

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS AND NOVEL METAPHOR

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Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es proporcionar un modelo explícito para el análisis estilístico de textos con preferencias metafóricas. Para describir la tarea del estilista usaremos el libro de Short (1996). También incluiremos una teoría de la metáfora respaldada por los estudios recientes del tema. Por un lado, el modelo debe incluir los rasgos de identificación metafórica. Éstos son la anomalía contextual y el contraste conceptual. Muchos autores han rechazado la anomalía como criterio de detección metafórica. A nuestro juicio este rechazo está injustificado y depende de que se ha hecho una distinción rígida entre semántica y pragmática. La anomalía sirve como criterio de demarcación de la metáfora novedosa si la describimos desde una perspectiva integradora. Por otro lado, debemos especificar el mecanismo de interpretación por el que reestructuramos un dominio en términos de otro; el resultado, el dominio reestructurado metafóricamente, sirve como contexto de interpretación de la metáfora novedosa.

Palabras clave: Estilística, Metáfora, Anomalía, Semántica y Pragmática.

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to provide an explicit model for the stylistic analysis of texts which include metaphorical utterances. For the description of what the stylistician's task is we will use Short (1996). To provide such a model, we will also need a comprehensive theory of metaphor backed up by recent studies on the topic. On the one hand, the model must include the features by which we detect an utterance as metaphorical. These features are contextual anomaly and conceptual contrast. Although the anomaly view has been rejected by many authors, we argue that the source of this unjustified rejection lies in the rigid distinction between semantics and pragmatics and that the problem dissolves once we describe the contextual anomaly of novel metaphor from an integrational perspective. On the other hand, we must specify the mechanism of interpretation by which we restructure one domain in terms of another; the result, the metaphorical restructured domain, serves as a context of interpretation for novel metaphor.

Key Words: Stylistics, Metaphor, Anomaly, Semantics and Pragmatics.

Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est de donner un modèle explicite pour l'analyse stylistique de textes avec des émissions métaphoriques. Pour décrire la tâche de celui qui fait l'analyse stylistique nous utiliserons le livre de Short (1996). Aussi nous incluerons une théorie de la métaphore appuyée par les études récentes faites à ce sujet. D'une part, le modèle doit comprendre les caractéristiques d'identification métaphorique. Celles-là constituent l'anomalie contextuelle et le contraste conceptuel. Beaucoup d'auteurs ont rejeté l'anomalie comme critère de détection métaphorique. Selon nous ce rejet est injustifié et dépend de la distinction que l'on fait entre sémantique et pragmatique. L'anomalie sert comme critère de démarquation de la métaphore originelle si nous la décrivons depuis une perspective intégrante. D'autre part nous devons spécifier le mécanisme de l'interprétation pour lequel nous restructurons un domaine dans les termes d'un autre: le résultat, le domaine restructuré métaphoriquement, sert comme contexte d'interprétation de la métaphore originelle.

Mots-clés: Stylistique, Métaphore, Anomalie, Sémantique et Pragmatique.

Sumario

1. What is stylistics? 2. Metaphorical identification and interpretation in stylistics. 2.1. Who is stylistics? 2.2. Rejection of the abnormal paradigm in metaphor from cognitivist and psychological approaches to metaphor. 2.3. Talking about anomaly in an integrational spirit. 3. The tacit recognition of the abnormal paradigm.

1. What is Stylistics?

The aim of this paper is to provide an explicit model for the stylistic analysis of the metaphorical use of language. For the description of what the stylistician task is, we will use the recent book by Short entitled *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose* (1996).

Short (1996: 5) argues that stylistics is concerned with relating linguistic facts (linguistic description) to meaning (interpretation) in as explicit a way as possible, pointing out that, although our understanding of linguistic form and meaning is *implicit*, the linguistic description and its relationship with interpretation should be described in as detailed a way as possible.

