Analysing metaphor in the family register through scripted sitcom conversations

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This study looks into the patterns of metaphor use in the family register of scripted sitcom conversations. Previous studies of metaphor in conversation adopted different approaches to the concept of register, resulting in a rich but complex picture (Cameron, 2003, 2007, 2008; Deignan, Littlemore & Semino, 2013; Kaal, 2012). This research attempts to reduce such complexity by using an approach to register based on closely defining communicative settings and the participants' roles (Giménez-Moreno, 2006). In this way, we were able to focus on the register used by family members and close friends and the contexts of private oral communication, as opposed to other possible registers characteristic of professional conversations or those between friends. The study provides data on the frequency, typology, grammatical form and function of the metaphors used in the fictional dialogues between family members and close friends from two British sitcoms, "Gavin & Stacey" and "The Royle Family". The findings, in general, confirm the patterns of metaphor use in naturally-occurring (UK) conversation, but show lower frequency ranges than other more purpose-oriented contexts. The main contribution of this study is the evaluation of metaphor as an 'appraisal resource' (Martin & White, 2005) and its frequent use in assessing the participants' attitudes. The study suggests that defining register in terms of communicative setting and participants' roles can help to provide comparable data on metaphor variation.

Keywords: metaphor, register, conversation, appraisal

1. Introduction

An increasing number of studies have focused on register and metaphor (Cameron, 2003, 2007, 2008; Charteris-Black, 2004; Deignan, Littlemore & Semino, 2013; Goatly, 1994; Krennmayr, 2011; Kaal, 2012; O'Halloran, 2007; Steen, Dorst, Hermann, Kaal, & Krennmayr, 2010b), considering the former (register) in terms

of broad language variations, such as conversation, or focusing on more specific communicative contexts, for instance, classroom talk or political discourse. The studies mentioned provided both quantitative and qualitative approaches, but often used different metaphor identification methods, creating a rich but an over-complex account of metaphor use (Kaal, 2012).

The research results focusing on metaphor in different registers can be especially difficult to compare if the register analysed is not clearly defined in terms of what Halliday (1978) termed 'tenor', 'field' and 'mode'. For conversation, Carter (2004) has suggested different types of context, such as transactional, professional, socializing or intimate, and different types of interaction, for instance information provision or collaboration. Following this, we strongly believe that the register of conversation covers different settings (more formal or informal), with different participants (family members, colleagues, friends, etc.), and therefore should be approached at a deep level of contextual variation, reflecting distinct choices of lexico-grammatical forms and pragmatic meanings. The use of metaphor varies in different conversational settings, as Cameron (2003, 2007, 2008) has repeatedly reported, with reference to classroom or reconciliation talk. In this study we have followed this complex approach to the analysis of metaphor in conversation, and have avoided considering oral interactions as one register encompassing many different communicative settings and distinct participants.

The term 'register' has been used with different meanings and the concept of 'contextual variation' has been defined through diverse labels and parameters, often conflicting or overlapping with other language varieties (Giménez-Moreno, 1997, 2006; Giménez-Moreno & Skorczynska, 2013). In the same vein as Carter (2004), Giménez-Moreno (2006) proposed an approach considering register as a dynamic continuum from the most intimate and informal to the most ritual and formal, covering a wide range of situations and contexts. Adopting this perspective, our aim was to investigate the use of metaphor in what we label the 'family register'; that is, forms of language taking place between family members and close friends in everyday communicative situations occurring mainly at home, but also in the street, on the phone or in the nearby pub. No study, to our knowledge, has approached this type of register and its correlation with the use of metaphor.

The material analysed consisted of scripted conversations taken from two popular British TV series: "The Royle Family" and "Gavin & Stacey". According to the experts, a large number of fictional dialogues are rooted in real-life conversations and based on models of language use in a range of everyday situations (Fowler, 1989). It was our aim, therefore, to provide data on the metaphor use in the family register, but also to shed light on whether the use of metaphor in this particular register replicates in any way the results obtained in previous studies on naturally occurring conversations with regard to its frequency, form and function.

