



faculty of social
sciences, arts
and humanities

43/2023

Research Journal
Studies about Languages

pp. 93–105

ISSN 1648-2824 (print)

ISSN 2029-7203 (online)

DOI 10.5755/j01.sal.1.43.35264

LINGUISTICS / KALBOTYRA

Conceptual metaphors in Volodymyr Zelensky's political discourse

Received 10/2023

Accepted 11/2023

HOW TO CITE: Linkevičiūtė, V. (2023). Conceptual metaphors in Volodymyr Zelensky's political discourse. *Studies about Languages / Kalbų studijos*, 43, 93–105. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.sal.1.43.35264>

Conceptual metaphors in Volodymyr Zelensky's political discourse

Konceptualiosios metaforos Volodymyro Zelenskio politiniame diskurse

VILMA LINKEVIČIŪTĖ, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

Abstract

The article aims at identifying and analysing conceptual metaphors in Volodymyr Zelensky's political discourse, their rhetorical effect on the target audience, the role and functions within the context of war. The consequences of this war are globally relevant because the geopolitical situation in the region, the future of the EU and its member states, especially Poland, the Baltic States and the EU candidate Moldova, are highly dependent on the end of this war. The research was conducted within conceptual framework which encompasses political discourse in the context of Russian invasion of Ukraine, conceptual metaphors, aimed at Ukraine, Russia and the global community, and focuses on their significance in the context of war. The most prevalent conceptual metaphors, identified in Zelensky's discourse, are – WAR IS A JOURNEY, STATE IS A BUILDING, WAR IS A GAME and STATE IS A PERSON. Their rhetorical effect is to form an intended positive image of Ukraine and a negative image of Russia, to define who is a victim and who is an enemy in this war. Furthermore, the real perception of the situation, based on conceptual metaphors, might attract more support in the form of armament, stricter sanctions against Russia and, eventually, lead to the victory.

KEYWORDS: political discourse, political argumentation, conceptual metaphors, domain, concept.

Introduction

Volodymyr Zelensky's political discourse has been within the scope of universal interest since 24th February 2022 when Russian troops invaded this sovereign, democratic state. His political discourse and explicit conflict communication, aimed at the terrorist state Russia is one of the powerful weapons employed in this war. Zelensky's discourse includes different methods and techniques which enable the President of Ukraine to inform the world about the real situation in his country and indicate who is the enemy and who is the victim in this war. Moreover, it is beneficial for attracting a greater attention of the global community, which thus might result in the support by Ukraine's allies. Conceptual metaphors are a cognitive weapon in Zelensky's arsenal, aimed at forming the target audience's perception of the real situation in Ukraine, getting a greater support and a real help in the form of armament.

The article aims at identifying and analysing conceptual metaphors in Zelensky's political discourse, their rhetorical effect on the target audience, the role and functions within the armed conflict. Therefore, the object of this research is conceptual metaphors in Zelensky's political discourse. Pursuing the aim, the objectives, aiming to identify, define and analyse cognitive and rhetorical means of Zelensky's political discourse, were set.

The consequences of this war are globally relevant because the geopolitical situation in the region, the future of the EU and its member states, especially Poland, the Baltic States and the EU candidate Moldova, are highly dependent on the end of this war. Therefore, the research into conceptual metaphors in Zelensky's political discourse, employed as a verbal and cognitive expression of the conflict, is scientifically relevant and significant. Furthermore, the analyses of Zelensky's discourse have not been abundant so far, which indicates and emphasises the scientific novelty of this research. Volodymyr Zelensky and his political phenomenon have been within the scope of interest of researchers even before the outbreak of war in 2022. Petlyuchenko (2019) has analysed the significance of Zelensky's charisma in 2019 electoral discourse, Ryabinska has discussed the impact of a comedy show, which starred Zelensky, on the political perception of society in "Politics as a Joke: The Case of Volodymyr Zelensky's Comedy Show in Ukraine" (2020). The image of President Zelensky in political cartoons and memes (2019–2020) has been analysed by Semotiuk and Shevchenko (2022), the President's public speeches have also been discussed by Liubchenko et al. in their article "Political Communication in the Post-Truth Era: Mind Mapping Values of Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky" (2021). When Russia invaded Ukraine, the research object in Zelensky's political discourse shifted from a comedian to the real, strong and reliable leader of the state. Rubio (2022) discusses Zelensky's political discourse in relation to the Russian invasion, Volianiuk (2022) analyses the Ukrainian political discourse in conditions of Russian-Ukrainian war. Furthermore, Trebin and Chernyshova (2022) focus on the linguistic analysis of Zelensky's political rhetoric. However, conceptual metaphors, prevalent in the discourse of the President of Ukraine, have not been extensively analysed. Kapranov (2015), Dilai and Serafim (2019) have researched conceptual metaphors in the Ukrainian political discourse, but they have not been analysed within the frame of war which emerged at the beginning of 2022.

It has already been mentioned that conceptual metaphors are beneficial and powerful instruments which enable the target audience to form the intended perception of the situation or the image of a particular person. Thus, they are extensively employed in political discourse. The significance of conceptual metaphors in this respect has been widely discussed by the initiators of conceptual metaphor theory Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and later developed by Chilton (2004), Pinker (2007), Kövecses (2010, 2020), etc. The significance of conceptual metaphors in political discourse and their rhetorical effects have been analysed by numerous scholars: Chilton (2004), Schäffner and Chilton (2020), Cienki and Müller (2008), Cibulskienė (2012), Neagu (2013), Bratož (2014), Perrez and Reuchamps (2014), Linkevičiūtė (2013, 2014, 2018, 2023), etc. However, these studies present the insights into the general perception of conceptual metaphor theory in relation to political discourse or political discourse of some particular states, e.g. the USA, but the Ukrainian political discourse within the frame of war has not been analysed from the perspective of conceptual metaphors.

