Višnja Čičin-Šain
Split

Piotr Cap (2013). *Proximization. The Pragmatics of Symbolic Distance Crossing.* **(Pragmatics Beyond, New Series 232). Amsterdam – Philadelphia: John Benjamins. ix + 220 pp. ISBN 9789027256379.**

Proximization: The pragmatics of symbolic distance crossing is the author's fifth monograph in the area of political and persuasive discourse. The author's main interests cover the areas of Pragmatics, Rhetoric and Critical Discourse Analysis. He is the founding and managing editor of international journal *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics.*[1] *Proximization* counts 220 pages and is divided into seven chapters. The analyses are based on an already-published body of material, but have been revised and further elaborated for this purpose.

Piotr Cap's *Proximization: The pragmatics of symbolic distance crossing* has the objective of constructing and introducing "proximization theory" into linguistics as a fully fledged theory capable of elucidating speaker-imposed envisaging of distance and closeness, as well as the social intentions and aims behind such construals. It is an essentially discursive strategy referring to symbolic construal operations by means of which 'physically, temporally and axiologically distant events and entities are presented as encroaching upon the speaker and her addressee in a directly and negatively consequential manner' (p.3). According to Cap, such a strategy aims for a negative representation of the 'out-group' (adversaries, all those who are, on some grounds, considered threatening and harmful to the 'in-group') with respect to the speaker and her audience/addressees which constitute the 'in-group' and are positively represented by the same strategy. The forced construals proceed along three lines, namely spatial, temporal and axiological, and are prompted by a strategic use of lexico-grammatical choices taken from the three cognitive categories. The evoked negative consequentiality is intrinsically fear-mongering and calls for precautionary measures, constituting thus the basis for soliciting public approval of a preventive action. Cap's model endows the present-day linguist with a sophisticated tool for investigating and exploring multifarious facets of language manipulation in public and political communication. *Proximization: The pragmatics of symbolic distance crossing* gives another valuable insight into how a strategic employment of language is capable of serving political objectives in the broadest sense. Cap delves into issues of legitimization and public approval

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[1] From 2012 published by de Gruyter.

at the same time raising awareness of the problems of space and representation of spatiality that pervade all aspects of our lives. Speaking and thinking of space and society, cultural identity, imagining of the in-group versus out-group and the political consequences such constructs spawn, Cap's proposals can be put into the wider perspective of the teachings of one the leading theoreticians of space and postmodern political geographer Edward Soja. Therefore, despite having been written by a linguist and linguistic par excellence, this book, given its width of interests and the far-reaching nature of its proposals, makes an outstanding instance of scientific interdisciplinary thought interesting to scholars in literary theory, cultural and ideology studies etc. However, it will primarily appeal to scholars interested, and having a certain amount of knowledge, in Pragmatics, Cognitive Linguistics and Discourse Studies as well as in broader areas of Rhetoric and Communication Studies. Also, given that it is practically impossible to engage in a critical discourse analysis without being confronted with the Gordian knots of figurative language, researchers into metaphorical language will undoubtedly find some brain-stimulating thoughts throughout this outstanding 220-page-long read.

Thematically, two major parts can be distinguished in the book: the first theoretically and methodologically-oriented one, in which a thoughtful and lengthy exposition of the model operating behind the concept of proximization is laid out (the spatial-temporal-axiological model), and the second part where empirical, i.e. (con)textual and lexico-grammatical evidence in support of theoretical claims are presented, as well as guidelines for further applications of the model. The concept was first proposed by Cap in 2005, having since been developed into a fully-fledged Critical Discourse Analysis apparatus with cognitive and pragmatic theoretical underpinnings. Cap's theory draws on Paul Chilton's cognitive-linguistic works which theorize Discourse Space and offer a visual model of spatial, temporal and modal conceptualizations with the application on political discourse. That notwithstanding, Cap offers a more pragmatically-oriented, dynamic and certainly unique model with a great explanatory power in its own right, able to account for conceptual shifts of the 'out-group' towards the 'in-group' and capable to offer quantifiable, verifiable data to endorse the theory. For the advancement of proximization, state political discourse, the 2001-2010 American anti-terrorist, interventionist discourse, has been chosen as the most suitable and fruitful ground for studying the strategies underlying the theory and for elucidating their primary discourse function, namely legitimization of actions proposed by the speaker. However, the author himself points out that political discourse should not be considered, and is not, the sole area for the employment and/or illustration of the suggested strategies. Analyses in the final chapter indeed give sound support to the author's stance about

the ideas put forth in this book being far-reaching and applicable beyond interventionist, military-oriented discourse.

The introductory chapter brings an overview of the project and a brief history of proximization, informing the readers how the idea came to be in the first place and acknowledging the decades-long work of other scholars whose intellectual attainments directly or indirectly helped the development of the ideas proposed in the book. Cap's arising theory operates on the border of Pragmatics, Cognitive and Critical Discourse Studies, successfully combining their basic tenets in an attempt to give the best possible answer to how legitimization and coercion may work by means of systematic and premeditated employment of language. The combined approach is appropriate for many reasons. Firstly, the notions of *construal* and *conceptualization* are central to both Cognitive Linguistics and Cap's arising theory. Namely, Cap's model takes CL's notions of construal and conceptualization in the analysis of the arrangement of the discourse space, acknowledging at the same time the power of linguistic choice in manipulating the layout of elements in that same space. Furthermore, being heavily pragmatic in essence, the model is socially engaged; it bridges the longstanding gap between Cognitive Linguistics and Pragmatics, employing achievements in the area of CL to a pragmatic, socially committed end. This position presents the basis for a critically-minded interpretation of a text or pieces of text, thus 'inviting new forms of dialogue among cognitive, pragmatic, critical and corpus approaches to (political) discourse analysis' (p.7). The first chapter also clearly outlines direct and indirect theoretical and empirical goals of the project and the book itself, as well as the possible limitations of the theory.

Chapter 2, "Proximization as a (linguistic) concept," offers an elaborated and extended 'history of proximization', i.e. theoretical background and relevant thoughts in current linguistics already brought up in the introductory part. Cap scrutinizes his fellow scholars' (Chilton, Hart, Dunmire, Filardo Llamas to name just a few) approaches to political critical discourse analysis gathering different strands of thought containing the concept of proximization, or related concepts that will prove useful in formulating the emerging cross-disciplinary theory. A special emphasis in this chapter has been given to Chilton's Deictic Space Theory, an essentially cognitive-linguistic theory offering a visual model of spatial, temporal and modal conceptualizations in political discourse whose 'aim is to show how people's mental representations are positioned with respect to three cognitive dimensions' (p. 22). Chilton's central claims are anchored in Fauconnier's Mental Space Theory. He holds that in processing discourse people place entities in their world by positioning them in relation to themselves along the axes of time, space and modality, where 'the Self', 'I', or 'we' is the deictic centre. Cap's main objection to

Chilton's model is its "static" or "fixed" nature, unable to account neither for the symbolic movement of peripheral entities in the discourse space towards the deictic centre nor for longer timeframes across which a political discourse usually extends. His solution and response to the observed theoretical 'shortage' is the introduction of verb phrases in the analysis so that the challenge of symbolical 'shifting' of peripheral entities towards the deictic centre may be addressed. This is the point at which it seems *proximization* as a mechanism of 'distance crossing' (hence the book's title) came to be. This chapter is concluded with the author's designation of Pragmatics as a discipline best suited for grounding the proximization's main, socially commited objective – socio-political legitimization. As the author defines proximization throughout this chapter, putting his developing idea into the broader perspective of Pragmatics, Cognitive Linguistics, Critical Discourse Studies, and Corpus Studies, it is impossible to fail to observe the vast, enviable amount of knowledge he possesses in the mentioned areas, as well as the ability with which he combines conclusions and assertions from the significant areas to the benefit of the advancement of the arising theory. The author's awareness of possible theoretical and empirical limitations of proximization is also commendable.

