

'Identification, Analysis, and Interpretation of Metaphorical Indicative Sentences of Subject-Predicate Form'

SUMMARY

Metaphorically used indicative sentences of subject-predicate form are in two respects anomalous in comparison with conventionally used sentences. First, the metaphorically used predicate is not used in its conventional sense. Secondly, there is not a conventional representation of a state of affairs in reality, but a conceptualization of the subject is described within the meaning of a conceptualization of the predicate. In this paper the recognition, action, and interpretation of this kind of metaphors is described in two respects: (1) a context-independent or sentence-semantic approach, in which the effect of the metaphorical meaning is analysed as an interaction among properties of the 'system of commonplaces' of subject and predicate, and (2) a context-dependent approach, in which the effect of the context on the action and interpretation of a metaphor-theme is analysed, and in which the interpretation of a metaphor-theme can't be considered independent of a situational setting and/or verbal context. ('Metaphor-themes' (Black) are metaphorical sentences that are considered independent of their context.)

In the introduction, 'Metaphor and the "Dogmas" of Analytical Philosophy', some methodological presuppositions are discussed, that are concerned in studying metaphor: the 'dogmas' of synchronicity, of literal, descriptive meaning, of cognitive meaning, of context-independent meaning, and of language as a picture of reality.

Not every description of every kind of metaphor violates all these dogmas. A diachronic description, which is significant for inquiries into change and extension of meaning and concept, the historical development of language, and teaching and learning of a language, violates the dogma of synchronicity.

The dogma of cognitive meaning is not tenable with a study of metaphor as imagery, in the etymological sense of the word (image-ry). Davidson and Quine exclude the study of metaphorical effect - that is not reducible to a specific cognitive content - from their scrutiny. Lakoff and Johnson break with the dogma of cognitive meaning, but also abandon the 'objectivistic' approach of language and meaning.

While describing metaphor in this paper some of these methodological presuppositions are retained. The description requires an expansion of the notion of meaning as description (conventional meaning as operational definition of the extension), as well as another conception of the (conventional) picture theory of language. In the semantical part (section II) is held on to the dogma of context-independent meaning; in the pragmatical part (section IV) this presupposition is not tenable. In section I.6 a classification of metaphors is proposed. The description in this paper centres on active, strong, generative metaphors (interaction-metaphors).

In the second section some conditions are posited - on the basis of the interaction-theory (Black 1962a and Black 1979a) and the criticism in Scheffler (1979) -, that satisfy the metaphorical interaction between properties of the 'system of commonplaces' of subject and predicate, to develop a standard method for defining standard meanings of metaphor-themes.

After discussing three restrictive conditions that are proposed by Scheffler - of which only two are retained -, a new one is proposed in section 2.3, by which the notions of 'metaphorical field', 'cultural concept' and 'differential meaning' are introduced. A metaphorical field is categorized under a cultural concept. An example of a cultural concept is 'humans are animals'; metaphor-themes of the metaphorical field of this cultural concept: 'X is a fox', 'Y is a wolf', 'Z is a lion', etc. The condition holds that the

interpretation of a metaphor-theme is guided by the position of that metaphor-theme in a metaphorical field ('under' a cultural concept), like the meaning of a word is defined by the position of that word in a semantical field. The position holds that the interpretation of a metaphor-theme is guided by the difference from the standard interpretation of the other metaphor-themes in the same metaphorical field. The notion of differential meaning holds that according as the conceptual contents of interpretations of metaphor-themes correspond more to each other, the differences among the interpretations may be stressed more. For the example 'X is a wolf' this means that exactly those properties are transferred in the interaction, that distinguish the 'system of commonplaces' of 'wolf' from the 'system of commonplaces' of 'fox' in the conceptual contents familiar metaphor-theme 'Y is a fox'.

On account of Black's description of the metaphor as 'the tip of a submerged model', the action of a metaphor is compared in section III to that of a (scientific) model. In both cases the representation is based on correspondence in structure (isomorphism) between model and metaphor on the one side, and field of inquiry or conceptualization of the subject on the other side; models as well as metaphors enable us 'to see' new connections and relations.

