

Nacey, Susan, *Metaphor in Learner English. Corpora and Language Learners*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2013. xi + 277 pp. ISBN 9789027202062. [Metaphor in Language, Cognition & Communication 2]

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*Metaphor in Learner English* by Susan Nacey is a detailed comparative corpusbased study of metaphorical expressions by advanced learners of English and native English-speaking students. The book, which is structured in three parts, devotes Part I to an analysis of the theoretical foundations of metaphor and its description in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe 2009). Part II provides a detailed description of the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) and its contributions to the systematic identification and analysis of metaphor in learners' texts. Finally, part III offers a quantitative examination of learner corpus data, explores and refines the controversial concept of creativity and addresses the relation between novelty and error in learners' metaphorical language.

Part I is the shortest of the three sections that made up the book. Its first chapter, 'Foundations', provides a general outline of the origins of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) and its developments since 1980. Through these first pages the author also highlights the contributions made by cognitive linguists such as Grady (1997) or Gibbs (2010) in order to clarify aspects such as the difference between abstract and concrete domains, or to illustrate the partiality and typical unidirectionality of mappings (Gibbs & Colston 2012). This chapter also outlines the main differences between metaphor, simile and metonymy and offers a typological classification of metaphors that stresses the absence of terminological consensus among scholars. In this context, Nacey advocates a tripartite typology, whatever its nomenclature, which matches the life cycle of metaphors and takes into account conventionalization and semantic opacity as determinant factors. Her argument is that these two issues lie at the core of the distinction between novel and entrenched metaphors, on the one hand, and transparent and opaque, on the other. Chapter one ends with an analysis of the concept of metaphoric competence and the benefits that its integration in language teaching methodologies may have to enhance learners' language competence and awareness of cross-cultural conceptual and linguistic differences (Boers 2004, Littlemore & Low 2006).

In Chapter two, 'Metaphor in Europe', Nacey discusses how, over the last 40 years, the concept of communicative competence has settled down and become an integral part of language teaching and assessment, as reflected by the CEFR. The integration of metaphor competence in the CEFR and its implications for pedagogical and learning processes are then evaluated to conclude that the conceptualization of metaphor displayed by the CEFR is inadequate because it is "based on classical views of the trope as nothing more than a figure of speech" (60). Then, the theoretical and practical problems associated to this conceptualization of metaphor are addressed. Nacey points out the lack of consensus among scholars as to the question whether idioms can be considered metaphors and highlights the restrictions of a conceptualization that leaves aside other instances of figurative language, granting metaphor a minor role in communicative competence. Finally, the last part of the chapter serves as the contextual frame for the study described in the subsequent chapters. It provides a brief overview of the actual situation of the CEFR and English in Norway and shows that, even though Norway has its own curricular guidelines, metaphor also enjoys only peripheral status in language teaching there.

Part II goes in depth into the methodological aspects of the study reported in the third section of the book. It describes the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Steen 2005, Steen et al. 2010) and evaluates its effectiveness to identify metaphorically used words in a large corpus. In Chapter 3, "Introduction to MIP(VU)" Nacey gives a description of the origins of MIP and the guiding principles that contribute to making this technique a reliable and unbiased method of metaphor identification in discourse. In this chapter, the author also analyses the improvements brought by

the most recent version of this method, MIP (VU), which allows identifying not only indirect metaphor but also direct and implicit ones.

Finally, the author discusses how to address potential problems such as the identification of the basic meaning of a word in ambiguous situations. In these cases, Nacey suggests that the incorporation of etymological information, usually excluded from the protocol, can be a significant asset.

Chapter 4, 'MIP (VU) in practice', deals with a step-by-step illustration of how to apply the MIP and how to face potential difficulties in the analysis of learner texts. For example, she describes how to tackle problems caused by spelling errors and L1 transfer — usually absent in professional writing — when applying automatic tagging to identify lexical units. The author also provides evidence for the limitations that the system currently poses (for example as regards compound identification) and suggests that "the definition of compounds needs to be expanded or separate categories need to be created to account for the type of deviations found in the author's analysis" (2013: 95) — i.e., lack or over inclusion of hyphens, fusion and split. Likewise, the potential pitfalls that factors such as novelty, uncertainty about the metaphorical character of a term, or problems to discern between metaphor and metonymy may bring are also analysed.

Chapter 5, 'Evaluation of MIP (VU)' offers a thorough evaluation of this procedure as a tool for the analysis of learner language, L1 and L2 novice writers, with emphasis on its drawbacks and benefits. In part III, the author offers a quantitative description of metaphor in learner language that relies on her analysis of 40,000 words extracted from the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE; Granger et al. 2009) and the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS).<sup>1</sup> Chapter 6, 'Quantitative Portrait of Metaphors in Learner Language', confirms the ubiquity of metaphor in learner language and analyses how metaphor density differs in argumentative essays written by Norwegian advanced learners of English and English A-level students respectively. This chapter also offers a detailed classification of learners' use of metaphors on the basis of their level of conventionality and word class. This way, the author shows that only a small percentage of the metaphorical expressions produced by L2 learners and novice L1 writers are novel and statistically proves that prepositions and verbs are used in predominantly metaphorical ways.

In Chapter 7, 'Metaphorical Creativity', Nacey discusses the concept of metaphorical creativity and sets the boundary between novelty and creativity by arguing that "metaphorical creativity, at the very least, involves deliberateness" (2013: 161) and that novelty is not an indication of creativity per se. The rest of the chapter provides an overview of the main types of deliberate and novel metaphors identified in the corpora and addresses the relationship between novelty and L1 transfer. The chapter finally evaluates the potential of the writers' native language to contribute to metaphorical creativity.

Chapter 8 presents the results of the investigation of learners' metaphorical use of prepositions and shows that only a small percentage of the prepositions that L2 writers used were non-deliberate novel metaphors, but errors motivated by divergent congruence and L1 transfer. This section ends with a reflection on the necessity of complementing traditional approaches to teaching prepositions with metaphor-oriented methods that address learners' specific difficulties in this area. The book, which is thought-provoking and stimulating, no doubt serves well as a reference work for educators, linguists and scholars from neighboring disciplines interested in the investigation of learners' figurative language use and its inclass monitoring. Its contribution to metaphor research is valuable since this piece of research helps to provide an analysis of learners' metaphorical competence that goes beyond its role in comprehension and meaning retention and examines how metaphor is actually used by L2 novice writers. Moreover, it also helps to raise educators' awareness that learners' metaphorical competence cannot be equated to their command of idiomatic expressions. Metaphor is pervasive in everyday language and is more than a stylistic trope that works at the level of lexis. As for the book's content, one possible criticism could concern the author's overemphasis on the description of the MIP, part II is completely devoted to this end.

Nevertheless, these chapters can be significantly useful for those researchers who are not familiar with this method or intend to apply it to the analysis of learner corpora. In this respect, it is worth stressing the author's effort to assess the potential limitations posed by the MIP as to provide strategies to compensate for the flaws exhibited by the current procedure when applied to the analysis of learner language. As far as the structure is concerned, the book is well organized. New concepts are illustrated with relevant examples and key information is summed up in tables, which helps to make content more accessible. Additionally, there are many connections made explicit between the different parts of the book, which adds to its accessibility.

On the whole, Nacey's monograph provides a good overview of metaphor use in general, as well as in language learning in particular. It is accessible both to people who are being introduced to the study of metaphor for the very first time and to people well-versed in metaphor research, as long as they share the belief that metaphor research must place the emphasis on words instead of concepts and adopt a bottom-up methodological approach.

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