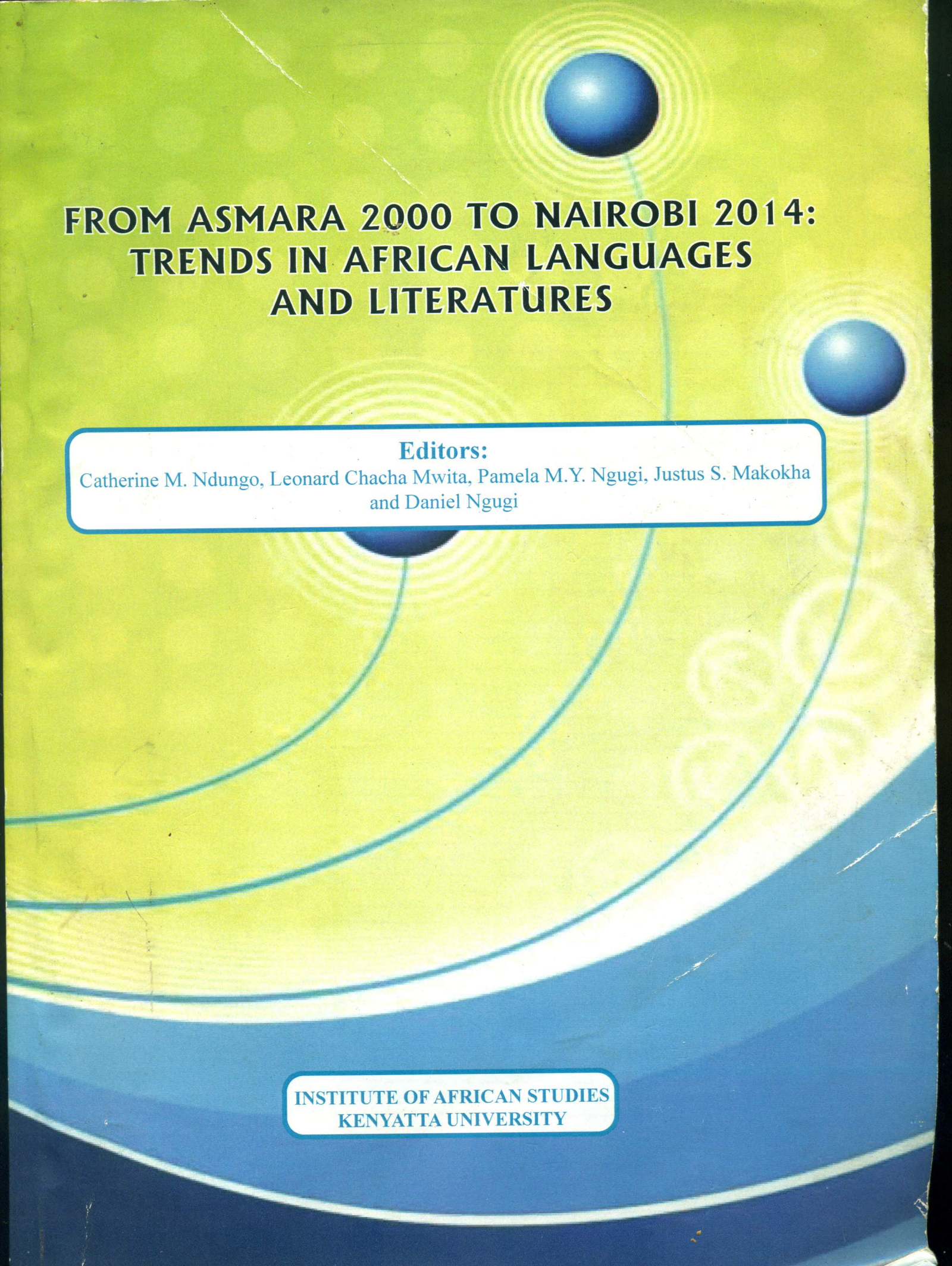




FROM ASMARA 2000 TO NAIROBI 2014: TRENDS IN AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

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A Complementary Approach between Conceptual Integration or Blending Theory (CIT) and Relevance Theory (RT) in the Interpretation and Translation of Metaphors

Peter Kamande Thuo

Abstract

In general, the interpretation and translation of metaphors pose a great challenge since they are based on particular cultural experiences and semantic associations (Wikberg, 2003: 117). This article proposes a complementary approach between Conceptual Integration Theory (CIT) and Relevance Theory (RT) as a rewarding conceptual undertaking in the interpretation and translation of metaphors. This approach mainly helps to address the underlying and/or organizing frames, direct projections and inferences activated by the mental spaces in the integration network, all of which need to be factored in the interpretation and translation process.

Introduction

A metaphor is a figure of language which involves relating what would otherwise be interpreted as independent semantic domains allowing for creativity which brings out the meaning of associated concepts in a vibrant fashion resulting in new insights which light up the discourse (Aaron, 2002: 6; Cormac, 1985: 136; Macquarrie, 1967: 97). This leads to one conceptual domain, namely the target/recipient domain, being partially understood in terms of another, namely the source/donor domain (Barcelona, 2003: 3). This process also involves the highlighting of relevant elements and inferences allowing for the creation of new meaning, far beyond that of the literal meaning of the associated concepts. The challenge then becomes explaining how these mappings are guided for one to ascertain that s/he has successfully retrieved the intended meaning of a given metaphor within its cultural conceptualization. This paper proposes a complementary approach between Conceptual Integration Theory (CIT) and Relevance Theory (RT) as a rewarding conceptual undertaking in the interpretation and translation of metaphors. This approach mainly helps to address the underlying and/or organizing frames, direct projections and inferences activated by the mental spaces in the integration network, all of which need to be factored in the interpretation and translation process.

A General Description of CIT

CIT, which is also referred to as 'mental binding', the 'blending theory', and in some instances the 'space structuring' model, is expounded in detail by Fauconnier and Turner (2002). This theory mainly draws from Fauconnier's previous research on mental spaces theory (1994; 1997) with the crucial insight "that meaning construction typically involves integration of structure that gives rise to more than the sum of its parts" (Evans and Green, 2006: 400). This theory captures the process of metaphor interpretation by projecting the content of input spaces

into a separate blended space, making it well suited to account for this creative online process. It seeks to demystify, so to speak, how meaning is constructed ‘online’ by allowing the setting up of mental spaces and an integration network across these spaces, the projection and/or blockage of elements from the input spaces to the blend and vice versa, and the recreation of new structures in the blend through the processes of composition, completion and elaboration (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 37, 44). A crucial insight from CIT is that meaning construction involves the integration of mental spaces and that the meaning that emerges in the blend may not be traced directly back to input spaces.

CIT has at least four basic mental spaces in its network: a generic space (GS), at least two input spaces (IS₁ and IS₂) and a Blend Space (BS) as demonstrated in Figure (1) below (cf. Fauconnier and Turner, 2002: 46).

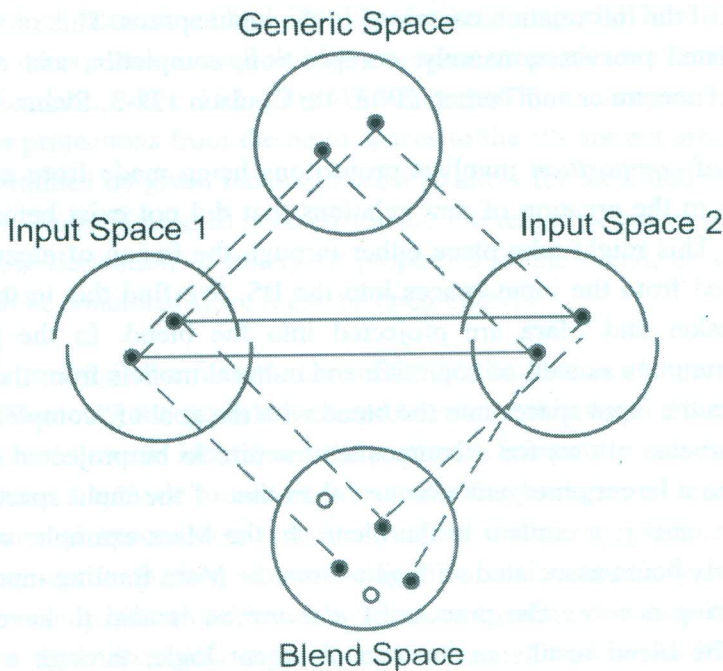


Figure 1: A prototypical diagram of conceptual integration

The circles represent mental spaces, the black dots represent elements in the spaces, the solid lines represent mappings between the inputs, the dashed lines link the correspondences between the elements, and the hollow dots represent emergent structures in the BS. Let me demonstrate these spaces by using utterance (1) below, referred henceforth as the ‘Mara example’.

