

Meaning construction in creative metaphors: Conventional meaning integration through *generic interfacing* in a blend, and conditions of propagation and lexicalization*

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Abstract

Given certain semantic and pragmatic conditions discussed in this article, innovative metaphors and metonymies may end in propagation and eventual lexicalization of new meanings in the language system. Paying attention to instances of creative *uses* of figurative language in context may provide valuable evidence for such changes in the system. Innovation creates new meaning, but creative figurative language must also recruit conventional elements into meaning construction. However, as conventional figurative and novel meaning are not processed the same way – the former tends to be processed as a comparison, the latter as more abstract categorization –, conventional elements function as generic content in novel blends. This gives rise to a phenomenon dubbed *generic integration*. Furthermore, cognitive processes of comprehension depend upon and give rise to pragmatic inferences that complete utterance meaning. Therefore, in order to be viable for propagation, novel metaphors and metonymies must fulfill structural *iconicity*, and pragmatic *relevance* requirements.

Keywords: metaphor; conventional meaning; generic interfacing; lexicalization; lexical spreading.

Resum. *La construcció del significat en les metàfores creatives: la integració del significat convencional a través de les relacions d'interfície genèriques i les condicions de propagació i de lexicalització*

Quan es donen les condicions semàntiques i pragmàtiques que expliquem en aquest article, les metàfores i metonímies innovadores poden donar lloc a la propagació de nous significats en el sistema lingüístic i a la seva lexicalització posterior. Si atenem a les mostres d'*usos* creatius del llenguatge figurat en el seu context, podem obtenir dades valuoses sobre aquests canvis en el sistema. La innovació crea nous significats, però el llenguatge figurat creatiu també ha de fer servir

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elements convencionals en la construcció del significat. No obstant això, com que no processem el significat figuratiu convencional i el nou de la mateix manera —aquell tendeix a processar-se mitjançant una comparació i aquest mitjançant una categorització més abstracta—, els elements convencionals funcionen com contingut abstracte en les noves fusions. Això dona lloc al fenomen de la *integració genèrica*. A més, els processos cognitius de comprensió depenen d'inferències pragmàtiques que completen el significat de l'enunciat i en creen de noves. Per tant, perquè es puguin propagar, les metàfores i metonímies de nova creació han de satisfer requisits d'*iconicitat* estructural i de *rellevància* pragmàtica.

Paraules clau: metàfora; significat convencional; relacions d'interfície genèriques; lexicalització; propagació lèxica.

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Introduction

Cognitive linguistics, a functional approach to language, assumes it is patterns of language use that give origin to language knowledge (Evans and Green 2011: 108; Tomasello 2003: 5). Croft (2000) calls language in use an «interface» mediating between the «conventions of a language (those aspects of use that make language stable) and mechanisms that result from deviation from convention resulting in language change» (cited in Evans and Green 2011: 109). Specifically in usage, according to Steen (2011: 31), metaphor is characterized by «its attention to any linguistic form that can express a cross-domain mapping, and any cross-domain mapping in conceptual structure that can be judged to be metaphorical», as opposed to «conventional metaphors in linguistic form and conceptual structure that are part of the study of grammar.» This can equally be applied to metonymy, as it is common usage in cognitive metaphor studies¹, and it highlights the fact that, like all language, figurative language is eminently dynamic in use, subject to a number of factors that determine its communicative success.

Metaphor and metonymy can be novel or conventional, and these aspects may be regarded statically (metaphor-as-product) or dynamically (metaphor-as-process). While a static approach provides us with a «picture» of a conceptual metaphor in terms of its internal semantic-conceptual structure and language structure conventionally associated with it, a dynamic approach allows us to understand how these – conventional as well as other – conceptual structures come to be through

1. For a discussion of the meaning of «metaphor» in a generic and specific sense, see Müller (2008).

cognitive processes of language comprehension. This opposition also reflects the dichotomy between synchrony and diachrony.

Intuition suggests that a dynamic approach can best do justice to the complex processing that makes possible the creation of conceptual meaning through figurative language in use. In fact, this is the view adopted in this paper: a dynamic approach, modelling creative uses of metaphor and metonymy through the application of integration networks to describe processes of conceptual blending (Fauconnier and Turner 2002), the preferred descriptive schemata to account for novel metaphor processes and structure (Evans and Green 2011; Müller 2008; Brandt and Brandt 2005; Urquidi 2013).

Croft's view of language usage as an «interface» between innovation and the language system is supported by our present evidence. Our analysis of four novel metaphors used in news reporting on economics shows that these function as veritable recruiters of conventional conceptual structures, formerly novel but currently stable metaphors and metonymies, reactivating their conventional but transparent metaphoricality – in one sense *awakening* these *sleeping* metaphors (Müller 2008) – and integrating meaning associated with their original metaphoricality into new meaning, as well as contextual clues that render it relevant.

Moreover, we are able to show that conventional metaphor and metonymy get recruited in the creative process as a tool for categorization that can be modelled as *generic information*, which informs space-building with generic qualities input spaces must share. This goes in support of Bowdle and Gentner's (2005) *Career of Metaphor Theory*, and their view that conventional metaphors will often be processed as categorization, and not comparisons. In Müller's (2008) terminology, conventional structures are indeed activated, but perhaps less «awakened» than «sleepwalking».