2.   Register in metaphor studies

Current studies on metaphor and register tend to be based on various versions of Biber's (1988, 1994) multidimensional approach to register variation (e.g., Steen et al., 2010a; Steen et al. 2010b), some of them with references to, or adaptations of, Halliday's (1978, 1980) systemic functional approach to register analysis (e.g., Goatly, 1994). Within most of these multidimensional studies, Biber's (1988) four main registers were analysed to obtain comparative data for metaphor variation in register. Thus, using the BNC corpus, Dorst (2011) focused on metaphor in fiction, Krennmayr (2011) on news items in newspapers, Kaal (2012) examined metaphor in conversation, and Herrmann (2013) studied metaphor in the register of academic writing. The variation in the use of metaphor in the different registers studied was also observed at the level of sub-registers. In the case of news items in newspapers (Krennmayr, 2011), a complex three-way interaction between the sub-registers of hard news, soft news and sciences, on the one hand, and metaphor and word class, on the other, was detected. In the same vein, Cameron (2008) observed significant variation in the metaphor frequency in conversation sub-registers (reconciliation talk, doctor-patient interviews and classroom talk). In fact, most of the above-mentioned specialists agree that (a) results in metaphor analysis can be distorted if the register analysed is not clearly defined and if the same metaphor identification method is not used, (b) that a more careful selection of language data representing the particular 'sub-register' is needed in metaphor analysis, and that (c) a detailed classificatory framework to approach contextual and register variation is necessary to refine the description of metaphor variation in different registers.

From our point of view, the response to these needs may be subject to the definition of the concept of 'linguistic register' in contrast to other closely related parameters of linguistic variation. The term 'register' has been identified with different meanings, such as style, genre, topic or discipline, function, dimension, or mode, (Giménez-Moreno, 1997, 2006, 2011a, 2011b; Giménez-Moreno & Skorczynska, 2013). Also many of these distinct terms and parameters have been used to refer to the concept of situational variation (e.g., Biber, 1995; Ghadessy, 1988; Gregory & Carroll, 1978; Halliday 1980). The result is that the concept of linguistic register turns out to be especially diffuse when it is applied in discourse studies.

For example, Kaal (2012, p. 84) analyses four samples with an average of 47,000 words representing four main registers: 'casual conversation' which includes conversations in a range of different contexts (like work, at the supermarket, or visiting family), 'academic register' containing "academic texts on varying topics published in books and journals", the 'register of news' from newspapers' domestic news pages and the 'register of fiction' from novels (i.e., 'imaginative books' such

as "My Beloved Son"). From the perspective of genre analysis theory (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990), books, academic articles, novels and newspapers' domestic news may also be considered as 'communicative genres'. Consequently, Kaal's work can be interpreted as a contrastive study of genre and when the author refers to "sub registers" she might actually be referring to 'sub-genres' within 'supra-genres' such as newspapers and conversations. As Jiménez (2008, p. 7) indicates, supra-genres comprise "a group of genres that share some common characteristics but that do not belong to a specific genre"; thus to Jiménez the supra-genre of homepages includes corporate, institutional and personal homepages. Following this view, the supra-genre of newspapers may encompass sub-genres such as editorial pages, entertainment features and financial news, among many others, including the sub-genre of domestic news analysed by Kaal.

In order to reduce this level of complexity and the subsequent ambiguity, Giménez-Moreno (2006) proposed an all-inclusive and unifying approach to register variation, based on manageable parameters and criteria. Within this approach, the key defining parameters of the concept of register are (a) the communicative setting, corresponding to the mental models and language choices dependent on 'where we are' (e.g., at work, or at home), and (b) the participants' roles, corresponding to the mental models and language choices dependent on 'how we express who we are' (e.g., daughter, colleague, friend, or father). Considering these two main parameters, at least four macro-registers are distinguishable: family, 'amicable' (between friends), social and professional. Each of these four macro-registers has its own scale of formality from more intimate / casual to more ceremonial / ritual tones. From this perspective, a register can be seen as a dynamic continuum, which fluctuates as we move from one role and context to another throughout the day, covering a wide range of interactions.

