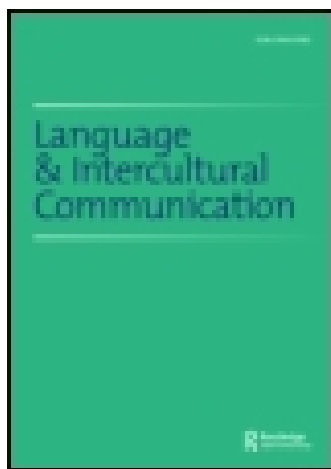


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Metaphor and intercultural communication

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BOOK REVIEW

Metaphor and intercultural communication, edited by Andreas Musolff, Fiona MacArthur and Giulio Pagani, London, Bloomsbury, 2014, 248 pp., £75.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-4411-6547-3

Metaphor and intercultural communication is one of the first volumes to dedicate itself to the study of metaphor across cultures. It represents a multidisciplinary range of studies with a focus on conceptual metaphor approaching the field of intercultural communication. In the foreword, the volume is said to ‘stand out as a major new effort to provide a basis for the scientific study of a fledgling field’, and its main aim is to ‘provid[e] some foundational work for a potential new scientific discipline’ (pp. xiv–xv). In the following review, I will argue that the book is a valuable resource for scholars interested in metaphor, but that it does not quite achieve the above-mentioned aim with regards to intercultural communication.

The introduction to the book, written by its editors Andreas Musolff, Fiona MacArthur and Giulio Pagani, gives some examples of metaphor in intercultural communication, for instance the differing interpretations of the body metaphor for a nation-state among British, American and Chinese students and differing connotations of ‘face’ in Spanish and English. In the foreword, Zoltán Kövecses states that the book ‘represent[s] efforts to deal with the challenge of handling’ cultural hybridisation, which is defined as the fact that we ‘constantly interact, and are confronted, with language, signs, objects, people, ideas, forms of behaviour and so on that come from other cultures’ (p. xiv) without necessarily knowing it, and the ‘human issues’ arising from those challenges. Cultural hybridisation, it is argued, should be ‘the main topic of intercultural communication as a discipline’ (p. xiv). Therefore, the focus of the book is on the topic of metaphor in what are said to be ‘some of the best-known cases of intercultural communication’ (p. xiv), namely ‘Metaphor in translation’, ‘Universal versus culture-specific aspects of metaphor’ and ‘Metaphor, globalisation and intercultural communication’. It is into these three parts that the book is structured.

The first part consists of four chapters. In ‘The evolution of translation trainees’ subjective theories: An empirical study of metaphors about translation’, Celia Martín de León and Marisa Presas critically examine the development of trainees’ conceptualisation of translation, from the simplifying view of ‘translation as transfer’ to a richer conceptualisation of what happens in translation. Next, Dafni Papdoudi investigates translations of conceptual metaphors of technology and their expressions from English to Greek in ‘Translation of metaphor in popular technology discourse’, arguing that attitudes and values from the English-speaking culture may thus be imported into Greek culture and language. Xia Xiang and Binghan Zheng’s chapter ‘Revisiting the function of background information in sight translating metaphor: An analysis of translation product and process’ discusses evidence that providing sight translators with background information can make their translations more

effective, mainly by allowing translators to understand metaphorical meanings more quickly and accurately in the reading phase. Finally in this first part of the book, Claudia Förster Hegrenæs' 'Conceptual metaphors in translation: A corpus-based study on quantitative differences between translated and non-translated English', analyses the quantitative distribution of the TIME IS MOTION metaphor in a corpus of translated and non-translated text, showing that the metaphor is overrepresented in the former.

The second part begins with an analysis by Anna Ogarkova and Cristina Soriano of the representation of ANGER concepts in English, Russian and Spanish and cross-cultural differences in its evaluation ('Variation within universals: The "metaphorical profile" approach to the study of ANGER concepts in English, Russian and Spanish'), which points out a range of cross-cultural commonalities but also divergences. Their chapter also proposes a new analytic method, entitled the 'metaphorical profile' approach. In 'Conceptual metaphor in intercultural communication between speakers of Aboriginal English and Australian English', Farzad Sharifian analyses differences in conceptual systems in Aboriginal and Australian English, arguing that ignorance of the former on the part of non-Aboriginal Australians continues to lead to miscommunication, with speakers of Aboriginal English at the disadvantage. To end this part of the volume, Sadia Belkhir compares proverbs drawing on dog behaviour in English and Kabyle in 'Cultural influences on the use of DOG concepts in English and Kabyle proverbs', concluding that 'dog' is used with largely negative connotations in both cultures and discussing the influence of the Great Chain of Being theory across cultures.

