



Slovenian and US Elections in Metaphors: A Cross-linguistic Perspective

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Abstract

The present paper examines metaphors in the discourse of elections from a cross-linguistic perspective. The methodological framework brings together the conceptual theory of metaphor, as one of the most prominent models within cognitive linguistics, and Critical Discourse Analysis. In addition, a cross-linguistic approach to analysing metaphors in discourse is suggested following Kövecses' (2005) criteria for cultural and linguistic universality and variation in metaphor. The analysis is based on a corpus of newspaper articles related to the elections held in 2008 in Slovenia and those held in the USA in the same year. The results suggest that while there is a certain degree of universality in terms of the predominant conceptual metaphors, there are also important variations between the two languages and cultures in question, such as the ubiquity of metaphorically motivated terminology and election jargon identified in (American) English texts.

Key words: conceptual theory of metaphor, critical discourse analysis, universality and variation in metaphor, election discourse

1. Introduction

The pervasiveness of metaphor has been recognised in a variety of discourses which are essential to our everyday life, from politics and economics to specialised scientific discourses, such as medicine and physics. What is more, metaphors are seen as an important aspect or distinguishing feature of particular discourses. This is further corroborated by an increasingly greater emphasis given to comprehensive models of human cognition, communication, and culture in metaphor research (Gibbs 2008).

From a broad methodological perspective the present research is related to two theoretical traditions which are focused on metaphors as forms of organising conceptual structure, i.e. the conceptual theory of metaphor (CTM), one of the more prominent frameworks within cognitive linguistics, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Several researchers have discussed the use of various methodological tools for researching metaphors in discourse by combining these two traditions (Charteris-Black 2004; Goatly 2007; Cienki 2008; Hart and Lukeš 2010; Maalej 2010 and others). The present paper speaks in favour of adding a cross-linguistic perspective to the approach to metaphor analysis which combines the two theoretical frameworks above. I would like to argue that valuable insights can be gained by analysing

conceptual and linguistic metaphors in discourse cross-linguistically. A major influence in the research of metaphors across languages is the work of Kövecses (2000, 2002, 2005) on universality and cultural variation in metaphor and metonymy. Underlying these efforts is the belief that a number of insights into the importance of metaphors as mirrors of our cultural and social environment can be gained by analysing metaphors contrastively. Since according to the cognitive view, metaphors do not function merely at the linguistic level but also on the conceptual, physical (bodily), and socio-cultural level, it should not come as a surprise that they are subject to variation across and within languages. On the other hand, universality and variation can be seen as two sides of the same coin as, in the majority of cases, they presuppose each other, so we can always expect to find degrees of both in our research.

The case study presented below was aimed at identifying conceptual metaphors and their linguistic realisations in a corpus of pre-election articles related to the American elections in 2008 and the Slovenian elections held in the same year. The results have shown that the Slovenian and American elections of 2008 were largely characterised by the same metaphorical themes, with common source domains, such as battle or combat, contest and journey. However, the results also suggest that there are significant variations in the use of metaphors between and within the languages selected. Three such variations will be discussed below, based on the criteria proposed by Kövecses (2005), i.e. congruent, alternative and preferential metaphors. In addition, another aspect of variation will be discussed, i.e. variation in the degree of conventionality. I will therefore argue that while (American) English and Slovenian share many metaphorical conceptualisations of elections, there are also significant variations which have cultural implications.

2. CTM, CDA and a Cross-linguistic Approach

CTM as initially developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and later Lakoff (1993) defines metaphors as understanding one domain of experience in terms of another domain of experience and sees metaphorical reasoning as central to our conceptual system. By allowing us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another, metaphors draw our attention to a particular aspect and away from other aspects which are not consistent with the metaphor. One of the most important insights of CTM is that metaphors structure our everyday activities in a systematic fashion. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 8) give us as an example the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY, for which a number of expressions can be found in English, such as ‘wasting time’, ‘investing time’, ‘saving time’, ‘using time profitably’ and many others. However, they also emphasise that ‘when we say that a concept is structured by a metaphor, we mean that it is partially structured and that it can be extended in some ways but not others’ (idem: 13).

