Identifying and assessing metaphors: the discourse on European future

ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Granada, 14-19 April 2005
Workshop 14: "Metaphor in Political Science"

Draft Paper – Not for Citation

Petr Drulák
Institute of International Relations
Nerudova 3
118 50 Praha 1
Czech Republic

tel. +420 251 108 216
fax. +420 251 108 222
drulak@iir.cz
Introduction

Even though analysis of metaphors has been providing an increasingly popular tool of examining international politics since the early 1990s (e.g. Lakoff 1992; Chilton, Ilyin 1993; Chilton, Lakoff 1995; Schäffner 1995; Musolff 1995; Chilton 1996; Milliken 1996; Hülsse 2003; Luoma-aho 2004; Drulák 2004), the methodological reflection on metaphor has not really started yet within the study of international relations (IR).¹ This paper addresses this lacuna by raising the question of “researching and applying metaphor” (Cameron, Low 1999) in IR studies at the level of both theory and methodology. In this connection, the methodological reflection on metaphor by applied linguistics (ibid.) is taken a useful starting point and a possible source of inspiration.

The paper outlines a methodological approach to the study of metaphor in IR discourse based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The approach aims at the analysis of given area of international interactions in terms of metaphors. Its goal is to sketch the conceptual space of actors in the given area and to show what they deem normal and possible. The results tell us what kind of political action can be facilitated by the discursive structures and, on the other hand, which political actions would lack any discursive embeddedness. In this respect, it differs from alternative approaches to metaphor in IR which start with a given metaphor documenting its impact on a particular area of international relations.²

However, the value added by the metaphorical perspective is shared by both approaches. I identify this added value in three areas especially. Firstly, the distinction between conceptual metaphor and a variety of its metaphorical expressions (Lakoff, Johnson 1980) provides a valuable link between general and particular which makes it easy to apply even a very abstract discursive models in a specific manner. Secondly, as the examination of metaphoricity of seemingly literal expressions shows (ibid.), metaphors are ubiquitous in our language and thinking, and thus their systematic investigation captures an important dimension of political thinking in the given area. Finally, metaphors show us what people say as well as how they say it bringing additional information to the traditional analysis of IR which focuses on content only (Hülsse 2003).

The approach is based on a specific concept of metaphor which is briefly introduced. The very method of researching metaphors is then presented in four steps. Firstly, it has to identify the speech community, the language and the discourse to be researched. Secondly, a network of conceptual metaphors has to be found which covers all the important options of international interactions in

¹ This paper elaborates on Drulák (2004).
² While Hülsse (2003) epitomizes the former approach by looking into the metaphors of the German EU enlargement discourse, Schäffner (1995) provides a nice example of the latter one focusing on the metaphor of stability and its role in the late Cold War, Anglo-American discourse.
the given area which are present in the political discourse. Thirdly, linguistic and political implications of each of the conceptual metaphors need to be elaborated and assessed. Fourthly, the weight of each conceptual metaphor in the discourse needs to be established as a proxy of its influence in shaping the thinking of the political actors. Finally, the paper concludes with a brief summary of applying this approach to the study of the EU constitutional reform.

**What is metaphor?**

There is a variety of different conceptualizations of metaphor and despite the unwavering attention paid to the topic the very definition of metaphor remains contested. All approaches are likely to agree that metaphor is “a device for seeing something in terms of something else” (Burke 1945: 503 quoted in Cameron 1999a: 13). Many conceptualisations also add another defining feature in the shape of “anomaly”, “conceptual incongruity” or “tension” (Cameron 1999a: 20) which are said to characterize the link between something and something else. This feeling of anomaly fits into a commonsensical understanding of the metaphor as a part of figurative language which cannot be taken literally if it is supposed to make any sense.

However, I will argue that this condition is too restrictive and makes us underestimate the shaping power of metaphor within the discourse. Therefore, I draw on a broader conceptualisation of metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) which relies on a distinction between abstract conceptual metaphors and specific metaphorical expressions. Following this, anomalies and incongruities, which indeed accompany many metaphors frequently, are addressed as a result of insufficient sedimentation of metaphors in the discourse. On this basis, metaphors are classified as sedimented, conventional and unconventional.

