

*Susan Nacey, Aletta G. Dorst, Tina Krennmayr, and W. Gudrun Reijnierse*  
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Forty years after Lakoff and Johnson's famous discovery of the "metaphors we live by" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), metaphor identification continues to be one of the major fascinations for early-career and expert academics alike. By mental shortcut, students sometimes appear to equate the entire (highly complex) realm of Cognitive Linguistics (e.g., Croft and Cruse 2004) solely with metaphor analysis; or they simply focus their cognitive linguistic analysis on these fascinating linguistic items that even at first sight stand out as being non-literal, opening up rich opportunities for both intuitive and well-founded interpretations. From "love is a battlefield" to the "waves of Coronavirus", vivid images are abundant in everyday experience. Their exploration across languages and cultures highlights the many different ways in which some (perhaps more abstract) things are experienced and described in terms of other (perhaps more basic or physical) things.

As demonstrated in an unusually frank and personal reflection by Elena Semino in the concluding afterword of Nacey et al.'s edited book (Chapter 15), a popular research area that is intuitively accessible to researchers at all levels can bring challenges that may not be directly obvious to everybody at

first sight. Descriptions of love as a battlefield or references to waves of virus outbreaks are obviously not literal; however, other expressions such as *at first sight*, *stand out*, or *ways* (in the preceding paragraph) may easily be overlooked in metaphor analysis, or their metaphorical status may be disputed due to conventionality. As a result, metaphor analysis can easily become an exercise of cherry-picking – choosing individual examples found in texts to demonstrate the existence or distribution of certain metaphors in discourse, without any systematic method to ensure thorough coverage throughout the linguistic data. Reports of such analyses are abundant especially in the somewhat older literature or in unpublished student or early-career research studies; Semino's personal experience is by no means exceptional, as it reflects the enthusiastic spirit with which qualitative insights on metaphorical phenomena have been (and are still) embraced, sometimes meandering into quantitative claims that are hard to justify upon closer scrutiny. Apart from questionable validity, one of the major drawbacks of such intuitive approaches is that direct comparisons between analyses in different publications are virtually impossible.

The introduction of a formalised metaphor analysis methodology called MIP: *Metaphor Identification Procedure* by the Pragglejaz Group (2007) offered a clearly specified and systematic approach for English language data, allowing for much better-founded quantitative insights as well as comparisons. This method has become well-known and is today widely used, as well as having been systematically extended by the so-called *Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit*, MIPVU (Steen, Dorst et al. 2010). However, not all aspects of this method are easily transferable to other languages, reinforcing the status of English (once more) as the main target of linguistic analysis around the world. The laudable goal of Nacey et al.'s edited book is to fill this gap and provide insights and guidance for systematic metaphor analysis across a wide range of languages other than English, along with discussion and some critical evaluation of both MIP and its successor MIPVU.

There is a tension between different possible readerships here. While it can be assumed that few people without any sort of background in metaphor analysis would choose to read this book, some may be very familiar with MIP and/or MIPVU, while others may have relied on their intuitions and ad-hoc systems for analysing discourse in different languages, or may never have aimed to analyse discourse data themselves. The book struggles with this tension sometimes, as becomes clear through glitches such as references to MIP and MIPVU and technical terms before they are properly introduced (particularly in the initial chapters). This generates an impression that the book is primarily written for “insiders”, experts in using a methodology that some of the editors of this book established in collaboration with further authors not involved in this volume. This is already reflected in the reference

to MIPVU in the title, which is described but not explicitly introduced in the book's abstract on the back cover: a reference that is clearly intended to appeal to experts, whilst it might potentially discourage newcomers to metaphor analysis. Throughout the volume there are various places where non-experts may be confused by unexplained terminology or less than sufficiently explained expert concepts. The very brief introduction to the notion of "implicit metaphor" on page 5 is a case in point, which leaves the uninitiated reader wondering why an anaphorical reference to a metaphor (by a demonstrative pronoun like *this* or *that*) should itself be treated as a metaphor.

In spite of such drawbacks, the editors did clearly make an effort to cater for diverse audiences, by providing an introductory chapter to this volume that aims to clarify the relevant history and background to any reader, as well as reprinting (from Steen, Dorst et al. 2010) the main relevant chapter that introduces a manual for MIPVU in the second chapter, and following this up by another chapter with guidelines or lessons learned from previous experience using MIPVU. In combination, these three chapters enable readers to fill gaps in their previous knowledge or experience with systematic metaphor analysis, rendering the book mainly self-contained. The editors evidently wished that even inexperienced researchers aiming to do metaphor analysis on any of the languages described in this book (or beyond) should be able to get sufficiently acquainted with the relevant procedures. To my mind, the success of such an endeavour will depend on the readers' previous knowledge to a higher degree than the editors may have anticipated. Not all explanations are clear as they stand, and not all concepts come with examples. Some of the procedures are presented in a very abstract way, such as the identification of "directly used lexical units that are related to metaphor" (page 36). The differentiation of various kinds of metaphor can be confusing, and lack of guided practice with this specific methodology may well lead to inconsistency in the results.

