Conceptual blending in advertising ☆

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Abstract

Conceptual blending occurs at the moment of perception and creates new meanings out of existing ways of thinking. Analysis of data collected in phenomenological interviews reveals the blending processes consumers use to "make sense" of advertisements. We recognize subtle similarities and differences between metaphor and blending, and examine their occurrence in three types of blending networks in ads.
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Fauconnier and Turner (2002) describe conceptual blending as a dynamic process that occurs at the moment of perception to create new meanings from existing ways of thinking. Blending is a common cognitive activity, closely related to analogy and metaphor (Fauconnier, 2001); it occurs in verbal and visual domains such as advertising, as well as in metaphoric and non-metaphoric contexts such as everyday language. In this paper we use the theory of conceptual blending to illustrate how consumers construct meanings from three ads that represent three types of blending networks.

Consumer researchers have paid scant attention to blending theory (BT). Joy and Sherry (2003) provided a partial description of this cognitive mechanism in their analysis of aesthetic experiences in museums. McQuarrie and Mick (1996, 1999) and Scott (1994) focused primarily on the function of metaphor and analogy but not on blending. These authors argue that visual images and verbal messages constitute culturally embedded forms or signs that combine in a specific manner to communicate meanings about brands. This research highlights the interconnectedness of semantic memory that allows con-

sumers to connect to a vast array of different experiences that have a recurring structure and to emphasize the fluid ways in which they connect different semantic concepts through the use of metaphor (Cornelissen, 2006).

In this paper, we explore how consumers harness conceptual blending to construct meanings. Although conceptual metaphor theory (MT) provides a wealth of information about the way people think, blending theory (BT) goes further accounting for the processes by which consumers create temporary and dynamic mental spaces and construct meanings within them. BT helps identify those images and words that have an immediate impact on consumers and inspire them to act. Although the terms "metaphor" and "blending" refer to different aspects of conceptualization, we argue that they are complementary.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) describe metaphor as a dynamic act of meaning construction involving movement from a source to a target domain. While MT generally deals with "stable knowledge structures represented in long-term memory," BT describes "the dynamic evolution" of an individual's unique representation. Weick (1989) favors the view of the unexpected and creative nature of metaphorical language (BT) rather than the usual ways of thinking about metaphors (MT), even though such patterns may exist within an organization. The assumption of directionality from source to target is problematic; metaphor comprehension involves more than a set of directional mappings. There is often an active combination and blending of information from target and source concepts.

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For example, when someone says "I am in the dark on this issue," the MT domains are vision (source) and knowledge (target). The mapping that occurs is based on one's general knowledge of links and alignments between these two entrenched domains; "in the dark" prompts one to imagine darkness as a lack of awareness or lack of knowledge. In BT, the focus is not on the domains themselves but on the temporary mental spaces that they generate. In the "in the dark" example, Input Space 1 (taken from the domain of vision) allows us to develop a scenario of an individual (X) who is standing in the dark. Input Space 2 draws on the domain of knowledge in which an individual or group withholds information from the speaker (X1). The Generic Space contains the person who has been deprived of a particular stimulus. The Blended Space contains the situation where another individual or group is keeping the speaker in the dark. In the blend, X and X1 are one and the same; being in the dark refers to ignorance. Both input spaces contribute to the blend via the use of a generic space which creates a dynamic scenario (Grady et al., 1999) (see Fig. 1).

While we are concerned with the construction, completion and elaboration of meaning in BT, our focus is on the choices made by subjects during phenomenological interviews. It seems to us that Fauconnier and Turner (2002) recognize this issue only tangentially. Blending theory goes beyond typical understanding of cognitive processes using analogy and metaphor. How schemata change and are modified requires a more complex understanding of processes than that of the source-to-target domain mapping that is central to analogy and metaphor.

Construction of multiple temporary spaces to run simulations and create thought, using metaphors that encompass more than two concepts and the reversal of directionality, is central to our theory of the meaning-making process.

1. Metaphor

The ability to map structural elements from one domain onto another is a prerequisite of metaphor. A standard definition of metaphor is "a figure of speech by which a word or phrase is transferred in application from one object to another." Traditional metaphor theory attempts to explain the mapping of attributes in terms of similarity or difference. The conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) demonstrates that metaphor is not just a figure of speech but a thoroughly embodied activity, generated by thought and imagination. Their insight makes possible a more abstract level of meaning because it unites two disparate domains and at the same time recognizes the asymmetry between them.