The article is structured as follows: introduction, which defines the object and the aim of the research; data and research methodology are discussed in the methodology part; a theoretical part which focuses on various approaches to political discourse, political rhetoric and defines the main cognitive linguistic concepts in this research; the analysis of conceptual metaphors in Zelensky's political discourse, and conclusions.

Theoretical Background

The research into political discourse is significant not only for academics and scholars; it is relevant for each member of society because it focuses on the analysis of explicit and implicit aims of the discourse subject. Since political discourse enables the agent of this discourse, Lassan (1995) arrives at the conclusion that every scholar has to answer two questions while investigating discourse: why did the speaker express this particular idea? Why did the speaker say it in this particular way? The responses to these two questions determine the communication context analysis, and reveal both the aim and effect intended by the speaker. Moreover, they define the rhetorical means aimed at achieving these aims.

Following Connolly (1993), "[t]he language of politics is not a neutral medium that conveys ideas independently formed; it is an institutionalized structure of meanings that channels political thought and action in certain directions" (p. 1). The definition of political language conveys the idea that politicians use particular words, expressions or collocations not only to express their ideas and opinions, but also to achieve the intended aims and goals.

Bielinis (2002) states that a “political text is a communicative tool, where the factors existing in text/speech have a huge importance because they are intended to affect the actions and evaluations of the addressee (reader/hearer) and his/her perception of the situation” (p. 52). The scholar has formulated a postulate which could complement the definitions of political discourse and political linguistics: “every act of political communication is pragmatically oriented and designed in accordance with social context” (ibid, p. 49). Furthermore, Amaglobeli (2018) defines political discourse as a manipulative linguistic strategy which serves particular, ideological goals. Van Dijk (1998) treats the concept of power discourse as one of the most important elements of political discourse where major power institutions, such as government, parliament, etc. are defined as the most influential in society. Thus, it might be claimed that presidential political discourse is very significant for the political cognition of the members of a particular society. The importance of political cognition in the study of political discourse is emphasised in van Dijk’s article “Political discourse and political cognition” (2002). The scholar also points out the importance of context in political discourse because it is defined by “who speaks to whom, as what, on what occasion and with what goals” (Dijk, 2002, p. 225).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out that “the concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 103). Metaphor includes at least two domains: “[t]he conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called the source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain” (Kövecses, 2002, p. 4). Furthermore, Musolf (2004) claims that cognitive metaphor theory involves conceptual, semantic, rhetorical, historical and ethical domains.

Thus, conceptual metaphors are one of the most powerful and significant means applied in political discourse since they implicitly enable the political agent/ leader to express their intended aims and to reach their goals. Moreover, conceptual metaphors include personal experience and “define our linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour” (Lassan, 1995, p. 45). In the case of the terrorist war against Ukraine, conceptual metaphors help President Zelensky to reveal the real situation in Ukraine and communicate his aims to the citizens of Ukraine, to the allies and enemies, and to the whole world.

According to Otieno et al. (2016), conceptual metaphors serve two main functions in political discourse: pragmatic and strategic. Furthermore, they claim that “metaphors structure our understanding of political, social and economic issues” (Otieno et al., 2016, p. 22). Carver & Pikalo (2008) also emphasise the significance of conceptual metaphors in political discourse because they implicitly or explicitly influence our perception of politics.

Therefore, the analysis of conceptual metaphors, prevailing in Zelensky’s political discourse is significant for the perception of the real situation in Ukraine, the formation of enemy and victim images in the subconsciousness of the target audience, and call for help and military support from the world powers.

Methodology

Qualitative research method was used for the analysis of Zelensky’s political discourse. Review of six public speeches, delivered by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky in the period from 28/12/2022 to 31/12/2022, served as the research instrument¹. *Speech*

by the President with the annual message to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the internal and external situation of Ukraine opens the research period while New Year greetings close it. This period is relevant for the research because it marks the end of the first year of war. Moreover, it encompasses two, already mentioned, significant speeches, aimed not only at the Ukrainian citizens, but at the global community, as well. Furthermore, this period is a festive time, people are preparing for the celebration of New Year; however, they are warned about the possibility of increasing Russian attacks aimed at spoiling their holiday mood. The latter annual speech is totally different from the previous annual address because it merely focuses on ten months of war instead of

¹ The data has been taken from the official website of the President of Ukraine, available at: <https://www.president.gov.ua/>

the whole year, it signifies the strength of Ukraine and its heroes, and expresses a strong belief and promise that Ukraine will definitely win.

The research was conducted within conceptual framework that encompasses political discourse in the context of Russian invasion of Ukraine, conceptual metaphors, aimed at Ukraine, Russia and the global community, focusing on their significance in the war context. The prevalent conceptual metaphors were identified in Zelensky's political discourse within the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The reconstruction of cross-domain mappings was based on the prevalent linguistic expressions in source domains. According to Kövecses (2002), the target domain is understood through the source domain. Moreover, the aim, role and rhetorical effect on the target audience in the context of war were analysed within the framework of critical discourse analysis of political discourse as rhetorical means of image formation. The analysis of conceptual metaphors in political discourse, based on these research methods, leads to the conclusion that a rhetorical form of argumentation depends on the cognitive conceptions of the speaker. Therefore, in this article, the research into Zelensky's political discourse is conducted on cognitive, linguistic and rhetorical levels of analysis.

