
Is “Generic is Specific” a Metaphor?

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Debate has raged for decades over what counts as metaphor. Do proverbs, such as *better the devil you know than the one you don't*, involve metaphor? When we refer to a generic-brand tissue as a *Kleenex*, is that a metaphor? In this paper, we observe that controversial examples such as these fall into the class of structures called “Generic is Specific” in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

We argue that “Generic is Specific” examples have complicated the debate between proponents of a conceptual theory of metaphor (Lakoff & Turner 1989) and detractors of this type of theory (McGlone 2007, Sperber & Wilson forthcoming). Furthermore, we suggest that Blending Theory (Fauconnier & Turner 2002) has the explanatory power to supersede this debate, and to show that “Is this structure a metaphor?” may be a less meaningful question than “How does this structure work?”

Blending Theory can represent the ways in which “Generic is Specific” blends look more or less like metaphor. In this paper, we find that these blends resemble metaphor to a greater or lesser degree depending on the similarity of the blends’ input spaces, the extent to which these spaces are structured by the same organizing frames, and the complexity of the blends’ mappings. According to our analysis, “Generic is Specific” blends map the family resemblances characterizing a category prototype to other category members. Some of these blends give the impression of metaphor, as in McGlone’s (2007) example *this journal is a gem*, which ascribes the qualities of a prototypical valuable object to a journal; while others appear less metaphoric, such as Sperber and Wilson’s (forthcoming) example of *here’s a Kleenex* used in reference to a generic-brand tissue.

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Blending diagrams illustrate that in examples such as *this journal is a gem*, qualities related to gems (namely, their high value for a particular purpose) are projected to the blended space. Similarly, in *here's a Kleenex*, qualities related to Kleenex are projected to a blend involving the generic-brand tissue. The major difference between the two blends is that in the *Kleenex* blend, both input spaces belong to the same low-level category (tissues), and therefore necessarily share an organizing frame (in that both types of tissues are used for the same purposes). This causes the *Kleenex* blend to appear less metaphoric than *this journal is a gem*, as the latter relates two very different concepts, each structured by an assortment of frames, which therefore may or may not project the same organizing frames to a blended space.

Another variation on “Generic is Specific” has been identified in proverbs (Lakoff & Turner 1989) and indeed, many proverbs, such as *better the devil you know...* share the defining characteristics of blends such as the one involved in *this journal is a gem*. A major difference between these blends is that proverbs tend to map relations, scales, and temporal and causal sequences in addition to the qualities found in other “Generic is Specific” examples. In other words, their organizing frames are more complex; and as we will see, these complex frames are projected only from one input space. This paper will conclude by extending its Blending Theory analysis from “Generic is Specific” blends such as *here's a Kleenex* and *this journal is a gem* to the more intricate structures blending found in proverbs.

1 “Generic is Specific”: Much Attention, Little Analysis

Arguments against a conceptual view of metaphor tend to use and re-use certain types of examples, such as *she/Joan is an angel* (in both Thomas & Mareschal 2001 and Sperber & Wilson forthcoming), and *this journal is a gem* (McGlone 2007). A disproportionate number of examples used by metaphor critics fall into the category labeled “Generic is Specific” in Conceptual Metaphor Theory. What makes these particular examples so attractive to opponents of conceptual metaphor?

In fact, “Generic is Specific” examples demonstrate several characteristics that make them easy targets for opponents of a conceptual view of metaphor. The first charge leveled against these examples is that these “metaphors” lack the systematic mappings required of conceptual metaphors. Regarding the sentence *this journal is a gem*, McGlone (2007:109-110) asserts: “...your understanding of this sentence did not hinge on a literal reading of the sentence – e.g., at no point in your reading did you wonder about the journal’s carat weight or how it might look in an engagement ring”. These observations, by themselves, represent a defective argument, in

that conceptual metaphors necessarily involve partial mappings (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). The absence of particular mappings in no way indicates the absence of conceptual metaphor.

However, when applied only to examples of "Generic is Specific," McGlone's observations have some merit. The structure of "Generic is Specific," as in *this journal is a gem*, does seem impoverished compared to that of more prototypical metaphors such as the Location Event-Structure Metaphor (see Lakoff & Johnson 1999) or the Conduit Metaphor (Reddy 1979). What, after all, is really mapped from Gem to Journal when we say *this journal is a gem*? This statement does little more than assert the high value of the journal in question. This minimal structure stands in stark contrast to metaphors with dozens of mappings, entailments and inferences, such as the Location Event-Structure Metaphor.

McGlone (2007) and others (see Glucksberg & Keysar 1993, Glucksberg et al. 1997, cf. Sperber & Wilson forthcoming) analyze statements such as *this journal is a gem* as "category-inclusion assertions," in this case including Journal in an "attributive category" exemplified by Gem, allowing "properties" from this category to be "attributed" to Journal. In this paper, we argue that this argument is relatively on-track insofar as it applies to the structures called "Generic is Specific," and that the applicability of this argument to "Generic is Specific" has paved the way for the overextension of McGlone-style analyses to metaphor in general.

