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**Research Article**

# Conceptual Metaphors in Political Discourse in Croatian, American and Italian Newspapers

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*Abstract*

*In political discourse metaphors are frequently employed for persuading and manipulating the public. The aim of our research is to show whether there are differences in the use of source domains of conceptual metaphors among Croatian politicians in comparison with American and Italian politicians. The corpus of our research consists of political newspaper articles and interviews from Croatian, American and Italian daily newspapers (Jutarnji list, Večernji list, Corriere della Sera, Repubblica, ABC, USA Today and The New York Times), downloaded from newspaper archives. We can conclude that metaphorical expressions vary from language to language, but often the same metaphorical expressions appear in all languages. Expressions that frequently recur are victory, attack, battle, race, defense, splay, stage and role. Except for two ontological metaphors in Croatian examples, we can say that there is no major difference in the source domains between Croatian, American and Italian political discourse.*

*Keywords: political dicsourse, conceptual metaphor, cognitive theory*

## 1. Introduction

In political discourse various linguistic devices such as different lexical and syntactic choices (for example passive vs. active structures, use of ergative structures), speech acts, implicatures and metaphors are employed with the aim of persuading and manipulating the public (Wilson, 2005). Thus, choosing a particular metaphor to convey a message is often a very powerful mode of persuasion. According to Lakoff & Johnson (2004) metaphors are grounded in human experience and they appear first in thought, then in language, which means that we experience the world through them. For the same reason, Kövecses (2005) states that metaphors are an integral part of culture. Apart from universal metaphors there are also those that are not universal and differ from language to language. Metaphors vary because our experiences as human beings vary. Conceptual metaphor consists of the source and the target domain and represents the cognitive ability to connect meanings of these two domains. The goal of the paper is to analyze how universal conceptual metaphors that appear in political discourse in different languages (in our case, Croatian, English and Italian) are differently realized in different metaphorical expressions due to differences in the cultural context. The paper is divided in six parts. After the introductory part, the second part of the paper discusses political discourse and cognitive perspective on metaphor, with the focus on the usage of conceptual metaphor in political discourse. Folowing theoretical

background, research goal, methodology, and the results of the research are presented. The final part of the paper brings discussion of the results together with concluding remarks.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Political discourse

Politics can be defined in the light of different theoretical perspectives. Chilton (2004), for example, offers two different views on politics. According to him (Chilton, 2004, p. 3), it can be seen as ''a struggle for power'' between those who want to consolidate and keep their power and those who try to dispute it, or as a society's institutions and practices that resolve various conflicts of interest over money, influence, independence, emancipation, and so forth. Furthermore, Chilton (2004) asserts that these two views correspond to two levels of politics, micro-level which involves clashes of interest, struggle for power or attempts to achieve collaboration between individuals and between various social groups, and macro-level which refers to a state's political institutions whose role is to resolve various conflicts, and which serve to assert an individual's or a group's dominance. Chilton (2004) also brings attention to different linguistic devices employed at the micro level, which are a powerful tool for attaining all those goals, and which can be subsumed under the term political discourse. At the micro-level, political discourse includes parliamentary debates, laws and so forth. Each type of discourse has its own specific features. We agree with Chilton (2004, p. 4), who points out that no matter how politics is defined, there is ''a linguistic, discursive and communicative dimension'' of the political action, which is partly recognized, or not recognized at all by political practitioners and theorists. We believe that this is changing, because numerous studies have shown that the force of language exerted upon the public is a very powerful tool in the political arena, and can be used in various ways to influence or manipulate the public. Political discourse has traditionally been described and analyzed among politicians, historians, but not until the early 1980s has it become a subject matter of linguistic studies (Wilson, 2005). According to Wodak (2009) political discourse includes different genres such as political speeches, press conferences, interviews with politicians, reports on different political events in the press and since politics includes persuasion, rhetoric and delusive devices, politicians employ different discursive strategies to achieve their goals. Many studies (Borčić, Kanižaj & Kršul, 2016; Howe, 1988; Wodak, 2009) have shown that political action mirrored in different types of genres involves persuasion, what is more, in the field of language and politics it plays the most important part. Thus persuasive elements are present in all genres in the field of politics. Although some politicians do not acknowledge the importance of language in the field of politics, we all witness the trend of hiring public relation experts by political parties whose expertise in the field can contribute to achieving goals, be it gaining or achieving power, etc. Political, as well as other types of discourse show that language and different types of social practices are closely linked. An interesting assertion is made by Chilton (2004) who points out that language and political behaviour are not merely instances of social practices, but that they can be considered as based on cognitive traits of the human mind. Thus cognitive approach to political discourse construes it as ''necessarily a product of individual and collective mental processes.'' (Chilton, 2004, p. 51)

