

Metaforicity: A cognitive ecological perspective on metaphor use in social interaction

THOMAS WIBEN JENSEN

From the vantage point of the most recent tendencies in cognitive science and cognitive studies of language, the article presents and unfolds the notion of metaphoricity. It is argued that the notion of metaphoricity needs to be integrated in an ecological framework in order to be able to offer a strong analytical and theoretical alternative to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Metaphoricity is to be seen as a gradable phenomenon – something which can be more or less active or present. In this sense, metaphoricity is not as clearly demarcated as a metaphor is. Still, metaphoricity always involves some degree of a potential double meaning. The article presents two analyses of social interaction in which it is shown how the notion of metaphoricity shifts the analytical focus from hidden conceptual mappings (as in CMT) to detailed studies of the dynamical linguistic and behavioural process that creates a double meaning. With a theoretical commitment to the idea that cognition is a phenomenon that arises in the interplay between an individual and its environment, the paper argues that metaphoricity can be seen as a medium that coordinates the attention of participants in interaction. This in turn creates the possibility of co-experiencing doubleness in meaning that can open up new ways of understanding a given phenomenon.