In this approach (which we adopt for the present study), conversation is seen as a supra-genre, with sub-genres such as face-to-face, group, telephone and email conversations, along with other types of discourse. Each conversational sub-genre varies depending upon the particular register used at any given time, thus enabling us to distinguish between professional, social, 'amicable' (i.e., friend-friend) and family conversations (e.g., family face-to-face conversation, professional telephone conversation, amicable group conversation, etc.). Our study focuses on conversations between family members and very close friends as manifested in scripted dialogues from "The Royle Family" and "Gavin & Stacey".

By adopting an approach to register in which we narrow our scope to specific contexts and interlocutors, our aim is to highlight the importance of avoiding the overarching concept of register encompassing varying communicative settings and participants, as research results in such circumstances may turn out to be difficult to compare, replicate and validate.

3.   Metaphor in conversation

As Kaal (2012, p. 44) argues in her detailed account of the studies of speech versus writing, "spoken language is generally characterised as implicit, context-dependent, involved, lexically scarce, interactive, loosely structured and as dealing with many different topics." Biber (1988) argues that 'online' contexts are especially challenging for speakers and the formulation of lexically and syntactically complex text is very often difficult. 'Offline' contexts, in contrast, allow time to decide on the type of phrasing to be used, including situations where the focus is placed on the imitation of spontaneous speech.

Regarding scripted conversations, Quaglio (2009), who compared the series "Friends" with a corpus of natural conversation from the "Longman Grammar Corpus", and Bednarek (2010), who analysed the "Gilmore Girls", both concluded that modern US TV series tend to share the core linguistic features of natural (American) conversation. Other researchers, such as Sherman (2003) argue that sitcoms may be considered language models in terms of vocabulary, grammar, syntax and accent, though other linguistic and paralinguistic aspects (such as pace, intonation, interruptions, or overlaps) tend to be manipulated to enhance the staging of the given interaction. Nonetheless, according to Amador-Moreno and McCafferty (2011, p. 2), readers, the audience, and literary critics can in general judge whether written fictional dialogue successfully imitates naturally occurring conversation or not, and this is based on speakers' perception of how real-life conversation functions. This ability to judge makes the comparison between written fictional dialogue and naturally-occurring conversation interesting from the linguistic point of view.

The studies of metaphor in conversation have been based to date on corpora of naturally-occurring conversations and have also explored other rhetorical figures. For example, Carter (2004) analysed a wide array of conversations and observed that 'common talk' has a large creative component expressed through figures such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole, proverbs, slang and other idiomatic expressions. With regard to metaphor, the studies conducted included a broad range of communicative contexts: doctor-patient interviews, healthcare communication (Gibbs & Franks, 2002; Gwyn, 1999), classroom talk and college lectures (Cameron, 2003; Cameron & Low, 2004; Corts & Polio, 1999), reconciliation talk (Cameron, 2007), religious sermons (Corts & Meyers, 2002), or political speeches (Charteris-Black, 2004).

Cameron's work (Cameron, 2003, 2007; Cameron et al., 2009) focuses on the adaptive nature of metaphor when it is used by participants in conversation and argues that conversation as 'talking-and-thinking-in-interaction' allows the metaphor to emerge, both in language and thought, from the interaction of various

complex systems: individual speakers' own dynamic language systems, their cognitive system and their physical system are all influenced by discourse activity. In such a context, metaphor is also marked for its affective, interactional and sociocultural functions. Within this particular perspective, Cameron draws attention to metaphor's ideational, interpersonal and textual functions in conversation, and it is the interpersonal which is examined in the present study.

