UNITING IRONY, METAPHOR AND HYPERBOLE
IN A PRETENCE-BASED FRAMEWORK

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The paper will provide an initial unification of three accounts: (I) the author's recent pretence-based account of irony, including certain complex forms of hyperbole within irony [Barnden 2015, Barnden forthcoming]; (M) the author's pretence-based approach to metaphor [Barnden 2001, 2016]; and (H) a recent approach to hyperbole by others [Ruiz de Mendoza 2014, Ruiz de Mendoza & Peña 2016]. Account (H) is based on mappings between an imaginary, counterfactual situation and the real world, and such a situation is essentially a pretence in the sense adopted in (I, M).

Account (I) is broadly within the widely-discussed pretence approach to irony (see, e.g., Currie 2006), but enriches the analysis. The enrichment allows, in particular, the treatment of hyperbole that rests on certain types of fictive elaboration. An example is when Mary ironically says, in response to John’s misguided claim that the weather is good for a picnic, “Oh sure, really good – you must like sitting in the rain eating soggy sandwiches” when in fact it is clear that John would not enjoy that and simply had not noticed the rain. The effect is nevertheless a heightened criticism of John. Account (I) also treats in a consistent way the simpler, scalar sort of hyperbole predominantly analysed in irony research, illustrated by Mary ironically saying “Sure, the weather’s absolutely wonderful” when John claims the weather is (merely) fine. The treatment of hyperbole in (I) is already on the same lines as that in (H), and melding of the two is straightforward.

Account (M) deploys pretence spaces during the understanding of (non-lexicalized) metaphor. The approach is akin to fiction-based ones (see, e.g. Walton 2004/1993; and Carston & Wearing 2015 sketch the use of essentially the same idea). The pretence spaces used in (M) and (I) both support complex inference within the spaces, in order to elaborate pretences, and both involve mappings from pretence spaces to reality spaces. The main focus in unifying (I) and (M) is to add contrast-based mapping to the range of mappings used in (M).

Also, a key feature of (I) is attitude export whereby mockery or other criticism of people within pretences is exported to become criticism of corresponding people in reality, and this can be handled as a straightforward development of a broad attitude-export principle that is central to (M).

The melding of (I, M, H) also adds to (M) a fuller treatment of the hyperbolic quality of much metaphor.

The paper concentrates on the above unification but will also touch on a particular benefit it provides, namely a consistent platform for treating the phenomenon of ironic metaphors noted by many authors. The present author claims that ironic metaphors cannot always be treated just as simple additions of irony and metaphor, and the unified platform facilitates the treatment of this.

References


