

BOOK REVIEW



METAPHOR AND METONYMY IN DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

**Alice Deignan, Jeannette Littlemore
and Elena Semino.** FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE,
GENRE AND REGISTER (2013), Series:
Cambridge Applied Linguistics, Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press. 327 pp., ISBN 978-
1-107-00943-1 (HB), 978-1-107-40202-4 (PB).

130

It may be a bit surprising to find a review of a book not directly related to ESP/EAP studies published in a journal explicitly dealing with the exploration of the topics relevant to the field of English for Specific/Academic Purposes. However, as ESP research in its more than fifty years long history has always been influenced by and has relied on the current applied linguistic theories, the book *Figurative Language, Genre and Register* by Alice Deignan, Jeannette Littlemore and Elena Semino deserves to be presented to *ESP Today's* readership, especially to those scholars and researchers who tend to examine scientific discourses of the underlying sciences taught at tertiary level institutions throughout the world from a cognitive linguistic standpoint and who may find it beneficial to become familiar with a new research framework presented in it.

The book represents a brave attempt at combining various aspects of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis in investigating metaphor and metonymy, phenomena that have been more than thoroughly studied in cognitive linguistics since the 1980s. By stressing the importance of genre and register (notions frequently associated with ESP studies, especially after Swales's 1990 work on genre analysis) for understanding metaphor, the authors open up a vast space of possibilities for other researchers, as they establish a solid framework for analysing figurative language in a different fashion. What sparked this book is

increasing evidence that factors related to communicative activity (such as audience, topic, context, mode of communication, etc.) have an impact on how figurative language is used. Therefore, different genres and registers can determine the use of metaphor and metonymy, and Deignan, Littlemore, and Semino propose a systematic approach to this usage variation. The authors acknowledge research results coming from the two main strands of approaching metaphor and metonymy – (1) cognitivist approaches built around Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (e.g. Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Sperber & Wilson, 1995), and (2) approaches that focus on using metaphor in authentic communicative situations (e.g. Cameron, 2003; Charteris-Black, 2005). They, however, develop their own method of approaching metaphor in different discourses, deciding to concentrate on some word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions) used figuratively thus excluding so-called ‘implicit metaphors’, and crossing boundaries between parts of speech in looking for relevant basic meanings of different expressions (pp. 5–16). In addition, the authors employ a theory of genre comprising elements of two traditions – English for Specific Purposes (ESP) studies (e.g. Swales, 1990), and Systemic Functional approaches (e.g. Martin & Rose, 2003, 2008). The former is used due to the fact that it allows looking for specificity regarding language users, whereas the latter offers broad descriptions of functions and purposes at the level of lexis, grammar and phonology (pp. 40–41).

The book comprises 327 pages, divided into ten chapters. In the opening chapter (titled *Figurative language*, pp. 1–30), the authors present the book’s scope and aims, position the book in the context of current research on figurative language, and define their approach to metaphor and metonymy. Although it is not as “user friendly” as the first chapter, Chapter 2 (titled *A framework for analysing variation in figurative language use*, pp. 31–54) offers a description of the general framework which combines methods from discourse analysis and corpus linguistics so as to examine figurative language use in both spoken and written discourse – it deals with studies of text-types and metaphor, compiling, analysing and comparing corpora of text-types, as well as with genre and register. A coherent and comprehensive theoretical framework that hinges on the notions of genre, which according to the authors encompasses elements such as discourse community, purpose and staging, and register viewed in Hallidayan fashion (Halliday, 1978) as influenced by field, tenor and mode, would thus facilitate a closer comparison of existing studies of figurative language use, in particular metaphor and metonymy, as well as certain replicable analyses.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of the book are of the greatest interest to ESP scholars, as they investigate the way in which metaphor and metonymy are conveyed and understood in academic discourse (both written and spoken), political discourse, and scientific discourse, when checked against the established theoretical framework. Thus the third chapter, entitled *Using genre and register to analyse figurative language* (pp. 55–88), demonstrates the application of the proposed

framework in analysing figurative language in two previous studies on academic (Littlemore, 2001) and political discourse (Deignan & Semino, 2010), respectively. As far as this chapter is concerned, it should be pointed out that those dealing with ESP studies can benefit from the fact that the framework which involves genre and register allows us to describe figurative language more systematically and compare it across related text-types and audiences. More specifically, the authors' model of genre and register helps not only to stress the influence "of the contexts of culture and of situation" (p. 55) on the features of figurative language, but also to point out how figurative language both expresses and enables to construct relationship between discourse participants, which both may have important implications for ESP teaching and learning, particularly when learners are new and not familiar with the given discourse community.

