Researching conceptual metaphors that (may) underlie political discourse

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Abstract

Research in cognitive linguistics has shown how metaphorical expressions in language can reflect deep-seated ways of thinking about one domain in terms of another. In his book Moral Politics, Lakoff (1996/2002) proposes two cognitive models involving sets of conceptual metaphors which he claims underlie (American) right- versus left-wing political rhetoric. In this paper, I will first summarize the findings of my research in which I coded the debates between George W. Bush and Al Gore in 2000 for the metaphors proposed by Lakoff. That research raised questions about the models, as the metaphors in them appeared rarely in the debates. I will then outline the challenges that arose in attempting a replication of this study, namely methodological questions which have theoretical implications. Then I will propose a method for deducing generalizations over metaphorical expressions on an empirical basis by using a pile-sort task, and report initial findings from a study using the technique. This involves coding the debates for metaphorical expressions (the criteria for which will be discussed), and then giving subjects sets of sentences with the expressions for grouping according to the patterns they perceive. The paper will thus show the value of multiple research methods -- the application of theory to data, and the deduction of theory (of a different sort) from data.

Introduction

Metaphors and models

When studying metaphor, one traditionally place to start is with the use of words — bringing us to the field of linguistics. But since we know that on another level, metaphor can provide a tool for reasoning about one thing in terms of another, I will be drawing on a particular kind of linguistics that sees itself within a broader field of cognitive science. This approach to linguistics actually subsumes several different strands which now come under the label of “cognitive linguistics,” but what ties them together is the goal of explaining how language works...
starting from psychologically realistic principles. They are therefore a reaction to theories which begin with assumptions that language functions like a formal system, as in mathematics or formal logic. Indeed, cognitive linguistics began with foundational research in the 1970s that questioned the basic assumptions of the formalist school of “generative grammar,” with some of the linguists who were questioning generative theory being the very ones who had espoused it a few years earlier. These “converts” became some of the “founding fathers” of what is now called cognitive linguistics.

One of those converts was George Lakoff, whose work will be applied and critiqued through much of this paper. Lakoff and Johnson’s 1980 book, while echoing some ideas which had been propounded before (Jäkel 1999), was instrumental in giving attention to metaphor as a process of mapping one conceptual domain onto another, which can receive expression in language. The blossoming of research during the following 25 years, much of which used this idea uncritically, has also prompted a response in the form of critiques about what the theory really claims. Some questions that have been raised include: Is every use of metaphorical language accompanied by active conceptual mappings in the brain? The consensus now is that this seems unlikely. Isn’t there an important difference between metaphor as it is expressed in a text and metaphor as it is activated in thought? Gibbs (1993, 1994) discusses this as a distinction between metaphor as a product and metaphor as a process. Steen (forthcoming) makes the distinction between metaphor on the level of the system (language or thought) and on the level of its use (in language or in thought). And if one claims that “in English we talk about ARGUMENTS AS WAR,” does that mean every speaker of English “possesses” that conceptual metaphor cognitively? Steen (1994: 16) observes that many analyses of conceptual metaphors are really making claims on the level of a hypothesized “supra-individual,” rather than on the level of real individuals (making us question who the “we” is in the “metaphors we live by”). Even with the problems that these questions raise, research based on conceptual metaphor theory (henceforth CMT), as it has come to be known, continues to thrive, as can be shown through a search for “conceptual metaphor” in any bibliographic database for linguistics.

One area that CMT has been tied to is the research on frames, models, and schemas. These notions have been approached in different ways in such fields as psychology, anthropology, linguistics, and computer science. For now I will use these terms “model” and “frame” without great distinction to refer to a kind of knowledge structure which can serve as a background for interpreting the meaning of a linguistic form (see Cienki, forthcoming, for an overview). Given that we are talking about a kind of knowledge structure, some prefer to speak of “cognitive models.” But clearly within a given culture there is a large base of shared knowledge; cognitive models are not completely individualistic, but are shaped by one’s context and shared to varying degrees by others in the shared social context. Taking this focus, some refer instead to “cultural models.” However, we need not take a purist’s perspective on one side or the other, and by virtue of more synthetic approaches, we arrive at solutions which recognize the dialectic between the cognitive and the cultural (the social), as with Gibbs (1999) and Shore (1996).

The research on CMT has linked up with that on models, but again, not without reflecting the cognitive-cultural debate described above. So on one hand, Lakoff (1987: case study 1) and Lakoff and Kövecses (1987) present a metaphorically-based cognitive model of the emotion concept ‘anger’ as it is manifested in American English. Quinn (1991) counters that metaphors simply reflect aspects of pre-existing cultural models. Kövecses (1999) returns to defend the view that many abstract concepts can only arise through metaphorical understanding. Shore’s
(1996) solution is that metaphorical models are just one of many types of cultural models which are shared (and cognitively “possessed”) by members of a cultural group to varying degrees.

