

## SEMANTIC EXTENSION AND THE EVOLUTION OF METAPHOR IN ALAN CRUSE'S MEANING IN LANGUAGE

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**Abstract:** *This thesis explores the treatment of semantic extension and metaphor in Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics by Alan Cruse. Particular attention is given to Cruse's classification of meaning extension into naturalized extensions, established extensions, and nonce meanings, as well as his historical overview of metaphor theory. The study situates Cruse's account within broader developments in twentieth-century linguistics, especially the contributions of I. A. Richards and later cognitive linguists such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. By synthesizing semantic and pragmatic perspectives, Cruse provides a framework that explains how figurative language becomes lexicalized and how metaphor operates as both a cognitive and communicative mechanism.*

### INTRODUCTION

The nature of meaning has been a central concern in linguistic theory. Semantics investigates stable aspects of word meaning, while pragmatics examines how context shapes interpretation. In *Meaning in Language*, Alan Cruse (2000) offers a systematic introduction to lexical semantics, sense relations, and mechanisms of semantic change. Among Cruse's key contributions is his detailed typology of meaning extension and his integration of metaphor into semantic theory. Rather than treating metaphor as merely ornamental, Cruse presents it as a dynamic force in lexical development. His discussion builds on earlier rhetorical traditions and modern semantic theory, especially the work of I. A. Richards (1965), whose interaction model marked a turning point in metaphor studies. This thesis analyzes Cruse's classification of semantic extension, examines his treatment of metaphor, and situates his ideas within broader linguistic scholarship.

#### Cruse's Typology of Meaning Extension

Cruse (2000) distinguishes three types of meaning extension: naturalized extensions, established extensions, and nonce meanings. These categories represent different degrees of conventionalization and lexical integration.

##### 1 Naturalized Extensions

Naturalized extensions are historically figurative meanings that have become fully integrated into the lexicon. Their metaphorical origins are no longer consciously perceived. For example, He's in love once evoked a spatial metaphor but is now interpreted literally. Similarly, The kettle's boiling involves metonymy (container for contents), yet it is processed as standard literal usage. These examples demonstrate semantic change through repeated usage. Over time, figurative expressions lose their novelty and become conventionalized, illustrating how metaphor contributes to lexical structure (Cruse, 2000).

##### 2 Established Extensions

Established extensions are frequent and conventional figurative meanings that remain connected to their literal sense. In *She swallowed the story*, the verb *swallow* metaphorically means “accept uncritically.” In *There are too many mouths to feed*, *mouths* stands metonymically for “people.”

Unlike naturalized extensions, these meanings retain a visible semantic link to their source domain. They are stored in the mental lexicon but still perceived as figuratively motivated (Cruse, 2000).

### 3 Nonce Meanings

Nonce meanings are creative, context-dependent extensions that are not permanently stored in the lexicon. Literary expressions such as *a heat-seeking look* or *swallowed by her fantasies* rely on contextual inference and shared cognitive mechanisms.

Cruse argues that such meanings arise from general processes of metaphor and metonymy but remain temporary unless conventionalized. Their interpretation depends heavily on pragmatic reasoning and the listener’s inferential abilities.

### The Development of Metaphor Theory

Cruse situates his discussion of metaphor within a broader intellectual tradition. In classical rhetoric, metaphor was treated as a stylistic device. However, twentieth-century linguistics reconceptualized it as a mechanism of meaning construction.

A major turning point was I. A. Richards’ *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1965). Richards proposed a tripartite model:

Vehicle – the metaphorical expression

Tenor – the underlying subject

Ground – the shared properties enabling the comparison

For example, in *the foot of the mountain*, *foot* functions as the vehicle, the lower part of the mountain as the tenor, and the spatial similarity as the ground (Richards, 1965). Cruse highlights this framework as foundational for later semantic analyses (Cruse, 2000).

Later developments in metaphor theory further expanded this cognitive perspective. In *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) argue that metaphor structures human conceptual systems. Their theory of conceptual metaphor demonstrates that metaphor is not merely linguistic but deeply cognitive. Similarly, Max Black’s interaction theory emphasizes the dynamic interplay between source and target domains (Black, 1962).

Cruse’s work, while primarily lexical-semantic, resonates with these approaches by recognizing metaphor as a systematic and productive mechanism.

### Lexical Semantics and Cognitive Processes

Cruse integrates metaphor and meaning extension into a broader theory of the mental lexicon. He argues that lexical meaning is structured yet flexible. Naturalized extensions illustrate how figurative expressions become entrenched, while established and nonce meanings demonstrate the ongoing creativity of language users.

His framework aligns with cognitive linguistic approaches but remains grounded in lexical semantics. By distinguishing levels of conventionalization, Cruse offers a nuanced model that accounts for both stability and change in word meaning.

Conclusion. Alan Cruse's *Meaning in Language* provides a comprehensive account of semantic extension and metaphor. His classification of naturalized, established, and nonce meanings clarifies how figurative language evolves from creative usage to lexicalized meaning.

By incorporating insights from I. A. Richards and anticipating developments in cognitive linguistics, Cruse bridges traditional rhetoric and modern semantic theory. His work demonstrates that metaphor is not merely decorative but central to meaning construction and lexical development. Ultimately, semantic extension reflects the dynamic interaction between cognition, context, and linguistic structure.

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