In both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 the authors explore the use of figurative language in science, that is, how the use of figurative language varies in written and spoken discourse respectively, targeting two different discourse communities – scientists and knowledgeable non-scientists. In Chapter 4 titled *Figurative language use in specialized and popular scientific written texts* (pp. 89–127), Deignan, Littlemore, and Semino focus on written discourse, analysing figurative language use in both specialised and popular written scientific texts (two research articles and a *New Scientist* article, respectively), and providing insights into different discourse communities and the different roles of metaphors in the two datasets, specialist texts and popular texts. The chapter proves that the choices related to figurative language, no matter how close the datasets are regarding their content, reflect the differences between discourse communities – their aims, shared knowledge and values as well as assumptions. Thus, the authors establish that the popular scientific texts are more open to using figurative language and trading on persuasive function of metaphors than specialised scientific texts; these texts also exhibit greater syntactic and lexical flexibility and meaning specificity, which again needs to be taken into consideration in the process of the ESP material selection and utilisation as well as the overall course design. In the fifth chapter, *Figurative language in spoken academic discourse between expert and non-expert interlocutors* (pp. 128–166), we encounter an analysis of figurative language in spoken academic discourse related to a social science (management), tracking metaphor and metonymy in the exchanges between those who belong or do not belong to a discourse community (experts and non-experts), and noting how metaphorical meaning develops as discourse unfolds. The authors determined that in the peer exchange, metaphors and particularly metonymies are used to strengthen the relationship between expert interlocutors stemming from their shared background and knowledge; in the lecture given to non-expert outsider, on the other hand, metaphors and metonymies have primarily pedagogical function, which is in line with the perceived (lack of) knowledge of this discourse participant and the need to use various ways to signal the use of metaphor and metonymy.

The next four chapters are not related to ESP studies yet present additional instances of investigating figurative language within diverse genres and registers, and across different discourse communities. While Chapters 6 (pp. 167–190) and 7 (pp. 191–230) explore the types of figurative language used in institutional settings of nurseries and a children’s football club, Chapter 8 (pp. 231–266) studies a comparison between an original Shakespeare’s play (*Romeo and Juliet*) and its version adapted for secondary school pupils in terms of figurative language. The ninth chapter (pp. 267–304) focuses on the results of a study about the ways the patients with chronic pain communicate their pain using visual mode, which may be further linked to the studies of metaphor creativity and multimodality.

Naturally, in the final chapter (*Conclusion*, pp. 305–320), the authors summarise the results, paying special attention to the bonds existing among figurative language, genre, and register – the research we find in the book shows all the sensitivity of figurative language to different aspects of usage – the forms, functions and frequency of metaphor and metonymy highly depend on their environment – discourse community and the related specificities. The metaphorical domains themselves seem to be exploited differently from genre to genre, even when they employ similar topics and text-types.

On the whole, *Figurative Language, Genre and Register* indeed offers a compact framework for a thorough description of the use of metaphor and metonymy in different discourse communities. We may find the authors’ decision not to tackle a range of other forms of figurative language (irony, euphemism, hyperbole, etc.) debatable, and we may say that there are parts of the book that are partially inaccessible to those not familiar with the field, but we cannot deny that this publication is a great addition to the metaphor and metonymy literature. The fact that figurative language seems to vary across genres and registers and that this has been empirically confirmed may lead to a new wave of research that will involve other discourse communities, and perhaps other forms of figurative language, which may be of great importance to ESP/EAP researchers, as the approach developed in the book accounts for how figurative language is used and understood in actual contexts, with different frequencies among related genres and registers.

Figurative Language, Genre and Register is also likely to initiate new lines of research in ESP and Systemic Functional approaches. The authors have covered many aspects of tackling figurative language in the domain of English for Specific and Academic Purposes, which is why ESP scholars may see this book as an invitation to fill a research gap and start analysing metaphor and metonymy in areas related to different scientific discourses as well as academic and research settings, checking how diverse contexts and different types of boundaries between genres and discourse communities affect figurative language, and whether figurative language helps or obstructs communication in these environments. Deignan, Littlemore, and Semino draw on ESP approaches, as they serve as one of the elements of their understanding of genre, hence this book may serve as a new

paradigm for both qualitative and quantitative research in ESP domain pertaining to figurative language use and its variation at two main levels: the level of linguistic expression and the level of communicative function. At the end of the book the authors admit that “[i]n trying to answer the questions we started with, we have raised more questions that will need to be addressed in further research” (p. 319) – this very conclusion speaks volumes about how important this publication may be in the future to diverse audience: ESP and EAP scholars, to those working in the domains of cognitive, applied and corpus linguistics, as well as to all those who explore the use of figurative language in varied discourse contexts and communities.

[Review submitted 6 Apr 2015]

[Revised version accepted for publication 15 May 2015]

Reviewed by **DUŠAN STAMENKOVIĆ**
 Faculty of Philosophy and Center for Cognitive Sciences
 University of Niš
 Serbia
dusan.stamenkovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

References

- Cameron, L. (2003). *Metaphor in educational discourse*. London: Continuum.
- Charteris-Black, J. (2005). *Politicians and rhetoric: The persuasive power of metaphor*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deignan, A., & Semino, E. (2010). Corpus techniques for metaphor analysis. In L. Cameron, & R. Maslen (Eds.), *Metaphor analysis: Research practice in applied linguistics, social sciences and the humanities* (pp. 161-179). London: Equinox.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Littlemore, J. (2001). The use of metaphor in university lectures and the problems that it causes for overseas students. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 6(3), 333-349.
- Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2003). *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause*. London: Continuum.
- Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2008). *Genre relations: Mapping culture*. London: Equinox.
- Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication and cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.