example of a non-propositional sense distinction.

Similarly, the meaning of the logical connective called truth functional implication, or material implication, is notably different from the standard interpretation of conditional sentences in English, such as
a) "If you come after 8 o'clock, your ticket is not valid."
b) "If it rains tomorrow, we shall stay at home".

In English the situation described in the main clause is usually considered to be a direct consequence of the information given in the conditional clause. So if a person in authority for instance at a theatre asserted a) and then, in spite of this, let someone in after eight because they had a ticket, s/he could be accused of having been untruthful, or even a liar. For the same kind of reason, we would probably feel that the speaker of b) had not kept her word, if she decided not to stay at home after all, although it rained on the day referred to as "tomorrow" in this statement of hers, provided that she had not later explicitly cancelled it by giving new and opposing information to the same addressee(s).

By comparison, an implication of this kind is only considered false in logic, if the proposition in the consequent (= the main clause) can be falsified, while the proposition in the antecedent (= the *if* clause) is correct. Obviously, this kind of understanding would often not make much sense in ordinary, natural language English. As a result, the term strict implication is sometimes used to represent natural language understandings of a conditional sentence. (Cf Allwood, Andersson & Dahl 1977:32–34,37–40,110f)

28 The more syntactic terms *governor* and *controller* deal with similar relations, but the relation between the syntactic subject of a clause and the predicate verb phrase is somewhat complex in this respect. It is true that the predicate verb and the (non-expanded) verb phrase (Huddleston 1984:112f) that it heads need to link on to a subject in a finite clause—unless it is an imperative clause—but it is the subject that decides the grammatical form of the finite verb element within the verb phrase. So as regards concord the subject governs the verb rather than the other way round. On the other hand, a clause seems to be structured around a (main) verb, and it is the syntactic relation to the verb which determines in which functional slots we find the other constituents of the clause.

denoting a similarity relation like *resemble*, *be like*, *look like,* or *correspond to*, the **theme**, or topic, is given first, and it is prototypically the syntactic subject. Its meaning is then compared with that of an element which functions as a complement of the verbal head of the predicate phrase.

In the following sentence the predicator is "looked like", and "the little girl" is the syntactic subject as well as the theme of the information structure in this string. In other words, this constituent tells us what the sentence is about: it is intended to say something about the referent of this noun phrase. The phrase "a fairytale princess" functions, on the other hand, as a predicative complement and as a rhematic component in the information structure.

(12) The little girl looked like a fairytale princess in her new dress and hat.

All the same, it is true that in reciprocal clauses like the one below the two valents, or arguments, of a "similarity" predicator are on the whole presented on equal terms in the information structure of the clause. As a result, this thematic arrangement does not noticeably tamper with the logico-semantic status of *resemble* as a symmetric predicate.

(13) These two handwritings resemble each other.

But in other prototypical presentations of the information given in a clause, one of the valents of the predicate verb is first put in focus as the theme, while the other is a part of the rhematic structure. The theme usually refers to something that has already been mentioned in some way in a stretch of oral discourse or in a written text. By contrast, the rheme tends to communicate something new about the preceding theme.[29]

In Fillmorian construction grammar the notions **frame** and **perspective** deal with these kinds of information relations within clauses. In Langacker's cognitive grammar the syntactic subject of

---

29 *Topic—comment* and *given—new* are largely synonymous with the terminological pair *theme—rheme*, which I have used here.

an English clause will similarly be described as standing out as the (primary) clausal **figure** against a less prominent **ground**.[30]

However, it is important to realise that what is presented as new information within a given universe of discourse can be quite well known to the participants more generally speaking. In fact, I would like to suggest that something well known often serves as a rhematic comparison element when it comes to characterising some more recent experience.[31] When commenting on the looks of a new-born baby, for instance, it seems more natural to say that it resembles an older person, who can be expected to be known by the addressee(s). In other words, we would rather say

(14) The baby resembles Winston Churchill/ his father

than

(15) ?Winston Churchill/The father resembles the baby.

Similarly, the city of Stockholm is sometimes called *the Venice of the North* because its central parts are situated on a number of islands. Significantly enough, this similarity relation does not really work the other way round; that is, no one would presumably speak of Venice as ?*the Stockholm of Italy*. This shows that a similarity relation can be mainly one-directional, or asymmetric, because certain predominating and well-known characteristics in one party are the starting point for the detected resemblance. This explains why it may in some cases be odd to turn the comparison around, as it were, and make the other element the main foundation for the comparison. Similarity is usually only partial; it is not the same thing as complete identity. Accordingly, it is easy to understand that it can be directional or asymmetric.

In other words, a recognition of similarity will be triggered by something that is primarily felt to have a certain (set of) characteristic(s). This individual or phenomenon is then made the basis for a description of something else, because this other, foregrounded phenomenon, say a new-born baby, reminds a language user of the experiential matrix of—or the ground for—the comparison, Win-

30 Ungerer & Schmid (1996:156–249); Fillmore & Atkins (1992); Langacker (2000:2,36,172,202 & 1987:120ff); Fillmore (1985).
31 Cf Miller (1993:368–371).

stone Churchill or the baby's father in the example above.[32] The basis of comparison concerning a similarity relation tends then to occur in rhematic position in a language string, while the thing that it describes is represented by the clausal theme.

Discussing the importance of **comparison** for human cognition, including language understanding, in quite general terms, Langacker[33] has used the terms **standard** and **target** for the relation between these two sides of "any act of comparison". He points out that this relation is asymmetric, because we exploit "previous experience for the structuring and interpretation of novel experience". If we apply his general, schematic analysis of the role and character of comparison in human cognition to the interpretative processes at work in metaphorisation, it is easy to see the parallel between a comparative standard and the source of a metaphorical mapping, on the one hand, and the correspondence between the wider notion of a **comparative target** and the more specific notion of a **metaphorical target**. In short, a metaphorical target is just a special case of comparative target. The terminological relation between them is simply hyponymic, comparative target being the more general notion, or the hypernym, while metaphorical target is a more specific hyponym.

3.2.5 Metaphor and hyponymy

Furthermore, I have suggested that metaphorisation is like hyponymy, although the latter is a **factual** sense relation, while metaphorisation is typically based on a mainly **imaginative**—and sometimes even chimerical—resemblance between some source contents and a target reading.[34] More precisely, the target of a metaphorical extension can be compared to the superordinate term in a hyponymic relation, as it contains *only some* of the attributes that are

---

32 Cf Langacker (1987:231), where he describes the subject of the verbs *equal* and *resemble* as "the figure in a relational profile", or as a trajector in relation to the object, the landmark or the reference point that the trajector/subject is evaluated against. Cf also Langacker (2000:33f).

33 Langacker (1987:349 & cf 2000:2,94,102,208,361).

34 Alm-Arvius (1999).

connected with the source, and thus also with the extensional set(s) that it denotes.

Moreover, the qualities that are mapped onto a metaphorical target are for the most part not the most central or indispensable ones in the source. Instead they tend to be more peripheral or even just connotative features. Other parts of the source sense will be disregarded in the metaphorical reading. When there is a more substantial similarity between two understandings of the same word or composite expression, a secondary interpretation can be considered an **approximation** rather than an outright metaphor. (See 2.1.1)

As a result, a metaphorical extension does not involve as many features as the exploited source, and in this a metaphorical use is semantically similar to a superordinate term, as the latter is also more general, or less specific, than the sense of a hyponym. A metaphorical extension is, however, different from a hyponymic relation in that it is not factual or verifiable. Instead it is a merely fanciful and typically somewhat unsettled selection of certain meaning aspects of the source. All the same, such an extended use of a word or longer string would hardly make sense—especially when it first occurred—unless language users could somehow connect the source and the target by detecting correspondences between them.

This does not mean that the similarities between the denotata of the source and those of the target are for the most part quite obvious or undeniable. Instead it is arguable that many metaphorical shifts are descriptively or rhetorically effective because they seem both surprising and strikingly relevant. In other words, it is often not clear that the subject matter of the target could be accounted for through a comparison—or indeed a direct imaginative equation—with certain aspects of the source.

In a straightforward example of metaphorisation the target is also quite different from the source. It follows that the similarity between the target and the source may well appear to be **created** through the metaphorical extension. In this way a metaphorical extension may even affect the understanding of the source. Would most speakers of English be aware of, for instance, the reputed cunning of foxes, if people were not conventionally described as having this quality by being metaphorically identified with such animals?[35]

35   Cf Cacciari & Glucksberg (1994:455,459,471–473); Richards (1965:122–127).

In order to see the difference as well as the similarity between hyponymy and metaphorisation, we can, for instance, look at a superordinate term like *weapon*, where the functional aspect is central and criterial. The **literal extension**[36] of *weapon* can occasionally be widened in an unconventional and not altogether predictable way *without* resulting in metaphorisation. *Bows and arrows, canons, machine guns, nuclear bombs, pistols, spears,* and *swords* are examples of prototypical weapons. In other words, these nouns are regular and unquestionable hyponyms of *weapon*. It is worth noting that the appearances and constructions of these different types of weapons are quite varied; what matters is their **function**: that they can be used as weapons, that is concrete things that can be utilised by people to attack, wound and kill others, or, alternatively, to defend themselves against aggressors using the same kinds of means as those attacking them.[37]

By comparison, *axes*, *knives*, and even *scissors* can be either *weapons* or other types of *tools*, as they are potentially useful as well as dangerous depending on how they are employed.[38] Actually, any concrete thing that can be used to physically attack and harm somebody can function as a weapon. For instance a chair or a pan

---

36   See notes 36, 39, and 52 in chapter 1.

37   If I had used a singular third person pronoun here instead of *they*, I would have opted for *he*, although I am aware that many would find this sexist. All the same, I have been informed that empirical evidence conclusively indicates that physical aggression or violence is more often instigated by men than by women. In fact, I would suggest that prototypical agent subjects with verbs like *fight* and *attack* denote males rather than females.

   Similarly, the prototypical user of the types of weapon mentioned above is a man rather than a woman. Such information is no doubt part of our general knowledge of the denotata of these nouns. Accordingly, this is yet another indication that extralinguistic experience and cognitive information will be directly integrated in and influence our understandings of content words and language strings containing such lexical items.

   Moreover, I cannot refrain from pointing out that if Lakoff and Johnson (1980:4f) are right in claiming that we think of and talk of arguments in terms of war, this may help to explain why also politics in peacetime in democratic nations tends to be felt to be a more natural male occupation than a female type of activity. Indeed, politics can involve both verbal argumentation and military activities. See the discussion of this conceptual metaphor in the next section, 3.2.6 above.

38   It seems as though *tool* must be analysed as a superordinate term in relation to *weapon*, even if weapons certainly appear to be non-prototypical members of the category of tools.

can incidentally be given this function. I even remember reading about a man who killed his wife with an electric toaster. So the possible referential range of *weapon*, that is the literal extension of this noun, can occasionally be **widened** to include also objects that are not ordinarily thought of as weapons. However, this does not result in metaphorisation, because these objects can be made to function quite literally as physical weapons.

(16) In his hands the frying pan became a deadly weapon.

(17) He used the frying pan as a weapon.

By comparison, we would consider the italicised phrase in the first example below the focal part of a simile, a metaphor-like type of figure of speech including an overt marker of comparison. This is a simile rather than a literal characterisation as in (16) above, because a feeling like *love* or somebody's degenerating medical condition are not concrete objects that can be handled so that they turn into actual weapons with the potential to inflict bodily harm or even kill someone.

(18) She used her love/ailing health *as a weapon*.

In the next example we have an outright metaphorical use of *weapon*. The figurative status of these last two applications of *weapon*, or rather the constructions in which they occur, is a result of the more intangible or partly abstract character of the collocates *love* or *ailing health*. Users of English know that only concrete physical objects that can be directly perceived and practically handled can be literally employed and spoken of as weapons.

(19) Her love/ailing health became a weapon.

This examination of different types of incidental widening of the understanding of the noun *weapon* shows that they can be either non-figurative or figurative. If these conclusions are combined with other observations concerning the nature of metaphors, it would seem as though an undeniable metaphorical generalisation must involve a suppression of central or criterial characteristics in the source reading. If this is not the case, we have at the most an approximation. Moreover, a metaphorical extension is only accept-

able if it is possible to perceive a similarity between the source and the target. This perceived similarity is what rescues metaphors from seeming absurd. In addition, the contents of a word or string are often given a more abstract understanding in a metaphor, but this does not appear to be an essential criterion.

Metaphorical uses representing concrete phenomena like *mouse* and *pigtails*—that is a computer gadget and a hairstyle respectively—are obviously possible because, firstly, speakers of English can see, or have seen, a similarity between the denotata of the primary and the metaphorical uses of these nouns, and, secondly, because these figurative applications are so clearly different from the primary senses. Many metaphors exhibit all these three **characteristics of metaphorisation**, but only the first two need to be satisfied in order to make an extended use metaphorical:

i) **suppression of criterial characteristics in the source**

ii) **perceived similarities between the source and the target**

iii) **abstraction**

The impression that metaphorical extension and hyponymy are comparable types of meaning connections may also explain why metaphors appear typically as easy to understand as literal uses. Especially truth oriented semantic theories have seen literal meanings as basic and normal in language, and metaphors as deviant and secondary. This analysis of metaphor is however *not* generally supported by psycholinguistic experiments, because they have tended to show that metaphors are understood as quickly or easily as literal messages. The so-called **incoherence view** also seems unlikely given the pervasive occurrence of metaphor in seemingly any kind of language use.[39] (Cf 3.2.1 and 3.2.7)

The constructional affinity between hyponymy, the basic kind of paradigmatic sense relation in language, and metaphorisation suggests that they are similar semantic processes, and this could in part explain why the occurrence of metaphor is so natural in human languages. They both involve a **generalising combination**

---

39   Cf Cacciari & Glucksberg (1994:458f); Rumelhart (1993)

of categories which typically are also clearly different in certain respects.

Moving to a higher level in a hyponymic hierarchy involves generalising and keeping only the features that are shared by the more specific hyponyms. As a result, many superordinate terms are more abstract than their hyponyms. (Cf 1.2.1 and 2.1.4) Metaphorisation is also a kind of semantic generalisation, as it means that central features in a literal source are overlooked or suppressed. All the same, an important difference is of course that at least straightforward hyponymic sense relations are **factual**, whereas metaphorisation is instead based on **imaginative**, non-factual conceptual connections.

If we elaborate the parallel between hyponymy and metaphorisation, we can also explain the difference between transparent **metaphorical extensions** and more independent **transfers**. (See 1.3.1 and 1.3.2) As long as a metaphorical extension is fully transparent—that is "alive"—its relation to the source sense is similar to that between a more general superordinate term and a more specific hyponym. However, when a figurative use is established and has become a lexicalised—or grammaticalised—secondary sense of a language construct, its relation to the literal sense of a polyseme is rather comparable to that between a couple of antonyms. The semantic similarity will still be detectable. Otherwise, we would not see the primary sense and a transferred sense as different but still related senses of a polysemous lexeme—or a grammatical item or pattern. Nonetheless, there is no longer as direct a relation between these readings, because the transfer need not be interpreted via a generalising comparison with the source. They are just different senses which share a common semantic quality—like antonyms.[40]

For instance: if someone's way of living or general existential attitude is *spartan*, this means that s/he thinks that people should live under simple conditions, avoiding luxury, following strict routines and principles, and face difficulties and threats bravely. This sense of *spartan* is now lexicalised in English, and it occurs both as an adjective and a noun. Even if many users of English recognise that *spartan* is polysemously related to *Spartan*, which denotes people

40 My "fake hyponymy" theory of metaphor is similar to Roger Brown's *class inclusion theory* (1958:140), although there are also clear differences between them.

and things found in the ancient Greek republic of Sparta, they also know that they do not mean the same thing. More specifically, *spartan*, as in a *spartan life style*, has been generalised in a metaphorical way to cover more things than the original literal extension of *Spartan*.[41]

All the same, unconventional instances of metaphorisation allow us to see familiar things in another, perhaps unexpected way, and they also make it possible to connect new experiences with something we already know. A newly constructed metaphor is typically a means to escape routine conceptions and habitual perspectives. We often see examples of this in poetry. The first example below is the first stanza of Sylvia Plath's poem 'Poppies in October' in her collection of poems titled *Ariel*, published posthumously in 1965.

(20) Even the sun-clouds this morning cannot manage such skirts.
Nor the woman in the ambulance
Whose red heart blooms through her coat so astoundingly— (p 29)

The next quotation is from *Macbeth*, and he says this towards the end of the play when he realises that his ambition and murderous deeds are destroying both his wife and himself.

(21) …
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.
(Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act five, Scene V)[42]

When it comes to handling new things and situations, the use of metaphor may be part of a psychological strategy to avoid confusion or to try to cope with anguish at being confronted with things we really know nothing about, because it means connecting them with something we have heard of or experienced before. Indeed,

---

41 Cf e g *Collins Cobuild* (1995:1600); *Longman* (1995:1374); *COD* (1990:1166).
42 The Players Edition (1951:1024f).

our ability to think in metaphorical terms may well be an important aspect of creativity in general, as it permits us to use what we know to come up with new ideas or viewpoints. (Cf 3.2.2)

3.2.6 Primary or conventional metaphors—and analytic sentences

Moreover, I would like to question the claim of some cognitive scientists that **primary conceptual metaphors** like 'Affection Is Warmth', 'Happy Is Up', 'Knowing Is Seeing', or 'Seeing Is Touching' necessarily underlie new, extended, or complex metaphors of any kind. Joe Grady is said to have come up with this idea, but he and his co-workers were influenced by the description and exemplification of systematic metaphorical concepts in Lakoff and Johnson's now classic book *Metaphors We Live By*, published in 1980.[43]

The notion of primary and conventional metaphors is an essential basis in Lakoff and Johnson's more recent theory of metaphor and cognition presented in their book *Philosophy in the Flesh* from 1999.[44] These metaphorical foundations are said to be unconscious, basic thoughts developed early in life by conflating sensorimotor experiences and subjective reactions that occur at the same time. In other words, particular perceptual impressions and movements in early childhood are identified with specific feelings.

The primary metaphor 'Affection Is Warmth', for instance, is said to arise through conflating the bodily experience of being held with the sensation of being loved by this human being.[45] As Taylor points out such a basic association between a specific type of physical sensation and a feeling appears however to be metonymic rather

---

43 Grady, Taub & Morgan (1996); see also Lakoff (1987:271ff); cf Kövecses (2000:90f); Ungerer (2000:322–334).

44 Lakoff & Johnson (1999:48–58).

45 Max Black (1962:42–44) used the term *primary metaphor* with a different meaning in his description of the interaction theory of metaphor. To him the primary metaphor is the interpretative restructuring that a metaphorical focus forces on the thing(s) it describes, though this dominating metaphor can be coupled with a number of subsidiary metaphors involving changed understandings for instance of the contents of the literal word that is used as a metaphorical focus. See section 3.2.7.

than metaphorical.[46] Actually, there are analysts, notably Umberto Eco, who claim that metaphors are quite generally based on metonymic connections.[47] Moreover, Taylor's observation should be compared to Lakoff and Johnson's claim that metaphorisation is not based on similarity between the source and the target—a question that was discussed in section 3.2.4 above.

Even if many of Lakoff and Johnson's examples of primary metaphors, like 'Categories Are Containers', 'Important Is Big', and 'More Is Up', seem to outline recurring lines of thought of a fundamental character—both intuitively and when subjected to rational analyses—my overall impression is that it is difficult to connect many examples of metaphor in actual language use to a limited number of already established primary metaphors.

In fact, there seems to be no way of empirically verifying the existence of such underlying primary metaphors. Consequently, they have to be described as nothing but postulated mental entities, which may seem more or less likely to other analysts. Surely metaphorisation is a far too creative mental potential to be tied down and restricted in this way?

If we could identify a number of primary metaphors, they ought in fact to form a fairly well-defined or even closed set, since they are said to be based on the pairing of regularly occurring sensorimotor experiences and subjective judgements. Lakoff and Johnson do not discuss this complication, although their argumentation seems to presuppose that there is a universal, restricted set of primary metaphors.[48] In short, I for one find it difficult to accept that each and every novel metaphor is just a variation or an elaboration of already existing primary metaphorical thoughts. It is no doubt problematic to assume that all language users share a restricted number of primary metaphors based on early, regularly occurring, and quite basic life experiences.

So a disturbing consequence of the claim that all metaphors build on underlying primary metaphors, which are normally acquired in childhood, is that they must basically be taken to be **universal.** Obviously, this flies in the face of the common observation that at

---

46   Taylor (1995:134–139); cf Fauconnier & Turner (1999:80–84).
47   Cf section 5.3 below.
48   Cf Grady, Taub & Morgan (1996:186).

least idiomatic metaphorical expressions are commonly **language specific**, and thus often difficult to translate into other languages.[49] (Cf 1.1)

The alternative is to accept that conflation of sensorimotor experience and subjective reactions to them typically plays a role in metaphorisations, and, also, that the set of primary metaphors is an open one, allowing the recognition of "new" underlying primary metaphors whenever this seems to be analytically helpful or required. Unfortunately, the explanatory validity of such a "creative" use of the model of primary metaphors is quite problematic.

In fact, new metaphorical extensions can be fairly open interpretatively[50], and the possibility to interpret them in different ways could lead to misunderstandings, which are not always recognised or explicitly commented on. A conventionalised transfer has, on the other hand, a ready-made and generally shared type of meaning within a language. This means that for instance certain basically metaphorical idioms like *get/have cold feet* can occur in an abbreviated form without losing their established sense.