Short argues that the essential core of criticism has three major parts:

Description → Interpretation → Evaluation

where interpretation is obviously prior to evaluation and, it is also the case, that what he calls "description" (which in turn involves analysis) is logically prior to understanding or interpretation (Short (1996: 4)). Then, he argues that in order to know the meaning of (1)

(1) Mary pushed John over

rather than the meaning of (2),

(2) John pushed Mary over

we must already know that Mary is the subject of the sentence and that John is the object. And he adds that

Normally, we do not *explicitly* do a grammatical analysis of the sentence to arrive at this knowledge; rather, we just know implicitly or intuitively what the grammatical relations in the sentence are. (Short (1996: 4))

When we read, we must intuitively analyse linguistic structure at various levels (e.g. grammar, sounds, words, textual structure) in order to understand, again intuitively, the sentences of a text and the relations between them. This set of tasks is usually performed so quickly that we do not even notice that we are doing it, let alone *how* we do it.

Our understanding of the linguistic form and meaning is thus *implicit*. But when we discuss literature (or any other type of discourse) we have to discuss meaning in an *explicit* fashion. Stylisticians suggest that linguistic description and its relationship with interpretation should be discussed in an explicit, systematic and detailed way." (Short (1996: 5))

2. Metaphorical identification and interpretation in stylistics

2.1 Who is stylistics?

When facing the metaphorical use of language, the stylistic analysis should make the tacit features of its identification explicit.

Short (1996) does not intend to give a theory of metaphor, but he is using one by saying that the kind of linguistic information relevant to the description of a metaphor is as follows: in (3)

- (3) Come, we *burn* daylight, ho!
(William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, I, iv, 43)

"daylight" cannot normally be the object of "burn". The verb "burn" usually takes as its object a word or phrase which refers to something which can be burnt, but "daylight" does not fall into this category.

Another example used by Short which answers the question of this section is in the first sentence of the introduction of his book:

The short answer to the question 'who is stylistics?' is that she is a friend of mine, and that I hope by the end of this book she might also become a friend of yours. (Short (1996: 1))

This could be summarized in (4).

- (4) Stylistics is a friend of Mick Short

The use of this example for our present purpose is threefold. It answers the question "who is stylistics?" briefly, it is done metaphorically and, furthermore, it has been

analysed by the author, although not explicitly saying it is a metaphor, when he explains the reason for choosing the title:

During your reading of this chapter you should also have been able to work out my reason for choosing 'who is stylistics?' as the title for the first chapter of the book. The sentence itself is, of course, syntactically deviant. The pronoun 'who' in English has to have human reference, but stylistics is an abstract concept, and hence foregrounded. As a result, even if you forget entirely the content of this chapter, you are unlikely to forget its title. (Short (1996: 28))

With our friend in mind (stylistics as described by Short), we can say that a theory of metaphor useful for this kind of analysis should provide the means to give a linguistic description of metaphor and its relationship with interpretation in as explicit a way as possible. Linguistic description thus requires an explanation of how readers know intuitively or implicitly that a certain use of language is metaphorical in order to achieve a metaphorical interpretation. The fact that readers normally do not explicitly recognize the metaphor is not a reason for not explaining the characteristic features to consider an utterance as a case of metaphor.

In (3) and (4), he detects a grammatical deviance, and thus he places them in what he calls "abnormal paradigm" (Short (1996: 7)). This leads us to think that if the model of stylistic analysis useful to explain the metaphorical use of language includes Short's intuitions, then cognitivist and psychological approaches to metaphor will not support it, since the idea of a deviation to detect a metaphorical use of language is refused by most theories of metaphor from these positions. To put it in Short's metaphorical terms, we could say that after reading Short's book we are not that sure that stylistics can be considered as a friend of some current theories of metaphor. Nevertheless, we hope that, at the end of this paper, it might become a friend of them as well.

2.2. Rejection of the abnormal paradigm in metaphor from cognitivist and psychological approaches to metaphor

Most cognitivist and psychological approaches to metaphor deny the anomaly or abnormality as a criterion for the explicit description of the implicit identification of

metaphor (see Gibbs (1992), Keysar y Glukberg (1992), Steen (1992 and 1994), Way (1991)). For example, when Gibbs speaks about anomaly view, he argues that

() there do not seem to be any necessary and sufficient conditions that serve to identify a particular utterance as metaphorical. Part of the difficulty with this view is that the grammatical deviance or literal falsity of a sentence does not in any way specify which of the numerous possible metaphorical meanings is correct or intended (Gibbs (1992: 579))

