

Identification, Analysis, and Interpretation of Metaphorical Indicative Sentences of Subject-Predicate Form (Master's Thesis 1989, University of Amsterdam, advisor R.I. Bartsch)

Abstract (467 words)

Metaphorically used indicative sentences of subject-predicate form are in two respects anomalous in comparison to literally used indicative sentences. First, the metaphorically used predicate is not used in its conventional sense. Second, there is not a conventional representation of a state of affairs in reality, but a conceptualization of the subject is described within a conceptualization of the predicate.

After discussion of classification of metaphors the paper centers on active, strong, generative metaphors (interaction metaphors).

This kind of metaphors is described in two ways: a context independent or sentence semantic approach, in which the effect of the metaphorical meaning is analyzed as an 'interaction' among properties of the 'system of commonplaces' of subject and predicate (interaction theory M. Black, Section II), and a context dependent pragmatical approach, in which the effect of the context on the action and interpretation of a 'metaphor-theme' is discussed, applying Gricean conversational implicatures (H.P. Grice, T.S. Stroik) or thematic dimensions (R.I. Bartsch, Section IV).

In the introduction, 'Metaphor and the "Dogmas" of Analytical Philosophy', some methodological presuppositions of study of metaphor are brought up for discussion: the 'dogma' of synchronicity, of literal, descriptive meaning, of cognitive meaning, of context independent meaning, and of language as picture of reality. The dogma of cognitive meaning is not tenable with conception of metaphor as imagery; Quine and Davidson 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. Analysis of metaphor requires an expansion of the notion of meaning as description (conventional meaning as the operational definition of the extension), as well as another conception of the (conventional) picture theory of language.

In the last section the principal notion of 'system of commonplaces' is compared to philosophical definitions of meaning (R. Carnap 'intension', H. Putnam 'normal form description'). It is concluded that this notion is best described as a complex of concepts, especially a polyseme complex as in Bartsch 1984. Propositions derived from 'system of commonplaces' may be considered 'true' or 'held to be true'; by the latter is meant 'true in language T for population P', by the former 'true in language T for a subgroup of experts of population P'.

Finally, the question whether metaphors can be 'true', or rather 'fitting', 'correct' etc. According to Black metaphors belong to another language game than fact stating sentences, and as soon as there can be spoken of truth or falsehood there is no metaphor anymore, but literal, conventional use. Bartsch introduces a notion of context dependent truth, semantical meaningfulness. A sentence is semantical meaningful when the sentence is satisfied with respect to the referents of the referring constituents in that part of the discourse or situational setting.