

“Double Entendre and Polysemy: Eastern and Western Perspectives”

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Double entendre (or multiple meaning), or more accurately polysemy in the semiotic structures of languages, which makes it possible, is an important issue in any theory of meaning. Indeed, it tests the validity of the sign theory and also questions the relations between the utterance and its referential context.

The conference aims to bring together specialists of general linguistics, more especially semanticists, and specialists of Indian studies and languages who will debate and express different views on this issue.

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Call for papers

January 15, 2013: Deadline for submission of abstracts

Themes of the conference

1) A descriptive part which focuses on the use of double entendre (or multiple meaning) in literature in the broadest sense of the term - including thus rhetoric and poetics - written in various languages. The purpose is to provide an analysis of double entendre seen as a discursive process in texts where one can observe recurrent and systematic patterns connected to different kinds of discourse. Particular attention will be given to the Indian field: indeed, double meaning is a crucial point not only in ritual speeches, where it shows reciprocity between sacrifice and benefic actions of gods and helps expressing speculations on equivalences that structure the cosmos, but also in erudite literature where it plays a key role in the construction of several stylistic devices (especially those that express analogy). It can also be a stylistic device by itself. The most radical use of double entendre may be observed in a literary genre which prospered around the late first millennium AD: that of works entirely provided with two (or even three) meanings, which simultaneously convey two independent stories, or a story and a didactic essay, etc. The descriptive part of the conference will, quite naturally, include comparative and typological approaches.

2) A historical part which meets the theories developed by many scholarly traditions to give explanation to double meaning and its use in the discourse context. Once again, the Indian case will be given preference, since double/multiple meaning is the subject matter of important theoretical and descriptive investigations, constantly interacting with the literary uses. Such investigations are carried out in treatises on poetics, which repeatedly deal with the nature of this process, its relation with stylistic devices and its role in the aesthetic sphere.

3) A semiotic component illustrating the dynamism of current research on polysemy. This trend is all the more surprising that research on this issue is already dense, along the most influential theories: notice, for instance, cognitive semantics including M. JOHNSON (1987), *psychomécanique* by O. SOUTET (2005) and J. PICOCHÉ (1986), semic or componential analysis by Chr. CUSIMANO (2008), CULIOLI's theory applied to polysemy by J.-J. FRANCKEL (2005), and approaches related to hermeneutics like those of P. CADIOT and Y.-M. VISETTI (2001). Indeed, every year, in addition to a constant number of Ph.D. defended on this topic, many studies from researchers whose theories are already well-known in the linguistic background, especially in semantics, come to the debate. Thus Chr. TOURATIER in the latest version of *La Sémantique* (2010) puts great emphasis on polysemy whereas Fr. RASTIER, in a recent essay (2011), dedicates to it one chapter, entitled "De la polysémie à la monosémie". In general linguistics too, contrastive analysis of polysemy in different languages of the world continue to enhance the debate and lead to change traditional views on the issue. Any paper developing one of these aspects is welcome.

Apart from these three directions, any communication expressing doubts about polysemy would also receive full attention. The conference could thus even be an opportunity for discussions on the theory of the sign.

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