

Non-literal speech as a challenge to compositional semantics. The meaning of “rosy-fingered dawn,” “rain on your parade,” etc not predictable from meanings of parts.

This is not so much of a problem if "linguistic usage [is] literalistic in its main body and metaphorical in its trimming" (Quine). This familiar thought is however “a mistake... Cognitive discourse at its most dryly literal is largely a refinement rather, characteristic of the neatly worked inner stretches of science. It is an open space in the tropical jungle, created by clearing tropes away.”

1. literature: specific metaphors; literary works as wholes (allegory, parable)
2. religion: "the lord is my shepherd," etc, religious texts as not literal truth
3. "conceptual metaphor" (Lakoff and Johnson): argument is war, time is space, mind as hidden,..
4. science: electricity as fluid, light as particle/wave, mind as telephone switchboard, computer, etc.
5. large-scale metaphors ("world hypotheses"): universe as machine vs. universe as organism
6. philosophy: logical space, the ghost in the machine, etc.

Decision tree: (1) metaphorical meaning, yes or no? If yes, (2) linguistic or speaker meaning? If linguistic meaning, (3) how is it generated? If speaker meaning, (4) what are the pragmatic mechanisms? If no, (5) what does metaphor accomplish and how?

Simile theory: “George is a gorilla” is short for “George is like a gorilla”

Problems: (i) drains them of conceptual tension, (ii) everything is like everything, (iii) respects of similarity may themselves be metaphorical (George is a block of ice), (iv) the metaphor may be true when the simile is false (gorillas aren’t fierce)

Pragmatic theory (Grice, Searle): statement taken literally is uncooperative, so....

Problems: (i) limits potential meanings to what speaker might mean, but interesting metaphors outrun speaker intent; (ii) radically underdetermines the results, (iii) not clear that the statement taken literally is always uncooperative (“Singapore is an island of efficiency in the South China sea.”)

No-content theory (Davidson): a metaphor is like a knock on the head.

Problems: (i) dead metaphors have content, surely that comes from the live metaphor; (ii) scientific metaphors seem truth-evaluable; (iii) metaphorical truths (“Spring is around the corner,” “It’s on the tip of my tongue”); (iv) metaphorical falsehoods (“~~Juliet~~ Joe Biden is the sun”)

Pretense theory (Walton): next time

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