Lakoff (1996/2002) argues that US American politics is structured by two opposing worldviews. Perhaps this is not surprising, given the domination of the American political scene by the two-party system. He argues that the two worldviews, as they play out today, are based on two different models of how a family might function. One is described as the Strict Father model (henceforth SF), and is associated with the right-wing worldview. Its reference point is a family with a hierarchical power structure, such that the father is the main authority figure whom the wife and children obey, and children are disciplined so as to learn the clear-cut rules of right from wrong. The goal is for the children to learn to be independently self-reliant, and therefore ‘strength’ is a highly valued characteristic. By contrast, the model described as characteristic of left-wing values is the Nurturant Parent model (NP). This model involves a shared, horizontal power structure in which the members of the family (with the term “family” covering several possible structures in the model) work together as a group. The main values are caring and empathy, and so growth is stimulated through nurturance. Though the models stem from gendered stereotypes, the NP model is not named “nurturant mother” because of an underlying espousal of the NP model as one which should be adoptable by men as well.

Metaphor plays an important role in both models, rather than being completely constitutive or merely a reflection of them. The assumption is that each way of thinking about which kind of family structure is the “right” kind serves as a basis for structuring one’s understanding of behavior and how to evaluate it — in short, one’s views of morality. So for adherents of the SF model, the claim is that, probably even unwittingly, they understand MORALITY AS STRENGTH, AUTHORITY FIGURES AS PARENTS, and RIGHTS AS PATHS to be followed. (Note that reference to conceptual metaphors with different wordings, either as “X is Y” or “X as Y,” depends on the citation context, and is not intended to reflect any theoretical distinctions.) These are just three of the 23 conceptual metaphors in chapter 5 of Lakoff (1996/2002), characterizing the SF model. (See the complete list in Appendix 1.) A specific linguistic example of the last metaphor would be when one talks about not giving in to peer pressure because one should have the metaphorical moral strength to withstand it and behave according to one’s own standards. Metaphors linked to the NP model are quite different, for example: MORALITY IS EMPATHY, MORAL ACTION IS NURTURANCE, and SOCIAL TIES ARE CHILDREN NEEDING CARE. Bill Clinton demonstrated an adherence to the first metaphor with his frequently-used line “I feel your pain.”

Lakoff (1996/2002) gives 20 relevant conceptual metaphors in chapter 6, devoted to the description of the NP model (see Appendix 1). How do these metaphors for morality relate to politics? This is explained by their connection to other metaphors that are claimed to be long-standing ones in American history and culture, namely the NATION AS FAMILY metaphor, with the specifications of THE GOVERNMENT AS A PARENT and THE CITIZENS AS THE CHILDREN (Lakoff 1996/2002: 154). Thus one can view the nation as either a SF family or a NP family, and there will be very different assumptions about the role of the government, let alone the president, depending on whether one assumes it (or he) should function as a Strict Father or as a Nurturant Parent.

The studies to be discussed here will examine the connection between metaphors and models in political discourse in two ways. One involves going from models that have been proposed and testing them against actual
political discourse. The other is to take political discourse and see what kinds of patterns "normal language users" see in the metaphorical expressions of that discourse. The specific political discourse I will be examining in these two ways is the set of three televised debates between George W. Bush and Al Gore before the US presidential elections in 2000, and to some degree the debates in 2004 between George W. Bush and John Kerry. At the end I will consider the potential for extending this research to the study of political discourse in European contexts and some possible challenges that may arise.

The first two studies concern the coding of the debates for metaphors proposed as part of the SF and NP models. This was done thoroughly for the debates from 2000 (study one), and an alternative method of conducting the study is proposed for the debates from 2004 (study two). For the third study, the Bush/Gore debates from 2000 again served as the source material, but this time they were simply coded for metaphorical expressions of any kind, and a sample of these expressions are being given to 30 participants in an experiment to see how they group them in what is known as a pile sort task. The study with these data is currently underway and the initial findings will be described below, and the results of further data collection will be reported at the workshop in April.

Throughout the paper, research methodology will be a central concern. For many years in work on conceptual metaphors, research methodology was an unmentioned subject. There are historical reasons for this, stemming from the domination of the field of linguistics in North America and much of Europe by the Chomskian tradition of generative grammar, mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Research within that school relied on intuition for evidence, since the goal was to describe one’s linguistic competence, that is, one’s knowledge of linguistic structure that is below the level of conscious awareness. According to that theoretical framework, what one actually utters (one’s linguistic performance) is not good evidence of one’s competence because it is tainted by what are considered extra-linguistic factors, such as memory restrictions, and even coughs and sneezes. This practice of using linguistic examples which one has constructed oneself, based on one’s intuition about the language as a native speaker, carried over into cognitive linguistics and remained unquestioned for many years. Despite the presumption that conceptual metaphors should be patterns that researchers could infer from generalization over sets of verbal metaphoric expressions, only more recently has there been a turn toward research based on a database of texts, known as a linguistic corpus, from the population of speakers about which one is making claims.

