Speaking figuratively across genres: discourse, metaphor, and variation.

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While research on metaphor has extensively considered issues of comprehension (Holyoak & Stamenković 2018) and rhetorical use (e.g. Breeze 2020), fewer studies have looked at how different discursive contexts, i.e. *genres*, might shape metaphor production (Caballero 2017). Studying such discursive variation is important, however, if we consider that all language use is situated in an activity (cf. Levinson 1979), and that genre-specific expectations on figurative speech could affect matters of processing as well as the rhetorical functions of metaphors.

To develop testable hypotheses about metaphor variation in genre, we conduct a corpus-based study comparing how the same semantic domains are found as either the *source* or *target* domains of metaphors at different rates in different genres. As such, our study contributes to the small but growing body of research on metaphor and genre (e.g. Dorst 2015; Steen et al. 2010). Concretely, we compare metaphor production in *newspapers* and *fiction*, across three semantic domains: meteorological phenomena, landscape descriptors, and physical altercation. These domains were chosen because they have both literal and metaphorical propensity and are likely to be talked about in both chosen genres. Given that newspapers and fiction follow different discourse conventions, we also expect that they might use metaphors to different degrees or ends.

We conducted a preliminary manual search on two newspapers and fiction corpora sampled from COCA (~27,000 words each). Our findings show that, perhaps surprisingly, fiction does not license more metaphors across-the-board, but that it is rather the interaction between semantic domain and genre which leads to more or less figurative language. For example, *meteorological* and *landscape* descriptors tend to be metaphorical more often in newspapers (34% and 21% respectively) than in fiction (19% and 11%), while terms of *physical altercation* are more often used metaphorically in fiction as opposed to newspapers (48% vs 23%). Some examples are given in (1)-(2).

1. *With pro-choice **winds** now blowing in politics [...]*　　(New York Times, 1990: COCA)
2. ***Fighting** tears, she stopped […]*　　(Atlantic, novel, 1990: COCA)

Our talk will delve into further discussion as to why that might be the case and present and validate larger-scale data extracted from COCA using computational techniques for metaphor detection, such as MetaNet (Dodge et al. 2015). We will use distributional word vectors to investigate the correlation between the metaphorical dimensions that semantic domains can afford (e.g. meteorological phenomena might relate to more dynamic processes), and their preferred status in each genre. Our results will thus shed more light on how speakers might construe different metaphorical domains based on the genre they encounter them in.

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