The conceptual metaphor, such as STATES ARE PERSONS, is an abstract rule or mapping which connects two distinct “conceptual domains” (Lakoff 1993: 208): the source domain, such as the one of PERSONS, and the target domain, such as the one of STATES. Thus, the conceptual metaphor makes us apply what we know about one area of our experience (source domain) to another area of our experience (target domain). It is independent of any specific statement found in language. As Lakoff (ibid.) observes, the conceptual metaphor is a matter of “thought and reason” while “the language is secondary.”

On the other hand, a metaphorical expression is a specific statement which draws on a general conceptual metaphor (Lakoff 1993: 209). While a conceptual metaphor connects conceptual areas, metaphorical expressions provide bridges between constitutive elements of these conceptual areas. For example, the statements “France decided to go to war” and “Germany is our

---

3 From here on, I will use capital letters when referring to conceptual metaphors. Statements which refer just to metaphors without any adjectives apply to both conceptual metaphors and metaphorical expressions.
ally” are two different metaphorical expressions, but both refer to the same conceptual metaphor of STATES ARE PERSONS.

Now, such statement as “Germany is our ally” does not have to be recognized as metaphor by everyone. More likely, most people will see it as a literal statement lacking any incongruity or anomaly. Indeed, our definition of metaphor is broad enough to include plenty of seemingly literal statements especially if they refer to abstract things such as states. The revelation of their metaphoricity is highly valuable as it helps us understand cognitive commitments which are hidden in the seemingly neutral and descriptive language.

How come that some metaphors are treated as metaphors while others are seen as a plain talk? I argue that the sedimentation of metaphor in the political discourse can account for that. The sedimentation depends on a variety of discursive and non-discursive factors, however, ceteris paribus, the longer and the more intensively a metaphor is used, the more likely it is to lose its metaphoricity and to be taken as literal (Hülsse 2003; Lambourn 2001: 9739; Strong 1976/1984: 99). On this basis, sedimented, conventional and unconventional metaphors can be distinguished.4

Sedimented metaphors, such as “France allied with Germany”, are not perceived as metaphors at all, they lack any incongruity and, therefore, they are communicated as literal statements. They are sometimes referred to as “dead” metaphors (Black 1993: 25), which refers to their hidden metaphoricity. Conventional metaphors, such as “The European Union has three pillars”, are recognized as metaphors but they are “automatic, effortless, and generally established as a mode of thought among the members of a linguistic community” (Lakoff, Turner 1989: 55); they do not require any further explanation. In contrast, unconventional metaphors do not function as normal communicative tools, they provide novel insights and as such would not be generally understood in usual communications. Cameron (1999b: 131) speaks about “strong metaphors” which are highly incongruous, novel and in a high cognitive demand. For example, the idea of the EU pillars was firstly introduced in the late 1980s as one of several unconventional descriptions of the future EC (Luoma-aho 2004).5

Sedimented metaphors are part of the common sense understood as the background knowledge which speakers usually assume to be well known by others and hence in no need of clarification. In this respect, they show that despite its being taken for granted as something natural common sense is a construction itself being produced and reproduced discursively (Milliken 1999: 237-240). Sedimented metaphors define normality and the invisibility of their

---

4 For a similar conceptualisation see Hülsse (2003: 219-221).
5 This reminds us that sedimentation is not a straightforward linear process starting with the birth of the metaphor as unconventional, continuing with its becoming conventional and finishing with it being sedimented. The vocabulary of the pillars has been repudiated by the EU draft constitutional treaty and, therefore, it is likely that in a few years time the metaphor will be as unconventional as fifteen years ago.
metaphoricity makes them especially powerful as they mostly remain unreflected in the speech.

In contrast, the metaphoricity of conventional metaphors is clearly visible due to their anomalies and incongruities. However, it is a recognized and well-understood anomaly which does not challenge common sense. In this respect, conventional metaphors differ from unconventional ones which are completely at odds with the rules of common sense. These bring about anomalies by connecting two areas of our experience in a way which common sense does not recognize. These innovative connections emerge from human creativity (Black 1993; Schön 1993; Lakoff 1993; Petrie, Oshlag 1993; Sticht 1993). Schön (1993: 140) uses a nice example of such a creative force of an unconventional metaphor when he speaks about researchers who developed a potentially useful paint-brush which, however, suffered from some seemingly unavoidable problems. Surprisingly, the researchers came up with the solution at the moment when they stopped to look at the paint-brush as simply another sort of brush and started to look at it as if it were a pump. The conceptual metaphor of PAINTBRUSH AS A PUMP then generated several technological innovations.

