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Identification of Metaphors in the Political Discourse of Mass Media: A Pragmatic Approach*

The cognitive-semantic theory of conceptual metaphors (Lakoff/Johnson 1980) treats metaphors not as purely ornamental units of speech but as an important means of processing information by human beings – a cognitive mechanism of structuring one generally less familiar and more abstract domain with the help of mental models formed on the basis of experience in another, generally more concrete, domain. Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) has provided a theoretical basis for a new generation of dictionaries of poetical metaphors (see, e.g., Lakoff/Turner 1989, Pavlovich 1999) and for a new kind of dictionary listing metaphors used in political discourse (see Baranov/Karaulov 1991 and 1994). Such a dictionary and the corresponding computer database represent, in fact, an inventory of mappings from the set of conceptual structures belonging to a variety of coherent domains such as (WORLD OF) ANIMALS, CRIMINAL WORLD, BUILDING CONSTRUCTION, CINEMA, etc. to concepts and conceptual structures from the domain of POLITICS such as IDEOLOGY, HUMAN RIGHTS, FINANCIAL CRISIS, etc. The conceptual mappings are illustrated by numerous examples from the corpus of metaphorical expressions used by politicians and journalists with reference to the corresponding political notions in mass media. Generally, one and the same political situation (type or token) is metaphorically conceptualised by several models which in turn represent competing ways of interpreting this situation propagated in a given society through mass media channels. An alternative choice of an appropriate metaphor for a given referent is a special case of “significant variability” in the sense of Parshin/Sergejev (1984), and this makes metaphors an effective tool of linguistic manipulation of the mental world model (Parshin 2000, p. 71). The comparison of conceptual metaphoric models of the same political referent used by representatives of different political parties and/or national cultures in political discourse can reveal – and in fact is revealing – cognitive dis-

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crepancy that must be taken into account for successful communication. (Chilton/Ilyin 1993 gave a good example of such a comparative analysis of a HOUSE model for the political situation in Europe before the unification of Germany). The dictionaries and databases of the kind we are discussing are the sources required for such comparative studies in the field of intercultural communication. But this makes it even more important that such sources contain the correct kind of data and that is why the general problem of identifying the presence of conceptual metaphors in a text deserves attention. In this paper, we address two aspects of this problem: the spectrum of surface reflections of conceptual metaphors in political discourse and the criteria of distinguishing actual or live metaphors from expressions that are metaphoric only in their etymological origin – dead metaphors.

1. The main categories of surface phenomena corresponding to conceptual metaphors in political discourse of mass media

My experience in developing a database of metaphoric models referring to European politics in Russian mass media of recent years brought me to the conclusion that the traditional philological category *metaphor* is too narrow to cover all figurative expressions that should be taken into account as surface reflections of conceptual metaphors. What we need is a pragmatic or relativistic approach to the surface metaphor (i.e., metaphor as a trope, or metaphoric expression). The main idea is that the boundaries of metaphors as a specific trope should be set relative to the type of discourse, because they are not identical to functions performed by traditional tropes in different types of discourse. In other words, there can be no universal criteria that could be valid for singling out metaphoric expressions in any given discourse.

I shall explain this with the help of the following analogy. Imagine some multifunctional object, for example, a piece of cloth. It can be used to make a dress; it can serve as a packing material; we can wipe liquid with it or use it as a shelter from the sun. Then on the basis of the “packaging” function, a piece of paper or foil falls within the same category with cloth but it is not so if we are interested only in the “dressing” or “wiping” properties of objects. A sponge may be considered as a sort of cloth if we need to wipe something

up, but no one shall consider a sponge as a sort of cloth in the “dressing” function of the latter. A metaphor (in the traditional philological sense of the term) is also a multifunctional object, and those properties of uncontroversial metaphors that are important for one purpose may be inessential for the others. Consequently, for each function attributed to metaphors, there is the corresponding set of expressions equivalent to uncontroversial metaphors in this function. Thus, all such expressions may be called metaphoric with regard to this function.

