

## REVIEW

**Zoltan Kövecses:**  
***Metaphor: A Practical Introduction***

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The study of metaphors has gained significant importance in the field of linguistics and cognitive science since the discovery of conceptual metaphors and their importance for understanding human thought and behavior (Anvarovna, 2022; Hart, 2017; Lakoff, 2014; Sullivan, 2013). In an attempt to provide a clear and substantial introduction of this topic for novice readers, Kövecses offers the second edition of *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, released in 2010. This book consists of a total of nineteen chapters with comprehensible explanations of complex concepts which encompass a cognitive linguistic approach to the study of metaphors. Each chapter provides the fundamental postulates of the theory and examples of its applicability in different contexts, a clear summary of its principal components, meaningful suggestions for further reading, and exercises which readers can execute. These exercises, together with the corresponding solutions, were written in collaboration with the authors Réka Benczes, Zsuzsanna Bokor, Szilvia Csábi, Orsolya Lazányi, and Eszter Nucz. In addition, the fact that each chapter deals with a particular topic in detail makes it easier for readers to follow this volume as they are not required to read the entire book from beginning to end. This does not mean that each chapter is treated solely; in fact, references are made to concepts explained in previous sections, but this does not interfere with the understanding of the chapter itself. In other words, although each section is self-explanatory, Kövecses does a remarkable work connecting each of the nineteen chapters cohesively, permitting readers to understand, in an incremental manner, complex aspects in the cognitive theory of metaphor. The first five chapters of the book deal with conceptual metaphors in different types of discourse and their manifestations in language and human behavior.

The first chapter of the book describes what the theory of conceptual metaphor consists of distinguishing conceptual metaphors from metaphorical linguistic expressions; the former is understood as conceptualizing one abstract domain of experience (target domain) in terms of another more concrete domain (source domain), and the latter is described as the linguistic manifestations of such conceptualization in a given discourse. Here, the metaphor identification procedure (MIP) is introduced as a tool to encounter mappings (sets of correspondences) between both domains. These mappings will later be revised and explained from a neurocognitive perspective based on the neural theory of language (Lakoff, 2014). Then, the second chapter illustrates a collection of the most common source and target domains of metaphor in everyday thought. The examples Kövecses mentions refer to the work of Gibbs (1994) and the book *Metaphors We Live By* by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Later, in the third chapter Kövecses discusses different kinds of metaphors and explains that, from the cognitive linguistics approach, metaphors can be classified in accordance with their conventionality, function, nature, and level of generality.

Metaphors can also be classified according to their cognitive function in structural (how speakers understand), orientational (how speakers evaluate), and ontological metaphors (the basis of structural metaphors), and that they can also be specific-level and generic-level. These detailed descriptions and explanations offer a strong basis for readers to

comprehend the nature and function of metaphor. It is important to state, however, that although Kövecses illustrates each conceptual metaphor outstandingly with a vast set of linguistic manifestations, all these examples belong to the English language. Therefore, I believe future editions of this book could collaborate with foreign authors to illustrate how conceptual metaphors are present in other languages. Then, in chapter four, Kövecses provides a remarkable work to demonstrate that, contrary to what people might assume, although poets and writers transform metaphors in their work by different methods such as (1) extending, (2) elaboration, (3) questioning, and (4) combining, conceptual metaphors are used by both ordinary people and writers in the same way. This is a clear demonstration of the ubiquity of metaphors, and Kövecses expands on this notion in chapter five with a vivid illustration of several nonlinguistic representations of metaphors in different areas of knowledge and life. This chapter is particularly interesting as readers can reflect upon the omnipresence of conceptual metaphors in life beyond their linguistic manifestations.

The next seven chapters can be grouped into the illustration of the cognitive bases of metaphor, metonymy, and their implications in human thought, consciousness, and understanding of the world. In chapter six, Kövecses does an exhaustive work to demonstrate that conceptual metaphors are motivated by nonpreexisting and nonobjective similarities between source and target domains. By contrast, the author offers a selection of examples which manifest the similarities between source and target domains in terms of the (1) correlations in experience, (2) independent perceived structural similarity and (3) induced perceived similarity, and (4) source being the biological or cultural root of the target. It is remarkable as well how the author does not stop there and connects these findings with the neural theory of metaphor by referring to the neural bindings and the brain mapping circuits which allow those correlations in human thought.

Chapter seven expands on how mental representation of abstract target concepts do not depend on one, but several source domains of human experience given the interconnective nature of neural bindings, where no source domain is sufficient by itself to structure all aspects of the target domain. Taking this into consideration, the author seeks to posit that although the exact same metaphors cannot be found cross-linguistically given their nonobjective correlative nature, they rely on shared universal human features of experience. This phenomenon is further explained in chapter eight, where the concept of embodied cognition is defined. To elaborate on embodiment, the author takes the conceptual structure of emotions described in four cognitive components: (1) conceptual metaphors, (2) conceptual metonymies, (3) related concepts, and (4) cognitive/cultural models where embodiment plays a crucial role. Taken the emotion of happiness/joy as an example, Kövecses exhibits that the main source of human experience to relate to abstract manifestations of emotions is the human body as people think with their brains. This means that thought is physical and is developed by functional neural circuitry. Hence, what makes thought meaningful is the embodied experience understood as the connection of those neural circuits with the

body. That is to say that the fact that source domains can meaningfully relate to abstract domains is a manifestation of embodied cognition as humans use their body as a primary source for the representation of the reality.

