

Interdisciplinary Workshop Stylistics

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Resonance

A pragmatic construction

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Creativity, **H**umor and **I**magery
in **L**anguage
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Getting started...

George Bernard Shaw:

*Here's an invitation to the opening night of my new play.
Bring a friend, if you have one.*

Getting started...

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Winston Churchill:

*I'm afraid I can't make it on the opening night. But I
may attend the second night, if there is one.*

Overview

- [Converging developments]
- Aim
- Starting point: tools and concepts
- Resonance ?
- Examples
- Systematization
- Generalization

Converging developments

1. Recent developments in Cognitive Linguistics (CL)

1.1. Cognitive Stylistics (Cognitive Poetics)

1.2. Extension of traditional CL (lexical-semantic, sentence-level grammar) to discourse

1.3. Application of CL to humour

Converging developments

1. Recent developments in Cognitive Linguistics (CL)

1.1. Cognitive Stylistics (Cognitive Poetics)

- stylistics not purely linguistic phenomenon
- looking for (cognitive) *patterns* across different texts
- ‘construal’ as starting point: ‘seeing/expressing things in different ways’
- Semino & Culpeper (eds.) 2002; Stockwell 2002; Gavins & Steen (eds.) 2003; Brône & Vandaele (eds.) in press (2008);

Converging developments

1. Recent developments in Cognitive Linguistics (CL)

1.2. Extension of traditional CL to discourse

- ‘usage based’?
 - methodology (statistic quantification, psycholing. evidence, corpus studies, close reading studies...)
 - research object: interactional data; spoken spontaneous language use
- Coulson 2000; Langacker 2001; Steen 2005; Knott et al. 2001; Verhagen (“intersubjectivity”) 2005; Sanders & Spooren 2006

Converging developments

1. Recent developments in Cognitive Linguistics (CL)

1.3. Application of CL to humour

- Deautomatization on different levels
- Coulson 2000; Giora 2003; Bergen & Binsted 2004; Brône et al. 2006; Veale et al. 2006; Brône 2007; Brône in press; Antonopoulou & Nikiforidou in press

Converging developments

1. Interesting developments outside/toward CL

2.1. Psycholinguistics

2.2. Conversation Analysis meets Construction Grammar

Converging developments

2. Interesting developments outside/toward CL

2.1. Psycholinguistics

- H. Clark (1996) *Using Language*
 - language use = ‘joint action’
 - ‘common ground’ (mutual awareness of shared knowledge)
 - ‘layering’
- Alignment Theory (Pickering & Garrod 2004; 2006; Garrod & Pickering 2004)
 - centrality of dialogue
 - “most natural and basic form of language use”
 - “traditional psycholinguistics has ignored dialogue”

Converging developments

2. Interesting developments outside/toward CL

2.1. Conversation Analysis meets Construction Grammar

- Meaning construction in interaction (*Bedeutungskonstitution*, Deppermann 2002) (*Gesprächsforschung*)
- Deppermann 2006; 2007; Fischer 2007, Günthner & Imo 2006, Imo 2007, Duden Grammatik 2005)

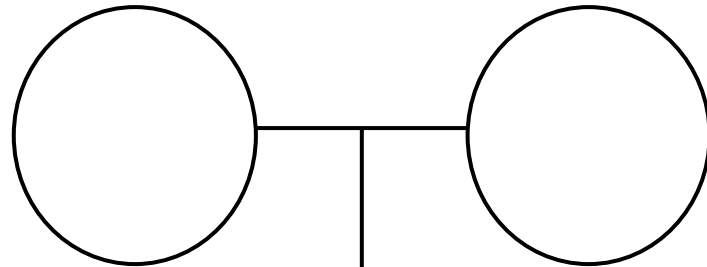
Aim

- Find cognitive patterns and mechanisms underlying this type of stylistic (humorous) meaning (Resonance)
- Insight: from meaning construal to meaning coordination
- Insight: complex interplay objective and subjective meaning
- Explore ‘constructions’ in the realm of pragmatics

