**Universidad de Valladolid**

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Grado en Estudios Ingleses

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

# Explaining taboo topics. Metaphorical construals of sexuality in children literature. A case study

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2020-2021

**Abstract**

The present study aims at analysing how the taboo topic of sexuality is metaphorically construed in children literature, particularly in picture books. Based on a corpus of nine picture books dealing with sexual education, a case-study has been conducted in which both visual and verbal cues have been analysed. In this multimodal analysis, not only metaphor but also image schemas and metonymy have been taken into account as they play a major role in metaphorical activation. This approach relies on the concept of frames rather than conceptual domains, as frames additionally account for aspects including evaluation and agency. This dissertation presents how the basic aspects of sexuality are metaphorically conceptualised, and how these are generally represented by means of pervasive frames in the chosen texts.

*Keywords*: taboo topic, conceptual metaphor, image schema, metonymy, picture book, frame

**Resumen**

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la construcción metafórica del tema tabú de la sexualidad en la literatura infantil, particularmente en libros álbum. Con base en un corpus de nueve libros álbum sobre educación sexual, se ha llevado a cabo un caso práctico en el que se analizan tanto signos visuales como verbales. En este estudio, no solo se ha abarcado la metáfora sino también esquemas de imagen y la metonimia, al considerar que desempeñan un papel importante en la activación metafórica. Este enfoque se basa en el concepto de marco en lugar de dominios conceptuales, puesto que los marcos explican adicionalmente la presencia de aspectos como evaluación y agencia. Este trabajo presenta cómo los diferentes aspectos de la sexualidad se conceptualizan metafóricamente, así como la representación general de estos por medio de marcos que dominan los textos seleccionados.

*Palabras clave*: tema tabú, metáfora conceptual, esquema de imagen, metonimia, libro álbum, marco

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The pervasiveness of metaphor as a cognitive mechanism has long been recognised, to the extent that more and more linguists do not only talk about metaphors, but rather focus on understanding metaphorical thought. A significant part of the research on metaphor is being done within the field of cognitive linguistics. This branch of study considers that language is one more aspect of cognition together with other psychological phenomena. For this reason, metaphor is not only to be found in language but also in other spheres of the mind, and can consequently be depicted in other communicative modes, including images. This explains the significance of studies on metaphor, as researchers believe the analysis of this cognitive device can give insights into the human mind and its interaction with the social surroundings. Metaphors, as well, are not an end in itself but serve different functions. Amongst those functions, an explanatory one can be found, including easing the understanding of reality to people like young children. This is also the case when explaining taboo topics like sexuality and reproduction. Because of the explanatory power of metaphors, it is considered that analysing the metaphorical construal of sexuality in picture books —where the verbal and the visual modes are combined— might enable, on the one hand, to ascertain the role of metaphor in the construal of taboo topics in children literature, and on the other hand, to assess the extent to which metaphors are multimodal operations.

This dissertation presents a case-study consisting of the in-depth analysis of nine picture books dealing with sexuality and aimed at young children. Its aim is to explore how the metaphorical conceptualisation of sexuality and reproduction is approached in this subgenre, in order to inquire into the extent to which texts rely on basic cognitive devices and patterns to make these topics accessible. Three basic and interrelated cognitive operations can be identified, including metaphors, metonymies and image schemas. The study attempts to find out if there are recurrent framing effects of the metaphorical representation of sexuality in the texts analysed, as well as to determine the cognitive operations used in the metaphorical construal of different aspects of sexuality.

After this introduction, the remaining part of the dissertation is organised as follows: literature review, methodology, analysis and conclusions. The literature review describes basic ideas about children literature and picture books. It also deals with the explanation of basic aspects of metaphor and terminology related to its study. Other cognitive devices that have proved to be crucial for understanding metaphor creation are presented, and further concepts that have been studied in relation to metaphor, including creativity and multimodality, are additionally explained. Finally, taboo topics, particularly in relation to sexuality, are explored, and insights into previous studies are given.

In the methodology section, a description of the corpus is provided, together with an explanation of the method followed to carry out the analysis and an example of how it has been applied. A combination of the MIPVU and VISMET procedures has been followed in order to analyse verbal, visual and multimodal metaphors. In the analysis, the results of the study are presented, including the main frames that have been identified, as well as examples of how these frames are construed metaphorically. In it, examples of each of the texts analysed are to be found. Afterwards, the conclusions of the analysis are presented, and an answer is provided to the research question about the kind of devices used for metaphorical conceptualisation of sexuality in children literature.

This dissertation is connected to some courses in the BA in English Studies. Specifically, it is related to courses on applied linguistics, where conceptual metaphor theory is studied. Furthermore, all the courses on applied linguistics generally emphasise the concepts of genre and communicative situation, which is something essential to consider when compiling a corpus and interpreting real discourse. Finally, this dissertation could also be connected to literature because it addresses a linguistic phenomenon — metaphor— in the literary subgenre of picture books. These belong to the powerful industry of children literature and therefore have a considerable impact on society.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study done in this dissertation is based on a number of theoretical notions, including conceptual metaphor, creativity, multimodality and the relation of these to taboo language and to the study of children literature. Also essential for the study of metaphor has been its relation to the cognitive process of metonymy, often crucial in metaphor activation. The main ideas about it are addressed by Littlemore (2015). This section will start with an overview of the multimodal nature of children narrative. It will then cover aspects about the nature of conceptual metaphor as addressed by authors like Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Elena Semino (2008), among others. Metaphor in this dissertation is discussed from the cognitive perspective, as proposed by the previous authors and Langacker's *Cognitive Grammar* (2008). Closely linked to metaphor is the concept of creativity, as discussed by Rodney Jones (2014) from a general perspective and by Zoltán Kövecses (2010; 2015), who explored metaphorical creativity. The multimodal nature of conceptual metaphor is addressed by Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009), Forceville (2014), Jones (2014), or Kövecses (2002), all of whom leave behind the traditional study of metaphor as a purely textual device. The concept of taboo is explored following Allan and Burridge (2006), who also explore the relation between metaphor and taboo.

To begin with, some aspects of children literature are explored. We could say that "children literature comprises texts addressed to children (among others) by authors who conceptualize young people as a distinct audience, one that requires a form of literature different in kind from that aimed at adults" (Gubar, 2011, p. 209). It has been considered simpler, containing more typical plots and no ambiguities. For Elorza (2021), children books are "multimodal artefacts" –including more than one mode—, a proposal based on Halliday's (2004) and Vandelanotte and Dancygier's (2017) general definition of multimodal artefact. Following these authors, a distinction between picture books and illustrated books has to be made. In the latter, images are instrumental, providing context and "repeating" the verbal text, and they can be longer, e.g. *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 1937). On the contrary, picture books feature a strong interplay between visual and verbal elements, as images reinforce the story by providing information which helps children follow the narration. They are shorter, ranging from what corresponds to thirty to forty

pages[1]. An example would be *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Eric Carle, 1969). Picture books tend to have an educational purpose and, as Elorza argues, they could be an effective way of tackling controversial topics. One of the numerous ways in which picture books deal with these topics is by the use of metaphors because they help express concepts by means of a different one which is easier to explain. For example, a study on adoption narratives in picture books (Calvo-Maturana, 2020) showed how metaphors are an essential tool for the construction of discourses on adoption.

The notion of conceptual metaphor is first proposed by Lakoff and Johnson in their influential book, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). In it, they try to challenge the traditional relation of metaphor to unnecessary aesthetic effects (p. 3), and its consideration as a matter of form rather than content. They claim, on the contrary, that our conceptual system is metaphorical in nature because whenever we talk about a concept, we structure our knowledge of it through a different one (p. 5). Semino (2008) describes conceptual metaphor as "[t]he cognitive phenomenon whereby one conceptual domain (the target domain) is understood in terms of another (the source domain)" (p. 226). A conceptual domain is knowledge about a particular aspect of experience, which can encompass vast networks of concepts related to each other (p. 226). For Langacker, a metaphor is a "set of connections among a source space, a target space, and a blended space" (2008, p. 51). The connections between the target and source space (or domain) are called mappings.

While metaphor allows us to construe something in terms of something else, metonymy is said to serve a more "referential" purpose (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 36). What differentiates metonymy from metaphor, though, is that metonymy profiles an aspect of the target using a source somehow related to it by "contiguity" (Littlemore, 2015, p. 4), while metaphor's source and target are related by "similarity" (p. 14), in principle having no previous relation which could have helped us make the connection.

For Langacker (2008), all linguistic expressions are "specific assemblies," while "schematic assemblies" are abstracted representations of shared aspects among expressions,

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[1] As many picture books do not have page numbers, sometimes the term "opening" is used, i.e. two adjoining pages.

so that we use them as a "template" for future ones with the same pattern (p. 168). Conceptual metaphors can also be seen as schematic assemblies as one metaphor is applied to two different conceptual domains by virtue of the shared structure between the domains. A metaphor would therefore be used or not depending on how well the experiential situation fits the 'template' in our conceptual system. Linked to this is the notion of image schema, a "schematic representation of activity that is built up from our everyday sensory experience (e.g., vision, touch, movement, force and balance) and through which we understand our conceptual world" (Giovanelli & Harrison, 2018, p. 12). Commonly identified image schemas are, for instance, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL or CONTAINER. Indeed, for Langacker and other cognitive linguists, meaning is not "propositional" but "imagistic," i.e. arising from image schemas by abstracting basic bodily actions (2008, p. 32).

