

# Conceptual Metaphor Time is Money

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**Conceptual Metaphor  
Time is Money**

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## SUMMARY

This paper explains the definition of the conceptual metaphor in general and applies these facts to the conceptual metaphor “Time is money”. Some sub-categorizations, such as “Time is a valuable commodity” and “Time is a limited resource”, will be explained. The meaning and understanding of the conceptual metaphor is connected to the culture we belong to. The comparison with the German, Hungarian, Croatian and Chinese languages proves that the conceptual metaphor “Time is money” is a cross-linguistically valid conceptual metaphor. Those three languages belong to similar cultures in which time, same as money, can be wasted, spent, invested, saved etc. Not only will the problem of the truthfulness and validation of the metaphor “Time is money” be explored, but also one of the metaphorical counterfactuals – denying the metaphor will be mentioned. Some expressions from science fiction thriller “In Time” show a new aspect of time being like money. The statement “time is money” definitely indicates closeness to the modern society and as such it is explored in context of our everyday life, industrialization and knowledge. Some history is also mentioned in order to realize the closeness of the metaphor with the reality.

Keywords: metaphor, time, money, everyday life, business, allusion

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## 1. Introduction

The main task of this paper is to provide insight into the conceptual metaphor “Time is money” and to show not only its characteristics as a conceptual metaphor, but also its usage and significance in our everyday life. Furthermore, it is important to show its variations in different cultures in order to realize its function. In the modern world, time really seems to be money. However, is it completely true?

At the very beginning it will be explained what the conceptual metaphor is in general so that these facts can be applied to the metaphor “Time is money”. Two important concepts will be shown: source domain and target domain which make the understanding of the conceptual metaphor easier. These domains will be applied to the metaphor “Time is money” in order to prove that it really is a conceptual metaphor. Moreover, it will be discussed how this metaphor is connected to different cultures and how the environment influences the understanding of the metaphor. Some sub-categories will be identified, too. The expressions concerning “Time is money” will be compared to the expressions in the German, Hungarian, Croatian and Chinese languages. This comparison will show that the conceptual metaphor “Time is money” is a cross-linguistically valid conceptual metaphor. The aim is to perceive differences and similarities between our and Western cultures. Next issue is one of the metaphorical counterfactuals and that is denying the metaphor, which explicates that the metaphor cannot be used in every situation. Technological development has increased the importance and credibility of the metaphor “Time is money” so that it has become usable in everyday life. At this point the metaphor “Knowledge is power” will be introduced, which confirms the truthfulness of the metaphor “Time is money”. The next chapter deals with the problem whether the metaphor is outdated or still has not lost its value. One of the last chapters of this paper reveals the similarity between allusion and the conceptual metaphor “Time is money”.

## 2. Conceptual Metaphor

In cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, or cognitive metaphor, implies the understanding of one idea, or conceptual domain, in terms of another, for example, understanding quantity in terms of directionality (e. g. “prices are rising”). A conceptual domain can comprise any coherent organization of human experience. The regularity with which various languages employ the same metaphors created the hypothesis that the mapping between conceptual domains corresponds to neural mappings in the brain. These metaphors are often perceptually based. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson were the first linguists who extensively explored this concept in their work *Metaphors We Live By*. Other cognitive scientists occupy themselves with subjects similar to conceptual metaphor using terms such as “analogy” and “conceptual blending”.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. 1. *Conceptual vs Linguistic Metaphor*

In the cognitive linguistic view, metaphor means understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. That concept is clearly shown in cases/situations when we talk and think about life and love in terms of journeys, about arguments in terms of war, about theories in terms of buildings, about ideas in terms of food, about social organizations in terms of plants, about corporations in terms of persons, about time in terms of money and many others. The simplest explanation of a conceptual metaphor is the following: conceptual domain A is conceptual domain B, so that one domain is understood in terms of another. A conceptual domain is any coherent organization of experience. Thus, for example, we have coherently organized knowledge about journeys that we rely on in understanding life.

It is important to see the difference between conceptual metaphor and metaphorical linguistic expressions. The latter are words or other linguistic expressions coined in the language or terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain (i.e., domain B). All the

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conceptual\\_metaphor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conceptual_metaphor)

preceding expressions that belong to the domains “life” and “journey” are linguistic metaphorical expressions, and they together form part of the conceptual metaphor “life is a journey“. The use of small capital letters implies that the particular expression does not occur in language as such, but it includes conceptually all the metaphorical expressions

There are special terms for the two domains that form a conceptual metaphor. The conceptual domain which contains metaphorical expressions by means of which we understand another conceptual domain is called source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain. Thus, life, love, ideas, arguments, social organizations, theory, time and others are target domains, while journeys, war, plants, buildings, food, money and others are source domains. We try to understand the target domain through the use of the source domain.

An important constant in cognitive linguistics is that conceptual metaphors usually use a more abstract concept as target and a more concrete or physical concept as their source. Having that rule in mind, it is evident that argument, love, idea, social organization, and time are all more abstract concepts than war, journey, food, plant, and money. This constant makes intuitive sense. It is much easier to understand an abstract concept through the use of another more concrete, physical, or tangible concept than the abstract target concept. Our experiences with the physical world provide us with a natural and logical foundation which helps us to comprehend more abstract domains. That is the reason why in most cases of conceptual metaphors the source and target domains are not reversible. We do not talk about ideas as food, journey as love or money as time. This phenomenon is called the “principle of unidirectionality”; that is, the metaphorical process is normally directed from the more concrete to the more abstract but not the other way around.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Kövecses Z. (2010) “*Metaphor A Practical Introduction*”

## 2. 2. *Mappings*

A mapping is the systematic set of correspondence that exists between constituent elements of the source and the target domain, as explained below:

1. Source domain: the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions or according to Croft and Cruse (2004) “the source of the literal meaning of the metaphorical expression” (p. 55) (e. g. time is *money*)
2. Target domain: the conceptual domain that we try to understand or according to Croft and Cruse (2004) “the domain of the experience actually being described by the metaphor” (p. 55) (e. g. *time* is money).

Many elements of target concepts originate from source domains and are not preexisting.

