NON-COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENTS: MULTIMODAL METAPHOR, METONYMY AND CONCEPTUAL BLENDING AT WORK

ZAIGA IKERE
Daugavpils University, Latvia
zaiga.ikere@du.lv

ILZE OĻEHNOVIČA
Daugavpils University, Latvia
ilze.olehnovica@du.lv

SOLVEIGA LIEPA
Daugavpils University, Latvia
solveiga.liepa@du.lv

Abstract
Nowadays the omnipresence of advertisements, and the necessity of conscious and subconscious mental interpretation of their hidden messages, can hardly be overlooked. In the present article, the authors attempt to provide additional evidence for the role of multimodal metaphor, metonymy, and conceptual blending in hidden cognitive mechanisms involved in the understanding and/or the correct interpretation of printed non-commercial advertisements and their overall communicative effect thus brought about. The objective is to consider and analyse text-image non-commercial advertisements randomly retrieved from the Internet; the analysis is carried out from the cognitive perspective and aims at discussing the functions of multimodal metaphor, metonymy and conceptual blending as powerful mechanisms exploited for creative purposes in advertising texts and accompanying images, and thus in conveying the central ideas embedded in the adverts.

Keywords conceptual blending, metonymy, multimodal metaphor, non-commercial advertisements

1. Introduction

Due to the presence of a competitive fight, advertising with its multifaceted and multidimensional character has become an important and inevitable part of the modern society. Undoubtedly, advertising, along with the particular and omnipresent advertisements of different types (e.g., TV or radio commercials, printed advertising (brochures, leaflets, and adverts in newspapers, magazines and other types of printed material advertising), outdoor advertising, e-mails etc.) in particular, has an enormous power over the audience and its effects are

longstanding. In addition, advertising may be identified as a type of discourse, as "it can tell us a good deal about our own society and our own psychology" (Cook 1996: 2-5), and it can be analysed as "the interaction of all elements that participate in advertising discourse: participants, function, substance, picture, music, society, paralanguage, language, situation, other advertising and other discourse" (Cook 1996: 2-5). For these reasons, advertising has become the matter of linguistic investigations, and there appeared a necessity of an account for both conscious and subconscious mental interpretation of the hidden messages found in advertisements.

The present article is the authors' attempt to provide additional evidence of the role of multimodal metaphor, metonymy, and conceptual blending in hidden cognitive mechanisms involved in the understanding and/or the interpretation of printed non-commercial advertisements, i.e., advertisements that, unlike business commercials, are primarily designed to inform and educate rather than sell a product or service, and their overall communicative effect thus brought about. For this purpose text-image non-commercial advertisements, randomly retrieved from the Internet, have been considered and analysed. The analysis is carried out from the cognitive perspective and aims at discussing the role of multimodal metaphor, metonymy and conceptual blending as powerful mechanisms exploited for creative purposes in advertising texts and accompanying images, and thus in conveying the central idea of printed adverts under question.

Non-commercial advertisements, also referred to as public service advertisements (PSAs), are chiefly messages with the objective of raising awareness, influencing and (or) changing public attitudes and behaviour towards a social issue. The exploitation of such tropes as multimodal metaphor and metonymy in PSAs triggers the target audience's attention and encourages more people to get involved in not only conscious, but also subconscious mental interpretation of the messages embedded, and sometimes hidden, in such advertisements. In a different perspective, our analysis being an application of the conceptual integration theory may hopefully provide some valuable insights, giving explanation why particular adverts are able to catch the public's attention, often affect their recipients' behaviour and change their way of thinking and their perception of the world.

