

Patterns of Figurative Language Competence in Adult Speakers

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Summary. In an attempt to discover patterns of adult figurative language use, preference and comprehension, 30 Ss were asked to complete 4 different tasks: a composition, a test of simile preference, a test of simile production, and a test of metaphoric comprehension. Each test provided scores for both novel and clichéd usage. The composition task was also scored for total words while preference and production tasks were scored for literal usage, thus producing a total of 11 dependent variables across the complete set of tasks.

Results revealed that Ss selected a higher number of novel figures under choice relative to production conditions. Correlational results revealed relationships across all 4 tasks for the categories of novel and frozen usage although certain tasks (i.e., simile preference and production) were more sensitive to novel diction while others (comprehension) were more sensitive to frozen diction. Within-task correlations, on the other hand, showed unique patterns for each of the tasks. Factor analyses of these correlations were found to produce a series of consistent three-factor solutions with the first of these factors concerned primarily with novel diction, the second with both novel and frozen comprehension, and the third primarily with frozen diction.

Taken in combination, present results were interpreted to mean that while the distinction between novel and frozen is a meaningful one, specific task requirements can and do moderate the pattern of relationships obtained. This suggests that figurative language competence may not be a unitary process but one that is strongly affected by specific task and situational constraints and that future work, both methodological and theoretical, must take these factors into account.

Introduction

One of the more classic, and still unresolved, problems in experimental psychology is that different measures of presumably the same process or event frequently do not correlate with one another. In well-worked areas, such as conditioning and learning,

the problem is often sidestepped and individual investigators come to narrow their focus of interest to one or another dependent variable. This is usually done on the assumption that future research will serve to clarify the relationship between the dependent variable chosen and other possible measures of the same event. Although the choice of a specific dependent variable would seem to be a strictly methodological issue, Dashiell (1935) long ago noted that different theoretical principles often owed their origin to different experimental situations and that how and what an investigator chose to observe strongly colored the theoretical principles he or she was likely to use in even so traditional an area of research as learning.

In a newly evolving area, such as figurative language, it is always also possible to make use of a similar single-measure approach and let the future worry about how the various measures of figurative competence will or will not intercorrelate. Such a strategy, unfortunately, may lead to incorrect conclusions. This was true, for example, in the case of early developmental work on figurative language which relied exclusively on the child's ability to explain clichéd figures of speech. Here, an exclusive use of explanation as the procedure of interest obscured the fact that figurative production (Pollio and Pollio 1974), preference (Gardner, 1974), and even paraphrase (Billow, 1975; Cometa, 1976) could be observed in children well before age-levels described by initial investigators (Asch and Nerlove, 1960).

As in the case of learning, such findings cannot be theoretically neutral. Pollio and Pollio (1979) note that figurative competence can be defined properly only in terms of a person's ability to use, understand, explain and even prefer figurative diction and there is no *a priori* reason to expect these activities to depend upon identical or even similar cognitive processes. Despite this possibility, most analyses of figurative competence *do* treat them as different aspects of the same cognitive act and much psycholinguistic work on metaphor has approached it from only a single direction. This is true whether we examine research inspired by theoretical principles which treat figurative activity as a derived interpretive act operating over fairly static semantic features (i.e., Clark and Clark, 1977; Thomas, 1969; Osborne and Ehninger, 1962, etc.) or as a more direct and immediate perceptual act involving a total speaker/hearer reaction to a complex semantic event (Köhler, 1929; Verbrugge, 1977; Harwood and Verbrugge, 1977). Even theorists not directly concerned with this particular controversy (i.e., Hörmann, 1976; Honeck, 1977; Hoffman, 1977) make no mention of the problems involved in evaluating figurative competence. In the absence of any disclaimers to the contrary, we can only assume that all theories consider different figurative activities as mediated by essentially similar conceptual principles.

In order to determine if this is a viable assumption, on either methodological or theoretical grounds, a number of adult speakers were asked to respond to four different tasks each presumably tapping one or more of the various aspects of figurative competence delineated above. Once these data were collected, correlational analyses were performed so as to uncover possible patterns of relationship among figurative use, comprehension, and preference. In all of this our general purpose was to evaluate the tacit proposition that essentially similar cognitive processes are involved in each of these three activities.