> (22) Then Clinton got cold feet about this policy, too. (*Sunday Times*, 12 Nov 1995:7/1)

> (23) … the outbreak of doubt over EMU which has struck deep in the orthodox camp this autumn after signs of cold feet in Germany.
> (*The Times*, 29 Sept 1995:15)

I would like to end this discussion by drawing attention to an interesting parallel between primary and conventional metaphors, on the one hand, and Kantian **analytic sentences**, on the other. Analytic sentences express general and firmly established relations between logico-factual senses, or the lexical items that carry them,

---

49 However, if we connect the idea of conventional metaphorical thought patterns—which are presumably often language specific rather than universal—with the widespread occurrence of idioms, they can help us explain why *idiom breaking* is in fact quite common. In other words, many cases of idiom breaking can be seen as variations of a conventional or idiomatic metaphor, or rather the idea that it stands for.

50 Martin (1987:220f).

within a language. They are main declarative clauses functioning as statements, and they are usually said to be true simply by virtue of the words used in them. However, I would claim that they convey quite general descriptions of different aspects of the world as they are conceived of and stored in a given language.[51] More specifically, they show how a language, in our case standard English, has conceptually divided up and labelled the extralinguistic reality that we live in and communicate about.

In analytic sentences like the following the meaning of the predicate is already part of the meaning of a subject. In other words, the subject is semantically more specific or identical to the contents of the predicate. As a result, analytic sentences are said to be tautological, in a wide sense of this term, and uninformative to anyone who knows the language in question. All the same, they can be useful when we need to explain the senses of words, and we find them for instance in sense explanations in dictionaries.

(24) To run is to move.

(25) A mare is a horse.

(26) Blind people cannot see.

(27) A husband has a wife.

The first two examples below are primary metaphors according to Lakoff and Johnson, while the next two are conventional complex metaphors.[52] However, in all of them the subject is more abstract and also really more general, while the predicate stands for something more concrete and more specific.

---

51 Analytic sentences are contrasted with **synthetic** sentences. In fact, in both cases the important thing is not their outer grammatical form, the sentential construction, but the proposition that such a declarative sentence is intended to convey. If a propositional string can be taken to describe a specific situation out in the world, then it is synthetic. In other words, a synthetic proposition can in principle be either true or false, and we have to examine the situation in question in order to assign a truth value to it. If the proposition corresponds to (the selected aspect of) this extralinguistic situation, then it is true, otherwise it is false. (Saeed 1997:86–90; Martin 1987:60–63; Hurford & Heasley 1983:91f; cf Lacey 1986:6–8; Leech 1981:73–84; Quinton 1967:107–128)

52 Lakoff & Johnson (1999:50f,63–69,161–166 & 1980:7–9).

(28) Categories are containers.

(29) Difficulties are burdens.

(30) Time is money.

(31) Life is a journey.

My point here is that in these metaphors a more general and abstract phenomenon, denoted by the syntactic subject, is spoken of as though it were just an example of the more specific and concrete thing described by the predicative complement. *Life*, for instance, is thus spoken of as though it were a "hyponym" of the "superordinate term" *journey*. This metaphorical formulation suggests that somebody's *life* is just a kind of *journey*, sharing central characteristics with other, presumably real (types of) *journeys*. However, in reality a journey is just a part of somebody's life. Consequently, this **imaginative reversal of inclusion relations** is a contradiction of factual knowledge, but all the same such metaphorical extensions of concrete senses like *journey* enable us to think and talk about certain aspects of the large complex of experiences that we call *life*. [53] The abstract lexical concept *life* is **concretised** by being thus compared to a journey, and it is arguable that this may affect not just the way we can think and talk about the lives of human beings, for instance our own, but also our conception of actual travelling. More specifically, it may widen and deepen our understanding of the conditions and potentials of both these domains of human experience.[54]

---

53 As I have pointed out, metaphorical extensions create imaginative inclusion relations that are comparable to hyponymy. However, it seems as though the basic, logico-descriptive relation between the subject and the subject complement in the kinds of metaphor exemplified above can be either hyponymic or meronymic. For instance, the literal or factual senses of *life* and *journey* appear thus to be meronymically related. *Life* can be considered the holonym, while *journey* is one of it obviously quite numerous meronyms. However, in the purportedly conventional metaphoric concept spelt out in (19) the relation between them is presented as one between a more specific hyponym, *life*, and a more general hypernym, *journey*. Cf Nogales (1999:200f).

54 Cf Kuhn (1993); Richards (1965:121ff); Fauconnier et al's model of blends in 3.2.8.

Similarly, the reason for talking of *seeing* as (a kind of) *touching* in the following putative primary metaphor is presumably that the latter type of perceptual experience seems more concrete.

(32) Seeing is touching.

In other examples of primary metaphors given by Lakoff and Johnson the basic, factually oriented sense relations between words are imaginatively rearranged to rather parallel synonymy, another type of sense relation within a hyponymic network.

(33) Argument is war.

The primary, literal senses of *argument* and *war* are hyponyms of the more general and superordinate noun *conflict*. In other words, they are antonymously related. However, through a hyperbolic shifting of *argument* its meaning becomes more extreme, suggesting a more violent type of conflict involving physical attacks and bodily danger, experiences that are not part of a mere verbal dispute. This way of describing arguing can no doubt be rhetorically successful: conceptualising argument as war does not just exaggerate the character of verbal dispute, it also adds, as it were, directly physical and other more concrete aspects to it that appear to make it easier both to think and to talk about different kinds and occasions of verbal disagreement.[55]

3.2.7 Internal and external metaphors, and Black's interaction view

As has already been observed, a metaphorical use of a word or longer expression is often signalled by a collocational irregularity from the point of view of the literal sense. I have used the term **internal metaphor** about the dominating type of metaphor where the figurative status of a use is directly evident from the combination of words within a syntactic string. By comparison, an **external metaphor**—like *He is so shortsighted*—could in principle also be

---

55   Lakoff & Johnson (1980:4f).

115

given a literal reading, but this alternative is ruled out by the communicative situation or the language context, that is the universe of discourse, in which it occurs. (Cf 2.1.6, 3.2.2 & 3.2.8)

Moreover, it should be pointed out that Max Black's influential **interaction view** of metaphor is only intended to deal with metaphorical strings that I call internal metaphors. Although Black's model of metaphor was "a development and modification of I A Richards's valuable insights", he introduced his own terminology. (Cf 3.2.2) More specifically, Black identifies a specific word—or the phrase—in a sentence as the **focus** of the metaphor, and the rest of the sentence is then the **frame** which makes us interpret the focal word in a figurative way. In the example below, the focus is the noun phrase "a wolf", functioning syntactically as the subjective predicative complement. The interpretative interaction between the focus and the frame constitutes the figurative message.[56]

(35) That man is a wolf.

The referent of the subject noun phrase "That man"—a particular man within a given universe of discourse—is thus characterised by being compared to a wolf, but obviously only certain traits that are considered typical of wolves can be applied to a human being. Black stresses that this "system of associated commonplaces", that is the properties that are evoked by the word *wolf* in general English, is dependent on culturally established beliefs and may involve "half-truths and downright mistakes" if compared to expert knowledge of wolves. Indeed, in certain examples some of the characteristics in the focus that the metaphor builds on may be ad hoc attributes suggested by, say, a poet or a prose writer rather than generally recognised features. In this way our impression of what a man can be is widened and restructured.

Moreover, the complexity of metaphorisation means that it will affect constituents within the basically non-figurative frame as well. Using "a wolf" as the focus of a metaphor commenting on the character of a man also invites us to discover human-like traits in these animals. In other words, our interpretations of the focus and

---

56 Black (1979:181–192,1977:441 & 1962:28,38–47); cf Levinson (1983:148–150,159f).

the frame interact in a way that will also influence and extend the meaning of the word that is metaphorically exploited to say something about another phenomenon, in this case the literal sense of *wolf*.[57]

According to Black, his interaction view of metaphor is preferable to both the **substitution view** and the **comparison view** of metaphor. The interaction view rejects, firstly, the simplistic assumption that metaphors in general are nothing but more pleasant or decorative substitutions of literal words or formulations with essentially the same contents. However, it also claims that the meanings of metaphors cannot just be said to build on similarity or analogy between a literal meaning, or the thing(s) it stands for, and a metaphorical interpretation of the same word. (Cf 3.2.1 & 3.2.4) No doubt Black's interaction view should be seen as a forerunner of cognitively orientated analyses and descriptions of metaphor, notably the theoretical frameworks of Lakoff and Johnson's and their co-workers presented, for instance, in *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980 and in parts of *Philosophy in the Flesh* in 1999.

3.2.8 More on cognitive studies and metaphor: thought complexes and space blends

According to the Russian psychologist Vygotsky, who died at the early age of 38 in 1934, metaphor and metonymy are based on more primitive, complex-like groupings that precede the formation of real concepts in the thinking and word understanding of children.[58] Such pre-conceptual thought complexes are said to remain in adults, and their existence would then explain why language users make the kinds of non-literal meaning adjustment that result in metaphor and metonymy. Although this can at the most be considered a sketchy hypothesis concerning the basis of metaphorical and metonymic language uses, it is intuitively attractive. These tropes are no doubt to do with the association between pre-linguistic ways of relating things in our experience and the language means used for expressing these connections.

57   Cf Kuhn (1993:533f,538f), and Searle's criticism (1993:90,93–95).
58   Vygotsky (1962:73f).

117

In a similar vein Gilles Fauconnier claims that in order to understand how language functions we must look at "the cognitive constructions that language acts upon".[59] He and some other researchers examining how language utterances are understood from a cognitive science perspective have called these **mental spaces**. Such thought formations are typically said to arise and proliferate locally in the course of language use. Moreover, each mental space is pictured as a discrete entity, but the participants and structures in them will be related by connectors.

Importantly enough, mental spaces are described as distinct from language structures and language meanings.[60] Actually, this way of describing language associated interpretations explains, I think, why the notion of mental spaces is difficult to apply to and test against actually occurring examples of verbal production. In other words, there seems to be no reliable way of proving that the mental spaces and space networks described in Fauconnierian analyses really correspond to inner cognitive representations and processes.

As far as I can see, mental spaces are in the main postulated types of cognitive constructions connecting to language strings. As terms in a scientific framework should be defined in relation to the somehow accessible empirical phenomena they are intended to represent, we must conclude that the explanatory validity of the notion of mental spaces is problematic.

Fauconnier describes metaphor as involving a particular type of conceptual **blend** of mental spaces. According to Fauconnier and others working with the terminological notion of mental spaces, the understanding of a metaphor includes not merely a source space and a target space: it also comprises a separate blend of the two connected to both of them. This additional space inherits attributes and structure from the source as well as the target. The blend has an emergent structure of its own, however, with features that are not part of either of the input spaces, that is the source and the target.[61]

---

59   Fauconnier (1997:13).
60   Fauconnier (1997:11ff) & personal communication.
61   Fauconnier (1997:168–171); cf Turner & Fauconnier (2000); Fauconnier & Turner (1999).

As can be understood from the outline given, analyses using mental spaces and space lattices to describe the construction of metaphor tend to be rather elaborate, not least because each connection between the spaces constitutes a separate analytical step. This is a consequence of the claim that spaces are discrete, and that they relate to each other in principled ways through connectors.

Fauconnier uses the figurative expression *dig one's own grave* when explaining how his space model works in metaphor analyses. He contrasts the whole literal or source type of experience that speakers will have of grave digging with the metaphorical target meaning, even if he has also claimed that only certain aspects of a source domain are mapped on to the target.[62] The necessary meaning adjustments removing striking discrepancies between the source and the target contents are said to occur in a third space, a blend. The rigid separation of source and target in the analytical model makes this necessary.

Fauconnier points out, for instance, that the sequences of events, including the intentional structures, in the literal source domain, on the one hand, and in the metaphorical target, on the other, do not match. In real life a grave is dug after someone's death, as a result of it, and the grave diggers know what they are doing. By comparison, the grave digging occurs before and causes the digger's own death in the target, and he does not realise that the consequence of his activity will be his own destruction. These paradoxes are, however, removed in the blend. In other words, the blend is said to be needed in order to eradicate contradictions and integrate the source and the target contents.

Although this is no doubt a serious attempt to establish the character of metaphorical shifts, I for one find the massive inclusion of rigidly separated information from the source space as well as the target space counterintuitive. I also question the necessity to postulate yet another cognitive entity, the blend, in order to integrate the two by reshaping the information they contain so that it can be projected back into the target, yielding the final metaphorical understanding.

Instead I would suggest that we just draw on **selected aspects** of actual grave digging and the general type of situation in which it

---

62   Fauconnier (1997:9).

occurs when using and interpreting the metaphorical string *He is digging his own grave*. The selected literal features, as well as evaluative additions, are then modulated to fit the intended metaphorical message, and the other source properties are pushed into the background or simply suppressed. (Cf 3.2.2 and 3.2.7) In other words, our overall experience of why graves are dug is generalised to include only features that are relevant for the target content which sketches how a person can unwittingly or foolishly ruin his own life.

3.2.9 Expanded and mixed metaphors

Accordingly, I insist that the observation that metaphors are realised in language constructions be firmly and explicitly recognised. There is simply no getting away from the fact that the study of metaphor concerns the semantics of verbal languages. However, a **linguistic orientation** in metaphor research and theorising does not mean that the connection to extralinguistic factors can be neglected. As cognitive structures and processes are important for metaphorisation, and indeed for natural language semantics in general, their character and role in the creation and processing of tropes must be addressed. This also involves recognising the complexity of the relationship between language senses and encyclopaedic experiences.

Expanded metaphors[63] elaborate the figurative exploitation of a field of experience over a stretch of text, moving from one particular aspect of it to other, related ones. Such metaphorical complexes imply that both language senses and experience in general, including emotive reactions and intellectual calculation, are involved in constructing and interpreting metaphorical uses.

---

63   This kind of metaphorical expansion and elaboration of a thematic field within a stretch of text has been called *extended metaphor*, but I opted for the term *expanded metaphor* instead in order to avoid confusion with what I have termed *figurative extension*. (Cf Wales 1990:296; see section 1.3)

(36) Macbeth: …
How does your patient, doctor?

Doctor: Not so sick, my lord,
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies
That keep her from her rest.

Macbeth: Cure her of that.
Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?

Doctor: Therein the patient
Must minister to himself.

Macbeth: Throw physic to the dogs—I'll none of it.
…
Come, sir, dispatch. If thou couldst, doctor, cast
The water of my land, find her disease,
And purge it to a sound and pristine health,
I would applaud thee to the very echo,
That should applaud again.—Pull't off, I say.—
What rhubarb, senna, or what purgative drug,
Would scour these English hence? Hear'st thou
of them?
(Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act five, Scene III)[64]

Actually, **metaphor expansion** means that various aspects of a universe of discourse, usually more concrete ones, are exploited to describe some other, more elusive and abstract complex of experience. In the extract above from *Macbeth* illness and attempts to cure it are introduced in the exchange about Lady Macbeth's condition. This field of experience is then metaphorically exploited in Macbeth's lines when he starts to talk about the approaching army as a medical complaint that is afflicting his country. Moreover, these passages from the play also exemplify Shakespeare's tendency to **mix metaphors** in an often drastic but effective and impressionable way. (Cf 1.2.1)

64 The Players Edition (1951:1023f).

In the following stanza from one of the poems in Ted Hughes's collection *Crow* rather crude and greedy ways of partaking of food-stuffs and liquids are introduced to give a vivid physical picture of also the psychological aspects of the behaviour of the two parties in a heterosexual love relationship. In an ingenious way descriptions of their physical contacts are developed into metaphorical characterisations of strong and destructive possessiveness. The reader begins uneasily to wonder whether their strivings to secure their relationship by "consuming" each other can really be called love.

> (37) He loved her and she loved him
> His kisses sucked out her whole past and future or tried to
> He had no other appetite
> She bit him she gnawed him she sucked
> She wanted him complete inside her
> Safe and sure forever and ever
> Their little cries fluttered into the curtains
> …
> (Ted Hughes, 'Lovesong', 1974:88)

A piece of text constructed by expanding a metaphorical theme exploiting one and the same more general experiential domain can also function like a **parable**, especially when these metaphors are all **external**. (See 3.2.7 above) The following could be a description of an actual agricultural process and the work that it involves, but it could also, or just as well, be intended as a figurative outline with a moral point.

> (38) First you must sow the seeds, then water and look after the crop as it is growing. Then, after all this work, you can reap the harvest.

3.2.10 The creative interaction of experience, cognition, and language senses

In the discussions above I have been critical of certain aspects of the analysis of metaphor within cognitive science, but, as I have also emphasised, practitioners within this recent theoretical paradigm

should be given credit for having considered the role of general cognition in metaphorisation. In short, the question is whether metaphors are fundamentally dependent on cognitive structures that need *not* be part of particular language constructions, or whether they instead arise through the imaginative exploitation and extension of the senses of items and compositional strings which are integrated parts of a language system.

A third, intermediate alternative is that metaphorisation draws both on systematic semantic contents and on general cognition and encyclopaedic experience, since the build-up and use of a verbal language must be connected with other human capacities and behavioural aspects. This more complex picture seems indeed more reasonable than either of the others, because insisting on a clear distinction between systematic semantics and non-linguistic knowledge and experience is counterintuitive. All the same, many sides of this central question concerning the nature of metaphor remain to be further analysed and compared with empirical examples of the creation and understanding of metaphorical language. (Cf parts of 1.2.2, 3.2.2 & 3.2.5 where these matters are discussed)

All things considered, I would thus conclude that the character of both metaphor and metonymy suggests that pre-linguistic experiences, thought structures, and attitudes can affect the communicative potential of verbal languages. Both these types of tropes involve motivated changes in the contents of words or longer constructions, and it is reasonable to assume that they occur because language users need to adjust basic and systematic senses in order to express other, related meanings in an efficient way, using the resources that are already at hand in their language.

As our present knowledge of the more specific factors participating in language interpretation and production is limited, the question concerning the more precise relations between language and cognition cannot be answered in a decisive way. I can simply point out that it is often difficult to say which is more basic: language competence or general cognition and experience. My suggestion is that systematic senses and general experience and thinking overlap and interact in complex and creative ways in the use of language—including the use of tropes—as well as in other psychological and physical activities.

So even if metaphorisation can partly be explained by the variability of language senses and the way they connect in intricate syntagmatic and paradigmatic networks, it also seems to draw on cognitive connections and experiences that are not necessarily or directly tied to linguistic structures. We should thus admit that especially lexical senses and sense features are partly variable or **open-ended** as regards what we can read into them. Language meanings vary among the users of a language to a certain extent, and they can be modulated by the associations evoked by a specific language context or extralinguistic situation.[65] (Cf 1.1 & 2.1.6) In (39) for instance, the paw of the cartoon character Mickey Mouse represents the cultural and economic might of the Disney company and their products. The understanding of words and language strings is however hardly a simple, "Mickey Mouse" thing. It is no doubt intricately connected with complex cognitive structures.

(39) Soon there will be no area of human endeavour into which the mighty mouse has not stuck his paw. Already we have Disney films, stage musicals, television channels, theme parks and shops stuffed full of kiddie-dazzling Disney merchandise. (*The Times*, 10 Oct 1995:35)

---

65 These interpretative possibilities constitute the basis for the syntagmatic or collocational potential of a word. Consequently, the collocations of actual examples of a word are all pieces of evidence of what its sense is really like. Paradigmatic sense relations are secondary to syntagmatic ones. We illustrate them in syntagmatic strings, for instance by showing which words can substitute for each other in a given type of collocation or more extensive language context.

3.3 Simile

Simile is a trope which like metaphor describes one thing by comparing it with another, suggesting similarities between them, although they are also clearly different. However, we distinguish similes from metaphors, because the former contain an explicit indication of the comparison, while it is merely implicit in a metaphor.[66] The word *like* in the next two sentences, which seems closest to being a preposition[67], is one example of an **overt indicator** of comparison, and the correlatives *as … as* in (42) also function semantically in this way.[68]

> (40) Oh My Luve's like a red, red rose,
>   … (Robert Burns 1796, 'A Red, Red rose')

> (41) … Gary dancing like a polar bear with its paw in a splint. (*The Times*, 17 Feb 1995:35)

> (42) She was as sweet as honey.

It seems most defensible to accept also structures like those italicised (by me) in the examples below as similes. They all contain items that characterise a situation or an individual as similar to something else. However, there is no factual identity between the thing described by a simile, its tenor in Richards's terminology, and the kind(s) of phenomenon that it is compared to through a descriptive vehicle.

If we take this broad view of what simile is, some examples do not seem clearly figurative. In addition, these examples show that the category of similes contains both cases which can easily be turned into metaphors by leaving out the similarity indicator and other

---

66   Cf *Aristotle on Rhetoric* (1991:229f,252).
67   Some other functions of *like* with a similar meaning clearly belong to other word classes: "He drove just like you do." (conjunction); "I wouldn't socialise with the likes of him." (noun); … *in like manner* (adjective). In addition, it is questionable whether the following construction with *like* can be considered a simile: "With a father like James, Peter is a doomed child."
68   Leech & Short (1981:88) distinguish between "conventional similes of the kind 'X is like Y' " and **quasi-similes** with some other similarity indicator, e g *resemble* and *as if*. Cf Melchers (1997).

125

constructions that have to be rephrased more extensively in order to become metaphorical. [69]

(43) He looked *as though he had seen a ghost*.

(44) … I cannot fly,
But, *bear-like*, I must fight the course. …
(Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act five, Scene VII)[70]

(45) In that outfit you *resemble/look like a scarecrow*.

