Framing through narrative and metaphor in discourse

Evaluations of a topic are often promoted in texts through the use of metaphors. Metaphor can express evaluations and ideology covertly, off-record, in comparison to literal language, a property which can be exploited by speakers and writers. The close analysis of metaphors in text thus has the potential to identify stances that might not be expressed on-record. There is a growing body of research broadly situated within Critical Discourse Analysis which draws on work from Conceptual Metaphor Theory to do this, investigating texts from a range of genres, such as popular science journalism or financial reporting, and on specific topics such as migration or illness.

In my talk, I will discuss analytical and methodological approaches taken to uncovering evaluations and stances expressed through the use of metaphor. I will show that scholars have found metaphors to frame their topics at different levels, from the macro, where, for example, the natural world is framed through a balance metaphor, to the highly specific. In the latter, a metaphorically used word, or more often, phrase, references a fragment of culturally-shared knowledge or experience along with associated evaluations, as described by Musolff’s notion of ‘scenario’ (e.g. 2006). I take metaphorical expressions from my data, consisting of educational texts about climate change, and politicians’ speeches about education, to explore encoded evaluations. I show how concordance and collocation data from a very large reference corpus can be used to test the researcher’s judgement about evaluations associated with particular metaphorical expressions, to build a detailed and nuanced picture of messages a text conveys below its literal, overt one.

References