

Semantic Universals

Metaphors, metonymy

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Profilmodul 1: Descriptive Linguistics

Literature

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Metaphors - Task 1: be creative

- Describe
 - the shape of your pen, pencil, ballpoint,
 - the taste of mulled wine,
 - the eyes of your neighbour
 - a political event
- Write a short poem, song lyric, ...

Metaphors - Task 2: Find the Metaphors

Ancestral Faces
Kwesi Brew

In: Wole Soyinka, ed., 1975.
Poems of Black Africa. London,
Nairobi, Ibadan: Heinemann.

They sneaked into the limbo of time
But could not muffle the gay jingling
Brass bells on the frothy necks
Of the sacrificial sheep that limped and nodded after them;
They could not hide the moss on the bald pate
Of their reverent heads;
And the gnarled backs of the wawa tree;
Nor the rust on the ancient state-swords;
Nor the skulls studded with grinning cowries;
They could not silence the drums,
The fibre of their souls and ours -
The drums that whisper to us behind black sinewy hands.
They gazed
And sweeping like white locusts through the forests
Saw the same men, slightly wizened,
Shuffle their sandalled feet to the same rhythms,
They heard the same words of wisdom uttered
Between puffs of pale blue smoke:
They saw us,
And said: They have not changed!

Characterising metaphor...

- What do you associate with the word "metaphor"?
 -
 -
 -
 -

Theories of metaphor

- There are many, many theories of metaphor:
 - Aristotelian comparison theory
 - Umberto Eco's cognitive rule-governed theory
 - Max Black's interaction theory
 - John Searle's speech act theory
 - Computational structure mapping theory
 - ... and many more.

Basic terminology

- Examples of metaphors?
- "Man is a wolf"
 - Primary term (tenor): *man*
 - Secondary term (vehicle): *wolf*
 - *tertium comparationis* (ground): 'wild, vicious, inconsiderate'
- Semiotics of metaphor:
 - syntax of metaphor
 - semantics of metaphor
 - pragmatics of metaphor

Aristotle: comparison theory

- Comparison, elliptical simile view
 - `Metaphor is the application to one thing of the name belonging to another. We may apply
 - (a) the name of a genus to one of its species, or
 - (b) the name of one species to its genus, or
 - (c) the name of one species to another of the same genus, or
 - (d) the transfer may be based on a proportion.'
- (this translation from Hutton 1992)

Tony Veale: <http://www.cs.ucd.ie/staff/tveale/home/encyc/cyc.html>

Aristotelian theory: examples

- (a) genus to species: 'Here stands my ship', in which 'to be at anchor' is a specialisation (species) of the more generic term 'to stand still'.
- (b) species to genus: 'Truly ten thousand noble deeds hath Odysseus done', in which 'ten thousand deeds' is a specialisation of the more generic term 'large number'.
- (c) species to species: 'Drawing off the life with bronze', and 'Cutting off the water with unwearied bronze', in which 'to draw off' and 'to cut off' are each a sibling species of the genus term 'to take away'.
- (d) proportional analogy: 'The wine cup is to Dionysus as the shield is to Ares', in which the analogy allows the term combination 'cup of Ares' to replace 'shield', and the combination 'shield of Dionysus' to replace 'cup'.

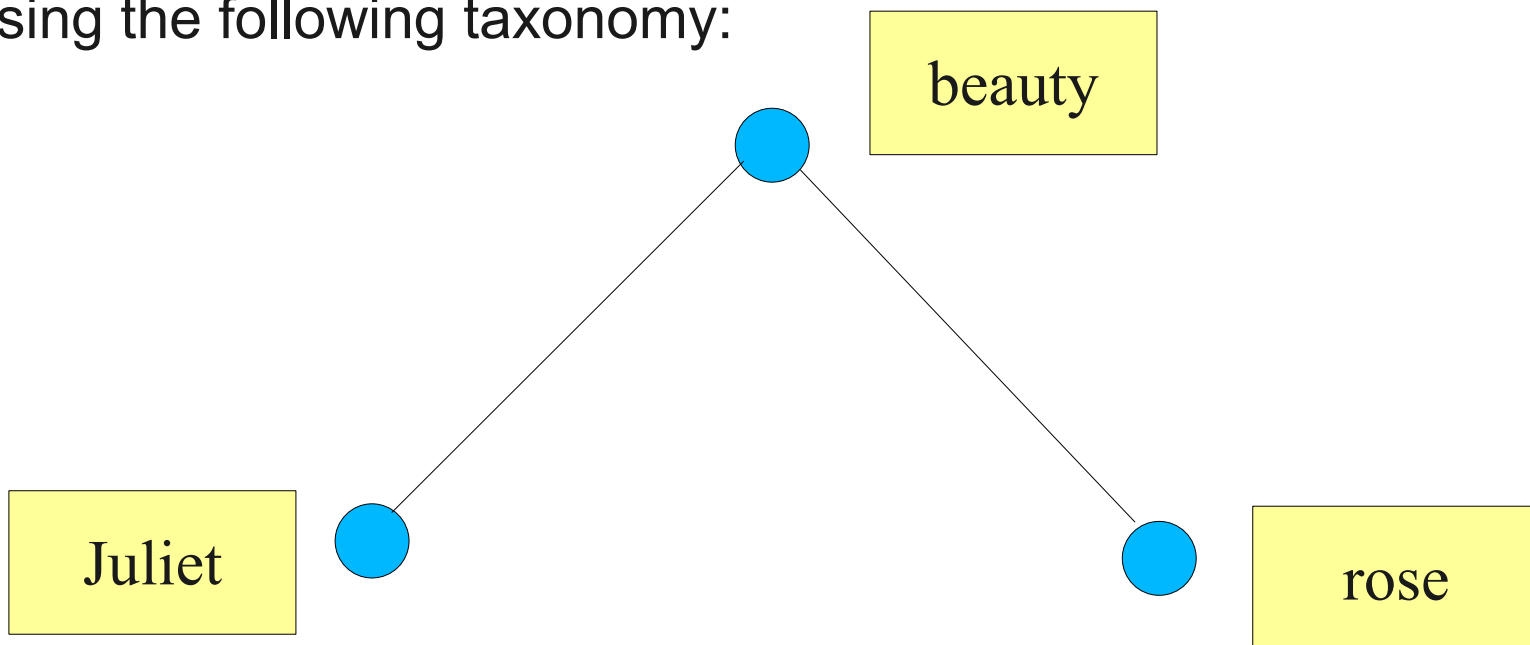
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Aristotelian metaphor theory: Tasks

