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Metaphor in Political Discourse

Case Study of English and German Conceptual Metaphors in the 2019 European Parliament Elections

Keywords: figurative language; conceptual metaphor; political discourse; conventional vs. novel

The aim of this case study is to analyse the use of figurative language based on conceptual metaphor in political discourse during the 2019 European Parliament elections in the United Kingdom and Germany. This research attempts to discover similarities and differences in the use of conceptual metaphors in British and German media and investigate their culture-based specificities (Kövecses 2005, Charteris-Black 2003). The frequency of the use of figurative language in the two languages will also be inspected to examine Grady's (2017) statement that the significance of figurative language in shaping public opinion is especially evident in discussions about topics of social importance. The corpus consists of 13,515 words in total and it was created for the purposes of this paper. It includes twenty articles, ten British and ten German, randomly selected from a larger corpus created for the thesis on the use of figurative language in political discourse. The articles were collected from online news portals with free access (e.g., www.bbc.com, www.theguardian.com, www.welt.de, www.tagesschau.de) during and shortly after the 2019 European Parliament elections. For the manual identification of figurative language several methods and sources were used: Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), Conceptual Integration Theory or Blending Theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2002), Metaphor Identification Procedure (Steen 2010), Master Metaphor List (Lakoff, Espenson, Schwartz 1991) and Goatly's metaphor base Metalude (Metaphor at Lingnan University). To check their entrenched phraseological status, all instances of figurative language were first checked in phraseological dictionaries and then categorised as conventional, modified or novel, according to the guidelines of figurative and phraseological profiling of political discourse by Omazić (2015). A special attention will be paid to discourse metaphors (Zinken 2007) that are in the process of being conventionalised due to their easily evoked analogical schemas. In addition to the quantitative analysis, the paper will also provide some insight into qualitative aspects of the use of figurative language in discourse, such as preferential conceptual metaphors, clustered figurative saturation, diffuse figurative use, intertextuality, and neologisms. As the preliminary results show, the most commonly used conceptual metaphors in political discourse in both languages are POLITICS IS WAR, POLITICS IS COMPETITION and POLITICS IS A JOURNEY.

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