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Internal structure of English colloquial metaphor

INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH COLLOQUIAL METAPHOR

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I. This article is an attempt at an analysis of the English colloquial metaphor using a structural method as professed by the Prague linguistic school. Its task is difficult in that it deals with linguistic meaning. If the phoneme is regarded as a phonic distinctive unit made up of a set of definite relevant features, such a set is parallelled by the phonetic segmentability of these features. A metaphor, however, is more complicated in being a (semantic) unit, a denomination (word or word group) with an allusive, cryptic, variable and unstable meaning. It is generally recognized that a metaphor is a set of two disparate, formally non-autonomous meanings that are in a covert comparison as based on a common property. Yet they represent one unity, or, as C. M. Turbayne aptly put it,[1] 'duality plus unity.' The internal compactness of a metaphorical meaning that fuses different meanings into one, undoubtedly contributes to the bad segmentability of the relevant semantic features unparallelled by formal correlates. One of the linguistic procedures disclosing the semantic features is an investigation of the onomatological (or external) relation of the metaphor to the extralinguistic reality denoted by it. The aim of this article is to reveal its internal functions and to trace a set of covert analogies (parallels) of which a metaphor is capable. Through such implied analogies we find word meanings (names) with which a metaphor is cryptically compared. It is a well-known fact that in comparing (and identifying) two meanings based on a common property, a metaphor retains uncommon features, although otherwise it works as if one semantic feature had absorbed the other without a residue, and as if the semantic component not involved by the comparison had been ignored. In this article attention will be called to such analogies as represent an interlocking semantic continuum. Coherent continua are regarded as being more binding and hierarchically higher than discrete particles.

II. A. Animate and Inanimate Metaphors:

Classification from this angle is very old.[2] By using it we can arrive at the following groups of English colloquial metaphors: 1. animate:

I seem to have got into a kind of jungle. Dickson MW. 8. 80 (Dostal jsem se do hrozné houštiny, džungle, šlamastiky).

2. Inanimate:

Why don't you get this table cleared up! It's a pigsty. Pinter BP. 1. 19. (Proč si nedáš uklidit stůl. Je na něm strašný svinčík), etc.

In our corpus of examples, there is a majority of animate over inanimate metaphors, at the ratio of 172: 87. Yet such a numerical proportion is not quite conclusive for

colloquial speech. The fact is that inanimateness is never entirely unambiguous and mostly admits the presence of a potential activity by an animate person, e.g.:

Or you must get out of this *mad-house*. This menagerie. Osborne Look back 2.47. (Musíš se dostat z tohoto blázince).

The metaphor *mad-house* (blázinec) itself is inanimate, by comparing with an inanimate thing, but it implies animate inmates of an asylum. The inanimate element is made fluent by the fact that metaphors are simultaneously words naming live (animate) persons. Hence this onomatological circumstance cuts inanimateness in such metaphors to a minimum.[3]

B. Sensorial metaphors (intersense analogies, synaesthesia): The animate-inanimate diacrisis has close ties also with the criterion assessing metaphors according to man's five senses, according to which of the five senses the primary meaning is compared. From this viewpoint we can distinguish visual, auditive and smell metaphors.[4] We set aside the problem of whether such a division is physiologically or psychologically correct and watertight. Undoubtedly there are inconsistencies, overlaps and incompleteness. It is obvious even to a layman that in receiving sensations, human senses necessarily co-operate with one another.[5] Nevertheless a recognition of five senses in semantics continues a certain linguistic tradition in that in (European) languages the five human senses make a stable, coherent semantic setup, with particles mutually complementing one another.[6] Colloquial sensorial metaphors are scarce in our corpus of material. We can distinguish here: 1. cryptic semantic comparisons with colours, with visual sensations:

That's how you'll end up, my boy—*black-hearted*, evil-minded and vicious. Osborne Look back 2.49. (Mít tvrdé srdce).

2. Tactile metaphors:

You get *bored stiff*, just sitting indoors. Osborne Entertainer 3.21. (Budeš otráven jako šváb).

