Uderstanding Sarcastic Metaphorical Expressions in Hindi through Conceptual Integration Theory

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Abstract

Metaphorical expressions are one of the most indispensable aspects of human language, thought and action. Their meanings are figurative, which in other words means that they carry literal meanings that are in direct opposition to the intended or primary meanings. The usage of metaphors is not limited to figurative writing and speaking only but they are pervasively found in everyday language. Irony, sarcasm, jokes, puns and other such metaphorical expressions rampantly occur in our everyday speech. This paper examines the abstract notion of sarcasm within the framework of conceptual integration theory, and with special reference to Hindi language. A corpus of five thousand sentences has been procured from Indian Language Technology Proliferation and Deployment Centre (TDIL) for the present study. The findings aim to provide a theoretical understanding of how Hindi sarcasm is perceived among the native speakers.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics; metaphor; sarcasm; irony; conceptual blending; figurative language

Povzetek

Metaforični izrazi so eden nepogrešljivih vidikov človeškega jezika, mišljenja in delovanja. Njihovi pomeni so preneseni in so lahko v popolnem nasprotju z izvornimi pomeni pozameznih besed v izrazih. Metafore niso sredstvo samo v literarnem jeziku, ampak so splošno razširjene tudi v vsakodnevnem pisnem in govornem izražanju. Ironija, sarkazem, šale, besedne igre in drugi metaforični izrazi so vsakodnevnica v govoru. Članek preučuje abstaktnost sarkazma na primeru hindujščine in sicer po teoriji konceptualne integracije. Za raziskavo je bil uporabljen korpus Indijskega centra za jezikovne tehnologije (TDIL) s pet tisoč primeri stavkov. Rezultati raziskave predstavljajo teoretično razumevanje sarkazma, ki ga uporabljajo hindujski govorci.

Ključne besede: kognitivna lingvistika; metafora; sarkazem; ironija; pojmovno prekrivanje; figurativni jezik

1   Introduction

The field of cognitive linguistics has generated a powerful set of theoretical tools for analyzing the ways in which we understand, communicate and create concepts. Development of the conceptual theory has brought an insight into the appearance and usage of metaphorical expressions in everyday speech. Conceptualization of a metaphor is grounded in wide range of bodily, social and cultural experiences, and creates an integral aspect of cognitive faculty which plays a creative role in meaning construction of knowledge and understanding reality. A metaphorical expression is one of the most indispensable aspects of human life including language, thought and action. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) noted "metaphor pervades our normal conceptual system. Because so many of the concepts that are important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience (the emotions, ideas, time etc.), we need to get a grasp on them by means of other concepts that we understand in clearer terms" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 115). Therefore, Lakoff and Johnson argue that "metaphor is a natural phenomenon" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 247), it is beyond language as it is found primarily in thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 153). It reflects a particular speech community and its creative aspects of language and culture in a positive as well as negative light. Metaphoricity is a specific feature of human language where no form of language can exist without metaphorical traits (Goalty, 1997).

Cognitive linguists claim that metaphors are not only limited to figurative writing. They are thought to be a specific mental mapping that reflects how people think and imagine in everyday life (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Irony, satire, sarcasm and other such metaphorical expressions rampantly occur in everyday conversation of different speech communities (Tay, 2014).

Sarcasm seems to stand out due to its heavily negative intention (Joshi, Bhattacharyya, & Carman, 2017). It is thought to be a form of figurative language and an integral part of human discourse where literal meaning of words are in direct opposition to the intended meaning (Grice, Cole, & Morgan, 1975). Under the developmental approach, sarcasm is described as culturally salient phenomenon that offers a clear cut case of discrepancy between content and literal meaning (Prokofiev, 2017). Sarcasm uses wit, ridicule and mockery. It is a form of a metaphorical expression which is identified by literary scholars as a skill of using incongruity to indicate distinction between reality and expectation. Sarcasm is not to be confused with irony, which pertains to situation and is thought be a tool for expressing sarcasm. Sarcastic language is defined as 'irony that is especially bitter and caustic' (Gibbs, 1994). Discrepancies between irony and sarcasm are reported to include disparity of literal meaning of an utterance – positive or negative, where a positive literal meaning is subverted by a negative intended meaning (Dews & Winner, 1995). In this respect, to understand sarcasm it would be crucial to understand the information that violates the truthfulness (Gibbs Jr & O'Brien, 1991). In the light of differential description between

sarcasm and irony, when one comes to the conceptualization of sarcasm and its function, there are several paradigms that function as a conceptual framework to understand mental representation of metaphorical expressions in the process of meaning construction.

