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Book review

**Review of Breeze, Ruth and Carmen Llamas Saíz (eds.). 2020.
Metaphor in political conflict. Populism and discourse.
Navarra: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra (EUNSA).
ISBN 978-84-313-3467-3**

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Рецензия

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This volume presents a collection of six papers focused on metaphor in political discourse. This assortment of chapters is preceded by a very good introduction by Ruth Breeze, which provides readers with a comprehensive review of metaphor and its role in our conceptualization (and manipulation) of reality. As Breeze claims, it is this manipulative function by skillful orators which mainly rises

scholarly interest in metaphor in political discourse. Furthermore, this introductory chapter succeeds in rendering coherence to the whole volume.

The volume is divided into six independent chapters, which focus on metaphor in political discourse from different perspectives and methodological approaches. Chapter one by Jenni Räikkönen presents an interesting mixed-method analysis of six pro and anti-Brexit British political discourses. Despite the coincident use of some metaphors (e.g. journey) to represent the relationship between the UK and the EU, the author reveals how the same metaphor can be conveniently and differently exploited to construct the same reality in different ways. The chapter shows a well-designed and careful methodological approach. Furthermore, it pays attention not only to more innovative metaphors but also to more conventional ones in the belief that these are even more “powerful” in the perpetuation of certain “realities”, as they often pass inadvertently to the audience.

In Chapter two, Margaret Rasulo explores the vague albeit complex constructs of “peoplehood” and “the people” in the political scenarios of the post-2008 financial crisis, where populism started its increasing rise in the political arena worldwide. To that end, Rasulo analyzes the speeches of four elected world leaders: Obama, Trump, Cameron and May, adopting Musolff’s (2006, 2016, 2019) notion of “metaphor scenarios”, whose usefulness she justifies by means of her own insightful analysis. As Räikkönen in Chapter one, Rasulo also employs a mixed-method approach; more specifically, she uses Sketch Engine’s word sketch and keyword extraction functions. The methodology is not only exhaustive but also presented in clear, visually appealing figures. As for the qualitative analysis, Rasulo combines Halliday and Matthiesen (2004) transitivity theory, Appraisal Theory (Martin and White, 2005) and the Social Actor Network (van Leeuwen, 1996). The combination of these three theoretical frameworks and the quantitative analysis render extremely thought-provoking results. Especially interesting is the fact that Obama’s and Cameron’s speeches seem to resemble each other as much as Trump’s and May’s do. Thus, while the first two leaders (re)construct “the people” as “endeavoring individuals”, Trump and May represent them as “yielding collectivities”, hence adopting narratives alike those of populist leaders. However, one of the chapter’s limitations, as acknowledged by the author herself, is the lack of a deeper cross-cultural analysis.

Closely related to the previous chapter, Chapter three by Carola Schoor approaches populist versus non-populist politicians’ use of metaphor. However, and as opposed to the prior studies, the author limits herself (admittedly so) to the in-depth analysis of only three speeches by three different politicians: the populist Dutch Geert Wilders, Boris Johnson and Barack Obama. An interesting aspect is the author’s distinction of five focus elements – i.e. the people, the political elite, democracy/government, politics and the political context as a whole. However, she does not really explain further how these five elements were identified and whether all the speeches need to include all of them or merely part of them. Furthermore,

each of these five elements can be –according to the author – represented by a set of dichotomies. For example, the government can be presented as corrupt or good, as fake or respectable. Intuitively, these dichotomies seem rather simplistic and may hide more complex representations, but also overlappings. For example, Schoor acknowledges that the use of inclusive “we” is a mix between a populist and elitist style, which seems rather counterintuitive. Despite these limitations, another interesting aspect of this chapter is the inclusion of other political leaders that are not Anglosaxon, as most of the chapters seem to focus on British or North American leaders in detriment of other cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately, some important limitations can be observed in this chapter. For example, the author seems to overquote her own work, especially the forthcoming one on the same speeches, which renders this study somehow preliminary and incomplete. Furthermore, the context where the three speeches under scrutiny take place is not really comparable. Thus, Obama addresses the people of America as a nation, which may explain why he adopts what the author defines as a “pluralist” style. In contrast, Johnson’s selected speech is just addressed at his own party – not the UK as a whole. Such a different audience may indeed have an effect on how the speech – and its corresponding metaphors –is constructed.

Chapter four by Lorella Viola also addresses populism by analyzing the 2018 end-of-the-year Facebook speech by Italian politician Matteo Salvini. As in the previous chapter, the analysis is qualitative given the limited size of the data. Viola’s chapter is interesting in as much as she introduces social media in the picture and focuses on the Italian political context rather than the Anglo-Saxon one. She also provides a really comprehensive and updated review of the literature, which makes this chapter particularly appealing to those working on social media and populism. As other authors in the volume, Viola also resorts to Musolf’s (2016) “scenario” approach. For example, one of her most interesting results is the presentation of Salvini as a modern Robin Hood, which activates this whole “scenario”. Furthermore, her paper reflects insightful and well illustrated parallelisms between Trump’s and Salvini’s rethorical strategies, even multimodal ones such as the choice of Salvini’s party logo, which closely resembles Trump’s.