One of the most comprehensive frameworks of analysing metaphors in discourse is Charteris-Black’s (2004) pragmatic discourse model for metaphor research, known as ‘critical metaphor analysis’, which integrates corpus approaches, CTM and CDA. Following Charteris-Black, Goatly (2007: 2) speaks in favour of ‘cross-fertilising’ the two traditions by emphasising that the critical metaphor analysis model

... demonstrates the importance of metaphorical patterns in the vocabulary and grammar of English for representing and shaping ideologies and social practices. To do so it relates metaphorical patterns or »themes« to a wide range of aspects of contemporary life, including media practice, adversarial legal systems, time and motion studies, the politics behind 9/11 ...

Maalej (2010) proposes a discourse model of metaphor based exclusively on CTM by arguing in favour of using some critical assets of CTM in a critical analysis of discourse. These are the pervasiveness of metaphor, its cognitive unconscious nature, its psychological reality and its process-product nature. Working with CTM analytical tools at the level of text, he shows that CTM can accommodate critical, discursive, as well as analytical claims.

On the other hand, Hart (2008: 4) maintains that CTM is fundamentally incompatible with CDA since the former is concerned mostly with conventionalised conceptual metaphors while the focus in CDA is on 'microlevel analysis of concrete examples of discourse, which is to say, actual instances of talk or text in different genres'. Hart (idem: 5) argues convincingly for the conceptual blending theory as a more useful framework for CDA purposes:

... CTM tends only to focus on the cognitive dimensions of metaphor, maintaining that it is a matter of language and knowledge. BT, on the other hand, accounts for the cognitive operations involved in the discourse process and thus provides a more suitable apparatus for metaphor in CDA.

Acknowledging CTM as a powerful tool 'for getting at the roots of political thought', Cienki (2008: 241) suggests that one of the reasons for a limited application of CTM to political discourse studies can be found in the research methods employed in CTM research. One of the major caveats concerns the question of the sources of linguistic data analysed, which has, for many years, been left to the researcher's intuition and therefore to subjective judgement and interpretation. Another is related to the identification of metaphorically used language and the problem of categorising linguistic expressions into separate conceptual metaphoric mappings. Cienki argues that there are clear benefits in applying multiple methods to the study of metaphors, such as working with various linguistic corpora rather than relying on the intuition of experts, and using a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches.

Another critical appraisal of combining CTM and CDA comes from Stenvoll (2008: 37) who sees the two research traditions as having both strengths and weaknesses. He contends, with metaphoric zeal, that

... in the political theatre of Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are given lead roles and are crucial in making the performance meaningful and enjoyable to the audience. In the political circus of CDA, however, metaphors are linguistic requisites used by discursive acrobats and the circus director to entertain and spellbind the audience. Elsewhere, in a more exclusive showing, a powerful few enjoy the tragedy of the oppressed.

Stenvoll emphasises that while CTM succeeds in connecting conventional metaphors to natural human experience, it fails to take into account the social construction of human experience. CDA, on the other hand, is so preoccupied

with revealing the power of ideology that it fails to capture the complex relationship between language, reality and power.

Bearing in mind the above reservations, I would like to argue that a more felicitous dialogue between the above mentioned frameworks may be achieved if we work at the level of text or a collection of texts, which was convincingly demonstrated by Maalej (2010). Broadly speaking, we can use the methodological apparatus of the conceptual theory of metaphor (i.e. the definition and idea of conceptual metaphor, the theory of domains, target and source domains, the nature of mappings, the spelling out of ontological and epistemic correspondences, etc.) while employing the reasoning of Critical Discourse Analysis in the sense of the significance given to metaphors in discourse and the role metaphors play in conceptualizing our social reality. Wodak and Meyer (2001: 2) state that the main aim of CDA is ‘to investigate critically social inequality, as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimised and so on by language use’. One way of exploring the ideological effects of language is to analyse the recurrent metaphorical patterns reflected in different conceptual metaphors which characterise a particular discourse. As Fairclough (2003: 131-2) points out ‘metaphor is one resource available for producing distinct representations of the world. But it is perhaps the particular combination of different metaphors which differentiates discourses’.