When we use a metaphor, we are not merely mapping characteristics of one entity onto the ones of another, but we actually construe a concept in a certain way in our minds. Construal is defined by Langacker (2008) as "one of the countless ways of conceiving and portraying the situation in question" (p. 4). That there are different ways of understanding an expression, or "usage event" (Langacker, 2008, p. 17), makes figurative language important because metaphor construes a concept in one of the innumerable ways in which it could be represented.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that some concepts are "best understood as an experiential gestalt … -a whole that we human beings find more basic than the parts" (1980, p. 69-70). Thus, though we consider many everyday concepts to be basic, they are in fact unconsciously —and more easily— understood as a whole made up of many other concepts. It has been deemed possible to define concepts with a mere description, an idea called the "dictionary view of linguistic semantics" (Langacker, 2008, p. 38). However, Langacker describes how "[a]n alternative view, metaphorically referred to as encyclopedic semantics, is generally adopted in cognitive linguistics" (p. 39): concepts are understood as domains of information, triggered when using an expression in context. In metaphors, we map characteristics of two different conceptual domains (see Lakoff & Jonson, 1980, p. 78). From this encyclopaedic view stems the importance of metonymy, which also arises

because "it is impossible to encapsulate all aspects of our intended meaning in the language that we use" (Littlemore, 2015, p. 4). By using it, the conceptualiser[2] profiles only part of the meaning that can be activated. Metaphor, as well, "highlights" some aspects of a domain and "hides" others (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 10), an idea which is related to the concept of 'framing.'

Frames are regular ways of representing a particular concept by focusing on certain aspects and which are socially shared by a group of people (Charteris-Black, 2019, p. 16). Thus, when a metaphor uses a certain source domain, we can say it 'frames' the target domain in a particular way. That frames are in a "sub-domain level" (Semino et al., 2018, pp. 628) means that one domain can contain different frames, each one of them conceptualising the domain in different ways. For example, crime can be framed by the use of metaphors related to "beasts" or to "viruses," and this has consequences on how people might try to tackle the problem: either by "capturing" it (if it is framed by "beast" metaphors) or "treating" it (if it is a "virus") (Charteris-Black, 2019, p. 16). Therefore, the difference between a domain and a frame is that the domain is the area of knowledge that is used to construe something else, while the frame refers to how this domain is subjectively represented in a particular case. Analysing from the point of view of frames is useful as it enables an account not only of metaphors, but also other devices, and allows us to make connections between apparently unrelated metaphors and metonymies.

Experiential gestalts imply that metaphor is an embodied cognitive process in which language use results from bodily experiences, and our interaction with the environment and with others (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 117). Some metaphorical concepts are ingrained in different cultures by virtue of this embodiment: "orientational metaphors," related to spatial orientation, and "ontological metaphors", related to our physical experience with objects (p. 25). To this we can add the notion of primary metaphor, which arises from "basic events" (physical) in our life that are then associated to certain cognitive responses through our repeated interaction in the world and thus result in a "conceptual binding" between them (Grady, 1997, pp. 20-26). The encyclopaedic view of meaning accounts not only for the

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[2] i.e. "the speaker/ writer and hearer/reader" (Giovanelli & Harrison, 2018, p. 34).

existence of conceptual metaphors, including domains with several intrinsic characteristics, but also for the range of contexts in which a particular conceptual metaphor is prone to occur. From this view of knowledge, we can also agree that "[t]he metaphorical structuring of concepts is necessarily partial" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 52) and "seldom neutral" (Semino, 2008, pp. 32-33). Related to this point of view is Langacker's claim that "meaning is not identified with concepts but with conceptualization" (2008, p. 30), that is, meaning is dynamic. Though we rely on previous knowledge about conceptual metaphors, we also re-elaborate what we know about a concept in each given occasion of use.

Apart from the nature of metaphor, we can ascertain its functions. For Lakoff and Johnson, "[t]he essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (1980, p. 5), that is, it has a referential function (p. 36), as we use it to relate to another reality. Additionally, metaphor serves an analogical function because we associate and abstract similarities between two concepts through mappings. For Semino (2008), the functions of metaphor in discourse are the "representation of reality," equivalent to Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) referential function; the "interpersonal" function, related to the "construction of personal and social relationships"; and the "textual" function, referring to "the construction of texts as coherent units of language use" (pp. 30-32), for instance, through the use of extended metaphors. All these functions of metaphor are shared with metonymy (Littlemore, 2015, p. 91).

Metaphors may trigger different points of view about reality (Semino, 2008, p. 218) which result from multiple conceptualisations of a single concept. These possibilities may have social effects and may eventually change the "orders of discourse" by a shift in the participants' relation, in the ways of conceiving things, and in social beliefs (Jones, 2014, p. 9). Lakoff and Johnson claim that we talk about a concept metaphorically "because we conceive of [it] that way-and we act according to the way we conceive of things" (1980, p. 5). This assertion is key to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, as it suggests that expressions are the realisation of what is already in our minds. Nevertheless, this conceptual system could be changed by the expressions used, so that we can distinguish between more physical and more cultural aspects of experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 57).

One of the key concepts that has been studied in relation to metaphor is creativity. So far, we have discussed the pervasiveness of conceptual metaphor in language and cognition, but unconventional metaphors can create new meanings and social realities. Notwithstanding, the question arises of whether there can be a genuinely creative metaphor. The concept of creativity has been approached from many different perspectives that range from more "product-based" approaches, focusing strictly on the text; to those centred on people (Jones, 2014, p. 3), arguing that creativity resides in the individual. Sociocultural studies have paid attention to creative processes as occurring not only individually but also through people's interaction with their surroundings, society and culture (Jones, 2014, p. 3). Thus, we can generally distinguish between the cognitive account of creativity, focusing on the individual, and the sociocultural view, which focuses on our interaction.

The extent to which a conceptual metaphor can be used in a creative or unconventional way has much to do with context, and there are different views on how metaphor may depend on it. For Kövecses (2015), the creative act resides in the context where we choose to express the metaphor and the purpose we are trying to achieve with it. Kövecses considers that the main contextual aspects contributing to creativity are:

> (1) [t]he immediate physical setting, (2) what we know about the major entities participating in the discourse, (3) the immediate cultural context, (4) the immediate social setting, and (5) the immediate linguistic context itself. (2015, p. 97)

He argues that these contextual factors work jointly in metaphor production, so a proper account of metaphorical creativity must include both conceptual and "context-induced" metaphors (2015, pp. 112-114). His principle of the "pressure of coherence" (p. 115) proposes that when producing a metaphor we are constrained both by our body and by the context in which the expression takes place, and this has a role in creativity. This is the case of metonymy as well (Littlemore, 2015, p. 73). Though metonymy is probably even more based on embodied cognition than metaphor, it also relies by definition on profiling one aspect of a concept, which is often based on the particular context of communication. In a study on the interrelation between basic conceptual metaphors and context in poetry (Rasse et al., 2020), the authors conclude that even though in a more "literary" text readers strongly rely on conceptual metaphor for its interpretation, this identification of meaning is

also significantly affected by the poem's co-text.

In their account of truth, Lakoff & Johnson claim that metaphor combines reason and imagination (1980, pp. 192-193), overthrowing the idea of metaphor as a completely subjective device. Semino argues that conventionality and creativity tend to interact in metaphor use (2008, p. 1), something true not only of poetic language, but also of scientific discourse. For her, there is no clear way of distinguishing literary language from non-literary language, as both are "a cultural and social construct" (2008, p. 42). Jones agrees that creativity is something to be found in everyday language (2014, p. 2), because aspects associated to literature are also commonly employed in everyday English. Thus, creative acts are strongly related to the use of conventional metaphors, and we can also say this of metonymy, because it is argued that we also think metonymically (Littlemore, 2015, p. 1).

Another cognitive approach to creativity has been proposed by Charles Forceville, who has focused on multimodal metaphor in advertising (2014). He considers that creativity occurs when a "maker" looks for a solution to a problem (p. 113), and that creativity is the key to a metaphor's success. For him, creativity does not arise from the content we are conveying, but from its form, which can involve different modes (p. 114). Both Forceville and Toolan (Jones, 2014) conclude that creativity arises when something we know is produced in an unexpected form. Kövecses agrees with this view by describing metaphorical creativity as "the production and use of conceptual metaphors and/or their linguistic manifestations that are novel or unconventional" (2015, p. 97). Therefore, creativity is linked to other elements or modes apart from the textual, and sometimes the key for a metaphor to be successful in its purpose is the particular use of these modes.

