

Monika Cichmińska

"Klinika doktora Molko (Doktor Molko's clinic)" - metaphor or blending?

Acta Neophilologica 6, 49-56

2004

Artykuł został zdigitalizowany i opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

JEZYKOZNAWSTWO I GLOTTODYDAKTYKA

Monika Cichmińska
Katedra Filologii Angielskiej
UWM w Olsztynie

„KLINIKA DOKTORA MOLKO (DOCTOR MOLKO'S CLINIC)” – METAPHOR OR BLENDING?

The purpose of the present paper is to show how Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Blending Theory or Conceptual Integration Model can be complementary in analysis of the language. We are going to concentrate on the language used in the article “Klinika doktora Molko” (Doctor Molko's clinic) which appeared in the Polish music magazine “Muza” in September 2003 written by Dagny Kurdwanowska. We want to demonstrate how the author presents her own vision of what Brian Molko, the leader of the rock group Placebo (hence the title) and the group's music are to her and to other fans of the group, and how she skillfully used the language of metaphor and blending talking about the group.

1. Conceptual metaphor versus conceptual blending

One of the fundamental and “classic” notions discussed within the paradigm of cognitive linguistics is conceptual metaphor, with its origins in Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), and further discussed and explored by Lakoff and Turner (1989), Kövecses (1986, 1990), Turner (1991, 1996), Gibbs (1994) and others, who have successfully shown that metaphor is not the matter of the language we speak, but more importantly it is the way we think – we conceptualise the reality. Metaphor is something we use unconsciously, efficiently and on an everyday basis. Numerous examples have shown the pervasive presence of metaphors not only in our everyday speech, but – more importantly – in the way we think about the reality.

The research on metaphor has concentrated on structure-mappings from a source domain onto a target domain. Some of the widely known examples given by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) include: ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING, TIME IS MONEY and LOVE IS MAGIC, where, respectively, the domains of BUILDING, MONEY and MAGIC are mapped onto the domains of ARGUMENT, TIME and LOVE. The

mappings project new structures from the source onto the target, thus allowing us to conceptualise ARGUMENT in terms of a BUILDING.

The research on conceptual blending – or conceptual integration theory, as developed and discussed by Fauconnier and Turner (1996, 1998, 2002), Fauconnier (1997), Coulson (1997, 2001) and others has shown, however, that models of cross-domain or cross-space mappings do not themselves explain the relevant data, and that in addition to mappings, there are dynamic integration processes which build up new blended mental spaces (Fauconnier, 1994). The blended spaces are characterized by emergent structure, which is not directly available from the input domains.

Fauconnier and Turner suggest (2002) that blending is a general cognitive operation which “gave our ancestors superiority and, for better or for worse, made us what we are today” and which plays “crucial role in how we think and live” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: v). They go on to say that conceptual blending “is responsible for the origins of language, art, religion, science and other singular human feats, and that it is indispensable for basic everyday thought as it is for artistic and scientific abilities” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: vi).

However, these two models – Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Blending Theory (BT) need not be treated as contradictory but rather as complementary. While CMT focuses on conventional metaphors used by a certain language community, well entrenched in the native speaker’s conceptualizations of the reality, BT treats blending as a routine process, dynamic and active at the moment of thinking; its products may become entrenched in conceptual structure and grammar, but they need not. Thus, BT often studies novel structures, such as jokes, cartoons, or headlines (Grady, Oakley and Coulson 1999; Coulson 2001).

2. Spaces in blending and blending processes

While conceptual metaphor typically involves mappings between two domains, blending involves mappings between four spaces: two input spaces, generic space, which contains abstract elements shared by the two input spaces, and the blended space, which inherits the structure of the inputs, and contains its own emergent structure.

Blending involves three processes: composition, completion, and elaboration. Each of the processes creates the possibility for a new structure to emerge.

To illustrate the three processes, we will give the example of trashcan baseball (Coulson, 2001), which is a game in which two students shoot the “ball” made of a crumpled piece of paper at the “basket” which in turn is a wastepaper basket. In this case, the input spaces are trash disposal and basketball, and the blend – the trashcan basketball – contains elements from the two input spaces, the emergent structure being properties of trashcan basketball which are different from the properties in the input spaces.