Besides combining CTM and CDA in metaphor research, I would like to argue in favour of analysing metaphors from a cross-linguistic contrastive angle. One of the major benefits of working with metaphors contrastively is that we are able to see whether a particular metaphor is unique to or more common in one language (here taken as an element of culture) or whether it is shared by more or all languages and is therefore universal. In this way we can analyse metaphors as products of a particular cultural environment. In addition, setting data from one language against that of another allows us to make inferences about the languages involved in analysis. By contrasting metaphors in the American and Slovenian pre-election discourse, for example, we are able to see if particular metaphors are more or less entrenched in one of the two languages. Kövecses (2005) speaks of cultural and linguistic universality and variation in metaphor. The discussion on the universality of metaphor, which was started by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980 and is still relevant today, worked around the premise that certain metaphors could be regarded as universal or near-universal and therefore independent of the time and place in which they occur. This is one of the main underlying assumptions of the cognitive view of metaphor which relates the universality of metaphor to the claim that human experience is largely universal. The conceptual metaphor which is frequently analysed in this context is ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER (Lakoff and Kövecses 1987, Kövecses 2002) with its numerous linguistic realisations in everyday language, such as¹:

- (1)
 - a. She’s blowing off steam.
 - b. When she told me the truth, I exploded!
 - c. Let him stew.
 - d. You make my blood boil.

(2)

a. *Razneslo jo bo od jeze.* (lit. She will explode with anger.)

b. *Nauči se zadrževati svoje izbruhe jeze.* (lit. You should learn to restrain your eruptions of anger.)

c. *Njegovo govorjenje mi je dvignilo pritisk.* (lit. His talking raised my pressure.)

d. *Prekipelo mi je od jeze.* (lit. I brimmed with anger.)

Although different aspects of metaphor can be subject to variation, it is the source domain which is the most productive supply of variation and likely to contain cultural content. The cultural embeddedness of metaphors is expected particularly at the specific level of metaphor, while the generic-level metaphors are more likely to be good candidates for universal or near-universal metaphors. The set of variation criteria proposed by Kövecses (2005: 67-86) is based on three possibilities of cultural variation, i.e. congruent, alternative and preferential metaphors. Congruent metaphors are metaphors which are in congruence with the generic schema but may lead to unique cultural content at lower levels, for example the anger related expressions in Japanese which are grouped around the concept *hara* (lit. 'belly'). Secondly, there are several distinct kinds of alternative conceptualizations across languages, such as the alternative to the common conceptualisation of time, according to which the future is 'in front' and the past 'behind us', in some languages (such as Maori) in which the past is conceptualized as being 'in front' and the future 'behind'. And thirdly, while in many cases two or more languages may share some conceptual metaphors, the speakers of a language may show preference for a particular conceptual metaphor. The analysis of American and Slovenian pre-election discourse revealed another aspect of variation, namely different languages may share the same conceptual metaphor but may differ with respect to the degree of conventionality. An eloquent example of such variation is the ubiquity of metaphorically motivated jargon and terminology related to the metaphor *ELECTIONS ARE A BATTLE*, which was recognized in the American pre-election discourse.

In addition, Kövecses (2005) discusses various aspects of potential variation in metaphor, which does not necessarily occur cross-culturally or cross-linguistically. Given the complexity of the contemporary society, we may, indeed, expect a certain extent of variation also within a particular culture or language. In this respect, several aspects or dimensions of metaphor variation within a culture can be examined, such as the social, cultural, regional, diachronic and individual dimensions.

3. Case Study

The sources of the articles were two major newspapers from the two countries, *Delo* and *Dnevnik* for the Slovenian corpus and the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* for the English corpus respectively. The articles were collected over a period of ten days before and the first day after the elections.

Table 1 shows the structure of the corpus used.

Language/Publications	Number of articles	Average article length in words	Number of words
Slovenian (<i>Delo, Dnevnik</i>)	14	617	8,640
English (<i>New York Times, Washington Post</i>)	31	1378	42,723
TOTAL	45	1995	51,363

Table 1: Corpus structure

Having identified and collected the sources relevant to the analysis, the next stage was to examine the corpus of texts in order to extract all the possible linguistic realisations of a potential conceptual metaphor. However, if we aim to analyse the productivity of a particular metaphor, we need to consider that conceptual metaphors can be realised in a language in many different ways. The most important question at this point is which stretch of language to analyse as a linguistic metaphor. At this stage we continuously need to make choices on the lexical level, being aware that the decision to put a linguistic metaphor on the list of realisations of a conceptualisation is often inevitably based on subjective interpretation. The translation of Slovenian examples into English follows the method of translating for informative purposes which has a constative or descriptive function and is produced to provide information to target language readers (Kocbek 2008).

