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Ce document a été généré automatiquement le 1 novembre 2020.

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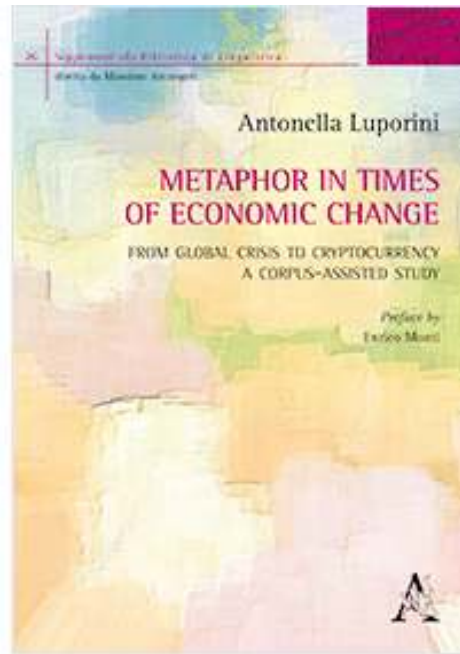
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RÉFÉRENCE

Luporini, Antonella, 2019. *Metaphor in Times of Economic Change. From global crisis to cryptocurrency. A corpus-assisted study*. Canterano: Aracne editrice. 165 pp. IBSN 978-88-255-2468-0. Préface: Enrico Monti.

1   It has been suggested that linguists – especially those interested in the language of finance and economics – should keep a close watch on the way metaphors evolve (Resche 2016). Readers of *ASp* will be well aware of the role metaphor plays in specialized discourse, a theme which has been aired in numerous articles and even some book reviews going back to the 1990s and beyond. A comparison of differing attitudes towards metaphors in financial discourse by A. Partington, published in *ASp* in 1995, is quoted in the book under review, though his advice to clearly distinguish between general language metaphors and those of specialised discourse is not taken up[1] as we shall see in the following. What then can a new book on metaphors in the field of finance have to offer? Firstly Luporini's book compares the use of financial metaphors in English and Italian, an unusual though not completely novel pairing, inviting an indirect *tertium comparationis* with French. Secondly, it presents the evolution of the metaphors used from the outbreak of the global financial crisis to the rise of cryptocurrencies (though the latter only for English). Thirdly, it experiments with corpora from the social media and fourthly, and probably most importantly, it advances the hypothesis that the lexical metaphor, in particular as understood in conceptual metaphor theory, is in fact complimentary to the grammatical metaphor of systemic functional linguistics. This claim has undoubtedly been made before – indeed Halliday himself underlined the identity of the two forms of metaphor, but it is the first time, as far as the present reviewer knows, that it has been demonstrated in the form of a book-length study.

2   The book is divided up into four chapters. The first gives an outline of metaphor theory and its development, in particular from the figure of speech of ancient times to the conceptual metaphor of the late twentieth century. The second chapter is devoted to methodological issues, the prime one of these being how to extract metaphors from corpora as automatically as possible. The third chapter is the study of metaphors used in the press at the time of the global financial crisis using one British daily and one Italian daily. The fourth is devoted to a similar study carried out on cryptocurrencies, using a different kind of corpus, this time given over to social journalism. There is a short conclusion, an appendix of *Medium stories* and a bibliography.

3   The Introduction sets the stage for the study and tells how research for a doctoral thesis led the author to the metaphor, both conceptual and grammatical, and to the realisation that the two can be combined to perform a linguistic and conceptual analysis of the changing world of global finance using the methods and tools of corpus linguistics. There is also a review of some of the major studies on metaphor in popularising economic and financial discourse. The author situates her study within

metaphor theory and how corpus linguistics can be harnessed in this framework, rather than in LSP strictly defined.

4   The first chapter aims to show how the perception of what metaphor is has changed since the times of Aristotle, when it was – partly abusively - considered a mere embellishment, up to the advent of conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff, his predecessors and his successors, though a special mention is made of its relevance to critical discourse theory. In line with the general orientation already mentioned, no specific attention is paid to whether specialized fields require specific treatment as far as metaphors are concerned. It is in this first chapter where the relevance of the grammatical metaphor is claimed and demonstrated. An example of nominalisation is given on an economic subject, taken from a general-interest newspaper, where it is shown how a syntactic transformation (a nominalisation in this case) changes the point of view presented to the reader in a similar way that lexical metaphors modify the perception of a given event. In particular, it is shown how the nominalisation leads the reader to understand the outcome described in the article under study as "non-negotiable", just as using the CONTAINER metaphor, for example, has a similar effect of presenting events as "natural forces". These two or three pages are among the most convincing in the book.