In the process of composition, a relation from one space is attributed to an element/elements from the other input spaces. In trashcan basketball, the frame for Ball is applied to the crumpled piece of paper from the domain of trash disposal, and thus the piece of paper becomes the ball in the game of trashcan basketball. The emergent structure arises from the fact that a predicate from one domain accommodates in order to apply to elements from a different domain, on the basis of the contextual information.

Completion refers to completing patterns which takes place when the emergent structure – projected from the inputs – finds matching information in the speaker's memory – or rather, more specifically, the frames that the speaker has collected in her memory. Thus, in trashcan basketball, pattern completion might lead to evoking a frame of basketball when one student shoots the ball and the other defends the goal.

Elaboration is the process in which the event in the blend is simulated and elaborated on, which is constrained by logic or illogic of the blended domain. For example, elaboration may be employed if one wanted to understand the concept of moon rock basketball – basketball played on the moon with rocks.

Although it might seem that elaboration is in fact the same cognitive process as completion – that is, evoking novel structure in the blend – the difference between the two lies in the fact that in elaboration novel structures can be activated by mental simulation, whereas in completion it relies on interaction with the environment as construed with blended models which are already available. Thus, as Coulson (2001) claims, elaboration “is more of a creative process than completion, and is potentially more cognitively taxing due to the demands of mental simulation” (Coulson 2001: 123).

3. “Doctor Molko's clinic”

The title phrase comes from an article published in a Polish music magazine “Muza” of August 2003 about a British glam rock band Placebo. The leader of the group – the vocalist, guitarist, lyrics author – is called Brian Molko, hence the title of the article.

The article not only tells the story of Placebo, but also tries to answer the question why the group is popular among listeners all over the world, especially in Europe and among the Polish fans. The author of the article, Dagny Kurdwanowska, suggestively presents her views on the group's popularity and unshaken supports of its fans. It is the language that the author uses to talk about the group that aroused our interest due to its suggestiveness, metaphorical appeal and consistency.

The question which the rest of the paper is going to address is whether the way of conceptualizing Placebo as a medicine which helps people and Brian Molko as a doctor is a result of applying a rather straightforward conceptual metaphor or maybe it is a product of conceptual blending. As the article is written in Polish, I will be giving the original wording of the author

together with my translations, imperfect as they may be.

The article concentrates on Placebo's concerts – those that were given in the past in Poland and one which was to take place on September 6, 2003. The article presents Brian Molko, the group leader, as a doctor, and the other two musicians as nurses. The group is referred to as clinic, concerts – as group psychotherapeutic sessions, and their music – as a medicine which is supposed to cure the fans, who, in turn, are depicted as people suffering from a mental illness:

1) *Prawdopodobnym skutkiem przyjęcia leku będzie stan euforii i szczęścia. The likely result of the drug application will be the state of euphoria and happiness.*

2) *Tym razem doktor Molko ze swymi wiernymi pielęgniarkami – Stefanem Olsdałem i Stevem Hewittem – będzie mógł uzdrowić znacznie większy oddział zwichniętych dusz.*

This time doctor Molko together with his faithful nurses – Stefan Olsdale and Steve Hewitt – will be able to cure a much bigger ward of twisted souls.

3) *Poradnia ekscentrycznego doktora Molko mogła otworzyć swoje podwoje na szerszą skalę.*

Eccentric doctor Molko's clinic could open the doors on a wider scale.

4) *Uzdrowiająca moc Placebo popłynęła w świat.*

The healing power of Placebo spread to the world.

5) *Oddanie fanów dla doktora Molko wyraża wdzięczność za to, że potrafi ukazać siedzące w nas koszmary lepiej niż my sami i dać nadzieję, że jednak nie jest się samemu.*

Fans' devotion to doctor Molko expresses gratitude for being able to show nightmares sitting inside us better than we can do it ourselves and giving hope that we are not alone.

6) *Fani mu ufają, więc coraz więcej cierpiących zgłasza się po poradę.*

Fans trust him, so more and more patients (suffering – lit.) come for advice.

7) *Od siedmiu lat doktor Molko prowadzi psychoterapię dla siebie i tysięcy fanów. Jednym warunkiem skuteczności jest...wiara w jej skuteczność. Tej fanom nie brakuje i tylko czekać, jak tłumnie stawia się na kolejny seans grupowy.*

For seven years doctor Molko has been providing psychotherapy for himself and thousands of fans. One requirement for its effectiveness is... belief in its effectiveness. The fans do not lack it and we just have to wait and see what crowds will turn at the next group session.