For example, the metaphor "Juliet is the sun" refers in general to Juliet's happy disposition and warm nature, but more specifically to the fact that she is the center of Romeo's universe. However, "her smile lights up the room," moves away from conventional metaphor and makes an association between happiness and brightness — an entrenched conceptual association arising from correlations in experience. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) call such associations primary metaphors. Metaphors can be both verbal and non-verbal.
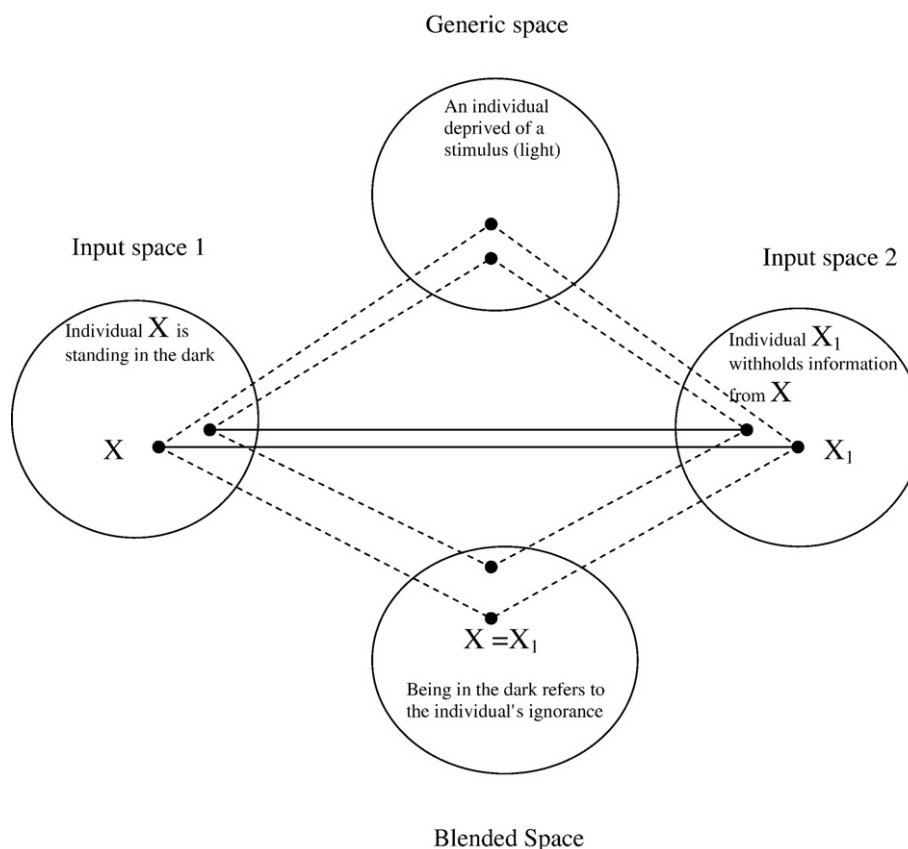

Fig. 1. "I am in the dark on this issue".

An example of a visual metaphor is the company logo for Prudential Insurance. It is a picture of the Rock of Gibraltar, one of the twin pedestals of the great statue of Hercules, said to have straddled the strait connecting Spain and Africa. Because of its strategic position as the entry point into Europe, Gibraltar was a target of successive waves of invaders.

With the rock logo, Prudential identifies itself as being the rock (metaphor). Given that this logo has been around since 1891, the company has acted "like a rock." The rock reflects the strength and security it offers customers. The fact that it has survived more than one hundred years as the company symbol is proof that this logo works. However, the current slogan that accompanies the rock logo — "growing and protecting your wealth" — puts a new spin on the metaphor. It is only through a blending process that one can come to understand this strange connection between a rock and growing wealth.

2. Conceptual blending

Metaphors are typically analyzed as systematic relationships between two conceptual domains. In the "I am in the dark on this issue" example, vision and knowledge are the two domains that systematically map on to each other. Conceptual blending also taps into the principle of mapping; however, it does so through the creation of multiple spaces and especially through the creation of a generic (third) space to engender a blend (a fourth space). Fauconnier (2001: 5) describes mental spaces as "small packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action. They are partial assemblies of elements, structured by frames and cognitive models." Spaces are not the same as domains, although they rely on domains to accomplish the necessary mapping. Spaces are based on more general and stable knowledge structures associated with a particular domain; they are temporary spaces used in the construction of meaning (Coulson and Oakley, 2000).

Prudential's promise — "growing and protecting your wealth" — seems to contradict the rock logo. The source to target projection, a one-sided move, does not provide a sufficient explanation. Conceptual blending is required to explain this process. Prudential promises investors that it will help make investments grow and protect wealth — but rocks do not "grow." In the blend, the increase in size and scale of the investment is equated to the rise and scale of rock. The rock in the blend has a variable nature incompatible with the rock in the source. This is an example of metaphor, and the metaphor is unidirectional, but one understands investors (and the company's actions to increase their investments) by projection from rocks and not rocks by projections from investors. The central inferential mechanism is neither projection from source to target nor detection of a structure they share.

The rock example makes sense in its own figurative terms: there is a blend and in the blend, rocks can increase in size. This meaning is useful in considering the input space — investing in Prudential. People are sophisticated in drawing relationships between the blend and the inputs, but are by no means uniformly constrained to make structure in the blend match the inputs. Because the standard theories of metaphor and analogy

have no place for blended spaces, the power and mechanisms of this example are missed. As Turner and Fauconnier (1999) would argue, the rock "growing" is a covert operation.

Products of metaphorical mappings are more influential when they satisfy a set of principles (Cornelissen, 2006: 1585). Between Cornelissen and Fauconnier and Turner (2002), eight optimality principles can be discerned and applied to the Prudential ad. The *integration* principle is satisfied because the metaphor relates the target and source domains in a representative way (the rock of Gibraltar has been around for a long time much like the Prudential company). The *topological* principle is met since the attribute of steadfastness and long-term survival that is associated with the rock of Gibraltar is also applicable to the insurance company. The *web* principle suggests that the representation in the blend should maintain its mappings to the input concept. Although rocks do not grow, the rock in the blend is allowed to grow. The *unpacking* principle is partially satisfied in the spin that is placed on the metaphor of growing investments. The original metaphor "like a rock" allows for the extension and application of the metaphor to other scenarios wherein the organization can be viewed as standing by principles and promises to consumers over the long haul. The *good reason* principle is also satisfied since the elements in the blend (rocks growing) are linked to growing the money of investors. The *metonymic tightening* principle is partially satisfied since in the blend rocks can grow (but it can only happen within its own figurative context). The *distancing* principle is satisfied, since the two concepts — rock and insurance company — are sufficiently distant. The *concreteness* principle is satisfied through the use of the "rock of Gibraltar."