This type of analysis, even as applied to "Generic is Specific," has two faults that need to be corrected. First, extensive research on category structure has shown that natural categories do not themselves have properties – category members have properties (see Rosch 1973, 1975, 1983, Rosch & Mervis 1975). Attributing characteristics from a category is meaningless unless we know the specific category members from which we are attributing family resemblances, and the reasons underlying the choice of both these category members and the relevant family resemblances.

McGlone's lack of attention to category structure leads to a second flaw in his analysis of *this journal is a gem*. If properties of an "attributive category" are simply assigned to Journal, how do we know which properties should be "attributed"? Salience of characteristics alone is not the answer, since (among other problems) salience can vary depending on context, as will be shown in the following section.

All in all, a more nuanced explanation of these examples is called for. Blending Theory, as employed here, is one framework within which such an explanation can be presented. A Blending Theory analysis of "Generic is Specific," while in some senses similar to McGlone's explanation, offers three advantages in addition to the resolution of the two problems described

above. First, a Blending Theory analysis can account for the more complex “Generic is Specific” found in proverbs (see section 4), which we argue cannot be modeled as “attributive categorization”.

Second, a Blending Theory analysis demonstrates graphically the impoverished structure of “Generic is Specific” compared to more prototypical metaphors. Since these metaphors have also been represented using Blending Theory (see Turner & Fauconnier 1995, Grady et al. 1999), this framework provides the optimal perspective from which to understand how “Generic is Specific” deviates from prototypical metaphor.

Finally, Blending Theory illustrates why “Generic is Specific” has been analyzed as metaphor in Conceptual Metaphor Theory; and additionally, why some examples of “Generic is Specific” are the focus of analyses by metaphor theorists, while others are of greater interest to opponents of a conceptual view of metaphor. While we argue that it is impossible to provide a simple answer to the question “Is ‘Generic is Specific’ a metaphor?”, we suggest that Blending Theory nonetheless provides the means to view exactly when, and to what extent, “Generic is Specific” looks more or less like prototypical metaphor.

2 A Blending Theory Account of “Generic is Specific”

The analysis of “Generic is Specific” given here, like the “attributive categorization” model of metaphor (and Relevance Theory analyses such as Sperber & Wilson forthcoming), recognizes the central role of categorization in generating the meaning of statements such as *this journal is a gem*. However, Blending Theory is able to offer a more precise representation of the conceptual structure of these statements – one which is also more in keeping with the results of category structure research.

According to the current analysis, the statement *this journal is a gem* does not re-categorize the concept “Journal”. Rather, this statement makes use of the status of Gem as an ideal, or a paragon prototype of the category of valuable objects (see Lakoff 1987). Here, this category roughly corresponds with the generic space. In “Generic is Specific,” the structure of the generic space often corresponds to that of the category encompassing both inputs, as this allows for easy recognition of the relevant category prototype. However, the generic space may also be more complex than a single category, as is normally the case in “Generic is Specific” in proverbs (section 4).

Journal does not to be re-categorized as a member of the category of valuable objects, as a journal is already an object that will have some degree of value (positive or negative) assigned to it. The value, or the usefulness of an item for a purpose, is one frame associated with Journal (as with all

members of the category of valuable objects). However, Journal lacks the prototype status of Gem, and does not necessarily share the High Value that is crucial to the status of Gem as a paragon prototype. The assertion *this journal is a gem* maps the High Value role of Gem to the Value role of Journal, as illustrated in the blending diagram in Figure (1).

Although the "value/usefulness for a purpose" frame is arguably not the most salient frame structuring the concept Journal, this frame is part of the concept Journal and is not projected solely from the Gem space. As can be seen in the blend in Figure (1), all relevant roles (such as Value) and relations (such as between an Object and its Value) are present both in Journal and in Gem, as well as in the generic space. Therefore, all spaces in Figure (1) share an organizing frame, rendering these blends *mirror networks* (as described in Fauconnier & Turner 2002:122-25). If other frame structure in Journal or Gem besides "value/usefulness for a purpose" is projected to the blend, the "mirror" is no longer a perfect one, and the blend must be considered a single-scope or double-scope network. We will return to this possibility when comparing more and less "metaphoric" forms of "Generic is Specific".

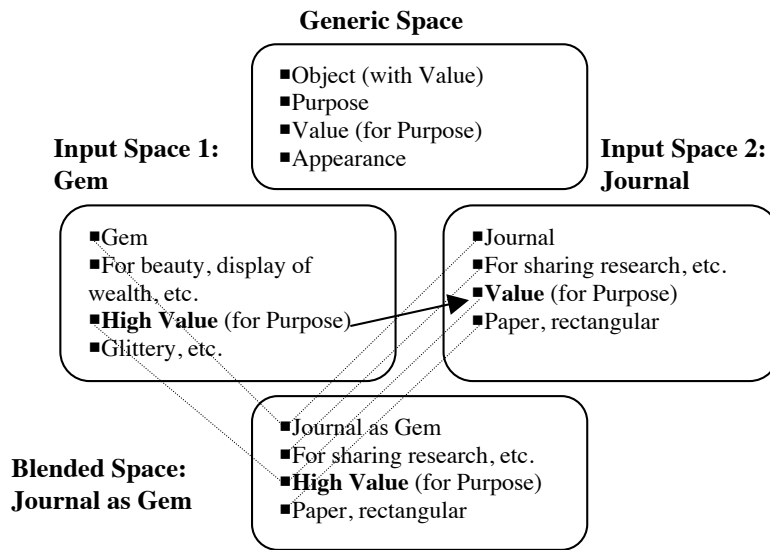


Figure 1. In understanding *this journal is a gem*, the High Value of Gem is projected to the blended space.

