

A book review of the work, metaphor: A practical introduction

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Introduction

Metaphor: A Practical Introduction, a book authored by Zoltán Kövecses, is a significant contribution to the study of metaphor and to the field of cognitive linguistics in general. The book serves as a foundational work in the areas of metaphor studies and the study of metonymy. It introduces key concepts, theoretical perspectives, and applications that are central to understanding metaphor as a cognitive phenomenon.

The Review

The book begins with a discussion of the basic concepts in metaphor studies. Following the cognitive approach towards metaphor, the book defines a conceptual metaphor and shows how this manifest in language and via other means of communication, such as gestures and communication through pictures. Other ideas of scholars, such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980), like invariance principles, are discussed. Additionally, the book examines the difference between metaphor and metonymy. Furthermore, the book explores the difference between metonymy as a linguistic trope and metonymy as understood in the cognitive linguistics tradition. Different types of metonymy are laid out and discussed. The book goes further to provide instantiations of metaphor in different contexts, including in literary texts, with the debate that surrounds the issue of metaphor in literary texts mentioned.

There is also the exploration of metaphor across cultures. First, the book explores the universality of some conceptual metaphors and the triggers, such as bodily reactions. It is shown that, due to similar experiences with regard to similar phenomena, different cultures share some conceptual metaphors which reflect that similarity in experience. Then, there is an exploration of some culture-specific metaphors that are not universal. The inspiration for these metaphors is usually the specific cultural experiences that members of certain cultural groups have. This type of discussion is quite important as it gives the reader a chance to see how the cross-domain mapping occurs across different cultures. Lastly, the book discusses the variation of linguistic, pictorial and other types of metaphors that are reflections of underlying conceptual metaphors.

A major strength of the book is that it provides a step-by-step discussion of metaphor as understood in cognitive linguistics. The book makes it possible for the reader, especially one who has had exposure to cognitive-based approaches such as conceptual metaphor theory, to grasp some basic elements of metaphor and to use this knowledge in interpreting the next chapters/section. The examples provided aid the reader to relate the information provided by the book with the everyday interactions which, in the cognitive-based approach, are viewed as reflections of metaphoric thinking.

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Another strength of the book is that it cites different works on metaphors. The book includes empirical and other types of work, and it outlines the contribution of some of the most significant works in metaphor studies. Also, each part provides works that can be consulted for further reading.

As a foundational work, the book does not help a reader who has not come across the concepts of cognitive linguistics. The book seems to be based on the assumption that the reader is familiar with some elements and does not deal with every basic component. Also, the book follows mainly the approach of cognitive linguists such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980), with most of the ideas explored drawn from the conceptual metaphor theory. Another challenge is with the cross-cultural element, with the bulk of the data collected from texts produced in the West. The examples, too, appear to be from the West. One issue raised against conceptual metaphor theory is its use of intuition over empirical evidence. This element is also seen in the book, where even the examples cited are inventions rather than texts taken from corpora.

Conclusion

Despite these shortcomings, the book is very important for a scholar interested in metaphor, especially if the focus is on the cognitive-based frameworks. The clear step-by-step is very important as it allows any type of scholar to grasp the arguments and to use the knowledge acquired in previous chapters as a basis for learning the next items. The inclusion of other works in the books makes it an important reference material for a person interested in exploring the ideas discussed in the book further. This book can be regarded as an integral part of the collection that anyone interested in metaphor studies and cognitive linguistics should have.

References

- Lakoff, G, & Johnson, M.. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. Oxford University Press.