2. Multimodal metaphor and metonymy at work

Inspired by Black's (1962, 1979) 'interactions theory', Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive linguistics findings, the Dutch scholar Charles Forceville (1996, 2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) expands the scope of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), the theory introduced by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980s, into the study of multimodal metaphor, i.e., "metaphor whose target and source are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes" (Forceville 2009a:

24). Forceville (e.g. 2008) highlights the importance of looking at metaphors in different media and convincingly argues that as metaphors are essential to cognition as theorized by Lakoff and Johnson, "it makes sense that they should occur not only in language, but also in static and moving pictures, sounds, music, gestures, even in touch and smell – and various permutations" (Forceville 2008: 463). He also points out that all possible manifestations of metaphor should be studied in order to avoid risk of misinterpretation. In advertising discourse, for instance, in printed advertisements, it is possible, and in fact rather likely, that an image will feature text, such as a brand name, a slogan, which can itself function as a crucial component for metaphorical expression and is often meant to be understood as a metaphor.

Let us provide an illustration of this type of discourse. The text-image non-commercial advertisement against driving under the influence of alcohol, quoted in Figure 1 below, is an example of a printed PSA containing a multimodal metaphor, which can be summarised as DRUNK DRIVING IS DISABILITY.

Figure 1: '*Don't drink and drive*'[1]

Using a cognitive approach (modelled on Alousque 2014) (cf. Table 1), it may be stated that the target domain DRUNK DRIVING is formed through the combination of the caption '*Don't drink and drive*' (which provides the verbal representation of the target) and a corkscrew resembling silhouette of a human being (which provides a visual representation of the target) which together form a metonymic reference to the process of drinking. The wheelchair visually represents the source domain of DISABILITY.

Table 1: Cognitive analysis of non-commercial advertisement *'Don't drink and drive'*

Cognitive analysis:	Metonymy: CORKSCREW FOR DRINKING; WHEELCHAIR FOR DISABILITY
	Metonymy-based metaphor: DRUNK DRIVING IS DISABILITY

---

[1] Retrieved from www.pinterest.com

	Source: disability
	Target: drunken driving
Modality:	Multimodal
	Visual representation of the source
	Visual/verbal representation of the target
Pragmatic effect:	Drunk driving can lead to inevitable consequences, disability in particular.

As argued by Barcelona (1997), a large number of metaphors have a metonymic basis and the above-discussed multimodal metaphor DRUNK DRIVING IS DISABILITY can be considered to be one of such kind. As claimed by Hidalgo and Kraljevic (2011), the awareness of metaphor-metonymy interaction patterns provides audiences with new possibilities of meaning creation, e.g., in such multimodal contexts as printed advertisements. The scholars state that "in this process, the function of metonymy is that of motivating metaphor by highlighting aspects of the source and target domains, thus, providing a perspective on how the new product is accessed by the audience" (Hidalgo and Kraljevic 2011: 158). Moreover, Barcelona (2000) points out that as metonymy is a more fundamental cognitive phenomenon than metaphor, it plays a crucial role in enabling and motivating certain types of metaphors.

Regardless of the fact that metonymy is evidently recognized as being "one of the basic characteristics of cognition" (Lakoff 1987: 77), thereby, being presumably even more basic than metaphor in language and cognition, it has been less intensively studied by cognitive linguists, in comparison to metaphor. However, over recent years a number of researchers (e.g., Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Croft 1993; Ruiz de Mendoza 1997a, 1997b, 2000; Ruiz de Mendoza and Díez, 2002; Barcelona 2000; Forceville, 2007; Urios-Aparisi, 2009; Qiu, 2013; Pérez-Sobrino, 2013, 2017 etc.) have devoted their attention to the study of both tropes, discussing such controversial topics as the difference and the delimitation between metonymy and metaphor, the role played between metonymy and metaphor, and the description of their possible interactions.

The creative print advertising campaign in Brazil called *'Hunted on the road'* (Figure 2) is another example of a thought-provoking and quite striking printed non-commercial advertisement.

Figure 2: *'Hunted on the road'* [2]

The message on the advert is '*Every day, more and more cyclists are being killed in Brazilian streets and roads. Let's respect the cyclists. Let's stop hunting.*' That is what the print advertisement created by agency Heads Propaganda in Brazil aimed to promote, but the small print may seem redundant in its visual context. The advert displays an image of a bike taxidermy, which is used instead of the stuffed animal as a hunting trophy, thus enabling the recipient to construe the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS. The text *"Hunted on the road"* is a verbal manifestation of the metaphor and presents the scenario of hunting where people treat others (cyclists) as prey.