The relation between multimodal discourse and metaphor thus has to be explored. The role of non-verbal modes has recently gained attention. For Jones (2014), discourse study has traditionally been "logocentric," but today we have come to see "all meaning making as essentially 'multimodal'" (p. 109), also in the study of metaphor. Understanding metaphor hence requires real occurrences in discourse, which can be related to non-linguistic modes (Semino, 2008, p. 217).

The importance of multimodality has led some authors to overthrow textual

occurrences as the only focus of discourse analysis.  Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009) describe multimodal metaphors as "metaphors whose target and source are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes" (pp. 23-24). Though it is complicated to define the notion of mode, it can include "(1) written language; (2) spoken language; (3) static and moving images; (4) music; (5) non-verbal sound; (6) gestures". Though metaphors can include these modes, in this dissertation we will focus on the verbal and visual ones. Other authors like Kövecses (2002) agree that, given the conceptual nature of metaphors, they should also occur in non-textual instances, including cartoons, drawings (pp. 57-58), or children literature (Calvo-Maturana, 2020), amongst others.

When talking about "non-verbal modes of communicating," Forceville and Urios-Aparisi claim that we have to look at the means by which the similarity between domains is created (2009, p. 32). This is nonetheless difficult to apply to non-verbal cues as they do not have the "A IS (LIKE) B format" of verbal metaphors (p. 32). Some aspects that can trigger this similarity are: "perceptual resemblance" (in size, colour, posture, etc.); "filling a schematic slot unexpectedly," which refers to the placement of a thing in an environment normally occupied by a different thing, so that the absent one is evoked; and "simultaneous cueing," that is, the simultaneous appearance of two things in different modes (p. 32). Like metaphor, metonymy can also occur in multimodal discourse (Littlemore, 2015, p. 65) because it is a pervasive cognitive process. In this way, metonymy operates in the textual and visual level and sometimes its activation is crucial for the creation of a metaphor.

It is likely that a metaphor's ambiguous manner of conceptualising ideas is exploited with the purpose of avoiding the direct expression of socially uncomfortable topics, commonly called taboo topics. According to Allan and Burridge (2006) "a taboo is a proscription of behaviour that affects everyday life," like "bodies and their effluvia" and "the organs and acts of sex, micturition and defecation" (p. 1). Direct references to a taboo topic are systematically avoided, and other means of expression are sought for expressing it indirectly. However, it is often context that determines the understanding of the topic as a taboo, as the expression's appropriateness to cultural conventions is subject to contextual aspects including the participants' relationship, audience, or topic (p. 30). The authors thus

conclude that "[t]aboo refers to a proscription of behaviour for a specifiable community …, at a specifiable time, in specifiable contexts" (Allan & Burridge, 2006, p. 11).

When discussing the linguistic expression of taboos, Allan and Burridge distinguish among three concepts. First, an "orthophemism" is the neutral and direct name of a concept, e.g. "toilet" or "menstruate"; secondly, a euphemism (e.g. "loo," "have a period") and its counterpart, the dysphemism (e.g. "shithouse," "bleed"), are "more colloquial and figurative than orthophemisms" (2006, pp. 32-33). They claim that taboos often lead to the use of figurative devices including metaphor to avoid mentioning certain aspects directly (p. 7). Thus, they argue that "taboos drive the renewal of language" (p. 174), forcing people to be creative verbally and in other modes, including images and drawings.

The study of metaphor as a way of expressing taboo topics is not new. It has been claimed that "taboos can be studied according to the metaphors that they generate and the conceptual networks in which these are included," and that "sexual taboos can be analysed in terms of conceptual metaphors" (Crespo-Fernández, 2006, p. 35). Crespo-Fernández studies metaphors as a device whose final interpretation can be euphemistic or dysphemistic, a process in which the participation of both conceptualisers plays a crucial role (2008, p. 105). The final metaphor either mitigates or reinforces the negative connotations of the concept, which are further connected to the source domain chosen for conceptualisation (2008, p. 103). The possible connotations are also determined by how the concept is actually construed, and the use of conceptual metaphors, which significantly helps overcoming the ambiguity of the metaphorical expression (2008, p. 108).

In this section of the dissertation, we have explored the defining aspects of conceptual metaphor as a pervasive cognitive and cultural process. Likewise, metonymy has also been argued to play a role in enabling metaphorical activation. The view of conceptual domains as complex networks of information leads to the convenience of studying metaphor from the point of view of frames, as well as in texts rather than isolated sentences or images. This justifies the choice of picture books as the object of analysis in this dissertation. The creative nature of metaphor suggests its pervasiveness in texts aimed at transmitting information both clearly and amusingly, such as children literature. In this

genre, the study of metaphor is inherently multimodal, as one of its subgenres, picture books, relies simultaneously on verbal and visual cues. Finally, sexuality, a taboo topic *par excellence*, relies on figurative language as it aims at avoiding the explicit expression of certain aspects while also easing their explanation. Following the theoretical descriptions included in this section, in this dissertation we analyse the metaphorical conceptualisation of sexuality and reproduction in sex education picture books.

## 3.  METHODOLOGY

The present section describes the selected texts for the analysis and the procedure followed. The sample used for the study consists of nine picture books, whose content was checked to ensure they met the following selection criteria:

- Genre: picture books, with verbal and visual elements in their narratives and whose number of pages ranges from 22 to 32. When the book has numbered pages, we will cite them, and when it does not, we will refer to openings.
- Target reader: children from three to eight years of age approximately according to Sex Ed Rescue and other websites' ratings.
- Aim: sexual education. All the analysed books have been written as an educational tool and include narrative elements because they mostly relate a story. In this way, they can be seen as teaching books with some characteristics of fiction narratives.
- Topic: reproduction and sexuality. Some books focus on sexuality, reproduction, or include both aspects. Sexuality involves the body, both as an exploration of the self or as an interpersonal activity, while reproduction involves bodily processes.
- Year of publication: publication dates range from 1995 to 2019. This could render results about diachronic variation in the texts' metaphorical conceptualisation.
- Language: all books are originally written in English.

The books' suitability was consulted in Sex Ed Rescue (Hakanson, 2019), a site containing resources to talk to children about sex. The site is run by a sexual educator, and a classification of books is provided. Some of them were consulted in The Sexual Health Company (2020) and Ruby Tuesday Books (2017). With those criteria in mind, nine books were selected for the analysis. In table 1, information about each text can be found. In

contrast to the other books, *What's the Big Secret?* is recommended for older children, so this has to be borne in mind when dealing with the conceptualisation of sexual aspects.

Table 1

*Description of corpus of analysis*

| Author | Title | General topic | Age recommendation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Smith, 1997 | *How are Babies Made?* | Reproduction. It explains fertilisation, the baby's growth during gestation, and birth. | 5-7 |
| Allan, 2006 | *Where Willy Went* | Reproduction. It tells the story of a sperm who trains for the Great Swimming Race in order to win the ovum. | 5-8 |
| Brown and Brown, 2000 | *What's the Big Secret?* | Sexuality and reproduction. This book explains bodily and gender differences between boys and girls, and explains intercourse, pregnancy and birth. | 6-9 |
| Waldron, 2019 | *That's My Willy* | Sexuality. This book addresses the topic of male genitals. Its aim is to teach them not to feel ashamed, and to set boundaries with theirs and other people's bodies. | 3+ |
| Waldron, 2019 | *What's Down There?* | Sexuality. This book explains what the female genitals are. It teaches children not to feel ashamed of their body and focuses on keeping privacy. | 3+ |
| Cole, 1995 | *Mummy Laid an Egg!* | Reproduction. The parents of two children tell them how babies are made. They invent unbelievable stories, so the children decide to explain them the truth. | 5-7 |
| Saltz, 2008 | *Amazing You!* | Sexuality and reproduction. It explains the reproductive parts, fertilisation and birth, so that children accept their body. | 4-8 |
| Silverberg, 2012 | *What Makes a Baby* | Reproduction. This book explains fertilisation, pregnancy and birth. It is devised as a help for parents to addressing sexuality without tackling sexual intercourse. | 4-7 |
| Blackall, 2014 | *The Baby Tree* | Reproduction. It is a story told by a boy who is going to have a brother and wonders where babies come from. He obtains different accounts and finally learns the truth from his parents. | 4-7 |

