

The Complex Metaphor of Political Animals in Media Political Discourse: a Cross-Linguistic Perspective

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Abstract. The present study aims at reconstructing and contrasting the complex metaphor of POLITICIANS ARE RATIONAL ANIMALS in Lithuanian and British media political discourse. The research material consists of the analytical articles retrieved from the electronic archives of the www.economist.com and www.politika.lt websites in the time span of five years (i.e. 2002–2007). The method applied to investigate the collected data is that of content analysis in the theoretical framework of cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory. The research findings reveal that the complex metaphor of POLITICIANS ARE RATIONAL ANIMALS is represented by the following source domains: STRENGTH and BUSINESS. Their use gives evidence of Pragmatic Morality shaping the system of political beliefs and expectations in Great Britain and Lithuania. In this view, morality is understood as a human invention explicitly devised to control combative and selfish tendencies in a society. The use of violence and force is thus seen as a constituent part of political activities. Moreover, moral politics is associated with coercive and forceful behaviour. The key concepts underlying pragmatic politics are STRENGTH, FORCE, CONTROL, ORDER, STABILITY, RULES etc.

Key words: media political discourse, metaphor, metaphorical expressions, cognitive models, pragmatic morality.

Introduction

Media political discourse is a complex interactive frame which captures the relations between politicians, the media and the public. The nature of their relationship is characterized by the roles politicians, media personnel and audience are performing. As noted by Blumer and Gurevitch their functions can vary from informatively neutral to informatively forceful or entertaining (in Lauerbach and Fetzer, 2007, p.6). For example, politicians can play the role of gladiators, while the media serves the function of an editorial guide and the audience becomes the partisan (i.e. informative forcefulness). In other instances, politicians become actors, while the media plays the role of an entertainer, and the public enjoys the show (i.e. informative entertainment). Despite the variability of roles, there is a unifying link which allows one to discern the roles performed by the participants. This can be done by analysing the language.

Fairclough refers to language as ‘a socially conditioned process’ in the sense that language use is inseparable from social contexts (2001, p.19). Moreover, linguistic means do not only reflect social processes and practices but also discern power relations in a given society. Power relations, in their turn, disclose the hierarchy of relationships and the moral nature of authority between social groups. As observed by Fairclough,

language is both a site of and a stake in class struggle, and those who exercise power through language must constantly be involved with others to defend (or lose) their positions (2001, p.29).

In the case of media political discourse, all three parties are powerful in their own terms: the media has the power to inform and critically analyse, politicians have the power to

govern the state, while the public has the power to moralize and elect politicians. These power relations are disclosed in the language use. One of the clues to discerning power relations is the analysis of metaphorical expressions and the reconstruction of metaphors underlying media political discourse. In the view of cognitive approach, it has been generally accepted that metaphor is a principal cognitive tool of organizing human experience and knowledge by means of systematically conflating different experiential domains (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Lakoff, 2002, 2003; Johnson, 1993; Fauconnier and Turner, 2004; Boroditskij, 2000; Mussolf, 2008). Thus, metaphor is primarily a tool of thought which can be realized linguistically. In this view, metaphor is primarily understood as a **conceptual realization** (in brain) and subsequently as a **linguistic manifestation** (in language) (see Kövecses, 2002).

Data and Methodology

This study aims at analysing metaphorical expressions, reconstructing metaphors and identifying their moral implications in media political discourse. For that purpose the two electronic archives of www.economist.com and www.politika.lt were accessed. The choice of these particular sources is motivated: both present an authoritative opinion and analysis of political affairs and both give relatively unrestricted access to the online archives. The English analytical articles were extracted from the section of *Bagehot* in *The Economist*, while the Lithuanian articles were accessed at [*politika Lietuvoje >komentarai*]. The articles were automatically and all-inclusively selected, covering the time span of five years, i.e. from 2002 to 2007. The collected data amounts to 415, 670 words in total, wherein a thousand of

metaphorical expressions in each language has been located and reconstructed into conceptual metaphors.