Indeed, Chapter 3 demonstrates some limitations of a uniform application of MIPVU. Annotators frequently disagree, not only with individual items but sometimes fairly systematically, implying a clear potential for different quantitative discourse analysis results. Where stress patterns or part-of-speech tagging are used for metaphor identification, there may be limits to the availability of information or databases, leaving more room for (or necessitating) individual interpretation. Some of the examples discussed appear to be truly controversial or arguably ambiguous with respect to metaphorical status, yet there does not seem to be much room for borderline cases and distinct interpretative perspectives. Such limitations may be true for any methodology, but the question remains as to what extent an extremely meticulous procedure of metaphor identification is justified when it still leaves ample opportunities for disagreement. Alleviating these concerns to some

extent, many authors in the volume report reassuring inter-rater reliability scores, suggesting that MIPVU typically reduces subjective interpretation to a minimum. However, it would have been good to see explicit discussion of how to treat genuine ambiguity or interpretative freedom in a generally acceptable way.

Some of the issues and challenges raised and solved within the initial chapters may be of use also in other areas of research, such as the question of how to identify and count “lexical units”. The tension between form and meaning, for instance in phrasal verbs, compound nouns, or cases of morphological complexity, is of overarching theoretical interest, and it may be useful for research across various areas to have access to a useful operationalisation of these issues for English. The issue is taken up again in some of the subsequent chapters for other languages, where MIPVU’s operationalisation for English may not be feasible.

Despite the clear merits and benefits of the initial introductory chapters, none of them addresses the main motivating question that, to my mind, any methodological approach should make prominent so as to motivate its application: Why do we need ever more metaphor analysis, spreading around the world? “Happy metaphor hunting”, as it is phrased on page 18, sounds exciting but doesn’t tell us what the major conceptual research questions are that could be addressed in this way. In her insightful afterword, Semino points out, quite rightfully, that “all research projects happen for a reason” (page 320); it would have been beneficial for the volume to point to a range of reasons that motivate metaphor research around the world. The state of the art has, by now, moved far beyond identifying that metaphors exist and how they work; while their discovery remains fascinating for newcomers, the multiple types of research gaps that an intricate systematic (and therefore very time-consuming) analysis can address should not be taken as self-evident.

Following the three-fold introduction, the application of MIPVU to multiple languages covers chapters 4-13 – ten chapters dedicated to highlighting specific challenges posed by a wide range of languages: French, Dutch, German, Scandinavian (covering the closely related languages Norwegian, Swedish and Danish), Lithuanian, Polish, Serbian, Uzbek, Chinese, and Sesotho. Finding capable and experienced researchers willing to contribute a paper to this comprehensive volume is no minor feat, making the book a prime example of good practice in systematically integrating and providing access to research on languages other than English. In an academic world where the dominance of English is constantly reinforced by every new generation of linguistic experts trained in English-speaking countries, the importance of gaining insights about the other languages around the globe – and the immense range of variety found on every single layer of scrutiny – cannot be underestimated. Metaphor analysis, like many areas in linguistics, started

from English, but it does not have to stay there; this volume clearly supports expansion of generic ideas across languages, with suitable adaptations.

Adaptations are necessary due to the various features of the linguistic systems involved. Some issues recur throughout the chapters, while others are specific to individual languages. Perhaps the most prominent complication for applying MIPVU to other languages is the lack of adequate or comparable resources. MIPVU relies heavily on dictionaries and part-of-speech tagging, which can be done automatically for English but not for all other languages. Also the availability of dictionaries differs extremely between languages, both concerning variety in terms of dictionary types, consistency between dictionaries on the market, and degree of underpinning linguistic insight. More often than not, this directly affects metaphor identification: for instance in the case of Uzbek where dictionaries do not contain derivations unless they have different meanings (Sila Gen Kaya, Chapter 11), and Sesotho where the researchers had to resort to English dictionaries to identify the basic meanings of the English translations of Sesotho terms (Seephephe, Ekanjume-Ilongo and Thuube, Chapter 13). Semino picks up on these issues in her afterword, pointing out quite rightfully that such challenges can be taken as weaknesses of MIPVU. Throughout the volume, the authors report various creative ways of filling the gaps caused by the lack of suitable part-of-speech tagging and dictionaries. These solutions are certainly useful and inspiring, and will help readers to overcome similar obstacles with these and other languages. Nevertheless, it would be a highly desirable future goal to develop a purely linguistic set of criteria for an advanced, generalised, language-transcending metaphor identification procedure that does not rely on specific resources that are, at least potentially, outside the influence of linguistic experts. Limitations like these clearly highlight the detrimental effects of placing one single language constantly in the center of attention.

