

Nacey, S. 2013. *Metaphors in Learner English* [Metaphor in Language, Cognition, and Communication 2]. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Only the second volume in the 'Metaphor in Language, Cognition, and Communication' series published by John Benjamins, Susan Nacey's book examines metaphor in learner English, and more precisely English as produced by Norwegian learners. It relies on the Norwegian component of the International Corpus of Learner English (Granger et al. 2009), as well as a reference corpus of native (British) English, taken from the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays. In order to extract metaphors from these two corpora, Nacey adopts a procedure initially developed by Gerard Steen and colleagues, and referred to in the book as MIP(VU), a combination of MIP, the Metaphor Identification Procedure, and MIPVU, a refined and expanded version of MIP (VU stands for VU University Amsterdam, where the procedure was developed). Using the extracted material as a basis for her analysis, Nacey seeks to answer a number of research questions, some of them concerning objective measures of metaphoricity (such as the frequency of metaphors in learner and native English), others tackling more subjective issues (like metaphorical creativity), and a last group dealing with theoretical and methodological considerations.

The book is organized around three parts and eight chapters, plus an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter provides a brief but very clear overview of the vast domain of metaphor research, underlining the three dimensions of metaphor, namely language, thought and communication, and showing how it compares to related concepts like metonymy and simile. The perspective is clearly that of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, according to which metaphor is a pervasive form of language (and also an intrinsic part of our conceptual system) rather than a 'detachable poetic ornament' (p. 10). Given the applied nature of the investigation, the chapter also includes a section on metaphoric competence, which shows that pedagogical applications in the field have been few and far between, and that the focus has mainly been on learners' comprehension, not production, of metaphors. The pedagogical discussion is taken further in chapter 2, which examines the role of linguistic metaphor in European education, before zooming in on the Norwegian context. As a way of

approaching what happens in language classrooms, Nacey has decided to scrutinize the Council of Europe's (2001) Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It turns out that there are merely three occurrences of the word 'metaphor' in the framework, of which two are metalinguistic uses aimed at explaining certain concepts. The third and only relevant occurrence of the term is part of the description of lexical competence, which is said to include the knowledge of (among other things) 'phrasal idioms, often: semantically opaque, frozen metaphors' (Council of Europe 2001: 110) – a use that refers to a very specific meaning of 'metaphor' and leaves aside a significant part of metaphorical language. This lack of information about metaphors in the CEFR (and its Norwegian version) suggests that metaphorical language has a limited role in the language classroom, with the possible exception of more idiomatic expressions. The second chapter ends with an overview of the language situation in Norway and a discussion of the debatable status of English in Norway, somewhere in-between a foreign and a second language.

The second part of the book is entirely devoted to the technique of identification of metaphors, with an introduction to the development of the procedure in chapter 3, a description of the procedure as it was applied by Nacey in chapter 4, and an evaluation of the procedure in chapter 5. The origin of the technique is to be found in the work of the Praggeljaz group (an acronym based on the researchers' first initials), who first proposed a way of systematizing the identification of metaphors. This method developed and came to be known as MIP, before being expanded into the so-called MIPVU. There are small differences between these three variants, which are presented in detail in chapter 3. When Nacey started identifying metaphors in her corpus data, MIP was already evolving into MIPVU, but a fully developed version of the latter was not yet available. As a result, she relied on a procedure that did not coincide exactly with either of the two variants (hence the name MIP(VU)). Because of this, it was necessary for Nacey to clearly explain what the features of her own application of the procedure were, which she does in chapter 4. MIP(VU) is made up of four main steps, each of which is described in turn. The first step consists in reading the whole text in order to understand its general meaning. Then, each lexical unit in the text has to be identified (a process that is normally referred to as tokenization in corpus linguistics). This is usually unproblematic, except

for phrasal verbs, polywords (e.g. *of course*), compounds and proper nouns consisting of more than one word. Strict criteria are adopted to classify these as one or several lexical units. The third step represents the core of the identification process and is divided into four stages: (1) establish the meaning of each word in context; (2) establish the basic meaning of the word, relying on dictionaries and, when necessary, etymology; (3) determine whether the meaning identified in (1) and that identified in (2) are sufficiently distinct from each other; and if so, (4) decide whether the two meanings are related by some form of comparison. In the fourth step of the procedure, the lexical units whose basic and contextual meanings have been judged as being sufficiently distinct from each other but related by some form of comparison are identified as (linguistic) metaphors. MIP(VU) can be applied to learner language, as explained in chapter 5, and despite some drawbacks (like the fact that some steps may be challenging and that the whole procedure is very time-consuming), it is presented as a transparent, reliable and replicable method to identify metaphor in discourse.