Method

Subjects

The subjects involved in the present experiment were 30 introductory psychology students (mostly freshman and sophomores) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. There were 16 male and 14 female subjects, each of whom received class credit for participation in the study.

Materials

Each of the 30 subjects was given a sheet asking them to write a composition on the topic of a dream or a fantasy they had recently experienced. Each participant was also asked to complete two further tests: One was a multiple choice test of metaphor understanding (Pollio and Pollio, 1979) while the second was a test developed by Gardner and associates (Gardner et al., 1975) designed to assess preference for figures of speech as well as to determine the type(s) of figurative responses given to incomplete similes.

The Pollio Test, which involves a 20-item multiple-choice procedure, was constructed using sentences or phrases originally produced by elementary and junior high school students writing "creative compositions." In this test, the respondent is asked to select from a set of four alternatives the one which most accurately describes the intended meaning of the underscored portion of the item. Responses were constructed such that each alternative represents a different interpretation of the target: two of the alternatives concern interpretations based on a literal reading of the figure, one presents a faulty metaphorical interpretation, while the final alternative presents a correct interpretation of the figure.

For example, alternatives to the target, "Then the trees disappeared like *melting ice cream*" are as follows:

- (a) It was very hot, and the trees started melting (literal, incorrect)
- (b) The leaves melted and dripped down the trunk (literal, incorrect)
- (c) Trees look a lot like ice cream cones (incorrect, metaphorical)
- (d) The trees lost their shape and disappeared slowly (correct interpretation)

In this test, there are an equal number of novel constructions such as the example presented above and more clichéd or frozen constructions such as "I was so excited, *I couldn't stand it.*" Of the 20 items, 10 are frozen and 10 are novel.

The second test administered to all subjects, the Gardner-Winner Test, contained two parts: the first designed to elicit figurative productions and the second designed to assess preference for different categories of figurative or literal diction. Each item in this test consists of a brief vignette ending in an incomplete simile. The unfinished similes are built around eighteen adjectives, representing six triads each consisting of adjective, its antonym and a low frequency synonym. For each incomplete simile there are two types of introductory vignettes, a neutral (N) and a metaphor inducing (M) one. Two forms of this test were constructed such that there were equal numbers of N and M introductions and such that the same adjective did not appear twice.

For the present experiment, subjects were first given the set of 18 similes and asked to write their own endings. This was called the Gardner Production Test. Following this, subjects were given the same set of similes and opening sentences and

were asked to select an ending from the set of four provided. This was called the Gardner Preference Test.

Each set of endings included one of each of the following four types, which Gardner et al. (1975) described as:

- (a) A Literal (or non-metaphorical) ending which repeated the adjective in the story,
- (b) A Conventional (or frozen figurative) ending which was appropriate but familiar and of scant originality,
- (c) An Appropriate ending in which the adjective was "transported" to a realm where it is not ordinarily applied but where, in the present context, it was appropriate, and
- (d) An Inappropriate metaphoric ending in which the adjective was "transported" to a realm where it was not ordinarily applied and where it was not appropriate.

An example of a Gardner preference item is as follows:

The weather was as warm as...

- a. the warmest spring day in a long time (Literal)
- b. toast is early in the morning (Conventional or frozen)
- c. the smile of a friend you haven't seen for a year (Appropriate and novel)
- d. a shoestring lying in the middle of the floor (Inappropriate)

Procedure

The order of presentation of all materials was as follows: after completing a brief questionnaire and hearing general instructions describing the experiment, each S was asked to write the dream-fantasy composition. Following this, the Pollio and Gardner tests were alternated so that half of the subjects received the Pollio test first while the remaining Ss received both Gardner tests first. In terms of the Gardner tests, production always preceded preference.

All subjects were administered these materials as a group (with the exception of three Ss who completed the experiment on an individual basis). No subject required more than one hour to complete the entire battery.

Test-Scoring

The responses required of participants in this study were varied, and therefore, so too were the recording procedures used. The easiest and most straightforward responses to code were those of the two tests. Responses to the Pollio Comprehension Test were evaluated as correct or incorrect for both novel and frozen items. Each S thus received two scores; one for total novel correct and one for total frozen correct.