Attention to metaphors in language usage – as opposed to grammar – must involve accounting for extra-grammatical forms of linguistic behavior, and is therefore subject to a clear distinction between conventional and novel metaphors. After discussing this opposition in the following section, section 2 will introduce frequent domains of conceptual metaphor that form the basis for economics language both in expert and non-expert communication. After a brief account of methodology and a corpus description on section 3, 4 and 5 will provide an account of the types and functions of creative metaphorical and metonymical expression in the corpus, giving special attention to their conceptual dimension and processes that generate new meaning. Some of Brandt and Brandt's (2005) changes to the model of conceptual blending, incorporating discursive and contextual factors will be applied to these metaphors. Finally, the conclusion will present a summary of this study's findings in relation to broader lexical innovation processes.

1. Creative and conventional metaphor in discourse

It is by now undisputed that, in terms of figurative language, the conventional-novel opposition actually constitutes a *cline* of metaphoricality, along which metaphorical (and metonymical) expressions may be placed (Lakoff and Johnson 1980;

Stefanowitsch and Gries 2006; Svanlund 2010; Kövecses 2010). Various criteria have been proposed to operationalize the relative difference in metaphoricity, and subsequent attempts have been made at testing them. Croft and Cruse (2004: 204ff) describe four diachronic stages of metaphoricity.

The frequency of occurrence of metaphorical expressions in well-constructed corpora has been one factor tested, with the expectation that conventional (conceptual) metaphors would present more frequent realizations in usage than novel ones. This general approach has been tested in Swedish (Svanlund 2010) and English (Stefanowitsch 2006), among others. Although compelling in empirical terms, this approach may not offer the complete picture. Additionally, it is only appropriate for testing 1) conceptual metaphors that 2) are already conventionalized to a degree that allows them to be found in large corpora with a certain significant frequency. Goatly (1997: 108) suggests further criteria such as a lack of morphological derivation, concreteness of meaning, historical awareness, and «the sense of arbitrariness and a tradition of agreement among members of a community». Indeed, the question of determining metaphor conventionality is a tricky, subjective matter, and an attribution of relative conventionality or novelty of metaphors, both conceptual and linguistic, needs to be justified by these criteria on a case to case basis, and in the broader context of each utterance in the case of metaphorical expressions.

In her tour-de-force monograph, *Metaphors Dead and Alive, Sleeping and Waking*, Müller (2008) disaggregates what has traditionally been regarded as *metaphoricity* into three different aspects: *conventionality*, *transparency* and *attention* to metaphor. The first two aspects, conventionality and transparency, are a matter of language-as-system, which includes the conceptual dimension. Attention, a question of usage, can result in either inactive *sleeping* or activated *waking* metaphors, a condition which may be triggered by contextual and discursive factors, as well as the form of the utterance in question. Moreover, Steen (2011) argues one can distinguish pragmatically between *deliberate* and *non-deliberate* metaphors.

In this paper, metaphorical expressions considered creative will be assumed to fulfill the requirements for being *both* activated and deliberate, meaning that the author will be assumed to be both conscious of their salient metaphoricity and *employing* them in a conscious manner. Given the genre of newspaper discourse, in which rhetorical elements play an important role in successfully communicating contents within limited space, the writer's awareness of generic style and a general *metalinguistic* consciousness is a safe assumption to make, and it will be made in this study. Furthermore, Kövecses (2009: 12) argues that *style*, that is, the «linguistic choice and variation to the communicative setting, subject matter, medium, audience, etc.» represents a major sub-dimension of within-cultural metaphorical variation in the media. In other words, it will be assumed that at least some – though not all – of the causes for metaphorical and metonymical innovation in this genre can be found in its style and the demands placed by its more general socio-discursive and linguistic contexts.

2. The conceptual basis of Economics language

Any attempt to study creative metaphors in the domain of ECONOMICS needs to take into account the broad conceptual, metaphorical basis that underlies conventional economics language. This has been a frequent matter of investigation, and past research has revealed their omnipresence both in the academic discourse, and more informal contexts of communication on the topic, such as the media. Mirowski (1994) and McCloskey (1989; 1991 and others), to name two of the most notable authors and works, have shown how pervasive metaphorical structures are in academic economic thought in the English language, structuring knowledge, supporting theories and providing models to analyze the social phenomena which is economics' object of study. Herrera and White (2012: 136) summarize a number of source domains that have been empirically proven to build the basis of conventional business metaphors. Domains such as «war, competitive games, living organism[s], marriage, meteorology, natural disasters, verticality (MORE IS UP), are more than likely to surface in any extensive study of business discourse».

In a broad study of metaphorical texts in English, Richardt (2005) argues there is a large and conventional body of *commonsense* knowledge, which is conceptual in nature and builds a *Commonsense Model of Economics* that overlaps somewhat with an *Expert Model*, both of which provide the basis for language production and readers' understanding of economic literature. This is an interesting distinction to make, reinforced by Skorczynska and Deignan's (2006: 88) work, that shows that lay and expert usage of metaphors in popular economics and business discourse differ in their «patterns, frequencies, and functions of linguistic metaphor in texts even where the topics of the texts are similar.» These differences notwithstanding, it is safe to say that even lay speakers are aware of and may utilize the ubiquitous conceptualizations of expert speakers, which are deeply ingrained in our language and culture.

