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How metaphorization flows in spoken Swedish

Abstract:

Metaphorization is dynamic, flexible and situated. And in recent years, an increasing number of researchers highlight metaphor as a “doing” instead of a “using” (e.g. Boström, 2018; Cameron, 2008, 2010; Gibbs, 2012; Gibbs & Cameron, 2008; Müller, 2008; Wiben Jensen, 2016). In spoken discourse, this doing can be identified as a teamwork effort, where speakers “build on each other’s or their own ideas, or disagree and offer alternatives” (Cameron et al., 2009, p. 66). In that sense “the dynamic system of discourse develops, adapts, and flows” (Cameron et al., 2009, p. 66; my emphasis). In this paper I discuss how metaphorical flowing can be identified in spoken discourse, with data from semi-structured group conversations on ROMANTIC LOVE in Swedish (Boström, 2018). Questions asked are: does metaphorizations actually flow between the speakers? And if they do; what flows and how?

Previous research with focus on how metaphorizations flow between speakers and across conversations is underrepresented. Cameron et al. (2009) discuss how the discourse is dynamic, but gives few concrete examples of actual “flowing” and how it works. Gibbs and Santa Cruz (2012) discuss the plausibility that different conceptual metaphors are activated during metaphor comprehension; a kind of metaphorical flowing on a conceptual level, however not recognized as such. One might also note that research on mixed metaphors (e.g. Müller, 2008, Chapter 5) possibly relate to a dynamic flowing of metaphorizations. It seems reasonable that “multiple forces simultaneously constrain people’s understanding of verbal metaphors” (Gibbs & Santa Cruz, 2012, p. 303), and by focusing on metaphorizations in spoken discourse and how these flow within and between speakers, as well as across the discourse event, we can further discuss the interplay between the situated discourse activity and identified metaphorizations.

The results indicate that some metaphorizations do seem to flow between the speakers, where one speaker’s metaphorization seems to influence another speakers metaphorization. In some instances of flowing, one metaphorization seem to influence a similar metaphorization, i.e. one speaker talks about a relationship as continuing on a journey, where another speaker, in the same immediate discourse activity, talks about reaching the end. In other cases, one metaphorization seem to influence another, not always evidently related, metaphorization. Interestingly, evidence of flowing metaphorizations are not, in the analyzed conversations, as prominent as one might think or as common as previous research reasons (Cameron et al., 2009).
References:


