Endangered Metaphors

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Endangered Metaphors
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Prologue

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1. Background to metaphor studies

Metaphor studies have shifted from the periphery of linguistics and cognate disciplines to their core, thanks to a significant degree to Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal monograph on the metaphors WE (mainly English-speaking Westerners) live by. Their arguments are directly responsible for an exploratory paper (Mühlhäusler 1995), in which I put forward a number of propositions regarding the metaphors OTHERS live by, including the following ones:

1. In the absence of immaculate perception, human beings interpret the world through culture specific metaphors – particularly those aspects of the world that are not fully known to them. Most advances in the sciences are a consequence of the adoption of new metaphorical interpretations. These typically have to do with what we regard as natural. As observed by Kuhn (1979): "The essence of any scientific revolution is the redrawing of the boundary between what is regarded as natural and what is not".
2. There is no culture-neutral boundary between what is literal and what is metaphorical. Thus, what is literal from the point of view of English speakers may well be metaphorical from the perspective of another language.
3. Far from distracting scholars in their search for truth, metaphors have very considerable heuristic value. However, metaphors can also be misused and exploited as rhetorical devices. Lakoff and Johnson, for instance, argue that "a metaphor in a political or economic system, by virtue of what it hides, can lead to human degradation" (1980: 236).
4. The metaphorical schemes of English are shared or at least largely overlap with those of most Standard Average European (SAE) languages, but are often absent or different in so-called 'exotic' languages.
5. By studying the metaphorical systems of other cultures and by feeding the results of such studies back into our own culture, we might be able to solve certain social, technological, environmental and philosophical problems. Like developing lateral-thinking skills (De Bono 1971) it is a method of generating alternative ways of looking at things.

6. There has been a massive and ever increasing reduction in linguistic diversity in the wake of Western colonization and modernization both of the Neo-Europe (Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, South America) and the Third World. Non-European semantic systems (including metaphor systems) are particularly vulnerable to the modernization process. The number of genuinely different semantic systems is rapidly shrinking.
7. Whatever one's view may be on intertranslatability, linguistic universals and linguistic relativisms, time empirically to test these matters is running out. The documentation and study of non-Western semantic systems hence must be one of the urgent priorities of linguistics, as indeed it is for anthropology, as emphasized in Keesing (1985: 214).

2. How to describe metaphors

It is good to see that so many scholars have begun seriously to look at the metaphors not just of non-Western cultures but also at those of non-mainstream peoples in the Western World. I am aware that not everyone agrees with my propositions. In particular, claim No 2 in the above list evoked the ire of one of the readers of my article, who subsequently wrote a critical paper on it (Goddard 1996). His main objection was to an "undercurrent of extreme relativism" (p. 145) and he argues that 'despite the enormous semantic differences between languages, there is solid evidence that they share a small set of "universal meanings", which can provide a non-arbitrary and non-ethnocentric vocabulary for cross-linguistic semantics'. In a rejoinder (Mühlhäusler 1996) I adduced a number of additional arguments in support of my original propositions. In addition, there are others, for instance that sharing some meanings and conceptualizations does of course not mean that all meanings are shared. Languages are more appropriately regarded as a mix of universal and singular properties than mere spelling variants of a set of universal principles. Whilst there is more glory in establishing universal principles and generalizations there is a clear place in linguistic studies for butterfly collecting and classification and there is room for documenting singular properties of human languages. An important question is how we can talk about such properties.

It seems as desirable to have a set of universal descriptive features but this may not be achievable on principled grounds. Any examination of the metalinguistic theories and practices of linguists will suggest that we are far from having agreed operational descriptors even in the domain of 'core' grammar, i.e. phonetology or morphosyntax. There is no agreement as to what constitutes a 'geminate', 'fortis', 'clitic' or 'object', not to mention concepts such as 'anterior' or ' aorist'. The problem is compounded by the belief that such descriptive apparatus can be applied to decontextualized words and utterances.

The development of a neutral metalinguistics would seem to be unachievable unless one believes that there are entities out there that can be simply labeled and unless one fudges the difference between metalanguage and language described as well as the distinction between metasprachlich and metalinguistisch made by German linguists. Using the term 'grammar' with systematic ambiguity as was first done by Chomsky (1965) will not do. Chomsky's deliberate confusion is being handed down to new generations of linguists by means of introductory textbooks such as Fromkin (et al. 6th edition 2009) and perpetuated in Goddard's paper together with the equally problematic view that a language consists of combinations of a determinate set of small units. His is one of the numerous attempts by philosophers and linguists to systematize knowledge and to represent it by means of a small number of recurrent elements, developed out of the enlightenment ideas exposed in several contributions to Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and repeated again and again in the *a priori* language proposals of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century universalists. To me the fact that such universals are attested in the description of language produced by professional Western linguists is not the same as saying that they are attested in languages. Taking machines to bits or talking the world to bits are metaphorically related, though this might turn out to be difficult to explain semantic universalists.

Unexpectedly, there is also little agreement on what constitutes a metaphor and how it can be defined and distinguished from both literal expressions and other tropes. Not all contributors to this volume agree on their definition of 'metaphor', but just as creolists can do creolistics in the absence of an agreed meaning of 'creole', metaphor studies are possible without an agreed definition. Happily, meaningful communication does not require a fixed grammatical code with a fixed finite set of agreed meanings and metaphors can be employed to enable communication between interlocutors with different knowledge bases.

As regards the analysis of metaphors, it is important to remember that they are not simply objects out there, but ways of using language in cultural and situational contexts. Their study involves denotation and reference to the external world, and the techniques developed for the analysis of language-internal sense-relations seem inappropriate. The notion of determinate meaning existing in situationally and culturally decontextualized words and sentences has little to recommend it. As Dirven and Paprotté observed in the introduction to their collection of papers on metaphor (1985: ix):

> Linguistic metaphor research has contributed to break down the divisional boundaries between semantics and pragmatics. Words obtain their meaning in co and context. The notion of fixed, schematic meanings, still treated as complexes of universal primitives, has lost its attractiveness and with it, explanations of metaphors in terms of feature transfer, verbal displacement and the like.

In an important critique of TGG's attempts to develop an inventory of semantic atoms for the description of decontextualized words, Bolinger (1965) has put forward a

number of insights which have lost little force thirty years later and which have a particular bearing on metaphor studies:

a. That any such attempts will force theoreticians to exclude some important semantic insights and, as a consequence, their theory will fail to explain the behavior of native speakers.
b. That metaphor poses a particular problem area for atomistic analysis: 'One can hardly avoid the conclusion of the indeterminancy in semantic interrelatedness' (p. 567).
c. That the very activity of semantic atomization is based on the metaphor of grammar as a machine.

Whilst acknowledging that many semanticians live by machine and atomizing metaphors, I believe there are good reasons for my not doing this (see also Harris 1987). I note that the contributors to this volume vary in their use of a number of metalinguistic expressions, but this is the price one has to pay for the fact that linguistics is not (and cannot be in principle) a natural science concerned with the analysis of given objects.

Harris (2001) has provided important additional arguments against orthodox universalist approaches to metaphor. His integrational linguistics regards the notion that linguistic expressions can have a distinct semantic characterization as decontexturalized units as untenable. Let us consider sentences such as:

humans and apes are related
humans are not apes

Harris notes that the interpretation of such constructions depends on their accreditation. Uttered by a scientist they are different from when used as a remark about someone who has a craving for bananas or a report by a Jehovah's Witness on scientific biology or from a poem about human amorality. In other words, whether or not such statements appear literal or metaphorical depends on contextual factors. When there is no conflict among interlocutors about the accreditation of a statement (e.g. among two scientists of the same conviction) they are taken to be literal descriptions. Where such conflict arises (e.g. between a fundamentalist Christian and a scientist) the statements are taken metaphorically by one of the interlocutors. I have noted (Mühlhäusler 2003) that environmental advertising often employs metaphors as a strategy to reconcile moral and economic discourses such as when they advertise green goods 'that do not cost the earth'.

That metaphor "constitutes the indispensable principle for integrating diverse phenomena and perspectives" has been observed by researchers in neighboring disciplines as well (Berggren 1962: 237).

3. Metaphors and language endangerment

There are two questions I get frequently asked when speaking about the loss of the world's linguistic diversity:

1. Isn't the loss of languages a natural process and isn't it therefore silly to try to arrest it?
2. Why should one bother with linguistic diversity? Wouldn't the world be better off if everybody spoke the same language?