The blend in Figure (1) has only one mapping (shown by the arrow), which maps a Gem's value (for its purpose) to the Journal's value (for its purpose). Gem, as a paragon prototype in the category of valuable objects, is characterized by the family resemblance of an extraordinarily high value. This "High Value" filler of the Value role is projected to the blended space.¹

Although the High Value of Gem projects to the blended space, the other fillers characterizing Journal, rather than those of Gem, project to this space. This induces "High Value" to be interpreted somewhat differently in the blended space than in the "Gem" space, since the Purpose of a Journal is different from that of a Gem. As a result, the High Value in the blended space refers to readability, sound methodology, and all the other elements of a valuable journal – rather than to glitter, carat weight, and the other attributes that contribute to the value of a gem.

This representation of the structure underlying *this journal is a gem* differs from the analysis proposed by McGlone in several ways. First, the "attributes" (or fillers) that are assigned to Journal come from the Gem space, rather than from a category to which Gem belongs. Second, Journal is not assigned to a new category; instead, its placement within an existing category is recognized and is taken advantage of in the construction of the blend. These differences render the above model more realistic than "attributive categorization" in terms of what is known about category structure, the importance of prototypes, and the locus of the family resemblances that structure categories. These differences give the Blending Theory representation explanatory power that the "attributive categorization" theory lacks. For example, Blending Theory explains why certain attributes and not others are mapped, as explored in the next subsection.

2.1 Mapping from Prototypes of Multiple Categories

"Attributive categorization" and related theories fail to satisfactorily explain why certain characteristics are "attributed" and others are not. However, research on category structure and prototype theory sheds light on these issues. According to current models of human categorization, prototypes in a given category are characterized by certain family resemblances, by which the prototypicality of other category members can be judged (see Rosch & Mervis 1975). When a "Generic is Specific" blend uses a prototypical category member in an input space, the blend maps the resemblances that are most important for the member's prototype status.

¹ Spaces with roles/fillers could each be depicted as a simplex blend between a space with roles and a space with fillers (see Fauconnier & Turner 2002:120-22), but this structure has not been represented here. Additionally, lines denoting correspondences with the generic space have been omitted from the diagrams in this paper.

The relevant prototype is not necessarily a paragon. For example, the blend in Figure (1) could equally well involve an anti-paragon of the category of valuable objects, that is, an object with outstandingly low value, as in *this journal is a piece of filth*. Here, the (very bad) filler of the Value role in Filth is mapped to Journal and projected to the blended space, just as the (excellent) filler of the Value role for Gem is mapped to Journal courtesy of *this journal is a gem*. Category members must be some kind of prototype in order to produce this type of blend. For example, everyday objects such as *apple, desk, coffee mug* are not considered to have an outstandingly high or low value. For this reason, *this journal is a coffee mug* fails to provide the useful inferences of *this journal is a gem* or *this journal is a piece of filth*.

The explanatory advantages of the Blending Theory model are especially apparent when we look at an input that is a prototype of more than one category. In this case, the input will normally be considered as a member of one category or the other, but not as a member of both. For example, the sentence *she/Joan is an angel* has been examined repeatedly by critics of conceptual metaphor, yet these critics have all overlooked the sentence's two available meanings, roughly paraphrased as *Joan acts like an angel* and *Joan looks like an angel*. Though both these meanings are possible, the default interpretation of *Joan is an angel* refers to moral nature (as in *Joan acts like an angel*), not appearance (as in *Joan looks like an angel*). The "moral nature" interpretation of the sentence *Joan is an angel* is given in the blend shown below.