- (1) *Njũkĩrĩre rĩrĩa Mara ateire nyina.*⁵³
 I.woke.up when Mara got.rid mother.his
 'I woke up very early in the morning'.

The GS contains the general conceptual structure as well as represents properties and elements that are common to all the other mental spaces in the network giving coherence between the spaces (Fauconnier, 1997: 149; Fauconnier and Turner, 2002, 47). In the Mara example, one of the elements in the GS is that of 'human being', which is common to the two input spaces in the form of a speaker and the person named Mara. Another element in the GS is that of 'activity' which is mapped to 'waking up' and 'getting rid of mother' in the input spaces. The fourth space in the integration network is the BS, simply referred to as the blend. Within the blend, there is the possibility of the development of new emergent structures which are more than the sum of the information contained in the input spaces. This process takes place through three interrelated processes, namely: composition, completion and elaboration (Fauconnier, 1997: 150-1; Fauconnier and Turner, 2002: 48; Coulson 122-3; Evans and Green, 2006: 404).

The process of *composition* involves projections being made from each of the input spaces which results in the creation of new relations that did not exist before within the respective input spaces. This might take place either through the fusion of elements or single elements being projected from the input spaces into the BS. We find this in the Mara example where both the speaker and Mara are projected into the blend. In the process of *completion*, background framings as well as cognitive and cultural models from the long-term memory are projected from the input spaces into the blend with the goal of "completing" the structure in the blend. This process allows for a composite structure to be projected into the blend which is completed into a larger emergent structure than that of the input spaces often resulting in the creation of an emergent content in the blend. In the Mara example, we find the inference of waking up early being associated with gain from the Mara framing input, where the poor Mara ended up getting a wife. The process of *elaboration* is said to have taken place when the structure in the blend results in its own emergent logic, through a process referred to as "running the blend". In the Mara example, we find the process of *elaboration* in as the ritual of [IRUA] is normally associated as best performed *ĩrĩa Mara ateire nyina* 'when Mara got rid of his mother'. Some of the information that is projected or generated in the blend might seem unrealistic. An example is the idea of the speaker witnessing the act of Mara getting rid of his mother or that of Mara being aware of his action being used as a reference point.

⁵³ The story is told of a person named Mara whose mother had died. He was expected to throw her in the forest for in those days the Kikuyu were not burying their dead but throwing them in the forest for hyenas to feed on them. Mara was a poor man who could not be able to marry for lack of cattle to pay for dowry and so he came up with a plan. He woke up very early in the morning and laid his mother on the path where the cattle were passing by to go to the fields and graze. The cattle stumbled on the body of Mara's mother and for compensation he was paid with a big herd of cattle which he used to get himself a wife.

One of the compressions that take place in the blend is that of time (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002: 312). In the Mara example, though the two input spaces are separated in time, both the elements 'speaker' and 'Mara' are projected into the BS. This allows for the possibility of both conducting their respective actions at the same time though they happen to have lived many years apart. We also find compression through syncopation in that all but a few key elements of the Mara story are suppressed in order to focus on the main lesson of the story. Parts of the story that are dropped include the time which Mara lived, whether he was an only child, whether his father was alive, etc., all of which are left to imagination.

The Methodological Gap

Scholars working on CIT have not explicitly provided details as to what informs or drives the integration process. This vagueness includes among other concerns that of detailing the constraining process which determines how input spaces are composed, how the selection and projection of elements takes place, as well as how emergent properties are derived in the blend (Moreno 2007: 77; Tendahl, 2009: 152-160). The fact that human cognition is a selective process means that the projections from the input spaces to the BS are not arbitrary or random but are somehow constrained by given factors in order to allow for local understanding (Evans and Green 2006: 409). There is need to account for the inferential selective processing in the integration network, the derivation of emergent properties in the blend, as well as how the integration process can be contained since it can be open-ended.