In comparing metaphor and simil in section 3.2, it is concluded that metaphor like simil is based on analogy and similarity, but that with a metaphor there is besides expansion of the meaning (of the focus), by which metaphor does, but simil doesnot, contribute to change and expansion of meaning and concept. Further, in Black (1962b) it is suggested that metaphor corresponds to a kind of 'as being'-thinking, whereas simil corresponds to a kind of 'as if'-thinking. This would mean that metaphor is 'stronger', because in a metaphor an ontological claim is made.

In section IV the effect of the context on identification, action, and interpretation of metaphor-themes is analysed with the guide of Stroik (1988) and Bartsch (1984a). By introducing the notion 'metaphorical statement' the shift is made from a sentence-semantical to a pragmatical approach. Next, in section 4.2 is examined when information from the context is necessary for the interpretation of a metaphor-theme. This happens (a) when the predicate has no literal, descriptive meaning and/or the predicate has no 'system of commonplaces' in the language community, (b) when the descriptive meaning and/or the 'system of commonplaces' is semantically indefinite (vague, general), and (c) when the producer of the metaphor intentionally deviates from the 'system of commonplaces' with which the predicate is associated. The contextual information can be made explicit by 'deviant implications' (Black 1979a), 'conversational implicatures' (Grice 1975 and Stroik 1988) and 'thematical dimensions' (Bartsch 1984c).

If not only the metaphorically used word is considered within the context of a sentence, but also the sentence in the verbal context or situational setting, it is possible to identify more sentences as metaphors. These metaphorical sentences, that are discussed in section 4.3, are not characterized by 'sortal incorrectness', but by a flouting (i.e. intentionally breaking) of norms of communication. In this paper only the Cooperation Principle of Grice is discussed. A metaphorical sentence can in this case be defined as a meaningful (intentional and recognizable) anomaly of one of the first three conversational maxims. According to this approach a sentence that is (conventionally) true in literal sense, may be metaphorically used, namely (a) when the sentence is used to refer to a state of affairs in the situational setting instead of to a state of affairs in reality, to which the sentence is conventionally referring (in this case the principle of relevance is flouted), or (b) when the sentence in conventional sense doesn't provide information for the hearer, of what the hearer may infer that the speaker is not intending the sentence in the literal sense (in that case the first maxime of quality is flouted).

In the last section the principal notion in the interaction-analysis of metaphor, the 'system of commonplaces', is compared to philosophical definitions of meaning (Carnap's 'intension', Putnam's 'normal form description'). It is concluded that this notion is best described as a complex of concepts, especially a polyseme complex like it is discussed in Bartsch (1984a) and Bartsch (1984b). The operational definition of Black doesn't suffice to define the notion as it is used in the analysis of the metaphor according to the interaction-theory.

In section 5.1.1 the opinion of Black and Searle is considered that metaphorical meaning is a kind of utterance meaning, as well as criticisms on this thesis. The criticism can be taken the edge off by the notion of 'interpretation operator', that is introduced in Berg (1988).

In section 5.1.2 the difference between 'to be true' and 'held to be true' is discussed. Propositions that are derived from the 'system of commonplaces' may be 'true' or 'held' to be 'true'. In the latter is meant: 'true in language T for population P'; in the former: 'true in language T for a sub-group of experts of population P'.

Finally, in 5.2 the question is given consideration whether a metaphor can be 'true', or that 'fitting' and 'correct' are the good words here. The idea of Black on model-representation, that was at issue in section III, is briefly discussed as well as Black's conclusion that metaphors belong to another language game than 'fact stating' sentences, and that's why a metaphor can't be true or false. As soon as there can be spoken of truth and falsehood, there is not a metaphor anymore, but literal, conventional use. Bartsch introduces a notion of context-dependent truth, 'semantical meaningfulness', on basis of which a metaphorical sentence may be true in its context. Semantical meaningfulness is formulated with regard to an interpretation relative to a part of the discourse or the situational setting. A sentence is semantically meaningful when the sentence is satisfied with respect to the referents of its referring constituents in that part of the discourse or situational setting.