Now, the conceptual borders between the three kinds of metaphors need to be clarified. This is especially the issue of conventional metaphors which represents a middle ground between sedimented and unconventional metaphors. All the three categories are defined from speaker’s perspective rather than from observer’s. Keeping this perspective one has to ask how speakers distinguish between sedimented and conventional metaphors and how they tell conventional ones apart from unconventional ones. Whereas the first distinction relies on a well-established distinction between literal and figurative language which is embedded in the common sense of the given common of speakers, the second distinction is trickier as it relies on the distinction between different degrees of metaphoricity within the figurative language.

Research on mental processing of metaphors can be helpful in this respect (Gentner, Wolff 2000). The studies on mental processing of metaphors have shown that while some metaphors triggered reasoning processes which led to the construction of the meaning of the metaphor, other metaphors were understood directly without provoking such processes. In other words, at the mental level, some metaphors were processed as literal statements whereas others required additional reasoning. This distinction nicely captures the difference between conventional metaphors which are understood directly and unconventional ones which cannot do without additional reasoning.

Having defined the three kinds of metaphor from speaker’s perspective it has to be taken into account that this perspective may not always be available to discourse analyst. Moreover, even if it can be researched by interviews or by measurements of the speed of mental reactions, it should be complemented by
other methods as well. In this connection, I suggest that from external perspective the distinction between sedimented, conventional and unconventional metaphors could be researched by looking into the frequency of conceptual metaphors measured by the frequency of their respective metaphorical expressions in the discourse. Roughly speaking, while sedimented metaphors are likely to be ubiquitous, unconventional metaphors will be rare, and the conventional ones will be situated somewhere inbetween.

**What discourse and whose discourse?**

Delimitation of the context within which metaphors are researched is an essential step in any study of metaphor. Cameron (1999b: 112) notices that the research always takes place “relative to particular groups and types of discourse context, which may not always be acknowledged.” In this connection, she notices that most studies of children’s use of metaphors are actually based on the norms of the adult language use which then distorts the results. On this basis, Cameron argues that metaphor research, especially the one on non-standard language use, has to take into account norms of the researched speech community as well as individual background knowledge of speakers. Thus, one needs to answer the following question: what discourse are we interested in and who are the participants to the discourse?

Both questions are likely to be answered with respect to the concept of speech community being defined as (Gumperz 1968/1972: 219):

“any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interactions by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant difference in language usage.”

This group of people shares language, experience and common sense in a particular time which are (re)produced in its communication networks. Therefore, speech community usually has a clear social dimension and tends to coincide with specific social units such as countries, tribes or religious groupings (Gumperz 1972: 16).

It is with respect to the specific speech community and its common sense that metaphors are classified as sedimented, conventional or unconventional. For example, statements about pillars of the European union are sedimented in the expert discourse, however, they are likely to be unconventional in the standard language use. Moreover, it is important from IR perspective that speech community can include several languages as long as there is “at least one language in common and ... rules governing basic communicative strategies ...”

---

6 As Low (1999: 55) warns, identification of metaphoricity by researcher alone is dangerous and the information provided by users needs to be treated with caution.
7 Sometimes, the concept of “linguistic community” is used (Lakoff, Turner 1989: 55).
[are] shared so that the speakers can decode the social meanings carried by alternative modes of communication” (Gumperz 1972: 16). In this connection, one can speak about “transnational speech community.”  Again, a network of experts for whom the talk about the EU pillars is a part of literal communication is an example of such a transnational speech community.

The identification of the speech community whose discourse is to be researched is connected with the identification of the area of international interaction to be researched. The decision about the area of study, for example, Czech-German relations, EU institutional reform or American foreign policy, narrows down the range of metaphors to be researched as it defines their target domain. This increased focus is especially valuable given that our conceptualisation of metaphor is very broad in theory, potentially including any kind of statement. However, in practice the research does not address all the metaphors within the given discourse, it deals only with metaphors whose target domain is set by the area of study such as Czech-German relations or EU institutions. Therefore, the research boils down to identifying a variety of source domains which are metaphorically connected with the given target domain.