It is obvious that comparing music to medicine is a conventional way of conceptualising music whereby we treat music as a kind of a cure which has a soothing effect on the listener. In Polish there is a saying "Muzyka łagodzi obyczaje" (Music has a soothing effect on people's behaviour). In English a quotation by William Congreve "Music has charms to soothe the savage beast" has become a proverbial saying. However, the author of the article goes much further than that. Her whole concept of the effect that the gro-

up’s concerts have on the listeners, her treatment of the group members and their fans, extend far beyond the conceptual metaphor.

As it was said before, in the CMT framework metaphors are analysed as stable, systematic, conventionalized relationships between two domains. In blending, on the other hand, the relationships arise between mental spaces, which are not equivalent to domains, but are short-term constructs structured by them. Also, a blend is a novel conceptualisation, which has been created at a given moment for the needs of the current discourse, and may never become well-entrenched.

It seems to be the case with the article in question. “Any conceptualization that starts out as a primary metaphor, or other simple conceptual association, is susceptible to being elaborated. The source concept of any basic metaphor can trigger the construction of a richer image” (Grady, Oakley, and Coulson 1999).

The starting point for the analysis of the author’s conceptualization of the role Placebo plays to their fans is then the conventional metaphoric mapping music is cure, as illustrated in the English and Polish sayings quoted above. The source of the metaphor – the cure – may now trigger the construction of a richer image to form a complex metaphorical blend. For example, from what we know about the domain of health and medicine, for the cure to be effective it must be prescribed or applied by a doctor. In the blend the doctor is Brian Molko, considered as the group leader and author of song lyrics (though the credits are given to the group as a whole). If the cure is applied by a doctor, it usually happens in a hospital or private clinic during a patient’s visit to the doctor. In the article the cure works most efficiently during concerts, when Doctor Molko and his nurses – the other two members of the group – perform their music to soothe the suffering of their fans – thus applying their cure – Placebo music.

Table 1 shows the elements and relations from the four mental spaces constituting the blend.

Table 1. Conceptual integration network: Music as cure

Input 1	Input 2	Blend	Generic
Cure	Music	Music-Cure	Path
Elements	Elements	Elements	Elements
Role: Doctor	Role: group leader Brian Molko	Role: Doctor Molko	Agent
Role: Nurses	Role: Other group members	Role: Nurses	Assistants
Role: Patients / The sick	Role: Listeners / Fans	Role: Patients	Patients / Undergoers
Place: Clinic	Place: Concert hall	Place: Concert hall	Work space
Event: Visit / session	Event: Concert	Event: Concert	Occasion
Means: Cure	Means: Music	Means: Music	Instrument
Goal: Curing the sick	Goal: Performing to the fans	Goal: Curing the sick fans	End-point on the path

In the BT model, the blend inherits some structure from both the target (Music) and the source (Cure) inputs. From the input space 1, which is structured by the domain of ill health, it inherits the roles of the doctor, his nurses and patients suffering from disease, as well as some details concerning the whereabouts of the doctor's activities, the means he uses and the goal which is curing the sick. From the input space 2, structured by the domain of rock music, it inherits the roles of group members and group leader, their fans, concerts and music they play, as well as the effect it has on the listeners. The two input spaces share some structure, represented in the generic space, in which a person uses some means to perform a certain activity on other people, with a certain goal in mind.

Another feature of BT is that it is able to capture certain incongruities or unexpected phenomena which cannot be explained with the CMT. Apart from inheriting partial structure from each input space, the blend also contains the emergent meaning of its own, which cannot be accounted for by means of two-domain models. For example, in the article Brian Molko is said to lead psychotherapy for himself as well as for his fans – thus, he is not only the doctor,

the healer, but a patient as well. Thanks to this fact, he is more credible and trustworthy to his fans-patients, as he is able to uncover the nightmares which haunt them, but which haunt him as well, and to show the listeners that they are not alone – that he shares the nightmares with them and he talks about them openly. Thus, the two roles of the leader of the group are blended to show that he is not only a doctor to cure the listeners' souls, but he is also one of them, not free from the suffering.

All the three processes of blending are present in the article under discussion. The contents of the two input spaces are projected in the blend, as we have just discussed, with the fusion of elements from the inputs – the doctor fused with the group leader, the nurses fused with the other group members, the patients fused with the fans, etc. Whether this particular representation is realistic depends on the very subjective feelings of the experiencers – judging by the atmosphere and emotional involvement of the group fans, one might say that the group therapy in Warsaw on September 5 2003 was successful indeed (the author of the present paper has to mention that she was present at the concert to witness the therapy).

