

## BOOK REVIEW

Review of Sarah Duffy and Michele Feist. **Time, metaphor, and language: A cognitive science perspective.** Cambridge University Press, 2023, 209 pp.

The renowned literary scholar Wayne Booth, back in 1978 (Booth, 1978), posited that the upsurge in interest in the study of metaphor was so great, even at that time, that by the year 2039, there would be more metaphor scholars than people (in the world!). This bold prediction (Booth claimed, tongue-in-cheek, that he used a calculator to figure this out) actually has an excellent chance of coming true. Although the year now is 2023, it is already impossible to ignore the avalanche of scholarly studies on all sorts of topics related to metaphor in thought, language, and actions. Metaphor, and figurative language, conferences are flourishing at sites all over the world, and thousands of metaphor books (both edited and authored) and journal articles have been published. The range of subjects about metaphor that are explored, from various disciplinary and methodological perspectives, is also simply enormous.

As a metaphor enthusiast, I openly confess that it is very hard to keep up with all that is going on in the almost 50 years since Booth's somewhat facetious prediction. In this context, when I am sometimes asked, "What's the newest and best work on metaphor that we must pay attention to?" I am typically reluctant to suggest a single answer given the wealth of fine scholarship on this always expanding topic. But at last, I am pleased to report that Sarah Duffy and Michele Feist's new book "Time, Metaphor, and Language: A Cognitive Science Perspective" is *an absolute must read for anyone interested in metaphor*, and really any scholar, from whatever discipline, with an interest in the dynamic relations between language and cognition.

The book is overtly about the very rich, interesting linguistic and psychological research on time metaphors. Cognitive linguistic studies have revealed that people, in somewhat different ways across cultures, understand time according to different metaphorical relations with space. One simple case is the distinction between time-moving and ego-moving perspectives. For example, as Duffy and Feist write, "we might think of time as an unstoppable train heading towards us when we hear 'holidays are coming'; or we might imagine time as a landscape that we move across as we 'approach the moment of truth'." In the first case, an event in time (the holidays) seems to move toward us as we remain still, while in the second instance, we seem to move toward a specific stable spot where a particular time event (the moment of truth) exists.

Duffy and Feist provide nice overviews of these different studies, which show how these two metaphorical interpretations of time shape temporal experience in different task-specific contexts. For example, one question that is revealing about people's concepts for time is seen in the following scenario: "Wednesday's meeting has been moved two days forward. What day will the meeting now be held?" People variously responded "Monday" or "Friday," depending on a host of factors, such as personality



differences, event valence, embodied positioning, and various other linguistic and contextual influences. In general, time may be understood metaphorically in terms of space and motion (i.e., time is motion). But there are many variations in people's reasoning about time that purely linguistic analyses alone are unable to detect.

The book tells the story of metaphorical time through different chapters that provide theoretical background, linguistic evidence, and psychological data on temporal reasoning. Chapter 1: "Introduction" gently warms up readers to the subject matter and theoretical questions motivating the book. Chapter 2: "The theory of metaphor: from language to cognition" offers a very cogent introduction to contemporary theories of metaphor. Chapter 3: "Metaphor beyond language: testing the conceptual connections" provides overviews of earlier experimental research on the psychological reality of metaphorical time concepts. Chapter 4: "Time in space: cross-linguistic variation and metaphor" lays out some of the notable variations in the ways different languages refer to time. Chapter 5: "Conceptualizing time through language and space" addresses several issues on the ways that time is concretely manifested in different spatial manners according to various psycholinguistic studies. Chapter 6: "Bringing in the cognizer" focuses more on the individual characteristics of people that affect their temporal reasoning skills. Chapter 7: "Time across paradigms" explores the contrast between looking at time from a cultural as opposed to an individual perspective. Finally, Chapter 8: "Discussion" summarizes the book's main points and unveils more speculative comments on the future of metaphor studies given many of the individual and cultural complexities described earlier.

Duffy and Feist's general argument is that our conceptions of time as space may be more complicated than seen in some cognitive linguistic studies given significant variations between individuals, their bodily positions and experiences, specific cultures, and the experimental tasks employed by psychologists investigating the influence of metaphorical thinking on understanding temporal events. This scholarly feat, by itself, is outstanding.

On the other hand, I know many scholars, from different fields of study, who would openly object to emphasis on personality differences, emotional and bodily variations, cultures, and experimental tasks because all these are essentially uninformative, and only detail the "noise" around a central mean or average tendency in a cognitive theory of time and space. This attitude tends to be more under the surface in many areas of cognitive linguistics, where researchers sometimes note the possibilities of individual and cultural variations, for example, but have little to say beyond that acknowledgment. The problem, though, is that noting variations in metaphorical experience is insufficient if we are to make better progress toward a more comprehensive, psychologically and linguistically sensitive theory of metaphor's pervasive role in temporal reason.

And it is here where Duffy and Feist's book is so incredibly important. Their aim is not just to document the varieties of variations in metaphors about time, but to suggest ways of how these factors can all play a role in a broader theory of both time concepts and metaphor, more generally. This is primarily why this book should be read by all metaphor scholars, as well as anyone interested in language and cognition relationships. "Time, Metaphor, and Language: A Cognitive Science Perspective" will show you how, and give you the courage, to embrace variations as a central, even defining, reality within grander theories of mind and language. I share my tremendous enthusiasm in this review because this new book sets the stage for the future

research on metaphor and is a great example of how to do cognitive science at its methodological and theoretical best.

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## Reference

Booth, W. (1978). Metaphor as rhetoric: The problem of evaluation. *Critical Inquiry*, 5, 49–72.