The identification of the area of study also raises further questions with respect to the speech community as several of these can be researched. Firstly, we can distinguish between participating actors and observing actors. While the former are subjects to the interactions whose discourse is researched, such as Czech and German governments in the area of Czech-German relations, the latter only observe these interactions without being directly involved, for example, Slovak discourse about Czech-German relations. Whereas the latter represents a legitimate area of research, it is only the former discourse which embeds the actual interactions. Secondly, several layers of the actorhood, and, hence, of discourse, can be distinguished generating potentially different speech communities such as government, experts, media or different segments of society. The clarification of the discursive layer is essential as communication in each layer is likely to follow quite different rules which may imply differing classifications of the very same metaphors as sedimented, conventional or unconventional.

Transnational speech communities

In the area of IR, one often faces a choice between the study of a national speech community and a transnational one. However, only rarely is this choice taken seriously enough. Most studies deal with one national discourse, e.g. German discourse on the EU enlargement (Hülsse 2003), and some compare several

---

8 This concept is broader than the concept of epistemic community (Haas 1992) which presumes a high degree of shared knowledge and beliefs among its members. Indeed, all transnational epistemic communities can be understood as kinds of advanced transnational speech communities, however the latter share only the language which makes communication possible and not the opinions which would bring about common standpoints on specific issues.
national discourses with respect to the given area, e.g. the EU in German and British media discourse (Musolff 2003), but there is only a handful of studies looking into an international discourse, e.g. European security discourse (Luoma-aho 2004).

Now, there seems to be a good reason for the dominance of the perspective based on the national discourse. The study of metaphor usually includes a reflection of linguistic structures which are peculiar to the given language. Therefore, it seems only reasonable to focus on the rules of the given national language and on their inner logic when we strive to figure out the often hidden roots of the specific metaphorical expressions and to work out all possible ramifications of the conceptual metaphors. Moreover, the studies which take into account several national discourses in the given area of international interactions point to unbridgeable differences in the national constructions of metaphors even if these metaphors may seem to be quite similar or even identical at the first glance. As Good (2001: 175) reminds one “cannot easily lift words out of context for international purposes and calmly codify, by dusting off the historical and cultural patina which has accreted round them.” A study by Chilton and Ilyin (1993) about different national understandings of the Gorbachev’s metaphor of the European house has become classic in this respect.

All the same, international interactions often bring about a discourse of their own which cannot be identified with any national discourse. In this connection, the sociolinguistic concept of “shared language(s)” can be used. Their speakers shared languages as idioms for communication inside the transnational speech community while using another language outside (Gumperz 1968/1972: 222). Shared languages are likely to be different from standard national languages, they are shaped by functional rather than social or regional factors (Dittmar 1976: 110). They are categorized as “special parlances” which also include administrative codes and trade languages (Gumperz 1968: 469; Gumperz 1968/1972: 227; Dittmar 1976: 110) as two opposing ideal types. While the former, such as Medieval Latin, are used exclusively, by small elites of “a special administrative and priestly classes”(Gumperz 1968: 469), and their use is accompanied by complex rituals, the latter are inclusive as they are supposed to “facilitate contact between groups without constituting their respective social cohesiveness” (Gumperz 1968/1972: 227).

For example, international diplomacy and European integration created their own languages which are guided by their own rules. Even though, to a large extent, either language overlaps with English or French, many of their statements will be unintelligible for many English or French while being well understood by diplomats or civil servants for whom English or French are second languages.

European diplomatic community provides a possible historical example of a transnational speech community with a shared language on the basis firstly of Latin, then of French and currently of English. The diplomatic language itself,
as a shared language, is to some extent independent of the national language on which it is based. Moreover, the community of diplomats is able to “transcend all differences of nationality or language” and to “evolve a form of solidarity and establish certain tacit standards which they all respect” (Nicholson 1969: 40). Sir Harold Nicholson (1969: 122-123) in his classical account of the European diplomacy speaks about “a paper currency of conventionalized phrases in place of the hard coins of ordinary human converse” but adding that the paper currency has a well-known value inside the diplomatic community. Importantly, this value is unlikely to be recognized outside of it. For example, a diplomatic phrase in which a diplomat says that “he must decline to be responsible for the consequences” does not say anything remarkable in the standard language use but it will ring alarm bells among diplomats who know that the phrase means a war threat (Nicholson 1969: 123).