The next stage was to look for recurring patterns leading to different degrees of systematicity. Systematicity in the form of recurring metaphorical patterns can be seen at various levels. Cameron (1999: 16) has identified three such levels, i.e. local, global and discourse systematicity. Local systematicity refers to the development and realisation of a conceptual metaphor within a particular text, while global systematicity reflects systems and layers of metaphors from a range of discourse types. Discourse systematicity, which is focused on specific discourses, can be placed between these two. In practice this means identifying the related conceptual domains and the cross-domain mappings and, finally, lexicalising conceptual metaphors. The American corpus shows clear systematicity for the metaphor ELECTIONS ARE A BATTLE both at the local level and discourse level. In individual articles analysed as texts, several aspects of the source domain of battle are developed systematically and this systematicity is reflected also in the whole corpus. In addition to this, various degrees of systematicity were identified at specific levels of metaphors, such as the lower-level instantiation ELECTIONS ARE CONQUERING LAND discussed below, which is congruent with the higher-level metaphor. At this stage, the related conceptual domains and the cross-domain mappings are identified and, finally, conceptual metaphors are established. The contrastive analysis stage was carried out both at the linguistic and conceptual level. Although different aspects of metaphor can be

subject to variation, it is the source domain which is the most productive supply of variation and likely to contain cultural content. The last stage is that of interpretation in which inferences are made as to the results of variation between the two corpora.

3.1 Slovenian Elections in Metaphors

The analysis of pre-election texts has shown that the Slovenian elections were characterised by five major metaphoric conceptualisations (1a–e). Conceptualisations of elections as a battle or a contest were the most productive with the highest number of different realisations identified, 62 for the domain of contest, 45 for battle, while there were 20 for journey, 13 for changes of weather and 11 for the domain of show.

(3)

- a. ELECTIONS ARE A CONTEST
- b. ELECTIONS ARE A BATTLE/COMBAT
- c. ELECTIONS ARE A JOURNEY
- d. ELECTIONS ARE WEATHER CHANGES
- e. ELECTIONS ARE A SHOW

Two kinds of variation were identified within the Slovenian corpus with respect to the source domains, i.e. variation in the type of activities and variation in the degree of conventionality of metaphorically used lexical items. While the majority of linguistic metaphors drawing on the source domain of contest could not be said to be related to any specific sports activities (with expressions like *doseči dober rezultat* (lit. achieve a good result), *biti v vodstvu* (lit. be in the leading position), *ubraniti naslov* (lit. defend a title), there were a few references to specific types of sport, such as running (*tek na dolge proge*, lit. long-distance track event) or boxing (*udarci pod pas*, lit. punches below the belt). There were also a few references to team sports, with the expression *ekipa* (lit. sports team) although it was not clear which type of team sport was meant. The combat or battle domain revealed a number of dead metaphors which have become conventionalised as pre-election jargon, such as *predvolilna kampanja* (lit. pre-election campaign) or *predvolilni boj* (lit. pre-election battle) but also some novel expressions, such as *strnitev vrst okrog Janše* (lit. closing ranks around Janša).

The journey domain, which was realised through a number of expressions like *poti do volilcev* (lit. paths to the voters), *zaupanje v našo stranko pomeni glas v pravo smer* (lit. trust in our party means a vote in the right direction), was especially salient at one stage of the election. The metaphor became very productive in reaction to the campaign in which the right-wing presidential candidate Mr. Janez Janša frequently used the metaphor *prava pot* (lit. the right way). Janša's political opponents attacked him for promoting dogmatism in politics, claiming that the metaphor presupposed only one 'right' way and depicted all the others as 'wrong'.

The domain of weather changes was reflected in linguistic metaphors, ranging from conventionalised expressions, such as *volilne napovedi* (lit. election forecasts) to novel and unconventional metaphors, such as (4), in which the words of one of the presidential candidates are reported. The conceptualisation of elections as a show or performance is supported by a number of conventional metaphorical realisations of the concept in which the people involved are seen as actors playing a role or performing in a show, with some examples of less conventional uses of the metaphor, such as seeing elections as an ‘operetta performance’ (*operetna predstava*).