CIT scholars also fail to detail the factors that influence the choice of interpretive frames⁵⁴ which also end up influencing the intended interpretation. In this work, I will also be using Frame Semantics as a tool towards identifying the particular frames and sub-frames evoked by given concepts with these schematic scenarios from respective background knowledge forming the basis on which mental spaces derive their structure (Fillmore, 1982b: 112, 124). The process of associating words to their corresponding frames is normally unconscious and entirely automatic. It is only when one has a problem in figuring out their meaning that the neurological process is made accessible through retrospection. Consider the Kikuyu utterances (2) and (3) below which share the organizing frame [*GŪTUA MATA*] 'to spit saliva'.

⁵⁴ A cognitive frame is a detailed knowledge structure or schema that "represent a schematisation of experience (a knowledge structure), which is represented at the conceptual level and held in long-term memory, and which relates elements and entities associated with a particular culturally-embedded scene, situation or event from human experience" (Evans and Green, 2006, pp. 211). They are knowledge structures shaped by how particular societies view the world and therefore include beliefs, values, and emotions (López 2002). It is the linguist C. Fillmore (1982b; 1985) who advocated for the idea that the meaning of a word has much to do with one's schematization of the world, thus establishing the view that every word is connected to its respective background frame which is evoked as reference whenever a given lexical unit is activated in the mind.

- (2) *Thoguo athiĩ gūtua mata* (Lit.: 'Your father has gone to spit saliva.')
'Your father has gone to urinate.'
- (3) *Thoguo aratuĩra mata gĩthuri* (Lit.: 'Your father is spitting saliva on his chest.')
'Your father is blessing you.'

In the context of this utterance being uttered in response to a son inquiring of his father's whereabouts, two different frames are evoked. In light of utterance (2), the frame of [*MŪGIRO*] 'taboo' is evoked for it is forbidden for a son to see his father's nakedness. Utterance (3) automatically recruits the frame of [*KĪRATHIMO*] 'blessing' and the son would feel more than welcome to witness the ritual, especially if he happens to be a beneficiary.

As pointed above, the process of correlation or "mapping" between the source and target domains is not enough in constraining the process of selecting instances that are relevant. As Moreno (2007: 81) further points out:

One important problem with Blending Theory, and with many psycholinguistic approaches to metaphor is that it does not take seriously into account the speaker's communicative intentions... a single metaphor... can be used to convey a number of different meanings on different occasions. In order to explain this in terms of Blending Theory, one would have to say the hearer forms a different blend in every occasion. It is not clear how this can be done. Since the projection from input spaces to the blended space is taken as based on structural similarities between spaces and not in the search for the recognition of speaker's intentions, there is no apparent reason why different elements from an input space would be projected into the blended space on different occasions. In fact, even if the explanation of different interpretations were to be given in terms of different types of completions of the blend, the theory cannot explain what determines these different completions.

In response to this criticism, Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 309-46) have proposed a set of optimality or governing principles, which they claim restricts, the blending processes. These include the 'topology' principle, the 'pattern completion' principle, the 'integration' principle, the 'maximization and intensification of vital relations' principles, the 'web' principle, the 'unpacking' principle, and the 'relevance' principle. Satisfying these principles is said to be selective, thus, satisfying one might be inconsistent with satisfying another, with the most likely one being adopted. Unfortunately, these principles do not offer specific guidance as to which mechanisms govern the selection process, how the determination of input spaces is done, how frames are recruited, how emergent properties arise, among other concerns. They seem more of fulfilling the role of a check-list which is only applicable at the end of the interpretation process since they address the resulting blended spaces as end products. These principles do not seem to have a role in constraining the process of the formation of blends as if

happens. There is need to detail the factors that lead to the formation of these blends in our minds and specifically on how the selection process takes place, an issue which is addressed in the next section.

Bridging the Gap

The theoretical basis proposed in this work is a complementary approach between CIT and RT. Even though there are some significant differences between these two approaches as far as the interpretation of metaphors is concerned, they can be viewed as largely complementary since they tackle different aspects of metaphoric conceptualization process. On the one hand, while CIT focuses on the structure of a metaphor within the conceptual system, on the other hand, RT emphasizes the communication aspect of the metaphor (Evans and Green, 2006: 465).

