

Transcultural memory and intertextuality in Fred Khumalo's *seven steps to heaven*

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Abstract

Enriching the mise-en-scene of a South Africa in transition with everything ranging from the music of the famous Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes troupe and South African trio dubbed 'Joy' to movie titles, this novel by Fred Khumalo is propelled forth by its play on the ambitions of a young black struggling writer and the vicissitudes of the publishing world which, by chance, celebrates his postmodern novel-within-a-novel *The Oneness of Two in Three* and a prize-winning trans-cultural short story called "Ramu the Hermit". This experimentation, however, simultaneously holds up and tests the virtues of the writing vocation exemplified by great poets of the Irish town of Limerick in a space where all things avant garde enjoy commercial success.

Keywords: Intertextuality, transcultural memory, 'double-voicedness', multiplicity

In the fashion of Carli Coetzee, who recently made a strong case for "activating other intertextual fields, to make other trends in the text and our responses to it visible"(2013: 63), Khumalo's transitional novel is replete with transcultural references and influences that range from Miles Davis's album of the same title to Joy's "Paradise Road", right through to Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes' "Wake Up Everybody", as well as chapters that carry an association with Hollywood titles such as "I Know What you Did Last Night", the novel evinces what Rita Barnard, following Twidle (2012: 24), aptly describes as cross-writing, namely, approaches that "play across different genres and modes of address rather than remaining trapped within those protocols of symbolic exchange that thrive on an endless series of tired oppositions: 'the novel' versus 'history'; 'aesthetics' versus 'raw experience'; 'committed' versus 'formalist'"(Barnard, 2012: 2).

Although there are strong historical resonances of township violence in the description of Sizwe the protagonist's political awakening in KwaZulu-Natal during the running battles between the United Democratic Front and the Inkatha Freedom Party, Khumalo's novel marshals allochthonous memory and transcultural intertextuality to the extent that race, gender and masculinities are represented through a multiplicity and temporality that are sophisticated enough to transcend and/or implode the binary oppositions between men and women, gay and 'straight', educated and lay, South African and Zimbabwean, black and white, rich and poor, per-urban Durban and urban Johannesburg, etc., without kowtowing to the conciliatory imperatives of master narratives of Nation-Building overmuch. Such deliberate blurring indexes the complex character of a transitional, if intractable, Rainbow Nation inasmuch as it attests to multiplicity in the novel. Khumalo's narrator, Sizwe Dube, is introduced to us

as connected to a wandering cockroach in the drab mise-en-scene of a Hillbrow a barely furnished shebeen:

The walls were garishly adorned with a menagerie of posters featuring liquor advertising, half naked black models, soccer stars, famous musicians—and the flavour of the century, Nelson Mandela, in various poses (2007: 2).

The foregrounding of poster pastiche calls to mind Mishra's attention to Gerard Genette's delineation of paratextuality as one of the five forms of intertextuality that refers to "title, epigraph, preface, epilogue, footnotes, *photographs*, drafts, acknowledgements, illustrations etc. which are somehow related to the main narrative" (Mishra, 2012: 211, emphasis added). Yet, significantly, the same Sizwe Dube, later on makes bold to state to meld his struggle as a writer to that of his alter ego, Freedom Cele, whose photo's appearance in newspapers (*Seven Steps*, 2007: 2008) goes beyond the memory of Sizwe's journalistic assignments in Zimbabwe as a South African. Rather, he indexes his struggle as both transnational and ontological as opposed to chalking it down to dipsomania and writer's block:

So, taking the leaf from the book of Nelson Mandela who saw good sense in a negotiated settlement for his country instead of an all-out war, he spoke slowly and clearly: 'Gentlemen of Zimbabwe, comrades who fought in the chimurenga, I have no fight against you. I realise that you are justifiably concerned, even paranoid, about the safety of your country. After all the world is crawling with spies and terrorists, and one has to go the extra mile to protect the citizenry of one's country. I salute and respect you, comrades. You and our comrades from our liberation movements fought side by side against the colonialist oppressors at Wankie and in many other battles. All I am asking you is this: Do you realise what I have been through? I've been through hell and back. And shit!' He raised his brows challengingly and said, 'Do you know what you're dealing with? Do you know who I am?' (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 2005).

Taking its cues from Cheryl Stobie's (2007) oft-muted observation that there is an element of 'doubling' in this novel, the paper conclusively endorses the view that invariably all characters have at least a double in the form of an alter ego as focus of unification necessary for decoding the novel's transnational allochthonous memory, which is encapsulated in the elusive authorship of the novel-within-the novel entitled *The Oneness of Two in Three*. Interestingly, Miłosałwa Stępień (2012: 79) mobilizes 'doubling' via the Bakhtinian term 'dialogism' to elucidate a constant interaction between meanings that bear an influence on each other.

With due regard to the titular significance of the novel-within-the novel, as well as the influence of music on the meaning of lived experience from the very onset of the main novel's plot, I would like here to also think of the double in the three characters of Sizwe Thulani and Patrick in from the perspective of how childhood is remembered through stories real and imagined. How they met and fought and wrote through each other is evenly matched by how the memories are enmeshed with stories such as the award-winning "Ramu the Hermit". The latter story of a black, Swahili-speaking Hindu of Zanzibari ancestry living in politically turbulent Durban renders these memories allochthonous; for it comes as the "movie of his life as a boy continued to play in his mind's eye" (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007:11).

The heteroglossic making of these memories, however, has to be further understood in two senses of "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text," where it becomes possible for

a textual temporality to arise where “several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and naturalize one another”(Kristeva, 1980:36). In the childhood memories recast through not only the movie of the mind’s eye, but also the short story plus the persona who is the nom de plume author who exists between Sizwe and Thulani it becomes possible to have a holy man, in fact “the first African sanyasi in the whole of Chatsworth township, a residential area inhabited by people of Indian extraction”(2007: 123) who spectacularly finds the full vitality of his humanity through a prostitutes who saves him then fulfils what his mantra supresses:

His long-suppressed desire whirled around his groin and exploded out of his penis in torrents, like preserved oil from a burst pipe. The sheets were flooded by the deluge of wasted human seed. The woman tittered, feeling the warm oil bathe her thighs. Ramu grabbed her impulsively, and let out a deep sigh (2007: 129).

Besides the obvious reference to the Thulani’s father, the ‘holy’ Reverend Tembe of the Anglican Church and his wayward ways with a shebeen femme fatale Sis Lovey, the short story also concretizes a life-changing fact that gains significant because of a historical fact: “I lost my virginity on the same day that Mandela was released from prison.”(2007: 94). Ejaculation is not necessarily synonymous with release in *Seven Steps to Heaven*, because it alludes to antinomial relations between the two, as evidenced in the case of Ramu and Sizwe both of whom feel dirty after ‘the release’. This structure of the narrative of allochthonous memory is better understood as metalepsis: "a trope-reversing trope, a figure of a figure" (Gates, 1983: 586).

Read within the scheme of metalepsis, then, ‘holy’ Nelson Mandela himself is indexed through his poster that hangs in a shebeen and is described as “the flavour of the century, in various poses”(2007: 2) alongside “a menagerie posters featuring liquor advertising, half-naked black models, soccer stars, musicians”(ibid). The deliberate vulgarization and pedestrianization, as it were, of the respected political figure is as much iconoclastic as it is antonymic. This other side of Mandela, his unholy double, comes up in a conversation that disavows his heroism:

‘Mandela did fuckall for you and me. In fact his release is the beginning of a long process of betrayal of our cause. He was released on their own terms, on the terms of the white world.’ ‘Of course no one is saying Mandela was the be-all and end-all of our struggle,’ Kokoroshe ventured, but he is a very important symbol of it...But of course no single individual holds the key to our liberation, not the name of Steve Biko, not Sisulu...’(2007: 94).