The research methodology is significant and relevant in identifying, defining and analysing conceptual metaphors and their rhetorical effect in Zelensky's political discourse within the context of war. The main methodological conception may be defined as follows: a rhetorical form of argumentation within a particular context enables the target audience to identify and perceive the aims of political leaders. Thus, the conceptual metaphor analysis will enable the target audience – the citizens of Ukraine and the global community – to perceive the real intentions of Vladimir Putin and his army commanders, Zelensky's approach to this illegitimate invasion of a sovereign state and terrorist war, and identify which part in this war is a victim and which is an enemy.

This study discusses Zelensky's political discourse as a multilayer analysis since it focuses on political discourse, rhetoric, cognitive linguistics and its communicative role. Conceptual metaphors enable the agents of political discourse to express their aims and goals implicitly as their communicative role is to evoke the intended perception of the situation, a particular image of the opponent in the subconsciousness of their target audience. Thus, conceptual metaphors might be defined as not only rhetorical or cognitive means or tools, but as powerful psychological strategies. Therefore, the employment of conceptual metaphors enables President Zelensky to communicate and achieve his aims and goals, verbally expressed in his political discourse.

Conceptual Metaphors in Zelensky's Political Discourse

Results

Conceptual metaphors in Zelensky's political discourse are aimed at three, most important agents of this discourse: Ukraine, Russia and the world. It has already been stated that the speeches, delivered in the last four days of the year 2022, include the annual speech to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and New Year Greetings by President Zelensky. Thus, the summary of this unfair, illegitimate and terrorist war against sovereign Ukraine emphasises the significance of the analysis.

The most prevalent domain in Zelensky's political discourse is WAR. Thus, the conceptualization of war in terms of a journey is recurrent in his speeches. WAR IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor has a dual nature because it includes two agents: Ukraine and Russia, and is aimed at depicting the political and military directions chosen by each of the agents.

Zelensky exploits dual nature of the journey and points out that Ukraine's political journey leads forward while Russia is moving backwards. The indication of direction implicitly presupposes that Ukraine is a modern state, and Russia is lagging behind, it is a short-sighted state where political strategies, aimed at seizing foreign lands and killing their innocent residents, have not changed for centuries.

Ex 1 *Everything that Russia tried to do against Europe did not work. Every Russian step was a mistake. And our steps did work (28/12/2022).*

Ex 2 *It is time to start negotiations on Ukraine's membership in the European Union. [...] I want us now to thank all those who opened this opportunity and this path to us. [...] They are the hope of the world that the time of empires cannot return (28/12/2022).*

- Ex 3** *And this is possible thanks to the fact that for the first time in several centuries we simultaneously have national unity, our own functioning state and the maximum unity of the world in supporting our beautiful Ukraine. We will not let anyone “roll it back” to the old days (28/12/2022).*

The words *step/s*, *path*, *return* and the expression *roll it back* in the above examples serve as the basis for reconstructing the conceptual metaphor WAR IS A JOURNEY. Example 1 emphasises the idea of illegal, wrong actions, defined as mistaken steps taken by Russia against a sovereign state Ukraine, while Ukrainian direction in this journey is contrasted with the Russian, and treated as right and effective – *and our steps did work*. Another significant contrast between modern Ukraine and backward Russia is evident in Example 2. Here, President Zelensky speaks about Ukraine’s path, leading to the European Union, and thus, leading to more support in this brutal war and, finally, to a faster victory and restored Ukraine. The expression *the time of empires cannot return* is implicitly aimed at Russia and all its detrimental actions in Ukraine when it was incorporated into the Russian empire. Moreover, the *empire* may not only suppose Russian empire of the 18th century, it might also metaphorically stand for the Soviet Russia and the Holodomor which killed millions of Ukrainians. Therefore, Zelensky points out that backward direction, leading to Russia, has to be eliminated. Example 3 emphasises the fact that the political path, chosen by Ukraine, has already led to the united and *beautiful* Ukraine. The statement that this happened *for the first time in several centuries* implies the idea that the situation was absolutely different when Ukraine was occupied by Russia. Thus, the president ensures the citizens of Ukraine that we *will not let anyone “roll it back” to the old days*. Here, *rolling back to the old days* implies the idea of Ukraine as a part of Russia. Furthermore, the inclusive pronoun *we* indicates that moving forward, but not backwards depends not only on the president and the government, but also on each citizen of Ukraine; thus, calling them to defend their state even more stoutly than they are doing it now.

Different journey directions taken by Ukraine and Russia are emphasised in the following example:

- Ex 4** *The Ukrainian warriors freed Zmiinyi, and since then every occupier knows the only answer he will hear from the Ukrainians to any of his encroachments. This showed that nothing can stop Ukraine. [...] Perhaps, the Russian army did not know that it was capable of fleeing so quickly. Fleeing, leaving everything behind - positions, weapons, their soldiers and collaborators (28/12/2022).*