If we generally understand the set of mappings that applies to a certain source-target pairing, we are able to understand a conceptual metaphor, too.

From a cognitive-linguistic perspective, conceptual metaphors function by mapping the meaning structure of a more concrete source domain onto the conceptual structure of a more abstract target domain in order to facilitate understanding of this second domain through the similarity between two different domains (in the example of the metaphor “time is money”, money is the concrete source domain and time is the abstract target domain) and mapping characteristics from the source domain onto the target domain. This understanding does not happen in a conscious way, but through our linguistic and cultural socialization. In a culture where people are not paid by the hour, the month, or the year, such mapping would presumably be rather vague.

Metaphors rely more on thoughts than on language; hence, the term *conceptual metaphor*. It implies a system of related metaphorical expressions that appear on the linguistic surface, although the metaphor may seem to consist of words or other linguistic expressions that come from the terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain. Similarly, the mappings of a conceptual metaphor are themselves based on core elements of embodied



human experience such as pre-linguistic schemas concerning space, time, moving and controlling.

As already mentioned, conceptual metaphors typically employ a more abstract concept as target and a more concrete or physical concept as their source. For example, metaphors such as 'the days [the more abstract or target concept] ahead' or 'giving my time' concentrate on more concrete concepts and express time as a path into physical space, or as a substance that can be handled and offered as a gift. The speaker may use different conceptual metaphors in order to make a case for a certain point of view or course of action. For instance, one might identify the phrase "the days ahead" as leadership or associate the phrase "giving my time" with bargaining. Selection of such metaphors depends on a subconscious or implicit habit in the mind of the person employing them.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. “Time is Money” as Conceptual Metaphor

The conceptual metaphor “Time is money” is one of the most frequently quoted examples. The subconscious mapping from “time” to “money” is a cognitive predisposition within western culture. The metaphor “Time is money” is very often used in English language, for example in sentences such as:

*I spent an hour with my grandmother yesterday.*

*This flat tire cost me an hour.*

*I lost a lot of time in the traffic jam.*

There is a handful of expressions of this kind that can be used. The mental structuring behind all these expressions is the “Time is money” concept in our minds. The “principle of unidirectionality” explains that we use the source domain “money” in order to understand the target domain “time.” Time is an abstract concept that is difficult to express directly. We talk about time in money terms. That means that we concentrate on more concrete domain of

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<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conceptual\\_metaphor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conceptual_metaphor)

knowledge – such as money – and map it onto time.<sup>4</sup> Steen (2007) explains this mapping as follows:

#### THE TIME IS MONEY METAPHOR

MONEY	→	TIME
The user of the money	→	The user of time (The Agent)
The purpose that requires the money	→	The purpose that requires time
The value of money	→	The value of the time
The value of the money	→	The value of the purpose

This mapping explains the understanding of time in terms of money and gives sense to the usage of words like *budget*, *spend*, *invest*, *profit* and *loss*. It allows us to comprehend sentences like the following:

- (1) I have to *budget* my time.
- (2) I *spent* too much time on that.
- (3) I've *invested* a lot of time on this project.
- (4) You don't use your time *profitably*.
- (5) That mistake resulted in a considerable *loss* of time.

Examples such as *You're wasting my time*, *This gadget will save time*, *You're running out of time*, and *I've invested a lot of time in her*, show some non-figurative conceptual notion of time. From such linguistic expressions it is evident that time can be understood metaphorically as being like money. The conceptual metaphor "Time is money" is based more on knowing the various linguistic expressions that English language has for speaking about time than on automatic conceptual mappings that emerge from everyday nonlinguistic experience.

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<sup>4</sup> Achard M., Niemeier S. (2004) "Cognitive Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition, and Foreign Language Teaching"

Why do we speak about time in the ways we do? The answer to this question lies in the fact that time is an abstract concept and we try to explain it in more simple terms. This explanation is provided by conceptual metaphors and corresponding mappings. For example, people understand money as an abstract idea through its usage in English as something that can be spent, wasted and lost the same as time can be. In this case language influences the way we think and enables us to comprehend certain conceptualizations. That is a conceptual motivation for why English speakers see time as being like money. On the one hand, a concept of time is strongly related to metaphor, but on the other hand we also have a nonmetaphorical perception of time. Nevertheless, we conceptualize time through metaphor, which is the reason why we speak of time in the ways we do.<sup>5</sup>

### **3. 1. Why is “Time is Money” a Metaphor?**

The metaphor is linked to our everyday experience with money which helps us to conceptualize time and allows us to view an aspect of a concept in terms of another one. It is not a strong obligation to conceptualize time as money, but it is the basis of western culture. In some other cultures time is not seen as money. This fact rejects all aspects that oppose to the conceptualization of time being money; e. g. Time is not really money. You can't get your time back.<sup>6</sup>

The conceptual metaphor “Time is money” provided us with a way to think about time, it has made use of concrete and familiar concept of money to facilitate the understanding of the more abstract concept of time. Except conceptualization, we can also think about time as money in terms of 'transconceptualization'. When thinking about time in that way, we also organize our lives taking time into account in that way: we regretfully waste time, budget time, do things to save time, spend time with our friends and family, lament about how fast time seems to pass. Not only the metaphor gives us a literary base to speak or write about time, but it also teaches us to use time practically: to organize our behavior, the actions we take in our daily lives/routines. It is an important part of our culture, especially of western culture. Most people regard time, consciously or unconsciously as a

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<sup>5</sup> Gibbs, Raymond W., Jr. (1994) “*The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding*”

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.waseda.jp/ocw/AsianStudies/9A-77WorldEnglishSpring2005/LectureNotes/02\\_season..\\_MattB/Lecture1\\_Metaphor-2.pdf](http://www.waseda.jp/ocw/AsianStudies/9A-77WorldEnglishSpring2005/LectureNotes/02_season.._MattB/Lecture1_Metaphor-2.pdf)

treasure, treating it differently, depending on the individual's needs, life style and the part played by other conceptual metaphors in determining our attitude toward treasures.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. 2. *Time and Culture*

In order to comprehend how metaphorical expressions in everyday language give us insight into the metaphorical nature of the concepts that are part of our everyday activities, let us consider the metaphorical concept “Time is money” in contemporary English.

