1 Introduction

The relationship between our body and our language has become an object of cognitive linguistic studies for a while now. We use our bodies to get to know the words and without the body no primary concept would emerge. We experience the world through our body perception, a feat that would be impossible without a multitude of senses we possess. All of five traditionally recognized senses (vision, hearing, gustation, olfaction and somatosensation) can be perceived with one part of our body: our head. Losing this body part equals death, so it is undoubtedly crucial for us. The perceptual experiences perceived by us gave life to simple and, later on, complex conceptualizations (Bergen, 2015: 10). Our conceptualization is therefore inevitably linked with our bodies and is created and (re)transformed mainly thanks to our most complex organ: the brain. Since we cannot access our mental processes directly, we can only analyze the manifestations of many cognitive processes, such as language use. We’d like to state that Ronald Langacker (as well as other cognitive linguistics) understand the term conceptualization quite broadly: “it encompasses novel conceptions as well as fixed concepts; sensory, kinesthetic, and emotive experience; recognition of the immediate context (social, physical, and linguistic); and so on” (Langacker, 1990:2).

A study of the concept of head isn’t a random one—the metaphorization of our crucial body part across languages and cultures may reveal to what extent our (self-)perception is universal. In order to accomplish this task, the following paper will focus on the concept of metaphor and polysemy in cognitive linguistic perspective. The fundamental theory applied by us is the embodiment theory. Based on this theory, we focus on the contemporary metaphor theory presented by George Lakoff (1993), as well as on the compositional polysemy addressed by Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2006).1

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1 We are grateful to Brigitta Flick for her technical support on this paper.
2 Theoretical Assumptions

In the present section we provide the theoretical bases that support the analysis undertaken in this paper. Our focus on the theory is on the metaphor and polysemy processes, fundamental issues for dealing with semantic extensions in the languages of the world. We adopt the framework provided by the cognitive linguistics in order to undertake the analysis in this paper.

2.1 Metaphors in Cognitive Linguistics

For centuries we used to understand metaphor in a classical, Aristotelian perspective. It was seen as a poetic and consequently a non-common language usage (Nerlich & Clarke, 2007:595). The concept of metaphor has been redefined in the last decades. One of the most cited book on the topic is *Metaphors we live by*, published in 1980, whose authors—George Lakoff and Mark Johnson—demonstrated that a metaphor isn’t just a mere rhetorical or artistic term, but also an omnipresent cognitive process that shapes and manifests our way of thinking. This subject has inspired a vast number of scientists and new questions about the cognitive nature of metaphorical thinking keep on emerging. In 1993, George Lakoff published *The contemporary metaphor theory* that corrects some previous assumptions about the nature of the metaphor and discusses its structure.

We learn that our thinking is mainly metaphorical and it enables us to perform abstract reasoning (Lakoff, 1993:24). Metaphors allow us to understand more complex and relatively unstructured subject matter in terms of a more concrete or relatively higher structured subject matter. As we may see, metaphors aren’t *a priori* linguistic in nature, but fundamentally conceptual (ibidem, 3). They had been seen as linguistic because their manifestations are often linguistic ones. For instance, associating our heart with love and other affections doesn’t manifest itself only through language use, but is also frequently visualized in graphic communication and arts. Metaphors are in fact mappings across various conceptual domains and are partial, asymmetric and non-arbitrary (ibidem, 232). It means that the mapping is the process of constructing the meaning and not decoding it. In other words, English-speaking people see love as a journey not because it’s objectively analogous, but because this comparison has become culturally entrenched. Not every analogy is mapped through cultural entrenchment, some of the metaphors are intimately connected to our body experience and reflect our embodiment.