As the title of the *Oneness of Two in Three* suggests, even in the textual scheme of things no one individual holds the key. Beyond Sizwe having a double in Thulani Tembe who, in turn, has a double in Freedom Cele, Sizwe finds a trope-reversing double in the Irish Patrick McGuinness, whose perceived literary virtues are extolled by the parents of his middle-class black girlfriend Thembi. For Thembi’s parents are fully convicted that he is descended from the heritage of a respectable tradition associated with the Limerick town of poets. Through the voice narration of Thembi, who is averse to the autochthonous collective memory of struggle being contemplated by other black students in the predominantly white campus of the University of Natal, she captures the anticipation of her family thus:

My parents were thrilled to hear that I was going out with Patreick McGuinness. A gallant Irishman, my father called him. Then he started regaling me and Mama with

stories about an Irish town of Limerick. A town of poets and writers, he said. Irish people were like black people. They had suffered just like us black people.

But they are still white my mother countered later on, to me. They are better than these black monkeys in our country, monkeys who don't want to work and blame all their misfortunes on the white government, she said. Look where we are now, despite our black colour. We took it upon ourselves to work hard, that's why we have no truck with these monkey faces who are forever whingeing about oppression, apartheid. Damn! It makes you wish you were born another colour, in another country! I can't wait to see Patrick McGuiness sitting with us at dinner table. You say he is doing his master's in Irish literature; he must be a bright boy (2007: 145-6).

This harks back to reflections on influence and the best of traditions, and no doubt Sizwe himself majors in Accounting and, most importantly English and philosophy, to support his vocation as a serious writer. It is, we suppose, by design and not default serendipity that they meet and forge a common interest around the student magazine. Indeed, it is Patrick who introduces him to the sexy publisher Shree Leroux, who buys into Patrick's idea of a postmodern novel called the *One of Two in Three*. But is the literary influence Irish, in a true and palpable sense? Not at all. If anything, Patrick is the trope reversed—anything but Irish in deportment and all, which fact makes it utterly impossible for Thembi to bring him home to dinner and so meet the parents. He signifies the double-voicing of the black writer. To be sure, Patrick rouses Sizwe—who seems lost amid what he sees “a sea of white humanity raging”(2007: 149)—with a black hip-hop sounding voice ‘Yo, brother, whassup?’...’Yo, bro, I'm talkin to you, huh!. We are here given to understand that it was for Sizwe's benefit, this talking black; a talking black that patronizes and alienates Sizwe by its foreignness; a talking black that disallows Sizwe the black man to talk back without being either defensive or rude to the tall young white man “in baggy jeans that threaten to fall off his tiny body, sneakers and Lakers shirt”(2007: 141).

Wearing his Lakers backwards, too, he proceeds to introduce himself ‘Man, Patrick McGuiness is the name...This here is my queen Thembi. And wha's your moniker, dude?’(2007:141). No sooner had they shook hands than Patrick switched to a white South African accent, which Sizwe could better understand and for which he was grateful no doubt. It does not last for long: right after Thembi leaves, Patrick comments that she is ‘a good bitch’, to which Sizwe objects. He responds with a smile “Yo nigger, where you from, huh?...nah, nah, nigger, you from the sticks you don't dig the lingo”, which infuriates Sizwe to a point where he says: “Man, don't call me a nigger”(2007: 142). That there is a relationship that ensues after this confrontation deliberately refers to his childhood friend and alter ego, Thulani Tembe, who is his also his writing double after a ménage a trois with Nolitha. Remarkably, he holds hands with him rather intimately in way that could only confirm his feelings for Patrick without guilt or disgust. Here Thulani is displaced by Patrick as a double: for Thulani is now Freedom Cele and publishes his stories under the pseudonym Vusi Mntungwa. Patrick thus becomes the double of a double of Sizwe's light-skinned childhood friend whom Sizwe remembers differently.

Such symptomatic doubling of characters as Stobie indicates above in the allochthonous scheme of things is not limited to characters such as Thulani Tembe and Sizwe Dube or Sis Lettie or Sis Joy. The mirror leitmotif also functions to highlight the figuration-cum-apparition of Thulani his alter ego in it, thus becoming less an object of narcissism but a reflection of existential angst associated with the fear of the tragic persona he is at once developing into and denying. Each time the desperate adult

Sizwe drifts into a Thulani Tembe phantasmagoria, the reader can almost hear the subtly referenced the allusion to the refrained chorus of a song by Michael Jackson, that is, ‘Man in the Mirror’:

I'm starting with the man in the mirror

I'm asking him to change his ways

And no message could have been any clearer

If you want to make the world a better place

Take a look at yourself, and then make a change (<http://www.metrolyrics.com/>)

For Sizwe Dube the writer to change himself into a success story or rehabilitated self, he has to consider the man in the mirror, viz., his double Sizwe Tembe author of *Ramu the Hermit* and nom de plume for churning out *The Oneness of Two in Three*. The Michael Jackson song is in effect part of musical score of the narrative that is operationalized as a transmuted bricolage ‘under erasure’ (to borrow from Heidegger and Derrida somewhat): both absent and present. To be both present and absent means that is not written into the text, yet its presence is everywhere ubiquitous in sober moments of self-reflection and also during dipsomaniac ruminations at Hillbrow bars. It is always the man in the mirror he has to confront with a purpose to either defeating the retrograde persona or banishing from his thoughts the apparently dead Thulani who is a haunting apparition.

Thulani is an alter ego and, as such, remains inextricably a part of Sizwe’s split self. He is part of the layered onion necessary for the formulaic cooking of soup in the life of the protagonist. This layerdness, as it were, is understood as an indelibly encoded aphorism from Sizwe’s mother:

People are like onions, his mother used to say, they come in layers. ‘When I was young, if I made soup and I was chopping onions’ – that’s what she would be thinking. Layers, everyone has layers. You have to see them in yourself and others (2007: 28).

The same holds true for *The Oneness of Two in Three*, the novel within the novel, which is a ploy to ‘do a postmodern thing’ but also *Seven Steps to Heaven*’s double. I would here like to point out that the recognition of cross-writing in this paper forms the basis of the symptomatic reading across genres which, for all intents and purposes, follows the premise of Miłoslawa Stępień, who in her “*Truth and Reconciliation*” in *English Language Novels of South African Writers* (2012) consciously makes “the primary assumption that meaning is always to be looked for both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the text” and, in so doing, returns “to some of Mikhail Bakhtin’s concepts such as the dialogic nature of novels, complemented by such concepts as ‘double-voiced discourse’, ‘heteroglossia’, and ‘hybridization’”(2012: 77).

A significant part of the double voiced discourse and heteroglossia in Fred Khumalo’s *Seven Steps to Heaven* reveals itself through signifiers outside the text, especially musical lyrics and cross-references that form the basis of both intertextuality and multiplicity. In the first instance, the two shebeen settings in urban Hillbrow and in a suburban KwaZulu-Natal location of Exclusive Park are associated with a milieu defined by meanings gleaned from the lyrics of music at play. The narrator, by creating a double-voiced discourse, sees fit to create a double signature, such that the tough Sis Joy character—owner of the eponymous Sis Joys’s Oasis on the roof of Hillbrow Heights—holds in counterpoise the figure of sensually ethereal Sis Lettie of the Paradise Road shebeen.

Inasmuch as Khumalo's narrator frames the story as the "[t]he movie of his life [that] continued Khumalo to play in his mind's eye" (2007:11), adult memories invoke visual metaphors that are indexically associated with film noir and the femme fatale figure. Elizabeth Bronfen's findings shown that heroines or, as the case may be, "heroes of film noir repeatedly find themselves penetrating into the darkness of a fascinating, and at the same time threatening, counterworld of corruption, intrigue, betrayal and decadence from which they can only escape by death" (Bronfen, 2004: 104). A recent study has shown that this kind of cross-writing and hybridization has been used by writers like Bloke Modisane and filmographers to ostensibly bring to view a tragic entry into "unpredictable settings and debauched existence in the cinematic idiom of film noir" (Masemola, 2011: 2).