Responses to the Gardner Preference Test were coded according to the category definitions given above; that is, A (Appropriate, novel), I (Inappropriate), C (Conventional or clichéd), and L (literal). Written responses to the Gardner Production task were coded according to definitions provided by Gardner et al. (1975) and were given the same letter designations as described above.

The evaluation of figurative language in the composition was a bit more complicated. Here three independent raters read each of the compositions and recorded on a separate sheet any instance of figurative language they found. Each instance was further classified as either novel (N) or frozen (F). The three raters then met together to compare ratings and to arrive at an agreement concerning specific instances of figurative usage.

This procedure was originally developed by Barlow, Kerlin and Pollio (1971) and has been used by them in a great many different studies (see Chapters 2 and 3, Pollio et al., 1977, for a discussion of the rationale behind this technique).

Using this procedure, each S received three different scores: one denoting the number of novel figures (N), a second denoting the number of frozen figures (F), and a third denoting the total number of words in the composition. To equate for compositions of unequal length, all N and F values were divided by the total number of words produced and then multiplied by 100. This was done not only to equate for composition length but also to get rid of fractional values that might occur. For this reason, all values reported in subsequent sections are presented in terms of N/100 and F/100 values; values which represent the rate of occurrence of novel and frozen figures per 100 words of text.

Results

Responses to each of the four tasks were classified into various categories for analysis. Pollio Test items were divided into the categories of frozen and novel and then scored as correct or incorrect. Gardner Production Test responses were classified into four categories; Figurative-Appropriate (novel), Figurative-Conventional (frozen), Literal, and Inappropriate. Gardner Preference Test responses were coded into these same four categories. Compositions were scored for frozen and novel figures and figurative rates were established for each S according to the procedure previously described.

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for 10 of the dependent variables derived from responses produced by Ss in the present experiment. These values are presented in Table 1 according to the response modality required of the subject (production vs. choice) as well as in terms of the linguistic nature of the response (novel, frozen, or literal). Since only the two Gardner tests provide for clear judgments of literal, such values are presented only for these two tasks.

Looking first at differences within production tasks, it seems quite clear that the overwhelming number of Gardner Production responses could be coded as clichéd or

Table 1. Mean number of responses for each of four major tasks coded according to linguistic category

Task requirement	Linguistic nature of response					
	Novel		Conventional (frozen)		Literal	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1. Production						
Gardner	1.50	1.79	13.50	2.77	2.49	1.54
Composition	.66	1.23	1.64	1.30	—	—
2. Choice						
Pollio	8.13	1.38	9.13	1.41	—	—
Gardner	5.20	3.81	10.71	3.99	1.87	2.06

frozen although there was little difference between subjects' use of novel and literal endings. Analysis of variance revealed a significant between-category effect ($F(2,58) = 25.33; P < 0.01$) indicating a strong preference for conventional endings. Turning now to the second production task, the composition, it is quite clear that when any use was made of figurative diction, it was more likely to be frozen than novel ($t = 2.80; P < 0.01$). This was true despite the fact that composition topics were designed to elicit non-literal usage.

The better than 3 to 1 and 9 to 1 differences found in favor of frozen over novel usage across both production tasks did not apply to Ss' ability to select the correct meaning for novel and frozen figures on the Pollio Comprehension Test. Although t -tests did show a significant difference ($t = 3.54; P < 0.01$) in favor of the number of correct responses for frozen as opposed to novel figures, the magnitude of this difference was quite small: roughly one item out of ten. Similarly, an examination of the data produced by the Gardner Preference Test revealed that while frozen figurative choice did predominate ($F(2,58) = 35.11; P < 0.01$), Ss did choose a great many more novel figures than they had produced in completing these same items (5.20 to 1.50). Thus, even though there was a continued superiority for frozen figurative usage across all 4 task conditions, production tasks seemed to yield a greater discrepancy between these categories than was true for choice or preference tasks.

To examine this result in somewhat more detail, t -tests were computed between the preference and production parts of the Gardner Test. Here, results indicated that there was a significant difference in the number of novel figures occurring on both tasks ($t = 7.12, P < 0.01$) as well as in the number of frozen responses ($t = 4.46, P < 0.01$). Taken in conjunction with results for the composition and comprehension tasks, such findings suggest that novel figurative language occurs less frequently in a production task than one in which novel responses have to be chosen out of a set of alternatives; i.e., in a preference task.