The premise of the first question can be easily dismissed. It is true that languages naturally come into being and disappear, but the rate at which they have disappeared from the mid-nineteenth century onward is far greater than the emergence of new languages and the loss of languages is accelerating. This is due to historical and human factors, not nature, as is emphasized in most of the contributions to this volume. It is not the case that humans have suddenly made a free choice to get rid of languages, as is sometimes claimed. On the contrary, speakers of small old-established/long established traditional languages have had no choice in this matter and when you ask the descendants of those who lost their languages, they overwhelmingly would like to have their languages back. This reflects a rational wish of having identity and roots, not irrational sentimentalism.

In spite of the wishes and aspirations of many speech communities, the process of language attrition continues unabated and the contributors to this volume make it abundantly clear that very little time indeed is left to document lesser-used languages, particularly aspects of their structure of lexicon which are brought into being by local conceptualizations and circumstances. Metaphor is a prime example of an endangered area of most traditional old-established languages. The following observations made by the authors in this volume are representative of what is happening on a global scale.

Awareness both among linguists and the wider public of the fact that many of the world's small languages are endangered or highly endangered is a recent phenomenon, with little or no debate before the 1980s. Even today, the full extent of this phenomenon is often not understood. Thus, in Australia there is a notion that some Aboriginal languages are still 'strong' – in the sense that they are passed on to the next generation and that there are significant number of speakers, an example being the Western Desert language, Yankunytjatjara. On closer inspection it turns out that what is passed on is the language names which tends to be applied to very different ways of speaking prevalent among younger speakers. This observation is also made in Montes de Oca Vega's contribution to the present volume on Nahuatl:

> Although we can say that Nahuatl is the most vigorous and vital language in Mexico today, it is important to have in mind that many speech registers have suffered modifications or been lost to Spanish, the official language in Mexico, due to the effects of globalization which include educational, commercial and legal issues.

Importantly, what present-day younger speakers of Nahuatl talk about, their cultural knowledge and their semantics have changed considerably when compared to the discourses of the previous generation. Some linguists have continued to act as if the continuation of a name equals a continuity of identity over time. The assumption of identity of languages over time was prevalent even before the onset of colonization in spite of the fact languages are always dynamic, changing and adaptive. The notion of identity over time makes even less sense in the present when language change is far more rapid and mostly non-adaptive.

The options speakers of lesser-used old-established languages have are either to become modernized (equals becoming fully intertranslatable with modern European standard languages) or be left behind. Modern languages thus are little more than say English, Finnish or Dutch is with funny word forms and many of the world's minor and lesser-used languages are becoming similarly semantically colonized and turned into SAE languages. Importantly, whilst continuing to use words of their traditional languages, the metaphors many young speakers live by are those of the languages that dominate them. A third option, maintaining or reviving their traditional languages is one that requires a vast amount of commitment, resources and time and the number of successful reversals of language shift remains very low.

Linguists can help preserve linguistic diversity by careful documentation and they may be able to contribute to language maintenance and revival, though this requires a great deal of community effort. Linguists can be advocates for small languages and help create greater awareness. I have a personal agenda as I am a native speaker of an endangered language, Alemannic, myself and I would like to help my people preserve it. The metaphors of my language reflect the life of inhabitants of the Black Forest. To understand how people who grow up with this language and culture think, it is necessary to know their key metaphors.

4. Arguments for linguistic diversity

The main arguments in support of linguistic diversity are a moral, a scientific and an economic one.

The moral reasons for sustaining linguistic diversity include a human right to speak one's own language, to be educated in one's language, or to have a name in one's own language People need languages to express their personal and cultural identities, to have access to their cultural roots and connect to their traditional environment. Cultural and linguistic Human Rights are part of the UNESCO Declaration on Human Rights.

There are many scientific reasons for language diversity. For linguists the availability of reliable data is an important consideration. One of the functions of the contributions to this volume is to provide linguistic professionals with data that in turn may help achieve a better understanding of metaphor. But there are other scientific

reasons as well. Among them is the insight that languages develop as specialized tools for managing particular environments. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is reflected in the lexical resources of the language including its metaphors. A desert language will have means for talking about survival in the desert, including words for different ways of finding water. Arctic languages will reflect very different cultural models and knowledge. It is noteworthy that one finds the greatest linguistic diversity in areas with complex small ecologies (such as in tropical rainforest areas), with each language being optimally suited to a particular ecology. The theme of the adaptation of languages to their natural environment is of central concern to the emerging sub-discipline of eco-linguistics (Mühlhäusler 2003).

No language is a neutral tool and no language interprets all aspects of the world better than another language. To gain fuller insights into phenomena one requires multiple perspectives, correctives from other languages. Some of the world's top scientists including Einstein and von Lorenz have seen the importance of such multiple perspectives as correctives for Western scientific language. Again, philosophers might ask different questions about the nature of 'being' if they approached this question from the perspective of a language that has a range of different words for different modes of existence. After all the being of a person is qualitatively different from the being of a chair or a rock.

The topic of the economic value of linguistic diversity has not featured in mainstream linguistic discourse and none of the authors in this volume ask how much the metaphors of the languages are worth. Some years ago Richard Damania from the Economics Department of University of Adelaide and I prepared a cost-benefit analysis of maintenance of Australian Aboriginal languages for DCITA (Dept. Communication, Information Technology and the Arts 2004). In this paper we demonstrated that the benefits by far outweigh the costs and that greater investment in language maintenance and revival could lead to even greater benefits. Restoring languages to communities not only reduces individual and social dysfunctionality and illness (thus saving dollars otherwise spent on prisons, hospitals and social workers), it can also lead to new economic activities such as linguistic and cultural tourism. The value of traditional ecological knowledge (e.g. plant names and knowledge of plant use, weather knowledge or fire management knowledge) runs into many billion dollars world wide and pilot projects such as an Australian project on Aboriginal weather knowledge has generated significant savings for agriculture and tourism.

A final argument for preserving linguistic diversity is the precautionary principle. Even if we do not fully understand what these languages are good for, we never will once they have disappeared. Extinction regrettably is forever.

One hopes that such arguments will be listened to. Unfortunately, there still is very little awareness among the world's leaders of the tragedy that is happening before their eyes, the potential loss of 80%+ of the world's languages within two generations.

The world's 6,000 or so human languages may differ little in linguistic complexity or their ability to express their thoughts of their speakers and there is no reason to

believe that English had qualities that pre-destined it to become a world language. French, Maori or Saami could have fulfilled this role equally well, had it not been for a series of historical accidents that catapulted English into its present leading role. What distinguishes languages are speaker numbers, economic and political power, status and many other things. Of the 6,000 languages known to linguists about 5,600 are spoken by 4% of the world's population the remaining 400 by 96% of the world's population. Only 10 languages have more than 100,000,000 speakers and this is on the transparency. Only 3 languages French, English and Russian have more than 100,000,000 additional non-native speakers. Counting languages and speaker numbers is a very hazardous business and it is difficult to get any agreement among linguists. A small number of languages are privileged not only in terms of speaker numbers but also in terms of the descriptions available for them. I sometimes get comments from my university's research body suggesting that I had spent enough time and money on the Norf'k language of the descendants of the Bounty mutineers. I have to remind them of the vast number of scholars that have worked on the description of English or Spanish over many years.

5. Documentation of metaphor

Metaphorical systems of traditional languages, particularly those without a tradition of literacy have not featured prominently in metaphor studies. Before the advent of internet search machines van Noppen's (1985) metaphor bibliography listed 4,300 plus titles. When I googled 'linguistic study of metaphor' I obtained 294,000 results. Whilst van Noppen's opus contains thousands of studies concerned with the metaphorical systems of a small number of Indo-European languages there is only a small trickle of studies of other languages, notably Japanese and Chinese and only a handful of studies for the Australian and Pacific region. Most of the studies of metaphor in the non-Indo-European languages address problems of poetical metaphor in traditional ceremonies rather than Lakoff and Johnson's question of the metaphorical arguments underlying everyday actions and argumentation.

That linguistic documentation is an urgent task, again has become widely accepted however as has been pointed out for instance by Evans (2010). Hansford in her paper on Chumburung numbers, points out another reason for the neglect of metaphor by documentary linguists:

> [...] linguists tend to use elicitation, because they are after a particular feature. Only natural texts will readily provide metaphoric or figurative expressions. Also linguists often do not stay long enough in the area to encourage local people to use them in face-to-face conversations or for the linguist to explain what he or she is looking for. In addition linguists tend not to study a lot of anthropology, although symbolism such as the three-four dichotomy should crop up quite early in language learning.

