Novel Metaphor Extensions in Political Satire
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1. Introduction

Despite divergent approaches to studying metaphor, researchers share a common point of origin; namely that metaphor involves some manner of transfer or sharing of qualities between categories. Research from the experimental psycholinguistic perspective has attempted to answer which qualities are shared or transferred and how this process occurs.

Another point of agreement is that not all qualities of Category A will be blended with or transferred to category B, as that would produce tautology rather than metaphor. Our goal in this project is to examine what happens to the conceptual elements from Categories A and B that do not seem to contribute to a familiar conceptual metaphor.

This is perhaps similar to the merging of two corporations, which inevitably renders some employees redundant and some positions obsolete. Nonetheless, these employees may still be vibrant and effective workers if an appropriate role is found. Similarly, with respect to metaphor, it is our thesis that a skilled individual can scavenge through these unused concepts to create novel and surprisingly apt expressions. Furthermore, these metaphors can be used to poke fun of more traditional conceptual blends or mappings, while revealing an element of truth. The specific genres we examine are mainstream broadcast journalism and the media that satirize it.

2. Models of Metaphor

Although we are concerned with metaphor production in this study, psycholinguistic research on metaphor comprehension research provides an appropriate vocabulary and context with which to discuss the novel extensions in political satire.

2.a Alignment and Projection

The work of Gentner and colleagues (e.g. Gentner & Bowdle, 2001) provides evidence for a process that first involves the alignment of two categories and then the projection of certain qualities from the base category into the target. For the phrase *Men is wolves*, the alignment approach predicts that the two categories are aligned at similar levels of abstraction: Wolves and men as actors. Once aligned, projections can be made connecting the actors (wolf à men), and the objects (animals à women). Thus, metaphor requires alignment, but the real work seems to come from the appropriate projection from base to target. Therefore, much of the research on this model focuses on how appropriate projections are made and, to a lesser extent, how some projections are ruled out.

2.b Categorization: Suppression and Enhancement

An alternative, categorization approach to metaphor places the target category subordinate to the base category (instead of parallel with, as in the alignment model). The result is an ad hoc category that demonstrates prototype effects (Glucksberg, 2003). Applied to Gentner's example, *men* and *wolves* would become members of an ad hoc

category—apparently, *animals that hunt* – and wolves serve as prototypical members of that category. Interestingly, laboratory research shows that these metaphors prime qualities that should be attributed to the metaphor, such as *ruthless* and *predator*, but they also suppress recognition of qualities that are not blended or shared, such as *tail* or *fur* (Gernsbacher et al, 2001). Thus, categorization models can begin to describe how qualities are shared and how they are excluded.

2.c The flotsam and jetsam

The models described above seem to place more emphasis on the selection of appropriate projections or blendings. However, as Grady (1997) pointed out, a substantial portion of the "unused" source domain simply would not work appropriately as a metaphorical mapping, even in heavily entrenched conceptual metaphors. For example, THEORIES ARE STRUCTURES provides a number of familiar mappings, such as *the theory is built on several key observations*. However, a phrase such as the *theory has French windows* makes little sense and, consequently, has probably never been used. From the alignment model, it appears that the unused source qualities just float away, where the categorization approach seems to actively jettison the unwanted qualities. While both approaches say that these qualities are not used as effective metaphorical projections or blends, neither seems to indicate that they cannot be used.

The goal of our study is to explore how variations in metaphor in political discourse. Mainstream media appear to rely on several key metaphors for government and politics. Satirists seem to echo many of these traditional metaphors, but are also skilled in exploiting the unused elements of the two categories to produce humor. We have chosen a to use the term *extension* to describe an element of the base category that is key to understanding the metaphor. Thus, an extension may be thought of in terms of *projection* from the structural point of view, or *enhancement* from the categorical point of view.