It is worth noting that it is the femme fatale who, despite the forcefully professed tragic sensibility of film noir, is the very encapsulation of "an attitude that addresses the limits of modern dreams of perfectibility" (Bronfen, 2004:104). A description of Sis Lettie at the Razzmatazz recalls film noir femme fatale of the 1950s genre in no small measure:

Then an apparition, a thing from heaven, appeared at the entrance to the club. She was tall on her silver stiletto heels, sparkling in her red sleepless evening dress. She had on gloves that reached to her elbows. Large earrings dangled from her lobes, their beauty enhanced by a dark Diana Ross wig she had on. There were murmurs: 'Who's this?' (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 88-89).

The grand entrance of the femme fatale character of Sis Lettie is pinned on the erotic masts of a temptress whose moving presence inspires the deejay to stop playing a Brenda Fassie number and, in its place, "put on the queen's favourite, 'Paradise Road':

Come with me down Paradise Road
This way please, I'll carry your load
This you must believe (2007: 90).

A kind of redemption or indeed lightening the tedium of latter day burdens suggestively offered by Sis Lettie is rendered both utopian and metaphysical when the song continues:

Come with me to paradise skies
Look outside, and open your eyes
This must believe
There are better days before us (2007: 90).

This highly favoured song by the Joy trio mollifies and tempts its shebeen audience, on the one hand, and intertextually prefigures (by discursive nomination) the contrasting character of Sis Joy in her Hillbrow Oasis. Her choice of song by Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, in contrast, is an exhortation that caloges Sizwe and other patrons to self-saving and civic duty.

Wake up everybody no more sleepin' in bed
No more backward thinkin' time for thinkin' ahead
The world has changed so very much from what it used to be
There's so much hatred war and poverty

Wake up all the teachers time to teach a new way
Maybe then they'll listen to whatcha have to say
'Cause they're the ones who's coming up and the world is in their hands

When you teach the children teach 'em the very best you can
The world won't get no better
If we just let it be
The world won't get no better
We gotta change it yeah, just you and me (<http://www.metrolyrics.com>).

The terms of 'waking up', 'teaching', 'healing' and 'building the land' above or indeed rebuilding a tumultuous South Africa in transition serve the purpose of discursively consolidating a new dispensation through codifying hard work into the everyday consciousness of all shebeen patrons present. According to Miłoslawa Stępień "all these terms tie in closely to an approach which perceives textual meaning as being dependent on the social context, thus introducing a conceptualization of the novel as being always dialogic and of meaning as emerging from the text's dialogic place within culture and society" (2012: 78). The approach of reading across and between the heteroglossia of the text allows readers to draw the link between words or characters that could easily be read in isolation. As per the exemplary reference to the paradigmatic selection of the word "Joy" as the name of the trio, and the name of a shebeen queen, as well as the goal of the *Seven Steps to Heaven*, it is clear that within such an approach, no interpretation is ever final "because every word is a response to previous words and elicits further responses [that are] constantly entering into dialogue with past, present and future utterances" (Allen, 2000: 28—quoted in Miłoslawa Stępień, 2012: 78).

Miłoslawa Stępień (2012: 79) makes a note of the fact that in the glossary entry to the term 'dialogism' within the English-language publication of four of Bakhtin's essays entitled *The Dialogic Imagination*, Holquist writes that according to the Russian theorist "there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others". In *Seven Steps to Heaven*, the title of the song "Paradise road", conditions the journey of Sizwe from childhood outside Durban to Hillbrow in Johannesburg and then Harare in Zimbabwe as everything but paradise. In fact, it indexes the journey cannot be understood as a bildungsroman proper or what Carli Coetzee calls an inspirational chronicle of self-actualization" (2013: 68).

Primarily, then, Miłoslawa Stępień notes that within such a conceptualization, the meaning of words is constantly and dynamically changing, as well as being dependent on spatial, temporal and situational factors. Take for instance, the protagonist's tendency to take solace in *Kaffir Boy*, an autobiography by Mark Mathabane that decries not only the banal and trite life of a black youth, but also inspires confidence in a young man who is determined to supersede soured relations between himself and his cavalier father. In this sense, the 'Kaffir' boy in question is not used in an invidious or delirious sense of notorious South African race relations: "he paused and realised that what the book was saying was almost true of his current circumstances, except that his own household had simply broken down because his parents simply had no confidence in each other any more", despite his status as an Anglican man of the cloth (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 77). Heteroglossia, then constitutes, a moving aside as well as crossing over:

Various kinds of crossings occur in the novel: the White man adopts the mannerisms of a Black persona, while his Black former girlfriend sounds White; a lesbian delights in wearing ultrafeminine, sexy clothing to confound stereotypes. Some wry humor attends the suggestion by the White man that Sizwe should write an academic article on "The Politics of Being Gay in the Black South African Community," and Sizwe's crisp rejoinder that this could be published alongside an article by his partner, titled "Confessions of a White Male Prostitute in a Changing South Africa." Overall,

however, the lessons learned by the characters are bitter, and issues of doubling, rape, drug addiction and failure despite promise are explored. (Stobie, 2011: 485).

Given the fact that the allusion to the Anglican Priest Tembe's infidelity is written as a form of 'doubling' into the short story of "Ramu the Hermit", it is reasonable to infer that Thulani Tembe's utterance, true to intertextuality, is 'heteroglot': that is, it refers to "the presence within it of other utterances, past utterances and future responses or redeployments" (Allen 2000: 213, quoted in Stepień 2012: 78), "thus it is a term which takes into account that meaning is constantly fluctuating and is dependent not only on how it was understood when it was uttered/written down but also on how it is later read and re-used" (2012: 79). We therefore observe that *Seven Steps to Heaven* is fully amenable to the concept of 'heteroglossia' such as it primarily used in its Bakhtinian sense of intertextual polyphony in terms of which writing contains multiple voices or origins (Mishra, 2012: 3). It is here worth looking at the way in which the heteroglossic registers of the novel highlight the elements of parody involved in the description of Rev Tembe's return to his church in Biblical terms after eloping with Sis Lovey yet the congregation is duped to have been a political kidnapping:

'The Lord works in mysterious ways,' Elder Mahlangu shouted at the congregation, his mouth foaming. 'The Lord opened the gates of the dungeon and allowed his son to walk free. It reminds me of those gates behind which Daniel had been languishing, hallelujah, don't we have a friend in Christ?'

'We have a great friend in Christ!' the congregation chorused enthusiastically.

On the strength of this story the faithful had come out in their numbers to see this holy man of God who had defied the evil forces and was back with them in the world of the living, gallantly spreading the word of God (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 104).

Considering that this passage is drawn from a passage from a chapter of *Seven Steps to Heaven* that carries the title "The Return of the Shepherd", it is worth returning to what Bakhtin (1981) frames as the intertextual capability of an utterance to arise out of dialogue "as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it" (Bakhtin 1981: 276-277—quoted in Stepień, 2012: 79). This is the fundamental basis on which Cheryl Stobie (2007) characterizes of Khumalo's novel as double-voiced. It is noteworthy that Sizwe the protagonist finds love with a complex Irish character Patrick McGuinness who, besides studying towards a Masters degree in Irish Literature, also speaks with an Afro-American accent, dates a middle-class black girl with a posh English accent, and yet is bedeviled by tendency to walk the streets as a prostitute. Likewise, Sizwe is strongly attracted to the same girl and, ironically, it is Patrick and Sizwe who end up together in a near-obsessive interracial, bisexual conundrum. Given that Sizwe has an alter ego in his friend Thulani, he leads a double life as a heterosexual and a bisexual man, a dipsomaniac writer and a freedom fighter straddling the two countries of South Africa and Zimbabwe, and a black and white man—all these being played out in the surface of the leitmotif mirror that reflects the present angst and defies autochthonous cultural memory or what Chimamanda Adichie calls "a single story" of African masculinity.

