CHAPTER 11

Extensions of meaning

ii.i Literal and non-literal meaning 199

11.2 Naturalized, established, and nonce extensions 201

11.3 Metaphor 202

11.4 Metonymy 211

11.5 Semantic change 214

Discussion questions and exercises 215

Suggestions for further reading 216

CHAPTER 11

Extensions of meaning

11.1 Literal and non-iiteral meaning

Most people are aware that if someone says *Jane's eyes nearly popped out of her head,* a *literal* truth has not been expressed, Jane's eyes were not, as a matter of fact, on the point of being projected from her head; the message is rather that Jane was very surprised. At the everyday level, the contrast between literal and figurative use does not seem problematical. It is not so easy, however, to be more precise about what 'literal meaning' really is. Let us look at some possible ways of pinning down the essence of literalness.

11.1.1 The reading of a word with the earliest recorded use

Dictionaries often organize their entries historically, with the earliest first. It would be a reasonable requirement of a dictionary that it should indicate which meanings are literal, and which figurative: most users would probably assume that the literal meaning would be given first. However, this is not really a satisfactory explanation of what literalness is. The most obvious objection is that while we might reasonably expect an intelligible path of change from past meanings to present meanings, most speakers are ignorant of the history of their language, so history cannot be the (direct) cause of current intuitions.

n.1.2 The most frequently occurring reading of a word

Frequency is another common principle for organizing dictionary entries. At first sight this seems more promising as a rationale for intuitions of literalness. However, this turns out not to be so. An example is the verb *see.* Two of the readings of this verb are "have a visual experience" and "understand" (as in *Do you see what I mean?).* There can be little doubt that it is the first of these readings which intuition points to as the literal reading. Yet it appears that the second reading has a greater text frequency. Clearly, we must look elsewhere for an account of literalness.

11.1.3 The default reading of a word

The default reading of a word is the one which first comes to mind when the word is encountered out of context, or the reading which one would assume to be operative in the absence of contextual indications to the contrary. This criterion would seem to give the right answer for *see:* it is the first meaning to come to mind, and if, say, a foreigner were to ask the meaning, one would hardly begin by saying that it meant to "understand". However, even if the literal meaning coincides with the default reading, we are still none the wiser as regards the underlying reason: it should be possible to come up with a genuinely semantic characterization.

11.1.4 The reading from which the most plausible path of change begins

Consider the following three readings of the noun *position:*

(1) Mary has been offered an excellent position with a firm of solicitors.
(2) What is your position on the single currency?
(3) This is an excellent position from which to watch the parade.

It seems implausible that one could begin with either (1) or (2) and derive the remaining two readings by metaphorical extension. On the other hand, starting from (3), involving location in physical space, the extension to mental space in (2) and a place in an institutional hierarchy in (1) seems relatively natural. Again, it is easy to derive the "understand" reading of *see* metaphorically from the "have a visual experience" reading, but not vice versa. In both these cases, the most plausible starting point is also intuitively the literal reading. But what about *expire,* with its two readings "die" and "come to the end of a period of validity"? In this case, either reading can be convincingly derived from the other. Which, then, is the literal reading? According to my intuitions, the expiring of driving licences is the extended reading, but to my undergraduate students, it is the other way round. It is not clear what the basis for the differing intuitions is.

11.1.5 The reading most closely related to basic human experience

The criterion of the reading most closely related to human experience follows from a claim that not only much of language, but also many conceptual categories, are metaphorical in nature, and are extensions from basic experience, especially, but not exclusively, spatial experience. On this basis, the "location in physical space" reading of *position,* the "have visual experience" reading of *see* and the "die" reading of *expire* would be literal, and their other readings figurative/extended. However, on its own this factor cannot explain why my students feel that the "driving licence" reading of expire is the literal one.

Perhaps a distinction ought to be made between diachronic and synchronic processes of extension. It seems that for diachrony, the 'plausible path'

criterion and the 'basic experience' criterion give the right answer. Let us suppose that if there is only one plausible path, then the diachronic literal/ figurative relationship persists in the face of later frequency changes. However, when there are alternative metaphorical extensions, while these criteria give the right answer for historical development, synchronically, an individual will take the most frequent/familiar reading (which will probably, incidentally, also be the one which is learned first) as literal, and the least familiar as extended. (Notice that the two directions of derivation for "expire" produce two distinct metaphors, not the same metaphor from different angles, or whatever.) For this explanation to be correct, it would have to be the case that when I first encountered the word *expire,* the "die" reading was much more frequent than it is now.