3. Metaphors of taste:

There was a terrible, *bitter row* over it. Osborne Look back 2.46. (ošklivá hádka),

4. Auditive metaphors:

The car was *whizzin'* at a hundred miles an hour. Dickson MW. 21.216. (Auto svištělo, frčelo rychlostí...).

There are also metaphors cryptically comparing with two senses at a time: 5. Metaphor of taste and of smell:

You made a *putrid* cup of tea. Osborne Dillon 12. (Udělal jsi hnusný čaj).

6. tactile and auditive metaphors:

Nothing seems to have *made a dent*—all of a sudden it changes. Dickson MW. 5.48. (Neudělalo to nejmenší dojem).

The metaphors comparing with two senses indicate ties towards the so-called mixed metaphors in which it cannot be safely distinguished with which sense they are implicitly compared.

In the metaphors we have traced the comparison between non-sensorial and sensorial meanings. In the parallel, only one term of the relationship was sensorial, the other was not. Yet there are also semantic analogies which are based upon the sub-

stitution of one sense by another.[7] In the synaesthetic relation both meanings latently compared by metaphor are sensorial. In this case, there is bilateral analogy, a real synaesthesia. From this angle, psychologists distinguish colour hearing (or synopsy or photism, audition colorée, Farbenhören)[8] as opposed to phonism (or sound seeing). Setting aside psychological considerations, we find that synaesthetic metaphors do not occur in our corpus of colloquial English material. Psychic phenomena of this type are not confined only to poetic language, but may be encountered also with everyday speakers.[9] From this viewpoint our sensorial metaphors might profitably be termed unilaterally synaesthetic because only one of the meanings compared is human sense. A genuine, bilateral synaesthesia is not employed by colloquial metaphors.

C. Mental metaphors:

Sensorial metaphors point to the realm of mind. Earlier researchers have actually admitted the existence of special mental denominations (names).[10] F. Waismann (228) is convinced that a majority of mind denominations has originated from words whose primary connotation was sensorial. Onomatologically speaking, thought builds upon the perception (reception) of sensations and works them up to be capable of loftier psychical operations. Thought is regarded as a higher degree of mental activity superimposed upon a much lower level of mere registration, collection and formation of sensations.

There are mental metaphors such as:

Who's being *small-minded* now? Wesker Roots 1.28. (malicherný).

Mental metaphors presuppose the existence of sensations, without reflecting sensorial and synaesthetic metaphors. They are different from, and linguistically not identifiable with them. They cannot be regarded as univocally visual, auditive, smell, tactile or taste.

D. Metaphors of mixed experience:

There are also metaphors implying a more complex assessment of the situation by the speakers. They do not suggest any clear-cut analogies with the areas of animateness, synaesthesia (senses) or mentality. They can cover all these areas only in a non-analytic and mixed manner. They are metaphors suggesting the speakers' mixed experience:

It did happen at Christmas, I suppose. *When the cat's away.* Delaney Th. 2.1.61. (Když je kocour pryč, myši mají pré).

The area of mixed experience is vast, residual and internally undifferentiated. Yet it must be taken into account — in the same way as the previous areas discussed— if we wish to grasp the complexity of human experience as reflected by linguistic devices.

E. Somatic metaphors:

From an onomatological viewpoint, animateness, sensorialness and mind are vested in the human body. In the New English colloquial style we can find somatic metaphors comparing with the human body:

Don't *jump* down my *throat*. Delaney Th. 2.2.56. (Neskákej mi do řeči).

While all previous metaphorical categories (animate, sensorial and mental) have indicated a comparison of meanings without naming them directly, somatic metaphors achieve the comparison by directly naming the body (or its parts), as may be illustrated by words like *head and shoulders, knees, throat, heart, heels, nose, bile, bare face, waist, sweat,* etc. This circumstance also indicates that somatic metaphors are on a different footing than the areas treated before.

