Functional Metaphors in Cicero’s Speeches and Letters

This paper examines and compares metaphorical expressions in Cicero’s speeches and letters. The object of this endeavor is to develop a nuanced methodology for identifying metaphorical expressions and for categorizing these expressions into functional classifications suitable not only for the proper understanding of prose style but, more expressly, for a descriptive, sociolinguistic analysis of social dialect and register in Cicero’s writings. Both of these goals mark progressions in our understanding of Roman language and discourse. This paper departs from previous studies of metaphor, which center themselves on species of imagery and their sources, by using functional categories of metaphors employed in register analysis, which more effectively describe the illocutionary force and other strategies of various metaphorical expressions. The results of the examination of certain speeches of Cicero and his letters from the same months to recipients of varied familiarity demonstrate that the functional varieties of metaphors characterize the differences between the registers of speeches and letters and between the social dialects employed by Cicero in his societal interactions more extensively than previously realized.

The first third of this talk details the rationale employed in determining what words and phrases are actively metaphorical. We recognize that the presence of a mixed metaphor indicates that one of the metaphors is presumably dead. Similarly, we detect active metaphorical expressions through the presence a given word or phrase unqualified by tamquam, aliqui, quasi, ut, quidam, velut, etc. but so qualified elsewhere in Cicero or in the prose of one of his contemporaries. Furthermore, we ought to exclude from the list of metaphorical expressions those words whose transferred meanings are employed by Cicero or by a previous or contemporary prose author. Finally, it is important to include as metaphorical expressions those dead metaphors (lexicalized metaphors) which are revitalized by the context.

The second third of the talk describes functional categories of metaphorical expression, including filling lexical gaps, explanation, reconceptualization, decoration and disguise (including euphemisms), imagining and enhancing memorability, foregrounding and enhancing informativeness, expressing emotion, and cultivating intimacy. To be sure, some metaphorical expressions may be placed in more than one of these categories. Moreover, this paper analyzes the daringness of a metaphor. Certain types of derivation are especially conducive to losing the metaphorical characteristic of a word, such as denominative verbs and especially compound verbs in Latin, whereas nouns generally retain this characteristic longer. Following S. Levin, *The Semantics of Metaphor* (Baltimore, 1977), this paper discusses "phenomenalistic" metaphors, those metaphorical expressions in which we change the world to literalize the metaphor. These metaphors are in many ways some of the most daring and "deviant".

Finally, this paper gives the empirical results of a comparison of two speeches of 62, the *Pro Sulla* and *Pro Archia*, speeches when Cicero was at the height of his influence, and two Caesarian speeches, *Pro Marcello* (46) and *Pro Rege Deiotaro* (45), with the letters
to Atticus and his *familiares* from the years 62, 46 and 45. The object of this selection is to demonstrate that even at two very different points in Cicero’s political career, similarities in the uses of metaphorical expressions cohere more closely to the genre of the writing than to the period. This paper discusses some examples of metaphorical expressions to illustrate the categorization and description process. In offering its conclusions this paper completes the first step of a modern analysis of register and social dialect by demonstrating that the treatment of a certain linguistic feature is peculiar to a specific genre of linguistic interaction.