Basically it seems that any metaphorical expression can be analyzed through Lakoff's theory of conceptual metaphor, where metaphorical statements are largely perceived through one-to-one mapping. However, not all such statements can be perceived through the conceptual metaphor theory alone because their lexical extensions go beyond what appears on the surface level. Therefore, for the conceptualization of extended meaning, we should focus on the conceptual framework of integration or blending theory, which regulates the process of conceptualization in human cognition in the form of novelty construction as well as the understanding of one idea or conceptual domain in terms of another. In conceptual integration or blending theory, knowledge structures or mental spaces are selectively projected into blending space in which projected conceptual elements are assimilated to create a novel concept with respect to content based emergent structure. Constructing a new meaning through the integration of existing concepts provides a wide range of conceptual concepts of metaphorical expression from two input spaces into a new mental extent called blended space. This is the creativity of cognitive enterprise that frequently displays an emergent structure of conceptual relations that are unavailable in input spaces (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002).

This approach is an effective mental process of composition, completion and elaboration of the blend. At the cognitive stage, a conceptually integrated emergent structure comprises neuro-biologically based semantic meanings with generative grammar, which relates them. In the theory of conceptual integration, it is not not a word, sentence or objects but rather the meaning that evokes an effective mental process. The following figure has been taken from Fauconnier and Turner's "basic diagram" to represent the cognitive operation of conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998). It is a visual illustration of cognitive process and the construction of a concept, emerging from blending two input spaces into a single blended space. A special reference to Hindi language is added.

Figure 1: Conceptual integration "basic diagram" (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998)

2　Sarcasm as a "linguistic element"

A landmark article on psycholinguistics of sarcasm by Gibbs (1994) begins with the definition of irony from the Oxford English dictionary as "the use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of literal meaning". Both irony and sarcasm serve multiple purposes in spoken language, especially in discourse. Speakers and writers have been found to use sarcasm to convey humor and censure, and to indicate social norms violation (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989; Shamay-Tsoory, Tomer, & Aharon-Peretz, 2005). Sarcasm often employs contradiction between literal and intended meaning, and appears as a universal feature of human language. Different speech communities use different visual, prosodic, lexical and contextual cues to convey sarcastic messages in distinct ways and with different emotions, attitudes, or intensions. Moreover, the function of sarcasm varies across speech communities consequently identifying and appropriately interpreting sarcastic utterances in a particular language different from others. Doing so entails both, the ability to read an array of potential cues that mark an utterance as sarcastic as well as the capacity to correctly interpret a speaker's motivation for using sarcasm (i.e. ridicule or insult).

Sarcasm is ubiqutous in all natural languages including Hindi and the speakers seemingly use various verbal and non-verbal strategies to express themselves. Non-verbal behaviors are also used to signal sarcasm such as raised eyebrows, eye rolling and tilted head. The saliency of sarcastic indicators depends on how explicitly a speaker wishes to mark sarcastic utterances as a speaker may intentionally restrict the number

of cues offered in order to obfuscate subversive motives and preserve deniability. Moreover, contextual cues including biographical information, physical setting and even the history of the relationship between interlocutors can figure into sarcasm use. Gibbs and O'Brien (1991) describe that the violation of truthfulness maxim is the key to understanding sarcasm. The intended meaning of sarcasm can not be understood until the listener observes literal meanings of the text that violates truthfulness. Grice (1975) points out the exploitation of maxim which is observed by means of metaphorical expressions. Clark and Haviland (1977) claim that a deliberate violation is perceived by the hearer while interpreting what the speaker intended to say. Thus, sarcasm prevails through various dimensions such as a failed prediction, insincerity of pragmatic context, negative intention etc. (Campbell & Katz, 2012).