In Chapter five, Liudmila Arcimavičienė approaches political conflict and foreign policy by analyzing Trump’s and Rouhani’s narratives in the 2017 and 2018 UN general assembly speeches. She also includes the speech given by the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov on the grounds that Russia may be seen as a mediator between the US and Iran. However, this choice somehow ‘imbalance’ the sample as it would have been more coherent to consider Putin’s speeches so as to have a more comparable dataset. The author’s main aim is to find out how these three countries, foreign policies and conflict scenarios are metaphorically represented as well as discovering the presence (if any) of populist features. She hypothesizes (p. 116) that “Presidents, being direct representatives of their nations, will use more populist features in comparison to the Minister of

Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, who will avoid speaking on behalf of the Russian people to the same extent as the Presidents of the US and Iran.” As already mentioned, this hypothesis is an obvious result of the imbalance in the dataset and could have been easily rejected simply by including Putin’s speeches in the picture, especially as the author has already studied them herself in the context of the Ukrainian crisis (see Arcimavičienė, 2020). One of the assets of the chapter, however, is the author’s updated review of the features of populist discourse and its combination with Maynard’s (2015) semantic categories of violence. Furthermore, her analysis is extensively illustrated with examples from the different speeches, which allow the reader to grasp the ‘essence’ of the different leaders’ metaphorical strategies.

The final chapter in the volume, co-authored by Ricardo-María Jiménez-Yáñez and Ruth Breeze, focuses on the Catalanian attempt at independence back in 2017 and how this was metaphorically represented in the media. More specifically, their study focuses on the editorials from four major newspapers, two based in Madrid and two in Barcelona, covering these eleven days, when Spanish public opinion concentrated on Catalonia. As other chapters in the volume, the authors resort to Musolff’s (2016) notion of ‘metaphor scenario’, particularly suitable for their dataset. Methodologically, the corpus employed is well balanced and highly representative of the Spanish public opinion, as it includes 44 editorials (11 per newspaper) of four of the most widespread and respected papers in the country. Adopting a qualitative approach, the authors identify the most frequent metaphor scenarios employed in their corpus, illustrating each of them with a wide variety of examples. Not surprisingly, most of the metaphor scenarios evaluate the Catalanian crisis negatively. However, it is interesting that the authors also include what they term “more neutral evaluation”. This is slightly more arguably, as it is difficult to see how evaluation can actually be neutral, especially when expressed by means of metaphor (Semino, 2008; Spilioti, 2018). However, the use of more fossilized metaphors such as “LIFE IS A JOURNEY” may render this illusion of “neutrality”, which might explain why the authors include this metaphor among neutral ones. Arguably, nonetheless, it depends on where this journey takes the voyager. For example, some of their examples depict the Catalanian crisis as a journey towards an abyss (which is clearly negative) or in need to be put the brakes on, which presupposes a negative evaluation too. Except for this aspect, the chapter presents a clear and insightful review of how these eleven days were conceptualized in the Spanish media, hence helping to shape the public opinion on the Catalanian “issue”.

In general terms, the volume is interesting and presents a varied albeit cohesive collection of papers on metaphor and political discourse. Interestingly, all the authors are female, which could be seen both as a strength and a drawback. As a reader, I particularly valued the fact that the volume includes not only Anglo-Saxon but also other political leaders (both European but also non-European), which enriches the collection by providing a cross-cultural approach. However, there is a

noticeable absence of papers centered on other political and cultural contexts such as the African, Chinese or Korean ones, just to mention a few. The volume reads easily and smoothly. In sum, this volume provides a sound collection which will indeed be of interest to any scholar working on metaphor and/or political discourse.

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Carmen MAÍZ-ARÉVALO obtained her PhD in English Linguistics in 2001. She has worked at the department of English Linguistics at the Complutense University of Madrid since 2006, where she currently holds a position of Associate Professor. She teaches Pragmatics, TEFL Methodology and Intercultural Studies. With regard to her research interests, her fields are pragmatics, intercultural pragmatics and computer-mediated communication. She has published many articles and given numerous talks in national and international conferences in these fields.

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Сведения об авторе:

Кармен МАИС-АРЕВАЛО получила докторскую степень по английской лингвистике в 2001 г. Она работает на кафедре английского языка и лингвистики Мадридского университета Комплутенсе с 2006 г., в настоящее время в должности доцента. Преподает ряд дисциплин, в том числе прагматику, методы преподавания английского языка как иностранного и межкультурную коммуникацию. В сферу ее научных интересов также входят межкультурная прагматика и компьютерно-опосредованная коммуникация. Является автором многочисленных статей, неоднократно выступала на национальных и международных конференциях с докладами по этим дисциплинам.

Контактная информация

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