11.2 Naturalized, established, and nonce extensions

11.2.1 Naturalized extensions

What is historically no doubt an extended meaning may be so entrenched and familiar a part of a language that its speakers no longer feel that a figure of speech is involved at all: such readings of a word (or expression) will be said to be **naturalized:**

(4) **He's in love.**
(5) It's hard to **put into words.**
(6) The **kettle's boiling.**

11.2.2 Established extensions

There are also readings which are well established, and presumably have entries in the mental lexicon, but are none the less felt to be figures of speech:

(7) John's **a parasite/a lounge lizard/a couch potato.**
(8) She **swallowed** the story.
(9) There are too many **mouths** to feed.

11.2.3 Nonce readings

Nonce readings are ones for which there are no entries in the mental lexicon; they therefore cannot be 'looked up', but have to be generated and interpreted using strategies of meaning extension such as metaphor and metonymy. The following are selected (almost) at random from Patricia Cornwell's best-seller **Hornet's Nest:**

(10) West gave him a look that was heat-seeking, like a missile.
(11) He had never told her his fantasies about being overpowered by her,

cuffed, pinned, held, yoked, and hauled away in the paddy wagon of erotic captivity.

(12) His heart rolled forward at such a pitch, he could not catch up with it.

11.3 Metaphor

A typical dictionary definition of metaphor is: "The use of a word or phrase to mean something different from the literal meaning" (Oxford Advanced Leaner's Dictionary). This is not very enlightening: since it does not even hint at any rationale for such a curious practice, it makes metaphor seem, at best, carelessness, and, at worst, perversity. However, as Lakoff (and others) have persuasively argued, metaphor is all pervasive in language, and is for the most part effortlessly interpreted, so it deserves more constructive consideration.

11.3.1 Approaches to metaphor

There have been many more or less suggestive commentaries on metaphor, most, however, leaving much to be explained. The Greek word from which the term *metaphor* originated literally meant "transfer". For Aristotle, what was transferred was the meaning of one expression to another expression: for him, a metaphorical meaning was always the literal meaning of another expression. (This is the so-called substitution view of metaphor.) Although Aristotle recognized the crucial role of resemblance in metaphor, in the classical tradition, metaphor was regarded essentially as a decorative device.

Another aspect of metaphor—the usually incongruous nature of the expression on a literal interpretation—was pointed out by Dr Johnson, who defined it as "heterogeneous ideas yoked by violence together". There is still a degree of disagreement (and confusion?) over the exact role of 'deviance' or 'semantic clash' in metaphor; we return to this topic below.

In modem times, LA. Richards (1965) is usually credited with giving an impetus to metaphor studies. He made a distinction between three aspects of metaphor: vehicle, the item(s) used metaphorically, tenor, the metaphorical meaning of the vehicle, and ground, the basis for the metaphorical extension, essentially the common elements of meaning, which license the metaphor. For example, in *the foot of the mountain,* the word *foot* is the vehicle, the tenor is something like "lower portion", that is, the intended meaning of the vehicle, and the ground (never properly spelled out by Richards) is (presumably) the spatial parallel between the canonical position of the foot relative to the rest of the (human) body, and the lower parts of a mountain relative to the rest of the mountain.

This account at least focused attention on the fact that there must be some essential connection between tenor and vehicle—a word cannot be used to mean just anything—but the nature of the connection, the 'how' of metaphor,

was not really elucidated. Richards also rejected the notion that metaphors can in general be translated into literal language, pointing out that there was a species of interaction between meanings ("the interanimation of words") that cannot be reproduced in literal language.

11.3.1.1 Haas: the interaction of semantic fields

A more thoroughgoing interaction theory, and more solidly grounded in language, was that of Haas (see Suggestions for further reading at the end of this chapter). For Haas, the meaning of a word constituted a 'semantic field'. This consisted of all the possible contexts of the word organized in terms of normality, the most normal contexts forming the 'core' region of the field, and the least normal forming the periphery. Essentially, the semantic field of every word encompassed the whole vocabulary, but each word imposed a different 'core-periphery' organization on it. When two words were brought into interaction, a new semantic field was created, whose core was formed by the contexts with the highest joint degree of normality for both words. This new semantic field defined a new meaning, the metaphoric one. For instance, referring to the metaphor *leg of the table,* Haas has the following to say:

> a word e.g. *leg,* is transferred to new contexts: from its normal *of the* — contexts *(of the man!woman!child!horse,* etc. to the given new context *of the table',* and we select from the more or less normal contexts of the displaced *legs* just those that fit. Though the legs of a table do not *move* or *stretch* or *hurt,* are neither *quick* nor *slow,* not *muscular* or *energetic* or *tired,* they are still found to be *long* or *short, strong* or *weak, thick* or *slim, beautiful* or *ugly,* they *stand (on)* and *support,* may be *broken* or *cut,* etc.