The cognitive method in the framework of political linguistics was applied to the collected data (Chudinov, 2001; Chilton, 2004, 2005). Metaphorical expressions were analysed in the following direction: TEXT >metaphorical expressions [basic meaning vs. contextual meaning = conflation] >conceptual metaphor [TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN] >moral implications. To be more precise, metaphorical linguistic expressions, which illustrated a conflated combinability of basic and contextual meanings, were selected in the collected data. For example, such metaphorical expressions as *a dying party*, *party's febrile mood*, *the party's rehabilitation*, *party failed to recover* etc. are based on the combinability of the two conflated meanings: the basic meaning of the HEALTH domain, i.e. *febrile*, *dying*, *rehabilitation*, *recover*, which is activated in the political context. On that basis, conceptual metaphor has been reconstructed: POLITICS IS HEALTH. Finally, the moral implications of the reconstructed metaphor were inferred. In the case of POLITICAL HEALTH metaphor, its use implies the longevity and permanence of political problems thus the lack of dynamicity and political progress in the party system.

The Complex Metaphor of POLITICAL ANIMALS

The research findings show that metaphorical expressions can be systematized into the complex metaphor of POLITICAL ANIMALS, which in its turn, is represented by the metaphors of STRENGTH and BUSINESS, as in the table below:

Table 1. The Complex Metaphor of POLITICAL ANIMALS.

POLITICIANS ARE RATIONAL ANIMALS	
BUSINESS	STRENGTH
POLITICIANS - being rational - political calculations - being led by self-interest	POLITICIANS - being strong/ tough/ aggressive - being led by instincts for self-protection
Common strategy+VERTICAL relationship in politics	

As indicated above, the metaphor of POLITICAL ANIMALS is a complex conceptual system which is represented by the two source domains: STRENGTH and BUSINESS. The moral implications of each domain are intertwined: the STRENGTH metaphor allows to perceive politicians as **strong** thus **powerful**. Moreover, it demonstrates the division of politicians into strong and weak, where both are led by the **instincts for self-protection** and **aggressive self-defence**. In the case of the BUSINESS metaphor, the frames of **well-calculated political actions** and **self-interest** are activated. In this regard, both conceptual domains are conflated in the following blend: POLITICIANS ARE RATIONAL ANIMALS, where rationality factor is

developed by the structural metaphor of BUSINESS, while the structural element of STRENGTH uncovers political forcefulness and aggression.

The Conceptual System of Political SELF-PROTECTION as Reflected in the STRENGTH Metaphor

The metaphor of POLITICAL STRENGTH is based on the activated associations between the domains of POLITICS (i.e. target domain) and STRENGTH (i.e. source domain). This generalization leads to the following conceptual mappings: POLITICIANS ARE STRONG/ WEAK AGENTS, BEING POLITICALLY ACTIVE IS BEING TOUGH and MORAL POLITICIANS ARE STRONG POLITICIANS. The concept of STRENGTH activates the frame of forceful behaviour on the part of politicians. Forcefulness, in its turn, can occur at both physical and mental/ moral levels. In the English data, this forcefulness is expressed through the conceptual element of TOUGHNESS, where the concept of political strength is associated with the politicians' tough behaviour which emphasizes their strenuous and unbeatable stature, as below:

- (1) *Mr Brown strongly supported Mr Blair's **tough stance and political positioning**, if not his highly confrontational tactics* (This time, Gordon is not a problem. November 10, 2005).
- (2) *Mr Davis has his strengths. He is **tough**, ambitious and more strategic than any of his recent predecessors* (D. Davis has a fight on his hands. October 6, 2005).

As the examples above illustrate, TOUGHNESS is seen a complementary attribute of political strength thus constitutive of political activities. In this view, political activities involve the exercise of strength and toughness as reflected in the metaphor – BEING POLITICALLY ACTIVE IS BEING TOUGH/ STRONG. Thus, political activities are closely associated with POLITICAL STRENGTH, due to which political problems are managed and appropriate decisions are made, as in the statements below:

- (3) *It has, he <Mr. Brown> believes, been **insufficiently tough** in negotiation and disingenuous over the treaty's importance* (Plenty of risk, not much reward. April 22, 2004).
- (4) *What is not in doubt is that Mr Brown has emerged from the campaign **politically stronger** than ever before* (Together again. May 5, 2005).