At least, three assumptions are rejectable about these approaches. The first debatable assumption is that anomaly is not a necessary condition for the identification of metaphor. If it has been said that it is not a necessary condition, it is because the anomaly view is normally linked to the proposal that metaphorical utterances are literally false. From this point of view, there would not be negative metaphors¹ and, even worse, we would have to accept that we interpret metaphorical utterances first literally and then, when we see that they are literally false, metaphorically. The important point, as far as Gibbs is concerned, is that

(...) the anomaly, or semantic, view suggests that the locus of metaphor understanding is situated at some point after a sentence has been analyzed and semantically (or literally) understood. (Gibbs (1992: 580))

But, the assumption that the anomaly always involves interpreting metaphors in two stages is not correct. Recognizing an unusual use of an expression in a particular context does not have to lead to a prior literal interpretation, we can recognize an abnormal use of an expression without interpreting the utterance of it literally. When we are to interpret an utterance of (4), we do not interpret it first literally as if stylistics were a *person*, unless we knew Short to have as a friend a person whose name were "Stylistics". In Short's use of (4), we realize that "friend" is used in an abnormal way as it is not normal to talk about stylistics, which is an abstract thing, as if it were a person. Nevertheless, we do not interpret it literally.

¹ For more information about the identification of negative metaphors see Soria (1992; 1993).

In addition, an anomaly understood as a grammatical deviance², is also a wrong proposal since if the abnormal paradigm is described only grammatically it cannot account explicitly for all the examples that we implicitly consider cases of metaphorical utterances. This criterion serves to detect (4) as metaphorical but, it cannot be used to identify as metaphorical an utterance of (5)

(5) The rock is becoming brittle with age

when uttered in the context of an old professor emeritus. This, however, does not mean that an anomaly is not needed in every metaphorical utterance as the anomaly can be generated either by an abnormality produced between two terms expressed linguistically or by the abnormal use of an expression in a situational context. Thus, an anomaly can be used as one of the necessary criteria for the identification of metaphor, but it must be described in a different way.

Secondly, Gibbs treats anomaly as the only criterion for the identification of metaphor and this is obviously incorrect. If we add the criterion of recognising a conceptual contrast to the appreciation of an unusual use of an expression in a certain context, we can say that there are two sufficient conditions to identify utterances as metaphorical.³ In (4) there is a contrast between the concept *friend* and the concept *stylistics* and in (5) there is a contrast between the concept *rock* and the concept *professor*.

Thirdly, if contextual anomaly and conceptual contrast are just criteria for the identification of metaphor, it does not have to specify which of the numerous possible metaphorical meanings is correct or intended. Describing the conditions for the identification of metaphor is not explaining the mechanism by which they are interpreted. Indeed, in (4), we implicitly realize that we can get an interpretation by contrasting the concepts involved in this utterance, thus we will interpret the metaphor creating a new category so that some features of the concept *friend* can be applied to

² The anomaly (or deviation or incongruity) has been used by other authors as the main criterion for the identification of metaphor, for example Kittay (1987) and Ortony (1980).

³ In our opinion, speakers identify utterances as metaphorical when they perceive a contextual anomaly and a conceptual contrast. *Contextual anomaly* is produced when an expression is used in an unusual linguistic or extralinguistic context and the *conceptual contrast* is brought about when we regard a concept in terms of another. These two conditions for the identification of metaphor constitute the criterion of demarcation between metaphorical and non-metaphorical language proposed in Soria (1992).

stylistics. In this case, we interpret (4) directly as a metaphor by using certain features from the domain of friend to talk about the relation between Short and stylistics. In this way, we see stylistics as something known well by Short and regarded with liking, affection, and loyalty.⁴ The terms belonging to the concept by which we see another concept metaphorically will be the *metaphorical vehicles* that acquire a metaphorical meaning. Once there is an implicit recognition of an utterance as a case of metaphor it is interpreted metaphorically. The speaker links two separate cognitive domains by using the language appropriate to one of them as a lens through which to observe the other, selecting, highlighting, omitting or organising certain features of the latter (Black (1955; 1977)). The metaphorical restructuring or recategorization is achieved by mapping a set of sentences from one domain to the other coherently. The result of the metaphorical restructuring, that is, the restructured domain, provides us with a context of interpretation of the metaphorical utterance provisionally restructured for that occasion. When the context from which the terms that are involved in a metaphorical utterance changes, the meanings associated with these terms change provisionally, some terms acquire a metaphorical meaning. A new category is created. In this way, the concept in the target domain inherits properties from the newly constructed category. The relation between the terms and the originated metaphorical meanings is not established or conventionalized.⁵

