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Linguistic and metalinguistic resemblance

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Abstract

This paper addresses the role of resemblance in language use. It makes a basic distinction between linguistic and metalinguistic resemblance. The former addresses similarities between entities and states of affairs, while the latter addresses metarepresentational aspects of language, which can be treated in terms of the notion of echo. It further distinguishes three dimensions of linguistic resemblance: attribute-based resemblance, structural resemblance, and high versus low-level resemblance. It pays special attention to the important theoretical status of high-level resemblance as a constraining factor on experiential correlation, which is also active in synesthesia and situation and event-based metaphors. The paper then discusses the role of resemblance in cross-domain relations in irony, hyperbole, and understatement, and it ends with an analysis of the role of metalinguistic resemblance as a pre-requisite for the inferential activity which arises from ironic, parodic, and metonymy-based implicational echoes.

Keywords: analogy, echo, linguistic resemblance, metalinguistic resemblance, metaphor, structural resemblance, high-level resemblance, simile

1. Introduction

After almost two decades of intense work by cognitive linguists on metaphor based on experiential correlation (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999), to the detriment of resemblance metaphor, Grady (1999) called for redressing the balance between the two great metaphor types. Unfortunately, Grady's call has been largely ignored by cognitive linguists and there is little in-depth work on resemblance metaphor and on resemblance in general, with the exception of iconicity, which is based on resemblance between the world and language (e.g., Haiman, 1980), including sign languages (e.g., Wilcox, 2004). Thus, there is little work by cognitive linguists on simile (recent exceptions are Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera, 2014, Romano 2017, and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2021), despite the interest of cognitive psychologists on this use of language (often compared to metaphor) (e.g., Glucksberg, 2001, 2006, Glucksberg and Haught 2006). This research gap is rather striking if we take into account the well-known cognitive commitment (Lakoff, 1990), which brings work within Cognitive Linguistics into alignment with findings in the cognitive sciences. Another area of neglect is metalinguistic resemblance, to be understood as the similarity between linguistic representations rather than between the entities (with their properties), situations, and events which are at the basis of the construction of such representations. This notion, which arises from work on the metarepresentational aspects of language use, has been of special interest to relevance theorists, within inferential pragmatics, as will be show below (Wilson, 2000, Wilson and Sperber, 2012a).

In previous research, Ruiz de Mendoza (2021) has investigated the role of resemblance in metaphor, simile, and analogy, together with other figurative uses of language which are extensions of these more basic uses (e.g., paragon, allegory, fables). The present analysis elaborates on some of the insights offered in this previous work, with a view to providing a more complete account of resemblance, which must include metalinguistic resemblance. We first discuss the different dimensions of linguistic resemblance with emphasis on their theoretical implications for the state of the art in the study of conceptual metaphor and simile. We then take up irony, hyperbole and understatement as special cases of linguistic resemblance containing fully coincidental cross-domain conceptual structure. Finally, we explore metalinguistic resemblance, in the form of echoic mention, first to complete the study of resemblance in irony, and then in its closely parallel application to parody and to metonymy-based implicational constructions. In the course of this exploration, we make explicit relevant convergences and divergences in the exploitation of resemblance relations across these different uses of language thus making our study part of an integrative framework.

2. Linguistic resemblance

Linguistic resemblance is based on perceived similarities between entities and/or states of affairs (i.e., states, situations, and events). It typically finds its way into linguistic expression through comparatives (*Jimmy is like/taller than his father*), superlatives (*Jimmy is the tallest in his class*), and figures of speech such as metaphor (*Her eyes are diamonds*), analogy (*The heart pumps blood throughout the body*), simile (*God's voice is like thunder*), and others related to these (e.g., paragon, allegory, fables) (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2020ab, 2021). However,

resemblance relations also play a role, as will be discussed below, in other figures of speech such as irony, hyperbole, and understatement.

We argue that there are three types of resemblance relations in figurative language:

(a) *Attribute-based resemblance*. This is the most basic case of resemblance. It involves specific attributes shared by physical entities (people, animals, plants, objects) to some extent. For example, the sentence *Her eyes are (like) diamonds* can be interpreted as ascribing salient features of diamonds such as their crystalline and bright appearance to a woman's eyes. What distinguishes non-figurative *like*-comparison from *like*-simile is the inferential character of the latter. We can refer to this type of cross-domain similarity relationship by the label *attribute-based resemblance*.

(b) *Structural resemblance*. It is based on the parallel alignment of part-whole conceptual configurations. It gives rise to analogical judgments of the following kind: A is to B as C is to D; therefore, A is C, and B is D. For example, we can say that a shell (A) is to a tortoise (B) as a house (C) is to a human (D), so a shell is "(like) the house of a tortoise". An analogy is thus a type of metaphor/simile based on structural resemblance.

(c) *High-level resemblance*. It is based on high-level conceptual constructs. High-level concepts are obtained by abstracting away conceptual structure which perceptually accessible (or low-level) concepts have in common. Effect-cause relations provide some illustration. For example, the metaphor *Your words were music to my ears* cannot be explained by comparing words and music directly, but rather the similar pleasing effects which words and music produced on the speaker. The common effects are ultimately

based on specific attributes of the words (e.g., because of their reassuring nature) and music (e.g., its melody, rhythm, texture).