### 2.2 Conceptual metaphor

Cognitive linguistics has been dealing with conceptual metaphors since 1980 when the original model was created by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Within the framework of the cognitive theory, conceptual metaphor has since been widely accepted. Conceptual metaphor consists of the source domain and the target domain and represents the cognitive ability to link meanings of these two domains. The source domain enables the understanding of the target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 2004). Conceptual metaphor is reflected in language as cognitive ability, which means that two levels can be distinguished: metaphorical linguistic expression and conceptual metaphor (Stanojević, 2009). Metaphorical expressions are also called linguistic metaphors. Mapping from the source to the target domain in conceptual metaphor refers to correspondences between the two

domains, hence it is a collection of our knowledge about what is being mapped to what. Apart from mapping, metaphorical entailments are also very important, which refer to consequences of understanding the target domain in terms of the source domain. To be more specific, metaphorical entailments refer to understanding of certain aspects of the target domain based on understanding and knowledge of the source domain (Stanojević, 2009). The level of conventionalization of linguistic expression is determined by the clarity of the link between the source and the target domain, or to what extent a particular expression evokes a conceptual metaphor (Stanojević, 2009). In other words, the conventionalization of a metaphor depends on the perceptive abilities of speakers of a language. Lakoff & Johnson (2004) divide metaphors into three groups: structural, ontological and orientational. In structural metaphors, the source domain provides knowledge about the structure of the target domain, that is ''one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another'' (Lakoff & Johnson, 2004, p. 14). In other words, the cognitive function of these metaphors is enabling a speaker to understand the target domain through the structure of the source domain. This understanding occurs through mapping elements from the source to the target domain. Ontological metaphors on the other hand do not allow cognitive structuring. They provide an understanding of abstract concepts and experiences in terms of objects, substances or bounded spaces. They enable us to notice the structure where it is barely noticeable or it is not noticeable at all. Thus ''…our experiences with physical objects (especially our own bodies) provide the basis for an extraordinarily wide variety of ontological metaphors, that is, ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc..as entities and substances.'' (Lakoff & Johnson, 2004, p. 25). Orientational metaphors are mostly related to basic human spatial orientations such as up-down, in-out, front-back, etc. They are based on our "physical and cultural experience" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2004, p. 25). According to Lakoff & Johnson (2004), metaphors are grounded in human experience and neural activity in the brain. Since the human body and the brain function equally in all people, metaphors are also universal, they are similar, at least on a conceptual level. What causes variations depends on intercultural and intracultural influences. In other words, variations arise in specific metaphorical linguistic expressions, which is also confirmed by the results of our research. There are two main causes of these variations: different experiences and different cognitive preferences and styles. In other words, metaphors vary because our experiences as human beings vary. What affects our different experiences is the physical environment, social context, cultural identity, cultural context, personal history and various occupations and interests (Kövecses, 2005).

## 2.3 Metaphor and political discourse

In political discourse the speaker's goal is to achieve persuasiveness through language. In order to make a strong impression on the public, politicians employ various lingusitic devices to achieve their goals. Many authors (Borčić, Kanižaj & Kršul, 2016; Howe,1988; Mio, 1997, etc.) agree on the fact that conceptual metaphors are essential rhetorical devices used for persuading the public in various genres of political discourse. Thus, Howe (1988) analyzed metaphors that are used by politicians when addressing the public during their campaigns or when they talk to each other privately about political issues creating their own jargon. Howe (1988) concluded that the dividing line between them is far from clear-cut because language used privately easily enters public space, but metaphors are powerful devices that can influence the public' s view on politics. Borčić, Kanižaj & Kršul (2016) analyzed interviews with the former Croatian president Ivo Josipović with the aim of determining the use of conceptual metaphor as a rhetorical tool in relation to positive and negative speaking about something and discovered that personification, reification and movement were mostly used in the interviews when discussing political topics, and that he used both affirmative and negative statements when discussing political issues. Mio (1997), on the other hand, stated that there are many theoretical papers on metaphors that far exceed the amount of empirical research on the effectiveness of this rhetorical device. Consequently, it cannot be stated with certainty how effective, or what is more, how manipulative, metaphors really are. All the authors agree on the purpose of conceptual metaphors in political discourse in general. They are considered good devices for simplifying certain complex concepts related to politics, economy, various social topics, which are all frequently discussed by politicians, thus finding common ground with the public by