My own work on Tok Pisin discourses draws on a large number of records of spontaneous conversations. They contain numerous metaphors as well as long stretches of a variety of Tok Pisin called 'Tok Pilai' or play language, which had never been documented before (Mühlhäusler 1985: 260 ff.)

Most 'documentation' of languages is far too narrowly focussed on 'core' grammar and lexicon and continues to ignore numerous other 'softer' or 'marginal' aspects of language. The cause of this of course is the dominant Western metaphor of reification which enables speakers of Western languages to convert embedded process of communication into objects. Speaking requires speakers, subject matter, purpose and numerous others – languages do not. Its object language is variably portrayed as a mental organ, a calculus, a system, a social semiotic and others. None of these definitions require attention to numerous environmental factors. The same metaphorical process lies at the bottom of notions such as communication, attitude, disagreement and numerous other abstract reified terms. The problems of the conduit metaphor of communication and the code metaphor of grammar have been discussed in detail by Reddy (1979). One is reminded of Whorf's statement (1956) that individual languages privilege only a limited interpretation of the world and that one needs other languages as a corrective.

One should certainly be careful not to assume that any single language provides privileged insights into every aspect of existence but, on the contrary assume that among languages there is a mix of metaphors representing the wisdom of a speech community and others that are problematic.

6. The work metaphors do

This leads me to another question: what work do the metaphors of others do? I have already alluded to the role of managing the natural and social environment. Another important function is that they enable contact with the spiritual world, e.g. surviving in dangerous places populated by forest spirits as is shown in Franklin's paper, or defining a relationship between people and God.

Metaphors can be characterized as bridges that lead from the known to the unknown. Another, perhaps more appropriate metaphor of metaphors is that they are like the beams of a searchlight that selectively highlights some aspects of the unknown but leaves other aspects in the dark. Thus when speakers of English describe the aftermath of an Australian bushfire, they say that everything is black whereas Aboriginal Australians say that the landscape is white. In actual fact, only the burnt trees and buildings are black, suggesting destruction and death. The ground is covered with white ash, which suggests fertility and regeneration (example given to me by Prof. Peter Sutton, South Australian Museum). The work that metaphors do in creating culture specific perspectives and actions can be illustrated with another example. Darwin's metaphor of the 'survival of the fittest' could become widely accepted in British English

and totally accredited as a literal description of certain evolutionary processes because it was grounded in social experience (business competition on a small over-populated island, social mobility and such like and in the discourse of sports and games). In Russia, by contrast, neither did Darwin's idea get accepted as an adequate metaphor, nor did the social context exist in which it could be taken literally true. Similarly the experience of difference and sameness in modes of being cannot be separated from its communicative context.

What is noticeable in the contributions to this volume is that the knowledge base of each of the language groups documented is very complex. What is common is that the languages documented have developed over a very long time amongst small groups of speakers and that they are important tools for the speakers in managing both the cultural and natural environment. One can characterize languages as the outcome of a particular prolonged process of accommodation to particular external circumstances.

It is important to ask what happens when speakers of particular languages find themselves in a radically new environment, such as when they are physically relocated. Most nomadic people have been made to live in settlements (a fact mentioned by several contributors to this volume), nuclear experiments for instance involved large-scale resettlement of people in the Pacific and Australia, suggesting destruction and death, or when they are missionized or colonized. In such situations the traditional knowledge base loses its power as a metaphorical basis for adapting to new circumstances.

A while ago I discussed with one of my research associates, Dr. Næssan, why many Australian Aboriginal people find it impossible to get on in a Western cash economy. After a long discussion, we concluded that this may be due to a metaphor meat food (*kuka*) is money. *Kuka* is scarce, desirable, obtained because of good luck, it goes off very quickly in a hot desert environment, and needs to be consumed quickly and shared around. This is how some of our Western Desert Aboriginal informants spend money: it is shared around and spent in a very short amount of time after which people are money *wiya* – broke. A metaphorical understanding of money equals pigs or live cattle has led to the institutionalized practice of converting the cash one earns into animals resulting overstocking and degradation of land in many parts of the world.

These of course are just anecdotal examples and much further research is required to confirm the claim that metaphorical systems in changed circumstances can often be highly dysfunctional.

7. How to identify metaphors

A while ago a colleague of mine organized a series of lectures titled 'Metaphors of God'. Whereas a talk on the metaphor 'the Lord is a loving shepherd' was accepted my own somewhat frivolous proposal to talk on the Reverend Spooner's metaphor 'the Lord is a shoving leopard' was not.

Frivolous as the example of the shoving leopard seems, it highlights a number of theoretical concerns I have. First, to understand why this metaphor came into being at all, one has to understand its linguistic history: in this case, the transposition of the initial consonants of two word phrases. But this transposition not only creates a new form, it also creates potential for a new meaning: it enables speakers to explore the implications of this expression, reflect on the nature of leopards and of God and to ask whether there might not be a religious system built around this notion. Such examples raise another question, which I will address once I have discussed a number of English expressions:

1.	to rabbit	to chatter, waffle
2.	old pot	an old man
3.	club and stick/clodhopper	policeman
4.	my love and kisses	my wife
5.	raspberry	to make a rude noise with the lips
6.	joy of life	wife
7.	loaf	head
8.	Up your date!	Up yours!
9.	Honey-pot	vagina

A linguist from a non-English speaking background will be able to construct plausible explanations for the metaphorical or metonymical character of such expressions, classify and describe them. Thus, he or she may refer to the constant twitching of a rabbit's lips to explain its putative metaphorical meaning, to the round raspberry shape of one's lips when blowing a raspberry or to the similarity in shape of a date to an anus. However, such an account would miss a crucial property of the above expressions; they are all instances of rhyming slang, thus:

1. 'to rabbit' is short for 'rabbit and pork' = 'talk'
2. 'old pot' is short for 'pot and pan' = 'man'
3. 'club and stick' rhymes with 'dick', 'clod hopper' rhymes with 'copper' = 'policeman'
4. 'love and kisses' rhymes with 'missus'
5. 'raspberry' is short for 'raspberry tart' = 'fart'
6. 'joy of life' rhymes with 'wife'
7. 'loaf' is short for 'loaf of bread' = 'head'
8. 'date' is short for 'date and plum' = 'bum'
9. 'honey pot' rhymes with 'twat'

There are hundreds more such words in English. In as much as speakers are aware of the origin of an expression, such as 'to rabbit' or 'use your loaf' they are probably best not treated as metaphors, when the memory of their history is lost, they behave like other frozen metaphors.

Rhyming slang is just one example of a widespread phenomenon Laycock (1972) has referred to as 'ludling' from ludus linguae, 'linguistic game'. Laycock has documented ludlings in a number of New Guinea and other languages, and demonstrated that different language groups can play quite different language games. Ludlings are particularly common in secret and taboo registers of language, and, as Montes de Oca Vega shows in this volume "riddles can be considered a type of speech play". The outcome of a linguistic game such as a riddle can provide significant insights into conceptualizations and metaphor, but one has to beware that this is not necessarily so.

The general conclusion from all this, is that in order to understand language one cannot restrict oneself to synchronic analysis but needs to pay attention to the historical development that brought arbitrary endpoints into being. Treating the English examples above simply is instances of metonyms or metaphors would fail to characterize how this language works. The rhyming slang examples illustrate there are several ways that lead to the development of metaphors, that in some instances the target domain is the point of departure and that similarity of form rather than similarity of meaning is the primary factor. Thus, in the case of English rhyming slang there are certain target domains, (police, sexual partner, sexual organs, marginalized groups) that are often referred to not by their name but by an expression that rhymes with it (see Franklyn 1960 for a technical discussion of rhyming slang).

Metaphors can come into being through a number of processes and it would be interesting to find out not just by what metaphors others live by but also how they construct metaphors.

8. Conclusions

Using language metaphorically is an activity in which we engage in order to bridge the vast gaps between what we know and what we can know. The knowledge base of different cultures and subcultures varies greatly, and with it the boundary between what is literal and what is metaphorical. The contributors to this volume have demonstrated both the richness of metaphor systems and their fragility.

Time to document metaphors of others is running out, as the knowledge base of speakers of numerous small traditional languages is being eroded and as traditional metaphors are being replaced by those of a few large world languages. Language documentation has often excluded metaphor and linguists have not consistently had sufficient training to deal with them. The present volume affords insights into what can be done and what needs to be done. I hope this is just the beginning of a much larger cooperative research project into the "metaphors others live by".

