ABSTRACTS: PLENARY SPEAKERS

Metaphors, Snowflakes, and Termite Nests: How Nature Creates Such Beautiful Things

Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr.
University of California, Santa Cruz (United States)
Day and time: 29th May 10.00
Room: Paraninfo

Metaphoric language is very much the product of human action, and many scholars now claim that metaphor in language arises from metaphors in thought. But the reasons for why we think metaphorically and speak (gesture) in these ways may be rooted in principles of self-organization that describe the existence, and forms, of many other animate and inanimate things, ranging from snowflakes to termite nests. My talk will describe the benefits of looking at metaphor from a self-organizational point of view, known as dynamical systems theory, and suggest how this perspective can solve several long-standing debates in metaphor scholarship on the variability of metaphors in context and the mental processes by which they are understood. The implications of this view for cross-cultural studies of metaphor will also be discussed.

Context-induced variation in metaphor

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Day and time: 31st May 13.00
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To say that metaphor varies according to context is to say that metaphor is essentially a cultural product, and not simply a product of universal embodiment. This means that in order to understand metaphor variation, we need to study in detail the types of context that play a role in this variation, and how they play a part. For the purposes of the paper, I will examine contexts from the most global to the most local type and show how contextual factors facilitate the development and mutual understanding of discourse.

"I'm a riddle in nine syllables": the poetics, psychology and pragmatics of metaphor in cross-cultural contexts
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Day and time: 30th May 11.30
Room: Paraninfo

In this paper, I attempt to confront the sharp challenge posed in Sylvia Plath's famous self-reflexive poem 'Metaphors'. How does one go about solving the 'riddle' posed by the figurative uses of language? What relationship obtains between apparently specialized linguistic activities such as the production of metaphors and the processes which animate our everyday social actions? In what way do metaphors enable us describe our cognitive states and to what end? Plath's poem, the first line of which is quoted in the title of my paper, offers a good starting point for this discussion because it appears to exemplify many of the features that theorists typically attribute to metaphor Not only does this verse go beyond mere 'literal' description to embody in its form the content of its message, it is also analogically sustained, culturally specific and highly sophisticated in the way that it performs or enacts its relationship to other figures of speech such as metonymy, paradox, hyperbole, personification and the pun. Most importantly, 'Metaphors' forces upon its readers/hearers the realization that they are actually partners in co-constructing its 'meaning' and in working out its hidden implicatures.

Following this introductory section called 'The Riddle of Metaphor', a second section of the paper briefly considers a couple of seminal works that provide, in my view, crucial insights into the nature of metaphor for any pragmatic theory. These are: Paul Ricouer's 'The Rule of Metaphor' and Donald Davidson's 'What Metaphors Mean', each of which marks a sort of apotheosis; the first being a culmination of a long line of structuralist readings of the poetics of metaphor that go back to Aristotle and the second offering us a striking analysis of the psychology of metaphor as 'dream-work' and returning, via Freud, to Plato's conception of the poetic language as uncontrollably arousing the emotions. Another aspect of 'background' that is important for my analysis is the way in which early Indian theorists (Bharata, Bhartrhari, Anandavardhana, Dandin) developed theories of metaphor that, arguably, explain and connect to some of the 'conceptual schemas' that are deployed on the subcontinent to this day. This section of the paper is entitled 'The *Ram*ifications of Metaphor' after the god Ram, hero of the 'Ramayana', an epic which is still performed in India every year and has robustly

survived translation into the new media of comics, film and television and even video-games.

With this rich 'background' and data in place, the penultimate section of the paper, 'The Recognition of Metaphor', then turns its attention to Stephen Levinson's specifications for a pragmatic theory of metaphor; Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson's hypothesis that metaphor and figurative language in general constitute cases of 'echoic mention' in communication; and Paul Grice's suggestion that metaphorical speech constitutes a clear violation of the Maxim of Quality which, *ceteris paribus*, enjoins speakers to 'tell the truth' in conversational contexts. Finally, the section on 'The Roots of Metaphor' presents my own arguments concerning the need to add the notion of 'impliculture' to the structure of generalized Gricean implicature for a satisfactory pragmatic analysis of metaphorical phenomena. Here, I contend that metaphor and other non-stigmatized 'literary' forms of the 'lie' which seem to bear a family resemblance to one another may have evolved to offer specific social advantages in different cultural contexts. Examples from bilingual contexts in India and Singapore, especially during the processes of language acquisition and learning, are adduced in this section to illustrate how metaphor use can be cross-culturally 'riddled' both with the possibilities of grave miscommunication as well as an enormous potential to radically extend and reset linguistic boundaries.

Metaphor and metonymy in grammar and communication

Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez
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Day and time: 30th May 15.30
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This presentation explores the consequences of the equipollence hypothesis, proposed by Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal (2007, 2008), in the context of the *Lexical-Constructional Model*, for the explanation of some grammatical and pragmatic phenomena on the basis of the same set of basic cognitive operations on various kinds of cognitive models (see also Ruiz de Mendoza and Peña, 2005; Ruiz de Mendoza, 2007). The equipollence hypothesis, which is methodological, is a working assumption according to which linguistic processes that have been attested in one domain of linguistic enquiry may also be at least partially active in other domains. More specifically, I propose that metaphor can be broken down into two more basic cognitive operations (already identified by Grady, 1999, as correlation and resemblance) and metonymy into another two (identified in Ruiz de Mendoza, 2000, as domain expansion and domain reduction) that variously apply to different kinds of high and low-level situational and non-situational cognitive model with different kinds of grammatical and pragmatic effects. Thus, metaphor and metonymy, whether by themselves or in interaction, not only underlie alternate grammatical construals of the same events, but also pragmatic implications that have been traditionally accounted for as cases of implicature/explicature-derivation (Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez, 2003) and illocutionary meaning (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007). Other cognitive operations are identified (e.g. strengthening, mitigation, contrast) and studied in their application to the explanation of some common figures of speech, especially simile, irony, hyperbole, and litotes. The resulting account -which is argued to comply with the requirements of cognitive, communicative, and explanatory adequacy- strongly suggests that grammatical processes are only different from inferential pragmatics processes in the ontological dimension of representation. The structuring principles and cognitive operations that underlie all of these processes are essentially the same.

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