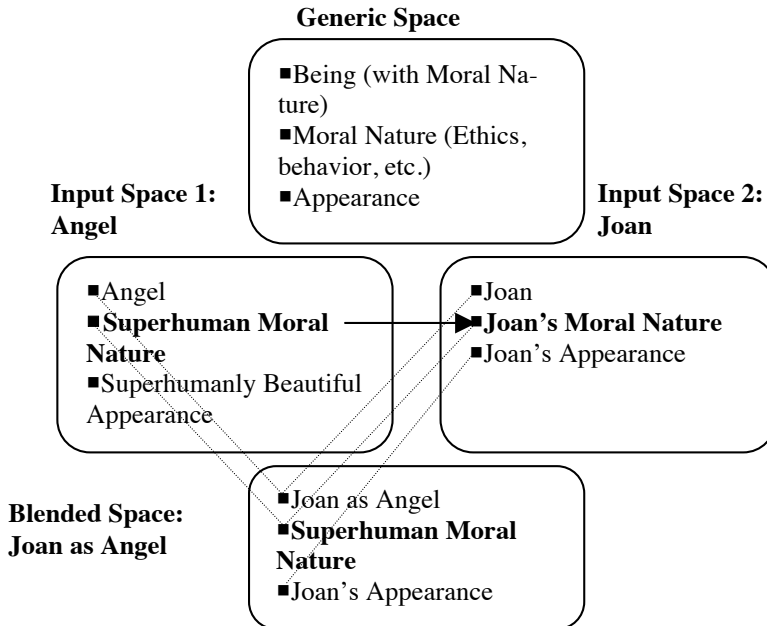


Figure 2. The blend evoked by *Joan is an angel* / *Joan acts like an angel*
 Figure (2) represents one interpretation of the sentence *Joan is an angel*, in which Joan’s moral nature is interpreted as angelic. Angels are paragon prototype moral beings, whereas the human Joan is not a prototype of this category. If the status of Angel as a prototype of moral beings is most relevant in context, then the superhuman moral nature of Angel will be mapped to Joan, and projected to the blend. Joan’s other characteristics will be projected to the blended space: in this blend, Joan looks like Joan, has Joan’s phone number, etc., but she has the superhuman moral nature of an angel.

However, angels are prototypes of more than one category. In the appropriate context, angels’ superhuman beauty may be more relevant than their status as moral paragons. As a result of the dual category membership of Angel, the sentence *Joan is an angel* may also refer to Joan’s appearance, rather than her moral nature. This interpretation is diagrammed in Figure (3).

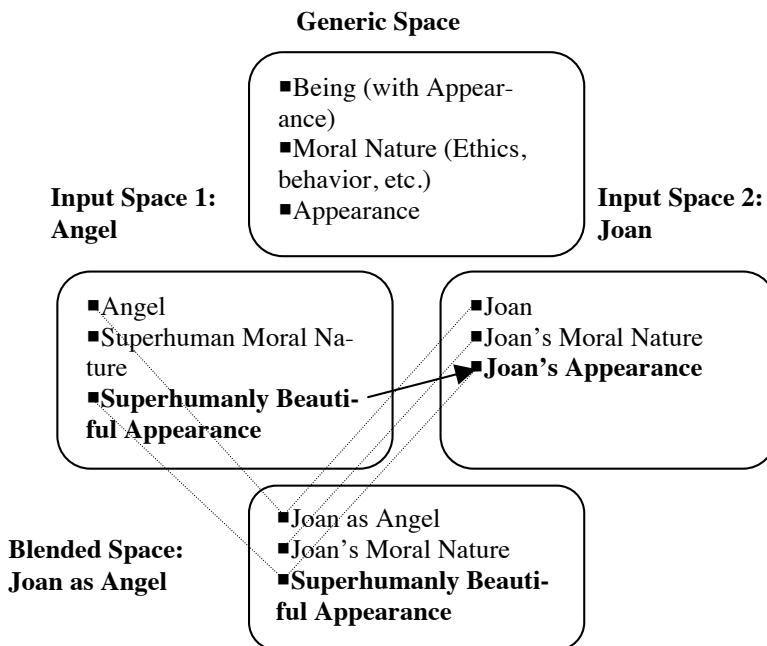


Figure 3. The blend evoked by *Joan is an angel* / *Joan looks like an angel*

In Figure (3), the filler of the Appearance role in Angel is mapped, rather than the filler of the Moral Nature role. In the blend, Joan has her own Mor-

Moral Nature (she may be ethical, cruel, indifferent, etc.). However, in the blend she has the superhuman beauty of an angel.

In the blends in Figures (2) and (3), Angel is treated either as a paragon of beauty or a paragon of ethics – not both. Additional space-builders are needed to bring in the characteristics associated with Angel as the prototype of both categories, as in *Joan acts like an angel, and she looks like one too*.

If we follow the “attributive categorization” model and add *Joan* to a category instantiated by Angel, we wouldn’t know which category, nor would we know which properties to “attribute”. The above model, in contrast, predicts exactly which categories we will be able to draw on when we use Angel as Input Space 1 in a “Generic is Specific” blend. We may use precisely those categories of which the Input 2 is a member, and of which Angel is a prototype. The family resemblances of Angel that are mapped will be those that characterize it as a prototype in its category, and all other projected information will come from Input 2. This predictive capability is not supplied by other accounts of “Generic is Specific”.

3 A Cline of Metaphoricity in “Generic is Specific”

If “Generic is Specific” isn’t “attributive categorization,” is it metaphor? Many examples of “Generic is Specific” are almost universally termed “metaphor,” and yet we might balk at assigning this label to other examples that demonstrate the same blending structure, such as when someone hands over a generic-brand tissue and says, “Here’s a Kleenex”. However, using brand names with generic reference is structurally identical to more figurative-seeming usages, such as calling a journal a “gem”. This is shown in Figure (4) on the following page.

As in the blend evoked by *this journal is a gem*, shown in Figure (1), the blend in Figure (4) involves the mapping of family resemblances from a category prototype to a non-prototypical category member. Due primarily to advertising by its manufacturers, the Kleenex brand of tissue has become a prototype of the tissue category. As such, the qualities of Kleenex can be attributed to other category members via a “Generic is Specific” blend. This possibility upsets the manufacturers of Kleenex and other brand-name products, who are rightly concerned that by using the brand name to refer to generic products, consumers will map the perceived qualities of the brand-name products to generic-brand products. Ironically, however, this blending is possible only because the brand-name manufacturers have worked hard to make their products the category prototype. Non-prototypical brand-name products are not used as Input 1 in “Generic is Specific” blends.