The main function of metaphors in poetry and other works of verbal art is the esthetic one. The function of activating the addressee's attention while the cognitive function is in the background is also prominent in this type of discourse. On the contrary, in scientific discourse, the cognitive or heuristic function of metaphors is in the foreground. Here they help to conceptualise new research objects on the basis of knowledge about objects of other types (cf. the metaphor of chemical valency used for restructuring the conceptual domain of syntactic and semantic relations in linguistics or the computer metaphor of mind in cognitive science). The argumentative function of metaphors as a means of persuasion is also important for scientific discourse. (To justify my view on metaphors, I used the metaphor of a multifunctional physical object above.)

In political discourse, metaphors also perform a heuristic function of conceptualising the ever-changing political reality and an argumentative function of substantiating political programmes and decisions. At the same time, political metaphors, as opposed to scientific or poetic ones, perform interactive pragmatic functions. As figurative or non-literal expressions, metaphors are used as devices of indirectness in cases when disputable political issues are touched upon. They enable the author to denounce the addressee's interpretation of a particular metaphor as not intended. Thus, unlike poetic and scientific metaphors that generally appeal to common knowledge, political metaphors create the common ground for partners in communication, and this helps the speaker to reach his/her goals in communicating more successfully.¹ Of course, even in newspaper political articles, metaphoric expressions may serve as an adornment and as devices for the activation of atten-

¹ All these functions of metaphors in political discourse were mentioned in Chilton/Ilyin (1993).

tion. But these aspects of metaphors are not so essential in this context and may be considered side-effects. That is precisely why we can disregard them when defining metaphors (or, to put it more cautiously, quasi-metaphoric expressions) in political discourse. Thus, for the purposes of literary criticism, simile and metamorphosis should be distinguished from metaphor, because they are different in their esthetic properties (see, e.g., Arutjunova 1999, p. 353-357). However, in political discourse, all the three tropes are functionally identical as they provide practically equivalent conceptualisations of an intended political referent.

Bearing this in mind, it is justifiable and reasonable for the purpose of making a truly representative dictionary of political metaphors to include as metaphoric all figurative expressions that are cognitively based on the combination of two concepts and belong to different ontological domains, that is, types of entities and events singled out in a specific world-view (picture of the world). In the case of mass media political discourse, such a world-view is the unification of the naive, scientific, and political pictures of the world, and it can be represented in the form of a thesaurus-like type hierarchy. Thus, in our metaphor database of European politics (as represented in the Russian and German press), we included on an equal basis the following kinds of figurative expressions generally distinguished in literary criticism:

- Explicit substantive metaphors (the metaphor referent is an NP in subject position; its metaphorical correlate is an NP in predicative function, generally accompanied by a relative clause, explicating the “common property”)² with its “hedged” variants, raised, phase, and negative transforms; for example:

- 1) “**Rossija** – ne segodnjashnjaja, a grjadushchaja – est’ to **boдрjashchee vino**, kotoroe sposobno ozhivit’ obsessivshuju zhizn’ sovremennogo chelovechestva. A **Evropa** – **krepkij sosud**, v kotorom my mozhem soxranit’ etoj vino. Bez prochnoj, sderzhivajushchej formy vino rastechetsja po zemle, a bez vina dragocennyj kubok stanovitsja pustoj, xolodnoj, lishennoj svoego prednaznachen’ja bezdelushkoj.” (V. Shubart, cit. v “Nezavisimoj gazete”)

² Here and further metaphorical referent and its correlate are given in bold type.

'Russia – not the one of today, but the one of tomorrow – is an **invigorating wine** that can revitalise the enfeebled life of modern mankind. And **Europe** is a **firm vessel** in which we can keep this wine. Without the durable containing form, the wine will spill on the ground, and without wine, the precious goblet becomes an empty, cold, and useless knick-knack.' (W. Schubart, as cited in "Nezavisimaja gazeta").

- 2) "Amerikanske vojska v Evropi – svoego roda "straxovoj polis", na kotoryj evropejcy v XX veke rasschityvali po men'shej mere trizhdy – v pervuju mirovuju vojnu, vo vtoruju mirovuju vojnu i v period "xolodnoj vojny"." (Itogi)

'American troops in Europe are a sort of "insurance policy" on which Europeans relied at least three times in the 20th century – in the First World War, in the Second World War, and in the "Cold War" period.' (Itogi).