Furthermore, replicability has not traditionally been a goal within the research cultures of linguistics nor of anthropology (as Borgatti [1994] notes). But now with the cognitive turn in linguistics and anthropology turning even further, more of the methods and expectations of research found in the natural sciences are being adopted. One of the issues being discussed in recent research on metaphor (e.g., Cameron and Low 1999) has been the fundamental problem of differing criteria for the identification of metaphorical language, or the lack of specification of how the researcher has made decisions about whether language is metaphorical or not. As a consequence, the results of different studies often cannot even be compared. This is also the case for most of the research to date employing CMT as a tool to study political language. Therefore, in the interest of espousing work with real language data and the benefits of designing one’s studies to allow for potential replication, research methodology will be treated explicitly in this paper.
Testing models against data

Study 1

The project described in Cienki (2004, in press a), and summarized here, tested the degree to which the SF and NP conceptual metaphors proposed in Lakoff (1996) were actually manifested in a corpus of language used in a political context by American politicians. The televised pre-election debates between George W. Bush and Al Gore were chosen as an example of rhetoric by representatives of the two dominant political parties in the US, speaking as representatives of their respective parties. The debates also covered a variety of issues of domestic and foreign policy, and provided each speaker an equal opportunity to address each one, making the contributions of the two speakers comparable in terms of topic content. The transcripts of the three debates that were analyzed were obtained from the US Commission on Presidential Debates (http://www.debates.org). Each debate lasted 90 minutes, and so the total of three yielded a corpus of approximately 41,000 words.

The transcripts were coded specifically for metaphorical expressions which were judged to be direct expressions of any of the 43 SF or 20 NP conceptual metaphors listed here in Appendix 1. Small sections of the transcript were coded by myself and another trained analyst until we were able to achieve reliable agreement on 20% of the data (20 out of the 100 pages of transcripts). As it turns out, relatively few direct expressions of SF and NP conceptual metaphors were found in the corpus, a total of 48. Agreement with the second coder was high both for the identification of SF metaphorical expressions (Cohen’s kappa = 1.0) and for NP metaphorical expressions (again, kappa = 1.0), partly because of the rarity and salience of the expressions when they occurred. As an example, when Gore talked about parents needing assistance in controlling their children’s access to the internet, he said the government needs to give parents “the tools to protect their children against cultural pollution,” and this was coded as an SF metaphorical expression (reflecting IMMORALITY AS IMPURITY). As expected, Bush used more SF metaphorical expressions (22 to Gore’s 5), and Gore used more direct expressions of NP metaphors (14 to Bush’s 7).

Reading the transcripts, however, one encounters many expressions which seem coherent with the intent behind either the SF or the NP model. Consequently, we also coded for any expression which followed the logic of either an SF or NP conceptual metaphor, but was not a direct metaphorical expression of one of those conceptual metaphors. These were called “entailments,” following Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980, 1999) use of this term in reference to inferences which are logical consequences of a given conceptual metaphoric mapping. For example, Bush’s statement “this is a society that — of ours that’s got to do a better job of teaching children right from wrong” was coded as a SF entailment. It supports the intent behind the SF conceptual metaphor that MORAL BEHAVIOR IS SETTING STANDARDS AND ENFORCING THEM by describing, in non-metaphorical language, one way of doing this. The results for this coding were significantly different than for the previous round, with 376 SF entailments and 462 NP entailments found in the data. Again, based on coding of 20% of the data by the second analyst, agreement was high, with Cohen’s kappa .99 for SF entailment identification, and .93 for NP. Bush, again predictably, used many more SF entailments than Gore (296 to 80). Surprisingly, however, Bush used almost as many NP entailments as Gore (Gore = 241, Bush = 221).

How can we account for the fact that the SF and NP models ring true on some level in terms of predicting something important about the logic that is employed in American political rhetoric, yet the conceptual metaphors claimed for the models do not receive much direct
expression in the data? Could it be that there was simply not much metaphorical language in the debates? This does not seem to be the answer if we consider the following. Of the 838 total number of expressions coded as entailments, mentioned above, 93 were coded as a subcategory of expressions that were metaphorical in some way, but not directly expressing a SF or NP conceptual metaphor. This group constitutes 11% of the entailment expressions. If that is at all representative of the debate language as a whole (including all the uncoded, non-SF and non-NP language in them), one could predict that potentially 11% of the 41,000 words in the corpus might be metaphorical, or 4510 words.

The explanation I propose in my studies draws on Clausner and Croft’s (1997) point that metaphors are structured at different levels of schematicity, and are also productive to different degrees, but the two scales are not necessarily dependent on each other. It seems that the SF and NP conceptual metaphors studied here can best be characterized as schematic in that they are at a higher level of abstraction than we normally encounter in our basic level experience. “Nurturance,” for example, is itself a more abstract notion than “feeding,” and using it to understand another abstract concept, “morality,” only tells us about it in a schematic way. Perhaps as a result, these central SF and NP metaphors are not directly productive in actual language use. However, the high numbers of expressions which were interpreted as entailments of those metaphors suggests that those metaphors play a significant role in reasoning and structuring arguments in talk about political issues. This was supported in a follow-up study (Cienki, in press b), in which I looked at the use of family terms (such as children, parents, family) in the debates, and found that family terms were used significantly more often in entailment expressions than other nouns which occurred with comparable frequency overall in the debates. This at least points to the importance of family-based language when talking in terms consistent with the logic of the models.