Correlational Results

Since the major purpose of the present study was to describe the patterns of relationship existing among different types of figurative activity, correlations were computed across all 11 dependent variables. Table 2, which presents these results, is arranged so that values are presented according to task in order to make it possible to see both within and between task correlations.

The first aspect of note in Table 2 is that of the 55 correlations comprising this table 18, or 33%, are significant at $P < 0.05$ or less. Within-task values for both Gardner tests indicate strong negative correlations between novel and frozen preferences and productions, and moderate (but still significant) correlations between frozen and literal preferences and productions. Turning now to the comprehension and composition tasks, there is a strong positive correlation between Ss' ability to provide correct interpretations for both novel and frozen figures on the Pollio Test. This pattern does not obtain within the Composition task where there are relatively small correlations between novel and frozen usage as well as between both of these categories and the number of words in the composition.

Correlations computed across all 4 tasks reveal a number of strong relationships. Starting with the Gardner Preference task, it is possible to see that the only sizeable

Table 2. Intercorrelations among the 4 tasks

Tasks	1. Gardner-Preference			2. Pollio Comprehension			3. Gardner-Production			4. Composition		
	App	Con	Lit	Novel	Frozen		App	Con	Lit	Wds	F/100	N/100
1. Gardner-Preference												
App (N)	XX	-0.85**	-0.25	0.20	0.14		0.71**	-0.47*	-0.04	-0.19	-0.06	0.59**
Con (F)		XX	-0.30*	0.03	0.06		-0.60**	0.58**	-0.13	0.24	0.07	-0.48*
Lit (L)			XX	-0.40*	-0.37*		-0.21	-0.19	0.28	0.19	-0.03	-0.14
2. Pollio Comprehension												
Novel (N)				XX	0.52**		0.17	0.11	0.24	-0.36*	-0.02	0.03
Frozen (F)					XX		0.11	0.33*	-0.13	0.29	0.35*	-0.04
3. Gardner Production												
App (N)							XX	-0.68**	0.07	0.01	-0.14	0.65*
Con (F)								XX	-0.59*	0.07	0.22	-0.34*
Lit (L)									XX	0.08	-0.08	-0.22
4. Composition												
Total Words										XX	0.17	-0.29
F/100											XX	-0.10
N/100												XX

* $P < 0.05$

** $P < 0.01$

correlations between any sub-category of this task and the Pollio comprehension task concern significant negative correlations between literal preferences and correct novel and frozen choices. Cross-task correlations involving both Gardner tasks indicate a good deal of consistency; that is, the use of novel and conventional usages in both tasks correlate positively. In addition, there are significant negative cross-task correlations between novel and conventional productions. The only category failing to intercorrelate across tasks is that of literal use.

Intercorrelations involving the Gardner preference and Composition tasks indicate only two significant values: a positive correlation between novel-appropriate preference and novel usage and a negative correlation between conventional preference and novel usage.

The Pollio comprehension task produced a different pattern of intercorrelations than was true for the Gardner preference task. As noted, both novel and frozen comprehension scores correlated negatively with literal usage on the Gardner-preference task and only slightly with literal usage on the Gardner production task. In terms of this latter task, the largest correlation concerned frozen comprehension on the Pollio-task and conventional usage on the Gardner production task. Although novel comprehension correlated negatively with words on the comprehension task, frozen comprehension scores correlated positively with F/100 values. Thus, while novel figurative usage correlated across both Gardner tasks frozen figures seem more strongly related in terms of their cross-task correlations on the Comprehension task, the Composition task, and the Gardner production task.

If we look now specifically at intercorrelations between the Gardner production and Composition tasks, it is again clear that there is a positive correlation between N/100 and novel appropriate and the (by now) expected negative correlation between conventional production on the Gardner task and N/100 values obtained from the Composition. As noted previously, there were no significant correlations within the Composition task itself.