Although Haas would have no truck with feature theories of meaning, his account of metaphor is similar in spirit to analyses in terms of semantic features, in which semantic anomalies are resolved by eliminating incompatible features from a composite expression, and allowing only compatible features to form part of the resultant meaning of the expression.

n.3.1.2 Black: analogue models

One of the virtues Haas claimed for his account of metaphor was that it avoided reference to 'pure ideas', 'private thoughts' and 'hidden intentions', and referred exclusively to 'public occurrences of words—occurrences in the contexts, present or remembered, of other words and of situations'. Most modem accounts, on the other hand, unashamedly embrace 'pure ideas' (in their modem guise of concepts, domains, and so on).

The ideas of Max Black have been influential in the development of modern theories of metaphor. First of all, Black rejected both the 'substitution' view of metaphor (see above) and what he regarded as a special version of it, the 'comparison' view, according to which, the 'literal' equivalent of a metaphor is the corresponding simile, so that, for instance, the literal equivalent of *the leg*

of the table would be *the part of the table which is like a leg* (Haas used to maintain that no distinction could be drawn in principle between metaphor and simile).

Black's picture of the mechanism of metaphor involved the projection of a set of 'associative implications' derived from one entity (the 'secondary subject') on to another entity ('the primary subject'). In Black's own example:

(13) Marriage is a zero-sum game.

the primary subject is *marriage* and the secondary subject is *zero-sum game* (Black makes it clear that the relevant entities ('subjects') are notions in the minds of speakers and hearers). The relevant associated implications of the secondary subject might be as follows (after Black 1979: 29-30):

(i) A game is a contest
(ii) between two opponents
(iii) in which one player can win only at the expense of the other.

The metaphor works by imposing the same implications (or similar/analogous ones) on to the primary subject, as follows:

(iv) A marriage is a sustained struggle
(v) between two contestants
(vi) in which the rewards (power? money? satisfaction?) of one contestant are gained only at the other's expense.

The notion that the implications are not necessarily identical for the two subjects is important: Black sees the 'implicative complex' of the secondary subject as an 'analogue model' of the implicative complex intended to be inferred for the primary subject. It is hard to see a Haasian selection of normal contexts achieving this. On the other hand, Black's view of the workings of metaphor is remarkably similar to the more recent Lakoffian picture of the projection of the structure of a 'source domain' on to a 'target domain' (see below).

n.3.1.3 Relevance theory and metaphor

Sperber and Wilson (1986) make a distinction between 'representative' and 'interpretive' uses of language, which for our present purposes we can take as parallel to the 'literal/figurative' distinction. Two important insights can be picked up from their account. The first is that metaphor is nothing special or deviant, and is simply an extreme case of 'loose talk'. Take the case of *The children stood in a circle round the teacher.* Do we imagine the children forming a geometrically exact circle? No, only a shape which has a sufficient resemblance to a circle. We do not feel this to be metaphorical, but this is perhaps merely a function of the degree of resemblance: for instance, some people probably find *electronic pet* slightly metaphorical; a greater proportion will feel the presence of metaphor in *emotional blackmail,* and so on. But the

mechanism of interpretation is the same for all these: look for relevant resemblances (this does not explicitly include, but nor does it explicitly exclude, wider-ranging structural parallels). The second point highlighted by the relevance-theoretical treatment is that the interpretation of an utterance used interpretively is very much a function of context: interpreters look to maximize contextual relevance with the least expenditure of effort (this notion is explained in greater detail in Chapter 17). This point is also well made by Black, but it is given less prominence by cognitive linguists.

11.3.1.4 Lakoff

According to Lakoff, metaphors are not merely decorative features of certain styles, but are an essential component of human cognition. Nor are they purely linguistic, but are conceptual in nature. They are 'a means whereby ever more abstract and intangible areas of experience can be conceptualised in terms of the familiar and concrete'.