#### TIME IS MONEY

- (6) I am *wasting* my time on the Internet.
- (7) I have to start *saving* my time.
- (8) I don't have the time to *give* you.
- (9) I *spend* my time reading books.
- (10) That flat tire *cost* me an hour.
- (11) How much time do I have to *invest* in you?
- (12) I don't have enough time to *spare* for that.
- (13) You're *running* out of time.
- (14) I have to *budget* my time reasonably.
- (15) *Put aside* some time for ping pong.
- (16) Is that *worth your while*?
- (17) How much time do I have *left* to live?
- (18) He's living on *borrowed* time since his doctor gave him 1 month to live.
- (19) You have to learn to use your time *profitably*.
- (20) I *lost* a lot of time when I got sick.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Metaphor>

(21) *Thank you* for your time.

In modern western culture time is seen as a valuable commodity and a limited resource which is used to achieve some goals in life whereas in some other cultures that is not the case. In western culture the time is precisely quantified. Work is measured in time spent laboring and it has become customary to pay people by the hour, week, or year. In western culture conceptual metaphor “Time is money” has a lot of sense and is seen in many aspects of life: telephone message units, hourly wages, hotel room rates, yearly budgets, interest on loans, and paying your debt to society by “serving time”. These practices appeared together with modern industrialized societies and structure our basic everyday activities in a very profound way. Furthermore, we identify time with a valuable commodity, a limited resource and money – we conceive time that way and that is why we understand and experience time as something that can be spent, wasted, budgeted, invested wisely or poorly, saved, or squandered.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. 2. 1. *Sub-categorization*

From early on, people living in human society have engaged in various economic transactions, which often include the use of money and commodities in general. The commercial event involves a number of entities and actions - a commodity, money, handing over the commodity, and handing over the money – which enable us to understand abstract things such as money. Below are some examples:

(22) *Spend* your time wisely.

(23) I tried *to save* some energy.

(24) She *invested a lot* in the relationship.<sup>9</sup>

According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), sub-categorization relationships characterize entailment relationships between the metaphors: “Time is money” entails that “Time is a limited resource”, which entails that “Time is a valuable commodity”. The metaphorical concepts “Time is money”, “Time is a limited resource”, and “Time is a valuable commodity”

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<sup>8</sup> Lakoff G., Johnson M. (2003) “*Metaphors We Live By*”

<sup>9</sup> Kövecses Z. (2010) “*Metaphor A Practical Introduction*”

form a single system based on sub-categorization, since in our society money is a limited resource and limited resources are valuable commodities.<sup>10</sup> This limitation can be seen in the fact that there are only three or four lexical items which collocate exclusively with money, namely *spend*, *cost* and *invest*. The others, such as *save*, *waste*, *have*, *give*, *spare*, *run out*, *budget*, *put aside*, *have left*, *borrow*, *lose* have more broadly usage and collocate with goods or commodities in general. This can signify the necessity to modify the conceptual metaphor “Time is money” into “Time is a valuable commodity”.<sup>11</sup>

We concentrate our thoughts on tangible valuable resources, material things like money. We conceptualize money, developing it as a concept, developing it as a “coherent organization of experience”, a conceptual domain, the domain of valuable resources. The concept of money as a valuable resource thus becomes through conceptualization a familiar one, a concept that represents the activities of our daily lives. When we concentrate our thoughts on something less tangible than money, like, for example, time, our experiences with money and time tie these two terms together, it becomes obvious that time and money have something in common, both are valuable resources. We develop a theme, “Time is money”, “Time is a valuable resource”, often unconsciously:

(25) Doing it that way will *cost* you time. (You will have to use up some of your valuable resource of time.)

(26) We're *wasting* time procrastinating like this. (We are wasting our valuable resource of time.)

(27) We can *save* time if we take this route. (We can use our valuable resource of time ore sparingly.)

(28) I don't *have* the time to give you right now. (I can't spare some of my valuable resource of time.)

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<sup>10</sup> Lakoff G., Johnson M. (2003) “*Metaphors We Live By*”

<sup>11</sup> Goatly A. (2007) “*Washing the Brain – Metaphor and Hidden Ideology*”

(29) I will *pay* you for your time. (I will give some of my valuable resource of money for some of your valuable resource of time.)

(30) How much time have you *invested* in the project? (How much of your valuable resource of time have you allocated to the project?)<sup>12</sup>

In order to characterize the entire system we are adopting the practice of using the most specific metaphorical concept, in this case “Time is money” and in that way we blend these terms. Of the expressions related to the “Time is money” metaphor, some refer specifically to money (spend, invest, budget, probably cost), others to limited resources (use, use up, have enough of, run out of), and still others to valuable commodities (have give, lose, thank you for). This is an example of the way in which metaphorical entailments can characterize a coherent system of metaphorical concepts and a corresponding coherent system of metaphorical expressions for those concepts.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. 2. 1. 1. *Time is Money/Commodity*

The saying “Time is money” is first attributed to Benjamin Franklin:

“He that can earn ten shillings a day by his labors and goes abroad, or sits idle one half of that day, though he spend but six-pence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon that the only expense; he has really spent, or rather thrown away, five shillings besides.” (p. 68)

The equation of time with money was the creation of the industrial revolution when hourly wage rates were paid.

Metaphorically there are several lexical items related to the conceptual metaphor “Time is money/commodity”. Like money you can *spend* time - “use time or allow it to go past” - or *invest* it - “put time into something to achieve a result” (*I invested three years of my*

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<sup>12</sup> <http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Metaphor>

<sup>13</sup> Lakoff G., Johnson M. (2003) “*Metaphors We Live By*”

*life in writing that book.*). Not only can *economical* mean “using less money”, but also it can mean “using less time” (*We will have to be more economical with the time we spend on student consultations.*). You can be forced to pay for something with money, but you also may have to pay with time, too: *cost* - “cause to lose (a period of time)” (*Shoplifting could cost you your future.*).

