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ANALYSING LANGUAGE AND MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE BY MEANS OF THE NEAR-FAR IMAGE SCHEMA

ANALIZOWANIE JĘZYKA I DYSKURSU MULTIMODALNEGO PRZY POMOCY SCHEMATU WYOBRAŻENIOWEGO BLISKO-DALEKO

ABSTRACT: Focusing on convergent evidence for the conceptual nature of metaphors that take the NEAR–FAR image schema as their source domain, such as: SIMILARITY IS CLOSENESS, DIFFERENCE IS DISTANCE, AFFECTION IS PROXIMITY and EMOTIONAL DISTANCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE, the application of NEAR–FAR is discussed not only in the context of linguistic, but also multimodal practice. Results of a number of experimental studies are presented as another kind of convergent evidence for the psychological reality of these conventional metaphors and of the NEAR–FAR schema. It is concluded that this schema is a reliable and useful research tool that cognitive linguists have at their disposal. In the *Postscriptum*, the framing of the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of "social distancing" is briefly considered in the context of both the SOCIAL DISTANCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE and AFFECTION IS PROXIMITY metaphors.

KEYWORDS: conceptual metaphor, polysemy, demonstrative pronoun, gesture, verbo-pictorial aphorism, social distance

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: metafora pojęciowa, polisemia, zaimek wskazujący, gest, aforyzm słowno-obrazowy, dystans społeczny

1. Introduction[1]

Taking the perspective of cognitive linguistics this article aims to show how basic pre-conceptual structures known as "image schemas" (Johnson 1987; Lakoff 1987) can be employed as tools of analysis of language as well as of multimodal discourse. On Johnson's (1987) original account, image schemas are experiential gestalts that infants acquire from sensorimotor experience of motion, object manipulation, and bodily proprioception. In his later characterization of image schemas, Johnson goes beyond their corporeal embodiment and develops a more comprehensive approach which, on the one hand, rests on the definition saying that "[a]n image schema is a dynamic, recurring pattern of organism-environment interactions" (Johnson 2007, p. 136) and, on the other hand, explicitly recognizes the fact that "environments" are not only "physical and biological", but also "social and cultural" (2007, p. 151)[2].

Unlike the issue of experiential nature of image schemas and their role in structuring abstract thought, the very method of using image schemas as descriptive and explanatory tools is seldom explicitly addressed in cognitive linguistics[3]. In this article, I will focus on one such pre-conceptual structure – the NEAR–FAR image schema (aka the PROXIMITY schema; section 2) , and first illustrate its applications in analyses of lexicon and grammar (section 3). However, since image schemas commonly group together into clusters (Cienki 1997), other image schemas (such as CENTRE–PERIPHERY, LINK, FORCE), will also reappear in my discussion. Referring to the modality-independent nature of image schemas I will then show how the NEAR–FAR schema and the relevant image schema groupings can be used as analytic tools of multimodal discourse (section 4). In a multimodal discourse, it needs to be noted, meaning is communicated by different modes of expression, i.e. sign systems "interpretable because of a specific perception process" (Forceville 2006, p. 382). In this study

[1] This article is based on my lecture delivered at the *Warsaw Multimodality Workshop and Masterclass*, University of Warsaw, 7–9 June 2018.

[2] For an overview of research on socio-cultural situatedness of image schemas, see Górska (2020, pp. 5–7).

[3] This is by no means meant to imply that in cognitive linguistics image schemas are not employed in descriptive practice as their application is a common denominator of diverse areas of research (see, e.g.: Lakoff 1987; Grady 1997; Hampe 2005b; Kimmel 2009; Mittelberg 2010; Coëgnarts and Kravanja 2012; Forceville 2016; Dancygier and Vandelanotte 2017; Wiseman 2014, 2016; Górska 2014a, 2014b, 2017, 2019, 2020). My point here is that the issue of what their role as analytic and explanatory tools entails remains an implicit matter.

of multimodal discourse, aside from the verbal modality, I will also consider examples of gestural and visual modes of expression[4].

When discussing image-schematic patterns of thought as descriptive and explanatory tools of analysis of conceptual structures that are expressed in language and in multimodal discourse, one has to face one obvious objection to this methodology, namely, if analytic tools and objects of analysis are the same, we might "see" what our tools allow us to recognize or force us to "see" only. This objection is, of course, undeniable. However, in my view, the case of image schemas illustrates the condition of any human science, where "mind" ventures to study itself[5]. So, the question in fact is, how can we learn to live with this situation and still believe that our descriptive and explanatory analyses have firm grounds? From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, a short answer would be: look for convergent evidence[6]. In the case of linguistic analyses, evidence from other modes of expression (such as vision or kinaesthetic enactment in gestures) would be one kind of such "convergent support". For linguistic as well as multimodal studies, experimental research investigating the role of image schemas in behavioural tasks and in general cognition would be of prime importance. In this article, convergent evidence for linguistic analyses that resort to NEAR–FAR will be derived from research on how the relevant image schemas show up multimodally, however a short overview of the pertinent experimental research will also be given (section 5).

Finally, in the *Postscriptum*, I will address the question of how the world–wide enactment of "social distancing" that we are all now supposed to obey in the times of Covid-19 pandemic, when viewed in terms of the metaphorical framing that relies on the NEAR–FAR schema, inevitably leads to emotional and attitudinal tension that makes living through this time of crisis even more difficult.

