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Susan Nacey. *Metaphors in learner English*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 2013. 279 + xi pp. ISBN 978-902-720-2062. Reviewed by **Rolf Kreyer**, Marburg.

The monograph by Susan Nacey, inspired by a Norwegian student's excuse for inadequate exam answers, "I'm sorry, but I had a brain curtain", addresses three kinds of research questions: 1) an empirical and quantitative description of metaphor use in L2 as compared with L1 writers, 2) questions of a more qualitative nature, such as to what extent and how do L2 writers use metaphors creatively?, and 3) questions of methodology, for instance how can metaphors be detected in authentic data and how can metaphorical creativity be identified? To answer these and related questions, the author applies a modified version of the Metaphor Identification Procedure, which she refers to as MIP(VU) (instead of 'MIPVU'), to approximately 40,000 words of argumentative texts taken in equal proportions from NICLE, the Norwegian Component of the International Corpus of Learner English, and LOCNESS, the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays.

The book falls into three parts, which, however, do not coincide with the three kinds of research questions listed above. Instead, the first part, in two chapters, "sets the scene by providing the foundations of th[e] investigation" (p. 3). Chapter 1 first gives a basic overview of relevant concepts and terms in (conceptual) metaphor theory, such as different approaches to metaphor in language and in thought, basic distinctions like that between conceptual and linguistic metaphor or between metaphor and simile, or the question of conventionalization and opacity in metaphors. In addition, the chapter discusses "metaphor in communication, exploring when learners use metaphor *as metaphor*" (p. 3). The author, here, capitalizes on Steen's (2011) three-way distinction of metaphor as a linguistic, a conceptual and a communicative phenomenon. The latter dimension becomes apparent in cases of 'deliberate metaphor', i.e. when "metaphor is intentionally employed with the express communicative function of promoting a shift in perspective from a topic domain to an apparently unrelated, 'alien' domain" (p. 28). Chapter 1 concludes with a discussion of 'metaphoric compe-

tence', a concept that "is relatively fresh, and [where] no clear consensus has been reached as to how best define it" (p. 31), and its potential pedagogical applications, e.g. in vocabulary learning or in preparation for university courses in England. Chapter 2 takes stock of the role metaphor and metaphor awareness/competence have in language learning in Europe, particularly with regard to the Council of Europe Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe: 2001). The term 'metaphor' occurs three times in the whole document; twice as an instance of meta-language and once in a discussion of lexical competence, more specifically as one type of fixed expression (i.e. *frozen metaphor*) alongside phrasal idioms. According to Nacey, the CEFR follows an outdated view of metaphor as a rhetoric device or a figure of speech only – the contemporary linguistic understanding of metaphor does not show in the document: "the framework downgrades the importance of metaphor for language users" (p. 60). The ensuing discussion of the role of metaphor in the Norwegian national curriculum, which is loosely based on the CEFR, leads the author to conclude "that metaphor has generally enjoyed no more than an [sic!] peripheral role in the language classroom, mainly limited to the study of idioms and proverbs" (p. 61).

The second part of the book focuses on the methodological question of how to identify metaphorical expressions in authentic text. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the development from Pragglejaz over the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP; Steen/Biernacka *et al*. 2010) to its newest version, MIPVU (VU=Vrije Universiteit (Amsterdam); Steen/Dorst *et al*. 2010), providing a detailed description and comparison of the individual procedures. The basic idea of MIP and MIPVU is to identify possible metaphorical uses of lexical items by comparing the basic sense of a lexical item with its meaning in the given context: "If the lexical unit has a more basic current/contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it" (p. 107). The major difference between MIP and MIPVU, according to Nacey, lies in the inclusion of direct and implicit metaphor in the latter. An example of direct metaphor is the simile, e.g. *writing is like hiking*. None of the words in this sentence is metaphorically used; still, the whole sentence is metaphorical, linking the target domain WRITING to the source domain HIKING. Implicit metaphor concerns the use of cohesive elements: a pronoun like *it* does not signal metaphoricity in and of itself but it may refer to a noun phrase that is metaphorical, such as *escape from reality* (p. 77). For the analysis itself, however, the in- or exclusion of these two kinds of metaphors is more or less irrelevant: the classic case of metaphorically used words is the indirect metaphor, i.e. cases in which there is a contrast between the basic sense of a word and its contextual

sense. It accounts for the vast majority of all metaphorical expressions, namely 99 per cent (p. 75).