In the study, verbal, visual and multimodal metaphors have been analysed departing from the MIPVU procedure (Steen et al., 2010, p. 8), dealing with linguistic metaphor and the identification of single lexical items as "potentially" metaphoric. This method departs from the search for a contrast between a lexical unit's basic and contextual meaning; a contrast related to comparison. While several methods for textual metaphor identification can be found in the literature, procedures for visual metaphors are scarcer. There is, however, a corpus of visual metaphors called VISMET (n.d.), by Metaphor Lab (University of Amsterdam), a project that proposes an annotation scheme for visual metaphor analysis including the possibility of verbal elements. In this dissertation, adaptations of the MIPVU and VISMET procedures have been followed to cover the analysis of multimodal cueing in the chosen texts. The example below exemplifies the procedure:
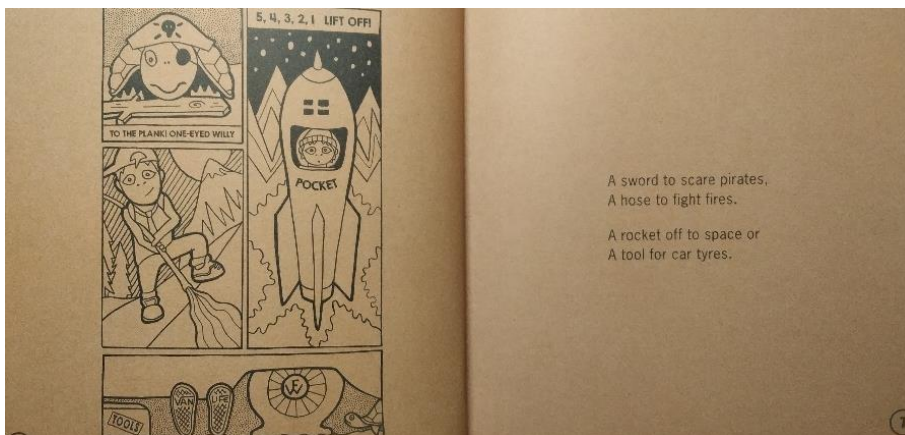


Figure 1. Waldron, A. (2019a). *That's my Willy*, edited by Ruth Owen and Mark J. Sachner, Ruby Tuesday Books Ltd, pp. 6-7.

If we look at the example in figure 1, the annotation procedure has been as follows:

1. Metaphor-related words are found examining the text word-by-word. For this, we

   a) Identify the contextual meaning of the lexical units. Here, "sword," "hose," "rocket" and "tool for car tyres" refer to the penis. This relies on co-textual marks –textual or visual. In this case, the narrator was previously talking about the penis.

   b) Check if the lexical unit has a more basic meaning by using dictionaries. According to *MacMillan Dictionary* (Macmillan Publishing Company, n.d.), a sword is

"a weapon with a short handle and a long sharp blade;" a hose is "a very long tube for carrying water to a garden or a fire;" and a rocket here refers to "a vehicle shaped like a tube that travels in space…" A similar process is done with the images, which have been also named. Similarities and differences between images and textual cues are likewise noted.

c) Examine whether the lexical unit's contextual meaning can be related to the more basic meaning by similarity. According to Steen et al., "[t]his typically happens because they capitalize on external or functional resemblances (attributes and relations) between the concepts they designate." (p. 37). A penis is similar to a sword, a tool for tyres and a hose in shape; and to a rocket in shape and function.

d) We also consider words signalling a cross-domain mapping, i.e. "metaphor flags" (Steen et al., p. 26), e.g. *like*, *as if*, etc. In the case under study, none was found.

2.     Following what is called the "expression level" of the VISMET project, the visuals are examined. This implies deciding whether depictions in the image contain:

a) Symbols, i.e. "a conventionalized visual sign that would trigger that specific concept also in absence of other contextual cues" (VISMET, n.d.). A visual metaphor has symbols if the source, target, or context needed to understand it is represented by a symbol. Whether an image represents a symbol is checked from the list provided in the annotation procedure. In this case, no symbol was found.

b) "Linguistic familiarity" —i.e. "representing visually an idiomatic expression, or using a verbal anchor that works as a key for understanding the image" (VISMET, n.d.). For this, we name the most salient visual units and search them in a dictionary of idioms (Farlex, n.d.). If an idiom matches the image, we mark it for linguistic familiarity as it represents a linguistic expression. In respect of the example under study, the word 'hose' is sometimes used to refer to the penis.

3.     In the analysis, attention has been drawn to frames as playing a role in metaphorical conceptualisation. Semino et al. (2018) claim that "framing" includes aspects like "agency, evaluation, and emotion" (p. 627). In this case, the sword, the hose and the tool for car tyres show that their user has agency, so the man's actions are profiled. For the four objects, we

could say that a movement/path frame is used because visually the hose is expelling water, and the rocket is lifting off, while the function of the sword and the tool for car tyres implicitly requires movement. Therefore, apart from a movement frame, a tool frame is also used because agency is profiled. These metaphors are activated by visual similarity between the objects and the organ, as well as the MOVEMENT schema related to their use.

## 4. ANALYSIS

Regarding the books' subject matter, two broad topics have been distinguished: sexuality and reproduction (see table 2). This lies on a distinction between entities, i.e. people and bodily functions (related to nouns); and processes, related to verbs and hence involving action. In relation to the latter, sexual intercourse is explicitly covered in one of the books, *Mummy Laid an Egg!* It shall be noted that this is also the oldest analysed text. Once identified, metaphors have been classified according to whether they arise from verbal, visual, or multimodal cues. In total, 46 conceptual metaphors were identified, the majority being multimodal (35), while ten are verbal, and one is visual. This is to be expected because in picture books images strongly contribute to the narration. Additionally, mappings were classified according to the aspect of sexuality focused upon. As shown in table 3, eight main target domains have been identified.

Table 2

*Topic of the books*

| Book | General topic |
|---|---|
| *How are Babies Made?* (1997) | Reproduction |
| *Where Willy Went* (2006) | Reproduction |
| *What's the Big Secret?* (2000) | Sexuality and reproduction |
| *That's My Willy* (2019) | Sexuality |
| *What's Down There?* (2019) | Sexuality |
| *Mummy Laid an Egg!* (1995) | Sexuality and reproduction |
| *Amazing You!* (2008) | Sexuality and reproduction |
| *What Makes a Baby* (2012) | Reproduction |
| *The Baby Tree* (2014) | Reproduction |

Table 3

*Number of occurrences according to mapping*

| Target domain | Number of occurrences |
|---|---|
| Reproductive cells | 3 |
| Fertilisation | 4 |
| Birth | 4 |
| Baby/foetus | 6 |
| Pregnancy | 7 |
| Genitals | 16 |
| Sexual intercourse | 4 |
| Genes | 2 |
|  | Total: 46 |

After considering the target domains and exploring which source domains are chosen for each case, these were organised into frames. The following main frames have been identified: (1) Water/swimming/sea, (2) plant, (3) animal, (4) love relationships, (5) treasure, (6) container, (7) movement/path, (8) food, and (9) tools. An explanation of each frame is provided below.

Several instances of the water/sea/swimming frame have been identified. In Smith (1997, p. 9) a baby inside a womb is metaphorically portrayed as a fish in a plastic bag, and this is verbally cued by "the liquid in the womb keeps the baby safe," "the baby," "the womb," and "a plastic bag." Visually, there is a plastic bag with water and a fish inside, so the metaphor is activated through the CONTAINER image schema.

Though in the previous example the water/sea/swimming frame is used to conceptualise pregnancy, being thus based on a CONTAINER schema, other instances focus on the process of fertilisation. In *Where Willy Went*, we find the multimodal extended metaphor FERTILISATION IS A SWIMMING RACE. The use of the PART-FOR-WHOLE metonymy SPERM FOR MAN activates this metaphor throughout the text, as the sperm takes on the qualities of a person, including facial features and the name Willy. For this reason, he also lives in a city which is a testicle (opening 2), he goes to school (opening 3), and trains for a race, among other examples. In opening 3, the water/sea/swimming frame starts to be activated by the textual cues "swimming," "Great Swimming Race" and "practised," as

well as the image of sperm swimming. Consequently, sperm are conceptualised as people through metonymy and further framed as swimmers in a competition attempting to fertilise the egg. Swimming also serves for framing sexual intercourse, which is presented as the starting point of the race. We see this in opening 6 (reproduced in figure 2), with the verbal cues "Mr and Mrs Browne joined together," "the teacher cried, "go!"" and "The Great Swimming race began," as well as the image of a bed and speech bubbles. As reproduction is construed with a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema, intercourse is represented as the initial point of this schema.
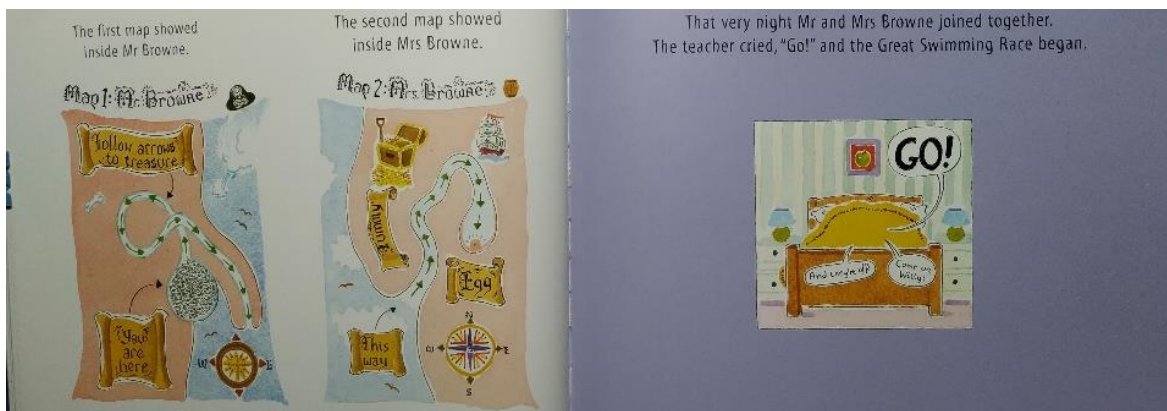


Figure 2. Allan, N. (2006) *Where Willy Went*. Random House Publishing UK, opening 6.