Instead of the single story, a double-voicedness that defies stereotyping becomes manifest in the words of Patrick McGuinness in the novel:

'That's a dangerous approach. You see, me the darkies don't like me because I get on well with the black dolls. The honkies don't like me either 'cos they say I am letting them down, trying to be black, always voting with the black students in the at SRC meetings. Me I go hip-hop when my white brothers are getting high and puking and

smashing each other with baseball bats at their rowdy rock sessions' (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 103).

Sizwe's alter ego Thulani is as complex as Patrick, to the extent that the single story is replaced by multi-layeredness:

But every now and then, he wondered what awaited him at the other end. Now and then his other persona, Thulani Tembe, would try to take over, asking questions about where Sizwe Dube was at the moment, how he was coping, but the dominant Freedom soon wrested control from the Thulani, putting himself at centre stage, cracking jokes with colleagues. What a simple straight-talking guy, they told each other (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 191).

In sum, therefore, "the dialogic nature of language must be emphasized" more than the single story of the simple, 'straight talking guy'. Rather, *Seven Steps to Heaven* demands to be read symptomatically in pretty much the same way that Sizwe is doubled through Patrick, or Sis Lettie through Sis Joy, or indeed Thulani through Freedom Cele, with Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes 'signifying upon' Culture Club, and Irish Poetry upon the South African novel, and the novel upon the Hindu-inspired short story. The foregoing are the hallmarks of transcultural memory. The alter ego in the paratext of Oneness of Two in Three vacillates between Thulani Tembe and Freedom Cele, further to think about Sizwe Dube. The three characters constitute the intertextual writing vortex, as it were, from which creativity springs. All told, *Seven Steps to Heaven* is a multi-layered text with characters that are as multiple as they are multi-layered themselves. Here the recurring leitmotif of "if I made soup..." carries a sense of hold, in that it signposts that "people are like onions"; indeed Freedom Cele is like an onion with Thulani Tembe beneath him, inasmuch as Sizwe Dube has Vusi Mntungwa and Freedom Cele lurking beneath him. This multi-layeredness crosses over from being a Zulu boy to being a lover of an Irish man who doubles as a male prostitute. Suffice to conclude that the ability of the text to present itself in heteroglot terms, such that the mirror does not show the protagonist facing, in the same manner that one's story is affiliated to another, renders the texts amenable to intertextual readings that are allocthonously transcultural in their character and genre composition.

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A comparative study of the effects of age on perceptual processes within an information technology college in light of the desktop metaphor

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Abstract

This study explores the conceptualisation of the desktop metaphor across two groups, using age as the primary variable. With a mixed-method approach, two groups are compared synchronically, the hypothesis being that the younger group will see the computer desktop as a ‘thing-in-itself’, while the older group will see it as an e-version of their actual desk. Using statistics, questionnaires, interviews and controlled observation, this hypothesis is tested in light of Blending Theory, Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Mental Spaces Theory (defined here as a sub-parts of the former), and Prototype Theory.

Key words: Mixed-method, Desktop Metaphor, Blending, Metaphor, Mental Spaces, Prototypes, Categorisation.

Introduction

The technological age has transformed the environment within which a vast majority of the world’s civilisation exists in. Our daily lives are often governed by interactions with technological devices, one of which is the computer. The pioneering efforts of Apple Inc. and Microsoft Corporation has allowed for computing to become a natural and interactive task. The invention of the Macintosh and Windows Operating System graphical user interfaces has permitted the integration of computers into our offices, our homes as well as our educational institutions. This technology-governed age has produced a generation that relies heavily on computerised devices to execute daily tasks and activities. This was not the case for generations who were raised before the technological surge. Although these older generations have, to some extent, adopted the implementation of technology in their lives, they arguably rely less on it than those generations who have been raised in the technology age.

This study attempts to determine whether age, as a social variable, affects a person’s perception process with relation to the visual metaphors that are presented by graphical user interfaces in an attempt to make computer-related tasks more user-friendly. It will explore the extent to which these metaphors have been adopted by a young age group, a generation which has been raised predominantly in the technological age, as well as an older age group, a generation which has been raised predominantly before the technological age.

We will apply Fauconnier and Turner's Blending Theory as a framework that will allow us to study the effect that the age variable has on the blends that emerge due to the extent of the influence that the metaphor has on the emergent blend. This study will allow the opportunity to determine whether the blended space is in any way affected by age, as a social variable. In other words, the study will verify whether the cognitive process of perception, through the application of Blending Theory, is in any way influenced by age, amongst other social variables.

Research Problem

The study is focused on determining whether social variables, specifically age, in any way alter the perception processes of individuals. We will apply Blending Theory (also known as Conceptual Integration Networks or Conceptual Blending), as set forth by Fauconnier and Turner (1998), as the theoretical framework on which this study will be based. We mean to determine whether age, as a social variable, impacts the blended space of the conceptual integration model, by means of studying the individuals' perception of a metaphor. In this case, we will apply Dan Gruen's "Desktop" Metaphor analogy, which is presented in Fauconnier and Turner (1998) as an example of Blending Theory. The aim is to determine to what extent, if any, the individual has adopted or rejected the metaphor of the electronic desktop and whether it has formed an entirely technology-based blend or whether it is still perceived as a metaphor that features aspects of the paper-based filing system in the blend. We believe that the incorporation of the age variable should have an effect on the blended space.

For example: A 19-year-old subject may, due to regular exposure to technological phenomena, perceive the term 'mail' as a reference to electronic mail, which is an advancement of the World Wide Web, while a 50-year-old subject may, due to a lesser degree of technological exposure, perceive the term 'mail' as a reference to so-called snail mail, which makes use of postal services. Therefore, the technology-based metaphor is adopted as a literal reference to the term 'mail' by the 19-year-old, while the 50-year-old still regards the technology-based metaphor as a metaphor that refers to the literal term 'mail' through postal services. The 19-year-old adopts the metaphor as a literal phenomenon, thereby creating an entirely technology-based blend, while the 50-year-old preserves the metaphor as a non-literal phenomenon, thereby maintaining a literal blend of the term 'mail'.

Fauconnier and Turner (1998: 135) explain what the blended space is and how it is formulated (note that this theory will be discussed in greater detail under the heading 'Theoretical Framework'):

A particular process of meaning construction has particular input representations; during the process, inferences, emotions and event-integrations emerge which cannot reside in any of the inputs; they have been constructed dynamically in a new mental space – the blended space – linked to the inputs in systematic ways.

The incorporation of age as a social variable in a study related to the workings of cognitive processes is an essential part of achieving more realistic results in the study of the human cognitive process. A very distinct issue in cognitive science is the inherent social influence existent in all subjects studied in the domain of cognitive linguistics. The issue is one that cannot be ignored by the cognitive scientist due to the fact that no human lives in isolation from his environment or other humans. In her work, 'New Directions in Sociolinguistic Cognition' (2010: 31), Campbell-Kibler emphasises the necessity of focusing on the effects that social variables have on linguistic cognition:

Variationists to date have been little interested in studying how social information is represented in the mind, despite a strong interest in how linguistic structures function

cognitively. As a result, debates about the mental relationships between social and linguistic structures have been hampered by a lack of clarity regarding the nature of social processing.