- 3) "... pora izmenit' svoi vzgljady i uvidet' v NATO "vazhnejshuju nesushchuju oporu sistemy bezopasnosti." (Moskovskie novosti)

'... it is time to change one's views and to see in NATO "the most important bearing of a security system."' (Moskovskije novosti).

- 4) "V principe Rossija pytaetsja stat' svoeobraznoj "kryshej" Evropy..." (Nezavisimaja gazeta)

'In principle, **Russia** attempts to become a sort of "roof" for Europe...' (Nezavisimaja gazeta).

- 5) "... nemeckaja pomoshch' – ne korova, kotoruju možno dojt' vечно." (Literaturnaja gazeta)

'... **German help** is not a cow that can be milked indefinitely.' (Literaturnaja Gazeta).

- Apposition metaphors (the metaphor referent is designated by a head N₁ of an appositive NP while the metaphorical correlate is represented by

N_2 or the whole S that is adjoined to N_1 either to the left or to the right),³ for example:

6) **“Starushka Evropa” – ‘(little) old lady Europe’**

This is a frequent nomination of Europe in Russian newspapers containing a specific personification metaphor.

7) **“No vdrug ideja-skelet nachala obrastat’ mjasom real’nyx peregovorov.” (Izvestija)**

‘But suddenly **the idea-skeleton** started to accumulate the flesh of real negotiations.’ (Izvestija).

8) **“No tot trjuk, kotoryj proxodil v 1993-1996 gg., kogda demokratov (i vnutrennix, i vneshnix) udavalos’, zapugivaja to Ruckim, to Zhirinovskim, to Zjuganovym, delat’ dostatočno podatlivymi, bolee ne rabotaet.” (Nezavisimaja gazeta)**

‘But **the stunt**, which worked well in 1993-1996 **when democrats (at home and abroad) were successfully made sufficiently compliant by intimidation with Rutskoj, Zhirinovskij, or Ziuganov**, does not work anymore.’ (Nezavisimaja gazeta).

- Adjectival phrase metaphors (the metaphor referent is more or less clearly indicated by an adjectival modifier of an NP that represents the metaphorical correlate), for example:

9) **“Evropejskij političeskij majatnik smeshchaetsja vlevo.” (Obshchaja gazeta)**

‘**The European political pendulum** is moving to the left.’ (Obshchaja gazeta).

where the referent of a metaphor is a political situation in Western Europe with its periodical alternation of conservative and socialist governments, and the metaphorical correlate is a pendulum oscillating from right to left and vice versa;

³ In Russian, appositive S always adjoins to the right of the head N.

- 10) "... segodnja u nee [Francii – I. K.] nedostaet **ekonomicheskix muskulov** protivostojat' bolee sil'nym konkurentam." (Itogi)

'... today it [France – I. K.] lacks the **economical muscles** to resist more powerful competitors.' (Itogi)

where the referent of the metaphor is 'economy' or 'economical efficiency', and its metaphorical correlate is 'muscles'.

- Genitive subject metaphors (the metaphor referent is designated by an NP in the genitive case while the head NP of the phrase represents the metaphorical correlate), for example:

- 11) "**Magnit evrazijstva** – odnovennoy prinadlezhnosti i Evrope, i Azii –zastavljaet nas otchajanno... borot'sja s diktaturaj i v to zhe vremja zagadochno uvodit ot ... tradicionnyx, nezyblemyx form demokratii... v zybkuju neopredelennost', blagodarja kotoroj my vsega mezhdu." (Nezavisimaja gazeta)

'**The magnet of Eurasianism** – belonging both to Europe and Asia – forces us to fight desperately ... against dictatorship and at the same time mysteriously leads us away from ... traditional stable forms of democracy ... into instability, and this is why we are always in between.' (Nezavisimaja gazeta).

See also the metaphoric expression *mjaso real'nyx peregovorov* 'flesh of real negotiations' in (7), which supports a basic conceptual metaphor of a political process as an organism, introduced by apposition *ideja-skelet* 'idea-skeleton'.

- Predicate metaphors, when the NP(s) representing the metaphor referent(s) is/are directly syntactically connected to a metaphorically used word with predicative meaning (verb, adjective, or noun), the latter implying through its semantic selection properties the metaphorical correlate(s) of the referent(s) in question, for example:⁴

⁴ In examples of this category, we mark with bold type the metaphor referent(s) and the metaphoric predicate.