focusing, through metaphor, on one aspect of some issue and ignoring other aspects that are irrelevant or undiserable. Conceptual metaphors evoke concepts of war, sport, journey, disease etc., which makes them recognizable and potentially effective with the public as in Chilton (2004) and Lakoff & Johnson (2004). Howe (1988, p. 87) discovered that in American political discourse metaphors are mostly related to sports and warfare which leads to conclusion that "politics is typically conceived as being  either a rule-bound contest…or as an unpredictable exercise of power." An important issue arises in relation to sports metaphors, and that is whether these metaphors are understood by women. Howe (1988) claims that political activity has mostly been confined to men, which may be the reason why sports metaphors are used frequently in political discourse. We can compare his statements with Radić-Bojanić & Silaški (2008), who analyzed the use of sports metaphors in Serbian political discourse. They claim that women mostly do not understand sports metaphors in political discourse and that these metaphors hinder women voters from understanding the intended political message and the overall political reality. Other authors, such as Chilton (2004), Kövecses (2010), Lakoff & Johnson (2004) state that, besides war and sport metaphors, frequently used metaphors in political discourse are those related to games and sport, journey, and that personification and reification are employed creating ontological metaphors, through which politcal party is conceived as a person, or the world of politics is conceived through concrete objects. Thus metaphorisation, through various metaphorical expressions is an indispensable part of political discourse.

## 3. Research Goal

The goal of our research is to show whether there are differences in the use of source domains among Croatian politicians in comparison with American and Italian politicians and to analyze how universal conceptual metaphors that appear in political discourse in different languages (in our case, Croatian, English and Italian) are differently realized in different metaphorical expressions due to differences in the cultural context.

## 4. Methodology

We analyzed the corpus that consists of 100 articles, which have 115 556 words and are taken from the daily newspaper archives (Jutarnji List, Večernji List, ABC, USA Today, The New York Times, Corriere della Sera, Repubblica). The time period is limited to articles published in January and February  of 2016.

## 5. Results

The results of the research are presented below. Metaphorical expressions (ME) found in political discourse in Croatian, American and Italian newspapers are grouped according to the conceptual metaphor they are related to. Each example is written in the original language together with their English translations. Furthermore source (SD) and target domains (TD) are determined for each example.

### 5.1 Croatian newspapers

Conceptual metaphor: **Politics is war.** ME: otvorena rana (open wound). SD: war. TD: The author alludes to Vukovar; ME: odnos snaga (power ratio). SD: war. TD: Premier's opponents and supporters; ME: Bratoubilački rat (fratricidal war). SD: war. TD: Conflict between premier and opponents; ME: Borba protiv HDZ-a (Fight against HDZ). SD: war. TD: Political conflicts; ME: Žrtva svojih ambicija (Victim of his own  ambitions). SD: war. TD: The candidate lost due to his own mistakes; ME: Tri izborna poraza (three election defeats). SD: war. TD: Three failures in the election; ME: Poprište legitimne nesloge (battlefiled of legitimate discord). SD: war. TD: The place of conflict of opinion; ME: Pobjeda male skupine (the victory of a small group). SD: war. TD: Gaining importance; ME: u obrani stavova (In defense of attitudes). SD: war. TD: Argumentation of

opinion; ME: ljuti boj (fierce battle). SD: war. TD: violent conflict; ME: Korporacijskog pukovnika (Corporate Colonel). SD: war. TD: Corporate powerful person; ME: Izgubiti izbore (lose the election). SD: war. TD: Not get support from voters; ME: Iz takve defanzive (from such defense). SD: war. TD: Premier's political rivals were not strong personalities; ME: jurišati u osvajanje (march into conquest). SD: war. TD: Take the lead political position.