In their study, 'The status of frequency, schemas and identity in Cognitive Sociolinguistics: A case study on definite article reduction' (2011: 25-26), Hollmann and Siewierska emphasise the fact that cognitive linguistics cannot simply be studied as a mental phenomenon, but should be viewed as a social activity as well. They present the view of Langacker (1999: 376 cited in 2011: 25) in the following in support of their claim:

Articulating the dynamic nature of conceptual and grammatical structure leads us inexorably to the dynamics of discourse and social interaction. While these too have been part of Cognitive Grammar from the very onset, they have certainly not received the emphasis they deserve.

In an attempt to account for the relationship between social and cognitive processes and the effects that they have on one another, it is essential that cognitive linguistic studies do not eliminate the influences of social variables on the cognitive process, but account for these in all research that is executed. Social variables can differ greatly from one individual to another, and this should be considered when attempting to study the individual subject. Social variables can include ethnicity, gender, culture, religion, status, environment, attitudes, parental influence, education and age. Therefore, the study means to account to some extent for these social variables and utilise specifically the age variable as a lens through which Blending Theory will be analysed. We intend to expand on Blending Theory by means of including the influence that age variations have on the uniqueness of the emergent blend. We believe that, if executed successfully, this study can be expanded to include other social variables to analyse not only Blending Theory, but also other cognitive linguistic theories, such as Lakoff and Johnson's pioneering theories of Conceptual Metaphor and Embodiment. In our proposed study, the age variable will be examined as a manipulator of the blended space that forms a focal part of Fauconnier and Turner's Blending Theory (1998).

Research Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the study include:

- To determine whether age has an influence on the conceptualisation process, as in the process of understanding that occurs in the mind.
- To investigate the nature of the relationship between age and human categorisation, namely when a concept is classified into categories based on commonalities and usually for some specific purpose.
- To determine in what way age affects conceptual input, as in the content displayed in input spaces, which are spaces that are constructed while we think to house information that we conceptualise, and to identify how it transforms the blended space.
- To examine the manner in which age supports the premise that language relies on a usage-based approach, in other words an approach that emphasises the tenet that language structure is the result of language use.
- To ascertain whether Blending Theory, as a cognitive linguistic framework, can be influenced by social factors.

Research Questions

Questions that will be considered in this study include:

- Does age influence the conceptualisation process?
- What relationship does age have with human categorisation?
- How does age affect conceptual input?
- If it does affect conceptual input, how will it transform or influence the blended space?
- How does age support the premise that language relies on a usage-based approach?
- Can age, as a social variable, allow us to view Blending Theory as a framework that is influenced by social factors?

This list of questions is by no means exhaustive and can be expanded to incorporate various theories and frameworks analysed by means of applying several other social variables, as mentioned above. These questions are merely the focus of this particular study, which revolves around the application of the age variable on Blending Theory.

Theoretical Framework

Cognitive linguistics emerged from the ground-breaking research on the nature of human categorisation in the field of psychology. The work done in cognitive linguistics has been applied in related disciplines, including psychology, anthropology, neurobiology, motor control, artificial intelligence, philosophy, and literary criticism (Janda. 2010: 3). This discipline that was born from linguistics distanced itself from the traditional generative approaches to linguistics and fostered theoretical frameworks that tended to deviate from the conventional approaches that governed the field at that time:

Cognitive linguistics, emerging out of linguistics proper, and initially in reaction to mainstream Chomskian-oriented approaches, has made important contributions to the study of human language and its cognitive underpinnings. This new field, however, relying mainly on linguistic methods of evidence gathering has made claims not only about languages, but also about the psychological reality of people's cognition (Gonzalez-Marquez et al., 2007: 89).

Cognitive linguistics can be defined as the scientific exploration of the human cognitive process through the imperative medium of language. The field fits into the realm of cognitive science and has introduced effective means of exploring the intricate complexities of the human thought process through theories related to the study of metaphor and meaning, amongst other cognitive phenomena. The discipline is made up of two main branches of study, namely Cognitive Semantics and Cognitive Approaches to Grammar. Evans and Green (2006: 153) explain Cognitive Semantics as “an approach to the study of mind and its relationships with embodied experience and culture. It proceeds by employing language as a key methodological tool for uncovering conceptual organisation and structure”. Cognitive Approaches to Grammar contrast with Cognitive Semantics as it rather focuses on the linguistic system as it revolves around the symbolic thesis, which identifies sound, meaning and grammar as linked entities. Both of these branches are similar with regards to the fact that they do not simply comprise one theory. Instead they exist due to a unification of several theories.

This study will focus on the core concept in Cognitive Semantics that is metaphor and will apply theories related to metaphor as its key framework. Metaphor resides in the ancient Greek discipline known as rhetoric, which revolved around the instruction of the act of persuasion by the utilisation of rhetorical devices. Metaphor is one of these rhetorical devices. Evans and Green (2006: 293) identify metaphor as an “implicit comparison”, which can be illustrated by the schematic form A is B, for example *The surgeon is a butcher*. Therefore, the comparison of two categories is not explicitly marked, as is the case with a simile, where *like* or *as* are used as explicit markers, such as *The surgeon is like a butcher*. The abovementioned metaphor attempts to highlight a perceived similarity between

the profession of a surgeon and that of a butcher, which assumes the cultural knowledge that butchers work in an imprecise, brutal and harsh manner. Surgeons on the other hand are perceived to work with precision, gentility and detail. Therefore, this metaphor attempts to contrast the surgeon with his perceived qualities. Instead the metaphor pairs the surgeon with the qualities of the butcher in an attempt to highlight the surgeon's incompetence in his profession.

Lakoff and Johnson pioneered research in metaphoric phenomena in their book *Metaphors We Live By* (1989) in which conceptual metaphor was introduced. They discovered that “metaphorical language appears to relate to an underlying metaphor system, a ‘system of thought’” (Evans and Green, 2006: 294). Therefore, not any conceptual domain is chosen arbitrarily to describe another conceptual domain. Conceptual metaphor identifies an association, which is a connection known as a mapping, between a target domain, the domain that is being described, which is conventionally structured in terms of the source domain, the domain in terms of which the target is described. Lakoff and Johnson proposed that metaphor is a conceptual association, which implies that people think in metaphorical terms.

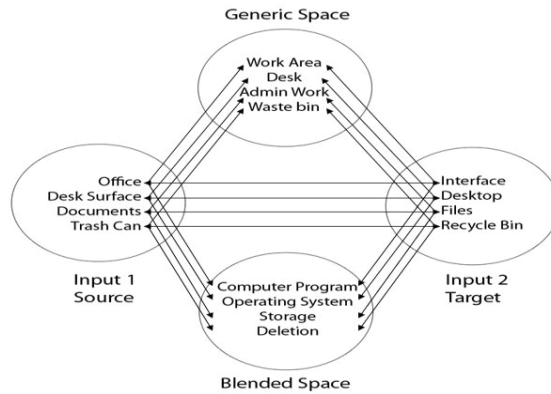
From the work done on conceptual metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson (1989) several other frameworks emerged that further expanded on metaphor as a cognitive phenomenon. This study will apply as its main framework one of these theories, namely Blending Theory (also known as Conceptual Integration) proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (1998). Grady et al (1999) outline Blending Theory and its relationship with Conceptual Metaphor Theory. They emphasise that one of the objectives of Blending Theory is to “unify the analysis of metaphor with the analysis of a variety of other linguistics and conceptual phenomena” (1999: 1). The similarity between Blending Theory and Conceptual Metaphor Theory are that both frameworks view metaphor as a conceptual, instead of a linguistic phenomenon; “both involve systematic projection of language, imagery and inferential structure between conceptual domains; both propose constraints on this projection; and so forth” (1999: 1). The differences that exist between these two frameworks include: Conceptual Metaphor Theory illuminates two mental representations and its relationships, while Blending Theory acknowledges more than two. Conceptual Metaphor Theory terms metaphor as a “strictly directional phenomenon” (1999: 1), while Blending Theory does not. Furthermore, Conceptual Metaphor Theory and its analyses are generally focused on embedded conceptual relationships, while investigations into Blending Theory tend to examine new and possibly fleeting conceptualisations.

