

REVIEW

by

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regarding

the PhD dissertation of Henrique Dores on „*Conceptual Metaphor and Pragmatic Context in Political Speeches (in Spanish and Portugues)*“ for awarding the educational and scientific degree „Doctor“in the professional field 2.1. Philology

In his dissertation Henrique Dores carries out an in-depth and systematic analysis of conceptual metaphor in the context of Cognitive Linguistics, which enables him to regard the aforementioned metaphor as a cognitive instrument and a conceptual phenomenon. It is worth noting that the theoretical framework focuses also on another relevant aspect of research, i.e., Linguistic Pragmatics. The author's holistic approach is not an end in itself, as it lays a solid foundation for adequate observation and description of the dynamic interplay between language, thought and political discourse, in which conceptual metaphors play a key role. This issue constitutes the object of analysis in the second chapter of the work, where the epistemological approach to the empirical data is based on theoretical assumptions from several disciplines, characterised by multiple overlaps and intersections: Linguistic Pragmatics, Rhetoric and Critical Metaphor Analysis.

Modern Linguistics is, by definition, mainly theoretical, therefore, my focus will be on the theoretical dimensions of the work, but not without giving due attention to the author's skills related to the empirical research and to the adequate selection of the investiture speeches, delivered by Spanish Presidents of the Government and Portuguese Prime Ministers. What is more, as the author claims that this area is not sufficiently studied, his research is aimed at shedding light on

the specific features of Spanish and Portuguese political rhetoric, and, above all, on discerning the disparities between the selected speeches. As a result of the successful empirical analysis, Henrique Dores comes to the conclusion that “formal and objective limitations of the speeches represent the initial level at which politicians’ choice of linguistic elements and discourse strategies is influenced by the dimensions of the speakers’ context models”. In search of relevant distinctions between the two corpora the author argues that “the Spanish corpus features greater management of group and institutional knowledge and the prevalence of deliberative rhetoric, with a greater salience of argumentative structures, whereas the Portuguese corpus displays more cultural and national knowledge management and is more prone to the use of epideictic rhetoric”. I deliberately lay stress upon these statements in order to prove that the theoretical and the empirical parts of the work are closely connected and that all theoretical assumptions, organised in four semantic blocks (‘Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics’; ‘Conceptual Metaphor Theory: A Quest for Meaning’; ‘Pragmatics: From Inception Towards a Cognitive View’, and ‘Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Pragmatics: Interfaces and Junctures’), reveal the relevant dimensions of the context that influence pragmatic choices concerning metaphorical usage and discourse strategies.

The dissertation focuses upon Lakoff’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory due to the authors’ recognition of the key role of conceptual metaphors in understanding reality. Furthermore, as this understanding depends on context, or I would rather say, on the context of the specific communicative situation, it is only logical that further attention is drawn to T. van Dijk’s conception and definition of context, as well as to its influence on metaphor choice in the process of communication.

Each author who works in the field of Pragmatics is well aware of the fact that this discipline is a dynamically evolving area, which has multiple interfaces with

Semiotics, Philosophy, Rhetoric, etc. Therefore, it is obligatory to “distil” and “filter” the theoretical basis, and establish the guidelines for one’s own research. Henrique Dores succeeds in doing so. He clearly sets the goals of his investigation. The first one is oriented towards the detection of conceptual metaphors within the selected speeches. Subsequently, a thorough and exhaustive analysis of the specific examples that form the basis of metaphorical expressions is carried out. Then the analysis proceeds to the most important stage, at which the author gets a deeper insight into the communicative aspects and the strategic intentions behind the intricacies of metaphorical usage. In short, three basic concepts are brought to the fore and they underpin and organise the logic of investigation: the context that predetermines metaphor choice, the interpretation of metaphor functioning and the strategic goals of metaphorical usage. The latter is closely connected with the processes of persuasion and manipulation of the addressee, which are intrinsically communicative actions, that is why, the analysis of this goal is conducted within the framework of Speech Act Theory.

Speech Act Theory studies the interlocutors’ communicative strategies, and is interested, above all, in those of the speakers or the so-called (first) interpreters. In this respect, stress is laid upon two lines of interpretation – one of them is implicit and has to do with speakers, the other one is explicit and reflects, on the one hand, the addressees’ perception, and, on the other hand, the author’s approach to the cognitive dimensions of discourse strategies, thus shaping the structural frames on the basis of which Henrique Dores lays bare the multilayered meaning of political discourse. It is worth mentioning that he succeeds in combining complementarily compatible theses from different theories, e.g., the successful upgrade of Lakoff’s theoretical framework with van Dijk’s context models.

