

TOPIC-TRIGGERED METAPHORS IN NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

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Abstract: The paper deals with metonymy based metaphors in sports newspaper headlines. These are mainly novel, unconventional metaphors, in which the choice of a metaphorical source domain is triggered by some aspects of the target domain. We deal with such metaphors where the NICKNAME of a sports club (animal- or bird-related) metonymically stands for the SPORTS CLUB, when the salient attributes of animals and birds are mapped onto the players. We show how these creative metaphors for VICTORY (eating the opponent, taming the opponent, flying, etc.) and DEFEAT (losing the wings, falling, etc.) are based on some conventional conceptual metaphors.

Key words: Conceptual Metaphor Theory, topic-triggered metaphors, newspaper headlines, sports discourse.

1. Introduction

This article is set within a wider theoretical framework of Cognitive Linguistics, more precisely Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff and Turner 1989) and Conceptual Metonymy Theory (Radden and Kövecses 1999; Radden 2000; Barcelona 2000), in which metaphor and metonymy are not regarded just as a textual decoration which contributes to the expressiveness of the text, and in which language, seen from a cognitive perspective, is treated merely as their superficial, linguistic realisation. As “metaphor and metonymy often ‘meet’ at conceptual and linguistic crossroads” (Barcelona 2000: 1), a strict difference between them cannot be drawn easily. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) define *metaphor* as understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another or as a partial mapping or set of correspondences between two conceptual domains, which they term the source and the target domains. *Metonymy*, on the other hand, is understood as a conceptual projection whereby one domain is partially understood in terms of another domain included in the same experiential domain (Barcelona 2000). Many authors claim that all metaphors are essentially metonymically-based (see e.g. Barcelona 2000; Radden and Kövecses 1999; etc.). A metonymy-based metaphor is defined as “a mapping involving two conceptual domains which are grounded in, or can be tracked to, one conceptual domain.” (Radden 2000: 93). In order to explain the kinds of relationships between domains which could form a basis for metonymy, and indirectly for metaphor as well, Radden and Kövecses (1999) give a detailed list of conceptual relationships which may give rise to metonymy, which we will use here to explain the types of metonymies and metaphors in sports newspaper headlines.

In this paper an attempt will be made to explain the multilayered nature of sports newspaper headlines via their metonymic and metaphorical meanings. We will deal

with metonymy based, innovative, unconventional metaphors in sports discourse which are, despite their novelty, based on several conventional conceptual metaphors. More specifically, we will deal with the ways VICTORY and DEFEAT in sports competition are conceptualised in sports newspaper headlines. The main focus will be on one aspect of headlines' metaphoricity in Serbian sports newspapers – the metonymy based metaphoricity, resulting from a characteristic communicative situation in which the sports discourse is created. The processes of metonymisation and metaphorisation will be illustrated by examples of headlines, possible motives for this kind of expression will be discussed, and evidence will be offered for the fact that even creative, unconventional metaphors are based on several conventional conceptual metaphors.

The data collection for this research consists of 120 examples of headlines excerpted from a Serbian sports daily, *Sportski žurnal*, published in the period between 15 October and 15 December 2008. The main criterion for the choice of headlines were the observed processes of metaphorisation or metonymisation in the headline text. All the headlines in this paper will be quoted in Serbian and their translation into English will be given as well.

2. The function of headlines in newspaper articles

Due to their attractiveness and eye-catching properties, headlines in media discourse have been frequently analysed (see e.g. Dor 2003; Feyaerts and Brone 2005; Ifantidou 2009; etc.). Newspaper headlines are a typical example of "little texts" (Halliday 1994: 392-397) and they are frequently understood as "as a riveting short-cut to the contents of newspapers" (Ifantidou 2009: 699). Their main functions are summarising and attracting attention to the full-text newspaper article (Ifantidou 2009: 699). These two functions need to be reconciled by means of an extremely short, economical text, in such a way as to inform the reader about the content of the article, while at the same time, by arousing his/her curiosity, to persuade them to read the whole article. In this regard, newspaper headlines perform the same function as headlines or slogans in advertisements – that of attracting the attention and encouraging the potential consumer to buy the advertised product (*cf.* Silaški 2009). Due to the need for maximum economy, informativeness and expressiveness, newspaper headlines are a type of text in which metaphor and metonymy often serve as cognitive shortcuts to a simpler and more effective presentation of complex phenomena. Many headlines may deliberately lack in informative value for the purpose of arousing curiosity, in which case they tend to be rather opaque. This is one of the main reasons for metaphoricity – dry information about sports competition results is spiced up with original and imaginative expressions. In this way, a bond is made between readers and journalists, members of a narrow discourse community, speakers of sports argot, and mutual understanding is created between them. As Koller (2004b) points out, the use of particular metaphors in headlines enables journalists to define the topic of an article, favour a specific conceptualisation and persuade readers to share their metaphors. The corpus of examples for this small-scale study consists of

those headlines whose deconstruction of meaning requires a lot of processing effort, since the meaning is frequently difficult to comprehend, due to deliberate masking and simplification of the article's content.

What are the main reasons for such an idiosyncratic, innovative choice of source domains for the conceptualisation of VICTORY and DEFEAT in sports competition, where the creativity and imagination of headlines' authors serve the main purpose of attracting reader attention and increasing expressivity? In order to be coherent with various aspects of the communicative situation in which discourse is created, metaphor producers are governed by "the pressure of coherence" (Kövecses 2005: 237). Namely, they adjust their metaphorical expressions to suit the context and the topic of the newspaper article, thus preserving the text coherence. In sports newspaper headlines we may observe various examples of the *pressure of coherence* stemming from diverse motivations, drives and associations. Innovative, "topic-triggered metaphors" (Koller 2004a), whose basic meaning is closely related to the *topic* of the article and which are used in headlines to increase their expressive and figurative impact, will be the subject of this analysis. In the next section, after a brief discussion about the role of sports in the process of metaphorisation in general, I shall deal with the ways in which the *pressure of coherence* may manifest itself in sports newspaper headlines, as well as with the cognitivistic explanation of such metaphorical and metonymic ways of expression.

3. Metonymy and metaphor in headlines

Thanks to its key attributes (clearly distinct opponents, an unambiguous and predetermined goal of sporting activity – winning, team spirit, strict rules that need to be obeyed, etc.) sports competitions often serve in the process of metaphorisation as a source domain for the conceptualisation of complex social phenomena. Thus, Kövecses (2002: 18) claims that SPORT is one of the most frequent source domains for the conceptualisation of intangible, abstract domains, such as *life* – LIFE IS A SPORTING GAME (Kövecses 2002: 31), *politics* – POLITICS IS SPORT (Howe 1988; Semino and Masci 1996; Segrave 2000; Russo 2001; Radić-Bojanić and Silaški 2008, etc.), *business* – BUSINESS IS SPORT (Liu 2002), *war* – WAR IS SPORT (Lakoff 1991; Jansen and Sabo 1994; etc.). Sport itself is often conceptualised as WAR (the SPORT IS WAR metaphor). This clearly indicates that, in the conceptual metaphors referring to sport either serving as a target or a source domain, there are frequent cross-domain mappings, intertwining, chaining and reversibility.

As Kövecses (2002: 31) claims, among the many creative speakers who can produce novel linguistic metaphors based on conventional conceptual metaphors, one of the main category is that of sports journalists. It is not surprising, then, that sports discourse abounds in innovative metaphorical expressions as linguistic realisations of conventional conceptual metaphors. As unconventional metaphors are a means "by which language users may enhance the expressiveness of their message through the most economical means available to them" (Charteris-Black 2004: 17), it should come as no surprise that they are frequent in headlines, the most visible and prominent, yet

the most economical part of the newspaper article, where it is necessary, by effectively arousing the readers' curiosity, to attract their attention and to summarise a lot of information in a very small space.

In my corpus of examples, I have observed several types of metonymy, out of which I shall deal with only one type – that connected with the nickname of a sports club (metonymy DEFINING PROPERTY OF CATEGORY FOR CATEGORY). More specifically, I will deal with those metonymy based metaphors in headlines triggered by animal-related and bird-related nicknames of sports clubs.

Most sports clubs in the world as well as those in Serbia have a name or a nickname (in addition to their official club name) obtained after their perceived or desirable characteristics (e.g. Eagles, Bulls, Doves, Magpies, Buffaloes, Jaguars, etc.). This nickname functions as a defining property of category within an idealised cognitive model of properties and categories, since “if categories are intentionally defined by a set of properties, these properties are necessarily part of the category” (Radden and Kövecses 1999: 35). Therefore, categories typically stand for one of their defining properties. Here we will deal with the opposite case of metonymy: NICKNAME OF THE CLUB FOR THE CLUB, i.e. DEFINING PROPERTY OF CATEGORY FOR CATEGORY. This metonymy is based on the cognitive principle CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT, when the club's nickname (serving as a defining property of the club) is more easily understood than the abstract name of the sports club. Such a metonymy enables the authors of headlines to use a wide range of metaphors for VICTORY or DEFEAT in sports competitions worldwide. This phenomenon was first observed by Aitchison (1987) and is also discussed in Kövecses (2005: 237). In the following sections we will deal with those metaphors in headlines triggered by animal-related and bird-related nicknames of sports clubs.

3.1. Metonymy and metaphor – animal-related nicknames of sports clubs

Having in mind that the communicative situation affects the choice of metaphors, in line with the topic of the newspaper article, headline producers create their metaphors for VICTORY or DEFEAT in accordance with certain (defining) properties of the characters that participate in the “story” (Kövecses 2005: 237). If the nickname of a sports club is an animal-related name (metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS), then this name metonymically (DEFINING PROPERTY OF CATEGORY FOR CATEGORY) stands for the club, whereas salient features of this animal are mapped onto the players, thus influencing the conceptualisation of VICTORY and DEFEAT of such a club. In this case, the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS structures our thoughts about the behaviour of players and its relevant aspects, as “anthropomorphization of animal attributes and behavior is almost always an input condition for the metaphorical applications of animal names” (Talebinejad and Dastjerdi 2005: 145).

As Fontecha and Natalan (2003: 774) state, several features characterise the ANIMAL metaphor. Firstly, these authors point out its systematicity, i.e. the same type of structure made up of a mapping or correspondences between a source (animals) and

target domain (people) is identified. Secondly, the animal metaphor is grounded in our experience with people and animals. Thirdly, this metaphor is based on the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor which “allows the mapping of generic information from the source domain to a specific instantiation in the target domain” (Fontecha and Natalan 2003: 774). Finally, it implies a vertical hierarchical organisation of beings, in line with the GREAT CHAIN OF BEING metaphor, which “allows us to comprehend general human character traits in terms of well-understood non-human attributes” (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 172). This is illustrated by the following examples from the corpus:

- (1) Ajkule *papale* krilca (‘Sharks *yum up* wings’)
- (2) Kojoti *se nakrkali* pačetine (‘Coyotes *gorged* with duck meat’)
- (3) Panteri *razbucali* Gusare (‘Panthers *gobble* Buccaneers’)
- (4) Jaguari *proždrali* Titane (‘Jaguars *devour* Titans’)

Thus, VICTORY in examples (1), (2), (3) and (4) is conceptualised as EATING THE OPPONENT, where we can observe a link between sport and war. Sport is often conceptualised as war, mainly due to their common goal – defeating the opponent. Hence a higher order conceptual metaphor SPORT IS A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL (Charteris-Black 2004: 127). Metaphorical expressions used to linguistically realise the VICTORY IS EATING metaphor (*gorge, gobble, devour*) clearly indicate the confrontational and aggressive side of sport (cf. Koller 2003: 183). All these metaphorical expressions are marked as [+AGGRESSIVE], except the one in example (1) in which the expression for eating (‘yum up’) may be regarded as motivated by the opponent’s nickname (fried chicken wings are small and regarded as delicious), as well as the disparity in physical appearance, strength and size between sharks and birds, where wings stand for the defining property of birds (flying). Furthermore, since the verb *papati* ‘yum up’, as used in Serbian, implies eating food by babies, it indicates an easy victory in a match between two unequal opponents. If the ultimate goal in war/sport is to defeat the opponent, it is then quite logical that the victory in such activities is conceptualised as the extinction of the opponent through nullifying its existence via eating (cf. Koller 2003: 183), as implied by an entailment of “the superordinate conceptual key SPORT IS A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL” – FAILURE IN SPORT IS DEATH (Charteris-Black 2004: 132).

- (5) Buldozi *rastrgli* Bizone (‘Bulldogs *dismember* Buffalos’)
- (6) Jaguari *komadaju* Titane (‘Jaguars *tear* Titans’)
- (7) Panteri *iskidali* Zmajeve (‘Panthers *rend* Dragons’)

In examples (5), (6) and (7) above, VICTORY is conceptualised as the FRAGMENTATION OF OPPONENT, which again results in the annulment of the opponent’s existence and stresses the confrontational character of sport competition (the DEFEAT IS DEATH metaphor).

- (8) Dama *kroti* posrnulu Vučicu (‘The Lady *tames* the stumbling She-wolf’)
- (9) Mihajlović *kroti* vučicu (‘Mihajlović *tames* the She-wolf’)
- (10) Vučica *u* Lukovićevoj *zamci* (‘She-wolf *trapped* by Luković’)

VICTORY may also be conceptualised as TAMING A WILD ANIMAL or as TRAPPING A WILD ANIMAL, illustrated by the above examples (8), (9) and (10) respectively, where the wild animal is deprived of its most basic properties – the ability to move freely and fight back. In examples (9) and (10) we may observe another type of metonymy, PLAYER FOR THE CLUB (MEMBER OF THE CATEGORY FOR THE CATEGORY) and COACH FOR THE CLUB (CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED) motivated by the cognitive principles TYPICAL OVER NON-TYPICAL (when “typical members of a category are [...] picked out when a category as a whole is described” [Radden and Kövecses 1999: 45]) and HUMAN OVER NON-HUMAN, when the player and the coach are chosen respectively to stand for the sports club. In the following section we will deal with metaphors triggered by a bird-related nickname of a sports club.

3.2. Metonymy and metaphor – bird-related nicknames of sports clubs

Nicknames of sports clubs are often derived from the names of birds, in line with the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE BIRDS (as part of a wider conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS), when the salient properties of birds as a source domain are mapped onto people (players) as a target domain. We shall illustrate this by several examples of headlines:

- (11) Golubice *lete* iznad Cepelina ('Doves fly over Zeppelin')
- (12) *Visok let* Jastrebova ('Hawks' high flight')
- (13) Orlovi *visoko lete* ('Eagles fly high')
- (14) Svrake *raširile krila* ('Magpies widen the wings')

Such a conceptualisation of players as birds (linguistically manifested in the nicknames Doves, Hawks, Eagles, Magpies, etc.) allows creative use and innovative extension of the PEOPLE ARE BIRDS metaphor. Thus, the VICTORY of the clubs with a bird-related nickname, in accordance with conventional orientational metaphors HAPPY IS UP (UP IS GOOD) and CONTROL IS UP, is conceptualised as a bird's flight, illustrated by examples (11), (12) and (13) (metaphor VICTORY IS FLYING). VICTORY is also conceptualised as the widening of the bird's wings (example [14]), according to the conventional metaphor IMPORTANT IS BIG, since the perceived size of a bird increases when it widens its wings. In metonymic terms, the defining property of bird as a category (its ability to fly) stands for the whole category.

- (15) Rakočević *srušio* Albatrose ('Rakočević shoot down Albatroses')
- (16) Orlovi *bez krila* ('Eagles without wings')

The image schema of VERTICALITY is one of the most basic cognitive concepts deeply grounded in our physical and bodily experience. According to this image schema, positively evaluated concepts “tend to be characterised by an upward orientation” (Kövecses 2002: 36) and are conceptualised as UP (e.g. HAPPY IS UP, HEALTHY IS UP, VIRTUE IS UP, etc.). Negatively evaluated concepts, on the other hand, are most frequently spatially oriented downward and are conceptualised as DOWN (e.g. SAD IS DOWN, SICK IS DOWN, LACK OF VIRTUE IS DOWN, etc.). Therefore, the DEFEAT (which

is always negatively evaluated) of the clubs with a bird-related nickname, in line with the image schema of VERTICALITY, is conceptualised as the fall of a bird (DEFEAT IS A FALL) in example (15), or as wing loss, in line with the defining property of a bird as a category (DEFEAT IS LOSING THE WINGS) in example (16). The most salient and the defining property of birds is having wings – if a bird loses its wings, it immediately loses its basic ability (flying), which in turn means it also loses health (SICK IS DOWN) and control (LACK OF CONTROL IS DOWN), and eventually falls down. Hence the conceptualisation of a DEFEAT as losing the wings, since defeat is negatively evaluated, as implied by another conceptual metaphor DOWN IS BAD (Charteris-Black 2004: 153). Due to space constraint, we cannot deal with several other conceptualisations of VICTORY and DEFEAT in sport newspaper headlines, triggered by the salient characteristics of the participants in the story. Hopefully, the above text suffices to illustrate the creativity and expressiveness of sports journalists as well as the fact that their metaphors are deeply grounded in physical experience and based on conventional conceptual metaphors.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we have made an attempt to point out major cognitive motives for the metonymic ways of expression in sports newspaper headlines, showing at the same time how the metonymy based metaphors increase expressiveness and figurativeness of sports discourse. Metaphors in headlines are mainly innovative and unconventional. However, they are based on several conventional conceptual metaphors, particularly those that refer to the ways VICTORY and DEFEAT in sports competition are conceptualised (e.g. SPORT IS A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL, DOWN IS BAD, GOOD IS UP, etc.). These creative metaphors result from specific aspects of a communicative situation in which they are created, when, due to the pressure of coherence, the conceptualisation of VICTORY and DEFEAT is in line with the overall topic of the newspaper article and the main functions of headlines in the print media. We have dealt particularly with those metaphors that are motivated by a metonymy NICKNAME OF THE CLUB FOR THE CLUB, where animal-related and bird-related nicknames of sports clubs serve as a basis for metaphorical way of expressing. Further comparative research could indicate the extent to which the figurativeness of sports newspaper headlines is characteristic of this particular type of discourse as well as the degree to which it is present in headlines of some other print media.

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