Consider another example. "Corporate raider tactics are roiling new markets" is the headline of an article in the *Wall Street Journal* (March 3, 2006, p. 1). One needs simultaneous multiple spaces to build meanings in this context. A raider is a person who makes a surprise attack. A corporate raider (metaphor) is one who conducts a predatory buy-out operation against a competitor. The aggressive actions taken by the corporate raider are "roiling up" (muddying, stirring up sediment) new markets. Input Space 1 (corporate raider tactics) is connected to Input Space 2 (roiling new markets) through the use of the generic space Input Space 3 (predatory actions that disturb) to create the blend (Input Space 4) in which actions taken by a person to purchase a controlling interest in a publicly traded company against the wishes of the current management are creating problems (turbulence) in new markets.

Although blends and metaphors both depict one element in terms of another, blends can also contain mapping links that are not metaphoric. In blends, the counterparts can project onto distinct elements in blended space. Consumer research abounds in studies of schemata but ignores how the modification and rearrangement of schemata occur. The theory of conceptual blending allows us to do just that.

3. Research method

3.1. Sampling and interview procedures

Data for this study were generated through in-depth interviews with 28 volunteers (Thompson et al., 1989). Our purpose was to
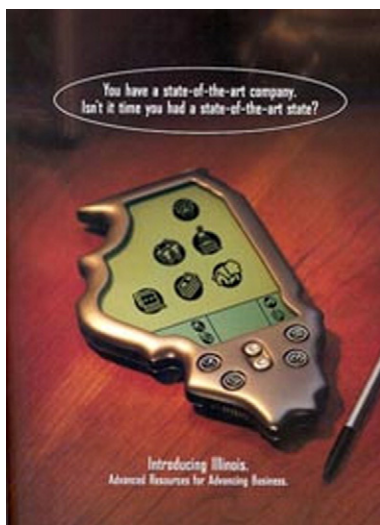
Ad 1. Virgin ad: simplex network.

explore how they arrived at an understanding of various ads. Our sample included students, homemakers, office workers, and professionals ranging in age from 20 to 60. Participants were typically chosen through a snow-balling technique wide enough to explore the ways in which ads are decoded by consumers from various walks of life. The interviews, 60 to 90 min long, were taped and transcribed.

In keeping with interview methods recommended by Thompson et al. (1989) we created a context in which the participants felt at ease and comfortable in discussing their understanding and perceptions of advertising. In order to get them to talk about advertising we invited them to bring an ad that they really liked. We asked them general background information and then went on to discuss the ad that they had brought with them. We encouraged them to describe other ads they liked, their general views on advertising, and the impact it

has on society. After this general conversation, we showed them the three ads (see Ads 1, 2 and 3) we had chosen.

Our goal was to create optimum conditions for the participants to observe, reflect on, and articulate the phenomenon of their meaning making. Then we applied the theoretical templates and models of conceptual blending to the data. Our analysis is grounded in the words and actions of participants.

We asked participants to choose one ad, describe what they thought was its message, and explain how they had arrived at such a reading. That we had already set the stage for a discussion of ads made them very focussed. Participants did not hesitate to express opinions about the ads since we had assured them that there were no "right" answers and that we were interested in their understandings. We followed the same process with the other ads. We used responses to assign each ad to a particular framework. We asked if they liked the ad, and if so, probed why. Did they own the product or had they used the service? Would they consider buying it? Two participants had relatives who owned a Hummer 2; 15 had bought products or services from Virgin; none had a connection with the State of Illinois. At each stage, we intervened only if the participant could not decode the ad and turned to us for guidance.

Ad 2. Palm Pilot ad — single scope network.

Ad 3. The Hummer 2 ad — double scope network.

We use only the transcripts from the interview sections that deal with how people made sense of advertisements, but the whole interview provided a context within which we understood what participants meant and the processes they employed. There is a delicate balancing act between drawing on prior knowledge while keeping a fresh and open mind to new concepts as they emerge from data. We used an iterative, part-to-whole reading strategy, first within the context of each interview and then between the corpus of interviews (Thompson et al., 1989). We identified emergent themes, discussed them, and conducted further iterative readings. These understandings formed the basis of our analysis. We provide an explanation that represents a fusion of horizons.

4. Conceptual blending and meaning construction: simplex, mirror and double scope networks

4.1. Simplex networks: Virgin ad

Fauconnier and Turner (2002) describe a simplex network as one connecting mental spaces, as in the frame "X is the Y of Z". This generally associates function with value (role). The relevant part and roles of the frame from Input Spaces 1 and 2 project into the simplex network. They also suggest that a simplex network is primarily compositional, but if a relationship in the blend reflects an actual state of affairs, then it is generally considered true. Composition refers to the projection and fusion of content from each of the inputs into the blended space (Coulson and Oakley, 2000: 180). What happens within simplex

networks only looks simple. Integration of information from the various inputs can occur at many levels.

In the Virgin ad, a general human kinship frame applies to the entire network. The generic space contains two companies that are related, while the blended space compresses roles and values (see Fig. 2 and Ad 1). Most participants recognized this implicit kinship form. Both of the following observations — "Virgin is the parent brand for its other business operations such as Virgin Music" (Monica, 28) "Virgin Music, Virgin Travel, etc., are all companies that belong to the Virgin family (Michael, 26)" — represent a simplex network. When we asked them what that meant, Michael noted that "what happens in the context of families can be applied to companies as well." "Parents and children have binding relationships because of their kinship tie — there are expectations from both sides" he added. For analytical purposes, Input Space 1 contains the frame, in this case, a kinship frame that includes father, mother, child, or a variation. Input Space 2 contains the roles — Virgin (parent) and Virgin Music (offspring).

