


Cognitive Linguistics: The Study of Discourse Goals of Using Different Types of Figurative Language			Linguistics Keywords: figurative language, discourse goal, simile, metaphor, irony, hyperbole.
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Abstract			
<p>Little work has been conducted on the investigation of the discourse goals for the speaker or the writer's figurative production. This study aimed at shedding light into discourse goals for figurative language. The subjects included 130 Associate degree students (65 men and 65 women; but after collecting the answer sheets, 18 answers weren't acceptable and were ignored). In this study, The participants were given a number of sentences, containing different figures of speech, and were asked to write as many discourse goals as possible which they considered to be the reasons for using these figures of speech. The results indicated that each figure of speech is used to accomplish some communicative goals. The overlap between the forms was also considered, and the results indicated the relatedness of certain figures.</p>			

1. Introduction

Figurative language isn't uncommon, it is a ubiquitous part of spoken and written discourse (Roberts et al, 1994). By comparing figurative language and Grice maxims we would conclude that figurative language must accomplish certain communicative goals better than literal language. Lakoff/Johnson (1980) go far beyond this and contend that "our ordinary conceptual system is basically metaphorical in nature". Of relevance to the aim of the present study is the question of the producer's intention of the metaphorical message and the perception of that intention by the receiver of the message. As Harris/Friel/Mickelson (2006) believe, studies on figurative language have taken two sides: comprehension and production. As for the former, the area of research abounds with miscellaneous studies on the comprehension of figurative use of language, but regarding the latter, one would spot areas of neglect in this research domain (Harris et al. 2006). So the purpose of this study is to determine those kinds of discourse goals that Persian language receivers perceive as the reasons for the production of figurative language in Persian on the part of language producers.

2. Review of the related literature

Miscellaneous studies have been done on the figurative language and many people studied this field, like Lakoff & Johnson (1980), Smith & Pollio (1990), Gerrig & Gibbs (1988), Glucksberg (1989), Kreuz & Roberts (1993), Giora (1999). One result is the repeated demonstration that, when sufficient context is provided, it takes no more time to understand

figurative expressions than to understand literal ones (Hoffman & Kemper, 1987 in Roberts et. al. 1994). Because of this result, Gibbs (1982, 1984, 1989) recommended that researchers stop debating what is and is not literal, and instead adopt an approach based on speech act theory (Austin, 1961). According to speech act theory, discourse participants comprehend utterances when they recognize the underlying goals and intentions of the other participants (Allen & Perrault, 1986 in Roberts et. al. 1994). Understanding when and why an utterance is produced is crucial in understanding its meaning.

Relatively few researchers have addressed the specific discourse goals that underlie the use of figurative language. Gerrig and Gibbs (1988) posited that figurative language can be used to establish intimacy between some discourse participants while excluding others. Glucksberg (1989) proposed that metaphors can be more precise and informative than literal statements. Glucksberg and Keysar (1990) suggested that metaphors are easier to understand than similes (Roberts et.al., 1994)

In one study (Long & Kreuz, 1993 in Roberts et.al., 1994), subjects explained the goals fulfilled by using irony, idioms, and rhetorical questions. As a measure of convergent validity, other subjects explained why characters in short scenarios made ironic or idiomatic statements or asked rhetorical questions. The goals provided in the scenario contexts were almost identical to those elicited more directly. This result suggests that individuals can accurately articulate their metacognitive knowledge about the uses of figurative language.

In another research, Roberts et.al (1994) wanted to derive a goal taxonomy that would encompass a wide variety of figures of speech and specify precisely the discourse goals that are accomplished by using these figures. If each figure is used to satisfy particular discourse goals, then the relations between the figures were considered in terms of the unique and shared goals they fulfill. The goal taxonomy indicated that each figure of speech is used to accomplish a unique constellation of communicative goals. The degree of goal overlap between the eight forms was also calculated, and the results provided support for theoretical claims about the relatedness of certain figures.

To investigate the probable effects of discourse properties on metaphor recognition, Steen (2004) undertook an empirical study of metaphor recognition in which 18 prospective Dutch students of discourse studies were asked to underline any part of a song they thought was metaphorical. The author divided metaphor properties according to a multidimensional discourse approach that distinguishes between linguistic, conceptual, and communicative functions of metaphorical language. A selection of eight structural metaphor variables for each of these discourse functions was chosen. It turned out that there were five effective variables in the song calculated to be good barometers for metaphor recognition: metaphor complexity, level, position in the utterance, text section, and overall text (Hashemian et.al, 2011).