Cameron found that the density of metaphor use varied depending on the aim and topic of the conversation: 100 metaphors per 1,000 words in reconciliation talk, around 50 per 1,000 words in doctor-patient interviews, and approximately 27 per 1,000 words in classroom talk, where depending on the topic of the lesson, the density ranged from 15 to 40 (Cameron, 2003, 2007, 2008). Cameron (2008) also reported that the form of metaphor varied: in her educational data, linguistic metaphors were typically verbs, delexicalised verbs and prepositions, noun phrases, adjectives and noun pairs. Regarding metaphor type, naturally-occurring conversations contained conventionalised metaphors rather than novel metaphors (e.g., Cameron 2003, 2008; Cameron & Deignan, 2006), and many linguistic metaphors were part of restricted conventionalised bundles, also referred to as 'metaphoremes', with their own lexico-grammatical, ideational and pragmatic functions (Cameron & Deignan, 2006; Deignan, 2005). Cameron (2007, 2008) further pointed to the fact that speakers often used metaphor to align themselves, especially when they talked about their emotions (for instance, in reconciliation talk). This type of affective function of metaphor has also been found to be centrally involved in accomplishing the persuasive goals of business training talk, where the emotional alignment of the speaker with the audience plays a crucial role (Skorczynska, 2014).

Kaal (2012, p. 55) rightly points out in her study that the works on metaphor mentioned in the paragraphs above are difficult to compare because of different metaphor identification methods used and also, as previously mentioned, due to the absence of a uniform approach to register.

4.   Metaphor functions in conversation: expressing appraisal

The studies mentioned in the previous section point to a range of functions detected in conversations considered as a dynamic flow of interaction: ideational, affective and textual. Much attention has been paid in them to the fact that metaphors convey emotions and evaluation (Cameron, 2003, 2007, 2008; McCarthy, 1998; Skorczynska, 2014). As our interest lies in patterns of interaction, we decided to focus on the interpersonal function (Halliday, 1994), referring to how people interact and construct social relations between them. In the context of oral

interactions, the use of appraisal resources, that is, how participants adopt stances towards what they say and with whom they interact, by means of approval, disapproval, enthusiasm or criticism, is of special relevance. In order to discuss the interpersonal function of metaphors in conversation we turned to Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, which provides a detailed description of evaluative functions of language, as well as of the repertoire of appraisal resources that are involved in their realisation: at the level of discourse semantics and across a range of grammatical categories.

We hypothesise that the use of metaphor may be significant in the realisation of the interpersonal function in the family register. According to Poynton (1985), quoted in Martin and White (2005, pp. 30–31), a register's 'tenor' is based on two principles, which in our view could be reflected in the usage of metaphorical language. The 'principle of proliferation' refers to the idea that the closer you are to someone, the more meanings you have available to exchange, and the 'principle of contraction' means that the better you know someone the less explicitness you need to use to convey a meaning. Applying this to appraisal, Martin & White (2005) argue that the better you know someone, the more feelings you will share and the less you need to say to share them. Proliferation and contraction, in this sense, are understood as semiotic resources for negotiating intimacy and distance, and metaphor may play a significant role in transferring more evaluative meaning and less explicit meaning especially in interactions between close friends and family members. A similar conclusion was drawn by Carter (2004) who pointed to figures of speech being used for intensification, evaluation and also for creating intimacy.

Appraisal, as one of the major discourse semantics resources for constructing interpersonal meaning, can be represented, according to Martin and White (2005, pp. 34–38), as three interacting domains: 'attitude', 'engagement' and 'graduation'. 'Attitude' is concerned with our feelings, that is, our emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things. 'Engagement' refers to the speaker's or writer's alignment or "disalignment,"[1] (that is, agreement or disagreement with respect to attitudinal assessments), as well as to beliefs or assumptions about the world. Finally, 'graduation' is concerned with adjusting the degree of evaluation, that is, how strong or weak the feeling is. Attitude itself can be divided into three areas of feeling: 'affect', 'judgement' and 'appreciation'. 'Affect' refers to all resources serving to construe emotional reactions, such as the feeling of shock with regard to terrorist attacks. 'Judgement' includes resources for assessing behaviour, for instance criticism of a particular politician in the news, and 'appreciation' involves resources for construing our evaluations of things, such as objects or performances, but also