Although Blending Theory emerged partly from Conceptual Metaphor Theory, its roots are firmly planted in Mental Spaces Theory. Some view Blending Theory as a direct extension of Mental Spaces Theory (Evans & Green, 2006: 400). Mental Spaces Theory, as developed by Fauconnier, holds the view that language directs meaning construction precisely in context. Therefore, no sentence can be analysed in isolation from continuous discourse. Evans and Green (2006: 364) outline this further: “In other words, semantics (traditionally context-independent meaning of a sentence) cannot be meaningfully separated from pragmatics (traditionally, the context-dependent meaning of a sentence).” This occurs due to the fact that meaning construction is dependent on context and information that is particular to a certain environment. Furthermore, this approach relies on general cognitive processes and principles that add to meaning construction. Fauconnier regards mental spaces as connected domains that allow speakers to make connections to mental spaces which have been constructed earlier in ongoing discourse. Due to the complex relationships that exist between mental spaces which contribute to a dynamic process of meaning construction, meaning arises, which is known as conceptualisation.

Fauconnier, with his work in Mental Spaces Theory, and Turner, who focused extensively on meaning construction from metaphor in literary language, both observed that meaning construction appears to originate from “structure that is apparently unavailable in the linguistic or conceptual structure that functions as the input to the meaning construction process” (Evans & Green, 2006: 401). Blending Theory developed from their efforts to justify this phenomenon.

We will provide an example to outline the aspects of Blending Theory, namely: *I feel blue*. Blending Theory utilises mental spaces as the fundamental constituents of cognitive structuring. These mental spaces are dependent upon domains, as spaces resemble particular situations which are organised by particular domains. In light of the example, the mental space would consist of the colour blue, which therefore recruits a domain of colour. Blending Theory applies four or more spaces; two or more spaces are used as ‘inputs’, another space is ‘generic’ (which houses information that is shared by the input spaces), and the fourth space is the ‘blend’ (this space presents information which emerges anew based on the interaction between the other three spaces). When considering the example, the spaces would consist of an input space, which presents the domain of colour and where the focal colour is blue, while the other input space would represent the domain of emotions, where the agent draws on his feelings of sadness or depression. The mapping which exists between the two input spaces define the relation between the two spaces, namely that the agent shares a sad emotion, or that the sad emotion connects to the colour. The generic space highlights the information which both inputs share, for instance colour connects with emotion. The blended space holds the emergent information, which is that the person feels emotionally depressed or sad, because he is blue. The metaphor, which attributes the colour blue to the emotions of sadness and depression, is formulated in the blended space.

We intend to apply Blending Theory to this study as this model has the capacity to highlight the emergent structure that merges the input spaces via cross-domain mappings and can only occur in the blended space. In an attempt to examine the cognitive process of perception, we will apply the perception of the Desktop Metaphor. This metaphor is outlined as an example of Blending Theory in Fauconnier and Turner’s study (1998) as it requires the agent to formulate the metaphor conceptually in the blended space. The application of the Blending Theory model in this particular study would allow us to compare the perception of the Desktop Metaphor between two different age groups. An example of the Blending Theory model on the perception process of a 19-year-old information technology student follows: The source input contains information regarding the features of a literal office-based desktop, such as office, desk surface, documents and a trash can. The target input comprises information related to the features of a non-literal computer-based desktop (the ‘Desktop’ Metaphor), which could include interface, desktop, files and recycle bin. Thus, the target input space would represent the desktop metaphor. The generic space will feature elements that are housed by both inputs, namely work area, desk, administration work and waste bin. Cross-domain mappings would connect the office in the source input with the interface in the target input and the work area in the generic space, the desk surface with the desktop and the desk, the documents with the files and administration work as well as the trash can with the recycle bin and the waste bin. An emergent blend would form based on the degree of the 19-year-old’s adoption of the metaphor as a literal phenomenon. Therefore, the blend would be primarily technology-based and would include computer program, operating system, storage and deletion as features mapped onto the blended space due to the 19-year-old’s perception of the desktop metaphor, which essentially is no longer a metaphor in the mind of the subject. An illustration of this example follows:



An example of a proposed Conceptual Integration Network diagram for the emergent blend of Group 1 (age 18 to 21).

In an attempt to examine the perception process as applied to the Blending Theory model, it is necessary to consider categorisation, in other words “our ability to identify perceived similarities (and differences) between entities and thus group them together” (Evans & Green, 2006: 248). Categorisation is the fundamental building block for knowledge representation and linguistic meaning, as it is central to the cognitive system (2006: 248). Categorisation originated in the field of psychology and research in this area has produced Prototype Theory, as set forth by Rosch and her colleagues. Janda (2010: 13) explains that “human categories tend to have a defining internal structure and no boundary”. For this reason a category is caused by and is situated around a prototypical member, to which all other members (called radial categories) connect in some way or another. This does not mean that the connection to the prototype allows for the member to share the prototype’s features as the connection can be interceded by a chain of linked members that share features with its adjacent members. However, no features may be shared by members at the furthest ends of the chain. The prototype acts as a “schematic representation of the most salient or central characteristics associated with members of the category in question” (Evans & Green, 2006: 249).

In this study Prototype Theory will be implemented to determine the features that will be contained in the input spaces of the Blending Theory model. A category member will be provided and participants will have to select the prototype of the category which, they think, bears the closest resemblance to that category member. For example: A category member named ‘desktop’ will be supplied to the participant. The participant will then have to add prototypical members which most closely relate to the ‘desktop’ category member:

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| FURNITURE -- TABLE -- WORK SURFACE -- DESKTOP -- INTERFACE -- SCREEN -- COMPUTER | |
| <i>Non-metaphoric</i> | <i>Metaphoric</i> |

In consideration of the example of the perception process of a 19-year-old participant, it can be assumed that, for example, he would list the metaphoric prototypes of the category as nearest to or most resembling the given category member. This would in effect allow us to determine whether or not the participant has adopted the desktop metaphor as a literal concept, while the application of Blending Theory would allow us to account for added “stray” category members, such as the insertion of added non-metaphoric category members, and the degree to which the metaphor has affected the emergent blend.

Essentially, the proposed study will further highlight the demand for the establishment of a variationist approach to Cognitive Linguistics. It calls for a hybrid method that is not simply made up of internal ‘mind’ science, but will aim to prove that these internally-focused studies require the incorporation of external social factors, which inevitably influence the internal processes of the subject. In this case, the study moves into the realm of Sociolinguistics. Theorists who support the new variationist trend of Cognitive Sociolinguistics include Hollman and Siewierska (2011), Campbell-Kibler (2010) and Geeraerts and Kristiansen (2012) among others. The proposed study should have the capacity to successfully fall into the category of variationist research in Cognitive Linguistics as it requires a merger between conceptual and social human factors.

Research Method

Research Design and Methodology

The research methodology will be qualitative in nature due to the fact that it will aid in gaining a deeper level of understanding of the manner in which the cognitive perception process reacts to the age variable. The qualitative approach will allow for a more detailed analysis of each participant’s perception of metaphoric and non-metaphoric phenomena. This approach should also permit us to account for the effects that divergent social variables may have on the conceptualisation process by means of considering the individual participant’s social features, such as gender, familial ties, religion, culture, etc. The qualitative approach witnesses the inductive nature of the study as the study does not aim to prove or disprove any existing theories. It is rather concerned with determining how the age variable affects the theory regarding metaphor, specifically Blending Theory. We are interested in investigating the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of this particular phenomenon, and agree that the qualitative methodology can aid greatly in this investigation. Nevertheless, it should be considered that a deductive aspect exists with regard to the age variable, and other social variables, and whether or not these social variables influence Conceptual Blending in any way.

