

# Metaphorical Expressions Used in Foods Products Advertisements and Their Inferences

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## ABSTRACT

Metaphors are not only found in everyday use of language, but also in advertisements. The use of metaphorical expressions, specifically conceptual metaphors in advertisements, especially in the slogans, is very common because they can attract attention and they can give positive inferences for the advertisement messages. The metaphorical expressions cannot be interpreted literally, but they must be inferred because they give new meanings to the expressions. The inference can be drawn by mapping the features of source domain on the target domain. Based on this condition, this article investigates metaphorical expressions used in the foods products advertisements through the answer of these two questions: 1) What are the target and source domains of the metaphorical expressions used in the advertisements? 2) What inferences can be extracted from the mapping of the source domains on the target domains?

Keywords: Metaphor; conceptual metaphor; inference.

## INTRODUCTION

Advertisers make use of advertisements in promoting their products. Through the advertisements they attempt to inform publicly about their special products and the excellence of their products over others. Among the various advertised products, foods products are often found in many kinds of media. It might be because food is human's primary need, so that advertisers often advertise the foods products to inform readers what kinds of foods they might need to buy. Therefore, this article is aimed to investigate the advertisements of foods products. The term 'foods products' here refers to foods and food ingredients as well.

Since there are a great number of advertisements in the society, advertisers must be able to make their advertisements directly known by the readers who might become the prospective buyers of the products sold. Besides, the advertisers also have to put the advertisements in such a limited span that they could economize the cost of the advertisements. For this reason, the advertisers need to link the advertised product with something that people already know so that the advertised product can be recognized and remembered easily. Therefore, the advertisers like to use metaphors in advertisements because metaphor refers to language use that explains something other than what it literally means through the comparison of

two things to make a connection between them (Knowles and Moon, 2006, p. 3). This comparing characteristics of metaphor is the same as what the advertisers need; no wonder metaphors are often used in advertisements.

The topic of metaphor is chosen in this research because metaphor is found in advertisements (Cook, 2001) and is unique. Metaphor can be considered as an extraordinary language that is only used as poetic rhetoric by poets; however, in fact it is also an ordinary language since metaphor is "pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1996, p. 3). Because metaphor is very closely related to humans' everyday life, it is not surprising that "a contemporary advertising contains many metaphors" (Forceville, 1996, p. 67). Because advertisers like to use metaphors, advertisements contain a great deal of metaphorical expressions. For this reason, metaphorical utterances, specifically the ones used in foods products become the topic of investigation in this article with the following two questions: 1) What are the target and source domains of the metaphorical expressions used in the advertisements? 2) What inferences can be extracted from the mapping of the source domains on the target domains?

By reading this article, it is expected that readers would get some contributions. First, it is expected that

readers would get the knowledge that advertisements contain not just literal meanings but also non-literal ones since they contain metaphors and inferences. Second, it is expected that this article could inspire those who are majoring in linguistics, to know more about advertisement messages.

## METAPHOR

Metaphor refers to creative language use by connecting two resembled things to result in a different meaning. Metaphorical utterances form new meanings because they cannot be interpreted literally and they are thought provoking. In relation to individual words, metaphor is “a basic process in the formation of words and word meanings” (Knowles and Moon, 2006, p. 4).

Forceville (1996, 2008) mentions that a metaphorical statement has two distinct subjects: target and source domains. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Forceville (2008, p. 464) state that “verbal metaphors of various syntactic forms are manifestations of a conceptual metaphor that can be captured in a paradigmatic A IS B format”. Though there are two main types of metaphor, namely conceptual and nonverbal metaphors, this article is limited on the discussion of conceptual metaphors because these conceptual metaphors use language for the target and source domains so that they are generally used in advertisements which often make use of words to gain attention.

## CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR

Conceptual metaphor refers to metaphorical statement that has two distinct subjects, namely target domain and source domain. It is the understanding of one conceptual domain in relation to another conceptual domain and can be characterized as CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN A IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN B (Kövecses, 2010). Thus, the target domain (A) is comprehended through a source domain (B). By mapping the features from the source domain on the target domain, the inference or the implicit meaning of the metaphorical expressions could be extracted.

