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Review of Jeannette Littlemore, Sarah Turner and Penelope Tuck. 2023. *Creative Metaphor, Evaluation, and Emotion in Conversations about Work*. London: Routledge. 74 pp. eBook ISBN: 978-1-003-26286-2

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Metaphor has traditionally been viewed as a literary device, but Lakoff and Johnson's research on metaphor in the 1980s (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) expanded our understanding of metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson proposed that the human conceptual system is metaphorical in nature and demonstrated that people comprehend the more abstract and complex aspects of experience by comparing them to more concrete, embodied things. Considering that emotion is a basic component of the human condition, it comes as no surprise that it plays an important role in contemporary approaches to decision-making, interpersonal relationships, among other areas. Metaphor is commonly used in everyday life to conceptualize abstract emotions in terms of concrete perceptions. For instance, he *brought me down* with his remarks (SAD IS DOWN). It is as a result of this process that metaphor is found in conventional language, and since Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor has indeed been found in a wide range of communicative contexts outside of literary works (e.g. Musolff 2016, Littlemore 2019, Taylor 2021, Zibin & Solopova 2024). Moreover, "the fact that metaphor has a strong physical and visceral basis renders it particularly conducive to the sharing of emotional experiences" (p. 2; see also Kövecses 2000, Kövecses et al. 2024). Metaphors function as potent linguistic devices that enrich language's expressiveness while communicating intricate ideas and emotions, and they appear frequently in literary works, media platforms, and historical periods, influencing how we comprehend

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diverse subjects (Paul et al. 2026). Additionally, emotion and evaluation are closely linked (Martin & White 2005), and it has been suggested that evaluation is often expressed by metaphors, and that metaphor often performs some sort of evaluative function which is striking and creative (Fuoli et al. 2022). However, there have been few studies exploring the use of metaphor to evaluate emotionally charged personal experiences. Addressing this gap, the book further explores the link between metaphor, emotion and evaluation within a realistic workplace.

The book *Creative Metaphor, Evaluation, and Emotion in Conversations about Work* is organized and written in a reader-friendly manner. Structurally, the entire work is divided into an introduction, a methodology section, a discussion, and a conclusion.

The introductory chapter consists of eight sections to illustrate the rationale for the research. Before formally introducing each section, the authors provide an extract from an interview with a senior British Civil Servant, in which the interviewee presents his evaluations of his current situation, such as work-related goals, challenges, and impediments. He expresses a strongly negative evaluation using metaphors. This extract serves to introduce the formal content. Then, in the first section, the authors shed light on the pivotal role played by metaphor in the sharing of emotional experience, which has been explored in both previous literature on metaphor and in the evaluation and emotion-related literature. In the next two sections, the authors discuss two general questions about the relationship between metaphor and evaluative communication. The fourth section is about previous studies of metaphors used in the workplace to understand a range of organizational cultures. An important comment on the nature of creative metaphors is presented in the fifth section, in which the authors review the previous studies of categories of creative metaphor. In the sixth part, the context of this study is presented. Next, four detailed research questions guiding the study, such as “To what extent is metaphor used to express evaluation in conversations about work?” and “Is the use of metaphor more likely to be associated with positive or negative evaluation?”, are presented. The last section is the references.

Chapter 2 “‘I’m surprised anybody can hear anything going on for the crashing of all of these elephants in the room’: Methodology and taxonomy of creative metaphor types” details the study’s methodology and taxonomy of creative metaphor types. To answer the research questions, the authors conducted interviews with 31 current and former senior UK civil servants. The authors adopted Cameron and Maslen’s (2010) approach to metaphor identification to capture particular experiences that were described through metaphor. Ten metaphor categories were identified in this study, such as “eating and food” and “fighting, war and physical attack, and the military.” After that, they further describe the procedure for identifying creative uses of metaphor. The authors claimed that the term “creative uses of metaphor” rather than simply “creative metaphor” was used in this study because the authors defined “creative” metaphor use as encompassing both novel comparisons between unrelated domains (e.g., soapy sponges and challenges) and unconventional applications of conventional comparisons between typically related

domains. Using concrete examples, the authors presented different ways in which the interviewees made creative use of metaphor, such as “creating a ‘new’ metaphorical mapping” and “introducing a new collocation”, to name a few. Further, the metaphors were coded in line with whether they expressed a positive evaluation, a negative evaluation, a mixed/ambiguous evaluation, or no evaluation. The chapter ends with a conclusion and references.