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[4] In the literature, there is still no consensus on how "mode" is to be defined and, as Forceville states the problem, in principle "any dimension of discursive meaning could qualify for modal status, and that would make the concept useless" (2014, p. 51). Rather than going into the problems of definition, Forceville takes a practical stance of listing the modes: "(1) written language; (2) spoken language; (3) visuals; (4) music; (5) sound; (6) gestures; (7) olfaction; (8) touch" (2014, p. 51). I will adopt this stance, however, for the present purpose, I will be using the cover term *verbal modality/mode* to jointly refer to the perceptual modalities involved in spoken and written language; and, with respect to the static genre of cartoons, I will be employing a more specific term of *pictorial mode/modality*.

[5] Note that this methodology is also employed by Langacker in his theory of cognitive grammar, where e.g., the abstract characterization of the category of nouns (the noun schema) is based on the cognitive ability of conceptual reification (1987); and the description of various possessive elements, metonymy and "active zones" relies on the so-called "reference point ability" (Langacker 1993).

[6] For more on convergent evidence, see e.g., Lakoff and Johnson (1999, pp. 81–92).

2. The NEAR–FAR image schema

The NEAR–FAR schema appears in Johnson's original "partial list" (Johnson 1987, p. 126), which names 27 image schemas[7], yet it is not discussed in any detail. On the other hand, in his later work, instead of NEAR–FAR Johnson mentions the schema labelled TOWARD–AWAY FROM (2007, p. 21), which implicitly refers to 'moving closer–moving away from'. The latter label quite clearly highlights the dynamic aspect of NEAR–FAR which, as any other image schema has not only a static, but also a dynamic aspect in that it grasps a skeletal knowledge about both states and processes. In other words, irrespective of the name used, this pre-conceptual structure captures not only our knowledge about locations of things in terms of distance, but also about things getting closer or moving apart.

Considering its corporeal embodiment, we can note that this schema emerges from a "primary scene" in which an infant's experience of physical closeness with a caregiver is strongly correlated with affection and emotional "warmth" (Grady 1997). In turn, perception of the world around us brings us a multitude of instances of physical closeness and distance (along some dimension) being correlated with, respectively, similarity and difference; the sound produced by mosquitos as compared to the buzz of bees, or the shape of a crane key and its scream as compared to a flock of flying swans and the sound they produce are just two instances of the myriads of such correlations.

To shed some light on the socio-cultural situatedness of NEAR–FAR, suffice it to mention two recurrent large–scale correlations of social distance and physical distance that social scientists describe in terms of "segregation effects" and "peer effects", with the former referring to a tendency for humans to physically move closer to people they think are similar to themselves, and the latter – to a tendency for humans to adopt various behaviours of their peers once they are physically close to them (see Winter and Matlock 2017, p. 104, and the literature cited therein). Such correlations of social distance and physical distance, as Winter and Matlock observe, not only abound in modern culture at large, but they were also characteristic of old hunter–gatherer settlements (Wiseman 2014, qtd. in Winter and Matlock 2017, p. 104). It is also notable that the very term "social distance" that is used in social science to describe the "distance" between two or more social groups (Bogardus 1933, qtd. in Matthews and Matlock 2011, p. 185) is itself a reflection of such large–scale correlations that constitute an integral part of our lived experience.

[7] Since then several other schemas have been added; for overviews see Hampe (2005a) and Evans and Green (2006, pp. 190–191); the list compiled by the latter authors includes 41 image schemas (see Evans and Green 2006, p. 190, Fig. 6.3.).

3. Analysing lexicon and grammar

In the cognitive linguistic literature, the NEAR–FAR schema – somewhat surprisingly – has not received much attention, and it is explicitly mentioned only occasionally. Günter Radden and Elizabeth Matthis's (2002) article on how the abstract concepts of SIMILARITY and DIFFERENCE are expressed metaphorically by lexical as well as grammatical means is a rare example of a case study that crucially relies on the spatial understanding of closeness and distance. Even though the authors do not make any explicit reference to the NEAR–FAR schema, in their study they rely on both its static and dynamic aspects. The static aspect of this schema, i.e. the conception of proximity and distance in physical space, motivates the static construal of SIMILARITY and CLOSENESS in examples given in, respectively, (1) and (2):

(1) a. That's not exactly the shade of blue, but it's *close*. (MED.)
b. John's views and my own are very *close* on the issue of free trade.

(2) a. Red and green are *far apart*. (Radden and Matthis 2002, p. 232)
b. John's views and my own are *far apart* on the issue of free trade.

In cognitive linguistic terms, these construals are motivated by two conceptual metaphors: SIMILARITY IS CLOSENESS (aka SIMILARITY IS PROXIMITY, cf. Grady 1997) and DIFFERENCE IS DISTANCE, both of which take NEAR–FAR as their source domain. By referring to these metaphors, we can analyse the expressions *close* in (1) and *far apart* in (2) as examples of lexical polysemy, and specifically, as metaphorical semantic extensions from the basic spatial meaning of the expressions *close* and *far apart* to meanings denoting, respectively, the state of similarity in (1) and difference in (2). The examples illustrate the lexical patterns of metaphorical extensions which are cross-linguistically very common. Two more examples from Polish may serve as another illustration here:

(3) a. Moje poglądy *bliskie* są poglądom Marysi. 'My views and Mary's views are *close*'
b. Nawet najbardziej *odległe* poglądy zasługują na uwagę. 'Even the most *distant* views deserve attention'

Another aspect of the metaphorical construal of SIMILARITY and CLOSENESS is revealed grammatically by the use of the English prepositions *to* and *from* in (4) and (5):

(4) a. This shade of blue is *similar t o* green.
b. John's views on the issue of free trade are very *similar t o* my views.