The conceptual metaphor consists of three types: structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors. In structural metaphor, the concept in target A is understood through the source B structure (Kövecses, 2010). Thus, the understanding is managed by means of conceptual mappings between elements of A and elements of B. To understand the metaphorical expression MAN IS A WOLF, for example, the features of the source domain (B), ‘WOLF’ that are

relevant with the target domain (A) are mapped on the target domain (A), ‘MAN’. The features such as being a living creature, being aggressive, cruel, and bloodthirsty are mappable on the target domain; while the features of having four legs and a tail are non-mappable features.

Oriental metaphor, which is another type of conceptual metaphor, deals with the concept of spatial orientation such as up-down, in-out, front-back, etcetera. The concept of spatial orientation is based on our physical and cultural experiences and vary from culture to culture. Some examples taken from Lakoff and Johnson (1996) are: HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN such as found in the utterance ‘My spirits *rose*’ (p. 15), or the orientational metaphor LIFE IS UP; DEATH IS DOWN such as found in the expression ‘He’s *sinking fast*’ (p. 15).

The third type of conceptual metaphor is ontological metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1996). Based on Kövecses (2010), ontology, which is a philosophy branch, has to do with “the nature of existence” (p. 38). In this metaphor, nonphysical things such as events, activities, ideas, emotions, and so on are viewed as entities or substances. When the physical object is viewed as being a person, it is called personification. An example is: His *theory explained* to me the behavior of chickens raised in factories.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The advertisements analyzed and discussed in this research are the ones on foods products which include foods and food ingredients, namely: pasta and its sauce product, foods in brine, and herb and spices. The discussion of the analyzed advertisements below shows that all the three advertisements contain metaphorical expressions.

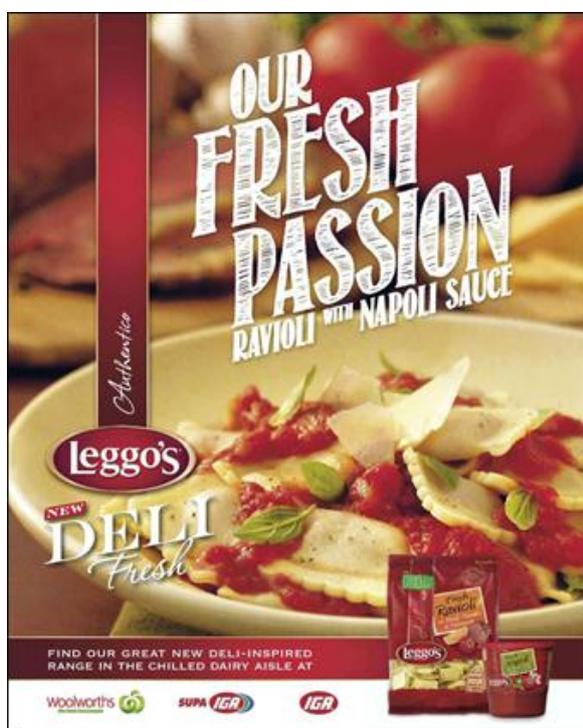
### *Leggo’s New Deli Fresh Advertisement*

The slogan in this advertisement is:

“Our Fresh Passion  
Ravioli with Napoli Sauce”

There are two advertised products here: Ravioli pasta and Napoli sauce. The verbal text ‘Our fresh Passion’ in the advertisement slogan above shows that ‘fresh passion’ is conceived as an object because it is put after the possessive adjective ‘our’. Based on the grammatical rule, the noun after the possessive adjective is possessed by the person appointed in the possessive adjective. Therefore, the utterance ‘Our fresh Passion’ means the ‘fresh passion’ belongs to ‘us’ and the ‘fresh passion’ is similar to a thing, an

entity, or an object. 'Fresh Passion' which is a nonphysical or abstract thing is seen as an object or an entity so that the utterance 'Our Fresh Passion' is a metaphorical expression. This way of viewing nonphysical thing as an entity or an object is used in ontological metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1996; Kövecses, 2010). Thus, *ontological metaphor* is realized here. Since 'our' shows a possessive form, the ontological metaphor is used for the purpose of identifying aspects, that is, the aspects of fresh passion that belongs to 'us'. The word 'us' refers to the one that writes the advertisement, that is, the advertiser. Thus, the aspect of fresh passion belongs to the product called *Leggo's New Deli Fresh*. The metaphor conveyed is PRODUCT IS AN ENTITY metaphor.