Metaphors involve (i) a source domain, usually concrete and familiar, (ii) a target domain, usually abstract or at least less well structured, and (iii) a set of mapping relations, or correspondences. For example, the ARGUMENT is WAR metaphor uses notions drawn from the domain of war, such as winning and losing, attacking and defending, destroying, undermining, and so on, to depict what happens during an argument. Likewise, the LIFE is a JOURNEY metaphor borrows structuring ideas from the domain of a journey and applies them to life: *We've come a long way together, but we have decided to take our separate paths, He has come to a crossroads in his life, This young man will go far.*

The correspondences involved in metaphor are of two kinds, (i) ontological, involving entities in the two domains, and (ii) epistemic, involving relations of knowledge about the entities. This can be illustrated using Lakoff's example of the metaphor which he expresses as ANGER is HEAT OF FLUID IN CONTAINER (Lakoff (1987: Book II, ch. 1)):

(i) Ontological correspondences

source: HEAT OF FLUID	target: ANGER
container	body
heat of fluid	anger
heat scale	anger scale
pressure in container	experienced pressure
agitation of boiling fluid	experienced agitation
limit of container's resistance	limit of person's ability to suppress anger
explosion	loss of control

(ii) Epistemic correspondences:

When fluid in a container is heated beyond a certain limit, pressure increases to point at which container explodes.	When anger increases beyond a certain limit, 'pressure' increases to point at which person loses control.
An explosion is damaging to container and dangerous to bystanders.	Loss of control is damaging to person and dangerous to others.
Explosion can be prevented by applying sufficient force and counter-pressure.	Anger can be suppressed by force of will.
Controlled release of pressure may occur, which reduces danger of explosion.	Anger can be released in a controlled way, or vented harmlessly, thus reducing level.

An important feature of metaphor is that the mapping from source to target domain is partial: for instance, in the ARGUMENT is WAR metaphor, there are ARGUMENT correspondences for:

winning and losing
taking up positions
defending one's position against attack
attacking and demolishing opponent's position
probing opponent's weaknesses
using weapons
shooting down opponent's aircraft, etc.

but no correspondences for:

taking hostages/prisoners
field hospital
anti-personnel mines
parachutes, etc.

Similarly, in the ANGER is HEAT OF FLUID IN CONTAINER metaphor, the 'cooking' aspect of, for instance, *boiling* and *simmering* has no correspondence in the ANGER domain.

Lakoff emphasizes that metaphors are conceptual, not merely linguistic. One consequence of this is that often a range of different linguistic expressions can tap the same metaphor, and this can be done flexibly and productively. For instance, the lexical resources of the source domain can be exploited in the target domain (this means that a conceptual metaphor cannot be reduced to a finite set of expressions). What Lakoff calls 'elaborations' involve more specific versions of the basic metaphor whose characteristics in the source domain carry over to the target domain. For instance, the difference in intensity between *boil* and *simmer* in reference to a heated liquid carries over to indicate corresponding differences in degree of anger in *to boil with anger* and *to simmer with anger.*

Another consequence of the conceptual nature of metaphor is that certain patterns of reasoning may carry over from the source domain to the target domain. Lakoff calls these 'metaphorical entailments'. For instance, if you destroy all your enemy's weapons, you win the war; similarly, if you demolish all your opponent's points in an argument, you win the argument.

The existence of a conceptual metaphor explains why new and imaginative extensions of the mapping can be understood instantly. Lakoff (1990) illustrates this using a line from a song:

We're driving in the fast lane on the freeway of love.

This, according to Lakoff, exploits the LOVE is a JOURNEY metaphor (lovers =travellers; relationship=vehicle; shared experiences =joumey). When you drive in the fast lane you go a long way (have a lot of shared experiences) in a short time, and it can be exciting (sexually) and dangerous (relationship may not last/lovers may be hurt emotionally).

It is not only complex and intangible concepts like emotions which are understood metaphorically. According to Lakoff, basic semantic notions such as time, quantity, state, change, cause, and category membership are also metaphorically understood as extensions of basic conceptual elements which he calls **image-schemas,** involving space, motion, and force.

(i) Categories: categories are understood in terms of containers/bounded regions of space. Something can be in or out of a category, and can be put into, or removed from a category, just as with a container. The logic of categories is the same as (may even be ultimately derived from) the logic of containers. If X is inside container A and container A is inside container B, then X is inside container B: this transitivity carries over into category membership.