(5) a. Red is very *different f r o m* green.
b. John's views on the issue of free trade are very *different f r o m* my views.

Here the concepts of SIMILARITY and DIFFERENCE are explicitly coded by the adjectives *similar* and *different* that are combined with directional prepositions: the preposition *to* that designates the endpoint of a path (GOAL) and *from* that designates the starting point (SOURCE)[8]. Note further that the two prepositions are also combined with metaphorical uses of the English expressions *close* and *far*, as in (6) and (7):

(6) a. This shade of blue is *close t o* green.
b. John's views on the issue of free trade are very *close t o* my views.

(7) a. Red is *far (away) f r o m* green.
b. John's views on the issue of free trade are *far (away) f r o m* my views.

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the usage of these two directional prepositions is by no means accidental – they are symptomatic of dynamic construals of judgements of similarity and difference, which are based on the following metaphorical correspondences:

(8) a. Similar things correspond to close things.
b. Different things correspond to distant things.
c. Judgements of similarity/difference correspond to motion.
d. Judgements of similarity correspond to motion toward a goal.
e. Judgements of difference correspond to motion away from a source.
(Radden and Matthis 2002, p. 241)

Before going into the question of why judgements of similarity correspond to motion t o w a r d a goal (8d) and judgements of difference correspond to motion away f r o m a source (8e), let me first refer to Radden and Matthis (2002, p. 241), who put such dynamic assessments of similarity and difference in the perspective of our common understanding of mental activity in terms of motion along a path, which is grasped by the conceptual metaphor known under the names: THINKING IS A JOURNEY (Sweetser 1987) and THINKING IS MOVING (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, pp. 236–238). Linguistic expressions manifesting this metaphor abound cross-linguistically. Note also that the relevant English examples in (9a–b) and their Polish equivalents in (9a'–b') are all highly natural:

(9) a. We have to r e t u r n to/come back to an earlier point in our discussion
b. We have to m o v e f o r w a r d t o a different topic.
a'. Musimy p o w r ó c i ć / w r ó c i ć d o wcześniejszego punktu w naszej dyskusji.
b'. Musimy p r z e j ś ć d o innego tematu.

[8] In cognitive linguistic terms, the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL or simply PATH image schema (Johnson 1987, pp. 113–117) provides embodied motivation for the meanings of these prepositions.

Analogously, when we make assessments of similarity and difference we are not involved in any physical motion, but in "abstract motion" (Langacker 1986)[9], i.e. adopting a fixed vantage point we perform a mental scanning of the situation; alternatively, we may also envisage it as the movement of our attentional spotlight (Matsumoto 1996, p. 189). This phenomenon is cross-linguistically extremely common, as is evidenced by the wide-spread use of motion verbs in descriptions of static situations (see e.g., Blomberg 2017). For English, the examples in (10) illustrate such rendering of static configurations in dynamic terms:

(10) A road g o e s / r u n s / c l i m b s up the hill.
The Equator p a s s e s through many countries.

We can now state the issue of the grammatical coding of SIMILARITY and DIFFERENCE by directional prepositions as the question of what motivates the directionality of the subjective motion that is involved in the assessments of similarity and difference. Crucially, the two correspondences in (8d–e) above, as Radden and Matthis (2002) show, grasp regularities that are very common in typologically different languages. In their random sample of 23 languages, SIMILARITY was most commonly expressed by the GOAL pattern while DIFFERENCE – in terms of the SOURCE pattern[10]. When characterizing these dominant patterns, they consider two kinds of motivation – one of which is perceptual and the other cultural (Radden and Matthis 2002, pp. 240–242). The latter is derived from two idealized folk models – called the ATTRACTION and the REPULSION schema. Relying on proverbs such as *Birds of feather flock together* and *Oil and water don't mix* the authors argue that it is part of our folk view that their internal force makes similar things be attracted to each other and different things – repelled. Arguably, the two folk models, are not – as Radden and Matthis claim – only grounded in the two FORCE subschemas of ATTRACTION and REPULSION, but rather they rely on an

[9] It is also referred to as "(abstract) subjective motion" (Langacker 1987) and "fictive motion" (Talmy 1996). Importantly, empirical studies have shown that in the processing of abstract motion the conception of physical motion is also activated or "simulated" (see Matlock 2006, 2010 and, for an overview of the relevant research, Matlock 2017).

[10] Specifically, the GOAL pattern was attested in: Danish, French, English, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Russian, Greek, Persian, Hungarian, Turkish, Hebrew, Japanese, while SOURCE in: English, Danish, Dutch, Afrikaans, French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian (see Tables 3 and 4 in Radden Matthis 2002, pp. 237–238). Moreover, there was also a variation in the number of attested patterns, with SIMILARITY also expressed by 4 other patterns (called: PLACE/ACCOMPANIMENT, SIMILARITY, COMPARISON, and "no spatial marking") and DIFFERENCE – by 3 other patterns (ACCOMPANIMENT, GOAL, and COMPARISON). The variability in the coding was also observed within individual languages, with English exemplifying the most descriptively challenging case of 3 patterns for expressing DIFFERENCE: the dominant SOURCE pattern (i.e. *different from*) as well as GOAL (i.e. *different to*) and COMPARISON (i.e. *different than*); for Radden and Matthis's account of the latter variability, see 2002, pp. 243–253.

image schema cluster that, aside from these subschemas, also involves the dynamic variant of NEAR–FAR, namely TOWARDS–AWAY FROM (see section 2 above). In turn, the perceptual motivation is derived from how spatially close and distant things are perceived visually. Things which are spatially close fall within our visual field, and thus in assessing closeness of things the path mentally covered is short. In this perceptual condition it is natural to start scanning from what is in focus of our attention – the perceptual figure and move t o w a r d s the perceptual reference point – the ground entity. By contrast, things which are spatially distant typically do not fall within the same visual field, and in this perceptual condition the "safer" strategy is to begin mental scanning f r o m the ground towards the attentional figure. In brief, in terms of the ATTRACTION model, similar things are spatially close, and thus the preferred direction of mental scanning follows the typical direction of visual perception of closeness. In turn, as the REPULSION model tells us, different things are distant in space, hence in the assessment of difference, the directionality of subjective motion tends to reflect how we perceptually scan spatially distant things.