High-level resemblance, as will become evident in our discussion in the following subsections, can combine with either attribute-based or structural resemblance in ways which are analytically productive. But before engaging ourselves in this exploration, some observations are in order. The literature on metaphor and simile has noticed that metaphor and *like*-simile, although considered largely equivalent, are not completely alike. There is a greater tendency for *like*-simile to be used when the speaker feels it necessary to be fully explicit about the basis for the resemblance relation, called the *ground*. For example, instead of *True friends are precious and rare diamonds*, it is more natural to say *True friends are like diamonds, precious and rare*. In addition, long elaborations of the ground are more frequent in the case of simile (Romano, 2017: 23). The quote *True friends are like diamonds – bright, beautiful, valuable, and always in style* (Nicole Richie) works better as a simile than as a metaphor (*True friends are diamonds*). There is a reason for this, which has been noted in Ruiz de Mendoza (2021). Metaphor presupposes the resemblance relation between the two terms of comparison. By contrast, *like*-simile is a call for the hearer to explore possible similarities. It is probably because of this essential difference that simile has been found to be more “open-ended” than metaphor in psycholinguistic work carried out by Glucksberg (2001, 2006). For example, experimental subjects interpreted the metaphor *My lawyer is a shark* as referring to the aggressiveness of the lawyer (seen in terms of the aggressive, predatory nature of sharks), while the interpretative range of the simile *My lawyer is like a shark* added other properties, related to the determinacy, the physical strength, and the velocity of sharks. This finding is also consistent with work by Chiappe and Kennedy (1999, 2001), according to which high similarity and familiarity ratings are generally realized as metaphors, and further

experimentation in Chiappe et al (2003), which also associated higher aptness (i.e., importance of features) with metaphor. In application to the eyes-diamonds resemblance connection in terms of brightness, these findings would mean that, if speakers feel that this connection is tight, familiar, and apt, the metaphorical solution is preferable. It would also explain why simile is preferred for the less familiar resemblance relation involved in *True friends are like diamonds, precious and rare*.

These findings, although arising from experimental work with metaphors and similes exploiting attribute-based resemblance, can be extended to structural and high-level resemblance. For example, in the sentence *A shell is the house of a tortoise* the underlying analogy is treated as self-evident to the hearer on account of its tightness, familiarity, and aptness. By contrast, *A shell is like the house of a tortoise* treats the analogy as not necessarily self-evident thus requiring exploration. These same variables can be applied to predict a greater preference for the metaphor *Her words were music to my ears* than for the simile *Your words were like music to my ears* provided that the speaker feels that the resemblance connection between the effects of the hearer's words and of music is tight, familiar, and apt.

We now turn our attention to the theoretical implications of postulating the notions of high-level and structural resemblance as analytical categories in the understanding of metaphor and simile. We start with a re-examination of so-called correlation metaphor, which we argue to be explainable in terms of high-level resemblance. We then explore synesthesia along similar lines. Finally, we account for situation and event-based metaphors (labelled ontological and structural metaphors respectively in Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) as the result of combining high-level similarity with structural and non-structural resemblance.

2.1. Correlation metaphors and high-level resemblance

Cognitive semanticists, following Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), have made emphasis on the pervasiveness of metaphors based on experiential correlation. For example, causes and forces are not physically similar but they correlate in primary experience since exerting physical force on objects can cause them to move or change. This correlation gives rise to the metaphor CAUSES ARE FORCES (*They pushed the bill through Congress*) (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999: 53). Correlation metaphor is clearly distinguished from resemblance metaphor by theorists (Grady, 1999). However, it must be noted that primary experiential correlation may not give rise to metaphor (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza, 2021); e.g., hearing thunder correlates with the beginning of a rain storm, feeling cold with shivering, experiencing a fast heartbeat and excessive sweat with an anxiety attack, etc. The question, then, is why some correlations result in metaphor. A plausible answer, which awaits further exploration, has been provided in Ruiz de Mendoza (2020a, 2021): primary experiential correlation becomes metaphorical when constrained by high-level resemblance. This holds for CAUSES ARE FORCES, since forces cause change like other types of cause. Let us here consider the rest of the cases of correlation metaphor selected by Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 51-54). We specify possible high-level resemblance constraints for them in Table 1.

Correlation metaphor	Primary experience	High-level resemblance	Example
AFFECTION IS WARMTH	Feeling warm when being held affectionately	Similar feelings of comfort when treated affectively and when in a warm place	<i>She's a warm person</i>
IMPORTANT IS BIG	Big things exert major forces and dominate our visual experience	Similar experience of awe and wonder when faced with important events and massive objects	<i>That's a big decision.</i>
HAPPY IS UP	When happy and energetic, we tend to adopt an upright posture.	Similar positional experience of verticality when happy or when erect in posture	<i>I'm feeling up today.</i>

INTIMACY IS CLOSENESS	Being intimate is usually accompanied by physical proximity	Similar feeling of familiarity when intimate with a person and when physically near a person	<i>We are close friends</i>
BAD IS STINKY	Being repelled by foul-smelling objects and by dishonesty, immorality, corruption, and the like	Similar effects of repulsion when smelling foul odors and when faced with dishonesty, immorality, corruption, etc.	<i>His name stinks</i>
DIFFICULTIES ARE BURDENS	Lifting and carrying heavy objects and facing challenges are an uncomfortable test to our abilities and endurance	Similar feelings of discomfort when lifting and carrying heavy objects and when facing challenges	<i>She feels weighed down with troubles</i>
MORE IS UP	Levels rise as quantity increases	Similar experience of augmentation of magnitudes when seeing objects accumulate and when seeing an object reach a higher position	<i>Temperatures are high in this season</i>
CATEGORIES ARE CONTAINERS	Objects with common properties are often found in the same bounded region	Similar experience of boundedness when objects have to be brought mentally or physically together to compare them and when they are physically placed within the same bounded region	<i>These two products are in the same category</i>
SIMILARITY IS CLOSENESS	Similar objects tend to cluster together (flowers, trees, rocks, etc.)	Similar experience of spatial contiguity when comparing objects and when objects are close to each other	<i>Your ideas are close to mine</i>
LINEAR SCALES ARE PATHS	Motion forward as involving progress (measurable in degrees) in terms of greater proximity to the destination	Similar experience of measurable progress when moving forward along a path and when improving our chances of achieving a goal	<i>Her intelligence goes beyond mine</i>
ORGANIZATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE	Focusing on the structure of an object requires forming conceptual	Similar experience of perceiving structural and logical connections when understanding and learning from	<i>They put together different ideas into one single approach</i>