The third (and last) part of the book presents and discusses the findings of the corpus study. In chapter 6, the focus is on the quantitative findings. Contrary to what one may have expected, Norwegian learners are shown to use more linguistic metaphors than native speakers. In both cases, however, the results are interpreted as evidence of the ubiquity of metaphors in language, with a proportion of 18% in the non-native corpus and 16.7% in the native corpus. The two corpora are then compared according to the word classes that are most likely to be used metaphorically. The most striking finding, and one that is common to the two corpora, is that prepositions are strongly associated with metaphorical language – which is why Nacey decided to devote a whole chapter to them. The quantitative analysis also includes figures regarding the degree of conventionality of metaphors. Novel metaphors appear to be rare in comparison with entrenched metaphors, especially in native English. The next chapter is more qualitatively oriented, with its focus on metaphorical creativity. Examining metaphors that belong to an open word class, the author seeks to determine whether learners' metaphorical language can be recognized as being creative in certain contexts. She identifies a number of cases in which metaphors seem to be deliberate, and hence possibly creative, such as those 'flagged' by explicit lexical markers (like *in a way* or *sort of*) and those accompanied by scare quotes.

To account for the remaining novel metaphors, Nacey suggests some possible causes, including transfer from the mother tongue (a plausible explanation for about one third of the novel metaphors in the learner corpus) and misspelling. She however admits that it is very difficult to distinguish between deficiency and (acceptable) difference when considering non-conventional metaphors. In the chapter devoted to prepositions, a comparison is drawn between the native and non-native corpora with respect to the frequency of individual prepositions used metaphorically and their entrenched or novel status. In addition, 'unusual' preposition uses in the learner corpus were translated into Norwegian with a view to establishing the degree of congruence between English and Norwegian, and assessing the possible influence of learners' mother tongue. One of the findings of this analysis is 'the marked predominance of L1 transfer as a potential source of unconventional prepositions' (p. 226). The chapter ends with two case studies on the prepositions *to* and *on*.

Nacey's book is outstanding on several accounts. The first feature that makes it 'stand out' in the field of metaphor research is that it examines a learner language variety. This is in contrast with the previous literature that has mainly focused on native, rather than non-native, varieties of language. Another notable feature is that the study relies on corpus data. Admittedly, corpus-based approaches to metaphorical language are not new (cf. Deignan 2005 or Stefanowitsch and Gries 2006), but they are far from being the rule and, moreover, Nacey's study has this specificity that it is more accurately described as 'corpus-driven' than as 'corpus-based'. Instead of starting from a selection of words or expressions that the researcher knows or expects to be used metaphorically, as is often the case in corpus studies of metaphors, this investigation looks at every word in the corpus in an attempt to identify all the metaphorical language there is to be found. In order to do so, Nacey adopts the Metaphor Identification Procedure, but instead of applying it blindly, she truly makes it her own – partly out of necessity since the technique was still under construction when she used it. She takes a critical approach to the procedure, thinks about the different options, justifies each choice she makes and relies on her own experience to revisit the model and consider its future developments. While this is laudable and undoubtedly contributes to refined insights into metaphorical language, it has two slightly unfortunate consequences. The

first one is that, provided with a description of the original procedure, the procedure as it was developed by the VU research team, and the procedure as it was applied by Nacey, the reader may sometimes be at a loss to know (or remember) which criteria were used in this particular investigation. At the end of chapter 4, for example, which is devoted to the description of MIP(VU), that is Nacey's own version of the model, we read (twice on the same page) that MIP, unlike MIPVU, does not identify direct metaphors (p. 112), but we are not explicitly told at this point how MIP(VU) situates itself with respect to direct metaphors. This information has been provided earlier, in chapter 3, where we learn that Nacey has followed MIPVU in including direct metaphors (p. 79), but a table summarizing the main differences between the models and indicating which options MIP(VU) has taken would have been a helpful resource. Another consequence of Nacey's own adaptation of the procedure is that her results are then not fully comparable with results based on the application of other versions of the procedure. This is regrettable, especially since one of the motivations behind the development of the procedure was precisely 'to ensure consistency of metaphor identification *across* investigations, so that the results from one study could be contrasted with the results from another, knowing that the same phenomenon had been measured in both studies' (p. 248). Nacey proposes some adjustments and reclassification of her data to allow for comparison with other studies (cf. p. 137-139), but this is not ideal theoretically (which figures should be taken as authoritative – before or after the adjustments?), and moreover certain minor differences still remain.

While the procedure is sometimes referred to as 'metaphor tagging' in the book (e.g. p. 128), it should be clear by now that it is fully manual, and from the above description it is quite easy to guess that the procedure requires patience and perseverance. Nacey says so several times, noting that '[t]here is no magic button to press; MIP(VU) is a time-consuming process' (p. 121). She evaluates her progress at 300 to 1,000 words a day. At this rate, the metaphor annotation of her – according to usual standards, relatively small – corpora of 20,000 words each must have represented several months of (intensive and challenging) work. In this sense, Nacey's most substantial contribution is not even directly visible in the book. It must also be emphasized that she performed this Herculean task on her own, unlike the other metaphor tagging projects

referred to in the book, which were carried out by teams of several researchers. This has a downside, however, namely that the inter-rater reliability assessment recommended by the creators of the procedure was not possible – although as a compromise, Nacey reanalyzed a sample of 2,000 words at a later stage, which showed the internal consistency of her tagging. Also, given the amount of work that the tagging has involved, one may be surprised that not every single nugget of the hard-won data has been exploited. The data analysis itself covers some 70 pages (to be compared with 60 pages for the presentation of the metaphor identification procedure), and of these, only about 25 also concern the native corpus. In addition, the study includes results which have obviously required additional (manual) identification, like the analysis of prepositions which considers cases of missing prepositions. And while metaphors turn out to be quite common in the two corpora (over 7,000 instances in total), the author ends up focusing on certain relatively infrequent phenomena, such as deliberate metaphors in chapter 7, which represent 128 examples (and each of the detailed categories between 21 and 31 examples), or anomalous uses of *on*, which correspond to 8 cases, on the basis of which Nacey makes quite strong generalizations ('That **so many** [i.e. 6, GG] cases may be attributed to L1 transfer ... indicates that there **really** is underdifferentiation between *på* and *on*', p. 234, GG's emphasis). However, the results of the analysis are certainly interesting and, despite some small inaccuracies – or at least inconsistencies – in the figures (cf. 1432 instead of 1434 non-metaphorical adjectives in tables 10 and 26; 72 instead of 76 entrenched metaphorically-related instances of *on* on p. 233), they enhance our understanding of learner metaphorical language and offer a glimpse into non-native speakers' creative mind (although the focus is on linguistic metaphors rather than conceptual metaphors). They also lead to some pedagogical proposals, which admittedly remain rather vague, but since this was not one of the explicitly stated objectives of the book, they should be seen simply as a bonus.

The book is a pleasure to read, it is well written and well structured. With the exception of the first chapter, which outlines the theoretical foundations of metaphor research (but in a very digestible way), the literature review is cleverly interspersed throughout the book, when and where relevant, which makes for an easy read and, at the same time, helps readers gradually build on the knowledge acquired in the previous

chapters. The work demonstrates great scientific rigour and critical reflection. It tries to avoid a priori assumptions, not only in the annotation of the data, through its corpus-driven MIP(VU), but also in the analysis of the data, for example by describing learners' non-entrenched uses (i.e. those 'whose contextual senses are [not] codified in standard dictionaries', p. 150) as 'novel metaphors' rather than 'errors', a terminological choice that will delight advocates of the English as a Lingua Franca approach. This attitude is combined with intellectual honesty, in that the author recognizes the difficulty and subjectivity of certain decisions or interpretations, as when she notes about the link between scare quotes and deliberate metaphors that 'the jury is still out' (p. 189) or admits with respect to metaphorical creativity that the discussion 'raises more questions than it solves' (p. 246). While this may be true, Nacey's book answers its fair share of questions, and does so in a convincing manner. It is a valuable contribution to the field of metaphor research, not only for its systematic application and critical evaluation of (a version of) the Metaphor Identification Procedure, as well as its findings about Norwegian learners' use of metaphors in English, but also, more generally, for its illustration of the potential of annotating and analyzing metaphors in non-native language varieties, a path that few metaphorologists have dared to tread up to now.

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