(46) Shall I *compare thee to a summer's day*?
… (Shakespeare, Sonnet 18)[71]

(47) … the Dalai Lama … had *compared the mind to a glass of muddy water*, the 'afflictive mental states' were *like the impurities or the mud*, *which could be removed* … (The Dalai Lama & Howard C. Cutler 1998:203)

All comparisons between the denotata of verbal senses cannot be considered similes, however. In fact, comparison or the recognition of similarities as well as differences is a basic aspect of categorisation in general.[72] **Literal comparisons** have a propositional or factual status, and it should be possible to say whether they are true or not. As a result, literal comparisons are important for building up logico-descriptive hyponymic hierarchies and even scientific taxonomies.

---

69 The sentence *I have seen him as a teacher* is ambiguous out of a specifying language context and/or extralinguistic situation. According to one reading the verb *see* means roughly the same thing as *perceive visually*, but another possible interpretation treats it as a near synonym of verbs like *consider*, *regard*, and *think of*, which represent the holding of an inner, non-factual and evaluative standpoint. This latter type of understanding involves an element of similarity or comparison, while *as a teacher* in a *see* clause describing a visual experience places the individual denoted by the object *him* within "a well-defined and established professional category consisting of people who are employed to instruct pupils or students" (Alm-Arvius 1993:310; see also pp 311, 320–322 & 324f). Consequently, *as a teacher* with a *see* instance that is synonymous with *think of* or *regard* (mentally) has simile-like qualities. In other words, these evaluative verb senses incorporate the kind of semantic characterisation labelled simile in their valency—or valence—structure. In this type of construction the secondary, transferred senses of *see* and *regard* are polysemously related to the primary senses of these verbs.
70 The Players Edition (1951:1025).
71 The Players Edition (1951:1311).
72 Cf Langacker (2000:94,102.)

In other words, a literal comparison cannot be turned into a metaphor by rewriting the formulation in which it occurs, so that it no longer contains some kind of explicit marker of comparison. [73]

(48) Even though dolphins look like fish and live in the same kind of habitat, they are mammals. Female dolphins give birth to their offspring and nurse them with milk like the females of other mammal species.

(49) Dolphins are mammals, not fish.

(50) Humans and chimpanzees are alike/resemble each other in very many respects.

(51) Humans and chimpanzees are both primates.

All the same, there are no doubt examples that cannot straightforwardly be characterised as either literal comparisons or figurative similes. They can be compared to (!) approximations, that is applications of single words or compositional strings that have a somewhat indeterminate status, being neither outright metaphors nor obvious literal uses.

(52) These paintings are like photos.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the semantic affinity between metaphors and similes makes them co-occur or shade into each other in some cases. Even if constructions like the ones in (53) below and in (42) above are by no means uncommon, this kind of **overlap** between similes and metaphorical expressions has not been commented on before, as far as I know.

In the next example the focus of the figurative comparison, the adjective "hard", must be taken to involve a **merger** of two different but related senses. This means that they are both active at the same time in this construction. The semantic relation to "nail" introduces a literal reading of "hard", while this adjective must be

---

73   Cf Miller (1993:368ff); Ortony (1993b:344–355); Kittay (1987:18f).

taken metaphorically as a predicative complement of the subject item "he".[74]

(53) He is as hard as nails.

More specifically, the adjective is here used to describe behavioural and attitudinal characteristics of the person referred to as "he" via a comparison with the concrete, physical hardness of nails, which are made of metal, typically steel. This joint interpretation is presumably quite unproblematic here because both the literal sense and this extended sense of *hard* are lexicalised in English. In fact, this kind of figurative comparison between a person and nail appears as a whole to be lexicalised in this type of idiomatic expression: *be as hard/ tough as nails*.

The secondary sense of *hard* illustrated above is similar to **synaesthetic** metaphors. (Cf 1.2.1) This term is used about metaphorical senses that describe impressions from another sense modality than those denoted by the primary or literal sense. They often include a pronounced attitudinal semantic component: *a cold/hard/soft/sweet/warm voice*, although this kind of emotive feature need not be obvious in the phrase *a high/low voice*. All the figurative premodifiers in the examples in the preceding sentence describe judgements of audible qualities by using adjectives that

---

74   Leech & Coates (1980:86f,89); Alm-Arvius (1993:171f,357–359). A merger is an instance of acceptable and functional ambiguity involving related senses of the same polysemous lexeme. It is not confusing, as such an application of a lexeme can be interpreted from both or either of these prototypically clearly distinct sense perspectives. In the example given above two senses of *hard* co-exist and co-operate to create the intended two-sided meaning.

   In another type of merger it does not matter which sense serves as the basis of the interpretation, because pragmatically induced modulation of either of them will result in the same kind of interpretation in that particular setting. It is, for instance, arguable that the conventional greeting *See you later* can be interpreted either as an instance of the primary sense of *see*, which can be paraphrased as "perceive visually", or from a secondary sense perspective denoting a situation in which people meet and communicate with each other. Actually, even a blind man could say "I'm seeing my doctor tomorrow" without this being in any way an exceptional or figurative use of this secondary—and originally metonymic— *see* sense. (Alm-Arvius 1993:220–242)

   Accordingly, the notion of merger is in principle different from the conception of semantic gradience, that is a continuous semantic relation between polysemous readings of the same lexeme or grammatical construct. Cf sections 1.3, 1.3.3, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, and 4.1 above.

literally denote visual or tactile experiences. Interestingly enough, there are few adjectives in English, and seemingly also in other languages, that primarily and strictly literally represent audible impressions.

3.4 Personification, and the importance of world views

Prototypical examples of personification are metaphorical. Consequently, such obvious instances of personification constitute a sub-category of the more general and comprehensive category of metaphors. In other words, **metaphor** can ordinarily be considered a superordinate term in relation to **personification**, and the latter terminological label is thus a hyponym of metaphor.

The impression that personifications are metaphors of a particular type means that examples of personification share some specific, additional characteristic that is not to be found in all metaphors. This property is clear from the term itself, as a figurative construction contains a personification when it describes something that is not human as though it could feel, think, act, live, or die in the same way as people.

(54) *Life* has cheated me.

(55) Have you tried to execute *your car*?

Abstract concepts and inanimate concrete phenomena are often personified, as in the examples above, and non-human live things like trees or flowers can also be spoken of in this way. Personification can be achieved by collocating words or expressions representing the things personified with lexical units that can strictly speaking be used only to describe human beings and their behaviour, experiences, and other characteristics.

The reason for this kind of metaphorical extension is of course that language users project their own subjective experiences and ways of thinking, reacting, and behaving on other things in the world. In other words, personifications are no doubt a result of an

anthropocentric tendency in human thinking, including the kinds of meaning that can be conveyed through verbal language. Accordingly, personifications can remind us of the classical saying *Man is the measure of all things*, which Plato used in one of his dialogues.[75]

Actually, we see in (54) and (55) that this kind of metaphorical extension can affect not just nominal expressions, here "Life" and "your car", but also the collocates that make us connect the referents of these noun phrases with the category of human beings and their potentials, activities, and experiences. In these sentences it is primarily the verbs "cheat" and "execute" that have this function, and, significantly enough, their meanings appear to be semantically widened as well. In short, it seems too simplistic just to say that "Life" and "your car" are spoken of in human terms in these strings. No doubt they are, in an imaginative way, partly awarded human characteristics, but at the same time the verbs "cheat" and "execute" appear to be given extended readings which allow them to occur with respectively a non-human subject and a non-human direct object. The interpretation of such constructions may even vary somewhat among users of English so that some chiefly see the noun phrases in question as personified, while others mainly adjust the contents of the verb or some other collocate in predicative or modifying position.

(56) No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change,

...
(Shakespeare, Sonnet 123) [76]

In addition, the examples above and below illustrate that personification can be coupled with **apostrophe**. The latter term denotes direct, vocative addresses to beings that may not be actually or factually present. [77]

75   Smith & Harvey (1948:402); cf Lakoff & Johnson (1999:511,551–557).
76   The Players Edition (1951:1329).
77   Cf Crystal (2001:21); Freeborn (1996:68,71,118); Wales (1990:32).

(57) Rough wind, that moanest loud
    Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
    Knells all the night long:
Sad storm, whose tears are vain
Bare woods, whose branches strain,
Deep caves and dreary main, –
    Wail, for the world's wrong!
(P B Shelley 1984, 'A Dirge')[78]

Personifications like those exemplified in (54) to (57) above are internal metaphors, since they can be said to violate basic collocational restrictions in present-day standard English.

However, it should also be observed that the claim that natural phenomena such as clouds, storms, or winds cannot experience feelings and react to make them known by moaning or crying is associated with a modern, factually oriented world view, based on the findings and principles of natural science. An animistic conception of the world would accept such characterisations as literal and possibly true. So the interpretations of lexical senses, including their sense relations, are, quite generally speaking, dependent on how we conceive of the world that we live in. Certain variations in the understanding of words, and their denotata out in the world, reflect this directly and practically also at the present synchronic stage of standard English.

A case in point is the semantic relation between the nouns *human (being)* and *animal*. According to a Darwinian **world view** human beings are just members of a kind of mammal species, and thus animals.

(58) Human beings are animals, just like other mammals.

On the other hand, humans have a unique position in relation to other living beings in the Judeo-Christian tradition that has dominated Western culture and thinking since Christianity became the religion of most European nations over a few centuries in the beginning of the Middle Ages. This way of thinking has seen

---

78   *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (1974, Vol 2:597).

humans and animals as fundamentally different, as only humans are said to have been created in God's image and are thought of as having immortal souls. In language usage this has meant that *human (being)* and *animal* are treated as antonyms.

(59) Human beings are not animals.

Both these types of ideas about the nature of humans and animals are active in today's English. The sense relation between *human (being)* and *animal* that is built on a Darwinian world view can be said to be of an **epistemic** character. In other words, it concerns our factual knowledge of the world. By comparison, the contrasting status of humans and animals exemplified in (59) is to do with **deontic** attitudes. Deontic meaning deals with moral and ideological judgements, as well as with social relations and questions about authority and power.[79]

As we touched on above, many cultures have thought of nature as being inhabited by human-like spirits, and this is no doubt a consequence of the human inclination to understand and conceptualise things in the world by comparing them with our own personal experiences and self-image. Gods and other spiritual beings in religious mythologies of various kinds normally have human characteristics and personalities in addition to super-human traits or special connections with other things in nature.

(60) Thor was the god of thunder in old Nordic mythology.

Animals that talk, act, and think like humans in fables, fairy tales, and sayings, for instance, are furthermore **anthropomorphised** rather than personified. This term can also be used to describe the human-like character of mythological and even religious beings.

(61) 'SOMEBODY HAS BEEN EATING MY PORRIDGE!' said the Great, Huge Bear in his great, gruff voice. ('The Three Bears' in *Read Me a Story* 1976:13)

In some cases it may, however, be more adequate to use the term **animation** rather than personification. An animate thing is simply

79   See e g Lyons (1995:253–25,329f,334f,339); Saeed (1997:126f,287–289,317f).

alive, and other living beings do not have the same, more highly developed intellectual and communicative capacities as humans. As I touched on above, there seem to be different degrees of personification, and some instances may appear to shade into mere animation. As in many other sorts of semantic variation we can probably talk of a continuum between these two types of metaphorical readings, and many such uses can probably be interpreted in various ways along this conceptual cline.

(62) The rocks looked threatening in the twilight.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that psychological and physiological parts of a human individual can be personified and spoken of as though they were in some respects separate individuals in relation to the person who has them. The heart has, for instance, traditionally been thought of as the seat of feelings in human beings, and this conception may have arisen as a kind of metonymic connection between feelings and fairly regularly accompanying physiological reactions. A person's heart can become agitated and beat quicker as a result of some emotional reaction, like being afraid, tense with expectation, sexually aroused, or overtaken by grief or intense happiness. Furthermore, blood and bleeding have in Judeo-Christian thinking been associated with spiritual matters, and these associations may also have been extended to include the heart. Today this kind of understanding of the noun *heart* seems metaphorical, however, and polysemously related to the factually descriptive sense of *heart* denoting a vital muscular organ that makes the blood circulate in a live body.[80]

(63) I have argued with *my heart*.

As we can see from the next two examples, other parts of a person can also be spoken of as though they were separate beings.

(64) I wanted to run away but *my legs* refused to move.

(65) He could not stop *his thoughts* from wandering off to other matters.

80 Cf Niemeier (2000:199–211); Gibbs (1999:64).

Finally, it should be pointed out that constructions like the follow-ing are metonymic shortcuts rather than personifications. (For further examples of this type see Chapter 5)

(66) Those were *happy days*. (i e days in which people were happy)

3.5 Oxymoron

An **oxymoron** is a **paradoxical** combination of words or expres-sions with opposite, that is more or less straightforwardly anto-nymic senses, like *bitter-sweet*, *the sound of silence*, and *Eyes Wide Shut*, the title of a Stanley Kubrick film. Typically, this semantic clash forces a metaphor-like adjustment of the interpretation of such constructions. Some oxymorons are word formations, usually compounds, while others are recurring or novel collocations, or even whole syntactic phrases or clauses.

(67) *She is the only man* around here.

(68) We *chastise those whom* we *love*.

(69) They seemed to be stuck in a *love-hate* relationship.

(70) A *terrible beauty* is born. (W B Yeats 1916/1920, 'Easter 1916')[81]

(71) Lauren Bacall, the American actress famous for her husky, slinky, *sweet-and-sour* persona … (Morris 1985:20)

Although oxymorons contain contradictory elements, they are meaningful in a paradoxical way. The qualities that are interlaced in this kind of trope are ordinarily felt to conflict, and as a result oxymorons allow us to acknowledge the intricate character of the things they describe. Like metaphor oxymoron makes it possible for language constructions to accommodate experiences that are not denoted by the basic contents of words and the sense oppositions that they involve. All the same, the antonymic elements in an oxymoron share some more general or superordinate meaning

81   *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (1974, Vol 2:1922f).

aspect, and it is this more general, common quality that makes it possible to bring together opposing senses in order to create a complex figurative reading of some kind.

In addition, this kind of paradoxical widening and connection of lexical senses may seem to exaggerate conflicting tendencies in the situations or phenomena that they are used to represent. In other words, certain examples of oxymoron can appear hyperbolic.

3.6 Hyperbole and understatement

Exaggeration is very common in language, and **hyperbole** is the term used for this kind of figure of speech. Occasionally the synonym **overstatement** is used instead. Many hyperbolic uses, for instance those in (72) to (75) below, are also metaphorical, because a literal interpretation of them would be impossible and absurd.[82]

>(72) Yours till the stars lose their glory
>Yours till the birds fail to sing
>… (Parts of the lyrics of a popular English song from the early forties, sung by Vera Lynn.)

Furthermore, we can note that in many idiomatic formulations which are both metaphorical and hyperbolic both these aspects may seem somewhat watered down. The reason for this is of course that the members of the speech community have heard them repeatedly and do not react with surprise or pay them any particular attention when they hear them, in spite of their really drastic meaning.

>(73) We are *all ears*.

>(74) I've been *working my fingers to the bone*.

At least originally, the reason for constructing and using this kind of trope is of course rhetorical: to make people really listen and

---

82   Cf *Aristotle on Rhetoric* (1991:253).

remember the message. Especially novel metaphorical exaggerations may startle, move, or amuse people. Quite generally speaking, the concretising and vividly rich association potential of metaphors tends to lend them a stronger pragmatic force than literal utterances.

(75) His words were *icy, painful stabs at her heart, causing oozing and lethal wounds*.

Some hyperbolic formulations are however similes instead of metaphors. (75) and (76) illustrate again the semantic similarity and the formal difference between metaphor and simile.

(76) His words were *like icy, painful stabs at her heart.*

In everyday speech generalisations like those given below are very common, and they show that not all hyperbolic uses are also metaphors or similes. The last but one of these sentences is a proverbial-like idiom, and the subject phrase in the last example is metonymic.

(77) All he wants to do is chase women.

(78) You're always leaving your key in the lock.

(79) You are never at home. (Said for instance to a husband who has just returned home.)

(80) Women are always at a disadvantage.

(81) There's absolutely nothing on the telly tonight.

(82) Children should be seen and not heard.

(83) The whole of England reacted with disgust and anger.

Tautological set expressions like *all well and good*, *null and void*, and *turn out of house and home* seem mildly hyperbolic.

Understatement is the opposite of hyperbole, because a strictly literal reading of such a turn of phrase makes something more insignificant or presents the subject matter in a more negative light than the speaker (or writer) really intended after all. Actually, the

understandings of both hyperbole and understatement may be analysed as an effect of Gricean implicature.[83] (Cf 2.1.6)

Politeness or the wish to avoid bragging or "putting on airs"—because cultural norms say that such behaviour is bad—may be one important incentive behind the use of understatement, especially when people are talking about themselves or something they have done. Understatement commonly involves negation of some sort, and the last sentence below could function as an ironic request.

(84) That wasn't such a bad meal that I cooked.

(85) She is no fool.

(86) It's nothing, just a scratch.

(87) Not at all/Don't mention it/Think nothing of it!
     (As a reply to, for instance: Thank you very much.)

(88) I'm a little tired. (Said when the speaker is completely exhausted.)

(89) I wouldn't mind some peace and quiet for a change.

Sometimes it can be difficult to say whether a usage should be considered hyperbolic or an instance of understatement. It is, for instance, not immediately obvious how the following idiomatic predication should be categorised.

(90) She/I wasn't born yesterday.

3.7 Symbolic language

In symbolic language use the usually literal—or at least non-figurative—senses of words and composite strings are retained, although they also associate to other conceptions, often of an intangible kind. Personal emotions, spiritual experiences, moral reflections,

---

83 Lexicalised instances of hyperbole and understatement seem to be examples of *conventional implicature* rather than *conversational implicature*. Conventional implicatures are non-propositional but established parts of the semantic contents of lexical or grammatical items and compositional, idiomatic constructions. (Cf Lyons 1995:164f,271–276,281; Grice 1975)

and specific cultural attitudes or phenomena can be evoked in an indirect and optional way through **symbolic associations** for instance in literary language, in sermons, in political speeches, and in advertising.[84]

Ideological and mythical concepts that are connected with concrete things like flags, badges, particular articles of clothing, various religious paraphernalia, or specific colours and signs exist in all cultures, and they can thus often be evoked either in language or in some other way.

(91) Above the altar hung a small black *cross*.

The swastika is an old pictorial sign that is found in many ancient cultures, notably in India, and it may have been used to represent the sun, for instance. However, since the Nazis made it their official symbol, it has been associated with them and their ideology.[85]

(92) Someone had painted a *swastika* on their door.

Bowler hats, also called just bowlers, are typically associated with the traditional outfit of British business men or civil servants, while stetsons are American hats, connected with a Western life-style.[86]

(93) It's more natural for me to don a *stetson* than a *bowler hat*.

(94) The retreating Republican troops were forced to show the *white flag* on all fronts.

The colour *white* is often associated with innocence, purity, or non-aggressiveness in Western culture, while *black* is instead connected with sadness and grief, or danger, or simply seriousness. So if we are told, for instance, that someone was dressed either in white or in black, this may add symbolic, imaginative associations to the concrete and more down-to-earth and factual description of this individual's appearance. Quite generally speaking, verbal symbols can have a strong rhetorical effect on some people, but they do not suppress the non-figurative meanings of the words and formulations used.

---

84 Cf Soon Peng Su (1994:143f); Abrams (1993:206–208).
85 *Nationalencyklopedin* (2000); cf *Collins Cobuild* (1995:1687); *American Heritage* (1985:1226).
86 Cf *Collins Cobuild* (1995:188,1635).

(95) You cannot wear that *red* dress at the funeral. You should be dressed in *black*.

Symbolic associations can be either culturally established or the result of personal experiences or fantasies. Especially the latter type of symbolic associations can also be spoken of as **connotations**. For instance, hermeneutic attempts which draw on Freudian and Jungian psychology can contain rather fanciful readings, dwelling on the occurrence of presumed sexual and archetypical symbols in texts or in some other mode of human expression.[87]

It is, furthermore, often pointed out that also seemingly every-day, concrete descriptions tend to take on symbolic qualities in poetry, because we are used to the **deautomatising** intentions and effects of poetic language. In other words, we expect a poem to say something special and unconventional, to throw new light even on everyday words or the matters and experiences that they represent. Indeed the formulations in the following well-known poem by the American William Carlos Williams (1883–1963) may be felt to take on symbolic qualities mainly because they are presented as parts of a poem, in the form of stanzas where the lines do not run all the way to the right margin as in ordinary prose. In other words, the poem format itself appears to invite readers to search for special meaning qualities of various kinds.

(96) This is just to say

> I have eaten
> the plums
> that were in
> the icebox
> and which
> you were probably
> saving
> for breakfast
>
> Forgive me
> they were delicious
> so sweet
> and so cold

---

87 Cf Abrams (1993:208f,263–268); Jung (1965:109–136); Drever & Wallerstein (1964: 290).

4 Punning

4.1 Polysemy in punning

A **pun** is a kind of word play that is made possible by the ambiguity[1] of a lexical unit or a longer compositional string. In other words, punning depends on the occurrence of **polysemy** and **homonymy** in a language, either on the lexical or on the grammatical level. Actually, both lexical and syntactic aspects may be involved, in particular if the pun exploits a polysemous sense distinction.