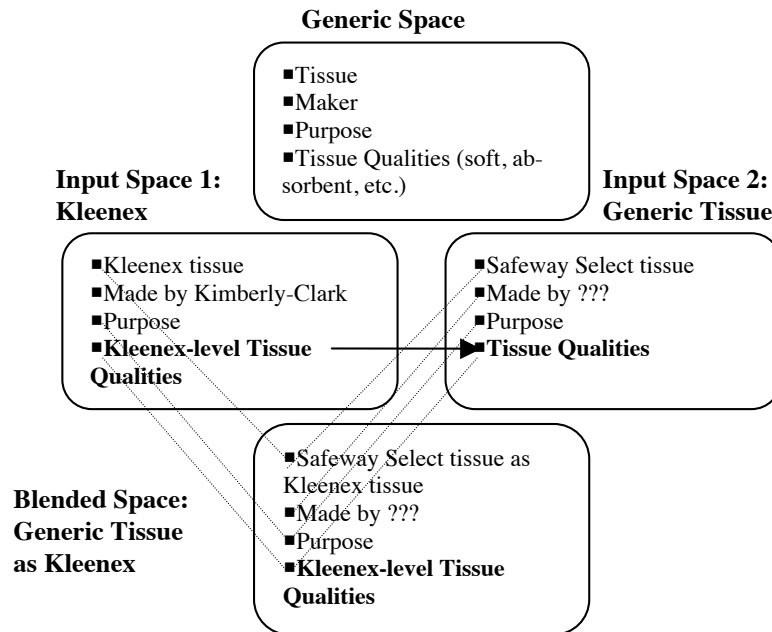


Figure 4. The blend evoked by *Here's a Kleenex* (referring to generic tissue)

If we compare the structures in Figures (1)-(4), we find them to be virtually identical. In each case, a characteristic or set of characteristics is mapped from a prototype to a non-prototypical category member, resulting in a blended space which contains all the characteristics of the non-prototypical category member except for the family resemblances that characterize the category prototype. This can result in a blended space juxtaposing the Purpose of a Journal with the Value of a Gem, as in Figure (1); or the Moral Nature of an Angel with the Appearance of a human being, as in Figure (2); or the perceived high quality of Kleenex with the attributes of generic-brand tissue, as in Figure (4). All of these blends can be considered mirror networks, in that the spaces in each blend share an organizing frame and differ only in the fillers of their frame roles. In each case, Input 1 provides the fillers associated with a category prototype, and Input 2 provides all other fillers. Why, then, do some “Generic is Specific” blends intuitively seem more metaphoric than others? This question can be resolved if we examine

these blends in terms of the various attributes that characterize prototypical metaphor.

3.1 “Generic is Specific” and the Characteristics of Metaphor

Is “Generic is Specific” a metaphor? Some signs point to “no”. First of all, the popularity of “Generic is Specific” with opponents of conceptual metaphor suggests, in and of itself, that these blends make easy targets for critics of conceptual metaphor. Second, some instances of “Generic is Specific,” such as the *Kleenex* example in Figure (4), seem less figurative than others despite similarities in their blending structure, indicating that it may be counterproductive to uniformly assign or deny the label of “metaphor” to all examples of “Generic is Specific”. To pinpoint the source of these impressions, “Generic is Specific” can be examined in a step-by-step comparison with the characteristics of prototypical metaphor.

The most detailed list of criteria for the identification of prototypical conceptual metaphor remains that of Lakoff and Turner (1989:103), which provides three general criteria for distinguishing metaphor from metonymy (and presumably, from other non-metaphoric processes). First, metaphor involves “two conceptual domains, and one is understood in terms of the other”. Second, “a whole schematic structure (with two or more entities) is mapped onto another whole schematic structure,” and third, “the logic of the source-domain structure is mapped onto the logic of the target-domain structure”.

We need look no further than the first of these three criteria to see why some instances of “Generic is Specific” seem more metaphoric than others. In the *Kleenex* example in Figure (4), are Generic Tissue and Kleenex “two conceptual domains”? The term “domain” is a slippery one, but most researchers would probably find Kleenex and Generic Tissue too similar to constitute two separate domains. One way to capture the similarity of the two concepts is to notice that the lowest-level category to which both belong to is very specific: the category of tissues. As a result, the generic space in the blend evoked by *here’s a Kleenex* is also very specific, as shown in Figure (5).

-
- Tissue
 - Maker
 - Purpose
 - Tissue Qualities (soft, absorbent, etc.)

Figure 5. The generic space of Generic Tissue as Kleenex (see Figure 4)

Another way to capture the similarity between the input spaces is to recognize that these inputs necessarily have the same organizing frames. The blend in Figure (4) can hardly be extended in novel ways, because there is little structure that can be projected from either input space which is not shared by the other input. This type of “Generic is Specific” is therefore necessarily a mirror network.