3   Method of Analysis

Based on the theoretical description provided in the sections above, the methodology section outlines the research process from planning to presentation through qualitative approach. Data collection used is an annotated digital corpus[1] that has been procured from ongoing and completed projects to strengthen technology development in and for Indian languages. For the present study five thousand sentences have been extracted from the large chunk of corpus which was built to investigate sarcasm in native speakers through conceptual integration theory. The data have been procured from the Indian Language Technology Proliferation and Deployment Centre.[2]

The data belongs to the discourse domain of politics that has already been segregated in the corpus. To filter the required data set, five thousand sentences have been read manually by a native speaker of Hindi. The filtered data sets have been analyzed qualitatively within the framework of conceptual integration to analyze sarcastic expressions. For the understanding of the context, the data sets have been analyzed through Grice's maxim of conversation that examines the nature of congruency and incongruence (Grice, 1975). The flow chart below (Figure 2) gives a schematic representation of the methodology adopted for this study.

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[1] Indian Language Technology Proliferation and Development Centre, TDIL (Technology Development for Indian Languages). www.tdil.meity.gov.in

[2] Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology - MeitY. The Centre works for consolidating and making available the linguistics resources under the initiation of Technology Development in Indian Languages Programme of MeitY.
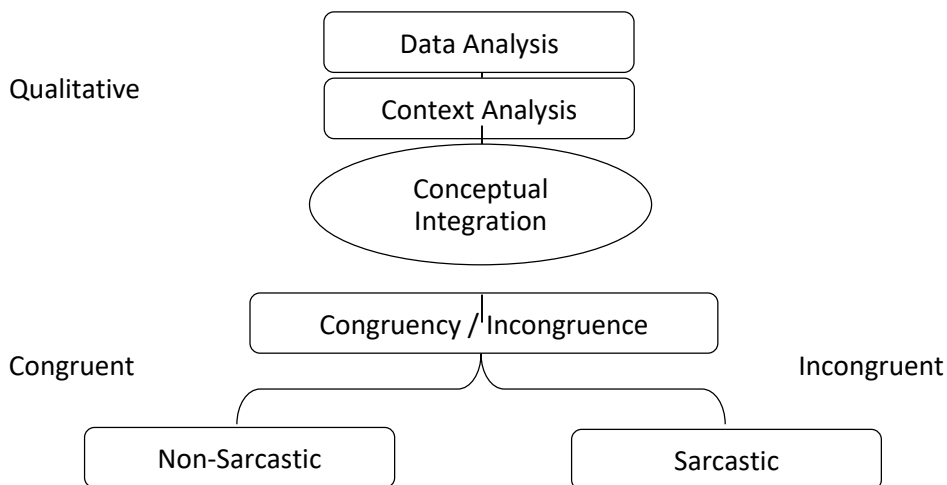
Figure 2: Methodology for investigating sarcasm in Hindi though Conceptual Integration

The current research consists of six sections. The first introductory section attempted to introduce the research area by providing a background of similar researches that have already been done. The section also highlighted the theory of conceptual blending/integration which has been found to be very relevant in the conceptualization of figurative language in cognitive linguistics. Focusing this research on Hindi sarcasm and its conceptualization, section 2 attempted to establish sarcasm as a linguistic element. The current section (section 3) has already outlined the methodology/tools adopted for the purpose of analysis. The following section (section 4) analyses 12 sarcastic Hindi sentences that have been procured from the data source. Analyses as in examples (1) to (12) indicate two inputs spaces, that is input 1 and input 2 as being juxtaposed and creating a blended space of incongruence entities. This incongruity yields sarcasm. Section 5 discusses the examples in accordance with the theory of conceptual blending or integration and the results are eventually summarized in section number 6.

4   Analysis and results

Extracted sarcastic sentences (1) to (12) have been analyzed through conceptual blending to observed the integrating process of a novel concept. The two input spaces contain the conceptual element of a particular metaphor. Both these input spaces have developed across their space mapping relations in order to obtain the correct perception of their conceptual constituent. As these constituents blend in a space, a naturally incongruous disparity is observed.

(1) chhata   na   hua   Chhatrapati   ka   chhatra   ho gaya
umbrella   NEG   be   Chhatrapati   POST.P   umbrella   be MASC. PST PVF
'As if this is not an ordinary umbrella but the umbrella of Chhatrapati Shivaji.'

Context: The expression is perceived as sarcasm because an ordinary object is attributed an extraordinary/unique status.