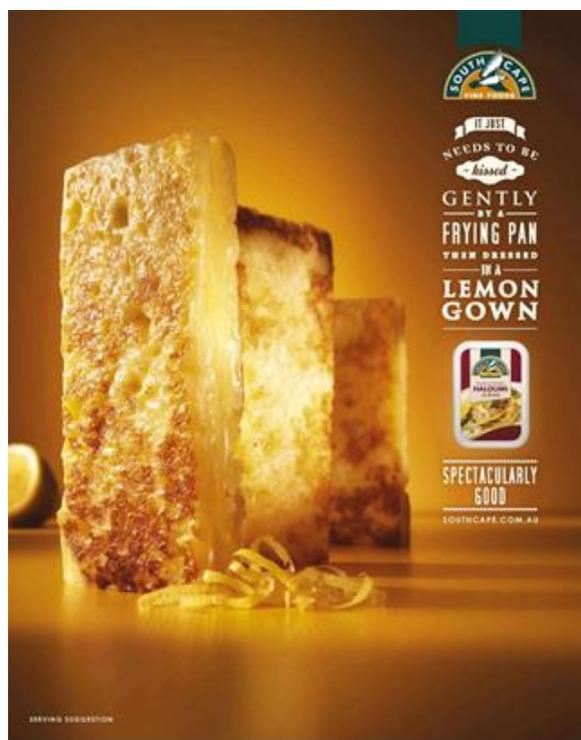


(*Delicious*, December, 2011/January, 2012, p. 129)

'Passion' means a very strong, deeply felt emotion, especially of sexual love, of anger, or of belief in an idea or principle. 'Fresh' means new, while 'Ravioli', the advertised product, means small squares of pasta filled with meat. In the ontological metaphor PRODUCT IS AN ENTITY, the target domain is the product and the source domain is an entity. The properties of an entity as the source domain such as being real and can be possessed are mapped on the product as the target domain. The fresh passion becomes an entity or a real, possessed thing ('our fresh passion'). The fresh passion refers to the product as well: Ravioli, the meat-filled pasta, with Napoli sauce. Therefore, the metaphorical expression "Our Fresh Passion. Ravioli with Napoli Sauce" suggests the inference that serving Ravioli with Napoli Sauce

for meals is the same as expressing the fresh passion or fresh love from the server to the one it is served.

### *South Cape Fine Foods Haloumi in Brine Advertisement*



(*Delicious*, July, 2012, p. 35)

The advertised product in this advertisement is haloumi in brine produced by South Cape Fine Foods. Haloumi is salty cheese originating in Cyprus and made from sheep's or goat's milk. It is cooked by being grilled or fried because it melts very slowly. The interesting slogan in this advertisement is written as:

"It just needs to be kissed gently by a frying pan  
Then dressed in a Lemon Gown"

Both expressions 'kissed gently by ...' and 'dressed in ...' are used to refer to humans' actions; thus, it is only human being that can perform the actions mentioned here. However, in the verbal texts above, they are used to refer to the product, *Haloumi in Brine*. Thus, the product is personified since it is treated as human beings that can 'dress' or 'put on clothes' and can be 'kissed'. Therefore, the type of metaphor utilized is *ontological metaphor*, specifically *personification* and the verbalized ontological metaphor is: PRODUCT IS A PERSON.

Haloumi is salty cheese originating in Cyprus and made from sheep's or goat's milk: often grilled or fried because it melts very slowly, while brine means water which contains a lot of salt, used for preserving

food. The word 'it' in the advertisement slogan "It just needs to be kissed gently by a frying pan" refers to 'haloumi'.

The word 'dress' in the next verbal text "then dressed in a Lemon Gown" has more than one meaning. The first is to dress which means to put on clothes and the second is to put some salad dressings on some food. However, the word 'dressed' in this verbal text would lead readers to choose the second meaning since it requires less cognitive effort involved in creating a logical scenario in which the particular proposition played a part. Based on Cruse (2000), less effort entails greater relevance, then the selected meaning 'put some salad dressings on' for the word 'dressed' in this verbal text is relevant. In the ontological metaphor PRODUCT IS A PERSON, the target domain is the product and the source domain is a person. The characteristics of a person as the source domain that can dress and be kissed are mapped on the product as the target domain. In addition, from the verbal text "Then dressed in a Lemon Gown", the source domain is also a beautiful woman dressed in a gown.