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[1]. The term used by Martin and White (2005, p. 95) to express the opposite meaning to 'alignment'.

natural phenomena. Both attitude and engagement can be graduated: in the case of attitude, a lesser or a greater degree of positivity or negativity can be expressed; and with reference to engagement, the writer's or speaker's intensity or their involvement in the utterance can be scaled (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 135–136). Even though the canonical grammatical realisation of evaluation is adjectival, Martin and White (2005, p. 38) point to less direct realisations. Metaphor, for instance, in its different grammatical forms, instead of directly expressing a particular evaluation, may convey attitudinal responses, and even arouse them in readers or listeners.

Martin and White (2005) provide a detailed account of their theory, including the repertoire of possible lexico-grammatical realisations of the evaluative functions of language, which cannot be included here because of the limited focus of this study. We accordingly developed a reduced framework of categories, as described in the next section.

5. Corpus description and procedure

The corpus for the study consisted of transcriptions of fictional dialogue from two British sitcoms: "Gavin & Stacey" and "The Royle Family". The success of these series lies in the fact that the characters, the oral exchanges between them and the situations in which they take place seek to reproduce real-life everyday conversations in different contexts, such as those that take place when having a family dinner, watching TV, shopping, going to a pub, or meeting someone in the street. We based the selection of the sitcoms on their popularity and the fact that at least one critic had argued that they reflected realistic family situations.[2]

"Gavin & Stacey" (Gernon, 2007–2010) depicts the long-distance relationship between Gavin from Billericay in Essex, and Stacey from Barry in the Vale of Glamorgan, Wales. Initially, Gavin lives with his parents, Pam and Mick, and spends his time with his best friend Smithy. Stacey lives with her widowed mother, Gwen, but is frequently visited by her Uncle Bryn and her best friend Nessa. The series follows the key moments in their relationship. Most of the action takes place within the homes of Gavin and Stacey, and later within their own home. "The Royle Family" (Mylod, Bendelack & Aherne, 1998–2012) centres on the lives of a Manchester family, the Royles, comprising family patriarch Jim Royle, his

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2. For example, according to the BARB (British Audience Research Board, "Top 30 Programmes 2010"), the viewer ratings for the BBC One transmission of the Royle Family Christmas Special cited 11.29 million viewers, being the fourth most watched programme of Christmas Day 2010. See also the article entitled "Families 'mirror' TV sitcom models", written by Julia Hartley-Brewer and published in *The Guardian* on 29th March 2000.

wife Barbara, their daughter Denise, their son Anthony and Denise's fiancé (later husband), Dave. All action takes place within the Royles's home.

The corpus consisted of three episodes from "Gavin & Stacey" and two episodes from "The Royle Family". The dialogues were transcribed[3] and checked, and the conversations between family members and very close friends were selected, totalling 69 conversation fragments. The corpus consisted of 16,431 words, of which 9,203 were from "Gavin & Stacey" and 7,229 from "The Royle Family".

The conversations were manually analysed by both researchers in order to identify metaphorically used words and phrases, following the Method Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) (Steen et al., 2010a). Disagreements over the identification of metaphors were solved through discussion and consultation with native speaker specialists.

The frequency of metaphor was calculated and normalised per 1,000 words. Fixed expressions were considered as single lexical units and understood in a very broad way, with frozen collocations, proverbs, routine formulae, sayings, and idioms all belonging to that category (following Moon, 1998). In order to evaluate the level of conventionality of the metaphorical material used in the corpus, the linguistic metaphors identified were divided into conventionalised or novel, using the "Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners" (Rundell, 2007) as the criterion.