Explain the metaphor and the simile in line "My love's like a red, red rose" from a poem by Robert Burns (1759-1796).

Formulate sentences

illustrating examples of the first three Aristotelian metaphor types using the following taxonomy:



Eco's cognitive comparison theory

1. Derive a componential representation of the vehicle, focusing on those components (markerese features, slots, attributes, predicates, etc.) which are deemed germane in the current co-text (narrative context).
2. Look abductively in the encyclopaedia (world knowledge-base) for some other sememe (concept symbol) that possibly shares some of the focused properties of the vehicle, but exhibits other, interestingly different properties of its own (presumably these interesting differences supply the emotive tension of the metaphor). The sememe found in this way is a plausible candidate for the tenor of the metaphor.
3. Try to link the opposing (interestingly different) properties of tenor and vehicle via a shared superordinate in the knowledge-base taxonomy. Presumably, such a link legitimises the opposition and thus the metaphor.
4. Evaluate the metaphoric reading. The higher up the knowledge-base taxonomy these oppositions are united, the more interesting the metaphor is deemed. Presumably, this is a criterion for establishing metaphoric quality, inasmuch as the more obscure the opposition, the more novel the metaphor will seem.
5. Establish new predications/attributions/relations in the tenor as a result of the metaphor, 'so as to enrich the cognitive power of the trope'.

Black's interaction theory

Interaction view (Max Black):

- mutual influence of cognitive structures underlying word meanings
- non-compositional: the whole changes the meanings of the parts by interchange of associations
 - contrast with standard compositional meaning
- similarity-creating, rather than based on pre-defined similarity
- active cognitive achievement, rather than passive recognition of state
- "Man is a wolf":



interaction

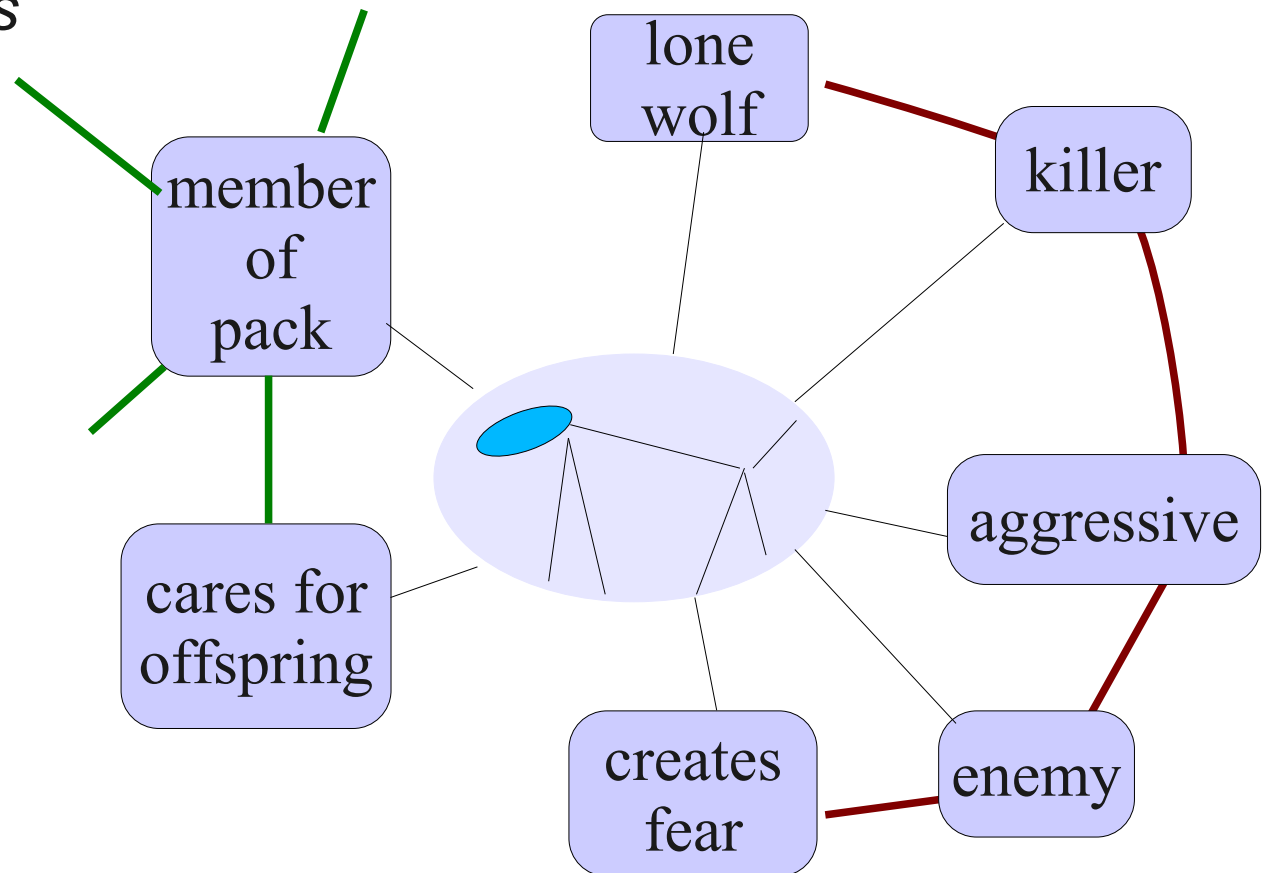
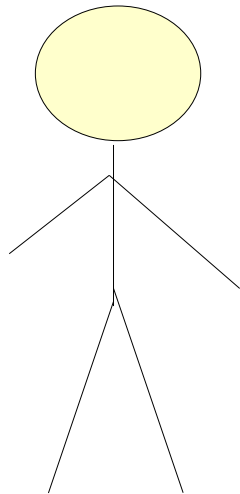


