NEW BOOK INFORMATION

Endangered Metaphors

Edited by Anna Idström and Elisabeth Piirainen

University of Helsinki / Steinfurt, Germany

In cooperation with Tiber F.M. Falzett

When the last speaker of a language dies, s/he takes to oblivion the memories, associations and the rich imagery this language community has once lived by. The cultural heritage encoded in conventional linguistic metaphors, handed down through generations, will be lost forever. This volume consists of fifteen articles about metaphors in endangered languages, from Peru to Alaska, from India to Ghana. The empirical data demonstrate that the assumptions of contemporary cognitive linguistic theory about “universal” metaphors and the underlying cognitive processes are still far from plausible, since culture plays an important role in the formation of metaphors. Moreover, that theory has been based on knowledge of metaphors in some standard languages. Indigenous and other minority languages, especially mainly orally used ones, have been disregarded completely. Besides researchers and students in linguistics, especially in metaphor and figurative language theory, this compilation provides food for thought for scholars in large fields of cultural studies, ranging from anthropology and ethnology to folkloristics and philosophy.

“Perhaps the major issue facing linguists today is the phenomenon of language endangerment. [...] Metaphors are a particularly interesting area of language because of their interaction with both language and culture, providing an insight into the ways in which different cultures come to terms with their environments, an insight that will be lost if the metaphorical systems of different languages disappear without being documented. It is therefore with great pleasure that I recommend the present volume to a broad linguistic readership. The editors and contributors have succeeded in bringing together and systematizing a wide range of phenomena involving metaphors in endangered languages [...] . I join them in encouraging others to continue their work by documenting metaphors in endangered languages, always bearing in mind that metaphors may be one of the first parts of a language to disappear once it becomes endangered.”

Bernard Comrie, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology and University of California Santa Barbara

“Endangered Metaphors offers a fascinating collection of articles looking at metaphorical language in languages that are slowly vanishing from the world’s landscape. These chapters focus on many issues related to metaphor theory, including questions on the universality and cultural specificity of conceptual metaphors, and topics associated with globalization in human languages and culture. The range of linguistic data explored is incredibly impressive [...] . Endangered Metaphors is a wonderful addition to the new book series on Cognitive Linguistic Studies in Cultural Contexts.”

Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., University of California, Santa Cruz

“The book breaks new ground in empirical and theoretical metaphor and idiom research, since it looks at the figurative lexicon of endangered minority languages that have never before been the topic of metaphor or idiom research. Therefore, the book is highly innovative and stimulating. The fifteen articles treat significant issues of figurative language and its cultural foundation in languages of five continents. [...] No similar publication exists to date.”

Dmitrij Dobrovolskij, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

Table of contents

Prologue

Peter Mühlhäusler

Endangered metaphors: Introduction

Anna Idström and Elisabeth Piirainen

“Our language is very literal”: Figurative expression in Dene Sųłiné [Athapaskan]

Sally Rice

“My heart falls out”: Conceptualizations of body parts and emotion expressions in Beaver Athabascan

Carolina Pasamonik

Walking like a porcupine, talking like a raven: Figurative language in Upper Tanana Athabascan

Olga Lovick

Are Nahuatl riddles endangered conceptualizations?

Mercedes Montes de Oca Vega

Bodily-based conceptual metaphors in Ashéninka Perené myths and folk stories

Elena Mihas

The use of a conceptual metaphor in the Siroi language of Papua New Guinea: Narrative is climbing a mountain

Sjaak van Kleef and Jacqueline van Kleef

Kewa figures of speech: Understanding the code

Karl J. Franklin

Metaphors in Dimasa and Rabha – A comparative study

Monali Longmailai and Lakshminath Rabha

Numbers that Chumburung people count on

Gillian F. Hansford

The importance of unveiling conceptual metaphors in a minority language: The case of Basque

Idarte Darreterre-Antuñano

Antlers as a metaphor of pride: What idioms reveal about the relationship between human and animal in Inari Sáami conceptual system

Anna Idström

Metaphors of the Finnish Roma in Finnish and Romani

Kimmo Granqvist

“Bhio’tu direch ga òthe, bha e cho math = You would just eat it, it was so good”: Music, Metaphor and Food for Thought on Scottish Gaelic Aesthetics

Tiber F.M. Falzett

Metaphors of an endangered Low Saxon basis dialect – exemplified by idioms of STUPIDITY and DEATH

Elisabeth Piirainen

Index of conceptual metaphors/metonymies

Name index

Subject index

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