How can these results be summarized? In general, they suggest strong correlations across tests for the categories of novel and frozen usage although certain tasks (Pollio Comprehension) reveal stronger correlations for frozen figures while others (both Gardner tasks) reveal stronger correlations for novel figures. Within tasks, however, there is a clear differentiation in the pattern of relationship obtaining between novel and clichéd usage: for the Comprehension task, the correlation is positive; for the Composition task, the correlation is essentially zero; while for both Gardner tasks, correlations are negative. Although this latter result may depend upon the particular scoring system used, the existence of negative cross-task correlations involving both Gardner tasks suggests that there may be more here than simple artifact.

In order to examine cross-task patterns in a slightly different way, factor analyses were also run across the various tests used in the present study. Because of the possible artifactual nature of within-task correlations involving both Gardner tests, only one measure was used to represent these tasks. Since there was no logical reason to choose between the number of appropriate (novel) and conventional (frozen) choices, separate factor analyses were run in which both Gardner production and preference tasks were represented by scores designating the number of responses falling in the novel (appropriate) and frozen (conventional) categories. For one of the analyses (N_1/N_2) both

Table 3. Factor analytic results for selected variables

Test	Analysis													
	1. N_1/N_2^a			2. N_1/F_2^a			3. F_1/F_2^a							
	Factor	II	III	h^2	Factor	I	II	III	h^2	Factor	I	II	III	h^2
1. Pollio Comprehension														
Frozen	0.05	0.80	0.42	0.82	-0.04	0.80	0.42	0.82	0.82	0.09	0.80	0.42	0.82	0.82
Novel	0.08	0.91	-0.15	0.86	0.06	0.90	-0.16	0.85	0.85	-0.01	0.91	-0.16	0.86	0.86
2. Gardner Preference														
Novel	0.87	0.17	-0.01	0.81	0.88	0.23	0.01	0.83	0.83	—	—	—	—	—
Frozen	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.88	0.01	-0.03	0.68	0.68
3. Composition														
Novel	0.86	-0.11	-0.03	0.76	0.82	0.00	0.02	0.68	0.68	-0.75	0.09	-0.01	0.58	0.58
Frozen	-0.07	0.05	0.97	0.94	-0.06	0.03	0.95	0.91	0.91	0.07	0.03	0.96	0.92	0.92
4. Gardner Production														
Novel	0.89	0.12	-0.08	0.78	—	—	—	0.65	0.65	—	—	—	—	—
Frozen	—	—	—	—	-0.69	0.31	0.27	0.65	0.65	0.75	0.24	0.24	0.77	0.77
Total variance per factor	40%	27%	16%		34%	29%	16%			36%	25%	17%		

^a N or F refers to which measure of the Gardner Test was used in the various factor analyses. The subscript 1 or 2 denotes Gardner Preference as 1 and Gardner Production as 2

tasks were represented by novel (appropriate) scores while for a second analysis (F_1/F_2) both tasks were represented by frozen or conventional scores. A third analysis (N_1/F_2) was also run using novel values for the preference task and frozen values for the production task. This particular pattern was chosen largely because novel preferences were distributed more normally across a wider range of scores than was true for novel productions.

Table 3 presents the results of three different factor analyses, each involving an initial principal components solution followed by an orthogonal rotation (varimax) to simple structure. Since in all cases better than 78% of the variance was accounted for by three factors, all analyses were terminated at this point.

An examination of results presented in Table 3 reveals a good deal of consistency across all three analyses. For each analysis, Factor I is clearly a novel figurative factor, although in the third analysis it could only be defined by a strong negative loading for novel productions on the Composition task. Factor II was comparable across all three analyses and is best (and almost exclusively) defined by the Pollio Comprehension test. Factor III seems best described as a frozen factor and is defined by loadings for both Composition and Comprehension tasks.

Results of these analyses only lend further support to the view that novel and frozen diction represent two distinct classes of figurative expression. In addition they suggest that within this battery of tasks novel diction is more uniquely assessed by both Gardner tasks and that frozen diction is best captured in terms of the Comprehension task. Only the Composition task was able to assess both aspects of figurative diction producing strong loadings on both Factors I and III. Considered somewhat more generally present results suggest that in order to capture the pattern of relationships existing among various aspects of figurative language, it will always be necessary to use not only production procedures such as are involved in a composition task but also choice procedures such as are involved in a comprehension task.