	representations of logical relationships	sensorimotor perception or when involved in intellectual pursuits	
HELP IS SUPPORT	By receiving physical support to perform a physical action, people feel helped	Similar experience of feeling alleviated when receiving physical or emotional support	<i>We received enough support to go ahead with the project</i>
TIME IS MOTION	We experience the passage of time as we move or observe motion	Similar experience of continuity when we perceive the passage of time and when we move or observe motion	<i>Time goes by</i>
STATES ARE LOCATIONS	We correlate certain locations with how we feel in them (warm in bed, cool in the shade, safe at home, etc.)	Similar feelings of being in the same condition when in a certain place or in a certain state.	<i>He is in a depression</i>
CHANGE IS MOTION	Changes of location involve changes of state (e.g., from warm to cold when getting out of bed)	Similar feelings of being in a different condition when changing state and when changing location	<i>It changes color from brown to red when hot</i>
ACTIONS ARE SELF-PROPELLED MOTION	Moving oneself through space is perceived as an action	Similar experience of effort and progress when moving oneself through space and when performing other actions	<i>I'm moving right along in the project</i>
PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS	Reaching a position in space is often the result of a goal to reach such a position	Similar experience of achievement when reaching positions in space and when achieving goals	<i>We are finally getting where we want to be</i>
PURPOSES ARE DESIRED OBJECTS	We grasp objects when it is our goal to take control of them	Similar experience of control when grasping an object and when we achieve our purposes	<i>The military grabbed power in a coup</i>
RELATIONSHIPS ARE ENCLOSURES	We live in the same enclosed physical space with the people we are most closely related to	Similar experience of restriction when in an enclosure and when in an oppressive relationship	<i>Our relationship is rather confining now</i>
CONTROL IS UP	It is easier to control someone or exert force on an object from above	Similar experience of power when in an upper position and when in a dominant situation	<i>I'm on top of the situation</i>

KNOWING IS SEEING	Seeing an object, situation or event allows us to derive information from it (perceptual and intellectual awareness correlate)	Similar experience of awareness when seeing an object, situation or event and when knowing about it.	<i>I can see what you mean</i>
UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING	Holding and touching an object allows us to get information about it	Similar experience of awareness when understanding the nature of an object and when touching it	<i>I'm afraid I can't quite grasp that idea</i>
SEEING IS TOUCHING	Visual detection involves the ability to select one or more objects from among several others, often many of them; tactile detection involves a similar ability by means of touching objects	Similar experience of detection through either visual or tactile means	<i>She picked out her cousin from the crowd</i>

Table 1. High-level resemblance in correlation metaphors

Table 1 should be self-explanatory and draw further attention to the need to explore the relationship between high-level similarity and correlation metaphor. Also, if correct, the treatment of high-level similarity as a constraint on correlation metaphor should be able to motivate other phenomena related to this kind of metaphor. The next section examines synesthesia along similar lines.

2.2. Synesthesia as a cause-effect correlation metaphor

Synesthesia is a complex phenomenon which can be studied from a neurological perspective (e.g., when a neurological pathway within a sensory domain leads to involuntary experiences in a second pathway within another sensory domain; see Cytowic, 2002). However, any non-synesthete can produce expressions which substitute one sensory image where another would

be more expected. This is so-called rhetorical synesthesia (Anderson, 1998: 328), which is used both in literature and in everyday language. For example, in Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, in a dialogue between Salomé and Jokanaan (Wilde's John the Baptist), she describes the blackness of his hair, to which she feels extremely attracted, in the following terms:

(1) The silence that dwells in the forest is not so black.

Silence is the absence of sound and blackness the absence of light. The notion of "absence" is common to both concepts, but there is no similarity between light and sound, which makes it difficult to work out the ascription of blackness to silence in terms of low-level attribute-based similarity. It is, however, possible to find primary experience for the two concepts to be brought together. Light and sound are both related to activity whereas darkness, which is black, and silence call upon lack of activity. Furthermore, in terms of subjective experience, there can be situations where silence and darkness may share their basic cause-effect structure: silence can be relaxing, but also depressing if continued for too long, much the same as "black" darkness. The synesthetic combination of silence and blackness is thus licensed by the effects they have in common, which allow us to correlate the experiences of silence and darkness; that is, this example of synesthesia can be explained as a case of correlation metaphor grounded in high-level cause-effect similarity. Other examples of synesthesia seem to adopt a similar interpretive pattern. For example, in John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale", we read:

(2) In some melodious plot,
 Of beechen green,
 Singest of summer in full throated ease.

These lines bring together the senses of vision and hearing by ascribing the pleasing auditory quality of being melodious to a land plot where the green color of the beech trees dominates the visual field in a way which causes the poet to feel similarly pleased.

A more complex example is found in Dylan Thomas's line "My nostrils see her breath burn like a bush", from the poem "When all my five and country senses see". This line binds the senses of smell and sight on the basis of the metaphorical connection between visual and olfactory impact (the effect). However, this is not based on straightforward experiential correlation, but it is mediated by the metaphorical depiction of the experience of both smelling and seeing a burning bush (the cause). This metaphorical depiction provides an elaboration of the basic cause-effect primary scenario in which a burning object is detected through smell and sight, both senses being salient within that scenario.