Langacker's (2009) description of demonstratives in terms of the PROXIMAL–DISTAL distinction can provide another illustration of the role the NEAR–FAR schema plays in grammatical analysis. When discussing how demonstratives "ground" the nominals in the current discourse, he considers the sentence: *I like t h i s s h i r t much better than t h a t o n e*, and observes that:

> In uttering [it] (…) the speaker is dividing the relevant scope of discourse into a p r o x i m a l r e g i o n and a d i s t a l r e g i o n, where the proximity most likely has spatial, temporal, and attentional components – *this shirt* is the one I am currently examining, *that one* is the shirt I examined previously. Given the partitioning of the scope of discourse into two sectors, using *this* or *that* in reference to the type specification *shirt* amounts to m e n t a l l y p o i n t i n g to one or the other instance of that type (Langacker 2009, p.121, all emphases, E.G.)[11].

This act of signalling of the intended referent by means of a demonstrative is often correlated with the corresponding pointing gesture, however, when there is no such gestural enactment of distance, the interlocutors can rely on the "mental pointing" that is "effected by the demonstrative's specification for proximal vs. distal, whether this is interpreted spatially or with respect to some other dimension, such as discourse proximity or speaker empathy" (Langacker 2009, p. 121, and the literature therein). A non-spatial interpretation of the proximal vs. distal specification of demonstratives is also crucial in Magdalena Rybarczyk's (2015) description of attitudinal meanings of Polish demonstratives. At the same time,

[11] Quite clearly, this account resorts to an image schema cluster that, aside from NEAR–FAR, also comprises the CENTRE–PERIPHERY and BOUNDED SPACE (aka CONTAINER) schemas.

her study constitutes an ingenious exemplary use of NEAR–FAR in accounting for subtle aspects of grammatical meaning.

Before going into her account of extended grammatical meanings any further, it should be noted that Rybarczyk resorts to the metaphorical pattern that is well-documented in lexical studies of semantic extensions (or verbal metaphors). The underlined data in (11) illustrate this pattern in English:

(11) a. They have c l o s e family ties. They are d i s t a n t relatives.
b. She's been c l o s e t o both her parents all her life, and now she is finally g e t t i n g c l o s e r t o her younger sister.
c. They had a c l o s e personal relationship for years, but now they are d r i f t i n g a p a r t.

Such lexical extensions from the sense of 'physical closeness/distance' to that of 'emotional closeness/distance' are systematic and widespread cross-linguistically. The primary metaphor that underlies this universal understanding of emotions in terms of spatial distance, emerges from the earlier mentioned "primary scene" (see section 2), wherein the infant's subjective feeling of emotional intimacy with a caregiver and the physical experience of warmth and of being near to that person form a unitary experiential gestalt; when the two aspects of this unitary experience – the emotional and the physical – become "deconflated" in the course of conceptual development, the pertinent metaphorical understanding of emotional intimacy arises. It is commonly referred to as INTIMACY IS CLOSENESS or AFFECTION IS PROXIMITY[12], while the generic level conception of this primary metaphor is rendered as EMOTIONAL DISTANCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE[13]. Needless to say, at the core of this metaphorical reasoning lies the NEAR–FAR schema in its static and dynamic variants (see section 2), which provide an understanding of emotions as, respectively, states and process; linguistically this is revealed by, e.g.: *(to be) close/distant* and (*to be) getting closer/drift apart* in, respectively, (11a–b) and (11b–c) above.

When considering how attitudinal meanings of demonstratives arise, Rybarczyk observes that:

> when a demonstrative is used, the speaker's distance or closeness towards the designated thing or individual is always implied rather than explicit. This allows for an indirect expression of spatial relations, which, in turn, tend to be metaphorically translated into attitudes or emotions (Rybarczyk 2015, p. 35).

[12] For more on the emergence of primary metaphors, see Lakoff and Johnson (1999, pp. 46–57 and the literature therein); and on the developmental link between AFFECTION IS PROXIMITY and AFFECTION IS WARMTH, see Wiseman (2014, p. 137).

[13] Alternatively, the generic conception is also labelled AN EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIP IS A DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE (Kövecses 2000, p. 92) and SOCIAL DISTANCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE (Winter and Matlock 2017, p. 103).

Referring to Heine's model of diachronic evolution, and its interpretation in terms of the synchronic implicational scale in particular (Heine 1987, p. 71), she argues that in the present-day Polish the proximal demonstrative *ten* 'this' has developed into a rhetorical tool fit for expressing emotional proximity as well as distance (Rybarczyk 2015, pp. 43–46). This grammaticalization path has been opened by one crucial change whereby *ten* has retained its characteristic function of "mentally pointing" to spatial proximity only in contexts when it is contrasted with the distal demonstrative *tamten* 'that'.[14] When used without this contrast and without clear contextual clues (whether linguistic or non-linguistic) indicating what distance in space is at issue, the proximal demonstrative in, for example:

(12) Usiądźmy w cieniu t e g o d r z e w a . 'Let's sit in the shade under t h i s t r e e' (Rybarczyk 2015, p. 38)

is ambiguous in its spatial reading – it may point to a tree in the speaker's proximity or the one which is distant in space. And it is this ambiguity that is exploited in attitudinal uses of this demonstrative.