Finally, taking the claims of CMT seriously, if metaphor is based in patterns of thought and not just language, then we should be able to find examples of metaphoric expression in various forms of human behavior which may correlate with at least some conceptual metaphors identified from analysis of linguistic data. This has been argued to be the case both for forms of intentional creative expression (e.g., Forceville 1996 on pictorial metaphor, and Zbikowski 2002 on music) as well as behavior normally beyond our control, such as dreaming (Lakoff 1997), and spontaneous gesture with speech (McNeill 1992; Cienki 1998; Müller 2004; Cienki and Müller, forthcoming). Consequently, I describe in Cienki (2004, in press a) an analysis of Bush’s and Gore’s manual gestures with speech in the one debate in which they were visible throughout. Gestures were coded as metaphorical if they were interpreted as making reference to an abstract idea, as indicated by the co-occurring speech, through a specific hand shape or movement of the hands. An example of one of the metaphorical gestures was when Bush said “And so [the way] to make sure we end up getting rid of basic structural prejudice is education,” and on saying “structural prejudice” he put his two hands forward, flat, with palms facing himself, finger tips pointing towards each other. The gesture emphasized his point, and could be interpreted as metaphorically depicting the prejudice as a physical structure. Whereas the linguistic analyses discussed above showed both Bush and Gore using some language reflective of both the SF and NP models, Bush repeatedly used flat-hand gestures which were consistent with SF metaphors (especially depicting STRENGTH), regardless of whether the co-occurring speech consisted of SF or NP expressions. Bush also used more metaphorical gestures (43) than Gore (13), but 10 out of the 13 of Gore’s gestures were produced along with NP utterances. Gore also produced a greater variety of gesture types than Bush, and more often used supporting gestures, with a cupped hand
held out, palm up (perhaps related to aspects of “nurturance”). Various conclusions are possible from this study of their gestures, including that the gestures reflect a clearer line-up of Bush with the SF model and Gore with the NP than we see in their verbal expressions, and that gestures may better be capable of reflecting the schematic metaphors of the SF and NP models than language per se (due to the schematic nature of many gestural forms). But ultimately these findings must really be considered preliminary since reliable agreement was not achieved with a second coder of the gestures.

Study 2

I originally planned to do a follow-up study, coding the pre-election debates in 2004 between George W. Bush and John Kerry for SF and NP metaphors for comparison with the Bush/Gore analyses. However, I have chosen not to for two reasons. One is that once I began such a study, I encountered methodological concerns. I began working on the follow-up by training a second researcher on the coding of SF and NP metaphors and entailments. The training began using clean transcripts of the Bush/Gore debates to see if we could reach reliable agreement in coding them before turning to the Bush/Kerry debates. However, we were not able to reach a significant level of agreement, according to a standard measure of inter-rater agreement, Cohen’s kappa. With each analyst independently coding 169 utterances, Cohen’s kappa for agreement was .54. Through discussion, it became apparent that what we needed was greater specification of how the SF and NP metaphors related to the specific issues under discussion by the candidates. Without having read my papers on the Bush/Gore analyses, the second coder was coming to some of the conclusions reached in them, namely that the SF and NP metaphors that we were seeking expressions of are not at the level of the data from these debates.

In addition to the distinction raised above about metaphors, that they can be characterized along a scale of degrees of schematicity, recent research on “frames” has arrived at the same conclusion. Specifically, research focussing on social issues has pointed out how they may be understood on different levels of framing. This is summarized on the web site of the FrameWorks Institute (2005) as follows:

- **Level One:** Big ideas, like freedom, justice, prevention, responsibility
- **Level Two:** Issue-types, like the environment or child care
- **Level Three:** Specific issues, like rainforests or earned income tax credits

Patent and Lakoff characterize these levels, in the order above, as Values, Issue areas, and Policies. With regard to the debates, we can say that most of the talk in them was at levels two and three, namely, concerned with issues and policies. Our problem, however, is that most of the conceptual metaphors proposed in the SF and NP models are at level one, involving target domains such as morality, well-being, and rights. We can conclude that in order to code a corpus of political rhetoric for these models more reliably, one would need more fully fleshed-out versions of the models, proposing how they are realized on the three levels. Then one could code for the expression of the different levels of metaphors, be they on the SF or the NP side.

While I have chosen not to undertake the project of “growing” these models further, I can suggest some ways in which one could attempt this. Some specifications of the SF and NP metaphors can be found in Lakoff’s own writings, even though they are not cast in terms of the levels two or three, described above. For example, chapter 12 of *Moral Politics* concerns the environment. Noting the (level one) SF view that THE MORAL ORDER IS THE NATURAL ORDER, which presumes the hierarchy of humans over animals and the natural environment, some further
(level two) metaphors proposed in the chapter are that NATURE IS A RESOURCE, NATURE IS PROPERTY, and NATURE IS A MECHANICAL SYSTEM. All of these reflect a view that humans have a right to make use of the environment. Some (level two) NP metaphors for the environment proposed in that chapter are that NATURE IS A LIVING ORGANISM, NATURE IS A MOTHER, and NATURE IS A HOME. These metaphors characterize a more interactive stance with nature, characteristic of the horizontal power structure of the NP model. Some other elaborations can be found in Lakoff (2004). For example, foreign policy can be based around the metaphor of the nations of the world as either a SF family (with the US as the Strict Father) or a NP family.