The specificity of the generic space in Figures (4)-(5), the low-level status of the category it represents, and the perfect fit of the inputs’ organizing frames, render Kleenex and Generic Tissue too similar to qualify as separate domains, according to most definitions of “domain”.

In the more metaphoric-seeming example *this journal is a gem*, on the other hand, are Journal and Gem different enough to constitute “two conceptual domains”? These inputs may seem more like “domains” than do Kleenex and Generic Tissue. For one thing, the lowest-level category that both belong to, valuable objects, is very general, and the generic space evoked by *this journal is a gem* is consequently equally general (as in Figure 6).

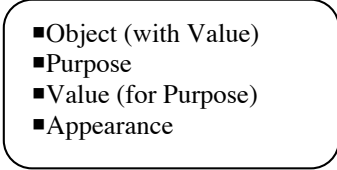
- 
- Object (with Value)
 - Purpose
 - Value (for Purpose)
 - Appearance

Figure 6. The generic space of Journal as Gem (see Figure 1)

Inputs that belong to the same low-level category, and take part in blends with relatively specific generic spaces, seem less like separate domains, and result in less “figurative,” less “metaphoric” blends.

Additionally, the Journal as Gem blend in Figure (1) can be extended in ways unavailable to the Generic Tissue as Kleenex blend in Figure (4). In the Journal as Gem blend, frame structure can potentially be projected from only one input space, rendering the blend something other than a mirror network. For example, “this journal is a gem in the rough” recruits not only the value of gems, but also their lapidary process, which is not part of the Journal input. The blend therefore maps the physical process of refining and polishing a gem, and the resultant increase in the gem’s value, onto the process of revising, reformatting, and so forth, which can allow a journal to achieve its potential. This blend is clearly a single-scope network and not a mirror network, in that the organizing frame structure of Gem projected to the blend includes material not found in Journal. The availability of frames

such as the lapidary process is only possible because of the structural differences between Journal and Gem. Blends with more similar inputs, such as Kleenex and Generic Tissue, cannot be extended in this manner.

It appears, then, that some "Generic is Specific" blends fare better than others in fulfilling the two-domain criterion of metaphor. How well, then, do these blends fit the other two characteristics of metaphor in Lakoff and Turner's list (1989:103)? According to this list, in a prototypical metaphor, "a whole schematic structure (with two or more entities) is mapped onto another whole schematic structure". Here, most "Generic is Specific" examples fail miserably. "Generic is Specific" generally maps only one quality of a prototype, or at most, a set of related qualities, such as those characterizing a "Moral Nature" or the qualities of a good tissue. This is a far cry from the dozens of systematic mappings that make up conceptual metaphors such as the Location Event-Structure Metaphor. "Generic is Specific" blends, then, are inherently different from prototypical metaphors, in that their mappings are more limited. In this sense, "Generic is Specific" can be said to look more like metonymy rather than metaphor.

"Generic is Specific" fares better on the third characteristic, which stipulates that in metaphor, "the logic of the source-domain structure is mapped onto the logic of the target-domain structure". Here, "Generic is Specific" measures up insofar as it always generates at least one unidirectional inference, ascribing the mapped quality of a category prototype to another category member.

Note that when Generic is Specific is elaborated into a single-scope network, it immediately picks up all the traits of metaphor. For example, the blend evoked by "this journal is a gem in the rough," as described above, includes numerous mappings, rather than the simple mapping of family resemblances. It also recruits the structure of a conventional blend (the Object Event-Structure Metaphor, a "primary metaphor" that includes the mapping Ideas are Objects) in order to complete the mappings from elements in Gem to Journal, and to generate new inferences, such as the inference that revising a journal will allow it to realize its high potential (as polishing a gem brings it to its highest potential value). Elaborating a mirror network, then, can turn it into a single-scope network that clearly fits the criteria of metaphor (different domains, multiple mappings, and inferences). This elaboration may occur in mirror networks with highly different inputs, such as Journal and Gem, but cannot occur in mirror networks with nearly identical inputs, such as Kleenex and Generic Tissue. The potential for creating a single-scope network, which easily fits any and all criteria for metaphor, may contribute to the "figurative" interpretation of blends such as Journal as Gem.

Whether “Generic is Specific” should be considered a metaphor depends on the value placed on the various characteristics of metaphor. If, for example, a researcher finds it most useful to limit the term “metaphor” to conceptual blends with multiple mappings, then “Generic is Specific” examples such as those in Figures (1)-(4) should not be considered metaphoric blends. At the same time, the potential of certain “Generic is Specific” blends to be extended into single-scope networks, and the consequent increase in the features of prototypical metaphor, should not be ignored.

Finally, any definitive conclusions about “Generic is Specific” must take into account its instantiations in proverbs, many of which are more nuanced than the examples we’ve seen so far.

4 “Generic is Specific” in Proverbs

The question of whether “Generic is Specific” should be called “metaphor” is complicated by the variations of “Generic is Specific” found in proverbs (see Lakoff & Turner 1989). In another sense, though, these examples clarify the status of “Generic is Specific,” in that they completely defy an “attributive categorization” explanation.