In a cognitive analysis (cf. Table 2), the metonymy HANDLEBARS FOR BYCICLE FOR CYCLIST present in the discussed advert is an example of a *metonymic chain*, where the sub-domain (source) affords access to the matrix domain (target) through an *expansion* process, especially the double or chained expansion process (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza 2000).

Table 2: Cognitive analysis of non-commercial advertisement *'Hunted on the road'*

Cognitive analysis:	Metonymy: HANDLEBARS FOR BYCICLE FOR CYCLISTS
	Metonymy-based metaphor: PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS
	   Source: animals
	   Target: people

Modality:	Multimodal
	   Visual/verbal representation of the source
	   Visual/verbal representation of the target

Pragmatic effect:	To raise traffic participants' awareness of cyclists as full-fledged legitimate members of traffic on the roads.

It is significant that Forceville (2008) claims that in the context of advertising, metonymy, being an essential cognitive process, not only reveals rhetorical strategies, but also has an important role in motivating metaphor and in

---

[2] Retrieved from www.welovead.com

highlighting its mappings. The examples quoted above also serve to show that interaction between metaphor and metonymy is of great relevance in advertising. It is also noteworthy that in the case of both adverts discussed above, the message is framed in (potential) tragedy. The images of the wheelchair and the taxidermy arouse direct associations with the consequences of the respective human activity, which consequently lead to the viewer's feeling "I don't want to do it".

3. Conceptual blending in advertising

Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner revised the traditional two-domain model in an interesting way (Turner & Fauconnier, 1995; Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), which has led to a more complex version of CMT, for instance, Conceptual Blending Theory, the framework suitable for dealing with creativity in advertising.

Fauconnier and Turner have proposed the so-called 'many-space model' of metaphor and conceptual projection. The basic unit of blending theory is 'the Network Model', which consists of basic principles, such as the *mental spaces, cross-space mapping* between them and the *emergent structure.* In conceptual blending the source and the target of a mapping are mental spaces, which form *"a relatively small conceptual packet built for purposes of local understanding and action"* (Turner and Fauconnier, 1995: 184), and the other spaces are the *generic space*, which contains the skeletal structure that applies to the input spaces and allows their correlation, and the *blend*, a rich conceptual structure, which integrates parts of the structure from input spaces as the source and the target of the metaphor in question. The elements gathered as a result of such selection can then be elaborated to develop an *emergent structure,* which includes information that has not been projected from either of the input spaces, i.e. a kind of a cognitive bonus. Based on this, metaphor is the result of a blending process, whose interpretation, at least for theoretical purposes, requires four mental spaces: two input spaces, a source and a target, and two middle spaces, a generic space and a blended space or "the blend". The structure from at least two input spaces is projected onto the blend, while the generic space licenses the projection and explains its theoretical lining. The template for a conceptual blend analysis has been quoted below as Figure 3.
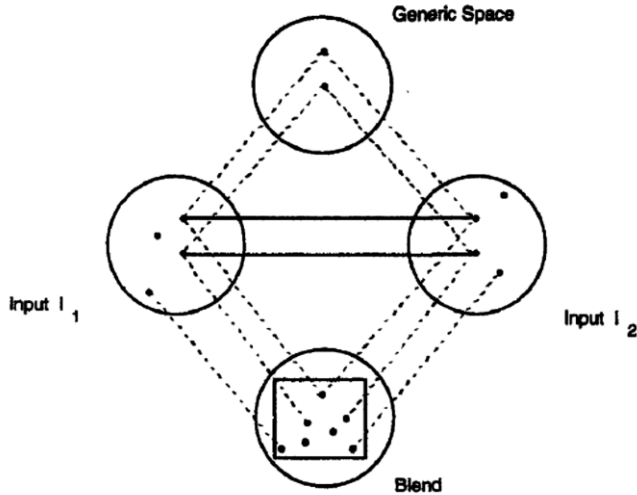
Figure 3: A basic integration network (adapted from Fauconniere and Turner 2002: 46)

Further on, we will try to illustrate the relevance of the theory of conceptual blending in the context of PSA.