2.3. Situation and event-based metaphors or similes

Situation and event-based metaphors exploit high-level resemblance. This can happen in combination with either attribute-based or structural resemblance. As an example of the former, we can think of suffering a disease as being in a jail. This is a case of situation-based metaphor. What the two situations share is the experience of being confined either when bed-ridden because of illness or when in prison. Confinement is a high-level notion. Another example of high-level resemblance is provided by the event-based metaphor *Death is a thief*. We commonly think of life as if it were our most valuable property. The loss of life is thus seen as the loss of property and causing people to lose their lives as causing them to lose their property. For this reason, we think of killing a person as "taking" his or her life. Since a thief takes other people's property, the event of stealing can easily be used to reason about the event of killing a person. The thief is the killer. Death can refer to the process of dying (*He had a slow death*),

to the end-point of the process (*His death took place unexpectedly*), and to its cause (*Drugs were the death of him*). The latter two meanings are obtained metonymically; in the first one there is a shift from the process to the result (or end point) of the process; in the second one, there is an additional shift from the result to whatever caused the result. It is on the basis of this last interpretation that we can personify death and say that it is a thief that “takes away” a person’s life. To sum up, this personification requires thinking of death as if it were a willful agent and our lives as if they were property; the loss of property is the loss of life. High-level resemblance is thus based on the idea of deprivation, which both dying and losing property share.

It may be noted that the disease-jail and death-thief metaphors are examples of what Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 25) originally classified as *ontological* metaphors, which allow us to take parts of our experience and treat them as discrete entities or substances. We now turn our attention to high-level structural resemblance, which, in the view presented here, underlies what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) classified as *structural* metaphors. These metaphors were defined as those in which a complex abstract concept is presented in terms of a more concrete concept. An example is ARGUMENT IS WAR. In this metaphor arguing is seen as engaging in a battle, where those arguing are contenders who attack their respective positions while defending their own. They plan strategies and they may gain or lose ground; ultimately, they may enjoy victory or suffer defeat. Examples of this metaphor are: *The debater came under fire*; *After a brief skirmish the debate escalated into full-scale war*; *Our team was defeated in just one battle*. What these examples have in common, beyond the correspondences noted above, is the following line of analogical reasoning:

People arguing (A) are to the domain of an argument (B) as contenders in a battle (C) are to the domain of war (D). Therefore, people arguing are contenders in a battle and an argument is war.

High-level structural resemblance can also give rise to *like-simile*, but only if the meaning focus is on the participant entities: *That debate was like full-scale war*. The reason for this limitation is a matter of syntactic constraints, since *like-simile* adopts the form of a primary predication (*X is like Y*). In any event, this kind of *like-simile* is also supported by the same analogical reasoning as its corresponding high-level structural resemblance metaphor, where the difference is, as in other cases of mutual convertibility, a matter of the less tight connection between the two terms in the case of *like-simile*: *That debate was like a war where only one side took casualties/ That debate was a war where only one side took casualties*. These examples contain a counter-expectation, i.e., the statement that there were “casualties” only in one of the contending parties. This counter-expectation carries over differently to the metaphor than to the simile. Since the *like-simile* does not presuppose the similarity between the two terms, this expressive solution can, in principle, accommodate the oddity of the situation better than the metaphor. This does not rule out the metaphorical solution. But it conveys a different kind of meaning: it suggests that a war with casualties only on one side is a possibility that people may contemplate.

3. Special cases of linguistic resemblance

The previous section has dealt with three types of resemblance relations, i.e., property attribution, structural alignment, and degree of abstraction, in analytical situations where the

meaning implications are denotational. Here we use the label “denotational” in a broader sense than the one assigned to it traditionally (i.e., the literal meaning of an expression). That is, by denotational meaning we refer to meaning which results from describing and reasoning about entities, situations, and events, independently of the speaker’s attitude (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2020a: 33). Metaphor and simile are denotational, since they relate to how we construe a state of affairs. Denotational meaning contrasts with attitudinal meaning, which is the focus of attention in irony, hyperbole, understatement, and other figures which relate to these, as discussed in Ruiz de Mendoza (2020ab).

In irony the speaker conveys his or her personal dissociation from what is stated in the ironic utterance. The inferential process underlying the derivation of this meaning, which has recently been spelled out in Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2021), is complex. However, in its essence, it boils down to a clash between two conceptual scenarios: one is based on what someone believes to be the case; the other, which contrasts with the previous one, is based on what the speaker is certain to be the case. For example, the ironic interpretation of *Yes, sure, Jeanette sang beautifully* requires the hearer to realize that the speaker believes that Jeanette performed poorly, contrary to the speaker’s beliefs, and to infer that, by means of that utterance, the speaker dissociates himself or herself from the purportedly erroneous belief. The speaker’s expression of dissociation can be further interpreted as being one of skepticism, contempt, mockery, etc., through context-driven generic meaning parameterization.

The analytical situation is different for hyperbole and understatement. In irony there is a cross-domain conceptual clash involving the cancellation of conceptual structure (i.e., one set of assumptions overrides the other). By contrast, in hyperbole and understatement we have a cross-domain reasoning process partially akin to the one for metaphor and simile, that is, of the “as if” kind. Let us illustrate this claim. Consider first the following example of hyperbole: *John knows every square inch of the valley*. The exaggeration involved in this example rests

on our common-sense assumption that it is virtually impossible for John to exhibit the kind of scouting abilities ascribed to him. The sentence thus depicts a source scenario where the protagonist has impossible scouting skills. This scenario is placed in correspondence with a target scenario where the protagonist's skills, while impressive, are reasonably possible. In the correspondence there is only one denotational difference, which is the one between the exaggerated source item, "every square inch (of the valley)", and the real-world target one, "much of (the valley)", plus an attitudinal inference arising from treating the target item in terms of the source item. In the example above, we see John's real scouting abilities, and their subjective impact on the speaker, as if they were those portrayed in the source scenario. Note that the generic default value of the attitudinal component of hyperbole is one of astonishment. In positive contexts, like the one in the example above, this default interpretation can take more specific attitudinal values denoting, for example, awe or admiration (e.g., *Wow, you're faster than lightning!*); in negative contexts, by contrast, we can have specific attitudinal meanings such as spite (e.g., *His nose is bigger than a rhino's horn*) and complaint (e.g., *This story is endless!*).