(ii) Quantity: two metaphors are involved in the conceptualization of quantity:

(a) MORE is UP; LESS is DOWN. This metaphor is exemplified in the following:

(14) Output rose dramatically.
(15) Fatal accidents are well down on last year.
(16) Efficiency savings have plateaued.
(17) Our pass rate is much higher than theirs.

(b) LINEAR SCALES are PATHS. This metaphor appears in the following:

(18) John is by far the best in the class.
(19) Bill has been catching up fast, and he's now about level with John in ability.
(20) John is streets ahead of Bill in academic ability.

(The logic of paths carries over into the logic of linear scales. For instance, if C is ahead of B on a path, and B is ahead of A, then C is also ahead of A; similarly, if C is ahead of B in ability, and B is ahead of A, then C is ahead of A (i.e. has more ability than A).)

(iii) Time: Time is understood in terms of things, locations, distances, and motion. Times are things; the passing of time is motion; time intervals are distances; future times are in front of the observer, past times behind. The passage of time can be construed in two ways, according to whether the speaker/observer is stationary or moving (it is always the case that one thing is moving, and the other is stationary):

(a) Events stationary, observer moving:

(21) We're coming up to exam time.
(22) I don't know how I'm going to get through next week.
(23) We have left all that behind us.

(b) Events moving; observer stationary:

(24) The exams will be upon us soon.
(25) The dayjust rushed past.
(26) Doomsday is edging closer.
(27) The holidays passed peacefully enough.

(iv) Causation: causation may be seen as a force which produces movement (i.e. change) towards a location, which may be an action (as in (28)), or a state (as in (29)):

(28) Frustration drove Jane to murder.
(29) John's words sent Jane into a state of panic.

Lakoff's arguments that metaphor has (or at least, has had) an essential constructive role in our mental life are persuasive. But a number of questions remain. One of these concerns the status of metaphorical processes in adult cognition. Obviously, they come into play in the interpretation of fresh metaphors (nonce readings); but many of the metaphors Lakoff discusses are fully naturalized in the language, others are at least established; for both types it seems necessary to assume that they are permanently laid down (entrenched) in the mental lexicon. Interpreting these would seem therefore to be a matter of selection of existing readings, rather than generation using metaphorical strategies (although we still need to explain the intuitive distinction between naturalized and merely established metaphors—perhaps this is due to a subliminal activation of the metaphorical process in the latter case). However, it is possible that metaphor is vitally operative either at earlier stages of the development of a language (or, indeed, at earlier stages in the evolution of language), or at earlier stages in the acquisition of language, for every individual.

In spite of Lakoff's insistence on the constructive role of metaphor, and his criticism of earlier views of metaphor as merely decorative, some of the metaphors that he discusses are arguably decorative in function. One of these is the following, a translation of an Indian poem:

Slowly slowly rivers in autumn show
sand banks
bashful in first love woman
showing thighs (Lakoff 1990.)

Lakoff calls such metaphors **image metaphors:** they are characterized by the fact that both source and target domains are well structured in their own right. What is the function of the metaphor here? It seems to be merely to invest the natural features of a landscape with an erotic aura—surely a species of 'decoration'? Lakoff (1990: 67) argues that the success of such a metaphor is a function of the richness of the image-schematic correspondences between the two domains ('We suggest that conventional mental images are structured by image-schemas and that image metaphors preserve image-schematic structure, mapping parts onto parts, wholes onto wholes, containers onto containers, paths onto paths, and so on.'). There are certainly many correspondences in the above metaphor between the colour, shape and untouched smoothness of the sand banks revealed by the slowly falling water level in the river and the thighs of a shy young woman divesting herself for her first lover. But while the richness of the correspondences may be necessary for a successful metaphor, they surely are not sufficient—just as important is the appropriate selection of domains in the first place.

113.2 Close relatives of metaphor

11.3.2.1 Personifications

Death is frequently personified as a coachman, footman, reaper, devourer, destroyer, etc. but never as a university lecturer or supermarket manager. Why? In most personifications events (like death, or natural disasters) are understood in terms of actions by some agent (like reaping, carrying away, or destroying), and it is the agent of such actions that is personified. The success of a personification thus depends (at least in part) on significant correspondences between the event and the implied actions of the agent indicated by the personification.

