

*Piotr Cap*

## METAPHOR AND MANIPULATION

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Metaphors can cheat. Their essence is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” [Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 5], which *in fact* means that they are capable of driving the addressee’s attention away from the literal meaning of the metaphorized notion. Moreover, since metaphorizing usually involves a large proportion of disanalogy between the referents of the metaphorical concept, combined with a slight analogous element, the addressee is given a manipulative incentive to accept the disanalogy on the analogy basis, admitting the creativity of the suggested insight. Taking into account both the inherent properties of metaphor and its pragmatic qualities, metaphorizing can be seen as a powerful instrument for insight imposition, capable of either neutralizing or intensifying the meaning of the conveyed message.

### 2. THE THREE FORCES OF METAPHORIZING [MacCormac 1985]

Metaphorical expressions are instruments for the stimulation of emotions resulting from unusual juxtapositions of conceptual referents within the metaphorical concept. The emotional reaction that they produce (considered as their perlocutionary force) may be different for different individuals according to the context in which the metaphorical expression is received. LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART concept, for instance, may suggest the mutual cooperation aspect but it may also imply that human feelings resemble objects placed on display, the interpretation depending on social context or individual characteristics of the hearer (for

a more detailed analysis of the concept, see Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 149). Both the type of emotion and the image imposed by the concept vary from person to person, whereas the illocutionary force of evoking various forms of emotion from the hearer remains relatively constant.

The imposition of insights triggering emotional response is not the only kind of illocutionary force characteristic of metaphorical expressions. Being perplexed by semantic anomaly, the hearer is naturally forced to wonder how what the speaker suggests may be real. Since love is not literally a work of art, there emerges a necessity for imaginative speculation, gradually leading to the analogy-based comprehension of the conflict among the semantic referents of the metaphorical concept. In other words, diaphoric metaphorizing is a means for attracting the hearer's attention, but the full understanding of the imposed insight can only take place on the basis of recognizing some common referential entailments.

In addition to the illocutionary forces of stimulating emotion and triggering the imaginative speculation on the part of the hearer, metaphorical expressions also possess the force of producing intimacy. The inventor of LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART concept, for instance, becomes united with the hearer in an intimate bond of insight, for once the hearer comprehends the metaphorical expression coined on the basis of the concept, the new approach to the idea of love will be shared by (or, at least, known to) the both sides of the discourse.

To see how the illocutionary forces of metaphorizing in actuality affect the hearer, consider the following expression:

- (1) *If Saddam doesn't change his politics, we're going to carry out another surgical operation on the Iraqi land.*

reported from the White House by one of the CNN correspondents in March '93. Although the noun *land* possesses [-animate] characteristics and *surgical operation* is performed to cure a human being, the presented metaphorical utterance, creative as it may be, is comprehensible even without much context. It becomes clear that particular Iraqi objects (most probably, military installations) will be attacked from the air, since a surgeon operates in a way "over" a patient. It is also visible that the Clinton's administration formulated an act of threat, resorting to a metaphorically coined euphemism. Possessing the illocutionary force of threat, the expression is further strengthened by its colourful and insightful way of conveying the meaning, which unites the "speaker" and the "hearer" in an intimate bond of insight as the "hearer" is perplexed and forced to speculate on the supposed literal consequence of the threat. In this way, the "hearer" is

asked to discover the “speaker’s” exact intention and his internal obligation becomes the very stimulant of emotions. The process of the illocutionary force inference, viewed from Bach and Harnish’s Elaborated Speech Act Schema [1979] perspective, looks as follows :

L1. Clinton is uttering (1)

L2. Clinton means that if Saddam doesn’t change his politics, the US air forces will attack Iraq.

L3. Clinton is saying that if Saddam doesn’t change his politics, the USA will carry out another surgical operation on the Iraqi land.

L4. Clinton, if speaking literally, is asserting that ... (see L3).

L5. Clinton could not (speaking literally) be asserting that ... (see L3).

L6. Clinton is suggesting that if Saddam doesn’t change his politics, the USA will *carry out another surgical operation on the Iraqi land* in the sense that although the Iraqi land cannot undergo a surgical operation literally, it is figuratively seen as a defenceless patient, fixed to the table and exposing its life – sustaining organs (that is, military installations) to the “surgeon”. The relations between *surgical operation* and the American airforce attack include the carefully planned character of both, precision of both, and the UP spatialization of both, which finds its reflection in the existence of the metaphorical concepts HAVING CONTROL/POWER IS UP, BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL/POWER IS DOWN, the concepts remaining relatively implicit in *surgical operation* and explicit in “airforce attack” (for further discussion of the concepts, see Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 15).

L7. Clinton is threatening Saddam Hussein through the suggestion that in case Saddam doesn’t change his politics, the US air forces have worked out a precise plan of attacking Iraq, as a result of which the Iraqi military installations may get destroyed, since there is a clear power advantage on the American side.