We want to point out that (i) perceiving an anomaly does not entail a prior literal interpretation of the utterance, and (ii) an anomaly is perceived although it must be defined in a different way. Thus, the anomaly is not described here as a literal falsehood or semantic deviance. The former requires interpretation in two stages (and for that reason it is also called "communicative indirectness"), the latter does not account for many examples of metaphor, as for example (5) in the context of an old professor emeritus

2.3 Talking about anomaly in an integrational spirit

The source of the pervasive wrong description of the anomaly as an indirect form of communication or a semantic deviance is the rigid distinction that has normally been

⁴ Definition of "friend" taken from the Collins English Dictionary.

⁵ An explanation of the provisional nature of metaphorical meanings and the principles of their production can be found in Romero (1990/1).

made between semantics and pragmatics. In our opinion, this should be revised. In this sense, we have to do away with Leech's (1983) distinction when he says

Meaning in pragmatics is defined [in relation to speech situations], whereas meaning in semantics is defined purely as a property of expressions in a given language, in abstraction from particular situations, speakers, or hearers (quoted in Toolan (1991: 342))

By contrast, Toolan (1991) argues, from an integrational perspective, that

(...) we learn and store lexical items, and even whole utterances, with contexts attached. The norm, in such expression-cum-context learning, will be for a range of contexts to be associated with any particular expression, and a range of expressions to be associated with any particular context (...) this picture relates difference in language-understanding directly to variation in life-experience and memory (Toolan (1991: 345))

To do away with the dichotomy semantics and pragmatics, he uses the problematic case of metaphor understanding. The evidence is the one provided by the empirical research from which it is concluded that we do not have to interpret metaphorical utterances in two stages. He also argues that in such expression-cum-context learning

(...) what is undoubtedly given, by other language-users rather than the language, and what will thus be experienced and added to the individual mental modellings, is abundant feedback and example as to how the language is ordinarily used. (Toolan (1991: 345))

Here we want to highlight the word "ordinarily". It is precisely in this sense that metaphor departs from conventional usage, and it is also in this sense that a metaphor can be said to be anomalous. Cognitivist proposals such as prototype or schema theories are very useful to explain the lack of prototypical or schematic features of the use of "flying fish" in an utterance of an expression such as (6).

(6) English literature is a flying fish

Nevertheless, to recognize the anomalous or abnormal use of "flying fish" in this context does not necessarily mean that we have to interpret an utterance of that expression in two stages: first literally and then, metaphorically. Quite on the contrary, we think that the literal interpretation is not available (in this particular case though not in other possible cases of ambivalence).

The utterance is interpreted directly, though not necessarily in the same way as conventional language. This is our main argument against psychologists. The denial of metaphorical interpretation in two stages does not necessarily entail that metaphorical and literal (or conventional) interpretations are achieved in the same way. In metaphorical uses of language we have to map certain features from one domain to the other in order to interpret a metaphor. For example, if we consider (6)

(6) English literature is a flying fish

in the context where it is produced.

We know what the sea looks like from a distance. it is of one colour, and level, and obviously cannot contain such creatures as fish. But if we look into the sea over the edge of a boat, we see a dozen colours, and depth below depth, and fish swimming in them. That sea is the English character - apparently imperturbable and even. The depths and the colours are the English romanticism and the English sensitiveness - we do not expect to find such things, but they exist. And - to continue my metaphor - the fish are the English emotions, which are always trying to get to the surface, but don't quite know how. For the most part we see them moving far below, distorted and obscure. Now and then they succeed and we exclaim, 'Why, the Englishman has emotions! He actually can feel!' And occasionally we see that beautiful creature the flying fish, which rises out of the water altogether into the air and the sunlight. English literature is a flying fish. It is a sample of the life that goes on day after day beneath the surface, it is a proof that beauty and emotion exist in the salt, inhospitable sea. (Example taken from Foster's *Abinger Harvest* and quoted in Helen Monfries (1970: 1))