In Chapter 3, "Proximization and legitimization," the author considers and gives the reasons why legitimization presents proximization's objective par excellence and why state political interventionist discourse proves the most suitable ground to start out with in attempts to apply the complex proximization apparatus to a linguistic pool of data. Cap recognizes the fundamental inextricability of legitimization and its perlocutionary effects with essentially psychological and evolutionary-investigated phenomena such as the speaker's credibility (Sherif and Hovland, Jowett and O'Donnell), consistency in belief (Festinger), "cheater detection module" (Axelrod and Cosmides). The second part of this chapter focuses on language data, exemplifying close connections between legitimization, proximization and written discourse. Here, the reader faces a preview analysis of a state interventionist discourse for the first time (an extract from an anti-terrorist speech by G.W. Bush) and gets a glimpse of how legitimacy can be sought by a premeditated, systematic employment of language. A bold and original claim advanced in this chapter that is to be supported empirically in the forthcoming chapters, is that the proximization apparatus is capable of accounting for shifting contextual (extralinguistic), temporally extensive situations to support speaker's integrity. In other words, proximization apparatus contains the means for 'updating' and redefining the original political rationale/policy, without explicitly admitting that wrong decisions have been made, and is capable of catering for the changes and fluctuations in political situation (for instance, G.W. Bush needed to redefine the rationale behind the necessity of mili-

tary campaigns in Iraq once the weapons of mass destruction proved to be non-existent). Cap claims this can be achieved by shifting salience in the employment of one of the three strategies, meaning that in a certain geopolitical context, spatial proximization will dominate the discourse, while in another axiological or temporal may prevail. Another major claim of this work is that all this can be quantitatively proven on a set amount of lexical data.

Unlike Chapters 2 and 3 that were in the service of putting the new theory into a broader perspective demarcating linguistic disciplines on which intersection the model should operate and defining its ultimate goal, Chapter 4 deals explicitly with the conceptual structure of the model, namely spatial (S), temporal (T) and axiological (A) domains along whose lines forced construals proceed. An insight into how the model works on a micro-linguistic level is offered. Conceptual make-up and strategies (three types of proximizations) taking place along each of the three domains contributing to the model are given in detail and exemplified on a micro-textual level, i.e. on chunks of speeches delivered by the USA presidents from 2001–2010.

Essentially assisted by referential and predicational strategies aiming at negative characterization of the out-group versus positive portrayal of the in-group, spatial proximization implies forced construal of entities outside the deictic centre (ODCs, elements geographically and ideologically distant) impinging upon the entities conceptually placed inside the deictic centre, always subsuming detrimental and harmful effects on the IDC elements (i.e. the speaker and her audience). According to Cap, spatial construals are forced when there is a tangible, concrete threat (e.g. 'Saddam Hussein', 'Iraqi regime', 'terrorist organizations' are some of the USA anti-terrorist discourse lexical items in service of ODC elements). Temporal proximization relies on a forced construal of 'now' as a momentous point in time which, if not seized immediately for preventive action, is bound to have detrimental consequences in the future. It also relies on phrases evoking past events and negative experiences to make a possible future threat more plausible, which links it closely to the concept of historical flashback spaces proposed by Chilton. Cap gives an analysis of what he deems to be an epitome of temporal proximization - the phrase "a September morning", employed by G.W. Bush in one of his speeches. The phrase is an exemplar of time conflation given that it refers to an actual event (the September 11 attacks), but at the same time a marker of indefiniteness, 's', is employed leaving thus an open possibility for a similar event to happen sometime in the future. Axiological proximization relies heavily on predicational strategies in creating the desired imagery. The rationale behind it is the following: the two groups with concrete referents are posited on two opposite poles and assigned con-

flicting ideological roles and values. Accordingly, the out-group is labelled as 'evil', 'radical', 'extreme' and so on, whereas 'home values' are indisputably positive and admirable. The strategy is characterized by the use of 'vague' or 'semantically empty', but ideologically charged words and syntagms such as 'democracy', 'peace, 'justice', 'free nations', 'radicalism', 'dictatorship', 'terrorists' etc. This kind of 'static' ideological conflict, achieved by referential and predicational strategies, is by various linguistic means activated conceptually and turned into a dynamic, realistic conflict, and this is what makes the crux of Cap's proposal on axiological proximization. It is a pity that he does not give more real textual examples of this strategy already in this chapter since this would prop up the theory and render his proposal clearer. All in all, one of the central, innovative claims in this book is that the three proximization patterns are interwoven, complement each other at a micro-temporal level (in individual speeches) and tend to change their salience relative to the changing political context at a macro-temporal level.