### 3. METAPHOR AND MEANING NEUTRALIZATION

The speech act status ascribed to creative metaphorical expressions can be socially extended in terms of exerting an impact upon wider social groups or even whole societies. Pragmatically forceful and semantically neutralizing at the same time, metaphor can be considered as a dangerous instrument of social power, capable of manipulating the public opinion.

Consider again the example of metaphorized threat (1) *If Saddam doesn’t change his politics, we’re going to carry out another surgical operation*

on the Iraqi land. Obviously, Saddam may function as the “hearer” on whom the threat is imposed, but one has to remember that the metaphorical expression (1) comes from political language, which naturally has many potential addressees. Due to the role of mass media, these addressees also become the “hearers” inferring the illocutionary force of political statements. In the presented case, however, their interpretation of the metaphorical expression (1) may differ considerably from the perlocutionary effect exerted upon Saddam Hussein, for the public, functioning as an indirect addressee, is not fully involved in the recognition of the suggested insight. The image of the USA performing a surgery upon Iraq may well trigger a positive reaction, based on the conviction that whatever the “doctor” does is meant to bring back the order in the organism of the “patient”. In this way, a superficial reading of the metaphorical expression (1) may hide its literal aspect, that is, the airforce attack, only implicitly proposed by the image of the *surgical operation*. If one thus considers the statement not only as a metaphorized act of threat imposed on Saddam Hussein, but also as an American attempt at neutralizing the meaning of actions against Iraq on the public scene, it should become clear that the neutralization results from the capability of metaphor for driving the addressee’s attention away from the literal meaning of underlying conceptual referent (on adopting the AIRFORCE ATTACK IS A SURGICAL OPERATION concept, the indirect addressee may no longer be able to recognize the entailments of the first referent).

Another example of the manipulative power of metaphor seems to be much sharper. Consider an expression frequently repeated by Nazi circles before and during the World War II:

(2) *The liquidation of the Jewish question.*

Its metaphorical status remains definitely beyond doubt – one cannot literally *liquidate* any abstract notion. Still, the concept PROBLEM NEEDING SOLUTION IS ENEMY extensively pervades many languages (3) *You have to fight your difficulties*, (4) *Pokonalem trudności* etc.) and it is obvious that the expression (2) *The liquidation of the Jewish question* had also found its conceptual basis in it. In this very case, however, the lost literal meaning, that is, “killing Jews” makes the expression (2) acceptable to the public, the fact being due to its neutralizing and mystifying character. After all, the use of the word *question* suggests some vague scientific approach, which eliminates the possibility of recognizing the [+physical] referent, namely people, behind it.

Pragmatically, the essence of the analysed metaphorical expressions (1) and (2) could be illustrated as follows:

Type of speech act: metaphORIZING  
 Type of illocutionary force: neutralizing,  
 supported by the three natural forces of metaphor  
 [M a c C o r m a c 1985], functioning as acceptance  
 facilitators

As it has already been noted, the presented structure very often finds its linguistic reflection in political language. The power of metaphORIZING subordinated to carrying out a neutralizing perlocutionary effect constitutes a dangerous scheme that parasites on human susceptibility to superficially read slogans. The examples (1) and (2) prove that linguistic creativity on the part of the speaker does not always aim at working out the mutual conceptual understanding, since a tricky imposition of insight may become a powerful instrument of manipulation.

It seems to me that the capability of metaphor for driving the hearer's understanding away from real meaning is sometimes supported by the existence of concepts based on the metonymic relation of synecdoche, that is, A PART standing for THE WHOLE, the capitalized words symbolizing the conceptual referents. I shall now analyse the assumed link, making use of the concept STATE IS PERSON, mentioned by Lakoff in his paper on the language of the Gulf War (distributed in January '91 via computer networks, under the title *Metaphor and War*).

The metaphorical concept STATE IS PERSON is, similarly to PROBLEM NEEDING SOLUTION IS ENEMY, a highly conventionalized item of human semantic memory. A state is conceptualized as a person, engaging in social relations within a world community. It functions in a neighbourhood, whose members have inherent dispositions : some states are seen as peaceful, some as aggressive or irresponsible. They can also be categorized according to health condition, determined by the nation's wealth and economic situation. The latter factor also contributes to the state's maturity image, since, for instance, Third World countries are considered as "undeveloped". Finally, states can be seen as strong or weak, depending on their military potential.

The act of metaphORIZING, when it presupposes the concept STATE IS PERSON, highlights the ways in which states act as units and hides the internal structure of the state, especially the attitudes of particular groups of people or institutions. In the cold war period, for instance, leaders of the USA and the USSR made frequent use of the concept, trying to persuade their nations that the arms race served the "national interest". It

is definitely a person's interest to be physically strong, but the military strength of the state may not always be in the interest of every citizen, for governments finance the military through taxation.