As a result, in addition to the traditional spaces addressing relations within the integration network, I have included two outer spaces, namely the discourse space (DS) and the relevance space (RS), as additional relations which constrain the integration process. Within the DS, the role of context is highlighted providing the structure and function which contribute towards the entire argument in which the metaphor is found. The RS is central in providing the framing that guides mappings and selections in the network. These two are interconnected, with the argument in the DS forming the basis which determines the background knowledge or framing which is activated within the RS. Let us examine in detail the role of these outer spaces.

The Discourse Space

The discourse approach adopted in this study is the mental model approach, which as Smith (2003: 55) points out, “posits a mental representation which models the state of affairs expressed in the text.” Langacker (1991: 97) refers to this mental world as the “current discourse space” in which both a speaker and a hearer have a shared construal of elements and relations that form the basis of their communication at a given moment. This space is also referred to as the “base space” (Brandt, 2000: 7) or as the “speaker reality space” (Fauconnier, 1994: xxvii). The reason behind the use of this approach is to try as much as possible to take on board the “context-based processing constraints” which are part of the author’s and the reader’s mental worlds and thus serve as clues necessary to the interpretation process (Cameron, 2003: 42). Identifying the discourse context of a metaphor is important, for as Kittay (1987: 40-1) points out:

The question of how we identify a metaphor has never been adequately treated, in part, I believe, because writers have not correctly identified the unit of discourse that constitutes a metaphor. Language can only be identified as metaphorical by virtue of linguistic and contextual conditions that require that we interpret it differently from its surrounding discourse; therefore, we cannot give the conditions by which we recognize metaphors without identifying that unit of discourse which constitutes a metaphor.

Incorporating a DS within the integration network is recognizing the role of the discourse participants who in one way or another influence the content of the mental spaces that are activated as well as how they are developed and revised in the course of the development of the discourse (Brandt 2000: 11; Fauconnier and Sweetser 1996: 12). It is important to note that utterances come to mean what they mean because of the structures and arguments which influence the semantic content of words which are found in the DS. The integration process takes into consideration the schematic scenarios such as values, beliefs, and attitudes which are blended within a given unit. Therefore the DS is crucial in analyzing the cognitive process including the relevant frames, elements, projections and inferences, which influence the meaning of a given metaphor (Dawes 1998: 77).

The Relevance Space

RT makes two general claims in respect to how humans cognitively process information as well as how they tend to naturally communicate that information. The first claim, referred to as the 'cognition principle of relevance', points out that human cognition is geared towards maximization of relevance, and the second claim, referred to as the 'communicative principle of relevance', states that utterances raise expectations of relevance (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 158, 260, 263-6). As Wilson and Carlson (2007: 230) further point out, the lexical meaning of an utterance involves the construction of an occasion-specific ad hoc concept which involves an interaction between the encoded concepts, the contextual information, and the expectation of relevance. According to this theory, the linguistic meaning of an utterance only acts as a clue to the speaker's communicative intentions.

The achievement of cognitive effects within the relevance theoretic framework takes place in three different ways: strengthening existing assumptions by providing further evidence, elimination of existing false assumptions in light of new evidence, and derivation of new contextual implications through interaction with existing information. To illustrate these three ways, suppose someone informed me some few days to the graduation ceremony at Africa International University (AIU) that,

(4) "This year's graduation at AIU is on the 2nd of August 2014."

If I happen to have known about the graduation day and planned to attend, then utterance (4) above would achieve relevance by strengthening what I already knew. Suppose that I thought that the graduation would take place a week later and had planned to spend that day doing something else. In such an instance, utterance (4) would contradict what I knew concerning the date of the graduation, thus eliminating my existing assumption. Lastly, if I had already planned to take a friend along with me, then utterance (4) above would combine with this existing assumption to yield the contextual implication that I should go ahead and take my friend along for the graduation.