> (1) We put people in front of cars. (In an advertisement for Volvo)[2]

As has been pointed out, the notion of conventional polysemy is to do with the occurrence of distinguishable but still **related** senses of a lexeme or of a grammatical item or construction. Usually there is a primary sense which is more basic than the others, synchronically speaking. The secondary senses are then connected with it through the kinds of meaning shift that we talk of as metaphor and metonymy, especially, although the relation between some polysemous senses seems rather meronymic or explicable within a logico-descriptive hyponymic network.[3]

More specifically, the different senses of a **polyseme** can be clearly distinct in some applications, but they can also overlap in an inconspicuous and natural way in actual utterances. In fact, the occurrence of such **polysemous overlaps** is the best test for

---

1   Cf Ullman (1962:156–192).
2   I have taken this example from P Kukulski's fourth-term essay, submitted to the English Department, Stockholm University in the spring term of 1997.
3   Alm-Arvius (1999) and section 5.5. Cf Alm-Arvius (1995 & 1993).

polysemy. The analytic sentence in (2) spells out the primary sense of *man* in English, while this noun has a more specific, but obviously related and dependent sense in the following standard-ised performative expression, where *man* is synonymous with *husband*. Finally, both these readings of *man* seem relevant in the third example.

(2)   A man is an adult human being.

(3)   I now pronounce you man and wife.

(4)   Mary went through a messy divorce last year, but she is now on the lookout for a new man.

Accordingly, different senses of a lexeme are treated under the same headword in the same entry in a dictionary. Similarly, different but still related interpretations of grammatical devices like, for instance, the genitive or the modal auxiliaries will be commented on in grammar books and other handbooks in a way that makes it clear that they are considered different possible interpretations of the same grammatical word or construction.[4]

The farewell and the jocular reply in the verbal exchange below exemplify how polysemy can be used in punning.[5] The English verb *see* has a primary sense, which can be paraphrased *perceive with the eyes*, or *perceive visually*, and also a number of generalised secondary senses, for instance the sense 'meet and talk to'.[6] The latter presumably dominates in farewell expressions like *see you soon* or *see you later*, although our interpretations of them are also prototypically felt to involve actual visual impressions. So while the verb in the first utterance, "See you soon", can be taken to focus on

---

4   Alm-Arvius (1995,1993); Quirk et al (1985:219–237,321f).
5   Alm-Arvius (1993:240).
6   This secondary sense is ordinarily symmetric when analysed in logico-semantic terms, because if a woman named Ann says that "I'm seeing my solicitor this afternoon", this statement must be taken to mean that the speaker and her solicitor are going to get together and talk about something. Accordingly, we could reverse the thematic perspective and instead say that "Ann's solicitor is seeing her this afternoon" without changing the propositional content. By comparison, the primary sense of *see* is non-symmetric, because even if one participant in a situation perceives somebody else visually, this does not mean that this perceptual experience is mutual. We can on many occasions see—that is visually perceive—other people without them seeing us.

the secondary *see* sense 'meet and talk to', the verb in the reply "Not if I see you first" involves only the primary sense of *see*, 'perceive with the eyes'.[7] The interpretations of these two *see* instances are linked, however, and in order to understand the joke in the reply, we must switch back and forth between them in a way that is typical of punning.

(5) 1st speaker: See you soon.
2nd speaker: Not if I see you first!

This particular farewell phrase and a number of similar expressions containing *see*, like *I'll be seeing you*, are conventionalised, idiomatic strings in the English language. This humorous adjacency pair including the farewell *see you soon* seems also to be stored as a whole in the English of many speakers of the language. As two speakers are involved when uttering adjacency pairs, they illustrate how the members of a speech community share the conventions of their language. In addition, examples like the farewell—reply pair in (5) above indicate that they share an intuition for the creative potentials of the language. It can result in the production of various sorts of tropes, and it includes the ability to interpret figurative meanings also when they are new to an individual language user. In short, proficient speakers of a language interact on the basis of all this shared knowledge and similar verbal habits when communicating with each other verbally.

4.2 Homonymy in punning

So far we have looked at the character of polysemy and noted that it is one kind of basis for punning. Other examples of this figure of speech, for instance the one below, draw however on the occurrence of homonymy in a language.

7   Cf note 74 in chapter 3.

(6)   The doctor fell into the well
      and broke his collar bone.
      He should have tended to the sick
      And left the well alone.[8]

Homonyms are for the most part lexical words, or perhaps just a couple of identical morphological forms of two or more lexemes, whose other forms are different, but occasionally there are also compositional homonymic constructions. Homonymy is different from polysemy, because it is *only* the expression sides of homonymic language elements that are the same, while their senses are **unrelated**.

Accordingly, homonymy is *not* a sense relation. By comparison, lexicalised or grammaticalised polysemy means that we can talk of sense relations within one and the same language construct, or perhaps rather between different established types of uses of either the same lexeme or the same grammatical item or pattern. As a result, homonyms must be considered completely separate words, or sometimes just identical forms of unrelated words. This means that they are normally listed under separate headwords as parts of different entries in dictionaries.

More specifically, there is a gradient of different stages of lexical homonymy, depending on

a)   whether the homonymy encompasses all the inflectional forms of a lexeme

b)   and whether the homonyms can replace each other in the same slot in a syntactic string.

If both these criteria are met, we have a case of **absolute homonymy**. The standard example of this in semantic literature is the formal identity of the two nouns *bank*. One of them stands for a kind of financial institution, and the other one is a word for a raised area, for instance along the edge of a river or canal. Accordingly, strings like *I saw him by the bank* and *They met at the bank* are ambiguous out of a specifying language context or communicative situa-

---

8   This example is from Soon Peng Su (1994:123,177), who found it in L G Heller (1974) 'Toward a General Typology of the Pun', *Language and Style* 7 (4), pp 271f.

tion. However, since the overwhelming majority of language utterances occur within some kind of linguistic or extralinguistic setting, the potential ambiguity of such clauses will usually be totally overlooked by the interlocutors.

If only the second criterion is fulfilled, just certain forms of two different words with the same word class status are the same. I have used the term **partial syntactic homonymy** for such cases, and they appear to be comparatively rare. Some morpho-syntactic forms of the regular verb *lie*, meaning 'not tell the truth', and the irregular verb *lie*, as in *lie down* or *lie awake*, are identical. As a result, the clause *He's lying at home* could either mean, roughly, that he is resting or recuperating at home, or that he is knowingly saying things at home which are untruthful. However, the particular occasion of use, or the text it occurred in, would again normally make it clear which interpretation is the intended one—unless it was treated as a pun for some reason.

Other sub-categories of homonymy cannot usually make one and the same syntactic structure ambiguous, but they are still sometimes used in punning.

The little verse in (6) above exploits the formal identity of the noun *well*, denoting a hole in the ground that contains water, and the adjective *well*, which is a synonym of *healthy* and an antonym of *sick* or *ill*, and which here functions as the head of a noun phrase, *the well*, representing the whole group of people who enjoy good health.[9] These two *well* forms exemplify the sub-category that I have called **partial formal homonymy**, and the puns below are also possible because of this kind of homonymy.

Down in *get down* is an adverbial particle. In the question below this phrasal verb is followed by the prepositional phrase "from elephants", which functions as an additional, specifying directional adverbial. Moreover, *down* can be a noun representing small soft feathers or hair, and this is what makes the surprising and rather contrived punning answer possible.[10]

(7) Q: How do you get down from elephants?
A: You don't, you get it from ducks.

---

9 Cf Svartvik & Sager (1977:286f).
10 Cf Alm-Arvius (1998:59–61).

The punning on *grave* in (8) is somewhat exceptional, because it means that the same form can either be interpreted as an instance of the noun *grave*, meaning a burial place in the ground, or as an occurrence of the adjective *grave*, a near synonym of *serious*. As I have pointed out above, the possibility to give one and the same word instance two distinct homonymic readings usually requires the use of homonyms that belong to the same word class. It is however arguable that placing the noun *grave* in a premodifying position is actually a kind of conversion, or more specifically a case of adjectivalisation.[11]

(8)   … Ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a grave man.
     … (Said by Mercutio when he is dying)
     (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act three, Scene I)[12]

Homophones are words that are pronounced in the same way, although they are spelt differently. The following pun plays on the phonological identity of, firstly, the noun *week* and the adjective *weak* and, secondly, the pronoun *one* and the numeral *one*. The first pair of lexical words are homophonically related. In addition, the two interpretations of this pun require different senses of the polysemous verb *make*. Such complex puns are by no means uncommon.

(9)   Seven days without water make one weak. [13]

By comparison, **homographs**, which are just spelt in the same way but pronounced differently, are for the most part less suitable for this purpose, because language users seem mainly to rely on the phonological structure of an element when they interpret it. This is of course natural, since written language is a later and deliberate achievement, both quite generally in the history of a language used by a specific speech community, and in the development of individual language users. Still there are quite a few people on this earth who have never learnt to read and write even their native, everyday language.

---

11   Cf Huddleston (1988:111-116).
12   The Players Edition (1951:920).
13   From *Longman* (1995:1145).

Moreover, it should be noted that even if homonyms are proto-typically lexical words or particular forms of lexical words, a whole syntactic construction can sometimes be ambiguous in a homonymic way. The following extract from the novel *Cider with Rosie* by Laurie Lee[14] is about the narrator's first day in school. The prepositional phrase "for the present" functions as a pun in this story from the reader's point of view, but it was not intended as such by the teacher who said it, and it was not experienced in this way either by the new schoolboy who simply misunderstood her.

(10) … I spent that first day picking holes in paper, then went home in a smouldering temper.

> 'What's the matter, Loll? Didn't he like it at school, then?'
> 'They never gave me the present!'
> 'Present? What present?'
> 'They said they'd give me a present.'
> 'Well, now, I'm sure they didn't.'
> 'They did! They said: "You're Laurie Lee, ain't you? Well, just you sit there for the present." I sat there all day but I never got it. I ain't going back there again!'

4.3 Puns will be language specific

The use of polysemes and homonyms in punning is thus dependent on systematic formational principles that guide the construction of **expression sides** in a language. More specifically, the terminological notion expression side(s) is here quite comprehensive, comprising both the expression sides of individual lexemes and those of longer syntactic strings, that is phrases and clauses. So, in short, punning exploits phonological formations, including whole strings of them, which can be physically realised and perceived either in speech or in writing. These lexical or compositional expression sides are arbitrary and conventionally tied up with certain senses in a language, as first sketched by de Saussure in his *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, edited and published posthumously

---

14   Lee (1962:44).

by a few former students of his in 1916. The expression sides of meaningful signs are normally language specific, and as a result puns are also language specific and difficult to translate.

If an interpreter, a translator, or a writer of subtitles in a film or on TV tries to come up with an expression in the **target language** for a **source language** pun, it can usually not be considered a translation really. It will instead be a newly created formulation that is felt to work reasonably or perhaps even quite well as a replacement in the source language in that particular language setting. This is not to say that puns can never be translated into other languages. The first example in this chapter can, for instance, be directly translated into Swedish, keeping the intended pun intact.

4.4 The communicative function of puns

Most puns seem intentional or constructed to achieve some special communicative effect, usually a humorous one. Often the fun of evoking an instance of verbal ambiguity appears itself to be the point of a pun. As a result, this kind of word play, built on **intentional ambiguity**, has sometimes been seen as shallow and without a moral or some other significant message.[15]

However, even a joke like the following one, from a comic strip in a newspaper, may be felt to highlight a common existential weakness in human beings. Surely it is not too farfetched to suggest that it may be taken to comment on the futility of greed or idle dreams of undeserved riches?

(11) *Scene 1*. Lady with a crystal ball to Bung, the jester: I see lots of dough coming your way.
Scene 2. The King: I hear Bung is in the hospital.
Courtier: Yeah, he got run over by a bread truck.
(B Parker & J Hart, 'The Wizard of Id'. *Dagens Nyheter*, 24 feb 1997:B12)

---

15   Fowler (1994:474); Crystal (1988:110).

At any rate, a pun will somehow trigger an imaginatively challenging combination of meanings, which at least has a surprise effect. This will catch a hearer's or reader's attention. In other words, a pun can serve as a mnemonic device or make people curious, so that they want to know more about a subject matter. This **foregrounding** effect explains why puns are often used in advertising and in newspaper headlines.

(12) Women use them. So
they sell them. Period.
(Headline of an article on advertising female sanitary products. *The Observer*, 17 Aug 1997:6)

(13) 'Stick with us' (Used to advertise a glue)[16]

The following headline contains a couple of ingenious puns, but this will hardly be clear to readers unless they go on to read the article, which is about insurance premiums. More specifically, it informs us that some professional groups, for instance hospital staff, have to pay more in order to get a car insurance, because their work tends to make them more accident-prone.

(14) Doctors and Nurses?
Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear
(*The Daily Telegraph*, Aug 28 1999:C5)

Playing doctors and nurses is a euphemism for hanky-panky, and this reading of the elliptical introductory question in the headline above seems at first to be supported both by the repetition of the following exclamatory expression *oh dear*, and by an accompanying photo of a handsome male physician, whom I would place in a film or soap opera rather than in a real medical ward. However, as I have already pointed out, the possible sexual innuendo in this first line is not born out in the text of the article, which deals with the rather more mundane question of insurance premiums. In addition, the interjection *oh dear* is given pun-like qualities through the contents of the text, since it tells us how *expensive* a car insurance can be for doctors and nurses, for instance.

---

16   This example is from David Crystal's book *The English Language* (1988:110).

Some stories for children contain puns, and they can be said to be one example of the joy that children can experience when they play around with language, presumably practising it and learning more about its intricacies at the same time. (Cf 6.5) This passage from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll is followed by a page in which the Mouse's tale is printed in the shape of a long and meandering tail in which the letters grow increasingly smaller as it proceeds towards its end. The English nouns *tale* and *tail* are homophones.

(15) "Mine is a long and sad tale!" said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing.

"It *is* a long tail, certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; "but why do you call it sad?" And she kept on puzzling about it while the Mouse was speaking, so that her idea of the tale was something like this:— (p 32)

4.5 The two meanings in a pun

As should be clear from the examples given in this chapter, one interpretation often seems more logical or more in focus in a pun. The reason for this may be common collocational practices, or simply how likely or expected the two readings are felt to be in a particular setting. If one understanding appears more basic or reasonable, the other one may just bring in a secondary and perhaps even somewhat farfetched interpretative possibility—at least at first sight. However, there are also more balanced puns where neither reading can be said to dominate.

$$\boxed{\text{Meaning}_1}$$

$$\updownarrow$$
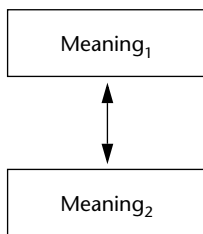
$$\boxed{\text{Meaning}_2}$$

Punning is similar to metaphor in that it involves two distinguishable meanings, but in a metaphor the source content is suppressed in favour of a more generalised target understanding. A pun is different in that it makes us switch back and forth between two distinct interpretations.[17]

While metaphorisation is a unidirectional process from the exploited source sense to the target understanding, a pun combines two semantic perspectives that present different or alternative interpretations. The ambiguity of a pun is normally intentional. The function of puns depends on this pairing of two distinct interpretations within one single morphological or syntactic formation. This means, in fact, that puns can be compared to ambiguous pictures like Jastrow's figure, named the duck–rabbit by Wittgenstein, because it can be seen either as a duck or as a rabbit, but not both at exactly the same time.[18] Finally, we can note the special character of the following puns.

(16) The new bride said to her husband: "Let's get a new sports car. I'd love to hear the patter of a tiny Fiat."

(17) "Man does not live by bed alone," says MGM-TV prexy Ed Montanus.[19]

They can be considered examples of **idiom breaking**, as they obviously play on the meaning of the following two idioms:

> *hear the patter of tiny feet*

> *Man cannot/does not live by bread alone*. (A proverb that was originally a quotation from the Bible)

Accordingly, it seems as though idiom breaking can be seen as a type of punning.

---

17 Leech & Short (1981:140) suggest that punning involves "a coalescence of concepts normally distinct". I find this a somewhat misleading description. Instead puns are characterised by the ambiguity introduced by associations to distinct understandings of polysemous and homonymous words or longer expressions.
18 Wittgenstein (1968:194ᵉ).
19 These puns have been taken from Art Moger's *The Complete Pun Book*, p. 160.

5 Metonymy and Synecdoche

5.1 Metonymy and experiential co-occurrence

As was pointed out in the introductory sections of Chapter 1, metaphor and **metonymy** are usually considered the two main types of tropes in verbal language, but the former has received much more attention in scholarly or scientific circles. The reason for this could be that metaphors are often more noticeable, and they also appear to be more frequent. So it could be that metaphors have spontaneously been felt to be more important and also more challenging both from a rational, analytical perspective and as regards their imaginative pretence.

By comparison, metonymies tend to appear practically explicable or even basically logical, with obvious experiential connections between a basic literal content and the metonymic extension. This is presumably a result of the observation that metonymic meaning changes will be based on regular pragmatic co-occurrence of things out in the world. Metaphorical extensions, on the other hand, come about through imaginative conceptual analogies between phenomena that are both obviously different and not typically found together in real-life situations.

A metonymic meaning shift is thus based on **literal, extensional contiguity**: that is natural or expected extralinguistic connections between the things denoted by a primary sense and the metonymic application respectively.[1] The name of a place, for instance, can be metonymically used about the people who live there, or perhaps

---

1   Cf Feyaerts (2000:60–65); Koch (1999:140–159); Lodge (1977:75–77); Jakobson (1974:132); Ullman (1962: 92).

rather about a specific group of people who are especially associated with this place and the kinds of activities that it is mainly associated with.

(1) *Oxford* takes its traditions seriously.

(2) *Downing Street* emphasised that Mr Kirkham had been honoured for his charitable work.

Similarly, a lexeme denoting a type of container—like *box*, *casserole* or *glass*—can stand for the contents. This kind of meaning shift[2] is so natural and inconspicuous that some people are surprised when they hear it spoken of as an example of figurative language.

(3) "There are no chocolates left! They have eaten *the whole box*."

(4) Mary had made *a casserole*.

(5) You must drink at least *half the glass*.

Actually, *glass* seems basically to be an uncountable noun denoting a specific kind of material. Because of a regular experiential connection this noun has also a lexicalised countable sense that represents another type of denotatum: a kind of container that people drink from, which is typically made of the human-made substance called glass. As a result, this noun can also be taken to stand for the contents of a drinking glass. The last example above illustrates this second metonymic transfer in the use of this noun.

$glass_1$ (the "material" ▶ $glass_2$ (the "container" ▶ $glass_3$ (the "contents" sense)　　　　　　　sense)　　　　　　　sense)

Metonymic shifts are in fact descriptive **shortcuts**.[3] Metonymy is a semantic process that makes it possible to invest a particular word or the phrase that it occurs in, typically as the head, with more meaning than this element basically contains. The word chosen to

---

2   See notes 36 and 39 in chapter 1.
3   Cf Saeed (1997:181); Lodge (1977:76,93).

convey a more complex metonymic message will also literally stand for something prominent in the situation described. Accordingly, it seems natural to highlight this aspect of a "full" meaning also in this kind of verbal shortcut. When using instances of metonymy, language users say only what is needed for other members of the speech community to understand what they mean.[4]

Practical human experience—which has also been called **encyclopaedic** knowledge—helps us to interpret metonymic formulations correctly. If somebody says *The kettle is boiling*, this means of course that the contents of the kettle, ordinarily water, are boiling, because it would be absurd to take it to mean that it is the kettle itself that is boiling.

An analysis of this example also shows that the ordinary **collocational** restrictions of the verb *boil* are still at work, although they would seem to have been suppressed in the metonymic shortcut. Proficient speakers of English know that strictly speaking only liquids boil, and a kettle is a solid object. More specifically, it is a kitchen utensil that can be filled with water, or some other drinkable liquid, which can then be heated by putting the kettle on a stove. Similarly, the statement *I don't like Mozart* will for the most part be taken to mean that the speaker does not like the music composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in the eighteenth century.

5.1.1 The expansion test and property inheritance

Actually, I have observed that there is a simple **expansion test** for what can be considered a metonymy. As we have seen, metonymic uses commonly involve violation of literal collocational restrictions. However, if the whole line of thought behind a metonymic shortcut is spelt out, we see that they are implicitly adhered to. In other words, a more explicit and elaborate description like *The water in the kettle is boiling* is no longer figurative, while *The kettle is boiling*—a more usual kind of formulation—is metonymic.[5]

Actually, the application of this test to metonymies indicates clearly why they occur in language. Metonymy is a convenient way

---

4   Cf Langacker (2000:62–67,198–200), where the term *active zone* is used about the parts of a whole that are involved in an event described in a language string.

of making verbal messages shorter by avoiding including details that will be made part of the understanding of such a construction simply as a matter of course.[6]

Moreover, **grammatical category shifts** are a comparatively common consequence of metonymic uses. As was pointed out above, the polysemous relation between the uncountable sense of *glass*, denoting a substance, and the countable "container" sense in, for instances, the phrases *a glass* and *several glasses* involves such a semantico-grammatical difference. We can also note the plural form of the synecdochical use of *glasses* as a synonym of *spectacles*.

Such a change in the grammatical character of a metonymy as compared to a more basic sense appears to come about through **property inheritance** from some other, **incorporated** type of sense which can be spelt out in an explanatory paraphrase of the kind exemplified above. For instance: although *Mozart* is basically a proper noun, it is an uncountable noun in the kind of context exemplified below, because this metonymic use of *Mozart* has incorporated the uncountable notion of 'music'.

(6)   I need to relax, I need to listen to *some Mozart*.