The extensive conceptual basis of the language of economics has a few interesting implications for popular discourse in Economics. First, it implies that a large number of terms and phrases, which would otherwise appear quite transparently metaphorical, are frequently used and may constitute the only existing means of expressing concepts or describing economic phenomena. A tax haven, *paraíso fiscal*, is literally and quite transparently a 'tax paradise', which does nothing to erode its status as the only official Spanish term to refer to the phenomenon in question. And by now, a 'real estate bubble', *burbuja inmobiliaria*, is attaining a similar degree of conventionality while remaining a very transparent metaphor, which is to say always potentially subject to cognitive activation as such. And this the second implication derives from the first: the fact that such a great part of the metaphorical basis of Economics is highly transparent makes it an easy source of creative writing through activation of dormant, transparent metaphors. Also as a consequence, it renders very high the likelihood of creative or novel metaphors producing mixed metaphors. Due to the high conventionalization of these metaphors, it is likely that its users will not notice them as such (they will use them in an inactive or 'sleeping' mode, to use Müller's (2008) term, or in *categorizational* mode, following Bowdle and Gentner (2005), without attention to their transparency, and might embed new,

unconventional and highly transparent, metaphorical coinages in phrases which are themselves highly transparent but more conventional.

This mixing of metaphors will likely activate the conventional, sleeping phrases and produce, for example, a humorous effect (as in (1), which will be further analyzed in section 4).

- (1) En **el pico de la burbuja** [...], el abandono escolar creció hasta at the peak of the bubble the abandonment school grew until ser el más alto de Europa. be the most high of Europe
‘At the peak of the bubble, the school dropout rate rose to be the highest in Europe’

3. Corpus and methodology

To carry out this qualitative study, 18 print issues of Spanish daily newspapers were considered, 16 of *El País* and 2 of *El Mundo*, between March 2014 and March 2015. An analysis of meaning construction, using conceptual blending theory, will be carried out on metaphorical expressions that have been construed as creative, innovative or novel, following the criteria listed on section 1.

This kind of analysis must take into account the fact that print media is a genre that contains multitudes: it is a polyphonic and multigeneric discourse. Polyphonic, because it includes both explicitly (through citations) and implicitly (through unmarked reproduction of hegemonic or minority discourse) the voices of different social actors, as well as reporters’, editors’ and copy-editors’. It is multigeneric, because it includes pieces of different generic traditions such as reports, brief notes, interviews, analysis pieces, opinion pieces, as well as letters to the editors. Not least of all elements such as headlines with very specific formal and functional traits. This study will therefore attempt to factor these issues in, as much as possible.

4. Types and processes of creative metaphors in economics news

4.1. Double foregrounding or interface metaphors

The following are examples of a very typical creative metaphor found in our corpus:

- (2) Mercadona es sin duda el líder de la distribución de la Mercadona is without doubt the leader of the distribution of the **alimentación** en España. Ha sido capaz de crecer en ventas durante food in Spain. Has been able to grow in sales during toda la crisis. Sin embargo, la cadena [...] ha **entrado en una fase** all the crisis. However, the chain has entered in a phase **de digestión**.
of digestión.

‘Mercadona is undoubtedly the leader of food supply in Spain. It has managed to grow in sales during the entire crisis. However, it has now entered a digestive phase.’ (*El País*, 07.03.2014)

- (3) **Sombras en la nueva tarifa de la luz.**
shadows in the new price of the light.
'Shadows in the new electricity price.' (*El País*, 01.04.2014)

These creative metaphors are triggered by their co-text, and the most evident effect is stylistic – a humorous «wink» to the reader, a play with words. In both cases it is evidently a metaphor in which the source domain is found in the topic of the text. In (2), a food metaphor (PROFIT IS FOOD) is used to refer to stagnation after a period of growth in a company's balance. Of course, there are already various conventional conceptual metaphors in Spanish – as well as other languages – to refer to micro- and macroeconomic processes like «growth», itself a metaphor based on the conceptual metonymy MORE IS BIGGER, to which the utterance refers to as well: «capaz de crecer en ventas». The metaphor in (3) is also triggered directly by the topic in discussion: there are 'shadows' in the 'light' (electricity) bill. In Spanish, 'light' is a conventional expression that refers metonymically to 'electricity'. Kövecses (2009: 12-13) has also identified a type of metaphor like (2) and (3), and regards them as instances of metaphorical variation in which the innovative choice depends «on the meaning of the sentences' constituents – namely, in the present case, what we could regard as the subject matter, or topic».

This type of metaphor has been described as *double foregrounding* (Bröne and Fayaerts 2005: 75, cited in White and Herrera 2009), and *interface* (White and Herrera 2009: 136-137), a pattern characterized by a «condition whereby lexis proper to the semantic field of the subject matter under discussion is employed figuratively. [...] and] there is a leakage from mainstream denotative to figurative senses». It is also characterized by processing initiated with a metonymical step between elements in the domain of the subject matter, after a first mention of the latter builds the corresponding space. This is why it has been called *double foregrounding*: there is a double mapping, first metonymic in inner-space, and then metaphoric towards a different space (White and Herrera 2009).

4.2. *Generic interfacing*

The concept of *interfacing* is insightful, though, as it also reflects the semantic step that goes from the conventional to the novel figurative parts of conceptual meaning. Indeed, it also reflects Croft's (2000) insight that creative language use and innovation emerges in the interstice between conventional and novel usage. Therefore, another phenomenon, described in this section, is dubbed *generic interfacing*, as it transforms pre-existing conventional figurative meaning into a part of the generic space of a blend.

In Spanish, English, German, as well as many other languages, ecological issues – taxes for environmental reasons – are metonymically (and quite conventionally) referred to as 'green'. This is employed in a new metaphor that elaborates on this 'greenness':

- (4) Estos sabios proponían revisar la **ensalada de impuestos verdes** locales
 these wise proposed revise the salad of taxes green local
 y autonómicos.
 and autonomous
 ‘These experts proposed revising the salad of local and autonomous green
 taxes’ (*El País*, 03.03.2015).