4.2. Salient rules

Topologists study qualitative questions about geometrical structures, such as "Is it all connected?" and "Can it be separated into parts?" This is what happens when people create mental spaces as inputs and two organizing relationships emerge. In "Virgin is the parent of Virgin Music," human kinship functions as the organizing frame of Input Space 1 (parent and offspring — composition). Appropriate values (Virgin and Virgin Music)
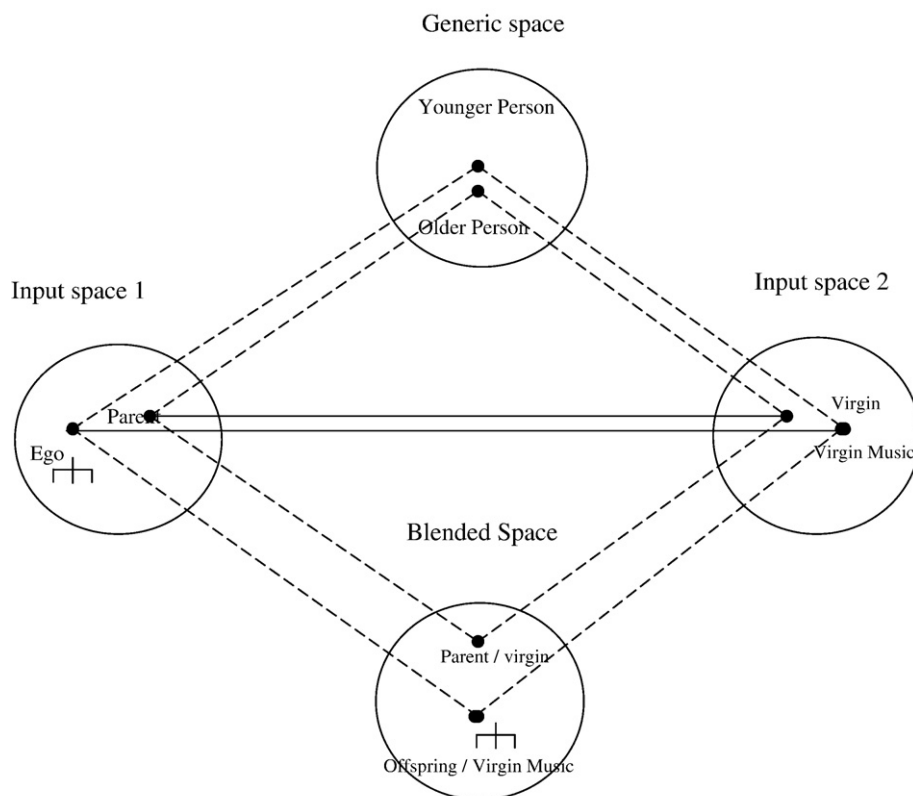

Fig. 2. Simplex network.

function as the organizing frame of Input Space 2. Completion (the human kinship metaphor allows us to complete the picture of Virgin as parent) fills out a pattern in the blend and is evoked when the structure projected from the input spaces matches information in memory. This is what Michael means when he talks about shared genetic codes and consequent expectations. The topological relationship between parent and offspring in Input Space 1 is called inner space, that between parent in Input Space 1 and Virgin in Input Space 2, outer space. These topologies become more complex in mirror and double scope networks. Although compression may clash with topology, an appropriate balance between the two must be maintained.

Compression either reduces one relation to a tighter version of itself or collapses two or more relations into a single new one. A conceptual strength of the simplex network is that it can compress roles, as well as establish the compression as a single new role in the blend. For example, the inputs for recognizing that Virgin is the parent of Virgin Music contain an "abstract parent" and "offspring" in one input space and "Virgin Music" in the other (metonymic principle). The blend inherits these elements but also creates a new role: parent of Virgin Music. This process is called elaboration; it describes the simulated mental development of the metaphor which may be continued indefinitely. Virgin and parent have an outer-space relation as in "Virgin Music and Offspring." However, the blend compresses the inner-space "parent–offspring" relations in Input Space 1 with the outer-space "role-value" connections between off-spring and Virgin Music to create a simple compressed, new inner-space role, "Parent of Virgin Music" (Input Space 2).

Other "virtual relations" (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002) are created through the compression of blending networks. In the Virgin ad, roles and values are vital relations. Parent is the role and Virgin is the value. Similarly, offspring is a role and Virgin Music is its value. Such relations can lead to certain kinds of actions. For instance, a parent can exercise some control over teenagers, but also allow them to act independently. Likewise, many of Virgin's companies are joint ventures where certain types of both control and freedom are exercised. This is an example of cause-and-effect relations. Recall our earlier discussion of optimizing principles. For this ad, the integrating principle is satisfied in that the kinship frame is applicable to the Virgin family and the representation in the metaphoric blend maintains its mappings to the input concepts (web principle — parent–offspring relations are present in Virgin and Virgin music relations). The unpacking principle is applicable since the comprehender can fabricate structure in relation to other subjects and applications. It is common to talk about orga-nizations as "parent companies". The good reason principle is evident in that parent–children relations are applicable to parent companies and their subsidiaries. The distance principle is satis-fied (kinship and organizations) and the concreteness principle is also in force (kinship and family relationships and organizational relationships).

4.3. Mirror networks

Mirror networks have a single organizing frame connecting all the mental spaces — the generic space, Input Space 1 and the blended space, Input Space 2. This frame specifies the nature of the activity, events, and participants. It is called a mirror network because all the spaces mirror each other although the blend may become a more complex frame as a result. Cross-space mapping in such networks is simple.