3. Cognitive approaches to humor

Cognitive explanations of humor rely on within and between domain mappings, so they may be, in fact, special cases of metonymy and metaphor. In the language of theorists such as Raskin (1985) and Veatch (1998), humor be described as the result of a well-understood norm (N) starkly contrasted with an unexpected violation (V) of that norm, if that contrast results in the two elements competing in the perceiver's consciousness. Thus, a clown may be understood as someone who is supposed to act in one way but deliberately behaves in another and jokes often make the sacred profane. In the political realm, humor is often aimed at making the powerful weak, perhaps by undermining the intelligence of a president, or by suggesting that he is powerless when facing his libido.

Although we know that concept blending and projections *can* occur as humor (*My ex-husband is nothing but cellophane: cheap, clingy, and easy to see through*), not all metaphors are jokes and in fact, some can be quite somber (*Death is a thief*). The difference, according to Pollio (1998) is that metaphor obscures the boundaries between the source and target, whereas humor emphasizes them. The cognitive approach can be applied to many domains of humor. For example, classic gender-bender comedies as the films *Some Like it Hot* or *Tootsie* tell stories in which a male character appears to other characters as a female. Because the film's characters see only the female Tootsie, they are not in on the joke. However, the film's audience can see the conflict between Tootsie-as-masculine and Tootsie-as-feminine.

A male in female attire is not inherently funny, however. If Tootsie manages to go

into a boutique and buy women's clothing, it is not necessarily amusing. But when a male character attempts to kiss the heterosexual man in Tootsie's clothing, or when another female character casually undresses in front of Tootsie, the audience can laugh at the conflict—the discomfort of the character trying to inhabit both categories at once. Thus, it is not the merging of the categories that makes us laugh; it is the specific projections or blends.

Is it possible to view metaphors of politics the in this light? Perhaps the typical metaphors of politics do not appear funny because the intended extensions are obvious. However, because all metaphors omit some qualities, there is room to find humorous extensions.

3. Corpora and aim of the present study

Previous research has shown that a single conceptual metaphor can produce opposing ideas in political speech, such as treating a governing body as a nurturing versus a strict parent (Musolff, 2004). However, this metaphor in itself is not very funny. We are proposing that satirists can exploit the metaphors in political rhetoric by drawing from what Grady referred to as "unused" extensions and use these contrasts to produce humor. To examine this hypothesis, our investigation involves two main resources, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies, 2007-2009) which includes text from *Newsweek* magazine and CNN television news. Second, we compiled a our own corpus of satire and parody from three sources on *Comedy Central*, a cable television network in the US.

The 385 million word Corpus of Contemporary American English served as our source for mainstream media text, focusing on general news reporting and politics. We limited our search to only television and radio, which includes transcripts from all major networks (ABC, CBS, CNN, MSNBC, PBS, Fox News, and National Public Radio). The broadcasts include news reporting, magazine-style news programs (e.g. Dateline, 48 Hours), talk shows (e.g. Tavis Smiley, NPR Talk Radio), and personality-driven topical shows (e.g. The O'Reilly Factor, Anderson Cooper). We included only for dates in the 2000's to match the range of satire, thereby reducing the word count to approximately 35 million.

The satirical corpus was built with *Sketch Engine*, by Lexical Computing Ltd. The official websites of the satirical television shows *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* provide a large collection of transcripts. Both shows are presented nightly from Monday through Thursday and they are modeled on evening news reports and political commentary shows, respectively. We collected and entered transcripts from 2000 to 2008 into the Sketch Engine corpus. In addition, we transcribed and added stand-up comedy routines from Lewis Black, a comedian known for social and political commentary. Because of the narrow focus of this study, our satirical corpus includes only 500,000 words.

4. Methodology

Our methodology is drawn from the techniques used by Charteris-Black (2005), Deignan (2004), and Graham and Low (1999). We begin by reading through haphazardly selected sections of each corpus, locating examples of metaphoric expressions in the various texts, and using them to generate broader conceptual metaphors under which they

fit. We used the following classifications of metaphor and figurative language, used and defined by Charteris-Black (2004):

1. Metaphor: a linguistic expression which shifts the context of a given word or phrase from what is expected to an unexpected context or domain, resulting in semantic tension.

2. Conventional Metaphor: a metaphor used frequently in the vernacular of a community, ultimately reducing our awareness of the tension.

3. Novel Metaphor: a metaphor not familiar or frequently used by the community, resulting in a higher awareness of the semantic tension.