Green is probably the color most saliently associated with nature in Western culture, which explains how easily the reader can identify the referent. Based upon this transparent, conventional collocation, a second figurative step is taken that reactivates its metaphoricity and expresses a new, partly deontic meaning. «Greenness», in its conventionally metaphorical sense is now also conventionally part of <green>’s polysemy, and as such can be viewed as a generic quality in the generic space. This would make input space-building dependent on these having a property generically stated as ‘a type of green object’, in other words, input spaces

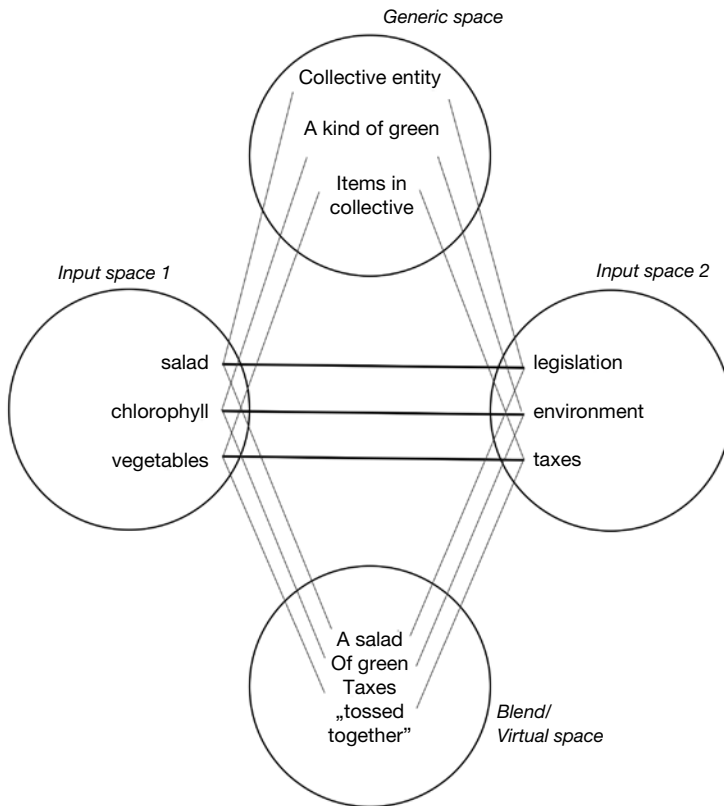


Figure 1. Ensalada de impuestos verdes as a conceptual blend.

generated under the generic space will have to be able to be *categorized* as green, before they can proceed to be blended.

A similar pre-blending step occurs in the following examples cluster, with the only difference that instead of a metonymy, the conventional figurative content integrated as a generic element is a metaphor: The conventional metaphor A COMPLEX SYSTEM IS A SHIP seems quite frequent in Economics (Zinken 2007, cited in Zinken and Musolff 2012: 3), instantiating basic metaphors such as ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IS A JOURNEY with a VEHICLE schema, both of which are described in Richardt’s (2005) *Commonsense Model of Economics*. In order to compare a British bank with a British pirate ship and, metonymically, with the infamous Pirate Drake, the following utterances are used:

- (5) LCH.Clearnet **hizo de Drake**.
 LCH.Clearnet did of Drake
 ‘LCH.Clearnet acted as Drake’.

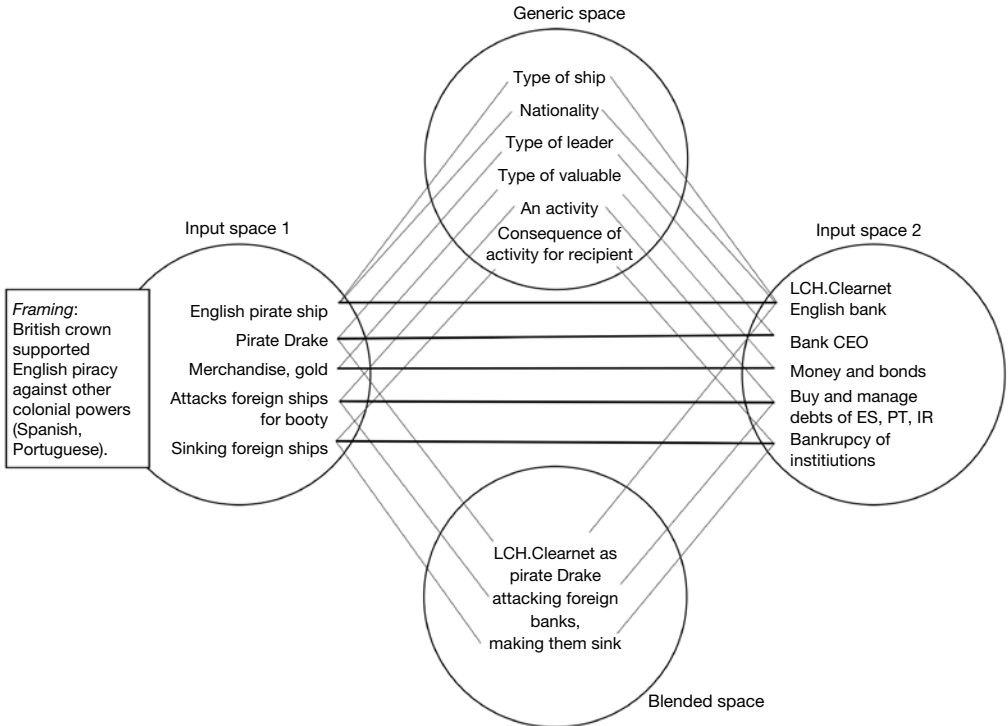


Figure 2. LCH.Clearnet hizo de Drake as a conceptual blend.