(4)

... prvak SDS ne dvomi, da bo v ponedeljek posijalo rumeno sonce, se pokazalo modro nebo in zavela hladna burja, ki da bo razkadila meglo nad tranzicijskimi močvirji ... (lit. ... the leader of the Slovenian Democratic Party does not doubt that on Monday, the sun will shine, the skies will clear and the Bora will start blowing which will blow away the fog above the transition marshes...)

Besides these major conceptualisations which will be compared with the results of the analysis of the American corpus below, the examination of Slovenian pre-election articles revealed two examples of variation which can be attributed to the individual dimension of variation within a culture. In (5) ‘winning the elections’ is conceptualised as ‘a rich harvest’, supported by the expressions ‘fertile’ and ‘productive’ and partly by the reference to ‘tree’ and ‘roots’. The metaphor invokes the source domain of farming or more generally the countryside and nature. In order to see this as an example of variation in terms of the individual dimension, we need to consider the general context in which it was used. It is important to note that the words are reported to have been used by the President of the People’s Party which has traditionally catered for and been supported by farmers and generally the rural population. Examples (6 a-b) point to another instance of variation related to the individual dimension but in this case it was the author of the article to attribute the metaphor to a particular individual, namely the Minister of Defence, who ‘has to know how to defend himself’ in the pre-election campaign.

(5)

Predsednik SLS ... pričakuje bogato žetev, in verjame, da bo letošnje leto za stranko rodovitno in plodno... da je stranka kot drevo, ki ima globoke korenine ... (lit. The president of the Slovenian People's Party ... expects a rich harvest and believes that the coming year will be fertile and productive ... that the party is like a tree with deep roots...)

(6)

a. ... je bil kot minister za obrambo ves čas tarča napadov... (lit. ... as the Minister of Defence he was the target of numerous attacks...)

b. ... minister za obrambo se mora znati dobro braniti (... the Minister of Defence has to know how to successfully defend himself ...)

3.2 American Elections in Metaphors

The analysis of the American corpus has revealed that the elections in 2008 were predominantly conceptualised as combat or battle with 121 linguistic metaphors identified, contest (76), journey (21), gambling (14), travelling by sea (6), and show (6).

In the case of the conceptual metaphor ELECTIONS ARE A BATTLE, the linguistic realisations of metaphors identified suggest a prototypical battle with lexical items, such as 'fight', 'battle', 'conquer', 'front', 'victory', 'defeat' and others. In addition to these, numerous unconventional metaphorical entailments were identified, pointing to specific forms of fighting, such as tribal fights in (7a), the French revolution in (7b), crusades in (7c) and several others.

- (7)
- a. ... the tribe's denser concentration are along the ideological Interstate ...
 - b. ... the state has long been a bastion of cultural conservatism ...
 - c. ... his crusade for campaign finance reform ...

The results also suggest that a specific metaphorically motivated jargon was developed in (American) English which conceptualises pre-election activities as a battle or fighting (see Table 2 below). In addition, the analysis revealed that certain aspects of the source domain BATTLE were made more prominent than others. A good example of this type of variation is the lower-level conceptual metaphor ELECTIONS ARE CONQUERING LAND which was found mainly in the American corpus. The examples below show that the metaphor is structured very systematically.

- (8)
- a. ... conceding Pennsylvania two weeks before the election ...
 - b. ... we have ground to make up, but we believe we can make it up ...
 - c. ... the shrinking electoral map ...
 - d. ... Obama in position to grab Colorado ...
 - e. ... incursions into Republican territory ...
 - f. ... Obama also is making a vigorous push in Florida ...

Similarly to the domain of battle or combat, the conceptualisation of election as a contest was realised in a number of linguistic metaphors which may be related to various types of sports with conventional expressions like 'win', 'lose', 'be/remain ahead', 'have a lead', 'be behind', etc. On the other hand, the metaphor showed some generative power with a number of novel realisations, such as (13) and (14). Among more explicit areas of contest, running was the most common, with highly conventionalised metaphors such as 'running mate', which has entered election terminology, to more novel expressions, such as (9). Another specific area of contest is reflected in the common use of the lexical item 'race', which in most cases did not suggest an explicit kind of race. This is accentuated by the few cases in which the type of sports or contest was made evident, such as horse-racing in (10), sailing (11) and car racing in (12).