One could also do a form of “grounded analysis,” combing the earlier debates (the Bush/Gore set) for level two or level three SF and NP metaphors, and then coding the later debates (Bush/Kerry) to see whether they appeared there. Given the structure of the debates, which consisted mostly of extended turns at talk in response to questions about different social issues, one could begin by coding the turns in the earlier debates for “level-two” issues as a starting point for identifying the metaphors about those issues. As a test, a research assistant and I coded one Bush/Gore debate transcript for a set of nine issues which we felt were prominently featured in their debates, namely: the economy, education, foreign policy, health care, justice, leadership qualities, military policy, natural resources/the environment, and social programs. We limited the coding to the longer turns, that is those above ten lines of transcript text (approximately longer than 130 words). After training with the one debate, to articulate which sub-issues would fall under these main issues, we were able to reach reliable agreement when independently coding a different debate transcript. For the 50 turns we coded for the nine issues, Cohen’s kappa was computed as .86. These turns, coded for main topic, could then form the basis for identifying level two and level three SF and NP metaphors. After performing similar coding of the turns in the Bush/Kerry debates for the issues, one could use them as a basis for coding for the various issue-specific metaphors (level two and three). Of course the analysis of the Bush/Kerry debates would be limited to the issues repeated from the Bush/Gore debates; new issues salient in 2004, such as terrorism, would not be accounted for with this method.

Finally, there is a second reason for not conducting a follow-up of the previous study which would attempt to replicate it. This pertains to the different historical contexts in which the two sets of debates took place. Since the first edition of Moral Politics was published in 1996, one could argue that it might have influenced Bush and/or Gore to alter their use of language to gain more undecided “swing voters.” While this is arguable with regard to the campaigns in 2000, it is a more serious question for the debates taking place in 2004. Not only had Lakoff’s book and the arguments therein been in circulation for four more years, but in the months leading up to the 2004 debates there was extensive attention in the media, particularly left-wing media, to Lakoff’s work. While Moral Politics presents the SF and NP models ostensibly as characterizations of right- and left-wing rhetoric, respectively, the author of the book also had an agenda of promoting more coherent use of NP language by the left in American politics, as the subtitle of the first edition makes clear: “What Conservatives Know that Liberals Don’t.” (Note that “liberal” is the common term in the US for the political left, with the term “libertarian” being the one associated with support for maximizing individual rights and minimizing the role of the state.) Thus whereas Lakoff is mostly describing the SF model as one used by the right, the NP model is one perhaps being proposed for the left more than described. This goal of promoting frames and metaphors for use by the left in the US is made explicit in Lakoff’s 2004 book, Don’t Think of an Elephant, which draws on his columns from the web site of the left-wing think-tank, the Rockridge Institute. Thus the very fact that the Bush/Kerry debates took place in 2004
means that it makes more sense to ask different questions when analyzing them — for example, not whether they provide evidence of the veracity of the hypothesized SF and NP models, but rather to what degree the candidates incorporated these metaphors into their rhetoric.

The paper has so far focussed on testing by linguists for empirical evidence of one or another model. It is another question entirely to ask what relations non-linguists see between metaphorical expressions in a given text, if indeed they see any at all. It is this question which will be addressed in the last part of this paper.

Growing models from data?

Study 3

If we go back to the starting assumptions of CMT, the method tacitly assumed in the literature is that one can look for patterns of metaphorical expressions in the language (of some text or corpus of texts) to deduce ways that (at least some) speakers of that language conceptualize one domain in terms of another (via conceptual metaphors). Even if we can agree on the scope of what CMT can claim to be talking about, we are left with questions about any analysis of conceptual metaphors which was done by one individual — questions about the validity of the research. One way of getting beyond the subjective nature of individual research is through a collaborative research group. One example is the so-called “Pragglejaz” group, named after the first initials of the international ten-member team, which has been working together since 2000 (see Steen 2002 for a synopsis of the project.) So far the group has focussed on the specific task of developing an explicit and reliable procedure for the identification of metaphorically used words in texts (specifics of the procedure are given below). However, one can imagine an extension of this in the form of a collaborative research group trained in CMT, and attempting to achieve inter-coder reliability in the identification of conceptual metaphors which may underlie the metaphoric expressions being analyzed. While some jointly published research indicates that there is some collaborative work taking place, few are as yet reporting statistics on rates of agreement in classifying metaphorical expressions according to conceptual metaphors.

Another approach would be to see what “normal people” (for present purposes that will mean “non-PhDs”) see in a given data set. For example, one could have participants in an experiment, who knew nothing about CMT, classify expressions previously identified as metaphorical according to whatever relations they see among them. This would be in the spirit of a critique raised by Sandra and Rice (1995) about other types of analyses in cognitive linguistics, but which also applies here. To quote the subtitle of their paper, their question about such research boils down to: “Mirroring whose mind — the linguist’s or the language user’s?” In an attempt to respond to this question, I am conducting an experiment in which participants perform a pile sort task with metaphorical expressions. The goal is to find out what patterns of relatedness they see in given sets of expressions on different topics, if indeed any commonalities arise among the participants’ groupings.

