

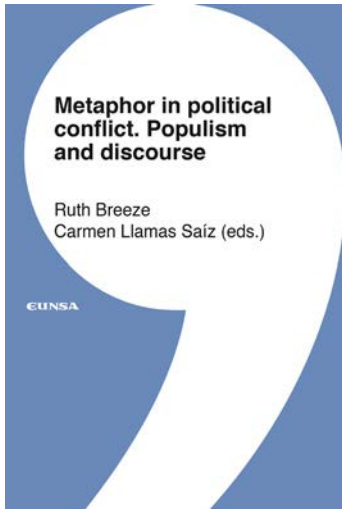
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 Book review

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Dejana M. Vukasović*

*Institute for Political Studies,
 Belgrade*

**METAPHOR IN POLITICAL
 CONFLICT. POPULISM
 AND DISCOURSE****



Ruth Breeze, Carmen Llamas Saiz (eds.), *Metaphor in political conflict. Populism and discourse*, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra (EUNSA), Pamplona, 2020, 212 p.

* dejana.vukasovic@ips.ac.rs

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The study of metaphors is one of the most dynamic study areas in the field of linguistics, discourse analysis, communication broadly (Perrez, Reuchamps, Thibodeau, 2019: 5). The importance of metaphors is foremost due to their power to define and shape our way of thinking and speaking, i.e. the way we perceive and understand reality (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Metaphors are not simply an aspect of style and language, they are also pervasive in everyday life, they structure what we perceive, i.e. they create realities for us (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). However, besides their cognitive nature, metaphors are also a discursive device. They also have a communicative purpose. Accordingly, discourse approaches to metaphor pay special attention to communicative strategies that make it possible to think in a particular way about social phenomena or to perform specific actions. Moreover, they focus on social contexts in which metaphors

occur, underlying the dynamic nature of metaphor, its capacity to shape the social reality of a specific topic or social domain. Thus, the metaphor represents a “pervasive linguistic phenomenon which is varied in its textual manifestations, versatile in the functions it may perform, and central to many different types of communication, from informal interaction through political speeches to scientific theorizing” (Semino, 2008: 1).

One of the books that enrich the existing body of literature related to discourse approaches to metaphor is *Metaphor in political conflict. Populism and discourse*, co-edited by Ruth Breeze and Carmen Llamas Saíz, and published by Ediciones Universidad de Navarra (EUNSA). Both co-editors are experienced scholars in the field of public discourse. Their works are mostly related to political, media and professional discourse and to corpus-assisted discourse analysis.

The book aims to reveal the power of the metaphor in political discourse and at the same time, to contribute to a better understanding of the political discourse itself. Furthermore, the book pays special attention to the role of metaphors in pop-

ulist discourses. As Ruth Breeze indicates in the introduction, metaphors are a “powerful tool to understand how discourses work” (p. 15). According to Breeze, political uses of metaphors are often particularly unclear, ambiguous and even obscure (p. 16). Metaphors are variable, i.e. multifunctional, or in Breeze’s words, they are “messy”. The ambiguous nature of metaphors in political discourse is foremost due to the fact that metaphors have the capacity to operate on a variety of levels, that is, they are able to shape our basic assumptions about the way society should be but also to remodel them, thus offering a new interpretation of the status quo, or a new vision of the future (p. 15). The variability of metaphors in political discourse is also acknowledged by Andreas Musolff in the preface of this book. As he observes, metaphors in political discourse have a tendency to work “at the level of argumentation, emotional and moral evaluation and dramatic characterisation” (p. 10). In other words, the study of metaphor implies “a critical investigation of how metaphors can serve to convey ideologies and negotiate power relationships” and therefore, the multifunctionality of metaphors is

of vital importance in situations of their use (Musolff, 2016: 4).