RT seeks to achieve these goals by guiding the interpreter to the achievement of cognitive effects using the least processing effort. If less processing effort is used to achieve more cognitive effects, then the utterance is said to be more relevant, but if one spends more processing effort and ends up achieving minimal cognitive effects, the utterance is said to be less relevant (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 261-6). Utterance (4) above would be more relevant if I was considering attending the graduation thus yielding a range of contextual effects. But suppose the person who uttered (4) above also told me:

(5) "The certificates and degrees will be conferred by the Chancellor of AIU."

I do not need to be reminded that the Chancellor of AIU will be conferring certificates and degrees to the graduating students, since this is the tradition. This means that the extra effort that I might spend processing this information will not be rewarded with any extra contextual effects, therefore utterance (5) will not be relevant to me. For any information to be relevant, a speaker needs to take into account the hearer's accessible background assumptions as well as the inferences he can readily draw in order to arrive at a hypothesis concerning the intended informative intention.

According to the relevance theoretic comprehension procedure, one naturally tends to stop when expectation of relevance is satisfied (Wilson and Sperber, 2004: 613). The interpretation that comes first is usually the one that is most relevant in a given context since it naturally requires the least processing effort (Gutt, 1992: 21, 24; Moreno, 2007: 40). In the event that there are a number of possible interpretations, the principle of relevance guarantees that the first interpretation that is consistent with this principle is the only one which should be understood as having being intended by the speaker. This is reflected by the RS in the integration network which forms the background framing of concepts in light of the communication intention, a factor that is mostly ignored by most blending analysts (Brandt 2000: 7).

When the expectation of relevance is met, and the hearer arrives at a satisfactory interpretation, he looks no further with the process naturally coming to a halt. If the first interpretation is not satisfactory, the next one in line is chosen. Take the example of the following utterance by a lady to a bride in a Kikuyu Christian wedding ceremony:

(6) "Ta mūiru waku nīndakwamūkīrīte na moko merĩ."
 As co-wife yours I.you.have.received with hands two
 'As my co-wife, I receive you with both hands.'

One of the interpretations that could be accessed as far as the ambiguous reference *mūiru* is concerned is that of a 'co-wife'. In the context of a Christian wedding where such a relationship is not entertained, this interpretation is rejected giving way to the second possible interpretation, namely that of a wife of a brother to the groom. This interpretation is chosen

because as a result of the background assumptions derived from both the immediate environment as well as from the cultural knowledge shared at the time (Wilson, 1994: 41). Therefore, the interpretation that satisfies the expectations of relevance is that which requires the addressee to “(a) Follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects: Test interpretive hypotheses... in order of accessibility. (b) Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied (or abandoned)” (Wilson and Sperber, 2004: 613).

As Evans and Green (2006: 463) indicate RT “relates to the processes that mental spaces and blending theorists refer to as projection, mapping, schema induction and integration”. This process comes naturally, for an interpreter is unwilling to pursue a given interpretation if it requires him or her to use unjustifiable processing effort. In explaining the relevance-theoretic argument, Moreno (2007: 97) argues that even though a concept has the potential of leading to a wide range of encyclopaedic assumptions, following the path of least effort, one only selects and processes a subset of these assumptions in interpreting the meaning a given concept or utterance. RT complements CIT by shedding light as to how the process of drawing and constraining of inferences as well as the projection of elements takes place in the integration network. While CIT provides the mental spaces and the information contained in them, RT establishes the links between these spaces and assists in the generation of new emergent properties in the blend. Figure (2) illustrates in the proposed modified conceptual integration network.