Conceptual metaphor: **Politics is sports (game).** ME: Predizborna utrka (Pre-election race). SD:Sports. TD: Candidates are striving to win the election; ME: Postizborni vrtuljak (post-election merry-go-round). SD: Game. TD: the parties' agreement on new opportunities; ME: Kao u igri stolica (like in the chair game). SD: Igra. TD: candidates aspiring to gain positions; ME: Stranački dres (party's jersey). SD: Sports. TD: party's political orientation; ME: To je prva runda (It's the first round). SD: Sport (boxing). TD: replacement of ministers; ME: Ne želi sudjelovati u tim igrama (She does not want to participate in those games). SD: Game. TD: political dispute about relocating president's office; ME: pravila igre (game rules). SD: game. TD: The author alludes to new laws; ME: Poluvrijeme dviju tura (Half of the two rounds). SD: Sports. TD: The author alludes to a break due to the selector's time in prison; ME: Karakter zaigranih ptičica (Character of playful birds). SD: Game. TD: The previous candidates were not so serious about politics; ME: Kartonska lutka (Cardboard doll). SD: game. TD: The President who does not express her views.

Conceptual metaphor**: Politics is a play (theater).** ME**:** Najzabavniji scenarij (the most entertaining scenario). SD: theater. TD: A political scene that amuses people; ME: u veseloj ulozi (In a cheerful role). SD: theater. TD: Politician's position (office); ME: na sceni (on the scene). SD: theater. TD: political situation; ME: pozornica ideološkog trvenja (stage of the ideological conflict). SD: theatre. TD: Political intolerance; ME: zastor je pao (the curtain falls). SD: theatre. TD: The elections are over.

Conceptual metaphor: **Politics is a journey.** ME: Povratak na vlast (return to Government). SD: journey. TD: The party again won the elections; ME: prvi reformski korak (first step to reform). SD: journey. TD: the first reform of the new government; ME: Smjer kojim se stranka treba zaputiti (the direction the party should take). SD: journey. TD: Determine the party's future policy; ME: Ne drži kormilo broda koje je dobila na upravljanje (She doesn't hold the rudder of the ship she has to steer). SD: journey. TD: The president is not capable of leading the country; ME: na put promjena (on the journey of change). SD: journey. TD: efforts to make changes in the country.

Conceptual metaphor: **Political party is a person.** ME: Stranka koja im je ukrala novce (the party which stole their money). SD: person. TD: Leading members of the party stole the money; ME: Most će predložiti (Most will propose). SD: person. TD: Members of the party Most will propose; ME: Nakon pregovora s Mostom (after negotiations with Most). SD: person. TD: After negotiations with leading members of the party Most; ME: Suradnja Mosta s SDP-om (Cooperation between Most and SDP). SD: person. TD: Cooperation between members of Most and SDP; ME: HDZ će provesti borbu (HDZ will fight). SD: person. TD: Members of the party would not be defeated; ME: Most ne bi potonuo (Most would not sink). SD: person. TD: Members of the party would not be defeated.

Conceptual metaphor: **Politics is furniture store.** ME: Na stol padnu ključne riječi (Key words fall on the table). SD: furniture. TD: Talk about all the advantages; ME: Salon namještaja (furniture store). SD: furniture. TD: Članovi stranke su u stalnoj jagmi za pozicije (Party members are in a permanent strife for positions); ME: Pograbili fotelje (They grabbed chairs). SD: furniture. TD: The author alludes to political positions; ME: Vruću fotelju (hot chair/seat). SD: furniture. TD: Kandidat za ministra branitelja Candidate for Minister of Croatian defenders; ME: Izlaziti iz ormara (Get out of the closet)**.** SD: furniture. TD: Premier's opponents appear.

## 5.2 American newspapers

Conceptual metaphor: **Politics is war.** ME: Hard fight in the primary. SD: war. TD: Fight between presidential candidates; ME: Parallel battles. SD: war. TD: Fight between several candidates; ME: To face attacks. SD: war. TD: Mutual attacks among the candidates; ME: Nevada looms as battleground. SD: war. TD: Candidates are fighting for dominance in Nevada; ME: To defend a comment in a debate. SD: war. TD: The candidate defends his opinion; ME: Attacks on illegal

immigrations. SD: war. TD: The candidate is opposed to immigration policy; ME: To turn fire on rivals. SD: war. TD: Candidates use all means to fight in the campaign; ME: He has never won an argument. SD: war. TD: He has never been persuasive; ME: Politics is conflict. SD: war. TD: Politics always causes disagreement between the candidates; ME: On the political front. SD: war. TD: Presidential candidates struggling for dominance.