The following step consisted of filtering out the metaphors fulfilling the interpersonal function and annotating the resulting items according to the appraisal domains described in Section 4. For instance, the metaphorical use of the preposition in "Dad, she's *on* a diet" ("Gavin & Stacey") was not considered as fulfilling the interpersonal function, while *sweet cheeks* in "You're too good to me, *sweet cheeks*, you are really" ("Gavin & Stacey") was regarded as an instance of such a function.

As usually happens with language data, establishing clear-cut and one-way correspondences between metaphor instances from the corpus and their functional features turned out to be complex. There were many cases where a metaphor could be placed within more than one appraisal domain, for instance 'judgement' and 'graduation', as in "My brother *would turn in his grave*" ("Gavin & Stacey"). This metaphor expresses judgement, but it is also graduated, as it communicates how appalled the speaker feels about the situation that is being evaluated. For such instances of metaphorical language, we double-checked the data in order to discuss and agree on the predominant appraisal domain. In the *grave* example, judgement was selected as the predominant appraisal domain. On the whole, we agreed on about 85% of the metaphors analysed. The remaining items were discussed, annotated with the help of native speaker informants and all were ultimately agreed on.

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3. The turns were transcribed verbally. Intonation groups were not marked.

After evaluating the metaphors as appraisal resources, we also looked into their grammatical form in order to identify possible patterns of correlation with their usage as appraisal resources in the family register. This type of approach, focusing on both form and function, allows for a detailed description of metaphors in the register concerned and a fairly fine-grained characterization of metaphor use.

6.   Results and discussion

The normalised frequency of metaphorically-used words and fixed expressions in the corpus reached 26 per 1,000 words. Metaphor frequency in the scripted sitcom conversations is, therefore, close to that of Cameron's classroom talk (27 per 1,000 words), some way from the figure for her reconciliation talk (100 per 1,000), and in the lower part of the ranges for real-life conversations reported in Section 3. Given that we were analysing fictional dialogue, which can be shaped to attract and increase the audience's response, we expected to find higher frequencies for metaphor usage. Our expectation derived in part from the fact that the higher frequency of metaphors in business periodical articles than in management journal papers has been attributed, in part at least, precisely to the need to attract the readers' attention (Skorczynska & Deignan, 2006).

Regarding metaphor type, nearly all of the metaphors used were conventionalised (96%), with just a few (4%) that were novel. In this sense, the percentages obtained replicate the results from the studies of naturally-occurring conversations reported above and indicate that successful fictional dialogue may indeed mirror real-life oral interactions on the semantic and lexical levels. Examples (1) and (2) are conventionalised metaphors (underlined), while Example (3) shows a novel highly context-dependent metaphor.

(1)   *You've got a right <u>dirty</u> laugh, do you know that?*   (G&S)

(2)   <u>*Talk of the devil*</u>.   (RF)

(3)   *If he was <u>chocolate</u>, he'd have <u>eaten</u> himself.*   (G&S)

The high proportion of conventionalised metaphors in scripted sitcom conversations also provides evidence for the principles of proliferation and contraction discussed earlier (Martin & White, 2005; Poynton, 1985): more evaluative and less explicit meaning seems to be conveniently conveyed by conventional metaphors in a more compact and indirect way.

Regarding the grammatical form of metaphor vehicles, verbs were the most frequent (40%), followed by fixed expressions (18.9%), prepositions (18%), adjectives (14.8%), and nouns (8.1%). These data replicate the results obtained in

naturally-occurring conversations (e.g., Cameron, 2008, p. 200), with the verbs in educational talk being notably more frequent (63%) than nouns (22%). In a similar vein, Kaal (2012, p. 117), in her study of conversation as represented by the BNC, pointed to verbs as being the most frequent (30.1%), followed by prepositions (22.7%), determiners (15.6%), nouns (12.5%), adverbs (8.7%) and adjectives (6.3%). In our data, however, adjectives constitute a higher proportion of all metaphors than in Kaal's study, and this may result from resorting to metaphorical adjectives to add 'colour' and liveliness to the scripted dialogue. Examples (4) to (8) show the different grammatical forms of the vehicle that were identified in our study: verb (4), preposition (5), adjective (6), noun (7), and a fixed expression (8).