Searle's speech act theory

- Two levels of meaning representation:
 - sentence meaning (literal meaning)
 - speaker's meaning (utterance meaning)
- "Man is a wolf", "Sam is a pig":
 - Literal meaning
 - must be understood
 - must be recognised as false
 - must provide features of "wolf" which can apply to "man" and others which cannot.

Lakoff's cognitive model theory

- See Lakoff () Ch. 5, Ch. 7
- Pretty much everything in language is a metaphor...
- Metaphors are not just based on *similarities* but also on structured *models*
- "Man is a wolf"



Lakoff's metonymic models

- "Greece won the Cup"
- "The blond in the corner"
- *pars pro toto*
 - some standard part or standard feature (of a structured model)
 - stands for the whole (of a structured model)
- New:
 - previous definitions: *paradigmatic* (based on similarity)
 - Lakoff's models: also *syntagmatic* (based on role in structures)
 - cf. *frames, scripts, schemas*
 - *defaults, typicality, ideals, stereotypes*
 - prototypical standard and deviation, centre and periphery

A metonymic structure: noun compounds

- Note Lakoff's examples:
 - "housewife"
 - "working mother"
- Compound nouns often have properties of the following kind:
 - prototypes
 - metonyms
 - stereotypes
- Why? Because they are
 - *subcategories*
 - *elliptical*
 - *lexicalised.*