Hence, 'tough' politicians are able to deal with any difficulties they might encounter. This leads to the following moral implication: political toughness is an unbeatable stature thus a moral advantage in modern politics.

It should be noted that the concept of strength has a positive evaluation in the English data, which can be explained by the metaphor MORALITY IS STRENGTH (Johnson, 1993). According to Johnson, most Western cultures perceive morality or moral behaviour through the concept of strength (1993, p.32). In other words, moral people are seen as strong in character and behaviour, while immoral people as weak and unreliable. Accordingly, weak people cannot be trusted

and should be avoided, while the strong possess the necessary powers for establishing order and stability in the naturally unstable and chaotic world. The same model is applicable to public (i.e. media political) discourse, where morally good politicians are tough and strong in their political decision-making. Besides, political strength is demonstrated by the exertion of FORCE, e.g.:

- (5) *Though the Lords can't **strike bills down** — the government can ultimately **get its way by forcing bills through** under the Parliament Act — their alterations are often successful* (A-leaping with a vengeance. February 9, 2006).
- (6) *On January 31st, the former Conservative chairman laced up his rhetorical Doc Martens and **stuck the boot firmly** into the new Conservative leader's rump* (With your permission. February 2, 2006).

As seen from the examples above, those politicians who do not exert physical force or lack strength are portrayed as weak thus lacking firmness of character. Thus, 'strength' is also seen as a complementary part of human character. In this view, strong political character is associated with strictness and discipline; hence, those lacking discipline in political decision-making are perceived as weak, e.g.:

- (7) *Mr Brown knows all too well that a party that **loses the habit of discipline** may struggle to regain it* (This time Gordon is not the problem. November 10, 2005).
- (8) *For all his moral passion and intellectual strength, the belief that the chancellor is **a flawed character** has taken hold* (They'll miss him. September 28, 2006).
- (9) *Because the government has broken its promises to them, many peers feel **released from normal constitutional discipline*** (Billy Bragg's modest proposal. March 11, 2004).

The element of FORCE is further developed by the element of BOLDNESS, whereby strong politicians are perceived as bold and determined in their behaviour, as achieved through the use of forceful actions, e.g.:

- (10) *It is, however, an opportunity for Gordon Brown to **push ahead with reform*** (A sad, sad business. November 16, 2006).
- (11) *The majority of them are not so self-destructive that they can't see a deeply unattractive risk/reward ratio in **forcing Mr Blair out*** (Prepared to wound but not to strike. May 11, 2006).

Forceful actions thus contribute to bold and strong politics, which is seen as a moral priority. Politicians' boldness and strength are perceived as essential characteristics contributing to sustaining stability and order in a state.

Similarly, in the Lithuanian data the concept of STRONG WILL is associated with a force influencing human body and its actions. Thus, politicians possessing strong will are able to exert force to control their actions. By contrast, politicians lacking strong will are perceived as weak and unable to resist various passions, control situations or solve political problems, e.g.:

- (12) *„Deja, ne tik šiai, bet ir kitoms **partijoms Lietuvoje trūksta politinės valios** (‘Lithuanian parties lacking political will’) („Darbo partijos lyderio diktatui – jo pavaduotojo atkirtis“: December 12, 2005).*
- (13) *„Greičiausiai baimė, kad įtarimai gali būti pareikšti bet kuriai partijai arba **politinės valios stoka**“ (the shortage of political will) („Darbo partija prieš VPK. Kas laimės?“: November 29, 2006).*

By lacking political will, Lithuanian politicians are seen as being unable to control political situations; consequently, this leads to inadequate decision-making. It has to be noted that "political will" is also closely associated with the exertion of physical FORCE, as "will" is generally conceptualised in terms of a forceful mind exerting influence on a human body. Hence, stronger will assists in resisting external negative forces. This conceptual model applies to the frame of Lithuanian politics, as the concept of strength is highlighted as the central attribute of political actions, as in the following utterances:

- (14) *„**Darant rimtą ir atsakingą politinį žingsnį, reikia turėti pakankamai jėgų** jam įgyvendinti iš tikrųjų arba, priešingu atveju, geriau nedaryti nieko“*. [while making serious and responsible political decisions, sufficient strength is needed] (by taking serious and responsible steps, sufficient strength is needed) (Lietuvos politinė sistema nesudaro sąlygų vadovautis moraliniais standartais. February 28, 2006).
- (15) ***Telkiamos jėgos** ten, kur jos **stipriausios***. ('recruiting the strongest forces') (Kodėl R. Paksas netaps revoliucionieriumi. January 26, 2006).

The examples above illustrate that the possession and exertion of strength have positive moral implications: strong politicians are seen as morally right in their actions, whereas the weak are seen as morally wrong in their decision-making.

Moreover, the metaphor of POLITICS IS THE EXERTION OF FORCE characterizes Lithuanian politics as pragmatically-oriented, which is reflected in the brutal approach to solving political problems. This is associated with Lithuanian politicians acting forcefully and coercively with much of the physical strength required, e.g.:

- (16) *<...> „Seimo daugumos „**buldozerio**“ **sutraiškytą** opozicijos iniciatyvą sudaryti parlamentinę komisiją premjero Algirdo Brazausko šeimos interesams iširti“*. (the initiative of the opposition was crushed by the bulldozer of Parliamentary majority) („A. Kubilius: nostalgiją praeičiai išgydys laikas“: November 15, 2005).
- (17) *„Nežinau, gal kas nors Lietuvoje dar gražins vasariui **pirmykštį pašaukimą – vesti prieš srovę, griauti šio pasaulio galybes, svaiginti laisvę**“ (the primary mission of leading against the mainstream, destroying world powers, intoxicating freedom) („Toks vasaris. Praradęs savo burtus“: February 14, 2006).*

The analysis of the STRENGTH metaphor also reveals that in some cases Lithuanian politicians are criticized for their

forcefulness, especially when it comes to violence and coercion, e.g.:

- (18) „Kad būtume nelyginant šuneliai, kuriems galima numesti kaulą, jei klauso, o jei neklauso, **pagrūmoti lazda**. Arba **kumščiu**“ (*shake one's stick or fist*) („Anestezija tautai“: February 20, 2006).
- (19) „Paprastai šnekant, iš sėkmingų ir **nenugalimų bestijų** kyla ne tik institucijos, bet ir politinės etikos normos bei politinio elgesio standartai <...>“ (*the political and ethical norms of unconquerable beasts arising*) („Knygos po lova“: May 10, 2007).

Politics in the Lithuanian media political discourse is closely associated with the exertion of physical force, which results in the outbursts of violence and cruelty, with politicians being referred to as *beasts* (in 22). Such moral expectations derive from the primary metaphor MORALITY IS GOODNESS, whereby immoral people are associated with evil. Thus, politicians' violent behaviour is characterized as evil that has to be stopped. Even more, such 'bestly' politicians are seen as led by their instincts and biological make-up, i.e. being void of rationality, as in the following statements:

- (20) „Bet šiandien niekada neklystantis **galios instinktas** jiems kužda, kad buvę šeimininkai **atgauna jėgas**“ (*the instinct of power, the former masters regaining political strength*) („Politinio maskarado vidurnaktis“: November 28, 2005).
- (21) „Taigi siekdama pilietinės emancipacijos, regis, mūsų visuomenė neišvengiamai turės grumtis su **demokratiųjų instinktų stokojančia Lietuvos valdžia**“ (*our society will inevitably have to fight with the Lithuanian government, lacking democratic instincts*) („Politinis elitas neberodo gebėjimų veikti demokratijos sąlygomis“: November 25, 2005).