Input 1 Chhatrapati ka chhatra	Input 2 Chhata	Generic space	Blend
Historical identity	Non- historical identity	An object	Historical – Non historical
Superior	Public approach/General	Concept	Kingship – Public
Royal use/Extraordinary	Ordinary use	Purpose	Royal – Ordinary
Symbol of prestige	Symbol of need	Symbol	Prestige – Need

Sarcastic Blend: Ordinary things cannot be a royal icon.

(2) aira-gaira   nahi   kale   angrejon   ka   sartaaj   aa raha tha
stranger   NEG   black   Englishmen   POST.P   sartaaj   come MASC. PST. PROG
'The one who is coming is not a nobody but the king of black Englishmen.'

Context: This is perceived as sarcasm in a situation when a brown skinned person behaves like a ruler amongst their own people.

Input 1 Aira-Gaira	Input 2 Kale angrejon ka sartaaj	Generic space	Blend
Undistinguished identity	Distinguished identity	Agent	Undistinguished – Distinguished
Irrelevant attitude	Relevant attitude	Position	Irrelevant – Relevant
Inglorious position	Glorious position	Knowledge	Inglorious – Glorious
Intellectual instability	Intellectual stability	Behavior	Instability – Stability

Sarcastic Blend: One who behaves like a Britisher. (Britain had colonized India for around 200 years.)

(3) protocol me   adami adami nahi rahta kenchua   ban jata hai
protocol POST.P man   man   NEG   live   earthworm   become.MASC.PRS
'A human behaves more like an earthworm when following protocols.'

Context: A sarcasm on the government system which reduces work efficiency by sticking to protocols too strictly.

Input 1 Adami	Input 2 Kenchua	Generic space	Blend
+Human	–Human	Agent	+Human – –Human
Mobility	Slow mobility (creeping)	Movement	Mobility – Slow mobility

Sarcastic Blend: Protocols reduce work efficiency of a man.

(4) lalu ji   to   media ke   darling hai
    Lalu HON CONJ media POST.P darling be PRS.
    'Lalu Ji is loved by the media.'

Context: Despite so many events of national importance, the media has maximum coverage of Lalu Yadav.

Input 1 Lalu	Input 2 Darling	Generic space	Blend
Public figure	Personal image	Agent	Public – Personal
Political power	Non-political power	Power	Political – Non political
Social representative	Individual supporter	Favor	Social – Individual

Sarcastic Blend: Getting publicity without reason.

(5) Rahul Gandhi ko   yuva neta   ghoshit karne matra se   kya yuva
    Rahul Gandhi POST.P youth leader announcedo only POST.P what youth
    kangres   ko   wot   denge
    congress   POST.P vote give MASC. FUT
    'Will youth vote for Congress only by announcing Rahul Gandhi as a youth leader.'

Context: For vote bank of youth, Congress Party announced Rahul Gandhi as a youth leader who has crossed the age of youth.

Input 1 Rahul Gandhi	Input 2 Yuva	Generic space	Blend
By age 47 yrs.	By Age 15-29 yrs.	Biological aspect	Age: 47 – 15-29 yrs.

Sarcastic Blend: To be called youth one must possess the quality of youth.

(6) bhajpa ne   Narendra Modi ko sankatmochan   bana ke   bheja hai
    bhajpa NOM narendra modi ACC troubleredeemer make POST.P send MASC.PRS
    'Narendra Modi is sent as trouble redeemer by Bhajpa.'

Context: This is expressed sarcastically because Bhajpa represents Narendra Modi as the Lord Hanuman who solves the problems of people as per Hindu Mythology.

Input 1 Narendra Modi	Input 2 Sankat Mochan	Generic space	Blend
Charismatic leader	Charismatic lord	Ability	Leader – Lord
Reformation of country	Savior of universe	Conscientious	Reformation - Savior
Circumscribed	Omnipresent	Presence	Circumscribed - Omnipresent
Positional act	Ubiquitously act	Power	Positional- Ubiquitously

Sarcastic Blend: Problems of the party are too huge for Narendra Modi to tackle.

(7) tejashwi jaise neta   Baisakhi ke   sahare   rajniti me   aate hai
   tejashwi ADV   leader crutches POST.P support politics POST.P come MASC.PRS
   'Leaders like Tejashwi come into politics through crutches.'

Context: Just as crutches enhance the mobility of those who have certain physical incompetence, similarly family has supported Tejashwi to join politics.