The direction, taken by Ukraine and its military commanders, evokes positive connotations in the minds of the target audience because it leads forward, to the victory. This idea is based on the fact that *the Ukrainian warriors freed Zmiinyi* from Russian occupants and on a very powerful statement that *nothing can stop Ukraine*. The context of Zmiinyi events, when Ukrainian soldiers refused to surrender, is familiar to everyone who is interested in Ukraine and its fight for freedom. In Example 4, the Ukrainian position and situation signify that Ukraine is a strong, sovereign country which wants to move forward along its way to freedom from Russia. Moreover, it indicates that Ukraine is a victim while Russia is depicted as an enemy. The cowardly Russian direction in this journey is opposed to the bravery and courage of the Ukrainian nation because the Russians flee from the battlefield, *leaving everything behind - positions, weapons, their soldiers and collaborators*. The fact of running away supposes the idea that the Russian direction leads back, to the days of old, uneducated, unintelligent state and society, and thus evokes negative connotations, revealing the true situation in this unfair, brutal war and attracting more physical and psychological support for Ukraine not only from its allies, but from all over the world. The direction leading to Ukraine’s victory is emphasised by President Zelensky in Example 5:

- Ex 5** *Ukraine is on its way to the victory that generations of our people have dreamed of (28/12/2022).*

This statement metaphorically expresses the idea that the forward direction *to the victory* is not only related to the current war, it supposes that Ukraine has been occupied by Russia for many years because many generations of Ukrainians have dreamt about this victory and freedom. Moreover, the idea of long-term occupation is further signified by the employment of present perfect tense.

Bright and positive future prospects for Ukraine are also formed on the basis of WAR IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor:

Ex 6 *Ukraine must always look for ways to show leadership, to attract other leaders, and every such success will strengthen our security, strengthen the external situation of our state (28/12/2022).*

The forward movement in Example 6 is aimed at finding new ways that will enable Ukraine to become stronger, to show that it is the leader, but not a loser. The focus on leadership expression implies the idea that Russia is no longer the leader in the region; moreover, it has become the loser. Therefore, such an implication evokes belief that Russia will be the loser in this war, too.

Although moving backwards is regarded as a negative journey direction and is usually related to Russia, the Ukrainian return in this journey context evokes only positive connotations:

Ex 7 *We will do everything to bring home all our people who are currently in Russian captivity (28/12/2022).*

Ex 8 *Millions of our people who have become displaced persons, who have found shelter abroad, should not become refugees. [...] We have to ensure their return (28/12/2022).*

Ex 9 *Let this year be the year of return. The return of our people. Soldiers – to their families. Prisoners – to their homes. Immigrants – to their Ukraine. Return of our lands. And the temporarily occupied will become forever free. Return to normal life. To happy moments without curfew. To earthly joys without air alerts. The return of what has been stolen from us. The childhood of our children, the peaceful old age of our parents (28/12/2022).*

The Ukrainian way back supports and strengthens the image of Ukraine, its president and government as of extremely worried about Ukrainian citizens, their security and welfare, and putting all efforts to help them. Therefore, backward direction is based on such important actions as saving people from Russian captivity, bringing them back home, and ensuring the return of the displaced from abroad. The return from this difficult journey is emphasised by President Zelensky in his New Year Address (Ex 9). WAR IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor might be identified in the dedication of the coming year – *Let this year be the year of return*. As it has already been discussed, return and backward directions express positive connotations in Zelensky's discourse because this direction implies the return to safe and stable life in an independent, sovereign country as it was before the war. The positive nature of return is repeatedly emphasised by the promises to return people, soldiers, prisoners and immigrants to their native country. Furthermore, this return promises coming back to normal, happy life that the Ukrainians have been deprived of by Russia and its occupiers. The constant repetition of a noun *return* supposes the idea that this return is one of the most important goals of the president, and implicitly evokes hope that Ukraine will be the winner in this brutal, aggressive war.

Volodymyr Zelensky employs the *return* concept not only in relation to his local environment, but to the global, too:

Ex 10 *Our two initiatives - the Export Grain Initiative and the "Grain from Ukraine" program - have returned the world to vital stability (28/12/2022).*

In Example 10, Zelensky points out that two Ukrainian initiatives helped the world to return *to vital stability*. The merit for helping the world in the journey context emphasises the previously discussed idea that the president positions Ukraine as a strong leader which might replace Russia in the region. Moreover, returning *the world to vital stability* depicts Ukraine as a serious and solicitous partner that ensures commitments and liabilities even suffering from war.

Furthermore, the *journey* metaphor enables President Zelensky to send the message to his nation and the world that, despite being attacked and invaded by the terrorist state, having *gone through terrible months* (Ex 11), the Ukrainians did not lose their humanity and will not lose it on the way leading to the victory:

Ex 11 *We have not lost our humanity even though we have gone through terrible months. And we will not lose it even though there is also a difficult year ahead. We will reach victory (28/12/2022).*

WAR IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor, formed by Zelensky in his political discourse, is aimed at a positive representation of Ukraine and its citizens and, conversely, at forming an extremely negative image of the invader – Russia. The role of this conceptual metaphor is to depict the real situation in this unfair, illegitimate war, and to attract more support from the allies. Example 12 should convince those who still believe in Russian propaganda or are hesitant about their position:

Ex 12 *The first missiles finally destroyed the labyrinth of illusions. We saw who was who (28/12/2022).*

The labyrinth of illusions implies the idea that the world, including Ukraine, did not believe in the possibility of being attacked and invaded by Russia, although; the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation has been continuing since 2014. Being lost in *the labyrinth of illusions* connotes the hope of Ukraine that Russia will not dare to escalate a broader military conflict in the territory of an independent, sovereign state. However, the Ukrainians and the whole world *saw who was who*.

The negative image of the enemy is further formed on the basis of weakness and defeat (Ex 13).

Ex 13 *With each such missile strike, Russia is only driving itself deeper into a dead end. They have fewer and fewer missiles (29/12/2022).*

Reaching *a dead end* (Ex 13) in any journey means failure and turning back. Therefore, such unfavourable Russia's position indicates that the invader is not capable of winning the war it escalated, and thus implies the idea that Russia, together with its dictator, is a loser.