Similarly, *see* as a near synonym of *meet and talk to* is a dynamic and agentive verb, while the primary sense of *see* is non-agentive, denoting a kind of experiential state rather than an activity. As a result, the former, secondary sense of *see* is, for instance, comparatively often realised in the progressive aspect, although the primary

5   Cf Warren (1992:72); Newmark (1981:125). By comparison, a metaphor cannot be made to lose its figurative character through this kind of expansion test. It is true that some metaphors can be turned into similes by adding an overt comparison indicator or explanation, but at least prototypical similes are also generally considered figures of speech or, more specifically, tropes. It also seems difficult to paraphrase a metaphorical extension adequately, because it involves both a comparative reflection of the more specific source contents and the generalised understanding of a metaphorical application.
6   Cf Gricean maxims in the theory of conversational implicatures, especially the maxim of quantity (Grice 1975:45ff), and the notion of presupposition (cf e g Yule 1996:25–33,35–45; Saeed 1997:94–102).

sense of the verb is ordinarily found in non-progressive verb phrases.[7]

(7) I*'m seeing* a couple of students after lunch.

(8) I *can see* only part of the picture.

5.1.2 Metonymic scenarios

As we have seen in several of the examples given above, many common metonymic uses are lexicalised. But even when that seems not to be the case, language users seem intuitively to know what factors decide whether or not a phrase headed by a particular lexeme can be used to represent a more complex situation or relationship. A metonymic meaning shift is natural as long as it is based on a regular type of connection between two phenomena within a **conventional scenario**, provided that the whole formulation used clearly evokes such an experiential complex. It is for instance quite natural to say

(9) I told the taxi to wait

meaning that 'I told the taxi-driver to wait for me in/with his car'. However, it seems odd to say

(10) ?The taxi laughed/was not very service-minded [8]

instead of

(11) The taxi-driver laughed/was not very service-minded.

The reason is presumably that taxi-drivers often wait for customers in their cars when they are going to drive them somewhere. In other words, there is a regular connection between a driver and his car in such situations. This **holistic scenario** is so common that it is easy to envisage by any proficient speaker of English, and a meto-

---

7   Alm-Arvius (1993:220ff).
8   As usual, the question mark before the example shows that it is felt to be unnatural. An asterisk in front of an example indicates straightforwardly that it is unacceptable.

nymic shortcut describing it is thus unproblematic from both the encoder's and the decoder's interpretative perspectives.

By comparison, there is no such general, regularly repeated scenario linking the job of driving a taxi with laughing. Instead laughing is what people in general do; it is not especially linked to the taxi-driving scenario. The group of people who ought to be service-minded also includes many more specific trades and professions, not just taxi-drivers.

Furthermore, we can note that while the metonymic shortcut in

(12) The whole room/bus laughed/applauded

is obvious and natural, it does not really seem possible to convey this type of meaning if we omit the premodifier "whole":

(13) ?The room/bus laughed/applauded.

A room or a bus is a delimited space, and both rooms and buses are part of conventional scenarios involving people, often a whole group of people. The adjective *whole* appears to direct our attention to what is inside such a walled-in locale, and since it is natural to assume that there are people inside a room or bus, the indication given by this actually hyperbolic modifier seems enough to allow a metonymic reading of such a noun phrase.

Certain other names of places containing people can, however, be used with a metonymic reading without the support of such modifiers or quantifiers.

(14) (All) Sweden was in shock after the terrible catastrophe.

In the following well-known quotation it is presumably self-evident that "England" stands for the nation rather than the land itself—that is the particular part of the earth inhabited by most English people.

(15) England expects that every man will do his duty. (Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar)

Other terms similar to scenario used within **cognitive semantics** are **context**, **domain**, (**idealised**) **cognitive model**, **cultural**

model, (interpretive) **frame**, and **script**.[9] A scenario can be seen as a complex conceptual structure, which comprises a number of more specific concepts in a partly variable and open-ended way. The link between a specific scenario and a **network** of lexemes—or rather their senses—within a language indicates that users of this language share the conception of this scenario, although no doubt with some individual variation. In addition, both individual versions of a scenario and the more general conception of it can change with time because of changes in the lives of people, including more widespread cultural changes.

Moreover, the notion of a holistic conventional scenario underlying a natural metonymic shift is also similar to what Langacker[10] speaks of as the **ground**—in relation to the highlighted part of it, the **figure**—or more specifically as the **profile** of a language expression. An obviously prominent part of the contents of a syntagmatic string stands out as the profile against the rest of it, the **base**. In other words, we seem quite generally to organise our conception of scenes and phenomena by relating salient entities to some more basic network of **presupposed** cognitive information. Interestingly enough, metonymic shifts would appear to result in a **condensed profile**, bringing together the prominent parts of a scenario in a way that is both cognitively and communicatively most efficient. This would indeed appear to be the reason for preferring a metonymic shortcut to a more explicit but also more elaborate and unfocused literal formulation.

Scenarios and concepts are primarily **cognitive** phenomena, representing different kinds of experiential domains, and they are typically intertwined with **social** considerations and **emotive** reactions. They interact with language senses, and can be modelled and commented on in various ways through the use of language. Even if it is presumably wrong to equate such cognitive structures and language senses, there appears to be a great deal of overlap and interaction between them. Generally shared language senses connect to central or typified aspects of one or several cognitive struc-

9 Gibbs (1999:68–75); Koch (1999:145–153); Radden & Kövecses (1999:19ff); Saeed (1997:299–334); Ungerer & Schmidt (1996); Lakoff (1987:116); Fillmore (1985:223ff).
10 Langacker (1987:120–126,183ff,486,489,491 & cf 2000:331f).

tures, and these associations explain why senses can often be extended and varied so easily without obstructing the communicative process in a noticeable way.

The interrelations between experiences of the world, cognition, and language semantics are obvious from the examples below. (Cf 1.1)

(16) That evening was sad. (i e people were sad that evening)

(17) I just can't listen to this angry and hysterical discussion any longer. (i e a discussion in which the participants are angry and hysterical)[11]

(18) He breathed sweet nothings in her ears. (i e he breathed and spoke quietly at the same time)

Similarly, the noun *sight* can be used to denote both the capacity to see—that is more specifically somebody's *eyesight*—and particular visual impressions made possible by this perceptual sense modality.

(19) Her husband is well over eighty, and both his sight and hearing are failing.

(20) You're certainly a sight for sore eyes.

(21) I saw a most peculiar sight in our neighbour's garden today.

5.1.3 Literal senses and metonymic shifts

In spite of the impression that metonymic meaning shifts are commonly comparatively inconspicuous and, as it were, natural, given a general knowledge of the experiential scenarios that make them possible, it may be surprising to note that a literal sense and an established metonymic application of the same lexeme often

---

11 Concerning such instances of metonymy, note the following quotation from Leech: "Lexical rules are rules accounting for the 'creative' or 'productive' aspect of the lexicon which allows us to form new words … or to derive new meanings for existing words (for example, to use the word *gullible* in the phrase *gullible era* to mean 'an era in which people are gullible')" (1981:212). The notion of *regular polysemy* is also applicable to such recurring types of metonymy. (Cf Pustejovsky 1995:28–31,54)

appear to have less in common in terms of semantic qualities than a literal source and a metaphorical target. A metaphorical extension comes about by promoting certain features in a source sense, while others are cancelled or at least demoted. This sharing of semantic or conceptual qualities tends to make the bond between a live metaphor and its literal basis fairly transparent and obvious.

By comparison, a metonymic shift may result in a more distinct sense structure in relation to the literal source once it has become established in the language. There is, for instance, nothing strange about the premodifier and head collocation in the noun phrase *a plastic glass*. Similarly, *linen* such as tablecloths, sheets, pillowcases, and underwear can now just as well be made of some other fabric, say cotton. People who live in the same house can metonymically be referred to as the house, for instance in a sentence like

(22) The cats fighting on the balcony woke up the whole house.

However, the members of *the House of Windsor* do not all belong to the same household, and some of them may rarely see each other. Moreover, we can observe that *the Cabinet*, that is a group of senior ministers in a government, is not associated with meetings in a small private room, although originally the inner circle of ministers received this label because they used to meet in such a place.[12]

These are just a few examples of how easy it can be to **obscure** or even **sever** a metonymic link once a more basic literal sense and an established metonymy are no longer associated with the same extra-linguistic scenario. The reason for this could be a change of cultural practices or the development of new products, for instance. (Cf 1.3.4)

We can also note that some apparent metonymies such as those given below are **euphemistic**.

(23) Would you like to wash your hands?

(24) He went to the bathroom.

(25) Did you go to bed with him?

(26) I never slept with him.

---

12   In addition, *cabinet* can be further extended in a metonymic way to stand for the work done by this group of senior ministers, as in the phrase *have cabinet*. Cf the list of recurring types of metonymy in 5.1.4 below.

161

5.1.4 Types of metonymic shortcuts

Finally, the following list—which is hardly exhaustive—exemplifies a number of common types of metonymic meaning shifts. Clearly, the direction of the semantic change is not always that given in the respective headings.[13]

Place/region—people
E g *church, country, England, house, room, school, town, village*

Time/period—people
E g *the Middle Ages, the nineteenth century, the Renaissance*

Place—activity
E g *chapel, church, college, market, school, theatre, university*

People—activity
E g *class, government, meeting, party*

Physical thing(s)—activity
E g *bed, dinner, football, lunch, meal, table, washing*

People/thing—time
E g *the bomb, Hitler, Napoleon, the Vikings*[14]

Activity—establishment
E g *business, church, school, theatre*

Activity—product
E g *building, composition, drawing, improvement, organisation, painting, shopping, speech, writing*

Substance—product
E g *glass, iron, linen, marble, paper, tin*

Substance—type of
E g *brandy, tea, whisky, wine*

---

13 This list has largely been copied from Alm-Arvius (1995). Cf Ungerer (2000:335–338); Radden & Kövecses (1999:29ff); Warren (1992:65–73); Lakoff & Johnson (1980:38f); Leech (1981:217–219); Ullman (1962:218–220).

14 As in *The Vikings/Hitler/The bomb changed human history*, meaning—roughly—'The time when Hitler ruled Germany …', or 'The time when the Vikings travelled to places far away from Scandinavia, attacked them, and sometimes settled there …', or 'After the invention of the nuclear bomb …'. Cf Leech (1981:218)

Producer—product
E g *Channel, Dior, Ford, Mozart, Porsche, Shakespeare, Turner*

Feeling—object of
E g *ambition, curiosity, love*

Sense modality—sense impression
E g *sight, smell, taste*

Container—contents
E g *bottle, box, casserole, cup, glass, purse*

Body part—part of article of clothing
E g *arm, breast, leg*

About experiencer—about situation or experience
E g *angry person—angry days/discussion*
  happy person—Happy New Year
  lonely person—lonely evening/trip
  sad person—sad event

Activity$_1$—activity$_2$
E g *cry*, synonym of either *weep* or *shout*
breathe (deeply) or *not breathe a word*

Many of these types of metonymic shifts are so common that they are generally productive and predictable. As a result, they can be considered cases of **regular polysemy**.[15]

5.2 Synecdoche

5.2.1 The general character of synecdoche

Examples of **synecdoche** seem usually to have a metonymic character as they appear to be grounded in the experience of **contiguous extensional** connections out in the world rather than in imaginative conceptual relations. Synecdoche is a meaning shift in the use of a lexeme—or a longer expression—within a **part-whole**

---

15   Cf Cruse (2000:113,211–216).

relationship.[16] More specifically, a synecdochical meaning change can proceed from either of these **meronymic** perspectives: a more comprehensive whole can be described by means of a language label that primarily denotes just a part of it, or a designation for the whole thing can be used about one of its parts. The first type of synecdoche seems to be more common. The other type may be hard to distinguish from more straightforward instances of metonymy.
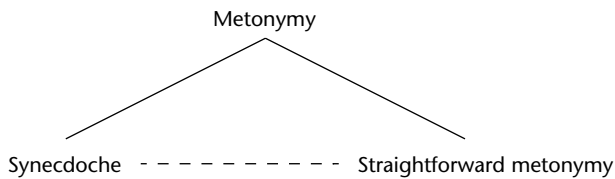
The dotted horizontal line between **synecdoche** *and* **straightforward metonymy** *indicates that the distinction between these sub-categories is not discrete but continuous.*

   (27) England won the match.

   (28) In her day, she was very famous.

   (29) All hands to the pumps!

   (30) Move your arse!

   (31) Could I have a word with you afterwards?

   (32) See us tomorrow again. (Said on TV)

   (33) In my home tea was the main meal of the day.

Obviously a synecdochical shift involves a kind of "zooming in" semantic strategy within one and the same experiential domain. This is why synecdoche can reveal cognitive and attitudinal—or even ideological—preoccupations in an interesting way. Through synecdoche these focal areas of interest in people and things are given descriptive and indeed also rhetorical **prominence**.

16   Cf Johnson (1987:171,192f,209); Lakoff (1987:77–90).

Clearly *black*, *white*, and *coloured* are used about people because the colour of their skin is considered a specifically salient or important characteristic. In addition, these uses all appear somewhat hyperbolic, because a white person, for instance, is not strictly speaking white. However, using this colour term increases the contrast to other colour descriptions of the "races" of people. The use of *red* and *yellow* with this kind of meaning is perhaps even more obviously exaggerated.

Similarly, the dominant position of *the United States* in international politics, economics, and culture in the world today explains why the denotational range of the geographical name *America* is prototypically narrowed down in general English, so that in most non-technical contexts it has come to stand for just a part of a whole continent, which comprises North, Central and South America.[17] Actually, this sense type seems to be the only existing one in the use of the noun and adjective *American* in general or everyday English, at least when they are intended to describe people. *An American* seems always to be a person whose home country is the United States.[18]

5.2.2 Denotation and synecdoche

In fact, if we widen our analytical perspective and consider how words and syntagmatic strings are employed to describe things in the world, it becomes obvious that language users quite generally make use of a **synecdoche-like strategy** when talking about things that they have experienced or think about. This is true of expressions of more factual matters, emotive reactions, and social relationships. Importantly enough, it is also at work in linguistic representations of conceptual constructs in ideologies and mythologies, which are in many cases projected on to the world rather than verifiable descriptions of it. This kind of semantic focusing on merely one or a few of the attributes of the denotata is common in lexical senses, and it is of course especially noticeable in noun senses.

---

17 Cf Radden & Kövecses (1999:31,35). The plural *Americas* is used about the continent.
18 Cf *Collins Cobuild* (1995:52); *Longman* (1995:39).

So linguistic signs and combinations of them may single out just one or a couple of the traits that are really at hand in a denotatum or referentially identified phenomenon. When, for instance, we call someone a *teacher* or a *student* or a *clever dick* or a *fool*, we name or focus on just a very limited range of the attributes that a specific individual has or exhibits or is just felt to have (from the experiential perspective of somebody else) at a given moment in time. This is a fairly deceptive quality in the build-up and use of language, as it means that we constantly simplify things when we mention or talk about them in verbal utterances.

At the same time this is probably a necessary characteristic of our linguistic competence and performance strategies. We have to be selective as regards the experiential aspects that we want to comment on when using language. Otherwise the enormous complexity of the world we live in would presumably make it impossible both to talk—or write—and to think about our experiences, thoughts, social relations, and feelings.

More specifically, this kind of selective labelling is commonly influenced by the general subject matter of a written text or a spoken stretch of discourse. In other words, it is often dependent on a particular **universe of discourse**.

As was pointed out above, this may also include personal feelings and social relationships. Derogatory characterisations like *That crackpot*, *You fool/nitwit*, and even *She's a whore*, must clearly on many occasions be seen as nothing but expressions of the speaker's—perhaps quite transient—feelings for somebody else. In other words, they cannot be taken as reliable descriptions of behavioural aspects of or persistent traits in the referents. All the same, it is well worth keeping their emotive meaning in mind, because all too often language users appear not to be fully aware of the distinction between emotive and propositional meaning. At any rate, they seem not to be guided by such insights in their interpretation of and reactions to verbal messages that must on closer inspection be said to be skewed by ideological standpoints or straightforward personal feelings.

In the same way, we should try to notice how social relationships and conventions are reflected in language use. Obviously, especially emotive and social meaning features can be difficult to keep apart, but, as has been pointed out, they can also be hard to distinguish

from, at least in principle, verifiable propositional meaning qualities.[19]

Applying a language label to something necessarily involves **selective categorisation**, and it follows that in using the senses that a language provides us with, we highlight only parts of the things we are commenting on. In other words, individual words as well as compositional strings appear not to be well suited for capturing the infinite complexities of most of the things we speak about. Language users convey experiences, thoughts, and reactions in cut-up selective packages in single utterances, and even if they are usually strung together in whole texts or spoken conversations, they will nonetheless as a group focus on just limited aspects of the things that are brought up in such pieces of verbal communication.

From a more general point of view, the creativity and flexibility of language senses—manifested for instance in figures of speech—may be felt partly to make up for this deficiency. But still, when everything is said and done, the selective descriptive capacity of linguistic signs is well worth remembering, if we want to avoid being intellectually and morally trapped within or by the semantic categories of one or a couple of languages that we know well, say standard English and standard Swedish.[20]

The fact that a vocabulary label is made to stand for two or more different but still related things results in lexical polysemy at a given synchronic stage in the history and development of a language. However, as was pointed out in section 1.3.4, there are many dead metaphors and obscured metonymies in languages, often because what was once the primary meaning, or the source of a figurative extension, is no longer used. In such cases we have to look at some earlier, historical stage of the language in order to see that a usage is, historically speaking, the result of a figurative sense shift. In addition, loans from other languages may have a figurative sense in the source language, but as we seldom borrow more than

---

19 Meaning distinctions of the kind discussed here are often spoken of in terms of different language **functions**. See e g Alm-Arvius (1998:30–37 & 1993:34–36); Halliday (1996:57–64); Jakobson (1996:11–17); Lyons (1977:50–56).
20 Cf Lakoff & Johnson (1999:17ff).

167

one sense of a word—at least at the same time—such polysemous connections are usually not carried over into the borrowing language.

5.3 The categorial indeterminacy of some figurative senses

Moreover, it should be emphasised that it is not always obvious how specific examples of tropes should be characterised. In particular it may not be clear whether certain figurative uses should be analysed as metaphors or as instances of synecdoche. The occurrence of such analytical indeterminacy is probably connected with the observation that both metaphor and synecdochical shifts describing a whole by using a word for just a part bring into focus only some properties of the source sense and the experiential domain that it is associated with.

   All the same, the difference between these two types of tropes is in principle clear. In synecdoche a word denoting a prominent part is used to represent the whole—or vice versa. In other words, the basic sense and a synecdochical reading of a vocabulary element stand for things whose denotations are directly connected. The denotata of the source and the target of a metaphor belong, on the other hand, to different and separate experiential domains.

   The expression *have a hand in something*, for instance, may appear to have both synecdochical and metaphorical qualities. Which categorisation is most appropriate may be an effect of the sort of situation it is used to describe. Similarly, the compound *bigwig* presumably had more of a synecdochical character in the days when people who could afford it wore wigs, but now it is closer to being a metaphor. I also think that the use of *bread* in various constructions to represent any kind of food, or even living costs in general, can be analysed either as a metaphorical generalisation or as an example of synecdoche.

(34) …
  Give us this day our daily bread
  … (From the Lord's prayer)

(35) In those days, most people had to earn their daily bread by hard physical work.

Actually, Eco maintains that "each metaphor can be traced back to a subjacent chain of metonymic connections".[21] However, I for one find this hypothesis fairly speculative or even far-fetched in many cases. All the same, we saw in section 3.2.6 above that primary metaphors in Lakoff and Johnson's sense may rather be said to be based on metonymic connections, even if this is not how they themselves describe them.[22] Admittedly, many of the general, underlying cognitive associations that are spelt out as primary metaphors seem plausible, but even so it still remains to be proved that this is how metaphors regularly and necessarily arise.

To the extent that it seems possible, I prefer more direct analytical attention to actually occurring figurative uses or combinations— that is to say, empirically oriented attempts at explaining how language users construct and make sense of tropes in relation to non-figurative senses as well as their experiences of both the world and their own selves.

5.4 Metonymic and synecdochical abbreviations

Many phrases or compounds in English (and other languages) have been shortened to words with a metonymic or synecdochical character. Mary W Shelley wrote in her novel *Frankenstein*, published in 1818, about Baron Frankenstein, who created a monster by joining together parts of corpses, a monster that eventually destroyed him. Nowadays, *Frankenstein*, the name of the Baron and scientist in the novel, is often used as a synonym of the more explicit and historically correct phrase *Frankenstein's monster*. This clipping of the phrase means in fact that the name of the Baron has been metonymically transferred to the monster.

---

21 Eco (1984:68; see also 69–88); cf Barcelona (2000b); Feyaerts (2000:69–75); Goossens (2000:149f); Radden (2000); Warren (1992:94–99).
22 Cf Taylor (1995:136–140).

Such **elliptical abbreviations** of syntactic phrases that also bring about a sense shift in the remaining lexeme are by no means uncommon, and they often appear to have a synecdochical character. They seem to occur in particular in informal language, but some of them are established parts of the vocabulary of general English and have a (fairly) neutral stylistic value. When the noun head is left out in a compound or common collocation, the remaining premodifier often changes its word class status and is treated as a noun instead of an adjective. Accordingly, this type of specifying sense shift, where a premodifier semantically incorporates the sense of a following head, is often coupled with **conversion** (or zero derivation) in the remaining lexeme.