III. In summing up our discussion, we may see that the internal structure of colloquial metaphors is an intersection of implied analogies with (parallels to) other, non-metaphorical areas. These analogies do not represent segments within a metaphor, and consequently do not constitute a hierarchy of internal criteria valid for each individual metaphor, but are potentially valid within the confines of the metaphors under investigation: Each colloquial metaphor may be subsumed at least under one of these categories. The partial pattern of animate, sensorial, mental and somatic metaphors is a set of analogical relations, of which the metaphorical meanings are capable, and which are not necessarily implemented by every metaphor. By having its internal analogies, a metaphor differs from other linguistic functives (i.e. phonemes, morphemes) that are built not upon semantic (onomatological) analogies, but on totally different principles. The existence of metaphors shows, however, that analogical structure is an important and fruitful concept in the systemic approach to language because it supplies a new communicative dimension to units of language, prevents monotony of style, and reveals the expressive potentialities of words in actual utterances.

NOTES

[1] C. M. Turbayne, *The Myth of Metaphor*,[2] 21 (Yale University Press, 1963).

[2] Ch. Brooke-Rose, *A Grammar of Metaphor* (London, 1958) finds the beginnings of such a classification as early as in Quintillian (216) and in the mediaeval work *Poetria Nova* by Geoffrey de Vinsauf (6).

[3] See S. Ullmann, *Language and Style* 84 (Oxford, 1964): 'A very common form of metaphor in the most diverse languages is the anthropocentric type.'

[4] Cf. S. Ullmann, *Language and Style* 85, saying: 'this is quite possibly a universal form of metaphor.'

[5] Cf. A. Wellek, 'Zur Geschichte und Kritik der Synästhesie-Forschung', *Archiv f. d. gesamte Psychologie* 79. 343 (Leipzig, 1931). Same author, 'Der Sprachgeist als Doppelempfinder' *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 25. 226—62 (Stuttgart, 1931).

[6] The set of human senses as a classificatory criterion for metaphors is also recognized by H. Hatzfeld, 'Peut-on systématiser l'analyse stylistique?' 231—4 in *Langue et littérature* (Paris, 1961). In his note he recalls that the proposed classification is unsafe. Alongside the clearly sensorial metaphors he also admits mixed ones ('mixtes') which he does not specify. Similarly also G. O' Malley, 'Literary Synaesthesia,' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15. 392 (Baltimore, 1957) who says: 'intersense metaphors may fuse or interrelate complex wholes of experience.'

[7] There is a vast amount of literature on synaesthesia, largely psychological: A. Wellek, 'Zur Geschichte der Synaesthesie-Forschung' (see our note 5) lists its bibliography on 374—84. See further articles by the same author, 'Beiträge zum Synästhesie-Problem, '*Archiv f. d. gesamte Psychologie* 76. 193—201 (1930), and, 'Das Doppelempfinden im abendländischen Altertum und Mittelalter,' *Archiv f. d. gesamte Psychologie* 80. 120—66 (1931). Linguistic theories of synaesthesia: S. Ullmann, *Language and Style* 85 (Oxford, 1964); same author. *The Principles of Semantics* 254; G. O' Malley, 'Literary Synaesthesia,' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15. 391—411 (1957).

[6] Cf. A. Wellek, *Archiv f. d. gesamte Psychologie* 79. 335, 337, 346 (1931).
[9] A. Wellek, *Arch. f. d. ges. Psych.* 79. 342 (1931) quotes Nussbaumer: 'alle Menschen haben Photismen'; G. O' Malley,' Literary Synaesthesia' 394, similarly also S. Ullmann, *Language and Style* 85 ff.
[10] See F. Waismann, 'Language Strata' 226—47 in *Logic and Language* (Garden City, N. Y., 1965).

RESUMÉ

Vnitřní výstavba anglické hovorové metafory

V tomto článku se zkoumají skryté významové analogie (paralely) metafor s jinými pojmenováními. Chápaje metaforu jako funktiv o dvou různých, nesegmentovaných významech, autor odhaluje vnitřní analogie hovorových metafor s oblastí životnosti (a neživotnosti), s lidskými smysly (metafory synestetické, sensorické), s duševnem (metafory mentální), metafory smíšené zkušenosti, a tělové. Svazkem svých vnitřních analogií se metafora liší od jiných jazykových funktivů (fonémů, morfémů), jež nejsou založeny na analogiích.