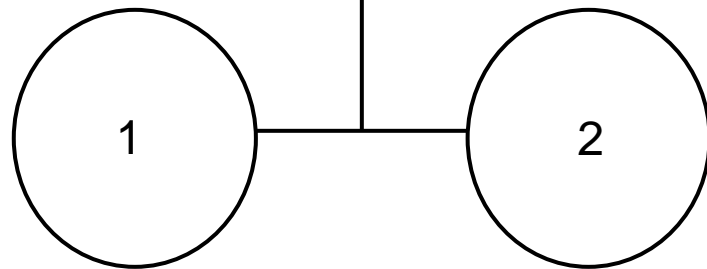
Starting point: tools and concepts

Verhagen 2005: 7

O: Object of Conceptualization



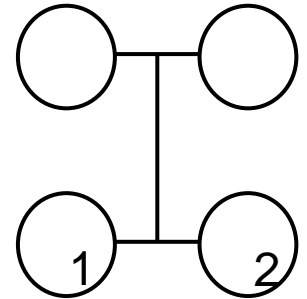
S: Subject of Conceptualization
(*Ground*)



Construal: “The relationship between a speaker (or hearer) and a situation that he conceptualizes and portrays, involving focal adjustments and imagery” (Langacker 1987: 487/8)

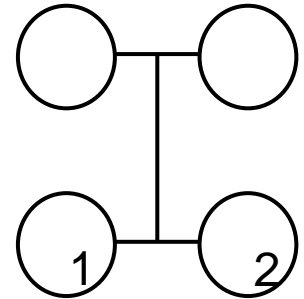
Starting point: tools and concepts

- Construal: inherent in any linguistic usage event
- Meaning: essentially *perspectival* (*embedded viewpoints*)
- language use as *joint action*
- *theory of mind* (“taking into account other minds”
Verhagen 2005: 6)
- “Subjects engage in cognitive coordination by means of the utterance” (ib.)
- *common ground* (Clark 1996): the knowledge that subjects mutually share, including models of each other and of the discourse situation



Starting point: tools and concepts

- *objective* (descriptive) vs. *subjective* (attitudinal, modal) construal



- ‘Subjective meaning’: Parts of the ground (participants, exchange, local and temporal setting) enter scope of predication without being linguistically expressed
(*Vanessa is sitting across the table*)
- From active construal (Langacker) to *intersubjective* construal *coordination* (Verhagen 2005)

Resonance ?

- Subtype of interactional humour (Veale et al. 2006; Brône in press; Zima et al. in press; Du Bois 2001, 2003; Sakita 2006 ‘dialogic syntax’)
- Example (Santa Barbara Corpus; Sakita 2006: 470)

Marci: *don't forget to buy yourself a cookie sheet before you go to make cookies*

Kevin: *and don't forget to take the Tupperware out of the oven before you turn it on*

Resonance ?

- Example (Clark 1996):

Ken: *and I'm cheap, - - -*

Margaret: *I've always felt that about you*

Ken: *oh shut up* (laughs)

- **Intentional parallelism:** Full or partial, explicit or implicit segment repetitions, substitutions, paraphrases, (morpho) syntactic or lexical blends, prosodic imitations
- Coherent **sequence** of conversational turn and **priming utterance** in immediately preceding discourse context
- **Intentional reinterpretation** of priming utterance through backtracking

Resonance ?

- **De-automatization:** semantic strengthening and enhanced discourse coherence: interconnecting different levels of discourse organization
- **Subjectification** of meaning
 - intersubjective construal: S2 attunes her construal to expected reaction, attitudes, judgments etc. of S1 and thus invites S1 to engage in process of cognitive coordination
 - attitudinal construal: irony, teasing, disagreement, trumping conversational partners, negotiating social roles and verbal intellectual hierarchies ...

Resonance ?

- **Data?**

1. Blackadder IV (*Brône 2007*)

(2100 turns; 152 humour)

2. Trumping expressions (*id.*;))

One-liners; Pöhn online Antwortbibliothek; (902 ‘challenges’;
253 humorous responses)

3. Interruptive call-outs in parliamentary debates (Austria and France; *Zima et al. in press*)

Resonance ?