In terms of resemblance, the source and target domains of hyperbole are fully coincidental denotationally (i.e., they bear full resemblance), except for the exaggerated component. This exaggerated source component relates to its target in terms of domain-based scalar similarity (Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera, 2014: 45). In *John knows every square inch of the valley*, the scalar domain is the extent of an area; in *Wow, you're faster than lightning!*, it is speed; in *His nose is bigger than a rhino's horn*, it is size; and in *This story is endless!*, it is length of time.

Understatement works similarly. The difference is that the source domain is built on the basis of an understated scalar concept. In the following utterance, a student's parents use a modest approach to minimize the impact of their daughter's success in her exams: *She did OK*

in the exams. The target for this source scenario is higher up on the grading scale than the underrated source. In terms of the attitudinal component, the parents convey apparent indifference, which in context may shade off into related values such as calmness or placidity.

Understatement underlies ironic uses where the minimized scenario is used to refer to its opposite (Wilson, 2006, Partington, 2007). For example, imagine a boat is sinking and the captain, rather phlegmatically, warns his crew: *Gentlemen, we may have a small problem*. This understatement is ironical to the extent that crew members are aware that they are in a challenging situation. The target meaning of the understatement is close to this paraphrase: ‘We have a big problem, but let’s face it with calm’. However, there is little reason to be calm in a virtually uncontrollable situation, which cancels out the attitudinal aspect of the target meaning of the understatement. As with hyperbole, in understatement the attitudinal inference arises from an “as if” reasoning process directed to the part in which source and target bear partial resemblance to each other. In this process, we are asked to think of the target in terms of the source. This attitudinal inference can then be cancelled out by further inferencing if conditions for ironic interpretation hold.

To sum up, metaphor and simile are based on partial resemblance between the entities, states, and events compared. On the other hand, irony, hyperbole, and understatement may involve a combination of full and partial resemblance. Irony works on the basis of cross-domain correspondences between two conceptual scenarios which contain fully coincidental elements but also mutually clashing conceptual structure. Hyperbole and understatement also contain fully coincidental cross-domain elements, but no relevant discrepant structure; instead, they feature partially resembling structure, which bears the brunt of the interpretive burden by acting as the grounds for the derivation of attitudinal inferences. Irony also differs from hyperbole and understatement in the metalinguistic origin of the scenario which depicts the disputed belief. This issue is addressed in the next section.

4. Metalinguistic resemblance

Linguistic resemblance is focused on the similarity between the denotational and attitudinal aspects of meaning. Metalinguistic resemblance works on different grounds. It captures similarities between meaning representations rather than between the entities and states of affairs denoted by such representations. It is an aspect of what Wilson (2000) and Wilson and Sperber (2012a) have termed a metarepresentation, i.e., a representation of a representation.

The previous section has noted that hyperbole and understatement involve full and partial resemblance between two conceptual domains. The present section revisits the notion of echo, which it borrows from previous studies within pragmatics by relevance theorists, especially in connection to irony (Wilson and Sperber, 2012b). Following up on previous work in Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014), Ruiz de Mendoza (2017a), and Galera (2020), it argues that echoic mention is more than a pragmatic task. Ideally, an echo is the result of a speaker's attempt to provide the hearer with an exact representation of someone else's attributed thoughts. An echo is, therefore, a case of full resemblance. However, when a thought is echoed, the meaning does not arise from any potential similarity between the entities, situations, and events denoted by the linguistic expression, but from the repetition of a thought. That is, echoes are cases of metalinguistic resemblance, where this term is used to capture the language user's reflection on how we make meaning through linguistic expression rather than on the entities and states of affairs designated by this means. By contrast, cross-domain similarities in metaphor, simile, irony, hyperbole, and understatement, even when full resemblance is involved, are a matter of linguistic resemblance. Furthermore, producing an echoed thought results from specific cognitive activity which can be ascribed the status of a cognitive operation

to be ranked on a par with other operations discussed in the literature, such as contrasting, expanding, and reducing conceptual structure (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011, 2017b). We shall now discuss the role of echoing in making meaning on the basis of metalinguistic resemblance.

4.1. Ironic echoing

Relevance theorists have argued that verbal irony is based on echoic mention (Wilson and Sperber, 2012b). Speakers may echo the hearer, other people, a socio-cultural stereotype, or themselves. In our previous example, *Yes, sure, Jeanette sang beautifully*, the speaker echoes someone's belief about Jeanette's performance, which contrasts with what the speaker actually believes to be the case (that Jeanette did not perform well). Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014) have noted that an echo is an extreme case of resemblance. Here, we further argue that echoic resemblance is metalinguistic rather than linguistic; that is, it is a reflection on what someone already said, a view which is consistent with the observations made in Sperber et al. (2010), according to which ironic echoes involve epistemic vigilance, i.e., probability assessments as to the likelihood of any state of affairs (see also Wilson, 2000).

Other theorists have put forward different explanations of irony which do not make mention of the notion of echo. A well-known one is Pretense Theory (Clark and Gerrig, 1984). Pretense theorists argue that verbal irony involves an act of pretense, associated with an attitude, which is intended to be discovered by the hearer. In the case of the example *Yes, sure, Jeanette sang beautifully*, the speaker acts as if he or she believed in the proposition expressed by the utterance, i.e., that Jeanette sings beautifully, while intending the hearer to discover both the pretense behind the speech act and the speaker's attitude (e.g., skepticism, cynicism, mockery, etc.). World knowledge and other contextual factors assist in this process.

A problem with a strict account of irony in terms of pretense and attitude is that this combination underlies at least non-ironic understatement and hyperbole. For example, nonchalantly saying *I've faced worse than this*, in the face of danger, suggests that the speaker is pretending to be calm “as if” he or she believed the situation is not so challenging. This is a case of understatement and it involves an act of pretense and an attitude, like irony. The situation is similar in hyperbole, which is a form of overstatement. Consider the following hyperbolic utterance: *Dr. Jones is the most patient, understanding and knowledgeable doctor in the world*. Hyperbole here takes the form of an absolute statement intended to convey the speaker’s personal admiration for a medical doctor. The admiration is an inference obtained from contrasting the impossible exaggeration with the real situation, where it is clear to the speaker that the hearer assumes that the speaker has no way of determining whether Dr. Jones is literally the best in the world. The exaggeration simply conveys the idea that, while it is impossible to know if Dr. Jones is actually the best on a worldwide scale, still he makes the speaker feel as if treated by the best doctor.