(36) *a coronary—coronary thrombosis*, a technical medical term

a daily—a daily newspaper

a final/finals—final examination/s or *final game/race etc*

a gold—a gold medal

somebody's intended—somebody's intended husband/wife/ spouse (old-fashioned or humorous)

locals—local people

somebody's local—somebody's local pub (in British English)

a medical—a medical examination

a periodical—a periodical magazine

a physical—a physical examination

a weekly—a weekly magazine

These sense shifts, which result from an elliptical abbreviation of a combination of lexemes, are of course possible because the language contexts or the extralinguistic situations in which they are used make it clear that they should be given this specific interpretation. Particular collocates often indicate how they should be interpreted:

(37) He *won a gold in the Olympic Games.*

(38) What *daily* do you *subscribe to*?

(39) Scotland *beat* England *two–nil in a friendly at Wembley*.

The following word formations have a similar character:

(40) *high-heels*, ie shoes with high heels

   shorts, ie trousers with short legs

   tails, ie a coat with tails—where *tails* is of course used in an established metaphorical sense

All this would seem to be in accordance with Roman Jakobson's view that metonymy and synecdoche are to do with combination of entities and the construction of verbal contexts, while metaphor is instead the result of selection and substitution of elements from the same linguistic code, or language, made possible by similarity.[23]

Analysts of tropes quite generally agree that metonymic shifts depend on the habitual and natural co-occurrence of the phenomena denoted by the literal and the metonymic interpretation respectively. As we have seen, this fundamental **combinatorial** character of metonymy manifests itself in collocational relations in strings containing metonymic shortcuts. More specifically, a metonymic or synecdochical shortcut will **inherit** collocational and categorial characteristics from the elements that are omitted but still implicitly understood in our interpretation of such descriptive shortcuts. (See 5.1 & 5.1.1)

5.5 Metonymy, synecdoche, and meronymy

As has been mentioned earlier in this study, synecdoche is similar to **meronymy** in that they both concern part-whole relations between senses and the things they denote. Actually, metonymy in general can be said to build on connections between different parts

---

23   Jakobson (1974:127–133).

of recognisable types of scenarios or complex entities. (See 2.1.1) Accordingly, it seems relevant to look at these semantic parallels in more detail, because, as in the case of hyponymy and metaphor, they suggest that more factually oriented semantic relations and figurative shifts share certain basic conceptual mechanism.

The Swedish noun *ben* is lexically polysemous, and its two most basic senses correspond to *bone* and *leg* in English.[24] Accordingly, these English nouns function as translation equivalents of the corresponding two senses of *ben* in Swedish.

Both these senses of *ben* denote concrete entities, and this fact is in an interesting way related to how we can analyse and describe this polysemous relation in Swedish. Obviously, these two senses describe a kind of part-whole relation, but the question is whether it is figurative or meronymic.

If this was a clear-cut example of the type of trope termed synecdoche, it ought to be possible to identify one sense as more primary in the synchronic use and understanding of Swedish *ben*. However, it is difficult to claim that one of these uses is definitely more basic, while the other one constitutes a figurative shift.

This seems to be true even if it is arguable that perceptually and kinesithetically the legs are more salient parts of a human body, for instance one's own, than the bones of the skeleton, in particular if we consider these body parts from an amateurish[25] and ontogenetic[26] developmental perspective. Accordingly, most children can be expected to learn how to speak about these two limbs before they learn how to refer to the bones inside the body. Moreover, the bones in a leg are just parts of the whole leg. This can be compared

---

24 Swedish *ben*, English *bone*, and German *bein* are of course cognates. German *bein* is however a translation equivalent of *leg* not *bone*.

25 Medical experts have of course a different and considerably greater knowledge of these body parts than that connected with the two polysemous senses of *ben* in general Swedish, or *leg* and *bone* in general English. The senses of expert terms should be stringently and deliberately defined, and they tend to comprise more descriptive details compared to general language senses. The latter are typically somewhat fuzzy or flexible with a shallower information potential. They are also often polysemously related to different senses of the same lexeme. Expert terms should, on the other hand, be monosemic as well as clear and consistently understood. (Cf Alm-Arvius 1992a & 1992b)

26 The notions of *ontogenesis* and *ontogeny* are to do with the development of particular individuals, while *phylogenesis* and *phylogeny* concern the evolution of whole races or species. (Drever & Wallerstein 1964:193f,213)

to the nature of a **meronymic sense relation**, where the term denoting the whole is called the holonym, while the term or terms representing parts of it are meronyms.

So it is not clear that the notion of synecdoche is more valid than that of meronymy when we want to describe the relation between the 'leg' and the 'bone' senses of Swedish *ben*. All the same, I suspect that most analysts would spontaneously suggest that this is a case of synecdoche without even considering the meronymic alternative, simply because meronymy is usually considered a sense relation that holds between different lexemes—or in many cases rather between particular senses of two or more polysemous lexemes.[27]

Both these conventional senses of *ben* denote concrete entities, and, as we have seen, it seems impossible to say that one of them is a secondary synecdochical shift, while the other is the more basic source sense. Furthermore, these three observations seem quite consistent with yet another insistent impression: that both the 'bone' sense and the 'leg' sense of *ben* are literal. In sum, both these senses of *ben* are **concrete** and **lexicalised** and also **literal** rather than figurative. (Cf sections 2.1.2 to 2.1.5)

As a result, it seems reasonable to propose that the analytical notion of meronymy can also be valid when it comes to describing the relation between these two polysemously related senses of *ben*. More specifically, I would propose that the fundamental difference between meronymy and synecdoche is that the former notion just stands for sense relations between lexical items denoting wholes and their parts, while the latter notion, synecdoche, comprises figurative shifts where the same expression side has been made to represent both some part(s) and a more comprehensive whole.

There is no risk of confusing meronymy and synecdoche when we are dealing with prototypical cases of each of them. However, when we cannot conclude for certain that one sense of a polysemous lexeme is more basic and literal than another one, both these analyses may well be relevant and valid.[28] Accordingly, the analytical categories of meronymy and synecdoche can hardly be considered altogether discrete. Instead, it is best to allow for some overlap

27   Cf Cruse (2000:112,153–156,211–214).
28   Cf Langacker's exclusionary fallacy.

between them, because in certain non-prototypical cases it need not be quite clear which of these two analytical descriptions is the most appropriate one. This is not really surprising, since meronymy and synecdoche share a central characteristic: they are both to do with part-whole relations between the senses of a given language system.[29]
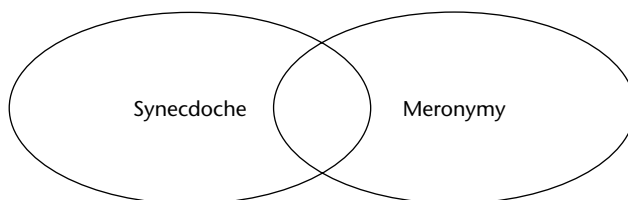
*The intersection of **synecdoche** and **meronymy** contains examples of sense relations that appear to share characteristics with both these analytical categories.*

29   Alm-Arvius (1999); cf Saeed (1997:78).

6 Schemes

6.1 The general character of schemes

Finally, we should outline and exemplify the character of a few **schemes** in language use. Schemes involve **rhythmic** repetitions of phoneme sequences, syntactic constructions, or words with similar senses, and because of this they can be said to be **echoic** and have a structuring character.[1] They mean that formal qualities are **fore-grounded**[2] in a stretch of language use, and since schematic repetitions will affect how people react to or even understand a verbal message, they can be said to be meaningful in their own way.

Usually schematic repetitions are aesthetically attractive, and they also help people to remember formulations or even longer textual passages. In other words, schemes tend to be important for linking different parts of longer stretches of language use. It is essential that readers and speakers can follow the progression of a stretch of verbal communication, be it a written text or a spoken piece of discourse where they are themselves active or passive participants. This kind of internal connection between utterances or sentences is usually discussed in terms of formally indicated **cohesion** as well as the underlying semantic **coherence**[3] of a text.

In addition, schemes also invest texts with poetic qualities. Accordingly, they can be found in texts that are produced deliber-

---

1   The information given about schemes in this chapter can be compared, for instance, to that given in the corresponding entries in Abrams (1993) and Wales (1990).
2   Halliday (1996:64f); Leech & Short (1981:28,48–50,138–146,254).
3   *Cohesion* and *coherence* are important terms in text linguistics or discourse analysis. The first one is to do with various mechanisms in language that connect different parts of a text or discourse into a coherent whole, that is a comprehensible semantic unit. Obviously, especially the term coherence, which focuses on the semantic consistency or comprehensibility of a longer stretch of language use, is related to the notion *universe of discourse*, outlined in section 1.1 above. (Cf Stubbs 2001:102ff; Wales 1990:73–75; Leech & Short 1981:243–254; Halliday & Hasan 1976)

ately, often by just one individual. It is not as easy to make them parts of stretches of spontaneous discourse involving the participation of two or more interlocutors. However, schemes are also important cohesive devices in literature that was once passed on orally, for instance poetry in illiterate societies or folktales. Idioms and proverbs often have similar literary qualities, and they also often contain schemes of various sorts.

The kind of meaning that the occurrence of schemes can add to language products like single utterances or whole texts can thus be called poetic. This characterisation agrees with Roman Jakobson's suggestion that language in which the form is made prominent and meaningful in itself has a specific **poetic function** (1996:15ff). It can be contrasted with other functions or meaning types in language, for instance its referential or conative functions—that is the capacity that language has for describing things in the world and for expressing social relationships.

6.2 Phonological schemes, onomatopoeia, and sound symbolism

Schemes can somewhat loosely be said to be rhythmic repetitions. The typically most noticeable schemes are probably alliteration and end rhyme. **Alliteration** is also called initial rhyme, and it means that an initial consonant or consonant cluster is repeated in two or more words in a stretch of language. The first two examples below contain the set phrases *harm a hair of somebody's head* and *through thick and thin*.[4] Schemes are common in such expressions and probably contribute to them being repeated and conventionalised.

(1) No one would dare to harm a hair of his head.

(2) They stuck together through thick and thin.

(3) In Parisian clothes shops, assistants paw and pin you until satisfied with the silhouette, … (*The Times*, 30 Nov 1995:19)

---

4   See e g Clark (1990:246,542).

The repetition of a vowel or a vowel plus one or more consonants at the end of words is called **end rhyme**. It is especially found at the end of lines in poetry.

(4) Overpay, underpay or
even take a holiday
(Headline in *The Daily Telegraph*, Aug 28 1999:B4)

(5) And now I wander in the woods
When summer gluts the golden bees,
Or in autumnal solitudes
Arise the leopard-coloured trees;
… (W B Yeats. 'The Madness of King Goll'.)[5]

Moreover, both alliteration and end rhyme occur in complex word formations, as in the compound *(the) World Wide Web*, and in reduplicatives like *airy-fairy, dilly-dally, helter-skelter, see-saw, walkie-talkie*, and *willy-nilly*. In such words these schemes can no doubt be felt to have aesthetic qualities as well as a possible **mnemonic** function.

Assonance—the repetition of the same, usually stressed vowel inside words or at the beginning of words—is not always as noticeable. However, we find it together with end rhyme in the following—also sound symbolic—string of premodifiers and their nominal head in the lyrics of a popular song from the fifties: *itsy bitsy teeny weeny (yellow polka dot) bikini*. Assonance was also a central ingredient in a slogan for Dwight Eisenhower in presidential campaigns in the US in the same decade: *I like Ike*[6]. In addition, assonance has no doubt been a factor favouring the idiomatic status of expressions like *law and order, high time*, and *live wire*.[7]

---

5 *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (1974, Vol 2:1910).
6 Cf Jakobson (1996:357).
7 *Live* in *live wire* is of course always metaphorical, as it means 'directly connected to a source of electricity' (*Collins Cobuild* 1995:978), but the following noun *wire* can be given a literal interpretation. This kind of combination of the pre-modifying adjective *live* and a head noun that denotes a piece of electrical equipment seems to be an idiomatic but still variable collocational pattern, as it is also possible to talk of a *live electrical circuit/flex*. By comparison, the meta-phorical application of *live wire*, meaning an 'active, eager, lively person' (*Longman Idioms* 1979:370), can be considered a cohesive lexical item, with a specific sense and expression side.

Consonance, the reoccurrence of a consonant inside or at the end of words, is commonly even less noticeable and contrived. None of the rhyme schemes outlined here need be deliberately used. Instead they could just be included in a stretch of language use as a matter of course, for instance because they are already part of idiomatic expressions. In addition, it is always possible that some examples of rhythmic repetition are simply the result of chance. Consonance is often more problematic in this respect than the other schemes mentioned here.

In the extract below from the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* we find unobtrusive but still potentially attractive instances of alliteration, consonance, and end rhyme. It shows that phonological schemes can also enhance the expressive quality of a stretch of prose.

(6)   On Sunday Clifford wanted to go into the wood. It was a lovely morning, the pear-blossom and plum had suddenly appeared in the world in a wonder of white here and there. (D H Lawrence 1961:186)

Alliteration and end consonance occur together in irregular verb forms with vowel gradation like *drink*, *drank*, *drunk*, in word formations like *tip-top*, and in idiomatic expressions like *tit for tat*. Actually, *zigzag* may also be felt to be **sound symbolic**, as its phonological form may appear to be a simple iconic representation of the kind of movement or shape that it represents. Similarly, *flip-flop*, exemplified in the string below, would seem to have **onomatopoeic** qualities.

(7)   Laura was wearing pink flip-flop sandals.

Onomatopoeia means 'sound imitation', as the expression side of such a lexeme has been formed through phonologically adjusted imitation of some sound directly connected with the (kind of) thing that it denotes. The reduplicative word formation *choo choo* is a playful synonym of *railway train*. It must have originated as a sound imitation of an old-fashioned steam-engine train. This example of onomatopoeia occurs together with both rhythmic alliteration and assonance in *Chattanooga Choo Choo,* the title of a piece of dance music made popular by Glenn Miller's big band that had its heyday in the late thirties and early forties. All three word

elements in this title begin with the same voiceless affricate. In addition, the three occurrences of the vowel represented by *oo* here constitute links in an assonance chain.

The iconic and thus motivated phonological form of a sound symbolic word or multi-word construction reflects some non-audible quality in its denotata or referent(s), for instance their shape or size as exemplified by *zigzag* and *itsy bitsy teeny weeny* above. The sound symbolic character of this string of adjectives meaning 'very small' is a result of the repeated use of two vowel phonemes that are "small" in the sense that they are formed through a comparatively small opening between the raised tongue and the palate, producing a harmonious high frequency sound.

Moreover, such sounds are associated with small things and creatures. A piccolo produces higher notes than ordinary flutes, small birds *cheep*, *tweet* and *twitter*, and rats *squeak*. Similarly, the senses of *beep*, *blip*, *click*, *little*, *mini-*, *peep*, *peer*, *scrimp(y)*, *seep*, and *wee* are all to do with smallness of some kind, while *scream*, *screech*, *shriek*, and *shrill* denote high-pitched sounds. So there are often experiential links between onomatopoeia and sound symbolism.

The term **phonaestheme** is used about particular phonemes or phoneme combinations that are frequently associated with a particular kind of meaning. Another example is *fl-*, which often occurs in words that describe some sudden change or movement: *flail*, *flame*, *flare*, *flash*, *fleeting*, *flick*, *flicker*, *flinch*, *fling*, *flip*, *flit*, *flop*, *flush*, and *flutter*. [8]

All the same, the adjectives *big* and *small*, for instance, support the claim that the link between the expression side and the sense of language items can be completely arbitrary.

---

8   Concerning phonaesthemes see Abelin (1999:4ff); Bolinger (1975:218f,275, 323,554); Klasson (1977:56). Onomatopoeia and sound symbolism are also dealt with in Alm-Arvius (1998:12f); *Sound symbolism* (1994); Newmark (1993:15,167f); Crystal (1988:122–124); Cruse (1986:34f); Jespersen (1922a: 150f,313f,396–411,413–416 & 1922b).

6.3 Parallelism and chiasmus

Parallelism involves semantic repetition and emphasis just as much as formal reoccurrence. Accordingly, it can also be compared to the character and use of tropes.

(8)   … So shaken as we are, so wan with care,
      … (Shakespeare, *King Henry the Fourth*, Act one, Scene I)[9]

(9)   Wars are not won by running away, but we shall go on to the end. We shall fight in the seas and oceans, and in the air. We shall defend our island. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall *never* give up. (Churchill after Dunkirk, 27 May—4 June 1940)[10]

Parallelism is also found in many idiomatic constructions, including whole sayings or proverbs. In these examples we also see that parallelism often involves antonymy: *(day) in, (day) out*, *ups and downs*, *all work … no pla*y, or synonymy: *ways and means*. In short, the analytical notion of parallelism seems most accurately to be placed along the interface between tropes and schemes.

(10) Day in, day out we have been struggling with these figures.

(11) We all have to learn to cope with the ups and downs of our lives.

(12) There are ways and means to achieve this.

(13) All is well that ends well.

(14) All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

Chiasmus, as in the quotation from Macbeth below, can be considered a specific sort of parallelism. It means that words or expressions are repeated in the reverse order.

---

9   The Players Edition (1951:480).
10   Newhouse (1981:49).

(15) Fair is foul, and foul is fair

…

(Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act one, Scene I)

The following paradoxical coordination of the antonyms *lose* and *win* is also from the opening scene of Macbeth, where we first meet the three witches and their abstruse assertions and predictions. It can be analysed as an example of **oxymoron** or **antithesis**, although it also connects to the figure of speech termed parallelism.

(16) … when the battle's lost and won.
     (Ibid)[11]

Blood, sweat, and tears is now an English set expression, and it can be compared to the memorable formulation from Churchill's radio speech to the British people after the German invasion of France in May 1940.

(17) I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, sweat and tears.[12]

It is noticeable that the idiom does not contain the word *toil*. Could this be because it is, as it were, the "odd man out" in relation to the other three nouns, which all denote bodily fluids?[13] In addition, a rhythmic threesome may be felt to be more agreeable than Churchill's somewhat heavier string of nouns sketching the expected suffering and struggle of the British nation.

6.4 Schemes and magic

It is well known that lexical items and also longer stretches of language use can be felt to have magic functions, even if this quality is not taken seriously by many people, especially not today when a secular, scientifically inspired world view tends to have a significant

---

11 The Players Edition (1951:999).
12 Newhouse (1981:46).
13 I am indebted to one of my students, Margareta Multan, for this observation.

influence on people's thinking and activities.[14] The parenthetical disjunct[15] *touch wood* and standardised invocations such as *God/ Heaven forbid* have modal meanings that originally connected to this kind of conception of the potential power of language. Their supernatural associations are now watered down, however, and are, for the most part, not seriously recognised even by people using them. Today these words and expressions will just be felt to convey some kind of emotive meaning concerning the future development of the matters they are used to comment on. Swearwords have also been linked to this sort of thinking and language function.

Interestingly enough, schemes have in some cases helped to create such magic conceptions concerning how specific speech acts, other events, or certain situational phenomena can decide, predict, or affect what will happen in the future. Magic formulae or incantations often contain schemes. *Hokus pokus filiokus* is the Swedish version of an incantation that is probably a distortion of the Latin introduction to holy communion.[16] In Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth* the witches chant in the following way, while they apparently also perform some kind of dance, just before they first meet Macbeth and Banquo.

(18) The weird sisters, hand in hand,
      Posters of the sea and land,
      Thus do go about, about:
      Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
      And thrice again, to make up nine.
      Peace!—the charm's wound up.[17]
      (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act one, Scene three)

Similarly, the formulaic apostrophe below, with an introductory vocative phrase followed by an imperative clause, was used in England in order to make the speaker's warts go away. The two parts of it are linked by both alliteration and end rhyme. It should be uttered when a funeral procession was passing, and at the same

14 See e g Persson (2001); Trudgill (2000:16–20); Wales (1990:158,452); *A Dictionary of Superstitions* (1989); Jespersen (1922a:239–241,431–441).
15 Quirk et al (19985:1112–1115).
16 *Nationalencyklopedin* (2000).
17 New Swan Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (1965:12f).

time the speaker should take some clay from under his right foot and throw it in the same road. This procedure should be repeated three times, and then the warts would disappear with the corpse as it decayed and became earth—or clay.[18]

(19) Corpse of clay, carry my warts away.

Moreover, few English speakers today presumably attach any real significance to the assumption that a bride should wear *something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue* in order to try to prevent her marriage from turning unhappy.[19] All the same, it is worth noting that the adjectives *new* and *blue* constitute an example of end rhyme, and that this seems decisive for them occurring together here rather than any conceivable link between their senses, for instance of the kind that we find with the antonyms *old* and *new*. In addition, the introductory consonants in *borrowed* and *blue* alliterate. Accordingly, other colour terms would not be as appropriate in this string simply because their expression sides would not rhyme in this way with other parts of it.

From my childhood I remember that the superstitious predictions in the verse below actually mildly affected the reactions of me and my playmates when we heard the calls of a cuckoo in early summer. We liked to hear the cuckoo in the west, because that was "best" according to the first line of the verse. Cuckoo calls form the north and the south did not feel as pleasant, because they spoke of grief and death respectively. A cuckoo heard in the east was alright, however, as it would somehow bring consolation.

(20) Västergök är bästergök
     Norrgök är sorgegök
     Östergök är tröstergök
     Södergök är dödergök[20]

The phonological expression side of a word can thus contribute to its overall usage potential, and in schematic arrangements it may

---

18 *A Dictionary of Superstitions* (1989:423f).
19 Cf *A Dictionary of Superstitions* (1989:42f).
20 Word-for-word translation: Western cuckoo is best cuckoo, Northern cuckoo is grief cuckoo, Eastern cuckoo is consolation cuckoo, Southern cuckoo is death cuckoo.