One interactive context for the use of the attitudinal *ten* arises among family members or close friends when the speakers refers to an individual who falls within his/her "core personal sphere" on account of being "linked to the speaker via stable relations of love, friendship, and belonging" (Rybarczyk 2015, p. 69). Rybarczyk illustrates such contexts with a reply given by the speaker who talks about her husband and the hearer's stepfather and, when asked about when she and her husband plan to do the house renovation, says:

(13) Nie wiem. Nie mogę się z t y m Jurkiem dogadać. 'I don't know. I don't seem to be able to arrange anything with [this] Jurek' (Rybarczyk 2015, p. 70)

In this context, by using the proximal demonstrative the speaker intentionally creates interpersonal distance with a person within her core personal sphere – her husband *Jurek* and, at the same time, construes him as emotionally close by locating him within what Rybarczyk calls the "transient personal sphere", which encompasses "elements physically close to the speaker or perceived as close enough to the speaker to affect him[/her] in a certain way" (2015, p. 69)[15]. In brief, by

[14] The construal of distance by the Polish distal demonstrative is still to a large extent bound to the spatio-temporal context of a given speech event, and this entails that, unlike its proximal counterpart, it "has not undergone grammaticalization to the point which would allow its use for the expression of a purely subjective distance" (Rybarczyk 2015, pp. 45–46)

[15] In her account, Rybarczyk develops Dąbrowska's (1997) concept of "personal sphere" by differentiating two of its layers: the "core personal sphere", which is relatively stable and defines the person's socio-cultural identity, and the "transient personal sphere", which includes "a complex net of short-term connections and emotional reactions to specific entities on specific occasions of interacting with them" (Rybarczyk 2015, p. 61).

construing the transient personal sphere in terms of the INTIMACY IS CLOSENESS metaphor, the speaker can communicate the affective proximity to the person who is "close enough to affect the speaker in a negative way, e.g. annoy her, disturb her, etc." (p. 69). Importantly, in interactive contexts when the speaker would have no reason to create interpersonal distance to the individual who belongs to the stable part of the speaker's core personal sphere (her husband *Jurek*), as when a positive attitude to that person is communicated, the use of *ten* is not sanctioned:

(14) *Bardzo dobrze się z t y m Jurkiem dogaduję. 'I get on with [this] Jurek very well' (Rybarczyk 2015, pp. 70–71).

Note, finally, that by exploiting this rhetorical potential of the proximal demonstrative and, in particular, by building the transient personal sphere the speaker is "trying to establish common ground [with the hearer] through attitudes" (Rybarczyk 2015, p. 73).

4. Analysing multimodal discourse

Even though this section will only focus on analyses of multimodal discourse in terms of NEAR–FAR, it will be clear that this schema appears in image schematic clusters (comprising also e.g., CENTRE–PERIPHERY, LINK, FORCE). Clustering of image schemas, let me add, is especially evident in the pictorial and gestural modes due to the characteristic affordances of these modes of expression, namely their ability to simultaneously cue different aspects of the perceived or conceived scene[16]. For brevity, my data will comprise one example of a gestural enactment of SIMILARITY IS PROXIMITY and two examples of the verbo–pictorial rendering of the EMOTIONAL DISTANCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE in cartoons by a Polish artist Janusz Kapusta.

My first example comes from Winter and Matlock's (2017, pp. 106–107) analysis of the SIMILARITY IS PROXIMITY metaphor in its gestural enactment by Michael Powell, CEO and president of the National Cable and Telecommunications Association. During a television interview, in his response to the question whether wired and wireless markets should be regulated in the same way, he explained that their regulations should be *harmonized* and, when noting that the two kinds of markets are *increasingly trending toward being more similar, not more different*, he gesturally enacted the trend toward their similarity by moving "his hands, palms facing toward each other, towards the middle of his body", and when co-expressing gesturally his statement *not more different*, he moved his hands apart. "This [verbal] sequence", as Winter and Matlock observe, was

[16] For more on affordances of the pictorial mode, see Górska 2020.

"integrated, with his hands continuously approaching each other and retracting again, beginning with 'increasingly' in the utterance", which shows that "the two spatial positions [were] prominent, one being close (coinciding with the 'similar' part of the sequence) and one being far (coinciding with the 'far' part of the sequence)" (Winter and Matlock 2017, p. 107). And, as is common in the gestural mode, the dynamic variant of NEAR–FAR provides the relevant structure here, since the gesturer indicated the distance through the dynamic movement toward or away from the midpoint of his body, and "[t]he amount of distance between the hands [was] associated with the degree of similarity or difference" (Winter and Matlock 2017, p. 107).

The dynamic variant of NEAR–FAR is also crucial to account for the message conveyed by Janusz Kapusta's verbo–pictorial aphorisms in the cartoons in Figure 1 and 2[17]. For analysis of the cartoon in Fig. 1, the dynamic variant of the schema provides grounds for establishing two cohesive ties between the verbal and the pictorial mode: the expression *zbliżenie* 'getting close' and the proximity of the two figures in the picture form one meaningful unit, and the noun *oddalenie* 'going away' and the two arrows pointing in opposite directions – another one. It is notable that this example is particularly interesting in that the target domain of EMOTIONAL DISTANCE/RELATIONSHIP is cued in the visual mode only, while the two nouns *zbliżenie* and *oddalenie* are schematic, and without this visual context they could refer to physical distance alone.

