Predicting Emergent Meaning during Literary Reading

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Overview

• Introduction – Emergent meaning in the context of literary reading -
  • Conceptions of emergent meaning.
  • Emergent meaning during absorption in literary reading.

• Study 1 – Locating the “inexpressibility” of emergent meaning -
  • An expressive form of absorbed reading (expressive enactment) predicts self-reported “inexpressible realizations.”

• Study 2 – Locating the “inexpressibility” of metaphor comprehension
  • An expressive form of absorbed reading (expressive enactment) predicts performance on a class inclusion metaphor comprehension task.

• Study 3 – Replication of Study 2

• Discussion
Introduction: A Conception of Emergent Meaning

• The emergent meaning of linguistic expressions in literary texts is:
  • Analogous to the perceptual “whole” referred to in the Gestalt adage that “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”
  • Analogous to the meaning of a sentential metaphor when it is “greater” than the meaning of the vehicle and topic considered separately (Tourangeau & Rips, 1991).
  • Evident as the meaning of stylistically (metaphorically) enriched passages in literary texts that “exceed” explication (or paraphrase).

• An example: The emergent meaning of a sentential metaphor -
  • *Time (metaphoric topic) is a river (metaphoric vehicle).*
Attributes of Time

- Time
  - Is endless
  - Is immaterial
- Flows
Attributes of River

• A river
  • Flows
  • Meanders
  • Is shallow
Attributes of Time in the Metaphorric Sentence

- Time is a River
  - Flows
  - Meanders
- Empties into nothingness
Attributes Salient for River but \textit{not} Salient for Time

\begin{itemize}
  \item Time is a River
    \begin{itemize}
      \item Flows
      \item \textbf{Meanders}
      \item Empties into nothingness
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}
Attributes *not* Salient for Either River *or* Time

- Time is a River
  - Flows
  - Meanders
- Empties into nothingness
Absorption in Literary Reading

- Absorbed literary reading - two kinds of absorption (Kuiken & Douglas, in press)
  - 1) Integrative Comprehension: Extrapersonal Space, Cognitive Perspective-taking and Event Realism.

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<td>I could see (in my mind’s eye) the same setting (or environment) that was “there” for a character to see</td>
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<td>Peripersonal Space</td>
<td>Things described in the world of the text seemed bodily present, as though they could not only be seen but also heard; not only heard but also within reach, not only reachable but also touchable, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-implicating Givenness</td>
<td>Remembering experiences in my own life helped me to sense what the character was going through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactive Empathy</td>
<td>For a moment I felt like I “was” the character described there</td>
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Study 1: Inexpressible Realizations

• 365 participants were asked to read an excerpt from the novella On Chesil Beach (McEwan, 2008).

• After reading, participants were asked to:
  • Read and write recursively about their categorial conception of a pivotal (preselected) passage.
  • Describe (1) their level of absorption, using the Absorption-like States Questionnaire (ASQ; Kuiken & Douglas, in press) and (2) their reading outcomes, using the Experiencing Questionnaire (EQ; Kuiken, Campbell, & Sopcak, 2012).

• Our structural equation model articulates two potential paths to such reading outcomes (e.g., inexpressible realizations)
  • Example item: “…what seemed clear to me also seemed beyond words”
  • From Open Reflection through Integrative Comprehension to selected reading outcomes.
  • From Open Reflection through Expressive Enactment to selected reading outcomes.
Study 2: Metaphoric Class Inclusion

- 306 participants were asked to read an excerpt from the novella *On Chesil Beach* (McEwan, 2008).

- After reading, participants were asked to:
  - Read and write recursively about their categorial conception of a pivotal (preselected) passage (N=149) or read and write recursively about their explanation of the character’s conduct and its consequences (N=157).
  - Describe their reflections using (1) the ASQ (Kuiken & Douglas, in press) and (2) the EQ (Kuiken, Campbell, & Sopcak, 2012)
  - Complete a version of the class-inclusion metaphor comprehension task introduced by Jones and Estes (2005); participants were asked to what extent a metaphoric vehicle is understandable as a member of the same class as the metaphoric topic.
    - For example, “Death is a fat fly” (unconventional literary metaphor)
    - For example, “Genes are blueprints” (conventional non-literary metaphor)
Absorption and Metaphor Comprehension

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<tr>
<th>Model: Outcome Variable</th>
<th>Expressive Path Coefficient</th>
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<tr>
<td>Study Two: <em>Literary</em> Metaphors</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>- 0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Two: <em>Non-literate</em> Metaphors</td>
<td>- 0.07</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Two: <em>Unconventional Literary</em> Metaphors</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>- 0.42</td>
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Study 3: Metaphoric Class Inclusion

- 160 participants were asked to read a “poetic” excerpt from the essay entitled *A New Refutation of Time* (Borges, 1956).
  - A genre contrast with the narrative excerpt used in Studies 1 and 2.
“A New Refutation of Time”

Time is a river that carries me along,
and I am the river;
It is a tiger that devours me
and I am the tiger;
It is a fire that consumes me
and I am the fire.

_Borges (1946)_
Study 3: Metaphoric Class Inclusion

- 160 participants were asked to read a “poetic” excerpt from the essay entitled *A New Refutation of Time* (Borges, 1956).
  - A genre contrast with the narrative excerpt used in Studies 1 and 2.

- After reading, participants were asked to:
  - Read and write recursively about their categorial conception of a pivotal (preselected) passage.
  - Describe their reflections using (1) the ASQ (Kuiken & Douglas, in press) and (2) the EQ (Kuiken, Campbell, & Sopcak, 2012).
  - Complete a version of the class-inclusion metaphor comprehension task introduced by Jones and Estes (2005); participants were asked to rate the extent to which a metaphoric vehicle is understandable as a member of the same class as the metaphoric topic.
Absorption and Metaphor Comprehension

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<td>Study Three: Literary Metaphors</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>- 0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Three: Non-Literary Metaphors</td>
<td>- 0.68</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
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<td>Study Three: Unconventional Literary Metaphors</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>- 0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Three: Oxymora</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>- 0.33</td>
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Discussion

• In summary - Expressive enactment (a form of absorption like state):
  • (1) facilitates self-reported inexpressible realizations (Study 1) AND
  • (2) brings together metaphoric vehicles and topics that seem literally distant from each other (Studies 2 and 3).

• Future directions:
  • Systematically examine genre differences - as suggested by Studies 2 and 3.
  • Study the contextualizing effects of autobiographical memory (e.g., memories related to loss)
    • For example, what is the relationship between the reader’s history with “death” and with “fat flies” that might alter readiness to consider them metaphorically “the same.”
Thank-You