Irony is not alone, therefore, in combining pretense with attitude. That is why the pretense approach is not enough to explain this phenomenon. The relevance-theoretic notion of echo can contribute to address this weakness. Surprisingly, relevance theorists have strongly argued in favor of their own explanation of irony as opposed to the echoic account (e.g., Wilson, 2006, 2013). But there is also work arguing for the complementariness of both perspectives (e.g., Kumon-Nakamura et al., 1995, Camp, 2012, Popa-Wyatt, 2014). The different proposals for a hybrid account have been discussed in Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2021). These perspectives have in common the assumption that in irony there is a target thought which is presumed to be shared by an individual or people in general. Irony conveys dissociation from such a target thought, which is usually captured by the vehicle of irony (often what is said). In a combined pretense-echoic account the target thought is both an echo and a

pretense. Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2021) have further observed that the echo is used to display the pretense. This is so because an echo is identified by the hearer as an expression of agreement. In fact, we can use any agreement expression, with or without a supporting echo, to convey irony, especially when two or more such expressions are combined. A case in point is provided by affirmative adverbial expressions like *Yeah, right, sure, of course*, etc., which can either take a special ironic tone of voice or not, since, as determined by experimental research, hearers can combine a variety of verbal and non-verbal cues to determine the presence of irony (Bryant and Fox Tree, 2005). Such adverbials can also be used to support an ironic echo, as in our previous example, *Yes, sure, Jeanette sang beautifully*, or they can even serve as what Attardo (2000) calls *indices* of irony, i.e., as a formal pointer to potential ironic meaning.

Ironic echoes can be partial (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2017a) for reasons of economy if there is no loss in their ironic import:

(3) Pamela: Jeanette sang beautifully.

Paula: Yeah, right, beautifully.

However, note that a partial echo is best constructed on the basis of the selection of a focal element of the utterance. That explains the choice of the evaluative adverb *beautifully* in David's remark above and the infelicity of trying to build an ironic echo on the grounds of non-focal elements: *#Yeah, right, Jeanette sang*. Sometimes, the choice of a partial echo has clear meaning implications. Consider a context in which Ron borrows money from David with the assurance that he will pay back before David needs it to make an important payment himself. However, Ron does not return the money before the appointed date. David complains:

(4) Don't be concerned, David, you will have every cent back before next month. Yeah, right!

This utterance is a full echo of Ron's failed promise. But a partial echo could have worked too:

(5) Every cent back, sure! Before next month. Yeah, right!

Beyond achieving expressive economy, this partial echo has the function of drawing attention to two focal elements of the promise, i.e., the return of the money and the deadline, while backgrounding the less focal element of reassurance (*Don't be concerned*), which is derivable from the recognition of the echoed utterance as a promise.

An ironic echo can also be inaccurate. Echoic inaccuracy is not an abnormal situation, but one that plays with the pragmatic meaning implications of the echoed utterance to convey specifically differentiated meaning. It often combines with partial echoing. These are some possible choices to ironize on Ron's failed promise by making use of partial and/or inaccurate echoing:

(6) *Yeah, right, all my money is back, just as promised.*

(7) *So, I would have all my money back in one month. Yeah, sure.*

(8) *It's so good I have received all my money, every cent of it, at the appointed date.*

(9) *Great! It's so good Ron can keep a promise. Now, I can surely make my own payments.*

Each of these partial and inaccurate echoes conveys a different set of meaning implications. In

(6) *all my money is back* is an expression of the expected result, which clashes with the facts,

thus leading to an ironic interpretation. The inaccurate echo resembles an interpretation of the expectation created by the promise. The variant in (7) is a report on the speaker's promise. It depicts a situation that resembles the original echo in terms of content but not in terms of the implied reality, which clashes with the content of the promise. In turn, (8) comes close to (6) in expressing result, with much more elaboration of each of two of the components of Ron's original promise: the return of the exact amount of money borrowed from David at the appointed time. This elaboration lends communicative weight to these elements, which thus become focal, with the underlying promise being topical. Finally, the strategy in (9) consists in (i) echoing the implicit speech act value of the original utterance (a promise), and (ii) presenting it as if fulfilled, which is the opposite of what is actually the case. The ironic value of this inaccurate and partial echoic ingredient is further strengthened by an extra informational item (i.e., the idea that the speaker needs to make his own payments), which is retrieved from the context of situation in which the promise was initially uttered.

Finally, ironic echoes can be complex. There are at least three strategies to endow an echo with complexity (Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano, 2019). In one of them, termed *compounding*, the speaker uses syntactic mechanisms (e.g., interclausal paratactic coordination) to refer to separate but related parts of a single ironic event: *Yeah, right, you are always right, and I'm always, wrong!* Another strategy is based on *cumulation*, i.e., the consecutive appearance of different but semantically related echoic terms which apply to the same target situation: *Yes, sure, she's an angel, a gem, a real treasure!* The communicative impact of cumulative echoes rests on the enhancing effect of successive addition. Finally, the third strategy is *chaining*. This is a discourse strategy, which takes place when a speaker echoes a previously echoed thought. For example, imagine Mary believes that her neighbor, an apparently ordinary family man, has a secret identity as a spy. Her best friend, Laura, ironizes of this belief by means of an echo: *Yeah, right, he surely is the new James Bond!* Then, one

day they are puzzled to find out that Mary's neighbor has been arrested on charges of espionage, which now allows Mary to ironize on Laura's previous echoic remark: *Yeah, right, he surely is the new James Bond!*