The author herself uses a protocol that she names MIP(VU), because her analyses "coincided with the refinement of MIP and the development of MIPVU" (p. 79). Consequently, MIP(VU) implements some of the changes but not all of them. In particular, MIP(VU) captures direct metaphors but ignores implicit metaphor. A detailed description of MIP(VU) is provided in Chapter 4. The procedure consists of a total of seven steps. While some of these are more or less unproblematic, e.g. step 1, which aims to "establish a general understanding of the meaning" (p. 85) of the entire text, others are not. In those cases the author provides a detailed account of how she proceeded and how her decisions were motivated. An example is step 2: "Determine the lexical units in the text/discourse!" (p. 86), where the author discusses at length how she dealt with notoriously problematic cases like phrasal verbs, polywords, compounds, and proper nouns. Similarly, the question of basic meanings (step 3: "For each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context!" (p. 98)) includes a detailed discussion of the role that dictionaries and etymology play in deciding on what is basic and what is not. The author concludes by emphasizing what exactly it is, that MIP(VU) does (and does not) do:

> MIP(VU) only identifies metaphors on the level of language. Metaphorically used lexical items are uncovered – i.e. linguistic metaphors. MIP(VU) does not identify metaphors on the level of thought – i.e. conceptual metaphors. Even though the procedure relies upon a cognitive linguistic model of cross-domain mappings underlying linguistic metaphors, these mappings are not identified. […] MIP(VU) targets *possible* (although probable) linguistic metaphors, the best candidates for [further] analysis […]. (p. 111)

Part II concludes, in Chapter 5, with an evaluation of MIP(VU) and its applicability to learner data. One aspect the author discusses concerns the reliability of the method. In sight of the large amount of data (40,000 lexical items) she (rightly, in my view) considered it unfeasible to have her analyses checked by fellow researchers or to have a second round of analysis through all of the material. Instead, the author has decided to reanalyze two essays each from NICLE and LOCNESS two months after the initial analysis. This reanalysis, with only 1.1 per cent of the 2,000 words recategorized, shows (her application of) the method to be very reliable. A specific problem in the analysis of learner language is that of 'idiosyncratic' lexis, an example from a Norwegian learner

being "this huge spectre of merchandise and inventions" (p. 119). Even though it seems likely that the learner wanted to write *spectrum*, this case and similar ones are coded as 'metaphorically used' if the lexical unit in question (*spectre*), "belongs to the standard English lexicon" (p. 120). In those cases, then, the author gives "the word actually produced" primacy over "the word apparently intended" (p. 119) – a decision that some researchers may find problematic. This and other issues aside, Nacey concludes that "[t]he clear and overriding advantage of employing MIP(VU) […] is the transparency and reliability of [the] identification process. […] MIP(VU) channels analysts into making clear decisions with steps that may be retraced and explained, rather than decisions based on intuition alone" (p. 123).

Part 3, then, turns to the analysis of metaphor in learner language. Chapter 6 provides results from a quantitative analysis of metaphor use in argumentative essays taken from NICLE and LOCNESS. The author addresses two questions: 1) Nacey wants to find out whether the cognitive linguists' claim about the ubiquity of metaphor holds true for argumentative essays written by novice writers. 2) Up to now metaphor has rather been regarded as a tool for the "interpretation, acquisition and retention of lexis" (p. 127). The production of metaphors, i.e. "what leaners [sic!] actually do with metaphor in an L2" (p. 127) so far has only been studied qualitatively rather than quantitatively. Nacey aims at making first steps to filling this gap. She analyses a total of 40,711 lexical items (20,468 and 20,243 from Norwegian and English learners, respectively) and finds that roughly every fifth and a half word is used metaphorically in NICLE and roughly every sixth word is metaphorical in LOCNESS. All in all, the learner corpora lie in between four genres analysed in Steen/Biernacka *et al*. (2010) and Steen/Dorst *et al*. (2010), with academic prose and news showing a higher metaphor frequency than the learner texts, which in turn use more metaphors than fiction and conversation. Regarding word class, the author finds that the Norwegian learners more frequently employ adjectives and nouns in a metaphorical way. Another difference can be found with prepositions: In line with cognitive linguist theories and previous research on metaphor frequency, prepositions are the most frequently metaphorically used words in both corpora. However, the two corpora differ with regard to the conventionality (i.e. either novel or entrenched) of metaphorically used prepositions. Metaphorically used words are classified as novel, if their contextual senses are not included in standard contemporary language dictionaries. In contrast, entrenched metaphors are those whose contextual senses are included in dictionaries. An analysis of the use of prepositions in both corpora shows that "novel metaphorical prepositions are relatively overused in NICLE. In LOCNESS, entrenched metaphorical preposi-

tions are overused and novel metaphorical prepositions are underused" (p. 153). However, despite these differences, "what is arguably most striking is the degree of similarity displayed in the texts of the Norwegian and British writers" (p. 242).