Input 1 Tejashwi	Input 2 Baisakhi	Generic space	Blend
By support	For support	Sustain	Support: By – for
Public strength	Strength of helpless	Power	Strength: Public – Helpless
Political upliftment	Miserable upliftment	Goal	Upliftment: Political – Miserable
Legacy Support	Moral support	Need	–

Sarcastic Blend: One who rises in politics through support.

(8) Tejashwi pahle   padhai kare fir   mange hisaab.
   tejaswi   before study do   CONJ ask   justification
   'Let Tejashwi study first then ask for justification.'

Context: Tejashwi talks without knowing the context.

Input 1 Tejashwi	Input 2 Hisab	Generic space	Blend
Surface understanding	Deeper understanding	Comprehension	Understanding: Surface – Deeper
Political discourse	Educational discourse	Communication	Educational – Political
Discrete knowledge	Integrate knowledge	Intelligence	Knowledge: Discrete – Integrate

Sarcastic Blend: Without education intellectual skills cannot be improved.

(9) Daru bina dosti   nahi   tikti.
    liquor   without friendship-NEG sustain FEM.PRS.IMP
    'Without liquor friendship does not sustain.'

Context: Liquor is important in friendship in the sense that friendship can be sustained longer.

Input 1 Daru	Input 2 Dosti	Generic space	Blend
Loss of reasoning	Help in decision	Catalyst	Loss – Help
Unhealthy habit	Healthy Behavior	Effect	Healthy – Unhealthy
Short term pleasure	Timeless companion	Bond	Short term – Timeless
Loss of confidence	Boost confidence	Action	Loss – Boost

Sarcastic Blend: For friendship to continue one needs to offer liquor to friends.

(10) Hum sab to Hindustan me   fail   hue lekin tumne to Londonme
     Hum sab to Hindustan me   fail   hue lekin tumne ADV landanPOST.P
     fail   ho-kar dikha   diya.
     fail   be-CP see   give MASC.PST
     'We failed in Hindustan but you showed up having failed in London.'

Context: It is perceived as sarcasm when someone who had failed in their native land due to lack of facilities compares themselves to those who studied abroad but could not pass examination despite having all facilities at hand.

Input 1 Hindustan	Input 2 London	Generic space	Blend
Less infrastructure	Great infrastructure	Facility	Infrastructure: Less – Great
Non practical implication	Practical implication	Uses	Non practical – Practical
Trend based admission	Interest based admission	Selection	Trend based – Interest based
Believe in grade	Believe in skill	Understanding	Believe: Grade –Skill

Sarcastic Blend: In spite of all the facilities he could not pass.

(11) Dimagme   kitabe bharne sejebe   nahi bharti hai.
     Brain POST.P book   fill   POST.P.pocket.PL NEG fill FEM.PRS
     'Just reading the books does not make one rich.'

Context: Only reading is not enough to earn money. One also needs to perform.

Input 1 Dimag me kitabe bharnaa	Input 2 Jebe bharnaa	Generic space	Blend
Research skill	Earning skill	Ability	Skill: Research – Earning
Intellectual approach	Realistic approach	Perception	Approach: Intellectual –Realistic
Use knowledge	Capitalize passion	Decision	Use Knowledge – Capitalize passion
Creative thinking	Business mind	Comprehension	Creative thinking – Business mind

Sarcastic Blend: To make money, work has to be done.

(12) Ab   yogi   bhi   bhogi   ki tarah   bina   khaye   nahi   rah sakte.
     now   saint   ADV   bhogi   like   without   eat MASC.PST .   NEG   live can.
     'Now ascetics too used to eat like common men to survive.'

Context: The line of distinction between an ascetic and a common man has blurred with regards to a way of life.

Input 1 Yogi	Input 2 Bhogi	Generic space	Blend
Devine love	Worldly love	Feeling	Devine – Worldly
Undesirable	Desirable	Need	Undesirable – Desirable
Inner happiness	Physical happiness	Satisfaction	Happiness: Inner – Physical
With equanimity	Without equanimity	Balance	Equanimity: With – Without

Sarcastic Blend: Nowaday's Yogi became Bhogi.

5   Discussion

Above examples were obtained from an annotated digital corpus of five thousand sentences, which have been read to extract the sarcasm-oriented utterances from the large chunk of annotated data set.