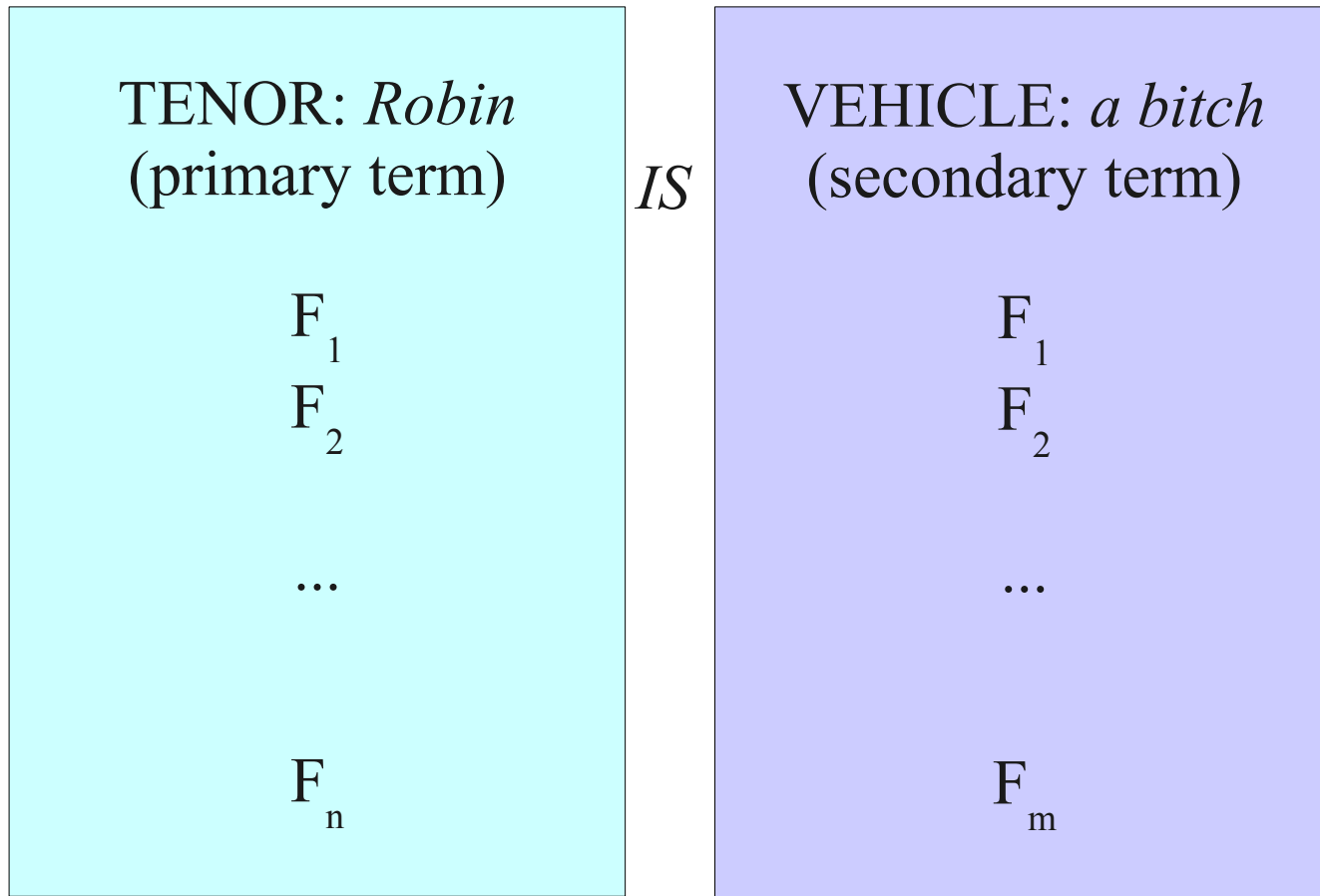
Metonymic reasoning

- Wholes and parts:
 - General axiom: If x is an A then x has a w and x has a y and x has a z
- Abductive reasoning:
 - Specific axiom: x has a w and x has a y and x has a z
 - Conclusion: x is an A .
- Metonymic reasoning:
 - Specific axiom: x has a w
 - Conclusion: x is an A .
- TASK: Fit this schema to an actual example.

Computational theories

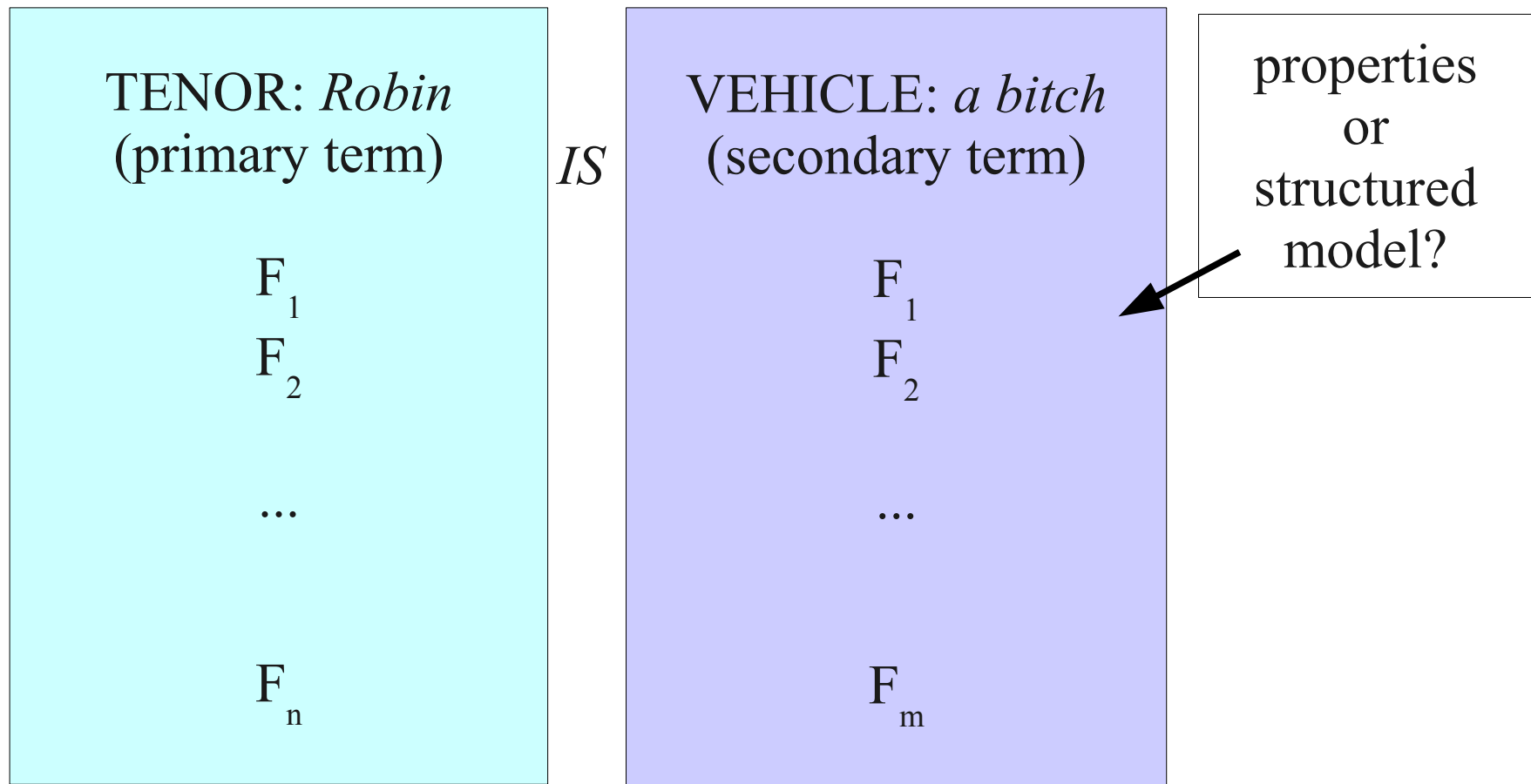
- Metaphor in Artificial Intelligence:
 - analogical reasoning
 - model formation
 - structure mapping
- Compare with
 - Aristotle's "proportions"
 - Lakoff's "models"