The features of a woman dressed in a gown as the source domain are mapped on the advertised product. This source domain gives the features of being beautiful, wonderful, and elegant. By mapping these features on the advertised product, it results in the inference that the advertised product, *South Cape Fine Foods Haloumi in Brine*, would look wonderful, tasty, and appetizing if some lemon is put on it. The lemon functions the gown for the advertised product. The slogan "It just needs to be kissed gently by a frying pan. Then dressed in a Lemon Gown" contains the word 'just'. The interpretation of the word 'just' does not depend on special context and it results in additional conveyed meaning. The word 'just' means 'only and has an additional conveyed meaning as being simple; thus, the slogan also infers the idea of 'simplicity', so that the inference is that preparing *South Cape Fine Foods Haloumi in Brine* with lemon dressing is not only very simple and easy, but the result would be tasty and appetizing since the appearance is wonderful and attracting.

### Mrs Dash Advertisement

The advertised product in this advertisement is *Mrs Dash*, a tasty blend of 14 herbs and spices. The advertisement contains two recipes. On each of the recipes there is a slogan and these two slogans are metaphorical imperative statements:

- "Perk up plain potatoes!"
- "Bring on the burger!"

ADVERTISEMENT

## THE NEW MEAT & POTATOES

**MRS. DASH ORIGINAL BLEND** adds a savory spin on an all-American classic

**Bring on the burger!**

**MRS. DASH CHEDDAR & AVOCADO BURGERS**

- 1 lb. lean ground beef or turkey
- 2 tablespoons Mrs. Dash® Original Seasoning Blend
- 4 slices reduced fat cheddar cheese
- 4 pieces romaine lettuce
- 1 medium tomato, sliced
- 4 toasted hamburger buns
- 1 avocado, peeled and sliced
- Ketchup or tomato salsa

1. Mix the ground beef (or turkey) and Mrs. Dash® Original Blend together in a large bowl. Form 4 equal patties.
2. Preheat grill to medium-high heat and grill burgers 8-10 minutes, turning once. Place cheese on the patties and cover the grill to melt it.
3. Place lettuce and tomato on each bun and top with a patty and avocado. Top the burgers with ketchup or salsa and serve.

Makes 4 burgers  
Prep Time: 10 minutes  
Cook Time: 10 minutes  
Ready in 20 minutes

**Perk up plain potatoes!**

**MRS. DASH GARLIC ROASTED POTATOES**

- 1/2 c. Mrs. Dash® Zesty Garlic Herb Marinade
- 4 potatoes, peeled and cut into 4 wedges each

1. Spray ovenproof pan with no-stick cooking spray. Add Mrs. Dash® Zesty Garlic Herb Marinade and potatoes to pan, toss to combine.
2. Roast in preheated 400°F for 20-25 minutes. Turn potatoes and roast an additional 20-25 minutes or until potatoes are cooked and browned.
3. Baste with additional Mrs. Dash® Zesty Garlic Herb Marinade, if desired.

Serves 4 | Prep Time: 5 minutes  
Cook Time: 40 minutes | Ready in 45 minutes

A tasty blend of 14 herbs and spices, Mrs. Dash brings surprisingly delicious, salt free flavor to any dish. For quick and easy recipes, visit [mrsdash.com](http://mrsdash.com)

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(Every Day with Rachael Ray, July/August, 2012, p. 26)

The first slogan, "Perk up plain potatoes!", is used metaphorically because the word 'perk up' is usually used to refer to somebody which means 'to become lively and active (after depression, illness, etcetera)'. In addition, 'perk somebody or something up' means smarten, show interest, liveliness or raise smartly/briskly. The plain potatoes are considered as the object to be perked up. Since something which is plain normally does not have a good taste and tends to make food tasteless although it is cooked with meat, chicken or turkey. A tasteless plain potato might spoil one's appetite; s/he cannot get a lively situation when eating the plain potato. This condition could be considered similar to the condition of a person who is not lively after getting depressed or getting sick. The plain potatoes can become delicious food only if *Mrs Dash* is added.

The second slogan, "Bring on the burger!" also has metaphorical meaning. The real meaning of the word 'bring on' as an idiom means 'produce' or 'bring into action'. This second recipe is a recipe for making burger filled with ground beef or turkey and seasoned with *Mrs Dash*. In the daily life, it is people who can make plants or crops grow faster by giving the plants or crops fertilizer. In the recipe, *Mrs Dash* is considered as the one that can make the burger bigger and thus nicer.

