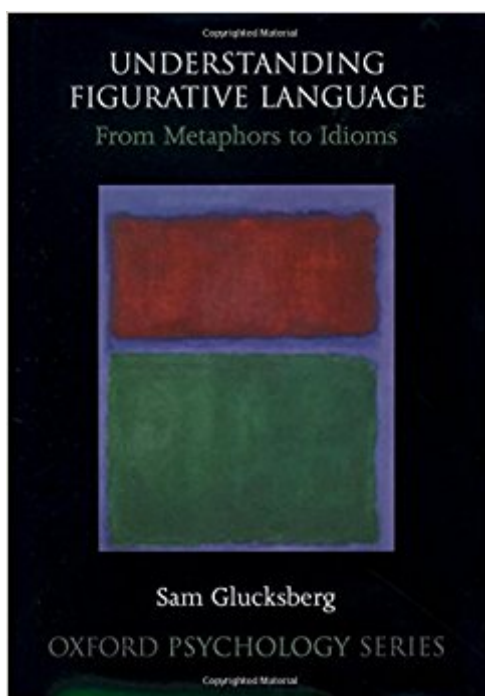


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Understanding Figurative Language: From Metaphor To Idioms (Oxford Psychology Series)



Synopsis

This book examines how people understand utterances that are intended figuratively. Traditionally, figurative language such as metaphors and idioms has been considered derivative from more complex than ostensibly straightforward literal language. Glucksberg argues that figurative language involves the same kinds of linguistic and pragmatic operations that are used for ordinary, literal language. Glucksberg's research in this book is concerned with ordinary language: expressions that are used in daily life, including conversations about everyday matters, newspaper and magazine articles, and the media. Metaphor is the major focus of the book. Idioms, however, are also treated comprehensively, as is the theory of conceptual metaphor in the context of how people understand both conventional and novel figurative expressions. A new theory of metaphor comprehension is put forward, and evaluated with respect to competing theories in linguistics and in psychology. The central tenet of the theory is that ordinary conversational metaphors are used to create new concepts and categories. This process is spontaneous and automatic. Metaphor is special only in the sense that these categories get their names from the best examples of the things they represent, and that these categories get their names from the best examples of those categories. Thus, the literal "shark" can be a metaphor for any vicious and predatory being, from unscrupulous salespeople to a murderous character in *The Threepenny Opera*. Because the same term, e.g., "shark," is used both for its literal referent and for the metaphorical category, as in "My lawyer is a shark," we call it the dual-reference theory. The theory is then extended to two other domains: idioms and conceptual metaphors. The book presents the first comprehensive account of how people use and understand metaphors in everyday life.

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Customer Reviews

"A leader in the field of psycholinguistics, Glucksberg (psychology, Princeton Univ.) examines how people process and comprehend figurative language like metaphors and idioms....Suitable for graduate students and above, this book will interest cognitive scientists, psycholinguists, philosophers of language, and others working in the field of language."--CHOICE

Sam Glucksberg is at Princeton University.

An essential reading for anyone who cares about the impact of non-literal language on our being. Sam Glucksberg has thrown a wide light on our diction and its composition into a variety of expression-forms. Clarifying the various ways we use the term "metaphor", Glucksberg has advanced the field of sociolinguistics. Then, he has clarified the "transference" of metaphorical expressions. Conceptual representation and symbolization (something I research in organizational leaders) has several levels of specificity and this book clarifies that well. The fact that several basic assumptions hold strong (in my research, are myths in management) has been taken head-on by the distinguished author. He shares some real problems with literal meaning, something we are not so sensitive to. Unaware management actually takes literal language as given, as sacrosanct and considers metaphors as non-serious stuff. Such myths can be dispelled by the study of this book. For example, he boldly says: We can no more shut off our metaphor-understanding machinery than our literal-understanding machinery (p.28); people can also judge degrees of metaphoricity (p.33); cognitive linguistics goes much farther, claiming that metaphors and idioms do not simply reflect or communicate ideas but instead constitute ideas and concepts (p.89). An excellent chapter is contributed by Matthew Malone. Providing several rich examples, graphical functions, relevant equations, and references to other relevant works, and liberal references - this is an excellent compendium in a hundred pages.

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