The domain mapping of conceptual metaphor does not always recognize all metaphorical expressions as it focuses only on one-to-one mapping of source and target domain. Therefore, to grasp extended meanings of metaphorical expressions it was important to go through either conceptual blending or integration theory to achieve an integrated mechanism with which observation of the novel construction gets possible.

Input spaces contain one or more conceptual elements of a particular metaphor and represent its attached construal aspects. These conceptual packets have been observed with reference to generic sense. It was found out that they may have a general or abstract structure, which are seemingly shared by both input spaces to express a common sense for different conceptual constituents. Input space may project into blended space, and as such represent an emergent structure of a novel concept.

As in (9) the two input spaces *Daru (liquor)* and *dosti (friendship)* have different conceptual elements where they have an abstract generic sense of *catalyst, effect, bond, and action* with respect to each conceptual element respectively. The cross space mapping between input one (*loss of reasoning, unhealthy habit, short term pleasure and loss of confidence*) and input two (*helps in decision, healthy behavior, timeless companion and boost confidence*) project their conceptual elements into the blended space that created an emergent structure of conceptual meaning of metaphorical expressions in blended space. Out of 5,000 sentences procured from data source, 12 sentences needed to be explained through conceptual blending or integration theory.

With respect to the above description it is observed that negative sentences occur not only in the intension of an individual but also reflect literally, and in the form of dropped negation in sarcastic expression, as a cue. Such indicatory cues help develop the understanding of sarcastic expression. Besides such sarcastic expressions there are affirmative, interrogative and imperative sentences also that are used as tools to ridicule an individual.

As such, sarcasm can be described as an obscure phenomenon. It carries several functions and uses means that are different from other communicative acts. The functional approach used in this research enables one to observe the intension of sarcastic utterances.

Sarcasms in speech are used to express intense emotions. Based on the above results it is observed that sarcasm can be used in both positive and negative sense. The positive use of sarcastic utterance is attached with humorous intent through which an individual makes a critical comment without appearing rude. Sentences (1), (4) and (10) are positively functional. Sarcasms with a negative function may be realized in various ways such as through ridicule, indirect rebuke, minor irritation etc. They are used to makes critical remarks. In this respect sentences (2), (3), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (11) and (12) are negatively functional.

In short, sarcasm has several functions and they rampantly occur in the discourse of people on everyday basis, primarily – though not necessarily – with negative function.

6   Conclusion

Mental processes have always intrigued mankind. Despite numerous researches that have already been conducted, a large part of this area is still to get examined carefully.

Cognitive linguistics is an upcoming area in linguistics. The field of cognitive linguistics has generated a powerful set of theoretical tools for analyzing the way in which we understand, communicate and create concepts. The development of the conceptual theory has brought the ubiquity of metaphorical expressions in everyday speech.

The conceptualization of a metaphor is grounded on a wide range of bodily, social and cultural experiences that create an integral aspect of cognitive faculty and play a creative role in meaning construction as well as in understanding reality. Metaphorical language is an indispensable aspect of human life through which people use figurative language to represent abstract concepts with reference to concrete entities for easy comprehension. In this respect, sarcasm is a form of figurative language and integral part of human discourse where literal meaning of words are in direct opposition to the intended meaning, which is pervasively used in everyday language to ridicule someone.

Hindi sarcastic statements are heavily dependent on the contextual knowledge of the hearer in order to be effective. Conceptualization of sarcastic metaphorical expressions in Hindi can not be explained by conceptual metaphor theory alone. Major sarcasms – or to say more demanding ones – are those that can only be analyzed through blending/integration, which consequently brings one to the conclusion that not all metaphorical expressions can be understood through the help of conceptual theory or one-to-one mapping relationship only. To get the extended meaning we need to look at the theory of conceptual integration or blending.

This paper tried to investigate the conceptualization of sarcastic expressions in Hindi language within the framework of conceptual integration. Conceptual blending integrates the conceptual elements into blended space with the help of generic sense and gives an emergent structure of meaning to observe its functions and uses. Hindi sarcasms, like figurative linguistic tools of other languages, are deeply rooted in the historical and cultural evolution of the language and its speakers. An effective comprehension and conceptualization of such concepts needs a multi-layered cognitive theoretical approach similar to what has been studied in this paper.

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