Conceptual metaphor: **Politics is sports (game).** ME: Race for nomination. SD: sports. TD: candidates want to get nominations and become the main candidate; ME: Favourite in the Super Tuesday contest. SD: sports. TD: Candidate who leads in the Super Tuesday contest; ME: She has played well in the general elections. SD: sports. TD: The candidate did a good job in the elections; ME: leading is a team sport. SD: sports. TD: For a candidate's lead the work of the whole team is required; ME: Clinton leads over Sanders. SD: sports. TD: Candidate Clinton is in a better position than Sanders; ME: The biggest player. SD: sports. TD: The most effective candidate in the election; ME: Politics is a game; SD: game. TD: Like in a game, there are winners and losers in politics; ME: Smashing victory in New Hampshire. SD: sports. TD: The candidate wins in New Hampshire pre-election polls; ME: Any shared win is a loss. SD: sports. TD: Any tied election is considered a defeat by presidential candidates; ME: Crossing the finish line. SD: sports. TD: The candidate has achieved his goal.

Conceptual metaphor: **Politics is a journey.** ME: Conservatives have migrated from Democrats to the Republican party. SD: journey. TD: Conservative voters incline toward Republicans; ME: Politics is a journey. SD: journey. TD: It's a long road to success; ME: Move toward with hope and optimism. SD: journey. TD: Candidates will continue their campaigns with hope and optimism; ME: Will Obama leave the White House? SD: journey. TD: Obama's plans after the mandate.

Conceptual metaphor**: Politics is a play (theater).** ME: American political scene. SD: theatre. TD: Current events in American politics; ME: Election drama. SD: theatre. TD: Unpredictable poll results; ME: Doomsday scenario. SD: theatre. TD: Denouncement of the presidential election; ME: Clinton took the stage. SD: theatre. TD: Clinton was dominant on the stage.

### 5.3 Italian newspapers

Conceptual metaphor: **Politics is war.** ME: La guerra tra i candidati (War between the candidates). SD: war. TD: Confrontation between candidates in the elections; ME: Attachi pesantissimi (The heaviest attacks). SD: war. TD: Inappropriate words that candidates say to each other during the campaign; ME: Essere ucciso (He was killed). SD: war. TD: The candidate is defeated; ME: Prendere in ostaggio le primarie (hold primaries as hostages). SD: war. TD: The candidate is too powerful in the primaries; ME: Salvare la nazione (save the nation). SD: war. TD: Enable a better life in the country; ME: Indebolire il favorito (weaken the favourite). SD: war. TD: Use arguments to weaken the favourite, end the predominance of the favourite; ME: La battaglia propagandistica (The propaganda battle). SD: war. TD: Fight between the candidates through the media; ME: La vittoria del presidente (The president's victory). SD: war. TD: The president fought for his measures and succeeded; ME: Miglior combattente (the best fighter). SD: war. TD: The most tenacious candidate in the presidential elections; ME: Essere comandante in capo (be commander in chief). SD:war. TD: A politician who makes decisions.

Conceptual metaphor: **Politics is sports (game).** ME: Corsa per la nominazione (the race for nomination). SD:sports. TD: Candidates are struggling to win the elections; ME: La politica e' un gioco di potere. (Politics is a power game.). SD: game. TD: Politics brings power to politicians who must know how to cope with it; ME: La politica è come il calcio. (Politics is like football.). SD: sports. TD: Every politician has his own team; ME: Conservare la guida (Keep the lead). SD: sports. TD: Keep the lead in the primaries; ME: Partita giocata dal centrodestra (The game is played by the right center). SD: sports. TD: The center-right party makes its moves; ME: Presentare la squadra (To present the team). SD: sports. TD: Presidential candidates present people from their team; ME: Vantaggio sul rivale (advantage over the opponent). SD: sports. TD: Advantage in the pre-election race; ME: Correre per la Casa Bianca (Run for the White House). SD: sports. TD: Candidates are struggling to enter the White House; ME: La Lega supera Forza Italia. (Le Lega defeats Forza

Italia.). SD: sports. TD: Party la Lega overpowers Forza Italia.