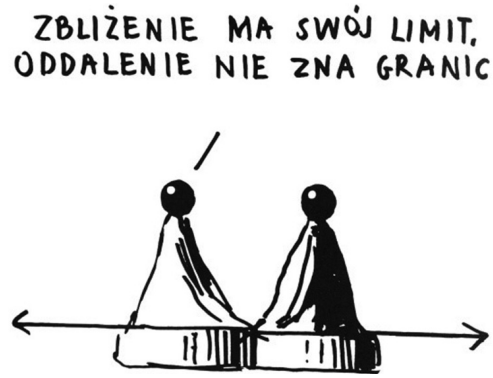

Fig. 1. *Zbliżenie ma swój limit. Oddalenie nie zna granic.*
'Emotional/Interpersonal closeness has its limits. Emotional/Interpersonal distance knows no boundaries' (lit. 'Getting close has its limit. Going away knows no boundaries')
(Kapusta 2014, p. 190, transl. E.G.)

[17] I'm very grateful to Janusz Kapusta for his kind permission to reprint these two cartoons in this article. In a different context of a case study of emotion concepts, these two examples are discussed in detail by Górska (2020, pp. 25–30).

It is only by integrating the two modes into one coherent message that we can interpret this cartoons as a verbo–pictorial expression of the EMOTIONAL DISTANCE/RELATIONSHIP IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE metaphor.

In turn, analysing the way in which the two modes are integrated in the cartoon in Fig. 2 would require a reference not only to the concepts of TOWARD–AWAY FROM grasped by the dynamic variant of NEAR–FAR, but also to the LINK and FORCE schemas which, forming an image schema cluster, motivate the construals of EMOTIONS, evoked in the verbal mode as *uczucia* 'emotions', in terms of, respectively, PHYSICAL DISTANCE, BONDS, and FORCES.

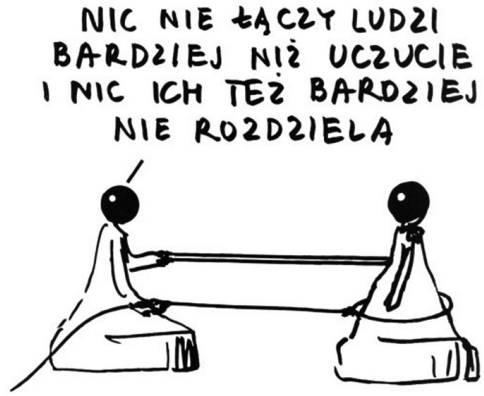

Fig. 2. *Nic nie łączy bardziej ludzi niż uczucie i nic ich bardziej nie rozdziela.* 'Nothing links people more and nothing pushes them apart more than emotions' (Kapusta 2014, p. 108, transl. E.G.).

Note first that the two verbs – łączyć 'link, join' and *rozdzielać* 'push apart, disjoin' form a coherent unit with two actions that in the pictorial mode are cued metonymically via the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy by the image of the lasso which the protagonist is holding evoking the action of 'linking' and of the rod-like object (represented by the two straight lines) that he holds in his left hand cuing the action of 'pushing apart' the other individual. In brief, in this verbo-pictorially constructed force-dynamic scenario, emotions are portrayed as forces that cause the protagonist to either draw the partner closer or move him/her away, which in metaphorical terms entails that the two individuals are either becoming emotionally close or distant[18].

[18] For a description of a gestural enactment of this metaphor, see Winter and Matlock (2017, pp. 103–104).

5. Concluding remarks

Let me first consider this study with reference to the notion of convergent evidence that cognitive linguists search for to motivate their analyses, which was briefly mentioned in section 1. We have seen that the conceptual metaphors SIMILARITY IS PROXIMITY and EMOTIONAL DISTANCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE, which were originally postulated on the basis of linguistic data alone, provide grounds for motivated accounts of both, the gestural and the verbo-pictorial discourse. In effect, relying on such convergent evidence from their non-linguistic realizations we can conclude that the metaphorical mappings from the image schematic source domain of NEAR–FAR onto the abstract concepts SIMILARITY and EMOTIONAL DISTANCE are not just a matter of how we talk, but are patterns of thought that form a part of our conceptual system.

Needless to say, evidence from experimental research counts as the most welcome testing for any analysis, be it purely linguistic or multimodal. It is therefore pertinent to this discussion to overview, however briefly, experimental studies that have aimed to test whether the spatial source domain of NEAR–FAR is activated in tasks that probed into the understanding of the target concepts of SIMILARITY and EMOTIONAL DISTANCE. Note, first, that the selected representative studies that tested the spatial understanding of SIMILARITY employed three different kinds of tasks: Casasanto (2008, Experiment 1) used a lexical decision task in which participants rated pairs of abstract nouns as more/less similar in meaning when they were displayed closer or further apart on the computer screen. When explaining why abstract nouns (such as *grief, justice, hope*) were chosen as the data, Casasanto observes that:

> their meanings are notoriously vague and context dependent; therefore, judgments of their similarity in meaning may be particularly susceptible to the influence of task-irrelevant variations in the spatial distance between stimuli (Casasanto 2008, p. 1049).