The candidate claims that the analysis of the cognitive and pragmatic aspects of the object of study is qualitative, however, at the same time he pays

considerable attention to the quantitative data in order to check and confirm his findings and theoretical conclusions. To this end, he resorts to the software for concordance AntConc 4.2.0. The inclusion of quantitative tools is justified by the fact that metaphor interpretation in diverse communicative situations is subjective to some degree, whereas the quantitative approach guarantees a more objective understanding of the context of communication that influences politicians' pragmatic choices. The aforementioned influence is illustrated by the predomination of metaphors from similar conceptual domains, related to *travel*, *building* and *conflict*. Of course, attention is drawn also to specific metaphors which are less frequently used, e.g., *Politics is religion*, whose strategic goal is to address large religious masses and walks of society. Similar strategic goals are achieved by the usage of a whole series of metaphors connected with Lakoff's models of the Nurturant and the Strict Father, which appeal to the ideological preferences of different social groups. Furthermore, Henrique's good knowledge of the political situation in both countries enables him to decipher adequately the sociopolitical aspects of the speeches, and to reach the logical conclusion that "the difference between the types of knowledge managed in each corpus is explained by the goals, and the specific characteristics of the audience". Therefore, the persuasive goals of politicians' speeches are predetermined mostly by the social dimensions of the context and not by the individual ones.

The dissertation opens the perspectives for further research on political discourse in different languages, and points out the need for broader historical frames. Attention is also drawn to the possibility of receiving effective "feedback" by investigating public reception and reaction to different rhetorical strategies.

As I said before, I especially appreciate the theoretical aspect of the dissertation. The parallel examination of the text material from the point of view

of pragmatics and cognitive linguistics does not prevent the results of the analysis from being reflected in conclusions of varying degree of abstraction and generalization. The same can be said about the combination of the diachronic and the synchronic perspective of the study. In fact, this is always expected if the study is holistic in nature. And the holistic approach, in turn, ensures interdisciplinary relevance of the theoretical framework of the dissertation. TCM in this case plays the role of a powerful analytical tool for identifying the purpose of conceptual metaphors in political speeches. Critical keyword analysis, with the use of concordance and word frequency analysis software, becomes an important filter for verifying the author's conclusions.

Of course, empirical analysis also plays an important role in the dissertation. Thirteen speeches of the Spanish Prime Ministers and ten introductory speeches of the Prime Ministers of Portugal are investigated in detail. The selection of the material is subordinated to the goal of revealing the various leadership strategies, the peculiar framing of the national identity and related approaches to management. It is interesting to note that the aforementioned binding is not as strict and not as expressive as the diametrical differences in the US two-party system. In this case, this system serves as a *tertium comparationis*. And the author is rightly guided by the interpretation of the influence of the context – it is about the social, political and historical conditions of speech delivery.

The dissertation focuses on the subjective aspects of the functioning of metaphors and this justifies the need for qualitative approaches. But the author is fully aware that in a future study, the use of quantitative methods and extensive databases would be extremely useful. It could lead to the discovery of additional patterns of metaphorical use in political speeches. In the concluding part of the work the author self critically notes that in the dissertation the functioning of metaphors in political speeches is examined through the prism of ideological models, but insufficient attention is paid to the changes and development of the ideological discourse. He also recognizes the need to expand the scope of diachronic analysis as well as the textual corpus with material from other languages. I take his reflections as a blueprint for further work with an even more nuanced understanding of linguistic strategies in political communication.

As with any scientific work, individual remarks can be made here. In this case, we are talking about the verbose conclusion and some repetitions in the

work, which can be indicated in a personal conversation with the candidate. But they do not belittle everything he did and do not overshadow the merits of the work, in which the theoretical formulations reflect various aspects of political communication related to the historical context, the use of conceptual metaphors and various pragmatic parameters.

From everything presented so far, it is clear that the dissertation under discussion has a high scientific and applied value. The author demonstrates the ability to critically and objectively analyze the existing approaches and theoretical developments in the field of his interest and to offer step by step his understanding and his solutions to explain the cognitive mechanisms.

The abstract accurately and correctly reflects the content of the dissertation.

Conclusion: Everything stated above gives me reason to confidently assert that Mr. Henrique Dores fully deserves to be awarded the educational and scientific degree Doctor in professional field 2.1.Philology.

Reviewer:

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