The pile sort task has been used to analyze various types of cultural domains, ranging from folk classifications of plant types (ethnobotany), to perceptions of dialect regions (Tamasi 2003), to types of pilot error (reported in Weller and Romney 1988). What it usually involves is giving participants a stack of cards, each with a name of an item or a picture on it, and asking
them to sort them into piles that are more similar to each other than they are to items in separate piles. In the unconstrained pile sort, which will be used here, participants can make as many or as few piles as they wish.

Sentences from the transcripts of the Bush/Gore debate served as the materials to be sorted in the pile sort task described below. These debates from over four years ago were chosen, rather than the Bush/Kerry debates, so that the participants in the experiment would be less familiar with the source of the expressions they were being given, and so be less likely to classify them according to the speaker. (This is especially relevant since the participants, university students, were not yet of legal voting age in 2000, and probably paid less attention to the debates at that time than to the debates in 2004.)

First, the coding of the debates by topic, described above, was completed for all the transcripts of the Bush/Gore debates, and served as the starting point for the selection of the expressions to be used. In order to narrow down the criteria for performing the pile sorts, three domestic policy issues were chosen: the economy, education, and natural resources/the environment. Domestic rather than foreign policy issues were chosen in order to maintain a consistent perspective in the discourse, an internal perspective of the relation of the government to the people, rather than confounding this with the perspective of the relation of the US to other countries.

The debate turns on each of these topics were collected into separate Word files, yielding the following amounts of text:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Total number of turns</th>
<th>Total number of words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>economy</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural resources</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2094</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The transcripts were then divided into utterances by sentence, with compound sentences being divided according to coordinating conjunctions (e.g., “and”, “or”). Each sentence was then coded in three ways.
1) Is the sentence about the main topic of the turn (be it economy, education, or natural resources)? Yes or no.
2) If (1) is yes, are there any metaphorically used lexical units in the sentence, using the Pragglejaz criteria stated below? Yes or no.
   If (1) is no, then no here as well.
3) If (2) is yes, is the metaphorical expression about the main topic of the turn? Yes or no.
   If (2) is no, then no here as well.

The sentences with expressions coded “yes” for step three formed the pool out of which sentences for the pile sort task were randomly chosen. That is, these were sentences on the main topic of the turn at talk, and they each had a metaphorical expression which characterized that topic.
After training, a second analyst and I were able to reach good agreement on the results of step three of this coding. Upon independent coding of 20% of the material from the three topics combined (169 sentences), Cohen’s kappa was computed as .74.

Before going further, however, an explanation of the procedure used in step 2 is in order. The following is the concise description of that procedure, developed by the Pragglejaz group for the coding of all metaphorically used lexical units in a given text.

(A) Read the entire text (i.e. written text or talk transcript) to establish a general understanding of the meaning.

(B) Determine the lexical units in the text.

(C) For each lexical unit in the text, check metaphorical use:

   (1) Establish the meaning of the lexical unit in context, i.e. how it applies to an entity, relation or attribute in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). You should take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit.

   (2) Determine if the lexical unit has a more basic current / contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context.

      For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be:
      - more concrete; what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell, and taste.
      - related to bodily action.
      - more precise (as opposed to vague)
      - historically older.

      Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit.

   (3) If the lexical unit has a more basic current/contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning can be understood by comparison to, and in contrast with, the basic meaning.

   (4) If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical by underlining it.

Repeat steps (1) - (4) for each lexical unit

While each of the steps above could be explained in more detail (and is in the paper by Pragglejaz, in preparation), only a few points will be made here. First, the procedure has been devised specifically for the analysis of texts in English. Second, while the word is the basic lexical unit analyzed through the procedure, the term “lexical unit” is broader than the individual written word, and encompasses frequently co-occurring word combinations which express a single unit of meaning. For example, “all right” is written “alright” by some without intending a different meaning. For the purposes of this procedure, we would be talking about one lexical unit in either case. Instances of uncertainty about lexical units are resolved in the procedure through use of a dictionary appropriate to the variety of English being analyzed. Given the present data, the dictionary used was the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners of American English* (Rundell et al., 2002), which is based on a 200 million word corpus of contemporary English. Citation as a headword in the dictionary is taken as the main criterion for a lexical unit. So, for example, the compound noun “head start” is considered one lexical unit in the procedure because it has the status of a headword listing in the dictionary.

Divergences from the procedure were made in this study in cases where two-word lexical units can be used as separate words with the same meaning. Thus although “tax cut” is a headword entry in the dictionary, it was counted as two lexical units because in other contexts the words can function separately with the same meaning, as in “to get a 10% cut in your taxes.” (Compare the example of “head start” as a lexical unit: note that the semantically related two-word expression “start ahead” does not involve the same two words, since “ahead” is an adverb.
rather than a noun. A “head start” is not normally the same as “the start of a head,” whatever the latter might mean.)