However, time is not just money. It is a commodity, too. You may *buy* time - “obtain or be allowed more time”; on the other hand you may not be able to *afford* the time - “have enough time to do”, or *spare* the time - “devote time to something when it is difficult for you” (*Could you spare the time to write me a reference?*), and towards the end of your life you may not have any time left so you *live on borrowed time* - “continue living beyond the time you were expected to die” (*The doctor gave him 3 months to live and since then he’s been living on borrowed time.*). Once you have time you can *save* it, *waste* or *squander* it - “use time badly”, and *use it up*, so that you *run out of* it – “have none left”.

The depth of the conceptualizing, the concretization of time as a commodity, can be seen in the difficulty of providing a meaning which does not itself use the same metaphor. However, this might not be the only way of conceiving. According to John Mbiti, the Ankore of Uganda do not think of *wasting* time but, more optimistically, *creating*, *producing* and *making* time. The differences between cultures cause these distinctions.

Presuming time is money, it does not mean that one’s time is worth the same amount of money as somebody else’s. Cultures of inequality have pyramidal time where the lowest paid workers earn far less than the most highly paid which causes and reinforces class domination. Nevertheless, independently from these culture distinctions, it is certain that, universally seen, time really is money.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Goatly A. (2007) “*Washing the Brain – Metaphor and Hidden Ideology*”



#### 4. “Time is Money” as a Cross-linguistically Valid Conceptual metaphor

Comparison of the German, Hungarian, Croatian and Chinese expressions related to the conceptual metaphor “Time is money” with the English ones clearly shows that this metaphor is a cross-linguistically valid conceptual metaphor. These four languages also indicate that time, the same as money, can be spent, saved, invested, etc.

##### 4. 1. “Time is Money” in German

Exploring similarities between Anglo-American and German cultures, as well as the English and German languages, proves that they exhibit almost the same metaphorical concepts of “Time is money” metaphor with minor lexical-semantic differences.

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) have given examples in English which reflect the metaphorical concept “Time is money”:

##### TIME IS MONEY

- (31) You’re *wasting* my time.
- (32) This gadget will *save* you hours.
- (33) How do you *spend* your time these days?
- (34) That flat tire *cost* me an hour.
- (35) I’ve *invested* a lot of time in her.
- (36) You need to *budget* your time.
- (37) Do you have much time *left*?
- (38) He’s living on *borrowed* time.
- (39) You don’t *use* your time *profitably*.

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) claimed that “concepts are metaphorically structured in a systematic way”. However, they also suggest that conceptual metaphors are reflections of our thinking of the concepts. For example, when we say “Time is money”, it reflects our thought that time is valuable, just like money. They have explained that “Time in English culture is a valuable commodity” and “Time is a limited resource that we use to accomplish our goals”. Therefore, they concluded that “Time is money”, “Time is a limited resource”, and “Time is a valuable commodity” are all metaphorical concepts which reflect people’s thought of time, which is also present in German:

#### ZEIT IS GELD

- (40) Ich *verschwende* hier meine Zeit. (I *waste* my time here.)
- (41) Das *spart* eine Menge Zeit. (It *saves* time.)
- (42) Meine Zeit ist *kostbar*. (My time is *valuable*.)
- (43) *Zeit ist Geld*, er kann keine Zeit dafür *erübrigen*. (*Time is money*, he can *spare* no time.)
- (44) Er will seine Zeit nicht *vergeuden*. (He doesn’t want to *waste* his time.)<sup>15</sup>
- (45) Ich *investiere* meine Zeit in mein Studium. (I *invest* my time in studying.)
- (46) Sie muss lernen und nicht ihre Zeit *verlieren*. (She has to study and not *lose* her time.)
- (47) Jeder kann seine Zeit durch effektives Zeitmanagement *gewinnen*. (Every person can *get* time through effective time management.)
- (48) *Verlorene* Zeit kommt niemals wieder. (Time once *wasted* never returns.)
- (49) Zeit *vertan*, Geld *vertan*. (If you *waste* time, you waste money.)
- (50) Zeit kann man nicht *kaufen*. (Time cannot be *bought*.)
- (51) Die meiste Zeit wird damit *vergeudet*, festzuhalten, was man längst verloren hat. (Most of the time is *wasted* to keep what we have already lost.)

These examples undoubtedly demonstrate that there is no big cultural difference between Anglo-American cultures and the German one, which means that this conceptual metaphor is also to be found in German, although the linguistic instantiations are slightly different. In both sets of examples, the English (31) – (39) and the German one (40) – (51),

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.monieseastasia.uni-tuebingen.de/project54.html>

the verbs preceding time are the same verbs preceding money. Thus we do not “spend” time in German, but we can say “Zeit investieren” (*invest* time), “Zeit gewinnen” (*get* time), “Zeit verlieren” (*lose* time), “Zeit sparen” (*save* time), “Zeit verschwenden” (*waste* time).

#### 4. 2. “Time is Money” in Hungarian

Let us now consider the conceptual metaphor “Time is money” in English and Hungarian and compare particular patterns that the translation of the English examples into Hungarian indicates:

(52) Pazarlod/pocsékolod az időmet.

waste                      the time

You’re wasting my time.

The Hungarian sentence is a literal translation of the English one. The word form that is equivalent to *waste*, *pocsékol*, is used in Hungarian, together with the word form that means *time*, *idő*.

(53) Ezzel a szerkentyűvel sok időt spórolhatsz/takaríthatsz meg.

This    gadget            much time    save can

This gadget will *save* you hours.

Again, the Hungarian translation is literal, except for the different syntactic constructions used. The word forms that are equivalents to *save*, *megspórol* and *megtakarít*, are used in Hungarian instead of the word meaning *time*.

(54) (a) \*Nincs időm, amit neked adhatnék.

No time      that you    give can

(b) Nincs időm a számodra.

No time the you

I don't *have* the time to *give* you.

Hungarians can say *Nincs pénzem, amit neked adhatnék* (*I don't have the money to give you*), but they cannot say *Nincs időm, amit neked adhatnék*. In Hungarian, one can say both *Nincs időm* (*I don't have time*) and *Adok neked időt* (*I'll give you time*), but not the two clauses combined (*Nincs időm, amit neked adok* – *I don't have time to give you*). In expressing the meaning that characterizes the English sentence, Hungarians use the sentence *Nincs időm a számodra* (*I don't have the time for you*), which employs linguistic metaphors based on the “Time is a valuable commodity” metaphor.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.3. “Time is Money” in Croatian

English and Croatian belong to Indo-European language family and as such are part of western culture. They both agree that every minute, hour, day or year is unique and irretrievable: once gone, it can never be taken back. However, the general attitudes towards time of the typical Croat differs to some extent from the attitudes of a typical member of western culture.

“Time”, “preciseness” and “promptness” are highly valued in western society, which the metaphor “Time is money” testifies. Much like money, it has been spoken of *spending time*, *saving time* and *wasting time*. These expressions represent a metaphorical mapping from *money* (precious commodity) as a source domain to *time* as a target domain and show western attitude towards money and time as highly valued commodities, where time is even more valuable, because money can be lost and regained while time cannot.

Here are some examples from the Croatian language:

(55) *Uložio sam vrijeme u učenje.* (*I invested my time in studying.*)

(56) *Trošim vrijeme uzalud.* (*I waste my time in vain.*)

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<sup>16</sup> Kövecses, Z. (2005) “*Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation*”

- (57) Moje vrijeme je *dragocjeno*. (My time is *valuable*.)
- (58) Mogu *uštedjeti* vrijeme i ubiti dvije muhe jednim udarcem. (I can *save* my time and kill two birds with one stone.)
- (59) Liječnik joj je dao 2 mjeseca života i od tada živi na *posuđenom* vremenu. (The doctor gave her 2 months to live and since then she has been living on *borrowed* time.)
- (60) Pokušat ću otkazati ispit te tako *dobiti* na vremenu. (I will try to cancel the exam so that I could *get* some time.)
- (61) Prestani *gubiti* vrijeme i primi se posla! (Stop *losing* your time and get to work!)
- (62) Trudim se *dobiti* na vremenu. (I am trying to *gain* some time.)
- (63) Vrijeme se ne može *kupiti*, ali se može kontrolirati. (Time cannot be *bought* but it can be managed.)
- (64) On samo nastoji *dobiti na* vremenu kako bi odlučio. (He is just *playing for* time before he can decide.)
- (65) Već dugo vremena on *krade* Bogu dane. (He has been *marking* time long enough.)
- (66) Sabor se *razbacuje* vremenom na beskorisne rasprave. (Parliament has been *squandering* time on useless discussions.)
- (67) Moderna tehnologija nam *krade* vrijeme. (Modern technology has been *stealing* our time.)
- (68) Vrijeme *ističe*. (Time is *running out*.)
- (69) Idemo u kupovinu da *skratimo* vrijeme. (Let's go shopping to *kill* time.)
- (70) Za sve *treba* vremena. (Everything *takes* time.)
- (71) Vrijeme se mora pametno *koristiti*. (Time must be sensibly *spent*.)
- (72) Dobro *uloženo* vrijeme se isplati. (Well-*invested* time pays off.)
- (73) Za ovaj rad se mora *odvojiti* više vremena. (More time must be *invested* in this work.)
- (74) Studije o *potrošnji* vremena izvješćuju o aktivnostima koje se odvijaju svakoga sata, svakoga dana za određeno vrijeme. ( *Time budget* surveys report the activities occupying each hour of each day for a fixed period of time.)

In the Croatian language, the expression “vrijeme je novac” is also used which is a literal translation of “time is money”. According to surveys conducted in Croatia, Croats spend “money like water” (“trošiti novac kao vodu”), they spend much more money than they earn. Hence, if we presume that metaphor “vrijeme je novac” is deeply rooted in the Croatian consciousness, as is the case in western society, it is quite clear that much like money, time is *spent* and *wasted* unwisely, like the water that Croats have in abundance. Research dealing with Croatian work ethics resulted in the fact that Croats have a weak attitude towards time, which proves that money is not as precious as in western culture because this metaphorical mapping from source domain (*novac*) to target domain (*vrijeme*) portrays the Croatian attitude towards “time”.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. 4. “Time is Money” in Chinese

Conceptual metaphors are a very important part of our language and conceptualizing the world, so that we do not consciously realize we are structuring the world in a particular way. For example, when speaking of the concept of time, people often refer to the concept of money. Let us consider similarities between English and Chinese:

(75) Ta weilè jiesheng shijian, zhū yīcì fàn jiū chī qī tiān.  
 s/he because *save* time cook once rice then eat seven days

In order to *save* time, s/he cooked once a week and ate (the same thing) for seven days.

(76) Ta wèi háizi fùqū shíjiān tài shǎo.  
 s/he for children *spend* time too little.

S/he *spends* too little time with his/her children.

Money is a physical object, which allows humans to purchase other concrete objects in the world that they want. Money can be saved, spent, invested, etc. In addition, examples (75) – (76) also demonstrate that both English and Chinese speakers can structure and understand

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<sup>17</sup> hrcak.srce.hr/file/10761

the concept of time in the same way, in terms of money. When time is structured in this way, the preciousness of time is at the center of attention.

The conceptual metaphor “Time is money” maps very similar concepts in German, Croatian and Chinese. This fact leads to the conclusion that this metaphor is a cross-linguistically valid conceptual metaphor.<sup>18</sup>

## 5. Metaphorical Counterfactuals – Denying the Metaphor

Denying the overall metaphorical view is a common function of double-sided metaphorical counterfactuals. It means that the metaphorical expression in the consequent is used to deny the conceptual metaphor introduced by the antecedent. This phenomenon usually takes place when the antecedent is either highly conventionalized or idiomatic. Example such as *If time was money then the poor would be rich*. connotes that a particular metaphorical view is not appropriate for a certain situation. The antecedent is typically an idiomatic expression while the consequent shows a new mapping providing the counterexample.