Summarising: "Robin is a bitch"



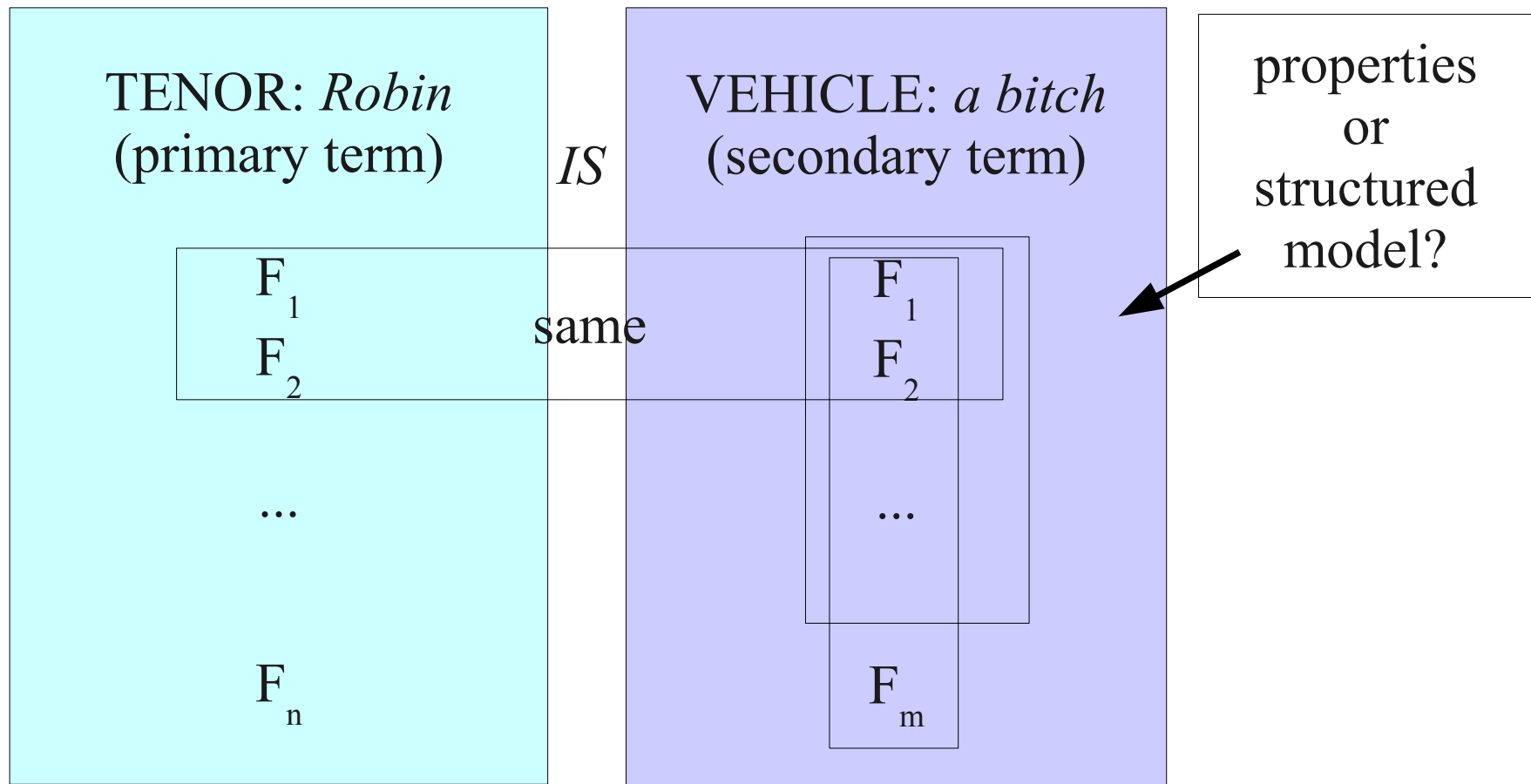
A synthesis of the comparison, interaction and speech act views.