Decisions about lexical units have consequences for decisions about metaphoricity. Since “head start” is counted as one lexical unit, its basic meaning is taken as essentially “an advantage over other people in the same situation as you.” Any metaphorical sense connected with the word “head” is not counted by this procedure. But since “tax cut” is being counted as two lexical units, according to the divergence from the procedure mentioned above, this means each word must be checked for metaphorical use. In this case, “cut” will be coded as metaphorical, since it is not being used in this context in its basic meaning, as characterized in the procedure.

Regarding step 2 of part C, note that the procedure involves a family-resemblance approach to determining the basic meaning, by providing a set of criteria which basic meanings “tend to” exhibit. These are not necessary and sufficient conditions, but criteria according to which a judgment must be made. The result is a procedure that is maximally inclusive, intended for use in identifying lexical units with potential metaphoricity. Designed with the goal of striving for replicable analyses, it provides one set of explicit rules (among the many that are imaginable) for making decisions about where to draw a line along the continuum of metaphoricity. The procedure is therefore not intended to identify which metaphors the speaker or audience are activating psychologically. This is a separate question which would call for other kinds of research methods.

Following this preparation of the materials, 30 sentences were chosen from each of the topics by numbering all the sentences with metaphorical lexical units relevant to the given topic, and selecting from them using a table of random numbers. An equal number of sentences from Bush (15) and Gore (15) was desirable for each topic to eliminate the source/speaker as a possible bias in the pile sort. Therefore a tally was kept as the sentences were selected as to who said them such that no more were selected from one speaker once his maximum of 15 sentences was taken for each topic. A further adjustment was made in the selection regarding repeated use of certain metaphoric expressions. For example, “tax cuts” were mentioned repeatedly in the turns talking about the economy. To allow for maximal representation of the variety of metaphoric expressions in the data, yet ensure some attention to differences in frequency of use of expressions, a lexical item which was coded as metaphoric was not selected more than once within a topic unless it was used in a different syntactic construction. So in addition to a sentence with the noun phrase “tax cuts” (“He says he’s going to give you tax cuts”), sentences with the following phrases were also selected for use in the experiment: “a cut in your income taxes,” and “have your taxes cut.” The sentences were then printed onto equal size slips of paper with the metaphorically-used lexical unit underlined in each sentence. So the example above appeared as “He says he’s going to give you tax cuts.”

The participants in the experiment are 30 American university undergraduate students, mostly age 18-22, participating for credit in research methods as part of a psychology course. They are being tested individually and asked to do a single-sort of the sentences for each topic, a technique outlined by Weller and Romney (1988). They are given the following instructions orally:

Each packet of slips of paper contains statements about a particular issue. For example, the first one is all about [name the topic here]. I would like you to read the statements one at a time and pay attention to the underlined words. Think
about the meaning of the underlined words in context. As you read the statements, sort the slips of paper into piles in which the underlined words are more related to each other than they are to those you place in separate piles. I have no preconceived idea of what the sorting “should” be. It is totally up to you. You can make as many or as few piles as you want. You can also change your mind about what pile something should be in as you go.

Note that they are asked to sort them into groupings that they see as related, not, for example, according to items that have something in common. At the end of each of the three pile sorts, I ask participants to tell me on what basis they created each of the piles, and with their permission I tape record their explanations. It takes participants about 15 minutes to do each pile sort. Ultimately, the results from the pile sorts for each topic will be analyzed independently using multidimensional scaling in order to bring out the most frequent patterns of groupings. These can then be interpreted with the help of the explanations provided by the participants themselves.

At this time, only preliminary results from the first six participants are available. Results from more participants currently being tested will be presented at the workshop. The first thing to note is that the participants found that the task to be do-able, that is, none of them made 30 individual piles, with one item each, for any of the topics. Second, there is already some overlap to be found between some of the groupings they made, even with this small number of participants. The preliminary data suggest that participants are using multiple strategies to form the groupings. For example, looking at the results for the economics metaphors, three salient strategies for grouping appear to be: complementarity in a scenario, relations of opposition, and simple use of the same word. As an example of the first strategy, four out of six participants put “structured the plan” and “balance the budget” in the same pile, with some explicitly explaining this grouping as having to do with order and discipline. An example of grouping by oppositions, three out of six put “we’ve got the biggest surpluses in all of American history” and “federal spending will be the smallest that it has been” in the same pile. Here the dimension along which the opposites differed provided the relation connecting them. Finally, multiple occurrences of the same word, regardless of their use in different syntactic constructions, was a motivation to put them together. So, five out of the six participants so far grouped the following together: “give you tax cuts,” “have their tax rates cut,” and “a 50% cut in federal income taxes.”

In all three cases, the relations focussed on were close to the language itself. That is, these initial participants did not deduce any overarching principle that determined a structure behind all the groupings they made, such as might be found in a comprehensive cognitive model. It remains to be seen what we can conclude about the possible role of conceptual metaphors in the groupings that are made, and further, how the patterns of metaphorical expressions grouped together may relate to the issues or policies (framing on levels 2 and 3) discussed in the debates.

Conclusions

As CMT is part of a cognitive approach to language, it provides a bridge between the study of metaphor as linguistic expression and metaphor in thought. This in turn allows it to link up with theories of framing and models, which also make claims on the linguistic and psychological levels. However, the research outlined here points out some of the challenges of
empirical research employing CMT, as it also raises questions about the scope of the claims that can reasonably be made regarding conceptual metaphors.