In the next opening (7) the "path" is represented visually with the sperm swimming toward the goal. Finally, the "goal" is reached visually when one sperm gets to the egg with the "finish" sign, and textually with "he was the BEST at swimming". So, a mapping is created between the first sperm reaching (and fertilising) the ovum and the winner of a race. The CONTAINER schema is therefore used to introduce the main character and its location to the reader, while the MOVEMENT schema is used for events in the narration.

Opening 6 (figure 2, left) also shows a multimodal metaphor relying on the same water/sea/swimming frame, which could be called AN OVULE IS A TREASURE. Apart from the verbal cue "two maps" (opening 5), we find "the first map showed inside Mr Browne," "the second map showed inside Mrs Browne," "follow the arrows to treasure" and "you are here", and the words "this way" and "egg" (opening 6). The visual cues are a compass, arrows pointing toward the egg through both bodies, a ship, clouds and birds outside of

them, and finally a skull with a black background (this is a cue that it might be a pirate treasure). The metaphor relies on a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema, beginning from the male toward the female body, while the CONTAINER image schema represents the bodies as containers. This connection between both schemas could be represented as in figure 3.
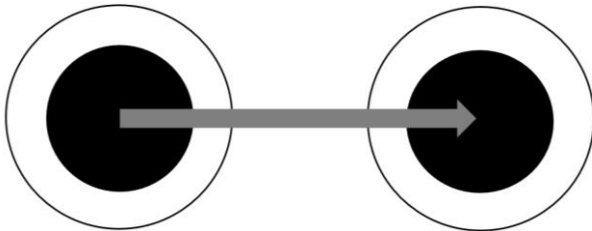


Figure 3. *Interplay between the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL and the CONTAINER image schema.*

The next frame that has been identified is that of plants. In Blackall (2014), there could be a main metaphor representing pregnancy as gardening, seen from the title of the book, *The Baby Tree*. The frame is used in a multimodal way in opening 4, where the textual cues are "plant a seed" and "Baby Tree," and the image shows a tree with babies, associating them with fruits, and getting pregnant with planting a tree. The thought bubble shows a "conduit" metaphor, by which ideas are objects able to be contained in the mind — considered a CONTAINER—, so communication is the transmission of ideas between containers (Kövecses, 2002, p. 74). This happens throughout the rest of the book as a co-textual device to differentiate real events from what the boy imagines.
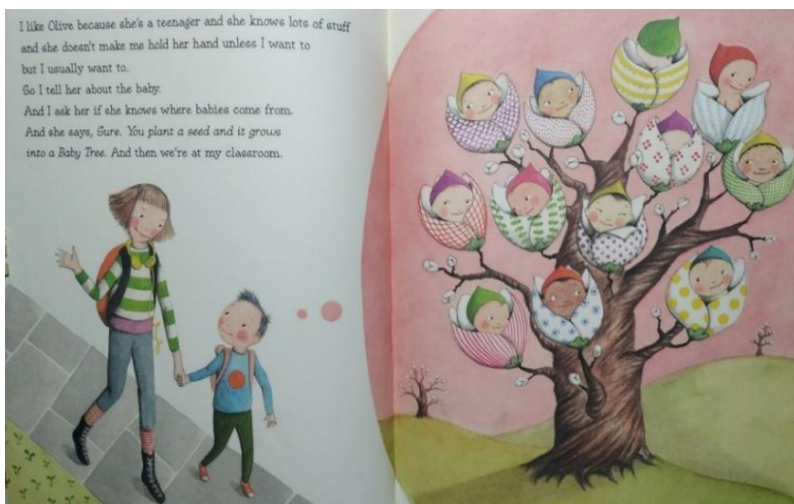


Figure 4. Blackall, S. (2014) *The Baby Tree*. New York, Penguin Group, opening 4.

We also find the plant frame in *Mummy Laid an Egg* (figure 5), verbally cued by "grow them [the babies]," "seeds," "pots," and "greenhouse." We see pots with plants and babies blooming from them, and next to the pots, there are bags and boxes reading, "baby seeds, and "baby plant food," as well as a watering can. Overall, we could argue that this is a multimodal metaphor relating babies with fruits, and the sentence "you can grow them from seeds…" relates gardening with making a baby and emphasises the agency of parents, who are involved in a creation process. The CONTAINER image schema shows a similarity between a womb and the pots, while the UP-DOWN schema is related to the idea of growth.



"You can grow them from seeds in pots in the greenhouse," said mum.
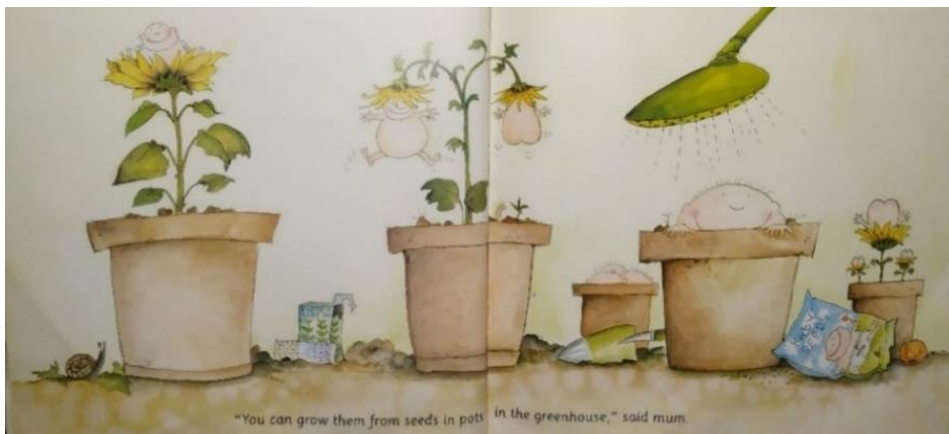
Figure 5. Cole, B. (1995). *Mummy Laid an Egg!* London, Random House Children's Books, opening 5.

It has also been observed that an animal frame could be used to conceptualise different aspects. In *Mummy Laid an Egg!* mappings are found between being pregnant and laying an egg, cued by the very title, and visually (figure 6) by the family looking at the egg. Pregnancy in a womb is mapped to animals growing inside eggs, activated by a CONTAINER image schema. We could argue this is an extended multimodal metaphor by which people are birds. In the following opening (figure 7), being born is "shooting out" of the egg, showing a MOVEMENT schema. Visually, the egg hatches, the word "BANG!" appears and the babies fly out. In this sense, animals are used to frame pregnancy and birth, but while for pregnancy this is realised through a CONTAINER schema, birth is related to MOVEMENT.
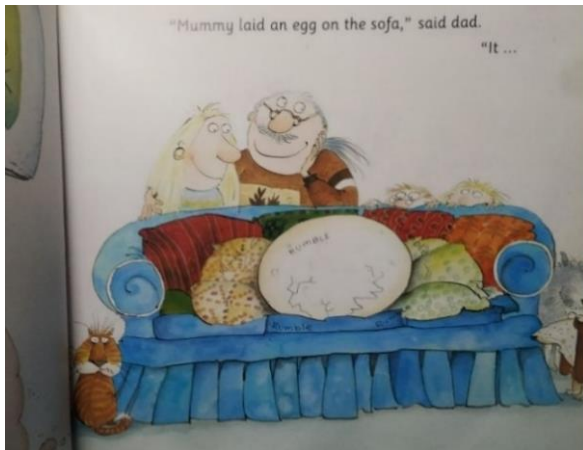
Figure 6. Cole, B. (1995). *Mummy Laid an Egg!* London, Random House Children's Books, opening 6.
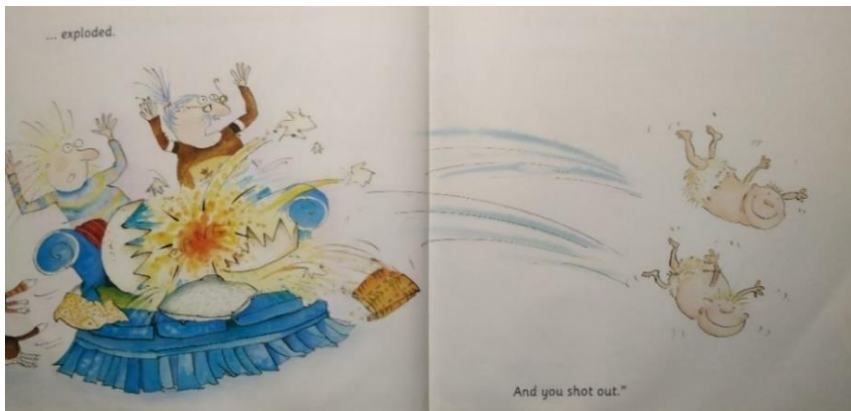


Figure 7. Cole, B. (1995). *Mummy Laid an Egg!* London, Random House Children's Books, opening 7.

Continuing with Cole (1995), the animal frame could be also found in opening 3 (left) in figure 8, where babies are represented as garden animals. Here, the words "made from slugs and snails" and the image of the father in a soil filled with snails, slugs and small babies, one of which he is taking up with a shovel, connect the babies with the other creatures. The metaphorical activation BABIES ARE ANIMALS results from the similarity in size between the entities and from their shared location. In opening 3 (left), being born is metaphorically related to being delivered home by a dinosaur, which is not only visually but also textually made explicit. There is arguably also a mapping between parents expecting a baby and parents expecting the dinosaur to come because the couple is at the

doorstep looking at the scene. Birth is metaphorically conceptualised with a movement schema, because when a baby is born we say that it "comes" or "arrives," and movement is part of the semantic scope of the word "delivered."



Figure 8. Cole, B. (1995). *Mummy Laid an Egg!* London, Random House Children's Books, opening 3.

Another frame identified for various metaphoric conceptualisations is that of love relationships. Beginning with Silverberg (2012), we could say that there is a multimodal metaphor which could be called GENETIC INFORMATION IS A LIFE STORY that is conceptualised by using a love relationship. This frame connects the sperm with the man's memories and the ovule with the woman's memories, and in turn conceptualises the union of both cells as a love relationship. First, the story maps genetic material inside the ovum and the woman's memories (figure 9) with the verbal cues "stories" and "the body the egg came from." The last cue shows that the metaphoric connection is related to an OVULE FOR PERSON metonymy, by which the CONTAINED (ovum) stands for its CONTAINER (woman). Inside the drawing of the egg we find visual representations of a film tape with images of a woman, a DNA molecule, a tree with notes hanging from it, a puppet theatre and an open book. There is a visual similarity between the DNA chain and the chain of images in the film tape, and we can associate the growing plant with a growing body. The involvement of DNA in genes is less salient than the person's real experiences in the world because it is cued once and only visually.

Figure 9. Silverberg, C. (2012) *What Makes a Baby*. Triangle Square, opening 3.

Related to this metaphor we additionally observe the mapping between genetic information inside the sperm and the man's memories (figure 10), verbally explicit in "stories" and "the body the sperm came from," and visually in the portrayal of different epochs, an open book, a tree stump, snowflakes, and a DNA molecule. As in the ovum, there is here a metonymy relating the sperm with the person whose stories are being told and shown. Though the whole metaphor is activated through a CONTAINER image schema, it can be argued that there is MOVEMENT in the lines in the background of the sperm, which is precisely the entity which moves toward the egg.



Figure 10. Silverberg, C. (2012) *What Makes a Baby*. Triangle Square, opening 5.

To finish with, a mappings is created between the fertilised ovule and the stories of both man and woman (figure 11). The verbal cues include the expressions "they are not two things anymore," "shared so much," and "one brand new thing." The visual cues are images inside the ovule combining both the sperm and the ovule's content, which cues the idea of

shared stories. This sharing is thus profiled by the visual blend between both parts of the story, male and female, placed in a container. This third container seems to activate the idea of a new being –a future baby– in which genetic features (metaphorically conceptualised as stories) of the father and the mother— are visually and textually combined. In this case, fertilisation is a process of creation in which the parents share agency by sharing their memories. As in the other mappings, the fertilised ovule is a CONTAINER image schema which relies on a metonymic PART-FOR-WHOLE relation between the ovum and the body. Thus, there is a conceptual blend between the two original metaphoric associations, egg/woman and sperm/man, and their combination into a new entity where the stories/genetic information of both originating entities are included.
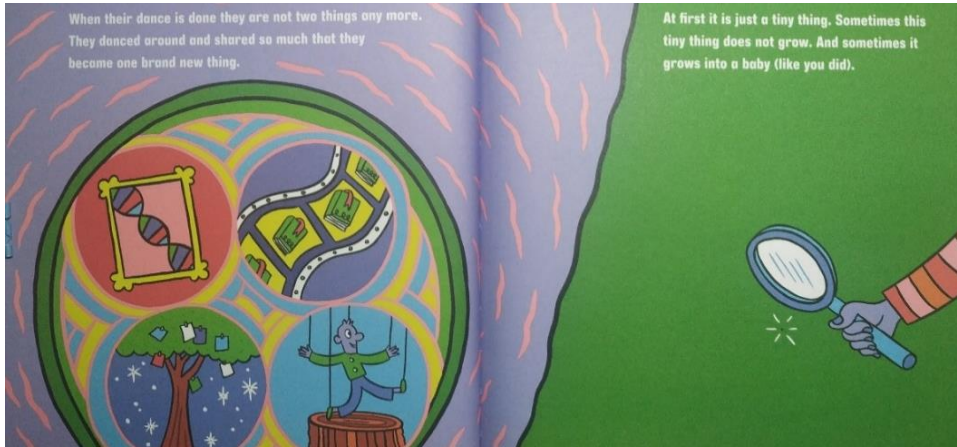


Figure 11. Silverberg, C. (2012) *What Makes a Baby*. Triangle Square, opening 10.

In *Amazing You* (Saltz, 2008), there is a mapping between intercourse and love (opening 12), cued by "when a man and a woman love each other" and "decide that they want to have a baby," and visually by a heart —metonymic symbol for love— surrounding the egg and sperm. This activates a similarity between them and the baby by virtue of the CONTAINER image schema, and the hearts in both images further cue this conceptual connection. The sperm and egg are metonymic for the couple because the text refers to the people while the image shows the cells greeting each other. They are also metaphoric because the heart surrounding them profiles love as the cause of the union, and therefore they could be said to be conceptualised as a couple in love.
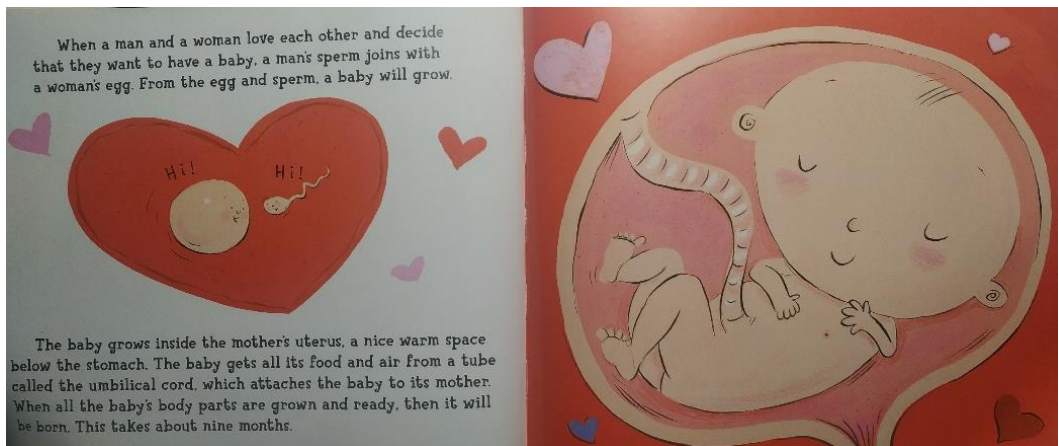
Figure 12. Saltz, G. (2008). *Amazing You!* Penguin Group, opening 11.

Another frame that was identified was the treasure, where the example above (THE OVULE IS A TREASURE, in Allan, 2006) can be included. In Waldron's *What's Down There?* the treasure frame contributes to answering the question posed in the book's title and is used as an analogy for the female genital organ. This is textually cued via references to "an oyster with a precious pearl inside," "mysterious cave below the tide," and "treasure chest" (in pages 8-9), with co-textual visual activations. The narrative is constructed as a dialogue between children and their grandmother, who uses a number of analogical metaphorical expressions to explain to children the biological configuration of female genitals. In page 17, the grandmother calls them "my little explorers," in page 25 masturbation is equated to "exploring one's body," and in page 13 the girl is holding a map. Though these mappings are related to a treasure, they acquire different senses depending on how they are co-textually construed. Thus, the vagina is construed as a treasure by the children, while the idea of actively exploring one's body is introduced by "Nan." We can also say that an UP-DOWN image schema (cued by people looking down in pages 9 and 18) is related to both the expression "down there" and to the physical position of the organ at the bottom of the torso.
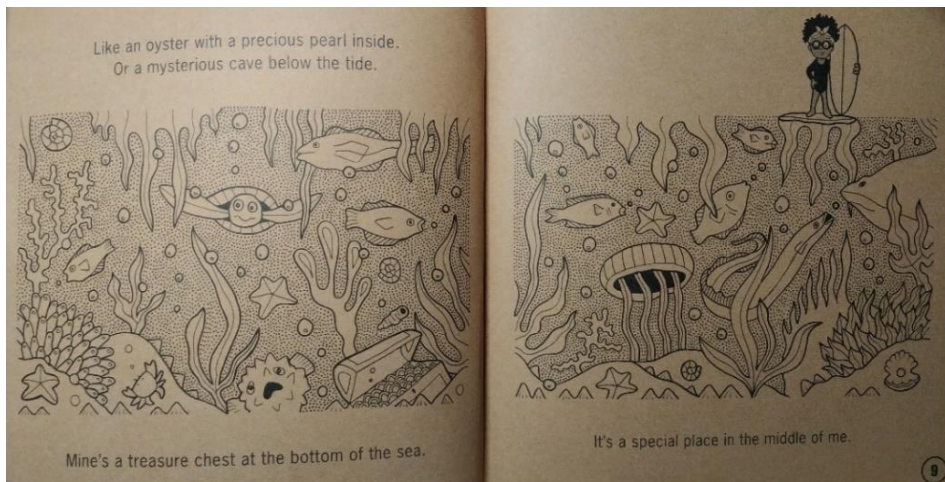
Figure 13. Waldron, A. (2019b). *What's down there?* edited by Ruth Owen and Mark J. Sachner, Ruby Tuesday Books Ltd, pp. 8-9.