Hence, the metaphor of STRENGTH performs a two-fold function in the collected Lithuanian data. First, it raises moral expectations grounded in the metaphor MORALITY IS STRENGTH, whereby politicians are expected to be strong, wilful and determined. By contrast, another aspect of this metaphor gives rise to moral expectations reflected in the metaphor IMMORALITY IS EVIL, whereby amoral politicians are seen as evil, which has to be stopped. Otherwise, their amoral behaviour can destroy the entire social order.

The Conceptual System of Political SELF-INTEREST as Reflected in the BUSINESS Metaphor

The underlying conceptual element of the BUSINESS metaphor in the English data is that of POLITICAL CAPITAL. Its reconstruction allows one to perceive British politics as an ongoing process of acquiring and distributing wealth owned by politicians. Moreover, all human resources are then associated with economic value and profit, while politicians are seen as investors, e.g.:

- (22) *It is how much of the **business of government has been transacted** (After he is gone. May 10, 2007).*

- (23) *Those <...> would have been among the first to have accused him of **making political capital** from the suffering of victims (Why Gordon needs a holiday. January 13, 2005).*

The element of POLITICAL CAPITAL is very closely related to the metaphor of POLITICAL ACTIONS ARE CALCULATIONS, where political actions are associated with procedural estimation involving careful planning and forecast. Despite careful calculations, British politicians are seen as taking unnecessary risks in their political decision-making. In many cases, inappropriate management of 'political capital' leads to the losses of dividends, e.g.:

- (24) *[Mr Blair] <...> having **spent nearly all his political capital** on an unpopular war, he felt vulnerable and hoped that he would win some breathing space (A Blunkett judgement. November 3, 2005).*
- (25) *A part of Mr Blair believes **power is such a precious commodity that it should never be given up willingly** (End of term. July 27, 2006).*

As illustrated above (in 28), the perception of political power as 'a precious commodity' leads to some important implications: first, political power can be bought and sold; second, political power has a commodity value.

Furthermore, the reconstructed BUSINESS metaphor activates the frame which involves the aspects of time and risk which are perceived as inseparable from the overall political success. Moreover, those politicians, who show their ability to handle time and take risks, are seen as optimists, e.g.:

- (26) *But in politics **timing is everything** <...> (A question that can no longer be avoided. July 6, 2006).*
- (27) *Because Mr Blair <...> is prepared to **take large risks** that pessimists would not (The hopeful interventionist. May 25, 2006).*

By contrast, the BUSINESS metaphor in the Lithuanian data is predominantly based on more negative than positive moral evaluation. It is reflected in the description of Lithuanian politicians' irrational, selfish and amoral behaviour. The negative moral evaluation is traced in the reconstructed linguistic realization of such elements as TRADE and CAPITAL. The element of TRADE characterizes Lithuanian politics in terms of the commercial exchange of political services, which aims at satisfying politicians' individual needs (i.e. self-interest) by neglecting national interests. Thus, the POLITICS IS TRADE metaphor is based on the perception of state-neglecting politics, with politicians seeking their own individual interests, e.g.:

- (28) „Visus **uždirbtus iš kitų nesėkmių politinius dividendus** vėjais paleido Darbo partijos deleguotas kultūros ministras V. Prudnikovas <...>“ (*political dividends earned from others' misfortunes*) („Turniškių demokratija: paskutinė stadija“: March 21, 2006).
- (29) „Politika – nes įstatymus ar **bendruomenės interesus parduodantis politikas** žlugdo pasitikėjimą ir teisingumą,

ir demokratija“ (politician selling community interests) („Korupcija žiniasklaidoje – be tabu?“ December 20, 2005).

Besides the element of SELF-INTEREST, the element of POLITICAL CAPITAL receives a negative moral evaluation, as various political activities are associated with obtaining financial gains and personal profit. Thus, politics is seen as a profitable activity for those seeking personal economic benefits at others' cost. Moreover, political capital is associated with political power, by losing or wasting the former, politicians lose their credibility and authority, consider the utterances below:

(30) „A. Brazauskas pats iššvaistė savo sunkiai pelnytą politinį kapitalą“ (A. Brazauskas wasted his political capital earned through hardship) „Visiška devalvacija“ (absolute devaluation) („V. Landsbergis ir A. Brazauskas: du išsiskyrę politiniai likimai“ December 5, 2005).