- (6) **Espanoles, portugueses, italianos e irlandeses** tienen buenos motivos Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians, and Irish have good motives para recordar su **infausto nombre**. to remember its fateful name ‘Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians and the Irish have good reason to remember his fateful name’.

- (7) LCH.Clearnet (u otra) garantiza cobros o pagos, y endurece y relaja a su placer las condiciones. Si las agrava, hardens and relaxes at its pleasure the conditions. If them worsens, exige más bonos a cambio del mismo dinero, deprecia la deuda española y **la hunde**. demands more bonds in exchange for+the same money, depreciates the debt Spanish and it sinks ‘LCH.Clearnet (or another) guarantees collections or payments, and hardens and softens loan conditions at its will. If it hardens them, it demands more bonds for the same amount of money, depreciating the Spanish debt and sinking it’ (*El País*, 05.03.2015).

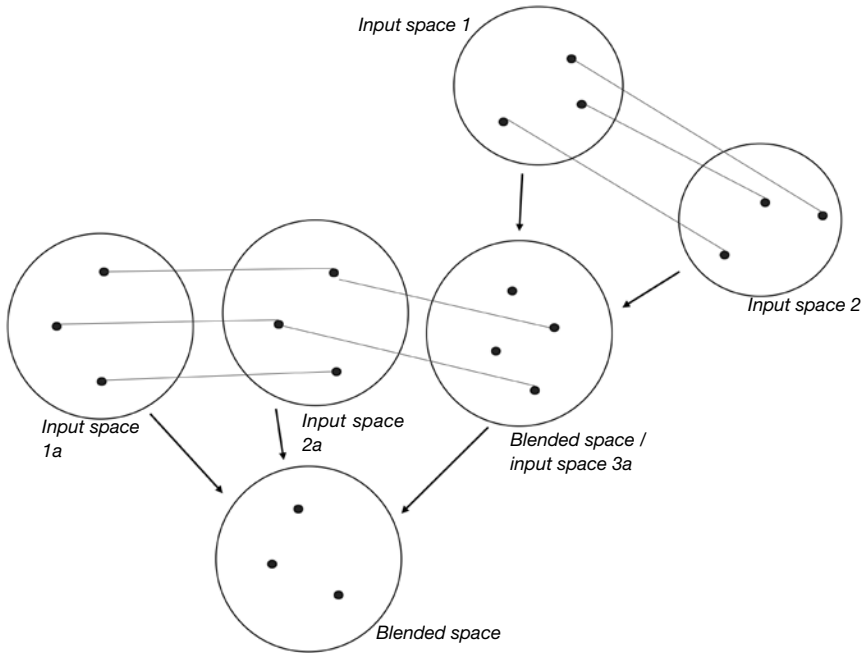


Figure 3. A multiple blend (adapted from Evans and Green 2011).

Because of its extension, this cluster can be considered an allegory. But the mechanism is the same: the way ‘green’ fits in the example above, ‘a type of ship’ in the generic space produces input spaces that can be categorized as ‘types of ships’.

The generic job of this type of interfacing is significant because it explains the fact that only spaces which fit into the category (green, boats) are generated as inputs. It does not merely generate one input, but it determines which additional input spaces will be considered for an innovative blend. Conventional meaning does not therefore merely contribute with information, it does so with generic information that structures the entire blend.

Note that Turner and Fauconnier (2002) described a similar structure for the metaphor: Death is The Grim Reaper, represented as a multiple blend (see Figure 3). The conventional content is a previous metaphor that produces a blended space in which Death possesses Agency. Grady and Green represent the meaning construction with a blended space acting as an input space for a new, in a multiple blend, or a chain of figurative blends.

Though in principle this representation reflects the processes of meaning creation that have taken place, one after the other, to generate the end-blend, it does not reflect the relative differences in conventionality between both blends. In fact,

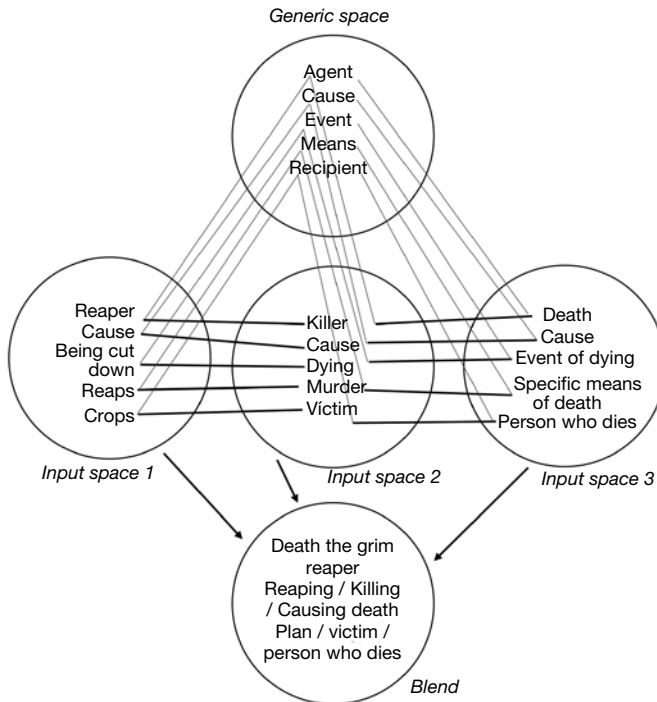


Figure 4. Death is The Grim Reaper with generic interfacing, adapted from Evans and Green (2011).

we believe both steps take turn in different synchronic moments of the language system, that is to say they are diachronic and as such will likely *be processed differently*, namely as categorizations and not comparisons (Bowdle and Gentner 2005). It is our claim that generic interfacing is a special case of multiple blending, in which a previous (older, more conventional) blend is absorbed schematically into the generic space.