11.3.2.2 Proverbs

A proverb describes a specific event or state of affairs which is applicable metaphorically to a range of different events or states of affairs provided they have the same or sufficiently similar image-schematic structure.

11.3.3 Metaphorand deviance

There has been much discussion—and disagreement, not to say confusion—about the relationship between metaphor and deviance, between those who maintain that the ubiquity and utter naturalness of metaphor make it perverse to qualify it as 'deviance', and those who claim that deviance is an essential clue to the fact that an expression is metaphorical (or at least, not literal). The reader will probably already have spotted the fact that these two supposedly opposed views do not really address the same issue, and we must first clarify a source of confusion (which is surprisingly prevalent in current discussions).

There can surely be no disagreement about the claim that metaphor is a natural and vital expression of the human cognitive-linguistic endowment. However, the question remains of how we recognize that an expression is not being used literally. This is where the notion of deviance, or at least anomaly, comes legitimately into the picture. It is perfectly compatible with the idea of the naturalness of metaphor to claim that figurative expressions are recognized by the fact that they are anomalous on a literal reading, and that this triggers off a search for a relevant non-literal interpretation derivable from the literal reading. Haas says:

> If there is to be general agreement amongst us about the meaning of a new and metaphorical utterance, then that agreement can only be due to the fact that the utterance consists of familiar words and that its sense is DERIVABLE from the familiar meanings of those words. Although some part of the utterance (a word or phrase) or even the whole of it strikes us as displaced in the context in which it occurs, the abnormal contribution it makes to the sense of the utterance must be derivable from the knowledge we share of its normal occurrences.

A word of caution is necessary at this point. There are current claims that there is no evidence that metaphorical meanings are computed by first computing the literal meanings. However, experiments claiming to demonstrate this do not clearly separate conventionalized metaphors from fresh metaphors: obviously, if a metaphor is conventionalized, its activation is merely a matter of the selection of an appropriate meaning, no different from the selection of the appropriate reading of *bank* in *She works in a bank.* The mechanism suggested above applies only to freshly coined metaphors.

However, even with this proviso, the thesis that anomaly is an essential clue to non-literalness is not universally accepted. Black (1979) gives the following example:

> Suppose I counter the conversational remark, 'As we know, man is a wolf ...' by saying, 'Oh, no, man is not a wolf but an ostrich'. In context, 'Man is not a wolf is as metaphorical as its opposite, yet it clearly fails the controversion [=anomaly] test.

However, Black's point is considerably weakened by the observation that the *literal* reading of *Man is not a wolf* would sit very oddly in the context he provides! And in fact he concedes later in the same article:

The decisive reason for the choice of interpretation may be, as it often is, the patent falsity or incoherence of the literal reading—but it might equally be the banality of that reading's truth, its pointlessness, or its lack of congruence with the surrounding text and non-verbal setting.

In other words, we recognize a non-literal expression by the communicative deviance of its literal reading.

11.4 Metonymy

The second major strategy for extending word meanings is metonymy. Metonymy is responsible for a great proportion of the cases of so-called regular polysemy.

11.4*1 Metonymy vs. metaphor

Metonymy and metaphor are quite distinct processes of extension, in spite of the fact that there may exist extensions that cannot be classified, because the end-point could have been reached by either route. Claimed examples of this phenomenon are *head of the bed* and *back of the chair:* is the reason we label them as we do because a person's head normally rests at that part of the bed, or a person's back rests on that part of a chair? Or is it because of some resemblance between a bed and a supine person, or between a chair and a standing person? We may never know. A succinct statement of the difference between the two tropes was suggested by Jakobson and Halle (1956), who said that metaphor was based on resemblance, whereas metonymy was based on 'contiguity', which we can gloss without too much distortion as "association".

Jakobson's dictum captures some of the difference between metaphor and metonymy, but leaves an important point unhighlighted. Metaphor involves the use of one domain as an analogical model (in Black's terms) to structure our conception of another domain; in other words the process crucially involves two (in the simplest cases) distinct conceptual domains. Metonymy, on the other hand, relies on an (actual, literal) association between two components within a single domain (and no restructuring is involved). Take the famous *ham sandwich* case:

(30) The ham sandwich wants his coffee now.

This is, of course, 'café language', but is perfectly intelligible to all. The domain invoked is a café, or similar establishment, where a customer is (perhaps momentarily) distinguished by the fact that he has ordered a ham sandwich. This fact associated with the customer serves as a convenient identifying device. There is no question of drawing any structural parallels between the person referred to and a ham sandwich. Suppose, however, that the customer was heavy jowled and of lugubrious mien, and the waitress had said:

(31) The abandoned bloodhound wants his coffee now.

