Rerview of *Identity, Narrative and Metaphor. A Corpus-Based Cognitive Analysis of New Labour Discourse*

Emilie L'Hôte, *Identity, Narrative and Metaphor. A Corpus-Based Cognitive Analysis of New Labour Discourse.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 305 pp., ISBN 978-1-137-42738-0. Hardback 63 lb.

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Emilie L'Hôte's book analyses the cognitive and statistical underpinnings of British Labour Party discourse as a key to its political success in 1997-2007 after more than 22 years in opposition. The scholarship is evidently inspired by the founders of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA), Norman Fairclough (2003: 13, 37) and Teun van Dijk (2009), whose reflections on Labour discourse gave an impetus to the work under consideration. At the same time, what makes L'Hôte's book unique is her quite successful endeavour to combine cognitive, CDA and statistical methods into a synergy, which she describes as "a corpus-based cognitive analysis of political discourse" (p. 49).

Established across three decades, CDA (Fairclough 1989, 1995, 2003, 2006 [1993]; van Dijk 1984, van Dijk 1993, 2008, 2009; Weiss & Wodak 2003; Wodak 1989, 2013) has won a large number of followers, which is perhaps motivated by its multidisciplinary nature (van Dijk 1998) and with the diversity of its principles and approaches. The author attempts to further inform it with cognitive theories and suggests reading the letter *C* in the CDA abbreviation as *Cognitive* (pp. 19-24). Having adopted this strategy, the author aims, on the one hand, to preserve the objective stance of discourse analysis (which is prone to ideological bias) and, on the other, to satisfy a long-standing want for a link between discourse and cognition. In this book L'Hôte makes use of a wide range of cognitive methods, such as cognitive theories of metaphor (e.g. Barcelona 2000; Gibbs 2006; Goatley 1997; Kövesces 2002; Lakoff & Johnson 1980), blending (Coulson 2006), mental spaces (Fauconnier 1985, 1997) and semantic frames (Fillmore 1982, 1994; Fillmore & Atkins 1992).

While the application of corpus methods is established in CDA, L'Hôte speaks of its "relatively slow integration" and emphasizes the need for quantitative accountability in relation to the size and composition of corpus data (p. 29). Similarly, she remarks that much of the pioneering work in cognitive linguistics lacks empirical grounding; consequently, "some of the conceptual metaphors established may not be as accurate as originally expected" (p. 30). In this book, L'Hôte applies WMatrix (an online tool for corpus analysis and comparison), frequency lists and keyness analysis in order to address "a need to go back to the materiality of the text" (p. 23) and thus gain a certain level of objectivity. The corpus consists of two parts. The first presents three political sub-corpora: New Labour 1994-2007 (NL), the Conservative Party of the same period (CL), and the Labour Party before 1994 (LP). The second part is composed of post-Blair era Labour and Conservative Party sub-corpora.

The scholarship demonstrates a clear-cut and carefully designed research procedure which includes the following stages.

In Part 1, the author deals with New Labour identity. As the author concludes, New Labour turned into "a political brand with a good name" as a consequence of the frequent occurrence of *Labour* (N) collocated with the epithet *new* (p. 79). New Labour is presented as an abstract entity rather than a group of members. In terms of mental spaces theory, this "provides the basis for a legitimization strategy that presents new Labour as a valid (pragmatic) value for the Labour role

defined in discourse" (p. 79). L'Hôte also discusses the disassociation of Labour from a series of negative political representations, analysed as "pathological stereotypes" i.e. the worst-case scenario that metonymically stands for the entire category, suggesting that the pathological variant is typical (Lakoff 2002: 311). Two pre-1994 Labour stereotypes, its "softness" concerning war (defense) and crime, and its "incompetence" in economic issues, are treated from the point of view of frequency and framing respectively, with a stress on two basic discourse strategies: Appropriation (p. 89) and Reciprocation (p. 113). The former is achieved by adopting and reframing concepts from an opposing model into Labour party discourse. For example, as the domains of business and economy become prominent in Labour party discourse, this defuses the effect of the negative stereotype of inefficiency and incompetence. The strategy of Reciprocation instead turns the stereotype against its initiator, e.g. when Tories themselves are featured as soft and incompetent. Both discursive strategies contribute to blurring traditional party lines with the consequence that the two metaphoric models of the Strict Father and the Nurturant Parent (Lakoff 2002: 65-142) become less relevant than before.