(4) *You ever <u>dabble</u> on the stock market, Jim?* (RF)

(5) *He's <u>on</u> disability allowance.* (RF)

(6) *He's a <u>big-headed</u> git him.* (RF)

(7) *Ignorant <u>pig</u>, am I?* (G&S)

(8) *My brother <u>would turn in his grave</u>.* (G&S)

With reference to metaphor functions, most of the metaphors identified (70.9%) in our corpus reflected the interpersonal function of language in conversation. It was possible to relate all to the appraisal domain of attitude (affect, judgement, or appreciation), or to engagement. However, it turned out to be difficult to decide whether a particular metaphor was exclusively graduating the strength or weakness of a participant's expression of feelings or involvement in an utterance, as all of the metaphors carried evaluative meaning and many of them did so with more or less strength or intensity. Given the analytical complexity of this particular function in the case of metaphorically used words and expressions, we consider that it needs to be further looked into and addressed in a separate study. For this reason, Table 1 includes just the percentages of metaphors for the two domains that were more clearly and straightforwardly identified: attitude and engagement.

Table 1. Distribution of metaphors per appraisal domain

Appraisal domain		Percentage of metaphors
Attitude	judgement	52.0%
	appreciation	29.3%
	affect	10.6%
Engagement		8.1%

Metaphors predominantly expressing judgement, that is, assessing behaviour, were the most frequent (52.0%) within the appraisal metaphors, followed by appreciation (29.3%), affect (10.6%) and engagement (8.1%). As we have previously stated, three of the appraisal domains: judgement, appreciation and affect express the speaker's attitude (Martin & White, 2005); hence a large proportion of the appraisal metaphors (91.8%) were used for this particular purpose. Examples (9) and (10) include metaphors judging the interlocutor's behaviour negatively, especially (10).

(9)   *The fault will lie solely at your door.*   (G&S)

(10)   *You perverted piece of shit.*   (RF)

Another appraisal domain related to the speaker's attitude, 'appreciation', serves to construe evaluation of things. In Example (11) *pigsty* is used to describe an untidy room. In Example (12), Bryn is trying to find a mnemonic for the acronym *www* necessary to correctly type in an Internet address, suggesting that any three words starting with the letter *w* would be useful, when Gavin ironically proposes *world wide web*. The fixed expression *that's the ticket* describes how useful Gavin's suggestion seems to be for Bryn. In Example (13), *wedding lark* is used by Jim to express criticism about the wedding costs.

(11)   *When Gavin brought Stacey back here last night we were asleep. The place was a pigsty. There was newspapers all over the lounge, three pairs of my pants on the radiator, thank God they were new.*   (G&S)

(12)   Gavin: *What about the world wide web?*
       Bryn: *World wide web. I like it, like a spider. Hey, that's the ticket! That's brilliant!*   (G&S)

(13)   *There'll be plenty of bloody tears if it's two hundred pound. Is his Dad paying owt[4] towards this wedding lark or what?*   (RF)

The third appraisal domain related to the speaker's attitude has to do with expressing affect, that is, it includes the resources used in construing emotional reactions. Metaphors predominantly conveying affect accounted for a lower percentage of the metaphors fulfilling the interpersonal function: 10.6%. Examples include:

(14)   *I've just only shook that off.*   (G&S)

(15)   *I'm absolutely shattered.*   (G&S)

(16)   *It's knocked me for six.*   (G&S)

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4.   *anything* (used in Northern England).

With regard to the domain of engagement, that is the resources used to align or "disalign" with the interlocutor, it accounted for the lowest percentage in our data: 8.1%. Example (17) shows how a metaphorical expression is used by Smithy to agree with Pam on the type of food he wants to eat.