183

even seem to be semantically substantial. Obviously the (would-be) magic arising from schematic connections between words in strings like those exemplified here means that in these particular contexts the link between their expression sides and senses cannot just be considered arbitrary.[21] The function of these phonological schemes is not just to foreground the words in them in an aesthetically attractive way. Such schematic repetition appears also to invest words with a holistic constructional character reminiscent of non-systematic calls and even of non-linguistic sounds in general, the interpretation of which cannot be analytically separated from their audible qualities.

In our response to poetry containing schemes we will be affected by such seemingly irrational reactions concerning the significance of schematic arrangements in their own right over and above the denotational meaning aspects of the words. No doubt Goethe's famous poem 'Erlkönig', for instance—the first two stanzas of which are given below—owes much of its suggestive force to the formal schemes employed.

(21) Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?
       Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;
       Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm,
       Er fasst ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.

       Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht? –
       Siehst, Vater, du den Erlkönig nicht?
       Den Erlenkönig mit Kron und Schweif? –
       Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif.[22]

---

21 Cf Rodari (2001:29); de Saussure (1966:67–69,73)
22 Goethe *Gedichte* (1967:76f). The following is largely a word-for-word transla-tion: Who is riding so late through night and wind? It is the father with his child; He has the boy well in his arm, He holds him tight, he keeps him warm. - - - My son, why do you hide your face so scared?—Can't you, father, see the elf king? The elf king with crown and train?—My son, it is a shred of mist.

6.5 Schemes, pedagogy, and idiomaticity

Finally, the first two examples below are well-known nursery rhymes, and the third is from a traditional story for children. They illustrate again how schemes can be used together for rhetorical, aesthetic, and mnemonic purposes in stretches of language use within a specific language system, in this case standard English.

Uses of schemes in literary pieces like those exemplified in (22) to (24) are also likely to have a pedagogical function, as they are intended for children and often learnt by heart partly or fully by new generations of speakers of the language. Repetitions of phonemes and phonotactic combinations in rhymes will constitute playful practice in recognising and producing them, and may help in building up practical phonological awareness in the language used. The occurrence of phonological schemes to a large extent explains the attraction of so-called nonsense rhymes for children.

(22) Mother, may I go out to swim?
        Yes, my darling daughter.
     Hang your clothes on a hickory limb
        And don't go near the water

(23) Jack be nimble
        Jack be quick
     Jack jump over
        The candlestick[23]

Similarly, there are formulaic repetitions of phrase patterns, with specific collocations, and variations of them, using words with paradigmatically related senses, in many traditional stories for children, which were presumably first orally transmitted from one narrator to another. This may help children to handle syntactico-semantic constructions and sense relations, including their denotational ranges. The extract in (24) contains somewhat hyperbolic collocations of synonyms: "Little, Small, Wee" and "Great, Huge". The antonymous relations of words are also emphasised through

---

23 *English Nursery Rhymes* (1997:11,51); cf Newmark (1981:22).

the characterisation of the three fable bears as "Great, Huge", "Middle", and "Little, Small, Wee" respectively.

And it will no doubt please children to find the "Little, Small, Wee Bear" repeatedly put in focus at the end of descriptive passages, not merely by being mentioned and quoted last, but also through significant additions and variations in the language formulations used, which are important for the progress of the story to another phase of the events that it reports on. Indeed, one moral of this narrative strategy would seem to be that even if your are small and come last in a group of individuals, you may still be the really important one. As children are likely to identify especially with the "Little, Small, Wee Bear"—apart from Goldilocks, that is—this will be reassuring.

> (24) … Now little Goldilocks had left the big spoon belonging to the Great, Huge Bear standing in his porridge, and when they got inside he saw it.
>
> 'SOMEBODY HAS BEEN EATING MY PORRIDGE!' said the Great, Huge Bear in his great, gruff voice.
>
> Then the Middle Bear looked at his bowl and saw that his spoon was standing in it, too, where Goldilocks had left it.
>
> 'SOMEBODY HAS BEEN EATING MY PORRIDGE!' said the Middle Bear, in his middle voice.
>
> Then the Little, Small, Wee Bear looked at his bowl, and there was a spoon in it, but the porridge was all gone.
>
> 'SOMEBODY HAS BEEN EATING MY PORRIDGE, AND HAS EATEN IT ALL UP!' said the Little, Small, Wee Bear, in his little, small, wee voice.
>
> Then the Three Bears began to look round to see if they could find who it was who had eaten the Little, Small, Wee Bear's breakfast. …
>
> ('The Three Bears' in *Read Me a Story* 1976:13f)

The language specific character of many occurrences of schemes is obvious, especially when they involve repetition of certain phonemes or phonotactic combinations, as in alliteration, assonance, and end rhyme. Moreover, we have observed that schemes occur in many idiomatic constructions in English, as well as in other tongues, and many of them are impossible to translate straight-

forwardly into another language. Such recurring types of colloca-
tion, fixed phrases, and proverbs convey specific meanings; they are
semantico-formal compositions which in many cases seem, at least
in part, to owe their place in a particular language to their attrac-
tive, poetic form.

As was noted in the preceding section, 6.4, schemes sometimes
appear to contribute to the kinds of difference in descriptive per-
spectives between languages that is called **linguistic relativism**.
The question is how deep-seated and original such language specific
conceptualisations can be, and how common they are in standard
English, for instance, when compared to other language systems.

In particular, it is worth observing that language specific meaning
aspects resulting from the use of schemes will be connected with
the rhetorical effect of such rhythmic and echoic constructional
elements. As has been pointed out above, schemes can have
mnemonic, cohesive, and pedagogical functions in addition to
their persuasive and aesthetic force. All the same, it is worth keep-
ing in mind that in certain cases their suggestive character may also
be felt to invest them with a mysterious or magical potential that
appeals to irrational streaks in human psychology.

7 Conclusion

As we have seen, there are two general categories of figures of speech:

i)   tropes, which are to do with meaning variations in the use of lexemes and multi-word language constructions

and

ii) schemes, which concern the repetition of phonological, syntactic, and lexical forms.

The distinction between tropes and schemes is not absolute or quite discrete. In particular, the category of parallelism involves the recurrence of formally realised patterns and items as well as semantically significant features.

Actually, it is arguable that schematic foregrounding of forms will be meaningful in itself. The rhythmic and echoic qualities of schemes tend to be aesthetically attractive, and the regular reappearance of specific properties structures verbal combinations or strings so that they are easier to remember. The poetic and enticing character of schemes has also connected them with verbal magic. In addition, the occurrence of schemes in many idiomatic constructions means that they can contribute to the kinds of semantic and cognitive differences between languages that are discussed in relation to the notion of linguistic relativism.

Also punning can partially be compared to schemes, as it exploits and plays around with the different meanings of formally identical elements. All the same, punning is closest to being a kind of trope, because the intentional ambiguity of such constructs makes us associate to and contrast two different meanings. This exposure of two distinct interpretations in one and the same formal package typically has a surprising and humorous effect. But occasionally the

semantic impact of punning is more seriously thought-provoking, resulting in succinct and unconventional descriptions of human experiences and dilemmas, or a new perspective on conceptional and denotational connections made possible through the formal identity of language items or compositional constructions. Because of the importance of outer forms puns are typically language specific. This reminds us again how language senses are "trapped" in their conventional expression sides. In other words, semantic contents—and of course especially the cores of sense networks—are formed within and dependent on a given language system, although they also necessarily connect to our experiences of the world, including social habits and interaction, as well as non-linguistic psychological capacities and processes.

Quite generally speaking, the semantic variation and shifts in tropes of different sorts are a most important and intriguing aspect of language communication and the capacity of human verbal languages to store, remodel, and create meanings. The main part of the present work has been devoted to exemplifying and analysing such uses in standard English in particular. Especially metaphor is a pervasive and prominent aspect of language competence and usage, but metonymy—including synecdoche—is also common enough to be considered a chief consideration of semantic observation and theorising.

The occurrence and character of tropes raise challenging and scientifically central questions concerning the relation between human cognition and experience in general, on the one hand, and the command and functions of natural verbal language(s), on the other. Even if this study has chiefly dealt with figures of speech in standard English, the wider perspective on human communication, mental structures, and culture emphasised in cognitive science prompts us to ask to what extent the occurrence and characteristics of, for instance, metaphors tend to be language specific or universal. I have already commented on the question of language specificity and linguistic relativism above, and return to it here. As far as I can see, there are no decisive research results concerning how significant or insignificant language specificity or linguistic relativism would appear to be when we compare the semantic levels of various human languages. Nonetheless, this is a most important question, with ramifications into many practical areas of human interaction

190

like international contacts of all kinds, translation, foreign language teaching, and the status and worth of different cultural practices and values.

But if we then return to considering what theoretical and methodological devices appear valid and rewarding in our studies of tropes, I would emphasise that empirical evidence clearly indicates that in order to understand the character of tropes it is necessary to compare and relate them to non-figurative uses. More specifically, it is interesting to note that there are parallels between factually oriented semantic structures and metaphor and metonymy. Metaphorisation seems in basic respects to be similar to the generalising capacity of superordinate constructs in hyponymic hierarchies. Accordingly, it is not surprising that there are noteworthy correspondences between Kantian analytic sentences and the notions of primary and conventional metaphors in the kind of cognitive semantics that is represented by analysts like George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.

Similarly, meronymy and metonymy are both to do with part–whole relations between lexical constructs and the extralinguistic phenomena that they denote. These parallels between non-figurative and figurative meaning relations suggest that language users operate with certain quite **general and basic strategies** when building up and using verbal language(s) semantics in a functional way.[1]

At any rate, semantic questions are central in the study of human languages like standard English. The following two quotations from Ronald W Langacker's *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*[2] firmly argue for the fundamental place of semantics within the general field of linguistics.

---

1   Pointing out the similarity between hyponymy and metaphorisation, on the one hand, and meronymy and metonymy, on the other hand, is in accordance with Ockham's razor, which says that "entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity", in Latin "Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem". (*A Dictionary of Philosophy* 1979:236) This principle of ontological and descriptive economy can be taken to recommend that the terminological categories used in the scientific analysis of some object of study should be kept at a minimum.
2   Volume 1 (1987).

"The most fundamental issue in linguistic theory is the nature of meaning and how to deal with it." (p 5)

"From the symbolic nature of language follows the centrality of meaning to virtually all linguistic concerns. Meaning is what language is all about; …" (p 12)

Appendix

Examples of figures of speech in longer stretches of text

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Letter to the editor in *The Daily Telegraph*, Saturday August 28 1999, p 25.

<p style="text-align:center">Too many matches for young players</p>

SIR—To come under fire from E. W. Swanton (Sport, Aug. 25) should probably be regarded as an honour. However, it is a bit much to be described as "touched by the confines of lunacy".

Mr Swanton's deep-seated affection for the county game has left him blind to a weakness in the system that is glaringly obvious to most commentators, many supporters and every overseas player or coach. There is simply far too much county cricket.

The circuit is a treadmill which, far from breeding Test cricketers as Mr Swanton believes, takes gifted members of the England Under-19 team—current holders of the World Cup—and turns them into journeymen, unfit for the rigours of Test cricket. The County Championship attracts tiny attendances and virtually no television coverage. Something needs to be done.

The domestic game will wither and die if it is not pruned. My "outlandish" solution is to cut the programme by half, so that each team plays about the same amount of cricket as an Australian state. This would lead to decent rest, proper preparation, fewer injuries and at least some of the sense of occasion that is the most marked difference between Test and county cricket.

The treadmill would turn into a springboard. The cost would be minimal: the present bloated programme generates only 11 per cent of the game's revenue, most of it in membership fees. If we

don't get fewer matches, we will sooner or later have fewer counties.

Several leading players, including Alec Stewart and Darren Gough, are already saying that the smaller counties should merge. Mr Swanton's beloved Kent, which hasn't bred a major Test player for 20 years, may be among the casualties.

*

Extract from an article in *The Weekly Telegraph*, Wednesday February 4 to Tuesday February 10 1998, p 16.

The President took his chance. Trumpeting economic achievements, he won more than 100 rounds of applause.

More important, the presentation echoed a mood of wellbeing around an affluent country. The President was not lying about this—America has never had it so good.

With conservatives under attack, Mr Starr on the defensive, Miss Levinsky's credibility in doubt and the President's popularity soaring, the Clintons appeared to have sent the accusers packing.

*

Albert Einstein in "Wie ich das Leben sehe"; in *Mein Weltbild*, p 9. Quoted in *Einstein sagt: Zitate, Einfälle, Gedanken*, Piper Verlag 1997, p 216.

Geheimnisse

Das Schönste, was wir erleben können, ist das Geheimnisvolle. Es ist das Grundgefühl, das an der Wiege von wahrer Kunst und Wissenschaft steht. Wer es nicht kennt und sich nicht mehr wundern, nicht mehr staunen kann, der ist sozusagen tot und sein Auge erloschen.[1]

*

1 The greatest thing that we can experience is the mysterious. It is the basic feeling that stands at the cradle of true art and science. Anyone who does not feel it and who is no longer surprised, no longer amazed, is dead, as it were, and his eyes are lifeless.

Extract from *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson, Airmont book edition 1962, pp 54f.

"I was standing on the dock, when, by the merest accident, I fell in talk with him. I found he was an old sailor, kept a public-house, knew all the seafaring men in Bristol, had lost his health ashore, and wanted a good berth as cook to get to sea again. He had hobbled down there that morning, he said, to get a smell of the salt.

"I was monstrously touched—so would you have been—and, out of pure pity, I engaged him on the spot to be ship's cook. Long John Silver, he is called, and has lost a leg; but that I regarded as a recommendation, since he lost it in his country's service, under the immortal Hawke. He has no pension, Livesey. Imagine the abominable age we live in!

*

Extract from *The Waste Land* by T S Eliot, from *The Waste Land and other Poems*, Faber and Faber edition 1972, p 29.

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: 'Stetson!
'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
'That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
'Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
'Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
'Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
'You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!'

*

Extracts from the short story 'Divorcing: A Fragment' by John Updike in *Your Lover Just Called: Stories of Joan and Richard Maple*, Penguin Books 1980, p 129f.

Richard Maple wondered, Can even dying be worse than this? His wife sat crouched on what had been their bed, telling him, between sobs, of her state of mind, which was suicidal, depressive, beaten. They had been living apart for a year and a half, and the time had achieved nothing, no scar tissue had formed, her body was a great unhealed wound crying, *Come back*. …

Studying her, admiring her compact, symmetrical pose, he wanted to die with her; he felt she was crouching at the foot of a wall that was utterly blank, and the wall was within him. He wished to be out of this, this life and health he had achieved since leaving her, this vain and pretty effort to be happy. His happiness and health seemed negligible, compared to the consecrated unhappiness they had shared. Yet there was no way out, no way but a numb marching forward, like a soldier in a discredited cause, with tired mottoes to move him. 'You were depressed when you were living with me,' he told Joan. That was one of the mottoes.

References

Abelin, Åsa (1999). *Studies in Sound Symbolism*. Gothenburg Monographs in Linguistics 17. Department of Linguistics, Göteborg University, Sweden.

Abrams, M H (1993). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 4th ed. New York etc: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

A Dictionary of Philosophy (1979). Eds J Speake et al. London & Basingstoke: Pan Books & The Macmillan Press.

A Dictionary of Superstitions (1989). Eds Iona Opie & Moira Tatem. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

Aitchison, Jean (1998). *The Articulate Mammal*. 4th ed. London & New York: Routledge.

Aitchison, Jean (1997). *The Language Web*. The 1996 BBC Reith lectures. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Aitchison, Jean (1994). *Words on the Mind*. 2nd ed. Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell.

Ahlberg, Axel W, Nils lundqvist & Gunnar Sörbom (1960). *Latinsk-svensk ordbok*. 2nd ed. Stockholm: Svenska bokförlaget, Bonniers.

Allerton, D J (1982). *Valency and the English Verb*. London & New York etc: Academic Press.

Allwood, Jens, Lars-Gunnar Andersson & Östen Dahl (1977). *Logic in Linguistics*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge, London, New York etc: Cambridge University Press.

Alm-Arvius, Christina (1999). 'Metaphor and Metonymy as Meaning Generalisations Comparable to Hyponymy and Meronymy Rrespectively'. *Proceedings from the 7th Nordic Conference for English Studies*. Eds S-K Tanskanen & B Wårwik. Anglicana Turkuensia No 20. Turku, Finland: University of Turku.

Alm-Arvius, Christina (1998). *Introduction to Semantics*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Alm-Arvius, Christina (1995). 'The Character of Polysemous Varia-tion'. *Proceedings from the Sixth Nordic Conference for English Studies*. Vol 2. Tromsø, Norway, May 25–28, 1995. Eds G Bjørhovde & G Rogne.

Alm-Arvius, Christina (1993). (Photocopy version 1991) *The English Verb See*: *A Study in Multiple Meaning*. Gothenburg Studies in English 64. Göteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgen-sis.

Alm-Arvius, Christina (1992a). 'Begrepp och språkbundna betydel-ser—hur urskilja deras beståndsdelar?'. *Terminologiläran och dess relationer till andra områden*. Stockholm: Nordterm.

Alm-Arvius, Christina (1992b). 'Om flertydighet—både inom all-mänspråket och vid användningen av facktermer'. *Terminologi-läran och dess relationer till andra områden*. Stockholm: Nordterm.

Alm-Arvius, Christina (1990). 'Om *buggar* och *buggning*'. *Nordisk tid-skrift för fackspråk och terminologi*. Annual vol 8. No 1–2 1990.

Aristotle on Rhetoric. *A Theory of Civic Discourse* (1991). Ed George A Kennedy. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Austin, J L (1975). *How to Do Things with Words*. 2nd ed. The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955. Eds J O Urmson & M Sbisà. Oxford & New York: Oxford Univer-sity Press.

Baker, Collin Freeman (1999). *Seeing Clearly: Frame Semantics, Psycholinguistics, and Cross-linguistic Approaches to the Semantics of the English Verb See*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Califor-nia, Berkley.

Barcelona, Antonio (2000a). 'Introduction. The cognitive theory of metaphor and metonymy'. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Cross-roads*. Ed Antonio Barcelona. Topics in English Linguistics 30. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Barcelona, Antonio (2000b). 'On the plausibility of claiming a metonymic motivation for conceptual metaphor'. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads*. Ed Antonio Barcelona. Topics in English Linguistics 30. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Black, Max (1979). 'How Metaphors work: A Reply to Donald Davidson'. *On Metaphor* 1979. Ed S Sacks. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Black, Max (1977). 'More about metaphor'. *Dialectica*. Vol 31. No 3–4.

Black, Max (1962). *Models and Metaphors* : St*udies in Language and Philosophy*. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press.

Blakemore, Diane (1992). *Understanding Utterances. An Introduction to Pragmatics*. Oxford UK & Cambridge USA : Blackwell.

Bolinger, Dwight (1975). *Aspects of Language*. 2nd ed. New York, Chicago etc: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Boswell, D A (1979). 'Metaphoric Processing in the Mature Years'. *Human Development* 22.

British National Corpus. Oxford University Computing services. (Abbr *BNC*) Web address for Simple Search on the BNC: http://sara.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/lookup.html. Web address to the BNC Home Page: http://www.hcu.ox.ac.uk/BNC

Brown, Roger (1958). *Words and Things*. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press.

Cacciari, Cristina & Sam Glucksberg (1994). ' Understanding Figurative Language'. *Handbook of Psycholinguistics*. Ed M A Gernsbacher. San Diego etc: Academic Press.

Cann, Ronnie (1993). *Formal Semantics*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Carnap, Rudolf (1947). *Meaning and Necessity. A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic*. 2nd ed. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Carroll, Lewis (no year of publication given). *Alice in Wonderland*. New York, Toronto, London etc: Scholastic Book Services.

Carroll, Lewis (1977). *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*. (First published 1871) London & Sydney: Piccolo Pan Books.

Chalker, Sylvia and Edmund Weiner (1994). *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar*. Oxford & New York etc: Oxford University Press.

Chambers Idioms (1982). Eds E M Kirkpatrick & C M Schwarz. Edinburgh: Chambers.

Chomsky, Noam (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press.

Clark, John O E (1990). *Harrap's Dictionary of English Idioms*. Paperback Reference Series. London & Bromley: Harrap Books Ltd.

Collins Cobuild English Dictionary (1995). 2nd ed. Eds J Sinclair et al. London: HarperCollins Publishers. (Abbr *Collins Cobuild*)

Collins Dictionary of the English Language (1979). Eds L Urdang et al. London & Glasgow: Collins. (Abbr *Collins*)

Cruse, D Alan (2000). *Meaning in Language*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

Cruse, D A (1986). *Lexical Semantics*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, David (2001). *A Dictionary of Language*. 2nd ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Crystal, David (1992). *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages*. Oxford UK & Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell.

Crystal, David (1988). *The English Language*. London, New York etc: Penguin Books.

Crystal, David (1985). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. 2nd ed. Oxford UK, New York & London: Basil Blackwell & André Deutsch.

Crystal, David & Derek Davy (1969). *Investigating English Style*. English Language Series. Burnt Mill, Harlow, Essex & New York: Longman.

Dahlstedt, Karl-Hampus & Claes Börje Hagervall (1990). *Främmande ord i vardagssvenskan*. Esselte ordbok AB.

Davidson, Donald (1979). 'What Metaphors Mean'. *On Metaphor*. Ed S Sacks. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

de Man, Paul (1979). 'The Epistemology of Metaphor'. *On Metaphor*. Ed S Sacks. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

de Saussure, Ferdinand (1966). *Course in General Linguistic*. Eds C Bally, A Sechehaye & A Riedlinger. Translated by Wade Baskin. New York, Toronto & London: McGraw-Hill Book Company. (First published 1915 with the title *Cours de Linguistique Générale*)

Drever, James & Harvey Wallerstein (1964). *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*. 2nd ed revised by Wallerstein. Drever compiled the 1st ed. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, etc: Penguin Books.