- 12) “Nachinaja s 1992 goda **rossijskij isteblichment** stal uverenno **kozyrjat’ rynochnymi reformami.**” (Itogi)

‘Since 1992, the establishment of Russia began to be trumped by market reforms.’ (Itogi).

Here the metaphoric use of the predicate *kozyrjat’* ‘to trump’ implies ‘cards’ as a metaphoric correlate of market reforms, ‘gamblers’ as metaphoric correlate of the establishment of Russia and their international counterparts, and thus, ‘gambling’ emerges as a conceptual metaphoric correlate of international relations.

- 13) “... Rossija budet i dal’she prebyvat’ v sostojanii **tlejushchego krizisa...**” (Nezavisimaja gazeta)

‘... Russia will continue to be in the state of **smouldering crisis** ...’ (Nezavisimaja gazeta).

- Relational metaphors, under which we subsume all cases when an NP representing the metaphor referent is syntactically connected to a metaphorically used word⁵ that stands in a specific semantic relation to the metaphoric correlate such as “part-whole”, “set-element”, etc.; see, for example:

- 14) “... Belorussii predstojalo ... **“pogolov’e” tankov sokratit’** v dva s polovinoj raza.” (Izvestija)

‘... Belorussia was to ... reduce by two and a half its **“livestock” of tanks.**’ (Izvestija).

Here the word *pogolov’e* ‘livestock’, literally denoting ‘cattle’, is metaphorically used in connection with tanks, thereby ironically conceptualising tanks as ‘cattle’, i.e., as a kind of national wealth. See also (4), where the metaphorical use of *krysha* ‘roof’ stands in a strong semantic relation ‘part – whole’ to the concept of ‘house’ which is normally expressed by a genitive complement of an NP meaning ‘roof’, but in this case, the syntactic position of the genitive complement is occupied by

⁵ The connection may be direct as in examples (13) and (14) below or indirect as a connection between *ona* ‘it’ and *muskuly* ‘muscles’ in (10) above.

'Europe', and thus, the latter is metaphorically conceptualised as a 'house'.

– Sentential metaphors in the sense of Miller (1979), for example:

15) "... izgotovlennnye v Brjussele lekarstva mogut okazat'sja gor'kimi ..." (Itogi)

'... the medicines made in Brussels may turn out to be bitter ...' (Itogi).

Without its context, the metaphorical nature of sentence (14) may not be understood, however, in the context of discussing the reaction of the European political elite to the prospects of the European Union, 'bitter medicines made in Brussels' are easily interpreted as a metaphoric correlate of the strict financial and economic conditions for integration formulated by the European Parliament.

– Periphrasis (the metaphoric correlate is used as an anaphoric or cataphoric device, co-referential with the metaphoric referent), for example:

16) "... esli imet' v vidu voenno-politicheskoe prisutstvie SShA v Evrope, to tut delo besperspektivnoe. Shumi ne shumi, **amerikan-skij zontik nad Evropoj** ... ostanetsja raskrytym." (Itogi)

'... as far as the **military and political presence of the USA in Europe** is concerned, the situation has no perspective. Whether you make a fuss about it or not, **the American umbrella above Europe** ... shall remain open.' (Itogi).

17) "Nakonec, est' eshche odin "**dzhoker**", kotoryj mozhet vstupit' v igru v ljuboj moment. Eto **problema rasprostraneniya jadernogo oruzhija**." (Nezavisimaja gazeta)

'Finally, there is one more "**joker**" that can come into play at any moment. It is the **problem of the expansion of nuclear weapons**.' (Nezavisimaja gazeta).

- Metamorphosis is sometimes opposed to metaphor proper in Russian linguistics and poetics.⁶ In Russian, this figure of speech is associated with a language-specific morphological technique – the use of the so called ‘instrumental’ case of comparison, as in the following example:

18) “Pentagonovskie generaly s trevogoj zhdali, chto **russkie tanki** v ljubuju minutu mogut **ognennoj lavinoj** pronestis’ po vsej Zapadnoj Evrope.” (Itogi)

‘Pentagon generals were waiting with anxiety, because **Russian tanks** could sweep at any minute through the whole of Western Europe like a **fiery avalanche** (lit.: fiery avalanche_{instr.}).’ (Itogi).