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Endangered metaphors

Introduction

Anna Idström and Elisabeth Piirainen

The title of our book brings two concepts together, both of which are well developed in linguistics, ethnology, anthropology and related cultural studies and have produced a rich literature: 'endangered' and 'metaphors'. The combination *Endangered Metaphor*, however, is a term newly introduced to the humanities, and thus requires some explication.

The first component of the book title, *endangered*, follows the well-known term *Endangered Languages*. Already in 1992, Hale & al. pointed out an alarming fact: at least half of the world's languages are going to become extinct during this century; this means that thousands of unique human languages will disappear forever, many of them without a trace. Most of the indigenous languages once spoken in Australia, The Americas, Siberia and the Pacific islands are on the verge of extinction. Only some elders may remember their original native language while their families have often switched to a more dominant majority language and did not manage to pass on their own language to the children. For definitions of the term *endangered language* with its gradations such as *seriously endangered, irreversibly endangered, near-extinct*, etc., we refer to the relevant literature.[1] For the purpose of this book the broad but necessary definition of an endangered language is: *a language without safe transmission to new generations*.

The second component of the book title, *metaphor*, is even more complex. There are various definitions of 'metaphor' in the vast amount of studies of this topic, and we don't want to add a new one to them.[2] We chose the term *metaphor* for practical reasons, because it is a short and understandable term. We use it in a broad sense, covering most of the linguistic units discussed in this book. The authors' methodological approaches are too different as to be subsumed under one and the same concept of

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1. Compare, for example, standard works like Crystal (2000), Nettle/Romaine (2000), Harrison (2007) as well as *Ethnologue SIL* 2009 or the *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*.

2. For an overview of trends in the interdisciplinary metaphor research see Gibbs (2008), among other things.

'metaphor': Several articles start explicitly from conceptual metaphors, either including metonymies or not, while others give priority to figurative units such as idioms or other kinds of figures of speech and indirect language, among them even 'dead metaphors'. What all these non-literal expressions have in common is their *ambiguity*, their semantic irregularity (most of them can be interpreted on two different conceptual levels) on the one hand, and a certain degree of *conventionalization* (they are inherent in the language system, are not freely created) on the other.

Despite these differences, the 14 articles of our book have one – highly topical – theme in common: *Endangered Metaphors*. The articles themselves contribute to the definition of 'endangered metaphors', since they are grouped around two salient phenomena: First, several studies cover languages which will be extinct in the near future; this will be accompanied by a complete lost of all metaphors and figurative units encoded in these languages. Secondly, other authors deal with languages whose continued existence as such is not endangered but which are exposed to serious changes, be it under the pressure of a more dominant standard language or due to social changes, education, urbanization and globalization in general. These latter articles unanimously emphasize that the level of metaphorical concepts, among them forms of veiling language or a former number system, is particularly affected by those changes. Our working definition of 'endangered metaphors', therefore, takes account of a broad notion of 'metaphor' (including all kinds of metaphorical expressions, idioms and other figurative units) and a differentiated notion of 'endangered' which includes changes in the realm of figurative language and non-literal mode of expression – independent from the degree of threat of the language in question.

The documentation and research on metaphors of the endangered languages has been neglected almost completely until recently. Despite the significance and urgency of the issue, very little on this subject has yet been published. The academic society should urgently take this task and preserve what is left. We are hoping that this book will encourage researchers and students to document and investigate metaphors of endangered languages and minority languages under the pressure of more powerful majority languages. The intention of our book is to explore in what ways these metaphors and other kinds of figurative language may encode culturally specific cognitive systems which will be lost when these languages cease to exist or will be abandoned when they change under pressure. Each article will investigate how metaphors in endangered languages yield insight into vanishing cultures by offering a large number of concrete examples.

Let us look at the regions and language families covered in this volume. The studies come from all continents and a wide range of language families. Indigenous North America is represented by two articles from Canada, authored by Sally Rice and Carolina Pasamonik, and one from Alaska authored by Olga Lovick. All of these languages, *Dene Sųłiné, Beaver* and *Upper Tanana Athabaskan* (respectively), belong to the same language family – namely, the *Athabaskan* languages. As these three articles demonstrate, the metaphoricity of a language or a language family cannot be exhausted by one study or one point of view. Each article brings unique information about

indigenous cultures that once flourished, but today are merely fading memories of the last speakers of the languages in question.

Moving southwards on the map of the world's languages we introduce one indigenous language from Mexico and another from Peru. *Nahuatl*, an *Uto-Aztecan* language spoken in Mexico, is fortunately not endangered as a language of communication – but as Mercedes Montes de Oca Vega shows, cognitive structures required by the interpretation of modern Nahuatl riddles have changed from the days when the ancient Aztecs enjoyed the very same riddles. If there were no written documents of the Aztec language, this change could hardly be followed. Elena Mihas' article discusses *Ashéninka Perené,* an *Arawakan* language and sheds light on conceptual bodily metaphors underlying a traditional story from the rainforests of Peru.

Linguistic wealth of Oceania is exemplified by two languages from Papua New Guinea, *Siroi* and *Kewa*. Siroi belongs to the *Madang* language family, while Kewa is one of the *Engan* languages. Sjaak and Jacqueline van Kleef analyze the systematicity of Siroi metaphors which are conventionally used in storytelling, and how these metaphors mirror the natural environment of those people, while the colorful Kewa idioms described by Karl Franklin draw a picture of the social life in tropical rainforests. Monali Longmailai's & Lakshminath Rabha's study from India opens a view to metaphors used in two *Tibeto-Burman* minority languages. This comparative analysis of *Dimasa* and *Rabha* shows how the metaphors are persistent and vulnerable at the same time, and offer the cultural, political and social environment as an explanation to either situation.

Another alternative view to the wealth of expressive power of metaphors is provided by Gillian Hansford's article about *Chumburung*, which is a minority language spoken in Ghana and belongs to the *Niger-Congo* language family. The Chumburung numeral system is partly used in a metaphorically conventional way.

In the end, there are endangered metaphors even in Europe. To begin at the very edges of Europe, our volume includes two languages which existed at their area long before new immigrants came: *Basque*, the only remaining language of the oldest attainable layer of Southwest European languages, now a minority language in Spain and France, and *Inari Saami*, a *Uralic* language spoken at the Far North of Europe: northern Finland. Iraide Ibarretxe-Antuñano sheds light on Basque metaphors and how they carry deep cultural values of a minority. Anna Idström's article about Inari Saami demonstrates that systematical patterns of conventionalized metaphors cannot be explained without taking into account the Inari Saami culture and human adaptation to the natural environment.

The three *Indo-European* varieties examined in this book – coming from the *Indo-Iranian, Celtic* and *Germanic* branches – are very different. However, all of them hand down special, otherwise almost unparalleled metaphorical concepts and images. *Romani* is the language spoken by the Roma in Europe for hundreds of years. Kimmo Granqvist's article compares metaphors that the Roma minority of Finland uses in their Finnish variety with metaphors used in Finnish Romani, their native language of Indo-Iranian origin. *Scottish Gaelic*, an endangered Celtic language, was traditionally

spoken throughout the Scottish Mainland (with the exception of the Northeast and Southeast extremities) and the Hebrides, and is now spoken in pockets of the West Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland. Tiber Falzett investigates the metaphorical connotation between 'food' and 'music' in Scottish Gaelic emigrant traditions in North America. Elisabeth Piirainen, who for the first time studied dialectal phraseology within a linguistic framework, discusses striking cases of endangered metaphors, drawn from her rich data of *Westmünsterländisch*, an archaic Low Saxon dialect whose figurative language in its former originality does not exist any more.

This leads us to the question of the intensity of endangerment of the languages considered here which varies between the two poles of being close to extinction and still being in a more or less stable position. The Athabaskan languages represent the most seriously endangered class with less than one hundred speakers and no transmission to new generations. At the other pole we have languages like Chumburung (Ghana), Kewa (Papua New Guinea) and Nahuatl (Mexico). These languages cannot be considered as endangered at the moment – with their large number of speakers and an untroubled transmission to younger generations, but a deeper investigation into metaphorical uses of the languages reveal clear changes in figurative expressions. As outlined above, those changes are, at least partly, consequences of the pressure of more powerful cultures and majority languages.