As many metaphors are based on the CONTAINER image schema, we could argue that there is a container frame. This could include the example of A BABY IS A FISH IN A PLASTIC BAG mentioned at the beginning of the section (Smith, 1997). The metaphor relating a testicle with a city (figure 14) in *Where Willy Went* can also be included, where there is a metonymic activation of the CONTAINER image schema, which stands for the person. From this, a metaphorical construal is created that can be easily understood by children because it is part of their embodied cognition. The metaphorical conceptualisation of being pregnant as laying an egg in *Mummy Laid an Egg* (figure 6), which has been included in the animal frame, could be said to rely on a container frame, as the construal of pregnancy is based on eggs as containers. The metaphor of genes as life stories (figures 9, 10 and 11) also features the container frame. Nevertheless, the love relationship frame is more salient because explicit references to the entities' agency are made through the verbs "talk," "tells" and "dance."
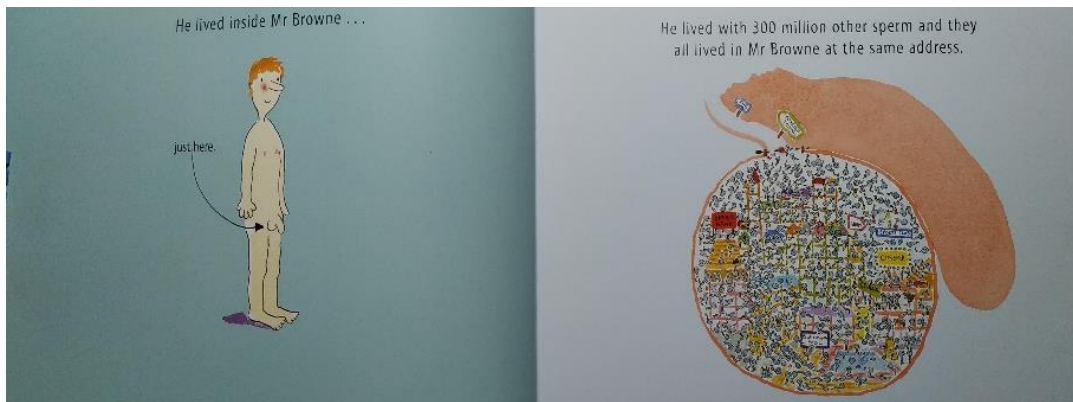
Figure 14. Allan, N. (2006) *Where Willy Went*. Random House Publishing UK, opening 2.

The metaphoric conceptualisation of genitals as a private refuge in *Amazing You!* (figure 15), is another example of this container frame, where the target domain is cued textually by "private parts," "hidden," and "they belong to you." Visually, the source is represented as a wooden stall with the word "private," and a girl seated on its staircase. There is an opposition between outer, public places and private, enclosed spaces, which is in turn connected to the body parts which can be exposed and the ones which cannot. The CONTAINER image schema is used to conceptualise private parts.



Figure 15. Saltz, G. (2008). *Amazing You!* Penguin Group, opening 3.

A movement/path frame also underlies many of the metaphorical conceptualisations in the texts. In the example from *Mummy Laid an Egg* (figure 6)*,* where being pregnant is conceptualised through a container frame represented by an egg, being born is "shooting out" of the egg (opening 7), which is also visually represented. The DINOSAUR metaphor

above (Figure 8) uses a movement/path frame as well because it conceptualises birth as a physical movement. Therefore, these examples rely on basic image schemas related to physical experience in the case of the egg and on linguistic familiarity in the case of the dinosaur. The metaphor of *Where Willy Went* relating fertilisation with a race also relies on the movement/path frame (opening 3) because the sperm training for the race and the lines left behind by its tail resemble this movement.

This construal of fertilisation as a race using a movement/path frame can be seen in *How are Babies Made?* (Smith, 1997) and *Mummy Laid an Egg* (Cole, 1995). In Cole (figure 16), the combination of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema representing fertilisation, and the CONTAINER schema, representing the bodies as containers, show a similar layout to figure 2 (left) and can therefore be represented with the diagram in figure 3 combining both schemas.
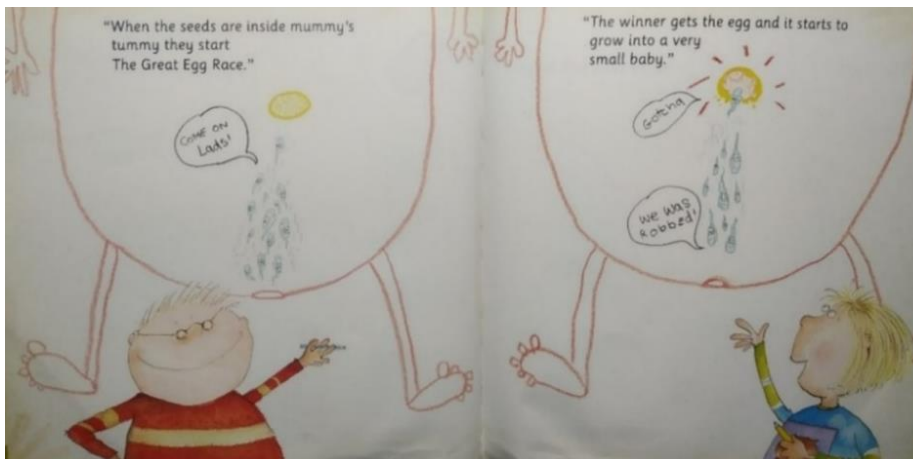


Figure 16. Cole, B. (1995). *Mummy Laid an Egg!* London, Random House Children's Books, opening 12.

In Silverberg (2012), a metaphor construes birth as an endless wait through a movement/path frame (figure 17). The repetition of "waited and waited and WAITED" relies on the conceptual metaphor relating time with space; "a long time" cues this wait verbally while the clocks are a visual metonymy for time; and "a lot of rest afterwards" is the goal of this process, visually cued by a bed. Visually, the mother's face recalls her emotions, activating a primary metonymy whereby facial expressions indicate the emotions

felt, and the textual cue "hurt" is probably visually activated in the last circle. All this shows a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema, related to the conceptualisation of time in terms of space, used to represent birth.
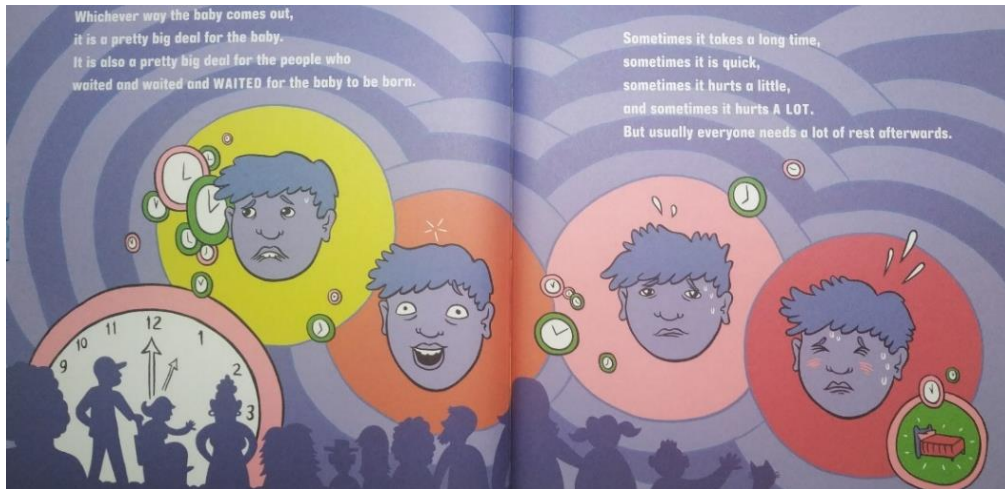


Figure 17. Silverberg, C. (2012) *What Makes a Baby*. Triangle Square, opening 16.

