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METAPHOR AND METONYMY IN ENGLISH FOR POLITICS (ESP) COURSE: STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIONS AND PRACTICES

Summary. The versatile research carried out in political linguistics has revealed the peculiarities of political texts thereby opening vast possibilities for a fruitful application of the findings to the curriculum of an ESP course of English for Politics corresponding to C1/C2 level of CEFR (2001). The present study analyses the knowledge and experience of students of political science in identifying, using and analyzing metaphor and metonymy in political discourse in the English language. Methodologically, the study is a small scale analysis carried out with the use of a questionnaire delivered to 55 students, where students are asked to answer questions with respect to their general knowledge and understanding of the use of metaphor and metonymy. They are further asked to identify metaphorical and metonymical expressions in a piece of political discourse. Finally, they are requested to express their opinion about the role of metaphor and metonymy in the creation of political texts. The results show that students demonstrate quite good theoretical knowledge of figurative language, namely metaphor and metonymy, however, their discourse analytical skills are rather poor. This conclusion can be made on the basis of students answer to the self-evaluative questions placed to them and on the basis of the given practical task.

Keywords: English for specific purpose (ESP), English for politics, political discourse, metaphor, metonymy.

Introduction

Developing a curriculum for University courses of English for specific purposes (ESP) is a challenging task given that they have to focus on a number of aims. Preparing a graduate for successful communication in the global market or in the fields of international science and research is indeed the main goal. Nevertheless, the main goal can only be reached if the supporting ones are achieved. Namely, an ESP course, as, for instance, *Legal English*, *Business English*, etc. is especially sensitive to the specific linguistic and communicative needs related to

the specialized discourse of the relevant fields and that is what the students have to master. In addition, as a university ESP course, it has to attend to the specific aspects and functions of academic discourse such as paper writing or presentation making. As indicated by Morrow (2004), learning a language entails "a range of different competences" at linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic levels. Finally, in order to achieve those two aims an ESP course has to incorporate various aspects of general English which students had to gain before undertaking an ESP course and consolidate while taking it.

In view of the observations above, ESP courses at Vytautas Magnus University (VMU hereafter) are oriented towards high level of instruction corresponding to C1/C2 of *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (2001; CEFR hereafter). They are offered to students along with all the spectrum of CEFR levels to reach the competence necessary for ESP studies. Levels A1 to B2 are designed for the development of general English competence, whereas courses of C1 are aimed at the advancement of specific communicative skills, as, for instance, listening, notetaking or brushing up grammar in particular communicative contexts. The object of the present paper is *English for Politics*, namely one of ESP courses taught at VMU since 2007 and designed particularly for students of the Faculty of Politics and Diplomacy. The aim of the study is to examine students' enrolled in *English for Politics* awareness of the role of **metaphor** and **metonymy** in understanding and producing political texts. It is also aimed at investigating students' experience and capacity to identify metaphorical and metonymical expressions in a piece of political discourse.

Theoretical framework

Metaphor and metonymy in political discourse analysis

Chilton and Schäffner suggest metaphor to be "a crucial conceptual and semantic mechanism in the production of political meaning" (1997, p. 221). They distinguish between two interrelated frameworks – a cognitive approach and an interactive approach – in the analysis of political metaphors. Within the former framework, metaphor is seen as a cognitive device to conceptualize and communicate the possibly problematic issues of reality. Within the latter framework, metaphor is tackled as a linguistic means to avoid direct "face-threatening and over-revealing" communication (Chilton and Schäffner, 1997, p. 222).

Research on political metaphor from a cognitive perspective is best represented in Lakoff's studies (1992, 1996, 2003). In his articles on the use, misuse and abuse of metaphor to justify the 1991 and the 2003 Gulf wars, Lakoff (1992, 2003; cf. Gibbs, 1994) shows how the initially neither good nor bad metaphorical thought can be materialized in metaphors that can kill. This happens when metaphorical discourse "hides reality in a harmful way" (G. Lakoff, 1992, p. 463, cf. G. Lakoff, 2003) and justifies infliction of pain, death and starvation which are

non-metaphorical and very much real. In American war discourse, G. Lakoff accentuates such metaphorical mappings as 'war as politics', 'politics as business', 'state-as-person', 'war as violent crime', 'war as a competitive game', etc. For example, the 'politics as business' metaphor entails the "cost-benefit" calculation whereby a war is determined by the "gains" from going to war outweighing its "costs" (G. Lakoff, 1992, p. 464). In the case of 'state-as-person', the metaphor highlights the unity of national interest and hides the heterogeneity of society where different groups of people are effected differently by the 'gains' and 'costs' of the war. In the conclusion of the first article, G. Lakoff expresses his concern about "the ignorance" and "the failure" to see what metaphors hide and if new, "more benign", metaphors could be introduced (1992, p. 481). In the conclusion of the second article, he emphasizes that, even though his analysis will not stop the war, what matters is awareness: "being able to articulate what is going on can change what is going on – at least in the long run" (G. Lakoff, 2003).

More frequently, however, research on political metaphor takes a more interactive or pragmatic perspective (Charteris-Black, 2005; Chilton and Ilyin, 1993; Chilton and Schäffner, 1997; Obeng, 1997; Partington, 2003; Wilson, 1990). Here, metaphor is viewed as a source of communicative dynamics by regulating the balance between implicitness and explicitness. On the one hand, metaphor serves "to lubricate the friction of contact" leaving space for negotiation (Chilton and Ilyin, 1993, p. 9). On the other hand, it enhances the force of one's discourse "in the attack on political opponents, the presentation of policies or the legitimization of political power" (van Dijk, 1997, p. 24; cf. Fairclough, 2001, 2003). For example, the 'common European house' metaphor (Chilton and Ilyin, 1993, p. 7), introduced by Gorbachev in 1985, became a powerful communicative tool in the international politics at the end of the 1980s.

In their analysis, Chilton and Ilyin (1993) discuss how the 'common European house' metaphor is used by the soviet authorities to present their 'new thinking'. In addition, they show how the metaphor is exploited by the leaders of Western European countries to address the problem of the political divisions in the contemporary Europe. For instance, after conceptualizing Europe as a common house (and the prototypical Russian house is a block of flats), Gorbachev places the Soviet Union in one of these flats and thereby accentuates its right to be among the rest of Europeans. By exploiting the main feature of metaphorical mapping, namely that "if x is metaphorized as house, x can be understood as having metaphorical doors, metaphorical windows, metaphorical walls, etc." (Chilton and Ilyin, 1993, p. 11), Western European political leaders, however, make the common house metaphor serve their own political goals:

Von Weizsäcker: It is a reference point which helps us visualize the way things should be arranged in this common European home, specifically, the extent to which the apartments in it will be accessible for reciprocal visits.

Gorbachev: You are quite right. But not everyone may like receiving night- time visitors.

Von Weizsäcker: We also aren't especially pleased to have a deep trench passing through a common living-room (Chilton and Ilyin, 1993, p. 17; taken from Gorbachev, 1988).

As Chilton and Ilyin comment, through a skilful metaphorical entailment, in his first turn, the German President initiates the discussion of the very sensitive matter of the post-war division of Germany. In the next turn, he re-specifies the source domain of the metaphor turning from the Russian prototypical house – a block of flats – to the German prototypical house – a single-family house. With this move, von Weizsäcker conveys that the border between the two German states is not a wall between two flats, as Gorbachev implies, and that “the frontier simply runs through the middle of the main room of a *Haus* (not between *kvartiry* of a *dom*)” (Chilton and Ilyin, 1993, p. 17).

Conceptualization of metaphor and metonymy in teaching English for Politics

In this study the conceptualization of *metaphor* and *metonymy* is based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal theory where *metaphor* is defined as experiencing and understanding one kind of thing in terms of another. *Metonymy* is seen as referring to one kind of thing through another one related to the former. Conceptual metaphor and metonymy are considered to be mental constructs with metaphorical or metonymical linguistic expressions as one way of their realization. For instance, the conceptual metaphor of ARGUMENT IS WAR has *I defended my arguments* as one of its linguistic realizations. The conceptual metonymy A PART STANDS FOR THE WHOLE has a linguistic realization of *We need some new faces around here*. As seen from the two examples, conceptual metaphor expresses a two-domain conceptual mapping and serves an explanatory function built on similarity, whereas metonymy expresses a one-domain conceptual mapping and serves a referential function built on connection.

As Lakoff and Johnson observe, in metaphorical or metonymical thinking, one aspect of a concept is highlighted while some other can be hidden at the same time. For example, through the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR one can concentrate on attacking the opponent and “lose sight of the cooperative aspects of arguing” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 10). Due to the property of metaphorical use to highlight and to hide, metaphor and metonymy can be strategically exploited especially in political discourse. As Wilson suggests, they can help “in arousing emotions and reinforcing particular perspectives” as well as result in eliciting “absurd images which can then be employed for the purposes of ridiculing one's opponent” (1990, p. 104). In Wilson's approach, metaphor is tackled as a pragmatic phenomenon.

Both *metaphors* and *metonymies* can also be evaluated on a *scale of conventionality* depending on how much original or conventional they are (Kövecses,

2002; Gibbs, 1994; Janicki, 1999, 2006). For Kövecses, conventional is an attribute to describe those metaphors and metonymies that could be seen as rather “well established and well entrenched” in everyday use (2002, p. 30). As Gibbs points out, however, “even words that appear to be classic examples of dead metaphors often have vital metaphorical roots” (1994, p. 276) or “what is conventional and fixed need not be dead” (1994, p. 277). He considers most proverbs as cases of metaphorical or metonymical mapping whereby abstract problematic situations are understood in terms of more concrete physical images; for instance, “the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence” (Gibbs, 1994, p. 309). Wilson (1990) aims at describing the relative originality of metaphors from a pragmatic perspective. For him, a metaphor could be assigned a place on the continuum from the relatively *dead* to the relatively *live* cases depending on its potential to generate stronger or weaker implicatures (Wilson, 1990, p. 115). Given the strategic nature of political discourse, one can expect interesting revitalizations of some *dead* or conventional metaphorical uses. For example, the old political cliché *the Asian tiger* used to refer to the fast growing Asian economies was renewed as *the Baltic tiger* in reference to the economic progress of Lithuania in 2003. Moreover, its metaphorical potential was used in the following redefinition by the Lithuanian parliamentary opposition: “the Baltic tiger or just a kitten?” (a video recording of a press briefing at the Lithuanian Parliament, October 8, 2003).

Methodology

The study is a small scale analysis with the combination of qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches. It was carried out in the years 2008-2009 as a questionnaire-based survey involving 55 students as respondents. The respondents were asked questions with respect to their general knowledge of the understanding and the use of metaphor and metonymy in political contexts, they were further requested to identify metaphorical and metonymical expressions in a piece of political discourse and they were finally requested to express their opinion about the role of metaphor and metonymy in the creation of political texts.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1 demonstrates students’ self-evaluation with regard to their theoretical knowledge of metaphor and metonymy as well as their experience in practical identification and use of metaphor and metonymy in political text. It pertains to delivering students answers to the following five questions presented to them in the questionnaire of the research:

1. Have you ever heard of the term metaphor?
2. Have you ever heard of the term metonymy?

3. Do you think political analysts need to understand the use of metaphor and metonymy?
4. Do you think you can identify metaphor and metonymy in political texts?
5. Do you think you can analyze the use of metaphor and metonymy in political texts?

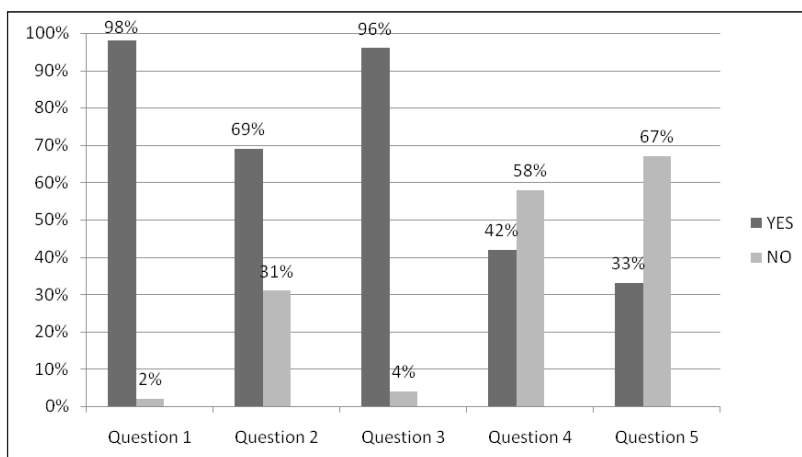


Figure 1. Students' theoretical and practical knowledge of metaphor and metonymy

As shown in Figure 1, in terms of the students' answers the five questions can be split into two groups: a group where the number of the positive answers exceeds that of the negative and a group where the negative answers are more abundant than the positive ones. The first group includes answers to the first three questions (1-3), namely to those questions where the students are asked about their very primary theoretical knowledge of metaphor and metonymy and their awareness with respect to the use of these mental structures. The other group consists of two questions where the students have to evaluate their own skills of identifying and analyzing metaphor and metonymy in political texts (4-5).

On the basis of the obtained results, it can be concluded that almost all students have heard of the term metaphor and believe that it is of high importance for political figures to understand how metaphorical and metonymical thought functions in political discourse (questions 1 and 3). In terms of metonymy (question 2), the results are slightly different. Despite the larger number of positive answers, the number of negative answers is much more considerable here: almost one third of students have never heard of metonymy at all. Another significant conclusion that can be made relates to the two remaining questions where the negative answers exceed the positive ones. In contrast to the first three questions,

questions (4) and (5) deal with the application of practical skills of discourse analysis rather than with the exposition of theoretical knowledge. Given that the ratio of positive and negative answers in question (4) is 42% to 58% and the ratio in question (5) is 33% to 67%, a tendency can be observed that the number of negative answers is increasing when the question refers to an increased necessity to adhere to the discourse analytic process.

Further in the questionnaire the students were given two extracts of political discourse taken from the Hansard of the British House of Commons (2004) and were asked to identify examples of metaphor and metonymy in the given text. They were asked to underline metaphor with a single line and to underline metonymy using a double line. The two extracts are as follows:

Does the Secretary of State agree that the IMC now has a vital and continuing role to play in helping to get the gun out of Northern Ireland politics, and that those politicians who have any influence over the paramilitaries must now urge them to disarm and to use only the ballot box, and not the bullet, to achieve social and political change?

Does it not follow, therefore, that any return to the road map must begin with the ending of terrorist violence and the start of the withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territory, but also with the resumption of the dialogue between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority that was derailed by violence last July?

As follows from the conceptualization of metaphor and metonymy presented above, metaphorical and metonymical thought is a continuum from the dead metaphors and metonymies to the most original and poetic ones. Therefore, it is a matter of interpretation to pinpoint which expressions can be attributed to the examples of metaphor and metonymy in the given abstracts. Nevertheless, the most prototypical cases which should have received some consideration on the part of the students are presented in Table 1 along with the numbers of marked cases in the students questionnaires. In Table 1, the linguistic manifestations of metaphor are marked by the single line, while the examples of metonymy are indicated with the double line. The second and the third columns present the numbers of students who successfully recognized the given cases as a metaphor or as a metonymy. The last column delivers numbers of questionnaires where this particular use of metaphor and metonymy was not indicated at all. The examples, which are presented in the first column, are put in the descending order of their successful indication by the students.

Table 1

	Marked as metaphor	Marked as metonymy	Not marked
return to the road map	33	5	17
the gun	32	5	18
the ballot box	21	14	20
the bullet	15	9	31
role to play	6	2	47
derailed	3	1	51
Israel	0	1	54

As it follows from Table 1, "return to the road map" is the metaphor most successfully dealt with by the students: it was marked by 38 students with 33 students successfully indicating it as a metaphor. "The gun" shows a very similar result with 37 cases of indication in the questionnaires, however, 32 of them marked it as a metaphor, while a clear one-domain mapping shows it to be a metonymy: the gun stands for the military activities. The same tendency is preserved in case of two other metonymies "the ballot box" and "the bullet": more students consider these expressions to be examples of metaphor rather than metonymy. The remaining examples receive overall little attention with "Israel" being indicated as a metonymy only in one of the 55 questionnaires.

In view of large numbers in the last column of Table 1, which shows cases of student's failure to identify metaphorical or metonymical usage at all, it can be assumed that students lack the very basic pragmatic competence necessary for the analysis of political texts. With regard to political metaphor and metonymy, students' skills can be evaluated as barely adequate to the very basic cognitive tasks of recognition and identification, whereas the cognitive demands for political analysts capable to deal with texts of international politics are far and away higher. The gap of pragmatic competence revealed in the study can only be filled with a consistent step-by-step teaching procedure starting with the development of students' aptitude for the comprehension of metaphor and metonymy as mental constructs. Further, thorough improvement of students' skills in distinguishing figurative use within a political text and most importantly identifying its effect on the creation of meaning needs to take place. Finally, the categories of metaphor and metonymy have to be included in the most cognitively challenging activities of creating one's own texts which could take the form of an analytic research paper, presentations or other pieces of written and oral production.

Conclusions

The literature on political linguistics and political discourse analysis that has been considered in the present study shows the importance of these fields for teaching political thinking and communication. This is also highly attributable to teaching English for the students of politics to make their language-instruction effective

and relevant to their field of studies and future careers. The results of the case study aimed at investigating the importance of conceptual metaphor and metonymy in the study of English for politics show that students appear to demonstrate quite good theoretical knowledge of figurative language, namely metaphor and metonymy, however, their discourse analytical skills are rather poor. This conclusion can be made on the basis of students answer to the self-evaluative questions placed to them and on the basis of the given practical task.

The results of the study indicate clear perspectives of what an ESP course designed for students of politics has to entail as to satisfy the needs of a future political analyst or researcher who would be apt to succeed at international level. Such a course would apply a multifaceted approach towards the development of communicative competence with special attention paid to pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects. Moreover, it would be aimed at the development of students' competences through a wide spectrum of cognitive activities reaching the most challenging level. By sketching out the guidelines of how the teaching of metaphor and metonymy should be enhanced in an ESP course of English for Politics, the study has also revealed the need to further raise questions as to what methodological decisions in teaching figurative language can be made, how the progress in pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence should be attuned with the development of specialized vocabulary, which is very often regarded as the core of ESP courses, and other numerous questions that have not been considered in the present study.

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METAFORA IR METONIMIJA MOKANT POLITIKOS ANGLŲ KALBOS: STUDENTŲ POŽIŪRIO IR PRAKTINIO TAIKYMO ANALIZĖ

Santrauka. Išsamūs daugiakrypčiai moksliniai tyrimai politinės lingvistikos srityje atskleidė politinių tekstų ypatumus ir atvėrė plačias galimybes produktyviai pritaikyti tyrimų rezultatus specialiosios (ESP) politinės anglų kalbos studijų dalyko, kuris atitinka Bendrųjų Europos Kalbų metmenų (2001) C1/C2 lygį, mokymo procese. Pateiktas tiriamasis darbas analizuoja politinių mokslų studentų žinias ir patirtį atpažįstant, naudojant ir nagrinėjant metaforą ir metonimiją politiniuose tekstuose anglų kalba. Metodologiniu požiūriu šis tyrimas yra mažos apimties analizė, atlikta naudojantis klausimynu, kuris buvo pateiktas 55 studentams. Šiame klausimyne studentų buvo paprašyta atsakyti į klausimus pagal savo bendrąsias žinias ir supratimą apie metaforos ir metonimijos naudojimą. Vėliau buvo paprašyta atpažinti metaforinius ir metoniminius posakius politiniame tekste. Galiausiai jie turėjo išreikšti savo nuomonę apie metaforos ir metonimijos vaidmenį kuriant politinius tekstus. Rezultatai rodo, jog studentai turi gana neblogų teorinių perkeltinės kalbos žinių, susijusių būtent su metafora ir metonimija, bet jų gebėjimai analizuoti tekstą gana menki. Šią išvadą galima daryti remiantis studentų atsakymais į įsivertinimo klausimus. Ją patvirtina ir praktinės užduoties rezultatai. Iš jų paaiškėjo, kad paskaitose vertėtų daugiau dėmesio skirti lingvistinio teksto analizei. Be to, tyrimas leidžia numatyti gaires, kaip turėtų būti sudaromas specialiosios politinės anglų kalbos kursas studentams, kad atitiktų politikos analitikams ir tyrėjams keliamus reikalavimus tarptautiniu lygiu.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: specialioji anglų kalba (ESP), politinė anglų kalba, politinis tekstas (diskursas), metafora, metonimija.