The antecedent expresses a familiar conceptual metaphor, “Time is money”, in a paraphrase of the idiomatic expression. However, the consequent uses the same conceptual metaphor but with a less familiar mapping (that of the “poor” being owners of “time/money”) to indicate a counterexample to the metaphor since the poor being rich is a contradiction.<sup>19</sup>

## 6. “Time is Money” in History

The majority of people have heard the metaphor that “time is money.” But what does that actually mean?

About 20 years ago, Charles Faulkner, well known Neuro-Linguistic Programming author, developer and trainer, discussed the metaphors of business. According to Faulkner,

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<sup>18</sup> [http://eprints.hkbu.edu.hk/188/1/time\\_passing\\_is\\_motion.pdf](http://eprints.hkbu.edu.hk/188/1/time_passing_is_motion.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/~mgl/tropical\\_truth/@05leebn.doc](http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/~mgl/tropical_truth/@05leebn.doc)

“Time is money” is an important one. He claimed it had existed about 150 years, but today it exists about 170 years.

According to his research, the metaphor first appeared in the early days of the railroads in the United States. Train tracks were being built in isolated towns and villages, linking the outposts to urban centers. Regular train stops made it possible to transport many necessary goods from distant locations, among which were farm crops that were brought to markets in order to be sold for a profit.

Richard Warren Sears, a railroad station agent in Minnesota, received a large shipment of watches from a Chicago jeweler, which a local jeweler rejected. It resulted in Sears purchasing them himself. He sold the watches for a considerable profit to other station agents and then ordered more for resale. Later became Sears and Alvah Roebuck partners and they founded Sears, Roebuck and Company together.

Time became a valuable commodity because trains ran on schedules. If a trader was late for the train, he was unable to buy or sell goods. Time became money. People on the prairies could no longer determine the time only by looking the height of the sun in the sky. The necessity for more precise time-keeping methods arose, like, for example, watches and clocks. These new methods ensured them not to miss the train.

Both time and money have definable traits and numerical units. However, when time is related to an exchange rate, it becomes valuable. When observed as a commodity, money can be exchanged for a certain amount of time, goods or services. Money is the necessity we cannot live without because we need it to survive in today’s complex society. When people save it, it becomes an object. When we are running out of money, we want more. Money can offer a sense of security and as such is an inevitable necessity.



Time is the commodity that everyone has an equal amount of. It does not matter whether you are wealthy or poor, everyone has the exact same amount of time. The only important thing is how we choose to spend it. Hence, time, like money, is spendable.

Faulkner, who occupied himself with studying metaphors, stated that when you talk about money in terms of “energy,” then you get an impression that you have more of it. According to this theory, “energy is money”. That gives a new way to look at being more successful in our businesses. It means that, if we put more energy into our work, we will automatically earn more money.<sup>20</sup>

### ***6. 1. “Time is Money” and Technological Development***

The most frequently used metaphor for time in English language, “Time is money”, gives insight into the purpose of life itself and for that reason should be carefully explored. The metaphor gives some guidelines which are important in life. Well spent time can enable us to produce wealth and wasting time can have the opposite effect - we can lose potential opportunities to produce wealth. Historically this has been one of the most essential metaphors and can be seen as a positive motivational influence in times of industrial revolution and technological development.<sup>21</sup>

The metaphor entered into English language together with the appearance of the industrial revolution, when people began to be paid for their work according to the amount of time they actually spent working. Periods of time were paired with amounts of money, which created the experiential basis of this metaphor. Since then, the metaphor has been realized in many other ways.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.yearick-millea.com/impact/?p=147>

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.albalagh.net/food\\_for\\_thought/time.shtml](http://www.albalagh.net/food_for_thought/time.shtml)

<sup>22</sup> Ortony A. (1993) “*Metaphor and Thought*”

Various inventions and new technologies had one goal: to save time and with it to save money. The list of such inventions and their achievements is endless. Those innovations made it possible to do many things in surprisingly short amount of time. Today men, materials, goods and ideas even can be transported from one place to another in a flash. The tasks that lasted for months and years can be finished in seconds or minutes. However, there is something ironic about all this development. Despite a great number of timesaving gadgets, life has become busier and quicker than ever before, but have these achievements made us more productive? For example, the Internet enables us to send information in any corner of the world in seconds, but people tend to use the same medium to waste hours and days in frivolous discussions in chat rooms or meaningless net surfing. That shows that there is a thin line between time saving and time wasting. It seems that people still did not learn to use their time wisely.

The metaphor “Time is money” recommends that no time should be wasted, but as seen in the example above, a lot of time is wasted thanks to all kinds of gadgets, which are intended to save both time and money. People usually talk about “killing time” and the need for the gadgets that enable them to kill time. In order to stop wasting time, one should be aware of the fact that time may be more important than money.<sup>23</sup>

## **7. “Time is Money” in Everyday Life According to Lakoff**

Lakoff starts the discussion about “metaphorical” concepts with the phrase “Time is money”. In this metaphor lies something more than a simple comparison between the value of money and the value of time. Lakoff is emphasizing that metaphors are tools which make something abstract to become more concrete. Obviously, time is a relative and abstract term. It is impossible to touch it or see it. It is to be grasped only as a creation of humanity in order to keep some perspective on the passing of our own existence. However, through usage of the metaphor “Time is money”, time becomes concrete. There is an inherent value to time that appears by using the metaphor. When this idea is applied to individuals in the form of dollars per hour, the metaphor represents an element of the “schematization” of society. An

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<sup>23</sup> [http://www.albalagh.net/food\\_for\\_thought/time.shtml](http://www.albalagh.net/food_for_thought/time.shtml)

individual is worth a certain amount of money per hour of their service to an employer. People's value is measured by the amount of time they spend working. Hence, individuals are categorized based on this metaphor which makes our perception of time concrete.<sup>24</sup>

### **8. “Time is Money” Compared to “Knowledge is Power”**

There is a need for success in the sphere of academic politics in order to realize one's true potential in finances, and to achieve maximized power. The metaphor “Knowledge is power” exists because of the connection between academic credentials and financial income. Academic success requires high value of an individual's time. The result of this fact is that the metaphor “Time is money” has created the metaphor “Knowledge is power”. If the first statement is true then the latter statement also has to be true based on the realization that academic success, or knowledge, will enable a greater financial status and power.

