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‘Royal’ metaphors in Danish and Norwegian New Year’s Eve speeches

Abstract:

This paper presents a comparative analysis of metaphor in the New Year’s speeches (NYEs) of the Danish queen and the Norwegian king. NYEs constitute an annual tradition in both countries, broadcast early in the evening of December 31 of each year, where these monarchs summarize the highlights of the past year and look ahead to hope and aspirations for the year to come (Hovland, 2000). In many respects, Denmark and Norway share a common historical, cultural, and linguistic background; indeed, the two languages are mutually comprehensible (Torp, 1998). In light of such similarities, one might assume the null hypothesis to be true, that there be no important differences with respect to metaphor use in the two set of speeches.

Our primary data consists of two sets of five speeches per monarch dating from 2013 to 2017: roughly 4500 words per set. We address two main research questions:

How is metaphor used in these NYE speeches?

Is metaphor used in similar ways in the Danish and Norwegian NYE speeches?

To do so, we first identify all linguistic metaphors in the speeches through applying the newly-developed Scandinavian version of the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (Nacey, Greve, & Falck, submitted), allowing for the calculation of the overall metaphor density in each speech. We then identify all metaphorical clusters in each speech (that is, groupings with a frequency of >20% metaphor over a 20-word span), and investigate the rhetorical function of each cluster (see Littlemore, Krennmayr, Turner, & Turner, 2014). We complement this analysis by identification of all potentially deliberate metaphors in the speeches, using the Deliberate Metaphor Identification Procedure (Reijnierse, Burgers, Krennmayr, & Steen, 2017).

Our analysis, with its focus upon metaphor density, metaphor clusters and deliberate metaphors, allows for determination of the function metaphor plays in the highly-conventionalized genre/ topics of NYEs. Our findings indicate that the monarchs’ rhetorical use of metaphor differs greatly, even though the speeches deal with many of the same events and issues, and function in both countries as unifying national rituals.
References:


