Review of Tomasz Dyrmo's PhD thesis: "Coming out as a multimodal metaphor: Perspectives from gesture and language"

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The present PhD thesis takes the format of three published articles, which are supplemented by an introduction and a conclusion.

The **introduction** elaborates on coming out as a social process as well as a metaphor, before introducing conceptual metaphor theory, especially multimodal and gestural metaphor, as the theoretical framework for the subsequent articles. The introduction closes by providing the structure of the thesis along with its framework and scope as well as the modalities of the analysed data.

The discussion of coming out does not mention it as a repeated process, although this is noted in two of the articles.

The candidate makes a case for analysing multimodal, including gestural, metaphor to overcome circular reasoning about linguistic and conceptual metaphor (pp. 9-10). I would argue, however, that the same criticism applies to the analysis of metaphor in different semiotic mode; what is needed to avoid the circular argument perceived by McGlone (2001) is psycholinguistic experiments. Other than that, though, the theory part is very well structured and engages with up-to-date literature.

Specific comments:

p. 2: When was 'the time of writing'?

p.13: Elaborate on 'the sense of interactivity present in gesture'.

pp. 14-15: How can 'discourse itself … be seen as a very generic metaphor'?

p. 16: Another study addressing gesture in political discourse, among other features, is Miglbauer, M., & Koller, V. (2019). 'The British people have spoken': Voter motivations and identities in vox pops on the British EU referendum. In Koller, V., Kopf, S., & Miglbauer, M. (eds) *Discourses of Brexit*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 86-103.

Article 1 ("Do we need Queer Cognitive Linguistics?") sets ou to 'show … that gender- and sex-related categories may constrain our understanding of cognitive processes' (p 242). This goal is phrased in a somewhat ambiguous way, but it becomes clear in the following that the author seeks to capitalise on the parallels between queer understandings of gender and sexuality on the one hand and key concept in cognitive linguistics, such as variation and gradability, on the other. This is an original observation that could serve as the foundation for a paradigm. However, while it is true that prototypicality is gradable, prototypes can – socially – be set in a binary

relationship with what is normative. This needs to be accounted for before gradability can serve as a foundation for queer cognitive linguistics.

The section on variation in metaphor studies needs to differentiate more clearly between the three foci within metaphor and gender research: 1. speaker gender, 2. metaphors for gendered social actors, 3. culturally gendered metaphors. Littlemore's (2019) work on embodied metaphors and different bodies is clearly relevant for the study of non-binary gender and metaphor use and understanding, but the link is less obvious when it comes to sexual identity and metaphor. I think that a case can be made that sexual identity has an impact of how speakers perceive their bodies, but this should have been made explicit in the article.

The sub-section on pronouns and non-binarity seems unmotivated and only loosely connected to the rest of the article. Within it, it is worth mentioning that examples (1) to (4) are metalinguistic comments. The subsequent sub-section (4.3) is short and rather sketchy.

Overall, the article has a strong premise but the theory it proposes has not yet been fully developed by the author.

Specific comments:

p. 243: Koller (2004) is a study of metaphor in business magazines and papers, not in workplaces.

p. 244: Social hierarchies also influence whose discourse is received by how many people and as how credible it is regarded.

p. 248: Concretise Bucholtz and Hall's (2016) claim with an example.

p. 249: Repeated coming outs can also be necessitated by changing contexts, e.g. a new workplace.

p. 250: The formulation 'Some people seem to never have a stable identity' sounds a little disparaging.

p. 252: How does conceptual metaphor reinforce normative ideologies (Chirrey 2020)? An example would be helpful here.

p. 253: Queer Linguistics is not a quantitative paradigm, so it is misleading to talk about 'scales in measuring … gender and identity'.

p. 254: Why would queer cognitive linguistics be limited to 'archival data'?

p. 255 n. 8: Where was that study conducted?

In **Article 2** ("A multilevel cognitive model of coming out"), the author applies Kövecses' (2017) notion of the different levels of metaphor to the metaphoric phrase 'coming out'. This is done systematically and mostly convincingly.