The participants were shown the State of Illinois ad (see Fig. 3 and Ad 2) which features a Palm Pilot shaped like the State of Illinois, lying on an expensive, wood desk. The top caption reads "You have a state-of-the-art company. Isn't it time you had a state-of-the-art state?" The lower caption reads: "Introducing Illinois. Advanced Resources for Advancing Business." The ad prompts viewers to construct a conceptual package that blends structure from the implicit comparison between Illinois and all the other U.S. states, and that implies that each is competing for high-tech businesses.

This ad also incorporates numerous optimizing principles. The integrating principle, web principle and topological prin-ciples are each satisfied. In addition, the unpacking principle (implicit comparison of various states), good reason principle (Palm Pilot lying on an expensive wooden desk — suggests the technological aspects of doing business), metonymic tightening principle (attributes of palm pilot and offerings of the State of the Illinois to encourage high-tech companies), distancing principle (geographical regions and state-of-the-art business) and con-creteness principle (palm pilot in the shape of the State of Illinois) are also satisfied.

Input Space 1 contains the phrase "State-of-the-art business," denoting advanced technology (Palm Pilot); Input Space 2 asks the question "Isn't it time you chose a state-of-the-art state?" clearly suggesting that Illinois operates like a competitive, successful, high-tech business. A partial cross-space mapping connects counterparts in the input mental spaces. Here are examples that illustrate the process by which participants arrived at the meaning of this ad. "There is a certain association made in the ad between technology and the State of Illinois. The state is objectified in a Palm Pilot (Mark, 32)" Another participant (Lionel, 38) noted "the message is that Illinois is an advanced state with state-of-the-art technology and encourages high-tech companies to get established there". "There is a play on the word "state". It stresses the importance of having an up-to-date state-of-the-art company and then elicits an idea of the state-of-the-art-state. They ask a question and provide the answer which is already there in the picture, like a riddle. The message is clever but a little more complex than most other ads" (Karen, 44).

The PDA icons and wand, all exemplifying state-of-the-art resources, are common to both input spaces. By applying the principles of composition to create relations that do not initially exist either at the initial input stage or during pattern completion, consumers transfer the contents of Input Space 2 to Input Space 1. The resulting generic space has the organizing frame "Success based on advanced resources." The blend answers the question, "Isn't it time you located in a state-of-the-art state?" The question does not allow us to run the blend with other states. The shape of the PDA mandates that the answer can only be Illinois, the state which offers "Advanced Resources for Advancing Business."
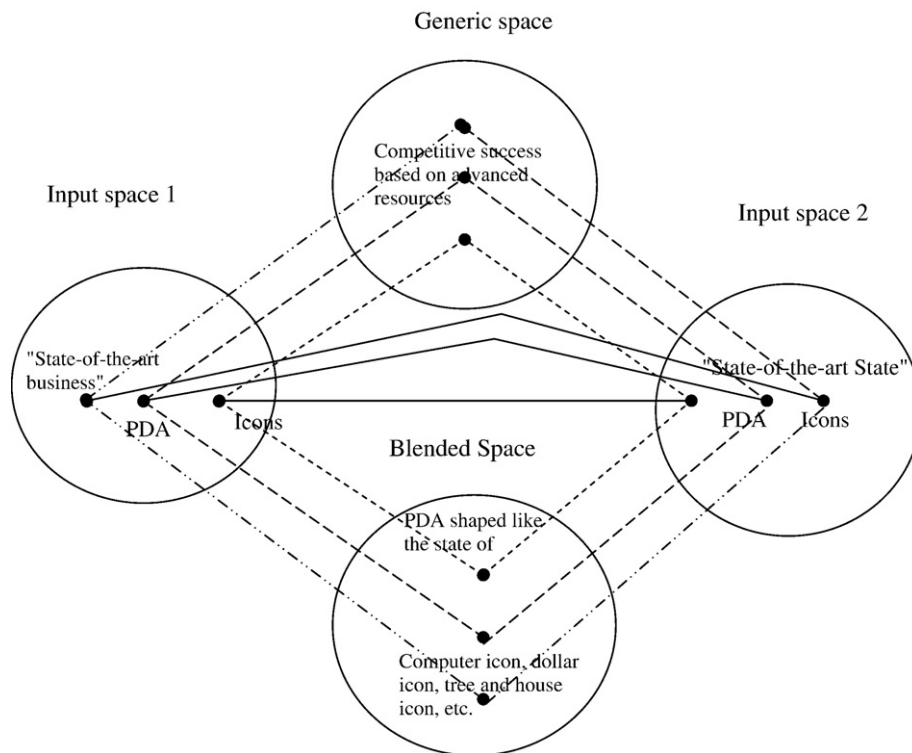
Fig. 3. Mirror network.

There is more to the blend. The icons on the Palm Pilot represent the advantages offered by Illinois: *computer*: high performance computing facilities; *dollar*: financial backing; *people*: human resources; *lab*: scientific laboratories; *state capital building*: tax credits; *tree and house*: balance between a good place to work and a good place to live. Completion, composition, and elaboration are required to construct the message that a competitive state must operate like a successful business and draw on its advanced resources to attract new business. One participant (Michelle, 31) identifies the process of arriving at this message: "The message is that the State of Illinois is redesigning itself in order to allow companies a chance to grow and be successful. Meet the new and improved Illinois is what comes to mind when I look at this ad." Michelle is also referring to established advertising practices that help re-position existing brands.

The emergent structure in this blend is instantiated concretely from both input spaces through the PDA and the icons. One can create and organize the ideas in a blend in various ways, but in this example only certain elements from both input spaces create new relations that exist only in the blend. For instance, participants do not project the probable negative role of regional governments in the promotion of industry within its borders (Input Space 2), nor do they project the negative attitudes of business towards government regulations (Input Space 1).