Journey concept is also aimed at Russians and performs the function of encouraging them to perceive Putin's propaganda, his intentions and aims, simultaneously revealing the facts about the real situation in Ukraine and war (Ex 14).

Ex 14 *All this war that you are waging, you are Russia, it is not the war with NATO, as your propagandists lie. It is not for something historical. It's for one person to remain in power until the end of his life. And what will be with all of you, citizens of Russia, does not concern him. Your leader wants to show that he has the troops behind him and that he is ahead. But he is just hiding (31/12/2022).*

Generally, the fact of being *ahead* of others directly indicates the winner's position. However, in Zelensky's political discourse aimed at Russia, *ahead* direction acquires negative features and evokes negative connotations. Therefore, he calls the Russians to be aware of their president's lies, concealed true facts because the only aim of the dictator Putin is *to remain in power until the end of his life* (Ex 14).

Another significant conceptual metaphor that might be identified in Zelensky's discourse, aimed at war, is the already classical metaphor STATE IS A BUILDING. This conceptual metaphor has an evaluative potential because it enables both – the speaker and the target audience to form the intended images and to evoke the intended connotations. Furthermore, STATE IS A BUILDING metaphor directly indicates that Ukraine's building is strong while Russia aims at destroying this building, thus; Ukraine has to rebuild or reconstruct it. This conceptual metaphor plays one more significant role in Zelensky's discourse – it expresses a strong belief in Ukraine's victory (Ex 15).

Ex 15 *We say: we have no other option than to win. On February 24, we began to create our victory. From many bricks – hundreds of other victories (31/12/2022).*

Example 15 directly refers to Zelensky's vision of victorious future and a strong building of Ukraine that will be constructed *from many bricks*. The bricks are metaphorical, each victory in this brutal war connotes one strong brick in the foundations and the building of the Ukrainian state. A famous Ukrainian resort Odesa plays a significant role in the BUILDING domain because it is defined as an exceptionally steady building that might protect and defend not only Ukraine, but the rest of the world, too (Ex 16).

Ex 16 *Odesa. Sunny and friendly, now a fortress. World fortress. Which defends us and which defends the world (31/12/2022).*

The image of the *world fortress* is formed not merely on the basis of Odesa's military and defensive role in this war, it also implies the idea that Ukraine saves the world from famine and starvation because it sends grain to countries in need and this supply is shipped from Odesa port. The role of a strong building and Ukraine's ability to construct steady buildings is emphasised in Example 17.

Ex 17 *Ukraine cements. It cements the European Union and the entire free world with the struggle for freedom and peace (28/12/2022).*

The significance of Ukraine's cementing ability forms a positive image of the state and directly indicates that Ukraine, despite the fact that it is currently at war, *unites the European Union and the entire free world*. Thus, Zelensky metaphorically implies that the already strong Ukrainian building again performs the *world fortress's* role and that the state's building might be reinforced by some foreign 'bricks'.

However, strong buildings and fortresses are always within the scope of interest of enemies who try to invade or destroy them. Thus, Ukrainian *building* has been constantly attacked by Russian enemies and; therefore, needs to be rebuilt (Ex 18–20).

Ex 18 *[...] we will restore the normality of life in the territory of Donbas and Crimea, which were illegally occupied in 2014 and have been brought to the point of disaster by the occupiers over the time that has passed (28/12/2022).*

Ex 19 *[...] the projects of a new, rebuilt Ukraine (28/12/2022).*

Ex 20 *Just as we must restore territorial integrity, we must also restore social integrity (28/12/2022).*

In Examples 18–20, President Zelensky directly indicates which parts of the state's building will be restored. He promises to rebuild Ukraine, to restore its legitimate territory and even to refresh the atmosphere in the building in the form of social integrity. The restoration concept not only implies the belief in victory, it further strengthens the positive and beneficial image of Ukraine, its president and the whole nation.

Russia is granted the destroyer's nomination, which is directly expressed in STATE IS A BUILDING conceptual metaphor:

Ex 21 *And you yourself will not forgive him everything that he will destroy and everyone whom he will kill (31/12/2022).*

Ex 22 *The world did not lose peace – Russia destroyed it (31/12/2022).*

Statement 21 is aimed at the Russians, here Zelensky tries to raise their awareness and perception of the real situation and true intentions of Putin who will destroy their lives, families and country. Destroyer's nomination here performs the role of calling the Russians not to believe propaganda, not to obey the dictator and to op-

pose, resist his decisions and actions until it is not too late. Statement 22 is dedicated to the global community because Russia is directly accused of destroying peace in the world. Therefore, the destroyer's imagery should encourage the world to support Ukraine, to provide it with armament and to fight against the destroyer of the global *building*.

