

# Emergence of Rhetorical Effect: Figurative Language and Systems Theory

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Researchers have been discussing emergent property of metaphor for a long time (e.g., Black 1979; Gineste, Indurkya, and Scart 2000). From broader perspective, Cameron and Deignan (2006) described emergence of metaphor in social context, and Demjén (2018) explains how the birth and decline of a running joke, both employing concepts of the complex systems theory, such as non-linear, phase shift, self-organize, and emergence. However, not all researchers share the definition of complex systems (cf. Ladyman et al. 2013). Therefore, the present study describes some aspects of comprehension of figurative language through some concepts in systems theory in general, rather than those of complex systems in a narrow sense.

The present study describes the following two features of rhetorical effect from the perspective of systems theory: (i) effect of some of the figures of speech are emergent in the traditional sense (i.e., the whole is greater than the sum of its parts); and (ii) the meaning of a lexical item is evoked downwardly (downward causation). These two concepts, emergence in the traditional sense and downward causation, are sometimes included as features of complex systems (e.g. Hashimoto (2014)) but other times not. However, linguists do not have to employ only the features of complex systems. Rather, linguists should pursue the features of language as a system, regardless to it is complex or not.

For the first point (i), the present study analyzes how figurative meaning of a metaphor and rhetorical effect of double-meaning emerge in the language system. Based on the analyses, the author claims that not only conceptual contents, but poetic effect also emerges through the integration of lower-level units.

Next, for the other point (ii), the author analyzes the mechanism of how a pun is understood based on Giora (2003) and the author's own research, and shows that both of the local (intra-sentence) and contextual environments influence the comprehension of a pun. The latter one is engaged with downward causation, in the point that macro-structure influence the interpretation of lower-level structure.

Through these arguments, the present study shows that it is useful to broadening the scope of research from complex systems to systems theory in general when we study figures of speech.

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