The final part of the book begins with the chapter 'English idioms borrowed and reshaped: The emergence of a hybrid metaphor in Spanish' by José L. Oncins-Martínez, who draws on extensive corpora to show the emergence in Spanish of a hybrid metaphor, proceeding from contact between a native idiom and a calqued expression from English, arguing that the hybrid metaphor may be in the process of replacing the idiom and the calque. This is followed by Jasper Vandenberghe, Patrick Goethals and Geert Jacobs's paper "'Economic conquistadors conquer new worlds": Metaphor scenarios in English-language newspaper headlines on Spanish foreign direct investment'. The authors explore the use of discourse metaphors in English-language media to refer to Spanish foreign investment actions based on Spain's colonial past, followed by a discussion of the negative intercultural practices of that use. Nadežda Silaški and Tatjana Durović examine the use of the JOURNEY metaphor scenario in Serbian and EU discourse to refer to Serbia's accession to EU membership, arguing that it serves to convey a sense of progress to the electorate while masking the incompetence of Serbian leaders ('One step forward, two steps back: Conceptualising Serbia's EU accession in Serbian and EU discourse'). The final paper, 'Metaphor and self/other representations: A study on British and Romanian headlines on migration' by Mariana Neagu and Gabriela Iuliana Colipcă-Ciobanu, analyses the representation of Romanian (im)migration in newspaper discourse to show how prevailing ideological conceptualisation shapes the current discussion about inner-European migration.

The issues of metaphor and conceptualisation are excellently addressed and defined in every chapter of this book, giving the volume an overall coherence and allowing the reader to follow the diverse authors' trains of thought easily. An especial advantage of the book is that most chapters are sufficiently accessible and succinct to be readable by a wide audience of both scholars and interested non-scholarly readers.

The internal coherence of the book could have been improved by more consistent editing. For instance, the ‘standard practice’ to underline words that are used metaphorically, applied to an example (p. 8) in the Introduction, is not applied in any of the chapters, where italics or single quotation marks are used instead. Martín de León vehemently (and rightly) criticises the simplifying effect of viewing translation as transfer (pp. 29–31), while the other chapters on metaphor in translation use exactly that metaphor to define translating as ‘transfer[ring] meaning from one language to another’ (p. 73, also 75) or adopt Schäffner’s (2004, p. 1253) formulation about ‘transferring (metaphors) from one language and culture to another’ (p. 53), without even problematising the notion or at least addressing Martín de León’s discussion of it. The fact that there is no cross-referencing at all (e.g. ‘see X, this volume’) may have been an editorial policy, but such referencing would have given the volume a more unanimous and coherent feel.

The final part of the book makes an excellent and timely contribution to some of the major ongoing discussions in Europe. Noteworthy here are the papers by Silaški and Durović and by Neagu and Colipcă-Ciobanu. The former contains a corpus-based analysis of the use of the JOURNEY metaphor scenario as a discourse representation of the EU accession of Serbia. The data consists of articles from Serbian daily and weekly newspapers and of press releases and official documents from the EU (p. 187). The authors argue convincingly that the use of ‘step’ and ‘traffic light’ metaphors are partly to blame for the negative impression among Serbians concerning their possible membership in the EU. The paper by Neagu and Colipcă-Ciobanu shows that British and Romanian newspapers make use of the metaphors of MOVING WATER, CONFLICT, SLAVE TRADE, HOUSE and HUNT to refer to Romanian (im)migration to the UK. The authors concede that those metaphors may simply be clichés, but their argument that the use of such metaphors do not help the public opinion about migration is nevertheless sound.

Researchers interested in language contact through translation will find most interesting the methodologically and scholarly excellent analysis in Oncins-Martínez’s paper, who traces the coinage of the Spanish expression ‘estar la pelota en el tejado de alguien’ to a case of language contact between the long-established idiom ‘estar la pelota en el tejado’ and the similar loan translation from English ‘la pelota está en el campo de alguien’, which is itself replacing the native expression. This is a convincing challenge of the ‘notion that a coherent metaphorical scenario and/or conceptual mapping will motivate any particular instance of metaphorical language use’ (p. 162).

The focus on the phenomenon of hybridisation that is singled out in the foreword is also well achieved and provides a wealth of information on current topics. The book is a welcome example of the fruitfulness of the interdisciplinary study of a research topic (in this case, metaphor), which is approached from a multitude of disciplines and perspectives and discusses a wide variety of languages. Scholars working on any aspect of metaphor will find a wealth of information and avenues for further research in this direction.