Victory is the main aim of Ukraine in this terrorist war; thus, it might be identified in the conceptual metaphor WAR IS A GAME. The metaphor is firstly aimed at the Ukrainians not to lose hope and to raise their spirits that Ukraine will defend its citizens, sovereignty, independence and territory:

- Ex 23** *The world saw that freedom can be victorious. Following our achievements on the battlefield. And all our warriors. It will definitely happen. Ukraine will definitely win (28/12/2022).*
- Ex 24** *We helped Europe feel like not several championships with teams of different levels, but one strong team that, together with the whole free world, is fighting for this important victory (28/12/2022).*
- Ex 25** *We give each of our partners a unique and very important feeling and a historic opportunity - to be a winner together with Ukraine. Thanks to Ukrainians, the world remembers what it means to be winners (28/12/2022).*

In Examples 23–25, WAR IS A GAME conceptual metaphor might be reconstructed on the basis of a verb *to win*, adjective *victorious* and, such nouns as *championships*, *team*, *victory*, *winner*. These words and expressions directly express the only possible outcome of the war – Ukraine's victory. Moreover, the inclusive nature and potential of this conceptual metaphor are emphasised by Zelensky in his political discourse and it refers to the fact that Ukraine represents the whole world in this game, it plays not only for its own freedom, but for global peace, too. Therefore, it invites Europe and the world to take part in the Ukrainian team, to support it and to experience *what it means to be winners*.

The detrimental goals of Russia in Ukraine are also expressed on the basis of the *game* metaphors (Ex 26–27).

- Ex 26** *And if someone tries to play against the independence of Ukraine - be it political, economic, or spiritual independence - our state will respond instantly and in a tough way (28/12/2022).*
- Ex 27** *Now, when the enemy has set himself the goal of destroying us, destroying our energy sector, we set ourselves the goal of becoming a leader in the transformation of our energy sector to counter any threats, any challenges - military, political, economic or even climatic (28/12/2022).*

In this game, Russia aims at invading and annexing Ukraine, depriving it of independence and sets a goal to destroy the sovereign state and to eliminate it from the world map. However, these goals are opposed to the goals of Ukraine, which is positioned as a stronger competitor in this game and is ready to *respond instantly and in a tough way*, and which will definitely lead to the victory in the *war game*.

President Zelensky personifies both countries – Ukraine and Russia; therefore, another conceptual metaphor STATE IS A PERSON may be identified in his political discourse. This conceptual metaphor has an evaluative potential because it enables the target audience to perceive which side is a victim and which one acts as an enemy.

- Ex 28** *Look at how global priorities have changed. Most of the countries of the world are no longer interested in whether Russia will hear them (28/12/2022).*
- Ex 29** *December 31st... Today, this Russian missile attack is not the end of the year, no matter how much the terrorists want it. It's the outcome of Russia's fate (31/12/2022).*

In Example 28, Russia is defined as a weak person who has lost its global significance and popularity. Thus, the majority of other countries *are no longer interested in whether Russia will hear them*. Former Russia's strength, expressed by the ability to be heard and listened to, is effectively exploited by President Zelensky in the direct formation of the image of an unimportant, marginal person. In Example 29, the personification is formed on the basis of expression *Russia's fate*. However, the fate is rather gloomy for Russia because Zelensky claims that the fate of the terrorist will be totally different from what it strives for. The disastrous fate is emphasised by the metaphorical promise that it *is not the end of the year*.

Ukraine, on the contrary, is attributed the imagery of a good person who became a victim of a brutal, criminal act:

- Ex 30** *Because it is Odesa Mama (31/12/2022).*
- Ex 31** *The face of Kherson is cut by fragments of shells [...] (31/12/2022).*
- Ex 32** *And, of course, Kyiv region and the city are our heart, which always beats thanks to you, all our Ukrainians (31/12/2022).*

In Zelensky's discourse, Ukrainian cities are depicted as people. Odesa is compared to mother in relation to the above mentioned act of feeding countries in need and protecting Ukraine and the world. The universal *mother* imagery evokes highly positive connotations in the subconsciousness of the target audience. Therefore, it complements the already formed positive image of Ukraine in Zelensky's political discourse. Kherson and Kyiv are treated as people in relation to their human attributes, such as face and heart. Injured Kherson's face forms the image of an innocent *victim* who suffered from shelling. The importance of Kyiv is signified by the reference to the most important organ in human body – *heart*. The fact that the heart still and always beats implies the idea that Ukraine has not surrendered and is not going to do that in the future. Thus, it directly refers to the victory which is a special merit of all Ukrainians.

The negative image of an invader is further formed on the basis of **RUSSIA IS A MENTALLY ILL PERSON** conceptual metaphor:

- Ex 33** *The enemy has not abandoned the insane idea to capture the Donetsk region... (31/12/2022).*

In Example 33, *the enemy* connotes Russia and its leader while the expression *insane idea* directly refers to the fact that only a mentally ill person can conceive a plan to attack, invade and annex an independent, sovereign country. The concept of a *mental illness* might refer to megalomania and delirium of Putin to be the most important and powerful political leader in the world, and to restore the former Soviet Union by annexing not only Ukraine, but also other, formerly annexed, states.

In conclusion, conceptual metaphors, identified in the President Zelensky's political discourse, serve as a powerful, cognitive tool and weapon in the war, initiated by Russia. Conceptual metaphors enable the president to attract the attention of the world leaders, to reveal the real situation in Ukraine, to disclose true intentions of Putin and terrorist Russia, to define which side is a victim and which is an enemy, and, eventually, to attract more support from the allies and the rest of the world.

Conclusions

The research results show that the most prevalent conceptual metaphor in Volodymyr Zelensky's political discourse is **WAR IS A JOURNEY** which is aimed at both – Ukraine and Russia, and therefore has an evaluative potential. It forms the intended, positive image in the subconsciousness of the target audience that the Ukrainian journey leads forward, to the victory, to the membership in the EU. Furthermore, the backward direction, taken by Ukraine, also connotes positive concepts, such as the return of Ukrainian soldiers and refugees to their homeland, and the return of annexed territories, whereas Russia's journey is compared to the labyrinth and the dead end, evoking negative connotations in the subconsciousness of the target audience.