Eco, Umberto (1984). 'The Semantics of Metaphor'. *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Elliot, T S (1972). *The Waste Land and Other Poems*. London & Boston: Faber & Faber

Elliot, T S (1962). *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. (First published 1939) London & Boston: Faber and Faber.

Encarta World English Dictionary (1999). Eds A H Soukhanov, K Rooney et al. New York: St. Martin's Press.

English Nursery Rhymes for Young Learners (1997). Harlow, Essex, England: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd. (Abbr *English Nursery Rhymes*)

Einstein sagt: Zitate, Einfälle, Gedanken (1997). Eds Alice Calaprice, Freeman Dyson & Anita Ehlers. München & Zürich: Piper Verlag.

Entzenberg, Claes (1998). *Metaphor as a Mode of Interpretation. An Essay on Interactional and Contextual Sense-Making Processes, Metaphorology and Verbal Arts*. Department of Aesthetics, Uppsala University.

Fauconnier, Gilles & Mark Turner (1999). 'Metonymy and Conceptual Integration'. *Metonymy in Language and Thought*. Eds Klaus-Uwe Panther & Günter Radden. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Fauconnier, Gilles (1997). *Mappings in Thought and Language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Feyaerts, Kurt (2000). 'Refining the Inheritance Hypothesis: Interaction between metaphoric and metonymic hierarchies'. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads*. Ed Antonio Barcelona. Topics in English Linguistics 30. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Fillmore, Charles J & Beryl T Atkins (1992). 'Toward a Frame-Based Lexicon: The Semantics of RISK and its Neighbors'. *Frames, Fields, and Contrasts*. Eds A Lehrer & E Feder Kittay. Hillsdale, New Jersey, Hove and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Fillmore, Charles J (1985). 'Frames and the Semantics of Understanding'. *Quaderni di Semantica*. Vol VI. No 2. Dec 1985.

Fillmore, Charles J (1982). 'Towards a Descriptive Framework for Spatial Deixis'. *Speech, Place and Action*. Eds R J Jarvella & W Klein. Chichester, New York etc: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Fillmore, Charles J (1971). 'Types of lexical information'. *Semantics. An Interdisciplinary Reader in Philosophy, Linguistics and Psychology*. Eds D D Steinberg & L A Jakobovits. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Finegan, Edward (1994). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. 2nd ed. Forth Worth etc: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Firth, J R (1957). *Papers in Linguistics 1934–1951*. London etc: Oxford University Press.

Fowler, H W (1994). *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*. Cumberland House, Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.

Frawley, William (1992). *Linguistic Semantics*. Hillsdale, New Jersey, Hove & London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Freeborn, Dennis (1996). *Style*. Houndmills, Basingstoke & London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Gibbs, Raymond W Jr (1999). 'Speaking and Thinking with Metonymy'. *Metonymy in Language and Thought*. Eds Klaus-Uwe Panther & Günter Radden. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, *Gedichte*. This selection by Stefan Zweig published again (1967). Ed Hellmut Haug. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. GmbH & Co.

Goossens, Louis (2000). 'Patterns of meaning extension, "parallel chaining", subjectification, modal shifts'. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads*. Ed Antonio Barcelona. Topics in English Linguistics 30. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Grady, Joe, Sarah Taub & Pamela Morgan (1996). 'Primitive and Compound Metaphors'. *Conceptual Structure, Discourse and Language*. Ed Adele E Goldberg. Standford, California: CSLI Publications.

Green, Georgia M (1989). *Pragmatics and Natural Language Understanding*. Hillsdale, New Jersey, Hove & London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Grice, H P (1975). 'Logic and Conversation'. *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol 3: *Speech Acts*. Eds P Cole & J L Morgan. New York etc: Academic Press.

Halliday, M A K (1996). 'Linguistic function and literary style: An inquiry into the language of William Golding's *The Inheritors*'. *The Stylistics Reader. From Roman Jakobson to the present.* Ed J J Weber. London & New York etc: Arnold.

Halliday, M A K (1989). *Spoken and Written Language*. 2nd ed. Oxford etc: Oxford University Press.

Halliday, M A K (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.

Halliday, M A K & Hasan, Ruqaiya (1976). *Cohesion in English*. English Language Series. London: Longman.

Hawking, Stephen (1989). *A Brief History of Time*. Toronto, New York, London etc: Bantam Books.

Hopper, Paul J & Elizabeth Closs Traugott (1993). *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Huddleston, Rodney (1988). *English grammar: an outline*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge, New York & Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Huddleston, Rodney (1984). *Introduction to the Grammar of English*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Hughes, Ted (1974). *Crow*. London: Faber and Faber.

Hurford, James R & Brendan Heasley (1983). *Semantics: a coursebook*. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Jackendoff, Ray (2002). *Foundations of Language: Brain, Meaning, Grammar, Evolution*. Oxford & New York etc: Oxford University Press.

Jakobson, Roman (1996). 'Closing statement: Linguistics and poetics'. *The Stylistics Reader. From Roman Jakobson to the Present*. Ed J J Weber. London & New York etc: Arnold.

Jakobson, Roman (1974). *Poetik och lingvistik*. Eds K Aspelin & B A Lundberg. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Pan/Norstedts.

Jespersen, Otto (1922a). *Language: its nature, development and origin*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Jespersen, Otto (1922b). 'Lydsymbolik'. *Nordisk tidskrift för vetenskap, konst och industri*. Eds N Herlitz, G Gran & H Olrik. Stockholm etc: Wahlström & Widstrand etc.

Johansson, Gabriel (1995). *I See a Voice. A Study of Descriptions of the Singing Voice in Music Reviews*. Third-term essay. Supervisor: Christina Alm-Arvius. English Department, Stockholm University.

Johannesson, Nils-Lennart (1990). *English Language Essays. Investigation Method and Writing Strategies*. English Department, Stockholm University.

Johnson, Mark (1987). *The Body in the Mind. The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Jung, Carl Gustav (1965). *Det omedvetna*. Translated by Heidi Parland. Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand. (First published 1960 with the title *Über die Psychologie des Unbewussten*)

Kecskés, Istvan & Tunde Papp (2000). 'Metaphorical Competence in Trilingual Language Production'. *English in Europe: The Acquisi-*

tion of a Third Language. Eds J Cenoz & U Jessner. Clevedon etc: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Kempson, Ruth M (1977). *Semantic Theory*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Kittay, Eva Feder (1987). *Metaphor. Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure*. Clarendon Library of Logic and Philosophy. Oxford etc: Oxford University Press.

Kjellmer, Göran (1981).'*Literally*: A Case of Harmful Polysemy?'. *Studia neophilologica* 53. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.

Klasson, Kerstin (1977). *Developments in the Terminology of Physics and Technology*. Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Stockholm Studies in English XLII. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

Koch, Peter (1999). 'Frame and Contiguity. On the Cognitive Bases of Metonymy and Certain Types of Word Formation'. *Metonymy in Language and Thought*. Eds Klaus-Uwe Panther & Günter Radden. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Kuhn, Thomas S (1993). 'Metaphor in science'. *Metaphor and Thought*. Ed Andrew Ortony. Cambridge, New York & Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Kukulski, Petrus (1997). *Metaphor as a Persuasive Device in Copytexts*. Unpublished fourth term essay. Supervisor: C Alm-Arvius. English Department, Stockholm University.

Kövecses, Zoltán (2000). 'The Scope of Metaphor'. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads*. Ed Antonio Barcelona. Topics in English Linguistics 30. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Lacey, A R (1986). *A Dictionary of Philosophy*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.

Lakoff, George & Mark Turner (1989). *More than Cool Reason*. Chicago & London: the University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, George (1987). *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Langacker, Ronald W (2000). *Grammar and Conceptualization*. Cognitive Linguistics Research 14. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Langacker, Ronald W (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. Vol 1. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Lawrence, D H (1961). *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. 2nd ed. Penguin Books.

Lee, Laurie (1962). *Cider with Rosie*. (First published 1959) Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England etc: Penguin Books.

Leech, Geoffrey N (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. Longman Linguistic Library 30. London & New York: Longman.

Leech, Geoffrey N & Michael H Short (1981). *Style in Fiction*. London & New York: Longman.

Leech, Geoffrey (1981). *Semantics*. 2nd edition. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England etc: Penguin Books.

Leech, Geoffrey & Jennifer Coates (1980). 'Semantic Indeterminacy and the Modals'. *Studies in English Linguistics for Randolph Quirk*. Eds S Greenbaum, G Leech & Jan Svartvik. London: Longman.

Levinson, Stephen C (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Ljung, Magnus (2000). 'Newspaper Genres and Newspaper English'. *English Media Texts—Past and Present. Language and textual structure*. Ed F Ungerer. Vol 80 of Pragmatics and Beyond New Series. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Lodge, David (1977). *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature*. London: Edward Arnold.

Loewenberg, Ina (1975). 'Identifying Metaphors'. *Foundations of Language* 12.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995). 3nd ed. Eds R Quirk & D Summers et al. Burnt Mill, Harlow, Essex: Longman. (Abbr *Longman*)

Longman Dictionary of English Idioms (1979). Eds T H Long & D Summers et al. Harlow & London: Longman. (Abbr *Longman Idioms*)

Lyons, John (1995). *Linguistic Semantics*. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Lyons, John (1977). *Semantics*. Vols 1 & 2. Cambridge etc. Cambridge University Press.

Lyons, John (1971). *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Malmberg, Bertil (1973). *Teckenlära*. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Aldus/ Bonniers.

Malmström, Sten, Iréne Györki & Peter A Sjögren (1988). *Bonniers svenska ordbok*. Stockholm: Bonniers.

Martin, Robert M (1987). *The Meaning of Language*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: A Bradford Book, The MIT Press.

Matthews, Robert J (1971). 'Concerning a 'linguistic theory' of metaphor'. *Foundations of Language* 7.

Melchers, Gunnel (1997). '*As Smart as a Carrot*: Proverbial Similes in English Dialects'. *Language in Time and Space: Studies in honour of Wolfgang Viereck on the occasion of his 60th birthday*. Eds H Ramisch & K Wynne. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Miller, George A (1993). 'Images and models, similes and metaphors'. *Metaphor and Thought*. 2nd ed. Ed Andrew Ortony. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Moger, Art (1979). *The Complete Pun Book*. Secaucus, New Jersey: Castle, a Division of Book Sales, Inc.

Mooij, J J A (1976). *A Study of Metaphor*. North-Holland Linguistic Series 27. Amsterdam, New York & Oxford: North-Holland Publishing Company.

Morris, Desmond (1985). *The Book of Ages*. New York, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England etc: Penguin Books.

Nationalencyklopedin Multimedia (2000). CD-ROM, maj 2000 för PC. Höganäs: Bokförlaget Bra Böcker AB. (Abbr *Nationalencyklopedin*)

Newhouse, Julia (1981). *Spotlight on Winston Churchill*. Cassell Graded Readers Level 6. London: Cassell Ltd.

Newmark, Peter (1993). *Paragraphs on Translation*. Clevedon, Philadelphia & Adelaide: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Newmark, Peter (1981). *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford & New York etc: Pergamon Press.

Nida, Eugene A (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating*. Leiden: E J Brill.

Niemeier, Susanne (2000). 'Straight from the heart—metonymic and metaphorical explorations'. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads*. Ed Antonio Barcelona. Topics in English Linguistics 30. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Nogales, Patti D (1999). *Metaphorically Speaking.* Stanford, California: CSLI Publications.

Novitz, David (1985). 'Metaphor, Derrida, and Davidson'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism.* Winter 1985.

Ogden, C K & I A Richards (1985). *The Meaning of Meaning.* (First published 1923) London, Boston & Henley: Ark Paperbacks.

On Metaphor (1979). Ed S Sacks. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Ord för ord: *Svenska synonymer och uttryck* (1977). Eds J Palmér, H Friedländer et al. Stockholm: P A Norstedt & söner förlag.

Ortony, Andrew (1993a). 'Metaphor, language, and thought'. *Metaphor and Thought.* 2nd ed. Ed Andrew Ortony. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Ortony, Andrew (1993b). 'Similarity in similes and metaphors'. *Metaphor and Thought.* 2nd ed. Ed Andrew Ortony. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1989). A S Hornby. 4th ed. Eds A P Cowie et al. Oxford etc: Oxford University Press. (Abbr *ALD*)

Parker, Brant & Johnny Hart (1997). 'The Wizard of Id'. *Dagens Nyheter*, 24 februari, 1997. Stockholm: AB Dagens Nyheter.

Persson, Gunnar (2001). '*Pin, pin bring me luck, because I stop to pick you up*. On magic in the English language'. *A Wealth of English. Studies in Honour of Göran Kjellmer.* Ed Karin Aijmer. Gothenburg Studies in English 81. Göteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

Persson, Gunnar (1990). *Meanings, Models and Metaphors. A Study in Lexical Semantics in English.* Acta Universitatis Umensis. Umeå Studies in the Humanities 92. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

Plath, Sylvia (1965). *Ariel.* London: Faber and Faber.

Platzack, Christer (1998). *Svenskans inre grammatik—det minimalistiska programmet: En introduktion till modern generativ grammatik.* Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Pollio, Howard R & Michael K Smith (1979). 'Sense and nonsense in thinking about anomaly and metaphor'. *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society* 13 (5).

Pustejovsky, James (1995). *The Generative Lexicon.* Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: The MIT Press.

Pyles, Thomas (1971). *The Origins and Development of the English Language*. 2nd ed. New York etc: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Inc.

Quinton, Anthony (1967). 'The *A Prior* and the Analytic'. *Philosophical Logic*. Ed P F Strawson. Oxford etc: Oxford University Press.

Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech & Jan Svartvik (1985). *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London & New York: Longman.

Radden, Günter (2000). 'How metonymic are metaphors?'. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads*. Ed Antonio Barcelona. Topics in English Linguistics 30. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Radden, Günter & Zoltán Kövecses (1999). 'Towards a Theory of Metonymy'. *Metonymy in Language and Thought*. Eds Klaus-Uwe Panther & Günter Radden. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Read Me a Story (1976). Ed F Waters. London, New York etc: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, Beaver Books.

Richards, I A (1965). *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. The Mary Flexner Lectures on the Humanities 1936. New York: A Galaxy Book, Oxford University Press.

Ricoeur, Paul (1979). 'The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling'. *On Metaphor*. Ed S Sacks. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Rodari, Gianni (2001). *Fantasins grammatik*. Translated by Anna Barsotti. Göteborg: Bokförlaget Korpen. (First published 1973 with the title *Grammatica della fantasia*)

Room, Adrian (1987). *Dictionary of Britain*. Oxford etc: Oxford University Press.

Rosch, Eleanor (1978). 'Principles of Categorization'. *Cognition and Categorization*. Ed E Rosch & B B Lloyd. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Publishers.

Rosch, Eleanor (1977). 'Human Categorisation'. *Studies in Cross-cultural Psychology*. Vol 1. Ed N Warren. London etc: Academic Press.

Rosch, Eleanor (1975). 'Cognitive Reference Points'. *Cognitive Psychology* Vol 7. Ed E Hunt. New York & London: Academic Press.

Rosch, Eleanor & Carolyn B Mervis (1975). 'Family Resemblances: Studies in the Internal Structure of Categories'. *Cognitive Psychology*. Vol 7. Ed E Hunt. New York & London: Academic Press.

Rumelhart, David E (1993). 'Some problems with the notion of literal meanings'. *Metaphor and Thought*. 2nd ed. Ed Andrew Ortony. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Rydén, Mats (1995). 'Det förflutna i det närvarande. Tankar om språk och språkforskning'. *Språk och stil* 5. Eds L Elmevik, B Nordberg & M Thelander.

Rynell, Alarik (1969). *Engelska förr och nu*. Lund: Gleerups.

Sampson, Geoffrey (1980). *Schools of Linguistics*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Saeed, John I (1997). *Semantics*. Oxford & Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.

Searle, John R (1999). *Mind, Language and Society. Doing Philosophy in the Real World*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Searle, John R (1993). 'Metaphor'. *Metaphor and Thought*. 2nd ed. Ed Andrew Ortony. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Searle, John R (1978). 'Literal Meaning'. *Erkenntnis* 13.

Searle, John R (1969). *Speech Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.

Shakespeare, William (1965). *Macbeth*. 3rd ed. Ed Bernard Lott. New Swan Shakespeare. London & Harlow: Longman.

Shakespeare, William (1951). *The Complete Works*. The Tudor Text. The Players Edition. Ed P Alexander. London & Glasgow: Collins.

Shen, Yeshayahu (1992). 'Cognitive Aspects of Metaphor Comprehension: An Introduction. *Poetics Today* 13:4.

Skeat, Walter W (1993). *The Concise Dictionary of English Etymology*. Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.

Smith, William George & Paul Harvey (1948). *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*. 2nd ed. Oxford etc: Oxford University Press.

Sonesson, Göran (1989). *Pictorial Concepts. Inquiries into the semiotic heritage and its relevance to the interpretation of the visual world*. Lund: Lund University Press.

Sound symbolism (1994). Eds L Hinton, J Nichols & J J Ohala. Cambridge, New York & Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Stevenson, Robert Louis (1962). *Treasure Island*. New York: Airmont Books. (First published 1883)

Strang, Barbara M H (1970). *A History of English*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd.

Stubbs, Michael (2001). *Words and Phrases: Corpus Studies of Lexical Semantics*. Oxford & Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.

Su, Soon Peng (1994). *Lexical Ambiguity in Poetry*. London & New York: Longman.

Svanlund, Jan (1999). 'Are Dead Metaphors Schematic Abstractions? Or What Collocations Reveal about the Metaphorical Mind'. Paper presented at a Poster Session, 6th International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, Stockholm July 1999/ICLC99.

Svanlund, Jan (1989). 'När bilderna bleknar—synpunkter på metaforers intensitet'. *Språkvård* 3/89.

Svartvik, Jan & Olof Sager (1977). *Engelsk universitetsgrammatik*. Stockholm & Göteborg: Esselte Studium AB.

Swinney, David A & Anne Cutler (1979). 'The Access and Processing of Idiomatic Expressions'. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 18.

Taylor, John R (1995). *Linguistic Categorization*. 2nd ed. Oxford, New York etc: Oxford University Press.

The American Heritage Dictionary (1985). Second College Edition. Eds M S Berube, D J Neely, P B De Vinne et al. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. (Abbr *American Heritage*)

The Cat Notebook (1985). Ed H Exley. Chalk Hill, Watford, UK: Exley Publications.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1990). 8th ed. Ed R E Allen. Oxford etc: Oxford University Press. (Abbr *COD*)

The Daily Telegraph (Saturday, August 28, 1999). London: Telegraph Group Limited.

The Dalai Lama & Howard C. Cutler (1998). *The Art of Happiness*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

The Norton Anthology of English Literature (1974). 3rd ed. Vols 1 & 2. Eds M H Abrams et al. New York: W W Norton & Company Inc.

The Observer (Sunday, 17 August, 1997). 119 Farringdon Road, London.

The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966). Eds C T Onions et al. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The Sunday Telegraph (March 18, 2001). London: The Sunday Telegraph Ltd.

The Stylistics Reader. From Roman Jakobson to the Present (1996). Ed J J Weber. London & New York etc: Arnold.

'The Three Bears' (1976). *Read Me a Story*. Ed F Waters. London, New York etc: Beaver Books & The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited.

The Times and *The Sunday Times* (1995). CD-ROM. London: News Multimedia Ltd.

The Wordsworth Classical Dictionary (1996). Ed W Smith. Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd. (Abbr *Classical Dictionary*)

Trask, R L (1993). *A Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in Linguistics*. London & New York Routledge.

Trudgill, Peter (2000). *Sociolinguistics: An introduction to language and society*. 4th ed. London, New York etc: Penguin Books.

Turner, Mark & Giles Fauconnier (2000). 'Metaphor, metonymy, and binding'. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads*. Ed Antonio Barcelona. Topics in English Linguistics 30. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Ullman, Stephen (1962). *Semantics. An Introduction to the Science of Meaning*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott Ltd.

Ungerer, Friedrich (2000). 'Muted metaphors and the activation of metonymies in advertising'. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads*. Ed Antonio Barcelona. Topics in English Linguistics 30. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Ungerer, Friedrich & Hans-Jörg Schmid (1996). *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*. London & New York: Longman.

Updike, John (1980). 'Divorcing: A Fragment'. *Your Lover Just Called: Stories of Joan and Richard Maple*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England etc: Penguin Books.

Viberg, Åke (1984). 'The Verbs of perception: a typological study'. *Explanations for Language Universals*. Eds B Butterworth, B Comrie & Ö Dahl. Berlin, New York & Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers.

Vygotsky, Lev Semonovich (1962). *Thought and Language*. 1st Russian ed 1934. Ed and translated by Eugenia Hanfmann & Gertrude Vakar. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press.

Wales, Katie (1990). *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. London & New York: Longman.

Warren, Beatrice (1992). *Sense Developments*. Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Stockholm Studies in English LXXX. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

White, Roger M (1996). *The Structure of Metaphor*. Oxford & Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.

Williams, Raymond (1983). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society.* Flamingo edition. London: Fontana Paperbacks.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1968). *Philosophical Investigations.* 3rd ed. English text only, translated by G E M Anscombe. (First published 1953) Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

Yule, George (1996). *Pragmatics.* Oxford Introductions to Language Study. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

Index

214