Discussion

Within the context of the present study, there seem to be two major questions that can be explored: one, how can the patterns of interrelationship among the various dependent variables be described and understood; and two, what kinds of methodological and theoretical implications can be drawn from these results?

In terms of the first question, the pattern of correlations obtained in the present study seems to indicate in agreement with many other studies (Pollio and Pollio, 1974; Gardner et al., 1975) that novel and frozen diction represent two discriminably different aspects of figurative language. Despite this general conclusion, present results also indicate that certain tasks make one or another of these categories more salient. So, for example, the Pollio Comprehension task was found to produce strong inter-task correlations for frozen usage while both Gardner tasks seemed more sensitive to novel usage. Writing a composition, however, seemed to be the most broadly sensitive of the tasks used in the present study, producing positive inter-task correlations across both novel and frozen figures.

Such task-specific differences suggest that any evaluation of an individual's figurative competence is likely to depend on what he or she is asked to do. In the case of the

present experiment, support for this conclusion can be found in terms of the decrease in clichéd expression and the increase in novel expression for choice, relative to production, conditions on the Gardner task. The implication seems to be that subjects are more likely to use novel expression where they are not required to originate such usage in the first place. There seems to be a tacit restriction about using novel figures that it requires some sort of "special" permission to remove.

Pollio and Pollio (1974) report a similar phenomenon in compositions written by school-age children. In this work they noted an increase in frozen usage and a decrease in novel usage over grade in school for children in middle-class neighborhoods. They attributed these results to a process of enculturation to the test/grade-oriented milieu of the school situation such that children in middle-class schools come progressively to inhibit novel usage as inimical to getting a good grade. Because of this, Pollio and Pollio concluded that creative compositions were better thought of as exercises in the control and use of grammatical and lexical choice rather than as exercises requiring the use of innovative prose.

Perhaps one of the more important task differences uncovered in the present study concerns the different pattern of intercorrelations between novel and frozen usage within the various tasks. In agreement with a great many other studies (see Pollio et al., 1977, p. 83), the Composition task produced essentially zero correlations between novel and frozen figures. If we consider the use of a novel figure as one created specifically for the present writing/speaking situation and the use of a frozen figure as simple lexical choice, this lack of correlations is quite understandable: there need be no relationship between a person's ability to create novel figures and his or her tendency to use clichéd or conventional figures within the same context. If we take the words *novel* and *clichéd* literally, we might even expect a negative correlation, as in fact was true for both Gardner tasks.

Present results also agree with earlier work in showing positive correlations between a person's ability to understand novel and frozen figures (Pollio and Pollio, 1979). Within the present context, such correlations can be understood in terms of an extremely straightforward analysis: any speaker having the cognitive ability to understand a novel figure will also be able to deal with a frozen figure as well. Since the opposite is not necessarily true, correlations should be positive (as they are) but considerably less than unity (as they also are). Under this second condition it is possible for a respondent to select the correct alternative for a frozen figure because the expression is a familiar one; by definition, novel figures cannot be understood on the basis of similar prior knowledge.

This conclusion also gains some support from factor-analytic results. Here, novel comprehension was found to be the major variable serving to define the second, or comprehension, factor while frozen comprehension was found to load almost as strongly on the third, or frozen diction, factor. Novel comprehension, however, did not load on any other factor leading to the possible interpretation that novel use and comprehension are independent processes, at least within the context of the present set of tasks.

Although some research has already been completed concerning production processes (Pollio et al., 1977), work involving multiple-choice tasks of figurative competence has only just begun (Pollio and Pollio, 1979). To the present, most studies of comprehension have involved asking a subject to explain or paraphrase a given figure (i.e. Asch and

Nerlove, 1960; Honeck, Reichman, and Hoffman, 1975; etc.) and the question of whether or not the ability to explain or even paraphrase a figure is methodologically equivalent to asking a subject to choose from among a number of alternatives remains an open (empirical) question. On the basis of present results, there is no reason to assume a one to one correspondence.

Taken in toto, present findings suggest that production measures (particularly for novel use) are likely to be susceptible to social context effects, as suggested by Pollio and Pollio (1974). Present results also suggest that comprehension measures involving multiple-choice procedures are much less likely to be susceptible to factors of this type. This, however, does not mean that multiple-choice items are free of context effects; only that such effects will be more related to task properties such as the nature of the correct alternative or the specific distractors used and less to the nature of the social setting within which the person is tested. In the end, however, we must conclude that there are no situation or task-free measures of figurative competence.

