

# Review of: "Grice's Café – Coffee, cream, and metaphor comprehension"

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**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

Disclaimer: I am not a (psycho-)linguist, but I draw on linguistic theories of quantification in work on description-variant effects on choice and judgment, commonly referred to as “framing effects” (e.g., Mandel, 2014, 2022, 2023), and such theories include neo-Gricean varieties, among others. Nor have I studied metaphor as a research topic. Accordingly, I have met this paper as an educated reader with broad interests in cognition. I hope some of the other reviewers are genuine experts in the the area of metaphor and on the fine details of Gricean and related accounts but that my comments will nonetheless prove to be of value.

With this caveat aside, let me first say that I very much enjoyed reading this paper and found the issue it picked up to be easy to grasp and worth taking the time to sift through. The author's use of the competence-performance distinction struck a resonant chord and perhaps he might consider reframing the distinction in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions for the understanding of metaphor. That is, whereas competence may be necessary, it is not necessarily sufficient for metaphor comprehension. (By reframing, I don't mean substituting but rather complementing the current description.)

The review of empirical studies on metaphor comprehension were enlightening, and some of the findings circled back to thoughts I had while reading the earlier parts of the paper. In particular, it strikes me that the search for meaning in metaphors is a search for coherence. For well-worn metaphors, the interpretational path to a coherent resolution of meaning may be automatic, but for novel metaphors, attaining a coherent representation may be effortful. In such cases, the aptness of the metaphor should tune the steepness of the slope from incoherence (at a high slope level) to coherence (in a well, that is at least, a local minimum). This is, in fact, what the author's brief review of the empirical literature finds, and perhaps it would be helpful to relate this finding to this idea.

The empirical review might also benefit from the inclusion of any developmental studies that chart the onset of metaphor comprehension. This should speak to the complexity issue in yet another way (i.e., in addition to the neural and psycholinguistic findings from adults). More informally, as any parent knows and as most non-parents can surely imagine, children's comprehension of literal meaning precedes metaphor comprehension (at least as a development step—it goes without saying that not *all* literal meanings will be comprehensible before *any* metaphorical ones!).

Finally, circling back to coherence, this represents a very general aim of decoding communication. However, at points in the paper, the author anticipates various usages of metaphor that are perhaps functional from the sender's perspective, such as using metaphor to allow for politeness or to demonstrate one's creative capabilities. These aims are also presumably inferred by the receiver as he or she attempts to arrive at a coherent representation of the metaphor in

linguistic and social context. For the non-expert in this domain who is nonetheless interested in reading this paper it may be of value to reflect on how these types of inferences factor into the overall process of metaphor sense-making.

## References

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