The study has a cross-sectional research design as data will be collected at one point in time (the data collection process will be discussed below). This particular design has been selected due to the fact that obvious time constraints should be considered with regard to the period in which the study will be executed as well as the availability of a certain number of participants. Although this study will be cross-sectional, it also has potential to be executed longitudinally as the perception process of one individual can then be studied intensively as his age changes over a period of years. However, this will not be the concern of this particular study.

This study solely relies on the ability to draw comparisons between data collected from two groups. Therefore, a between-subjects design will be applied. The participants’ results within one age group will be compared with one another to determine similarities and differences in the cognitive perception process that exists in one age group. The two age groups will further be compared to determine if a wider degree of variation or similarity exists between the two age groups and the participants of one age group. For example, the group of 19-year-old participants may share the same perception with regards to the desktop as a non-metaphoric phenomenon, while the 50-year-old participants may share the same perception of the desktop as a metaphoric phenomenon. Therefore, results compared among individual participants within the groups of 19-year-olds and 50-year-olds show similarity, while results compared between the two groups will show the differences that exist in the perception processes between the young and adult participants.

Setting

The execution of this study will occur at a private college, which specialises in courses related to information technology, such as software development, CGI and Animation, Advanced Business

Systems, Mobile Device Development, Embedded Coding and Engineering. The college is relatively small as it houses approximately 120 students and 25 staff members at a given time. We have selected this particular college for two reasons. Firstly, the people who work and study at this college all share similar interests and abilities and all get an equal amount of exposure to IT and computer-related tasks every day. This consideration is helpful as it is essential to the execution of this study to be able to control external variables, like level of education, computer exposure, IT-related abilities and skills, and so forth, as these variables can/will affect the study in some way, which should be accounted for. The college is small and intimate enough to execute a qualitative comparison between two groups, without the emergence of an abundance of incoherent and unnecessary data. Secondly, one of the authors works as the head of the English department at this college. This acts as an advantage as she has knowledge of each student's abilities, interests and educational information. She also maintains excellent work relations with the staff and knows them on a personal level as well. This knowledge allows us to add more depth to the research by interacting with students and staff in interview tasks, where the participants feel more at ease as they are acquainted with her and, therefore, they will not feel threatened or insecure to participate in the study and share their personal information. To eliminate a possible bias that may exist due to the author's personal involvement in the college, all questions that will be asked in the data collection process will be predetermined and will be similar for all participants.

In summary, the setting that we have selected will allow us to work with small groups of participants with similar social variables whom one of the authors knows well enough to examine in greater depth, thereby adding to the qualitative nature of the study, by means of considering their levels of education, their fields of specialisation, their interests and hobbies, their goals and accomplishments, among others. The setting is also fitting to the method that we intend to apply as it is very IT-centralised and the participants are immersed in the IT field on a daily basis.

Participants

The study aims to compare the cognitive perception processes and the impact that age has on this between two groups consisting of participants in two different age groups. Each group will contain 8 to 10 members to uphold the qualitative nature of the study and to ensure that accountability can be made for divergent data that may reveal itself. For example, two participants' perception processes of the desktop metaphor vary greatly from the other eight in their group due to divergent social variables (growing up in unconventional circumstances, such as absent parents, and so forth) that affect their conceptualisation processes. The two groups will be Group 1 that is made up of young participants between the ages of 18 and 24 years, while Group 2 will consist of adult participants between the ages of 40 and 50 years (these age ranges, namely 'young' and 'adult', have been categorised by the World Health Organisation). The participants are all involved in the IT field on a daily basis, either as students of IT-related specialisations or as trainers of IT-related courses, heads of IT-related departments or directors of an IT college. Therefore, it can be stated that the participants share relatively equal daily exposure to IT-related activities.

Data Collection

Firstly, it should be made clear to all participants that this study is not in any way an assessment of their skills or abilities in IT-related work. As the setting is educational and it is often required that participants do assessments in their IT courses, we predict that the participants may feel obligated to define their roles in this study in terms of their IT-related knowledge. It should be made clear to all participants that their involvement in this study has no reflection on their IT studies in any way and that it is entirely independent from the work that they do in and for the college.

In an attempt to examine the perception process of each participant, it is essential that the data collection process consists of an in-depth approach to attain a clearer understanding of the internal processes which occur when the participant interacts with external surroundings. In light of this a few data collection methods will be employed. Firstly, each participant will be required to fill in a questionnaire. The questionnaire will require that the participant provide information about himself. The questionnaire will consist of closed-ended questions in statements that can be ticked, such as *Gender: Male/Female*, but will also contain questions that will require the participant to fill in personal information, such as *Briefly describe your current living situation*. Clearly the questionnaire employs the participant to share personal details, but on an anonymous basis. This method allows us to gain an understanding of the social variables, besides age, that may come into play during the process of data analysis and can assist us in accounting for divergent data if applicable.

Once the questionnaire has been completed by each participant, the participant will get an opportunity to individually enter an office space. The office space will contain office furniture, like a desk, chair, filing cabinet, etc.; stationery, such as pens, files, documents, etc.; as well as other objects, like books, a trash can, a computer, etc. The participant will get a short period to interact with his environment, as directed by a list of tasks that will be handed out. The task list will contain directives, such as *Take a document from a file on the desk and throw it in the trash can*. While the participant interacts with his environment by following the task list, a video recorder will record his actions. At this stage, the participant will interact with his literal (non-metaphoric) surroundings.

Once the participants have individually executed the given tasks in the office space, they will be required to execute certain directives on a computer. Again, a task list will be given to each participant to guide him through the process of interaction. An example of a given task is: *Copy today's date and time onto the document*. There will be a correlation between the task list provided for the office space interaction and the task list that will direct the computer desktop interactions. The participant's interactions with the computer will be observed and noted down (a video recording will not allow us to clearly witness the occurrences on the computer screen). This data collection method gives the participant an opportunity to interact with a non-literal (metaphoric) work area. This aspect of data collection applies Dan Gruen's 'Desktop' Metaphor (in Fauconnier and Turner, 1998). In this study the desktop metaphor will act as a tool for data collection, as outlined above.

Afterwards, each participant will be interviewed individually. The interview will be informal where the participant will get an opportunity to share his thoughts and comments in a relaxed and conversational manner. However, questions, that are both open ended and closed ended, will be asked to gain insight into the participant's attitude toward the environments and the interactions. Questions will include: *Do you prefer to type notes on your computer (or other electronic device) or write notes on a piece of paper?* and *Do you check your reminders on your computer (or other electronic device) or do you check your reminders in your diary?* as well as *What is the most important object in your office/work space?* Answers to these questions, to list a few, will provide us with data that may explain the manner in which the participants interacted with the office space and computer desktop as well as how they responded to the interactions. It will also provide insight into their daily interactions with the features of these environments that occur outside of the study. Voice recordings will be made of each interview and transcripts will be created from these.

Finally, the participants will be given a list of features that they have come across throughout the course of the interaction process. These features will act as category members of certain office-related categories, such as 'files'. Participants will then be required to fill in two prototypes that explain the category the most in a short time (the participants should not get the opportunity to sift through their

thoughts, but select the feature that springs to mind first). For example: FILES: PAPER, DOCUMENTS, WRITTEN, or FILES: COMPUTER, DOCUMENTS, TYPING. The relations that are drawn between the category member and the participant's idea of the most obvious prototypes will give us a visual representation of the categorisation process that governs the participant's perceptions. Therefore, in consideration of Blending Theory, a participant who connects COMPUTER, DOCUMENTS, TYPING to FILES, should be more inclined to adopt the metaphor as literal and the emergent blend should then be dominated by the metaphor. In other words, the blend will be technology-based, as the participant perceives the computerised desktop to be literal (non-metaphoric).