Kövecses, after offering this clear-cut definition on embodiment, posits that the embodiment hypothesis can be extended to other abstract concepts different from emotions, a claim which has matured by means of extensive research in the last years (Maggio et al., 2022; Stein, 2020; Lakoff, 2012, 2014). In line with this, the author talks about metaphorical entailments in chapter nine explaining that source domains make use of humans' rich everyday knowledge in their cognition of certain conceptual elements within these domains which are later mapped onto target domains. That is to say that each of these conceptual elements have a metaphorical entailment potential to be extended to understand a more abstract domain of experience, and that potential can be utilized partially or fully. To illustrate this, Kövecses refers to the metaphor *ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER* to exemplify how our everyday knowledge and bodily experience with hot fluids and their behavior is used in the mapping circuitry of humans' brain to represent the concept of anger meaningfully by embodied cognition.

Continuing with the interactive nature of metaphor in human cognition, Kövecses handles the scope of metaphor in chapter ten defining it as "the range of target concepts to which a given source domain applies" (146). This demonstrates, as the author explains, that metaphors do not occur in isolation, and that central mappings from which other mappings derive can be found in the brain circuitry of metaphors. These central mappings map the "main meaning focus of the source onto the target" (146), and just as these mappings interact with one another, conceptual metaphors form coherently structured larger groupings which govern the human metaphorical understanding of the world. This phenomenon is called "metaphor system", and Kövecses deepens on this matter in line with other cognitive findings in chapter eleven. The systematic behavior of metaphor is later contrasted with the introduction of metonymy in chapter twelve, where Kövecses establishes that, from the cognitive linguistic approach, metonymy serves as a provider of mental access "through one conceptual entity to another" (191). Here, the author characterizes metonymy as being of conceptual nature but distinguishes it from metaphors; while metonymy happens between concepts, linguistic forms, and entities and events in the world, metaphor happens between concepts.

In the final section of the book, Kövecses does a brilliant work describing the universality of metaphors in human language by extending beyond the linguistic manifestations of conceptual metaphors in English. Displaying examples from Japanese, Hungarian, English, Polish, among others, Kövecses postulates that some conceptual metaphors might be universal in chapter thirteen. Although the examples offered are translated into English without offering the original version in the mother tongue, the exemplary analysis which Kövecses

accomplishes helps the reader to understand how the universality of some metaphors is undeniable. Then, in chapter fourteen, Kövecses sets the bases for the precise study of cultural variations and their motivations in the conceptualization of individuals, and how such conceptualizations reflect these individuals' behavior in a given cultural context.

Accordingly, in chapter fifteen Kövecses accounts for the importance of the application of the conceptual metaphor theory to the study of idioms and culturally specific metonymies. In contrast to previous conceptions of these linguistic manifestations as arbitrarily, the author posits that they are motivated by shared cultural-cognitive mechanisms which helps researchers to understand the foundations of human thought in a close relation to the individuals' cultural background by means of metaphor. In fact, to continue demonstrating how conceptual metaphors prevail in human thought, in chapter sixteen Kövecses achieves to help readers understand that metaphors are alive in humans' conceptual system and arise independently from language. The author illustrates the concept of polysemy, wherein multiple meanings are associated with various linguistic elements; this association is motivated by the intricate mapping within the brain's metaphorical system. This assumption is further refined in chapter seventeen, where Kövecses does a splendid work describing a network model incorporating input, blended, and generic spaces in the online process of human understanding of the world.

Given the importance of metaphor in the conceptual system of human understanding of the world, Kövecses establishes the importance of the study of metaphors in discourse in chapter eighteen as they can provide critical account for the individuals' mental schemas involved in the interaction with the world and their behavior in a given context. In other words, as the author elaborates during the whole book, the metaphors individuals utilize are not accidental, but they reflect conceptual structures which work at different levels of cognition, influencing and determining people's acts in the society. Subsequently, chapter nineteen explains how these metaphors work on three levels: (1) the supraindividual level (how a given language reflects decontextualized metaphorical patterns), (2) the individual level (the metaphorical system as used individually by speakers), and (3) the subindividual level (universal aspects of embodiment). However, it is important to say that, just as Kövecses states at the end of this book, more cognitive and multidisciplinary research is necessary to fully understand how metaphors and thought interact in all these levels. Researchers have done an impressive work to continue polishing the understanding of the conceptual metaphor theory.

In conclusion, this book provides a substantial number of examples and illustrations to offer a sharp understanding of profound concepts underlying the conceptual metaphor theory. For these reasons, I consider this practical introduction a valuable resource for both linguists and non-linguists who seek to understand the cognitive foundations of language and human thought in relation to the brain's metaphor circuitry, and how metaphorical

thought shapes our conception of reality in the everyday world. Researchers can consult either the whole book or individual chapters as every single section is full of meaningful theory and representative examples to draw on.

## References

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