In setting up and advancing his theory, Cap leaves no stone unturned, he gives deep consideration to the theoretical basis and empirical consequences of the proposed structural plans for each of the three proximization strategies. He meticulously weighs possible counter-arguments and gives convincing answers to them. For instance, he is aware of the fact that the three strategies may not be easy and straightforward to capture and identify on a lexico-grammatical level and accepts the view that a good part of meaning for certain lemmas may rest on inferences and interpretation (metaphorical language being just one of the obstacles on that route). Nevertheless, Cap is convinced that the backbone of meaning *can* be measured and that the main lexemes responsible for the enactment of certain meanings are possible to be pinpointed. In the light of that opinion, he is determined to outline the basic, key lexico-grammatical items (noun phrases, verb phrases and their characteristic relationships) pertinent to each of the strategies, which is the goal of the forthcoming chapter. Touching upon linguistic indeterminacy, at several points in the present chapter, the author recognizes the importance of research into metaphor given its possibility to conflate abstract with the physical (as it is the case with temporal proximization) and prompt inference patterns accountable for a plethora of spatial and axiological construals. For instance, it is known that metaphors can be excellent tools for evoking fear and anxiety, which is said to be a prerequisite for successful coercion. However, given the complexity and magnitude of the problem, he leaves it aside, at least as far as the present book is concerned.

Chapter 5 is a more operationalization-oriented continuation of the previous one where the emphasis was put mainly on formulating and providing definitions of the three proximization strategies. Chapter 5 outlines key lemmas, grammatical rela-

tions and patterns crucial in the enactment of each of the strategies and sets them into categories. The methodology for collecting the data (setting up a threshold for choosing lemmas etc.) is also explained in great detail. Cap's derived categories are in essence generalizations, bottom-up abstractions of characterizations and relations of the actors of the 2001–2010 USA interventionist discourse. To give an insight into the organization of the categories some of these are reported here: spatial proximization contains six categories, the first two being NPs denoting IDC elements ('USA', 'American people', 'democratic nations' etc.) and NPs construing ODCs ('Al-Qaeda', 'extremists', 'radicals'...). Third and fourth categories are VPs acting as markers of motion of ODCs towards the deictic centre and impact of ODCs upon IDCs respectively. For instance, the most common lemmas accountable for the motion are 'move/are moving', 'are heading' (towards an IDC), 'destroy', 'set aflame', 'burn down' (an IDC). The last two categories contain lemmas denoting anticipation or effects of impact ('threat', 'danger', 'catastrophe' etc.), according to Cap, accountable for creating a general sense of fear and anxiety that should facilitate the enforced vision of a looming alien threat. As Cap himself points out 'any gains in generality are proportionate to losses in precision' (p. 105), therefore, in order to construct a framework for extracting a reproducible and verifiable set of data whereby scientific rigour in discourse studies may be enhanced, all lemmas that might have carried meaning important for any of the strategies, and did not meet the specified frequency requirements, were left out of the analysis. This method is reasonable when one approaches a corpus of 600 or so texts that make up ten years of a political discourse, as well as in case when the model has to be validated across longer periods of time; still, it is hard to shake the feeling that this kind of approach might be a bit unflattering for single texts or speeches.

Following the structuring of categories and enlisting the main lemmas pertaining to each category, Cap sets out to find how the STA model operates over longer periods of time. To this end, he collects a corpus of several hundred speeches delivered by G.W.Bush and Barack Obama in the period of ten years and breaks them down into four sub-corpora. Each corpus subdivision follows an event in American politics Cap considers a milestone and, consequently, a possible trigger for the change in rhetoric. The author recognizes America's failure to prove the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq as one of such decisive moments calling for a redefinition of rhetoric. On a statistically mindful set of data, i.e. of counts of key lexical items appearing in each period, Cap corroborates his idea of proximization strategies being able to display different degrees of salience relative to the changing geopolitical context. For instance, spatial proximization dominates the first period (between 9/11/2001 and 2003 when the WMD premise collapsed) and gives way to

axiological proximization as a compensatory mechanism aimed at maintaining legitimacy of the leader. The author offers support to his claims in form of several, well-structured tables of statistical data with accompanying commentaries.