The food frame is used in opening 4 of *Amazing you!* where a penis is verbally described as a "weenie" and a "hot dog," a metaphorical analogy based on similar shape. A multimodal example of this frame appears in *Mummy Laid an Egg*, where the parents refer to making babies as cooking. In opening 2, this is verbally cued by "babies are made from sugar and spice and all things nice," and visually by the image of a cauldron with the babies —the CONTAINER image schema. In opening 4, babies are compared to biscuits as the mother "make them [the babies] out of gingerbread." Visually, the mother is holding a tray (CONTAINER) with baby-shaped cookies. We could say that this metaphorically construes pregnancy as a process of creation in which parents have an active role.

Finally, it can be said that there is another frame for tools in the metaphors relating the penis to a sword, a hose, a rocket and a tool for car tyres (Waldron, 2019a) above in figure 1. Though they all use the movement/path frame, these are also construed as objects used for a certain action. In the movement/path frame, the metaphors were related to an entity with an agency, like the sperm engaging in a competition or the sperm and the ovule dancing. Normally, the ovule and the sperm acquire human traits through PART FOR WHOLE metonymic relations. In this case, however, the target domain is the male organ and it is not

conceptualised with any agency, but as a tool whose movement is based on external forces.

In this section, it has been explained that several frames are present in the texts analysed, either as an extended metaphor in the same book, or in several of them. One of the primary basic image schemas that have been found to be used in the metaphorical conceptualisation of sexuality and reproduction is the CONTAINER image schema, which is mainly used to represent pregnancy, the reproductive cells, genes, and genital organs. Apart from these sexual aspects, this schema can be argued to serve a textual function: it is employed for the initial point of the narration (e.g. the character's location), and for textual organisation in the case of speech bubbles. In contrast, the MOVEMENT schema is employed to represent fertilisation, birth and the male genitals, and is additionally related to events in the narration. Finally, the UP-DOWN image schema represents pregnancy in the case of the plant frame (related to growth) and is further used for female genitals. Creative metaphors have been proved to be present in several frames, including the swimming race, plants, love relationships or treasures; while others are more basic or conventional because they rely exclusively on a basic image schema or on linguistic expressions. With these results in mind, the section that follows includes the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to determine what kinds of processes are used in the metaphorical conceptualisation of sexuality and reproduction in picture books. The relevance of multimodal metaphor in this process is supported by the findings. Combined uses of semiotic modes is by far the most common type of metaphor use (76.1%), followed by verbal (21.7%), and visual metaphors (2.2%). This was to be expected, and it is related to the multimodal nature of picture books. Moreover, the target audience —young children with more or less reading capacity— and the books' aim mean that the text and its metaphors have to be explanatory, for which images help by extending metaphors through visual elements. In fact, as shown in the analysis, the book aimed at older children features more verbal metaphors, and this might be due to children's greater reading skills.

As regards the devices used for metaphor creation, the main results were related to frames used throughout the different books. The water/swimming/sea frame either

represents pregnancy, employing a CONTAINER image schema; or fertilisation and reproduction, using a MOVEMENT schema. One finding that emerges from this study is that some frames are more creative while others rely on basic image schemas. The water/sea/swimming frame has been found to be highly creative because it includes examples in which it is extended through the whole narration to create a story, sometimes including different independent metaphors related to the same frame. Thus, creativity in the case of the picture books' study does not come from the use of novel or unexpected conceptual domains, but from the extended use of metaphors as a narrative mechanism.

Plants have been found to play a role in the metaphorical conceptualisation of pregnancy, for which the UP-DOWN schema highlights the idea of growing. Additionally, a CONTAINER image schema is related to the womb. Apart from activating basic schemas, the metaphors are further elaborated and made more creative by several multimodal mappings, establishing a connection between babies and fruit, sperm and seeds, and planting and getting pregnant, among others.

The animal frame is used in a wider variety of contexts, ranging from pregnancy — related to a CONTAINER image schema by connecting the womb with an egg— to birth — related to a MOVEMENT image schema. Another target domain which it represents is babies, particularly realised through visual relations. The animal frame can be said to be less creative because many examples rely on linguistic familiarity: for example, the word 'egg' is a common synonym for 'ovum.'

The love relationship frame was identified in metaphors that construe genes in terms of a relationship. Here, the CONTAINER image schema is employed for genetic information and the MOVEMENT schema is used to construe the process of fertilising the egg. Relationships are also used to metaphorically frame sexual intercourse and pregnancy. For this, the CONTAINER schema is used for the sperm, the egg and the unborn baby. This frame is more creative because it combines different image schemas and is used to represent different aspects (genes, fertilisation, intercourse and pregnancy). It has a close relation to metonymy because metaphors arise from the personification of reproductive cells.

Treasures are used to frame, on the one hand, the female reproductive system with the CONTAINER schema, used to represent the ovule inside the body. On the other hand, it also uses an UP-DOWN schema to conceptualise the female organ, related to the expression 'down there' and to its position at the bottom of the torso. The use of a treasure frame may be related to the conception of these entities as static elements that have to be found. Overall, this frame can be said to be creative because it does not only rely on basic image schemas, but also elaborates them to fit the narration; for example, the treasure arises because the narration deals with exploration or with swimming toward a certain place.

The container frame is used for pregnancy because it frames the body as a CONTAINER; it is also used for genitals as a refuge or as a city. This is probably because the organ is conceived as a delimited place and because the sperm are metonymically conceptualised as people, so that they live inside it. Finally, the container frame is used for genes by which they are represented as ideas contained inside the sperm and egg.

The movement/path frame is used for three main aspects of reproduction. First, for conceptualising birth as a MOVEMENT schema. Secondly, it is used for fertilisation in various books, with the swimming race as source domain. Finally, the movement/path frame is only used for pregnancy in the case of the umbilical cord. Container and movement/path frames rely on their counterpart basic image schemas, sometimes combining with each other when they are used to represent fertilisation.

Overall, it has been found that the CONTAINER schema is normally used to introduce the main character and its location to the reader —the initial point of the story—, which is related to static objects and therefore connected to sexuality. On the contrary, actions and events are connected to reproduction by virtue of the MOVEMENT implied in the process. This bears a relation with the distinction that has been established between sexuality and reproduction and explains that pregnancy is construed through a CONTAINER schema, while birth is often related to a MOVEMENT schema.

The food frame is used for the male genital organ, a metaphorical relation based on visual similarity. This kind of construal does not happen in the case of the female genitals, probably because visual similarity is easier to understand in respect of the male body. Other

types of conceptualisation are relied upon when referring to the female organ. Food is also used to represent pregnancy by comparing making babies with cooking, for which the CONTAINER image schema is employed. Here, food frames pregnancy as a process in which parents are agents in a process of creation. The food frame is basic because for male genital organs it relies on visual similarity; and for pregnancy, on the semantic relationship between 'making' a recipe and 'making' a baby.

The tool frame is used for the male genital organ, for which it employs a MOVEMENT schema related to using a tool. That this frame is only used to conceptualise this aspect might be related to the fact that the word 'tool' is a colloquial name for the organ, hence showing the role of metaphor in creating neologisms. The tool frame can therefore be said to be more basic, as it arises from a conventional metaphor. Besides, the male body is conceptualised with a kind of agency that is not so present in construals of female sexuality.

Besides having an explanatory function, some metaphors are visually activated and play a role in the configuration of the narrative. This is the case of speech or thought bubbles as a mechanism of textual organisation. This is to be compared with multimodal metaphorical construals of sexuality. This supports the idea that multimodal metaphor is used for extending the meaning of the textual cues, as authors rely on it to explain taboo topics, while other devices are used for textual functions.

The relation between metaphor and metonymy is mostly seen in cases where metaphor activation is enabled and eased by the attribution of human characteristics to reproductive cells; this is often done in the different stages of the narration, and makes understanding easier for the child by relating events to real people. In the case of the water/sea/swimming and the love relationship frames, the prominence of metonymy can be related to "pressure of coherence" (Kövecses, 2015, p. 115). In this way, metonymy (like metaphor) could be constrained by both our body and context, because it profiles particular aspects of an entity depending both on physical experience and the current narrative purposes of the books under study.

Overall, this study supports the idea that there is an interplay between basic image schemas and metonymies, and metaphors created ad hoc in order to build a story. Besides shedding

light on metaphorical construals of sexuality, this dissertation also shows the importance of including the study of different cognitive processes, such as image schemas and metonymies, when looking at metaphors as a mechanism for addressing taboo topics. For this, it focuses on the explanatory function of metaphors and therefore shows how this device is not only used for embellishment but for clarifying aspects. Furthermore, it shows the multimodal nature of metaphorical processes. Finally, it distinguishes more creative uses of metaphor as opposed to more basic or conventional ones within the genre. The major limitation of this study is the small size of the corpus. Further research is required if wider and more general conclusions are to be reached. However, the corpus did fit the initial stage of a case study, as it was intended in this dissertation. Given the corpus' small size, no significant results were obtained in relation to expected diachronic evolutions in the use of metaphors. Thus, the analysis of a more varied sample could be a productive area for further work in order to confirm the existence of differences across time.

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