As a conclusion, all of the articles point to a single direction: the metaphors of a language are vulnerable. *They start to vanish at the very beginning of a language becoming endangered*. As a number of authors point out (e.g. Idström, Longmailai & Rabha, Lovick, Piirainen), it may be too late to document the conventional figurative expressions of a language effectively when there are only a few speakers of the older generation left, and those few who still remember the language do not use it in every day life. This does not mean that languages on the verge of extinction should be abandoned as hopeless cases. On the contrary: these languages should be seen as cases of extreme urgency and any kind of metaphorical substance that is left should be preserved for posterity. More importantly, the documentation of figurative expressions should be started immediately when a language becomes potentially endangered. In such a situation metaphors and figurative nuances are the first to vanish, even if the language continues to exist. The figurative units of endangered languages in their originality, handed down by generations, are severely endangered by the overwhelming influence of the mightier languages in question, by the processes of globalization and other factors of linguistic change.

Our book is dedicated to all those who experienced the loss of their native language, the loss of the rich conventional wisdom, the images, concepts or myths they have been familiar with since childhood. "Where have all these images gone?" we could ask modifying Nettle & Romaine's (2000: 1) famous yet seemingly melancholic question.[3] However, this is not the place to mourn these losses but, instead, to try to

3. "Where have all the languages gone?"

bring about a reversal through increased research in the area of endangered metaphors. Our book should be regarded as one first small step in this direction.

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"Our language is very literal"

Figurative expression in Dene Sųłiné [Athapaskan]

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For reasons perhaps more sociolinguistic than linguistic, Athapaskan languages rarely borrow in order to expand the lexicon. Instead, they opt for the recycling of a very small set of core stems through recombination or simple reinterpretation (involving metaphor and metonymy). The resulting lexical inventory is striking to cognitive linguists because of the way experiential reality and typologically common construal patterns are routinely exploited for lexical expansion. This paper presents figurative lexicalization strategies in Dene Sųłiné and argues that they are similar to patterns adopted by genetically unrelated languages. Importantly, a deeper understanding of the processes involved in Athapaskan lexicalization may help speakers continue to lexicalize new concepts in indigenous ways, thus helping sustain the health and viability of their languages.

Keywords: Figurative expression, Dene Sųłiné, Athapaskan, lexicalization

1. Introduction

Like most Athapaskan or Dene languages, Dene Sųłiné resists borrowing as a way of extending the lexicon.[1] A long-discredited hypothesis first advanced by Sapir (1921: 196) holds that elaborate derivational and inflectional processes within the verbal complex conspire to keep foreign loan words to a minimum (cf. K. Rice 1989, 2000;

1. Literally, 'the true people', Dene Sųłiné is the preferred ethnonym for this northern Athapaskan language loosely associated with the Mackenzie Basin, generally replacing the Cree-based *Chipewyan*, except in its ISO 639–3 code: *chp*. In this paper, I employ the practical orthography used at Cold Lake, Alberta. That system conflates /e/, /ɛ/, and /ə/ and writes them all as *e*. High tone and nasalization (represented with a Polish hook) on vowels are phonemic, as are ejectivized versus "plain" stops and affricates (represented with an apostrophe). Other possibly unfamiliar bigraphs with their IPA values are as follows: *th* = /θ/, *dh* = /ð/, *gh* = /ɣ/, *sh* = /ʃ/, *zh* = /ʒ/, *dz* = /dʒ/, *tł* = /tɬ/.

Hargus 2007, for descriptions of some of these processes). However, this morphological resistance may instead be due to socio-cultural factors rather than linguistic, a hypothesis advanced at the end of this paper. In any event, language-internal word-formation mechanisms which I will subsume under the rubric *periphrasis* (such as relativization, apposition, incorporation, and compounding) as well as *conversion* (which can involve special morphology in the way that the plural of computer *mouse* in English is often *mouses*, not *mice*) seem to be the most productive means of achieving lexical extension in Dene Sųłiné and its Athapaskan sisters both historically – for indigenous terms – and synchronically – for terms of acculturation. Illustrative examples of some of these periphrastic or morphosyntactic pathways of lexicalization are presented in (1):[2]

(1)	a.	*nadudh-i*	'the one that slithers along'	'snake'	RELATIVIZATION
	b.	*nilts'i slini*	'wind it is evil'	'tornado'	APPOSITION
	c.	*sets'ǝ́-yałti*	'towards me-3SG talks'	's/he's scolding me'	INCORPORATION
	d.	*tthe-sheth*	'stone-hill'	'mountain'	COMPOUNDING
	e.	*-la*	'hand'	'job'	CONVERSION

There is some evidence that loan translation has also been deployed to achieve lexical extension especially for many terms of acculturation brought during the first wave of European colonization, since many languages of native North America use similar imagery and a similar lexico-semantic "recipe" for the same salient referent (cf. Brown 1999), as shown in (2):

SOME PROBABLE CALQUES

(2)	a.	*kóntué*	'fire water'	'alcohol, whiskey'
	b.	*bescho nené*	'big knife country'	'America'
	c.	*ghįnaze*	'little worm (pupa, maggot)'	'rice'

Nevertheless, there are few true borrowings beyond proper (Christian) names, most of which derive from French and have been altered to conform to Dene phonotactics. I have encountered only a few dozen conventionalized loans in over 18 years of interactions with speakers.

BORROWINGS

(3)	a.	*libada*	< French *le potate*	'potato'
	b.	*masi*	< French *merci*	'thank you'
	c.	*lidi*	< French *le thé*	'tea'
	d.	*Lizębér*	< French */elízabét/*	'Elizabeth'
	e.	*susíkiyás*	< Cree *osikiyâs*	'lizard'

2. I use *lexicalization* in the sense discussed in Pawley 1985, viz. in a manner that includes both multimorphemic items such as compounds (i.e., *laptop* or *overindulge*) as well as periphrastic items such as idioms (i.e., *nickel and dime to death*) which have lexical status.

While interesting in their own right, the morphological *mechanisms* driving lexicalization are secondary to my purpose here. In this study, I report on lexical extensions and apparent innovations in Dene Sųłiné that have come about morphologically or periphrastically through the application of some typologically common metaphors and metonymies. Some preliminary examples, presented in (4) and (5), are hardly unusual to readers familiar with Lakoff and Johnson (1980); Panther and Radden (1999); and Panther, Thornburg, and Barcelona (2009). The actual trope types are expounded on in Sections 2 and 3.

TWO METAPHORS

(4)	a.	*sets'ĕni*	'the towards me one'	'my friend'	IN IS GOOD FORM SIMILARITY
	b.	*ets'eze gaiaze*	'little white kidney'	'chickadee'	

TWO METONYMIES

(5)	a.	*bąlai*	'that which is round ('button')'	'the French'	PART FOR WHOLE
	b.	*náť adhi*	'that which is cut twice'	'square'	PROCESS FOR PRODUCT

A case study such as this is intended to demonstrate the ubiquity of figurative processes in everyday language use while advancing the premise that such processes can be relatively constrained and systematic in language(s).

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. In §2, I briefly describe some typologically common metaphors and metonymies that are highly prevalent in Dene languages. I then summarize some of the typological literature on figurative lexicalization pertinent to the later discussion on Athapaskan. In §3, I present examples from the Cold Lake variety of Dene Sųłiné, a fairly conservative but sadly moribund dialect spoken in east central Alberta, Canada. Some general tendencies are discussed in §4 and compared with examples from other Athapaskan languages. Finally, §5 addresses issues pertaining to the function and analysis of metaphor and metonymy in a language's lexicon and grammar and why it is neither paradoxical nor oxymoronic for speakers to insist that their very figurative languages are, in fact, very literal.

2. Conceptual and typological patterns of lexicalization

Much early research in cognitive linguistics (henceforth CL) revolves around the study of grammaticalization and lexicalization patterns cross-linguistically (cf. Talmy 1985, Traugott and Heine 1991, Bybee et al. 1994, Svorou 1994). One product of this research has been to demonstrate how conceptualization and human experience mediate linguistic patterning (this is the central message in Langacker 1987/1991a, 1991b; Lakoff 1987, Johnson 1987, and Taylor 1989). Of special interest is exploring how semantic and functional extensions arise for a given lexical item or construction. Metaphor and metonymy have both been implicated in such extension processes in language, although they are by no means the only mechanisms of semantic change.