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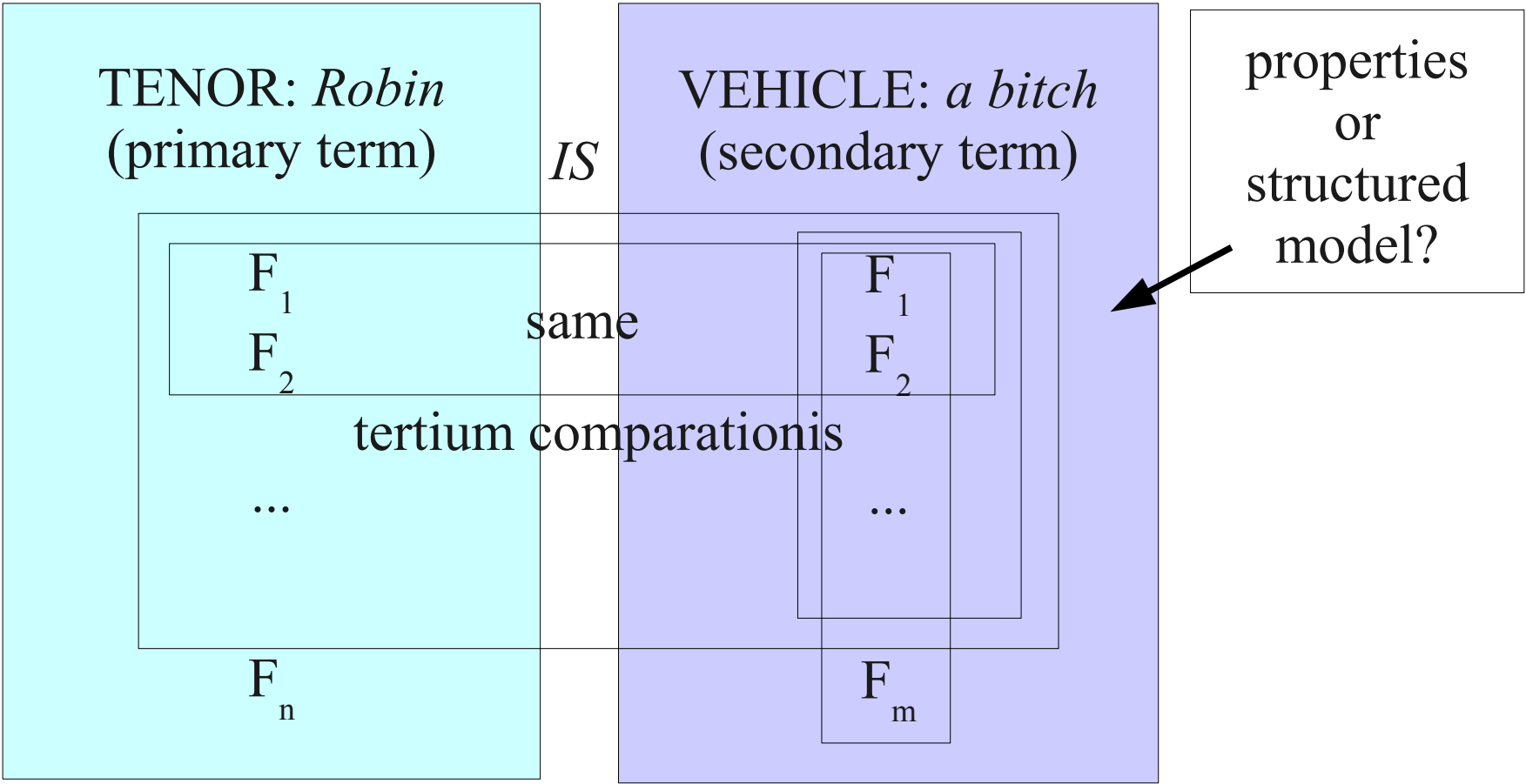
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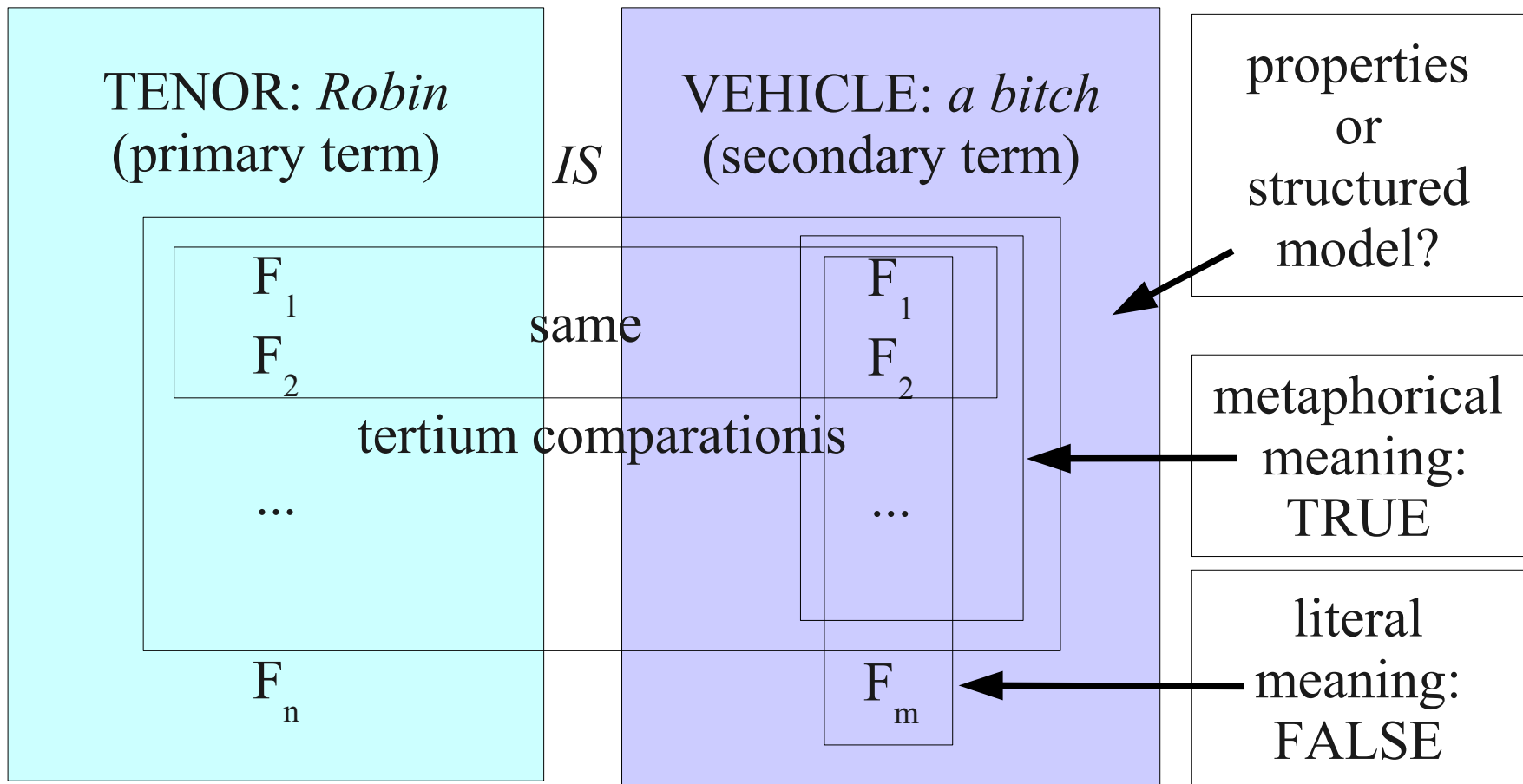
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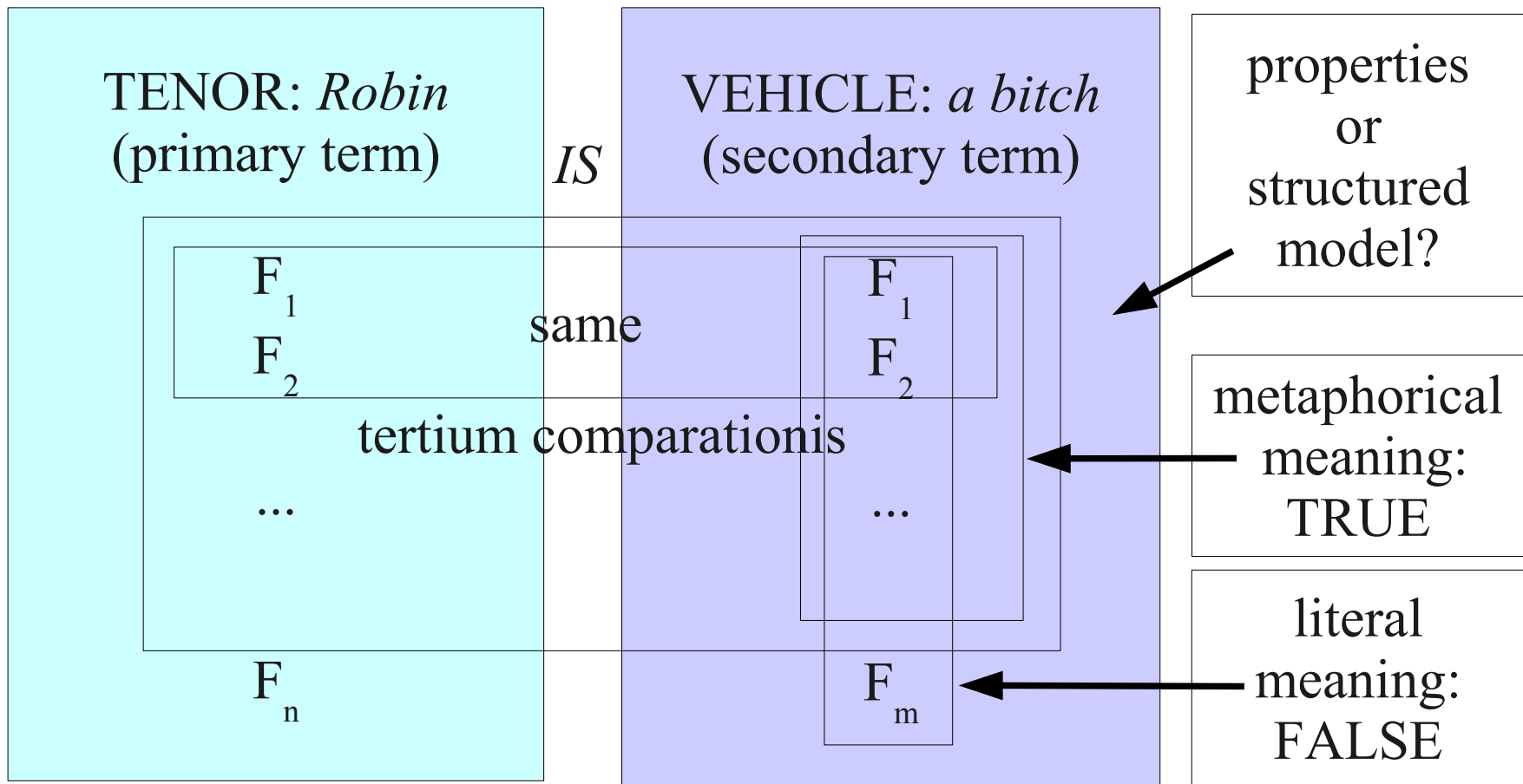