The social issue adverts against drug abuse provided below (Figure 4) contain a metonymy-based multimodal metaphor DRUGS ARE DEATH, where the source domain DEATH, developed with the help of metonymy GRAVESTONE FOR DEATH, is presented visually. In turn, the inscriptions on the gravestones saying: "*KO*KAIN", "NIKO*TIN*", and "*EC*STACY" are verbal representations belonging in the target domain DRUGS.

Figure 4: *'With drugs you are digging your own grave'*[3]

The intended message of the given adverts is rather obvious – *'With drugs you are digging your own grave'*, which means that drug abuse has or will have negative consequences that can be easily foreseen. The meaning construction related to this social advertisement campaign can be explained with reference to the basic

---

[3] Retrieved from www.welovead.com

integration network developed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) and is presented in Figure 3.

Table 3: Cognitive analysis of the non-commercial advertisement *'With drugs you are digging your own grave'* within the conceptual blending theory

SOURCE (Input space 1)	**GENERIC SPACE**	**TARGET** (Input space 2)
Someone digs a grave (activity).	*Someone performs a specific action.*	Someone harms him/herself by using drugs (activity).
A shovel is used as the digging instrument.	*There is an instrument used.*	Drugs are taken (eaten or injected).
The grave is going to be for a dead person in a near future.	*The action is related to death.*	By continuous drug abuse, one may die.
The dead person is the grave-digger.	*The doer of the action dies.*	The one who was taking drugs dies.
The digger has the possibility to stop digging with the shovel so that he does not die.	*The doer may prevent death by stopping the action.*	The drug consumer may stop taking drugs in order to avoid death.
BLENDED SPACE		
Someone repeatedly takes drugs and that is killing him. The drug consumer is still in time to avoid death by refusing to take drugs.		

It should be noted that the research on blending theory often focuses on novel or creative conceptualization. This feature of 'newness' differentiates the four-space model from the two domain-model of CMT. With the help of the four-space model, it is possible to explain certain meaning constructions. This may make the notion of blending useful for the analysis of metaphors, instantiated in printed advertisements in particular, as the conceptual integration enables the simplification of complex ideas and helps to present the abstract through the concrete.

4. Concluding remarks

Since advertisements, social issue non-commercial advertisements included, are numerous, for them to be effective, to stand out from the sea of other advertisements, they must be noticed. The use of metaphors is one of the most frequently used strategies employed for this purpose. As Kövecses (2002: 65) rightly points out: "a major manifestation of conceptual metaphors are advertisements." PSAs are dynamic discourses, in which all modes (in the present case the verbal mode and the visual mode) can contribute to multimodal metaphors either in the source domain or the target domain.

The interplay of metonymy and metaphor is richly represented in social advertisements. Barcelona (2000) points out that metonymy is a more fundamental cognitive phenomenon than metaphor, and metaphor is very often

motivated by metonymy, which has proven to be true for the three advertisements analysed in the present research.

Advertising requires both conscious and spontaneous mental interpretation of the hidden message. The conceptual integration theory can be successfully applied in the field and provide valuable insights, giving explanation why adverts are able to catch our attention and affect our behaviour: the message of the advertisements arises in the blended space as a result of a number of intricate mental processes. In general, the eye-catching blends are perceived unconsciously, the blended space is creative, comprehensible and it arouses emotional response. At the same time it subtly highlights the main characteristics of the idea advertised and can be powerful enough to make people think about the deadly consequences of the definite actions.

References

Alousque, Isabel Negro. 2014. Verbo-pictorial metaphor in French advertising. *Journal of French Language Studies, 24*, 155-180. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959269513000045

Barcelona, Antonio. 1997. Clarifying and applying the notions of metaphor and metonymy within cognitive linguistics. In *ATLANTIS XIX (1)*, 21-48.