The positive image of Ukraine and the negative depiction of Russia is further formed on the basis of the following conceptual metaphors: STATE IS A BUILDING, WAR IS A GAME and STATE IS A PERSON. STATE IS A BUILDING metaphor directly indicates that Ukraine's building is strong while Russia aims at destroying it; thus, Ukraine has to rebuild or reconstruct this building. The *strength* metaphors enable President Zelensky to express his strong belief in victory. Moreover, the role of this conceptual metaphor is to depict Russia as not only the destroyer of Ukraine, but as the destroyer of the global building.

WAR IS A GAME conceptual metaphor is based on the *victory* concept; thus, it firstly encourages the Ukrainians not to lose hope that Ukraine will defend its citizens, sovereignty, independence and territory. Moreover, it forms the image of Russia as an unfair competitor – aggressor who has illegal, brutal and detrimental goals in this game.

STATE IS A PERSON is another dual metaphor, employed in Zelensky's political discourse. This conceptual metaphor has an evaluative potential because it enables the target audience to perceive which side is a victim and which one acts as an enemy. Furthermore, it serves as a powerful tool for the president to form the image of Ukraine as a good and strong person, whereas Russia is depicted as a weak person who will not be able to win the war.

Although the majority of conceptual metaphors, identified in Volodymyr Zelensky's discourse, have a dual potential, they are aimed at Ukraine and Russia, one more conceptual metaphor merely aimed at Russia has been identified – RUSSIA IS A MENTALLY ILL PERSON. This metaphor is significant in the formation of a negative image of Russia because it complements the already formed image of a weak person and directly refers to the fact that only a mentally ill person can conceive a plan to attack, invade and annex an independent, sovereign country.

The rhetorical effect of conceptual metaphors in Volodymyr Zelensky's political discourse is to form the intended positive image of Ukraine and a negative image of Russia, to define who is a victim and who is an enemy in this war. Furthermore, the real perception of the situation, based on conceptual metaphors, might attract more support in the form of armament, stricter sanctions against Russia and, eventually, lead to the victory.

References

- 1 Amaglobeli, G. (2018). Types of political discourses and their classification. *Journal of Education in Black Sea Region*, 3(1), 18-24. <https://doi.org/10.31578/jeb.v3i1.117>
- 2 Bielinis, L. (2002). Lingvistiniai politinės komunikacijos supratimo aspektai. *Respectus Philologicus* 2(7), 49-59.
- 3 Bratož, S. (2014). Metaphors in political discourse from a cross-cultural perspective. 7(1), 3-23. Repository of University of Primorska. Retrieved June, 2023, from http://www.emuni.si/press/ISSN/1855-3362/7_003-023.pdf
- 4 Carver, T., & Pikalo, J. (2008). *Political Language and Metaphor: Interpreting and Changing the World*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203931233>
- 5 Cienki, A., & Müller, C. (2008). *Metaphor and Gesture*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/gs.3>
- 6 Chilton, P. A. (2004). *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203561218>
- 7 Cibulskienė, J. (2012). The development of the journey metaphor in political discourse: Time-specific changes. *Metaphor and the Social World*, 2(2), 131-153. <https://doi.org/10.1075/msw.2.2.01cib>
- 8 Connolly, W., E. (1993). *The Terms of Political Discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- 9 Dilai, M. & Serafin, T. (2019). Metaphorical conceptualization in the Euromaidan discourse. In I. Navarro i Ferrando (Ed.), *Current Approaches to Metaphor Analysis in Discourse* (pp. 155-182). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110629460-008>
- 10 Kapranov, O. (2015). Conceptual metaphors in Ukrainian Prime Ministers' discourse involving renewables. *Topics in Linguistics*, 16(1), 4-16. <https://doi.org/10.2478/topling-2015-0007>
- 11 Kövecses, Z. (2002). Cognitive-linguistic comments on metaphor identification. *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics*, 11(1), 74-78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/096394700201100107>