Part 2 shows that change acts an impetus for Labour Party discourse transformations. Internal change (change made by the party or the country) is made the synonym of *progress*. This occurs through New Labour's demonisation of the past in British politics, contrasting the party both with Conservatives and pre-1994 Labour. In this context the metaphor POLITICS IS A JOURNEY represents the party's journey towards better Labour through liberalization.

External change and in particular globalization, is viewed as inevitable, unpredictable, and impossible to argue against. This comprises the basic qualities of the metaphor GLOBALISATION IS INDEPENDENT ENTITY. The metaphor sets up globalisation as an agent of progress while at the same time its hostile side is also widely represented. External change as an engine of internal change in the country brings about what L'Hôte refers to as the "no-alternative" rhetoric of Labour. Through the identification of a recurrent use of a no-alternative strategy in her data, she adds empirical support to Mouffe's (2009: 108-128) claim that New Labour seeks to create "politics without adversaries" (p. 209). In combining images of external and internal change, Labour presents its future as inevitable progress, while at the same time denying the possibility of any other type of change.

Labour after Blair (2007 till present) produces discourse that on the one hand demonstrates continuity, and on the other successfully manages to deviate from some of Blair's visions of the Labour Party. The first tendency is evident, for example, from the decreased occurrence of the word *tough*, which paradoxically testifies to keeping up with the New Labour party line. As L'Hôte concludes, the stereotype of the tough Labour demonstrates stability in the mind of the public and therefore needs no further confirmation (p.226). The opposite tendency is revealed when Brown and Miliband distance the Labour from Blair's globalist discourse, which promised never-ending progress for the country, on the one hand, and from the issue of war in Iraq, on the other. The idea of globalisation is substituted by the concept of "a world of shared global rules founded on shared global values" (p. 249). Concerning war in Iraq, after the global disavowal of Britain's participation in it, L'Hôte features this Blair's wrong choice at cognitive level: it is demonstrated as subjectively biased in the Mental Space built by *I thought* (p. 251).

The author also attempts to examine the new party strategies in multimodal texts (e.g. election posters and popular parodies) in terms of Blending Theory and mental airbrushing.

Blending proves to be an efficient tool for explaining the mental underpinnings of political popular parodies. As an example, L'Hôte considers a spoof poster, which illustrates public reaction to the Labour election strategy in 2010. This strategy was aimed at adapting Gordon Brown's reputation for his short temper and aggression to his image of a hard politician that is ready for an open and even physical confrontation. The spoof poster shows Gordon Brown as a schoolyard bully addressing the words "Step Outside, Posh Boy" to David Cameron, his political opponent. The title

of the poster associates David Cameron with his upper-class background (*posh*), suggests his weakness and absence of appropriate experience (*boy*). L'Hôte models the situation as a blend resting on the conventional metaphor of COMPETITION AS A PHYSICAL CONFLICT. The blend is presented as the result of mapping British politics on the schoolyard fistfight between the pupils of different social backgrounds (p. 234).

Public reaction to political manipulations is also analysed as a kind of mental airbrushing. This term is associated with the computer trick of changing the images of politicians to make them look better or more beautiful in election posters to the extent that their natural features can be barely recognised. Mental airbrushing is considered as the means of manipulating public mind to conceal unpopular characteristics of a party and to show them to advantage. L'Hôte features such manipulation in the parody of "We can't go on like this" Conservative election poster. There, in Barack Obama's famous slogan "Change you can believe in" the word *change* is substituted by the word *airbrush* (p. 236). Combined with an image of photoshopped David Cameron this substitution directly questions the validity of the Conservatives as an effective power to change the country.

L'Hôte also concentrates on blurring the borderline between Lakoff's models of Nurturant Parent and Strict Father providing the political relevance of post-Blair Labour. She clearly demonstrates the bias towards a more Nurturant image, which makes Labour closer to their political counterparts (p. 257).

This obviously successful attempt to present a relevant corpus-based cognitive interpretation of a political discourse brings to the foreground a number of issues which will want clearing up in prospective studies.