Barcelona, Antonio. 2000. Introduction: The cognitive theory of metaphor and metonymy. In: Barcelona, A. (ed.). *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective,* 1-28. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110894677.1

Black, Max. 1962. *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501741326

Black, Max. 1979. More about Metaphor. In: Ortony A. (ed). *Metaphor and Thought,* 19-43. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139173865.004

Cook, Guy. 2001 [1996]. *The Discourse of Advertising. Second Edition.* London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203978153

Croft, William. 1993. The role of domains in the interpretation of metaphors and metonymies. In *Cognitive Linguistics 4-4*, 335-370. https://doi.org/10.1515/cogl.1993.4.4.335

Fauconnier, Gille and Turner, Mark. 2002. *The Way We Think.* New York: Basic Books.

Forceville, Charles. 1996. *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising.* London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203272305

Forceville, Charles. 2007. Multimodal Metaphor in Ten Dutch TV Commercials. In *The Public Journal of Semiotics I* (1), January 2007, 15-34. https://doi.org/10.37693/pjos.2007.1.8812

Forceville, Charles. 2008. Metaphor in Pictures and Multimodal Representations. In: Gibbs, R.W.Jr. (ed.). *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, 462-482. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511816802.028

Forceville, Charles. (2009a). Non-verbal and Multimodal Metaphor in a Cognitivist Framework: Agenda for Research. In: Forceville, Ch. and Urios-Aparisi E. (eds). *Multimodal Metaphor*, 19-42. Berlin/New York: Mounton de Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110215366

Forceville, Charles. 2009b. A Course in Pictorial and Multimodal Metaphor. Available from: https://semioticon.com/sio/courses/pictorial-multimodal-metaphor/. [Accessed: 15th August 2018].

Hidalgo-Downing, Laura and Kraljevic Mujic, Blanca. 2011. Multimodal metonymy and metaphor as complex discourse resources for creativity in ICT advertising discourse. In Gonzálvez García F., Peña S., and Pérez-Hernández L. (eds) *Metaphor and Metonymy Revisited beyond the*

Contemporary Theory of Metaphor, 153–178. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/rcl.9.1.08hid

Kövecses, Zoltán. 2002. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Lakoff**,** George. and Johnson, Mark. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, George. 1987. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226471013.001.0001

Pérez-Sobrino, Paula. 2013. Metaphor Use in Advertising: Analysis of the interaction between multimodal metaphor and metonymy in a *greenwashing* advertisement. In: Gola, E. and Ervas F. (eds) *Metaphor in Focus. Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor Use,* 67-82. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Pérez-Sobrino, Paula. 2017. *Multimodal Metaphor and Metonymy in Advertising.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/ftl.2

Qiu**,** Yingying. 2013. Interaction of Multimodal Metaphor and Metonymy in Public Service Advertising: A Case Study. In *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 3 No. 9, 1584-1589. https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.3.9.1584-1589

Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco José. 1997a. Metaphor, metonymy and conceptual interaction. In *Atlantis* 19(1), 281-295.

Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco José. 1997b. Cognitive and pragmatic aspects of metonymy. In *Cuadernos de Filología Inglesa*, 6/2, 161-178, University of Murcia, Spain.

Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco José. 2000. The role of mappings and domains in understanding metonymy. In: Barcelona, A. (ed.). *Metonymy and metaphor at the crossroads*. *A Cognitive Perspective,* 109 – 132. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110894677.109

Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco José and Díez Velasco, Olga Isabel. (2002). Patterns of conceptual interaction. In: Dirven R. and Pörings R. (eds.) *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast,* 489-532. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110219197.489

Turner, Mark and Fauconnier, Gilles. 1995. Conceptual Integration and Formal Expression. In *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity 10*, 183-204. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms1003_3

Urios-Aparisi**,** Eduardo. 2009. Interaction of Multimodal Metaphor and Metonymy in TV Commercials: Four case studies. In: Forceville, Ch. and Urios-Aparisi E. (eds). *Multimodal Metaphor*, 95-117. Berlin/New York: Mounton de Gruyter.