Also, Jones/Estes (2005), drawing on the metaphorical class-inclusion model, embarked on a research program with a view to test the extent to which the subjects judged the topic concept (e.g., TIME) to be a member of a vehicle category (e.g., MONEY). They divided the study into three experiments. Taking all the three experiments together, the authors found that metaphor comprehension involves a process of attributive categorization, whether conventional or novel, highly apt or less apt, and regardless of the relational similarity between topic and vehicle (Hashemian et.al, 2011).

In a similar vein, Harris et al. (2006) conducted a research study examining the perceived reasons by listener or reader as to why a metaphor or simile is used. The researchers divided their study into three experiments and told participants to check those goals they considered to be relevant to the production of the specific figurative sentence. All in all, of the 12 discourse goals, only "Compare Similarities", the most frequently chosen goal overall, differed for metaphors and similes. This goal was more often chosen for similes (64%) than for metaphors (57%) (Hashemian et.al, 2011).

In another research, Hashemian et.al(2011) aimed at shedding light into a number of different discourse goals as they were identified by Iranian EFL undergraduates in sentences containing figurative language based on four independent variables: Figure Type, Tenor Concreteness, Context, and Modality. The participants were given a number of sentences, containing both metaphors and similes, and were asked to choose as many 12 discourse goals as possible which they considered to be the reasons for triggering the utterances. The results indicated that the discourse goal of Compare Similarities was more frequently selected for similes than for metaphors by the participants. The Context variable turned out to have significant interaction with the choice of the discourse goals of "Provoke Thought", "Get Attention", "Clarify", and "Contrast Differences", whereas the factor of Modality influenced only "Add Emphasis". Also, three goals, "Add Interest", "Clarify", and "Show Positive Emotion" significantly affected Tenor Concreteness. Comparatively, some marked differences were noticed between Iranian L2 learners and native speakers. L2 teachers are, therefore, advised to more emphasize the correct attributions of discourse goals for metaphors and similes(Hashemian et.al, 2011).

In the present study, using Roberts et.al. pattern (1994), we wanted to derive a goal taxonomy that would encompass a wide variety of figures of speech in Persian and specify precisely the discourse goals that are accomplished by using these figures.

3. Different Types of Figures of speech

In the psychological literature, eight distinct types of nonliteral language have emerged (Kreuz & Roberts, 1993). These are hyperbole (exaggeration: "I'd rather be boiled in oil than take his class"); idiom (a meaning not obtainable from a literal interpretation: "He let the cat out of the

bag"); indirect request (a command phrased as a comment or question: "I sure could use the salt"); irony (typically, a statement contrary to an intended meaning: "Another gorgeous day!" uttered during a thunder storm); understatement (presenting something as less significant than it is: saying that "Ted was a little tipsy" when Ted was very drunk); metaphor (implicit comparison: "Cigarettes are time bombs"); rhetorical question (a question that does not require an answer: "How many times must I tell you?"); and simile (explicit comparison: "Cigarettes are like time bombs").

4. Methodology

130 students of Binaloud higher education institute(Mashhad-Iran) participated for course credit. Subjects were assigned randomly to one of eight conditions: hyperbole, idiom, indirect request, irony, understatement, metaphor, rhetorical question, and simile. 16 to 17 subjects participated in each condition.

Each subject received a booklet containing instructions, a definition and 3 examples of one particular figure. Also we asked them to provide 3 additional examples of that figure and the reasons why an individual might use that figure of speech. Asking subjects to produce examples ensured that they had an adequate understanding of the figure.