- Simile, for example:

19) “... tixie ugolki Francii tak i ostajutsja na obochine **magistrali**, kotoraja, slovno **drenazh**, obespechivaet ottok rabochix mest i komercii k blizhajshim gorodam.” (Moskovskie novosti)

‘... quiet corners of France still remain at the side of **the highway like a drainage** ensuring the flow of working places and commerce to the nearest towns.’ (Moscow News).

From a pragmatic standpoint, all the kinds of figurative expressions listed above and their combinations are equivalent in political discourse, because they serve basically the same purpose: to influence the addressee’s conception of the intended referent by projecting onto it some cognitive structure pertaining to its metaphoric correlate, whether explicit or implicit.

2. Features distinguishing live metaphors from dead ones

The next problem of political metaphor lexicography is the problem of dead metaphors. From a synchronic semantic standpoint, dead metaphors are no longer metaphors, because they no longer possess the specific duality of a true metaphor that always relates two separate concepts (the primary and secondary subject of a metaphor). In a dead metaphor, the former secondary

⁶ See esp. Vinogradov (1976), p. 411; Arutjunova (1999), pp. 356-357.

subject becomes a conventional meaning of the expression in question, thus, the semantic duality is lost. Such cases are of no interest to the critical analysis of political discourse and should not be included into dictionaries. But we cannot fully rely upon explanatory dictionaries in making a decision whether a given expression contains an actual metaphor or a dead one, because even dead metaphors can again “come to life” in certain contexts. This is why when identifying metaphors in a text, it is necessary to take into account the pragmatic factor, namely, the degree to which the author of a given utterance is aware of the fact that an expression he uses in connection with an intended referent (primary subject) has a different literal meaning (secondary subject).

Quotation marks are just one sign of such an awareness. When they are not used to mark the presence of another voice in a text (quotations of direct speech, as in (3) of Section 1), they signal that the author realises that the expression in quotation marks is semantically alien to its context. We have examples of such use of quotation marks in (2), (4), (14), and (17) of Section 1. In all these examples, it is obvious that the so marked expressions are surface reflections of conceptual metaphoric mappings, because they have not yet developed corresponding conventional meanings in the lexical system of the Russian language. There are cases, however, where quotation marks are used along with words that already have their metaphoric usages included among their conventional readings in dictionaries, for example, the word *podtalkivanije* ‘to push along’ in (20):

20) “... dlja “**podtalkivanija**” processa realizacii OA nado nezamedlitel’no sozdavat’ mezhvedomstvennuju gruppu.” (Izvestija)

‘It is necessary to create without delay an interdepartmental group for “**pushing along**” the BA realisation.’ (Izvestija).

This noun and the corresponding verb have the primary meaning of a physical action of ‘pushing’ and a secondary, metaphorically derived, abstract meaning of ‘urging, instigation’ already appearing in contemporary dictionary entries. The fact that the author uses this word with quotation marks may be taken as evidence that he/she has a primary physical concept of ‘pushing’ in mind and creatively uses it as a metaphorical correlate of an intended referent, which in a given context is understood as ‘a political activity aimed at starting or forcing a certain political process’. In this manner, the purported

addressee is invited to activate the concept of pushing along with its cognitive image-scheme such as: including exertion of physical efforts by the pushers, expenditure of physical energy, inability of a pushed object to move on its own, etc.

Of course, live metaphors do not need to be marked by such a punctuation technique. Ultimately, it is the context in which the analysed expression appears that allows the distinction of the actual metaphor from the conventional (etymologically metaphoric) meaning. In principle, a word with a conventional reading 'Y' which is a trace of a former metaphor 'X → Y' may be identified as a revived metaphor if its primary literal reading 'X' is supported in a given context by other expressions belonging to the same semantic domain as 'X'. Consider the following example with the verb *podtalkivat* 'to push':

- 21) "Kstati, imenno k etoj strategii uzhe pjatyj god aktivno prizyvaet Moskvu Mezhdunarodnyj valjutnyj fond, **podtalkivaja** rossijskie kompanii k samostojatel'nomu **plavaniju** na rynkax kapitalov." (Itogi)

'By the way, for five years the International Currency Foundation has already called upon Moscow to justify this strategy of **pushing** Russian companies to **swim** in capital markets without assistance.' (Itogi).