(31) „Konservatorių veiksmus galima traktuoti dviprasmiškai: kaip bandymą susikrauti politinį kapitalą <...>“ (amass political capital) („Valdančiosios koalicijos nesantaikos obuolys dvelkia nafta“ December 5, 2005).

Thus, one of the political goals in Lithuanian politics is about obtaining political capital, which guarantees power and authority. However, Lithuanian politicians are perceived as being selfish and greedy by nature thus unable to amass their political capital.

Conclusions

The analysis of metaphorical expressions and the reconstruction of POLITICAL metaphors in English and Lithuanian media political discourse allows identifying several major features:

1. Political affairs disclosed by the media in both cultures are framed by the metaphors of STRENGTH and BUSINESS.
2. The STRENGTH metaphor, as a complex conceptual system, is based on the moral expectations underlying **pragmatic morality**. Its use discloses such moral expectations as strong *political will*, *determination*, and *political hierarchy* based on power and influence shared by politicians.
3. The reconstructed STRENGTH metaphor uncovers the complex system of political self-protection. In the eyes of the media, both British and Lithuanian politics dispose features of **political pragmatism**, where the state is governed by the Strong. Moreover, the pragmatic nature of human character initiates struggles for power and authority. This reminds of aggressive **Hobessian** approach to human nature, where people are regarded as evil by birth and always competing for better position in life thus primarily self-protecting themselves against others' forcefulness.
4. The BUSINESS metaphor activates the conceptual system of **calculated actions** in British politics, while the

frame of **self-interest** is activated in Lithuanian politics. This leads to an interesting observation: though the same metaphor underlies both British and Lithuanian politics, it results in different moral evaluation. In the eyes of the British media, politicians are seen as able to calculate their actions thus make rational decisions. Moreover, their forcefulness is paralleled with rationality thus British politicians are seen as having needed capacities thus morally accepted. By contrast, in the view of the Lithuanian media, Lithuanian politicians cross their moral limits of forcefulness and turn into 'beasts', and their calculations are not concerned with national but private needs. This leads to a negative moral evaluation on the part of the Lithuanian media: politicians are seen as yet incapable of the expected MORAL STRENGTH and RATIONALITY.

5. Despite the differences, Both metaphors allow to reconstruct the complex metaphor of POLITICIANS ARE RATIONAL ANIMALS, where rationality is activated by the BUSINESS metaphor and animal-like nature of politicians by the STRENGTH metaphor.
6. Finally, it should be noted that British politicians are perceived as able to match the raised metaphorical frame of POLITICIANS ARE RATIONAL ANIMALS, while Lithuanians are still lagging behind.

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Politikai yra racionalūs gyvūnai: gretinamoji metaforų analizė

Santrauka

Šio straipsnio tikslas – remiantis metaforinių pasakymų analize, rekonstruoti vyraujančius politinių įvykių vertinimo modelius Didžiosios Britanijos ir Lietuvos viešajame diskurse. Tyrimui buvo pasirinkti straipsniai iš *The Economist* ir *www.politika.lt* elektroninių archyvų. Straipsniai analizuojami remiantis kognityvinės lingvistikos principais bei kokybiniu analizės metodu, kurie leidžia rekonstruoti metaforiniuose kalbiniuose pasakymuose (metaphorical linguistic expressions) glūdinčias konceptualiąsias metaforas (kognityvinius vertinimo modelius). Nustatyta, kad politinis vertinimas Didžiosios Britanijos ir Lietuvos viešajame politiniame diskurse yra grindžiamas kompleksine konceptualiąja metafora POLITIKAI YRA RACIONALŪS GYVŪNAI. Išanalizavus šios metaforos kalbinę raišką, paaiškėjo, kad straipsniuose vyrauja pragmatinis politikos vertinimas, kuriantis ir skleidžiantis autoritetų ir hierarchinės valdžios svarbą viešojoje erdvėje.

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