



## **Book Review**

**Attila Imre**

***A Cognitive Approach to Methaphorical Expressions***  
(Sapientia Foundation – Institute of Research Programs,  
400112 Cluj-Napoca, Matei Corvin 4., 2010,  
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### **1. The structure of the book**

As the title indicates, Attila Imre's book gives the reader an introduction into the field of Cognitive Linguistics. The specific focus is on English, Romanian and Hungarian metaphorical expressions that contain prepositions or verbal prefixes like the English *over*, *through*, *above*, *across*, the Romanian *prin* and *peste*, or the Hungarian *át*, *keresztül*, *felett* and *felül*. The examples are taken from representative dictionaries of the above-mentioned three languages. The book consists of two main parts: The first gives a theoretical background and the second describes the semantics of metaphorical expressions.

In the first part, the author addresses the main ideas of Cognitive Linguistics. Besides examining, among others, the issues of categorisation, conceptual metaphors, and image schemas, the first part gives an introduction to the history of metaphor and deals with metaphor as it is addressed in Cognitive Linguistics. The first part serves as a detailed summary of the cognitive linguistic literature on metaphors and also shows the author's standpoint on several important questions in Cognitive Linguistics.

The second part of the book gives a cognitive linguistic analysis of 10 prepositions and verbal prefixes in three languages. The author demonstrates the use of metaphors and thus gives the reader an insight into how metaphor theory is applied in the practical analysis of linguistic expressions. For instance, Imre

examines the English preposition *over* applying Lakoff's theory ("The Case Study of *Over*", 1987) in his analysis. The book gives a thorough examination of metaphorical expressions using a cognitive linguistic approach. The author also presents the reader with figures in order to make the analysis easy-to-follow. Imre starts with analysing English prepositions and verbal prefixes, continues with the Romanian examples and finishes with the Hungarian ones. All chapters are carefully written and present the reader with detailed figures and tables.

## 2. Theoretical background: Image schemas

Although the theoretical background is detailed, some questions remain unanswered in several chapters of the book. To mention one shortcoming of this type, in Chapter 7 titled "Metaphorical Expressions" Imre states the following: "In our presentation of the English, Romanian and Hungarian prepositions we apply a system of abbreviations which differs from Langacker's terms" (67). In order to understand the highlighted difference, it would be essential that the reader has a clear picture on Langacker's theory because it serves as the basis of the analysis presented in Imre's book. In section 3.4 Imre gives an introduction to Lakoff's image schema theory; however, he fails to give sufficient information on Langacker's view (he only touches on it in section 3.3 titled "Relationship, participants, perspective") and, thus, he does not provide the reader with a firm background to the analysis he presents in the book.

## 3. Metaphorical expressions

The analyses of expressions are summarised in figures that, first of all, prove to be beneficial for learners of second languages. One specific purpose of the book is to contribute to improving techniques of second language teaching. The illustrative figures of each chapter help to reach this goal. An additional shortcoming of the book appears however when the reader looks into the analyses of particular linguistic expressions. An examination similar to that of Lakoff and Langacker (from grammatical sentences to image schemas) would have given an extra value to Imre's book. Lakoff in *Cognitive Semantics* (1988: 145) examines the preposition *over* as it appears, for instance, in the following sentences:

*Sam walked over the hill.* (path )

*Sam lives over the hill.* (end-of-path)

Similar to Lakoff, it would have been useful for Imre to go beyond the linguistic expressions in his analysis and focus more on image schemas that motivate the meaning and the understanding of the expressions.

Langacker in *The Cognitive Basis of Grammar* (2002: 23) examines the preposition *above* as it appears in the following example.

*The lamp is above the table.*

Langacker gives a comprehensive analysis: he not only describes the role of the preposition, but also that of the noun and the verb (the other parts of the sentence), as well as their relation to each other. The comprehensive analysis leads Langacker to the conclusion that the meaning of *above* is based on an underlying image schema that is dependent on the relation of lamp and table.

Similar to Langacker, an examination of the prepositions as they appear in context (the way they are related to other parts of the sentence in which they appear) would have helped the reader better understand the role of image schemas in metaphorical understanding. In order to enhance second language learning, it would have been useful to include comparative data in the figures and tables as well.

#### 4. Conclusions

The book offers promising topics for future researches in the field. For instance, the thorough examination of the Romanian prepositions *asupra* and *deasupra* or that of the Hungarian *túl* and *végig* would provide a comprehensive picture of the role of prepositions, postpositions and adverbial particles in metaphorical understanding. A shortcoming of the work however is that the author fails to give sufficient introduction to image schema theory – as for instance, that of Langacker – that serves as the basis of the examination presented in the book. Imre's book is a valuable contribution to the cognitive linguistic literature that in particular describes the comparative analysis of metaphorical expressions in different languages. The analysis of English, Hungarian and Romanian expressions is especially beneficial and recommended for learners of second languages.

#### References

- Lakoff, George. 1987. Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things. Book 2, "The Case Study of *Over*", 416-461. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 2002. *Concept, Image, and Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Grammar*. Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter.