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Introduction

The aim of this book, “Producing Figurative Expression”, is to shift the scholarly agenda more towards researching the production of figurative expressions. Much of previous research into metaphor, irony, hyperbole, and other forms of figurative expressions has focused on identifying their (co-)occurrences and communicative effects, for instance regarding how they impact individuals’ attitudes towards topics under discussion. When and why figurative expressions are produced, however, is less often the subject of theory and analysis.

As the editors John Barnden and Andrew Gargett clarify in the introduction of the volume (pp.6–7), reasons for this gap in the literature certainly do not include a lack of interest among colleagues in the field. Instead, the editors argue that the gap is the result of research obstacles we are all likely to encounter when studying the production of figurative expressions.

The editors explain that for each method used to study the production of figurative expressions, there are different types of limits to the validity of findings. In corpus analysis, production can be examined by identifying patterns of already produced figurative expressions. However, both the difficulty of reliable coding as well as researchers’ inability to oversee the production process represent challenges to the accuracy of results. In experiments, production can be studied by asking participants to deliberately produce figurative expressions following certain instructions. While this setting allows for more researcher control over the production process, the unnaturalness of the study context negatively influences the degree to which findings can be generalized to real-life situations. Another example the editors give deals with computational research, in which production can be examined by building systems that learn, for instance in the context of metaphor, to put different types of domains together. The main research obstacle here seems to be that computers lack human interpretability. As a result, building these systems in a way that their produced expressions make sense is a considerably complex endeavor. Studying the production of figurative expressions is thus

not without challenges, but the publication of this book suggests that there are ways to deal with and perhaps overcome them.

Outline of the book

The first chapter of the book, as mentioned above, is an introduction written by the editors. The introduction has three main objectives. The first is to explain the imbalance in the literature regarding production research, which includes a description of what is meant by relevant terms. Production, for instance, is broadly defined as the (un)intentional creation of figurative expressions in different modes of expressions (e.g., utterances, gestures, visuals). The second objective of the introduction is to summarize the contents of the subsequent chapters, and the third, to review the production literature in areas of research that are not part of the book (e.g., translation, psychotherapy). Because of this combined focus, the introduction prepares readers well for what to expect in the substantive chapters, of which there are as many as seventeen.

The first section (*General empirical studies, with main focus on metaphor*) contains four chapters. In the first chapter, Albert Katz summarizes procedures he used in past experimental research that focused on metaphor and sarcasm. This summary demonstrates the value of using these production techniques to experimentally study the production of figurative expressions. Next is a chapter by John Kennedy who analyzes examples of visual metaphor in pictures drawn by people who are blind. The examples reveal that such pictorial metaphors are often apt despite these individuals' inability to see, suggesting the importance of tactile experiences for producing visual metaphor. Andreas Musolff, in the third chapter, presents the results of both a corpus analysis of metaphor production and a large international and cross-linguistic survey of metaphor interpretation. Based on these results, he makes a case for thinking about metaphor production and interpretation as intricately connected. The final chapter of the first section is written by Amitash Ojha and Bipin Indurkha. The authors provide both a theoretical and experimental account of the role of perceptual similarity in the production of visual metaphor.

The second section (*General empirical studies – other*) contains five chapters. The first is a chapter by Herbert Colston, who proposes to study formulaic language more because it is often inherently figurative, such as gratitude acknowledgements (e.g., “no problem”, “any time”). By means of three experiments, he shows that such a focus enables scholars to successfully get participants to produce reasonably authentic figurative language. Next, Francesca Ervas considers why verbal irony is often produced over literal language or other forms of figura-

tive expressions in persuasive contexts. In an experiment, she finds support for the hypothesis that this is because verbal irony contains a specific emotional charge. The third chapter in the second section is written by Rachel Giora. This chapter tests the prediction, derived from the defaultness hypothesis, that resonance with default interpretations influences the production of figurative expressions. Results of corpus analyses of metaphor and sarcasm provide evidence for this relationship. Loes Koring, in the fourth chapter, argues for how definiteness can be used to mark figurative expressions. Her experiment shows that figurative expressions are considered more idiomatic when they contain a definite article (e.g., “the”) than when they contain an indefinite article (e.g., “a”). Finally, Roger Kreuz and Alexander Johnson present a review of the literature on verbal irony production and share their recommendations for future research.

The third section (*Empirical and analytical studies aimed at specific applications*) contains four chapters. In the first chapter, Nazlı Cila and Paul Hekkert introduce a conceptual model for metaphor in product design, which distinguishes the different factors that affect the characteristics of visual metaphors designers create. Fiona MacArthur, in the second chapter, explores metaphor production among L2 speakers of English in face-to-face interactions using corpus analysis. She finds, among other things, that despite their lower language proficiency, L2 speakers do not produce metaphors less often than L1 speakers. Also using corpus analysis, the third and fourth chapters of the section both demonstrate the importance of metaphor production in the real world, since they show that people often (co-)construct metaphors to make sense of negative life experiences. Susan Nacey investigates metaphor production in computer-mediated interactions among survivors of relationship abuse. Sarah Turner, Jeannette Littlemore, Danielle Fuller, Karolina Kuberska, and Sheelagh McGuinness study how people who have experienced pregnancy loss use time-related metaphors to communicate their grief.

