

Twenty-five Years After ‘Metaphors we Live by’: The absence of the topic of metaphor in introductory psychology textbooks

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The Importance of Metaphors and the Body

The theory that there are conventionalized metaphors that underlie and frame how we think (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) has gained increasing support in cognitive science over the last few decades and provides a valuable model for understanding language, meaning, and mind (Gibbs, 1994). In fact, modern cognitive psychological research has recently been moving toward an embodied-embedded approach to cognition and perception. According to this approach, the human mind must be understood as immersed in a social and cultural context of meaningful actions (Pecher & Zwaan, 2005). In addition, cognitive processes are constrained by how the human body can engage the world perceptually (Barsalou, 1999). Thus, a mind is not decontextualized and disembodied, but a part of a person coping with obstacles in the world (Gallagher, 2005). Conceptual metaphors underlie the process of the embodied mind actively constructing meaning through its experience within the physical and socio-cultural world.

What are Psychology Undergraduates Taught?

Psychology is defined as the science of mind and behavior. Given that metaphors are important for conceptualizing mind and body, it is important to investigate how this topic is presented in psychology courses.

Introductory psychology textbooks can vary in difficulty and content (see Griggs, in press). Subject and author indices for high- ($n = 4$), high-middle- ($n = 5$), middle- ($n = 7$), low-middle- ($n = 6$), and low- ($n = 7$) level textbooks listed by The Society for the Teaching of Psychology’s (Division 2 of APA) Office of Teaching Resources website, <http://www.lemoyne.edu/OTRP/introtxts.html> were analyzed for the inclusion of relevant authors (e.g., editorial board of *Metaphor & Symbol*, *Metaphors we live by*, creativity, figurative language, irony/sarcasm/humor, language and thought relationship, metaphor, poetry, and simile. All textbooks were published between 2002 and 2006. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Twenty-five years after Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) influential book, an analysis of psychology textbooks’ indices indicates that the importance of metaphor is not recognized by textbook authors. Results indicate, however,

that the topic could easily be incorporated into already present discussions of creativity research or the language-thought relationship.

Table 1: Frequency of Characteristics in Textbook Analysis.

	Textbook Level				
	High	HM	Middle	LM	Low
Authors	6	8	13	8	4
<i>Metaphors</i>	1	0	0	0	0
Creativity	3	4	6	6	7
Figurative	0	0	0	0	0
I, S, H	1	2	3	3	2
L-T	4	2	5	2	6
Metaphor	0	0	2	1	0
Poetry	0	0	0	0	0
Simile	0	0	0	0	0

Note. HM stands for high-middle level; LM stands for low-middle level; *Metaphors* is *Metaphors we live by*; I, S, H stands for irony, sarcasm, and humor. L-T stands for language-thought relationship. (It is logically possible for *Metaphor* to be cited without metaphor in the subject index.)

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