Affective equivalence relations in synaesthetic phrases

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Abstract – The paper argues that the semantic processes underlying proper (e.g. warm colour) and physiognomic synaesthesias (e.g. cheerful colour) are based not on conceptual mapping, but on affective equivalence relations.

Keywords – idiomatic synaesthesia, proper synaesthesia, physiognomic synaesthesia, metaphor, metonymy, affective equivalence

I. Introduction

Synaesthetic expressions can be divided into two groups according to the literature: proper synaesthesias are linguistic expressions which interconnect two sense words belonging to different sensorial domains (e.g. warm colour), pseudo-synaesthesias are phrases in which a sense word qualifies a human characteristic, feeling or state of mind (e.g. soft-hearted) (P. Dombi 1974).1

Exists a group of synaesthesias which is at the border-line of proper and pseudo-synaesthesias. These synaesthetic expressions link a sense word and a word expressing a feeling (e.g. cheerful colour)2 – I call these expressions physiognomic synaesthesias. This article tries to describe the semantic processes underlying proper and physiognomic synaesthesias – it is not concerned with the semantic basis of pseudo-synaesthesias.

II. Affective equivalence relation in proper synaesthesias

Synaesthesias like warm colour are considered metonymies based on contiguity (e.g. Cacciari 2008, Marks 1996, Shibuya–Nozawa–Kanamaru 2007). In a cognitive semantic approach synaesthetic metonymies are based on associative learning; in daily experiences some sensations co-occur with other ones – synaesthetic phrases like warm colour can be present in language because objects or phenomena emitting warmth (e.g. fire) generally co-occur with warm (red, orange) colours. Sensory co-occurrence does

1 Pseudo-synaesthesias are called psychological metaphors according to some researchers (e.g. Schecter–Broughton 1991: 120).

2 This type is called physiognomic metaphor or perceptual-affective metaphor in the works of Western researchers.
motivation that stands at the basis of the synaesthesia conceptually and not perceptually coded – equivalence. The contiguity, but by some felt affective – that is to say, not by an associative relation of the senses, nor by conceptual sense words in the synaesthesia warm or cold colours? In our opinion the togetherness of the phenomena giving off warmth or coldness (e. g. purple) as visual (colour) senses. In addition, the question arises: how could learn the sensory association of the tactile (warm) and contact with fire in order to observe the warmth of it, so they by children (Seitz 2005), who do not come necessarily into the togetherness of the members contracted in a synaesthetic expression is intersubjectively valid. This is confirmed by by Graumann (2007) who summarizes the psychological and physiological impressions evoked by different colours by persons participating in different experiments (e. g. Frieling 1968, Heller 2002): e. g. 1. red: a.) psychological impressions – dynamic, active, powerful, desirous; b.) physiological impressions – warm, hot, dry, stimulating and 2.) yellow: a.) psychological impressions – cheerful, happy, exuberant; b.) physiological impressions – warm, light, stimulating (Graumann 2007: 132).

Conclusion

In this paper I tried to present the idea that the togetherness of the constituent members of synaesthetic expressions is not motivated by conceptual or perceptual contiguity or similarity – instead there presumably is a correspondence or equivalency relation between the members. This correspondence is an affective one, that is to say it exists pre-conceptually. At this point our train of thought links to Seitz’s (2005) synaesthesia theory: he delimitates synaesthesia from conceptual metaphor, and argues that synaesthetic expressions are so called primary metaphors because they do not form on the basis of more or less conscious mappings but they activate innate perceptual correspondences, so they form in a largely intuitive and non-conscious way. Likewise Seitz, we presume that synaesthesia is not based on conceptual mappings, but – as we have seen – in some type of synaesthesias (e. g. warm colour, cheerful colour) we cannot speak about neural-perceptual correspondences that manifest in linguistic expressions, instead there can be identified an affective equivalence relation in them. The mappings governing the formation of synaesthetic expressions indeed are not conceptual ones – that is to say they are non-conscious, and form in an intuitive way, but not because they reflect innate neural-perceptual relations, but because in synaesthesias affective representations correspond to each other.

References


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