(9)
... Barack Obama and John McCain sprinted through a dwindling number of battleground states ...

(10)
... running neck and neck with his Republican rival ...

(11)
... in other races, voters might be confused about which banner a candidate is even sailing under ...

(12)
... nine days is a long time, so we're just going to step upon the gas ...

(13)
... he will hopscotch through Pennsylvania

(14)
... he had pinballed between Obama and McCain ...

The journey metaphor, for which a number of more or less conventional expressions were identified, such as (15), was perhaps made more prominent in the days after the elections, which were characterised by President Obama's inauguration speech, in which he uses the journey domain very explicitly, with expressions like 'the road ahead' and 'a steep climb'. The deep-rootedness of the domain of journey in American political discourse was further corroborated when former President George Bush congratulated Obama by saying 'You are about to go on one of the great journeys of life. Congratulations and go enjoy yourself'.

The other three conceptual metaphors identified in the corpus of articles, i.e. elections as a sea voyage as in (16), as gambling in (17) and as a show in (18) were likewise realised on the linguistic level by various metaphorical expressions which revealed different degrees of conventionality of the metaphors, from metaphorically motivated pre-election terminology (for example the gambling expression 'toss-up' in 'toss-up state') to live metaphors, such as the ones below.

(15)
... a decade long odyssey for McCain ...

(16)
... we have a righteous wind at our back ...

(17)
... McCain remains very much in the game ...

(18)
... no one had a script for the arrival of Sarah Palin onto the national stage ...

Another recurrent pattern identified in the corpus conceptualised presidential candidates as messiahs. It is worth noting that although during the elections many people saw in Barack Obama a messiah-like figure, the majority of

linguistic metaphors found in the corpus referred to McCain as the messiah as is evident from the examples below:

(19)

- a. ... true believers in McCain flock to Pa ...
- b. ... McCain believers showed up en masse...
- c. ... McCain's political resuscitation...
- d. ... McCain's political resurrection
- e. ... the senator became ubiquitous...
- f. ... McCain has more time to make his comeback ...

In addition, the American corpus revealed a number of metaphors which were systematically attributed to the two presidential candidates. John McCain was depicted as a maverick, a metaphor disseminated by his own campaign, and Bush's clone, which was promoted by his opponents. Barack Obama was portrayed as a communist and during the last days of the campaign as a player who is so confident that he will win that he does not see that he might actually lose. This is reflected in example (20) which is an analogy to Obama's campaign.

(20)

... few spectacles are more satisfying than seeing a football player strutting toward the end zone, only to be tackled out of nowhere at the 1-yard line, causing a humiliating fumble...

With respect to the two presidential candidates the corpus also revealed two interesting examples of variation which can be attributed to Kövecses' individual dimension. Example (21) refers to McCain and suggests metaphorically that McCain is a 'military guy', while example (22) sees Barack Obama as a lawyer giving his 'closing argument'. Now it is clear that the metaphors make sense precisely because McCain has a military career and Obama is a lawyer by profession. What makes these examples metaphorical is the fact that in the given context they are not actually exercising their profession. Their professions are intentionally chosen as source domains in the metaphor.

(21)

... he's a military guy, and you're supposed to salute the guy ahead of you on the command chart ...

(22)

... Barack Obama gave his 'closing argument' for the campaign at a rally in this battleground state...

3.3 Contrastive Analysis

Examining the results of the analysis contrastively we can see that both the Slovenian and American elections of 2008 were predominantly conceptualised by the source domains of combat or battle, contest and journey. By far the most productive metaphor in the American corpus was ELECTIONS ARE A BATTLE, while in the Slovenian corpus the metaphor ELECTIONS ARE A CONTEST showed more generative power, which can

lead to the conclusion that (American) English shows a certain preference for conceptualising elections as a combat, while in Slovenian elections are seen more as a contest. The preference for the source domain of combat in (American) English is further reinforced by the conventionality of the metaphor (discussed below) and the systematicity of the metaphor at lower levels, as in the metaphor ELECTIONS ARE CONQUERING LAND, which was identified in the American corpus.

An instance of a congruent metaphor can be seen in the source domain team sports in the Slovenian corpus; while both discourses conceptualise elections as a contest or sport, reference to team sports was found only in the Slovenian corpus. On the other hand, the conceptual metaphor THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IS A MESSIAH could be seen as an alternative conceptualisation as it was found primarily in the American corpus.