While there are major differences between these processes, they each entail shifts of reference within or between what philosophers and cognitive scientists call **mental models** or what cognitive linguists call **background** or **cognitive domains**. That is, the semantic use or interpretation of metaphors and metonymies involve a projection of language commonly expressing (usually) more concrete or real-world relations or situations to (often, but not necessarily) more abstract or idealized cases in which the domain of reference might be ideation, causation, or textual expression itself. However, metaphors and metonymies are not just used to describe the abstract or otherwise inexpressible. They can be recruited for purposes beyond the utilitarian as well; for example, for cultural or metalinguistic reasons, a topic I return to in §5. It should be pointed out first, though, that inter- and intra-domain projections as implicated in metaphors and metonymies are responsible for the widespread ambiguity and polysemy found in language and are a major force in driving semantic change and grammaticalization (cf. notably Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Sweetser 1990, Heine and Kuteva 2002). Many words have multiple meanings and grammatical functions, although individual meanings are usually specific to a particular background domain. Critically, the domain of application bears on the intended or correctly inferable semantic meaning of a term (cf. Croft 1993). This is especially the case with metaphor and metonymy.

2.1 Metaphor

Literary scholars and cognitive linguists both characterize metaphor more or less the same way: as an inter-domain mapping function. An expression that has a literal interpretation in one domain of application takes on a figurative meaning in a second domain. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) inspired most of the contemporary CL work on metaphor and metonymy (cf. Dirven 1985, Claudi and Heine 1986, Goossens 1990, Langacker 1991b, Radden and Kövecses 1999, Panther and Radden 1999, Gibbs 2008, and Panther et al. 2009). Collectively, this research not only has catalogued many conventional metaphors and metonymies across languages, but it has analyzed them systematically. Lakoff and Johnson placed the study of these figurative tropes squarely in the realm of linguistic analysis of everyday (rather than specialized or literary) language. The examples throughout this paper are necessarily of the former type since Dene Sųłiné has but the shallowest of written traditions and most remaining speakers cannot read or write using either a practical roman orthography or the Cree-based syllabary familiar to them from the rather antiquated Roman Catholic (Oblate) hymnals and prayerbooks passed down from their forebears. Moreover, metaphor and metonymy are ubiquitous in colloquial language and do not just pertain to a highly composed genre or register. Most examples of everyday metaphors rarely strike the average speaker as conspicuously figurative or unusual. Indeed, many times the metaphor has to be stated explicitly before it is recognized as such, a point I return to in §5.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) identified three highly prevalent classes of conventionalized metaphors based on correlations we perceive in our experience: *orientational*, *ontological*, and *structural* (similarity) metaphors. Orientational metaphors obtain when expressions associated with location or movement along a vertical or horizontal axis signal non-spatial and especially qualitative relations. Specifically, verbs, adpositions, and adverbials associated semantically with location or movement upwards or inwards (towards the speaker) in space or along a scale (always spatially construed) are more positively esteemed than are those associated with location or movement downwards or outwards (away from the speaker). Ontological metaphors are those whereby intangible, ephemeral phenomena (like TIME, IDEAS, or EMOTIONS) which frequently lack direct means of expression in a language, can be talked about and even conceptualized as if they were substantive, directly perceivable, and imbued with value or other physical qualities like a real concrete object. Structural metaphors fall out under what Lakoff (1987) calls "great chain of being" metaphors. Associated behaviors or attributes of entities up and down the epistemological animacy scale can be mapped onto entities in other (both higher and lower) categories: PEOPLE ↔ ANIMALS ↔ PLANTS ↔ INANIMATE OBJECTS, etc.

2.2 Metonymy

Metonyms are perhaps more ubiquitous in language than are metaphors and individual metonymies more widespread across languages (cf. Radden and Kövecses 1999, Panther and Radden 1999, and Panther, Thornburg and Barcelona 2009). Metonymy is characterized in CL as an *intra*-domain mapping function. Some subpart of a thing or aspect of a relation comes to stand for the whole in a typical metonymy or, conversely, the whole can stand for a part. Of special relevance to the Dene Sųłiné examples detailed in §3 are, of course, both PART FOR WHOLE and WHOLE FOR PART metonymies (of which CONTAINER FOR CONTENTS metonymies are a special and frequent case), but also GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC and SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymies, which Sullivan and Sweetser (2010) contend are, in fact, metaphors – a position that I do not happen to endorse. Perhaps most widespread in the Athapaskan languages are those metonymies which are verb based, operating on *relational predications* in one of two ways. In the most obvious case (since most nouns in the language are deverbal, arrived at morphologically through the addition of a relativizing or nominalizing particle in a 'the-one-that-VERBS' or 'the-one-that-is-VERBED' type of schema), the entire process stands for a salient event participant bearing an AGENT, EXPERIENCER, INSTRUMENT, PATIENT, LOCATION, or MANNER role, a sub-part of that process. My corpus is full of such ATTRIBUTE/BEHAVIOR FOR ENTITY metonymies. Equally robust are PART FOR WHOLE metonymies in which a sub-part of a state or relation or a sub-phase of some process (such as the initial cause or end result) can come to stand for the state, relation, or process itself. In most cases, it is an initial phase that stands for the whole. These metonymies may be less obvious, but they are highly prevalent in Athapaskan languages

due to the ready conversion of noun stems into verb stems and the ubiquity of deverbal nominalizations.

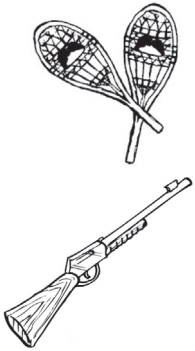
Most of the lexicalizations examined in §3 involve the following patterns of metaphor and metonymy. Metaphor features prominently in cases of conversion and compounding, in which some term for a concrete substance may be applied in a more abstract or at least non-literal domain. Since, as mentioned previously, many nominals in Dene Sųłiné are derived from verbal sources, PROCESS FOR {RESULT, EFFECT, PRODUCT, AGENT, EXPERIENCER} verb-based metonymies are extremely numerous. Indeed, verb-based signification (through relativization) seems much more prevalent than does noun-based (through exogenous compounding or incorporation) in the language. Some of the diverse lexical domains bearing witness to these figurative lexicalization processes include the very familiar practice of PERSON, GROUP, ANIMAL, and PLACE NAMING, as well as TOOL or CULTURAL ARTIFACT NAMING. Less commonly considered cases involve PSYCHOLOGICAL STATES, DISEASES, and various PROCESS predications. I will exemplify and discuss each of these in turn in §3. First, I present two proposals about lexicalization patterns cross-linguistically that have tried to account for naming tendencies in particular.

2.3 Some proposals about lexicalization tendencies

The study of metaphorically and metonymically inspired semantic extension has a huge literature, not just in the CL world, but in typological and historical linguistics as well. I single out two sets of investigations in particular because they (a) treat metaphor and metonymy on par and (b) they are intensely cross-linguistic. Cecil Brown's (1999) massive study of 77 terms of acculturation across nearly 200 New World languages dissects naming tendencies by region, genetic stock, dominant European colonizer, degree of bilingualism, as well as semantic domain of the artifact. At a coarse-grained level, he divides his concepts into *natural kinds*, encompassing introduced fruits ('watermelon'), vegetables ('peas'), grains ('rice'), livestock ('pig') and domestic animals ('chicken'), and *artifacts*, such as prepared foods ('butter'), tools ('fork'), storage items ('bottle'), clothing ('button'), domestic items ('candle', 'window'), measurements ('mile'), and a host of other concrete and abstract concepts (e.g., 'key', 'soldier', 'school', 'Wednesday'). He reports on percentages of loans, calques, loan blends, or indigenous lexicalizations inspired by metaphor and metonymy for his many factors and his many items. Brown subsumes most of his indigenous lexicalization strategies under one of two general types: *referential extension/marking reversal* (some type of form-similarity metaphor whereby a native term is extended, often upon modification, to name the introduced concept as in 'sun' for 'clock' or 'big-dog' for 'horse'), or *descriptive focus/utilitarian naming* based on a salient feature of the item (a kind of PART FOR WHOLE metonymy as in 'the rounded one' for 'button') or on how humans use the item (also a kind of metonymy, usually based on a PROCESS FOR PARTICIPANT metonymy as in 'that which you write it down with' for 'paper'). He concludes there is a robust correlation between the

nature of the introduced items (living thing or artifact) and the nature of the naming pattern (referential extension/metaphor vs. utilitarian function/metonymy), finding that only 10% of the items in his corpus that referred to introduced living things were given a utilitarian name as opposed to 63% of imported artifacts (Brown 1999: 41).

