Metaphor in Learner and Expert Argumentative Writing:

A Comparative Corpus-driven Study

COLECCIÓN
TESIS DOCTORALES

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This book is dedicated to my beloved husband and sons.
Amor est vitæ essentia. Deus caritas est.

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PREFACE

One of the greatest pleasures of academic life is to witness the accomplishments of one's former students. I have been very fortunate in this aspect, and I am happy to say that the author of this book is a true representative of the successful researchers to whom I had the pleasure to teach and guide when they were students. I introduced Marcela Chapetón into corpus linguistics when she came to the University of Barcelona and guided her through the resources it offers to analyse language. Although she was largely autonomous, together we went through the complexities of completing a PhD dissertation, which I am very pleased to see published.

Metaphor in Learner and Expert Argumentative Writing: A Comparative Corpus-driven Study reflects its author's outstanding qualities as a researcher: a passion for her subject of study, inspiration to find new ways of dealing with the data and systematicity in the handling of her material. Chapetón was a student with great insights and, no doubt, her passion has contributed to feeding my own interest in metaphor, this fascinating aspect of our language and mind.

Metaphors, it is well acknowledged by now, are fundamental in thought and in language, since they reflect the way we understand and organize the world. The theory of conceptual metaphor, developed by Lakoff and Johnson in the 1980s, views metaphor as a cognitive mechanism, crucial to abstract reasoning. Metaphor is no longer only considered an ornamental element, rhetorical or poetic, but a fundamental tool by which we conceive one thing in terms of the other. Through mappings between two different conceptual domains, we understand abstractions (target domain) in terms of more concrete concepts (source domain).

Such a fundamental mechanism of our thought is intrinsically reflected in our language. Conceptual metaphors underlie linguistic metaphors, which are

ubiquitous in language. However, speakers use metaphor very often unconsciously and most metaphors in our everyday language go unnoticed. When somebody writes "the growth of human achievements," few people (including, perhaps, the writer of such an expression) are aware of the metaphor in "growth," which illustrates the conceptual metaphor SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE PLANTS (this volume, p. 35), where the source domain (plants) maps onto the target domain (social organization), with "growth of a plant" corresponding to "development of an organization".

Whereas many conceptual metaphors are thought to be universal, metaphorical expressions are language specific and need to be mastered by language learners. The same conceptual metaphor will be expressed in different ways in different languages and, even if awareness of conceptual metaphor may help language learners to interpret it, its production is more problematic. Moved by her pedagogical drive to help learners of English, inspired by the theoretical approach of the theory of conceptual metaphor, and aided by the methodological tools and resources of corpus linguistics, the author has articulated her research in a personal way, integrating Conceptual Metaphor Theory with an applied linguistic approach.

This volume focuses on the use of metaphor in real language. Chapetón is interested not only in the cognitive perspective of metaphor but also as a phenomenon of language in use. Bearing very much in mind that a complete study of metaphor has to reflect its actual use by speakers rather than being based on introspection alone, and being aware of the danger of presenting decontextualized examples, she combines a cognitive and a corpus-based applied linguistic approach and analyses the metaphoric expressions of three different corpora of argumentative texts. Willing to frame her research in an applied linguistic context and driven by her pedagogical interest in the teaching of English, she compares the differences and similarities of metaphoric production in a learner corpus of Spanish EFL students, a native corpus of American university students, and an expert corpus of American newspapers editorials.

Following a general introduction in which the author's motivations are explained, the theoretical foundations of Conceptual Metaphor Theory are established. Chapetón offers an insightful review of the main literature from a historical point of view, evaluating the recent developments in metaphor theory and metaphor production. Her masterful review extends from the antiquity and, contrary to what has often been held, the author, following Mahon and other metaphor researchers, argues that Aristotle had a modern view of metaphor and understood its cognitive dimension, later reintroduced by Lakoff and Johnson.

Such a thorough study of metaphor is only possible in the context of a systematic research methodology. In this book, the reader will not only find insightful and interesting results but also a discussion of a highly stimulating research procedure. The reader, also considered as a researcher, is given a detailed account of the

different steps taken. Chapetón reports on the problems faced, the decisions taken and the reasons for them, and also the advantages and limitations of her approach.

In order to find out in what respect the metaphorical production of the three groups of writers converges or differs, she first makes sure that the corpora to be compared are representative, balanced and comparable. Another important issue is the adequate identification of metaphors, and in order to ensure accuracy and objectivity, a combination of procedures is used. Chapetón carefully selects an integrated methodology for metaphor identification, combining the Metaphor Identification through Vehicle terms (MIV) procedure with the MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure), proposed by the Pragglejaz Group. The combination of inter-rater reliability, with four raters checking the same sample, and the application of the Metaphor Identification Procedure when there was disagreement constitutes a reliable way to avoid subjectivity and prevent the interference of intuition in the results. With such solid theoretical and methodological foundation, her data are analysed.

Her study of linguistic metaphors is both quantitative and qualitative. Using the tools provided by corpus linguistics, the author first carries out a quantitative study of the frequency of metaphoric use across the three corpora, then moves to a qualitative study exploring their differences and similarities, and, finally, she zooms in a particular type of metaphor, the animate metaphor. This rigorous, detailed and systematic analysis and comparison of the three corpora has provided a number of relevant findings, some of which are contrary to commonly-held beliefs. For example, whereas the typical examples of metaphors are nouns, Chapetón, corroborating Steen's and Cameron's results, shows that verbal metaphors are more common than nominal metaphors. Also, and as can be easily expected, experts use more metaphors than students, but, interestingly enough, the present study reveals slightly higher frequencies of metaphorical density in the non-native students than in the native students corpus, a fact that is accounted for. A thorough analysis of the animate metaphor, with an important distinction made between animation and personification, also reveals new discoveries in the way it is employed by the different groups of writers.

In the last chapter, the reader will find a summary of the main results of this study and their implications, both for metaphor theory, for the teaching of English, and for English for academic purposes. The pedagogical applications of its findings are also addressed, in particular the need to increase metaphoric awareness among learners. Finally, the author includes interesting new avenues to be explored in the field of metaphor studies.

In short, the publication of this book, which is an important contribution to the study of metaphor, must be celebrated. It is not only a deep analysis of the characteristics and complexities of metaphor in actual use, but also a model of research

methodology. It is also very well written and has a clear organization. *Metaphor in Learner and Expert Argumentative Writing: A Comparative Corpus-driven Study* will be of great interest to a wide readership, including expert metaphor researchers, teachers of English, and postgraduate students.

Isabel Verdaguer, PhD
University of Barcelona

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