Data Analysis

After the process of data collection, the data gathered will include questionnaires, video recordings, notes on observations of interactions with the computer desktop, voice recordings and interview transcripts as well as lists containing categories and their prototypes provided by the participants. The questionnaires will contain the participants' personal information with regards to social variables, including age, gender, ethnicity, hometown, familial information, religion, culture, level of education, occupation, and so forth. Video recordings will provide a visual representation of the participants' interactions in the office space as directed by the task list. Our notes on the observations made will contain information on the participants' interactions with the computer desktop as directed by the task list. The voice recordings and transcripts will contain more detailed information related to the participants' insights, comments and experience. Lastly, the lists of categories will highlight the participants' manner of categorisation of office and desktop-related features.

In terms of data analysis, the video recordings and notes on observations will be studied and compared to identify similarities and differences amongst participants in one age group, as well as between Groups 1 and 2. Notes will be made on the comparisons drawn between the individuals and the age groups, such as *7 out of 10 participants from Group 1 create a new folder on the computer desktop in 30 seconds, 3 out of 10 participants from Group 2 create a new folder on the computer desktop in 30 seconds* (we use timing for the purpose of this example as it signals the participant's ease of executing the task and, therefore, his familiarity with the task). The information that emerges from these comparisons will be outlined in columns that identify the task that was executed by the participants and information regarding the execution of each task according to the groups that they are in. The comparisons that will be made at this stage will allow us to determine, according to the number of participants, who executed the tasks with ease and in what manner they executed it, such as *Take a document from a file on the desk and throw it in the trash can: GROUP 1: 10 participants executed the task quickly and easily, GROUP 2: 10 participants executed the task quickly and easily*. In comparison to this task that occurs in the office space, the related task on the computer desktop will be analysed: *Double click on a file on the desktop, right click on a document in the file, drag and drop the document in the recycle bin: GROUP 1: 8 participants executed the task quickly and easily, GROUP 2: 5 participants executed the task quickly and easily*.

Once the comparisons have been drawn, the data will be considered and accounted for by means of investigating the interview transcripts and questionnaires. In consideration of the last example where 8 participants in Group 1 comfortably executed the task and 5 participants in Group 2 comfortably executed the task, the interview transcripts could assist us in identifying why 2 participants from Group 1 had difficulty with the task, while 5 participants from Group 2 found it challenging. The participants' comments in the interview could lead to an explanation of the individual's daily practices, such as 3 participants from Group 2 only use the computer regularly for typing of

documents, while 2 participants from Group 2 spend relatively little time working on the computer, but prefer working with paper-based documentation on a daily basis. We believe that analysing the interviews can provide explanations that surpass the limitations of the study, but can explain their behaviour to the phenomena in question on a daily basis within their lives.

In an attempt to present the comparisons in a conceptual integration model (representation of Blending Theory), the list of categories will act as a starting point for this task. The list of categories, which employs Prototype Theory and categorisation, will contain features of the prototype, as determined by the participants. These features will be correlated and totalled, for example under the prototype 'files', 9 participants from Group 1 related 'computer' or a similar concept as a feature, while 4 participants from Group 2 related 'computer' or a similar concept as a feature; 3 participants from Group 1 related 'paper' or a similar concept as a feature, while 8 participants from Group 2 related 'paper' or a similar concept as a feature. The main features, as identified by the participants from each group, will be determined. The consideration of the categorisation process of each age group will allow us to draw inferences with regards to the perception processes of each group and should allow us to make comparisons about the extent to which a particular age group is guided by metaphor. In other words, this aspect of the analysis will already provide an indication of whether or not an age group has adopted the IT-related desktop metaphor as literal by the associated features that they list and the regularity of similar associations within one age group.

The incorporation of Prototype Theory will further provide a method to categorise features of each desktop by forming a spectrum of radial categories that, to each participant, links either directly or indirectly to the 'desktop'-category (the prototype being either computerised or physical, depending on the participants' own perceptions and categorisation). Thus, if the category member is 'desktop' and the participants provide radial categories that include 'documents' and 'files', these radial categories can be placed into input spaces as features of the source (the physical desktop) and the target (the computerised desktop) domains. Emergent structure should arise from features of the source domain that are mapped onto the target domain. The data that has been collected and compared based on the participants' interactions with the office space and computer desktop, can assist us in determining whether the radial categories provided by the participants are predominantly metaphoric or non-metaphoric in nature. Therefore, for the radial category 'documents', 7 out of 10 participants from Group 2 consider documents to be paper-based. In this way, 'documents' will then be considered a feature of the source domain (input 1) that is mapped onto the target (input 2) that relates radial categories as entered by the same group, such as 'files'. The cross domain mappings would then define the relationship between the term 'documents' in the source and 'files' in the target, as in literal and non-literal versions of an office-related object with synonymous meaning, functions and attributes. The generic space (experiential knowledge) will contain information that features in both inputs. In this case, both inputs contain a feature of 'administrative work', which is what will be placed in the generic space and will be mapped onto both inputs. Lastly, the emergent blend will be structured. The blended space will house data that best represents the perception process, and data that have been gathered during the comparison of interactions and the categorisation process of the participants play an important part in this regard. The participants' experience with the interactions should emphasise the degree of ease and comfort with which tasks are executed on the computer desktop and the categorisation list will very clearly indicate the adoption or rejection of the desktop metaphor as non-metaphoric, as discussed above. This information must feed into the emergent blend. For example, a group's interaction with the documents on the computer desktop is lengthy and uncertain and their category lists regarding the category member 'documents' contain more radial categories related to the paper-based filing system. It cannot be assumed that the emergent blend will

be technological in nature, but the blended space should rather hold information that reflects the abovementioned data, such as input 1 (documents), input 2 (files), generic space (administrative work) and blend (paper-based filing). Conceptual integration models will be drawn up to display these deductions (as is exemplified on page 7). The conceptual integration models of both groups, but also individuals in one group, will be drawn up and compared to determine if the age variable in any way affects the perception process of the desktop metaphor.

The conceptual integration models of participants within one age group will be compared to identify whether these are linked in some way by means of the majority of similarities or differences that are emphasised. This analysis will determine whether the perception process relies at all on age or whether it is an individualistic phenomenon. Small strands of divergent data will be identified and accounted for by means of consulting the participant's questionnaires and interview transcripts to establish whether these divergences may be due to a range of unique social variables that may come into play, such as a unique foreign culture or unconventional familial situations. Once the participants' blending processes are analysed and a pattern does arise, the groups' conceptual integration models will be compared and analysed in an attempt to verify whether the age variable does play a role in the perception process and, if so, the manner in which it does this.

The reason for executing this study

The fields of cognitive science focus mainly on the internal processes of the mind, but often do not acknowledge to any great extent the influence that social surroundings have on these internal processes, as discussed above. Therefore, the external is to some extent isolated from the internal. Geeraerts et al (eds) in an investigation of the *Advances in Cognitive Sociolinguistics* (2010: 11) explain:

Meaning does not exist in isolation: it is created in and transmitted through the interaction of people, and that is why the definition and basic architecture of language are recognised by Cognitive Linguistics as involving not just cognition, but socially and culturally situated cognition.

This study acknowledges the essential role of the social aspect as a natural force that determines to some extent the cognitive aspect of people. With the aim of proving the manner in which the internal relies on and relates with the external, the study calls for a merger of cognitive processes with social attributes, which will shed light on the study of metaphor, in this regard the desktop metaphor as analysed through Blending Theory, and the perception process involved in the interpretation of metaphor, and will identify whether and in what way age as a social attribute governs this process.

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