Chapter 7 zooms in on the communicative relevance of metaphors in that it focuses on metaphorical creativity in the Norwegian texts as shown in the open word classes. The chapter starts off with a detailed discussion of the concept of '(metaphorical) creativity'. Being notoriously difficult to define anyway, creativity becomes an extremely elusive concept when we attempt to apply it to learner language. A crucial question is the distinction between 'deficiency' and 'difference', i.e. do we take the target norm as binding for learners, rendering deviations anomalous or deficient or do we regard the target norm as flexible, allowing learners to experiment with the L2 and, as a result, come up with something that in part is different from the target norm; e.g. is the term *brain curtain* a mere mistake or should it be treated as a metaphorically creative compound? In the light of such principal problems, Nacey introduces one necessary condition for metaphorical creativity, namely deliberateness. However, and maybe contrary to expectation, Nacey understands deliberateness to include the production as well as the reception process:

> metaphors may […] be judged deliberate not only if they were intentionally produced, but also if they are perceived by readers as having been deliberately produced. Deliberate metaphors may be deemed creative if their producer recognizes their significance – the primary proposal at issue here – but the possibility that writers can have creativity thrust upon them by the reader cannot be overlooked. (p. 169-70)

The identification of deliberate metaphors in the two corpora, of course, is highly problematic, since "[n]either writers' intentions nor readers' perceptions can be unambiguously determined with nothing more than a single text as evidence" (p. 170). Nacey, therefore, resorts to identifying possible deliberate metaphors, for instance, by looking at defective, i.e. obviously false, 'A=B' comparisons (e.g. *Juliet is the sun*) or 'scare quotes', where the quotation marks make clear that the expression within is not to be understood literally (e.g. *different impressions that need to be sorted out and "digested"*). On the whole, 128 deliberate metaphors are identified through this approach. Another possible indication of metaphorical creativity is novel metaphor, i.e. a lexical item whose contextual meaning is not codified in dictionaries, such as *dream away* ('to daydream'). These kinds of metaphor are very rare in the data and "the majority are attributable to inadvertent error of some sort, even though they at times seem

especially apt" (p. 203). In summary, Nacey finds that "when it comes to the concept of bilinguals' metaphorical creativity, by which the learners' first language influences and enriches the metaphors produced in the target language, the current investigation indicates that this does not play an important role" (p. 204).

Chapter 8 explores "the most 'metaphorical' word class of them all" (p. 205), prepositions, more specifically, novel metaphorical prepositions. They are relatively rare, given the fact that "95% of the metaphorical prepositions produced by the Norwegian writers in English are perfectly appropriate and correct" (p. 236). Even the 67 instances of novel metaphorical prepositions are most likely not a sign of deliberate metaphor use but should be treated as errors. The source of these seems to lie in linguistic transfer rather than conceptual incongruity, that is Norwegian learners use a wrong preposition because of phonological or orthographical similarities rather than differing conceptualisations of, say, spatial or temporal relations.

An evaluation of Nacey's monograph maybe best is done with the envisaged readership in mind. As we can read on the cover, "the book is intended for metaphor researchers, corpus linguists, applied linguists and language educators". The impression I had is that it is primarily of value for the metaphor researcher. I can recommend this book whole-heartedly to anyone who is interested in the scientific study of metaphor and in particular MIP and MIPVU: novices to the procedure(s) will find a very accessible and very well-written introduction to MIPVU that provides the reader with the basics of the procedure as well as raises awareness for possible problems and pitfalls. Veterans of MIP/MIPVU will no doubt find it interesting to see how the procedure(s) can be applied to 'problematic' learner language. The author indeed does "provide additional guidance to that published by the developers of MIP/MIPVU, by explicitly discussing issues and proposed solutions for concerns inadequately addressed in previous works" (p. 4). In addition, the findings the study presents will be of interest to metaphor researchers since Nacey explores a hitherto neglected genre with the rigorous approach that characterizes MIP/MIPVU. The study may be appealing for corpus linguists insofar as the book is an example of another, maybe less typical, way of exploiting language corpora and, of course, for any corpus linguist that has a vested interest in corpus-based research into metaphors. For applied linguists and language educators the book may fall a little short of what the title *Metaphors in Learner Language* leads one to expect. In my view, this is a direct consequence of what MIP(VU) wants to achieve: it only identifies lexical items that ***may*** be used metaphorically (in the sense of conceptual metaphor), i.e. lexical items that are used in a sense that is different from the

basic sense. According to the author, "MIP(VU) is only the first step of a five-step procedure designed to explicitly reveal the links between linguistic and conceptual metaphor. […] four remaining steps are required to document the conceptual metaphor activated, if any" (p. 111; see Steen *et al*. (2011) for details). Mostly, then, the monograph offers information on the best candidates for a full metaphorical analysis but it does not provide this analysis, that is, it does not really tell us a lot about how learners use metaphor. An exception to this is Chapter 7, which explores the creative use of metaphor in learner English. I assume applied linguists and language educators would indeed welcome more of this kind of research in a book on metaphor in learner English.

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