Here the hearer is invited to see the characteristic lineaments of a bloodhound's face in the customer's visage; no literal association between the customer and any actual bloodhound is imputed or evoked.

11.4.2 Patterns of metonymy

There are certain highly recurrent types of metonymy. The following may be signalled:

(i) **CONTAINER for CONTAINED**

(32) The kettle's boiling.
(33) Room 44 wants a bottle of champagne.
(34) The car in front decided to turn right.

(ii) POSSESSOR for POSSESSED/ATTRIBUTE

(35) Why is John not in **Who's Who ?**
(36) A: John Smith.
B: That's me!
(37) Where are you parked?
(38) Shares fall 10 per cent after Budget.

(iii) REPRESENTED ENTITY for REPRESENTATIVE

(39) England won the World Cup in 1966.
(40) The government will announce new targets next week.

(iv) **WHOLE** for **PART**

(41) I'm going to wash the car/fill up the car with petrol.
(42) Do you need to use the bathroom?

(v) PART for WHOLE

(43) There are too many mouths to feed.
(44) What we want are more bums on seats.
(45) **I** noticed several new faces tonight.

(vi) PLACE for INSTITUTION

(46) The White House denies the allegations.
(47) The Palace defends the sackings.

The above list is by no means exhaustive. An interesting and only partially understood question is why some relationships are metonymically viable, but others are not, or are considerably less so. Take, for instance, the part-part relation, which, since it involves items clearly associated within a single

domain, might be expected to yield lots of metonymy. But it is relatively rare. (The following are odd by my intuitions:

(48) I'm having my wheels serviced, (wheels —> car; car—>engine)
(49) I was obliged to spank one of the new faces.)

11.4.3 What is metonymy for?

There are many cases where an indirect metonymic strategy of reference appears to be preferred to a more direct mode of reference. (In some instances, the metonymic mode may be considered to be conventionalized, but the question still arises of why it should be so.) The following are examples (some repeated for convenience):

(50) Where are you parked?
(51) The kettle's boiling.
(52) Room 44 wants a bottle of champagne.
(53) Why is John not in **Who's Who?**
(54) John stroked the dog.

An important question is thus why metonymy should 'feel' more natural in these instances. What is the advantage of metonymy here? One possible motivation is that the expression is rendered shorter, hence more economical of effort. The full versions of the above would be:

(55) Where is your car parked?
(56) The water in the kettle is boiling.
(57) The person in Room 44 wants a bottle of champagne.
(58) Why is John's name not in **Who's Who?**
(59) John's hand stroked the dog.

However, this cannot be the full story, because many parallel cases can be invented which do not seem nearly as natural:

(60) Where are you being serviced/repaired? (Where is your car being serviced/ your watch being repaired?)
(61) The oven is burning. (Something/the cake in the oven is burning.)
(62) The office is typing. (The person/the secretary in the office is typing.)
(63) A: Where is your briefcase?
B: I'm in the bedroom. (My briefcase is in the bedroom.)

Another possibility is that the target entity is more easily accessible via the metonymic vehicle than directly (obviously, the target entity must be uniquely identifiable—but this is a general requirement for successful reference, and is not the point at issue here). However, this notion is not so easy to pin down in a satisfactory way.

It is also the case that often, even though an indirect metonymic reference is

not necessarily the preferred, or default strategy, some metonyms are acceptable, whereas others, ostensibly following the same general principle, are not. The following are examples of this:

(64) I see you've got yourself some wheels/* a clutch pedal.
(65) *We've bought some new legs. (="a new table".)
(66) Room 23 is not answering.
(67) ?Room 23 is asleep/out.
(68) She's in the phone book.
(69) *She's on the back of my hand. (="Her phone number is on the back of my hand".)
(70) The car in front decided to turn right/*smoke a cigarette.

Clearly, more work needs to be done before it can be claimed that metonymy is well understood. However, it seems that the motivation for using metonymy will turn out to be one or more of the following:

(i) economy;
(ii) ease of access to referent;
(iii) highlighting of associative relation.