There is another aspect of variation which could be added to Kövecses' list, namely different languages may share the same conceptual metaphor but may differ with respect to the degree of conventionality. An eloquent example of such variation is the ubiquity of metaphorically motivated jargon and terminology related to the metaphor ELECTIONS ARE A BATTLE, which was recognized in the American pre-election discourse. While expressions such as 'campaign', 'battleground state', 'camp', 'column', 'stronghold', 'allies', and 'blitz' all clearly belong to the domain of battle, their role and importance in the context of elections varies considerably. For example, today the expression 'campaign' clearly belongs to election terminology, referring to organised pre-election activities. This means we hardly see it as a metaphor in the first place, its etymology (from Italian *campagna* meaning 'field' or 'military operation') largely forgotten. From a diachronic perspective we can argue that as it is a dead metaphor, it has acquired terminological status. On the other hand, the word 'camp' in the context of elections has not lost all its metaphorical power as we can still recognise it as a metaphor. This expression is frequently used for organisation units of a political party during elections, which means that its meaning has become conventionalised. In this case, we could argue that the word 'camp' belongs to metaphorically motivated pre-election jargon. However, the corpus revealed many other, less conventional metaphors related to the source domain of combat, such as 'long march on the White House', which is clearly a live or active metaphor as its interpretation requires a wider context.

Table 2 shows a number of key lexical items which belong to the battle domain and their systematic use in the pre-election context. While several of these lexical items were identified in both languages, such as the word 'battle' (*bitka*), 'attack' (*napad*), 'base' (*baza*), it is also clear that the English set is the largest (the items in brackets are translation equivalents which were not actually found in Slovenian) and the most systematically organised.

Elections domain	English	Slovenian
a series of pre-election activities	campaign	<i>kampanja</i>
pre-election activities	battle, fight	<i>bitka, boj</i>
an increased intensity of the pre-election activities	attack	<i>napad</i>
a group of people supporting the same candidate	camp	<i>tabor</i>
centre of election organisational unit	headquarters	<i>(štab)</i>
supporter	ally	<i>(zaveznik)</i>
group of supporters	base	<i>baza</i>
assistant	aide	<i>(pribočnik, adjutant)</i>
gather people to take part in pre-election activities	mobilize	<i>mobilizirati</i>
group of voters	column	<i>(kolona)</i>
place with a high number of supporters	stronghold	<i>(oporišče)</i>
intensive pre-election activity	blitz	<i>(blitzkrieg)</i>
plan for gaining the majority of votes in the elections	strategy	<i>strategija</i>
state where both candidates try to win the majority	battleground	<i>(bojišče)</i>
a specific pre-election activity	operation	<i>(operacija)</i>
exposed pre-election activities	front line	<i>(bojna linija)</i>

Table 2: Cross-domain mappings in the metaphor ELECTIONS ARE A BATTLE

This claim is further reinforced by the fact that in the Slovenian corpus a number of key lexical items from the military domain were used in inverted

commas (23 a-c), pointing to the conclusion that their meanings were regarded as unconventional in the respective languages.

(23)

- a. ... v tej predvolilni 'vojni'... (lit. ... in this pre-election 'war'...)
- b. ... 'preboj' manjših strank ... (lit. ... a 'breakthrough' of smaller parties ...)
- c. ... sta 'bila boj' z Gregorjem Golubičem (lit. ... was 'fighting a battle' with Gregor Golubič ...)

Another aspect of metaphor which supports the claim that some metaphors form the military domain are deeply entrenched in the American election discourse is reflected in the following examples in which the military source domain is used both metaphorically and literally:

(24)

- a. Within hours of the Russian **attack** on Georgia in August, Mr. McCain was on the phone to his foreign policy advisers, seeking to **calibrate** the right response. It was a critical moment for a man who has surrounded himself with members of both **warring camps** in the Republican Party.
- b. But when pressed, Mr. Obama's **aides** said that he would be hesitant to commit American **ground troops**, who are in short supply because of the demands of **Iraq and Afghanistan**.