In contrast to that, however, the groundwork for the book’s second tenet, intercultural communication, remains rather thin. The description in the foreword of intercultural communication as a ‘new scientific discipline’ and ‘a fledgling field’ (pp. xiv–xv) is somewhat questionable, given that the field has received continuous attention in the form of readers, introductions and resource books for over two

decades (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 1983/2003; Lustig & Koester, 1993/2012; Neuliep, 2000/2015; Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 1972/2009). But even if we accept that description, the introduction to the volume does little to define intercultural communication and authors rarely contextualise their findings with existing research in their particular sub-discipline. There are hardly any references to basic literature in the field, such as the ground-breaking work by Landis et al. (1983/2003), Lustig and Koester (1993/2012) and Scollon and Scollon (2000), or current introductions such as Novinger (2001), Kotthoff and Spencer-Oatey (2007) or Piller (2011). A minor negative point resulting from this is some terminological inconsistency in using ‘cross-cultural communication’ when in fact ‘intercultural communication’ is meant (p. 86) and vice versa (“‘intercultural’ differences’, p. 187; ‘intercultural comparison’, p. 197).

While scholars working in intercultural communication will certainly find many interesting insights in this book, the focus does seem to be heavily on the issue of metaphor. With regards to the aim of the book to help establish intercultural communication as a discipline, it is often not clear how the chapters play their part in this. In parts I and II, the authors either do not mention the significance of their results for the field of intercultural communication at all, or they do so in a final paragraph (p. 31, 49) that does not really feel like it was conceived from the outset as part of the paper (a glance at the index shows that the term ‘intercultural communication’ only occurs five times in the main body of the book). Attempts to make such connections do not extend beyond vague and opaque allusions to, for instance, the ‘intercultural *potential* of discourse metaphors [...] in media discourse commenting on an intercultural (business) event’ (p. 180, emphasis mine) or an examination of the ‘intercultural *character*’ of a metaphor scenario in discourse (p. 187, emphasis mine). Authors adopt a wide range of frameworks and methodologies with regards to metaphor conceptualisation and identification, but hardly any with regards to intercultural communication. Volumes such as Holliday, Hyde, and Kullman (2010), Neuliep (2000/2015), Samovar et al. (1972/2009) or Snell-Hornby, Jettmarová, and Kaindl (1995) provide a wealth of frameworks and approaches to, among other things, identity, the cultural context, othering, non-verbal and verbal codes and representation which would have been applicable here. The studies are well contextualised within metaphor research, but rarely within intercultural communication.

Given the book’s title and the inspiring examples of intercultural communication given in the introduction, it is somewhat surprising that it is only halfway through the book that we encounter the first paper that discusses a case of actual intercultural communication: Sharifian’s chapter on contact between Aboriginal and Australian English speakers. Here we find both an account of cross-cultural divergence in the conceptualisations of land, rain, medicine and aspects of nature, as well as a discussion of the effects of that divergence in intercultural settings, such as the puzzlement of a non-Aboriginal speaker when encountering the expression ‘footfalcon’ (meaning ‘traveling on foot, especially long distances’, p. 125) because of their inability to understand the metaphor.

Apart from this chapter, most of the contributions in this book conduct language contact or cross-cultural conceptualisation research that may influence an intercultural meeting, or intralingual research. While knowledge of the findings presented here can certainly be beneficial in actual intercultural settings, more papers in the vein of Sharifian’s or the cases mentioned in the introduction, discussing the effects,

dangers and possibilities of cross-cultural conceptualisation differences in intercultural settings or strategies that speakers use to deal with them would have given the book a stronger profile to address its aim of providing foundational work for the field of intercultural communication. As it stands, the majority of the studies in this book are ‘comparisons of communication across cultures’ rather than studies of ‘communication between people from different cultures’ (Gudykunst (2003); see also Scollon and Scollon (2001) for an overview of some sub-disciplines of intercultural communication).

In all, the book presents a great collection of studies of metaphor and conceptualisation with implications for intercultural research. Those implications are interesting and relevant, but may also have featured in books on translation studies, contrastive discourse analysis or cross-cultural pragmatics. That is not necessarily negative, as it proves the above-mentioned appeal of the contributions to a wider audience in linguistics in general. But to focus on what happens when there is actual contact between speakers is something that could have been a unique feature of this volume. Unfortunately, it is something that is not quite achieved because most of the authors do not extend their discussion beyond the potential of contact between speakers of the languages involved. The problem is perhaps best defined by the editors themselves:

research into the relationship between metaphorical conceptualisation and culture has tended to focus more on describing and comparing the motivation of metaphorical expressions used by different cultural groups, rather than what actually happens when speakers with differing cultural conceptualisations come together and interact with each others’ linguistic productions. (pp. 4–5)

Sadly, this book does not remedy that condition either.

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