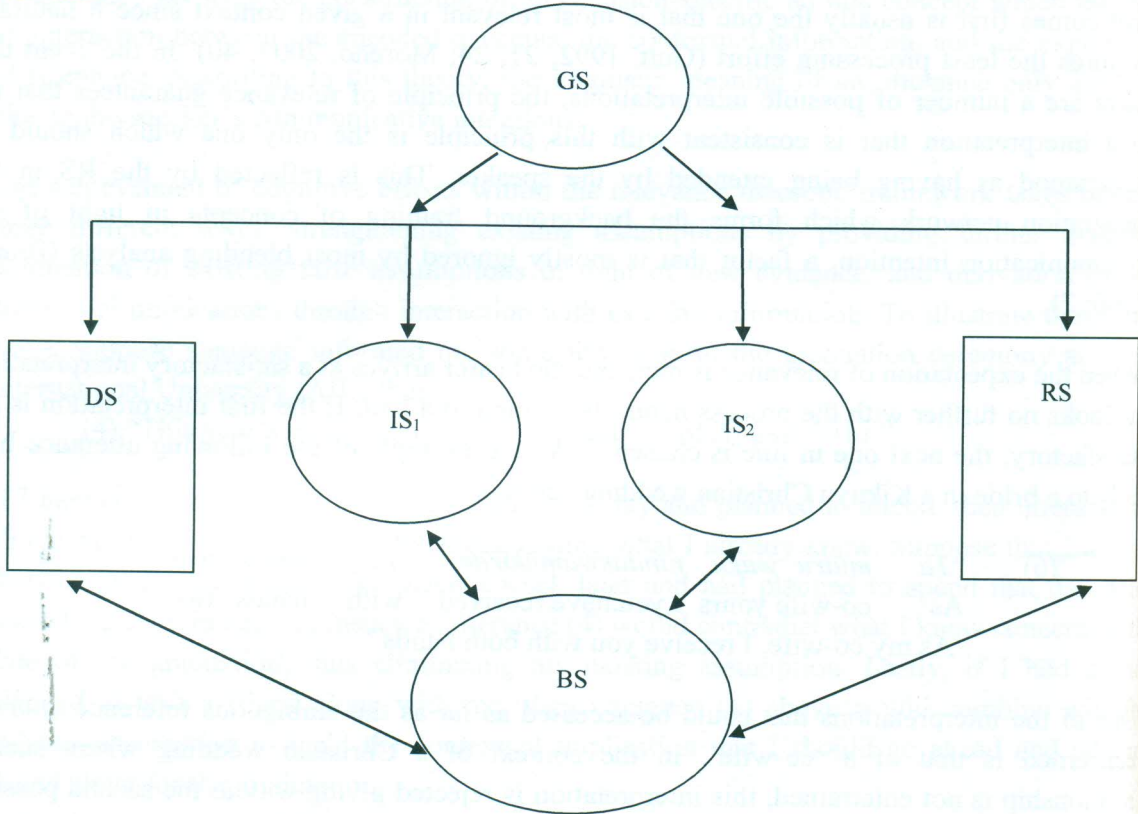


Figure 2: A modified integration network

Translating a Metaphorical Blend

McElhanon (2006: 69-70) proposes a translation model based on conceptual blending but with an additional space, namely that of the translation space which allows for the projection of inferences from the translation space to the target space and has “metonymic links with the content of the SL blended space”. The translation space is important for it provides a platform for one to compare the SL and RL blended spaces and draw the relevant connections between them as illustrated in figure (3) on the next page.