- **Data?**

Interruptive call-outs in parliamentary debates (Austria and France; Zima et al. in press)

Debate	Duration in minutes	Call-outs in debate	Call-outs with resonance effect	Relative frequency
07.04.2005/Austria	600	655	158	24,12%
01.03.2006/Austria	829	539	105	19,48%
21.06.2006/France	275	95	8	8,42%
27.06.2006/France	340	126	23	18,25%
28.06.2006/France	215	75	7	9,34%
30.06.2006/France	280	298	51	17,11%
06.02.2007/France	285	99	12	12,12%
Total: Austria	1429	1194	263	22,03%
Total: France	1395	693	101	14,57%

Tbl.1 Frequency table for call-outs with resonance effects per debate

Examples

- Resonance patterns on different (all) **levels of linguistic organization:**

Syntax

Lexical (words, idioms)

Morphological

Prosody

Conceptual

Illocution

...

- In each case: S2 manipulates (exploits) construal by S1 to serve their own communicative purpose (figure/ground realignment; polysemy; underspecification...)

Example: idiom

Example from the *Blackadder* corpus:

Darling (crying): No! No! Look, for God's sake, I'm not a German spy!

Edmund: Good. Thanks very much. Send in the next man, would you?

(Nurse enters)

Nurse: What is all this noise about? Don't you realize this is a hospital?

Darling: You'll regret this, Blackadder. You'd better find the real spy or
I'll make it very hard for you.

Edmund: (protesting) Please, Darling – there are ladies present.

- Staged misunderstanding (nested viewpoints; FGR (idiom); thread → promise (illocution))

Levels of Resonance

Idioms (FGR)

A) *Your nagging goes right in one ear and comes out the other*

B) *That's because there is nothing in between to stop it*

A) *We're all in the same boat*

B) *True, but you beat the drums and we are rowing*

Words (Polysemy)

A) *Do you always have to drink that much alcohol?*

B) *No, I do it voluntarily*

Levels of Resonance

Idioms / words (underspecification)

A) *Your son doesn't behave like the other kids*

B) *Yeah, thank God!*

A) *I guess you have potency problems, no?*

B) *Yeah sure, always in the morning and late at night*

Levels of Resonance

Parallelism on other levels of linguistic organisation as well:

- Illocution
- Syntactic structure

Illocution

A) *Asshole!*

B) *Thank you for introducing yourself. My name is Hans Wiegel*

A) *Your clothes don't match with the image of our company*

B) *Thank you for that compliment*

Levels of Resonance

Syntactic structure

- A) *I have been told to wash my hands after being gone to the toilet*
- B) *I have been told not to pee on my hands*

George Bernard Shaw:

Here's an invitation to the opening night of my new play. Bring a friend, if you have one.

Winston Churchill:

I'm afraid I can't make it on the opening night. But I may attend the second night, if there is one.

Levels of Resonance

Conceptual level (realignment of metonymy)

Opposition M.P. (referring to the Prime Minister): *But what can we expect, after all, of a man who wears silk underpants?*

Prime minister: *Oh, I would never have thought the Right Honorable's wife could be so indiscreet!*

Levels of Resonance (call-outs)

Illocution

- **MP Donnerbauer (ÖVP):** This parliamentary question by the Green party officially reads: „Elite-University Maria Gugging: fallen to pieces“. That is a very drastic way to describe this matter (...) **Now I wonder** (...) What has happened, that justifies this expression? What has really happened? Aren't there enough financial resources available then?
- **MP Sburny:** *The scientists are gone! Didn't you get it yet?! The people who are supposed to work there, are no longer around!*
- **MP Donnerbauer (ÖVP):** Is this project going to be financially starved to death, dehydrated, as they always like to claim? **Yet, now I wonder:** What motivates the Green party to make these claims?
- **MP Sburny:** *You could have listened, instead of just reading your prepared speech!*

Levels of Resonance

Illocution

MP Renate Csörgits (SPÖ):

Nun komme ich zur Schwerarbeitsverordnung. Auch da kann man es auf den Punkt bringen: Auch diese Verordnung ist schlicht und ergreifend *misslungen!* **Was meine ich damit?** (*Abg. Dipl.-Ing. Scheuch: Das wissen Sie selbst nicht!*) – Sie enthält eine sehr schlechte Definition im Zusammenhang mit den schweren Arbeiten im Pflegebereich. Sie knüpfen da an den Bezug des Pflegegelds an.