4. Conceptual Metaphor: a statement resolving the semantic tension of a group of metaphors, showing their relation.

Given the breadth of metaphorical concepts in political discourse, we decided to limit our automated searches to a more manageable set of target domains, namely the United States government in general, Congress, the White House, and former President George Bush (the underlined words served as the exact search terms).

To begin the corpus work, we searched the satirical corpus for keywords mentioned above. We followed the searches by scanning the results for signs of conceptual metaphor. Upon completing the initial search process, we created a hierarchical category system for the conceptual metaphors and the specific extensions used (see Table 1 and 2). Next, we searched the mainstream media corpus using the same techniques and extracted both the conceptual metaphors and specific extensions.

After searching for government keywords, which are target domains, we searched for evidence the conceptual metaphors that turned up. For example, we found instances of *GOVERNMENT IS A PARENT*, as described by Musolff (2004), in the satirical corpus. We therefore included searches for family membership lemmas with government-lemma collocates. Similar analyses were conducted with other metaphors that were manually identified (e.g. *CLASS WARFARE*).

4. Results

The results of our manual and automated searches include two major conceptual metaphors (as inferred by the researchers): GOVERNMENT IS AN ORGANISM and GOVERNMENT IS AN OBJECT. Nested within these broad domains are subordinate categories such as GOVERNMENT THINKS and GOVERNMENT ACTS, which are consistent with the ORGANISM metaphor. These subordinate categories are in turn comprised of the utterances in the corpus. These, we have grouped together for the purposes of statistical analyses.

The tables below present a quantitative summary of these categories and their prevalence within each corpus. Due to the difference in corpus size, raw frequencies have been converted to frequency per million words.

Table 1: Hierarchical table of Conceptual Metaphor I: *GOVERNMENT (OR CONGRESS) IS AN ORGANISM.* The figures show the occurrence of expressions in each category per one million words.

	Mainstream Media	Satirical Media
GOVERNMENT IS/HAS A BODY		
Government has a face, arm, or body parts	.06	1.121
GOVERNMENT HAS MENTAL PROCESSES		
Government can consider/think	.97	2.24
A government feels/felt	.33	.673
Governments can defy/deny/rebel	0	4.48
GOVERNMENT BEHAVES		
A do-nothing congress	.28	4.48
Government protects/shields	.44	2.24
Government speaks	1.5	2.24
Government responds	.94	1.121
Government plays a role	2.1	6.73
Political parties get their act together	.11	2.24

Table 2: Hierarchical table of Conceptual Metaphor II: *GOVERNMENT (OR CONGRESS) IS AN OBJECT*

	Mainstream Media	Satirical Media
GOVERNMENT IS A DEVICE OR MACHINE		
Government is working (functioning)	1.5	1.121
Government has stopped working (functioning)	2.1	6.73
Government is a toilet	0	2.24
GOVERNMENT HAS MASS/EXISTS IN SPACE		
Big government	2.92	6.73
Transparent government	.14	2.24
Road to the White House (or political office)	.56	2.24

As these tables show, the use of conceptual metaphor is not unique to either genre, although they do appear at a somewhat higher rate in satire. A qualitative analysis of the specific figurative expressions suggests that the difference in frequencies may be accounted for by at least two properties of satire: Novel extensions, and relaxed standards regarding appropriate language.

First, consider the similarity of conventional metaphors found in the two corpora, such as these two instances falling under the GOVERNMENT IS AN ORGANISM-- GOVERNMENT HAS MENTAL PROCESSES category.

a) Satire: Congress *has put on a brave face today*, Jon.
b) Mainstream: Congress *wants to strip away* the right of the courts to hear these cases.

These are conventionalized expressions in which government—in this case, Congress—has thoughts and feelings just as an individual would. These phrases are conventional in that brave face is an idiomatic expression, and it is not unusual to speak of Congress as a whole possessing traits such as courage. Similarly, the act of stripping away rights is fairly conventional, and once again, Congress is simply the actor in an conventional saying.

