
Reviewed by Zhen-qiang Fan, Zhejiang Gongshang University

Since the 1970s, more and more scholars have approached metaphor from a cognitive perspective. While stressing their conceptual nature, these researchers, in one way or another, neglect other aspects of metaphors. In recent years, many researchers investigating metaphor have started to adopt a discourse-based method, emphasizing the essential role of social and conversational context in processing, interpreting, recognizing, and appreciating metaphors. However, so far few have built a model which gives due attention to the workings of metaphorlic language. Aiming to fill this gap, Karen Sullivan ‘integrates insights from Construction Grammar with those of Cognitive Grammar, Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Frame semantics, bringing these together into a new account of metaphorlic language’ (4).

The book contains ten chapters, including an introduction and conclusion, a list of references, primary sources, and indices. The introduction, ‘Metaphorlic language and metaphorlic thought’ (1–16), critically evaluates existing studies on metaphorlic language. It also presents the objectives and overview of the entire book. In Ch. 2, ‘Frames in metaphor and meaning’ (17–33), S introduces two important notions from cognitive linguistics (CL), frame theory in cognitive semantics and autonomy/dependence in cognitive grammar, adapting them to suit the analysis of metaphorlic language. Ch. 3, ‘Frames and lexical choice in metaphor’ (35–48), demonstrates how frames evoked by a lexical item’s non-metaphorical senses can help to determine which items are chosen to express a given conceptual metaphor.

Ch. 4, ‘Frames in metonymic inferencing’ (49–61), illustrates the effectiveness of frames and constructions in distinguishing metaphor from other figurative language such as metonymy. It is argued that metonymic inferencing requires specific constructional contexts that allow for ambiguity while the constructions involved in metaphor are adopted in ways that avoid ambiguity and ensure a metaphorlic interpretation.

The remaining chapters of the book (Chs. 5–9) offer a more detailed illustration of the new model proposed by analyzing a series of grammatical constructions. Ch. 5, ‘Two types of adjective construction in metaphor’ (63–86), focuses on domain constructions and predicating modifier constructions, while Ch. 6, ‘Argument structure constructions in metaphor’ (87–114), concentrates on argument structure constructions, such as resultatives, ditransitives, and uses of the copula. Ch. 7 scrutinizes ‘Metaphoric preposition phrases and closed-class items’ (115–30), and Ch. 8, ‘Repeated domain evocation and xyz constructions’ (131–48), investigates constructions which combine two or more of those from Chs. 5–7. Finally, Ch. 9, ‘Metaphoric
constructions beyond the clause’ (149–66), further examines some larger metaphor-evoking structures, including relative clauses and conditional constructions, as well as other complex structures such as parallelism and negation of the literal. Ch. 10, ‘Conclusion’ (167–72), presents the significance and limitations of the research.

This book shows the cross-fertilization among several existent theories within CL by creating a unified and coherent model that is capable of explaining both metaphoric and non-metaphoric language. The book should be of interest to anyone interested in CL and metaphor in particular. Future studies could consider extending the model to cover more metaphor-evoking constructions and analyze linguistic data from languages other than English.