10.38

MP Karl Öllinger (Grüne): **Einen schönen guten Morgen**, meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren! (*Abg. Dipl.-Ing. Scheuch: Guten Morgen? Es ist halb elf!*)

Levels of Resonance

Lexical parallelism

Abgeordnete Theresia Haidlmayr (Grüne): Das heißt, das wäre nicht nur organisatorisch ein Vorteil, sondern auch eine – unter Anführungszeichen – „Entlastung“ für die Einrichtungen, was Sie bis jetzt **noch nicht kapiert** haben, so wie Sie für die Erhöhung des Verpflegungsgeldes fünf Jahre gebraucht haben, bis das in Ihren Köpfen war und bis Sie das **kapiert haben**. Vielleicht habe ich Illusionen, aber ich denke, man kann Ihnen zutrauen, dass Sie auch das noch **kapieren** und wir in ein paar Jahren hier stehen und Sie sagen: Wir sind so super (*Zwischenrufe bei der ÖVP. – Abg. **Gahr: Sie sollten kapieren, dass Ihre Wortwahl nicht in Ordnung ist!***

A final example

Emperor Charles the Bald: *What separates an Irishman from a fool?*

Irish philosopher John Scotus: *Just this table...*

Complexity of construal mechanisms:

- local setting element gets objectified (*this table*; implicit parallelism)
- generates resonance effect: subjective construal (utterance, S1, S2: trumping opponent by his own means and displaying verbal/intellectual mastery)
- exploitation at lexical semantic level: *separates* (lexical figure/ground reversal)
- referential for generic meaning (*an Irishman, a fool*)

Systematization

- Resonance: playful alignment of utterances through structural mapping across turns (parallelism)
- Powerful construal mechanism at any level of linguistic organization
- Semantic value in multiple dimensions of discourse organization:

(Inter)subjective construal

- invites S1 to engage in cognitive *coordination* with S2
 - expresses *dissociative* attitude vis-à-vis S1 (irony, teasing, disagreement, trumping; cfr. *layering* (Clark))
 - negotiates verbal/ intell./social hierarchy: *superiority* of trumper (S2) over trumpee (S1)
 - enhances discourse *coherence* across conversational turns
- Interaction objective / subjective construal ? [in progress...]

Systematization

→ All ingredients for a **'pragmatic construction'**

FORM

- **Intentional parallelism:** Full or partial, explicit or implicit segment repetitions, substitutions, paraphrases, (morpho) syntactic or lexical blends, prosodic imitations
- Coherent **sequence** of conversational turn and **priming utterance** in immediately preceding discourse context

MEANING

- **De-automatization:** semantic strengthening and enhanced discourse coherence: interconnecting different levels of discourse organization
- **Subjectification** of meaning
 - intersubjective construal (S2 attunes construal to presumed attitudes, ...of S1, instructing S1 to realize their inferior position vis-à-vis S2)
 - attitudinal construal (teasing, irony, trumping...)

Systematization

→ All ingredients for a **'pragmatic construction'**

- 'Resonance'-features: schematic construction
- look for network of more specific constructions (subtypes)
 - level of operation (clause, words, idioms, illocution, prosody etc.)
 - types of construal mechanisms operating the parallelism (repetition, ellipse, metaphor, FGR, underspecification, ...)
- productive: local, online creation of specific constructions (any linguistic unit can be paralleled, thus giving it constructional status of priming utterance)
- K. Fischer (2007) about the need to investigate 'pragmatic constructions':

Systematization

→ All ingredients for a **'pragmatic construction'**

• K. Fischer (2007: 147/8):

- "zahlreiche *neue Arten von Bedeutungsmerkmalen* in der Grammatik müssen berücksichtigt werden"

- "Auch die *Einheiten der Grammatik* müssen, basierend auf interaktionalen Analysen, neu definiert werden"

- "Die Beschreibung kann *nicht mehr allein auf die Satzebene* beschränkt bleiben, da sich viele *pragmatisch relevante Ausdrücke* auf größere Einheiten als auf Sätze beziehen."

• A. Deppermann (2006: 59):

- "... werden sequenzrelative, auf Gesprächs- und Beziehungsorganisation bezogene, stilistische, genrebezogene etc. Werte von Konstruktionen kaum einmal berücksichtigt."

Generalization

Broader semantic interest?

1. In the course of discourse interaction, not just active meaning construal ...
2. ... but intersubjective meaning coordination as well
3. Insight in different dimensions of the interpretation process (*layering, subjectification, polyphony, ...*)
4. Look for cognitive processes and mechanisms underlying stylistic effects
5. Identification of local, online generation of pragmatic constructions

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