Compressions of vital relations (inner and outer spaces) are routine because they share a frame. Fauconnier and Turner (2002) suggest that dis-analogy goes hand in hand with analogy. A Palm Pilot and the State of Illinois represent two disparate

elements, but clever merging into an Illinois-shaped Palm Pilot makes it possible to discern their differences and similarities. The outer-space analogy (Input Space 1 has Palm Pilot, Input Space 2 has Illinois) compresses directly into "similarity" (vital relations: Illinois offers state-of-the-art technology just as the Palm Pilot does) in the blend. An outer-space relation of representation, connecting a picture to what it represents, condenses to "uniqueness" in the blend. The relevance principle means that the blend contains elements that prompt the correct network connections. The Illinois ad focuses exclusively on Illinois business services, represented by the PDA icons. There is no prompt to visualize the borders that Illinois shares with other states. The complexity of such interpretations is witnessed in Marina's (23) comments: "The wording is clear but the picture is quite complex. It does not support the message easily or clearly. It is like a puzzle — it takes time and effort but it is great when you crack it."

The ad format generated different levels of viewer competency. The frustration of figuring out why the Palm Pilot was presented in an unusual way did not detract from the pleasure the same participants had in noting the "rich texture of the wood (Marina, 23)," the "beautiful silvery frame of the Palm Pilot (Michelle, 31)," the "cool green of the face of the Palm Pilot (Lionel, 38)," and so on. Evoking these emotions allowed us to track participants' thoughts as a stream of feelings occurring in time, each influencing the next. As Scott (1994: 257) notes, the overall attitude of the ad may be useful, but its impact increases if we construe responses to pictures as a complex chain of deduction, comparison, selection, and combination, suggests both cognitive activity and subtleties of textual material.

4.4. Double scope networks

Double scope networks integrate two conflicting notions to produce a blend with a new organizing structure and an emergent meaning of its own. Both organizing frames contribute equally to the blend even though they may clash. We have no difficulty integrating different identities and different frames to generate novel identities and frames (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002).

Consider the application of conceptual blending in an analysis of participant responses to the Hummer 2 ad (see Fig. 4 and Ad 3). A yellow Hummer 2 sits on top of a mountain, with a background of deep blue sky. The two-word caption in small print in the right hand corner above the Hummer reads "Truck Shui." Rona (39), an office worker noted that "the American and Chinese combination is very clear: Feng Shui is applied to the truck." Many other participants coupled the two seemingly incompatible ideas through the creative use of temporary spaces.

This ad produces at least two mental spaces — a truck from America (Input Space 1) and Feng Shui from China (Input Space 2). (Feng Shui, literally meaning wind and water, is an ancient Chinese ethnoscience used in modern times in positioning buildings, rooms, entrances and furniture to ensure health, family harmony and prosperity.) The two independent input spaces, although incompatible, successfully project into a blend, referred to as a "double scope network." The generic space projects the abstract structure that guides the blending process to convey the idea that correct alignment of objects within an environment produces harmony. Only through pattern completion, composition, and elaboration can one grasp the full import of how such a balance emerges within the blend. The central features of the truck — body, wheels, tires, and treads — all emphasize the vehicle's stability and power, while the word *Shui* evokes harmony and alignment. Combined, the words and images create the truck–shui blend. All eight optimality principles are satisfied. The integrating principle is embodied in the structures used from the domain of "Feng Shui" which are representative of the alignment principle which in turn creates harmony. The topological principle is manifested insofar as Feng Shui is applicable to the alignment of the central features of the truck which creates stability and power. The web principle is apparent in that the blend harmony is evoked and can be applied to the input "Feng Shui". The unpacking principle is only partially satisfied since the Hummer 2 (truck shui) cannot really be applied to other contexts since the truck cannot be viewed as a vehicle that is environment friendly. The good reason principle is invoked since the yellow Hummer is photographed against a clear blue background. The metonymic tightening principle is present since the idea of harmony in the blend ties in with the harmony of the yellow truck against a perfectly blue sky (lack of pollution). The distance principle is apparent since the domains of trucks and Feng Shui are far apart. The concreteness principle is only partially satisfied since
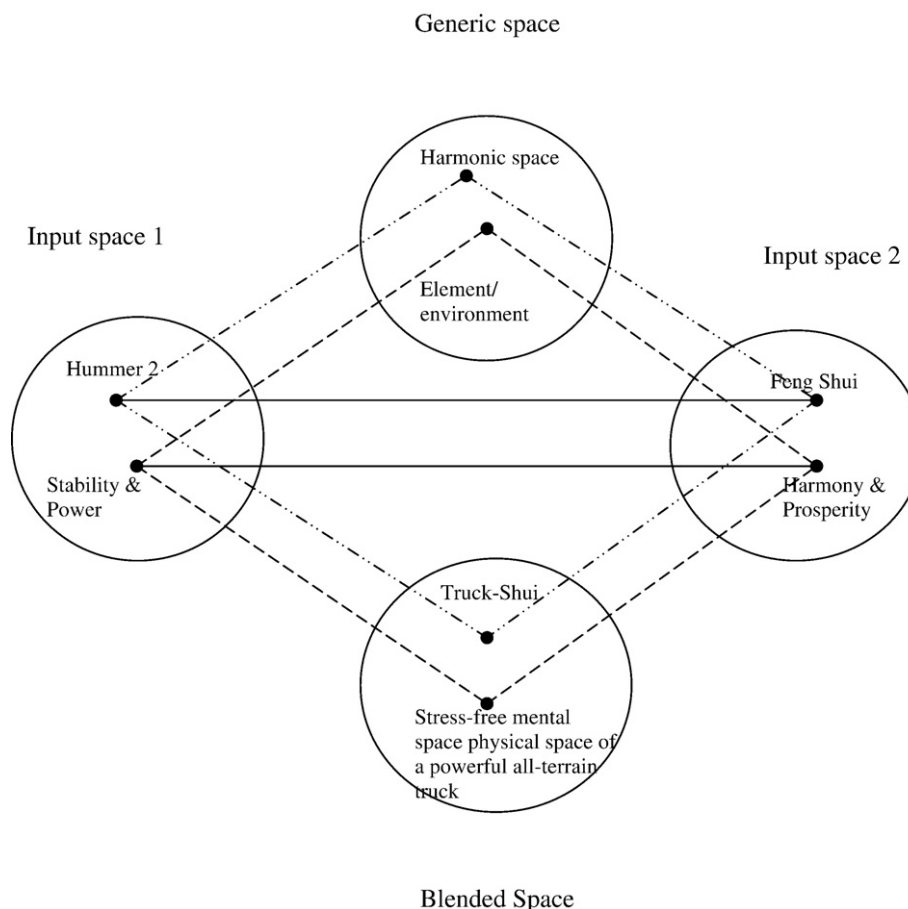
Generic space

