A well-rehearsed claim in the theory of meaning is that metaphor is a ubiquitous feature of natural languages and that it serves cognitive purposes (Kompa 2015, Kompa (forthcoming)). According to the so-called conceptual theory, metaphors are mappings across conceptual domains (Lakoff/Johnson 1980). They are not figures of speech but ‘modes of thought’ (Lakoff 1993). Moreover, it is claimed that all abstract concepts are metaphorically structured and that the most basic metaphors are experientially grounded. Hence, metaphorical thought is embodied (Lakoff 1987; Lakoff 2008). For example, as children, we have experienced affection and warmth occurring together. So, by employing the metaphor AFFECTION IS WARMTH we are able to understand sentences such as “They greeted me warmly.” Our concepts are crucially shaped by how our bodies interact with the world and by our sensorimotor system (Lakoff/Johnson 1999). Moreover, people seem to understand metaphors by imagining what it must be like to engage in relevant actions. People understand the expression “to stomp out racism”, e.g., by conceiving racism as if it was a physical being (thereby also employing the metaphor IDEAS ARE OBJECTS) and by thereby imagining their bodies in action (Gibbs/Matlock 2008). Yet, the exact role of simulation and motor activation in the interpretation of metaphors is a controversial issue (Casasanto/Gijssels 2015). It has been argued that activation in primary motor regions is necessary only for the interpretation of unfamiliar metaphors (Desai et al. 2011). Also, it was shown that the comprehension of metaphorical uses of action verbs (“grasp the idea”) does not yield the same motor activation pattern as the comprehension of literal uses of action verbs (“grasp the cup”) (Rueschemeyer et al. 2007). Still, it has been claimed that abstract, metaphorical meaning in general is grounded in literal meaning and ‘grasped’ via processes of simulation (e.g. Gibbs 2006). Our aim is to assess these hypotheses by first developing a theoretical framework and a set of criteria (that is so far missing) for distinguishing between familiar and novel or creative metaphors. The main focus of this project is theory formation but if the PhD candidate would have also an empirical profile (as it is the case in master program cognitive science), then in close cooperation with PI Mueller, the theoretical work on these topics could be supplemented by an EEG study along the lines suggested by van Elk et al. 2010 with the aim to test whether and to what extent motor activation is involved in the interpretation of familiar and novel metaphors. Under the leadership of PI Mueller, we suggest to device a learning study in order to investigate how the neuronal pattern of motor activation changes as a novel metaphor becomes more familiar over time (and as presented in different contexts). This framework for EEG-studies has of course to be constrained in such a way that a manageable PhD project is shaped. This will be guaranteed by the supervisor team. On the basis of reviewing the literature and ideally an own EEG-study, this project aims for a better understanding of the role of simulation and motor activation in metaphor comprehension in general and the role of modality-specific and amodal representations in particular and thus of the way in which abstract, metaphorical concepts are grounded in action and sensory experience.