This section will focus on the “Generic is Specific” proverb *better (deal with) the devil you know than the one you don’t*, as used in this quotation from Paul Nisbet, a defense analyst (boldface ours).²

“There are reasons why the Navy might not be as delighted with having Northrop as the preeminent shipbuilder rather than GD,” Nisbet said. “They know GD; they’ve dealt with them for years and decades. Northrop is a ‘Johnny Come Lately.’ **Better deal with the devil you know than the one you don’t.**”

(“Northrop Bid Likely to Fail, But So What?”, *Los Angeles Business Journal*, May 14, 2001).

The “Generic is Specific” blend evoked by this proverb is shown in Figure (7), in which it can be seen that dealing with GD (as opposed to Northrop) is conceptualized in terms of dealing with a known devil (as opposed to a new devil). (Note that the lines indicating projections to the blend have been omitted from this diagram in order to limit clutter.)

²This example was chosen for the instantiation of “Generic is Specific” with minimal influence from more prototypical metaphors. Many proverbs combine prototypical metaphor and “Generic is Specific,” as in *you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink*, which involves the Location Event-Structure Metaphor (in which guiding a horse to a goal maps to assisting someone in the accomplishment of a purpose, among other mappings).

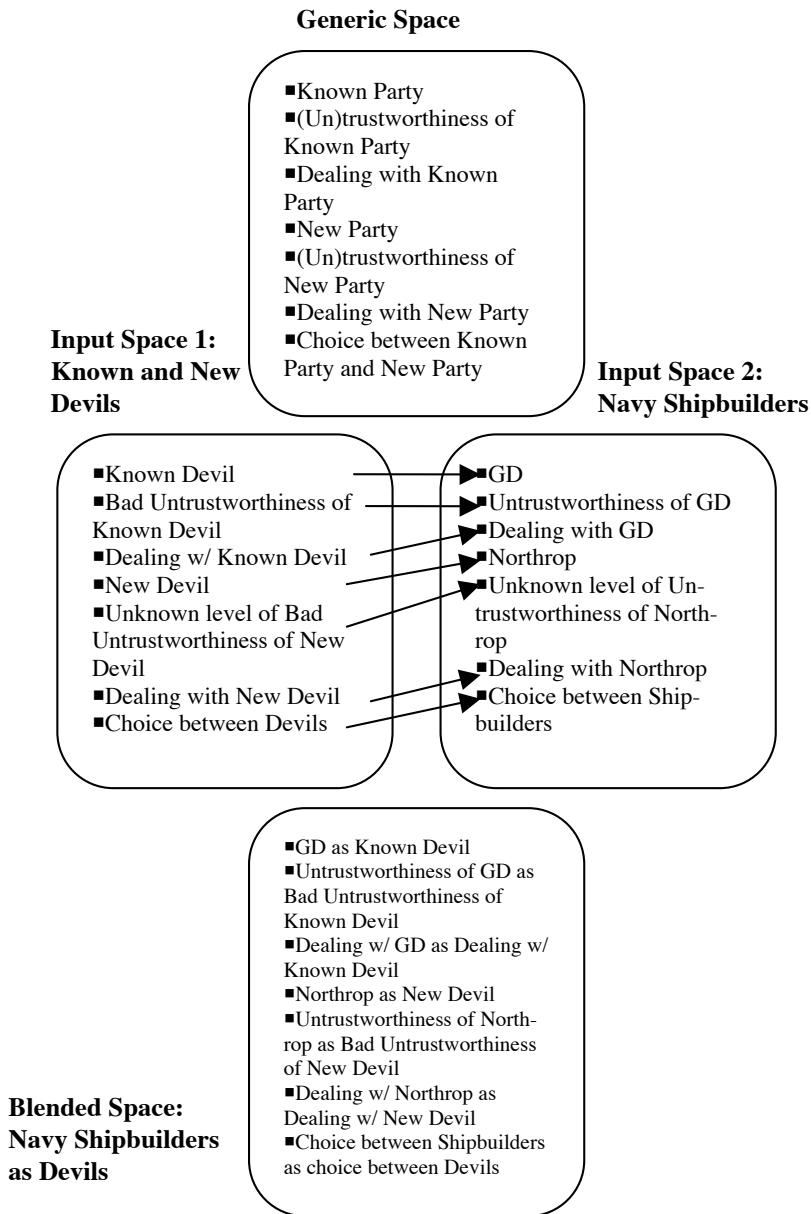


Figure 7. The blend evoked by *better (deal with) the devil you know than the one you don't* (in reference to Navy shipbuilders GD and Northrop)

Clearly, the structure of the blend evoked by *better the devil you know than the one you don't* is more complex than the "Generic is Specific" blends evoked by expressions such as *Joan is an angel*. However, it is equally clear that the blend in (7) draws on some of the same blending strategies. For example, the use of the term *devil* here generates inferences in much the way that *angel* does in *Joan is an angel*, in that the Untrustworthiness of the devils is projected to the blended space, as the Moral Nature of angels is projected to the blended space in Figure (2). Since Nisbet refers to both GD and Northrop as "devils," this generates the inference that both are untrustworthy to some degree.