The result of completion – filling out patterns in the blend triggered in long-term memory by evoking the blend – is the expression that *Placebo zostało zaserverowane w mniejszej dawce* (Placebo was served in a smaller dose). We know - from the domain of ill health – that during the treatment we may be given the medicine in smaller or bigger doses, hence we complete our understanding of the scenario by talking about serving music in a small dose – referring to a concert which was shorter or maybe less intense, just like a medicine may work for a shorter or longer time, with bigger or smaller intensity.

Elaboration may be noticed in the blend in using the word *objazdowe* (traveling) in the sentence: Trzech muzyków, trzy instrumenty – oto funda-

menty, na których zbudowano objazdowy oddział dla wrażliwców (*Three musicians, three instruments – these are the foundations on which a traveling ward for the sensitive was built*). In Polish the word *objazdowe* is used in connection with the cinema, not hospital or clinic. Also, the Polish word *wrażliwcy* (*the sensitive people*) is an example of elaboration, as the sensitive people are not normally put in hospitals or sent to the doctor just for being sensitive and there are no special wards for them. Calling Brian Molko a guide as in *Doktor Molko to dobry przewodnik po nienormalnej rzeczywistości* (*Doctor Molko is a good guide around the abnormal reality*) is another example of elaboration, whereby we conceive of a psychologist or psychotherapist (and doctor Molko refers to this kind of doctor – the doctor of human souls) as a guide who leads us in our life and helps us deal with the external reality, a model and a spiritual leader.

It may be subject to discussion whether the last three examples are instantiations of the process of elaboration or completion. Subjective, intuitive counterarguments against them may result from uncertainty what information is part and parcel of our knowledge about ill health, doctors, patients and medicines, or rock concerts and rock music. However, our belief is that the two processes are not entirely distinct, and they form a continuum rather than being two end-points on a scale.

4. Conclusion

The aim of the present paper has been to show that conceptual metaphor and conceptual blending need not be treated as contradictory as has been suggested by some researchers (Coulson, 1996), but as complementary, focusing on two different aspects of cognitive processing, addressing issues of different nature. Thus, the article has attempted to demonstrate how the two phenomena are indispensable in discussing the nature of conceptualization of a given phenomenon. In the language discussed in the present paper both the conceptual metaphor and blend interweave to create the author's subjective, but consequent, uniform, suggestive vision of what Placebo and their music constitute to their fans. This vision is pervasive in the whole article, serving as a good example of linguistic material to research into the interplay of metaphor and blending.

The novel conceptualization of the music and the group members, altogether with the conceptual metaphor music is cure, prove that a full understanding of the linguistic – and, more importantly, conceptual – creativity which underlies the above examples would be impossible without referring to the two phenomena in question.

References

- Coulson, S. (1996). "The Menendez Brothers Virus: Analogical mapping in blended spaces". In A. Goldberg (ed) *Conceptual Structure, Discourse, and Language*. Stanford, CA: CSLI.
- Coulson, S. (2001) *Semantic Leaps*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Fauconnier, G. and Turner, M. (1996). "Blending as a central process of grammar. In Coulson, S. (ed) *Conceptual Structure, Discourse, and Language*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 113-131.
- Fauconnier, G. and Turner, M. (1998). "Conceptual integration networks". *Cognitive Science* 22:2. 133-187.
- Fauconnier, G. and Turner, M. (2002). *The Way We Think*. Basic Books.
- Fauconnier, G. (1997). *Mappings in thought and language*. Cambridge, U.K.: CUP.
- Gibbs, R. (1994) *The Poetics of Metaphor*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Grady, J.E., Oakley, T., and Coulson, S. (1999). "Blending and metaphor". In *Metaphor in cognitive linguistics*, G. Steen and R. Gibbs (eds.). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Kövecses, Z. (1986). *Metaphors of Anger, Pride and Love*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kövecses, Z. (1990). *Emotion Concepts*. New York: Springer.
- Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980), *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Lakoff, G., and Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh*. Basic Books.
- Lakoff, G. and Turner, M. (1989). *More Than Cool Reason: a poetic guide to metaphor*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Turner, M. (1991). *Reading Minds: the study of English in the age of cognitive science*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Turner, M. (1996). *The Literary Mind*. Oxford: OUP.