In turn, Boot and Pecher (2010) relied on a non-linguistic experiment that involved a colour similarity decision task. In their experimental design, the participants judged pairs of squares having either very similar colour or completely dissimilar colour when the squares were displayed either near or far apart on a computer screen (Experiment 1) or their distance varied in a gradable manner (Experiment 2). The third kind of experimental study was designed by Winter and Matlock (2013), who tested whether the alternation of spatial distance between the depicted characters in a room (Experiment 1a) and cities on an imaginary island (Experiment 2b) during the priming stage would affect the subsequent judgments about political similarity of, respectively, the characters and the cities.

The three kinds of experimental conditions each brought supportive evidence for the activation of the NEAR–FAR schema in judgments on SIMILARITY. In the lexical decision task, the degree of similarity in meaning of the pairs of abstract words was affected by the task-irrelevant variation in proximity, with words displayed closer to each other rated as more similar in meaning, and words displayed further apart – as more distant semantically (Casasanto 2008). Likewise, in the colour similarity decision task, the similarity judgments were affected by the spatial distance between the displayed squares: when the distance between the coloured squares was small, responses were faster for similar colours than for dissimilar colours, whereas the opposite results were obtained when the spatial distance between the squares was big. When summing up their results, Boot and Pecher observe that, while the results of earlier experiments that relied on linguistic data might be explained by metaphorical language, their results show that the metaphorical mapping from the NEAR–FAR schema is part of the concept of SIMILARITY itself:

> When making a decision on the similarity of colours, participants must have activated the concept SIMILARITY. That this concept was primed by the actual distance between the stimuli indicates that distance is part of the concept. Moreover, the fact that we found an effect in a speeded and easy decision task indicates that distance is a core part of the concept of similarity (Boot and Pecher 2010, p. 952).

In the spatial priming-based tasks from Winter and Matlock's (2013) experiments, the prior depiction of characters or cities closer to each other or more distant apart made the participants assume that they were either more similar to each other or more different. And the fact that the same results were obtained on two spatial scales – characters in a room and cities on an island, "suggests that what matters in the spatial dimension (source domain) is the relative difference between two entities within a spatial frame, such as a room or an island" (Winter and Matlock 2013, p. 227).

To illustrate other kinds of non-linguistic tasks, let me refer to priming studies investigating the psychological reality of the EMOTIONAL DISTANCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE metaphor. Williams and Bargh (2008) used spatial priming behavioural task that did not involve any reference to the self – the participants were asked to plot on a Cartesian coordinate plane an assigned set of points that were either relatively close to each other or far apart; during the stage that followed the priming, they completed a questionnaire asking them to rate the strength of their bonds to their family members and their hometown (Experiment 4). As predicted, even though the priming involved simple physical distance cues, it had significant impact on people's self-reported attachment to their family and hometown – compared with participants primed with closeness, which increased the reported strength

of bonds, priming spatial distance increased the participants' feelings of emotional distance. In turn, Matthews and Matlock (2011) first primed their participants to think about friends and strangers by asking them to read a short narrative in which they were asked to imagine travelling through a park to deliver a package and passing by friends or strangers along the way. There were three variants of the narrative which differed in the mode of travelling: on foot, driving a car, or riding a taxi. The participants were then given a behavioural task: they received a map of the park with the figures depicted in it and their task was to draw a route they would take to deliver the package. The results of each of the three experiments confirmed the prediction that friends would be conceptualized as closer while strangers as more distant, and this would influence how the participants reasoned about physical space: the routes they drew were much closer to friends as compared to strangers[19].

Observe now that the design of Matthews and Matlock (2011) study involved a verbo-pictorial multimodal task: having read a story in the priming stage, the participants were prompted to "enact" their spatial understanding of EMOTIONAL DISTANCE in terms of the NEAR–FAR schema during a drawing task in the "friends" vs. "strangers" scenarios. Inspired by this experimental design, Rybarczyk (2015) conducted a multimodal experiment aiming to investigate the attitudinal meanings of the Polish demonstrative *ten* 'this' (see section 3 above). In her experiment, the participants were prompted by a verbally expressed story in which attitudinal distance was coded grammatically by the demonstrative to perform a drawing task, and thereby reason about distance in physical space. Located in an office setting, the story evoked an interaction between the protagonist and another participant which could be interpreted within the protagonist's core personal sphere in terms of interpersonal distance or, because the protagonist might have felt irritated by the colleague's behaviour, in terms of affective proximity within his transient personal sphere. And the drawing task was meant to establish whether any of the two readings of *ten* – the interpersonal distance sense or the affective proximity sense – would be "enacted" in physical space in a regular manner. The participants were asked to indicate the distance from the protagonist to his colleague by choosing an arrow on the picture of the office scenario. Since the majority of participants indicated spatial proximity rather than distance, Rybarczyk concludes that it was the affective proximity sense that was enacted in spatial terms (2015, p. 183). And in more general terms, this study, similarly to Matthews and Matlock (2011), shows that the metaphorical relationship between physical space, on the one hand, and emotional and social distance,

[19] Note, additionally, that positive results were also obtained for reasoning about time: at the final stage of the experiments, the participants were asked to estimate how long the trip took; irrespective of the mode of transport, the travelling time was estimated as significantly longer in the scenario with friends as compared to the one with strangers.

on the other hand, can be manifested in how people conceptualize space in terms of NEAR–FAR and enact their conceptualizations in drawing tasks.

Summing up, the fact that the above studies resorted to different kinds of tasks strengthens the experimental evidence that all points to the activation of NEAR–FAR when abstract concepts of SIMILARITY and EMOTIONAL DISTANCE are evoked. Providing experimental support for the conceptual nature of the metaphors involved, they constitute convergent evidence that cognitive linguists search for to corroborate their analyses – be they purely verbal and multimodal alike. At the same time, however, they not only enhance the validity of the "result" of the analytical process – the specific descriptions based on the application of the above discussed conceptual metaphors, but they also show that we can rely on the analytical tool that has been used to arrive at these descriptions – the NEAR–FAR schema – with due confidence.