Chapter 3 “ ‘She did the traditional sort of chuck it all up in the air, so get all the deckchairs and throw them up in the air, cause chaos for a year and a half and then leave’: To what extent are creative metaphors used to perform evaluation and how do creative and conventional metaphors relate to one another? ” explores in more detail how exactly interviewees used creative and conventional metaphors to evaluate their personal working experiences. Specifically, based on ten categories of metaphor in Chapter 2, the authors investigated how each category was used creatively or conventionally to express various evaluations and examined the relationship between these metaphorical uses. It was found that creative metaphor was used relatively more often to perform evaluation and was more likely than conventional metaphor to express a negative or mixed/ambiguous evaluation. Moreover, the results of metaphor categories and the types of evaluation they expressed revealed that categories with the most negative evaluations were health and injury, general actions and experiences, as well as fighting, war, physical attacks, and the military. Next, the authors provided a qualitative elaboration of the metaphors that were used in each of these categories with specific examples to illustrate how metaphors were used to describe and evaluate implicit workplace cultures. For instance, eating and food metaphors were used to perform a positive evaluation, such as “If you’re offering them a good, big, *crunchy* job.” This characterization suggests that the job is both positive and challenging, implying it could be engaging and satisfying, much like a food texture that one can sink their teeth into. Finally, the authors briefly summarize the chapter, which is followed by the references.

Chapter 4 is the conclusion. The authors conclude the book by summarizing and reiterating the main findings of the research and discussing its potential applications and implications. However, some limitations of the study are also presented.

Aside from its excellent writing and logical organization, this book also boasts the following noteworthy strengths. First, the most impressive aspect of this book lies in its arrangement. On the one hand, at the micro level, each chapter of the book (except the concluding chapter) follows a sound logical structure, from introduction to chapter summary, and the step-by-step arrangement also increases readability. Additionally, the titles of each chapter are chosen from the metaphorical language used by the interviewees which arouse readers’ interest. On the other hand, at the macro level, the book’s organization follows the logic from the research rationale and questions through the methodology, analysis, discussion and conclusion, which helps readers put theory into practice. Second, from a theoretical perspective, compared with previous works, one of the striking merits of this book is that it

provides a more nuanced account of the links between metaphor, creativity and evaluation, especially for the relationship between creative metaphor use and negative evaluation, which further deepens the theoretical construction of the evaluative nature of metaphor. Practically speaking, this book is highly recommended to researchers interested in better understanding metaphor, creativity, evaluation, and workplace cultures because of its strong connection to practice. Based on the real interviews, this book outlines ten categories of metaphors used in workplace communication and clarifies differences in evaluative function between creative and conventional metaphors. It is an excellent example of showing the practical applicability of metaphor research in contexts ranging from written discourse to real-world research settings. Furthermore, another highlight of this book concerns its relevance to society. As the authors note, the metaphor analysis of this study offers fascinating perspectives on how senior civil servants perceive their work, potentially fostering understanding among individuals from other sectors about the nature of Civil Service roles. Lastly, in terms of methodology, this book provides readers with a clear procedure for identifying metaphor and the taxonomy of creative metaphor types in this study offers “a nuanced and fine-grained account of the ways in which metaphor is used creatively in authentic discourse” (p. 14).

However, there are some limitations in this book. As the authors note, the limitations include the relatively small number of participants and the single research setting. In addition, the book could have been even better if the following aspect had received further consideration. It concerns the categories of metaphor in the data. Some categories of metaphor are overly general, which leads to unclear boundaries between different categories (e.g. actions and experiences were not included in other categories).

Notwithstanding these minor flaws, this book is a thought-provoking and valuable study. Its authentic data, detailed metaphor-identification procedures, logical explanations, and intriguing findings endow this book with great uniqueness and originality. To sum up, this book provides us with an in-depth investigation and analysis of “metaphors we live by” and metaphor as a powerful tool for emotional evaluation, expanding the research scope of metaphor, emotion and evaluative discourse and providing inspiration for the study of interactions between metaphor, society, and communication. As such, it comes highly recommended to researchers with an interest in these fields.

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