

Analysing metaphor in discourse: Critical and applied approaches

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In this talk, I will give an overview of recent work that analyses metaphor in a variety of discourse domains, including politics, business and health communication. In doing so, I will draw a distinction between critical and applied approaches.

The former combines conceptual metaphor theory with critical discourse analysis, constituting critical metaphor analysis (Charteris-Black 2004, Koller 2004a, Musolff 2004) as a growing and distinct part of metaphor studies. Critical approaches are distinguished by seeking to uncover how metaphor is used to express, reinforce or subvert ideologies, critiquing both the discourse itself, the practices around it and the wider social context in which it is embedded. I will present examples of studies that have looked into how metaphor is used to perpetuate or challenge gender stereotypes in business discourse (e.g. Koller 2004b, Nicaïne 2013), and how metaphor is used to construct out-groups in political discourse (e.g. Hart 2008).

On the other hand, researchers from a wide range of disciplines have turned to conceptual metaphor theory to apply its tenets in analysing what possible impact metaphor use can have on texts recipients and how it can influence their actions (e.g. Morris et al. 2007). This body of work can often be found in business and management studies as well as in studies of health communication (e.g. Seale 2001). Advocates of this applied approach to metaphor in discourse are not so much interested in the ideologies and power relations that operate in broader society but rather focus on the effect of metaphor for particular discourse participants. An offshoot of this applied approach is the use of metaphor as a tool for intervention in management (e.g. Greve 2012) and therapeutic contexts (e.g. Tay 2013).

In the last part of my talk, I will address some methodological issues of analysing metaphor in discourse, in particular looking at how systematic manual methods for metaphor identification can be combined with corpus-based analysis to find metaphor candidates in a larger collection of texts. I will demonstrate such an integrated method with an example from my recent work on metaphor in end-of-life care.

A list of references will be provided on the day.