5   The second chapter is devoted to getting the most metaphors out of a corpus as automatically as possible. The author reviews the abundant literature on metaphor extraction, focusing in particular on the Pragglejaz Metaphor Identification Procedure and its successors. She readily admits that not everything can be done automatically and that hands-on intervention is also needed: the method advocated is in fact a carefully planned series of operations, some done automatically, others by hand, in particular for what the author terms troubleshooting. Tools used include the corpus query system SearchEngine and well-known KWIC tools. Much attention is given in this chapter to the type of metaphor to be retrieved, ranging from those variously known as dead and buried through the sleeping to the fully active. Given the pervasive metaphor stance of this work in general, the scope of metaphors caught in the net is intended to be quite large. In other words, though dead metaphors are eliminated, it is recommended to cast the net widely in order to catch underlying metaphors.

6   The main research project itself is the focus of the third chapter, the investigation of the metaphors of the global financial crisis as mirrored in the main first page articles and the leaders of the 2008 issues of *The Financial Times* for English (307,181 words) and *Il Sole 24 Ore* for Italian (556,096 words). Corpus extraction was carried out partly automatically, partly by hand, as explained in the previous chapter, focusing on the lemma *crisis/crisi*. The cooccurring conceptual metaphors and nominalisations were then identified and classified. For example, *emerge from the crisis* or *uscire dalla crisi* were taken as instances of the ontological metaphor THE CRISIS IS A CONTAINER. The results from the subcorpora were then tallied according to broad source concept, the most frequent being: PHYSICAL ENTITY, CONTAINER, WAR/CONFLICT, HEALTH, NATURAL FORCES, JOURNEY, LIVING/HUMAN BEING, etc. The most frequent source concepts related to the crisis, which are consistent with those already identified in metaphor studies, are then analysed in detail. Differences between the languages were not great, though three source concepts were only found in the Italian corpus: RELIGION, SHOWBUSINESS and SUPERNATURAL FORCE.

7   The fourth chapter breaks new ground, focusing as it does on the new financial phenomenon of cryptocurrencies on the one hand and on social journalism rather than

newspapers as a source of corpus. This latter is made up of 60 articles, called "stories" (185,000 words), taken from the social media site *Medium*. The site is open to anyone including mainstream media such as *The Economist* or *The Financial Times*, so that it is difficult to tell just who wrote what content, though it would seem that some are by real experts. In spite of this difference, the same method as outlined in the previous chapter is used: the keywords in context list is made up of co-occurrences around *crytocurrenciy/cryptocurrencies*, and the associated megametaphors are identified and extracted. The marginal metaphors found in Italian but not in English in the newspaper corpus make a discreet appearance in the cryptocurrency corpus. Other metaphors are found more frequently, such as GAS (*volatile, bubble*) and MOTION; in addition, WAR and HEALTH figuring strongly among the so-called structured metaphors. Generally, the metaphors used with cryptocurrencies tend to convey a less pessimistic message than those associated with the 2008 financial crisis, which in fact may be to some extent due to the bias of the corpus. This may not have been the case had the study been focused on the actual terminology rather than the co-occurrences of the keywords.

8   Though the focus of this study is on two financial developments, the reader of *ASp* should not assume that it intends to be an exercise in language for special purposes. The focus is not on terminology – not only is no reference made to theory-constitutive metaphors, hardly any of the metaphors concern terms at all. It is not concerned either with so-called pedagogical metaphors, helping the non-initiated to understand the mechanisms involved.

9   This work proves to be innovative on a variety of counts. The most stimulating contribution is certainly the determination to treat lexical and grammatical metaphors as varying expressions of the same phenomena. This is admirably explained in the second chapter, and followed up in the two case studies. It may be felt, however, that more special attention could have been paid to the way nominalisations combine with lexical metaphors to produce the effects produced and reported on. More generally, this book details the way quite small corpora can be used to extract metaphoric expressions, and is thus methodologically interesting. It also calls into question the pragmatic typology of communication from expert to expert, expert to lay, etc., in the use of social media, where the highly skilled have to jostle with both professional journalists and people with bees in their bonnet.

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NOTES

1. "The Lakoff-Johnson-Gibbs school was principally making claims about English in general. Perhaps more attention to sectorial languages would have made them more sensitive to the pragmatists' ideas about processing difficulties and strategies." (Partington 1995: § 38)

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