(17) Pam: *Do you want Pammy's full English[5] ?*
Smithy: *You <u>read my mind</u>!*

We were also interested to further explore how the grammatical form of the metaphorical vehicle correlated with appraisal in the family register of scripted sitcom conversations, and especially whether verbs were the most frequent. The findings for the appraisal metaphors turned out to be distinct from the overall figures obtained from the corpus. The fixed expressions with a metaphorical sense accounted for 35.8% of the appraisal metaphors, followed by adjectives (24.7%), nouns (23.2%) and verbs (16.1%). As can be seen, the results for the metaphors expressing appraisal differ from the overall figures with verbs being the most frequent (40%), followed by fixed expressions (18.9%), prepositions (18%), adjectives (14.8%), and nouns (8.3%).

Fixed expressions, carrying both metaphorical and evaluative meanings, seem to be used by sitcom scriptwriters to render the fictional dialogues more 'colourful', captivating and lively, and in this way to entertain the audience. In addition, this type of expression conveys much of the meaning in an implicit, indirect and compact form, reflecting the principles of proliferation and contraction (Martin & White, 2005; Poynton, 1985), which are likely to govern oral interactions in private or intimate contexts. The adjectival form of appraisal metaphors in our data provides further evidence about the canonical grammatical form of the language used for appraisal, as argued by Martin and White (2005). The verbal metaphors expressing appraisal were the least frequent, as they are on the whole less likely to convey metaphorical meanings related to the different appraisal domains.

The results obtained in the analysis of the frequency and form of the metaphors in our corpus of scripted sitcom conversations replicate many of the earlier findings from the study of naturally-occurring conversations, suggesting that they were modelled on real-life oral interactions. Moreover, the data related to the use of metaphor as an appraisal resource in what we considered the family register provides new insights into this particular function of metaphor, which, seems to be clearly correlated with the communicative context analysed and the grammatical form used.

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5. "full English" refers to full English breakfast.

7. Conclusions

This study describes the use of linguistic metaphors in the family register, as represented by conversations between family members and close friends in a range of communicative settings in two British sitcoms. The need to look into this particular register has arisen from the fact that the previous studies of metaphor in naturally-occurring conversations approached the notion of register from different perspectives, thereby limiting the generalisability of the findings attested. We have argued, therefore, that the register in which metaphor is analysed needs to be clearly specified and we proposed a practical approach to register based on manageable parameters and criteria, reflecting varying communicative settings.

We have provided data on metaphor use in the sitcoms and compared the results to similar studies examining naturally-occurring conversations. The findings show similarities regarding the grammatical form of metaphor, such that verbs, followed by fixed expressions are the most frequent. Moreover, the results obtained also suggest that metaphor frequency in scripted conversations is not too distant from real-life UK oral interactions. Finally, the predominant use of conventionalised metaphors also followed the pattern reported from naturally-occurring conversations.

The main contribution of this study is the application of Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) to the functional analysis of metaphors in conversation. Our attempt was exploratory, and used a simplified framework; however, although there proved to be some problems with the 'graduation' category in particular, we feel that, overall, Appraisal Theory has considerable potential for functional studies of metaphor. Regarding our data, most of the metaphors in the sample of the family register analysed were used for judgement, while at the other end of the scale, only a small percentage served to express alignment or "disalignment" with the interlocutor. The grammatical forms of appraisal metaphors had a different distribution pattern from the overall results in the corpus, with fixed expressions and adjectives—and not verbs—as the most frequent. These findings provide new insights into metaphor variation being dependent on the relationship between function and form in specific communicative contexts.

This study suggests that there is a need to specifically define the register analysed, in terms of the context and participants' roles, in order to enhance data comparability. This study, obviously, presents many limitations, such as the limited size of the corpus and the fact that the application of Appraisal Theory needs to be further developed, refined and validated for metaphor studies. However, we hope that the novelty of this approach will attract scholars' attention and encourage further studies of metaphor variation in different registers.

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