“Time is money” and “Knowledge is power” both are the explanations of intangible parts of life (time, knowledge) in terms of those that are tangible (money, power). If we begin to categorize everything into the tangible elements of life then we are able to classify people according to their financial status or the amount of power they possess. Metaphors, therefore, are a fundamental element of the social schematization of perceptions.<sup>25</sup>

### **9. Similarity Between Allusion and Metaphor “Time is Money”**

Like allusion, metaphor involves the connection between two independent terms. The functions are so similar that the definitions of metaphor and allusion are almost the same: “Allusion in the metaphorical relationship created when an alluding text evokes and uses another, independent text.” Just as the metaphor “Time is money” evokes one term (money) in order to understand another (time), so an allusion evokes an element from another text in

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<sup>24</sup> [http://www.kyoolee.net/Robinson\\_James\\_H.\\_-\\_Jn07\\_-\\_Powers\\_of\\_Metaphor.doc](http://www.kyoolee.net/Robinson_James_H._-_Jn07_-_Powers_of_Metaphor.doc)

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.kyoolee.net/Robinson\\_James\\_H.\\_-\\_Jn07\\_-\\_Powers\\_of\\_Metaphor.doc](http://www.kyoolee.net/Robinson_James_H._-_Jn07_-_Powers_of_Metaphor.doc)

order to understand aspects of the alluding text. Likewise, metaphor theorists identify entire narratives functioning with metaphors.<sup>26</sup>

### 10. Is Time Really Money?

The metaphorical understanding of time as money implies that time is a limited resource. Furthermore, it also means that time is a valuable commodity and the metaphor advises that time is to be treasured, wisely spared, and it is not to be frittered away on any account.

However, are metaphors always truthful? We may speak of saving and spending time, but it is not actually money; pounds or pence. Nevertheless, metaphors are true for us if our personal understanding coincides with our understanding of the experience they describe.

So, it can be true that time is like money. It should be wisely spent because it is something too precious to be wasted, insofar as that matches with our experience. It can happen that this formulation is untrue for some people, for example, young people who have never had paying jobs.

However, supposing the statement “time is money” is true for us: Even so, is this the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

We can perceive time as a limited resource that, as such, has a certain value. The metaphor “Time is money” emphasizes that money is something precious that can be saved, spent, wasted, but time is not a hard currency. Unlike time, money spent can be paid back if the “goods” it buys are useless. You cannot get a refund on misspent time which casts suspicion on the metaphor which equates time with money.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Hylan, S. (2005) “*Allusion and Meaning in John 6*”

<sup>27</sup> Shepherd, V. (1994) “*Literature About Language*”

Time is not “worth” anything and it has no monetary value. Like other clichés we use to order our lives, the old saying “time is money” has a nice ring to it, but it is definitely not the ring of genuine silver dollar.

As metaphor, the “time is money” phrase is also disputable. Time is more like water or air: something that is, or at least that should be available to everyone. You do not have to work in order to earn time, you cannot come into it by inheritance, or win it at the gambling table. *You already have it.* Is it limited? Yes, the same as money is. However, that does not make time an equivalent to money. Water and air, as we are rapidly learning, are limited like money, but they are not actually money. Like time, they can be manipulated to earn money, but they are not the same as money. Time, water, and air do not have the same value as money does. They also do not buy the same things.

In the 2011 science fiction thriller “In Time”, previously titled “Now” and “I’m mortal”, starring Justin Timberlake and Amanda Seyfried, the metaphor “TIME IS MONEY” relates to everyday lives of people and time has replaced money as the standard currency. The film itself begins with the sentence: “Time is a currency. We earn it and spend it”. People in the film must “acquire time” through labor after turning 25 years of age, or die within one year. People “earn a few more hours of life” or “use hours to pay for everyday necessities”; they can also live for centuries depending on “how much time they have accrued”. Someone’s time can get stolen or someone can flaunt one’s time by purchasing something unnecessary. The gang in the film is called “Minutemen”; they steal other people’s time by force. It is said that there is “enough time for everyone” but it “is being stockpiled” by the rich to use it. Just like money “time can be transferred, it expires, it is gone”. The police are the “Timekeepers” and they have the power to “take time” from the suspect, the same as property is blocked as long as the investigation against a criminal lasts. Time is considered “wealth”. It can happen that “there is no time to pay for a bus ride” or that “the price of time increases”.

We also find out that there is “inequity of the time system” and “time is given as a token of appreciation for friendship” etc. In the film there is “a time-loaning businessman”, a billionaire. All these expressions fit into the concept of time as a valuable commodity. Furthermore, “time is confiscated”, you can “be in possession of someone’s time” and “have a

significant amount of time on you” or “demand a 1 000 year ransom”. “Time Holders store time”, there is a “Time Bank robbery” and “bounty of 10 years on someone’s head”. A person can be “challenged to a Time Fight “, “have a million years on hand”, “distribute the time among the people”, “replenish time”, “take unused time” or “be left with seconds to live”. Time becomes inheritance; it can be easily transferred from one person to another. Gambling time in the film means wasting time in real life. In casino, the main character Will Salas uses the expression: “I am gambling my inheritance.” He previously received time from 105-year-old Henry Hamilton. To “clean someone’s clock” in the movie means to clean someone’s account or to rob someone, to “time out” means to die.

The idea that our time possesses monetary value – that it has the same features as money – creates an impression that it can be wasted, and that wasting has the same meaning as stealing something valuable. It is an idea that is so universal that it cannot be avoided. As workers, we are paid by the hour. Our vacation time and our sick leave also have certain monetary value. Lawyers, psychiatrists, accountants, and therapists assess us by the amount of time they spend on us, not by what they can do for us. We *budget* time; we *spend* time; we *waste* time.

The fact that something as commonplace as air must be husbanded, coveted, budgeted, and even somehow earned unfortunately leads to and demands greed, resentment, and stress. Under these conditions, our culture’s insistence on assigning a monetary value to time became inevitable. Most of us are paid by the hour, which forces us to think of life as something that can be broken into coin-like pieces, but that is an allusion. We are not paid just by the amount of time we work, but also for our skills and abilities, for the product of our intellectual or physical labor. The amount of money we can demand for our working time depends not just on how much time we have to sell, but on skill we possess and ability we can invest in our work.