Blended Space

Fig. 4. Double scope network (simplified version).

there is an assumption that the reader knows enough about Feng shui to make the connections between its principles and the atmosphere that the truck is expected to create.

Participants (Mona, 41 and Linda, 36), who were knowledgeable about China and color principles, took this further. They commented on the Eastern orientation of the ad, noting that the color yellow is associated with ancient Chinese emperors, who in turn are linked to the dragon, a symbol of wealth (note here both elaboration and pattern completion). They also observed that the color blue (reportedly the favorite color of 80% of Americans), dominates the background, thereby adding a Western dimension.

The ad implies that, when you drive a Hummer, you enter the stress-free mental space of Feng Shui, as well as the physical space of a powerful truck that can navigate any terrain. Analogy obtains here also, but the blend has an emergent structure that fuses the incompatibilities in the mental spaces into a meaningful outcome. This Hummer ad is a good example of a double scope network, in which both input spaces contribute equally to the final blend. In keeping with the findings of McQuarrie and Mick (1999), participants who were sufficiently acculturated to the Chinese rhetoric and semiotic systems could decode the text with ease.

Participants who did not recognize the Feng Shui reference made comments such as "What is this truck shui?" (Lisa, 37; Brendan, 21). Yet, when prompted to associate Feng Shui with the Chinese principles of spatial organization, they could decode the message. Most of the others said they arrived at the message by paying close attention to layout and colors. One male participant (Tom, 35) describes his process of meaning construction:

"The truck takes up most of the space in the picture. It reminds me of the Tonka truck I used to play with a lot as a kid. Usually you see ads for Hummers in a forest or on mountains full of mud, etc. This ad is very different because it is very simple. This looks like the top of a mountain. The sky is blue and the Hummer is yellow. There are no clouds; there are no obstacles, so it is very different from the usual Hummer ads. The phrase "truck shui" is a play on the words Feng Shui. So it means that the truck must have everything in its rightful place."

Responding to our request to expand on "the truck must have everything in its rightful place," he said:

"The outside tells you that it is very functional — wheels, tires, etc. All very well balanced. But it's changed drastically from the original truck (an army truck) to a truck for everyday driving for the average consumer. It makes me feel good. Truck shui emphasizes the simplicity of the ad and the product… nothing complicated."

In this example, Input Space 1 (truck made in the USA) clearly evokes the participant's memories of a yellow toy Tonka truck, and all-terrain trucks. He focused on the idea that the truck should have everything in its rightful place as suggested by the phrase "truck shui." This in turn conjured up the domain of Feng Shui, which he identified as a discipline that creates harmony through appropriate placement of objects. He reiterated that the ad was simple, the yellow Hummer in the middle of the picture reminded him of the sun (similarity in color and position), and that it made him happy.

When asked to elaborate, he noted that the inside of the truck fostered a sense of relaxation while the outside, which is what the viewer sees, promoted functionality. He also insisted that simplicity was central to the ad's message. Since the vehicle had no obstacles in its path, it adhered to the Chinese principle of positive energy flows based on unobstructed paths. He could see himself buying a Hummer although he said he would need more information.

Other positive examples illustrate how meaning is constructed in double scope networks: "We only see the truck — everything else is in the background. This technique of focusing on the truck and reducing the clutter around it made me think of Feng Shui — which is supposed to bring clarity and organization" (Victoria, 35) . "Also the wording 'truck shui' complements the image and reinforces the serenity message (Ingrid, 22)." "Truck shui can mean that the Hummer is uniquely designed to differentiate it from other trucks, very much like Feng Shui — a unique way of designing your space (Shawn, 55)." "The message plays on meanings associated with Feng Shui. Feng Shui evokes serenity, internal peace attained through the art of organizing and placing certain objects in specific places. There is harmony with the road, harmony with the driver, harmony within itself and all its features (Rita 30)."

The blend "truck shui" fuses selective elements from both input spaces to create an emergent structure in which an army truck exists in harmony with the environment. As most participants noted, Hummers are large and polluting vehicles, but placing a yellow Hummer 2 on a mountain top against a clear blue sky suggests that proper placement brings harmony. This shift in causal structure (from "Hummers pollute the environment" to "Hummers are harmonious with it") is enough to produce emergent structures specific to the blend. The causal inversion is guided by the Feng Shui input of correct placement of objects in space, but the emergent structure is deduced only in the blend from the new causal structure. The emergent structure, though fantastic from a literal point of view, efficiently transfers intended inferences back to the Feng Shui input, drawing real world inferences. This structure emerges in the blend, not in the inputs themselves.