5. Data analysis

Although 130 subjects participated, only 122 demonstrated sufficient understanding of their figure by producing at least two acceptable examples of it. Only these subjects are included in the data analyses. According to Roberts et.al. pattern (1994), A goal taxonomy was created. To achieve acceptable reliability, 3 judges discussed them. Interjudge agreement was high. Some responses were regarded by judges as too vague or idiosyncratic to fit into the taxonomy. In such cases, the judges classified the response as "other". Despite "other", there were 19 discourse goals: 1- To be conventional. 2- To be unconventional. 3- To be eloquent. 4- To be humorous. 5- To protect the self. 6- To compare similarities. 7- To contrast differences. 8- To emphasize. 9- To de-emphasize. 10- To add interest. 11- To provoke thought. 12- To differentiate groups. 13- To clarify. 14- To be polite. 15- To get attention. 16- To show positive emotion. 17- To show negative emotion. 18- To guide another's actions. 19- To manage the discourse. 20- Other

After analyzing, two goals from Roberts et.al. taxonomy (1994) weren't among Persian participants goals in this research(19- "To manage the discourse" & 7- "To contrast differences") and were removed by researchers. Instead, there were four new goals among Persian participants goals not stated in Roberts et.al taxonomy(1994) including("being ashamed"- "showing a clear-sighted characteristics"- "being an easy going method"- "saving time and utterance"). These new goals were added to the related list.

1. Figures of speech and Goals data

Goal No.	goal	Indirect request	Understatement	Idiom	Simile	Rhetorical question	Hyperbole	Irony	Metaphor
1	To be conventional			4		3	1	1	1
2	To be unconventional					1	1		
3	To be eloquent	1		1	8		1		7
4	To be humorous			2				5	
5	To protect the self	1	8			2		1	
6	To compare similarities	6		1	1			1	
7	To emphasize		1	3	3	6	7		3
8	To de-emphasize		1						
9	To add interest				1				1
10	To provoke thought		1			1			1
11	To differentiate groups	2						2	
12	To clarify			7	8	3	5	1	9
13	To be polite	5							1
14	To get attention						7	1	1
15	To show positive emotion	7	4	1	1	2		2	
16	To show negative emotion	1	1			2		8	
17	To guide another's actions	3	5	1	2	2	1	3	3
18	others		6			1		4	
19	being ashamed	2	1						
20	showing a clear-sighted characteristics	2				1			
21	being an easy going method		1		1	2	1		
22	saving time and utterance		1	2	2	1	1		3

6. Discussion and Conclusion

A Cochran test was used and results indicated that the most frequent goals for indirect request are: To show positive emotion, showing a clear-sighted characteristics, To be polite.

2. Cochran test for indirect request

sample	13
Test statistic	70.15
df	21
p-value	0.00

The most frequent goals for Understatement: others, To guide another's actions, To protect the self.

3. Cochran test for understatement

sample	14
Test statistic	79.555
df	21
p-value	0.00

The most frequent goals for idiom: To clarify, To be conventional.

4. Cochran test for idiom

sample	14
Test statistic	66.261
df	21
p-value	0.00

The most frequent goals for simile: To clarify, To emphasize, To be eloquent.

5. Cochran test for simile

sample	13
Test statistic	93.188
df	21
p-value	0.00

The most frequent goals for Rhetorical question: To emphasize.

6. Cochran test for rhetorical question

sample	12
Test statistic	33.243
df	21
p-value	0.044

The most frequent goals for Hyperbole: To emphasize, To clarify.

7. Cochran test for Hyperbole

sample	14
Test statistic	97.593
df	21
p-value	0.00

The most frequent goals for irony: To show negative emotion, To be humorous.

8. Cochran test for Irony

sample	13
Test statistic	71.911
df	21
p-value	0.00

The most frequent goals for metaphor: others, To guide another's actions, To show negative emotion, To be humorous.

9. Cochran test for Metaphor

sample	13
Test statistic	68.260
df	21
p-value	0.00

These results suggest that specific discourse goals can be accomplished by using specific figures of speech. In many cases, a discourse goal can be fulfilled by more than one figure. However, certain goals are generally accomplished through the use of one particular figure. Some figure of speech shares certain discourse goals with other figures and the figures can be said to overlap to varying degrees; For example, some goals provided for Metaphor was also provided for Understatement: "To guide another's actions" and "others". One of the goals provided for Idiom was also provided for Simile and Hyperbole: "To clarify". One of the goals provided for Simile was also provided for Rhetorical question and Hyperbole: "To emphasize". Some goals provided for Metaphor was also provided for irony: "To show negative emotion" and "To be humorous". Therefore each figure of speech is used to accomplish some communicative goals and there is the overlap between some forms and the results indicate the relatedness of certain figures.

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