11.5 Semantic change

One can hardly read a chapter of, say, a novel by Jane Austen (to go no further back in time) without becoming aware of the fact that words change their meaning through time. In the case of Jane Austen, the changes are relatively uncommon, and relatively subtle. For instance, *interfere* has not yet developed its negative aspect: its meaning is closer to modem *intervene', handsome* is applied indifferently to men and women (and girls); *amiable* was a much more positive recommendation of a person's character than now; *direction* no longer refers to the indicated destination of a letter ... and so on. Historical processes of semantic change are of course intimately linked to synchronic processes of meaning extension. One possible scenario might run as follows.

(1) Word W has established a literal sense, Si.
(2) Some creative person uses W in a new figurative sense, S2 (according to the rules of synchronic extension).
(3) S2 'catches on', and becomes established (i.e. laid down as an entry in the mental lexicons of members of the speech community), so that W becomes polysemous between Si and S2. Si is still perceived as literal, and S2 as figurative.
(4) Si begins to become obsolescent. S2 begins to be perceived as literal, and Si as figurative.
(5) S1 is lost, at which point the meaning of W has changed from S1 to S2.

This can be illustrated with English *expire*. First, before there were such things as tickets and licences with limited periods of validity, this just meant "die". Then, it was metaphorically extended to mean "come to the end of a period of validity", which existed as a clear figurative use alongside the literal use. Nowadays, the "die" sense is quite uncommon, and classes of students will declare that for them, it is a metaphorical extension of the "cease to be valid" sense. Stage (5) is perhaps yet to occur, but there is no doubt that the default reading has changed.

This example illustrates one way in which synchronic meaning extension forms an essential part of diachronic change (there are, of course, other scenarios). In principle, the meaning of a word may change along any of the semantic dimensions identified in Chapter 3; however, no attempt will be made here to give a full account of historical change in word meaning.

Discussion questions and exercises

1. Using Lakoff's study of anger as a model, investigate the metaphorical representation of other emotional states such as fear and depression.
2. How many examples of non-literal language use can you find in the following sentences (from Grafton 1994)? Classify each example as metaphor, metonymy or hyperbole.

    (i) Occasionally I went over to the shallow end of the pool and got my feet wet. If I lowered myself into the depths by as much as six inches, I suffered shortness of breath and a nearly overwhelming desire to shriek.

    (ii) I had a quick bowl of soup with Henry and then downed half a pot of coffee, managing in the process to offset my lethargy and kick into high gear again. It was time to make contact with some of the principals in the cast.

    (iii) The hotel's air-conditioning, which was fitful at best, seemed to drone off and on in a fruitless attempt to cut into the heat.

    (iv) I'm sorry sir, room 323 is not answering.

    (v) I went out on to my balcony and leaned my elbows on the railing, staring out at the night.

    (vi) I was aware of the yawning three-storey drop, and I could feel my basic dislike of heights kick in.

    (vii) His name was being withheld from the local papers because of his age.

    (viii) I could practically hear Mac squinting through the telephone lines.

    (ix) July in Santa Teresa is an unsettling affair.

    (x) I rolled out of bed, pulled on my sweats, brushed my teeth and combed my hair, avoiding the sight of my sleep-smudged face.

(xi) A: "Can you get me an address?"
B: "Shouldn't be too hard. She's probably in the book."

(xii) He was mortgaged to the eyeballs, so his house wasn't worth a cent.

(xiii) The day seemed interminable, all heat and bugs, kids shrieking in the pool with ear-splitting regularity.

(xiv) "I want to talk to Lieutenant Whiteside first. Can you have me switched over to his extension?"

(xv) Steep hills, pleated with erosion, rose up on my left, while to the right, the heaving gray Pacific was pounding against the shore.

Suggestions for further reading

On metaphor, an excellent source of readings is Ortony (1979); the present account has drawn heavily on the paper by Max Black in this volume, but many of the other papers are well worth reading, and will give an idea of a variety of approaches. Haas's account of metaphor has not been published, but can be accessed at the Manchester University Linguistic Department's website: http://lings.ln.man.ac.uk/Html/wh. LakofTs views appear in several publications: a popular introduction is Lakoff and Johnson (1980); a later account with a literary focus is Lakoff and Turner (1989). The fullest exposition of Lakoff's approach, applied particularly to ANGER, is to be found in Book II, Chapter 1 of Lakoff (1987), to which may be added Lakoff (1990). An analysis of LOVE on Lakoffian lines is Kövecses (1988). See also Dirven (1985)-

On metonymy, see Croft (1993) and Kövecses and Radden (1998).