Blending theory focuses on examples of metaphoric projection involving more than two concepts and/or bidirectional projection, where both concepts contribute to the new construct and/or even a reversal of the usual source to abstract direction.

Not all participants favored the Hummer ad. A young male participant (Robert, 24) was angry with it: "I don't like this ad because it's misleading. It's too simple for what the Hummer really is — a big polluting truck. It makes the truck seem like the center of the universe. It does not respect nature, the ad is a lie." He was vehemently opposed to buying one. Another participant was ambivalent: "The color of this model, yellow on a blue background, helps with the peaceful element of the vehicle but the positioning of the truck in the center represents the dominating and imposing factors of the truck. 'Truck shui'

For example, when someone says "I am in the dark on this issue," the MT domains are vision (source) and knowledge (target). The mapping that occurs is based on one's general knowledge of links and alignments between these two entrenched domains; "in the dark" prompts one to imagine darkness as a lack of awareness or lack of knowledge. In BT, the focus is not on the domains themselves but on the temporary mental spaces that they generate. In the "in the dark" example, Input Space 1 (taken from the domain of vision) allows us to develop a scenario of an individual (X) who is standing in the dark. Input Space 2 draws on the domain of knowledge in which an individual or group withholds information from the speaker (X1). The Generic Space contains the person who has been deprived of a particular stimulus. The Blended Space contains the situation where another individual or group is keeping the speaker in the dark. In the blend, X and X1 are one and the same; being in the dark refers to ignorance. Both input spaces contribute to the blend via the use of a generic space which creates a dynamic scenario (Grady et al., 1999) (see Fig. 1).

While we are concerned with the construction, completion and elaboration of meaning in BT, our focus is on the choices made by subjects during phenomenological interviews. It seems to us that Fauconnier and Turner (2002) recognize this issue only tangentially. Blending theory goes beyond typical understanding of cognitive processes using analogy and metaphor. How schemata change and are modified requires a more complex understanding of processes than that of the source-to-target domain mapping that is central to analogy and metaphor.

Construction of multiple temporary spaces to run simulations and create thought, using metaphors that encompass more than two concepts and the reversal of directionality, is central to our theory of the meaning-making process.

1. Metaphor

The ability to map structural elements from one domain onto another is a prerequisite of metaphor. A standard definition of metaphor is "a figure of speech by which a word or phrase is transferred in application from one object to another." Traditional metaphor theory attempts to explain the mapping of attributes in terms of similarity or difference. The conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) demonstrates that metaphor is not just a figure of speech but a thoroughly embodied activity, generated by thought and imagination. Their insight makes possible a more abstract level of meaning because it unites two disparate domains and at the same time recognizes the asymmetry between them.

For example, the metaphor "Juliet is the sun" refers in general to Juliet's happy disposition and warm nature, but more specifically to the fact that she is the center of Romeo's universe. However, "her smile lights up the room," moves away from conventional metaphor and makes an association between happiness and brightness — an entrenched conceptual association arising from correlations in experience. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) call such associations primary metaphors. Metaphors can be both verbal and non-verbal.
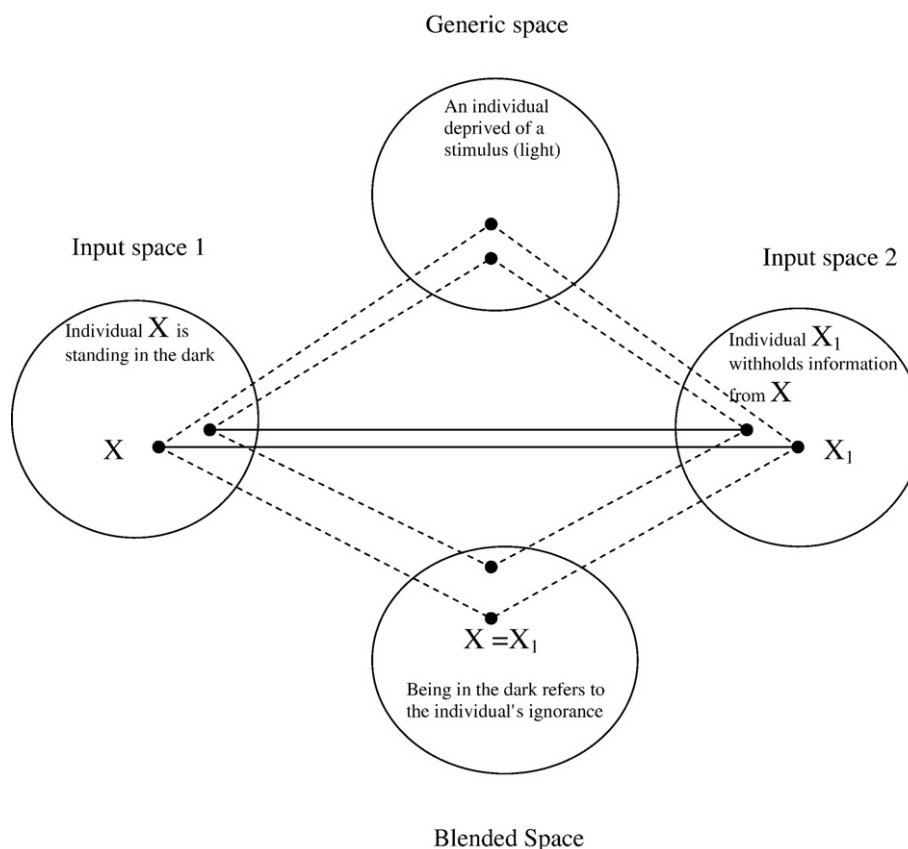

Fig. 1. "I am in the dark on this issue".

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