The first concerns the effectiveness of corpus-based research in cognitive studies. Its great advantage (of scientific objectivity) is absolutely evident in case where cognitive metaphors and metaphoric models are 'demystified'. This may be considered a great leap for cognitive linguistics, but leaves unsolved the mechanisms of (e.g. nationally specific) associative thinking as a key process for creating new metaphors. As any other cognitive process (e.g. creating stereotypes in L'Hôte's argumentation involving Lipmann's theory (1960) [p.82]), it may be considered in terms of modeling or mapping the world.[1] This theory explains the way every culture programmes the image of the world in our heads. It is a kind of a conceptual or cultural matrix of the nation[2] that depends on the attitudes, biases, traditions, history, geographical position, current political and economic situation of a certain nation. As a cognitive structure it is presented as a set of logically connected domains (domain matrixes) or frames. Verbally, it is implemented in a national corpus. Consequently, such politically relevant concepts as CHANGE, GLOBALISM, CRISIS may be mapped and lexicalized differently. Similarly, in the world map, the choice of relevant source and target domains in metaphoric mappings is also stipulated by the tendency to "perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture" (Lipmann 1922: 81).

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1   Karasik, Valadimir. 2004. *Yazykovoy krug: lichnost', konzepty, diskurs* [Linguistic circle: personality, concepts, discourse in the Russian language]. Moscow: Gnozis; Kubriakova, Elena S. 2004. *Yazyk i znaniye. Na puti polucheniya znaniy o yazyke. Chasti rechi s kognitivnoy tochki zreniya. Rol' yazyla v poznanii mira* [Langauge and knowledge. On the way to receiving knowledge about language. Parts of speech in cognitive perspective. Role of language in comprehending the world in the Russian language]. Moscow: Yazyki slavjanskih kul'tur; Popova, Zinaida & Sternin, Iosiph. 2003. *Yazyk i nazional'naya kartina mira* [Language and national model of the world in the Russian language]. Voronezh; Serebrennikov, Boris (ed.). 1988. *Chelovecheskiy factor v yazyke* [Human factor in language in the Russian language]. Moscow; Ter-Minasova, Svetlana. 2000. *Yazyk i kul'turnaya kommunikaziya* [Language and intercultural communication in the Russian language]. Moscow: Slovo.

2   Assman, Jan. 1998. *Moses the Egyptian*. Harvard University Press; Erll, Astrid & Nunning, Ansgar. 2005. Where Literature and Memory Meet: Towards a Systematic Approach to the Concepts of Memory used in Literary Studies. In Herbert Grabes (ed.) *Literature, Literary History and Cultural Memory*. Tübingen. 21. 261–294; Nora, Pierre. 1989. Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire. In *Representations*. 26. 7–24; Whitehead A. *Memory*. Routledge, 2009.

On the other hand, quantitative (especially keyness) analyses of the corpus may produce quite predictable results when considered against the geopolitical situation, e.g. the prominence of war-related keywords *Kosovo, Saddam, terrorism, Taliban* etc. in the discourse of new Labour and Conservatives in 1994-2007 (p. 93).

Another issue pertains to such salient notions as "framing", which is widely used in the book. Initially, the term is introduced in the sense of the seminal work of Fillmore (1982) as mental structures describing typical (experience-grounded) situations considered as a *system of participants*, their *roles*, *attributes* and *properties*. This view of the frame stipulates a clear-cut analysis procedure described by Fillmore (Fillmore 1994; Fillmore & Atkins 1992) and extended by Dirven & Verspoor (1997: 75–79). However, in the discussion that follows, the meaning of this term transforms from "framing" to "presentation under a certain angle" or "glossing". For example, "As for remaining differences between new Labour and Conservative discourse, they may this time have to do with *framing*: While new Labour focuses on issues of justice … and images of strength and "toughness" …, the Conservatives emphasise discipline and punishment." (p. 91).

The last arguable issue concerns L'Hôte's decision to omit political personalities from her scope, which was obviously done for the sake of objectivity. However, Enkelmann (2013: 31-32) observes that "[a] charismatic person possesses power. It means that he/she influences the actions and thoughts of other people" [translation mine]. Other recent studies have emphasised the role of a personality in political discourse (Mondak 2010; Redlawsk & Lau 2006) and have considered linguistic (political) personality in its cognitive aspects (Karaulov 1988). The data suggest that a considerable portion of the party's success belongs personally to Tony Blair. The heydays of New Labour between 1994 and 2007 will go down in history as Blair's era; and not for nothing does his most characteristic stance grace the book cover. Consequently, tearing apart a successful party *identity* from the *personality* of its leader, his/her communicative potential and charisma, seems somewhat unnatural.

In conclusion, L'Hôte's book represents a successful synergy of CDA, cognitive and corpus-based linguistics. Though it naturally leaves some issues in cognitive linguistics beyond its scope, it opens wide perspectives for further empirically supported and computer assisted research in cognitive theory of metaphor, blending and mental spaces.

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