4.3. *Mixed metaphors*

As Müller (2008) argues, the effect of mixed metaphors is only possible due to the fact that conventionalized verbal metaphors – those typically regarded as ‘dead’ – do maintain a certain degree of metaphorical transparency. Because, how can it be «problematic to combine conventionalized, supposedly dead metaphors with different lexical roots, if those roots have been cut off?» (Müller 2008: 138). Also, that the commonplace notion that mixed metaphors in discourse constitute a kind of stylistic error, though, comes from a normative view of language, «the perspective of the linguistic expert (the collective-mind view)», as opposed to that of the individual «who produced the mix (the individual-mind-view)» (Müller 2008: 146-147). An examination of the phenomenon of mixed metaphor, according to Müller (2008: 147), intends to

rehabilitate the perspective of the producer of mixed metaphors. The phenomenon of mixing metaphors is a highly revelatory form of metaphor use in discourse, for it allows us to reconstruct how language users experience and process metaphoricality in conventionalized verbal metaphors when they speak or write.

As has been discussed above, mixed metaphors may often be found in the subject matter of economics, a consequence of the extensive conventional metaphor complex that underlies it. They occur because the speaker fails to consciously identify one or more of the metaphors as such. What results is an inconsistency on the literal level – which is what motivates the German name for the phenomenon: *Bildbrüche* or ‘image breaks’ – (Müller 2008) and an utterance such as (8), as well as (1) cited above:

- (8) Europa, **metastizada** de populismo y **minada** por el escepticismo
 Europe, metastasized by populism and mined by the skepticism
 ciudadano.
 citizen
 ‘Europe, metastasized by populism and mined by citizen skepticism’ (*El País*,
 01.04.2014)²

2. This seems to recall the canonical expression *minar los ánimos*, in which *minar* is read as ‘undermine’, in which Europe is conceived as a solid body, not a territory. However, due to the context of the utterance, in which further war metaphors were present, this reading was preferred. A different reading is just as valid and either makes no difference to the substance of the present analysis, which is that this metaphor relies on mixed conceptualizations.

- (1) En **el pico de la burbuja** [...], el abandono escolar creció hasta at the peak of the bubble the abandonment school grew until ser el más alto de Europa. be the most high of Europe
 ‘At the peak of the bubble, the school dropout rate rose to be the highest in Europe’

The «peak of a bubble» is a difficult construction to imagine: a bubble’s existence depends on the perfect balance in its spherical shape. Any sort of ‘peak’ would disrupt this balance and destroy the bubble. This is a reality most speakers will accept as true: bubbles are spheres, spheres have no peaks. In the figurative reading, though, the mixed metaphor does seem to make sense. In this reading, a ‘peak’ is a topological metaphor for the highest value in a ‘curve’ (another metaphor) that describes the development of any given measure, such as housing prices. The ‘peak’ of the bubble refers here to the moment in which housing prices attained a maximum. And the bubble, of course, refers to the uncontrolled increase in these prices and housing debt. So despite its inconsistency, this is a coherent metaphor: it possesses a shared entailment.

In (8), Europe is conceptualized as both a body and a territory, an inconsistent image. A body may suffer a metastatic disease – that is, an advanced form of cancer – but not a territory, at least not literally. Likewise, a territory may be mined, but not a body. This literal incompatibility qualifies as a mixed metaphor. As in (1) above, though, these metaphors do seem to make sense from the perspective of the reader, and the writer clearly must have known what he or she meant. Müller

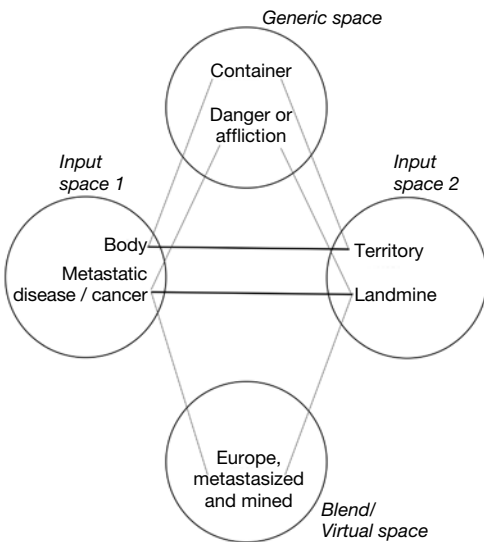


Figure 5. Europa, metastasizada y minada.

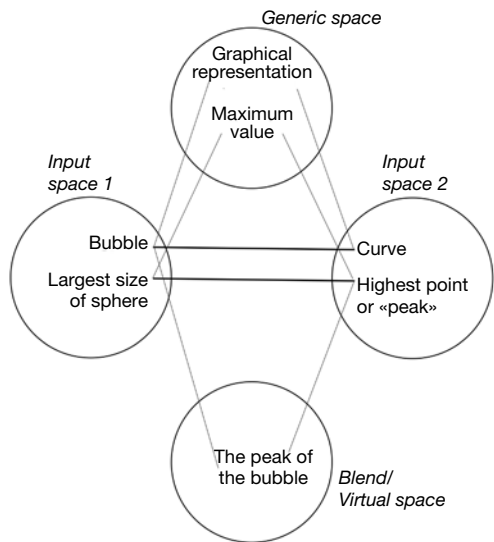


Figure 6. El pico de la burbuja.