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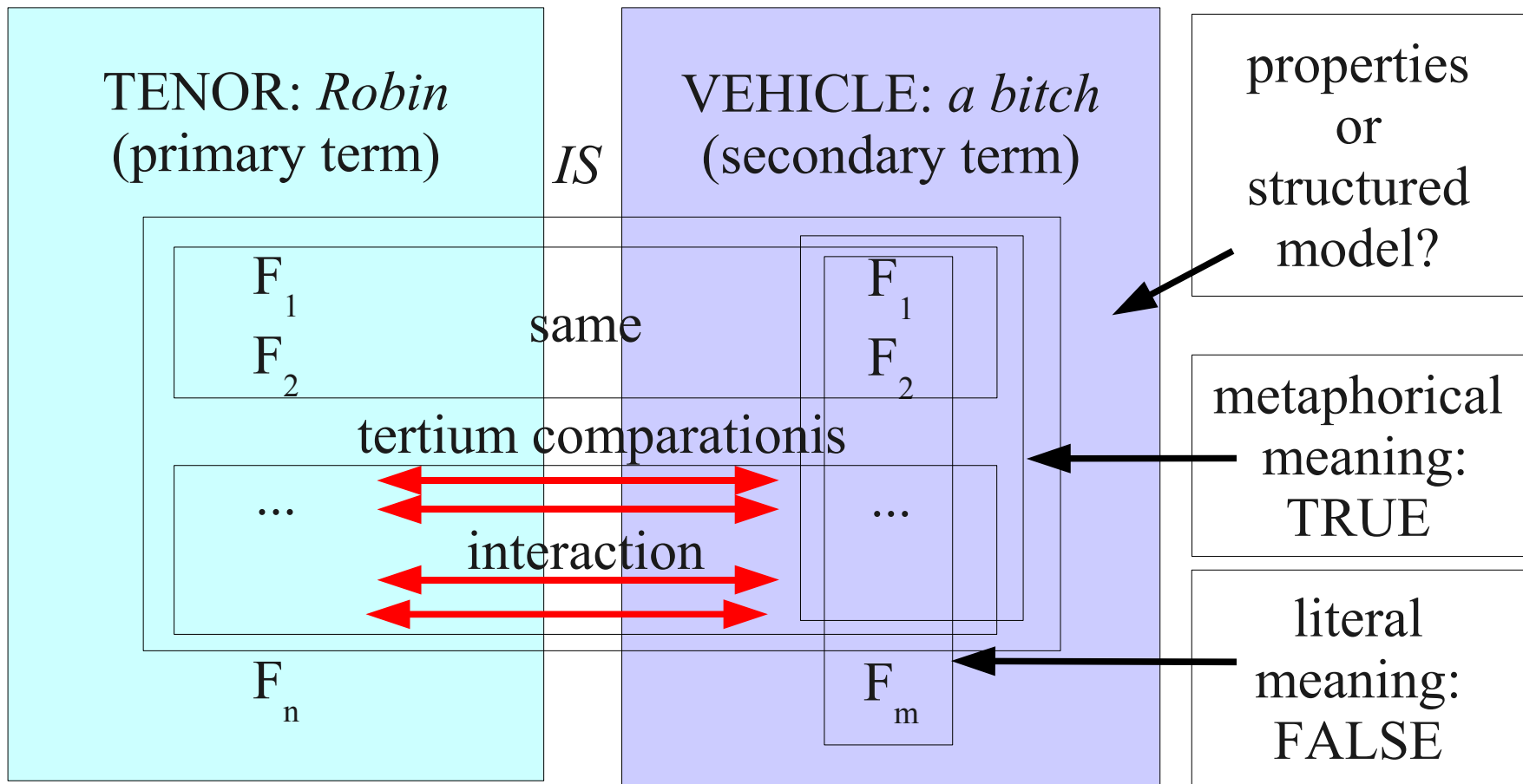
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A synthesis of the comparison, interaction and speech act views.

But why? - The pragmatics of metaphor

- What do metaphors contribute to an utterance which a literal statement does not?
- Why do people use metaphors?

But why? - The pragmatics of metaphor

- What do metaphors contribute to an utterance which a literal statement does not?
- Why do people use metaphors?
 - compliments, insults?
 - understanding the difficult using the simple?
 - enhancing the simple with the complex?