Postscriptum

In the present times of the Covid-19 pandemic, we are all expected to enact "social distancing" on daily basis[20]. Aimed to slow the spread of coronavirus, social distancing, i.e. reducing social interaction between people and keeping a distance of approximately 2 metres from others, is recognized as the key measure recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and adopted by governments to fight the pandemic. Its positive effects are generally acknowledged, yet the unintended consequences of the very term *social distancing* will be staying with us for the long time to come. By this very term, we are metaphorically framed to think and live through this pandemic in terms of SOCIAL DISTANCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE (see also fn. 13 above), and its crucial entailment that is rooted in its lower-level instantiation – the universal primary metaphor AFFECTION IS PROXIMITY – the entailment that staying at a physical distance implies lack of affection and emotional involvement. Beyond doubt, this is not what one would need in the time of the pandemic, when emotional support and affective involvement would make living through this crisis much easier to bear. It is therefore unfortunate that the implications of this metaphorical framing have been noticed by WHO much too late; it was no sooner than on 20th March 2020, when the WHO epidemiologist Maria Van Kerkhove for the first time admitted during a daily news briefing that while maintaining a physical distance was "absolutely essential" amid the global pandemic, "it does not mean that socially we have to disconnect from our loved ones, from our family" and, therefore, she added, "We're changing to say physical distance and that's on purpose because we want people to still remain connected (emphasis, E.G.)"[21]. However,

[20] It should be noted that the article was submitted for publication in June 2020.

[21] https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/transcripts/who-audio-emergencies-coronavirus-press-conference-full-20mar2020.pdf?sfvrsn=1eafbff_0, accessed on 30 April, 2020.

the timing was crucial, and the WHO's suggested "reframing" of the pandemic in terms of *keeping physical distance*, i.e. a non-metaphorical frame, was opposed as it brought with it a risk of ambiguous information from the authorities. As Lori Peek, a sociology professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder and the director of the Natural Hazards Centre, put it in an email to CNN:

> My main concern is that this switch in terminology–in the midst of the crisis–violates one of the key principles of effective risk communication, which is to ensure that there is clarity and consistency in messaging. I just don't want to see members of the public become confused or frustrated during what is already such an uncertain and frightening moment for so many[22].

Soon, WHO itself returned to the earlier term of *social distancing*, and this is the term that has stayed with us worldwide.

To shed some light on the possible implications of this framing let me first refer to Williams and Bargh's experiment on the influence of the concept of spatial distance on affect that was reported in the previous section. When concluding their study the authors observe that their results reveal:

> the fundamental importance of distance cues in the physical environment for shaping people's judgments and affective experiences, and highlight the ease with which aspects of the physical environment (and the spatial relations therein) can activate feelings of closeness or distance without one's awareness (Williams and Bargh 2008, p. 307).

Another aspect of it comes to the fore once we take into account the results of empirical research on the very role that framing has on how people live through difficult experience, such as with cancer (Hendricks et al. 2018), or in their emotional life (Lee and Schwarz 2014)[23]. As I already indicated, in the case in point it is not only a matter of metaphorical framing in terms of SOCIAL DISTANCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE, but also in terms of the primary metaphor AFFECTION IS PROXIMITY that is inextricably linked to it. Leaving this direction of research on *social distancing* open till the time when this pandemic is over, let me note that in its most charitable version it sounds: *It's social distancing, and not social isolation*. Another option, suggested by Stanford psychologist Jamil Zaki, to stay physically apart and practice *distant socializing* with the help of technologies such as FaceTime and Zoom[24], ironically questions the very frame itself.

[22] https://edition.cnn.com/2020/04/15/world/social-distancing-language-change-trnd/index.html, accessed on 30 April, 2020.

[23] For a comprehensive overview of such research, see Thibodeau et al. (2019).

[24] https://edition.cnn.com/2020/04/15/world/social-distancing-language-change-trnd/index.html, accessed on 30 April, 2020.

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Streszczenie

Koncentrując się na zbieżnych dowodach na pojęciową naturę metafor, których domenę źródłową stanowi schemat wyobrażeniowy BLISKO–DALEKO, takich jak: PODOBIEŃSTWO TO BLISKOŚĆ, RÓŻNICA TO ODLEGŁOŚĆ, CZUŁOŚĆ/UCZUCIE TO BLISKOŚĆ FIZYCZNA, DYSTANS EMOCJONALNY TO DYSTANS FIZYCZNY, artykuł omawia zastosowanie schematu BLISKO–DALEKO nie tylko w praktyce badań nad językiem, ale i w badaniach multimodalnych. Jako inny rodzaj zbieżnych dowodów na psychologiczną realność omawianych metafor konwencjonalnych oraz schematu BLISKO–DALEKO przedstawione są też wyniki kilku badań eksperymentalnych. Dyskusja prowadzi do wniosku, że schemat BLISKO–DALEKO stanowi wiarygodne i użyteczne narzędzie badawcze, na którym językoznawcy kognitywni mogą polegać. W *Postscriptum* autorka rozważa pokrótce ramowanie pandemii Covid-19 w terminach „dystansowania społecznego" zarówno w odniesieniu do metafory DYSTANS SPOŁECZNY TO DYSTANS FIZYCZNY, jak i CZUŁOŚĆ/UCZUCIE TO BLISKOŚĆ FIZYCZNA.

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