(2008) proposes that a blending analysis of the integration that occurs in these types of metaphors can help understand why this is the case. It is interesting to note that, also in these examples, some of the generic content originates in a very conventional, primary metaphor of time: time is space.

In her conceptual blending analysis of mixed metaphors, Müller notes that not all the information in the input spaces end up being projected into the blend, but that *selective projection* takes place, in which the speaker judges which *salient* elements of both images will be «mapped from one input space onto another one and projected from a blended space where they [are] combined, interacted, and produce new meaningful structures» (Müller 2008: 167). As we can see in figures 3 and 4, this is also the case in the mixed metaphors discussed here. Each blend suppresses elements of the input spaces that would be irrelevant or even detrimental to the construction of intended meaning. In (1), the structure of the graphical representation in input space 2, a curve where a maximum is a peak, is suppressed, and so is the maximum value of input space 1, the largest size of the bubble. Example (8) suppresses the incompatible ontological metaphors instantiated in both input spaces and instead focuses on the elements that do have something relevant in common, namely the dangers that Europe possesses within itself, conceptualized as cancer and land mines, both of which are found within their respective containers.

As an instance of creative use of metaphor and metonymy, we believe that mixed metaphors are, in general, cases of involuntary creativity with the potential to create emergent meaning, albeit one with low lexicalization potential due to 1) its low iconicity and 2) low relevance due to expensive cognitive processing required to establish meaning.

5. The path towards lexicalization

The phenomenon that presents synchronically as *different degrees of metaphoricity manifested in different utterances* may be viewed from a diachronic perspective as forming part of a broader process, in which extremely novel cases of metaphors have a chance to make their way through time and language, to eventually constitute new (lexical) units in the system. This relationship between both temporal dimensions is also expressed in Goatly (1997: 107):

[T]he distinction between metaphorical and literal language is not clear-cut: the same processes of matching necessary for literal utterances come into play in the understanding of metaphorical utterances; and repeated metaphors provide us with cognitive furniture and become absorbed by word-formation and other Lexicalization processes into the dictionary.

Croft's (2000) approach to language change also considers both perspectives. The synchronic view takes a look at language structure at any given point in time, and the diachronic view considers the change in language structure. For language change, the salient element in the synchronic dimension is innovation, while in the diachronic dimension it is *propagation*, that is, when the change «spreads through the linguistic community and becomes established as a new convention (cited in

Evans and Green 2011: 123-124). When and why does propagation occur, and do all innovations undergo propagation?

We know from experience that universal propagation of innovation is not the case, and even the most gratifying of our coinages can fall into obscurity shortly after its inception. Bowdle and Gentner (2005) name two main constraints to the metaphorical creation of polysemous words, which function through extending the base term by new meanings.

First, the alignment of the target and base concepts must be able to suggest a coherent category. Mappings that focus on relational structures are therefore more likely to generate stable abstractions than mappings that focus on less systematic object descriptions. [...] Second, even if a metaphor is able to suggest a coherent category, the abstraction must not already be lexicalized. This follows from E.V. Clark's (1992) principle of preemption by synonymy: If a potential innovative use of a term is synonymous with a well-established term, then the former will be preempted by the latter and will be considered unacceptable. (Bowdle and Gentner 2005: 198)

This approach, named the «Career of Metaphor Theory», predicts that «coherent categories» which give recognizable structure to the content expressed are more likely to be lexicalized. This prediction can be disaggregated into a semiotic and a cognitive-pragmatic aspect. From a pragmatic perspective, at least some of the structures generated in a conceptual blend are processed pragmatically as inferences, a wealth of possible implicatures emerging from a blend in communication is evidence of a metaphor or metonymy's ability to produce cognitive effects in the speakers, and therefore its potential for propagation. The metaphor or metonymy's likelihood to generate stable abstractions can be, from a semiotic perspective, also expressed as a form of *iconicity*.

Bowdle and Gentner (2005) give further criteria to characterize metaphors vis-à-vis their conventionality, namely the type of comprehension processing they will prompt a reader or listener to engage in. They distinguish between two matching processes used to cognitively process literal utterances: categorization and analogy, which are employed differently in conventional and novel metaphor comprehension processes. A diachronic process they label *the Career of Metaphor* consists of an «evolution toward metaphoric polysemy» of a base term, initially employed in a creative manner for a new referent, allowing it to «take on additional, related meanings» (Bowdle and Gentner 2005: 198), as is regularly and often the case in lexical change. However, according to the *Career of Metaphor* hypothesis, with increasing conventionality of a metaphorical expression, the means of processing it changes, from a comparatively expensive cognitive operation of establishing analogies between individual elements of the base and the target, to a more efficient categorization of the target into a more abstract category indicated by the base. In other words, repeated use of a certain novel metaphor can generate an abstract, metaphoric category that will facilitate and speed up its processing (Bowdle and Gentner 2005: 197 ff.) As we have seen in section 4 with generic interfacing, this difference is also reflected in novel conceptual blends that recruit conventional figurative meaning, not reconstructing the complete input spaces with all the «map-

pings that focus on less systematic object descriptions», but absorbing these as abstractions into the generic space.