- 12 Kövecses, Z. (2002). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195145113.001.0001>
- 13 Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor and Culture*. Universitatea Cluj Sapientia.
- 14 Kövecses, Z. (2020). An extended view of conceptual metaphor theory. *Review of Cognitive Linguistics*, 18, 112-130. <https://doi.org/10.1075/rcl.00053.kov>
- 15 Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live by*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- 16 Lassan, E. (1995). Дискурс власти и инакомыслия в СССР: когнитивно-риторический анализ [Discourse of Power and Dissent in the USSR: Cognitive- rhetorical Analysis]. Vilnius: Vilniaus universitetas.
- 17 Linkevičiūtė, V. (2013). Conceptual metaphors in Gordon Brown's political discourse (2007-2008). *Studies about Languages*, 23, 89-94. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.sal.0.23.5428>
- 18 Linkevičiūtė, V. (2014). Conceptual metaphors in Tony Blair's political discourse (1998-2006). *Res Humanitariae*, 16, 170-181. <https://doi.org/10.15181/rh.v0i16.1019>
- 19 Linkevičiūtė, V. (2018). Conceptual metaphors in Donald Trump's political discourse: politics domain (2019). *Studies about Languages*, 34, 46-55. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.sal.0.34.21886>
- 20 Linkevičiūtė, V. (2023). The image of Russia in Volodymyr Zelensky's political discourse (The first week of the war). *Balkanistic Forum*, 23(1), 9-27. <https://doi.org/10.37708/bf.swu.v32i1.1>
- 21 Liubchenko, Y., Miroshnychenko, P., Sirinyok-Dolgaryova, & K., Tupakhina, O. (2021). Political communication in the post-truth era: mind mapping values of Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky. *Communication Today*, 12(2), 146-167. Retrieved June 6, 2023, from <https://communicationtoday.sk/political-communication-in-the-post-truth-era-mind-mapping-values-of-ukraines-volodymyr-zelensky/>
- 22 Musolff, A. (2004). *Metaphor and Political Discourse: Analogical Reasoning in Debates about Europe*. Houndmills, Basingstone: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230504516>
- 23 Neagu, M., I. (2013). *Decoding Political Discourse: Conceptual Metaphors and Argumentation*. Houndmills, Basingstone: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137309907>
- 24 Otieno, R., F., Owino, F., R., & Attyang, J., M. (2016). Metaphors in political discourse: A review of selected studies. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 7(2), 21-26. <https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEL2015.0856>
- 25 Perrez, J., & Reuchamps, M. (2014). Deliberate metaphors in political discourse: the case of citizen discourse. *Metaphorik*, 25, 7-14. Retrieved June 6, 2023, from <https://hdl.handle.net/2268/174162>
- 26 Petlyuchenko, N. (2019). Servant of the people as a collective avatar of Zelensky's charisma: Phenomena of Ukraine's 2019 electoral discourse. *NANO-2019: Limits of Nanoscience and Nanotechnologies*, 47-57. Chişinău.
- 27 Pinker, S. (2007). *The Stuff of Thought: Language and Human Nature*. New York: Viking.
- 28 Ryabinska, N. (2020). Politics as a joke: The case of Volodymyr Zelensky's comedy show in Ukraine. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 69(2), 179-191. <https://doi.org/10.180/10758216.2020.1816836>
- 29 Rubio, A., M. (2022). Zelensky's discourse during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. How the war of narratives influences conflicts (Doctoral dissertation, Universidad Pontificia Comillas). Retrieved June 6, 2023, from <https://repositorio.comillas.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11531/55778/TFG-%20Moreno%20Rubio%2C%20Angel.pdf?sequence=1>.
- 30 Schäffner, C., & Chilton, P. (2020). Translation, metaphor and cognition. In F. Alves & A. L. Jakobsen (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Cognition*. Abingdon & New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315178127-22>
- 31 Semotiuk, O., & Shevchenko, V. (2022). Making fun of power: political cartoons and memes about President Zelensky. Quantitative and qualitative analysis. *The European Journal of Humour Research*, 10(4), 82-98. <https://doi.org/10.7592/EJHR.2022.10.4.703>

- 32 Trebin, M., & Chernyshova, T. (2022). Linguistic analysis of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's political rhetoric: strategies & tactics. *Вісник Національної юридичної академії України імені Ярослава Мудрого. Серія: Філософія, філософія права, політологія, соціологія*, 1(52), 193-209. <https://doi.org/10.21564/2663-5704.52.249894>
- 33 Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology. A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage.
- 34 Van Dijk, T. A. (2002). Political discourse and political cognition. In P. Chilton & C. Schäffner (Eds.), *Politics as Text and Talk: Analytic Approaches to Political Discourse*, 203-237. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/dapsac.4.11dij>
- 35 Volianiuk, I. (2022). Політичний дискурс в умовах Російсько-Української війни: лінгвістичний аспект [Political Discourse within the Context of the Russian-Ukrainian War]. *Uzhhorod: Закарпатські філологічні студії*, (pp. 47-52).

Source

Official website of President of Ukraine – Volodymyr Zelensky. Retrieved from <https://www.president.gov.ua/>

Santrauka

Vilma Linkevičiūtė

Konceptualiosios metaforos Volodymyro Zelenskio politiniame diskurse

Šiame straipsnyje siekiama nustatyti ir išanalizuoti konceptualiąsias metaforas Volodymyro Zelenskio politiniame diskurse bei iširti jų daromą retorinį poveikį tikslinei auditorijai, rolę ir funkcijas karo kontekste. Šio karo pasekmės yra svarbios globaliu mastu, kadangi regiono geopolitinė situacija, Europos Sąjungos, o ypač Lenkijos, Baltijos šalių bei ES kandidatės Moldovos, ateitis priklauso nuo šio karo pabaigos. Tyrimas buvo atliktas taikant konceptualią metodologiją, kuri apima politinį diskursą Rusijos invazijos į Ukrainą metu, konceptualiąsias metaforas, skirtas Ukrainai, Rusijai ir globaliajai bendruomenei bei jų reikšmę karo kontekste. KARAS YRA KELIONĖ, VALSTYBĖ YRA PASTATAS, KARAS YRA ŽAIDIMAS ir VALSTYBĖ YRA ASMUO – dominuojančios konceptualiosios metaforos, nustatytos Zelenskio diskurse.

Šių, konceptualiųjų, metaforų vaidmuo yra formuoti teigiamą Ukrainos ir neigiamą Rusijos įvaizdžius bei apibrėžti, kas yra auka, o kas šiame kare – priešas. Be to, tikrasis situacijos suvokimas, paremtas konceptualiosiomis metaforomis, gali padėti Ukrainai sulaukti daugiau pagalbos ir paramos ginklais, lemti griežtesnes sankcijas Rusijai bei nuvesti į pergalę.

About the Author

VILMA LINKEVIČIŪTĖ

Dr., Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

Research Interests

Cognitive linguistics, political discourse, conflict communication.

Address A. Mickevičiaus g. 37, Kaunas, Lithuania

E-mail vilma.linkeviciute@ktu.lt

ORCID Id 0000-0002-6982-2892