Albeit he does not deal with inferences directly and leaves them, just like metaphorical language, for some other scientific endeavour, it is a pity that Cap does not refer back to the issue of lexical, 'measurable' items like 'and', 'or'and 'if' marking inferential relationships and enhancing persuasion, that he references at the beginning of the book (Gough and Talbot, Halliday and Hasan), which would certainly shed some additional light on his analyses. This chapter unfolds the explanatory power as well as complexity of Cap's model even further. The strongest point advanced here is the claim, and more importantly, empirical evidence corroborating it, that some discursive functions in language can be 'captured' and measured, as it has been evidenced by the relatively stable sets and patterns of lexemes performing the three strategies across a certain period of time. As Cap points out, it has been shown that 'some of the macro meanings (the meaning of "them" encroaching upon "us" physically, the meaning of "them" revealing values confronting the "us" values) could *perhaps* be defined as relatively stable constellations of relatively fixed, well demarcated language forms engaging in regular interaction patterns...' (p. 141).

Only in the penultimate chapter does the author engage in critical discourse analysis. Arguably, this is the most interesting chapter since the final aim of the proximization model is put forth in a descriptive manner. The author gives a critically minded interpretation of the numerical results outlined in the foregoing chapter and presents the attainments of his model in its full glory. The readers get to see the dynamics of the STA model and its potency to adeptly capture and interpret the fluctuations and changes of course in American anti-terrorist rhetoric. The interpretation is accompanied by a number of tables and textual examples, which makes the chapter even more compelling. The conclusions reached in this chapter are crucial for the establishment of the proximization theory and its underlying STA model as a fully fledged linguistic theory. The author manages to defend the starting premises proving spatial-temporal-axiological model indeed operable and valid from theoretical, methodological and descriptive viewpoints, establishing proximization as a valid model among a variety of Critical Discourse Analysis tools.

The final chapter, 'Towards further applications of proximization theory', supports the author's ambitions as to the vast applicability, explanatory power and universality of proximization theory. As already pointed out, interventionist discourse is not the only discursive niche where STA model is expected to operate. Its

theoretical and explanatory aspirations are declared much greater and well justified on preview analyses of cancer prevention, climate change, cyber-threat and political party representation discourses. The discursive territory in which the proximization model, already in this state of development, is able to operate and give its contribution to, is immense. However, this chapter also reveals some of its weaknesses. Namely, it is yet to be investigated how the contribution of other construal operations such as metaphor and metonymy in the process of structuring a discourse space might work and contribute to the model. It is also well known legitimization can be sought for by means of metaphorical language, especially via its entailments (train-based metaphors being one of the popular ones among European politicians). In fact, the momentousness of 'now' (remember the crux of temporal proximization) and the importance of political action in the present prompted by metaphorical expressions with 'leaving trains' are the first thing that come to mind.[2]

To sum up, Cap offers an exceptional, empirically verifiable, interdisciplinary-oriented, dynamic tool designed for researching cognitive arrangements of discourse space and their pragmatic effects on a wide variety of discourse genres. Though promising as it already is, Cap's model has yet to reach its full potential and live up to its aspiration of becoming a communication theory. Although the author believes that 'literal', lexically observable construction of spatial and temporal relations holds primacy over metaphorically construed ones, investigation into figurative language would be able to overcome the current difficulties regarding the instances whose meaning is realized through implications, entailments, analogies or emotional coercion, as it is the case with the examples from anti-immigration discourse ('immigrants 'flooding' into Britain), or cancer prevention discourse (human body (IDC) is construed as a container, dealing with cancer is thought of in terms of waging war on the illness) etc. To conclude, it is evident that Cap's work opens up a number of additional possibilities for research. In each of the linguistic areas touched upon in this book, the author demonstrates an enviable knowledge and amount of critical reasoning offering invaluable food for thought that certainly won't leave readers of any scientific orientation disappointed.

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[2] More details on train metaphors in political discourse can be found in the works of Mussolf (2004) and Šarić (2005).

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