Compounded, cumulative, and chained echoes can be partial and/or inaccurate. In the case of compounding, *Yeah, right, you are always right, and I'm always, wrong!* can be a literal echo of a belief which the speaker attributes to the hearer, but it does not need to be an exact repetition of the expression of such a thought. It could even be the speaker's own wording of the upshot of any number of previous remarks made by the hearer conveying his belief in his superior acumen. Cumulative echoes are inherently inaccurate since each term in the cumulative series is an enhanced version of the preceding one. Finally, chained echoes can be incomplete and/or inaccurate provided that there is no loss in ironic import. In the example above, Mary could have echoed Laura by simply saying *Yeah, right, the new James Bond!*, with the consequent change in meaning based on enhanced focal attention to the core of the disputed belief. Other factors, such as loose recall and/or interpretation of the original sentence or attributed thought can also play a role: *Yeah, right, he surely is James Bond!*

By way of summary, the similarity relationship between a thought and its echoic mention is metalinguistic, since it is focused on the repetition of what someone has said or is assumed to have thought, even if, through a clash of content, it does impinge on the linguistic aspects of meaning. The echo is essentially metalinguistic, whereas the production of ironic meaning requires inferencing based on the content of the echo, which, as noted in section 3, supplies the interpretation process with elements of fully coincidental cross-domain resemblance. It is for this reason that the similarity involved in an echoic mention can be affected by cognitive and communicative factors such as focal prominence, interpretive ability, recall capacity, and intended changes in the ironic impact of the utterance. The impact of these

factors on the meaning of ironic utterances is an indicator of the special quality of ironic echoes as metalinguistic devices used to ultimately convey linguistic meaning.

4.2. Parodic echoing

Traditionally, the notion of parody refers to imitation of someone's verbal and/or non-verbal behavior for comic effect, which combines a critical and a comic act (Rossen-Knill and Henry, 1997). It is thus focused on form rather than content, which makes it fall within the scope of metalinguistic resemblance. Interestingly, there is a tendency in parody to exaggerate and, sometimes unkindly, mock the original. In addition, parody is only effective if whatever is being imitated is well known to the audience.

Because of the intrinsic imitative nature of parody, verbal parody can be accounted for in terms of echoic resemblance based on the total or partial repetition of someone's verbal behavior and (usually) of relevant accompanying paralinguistic features (body language, gestures, facial expressions, tone and pitch). Like parodic imitation in general, parodic echoes are intended to mock the object of imitation. Unlike ironic echoes, they do not clash with reality but they exaggerate or otherwise distort it. Thus, they readily combine with hyperbole, where hyperbole is not directed to the content but to the formal and paralinguistic aspects of the message. For example, imagine a secondary school teacher that starts off every lesson by saying *So, let me pick up where we left off yesterday*. One of the students, before the teacher steps into the classroom, mocks the teacher by imitating his tone of voice while repeating his usual starting remark. This is a common example of verbal parody. From a cultural perspective, the sheer act of imitating the teacher is, in itself, a lack of respect and may involve humor for other students who commune with their classmate in their scale of values. However,

introducing hyperbole can enhance the impact of a parodic echo. Think of the same utterance in a tone of voice and prosodic contour which exaggerates those typically used by the teacher.

As is the case with ironic echoes, parodic echoes can be partial and/or inaccurate. Except in situations which can be attributed to the parodist's lack of skill, the use of partial and/or inaccurate parodic echoes will generally serve the central humorous purpose of this kind of imitation. It is in these situations where parody can address the content of the message thus stepping beyond the metalinguistic into the linguistic aspects of the utterance. Consider the following slightly modified version of the teacher's remark in the example above: *So, let me pick up where I bored you off yesterday*. The change in content in this example affects the verbal phrase of the subordinate clause, but in a way that it still preserves partial formal resemblance with the original (based on the use of the same adverbial *off*), which it thus evokes.

Parodic echoes can also be complex, like their ironic counterparts. Compounding is possible to the extent that there are contextual factors allowing for the integration of two parodic situations into one. For example, a student may parody both the way in which a teacher starts and finishes a lesson. Imagine that a Mathematics teacher almost invariably finishes his lessons by saying *quod erat demonstrandum* ('what was to be demonstrated'). Through compounding, the student can combine two parodic echoes into one single utterance: *So, let me pick up where we left off yesterday, quod erat demonstrandum*. This can produce an enhanced humorous effect, especially if assisted by exaggerated tone and pitch plus relevant paralinguistic features. Consider now another variant of the previous example: *So, let me, allow me, don't forbid me, to pick up where we left off yesterday*. This is an example of cumulative echo addressing the original speech act marker (*let me*) mischievously used as way to increase the humorous effect of the parodic echo. The use of *let me* in the original expression is merely formal and, as such, not a literal first-person self-command. Finally, we can also have chains of parodic echoes, which give rise to parodies of parodies based on the repetition of a

previously uttered parodic echo. For example, a student who is tired of his classmate's habit of parodying their teacher may decide to take him off by producing his own parodic echo of his classmate's typical parodic echo: *So, let me pick up where we left off yesterday*. To make his parodic intent effective, the second parodist needs to find a way to single out and exaggerate whichever elements of the classmate's parodic output are distinctive of the target echo, such as tone of voice and pitch.

Parodic echoes, unlike ironic echoes, are not constructed to provide points of contrast with any other information, nor do they involve speaker's dissociation, but simply mockery arising from the singularity and potential oddity of the behavior of the parodist's target. Because of this, the use of inaccurate, partial, and complex parodic echoing is subservient to the kind of humorous impact which the speaker wants to have. Inaccurate and partial echoes lead the hearer to step into the linguistic aspects of the utterance thereby constraining the humorous effect in more specific ways than accurate echoes. Complex echoes have a similar constraining effect. The difference is that inaccurate and partial echoes single out specific elements of the echoic structure of the utterance through its internal manipulation, whereas complex echoes use external elements to constrain interpretation. The similarity between a parodic echo and its target can be affected by the same types of cognitive and communicative factors listed above for ironic echoes but with different communicative consequences, all of them subservient to the modulation of the humorous effect of the parodic utterance.