I have suggested some ways in which methods from cultural and cognitive anthropology and experimental psychology can be employed, not only to more clearly qualify the claims being made in CMT research, particularly as it is applied in the realm of politics, but also to promote the design of studies which can be replicated.

Two different directions of research have been touched on: the testing of proposed models against data, and the deduction of models (or at least relations between metaphorical expressions) from data. The two are informed by quite different perspectives. The former, top-down, approach relies on the intuitions of “expert” analysts (plural) whose judgments are informed by a background of texts and sources in the subject. The latter, bottom-up, approach draws on the immediate impressions that arise from contact with specific examples of political rhetoric by a broader audience of non-specialists. The two types of research may produce results which cannot even be compared due to the different levels of information which the data represent. But this is worth discovering in the first place, given the dearth of research which looks at metaphor as it is understood by non-linguists/non-specialists.

To what degree can the specifics of the first two studies, based around the proposed SF and NP models, be applied elsewhere? While this is ultimately an empirical question, a few concerns arise based on what we know from the start. One is that the SF/NP models form a binary system. This maps easily onto a half and half split of the political spectrum, which facilitates a rough mapping onto the two-party system that dominates US politics. One question is how well the models would apply in a more truly multi-party state. The broad spectrum of European political parties might actually provide more representation of the NP model than one would find in the US. A second concern has to do with the fact that in the US elections, one votes for a person for an office rather than for a party list, so we have a politics of personalities. As Patent and Lakoff put it, “Parties are about policies, but people are about values.” This can explain the focus of the SF and NP metaphors on the level of values, what was called “level one” earlier. Returning to the first study, Bush’s high number of both metaphors and entailments reflecting both the SF and NP models indicates a greater focus in his rhetoric on the level of values, as opposed to Gore’s greater focus on issues and policies. The election rhetoric in European political systems in which voters elect a party rather than an individual might be better characterized in terms of models which focus on levels two and three — those of issues and policies.

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References


Appendix 1

Metaphors in the “Strict Father” (SF) model (Lakoff 1996/2002, ch. 5)

Moral Strength
• BEING GOOD IS BEING UPRIGHT
• BEING BAD IS BEING LOW
• DOING EVIL IS FALLING
• EVIL IS A FORCE (either internal or external)
• MORALITY IS STRENGTH

Moral Authority
• A COMMUNITY IS A FAMILY
• MORAL AUTHORITY IS PARENTAL AUTHORITY
• AN AUTHORITY FIGURE IS A PARENT
• A PERSON SUBJECT TO MORAL AUTHORITY IS A CHILD
• MORAL BEHAVIOR BY SOMEONE SUBJECT TO AUTHORITY IS OBEEDIENCE
• MORAL BEHAVIOR BY SOMEONE IN AUTHORITY IS SETTING STANDARDS AND ENFORCING THEM

Moral Order
• THE MORAL ORDER IS THE NATURAL ORDER

Moral Boundaries
• RIGHTS ARE PATHS

Moral Essence
• A PERSON IS AN OBJECT
• HIS ESSENCE IS THE SUBSTANCE THE OBJECT IS MADE OF

Moral Wholeness
• MORALITY IS WHOLENESS
• IMMORALITY IS DEGENERATION

Moral Purity
• MORALITY IS PURITY
• IMMORALITY IS IMPURITY

Moral Health
• MORALITY IS HEALTH
• IMMORALITY IS DISEASE

Moral Self Interest
• WELL-BEING IS WEALTH

Morality as Nurturance
• MORAL ACTION IS NURTURANCE

Metaphors in the “Nurturant Parent” (NP) model (Lakoff 1996/2002, ch. 6)

Morality as Empathy
• MORALITY IS EMPATHY

Morality as Nurturance
• THE COMMUNITY IS A FAMILY
• MORAL AGENTS ARE NURTURING PARENTS
• PEOPLE NEEDING HELP ARE CHILDREN NEEDING NURTURANCE
• MORAL ACTION IS NURTURANCE

Morality as Social Nurturance
• MORAL AGENTS ARE NURTURING PARENTS
• SOCIAL TIES ARE CHILDREN NEEDING CARE
• MORAL ACTION IS THE NURTURANCE OF SOCIAL TIES

Moral Self-Nurturance
• MORALITY IS NURTURANCE [OF ONESELF]
Morality is Happiness

- MORALITY IS HAPPINESS

Morality as Self-Development

- MORALITY IS SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Morality as Fair Distribution

- MORALITY IS FAIR DISTRIBUTION

Moral Growth

- THE DEGREE OF MORALITY IS PHYSICAL HEIGHT
- MORAL GROWTH IS PHYSICAL GROWTH
- MORAL NORMS FOR PEOPLE ARE PHYSICAL HEIGHT NORMS

Moral Self-Interest

- WELL-BEING IS WEALTH

The Moral Strength to Nurture

- BEING GOOD IS BEING UPRIGHT
- BEING BAD IS BEING LOW
- EVIL IS A FORCE (either internal or external)
- MORALITY IS STRENGTH