Conceptual metaphor: **Politics is a journey.** ME: Viaggio sulla lunga strada Bianca. (Travelling on the long White road.). SD: journey. TD: Candidates have a long way to win and enter the White House; ME: Cambiare direzione della campagna elettorale (Change the direction of the election campaign). SD: journey. TD: Presidential candidates make some changes in their campaigns to attract more voters; ME: Il ritorno sulla scena politica (Return to the political scene). SD: journey. TD: Candidate returns to politics after a long absence; ME: Lasciare la Casa Bianca (leave the White House). SD: journey. TD: After the election, the former president leaves the White House. ME: Punto di partenza (the starting point). SD: journey. TD: It refers to the beginning of the campaign in the presidential election.

Conceptual metaphor**: Politics is a play (theater).** ME: La scena politica italiana (Italian political scene). SD: theater. TD: The current political situation in Italy; ME: Lo scenario politico (Political scenario). SD: theater. TD: Political situation in presidential elections; ME: Il dramma politico (Political drama). SD: theater. TD: Uncertain situation in the US presidential elections; ME: Lo spettacolo è sconcentrante. (The play is deconcentrating.). SD: theater. TD: Current political situation confuses the voters.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

We have identified in all three languages four structural metaphors: politics is war, politics is sports (game), politics is a journey, and politics is a play (theater). There are two ontological metaphors that were found only in Croatian political discourse: political party is a person and politics is furniture store. The most frequent metaphors in the examples of all three languages are related to war then followed by sports metaphors. We agree with Howe (1988) who claims that these metaphors are largely understood by the public, although it has yet to be researched whether sports (game) metaphors are equally understood by men and women. We can conclude, on the basis of our examples, as well as from the previous research that the world of politics in Croatia, American and Italian political discourse is presented as unpredictable, tumultuous, and even merciless through the frequent use of war metaphors. On the other hand by using sports (game) metaphors politics is slightly differently depicted. It is presented as a contest between opponents who have to follow certain rules, competitiveness is emphasized through these metaphors, but also positive elements such as teamwork in order to achieve a common goal and fair play. Most frequently used metaphors following war and sports metaphors are those related to journey and theatre. Theatre metaphors lead us to the conclusion that political activity is similar to staging a play, which means that everything is prearranged, and that politicians are like actors who have a whole group of people working for them, writing their speeches and programmes. What is more political activity can also be perceived as entertaining or can evoke different intense feelings. Metaphors related to journey are used as frequently as theatre metaphors. Political activity is presented as movement, travel, which can have positive meaning in terms of politicians knowing in which direction they or the country should go, and overcoming different barriers until reaching the final destination. Ontological metaphors identified in Croatian political discourse are formed through personification (political party is a person) and reification (politics is furniture store). Through personification human characteristics, good or bad, are attributed to political parties. Although this metaphor is quite common (Borčić, Kanižaj & Kršul, 2016) we found it only in Croatian political discourse, but it should be noted that ours is small-scale research. Another ontological metaphor found in Croatian corpus is formed through reification (politics is furniture store). Examples of metaphorical expressions related to this metaphor have slightly negative connotations. In Croatia career in politics is perceived as very lucrative, and it is often felt that politicians' goal is oriented more towards gaining good positions than working for the public good, which is confirmed by the examples from our Croatian corpus. We can conclude that metaphorical expressions vary from language to language, but often the same metaphorical expressions appear in all languages. Expressions that frequently recur are victory, attack, battle, race, defense, play, stage and role. Except for two ontological metaphors in Croatian examples, we can say that there is no major difference in the source domains between Croatian, American and Italian political discourse.

Metaphors are an indispensable part of, not just political, but public discourse in general. We all agree that they can change our opinion, confirm our pre-existing view on some political issues, but they can also distort reality. Their actual effectiveness still has to be confirmed, so further research could be oriented towards perception and effectiveness of metaphors among the public in general, but gender differences in the perception of metaphors in political discourse especially should be further researched.

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