As a simple illustration of the Brown findings, consider the items in Figure 1 which shows images for two items of acculturation (depending on the culture), one indigenous to native peoples of North America, although not exclusively so, and the other a modern variant of an artifact first introduced by European colonists. In English, the top item has been lexicalized through a compound, as shown on the right. Thus, it is multi-morphemic, analyzable, and figurative by virtue of a GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy or some other kind of utilitarian description ('outer shoe for use with other shoes in deep snow made of bent birch wood and sinew'), unlike a similar – but borrowed and therefore unanalyzable – monomorphemic English word, *ski*. The Dene Sųłiné equivalent, *ʔaih*, is monomorphemic, unanalyzable and therefore non-figurative, as befits an indigenous concept to people who traditionally lived in the seasonally snowy boreal forests of the subarctic. By contrast, either of the English terms for the firearm, *gun* or *rifle*, are arguably unanalyzable and monomorphemic to modern speakers. However, the Dene Sųłiné equivalent, *helk'ędhi* (< *he-l-k'ędh-i)* 'that which shoots', is multi-morphemic and structured around a PROCESS FOR INSTRUMENT metonymy. In Brown's (1999) terms, both *snowshoe* and *helk'ędhi* would be classified as lexicalizations framed around functional utility, typical for manufactured cultural objects, as opposed to his "natural kinds." These contrasting examples illustrate one purported cross-linguistic lexicalization tendency: that terms for items of acculturation tend to be borrowed or figurative. In each case, the native object is lexicalized simply and literally, while the encountered object is lexicalized complexly and figuratively. As we will see in §3, terms of acculturation are indeed overwhelmingly figurative in Dene Sųłiné, but strikingly, so are most indigenous concepts as well.



non-figurative lexicalization	figurative lexicalization
ʔaih	***snowshoe*** lit. 'shoe for snow'
[Dene Sųłiné]	[English]
gun, rifle	***helk'ędhi (t'elk'idhi)*** lit. 'the thing that shoots'
[English]	[Dene Sųłiné]

Figure 1. Figurativity in English and Dene Sųłiné lexicalization for two terms of acculturation

intrafield metonymic changes 'skin'→'body'	→	interfield metonymic changes 'smell'→'nose'	→	interfield metaphoric changes 'spear'→'penis'	→	intrafield metaphoric changes 'anus'→'mouth'

Figure 2. Wilkins' (1996: 274) four classes of semantic change, ranked hierarchically, within the semantic field "parts of a person"

In a similar vein and inspired by some of Brown's earlier work with his colleague, Stan Witkowski (Witkowski and Brown 1978), David Wilkins (1996) searches for cross-linguistic tendencies of semantic change (what we could also call semantic extension leading to polysemy) in the admittedly circumscribed but completely universal and therefore always indigenous domain of "parts of a person". Tracking 75 concepts across a large number of languages of central and western Australia, he concludes that metaphor and metonymy are differentially responsible for the most commonly attested semantic extensions or *chains* (e.g. 'egg' → 'testicle' vs. 'skin' → 'body' → 'person') affecting body part naming. Although his larger aim is to better understand semantic shift in order to expand the list of possible cognates for purposes of proto-reconstruction across a language family, he does propose an implicational hierarchy within the semantic field of "parts of a person" which could be tested both cross-linguistically and across other semantic domains. This hierarchy, presented in Figure 2, is especially relevant in the context of the present volume since it puts metonymy alongside metaphor as a patterned and cognitively motivated mechanism of semantic change in language after language.

The present study of figurative lexicalizations in Dene Sųłiné ranges beyond the typical referential denotata of the Brown and Wilkins investigations. Although I do include terms of acculturation and body parts, I also investigate figurativity in indigenous concepts as well as in a host of relational predications (states and processes) in the language.

3. A semi-structured inventory of metaphors and metonymies in Dene Sųłiné

In this extended section, I survey certain semantic domains in Dene Sųłiné that are replete with lexicalizations based on metaphor, metonymy, or a combination thereof. This is by no means an exhaustive inventory – one feels as if the surface has barely been scratched – but I believe it to be representative. Moreover, I make no claims about the figurative uniqueness or universality of these expressions. That is, the lexical formatives and/or conceptual imagery contained in the following expressions may or may not be particular to this dialect or this language. The resulting lexicalization may involve nothing more than a wholesale calque or loan translation from other languages. Nevertheless, an ingenious combination of indigenous lexical items driven by metaphor

and/or metonymy has produced an impressive set of innovative and often idiomatic expressions. Taken together, they contribute to a line of argumentation in CL that seeks to demonstrate the central role that meaning plays in lexical and grammatical structure in language. They also bring us closer to understanding the cognitive means by which human beings, no matter the culture, come to linguistic terms with the world around them and within them.

In the case of Dene languages, the stem inventory is staggeringly small. Estimates range from 1300–2000 semantically discernible (though often very vague), relatively cognate, phonologically coherent, and generally monosyllabic lexical stems (Victor Golla and Jim Kari, p.c.). Semantic extension (leading at times to cross-categorial conversion with attendant morphological adjustments) appears to be fairly robust, but it remains a poorly studied part of the Athapaskan lexicon. It is especially the case that verb stems, often highly suppletive, will "cross-lexicalize".[3] There may be arguments for treating these stems as highly polysemous or at least as engendering chained associations via metaphor and metonymy. I tackle Athapaskan verb stem polysemy at length in Rice (forthcoming). Nevertheless, Dene verb stems – and not just the well-known classificatory verb stem system – are notoriously vague and generic, and only gain their specificity through a variety of prefixes or context of use.[4]

Because of the small inventory, stems are routinely called upon semantically to do double and triple duty, if not more, through conversion, compounding, juxtaposition, and inflection. The small inventory extends as well to a small set of items that would traditionally be considered derivational material, encompassing things like augmentatives, diminutives, defunctives, gender markers, intensifiers, negativizers, nominalizers, qualifiers, and the like. These items, all suffixes, are still highly productive, but they have allowed for, either singly or in combination, the creation of many entrenched and conventionalized lexical items, which in turn can be examined for their degree of figurativity since many exhibit striking metaphors and metonymies. It is the inventory and analysis of this relatively small set of items that we delve into here.

A word first about format. In individual examples, a metaphor will be identified using an [X IS Y] comment, while a metonymy will be specified by the rubric [X FOR Y]. If the English (free) translation is itself figurative, double asterisks (**) will follow the gloss. To save space, I present data in columnar format, with the Dene example listed

3. For example, the stem *-da* shows up as the singular imperfective form for 'sit', 'go', and 'rock (back and forth)'. Likewise, the stem *-ʔį* is associated with paradigms for 'see', 'look around/for', 'notice', 'wait for', 'steal', and 'hide' (cf. Li 1933).

4. The classificatory verb system conflates position, dislocation, and controlled handling of objects which are variously construed as stick-like, flat and flexible, solid and round, granular, animate, contained in an open container, contained in a closed container, and so on. The different Dene languages feature different inventories of classified objects. The Athapaskan literature features many studies, although Rice (forthcoming) argues against its exclusivity. I contend that the majority of verbs are classificatory in that they conflate information about a salient event theme and the event or relation itself.

first, the literal gloss in the middle column, and the figurative or free gloss at the right. I primarily present examples of Dene Sųłiné figurative lexicalizations by semantic domain, regardless of whether they involve pure metaphors or metonymies. In §4, however, I summarize with comments about the most systematic metaphors and metonymies observed in the data.

3.1 Naming others and describing the human condition

A lexical domain especially rich in metaphors and metonymies involves (proper) naming. This is a good category with which to begin because names are both highly conventionalized and highly charged in terms of cultural identity. Having an epithetic quality as they do, ethnonyms especially can serve to identify both the referent and the labeler as members of a specific group. The practice of giving descriptive (that is, figurative) sobriquets or nicknames is typical of Athapaskan, not to mention Amerindian languages generally (cf., notably, Sapir 1923, 1924; Young and Morgan 1987: 811–812b; Basso 1990). I will concentrate here on ethnic and group naming. Proper names, peoples (tribes/nationalities/ethnic groups), and place names are rarely monolexical. Generally, the resulting composite lexicalization describes something about the people themselves, a geographical feature of where they come from, or activities or artifacts native to the region. Most of the ethnonyms in my Dene Sųłiné corpus involve metonymies, typically either a GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC or a PART FOR WHOLE metonymy.