there are terms in (6) which belong to the two concepts that take a part in the metaphorical restructuring that permits interpreting such an example adequately. In particular, the expression "flying fish" belongs to the concept *sea*, concept by which we

see another concept metaphorically, in this case, the concept *English character*. The expression "English literature" is shaped by this concept. The metaphorical vehicle "flying fish" acquires, for this occasion, a metaphorical provisional meaning. The conceptual system is provisionally re-structured for the occasion and a new ad hoc category is created (see Barsalou (1983) and Way (1991)). Thus, the cognitive domain of English character can be seen through the cognitive domain of sea inheriting certain features of the latter. In the former, there are some features which are selected and highlighted, while the ones that have not been selected are concealed. The English character has the features of an apparently imperturbable and even sea where, when looked at in depth, a dozen colours and fish swimming can be seen. Within this apparently even but really rich English character, there is still a richer and more dynamic aspect: English literature. Within that English character seen as a flat sea, English literature is one of its creatures but it is different from the other features of the English character in the same way as the flying fish is distinguished from the rest of the fishes as creatures of sea-life. The English character seen provisionally from the sea-life world provides a context of interpretation for (6) from which the term "flying fish" changes its meaning and gets a provisional one that depends on the new relations that it establishes with other terms in the characterization of English literature as this is a feature of the English character.

It can be seen from the analysis of this example that metaphor is context-dependant in a different way from the context-dependance of conventional language. In conventional language, we can resort to our background or default assumptions to select one of the possible meanings of the expression when interpreting an utterance of it. For example, we can interpret the utterance of (7)

(7) The other day I went sailing with a friend and we saw a flying fish

using the knowledge we have by our memory of previous experience (both linguistic and extralinguistic), we all know what "flying fish" means in the context of sea-life. In literal language we resort to a conventional category, that is, we use a established concept in our conceptual system which has one or various possible and normal linguistic contexts assigned. Thus, in (7) "flying fish" is not a new category created for the occasion. It means "any of the marine teleost fish common in warm and tropical seas, having enlarged winglike pectoral fins used for gliding above the surface of the water".⁶ We

⁶ Definition taken from the Collins English Dictionary.

implicitly expect to find this lexical item in the context of sea-life. Thus, when we find it in (7) we confirm our expectation and interpret it in this conventional sense. By contrast, in the metaphorical use of language, we need the context in order to determine the salient features of a domain to map onto the other domain. In (6), we have to recognise that "flying fish" does not appear in its normal sea-life context and that we have to contrast the domain of literature and the domain of sea-life so that we can adapt our lexical conventional knowledge to create a new ad hoc category in order to interpret the metaphorical utterance. Without recognising that "flying fish" appears in an abnormal context we will not have the need to contrast the two domains to know what properties English literature is to inherit from the newly constructed category. In (6), "flying fish" acquires a new meaning for the occasion, and this new meaning is not established and shared by the members of a linguistic community.

In this sense we would like to quote Toolan once again.

At the heart of all linguistic communication -not just in the use of creative metaphor- lies risk: the risk involved in attempting to get one interlocutor to see the same picture of some aspect of reality, you, the speaker, believe you see. (Toolan (1991: 347))⁷

We agree with him about the risk but, in metaphor, as he seems to suggest, the risk is bigger as the hearer has to reconstruct the lexical meaning of that expression in the unusual context. However, in conventional metaphor, the risk is the same as in the literal use of language since, from the point of view of the language-user, they are equally conventional. As he argues

(..) the historical linguist's perspective is not that of the ordinary language-user (.) Theoretical appeal, in account of contemporary use of language, to how *come out* and *under* may once have been chiefly used amounts not to a historicized explanation but simply an anachronistic one. (Toolan (1991 346))

This implies that when we describe and interpret examples of conventional metaphors such as "attack a position" we do not have to resort to the kind of analysis elaborated for (6). It is not abnormal to use the term "attack" when talking about opposing

⁷ See also Bhaya Nair et al. (1988)

positions, in cases such as this one; we do not have to map any feature from one domain to the other. We can interpret an utterance of this expression without the need to contrast two domains.