Justifying the use of military force against Iraq in Jan.'91, George Bush not only metaphorically unified the American attitudes towards the Gulf War, but, using the same STATE IS PERSON concept, presented a horrifyingly plain and compact image of the Arab country, simply projecting Saddam Hussein's tyrannous characteristics upon it. As a result, the whole Iraqi society was seen as a cruel oppressor of the weak Kuwait and, almost according to a fairy tale formula, the heroic action against the kidnapper could find its moral justification.

I have analysed cases in which metaphorizing served the purpose of neutralizing the literal meaning of expression. It has been found that although it is the creative aspect of metaphorical formation that helps direct the hearer's attention towards the semantically misleading analysis of the abstract, the manipulation may have its conceptual basis in the existence of conventionalized and therefore semantically accepted concepts, which become gradually able to hide disanalogies between their referents.

#### 4. METAPHOR AND MEANING INTENSIFICATION

In a large number of cases the metaphorical clash of disparate conceptual referents drives the addressee's attention away from pragmatically neutral meaning input, manipulatively strengthening the message. The *Newsweek* magazine from Oct. the 8th, 1990 brings the following metaphorical expression:

(5) *Saddam is sitting on our economic lifeline,*

the words originally used by George Bush in one of Congressional debates over whether the USA should go to war in the Persian Gulf. The statement seems to have been derived from the underlying ECONOMY IS HEALTH concept, which in turn is coherent with the analysed STATE IS PERSON concept. Clearly, the metaphorical expression (5) also serves the objective of justifying the US military actions in Iraq, but this time the act of metaphorizing intensifies, rather than neutralizes, the meaning. The reason for seeking a different type of perlocutionary effect is the need for maximizing the damage done to the American nation, which perfectly goes along with the presented attempts at neutralizing the meaning of consequences of the US actions against Iraq. In the metaphorical expression (5) *Saddam*

*is sitting on our economic lifeline*, the analogy to "pipeline" is evident, and it serves the purpose of presenting the US economy in terms of a living organism in which any serious damage done to the bloodstream may cause death.

The metaphorical expression (5) appears to fit what Lakoff in *Metaphor and War* calls the "Self-Defence Scenario", where "Iraq is villain, the US is hero, the US and other industrialized nations are victims, and the crime is a death threat, that is, a threat to economic health". Interestingly enough, the manipulative quality of metaphors subordinated to the Scenario must have been lower than of those which supported the idea of rescuing Kuwait from the hands of tyrannous Saddam, since finally Bush's administration settled on the second schema, acceptable to both Congress and the public as providing moral justification for going to war (according to the Gallup Poll from Jan. 10, 1991, the question: "Should the American forces engage in combat with Iraq if Iraq refuses to leave Kuwait and restore its former government?" was answered "Yes" by 62% of Americans) (*Newsweek*, Jan. 21, 1991).

An interesting field for the metaphorical meaning intensification is doublespeak of inflated language (Lutz 1989), which is designed to give an air of importance to people, situations, or things that would not normally be considered important. In the USA, for instance, car mechanics are officially called *automotive internists*, which builds up a quasi-medical metaphorical concept MECHANICS ARE DOCTORS, capable of projecting the aura of financially significant prestige upon representatives of a less prestigious, ordinary occupation.

## 5. CONCLUSION

As it can be noticed, all the examples of metaphors provided throughout this paper follow the Lakoffian (1980) double-place conceptual schema. The disanalogous effect of the duality of reference is based on the clash of both conceptual referents. The diaphoric status of some metaphorical expressions adds to their pragmatic force, which can be used as a means for exerting some manipulative powers not only upon the hearer considered as a single person, but mainly upon public opinion, which is exposed to two kinds of insight imposition: either neutralizing the meaning or intensifying it, perhaps sometimes depending on whom the sought justification of actions suggested in the metaphorical statement really concerns.

## REFERENCES

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## METAFORA A MANIPULACJA

Metafora w swej istocie jest pragmatycznym środkiem odwracającym uwagę odbiorcy wyrażenia metaforycznego od dosłownego znaczenia wykorzystanych słów. Powyższemu procesowi sprzyja towarzyszący dysanalogii element analogii mocnych implikacji zestawionych pojęć, stwarzający pole dla dwukierunkowej, neutralizującej bądź intensyfikującej znaczenie, manipulacji językowej. Akceptacje manipulacyjnego wyrażenia metaforycznego ułatwiają trzy inherentne siły illokucyjne metafory, tj. wzbudzania emocji, prowokowania zastanowienia nad sensem przytoczonej anomalii znaczeniowej oraz tworzenia intelektualnej więzi między autorem a odbiorcą wyrażenia metaforycznego.