What seems to be unique to satire is the use of novel versions of these conventionalized metaphors. For example, in the same category of conceptual metaphor, the satirists produced phrases such as:

> c) Satire: Congress feels like they never get to do anything cool. The White House lets the other branches of government do whatever they want.

In this example, Congress is not just a sentient organism, it is a frustrated adolescent. The White House is not just the familiar parent (as described by Musolf), but also a parent struggling with a houseful of children. Both extensions work together to probe previously unused conceptual space. More specifically, they extend to subordinate categories to offer more precise examples of organisms.

Similar extensions can be found with GOVERNMENT IS A DEVICE/MACHINE. Both forms of media have numerous, conventionalized forms of this conceptual metaphor: *the [legislative]process runs smoothly*, *the deliberations have ground to a halt*, and so on. These expressions invoke the idea of a generalized, abstracted machine, and thus operate at the basic level of the category. Satire takes advantage of unexplored, subordinate space, as well as relaxed standards, in this example:

> d) Satire: [Democracy is] a potpourri of sage, cedars, orange rinds, rose petals…sat on the back of the toilet…whenever we drop legislation into the bowl of Congress, democracy acts as an air freshener.

In this case, the scatological humor comes from the GOVERNMENT IS AN ORGANISM conceptual metaphor, while also invoking the GOVERNMENT IS A DEVICE metaphor through the use of the air freshener and toilet. Needless to say, this example includes a number of novel extensions. However, there are conventionalized versions of this metaphor: it would not be unusual to hear *this new law stinks*. Thus, the humor seems to come from the novelty and specificity of the extensions.

Personifying a governing body such as congress is a clear example of conceptual metaphor, but what about individuals within government? It turns out that Unites States media also treats the President as a specific, metaphorical individual.

> e) Mainstream: he [the President] is turning into Hitler
> f) Satire: Bush and Cheney have turned into the Dukes of Hazard. Every week they get themselves into this crazy predicament, "there ain't no way the Duke boys are getting out of this one[the narrator says]" and then they jump the General Lee[1] over the Bill of Rights.

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[1] For the uninitiated, this is a reference to *The Dukes of Hazard*, a 1970's weekly television program in the US. The General Lee was a muscle car that allowed Bo and Luke Duke to narrowly escape seemingly impossible predicaments through some rather improbable car chases. The show itself evokes images of an uneducated, rough-cut southern males making this a surprisingly apt metaphor for the administration's detractors.

These two examples share similar form in that an individual in government is assigned the identity of another specific individual. Hitler is such a conventionalized eponym for a tyrant that it is familiar to most of the audience. The satirical reference to the General Lee assigns the identity of "Duke Boy" to President Bush, which provides a very clear image to the specific audience. The novelty of the satirical quote comes in the specificity of the language. Rather than stopping at *Bush and Cheney are Bo and Luke Duke*, the speaker provides a more specific extension: they are the Duke boys jumping the General Lee over an obstacle. (The fact that the obstacle is the Bill of Rights provides an additional subordinate extensions, not to mention the contrast between the Bill of Rights as an obligation and an obstacle).

5. Conclusion

We found that conventional metaphors are used similarly in both corpora (satire repeats the traditional news source), but satire presents unique patterns of variation. To highlight some of the more interesting examples, the satire exploited the concept of rebellion in parent-child relationships, relating congress' desire to stay out past curfew, and get tattoos and piercings. Thus, it appears that at least a portion of satirical comedy works by exploiting the conceptual qualities left unused in traditional political metaphors. However, there are limits to the directions that satirical extensions may take. The dominant method in this corpus is to extend the metaphor to a more specific instance— from the generic person to an angry teen.

These findings may be viewed in light of metaphor theory or humor theory. From the metaphor perspective, we asked whether the unused aspects of conceptual metaphor categories were useless, or simply waiting to be used. As is clear from satire, some of the space is useful. However, our genre of interest tends to extend metaphors only towards subordinate categories and specific instantiations of a category. To some extent this is due to the reliance on well-established conceptual metaphors. When new metaphors emerge, novel extensions abound without necessarily producing humor. Turning to humor theory, we see that the novel extensions produce the necessary category-conflict for humor to occur.

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