Therefore, whether the blended spaces in the innovative blends presented above will transcend into conventionality depends on their ability to become *icons*, in a system that does not already possess another sign for that same meaning, and on their ability to generate relevant inferences for other speakers. This will be tested in the frequency and types of meaning spaces constructed in communication.

The pragmatic dimension of meaning construction has been explored in Brandt and Brandt (2005), in which a change in the model of conceptual blending was proposed that includes a *semiotic space* composed of the elements of meaning that are present in the situation of utterance. Figure 7 shows the ‘salad of green taxes’ metaphor in a blend that includes the *semiotic space*. As can be seen in figure 7, co-text and context are distributed among the *pheno-world*, the *communicative situation* and the *semiotic act* itself.

From this integrated space, Relevance on three different levels must be identified if the hearer is to understand the intended speaker meaning. *Semiotic relevance* allows the hearer to reconstruct the *presentation* and *reference* spaces (inputs 1 and 2 respectively in classic blending models) thanks to her understanding of the signs uttered. These spaces are then projected onto a *virtual space*, which corresponds to the blended space of meaning, but excludes any and all pragmatic inferences, or emergent meaning caused by an interpretation of the blend in context. Related to the pheno-world, *argumentational relevance* provides the schemata which allows the reader to take the virtual space and construe its emergent meaning as something

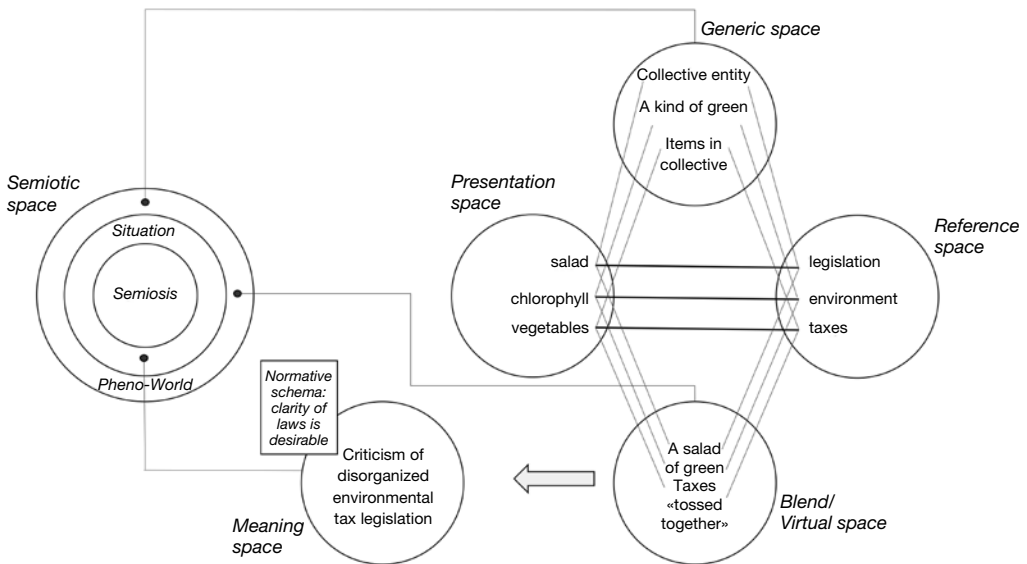


Figure 7. Ensalada de impuestos verdes in communication.

disorderly, as well as green. *Illocutional relevance* relates to the intended effects of the utterance as a speech act, in this case the fact that it is meant as an element of style whose purpose is to catch the newspaper reader's attention. Once these are interpreted, the blend gives rise to a meaning space, which contains the intended meaning of the utterance, complete with all and any inferences construed in the communicative situation between speaker and hearer.

While Brandt and Brandt (2005) argue against the necessity of a generic space and exclude it in their modelling of blending processes, it is our belief that the generic space *does* explain something, namely the integration of conventional meaning into the blend. We have therefore decided to include it in this adapted model. We do agree with Brandt and Brandt's observation that pheno-world relevance must guide space-building, and contributes much of a blend's content in recruited frames and schemes, and meaning in the pragmatic interaction between blend and context. Nevertheless, the built spaces must be structured by common generic properties. This explains how the domains of these spaces get selected from the entirety of the pheno-world, and how conventional figurative meaning is inherited.

6. Summary and conclusions

In this paper, various metaphors displaying processes of interplay between conventional and innovative figurative content were analyzed. The processes of double foregrounding, generic interfacing, and the mixing of metaphors all require dynamic models to describe how different types of content, including metaphors and metonymies with different degrees of conventionality, interact to produce new meaning.

Crucially, we have found that conventional figurative meaning does not only contribute to a blend in providing conceptual content: it does so with generic information that structures the entire blend. This observation reveals one, to this date unknown implication, of the Career of Metaphor Theory for integration networks modelling of creative blends. Conventional metaphor and metonymies that are processed cognitively as categorizations must be treated differently than creative ones, and modelled accordingly as generic content.

In considering the processes of comprehension of creative utterances via blends in their pragmatic contexts, it becomes clear that a creative figurative expression must fulfill structural *and* pragmatic requirements in order to have a chance at propagation. While the Career of Metaphor Theory states the need for coherence in a metaphor's structure, which renders it more versatile in language than less coherent representations, this coherence is, in our opinion, a function of iconicity, a structure's ability to mirror users' experiences, as well as its relevance. Relevance, relating to the ability of a metaphor's virtual space to generate pragmatic implications in its given pheno-world and situation contexts, can explain how the construction of coherence happens in the mind of a speaker, in an interplay between the structure of the linguistic sign and its experienced content.

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