Time is not money!

- We don’t spend time: we pass time.
- We don’t budget time: we write lists, make plans, and schedule appointments.

- We don't waste time: we idle or get distracted.

Time is part of our life, of our environment, not the coin of the realm. It relieves a vast amount of frustration and stress. The concept of time being money is deep-rooted in our society, it is imposed on us. It is difficult to abandon that view because our reality persistently states: "Time is money".

Money buys stuff. Time buys experience, wisdom, and peace of mind.<sup>28</sup>

The metaphor "Time is money" highlights the resource-based similarities between time and money, but ignores many existing differences between these two concepts, such as the fact that unlike money, time cannot be saved and used some time later. This selective nature of metaphor encouraged Davidson (1990) to suggest that "most metaphorical sentences are patently false." Likewise, Lakoff and Johnson state that this partiality is a defining characteristic of the concept of metaphor. "If it were total, one concept would actually be the other, not merely understood in terms of it." Because of this partial nature, some researchers suggest that multiple metaphors are often necessary to portray a complex concept adequately.

Metaphors are integrated in experience. Ultimately, all metaphors are grounded through our interaction with our physical and cultural environment. As Lakoff and Johnson said: "The kind of conceptual system we have is a product of the kind of beings we are and the way we interact with our physical and cultural environments." The metaphor "Time is money" is largely grounded in our materialistic culture, but it loses its conceptual power and credibility in less materialistic ones. Although most metaphors are concepts expressed in terms of another concepts, say Lakoff and Johnson, they are "grounded in systematic correlations with our experience." For instance, "Time is money" is grounded in our particular cultural experiences that highlight the resource-like aspects of both time and money as objects that share similar features: they can be precisely quantified, possess a specific value, and are progressively used up in order to accomplish a particular goal.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://funny-about-money.com/2008/01/06/time-is-not-money/>

Metaphors actively shape both our thoughts and our actions because of their grounding in our conceptual experience, systematic nature, and communicative power. As Lakoff and Johnson again claim: “New metaphors have the power to create a new reality.” Metaphors are partial, they define reality selectively in a way that they emphasize particular features of a concept and hide others. An individual might enact the metaphor “Time is money” by carefully budgeting time out of a fear of wasting it and at the same time ignore the fact that at the end of the day one has no more of this valuable resource than any other individual. Hence, this metaphor affects the way people think about time and how they conceptualize and manage their time.<sup>29</sup>

### ***10. 1. “Time is Money” in Business***

The person who coined the phrase “time is money,” probably was a sales representative paid on commission. In the selling profession, the saying sounds completely true.

So, the important question is: How effectively do you manage your time? Do you spend your time as you would any other valuable commodity, or are you the type of a salesperson who is under stress, constantly jumping through hoops and consistently being late for meetings and client appointments?

We are much better at measuring time than at managing it. In today's modern world filled with technology, physicists have become extremely proficient at measuring time. Their invention, the atomic clock, based on strontium atoms trapped in a laser grid, is so precise that it has an inaccuracy of less than one second in 200 million years.

Measuring time is a standard procedure. However, time management depends on our own personal perspective. We can use time in many ways: we can waste it, save it, spend it, invest it, borrow it, steal it, juggle it, squander it, though at the end of the day, we do not seem to have enough time. There are all sorts of “time managers”: time wasters, time bandits and

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<sup>29</sup> [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1038/is\\_n5\\_v39/ai\\_18736458/pg\\_2/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1038/is_n5_v39/ai_18736458/pg_2/)



sometimes, in those rare moments when too much time was left, time killers. At the one hand, time flies when we are having fun, but on the other hand, time drags for those who are doing time. For some people time stands still, while for others time is slipping away, like sand through an hourglass.

The improper use of time is the most important skill in the selling profession. A smart, talented and motivated salesperson can fail only because he or she simply could not or would not effectively manage their time.<sup>30</sup>

## **11. Is Metaphor “Time is Money” Outdated?**

As we make efforts to do things quicker and as our lives become more stressful, time seems no longer to be the limiting factor. Living according to the statement “time is money” makes us slaves of time. We are forced to submit to the demands of the clock, colleagues and employers. If it takes nine months to make a baby, can nine women make a baby in one month? Rushing things does not mean that we are able to complete demanding processes in a minute. Sayings like “Patience is a virtue” and “Rome wasn’t built in a day” are sending us the message that some things just take time. It suggests that “Time is money” may be an outdated metaphor. Which metaphor can we use or create to replace it?

There are also cultures where time has little or no relationship to money. However, concept of time is a crucial part of western culture and it is linked to our cultural experiences with money, limited resources, and valuable commodities. For many people in the design community the statement “time is money” is one of the justifications for almost everything, but yet some actions may appear to be a “waste of time”.

According to Lakoff (2003) conceptual metaphor “Time is money” is a foundational metaphor. Beside this metaphor, there are other metaphors for time. The metaphors we use unconsciously may be limiting our life choices. The best solution is to be conscious and intentional about using metaphors consistent with our values. They may help us and others

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/20/46339.html>

create a future where people, family and relationships are fundamental to our future survival, health and well-being.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> [http://www.center-for-balance.org/blog/2007\\_09\\_01\\_archive.html](http://www.center-for-balance.org/blog/2007_09_01_archive.html)

## **12. Conclusion**

Not only has this paper explored the metaphor “Time is money” as conceptual, but it has also tried to explain its everyday usage. Since it is one of the most used metaphors in English language we have to be aware of the importance of understanding the metaphor. This metaphor is used and present in other languages, too. In the modern age we are living in, time can be identified with money, but is it possible to buy something abstract as time? Times are changing and perhaps the meaning of this metaphor will change in some aspect. For the time being, time is precious and is not to be wasted. It is a limited resource that cannot be beaten, which makes it so valuable to people that there is a metaphor to confirm it and it says: “Time is money”.

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