4.3. Implicational echoing

An interesting metalinguistic resemblance phenomenon is implicational echoing. This is another analytical situation where initial metalinguistic activity, which is external to content, impinges on the derivation of meaning implications which add to the content of utterances.

Implicational echoing consists in the repetition of all or part of an utterance or of an attributed thought, with varying degrees of accuracy, thereby conveying relevant extra denotational or attitudinal meaning not explicit in the repeated representation. This phenomenon has been investigated within the context of conceptual metonymy by Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014) and Galera (2020). Here we consider implicational echoing from the point of view of its role within metalinguistic representation.

Let us first consider the following utterance: *She had a “don’t talk to me anymore” look in her face.* The sentence “don’t talk to me anymore” is echoic of a typical behavioral reaction in many people when they are upset. The reaction (asking not to be talked to) is metonymic for the cause of the reaction (being upset) (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza, 2014: 151). The echo does not supply the meaning interpretation of the expression, but affords access to it through metonymy-based inferencing (see Panther, 2005, Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera, 2014, Panther and Thornburg, 2018, Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera, 2020, for further discussion of the supportive role of metonymy in the derivation of implicated meaning). A possible paraphrase of this utterance could be: ‘She had the typical look in her face of someone who warns you not to talk to her anymore because she is upset.’ Compare now a slightly more complex example:

- (10) Daughter: Come on, daddy. Let me do it, daddy, please!
 Father: Don’t you “daddy” me! I said “no”.

The daughter’s use of the appellative “daddy” in this brief exchange is intended to appeal to her father’s feelings so he will change his mind about her wishes. In turn, the father echoes the appellative to let his daughter know, through pragmatic implication, that he has identified her persuasion strategy, while explicitly asking her not to use it and stating that he will stick to his decision. The negative imperative *Don’t you daddy me!* is roughly equivalent to saying ‘Don’t

use “daddy” to persuade me by appealing to my feelings of parental love’. Since the appellative “daddy” is instrumental to the action of persuasion, it follows that this echoic use of the appellative, which is metalinguistic, works through the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. Part of the activity of this metonymy has been studied in Kövecses and Radden (1998: 55), who illustrate its role in understanding the use of other denominal verbs such as *to ski* and *to shampoo*. However, in our echoic example there is more than the metonymy-motivated categorial conversion of a noun into a verb, since the echoed appellative carries with it the meaning implications of the daughter’s initial use, that is, the idea that the daughter is using the endearing appellative with an implicit persuasive purpose. This implicational meaning originates in the metalinguistic similarity between the two uses of the appellative made in the conversational exchange.

As was the case with ironic and parodic echoes, implicational echoes preserve relevant denotational and attitudinal inferences from the target expression. In echoic irony the denotational inferences clash with what the speaker believes to be true, thereby giving rise to their cancellation and new attitudinal inferences conveying the speaker’s dissociation from the echoed thought in a number of possible ways (skepticism, wryness, derision, etc.) In echoic parody, the original attitudinal inferences are overridden by the overall humorous and critical intention of the parody. Therefore, in the three analytical situations, the original intent of the echoed utterance or thought is only preserved in the echoic phase of meaning construction. The echoes serve as the input for the rest of the meaning implications to be worked out depending on the speaker’s communicative purposes.

5. Conclusions

This paper has offered an overview of the role of resemblance in language use. It has made a basic distinction between linguistic and metalinguistic resemblance. The former addresses similarities between entities and states of affairs, which can be captured by means of figurative language, while the latter addresses metarepresentational aspects of language, which we have treated in terms of the notion of echo. We have further distinguished three dimensions of linguistic resemblance, to wit, attribute-based resemblance, structural resemblance, and high versus low-level resemblance.

We have paid special attention to the important theoretical status of high-level resemblance as a constraint on the construction of metaphorical thought based on experiential correlation, of synesthesia (where senses are bound as a result of cause-effect/effect-cause similarity), and of metaphors and similes depicting either situations or events. This kind of analysis has allowed us to account for ontological metaphor in terms of high-level attribute-based (non-structural) resemblance and for structural metaphors in terms of high-level (structural) resemblance. It also brings experiential correlation, synesthesia, ontological and structural metaphor under a common explanatory framework.

The discussion of the theoretical import of the distinction between the three dimensions of resemblance has been followed by a discussion of the importance of fully coincidental resemblance as a context for further cognitive activity focused on non-denotational (or attitudinal) aspects of meaning. This is the case of irony, hyperbole, and understatement, which, like metaphor, involve cross-domain mappings of fully coincidental conceptual structure with some discrepant element in irony and some partially resembling element within a context of full cross-domain coincidence in hyperbole and understatement. In irony, as in hyperbole and understatement, it is the non-coincidental structure that acts as a source of inferences thereby carrying the interpretive burden.

The paper ends with an analysis of the role of metalinguistic resemblance as a prerequisite for the inferential activity which arises from ironic, parodic, and metonymy-based implicational echoes. Ironic and parodic echoing can be full or partial, accurate or inaccurate, and simple or complex, each option providing the groundwork for different kinds of meaning effect. The changes in meaning do not depend so much on the nature of the echo as on the subsequent meaning-derivation activity for which the echo only provides the preliminary input. The case of implicational echoes is different in this respect, since, by their own nature, they need to be non-manipulated exact reproductions of (relevant elements of) previous utterances or attributed thoughts.

In general, the account provided in this paper makes explicit the dimensions of analysis which are relevant to the understanding of the role of linguistic and metalinguistic resemblance in language use, while specifying the relationship between these two broad areas of linguistic enquiry.

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