3.1.1 *Ethnonyms*

Across the larger Dene world (at the time of European contact, it stretched from Alaska to Mexico in latitude and from the Pacific Ocean to the Hudson Bay in longitude), the word for person or people is highly cognate: *diné* (Navajo), *-t'ina* (Tsuut'ina), *denae* (Ahtna). According to Victor Golla (p.c.), the etymology of the probable proto-form strongly suggests a derivation based on a stative predication – an ideophone, really – of the form 'sounds like X':

(6) *dene* (<*de-na*)
lit. 'the one who sounds human'
fig. 'Dene person (the one that speaks like a human being)'

This etymological hypothesis is intriguing as it both makes morphological sense and conforms to what I have found to be a quite common set of metonymies across the many Dene languages that I have examined: SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC or GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymies. These tropes are especially common in ethnonymic naming. In the examples below, I gloss the Dene Sųłiné exponents *dene* and *-t'iné* as 'person' or just list the group modifier. As singular and plural are not specially marked in Dene Sųłiné, these terms also refer to the entire 'people' so designated.

GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC

(7)	a.	*dene sųłiné*	'genuine/true person'	'Dene Sųłiné'
	b.	*ʔena*	'enemy'	'Cree'; 'non-Dene native'
	c.	*hotélna [< hotéli ʔena]*	'barrens (AREAL cover) enemy'	'Inuit'
	d.	*des nąt'iné*	'river-across-people'	'Slavey'
	e.	*ʔasi dene*	'some person'	'non-native person'

With the first (fur traders) and second (homesteaders) waves of colonization, came ethnonyms based on some salient feature of the interlopers. Usually these features pertained to dress or lifestyle, hence, they are metonymic. I make no claims about the semantic uniqueness of these lexicalizations. It is highly likely that most of the examples in (8)–(9) are calques.

ASSOCIATED ARTIFACT (PART) FOR OWNER/WEARER (WHOLE) FOR SPECIFIC

(8)	a.	*tthot'iné [< tthé-yoh t'ı̨né]*	'stone-house person'	'English'
	b.	*bescho dene/t'iné*	'big knife person'	'American'

ATTRIBUTE FOR WHOLE

(9)	a.	*betthighe tł'ų̨le nenedhí*	'those whose tied hair is long'	'Chinese'
	b.	*ʔı̨łt'eri nade*	'the ones who are naked'	'Ukrainians'

3.1.2 *Kith and kindred*

Dene people were traditionally hunter-gatherers who migrated seasonally in small multi-family bands. Kin systems were somewhat fluid (Ives 1990) and the nomenclature system is complex, although not particularly figurative. Contemporary Dene Sųłiné speakers refer to their family and fellow band members in similar ways, no doubt since both groups were traditionally their relatives. Both terms are metaphoric and suggest unity. As shown in (10), one invokes a body part metaphor whereby the family is construed like a hand (an intriguing source image schema since its individual parts are as salient as the whole); the other stresses the oneness of the group in a kind of DIVERSITY IS UNITY image.

(10)	a.	*selot'iné [< sela-hot'iné]*	'my hand/partner-people'	'my relatives'
	b.	*ı̨łá dene*	'one people'	'family'

Other significant relationships that are lexicalized figuratively in Dene Sųłiné involve forebearers and descendents, which likewise can be metaphorically (and spatially) construed in English. In Dene Sųłiné, both orientation and botanical metaphors are at play:

TIME IS SPACE (PAST IS AHEAD OR PAST IS BEHIND)

(11)	a.	*tthéridene*	'first people'	'ancestors/forebearers'
	b.	*yanísot'ine*	'the past/long ago people'	'ancestors'
	c.	*ʔąlnetthi*	'the one who went the length'	'elder'

PEOPLE ARE PLANTS

(12)	a.	*betthúe*	'3SG-branch'	'his/her grandchildren'
	b.	*bechįghaé*	'3SG-wood-root'	'his/her descendants'

With respect to significant relationships of the same generation, a few are lexicalized figuratively, notably, the concepts of 'partner' and 'friend'. These lexicalizations are based on two metaphors seen previously: a body part metaphor (USEFUL PERSON IS USEFUL BODY PART) and a spatial metaphor (IN IS GOOD), as shown in (13) and (14), respectively:

(13)	*sela*	'my-hand'	'my same-sex cousin, helper/partner' (♂ speaker)
(14)	*setsʔéni*	'the-towards-me-one'	'my friend'

Although there is no gender differentiation in the personal and possessive pronoun system for third person singular in any Athapaskan language, there is ample differentiation when referring to males and females. The generic 'human/person/people' term, *dene*, does not extend exclusively to males. Although the etymology of the suffix in the male human term, *deneyu*, is opaque, it might be related to *sį-yeze*, 'my son' (lit. 'my little man'?) and *-yane*, the all-purpose male suffix used for animals. By contrast, the female term, shown in (15), is strongly metonymic, based on a PART FOR WHOLE metonymy. The *-kwi* suffix is an obscure pluralizing morpheme which applies to human collectives (like the English *-folk*), although it and its cognates in other Dene languages are no longer very productive.

(15)	*tsʔékwi (< tsʔér-kwi)*	'womb-ones'	'woman, women'

Athapaskan kin systems are fairly complex, with differences in cross-ness and parallelness (sic) extending across three generations, as well as differentiation in older and younger siblings. Thus, while there are many distinct terms, there is also some morphological recycling, as the examples in (16) show. These could probably be considered examples of what Brown (1999) calls a *marking reversal* or what Wilkins (1996) calls an *intra-domain metaphor*. Within the content domain of kinship, the diminutive singles out individuals who are of different generations than those referred to by the non-derived stems, but not necessarily descending generations. Nevertheless, the derived forms do suggest an especially close relationship to ego, as is often the case when a diminutive is used. This lexical extension via the diminutive gives rise to what I will call a SMALL IS FAMILIAR metaphor in the context of kin terms.

SMALL IS FAMILIAR

(16)	a.	*sunaghaze [<sunaghe-aze]*	'my little older brother'	'my grandson'
	b.	*setáze [<setá-aze]*	'my little father'	'my uncle (father's brother)'
	c.	*sáraze [<sáre-aze]*	'my little older sister'	'my granddaughter'; also 'my daughter-in-law' (♀ speaker)

d.	*setsǫaze* [<*setsų-aze*]	'my little aunt (dad's sister)', 'my little mother/sister-in-law', 'my cross-sex cousin' (♂ speaker)	'my sweetheart' (♂ speaker)

3.1.3 *Cultural roles*

Pre-contact Dene society was largely egalitarian, with any differentiation reserved for chiefs and shamans (Abel 2005). Both of these traditional societal roles are lexicalized via a relativization ('the one who Vs'); thus, they are based on a deverbalized process and are therefore metonymic. Just as a host of non-traditional concrete objects that were introduced into Dene culture required lexicalization, so too did non-traditional social roles, job titles, or professions. Many of these are based on the 'chief' formative derived from an all-purpose verb of being/doing/acting upon (which we will revisit later), *-dher/-dhi*: *k'ǫ́dheri [< k'á/k'é hólderi]*, lit. 'the one who acts for/on (unspecified)', fig. 'chief, boss, ruler, Lord', as shown in (17). Others involve compounds with *dene* 'person' or other types of relativizations based on processes (being at, knowing, speaking, teaching, making, etc.).

GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC OR SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC

(17)	a.	*k'ǫ́dheri*	'chief'	'factor (head of fort or trading post)'
	b.	*tsąba k'ǫ́dheri*	'money chief'	'Indian agent (dispenses treaty money)'
	c.	*dení k'ǫ́dheri*	'moose chief'	'forest ranger/game warden'
	d.	*k'ǫ́dheri nethé*	'chief important'	'king/prime minister'
	e.	*k'ǫ́dheri nethé ts'ékwi*	'chief important woman'	'queen'

PROCESS FOR AGENT and GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC

(18)	a.	*yałti*	'the one who speaks'	'priest'
	b.	*tthethiyį*	'the one who stands (at the) head'	'leader'
	c.	*tsątsáné k'olyąi*	'the one who knows about metal'	'mechanic'
	d.	*níhołtsįni*	'the one who made earth'	'the Creator'

DOING IS BEING AT and BEING AT IS BEING

(19)	a.	**nádher*	'3SG stays/lives customarily' [infelicitous without a complement]	
	b.	*łueghąnádheri dene*	'the person who's about fishing'	'fisherman'
	c.	*įłts'uzi gáh nádher*	'3SG lives about the trap'	'trapper'
	d.	*seʔą nádheri*	'the one who stays by me'	'my neighbor'
	e.	*įk'ązį nádheri*	'the one who stays (about) spirit'	'medicine man/shaman'