In order to analyse this multifunctionality of metaphors in political discourse, the book combines the approaches of the metaphors as thought-based (cognitive dimension) with the approaches of metaphors as discourse-based (discursive dimension), by showing that the deconstruction of source and target domains implies the identification of systemic patterns in the specific context of use. In this regard, the book pays special attention to “metaphor scenarios” for the analysis of the force of metaphor in a given discourse. Conceptualized by Andreas Musolff, metaphor scenarios show us the multifunctional nature of metaphors and their embeddedness in specific socio-political and historical contexts. Thus, metaphor scenarios go beyond the simple categorisation of metaphors based on conceptual domains. As noted by Musolff, the scenario-oriented approach enables us “to refine our understanding of the metaphors’ degree of entrenchment in their sociocultural setting and the power to ‘frame’ its discourses” (Musolff, 2016: 133).

After its preface and introduction, the book examines the use of metaphors in the contemporary political contexts through six chapters. The chapters cover different genres, from speeches and parliamentary debates to social media, thus creating a thought-provoking combination of approaches without sacrificing the coherence of the book. Focusing on the analysis of speeches of prominent political figures from a variety of settings, the book aims to reveal the situations in which there is controversy or conflict and to analyse the role of metaphors in these situations. Thus, the book addresses different situations covering the relationship between the EU and the UK, the rise of contemporary populism in Italy, the 2017-18 US-Iranian conflict, the 2017 Catalan Independence crisis and post-2008 economic and financial crisis. Notably, different case studies in this book reveal the persuasive or manipulative function of the metaphor.

The first chapter explores metaphors used in British parliamentary debate related to the EU (2000-2016), aiming to reveal what kind of metaphors the pro-EU and anti-EU politicians use when talking about the EU and what kind of image

of the EU they create by using them (p. 27). The second chapter discusses the concept of “peoplehood” in political discourse with the aim to identify peoplehood representations embedded in political action and leader-specific attitudes (p. 45). This chapter demonstrates the pervasive, latent conceptual nature of metaphors and metaphor scenarios as constructs in human language, their essential role in exemplifying knowledge and their ability to facilitate the understanding of context-embedded narratives of people, objects and actions by anchoring them to a specific frame of representation. The book also deals with the general question of how metaphors contribute to a populist political style and, more specifically, with the nature of metaphors used by populist politicians and the rhetorical advances of this use. Thus, the third chapter analyses populist, elitist and pluralist speeches by politicians in order to demonstrate how these three political styles are articulated in different metaphors. In so doing, it distinguishes three main functions of metaphors and metaphor scenarios: strategic, rational or an emotional function (p. 75). The fourth chapter starts from the understanding of populism

as discursively articulated ideology and analyses the role of metaphors in the construction and spread of the populist ideology in order to identify a range of presentational elements and rhetorical devices which may be generalised to characterise populist social media communication. The chapter aims to highlight larger patterns in the way populist actors construct their social media messages. At the same time, the chapter contributes to the research on how populist ideologies are discursively articulated on social media. Chapter five deals with the general question of how foreign policy is represented through metaphor (cf. Chilton, Lakoff, 1989). More specifically, the aim of this chapter is to approach political conflict and foreign policy and to analyse the place of metaphors in the context of uncertainty (the 2017-18 US-Iranian conflict). It identifies patterns of metaphorical representation in the context of foreign policy. Finally, the last chapter moves away from politicians’ speeches and focuses on the question of media communication on politics. It analyses the variations of metaphors in newspaper editorials with different political allegiances which they tend to use in order

to legitimize or discredit controversial political movements. The argumentative force of the metaphor scenarios is analysed in this chapter.

By exploring and revealing the power of metaphors in political discourse, this book makes a significant contribution to the existing academic literature in the field of discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics at various levels. It sheds light to the central role that metaphors play in the construction of political reality by offering responses to various important questions, including how language, ideology and power are interlinked in political discourse, how relevant metaphors are in populist discourses in situations of political conflicts or uncertainty, how metaphors are used with specific political goals in these situations, how they have the ability to frame the debate and indirectly communicate hidden ideologies, in what way different discourse genres influence the use of metaphors in political discourse. Through its diverse chapters, and from different angles, the variability of metaphors in political discourse is revealed, leading to a deeper understanding of political and populist discourse. Furthermore, the book focuses on metaphor

scenarios in order to capture the variability of metaphors in the contemporary political contexts. The book is therefore a valuable resource for all scholars interested in the study of metaphors and in understanding their power in political discourse.

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