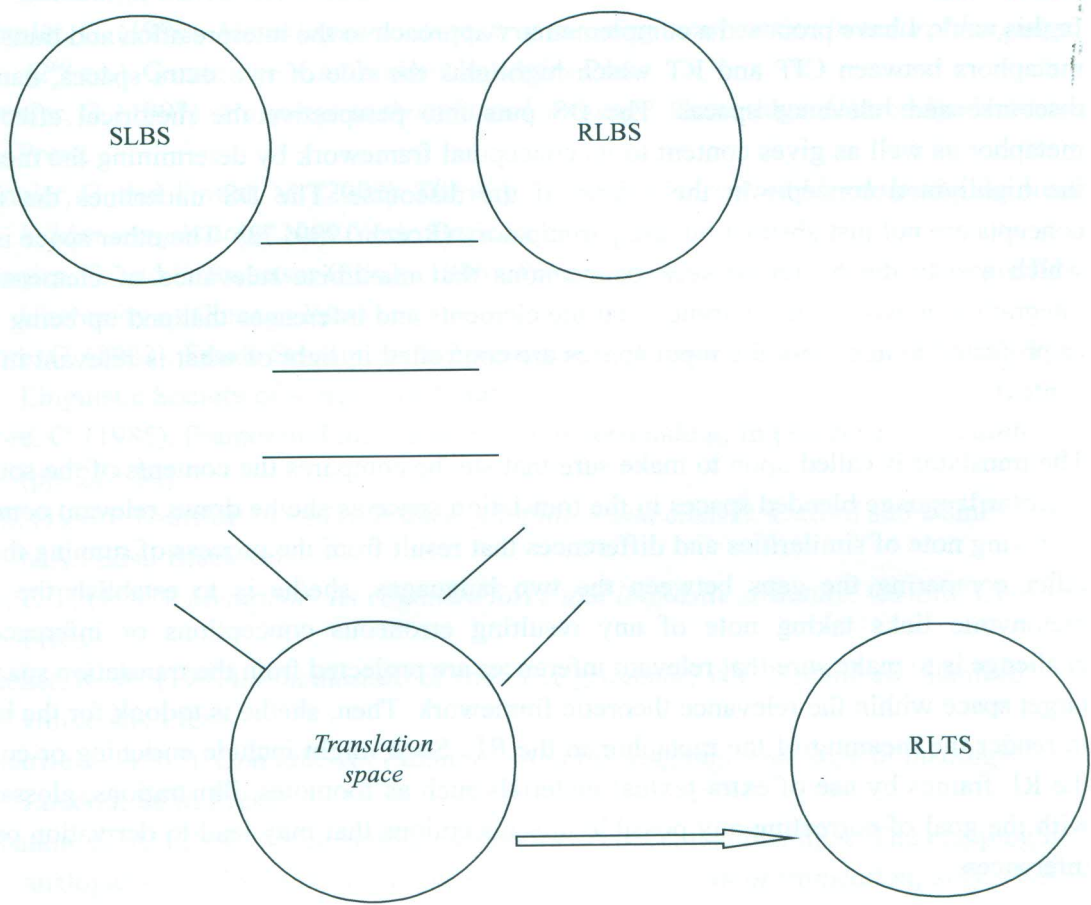


Figure 3: The translation and RL target spaces

Let me demonstrate this process by translating the metaphor $\epsilon\tau\upsilon\pi\tau\epsilon\nu\ \tau\acute{o}\ \sigma\tau\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ “was beating his chest” (Luke 18:13) into Kikuyu. One inference that is projected from the source language blended space (SLBS) to the translation space which is associated with the action of the tax collector beating his chest is that of ‘humility’. The inference that is projected from the receptor language blended space (RLBS) to the translation space is that of ‘pride’ and ‘arrogance’. These differing inferences are arrived at as emergent properties from the respective background framing through the process of *completion*. There is need to make sure that the inference from the RLBS is not projected to the receptor language translated space

(RLTS) since this could lead to the derivation of erroneous inferences or assumptions that could end up interfering with the message conveyed in the context of Luke 18:9-14. One of the options would be to render the metaphor using a corresponding action that shows humility in receptor language, such as that of *kũreha moko hamwe* "holding hands together" and possible adding the explicature *kuonania kwĩnyihia* "to show humility" in an attempt to maintain a higher degree of meaning resemblance with original.

Conclusion

In this work, I have proposed a complementary approach to the interpretation and translation of metaphors between CIT and RT which highlights the role of two extra spaces, namely the discourse and relevance spaces. The DS puts into perspective the rhetorical effect of the metaphor as well as gives content to its conceptual framework by determining the meaning of the highlighted concepts in the course of the discourse. The DS underlines the fact that concepts are not just abstract but are participatory (Rosch 1999: 73). The other space is the RS which assists the hearer to seek connections that maximize relevance of elements in the integration network. I have argued that the elements and inferences that end up being selected or projected to and from the input spaces are controlled in light of what is relevant in a given context.

The translator is called upon to make sure that she/he compares the contents of the source and receptor language blended spaces in the translation space as she/he draws relevant connections by taking note of similarities and differences that result from the process of running the blend. After comparing the gaps between the two languages, she/he is to establish the relevant metonymic links taking note of any resulting erroneous conceptions or inferences. The challenge is to make sure that relevant inferences are projected from the translation space to the target space within the relevance theoretic framework. Then, she/he is to look for the best way to render the meaning of the metaphor in the RL. Such might include enriching or correcting the RL frames by use of extra-textual materials such as footnotes, illustrations, glossary, etc., with the goal of correcting any possible misconceptions that may lead to derivation of wrong inferences.

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