Looking now at present results in terms of individuals rather than in terms of tests, one conclusion seems to be that there is a reasonable degree of within-person consistency in terms of use, preference and comprehension of frozen and, more importantly, novel figures of speech. Since a major consideration underlying a good deal of work in figurative language concerns the relationship of such language to problem-solving ability, present results imply that it should be possible, using a battery of tests, to identify different groups of individuals who are differentially sensitive to figurative expression and thereby to select individuals who are, or who are likely to become, skillful problem-solvers. Although a more complete rationale for this expectation is presented elsewhere (Mawardi, 1959; Lockwood, 1974; Pollio and Barlow, 1975; Pollio et al., 1977) the usual hypothesis is that novel figurative expression is useful in problem-solving activities because, in Gordon's terms (1961), it enables the would-be problem-solver to make both the familiar strange and the strange familiar.

A final set of questions that can be asked of present results concerns their theoretical implications. To appreciate these implications, we need remind ourselves that almost all theories of figurative expression assume a unitary cognitive process at the heart of metaphoric competence. This is true whether such theories view figurative expression as a direct perceptual/conceptual act (Verbrugge, 1977) or as a derived linguistic act involving transformations on essentially fixed semantic elements (Bickerton, 1968; Thomas, 1969; Clark and Clark, 1977, etc.). Neither class of theory seems to address the issue of whether or not different tasks might require different figurative competencies or even if specific task constraints might affect an investigator's ability to evaluate figurative competence. The usual assumption is that different tasks are alternative measures of a unitary act and that whatever differences do occur ought easily be explained in terms of constraints set by specific tasks.

Suppose for the moment, however, that we take an alternative point of view and seriously consider the possibility that different tasks represent not so much variations on a single act but discriminably different cognitive activities. What this means is that any attempt to describe figurative competence independent of (i.e., insensitive to) task and situational factors is likely to produce far too idealized and schematic a representation of this process and that any such an attempt is likely to miss the fact that speaking and understanding, at a minimum, always occur within specific task and social contexts.

A further, and somewhat more subtle, theoretical implication to this line of analysis concerns Dashiell's (1935) discussion of the role of reference situations in the development of theoretical principles. According to this analysis, theories of learning often derived their major concepts from a careful and systematic understanding of one, or at most, a few procedures. If the same line of argument is applied to the case of figurative language, it seems possible to argue that derived process models might view the explanation task as their reference task whereas direct perceptual models might view unreflected activities (such as understanding or use) as their point of departure.

If this is the case then both derived process and direct perceptual models may be appropriate for different aspects of figurative diction. Consider what is required to *explain* a figure: an ability to transform pre-existing information about a given topic-vehicle combination into a single coherent interpretation. Consider, on the other hand, what is required for comprehension or even use: an immediate grasp of a total topic-vehicle pattern. Derived process models would thus seem appropriate to the task of explanation while more direct perceptual models would seem appropriate to the task of ongoing use and/or comprehension.

Thus, task considerations of the type originally raised by Dashiell (1935) suggest a division of process models into those concerning reflected activities such as explanation on the one hand, and those concerning unreflected activities such as production or comprehension on the other. Since the latter two tasks seem more appropriate to the ongoing use and appreciation of figurative language, a proper theoretical starting point would seem to be with these activities rather than with explanation. In the long run, it may even be profitable to consider this latter task as one more concerned with explanation *per se* rather than with figurative competence.

Task effects thus present an additional argument against any context-free analysis of figurative competence. Taken in conjunction with earlier work on anomaly (Pollio and Burns, 1977) and individual differences (Pollio and Smith, 1979) these results suggest that any attempt to deal with figurative language solely on the basis of a context, person, and/or task-free mechanism must be erroneous from the start. Figurative speaking and understanding are always done by someone, within some context, trying to do one or another linguistic something. Situated speaking, as Rommetveit (1974) put it, is a basic fact of human language use and understanding and all of our analyses must begin with this as their initial premise, not as something to be explained away as a methodological nuisance.

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