I found myself somewhat confused about the CONTAINER image schema: If we take the outside to be heteronormativity, the Trim (2007) quote on p. 32 is not entirely relevant, because although heterosexuality is not the speaker's identity, certain forms of it are normative and as such not "alien". On the same page, the author quotes Motschenbacher (2010), who conceives of heteronormativity as a space; are we to understand the metaphorical closet as being located within that space? Also, if the goal of the MOVEMENT domain is the recipients of coming out as a speech act (p. 36), are they situated in that space? The examples are analysed competently though, and the sub-section on the FORCE image schema is much clearer.

Sub-section 3.4.2 needs some clarification: identifying a scenario in which coming out is shifting a heavy object off one's shoulders (or chest) relies on a secondary metaphor, in which a source domain (coming out) is changed to a target domain. I know that it can be difficult to formulate target domains literally, but is there an alternative to 'psychological burden'?

The paper is based on written coming-out narratives that were posted online; unfortunately, the author does not mention the criteria for selecting specific examples from the data site.

Notwithstanding the above criticisms, the article is a competent application of Kövecses' (2017) model.

Specific comments:

p. 30: ABILITY is an effect of REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT.

p. 32: Figure 2 does not capture the sequential aspect of iteration.

p. 34: It is worth pointing out the grammatical structure of 'force/make sb come out', i.e. passive + infinitive.

p. 35: The MOVEMENT domain, being more specific, is better said to instantiate the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema rather than vice versa.

p. 37 n. 3: Give a reference for case grammar.

p. 38: Give examples in Table 1.

After proposing a paradigm with queer cognitive linguistics and discussing the cognitive structure of the metaphor 'coming out', the author addresses the main topic of the thesis in **Article 3** ("Gestural metaphor scenarios as coming out narratives"). As such, the articles build well on each other. The notion of a gestural metaphor scenario is intriguing, although I would question if gestures alone can constitute whole scenarios. Like Article 2, this article also features a competent application and extension of a model (here: Musolff 2016), and it is well structured. (But note that a sub-section 3.1.5. is cross-referenced on p. 29 that cannot be found in the article.)

I am doubtful whether metaphorical co-speech gestures are indeed 'a less conscious form of expressing metaphors' (p. 29); this would depend on the level of conventionality in either mode.

Also, it seems unlikely that all metaphor scenarios rely on a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema (p. 31). Nor does that schema alone underlie the conduit metaphor of communication, because it does not feature an object. By contrast, the point that gestures help to diffuse and express emotions in coming-out stories (p. 33) is well taken.

While the findings are convincing, there is only scant detail about the process of analysing metaphor scenarios. This is raised as a desideratum in the conclusion; for an operationalisation of linguistic metaphor scenarios, see Koller, V. (forthcoming 2023). "A wall of human misery": Critical metaphor analysis and the media representation of Ukrainian refugees in the British news. In Romano, M. (ed.). *Metaphor in Social-political Contexts: Critical, socio-cognitive approaches*. De Gruyter.

Specific comments:

p. 27: Should it be 'alternations' or 'alterations' under point 5?

p. 30: There is no mismatch in Figure 1 a; rather, the gesture shows the source domain while the speech realises the target domain.

p. 32: What do gestural metaphor scenarios structure - the understanding of a concept or the concept itself?

p. 33: GIVING AN OBJECT IS COMING OUT is another secondary metaphor (see above).

p. 34: Figure 3 misses the conceptualisation of identity (not just secret) as an object.

pp. 34-35: The KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor is relevant here, but knowing is the result of, not the same as, learning.

p. 38: Could the circling gesture in Figure 7a indicate a metaphor THEATRE IS SPACE? Or does the movement metaphorise the process of getting involved?

p. 39: The size of the gesture in Figure 8a is iconic of the attributes 'big fat'.

The **conclusion** is comparatively short but does include a summary of the three articles along with an outlook on future and ongoing work. I am not entirely convinced that the thesis provides 'a more elaborate picture of human cognition', but it certainly contains some good analyses and extends influential models in cognitive semantics in a queer direction.

The thesis as a whole, including the published papers, would have benefitted from more proofreading to eliminate spelling errors and minor but persistent grammar mistakes (e.g., use of the definite article). Some of the references at the end are not in alphabetical order.

In total, I am happy to assess the PhD positively and believe that the candidate can proceed to the final stages towards earning his doctorate.