Reinforcing this point, some of the chapters stand out by going beyond the standard contribution made by all of the ten chapters dedicated to explore how MIPVU can be applied to languages other than English. All individual chapters are interesting to read, similarly structured, and fairly consistently of high quality, reflecting a high editorial achievement. They all explore specific challenges identified when applying MIPVU, report about the status of dictionaries, and provide natural language examples to demonstrate annotation procedures and principles. The number of words annotated for the study presented in each chapter differs, as does the procedure of identifying inter-coder reliability, reflecting a certain amount of inconsistency which may be inevitable in a highly complex multiple-author achievement like the present collection. Beyond this, some chapters contribute original insights on linguistic features affecting metaphor analysis that extend the state of the art on the nature of metaphor and the forms it can take across languages. For

instance, Wang, Lu, Hsu, Lin, and Ai (Chapter 12) demonstrate the problems raised by the writing system in Chinese together with a lack of clear word class distinctions, necessitating a specific linguistically founded procedure for identifying words as a basis for analysis.

Furthermore, Urbonaitė, Šeškauskienė and Cibulskienė (Chapter 8) explore how metaphorical meanings are conveyed in Lithuanian through grammatical cases and derivational morphemes, a phenomenon not described or captured in MIPVU. Morphological constructions are also relevant for Polish as reported by Marhula and Rosiński (Chapter 9), particularly in the case of new word formations. In Chapter 10, Bogetić, Bročić and Rasulić reflect on similar concerns in Serbian and suggest adding a further step into the MIPVU procedures that allows for identifying metaphorical meanings encoded in grammatical cases. It stands to reason that implementing and extensively testing such an enhanced procedure across other languages with rich case systems would further contribute to establishing a truly generic, versatile and non-English centred metaphor identification procedure.

After gaining a rich variety of insights on other languages through ten chapters of linguistic diversity, chapter 14 titled “Linguistic metaphor identification in English as a lingua franca” (Fiona MacArthur) comes as a surprise. First of all, returning to English appears like a step back after having moved onwards from insights with English as a starting point of enquiry. Secondly, the chapter differs in message and structure from the others and raises a few concerns as to the way it is presented. Thirdly, some of the issues raised in this altogether very inspiring chapter challenge some fundamental assumptions underlying MIPVU, primarily with regard to its treatment of different levels of linguistic proficiency, sociolinguistic variety, and flexibility of interpretation depending on the speaker’s background – well beyond the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF), which could be regarded as a specific case.

Traditionally, a lingua franca is understood as “any lingual medium of communication between people of different mother tongues, for whom it is a second language” (Samarin 1987: 371). However, MacArthur includes situations in which native speakers of English use English to communicate with non-native speakers about topics other than language teaching, which, to me, is simply a situation in which different levels of language proficiency collide – even if it happens in the non-native speaker’s home country. Moreover, MacArthur regards her corpus as representing a generic sample of ELF in order to identify specific features and aspects not captured by MIPVU; however, most of the non-native speakers are Spanish, and the variety is limited and not balanced. To my mind, this could have been an insightful chapter about flexibility in the use of English, potentially incorporating insights on learner language, different usage scenarios, and furthermore one crucial insight that despite being almost self-evident still appears to lack

general recognition: namely that native-speaker English is by no means “perfect” (Dąbrowska and Street 2006). Instead of using this chance to exemplify the immense variety of how English is used and interpreted on the basis of the data set at hand, the author falls into the same trap, claiming that the notion of “error” is irrelevant with native English speakers (page 295). I felt that this was a chance missed, especially in light of the fact that the author makes a range of very good points such as questioning whether alternative usages of certain terms should always be interpreted as metaphors or may sometimes simply be errors – or perhaps different conventions in different versions of English.

Generally, throughout the volume, all chapters adhere to a high standard of academic writing, with very few typos (e.g., *philospher* in a footnote on page 6, *that* instead of *than* in the last paragraph on page 13, *Van dale* in a heading on page 94, and *process* rather than its plural on page 287) or other shortcomings such as using abbreviations before they are introduced, as seen in Chapter 1. All chapters are well-written and accessible to advanced students and experts alike, and are both self-contained and meaningful in the context of the volume as a whole. The book conveys a clear message pertaining to the establishment of pathways to consistent metaphor identification across languages, with the chapters ordered in a meaningful sequence. One might argue that the chapter on challenges *within* English, in contexts where English is used as a lingua franca or by learners, could have been better placed between the introductory chapters and those on other languages; this would have been especially beneficial if the chapter had directly aimed to highlight linguistic variety at different levels of proficiency and different usage contexts.

The fascination for metaphors in language has lasted for forty years, and it is not about to wane. This book will undoubtedly inspire researchers around the world to engage with this fascination in a systematic and reliable way, following the footpaths of experienced metaphor analysts, while at the same time remaining open-minded and creative in tackling the challenges raised by every new language that waits to be explored.

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