

Resenha/review

ZANOTTO, Mara S.; CAMERON, Lynne.; CAVALCANTI, Marilda C. (Ed s.)
Confronting Metaphor in use; an applied linguistic approach. Amsterdam/Philadelphia,
John Benjamins, 2008. D.E.L.T.A., 25:2,2009 (527-530)

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Reviewing *Confronting Metaphor in use* is a real challenge, given that one of its chapters deals with metaphors in book reviews. Low, in Chapter 4, investigates twenty reviews in Linguistics, Economics and Chemistry and defends that “reviewers consistently claim a position of authority, asserting or implying that they are well-read, up to date, experienced, a member of the relevant research community and/or having relevant expertise” (p. 95). He also points out that metaphors contribute to “flag reviewer expertise and status” (p.96). His article forces me to identify myself as someone who is coming back to metaphor studies and that is eager to know about the new trends in this research field. I must also say that I am highly influenced by cognitive studies in a dialogue with complexity theory. I hope my metaphors do not deny the way I position myself in this review.

It is a good surprise to find out a book which gathers together scholars from Europe and Brazil to offer us a broad view of metaphor studies. From an applied linguistics perspective, the focus of this collection of research reports is language in use. In the introduction, the reader is warned by the editors that “[I]t is timely for researchers to approach metaphor as social and situated, as a matter of language and discourse, and not just as a matter of thought”. As one who looks at the phenomenon in the light of complexity, I could not agree more, and the word “just” in “and not just as a matter of thought”, makes all the difference. It shows that the editors recognize that metaphor is also a matter of thought. On reading the research reports, we infer that linguistic social practices and thought are inseparable parts of the same phenomenon.

Having positioned myself, let me introduce the book. It is divided into four parts. The first deals with *the nature of metaphor in use* and the four chapters focus on stability and variation. In the first one, Zanotto and Palma investigate the indeterminacy of metaphor by resorting to Zanotto’s previous case studies compared to other more recent ones carried out by both authors separately. The same poem is used with six different groups, from 1984 to 2003, and in all those studies the data were collected by means of think-aloud protocols during reading activities. Although the authors demonstrate that metaphors also display polysemy and indeterminacy, they are cautious in their conclusions on what concerns the type of indeterminacy which characterizes the multiple reading outputs in their data.

Shifting from literature to educational discourse, Cameron’s approach focuses upon metaphor in conversation with the aim to show changes and adaptations undergone by metaphor in “the dynamic flux of language use”. It is her contention that the multiple uses of a metaphor Vehicle term “are both derived and constrained by

speakers' experience of the world, their socio-cultural contexts, and their discourse purposes" (p.61). I would add that they are also constrained by cognitive processes which are also in constant processes of adaptation and change. She argues that "[C]ognitive metaphor theory holds that conceptual metaphors are static, fixed mappings between Topic (or target) and Vehicle (or source) domains" (p.46) but defends that in language use the focus is the adaptive and changing characteristics of linguistic mappings. I would expect Cameron, one of the main Applied Linguistics scholars dealing with complex systems, to resignify the cognitive view of metaphor and propose that conceptual metaphors should not be understood as static and fixed mappings, but as dynamic and adaptive due to the emergence of new metaphors in discourse. From a complex system perspective, discourse could not be separated from other components of language which are seen as a complex system. I dare say that her study and also Zanotto and Palma's, besides others in the book, are good proofs that

[C]omplex systems are open and not separated from context, but interact with contextual factors as they change over time. We therefore need an embodied view of mental activity, including language use and processing, in which mind is seen as developing as part of a physical body constantly in interaction with the physical and sociocultural environment, with this interaction contributing to the emergent nature of the mind (Gibbs, 2006). (LARSEN-FREEMAN & CAMERON: 2008: 34).

Talking about sociocultural environment, Boers and Stengers, in the last chapter of this part, study idioms in three different languages: English, Dutch and Spanish. They present evidences to prove that "at a conceptual/semantic level the lexical composition of metaphorical idioms in a language is fuelled by the lexical fields of source domains that have been especially salient in the culture behind that language" (p. 67).

The second part – *Examining metaphor in corpora* – is also made up of four chapters using corpus techniques, an innovative approach in metaphor studies. Koller works with 210 articles in a corpus of business magazine and newspaper texts on marketing, published between 1996 and 2001, and analyzes the data with the help of WordSmith Tools 3.0. The results reveal the predominance of **war** metaphors and the emergence of **relationship** metaphors in marketing discourse. Koller wanders if the last represents a shift in conceptual models in a context of socio-economic change. In chapter 6, Berber-Sardinha uses corpora techniques to investigate metaphor probability in Brazilian corpora: one corpus made up of 14 conference calls and a general one. His study points out how pervasive metaphor in language use is and defends that probability studies could help ranking word senses in dictionaries. In a different approach, Deignan, in chapter 7, defends corpora studies against isolated sentences analysis, proving through the study of the "argument is war" metaphor that decontextualized language can lead researchers to misleading explanations. On the same track, Vereza (chapter 8) presents arguments to show the advantages of naturally occurring data over isolated sentences. She works with "the metaforicity of "war" through its most frequent collocates" and shows that a larger database gives support to "more solid conclusions".

In the last two parts, we can find 7 chapters altogether dealing with metaphor in education context and one in other professional contexts, but there is a tremendous difference between those two sections because part III, *Understanding metaphor in language education*, does not deal with real language in use. It is made up of two chapters: the first reports a study testing figurative capacity of monolingual primary school children and the second presents a study with 47 post-graduate, overseas students

at the University of Birmingham guessing the meaning of 10 vocabulary items in decontextualized sentences.

The last part – *Using metaphor as a tool in professional development* – goes back to language in use (narrative, chat, email, questionnaire, interview, and oral presentations) with four Brazilian researchers talking about professional development. Telles interprets the metaphors of a female school teacher's narrative about her professional development; Cavalcanti and Bizon investigate how metaphors are used by in-service teachers of Portuguese to elaborate difficulties in online interaction during an online course about research; and Liberalli discusses "metaphors and metonymies used by teachers to talk about their school communities" (p.267). Closing the book, Freire examines five workers' experiences with emails in three different management contexts. She makes an attempt to read the participants' reflections in the light of "professional knowledge landscape metaphor". Although she presents important reflections on the impact of email in work contexts, the landscape metaphor did not prove to be fully adequate, since her research focused only on the participants' experiences with that electronic interaction. As Clandinin and Connelly explain, the landscape metaphor "has a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things, and events in different relationships" (p. 4). The chapter does not show this diversity and it seems that, in fact, the research did not aim at professional development properly, but at a specific aspect of the participants' work routine: email interaction.

The diversity of studies compiled in this book, even the ones which do not deal with language in use, offer a vital contribution to the studies of metaphor. The chapters do not only contribute to the understanding of metaphor in use, but also provide examples of different methodologies for the ones interested in carrying out research in the metaphor fields. The wide range of contexts and the diverse data collection techniques and analytical approaches are evidences of the fertility in the way Applied Linguistics looks at metaphor. *Confronting metaphors* is a valuable addition to libraries of researchers, graduate students and educators interested in metaphor studies.

References:

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