The blend in (7), however, contains a great deal of structure besides the mapped characteristics of a prototype. In addition to the untrustworthiness of the known and new devils, the *relative* untrustworthiness of these two devils is preserved in the blend. In other words, an entire *scale* of untrustworthiness/trustworthiness is projected to the blend. A scale of familiarity/newness is also projected, as this is necessary in order to compare the relative newness of the two devils/shipbuilders. Additionally, temporal relations are projected: the known devil was dealt with prior to the decision between devils, etc. Causal relations are preserved, in that the choice between devils will precipitate dealings involving either a greater or a lesser extent of untrustworthiness. These scales, relations, etc., can be said to compose the organizing frame structure of Input 1 which is projected to the blend. These relations are not part of Input 2, so the blend cannot be said to be a mirror network like the earlier examples of Generic is Specific.

It seems, then, that the type of "Generic is Specific" in Figure (7) involves the mapped prototype qualities found in simpler examples such as in Figures (1)-(4), but additionally maps more complex structures, including scalar, temporal, and causal relations. Because more than prototype qualities are mapped, and because the organizing frame structure is not shared by all spaces, this type of "Generic is Specific" involves a generic space that does not align with the structure of a single category. In fact, the generic space in this type of blend is quite complex, as is apparent in Figure (7).

The complexity of the generic space in this type of "Generic is Specific" renders it completely incompatible with an "attributive categorization" explanation. If this structure involved category inclusion, then Input 2 would be included as a member in a category called something like: "Dealing with a known party of some level of (un)trustworthiness, faced with a decision between a known party and a new party of unknown (un)trustworthiness ..." and so forth. This type of structure would be a cognitively implausible category. Category members have family resem-

blances, but they do not include structures such as causal sequences. The type of “Generic is Specific” in Figure (7) involves the blending of structures that simply cannot be accounted for as “attributive categorization”.

If this type of “Generic is Specific” cannot be “attributive categorization,” can it then be “metaphor”? Returning to the criteria used earlier, are there “two conceptual domains, and is one understood in terms of the other”? The inputs in Figure (7) are highly distinct, especially given that they do not belong to a common category or share the same organizing frames, so they seem like good candidates for “domains”. Next, does a “whole schematic structure (with two or more entities)” map onto another whole schematic structure? In this respect, the example in Figure (7) looks more like metaphor than examples such as (1)-(4), in that the blend in (7) involves numerous mappings. Finally, is “the logic of the source-domain structure ... mapped onto the logic of the target-domain structure”? Again, yes: the blend gives us unidirectional inferences regarding the high untrustworthiness of the two shipbuilders, and the superiority of the one over the other. The proverb diverges from prototypical metaphor in that its organizing frame structure is a matter of convention, rather than embodiment or world experience, but it certainly generates inferences.

It seems, then, that the most metaphor-like instances of “Generic is Specific” are those in which the inputs do not share the same organizing frames, as in proverbs such as *Better the devil you know ...* Examples in which the inputs are substantially different, even if they do share organizing frames, also resemble conceptual metaphors to a certain degree (as in *this journal is a gem*). Both of these types look like metaphor in that their inputs are more “domain”-like than those in examples such as *here’s a Kleenex*. Moreover, when “Generic is Specific” lacks shared organizing frames, it looks more like metaphor in that it involves multiple (usually numerous) mappings. And finally, all “Generic is Specific” examples behave like metaphor in that they produce inferences. Overall, then, we see a cline of metaphoricity in “Generic is Specific” examples, from highly metaphoric proverbs, to blends such as *this journal is a gem*, down to examples such as *here’s a Kleenex*.

5 Conclusions

The present analysis of “Generic is Specific” has implications for both opponents and proponents of a conceptual view of metaphor. First, this analysis suggests that opponents of conceptual metaphor are not justified in using instances of “Generic is Specific” (and especially the least metaphor-like types of “Generic is Specific”) as counterexamples to a conceptual theory of metaphor. To a greater or lesser extent, all types of “Generic is Specific”

differ in their structure from more prototypical metaphors, and cannot be legitimately used to attack conceptual metaphor as a whole.

Second, even if "attributive categorization" theorists limit the scope of their argument to "Generic is Specific," their model needs refinement before it can adequately account for structures of this type. These theorists need to recognize that categories do not have "properties"; they need to reshape their theory so that it is capable of predicting which "properties" would be "attributed," and from which categories; and they need to revise their theory so that we are not forced to call some strange things "categories," such as "Dealing with a known party of some level of (un)trustworthiness, etc."

Even though "attributive categorization" does not adequately represent "Generic is Specific," Conceptual Metaphor Theory cannot yet fully account for this process, either. This paper has shown that "Generic is Specific" may look more or less like metaphor, depending on how much structure is mapped, the lowest-level category to which both inputs can be assigned, and whether these inputs share the same organizing frames.

The Blending Theory analysis given here has the advantage of capturing both the metaphor-like and the category-based aspects of "Generic is Specific". In answer to the question, "Is 'Generic is Specific' a metaphor?" then, the best response might be "Does it matter?" Human beings use many types of conceptual structures in reasoning and in language. We cannot expect that these structures will belong to hard-and-fast categories, any more than we can expect to find hard-and-fast categories in most other areas of human cognition. Identifying, modeling and understanding the structures that occur, then, may be more productive than assigning labels and trying to confine these conceptual structures to artificially invented categories.

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