The fourth and final section (*other theoretical analysis and cognitive or computational modelling*) contains four chapters. The first is a chapter written by Stephen McGregor, Matthew Purver, and Geraint Wiggins, who propose a novel computational method for metaphor generation based on statistically grounded semantic representations. They explain the validity of this method in relation to both cognitive and pragmatic accounts of metaphor. Next, Mihaela Popa-Wyatt refines the definition of hyperbole to give more priority to its emphatic qualities, including the expression of affect. In the third chapter, Francisco Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez provides both a review of how different forms of figurative expressions relate to each other and a theory-driven assessment of their constraints. The book ends with a chapter by Tony Veale, who argues for the value of relying on

signs with external reference as well as on topic modelling for creating computational systems that generate potentially deliberate metaphors.

Evaluation

There are many things to like about this book. First of all, I appreciate the underlying motivation for bringing together research efforts involving the production of figurative expressions to address an imbalance in the literature. When compared to the amount of scholarly attention paid to the (co-)occurrences and effects of figurative expressions, I agree that production tends to be somewhat overlooked, at least in certain fields and/or regarding certain topics. I believe this book will inspire more research into the production of metaphor, irony, hyperbole, and other forms of figurative expressions, thereby fulfilling its main purpose.

Another strength of the book is that it is diverse in different ways. The book is rich in terms of addressing different forms of figurative expressions (e.g., metaphor, irony, hyperbole, idioms) as well as in terms of the use of different methods (i.e., corpus analysis, experiments, surveys, computational research). The chapters have been written by experts from different disciplines (e.g., linguistics, psychology, computer science). Authors are also affiliated with universities from a wide range of different countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, Italy, India, Israel). Taken together, this means that the book gives a broad, interdisciplinary, and potentially cross-cultural overview of production research that focuses on figurative expressions.

Side note: the editors have grouped the chapters together based on the forms of figurative expressions that are studied, the methods that are used to study them, and whether the studies have specific applications. In the introduction, the editors indicate that they chose this grouping to accommodate readers with particular interests. At the same time, it is acknowledged that the boundaries between the sections are somewhat fuzzy. Therefore, it is good to keep an open mind: you may find chapters that correspond to your expertise in more than one section.

I was also happy to see a number of chapters reviewing and bringing together different strands of research. Particularly worth highlighting are the chapter by Roger Kreuz and Alexander Johnson on irony production research and the chapter by Francisco Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez on the relatedness and constraints of figurative thinking. Because the production of figurative expressions can be studied from a variety of disciplines, with different methods, and with potentially different applications in mind, literature reviews are an essential tool for researchers to identify next steps necessary to advance knowledge in the field.

An obvious point of criticism would be that the book lacks representation of some important forms of figurative expressions such as metonymy, important

modalities such as gestures, and important communication domains such as journalism. However, the editors did well to warn the reader in the book's introduction that the book contents are not, and cannot be, exhaustive. The reason they give is that such an ambition would require many more volumes. This is undoubtedly true, and therefore does not undermine what the book is aiming to do.

What I hoped the book would do in every empirical chapter, but does not always deliver on, is give explicit guidance for dealing with the research obstacles outlined in the book's introduction. Many chapters do not directly engage with these obstacles. Nevertheless, some of the chapters stand out positively in that regard. For corpus analysis, Susan Nacey, for instance, explains how to use automated semantic annotation to more reliably identify metaphorical frames. For experimental research, I would especially recommend the chapter by Albert Katz and the chapter by Herbert Colston, which describe experimental techniques and protocols to make participants produce natural language, while still maintaining sufficient researcher control. Finally, for computational research, Stephen McGregor and his colleagues as well as Tony Veale propose concrete approaches for creating comprehensive metaphor generation systems. This means that some book chapters do indeed provide researchers with detailed instructions, tailored to the specific method of interest, to overcome obstacles in production research.

My closing critique is that some chapters only indirectly examined production of figurative expressions. The conclusions of some chapters seemed to engage more with literature that focuses on the (co-)occurrences and effects of figurative expressions than their production. This could point to the concept of production being too broadly defined in the book. However, this overlap in concepts also nicely demonstrates how the production and understanding of figurative expressions may actually be difficult to disentangle. It underlines what Andreas Musolf in his chapter also argues: that these concepts are in fact intertwined and that we should also study them that way.

In sum, the edited volume "Producing Figurative Expression" presents research into the production of metaphor, irony, hyperbole, and other forms of figurative expressions across discourse domains, disciplines, and potentially also cultures. With this, the book sets the agenda for new lines of investigation in the study of figurative expression production. My hope is that some of these new lines will especially focus on overcoming associated research obstacles to allow researchers to gain even deeper insights into production dynamics.

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