The three highlighted expressions in (24a) are all usually associated with the source domain of war. While 'attack' is a literal reference to a military operation, 'calibrate' and 'warring camps' are used metaphorically; the former as part of an idiomatic expression 'calibrate a response' and the latter as a metaphorically motivated pre-election jargon term. Similarly, in (24b) the expression 'aides' is only a metaphorically used pre-election term and, unlike 'ground troops', has nothing to do with real wars. The question is how is it possible to make sense of the message in this interweaving of the literal and the metaphorical. An answer to this questions can be found in the role the metaphor ELECTIONS ARE A BATTLE plays in the American pre-election discourse which has become highly conventionalised both at the conceptual and linguistic level. I would like to argue that even without the help of inverted commas, an average American reader will have no difficulties in telling the literal from the metaphorical battle.

3.4 Interpretation

The case study above has shown that while there is a high degree of universality in the way elections are conceptualised in the two cultures in question, there are also important variations between the languages which have cultural implications. One possible interpretation for the systematicity and higher degree of conventionality of the military domain in the English corpus compared to the Slovenian one can be found in the differences between the respective elective systems as well as the political environment in general. If we understand discourse from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis as 'an element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements' (Fairclough 2003: 3), then we can assume that the social, in our case political, context will also influence the choice of metaphor.

In the case of the Slovenian and American political systems, three differences are worth mentioning, namely the number of major political parties, the role of the president of the state and the presidential elections. The political party system in the United States is a traditional two-party system with the Democrats and Republicans as dominant parties, while present-day Slovenia is characterized by a multi-party system in which parties usually form a coalition before the elections. We can assume that this will be reflected in pre-election discourse and in the way people conceptualize elections. The differences between the two systems were evident also from the metaphors used; for example, in the Slovenian corpus the conceptualisation of elections as sports activities suggested also team sports, while the source domains used with reference to American elections were mostly related to typical individual sports (e.g. running, horse races or car races).

Secondly, in Slovenia the president of state, who is elected by popular vote, has a mainly advisory and ceremonial function, while the executive and administrative authority is in the hands of the prime minister. In the USA, the role of president is much more crucial as he/she is both head of state and government. The significance of the presidential function is reflected in a number of national symbols related to this position. One of them is the very residence of the president, the White House, as a symbol of the USA. Election metaphors, such as 'long march on the White House' and 'conquer the White House' make perfect sense in the American context, while they would sound rather bizarre with reference to elections in Slovenia where the residence of the president of state is a flat in an apartment building. The differences in the role of the president of state are related with the election system and the importance of the presidential elections in the USA.

The systematicity of metaphor use identified in the American corpus is a clear reflection of the election system, in which 'battleground states' have to 'be conquered' in order for the candidate to win the elections. We may conclude that the conceptualisation of elections in military terms is more deeply-rooted in the American mindset and political culture. This is further substantiated by the well-established election jargon and terminology identified in the American corpus which is metaphorically motivated by the domain of fighting and war. Analysing metaphors in business discourse in which the military domain also appears to be prevailing, Koller (2006: 247) argues that

... the question of how such terms as *campaign*, *launch* or *target* have come to be used in business discourse in the first place is a crucial one. After all, the very dominant presence of such terms from the military domain in business discourse is by no means coincidental. While the lexemes in questions are certainly not consciously employed by all speakers in every single instance, their presence is still significant as it ties in perfectly with that of other lemmas from the war domain that are perceived as more metaphoric, for example *blitz* or *troops*.

4. Conclusion

Metaphors are complex phenomena and to account for all the different aspects of their nature it is worth applying different approaches to metaphor research. The methodology used in this paper is to work at the intersection of

the conceptual theory of metaphor and critical discourse analysis from a cross-linguistic perspective. It has been suggested that valuable methodological tools for researching metaphors in discourse can be gained by combining these different approaches.

The analysis of metaphors in American and Slovenian elections has shown variations between the two languages which have cultural implications. I have tried to argue that the variations identified reflect different conceptions of this social phenomenon in the minds of the speakers of the two languages. A conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis is that while the source domains related to the conceptualisation of elections are largely overlapping, the fact that the two languages differ in the degree of conventionalisation of metaphors used or the fact that there are degrees of preferences for a certain conceptual domain indicate that there are differences in the way speakers of the languages analysed perceive elections.

Notes

- ¹ Kövecses (2002) reports that metaphorical expressions corresponding to this conceptual metaphor have been found in a number of unrelated languages, such as English, Hungarian, Japanese, Woof and others.

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