From the discussion of the two metaphorical statements in the slogans of the recipe above, it is

clear that *Mrs Dash* is personified. It gets the human's qualities that could make food more delicious and finally make life livelier because of the delicious food. For this reason, the metaphor found in this advertisement is PRODUCT IS A PERSON metaphor or is called *ontological metaphor*, namely *personification*. Besides, this personification is also clearly stated by the advertiser in the brand name of the spices itself, that is, *Mrs Dash*, so it is considered as a human being, a woman. Therefore, the advertised product is personified as a woman who can make food become delicious.

Besides the ontological metaphor, this advertisement also contains *orientational metaphor* with the polar opposition up-down, that is, PERK IS UP, DEPRESS IS DOWN. The word 'perk' which means 'raise smartly/briskly' has the idea of being 'UP'; thus, being 'better'. On the contrary, the word 'depress' which is the opposite of 'perk' has the idea of being 'DOWN'.

As has been discussed above, this advertisement contains ontological metaphor: PRODUCT IS A PERSON which is inferred from the first slogan "Perk up plain potatoes!" and the second slogan in the advertisement: "Bring on the burger!". The target domain In the metaphor is the product and the source domain is a person. The characteristic of the source domain, the person in the personification that can perk up plain potatoes and bring on the burger are mapped on the target domain, the product. Plain potatoes should be perked up because if they are plain, they are tasteless and not delicious.

Based on the literal meaning, 'to perk up' that refers to a person has the meaning: 'to become lively and active such as after depression or illness'. 'To perk something or somebody up' also means 'to smarten, to show interest or liveliness' or 'to raise smartly/briskly'. Thus, the plain potatoes need to be perked up or to be made interesting and raising smartly. As the subject or the doer for the verbal text "Perk up plain potatoes" is Mrs. Dash, and Mrs. Dash is the product itself, it infers the idea that Mrs. Dash is capable to make plain potatoes become delicious food; therefore, it can raise smartly one's appetite and finally make somebody energetic and lively. It is not just for plain potatoes; Mrs Dash can also bring on the burger. The word 'bring on' means 'produce' or bring into action', so it infers the idea that Mrs Dash as the product, enables nice burgers to be produced or enables people to bring into action the production of nice burgers.

This inference is also supported by the background color of the advertisement that uses the contrasted

yellow color on the whole page, starting with very light yellow which becomes darker at the end of the page. Based on the color meaning by Stutton and Whelan (2004), yellow which is the color of the sun and the smiley face icon, literally lights up people's lives. Psychologically, yellow is the happiest color in the spectrum and it transmits optimism, joy, and spontaneity and when it is used in the kitchens and dining rooms, it gives an appetizing backdrop for food. Thus, with the support of the background color, the advertisement slogan's inference is: using Mrs Dash in the cooking of plain potatoes and burgers will change the plain potatoes into appetizing meals and create appetizing burgers so that people get joy and happiness when they eat the meals.

From the discussion on the analyzed advertisements, the overall findings that could be extracted is that all of the advertisements contain conceptual metaphor which has target domain that refers to the advertised product and source domain, which is chosen by the advertisers, contain positive features concerning the advertised product which are mappable on the target domain. By finding the characteristics of the source domain and mapping them on the target domain of the metaphor, the inference of the metaphorical utterances could be drawn.

All of the three advertisements contain ontological metaphors and one advertisement contains orientational metaphor. The metaphorical utterances are used as the advertisement slogans so that the slogans could immediately capture readers' eyesight.

## CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it could be concluded that advertisers like to use metaphorical expressions in the advertisements on food and food ingredient products. The metaphorical utterances, specifically conceptual metaphors, are often found in the advertisement slogans because slogan is the part that is usually written bigger than the other parts so that they easily attract attention. Besides, since advertisement slogans should be short and effective, the use of metaphorical utterances, which do not need long description and ineffective words, for the slogans would be suitable.

Besides, the finding in this article shows that advertisers like to use ontological metaphor, specifically personification. Personification treats the advertised product as if it were a human being and the human characteristics in the source domain are mapped on the target domain. It gives the conclusion that by using ontological metaphor, the advertises can make readers understand the inferences of the metaphorical

utterances more easily since readers as human beings can compare the advertised product with human characteristics better than with other comparison.

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