3. The tacit recognition of the abnormal paradigm

What we have just said with respect to the anomaly may seem to be inconsistent with the positions that reject the anomaly view. In fact, most cognitivist proposals would not even accept the distinction between creative metaphor and the treatment of conventional metaphor as literal (or conventional) and, therefore, as a different phenomenon. This explicit position is evaded on many occasions. Nevertheless, in other cases, the distinction is explicitly recognized although it is not given the importance that we think it deserves. Still, we may find others that would agree with us when admitting that there is a gradient between conventional and metaphorical uses of language allowing us to talk about an abnormal paradigm in the upper extreme of the gradient where novel metaphors are. For instance, Werth says

I would not dispute, therefore, that some metaphors are superficially deviant, in the sense that they depart from the normal range of collocation (although the more they are used, the less true this becomes, (...)) (Werth (1977: 18))

From this perspective, the anomaly does not mean communicative deviation but non-habitual use of certain concepts in certain contexts (cf. Steen (1989: 136)). In fact, from a psychological perspective it is recognised that context plays a special role in metaphor. As Gibbs says

Metaphor is a particular challenge to psycholinguistic theory because of its heavy reliance on contextual information for its understanding (Gibbs (1990: 66))

As we noted before, the difference between the context-dependence of novel metaphor and the context-dependence of literal language is that, in the former, the context is always unusual and, in the latter, we use an established concept in our conceptual system which has one or various possible and normal linguistic contexts assigned.

Although it may seem so, our position does not oppose the cognitivist approach. Indeed, as Gibbs says:

The view of metaphor as conceptual structure is a particularly valuable linguistic theory of metaphor because it suggests a difference between having a metaphorical mapping of two disparate domains already existing as a unit in one's conceptual system and the mental act of putting together that same metaphor for the first time. (Gibbs (1992 596))

However, although this is explicitly recognised by a cognitivist psychologist such as Gibbs and it is admitted by Lakoff y Johnson (1980 53) when they distinguish between metaphors we live by and imaginative novel metaphors which are not used systematically to structure our conceptual system, it is overlooked in most of the cases. In our opinion, this possibility offered from the cognitivist approach should be exploited, especially in stylistics where an explanation about the form of a certain linguistic use and its relation with interpretation is expected.

If this is so, detecting the anomaly is a useful criterion of metaphorical identification especially for the stylistician whose objective is precisely this: to see how linguistic form is related to interpretation. It is not enough to say that a metaphor evokes or suggests these or the other ideas, it must be specified why we say a metaphor is a metaphor and how a metaphorical interpretation is achieved, how we intuitively get the meaning when we interpret the metaphor. The mental act of putting together two domains for the first time entails an anomaly which is precisely to relate two concepts which are not usually related so that we see one in terms of the other.

One major problem here is, from our point of view, that the distinction between the two different acts mentioned by Gibbs, that is, the difference between conventional and creative metaphor is not taken into account when talking about the process of interpretation of these different acts. In fact, after distinguishing these acts Gibbs goes on to say:

Unlike many theories of metaphor, particularly the anomaly and speech act views, the conceptual-structure view provides an explanation for so many metaphors being understood effortlessly, without conscious reflection... Metaphor understanding is not generally different from the comprehension of literal language because our conceptual system is structured via metaphorical mappings. (Gibbs (1992. 596-597))

Two considerations are relevant here. First, to explain conventional metaphors as creative metaphors is, as we pointed out earlier, an anachronism. Indeed, the more a metaphorical expression is used, the less needed an abnormal categorization becomes. Second, the fact that we do not recognize the anomaly explicitly does not mean that we do not do it implicitly. In most of the cases, the psychological evidence is based on experiments designed to prove if the linguistic description (that entails the recognition of an anomaly) is made in an explicit way. But, as in the case of the subject and object, the fact that speakers do not recognise explicitly that in (1) Mary is the subject doesn't mean that the linguistic description about how language functions is not useful to see how the linguistic form is related to interpretation.

If we describe the anomaly from an integrational perspective, the anomaly does not entail a prior literal interpretation of the metaphorical utterance. Thus, the acceptance of the abnormal paradigm in creative metaphor and not in conventional metaphor is compatible with the cognitivist position. In this way, cognitivists can be considered friends of the stylistic analysis of the metaphorical use of language in Short's book.

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