

Metaphor in the discussion of English as a global language in four general non-fiction texts

In 'Metaphors we live by' George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) assert that "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature." If metaphors are indeed a fundamental aspect of our conceptual system then it would be possible to gain an understanding of a writer's opinion on given subject matter by investigating their choice of metaphor – even if their opinion about the subject matter is not overtly stated in the text.

The English language has been discussed in recent years at academic and more general texts in terms of its global reach. In academic texts the presentation of data, expression of an opinion and the formulation and discussion of hypotheses on this subject is usually presented drily, with little if any resort to literary devices such as metaphor. General non-fiction texts on the other hand are more likely to draw on metaphor and other devices as ways of enriching the text for a general readership. I suggest that the investigation of metaphor within these general texts will reveal something about the attitudes of their authors to English and its increasing use and diversification around the world.

This project involved the investigation of four general non-fiction texts and the work of George Lakoff and his colleagues in the area of metaphor. All four texts were written by native speakers of standard British and North American English varieties. The approach comprised an empirical measurement of metaphors in the texts and an analysis of what (if anything) they revealed about author attitudes to the use of English around the world.