As we have said above, the analysed verb along with 'pushing' normally means 'to urge somebody to do something'. The latter abstract meaning is appropriate to the context of (21) but shows in the same context the presence of a live conceptual metaphor:

- 22) 'swimming without assistance (physical activity) → independent social activity'

The dead metaphor, hidden in the conventional abstract meaning of *podtalkivat*, is revived because the presence of a concept of physical action in the structure of a conceptual metaphor (22) activates the primary concrete physical reading of this verb: 'to push'. Thus, instead of a simply understanding *podtalkivat* as 'to urge', the conceptual metaphor from the domain of physical activity to that of social activity 'pushing somebody (in)to the target object → urging somebody to the target activity' is restored, and what

is more, the combination of image schemes of 'A pushing B' and 'B is swimming without assistance' is supported by the reader's own knowledge of the usual way one is taught to swim: You are safely taken to a place in the water where you can no longer touch the ground with your feet and then you are suddenly pushed away from your supporting agent or object.

On the contrary, if a literal meaning 'X' of an expression *X* with a conventional metaphorically derived meaning 'Y' is semantically incompatible with some element of its immediate context, it is proof that *X* is not perceived by the author of the sentence as a figurative expression of 'Y' and that consequently *X* is not a surface marker of a live conceptual metaphor 'X→Y' but merely a conventional sign of 'Y'.⁷ See, for example, the underlined material in (23) and (24):

23) "... v processe bor'by s etimi trudnostjami i v politicheskoj, i v ekonomicheskoj sferax medlenno, no neuklonno rozhdajtsja novaja Rossija ..." (Nezavisimaja gazeta)

'... in the process of struggling with these difficulties both in political and economical spheres, a new Russia is slowly but steadily being born ...' (Nezavisimaja gazeta).

24) "... Rossija, stalkivajushchajasja ... s perspektivoj utraty pozicij na regional'nyx rynkax ... mogla by ... vosstanovit' poterjannye ekonomicheskie i torgovyje pozicii ..." (Nezavisimaja gazeta)

'... Russia, encountering (lit. colliding with) the perspective of losing its positions on regional markets ... could ... restore the lost economic and trade positions ...' (Nezavisimaja gazeta).

In (23), the verb *rozhdat'sja* that in its primary "biological" meaning 'to be born' belongs to achievement predicates (Vendler 1957, pp. 143-160) is used in an adverbial context that is characteristic of accomplishment predicates. This shows that the author's intention is not the primary, but the secondary conventional metaphoric reading of this verb – 'come into being', because in this reading, the predicate belongs to the accomplishment class. In (24), the verb *stalkivat'sja* has a primary "physical" meaning 'to collide' and a con-

⁷ A different point of view is expressed in Baranov (1994).

ventional metaphorically derived abstract meaning 'to encounter'. The conceptual metaphor underlying this semantic derivation could be regarded as a live predicate metaphor only if there was any linguistic evidence that in the given context the author really activated the image schema of COLLISION in the verbalisation process, that is, if he or she uses expressions motivated by this schema, such as *s razbegu* '≡ after the running start' or *s dvizhu-shchimisja navstrechu X-ami* 'with X-s moving in the opposite direction' and the like. However, we see no such signs of the COLLISION scheme here, and thus we have no reason for treating this case as a live metaphor. In the same way, it can be shown that *perspektiva* 'perspective' is not a surface marker of a live metaphor 'perspective (what is seen ahead) → possibility in future', but just a sign which conventionally means 'possibility in future'.

In this paper, I argue that the main questions that arise in the process of making a dictionary of political metaphors – that of identifying live conceptual metaphors in a corpus of text – may be solved on the basis of a pragmatic approach, taking into account the reflections in a text of cognitive processes in the minds of its author and its reader. Certainly, this goal cannot be attained without a further fine-grained semantic analysis of presumably metaphoric expressions in their linguistic and cultural context.

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