The EU institutions have also produced their own transnational speech community communicating by means of the so-called Euro-speak, “the purpose-built vocabulary of terms to describe (and shape) the reality of the EU” (Christiansen et al. 1999: 541). The relationship between shared language, discursive community and common sense is nicely described in case of the EU by Christiansen et al. (ibid.):

“While actors clash over the meaning of specific issues, the expansion of a unique vocabulary into increasingly common knowledge contributes to bind them together and assists the construction of a European political class.”

From the linguistic perspective, Euro-speak relies on French and English. However, the fact that native speakers of these languages find it useful to translate, for example, French Euro-speak into “normal” French (Gondrand 1991), shows some independence of the shared language of European integration from national languages which constitute it. Arguably, most items of the Euro-speak are just technocratic short-cuts to be found in any institution, they refer to procedures and institutional structures without any impact on thinking about European order and hence without any significance to the present study. All the same, some of them are highly metaphorical, shape the way people think about the EU and result from the international interactions. It is more fruitful to look for their origins in a particular conceptual system rather than in a particular native language. Hence, we can ask whether such notions as “acquis communautaire”, “engrenage”, “methode communautaire”, “pooled sovereignty” or “subsidiarity” (Schmitter 1996b: 133) are English or French, but it will often be more interesting to look into their conceptual background such as neofunctionalism or EU jurisprudence.

How to find conceptual metaphors
Having established the context the network of conceptual metaphors can be identified. This network should provide for the most important discursive options of structuring the chosen area of international interactions. It should tell us which metaphorical models are relevant for the given area coming up with several source domains which are used in the discourse to provide understanding of and to structure the given target domain. The identification of conceptual metaphors results from “a process of interaction between theory and data” (Cameron 1999b: 105). I distinguish two methods of the identification, bottom-up and top-down, to argue that both methods can be integrated into a hermeneutical approach. Following this, the size of the network is addressed. Finally, the implications of the conceptual metaphors are dealt with.

There are two methods for identifying conceptual metaphors (Cameron 1999a: 18). I label them as bottom-up and top-down. Firstly, bottom-up way is based on generalizations from “collected examples of coventionalised metaphors found in the language” (ibid.). The bottom-up approach starts with a variety of specific metaphorical expressions which are then classified into abstract conceptual metaphors. Secondly, the top-down approach starts with a conceptual reflection of mental representations of the given field (ibid.) identifying conceptual metaphors without engaging the discourse at first. Hence, this approach first embraces theoretical reflection generating conceptual metaphors as purely theoretical constructs which are only later matched with specific metaphorical expressions found in the discourse.

Both approaches complement each other in their strengths and weaknesses. The top-down approach offers coherence and completeness. It deduces the conceptual metaphors from a set of abstract principles anchored in the theoretical reflection of the given target domain. Therefore, the resulting metaphors are unlikely to overlap while logically covering all the possibilities. In this respect, it can come up with radically new conceptual metaphors, which are a logical possibility but which have not found their way into the political discourse. Also, it makes it possible to identify sedimented metaphors whose metaphoricity is invisible in the discourse.

However, as it does not engage the discourse directly, the top-down approach does not tell us which of the identified metaphors is actually relevant for the discourse nor does it provide any sufficient basis for associating conceptual metaphors with concrete metaphorical expressions. This is where the bottom-up approach comes in, offering a variety of metaphorical expressions grouped on empirical basis into metaphorical groups associated with conceptual metaphors. However, these bottom-up conceptual metaphors are likely to lack the conceptual clarity, they may leave out important sedimented metaphors and they are unlikely to hint at the possibility of the radical change.9 Ideally, both

---

9 As Deignan (1999: 196) observes, the corpus-based approach which uses the bottom-up way is not particularly useful for the study of innovative metaphor.
approaches should be integrated so that their weaknesses are cancelled out while their strengths are kept.

I argue that the method inspired by the motion within the hermeneutical circle provides such an integration of the bottom-up and top-down approaches. The hermeneutical circle suggests that our understanding of a whole is conditioned by our understanding of its parts while our understanding of its parts is conditioned by our understanding of a whole (Gadamer 1960/1990). The motion in the hermeneutical circle may start with our creating a vague idea of the whole which makes it possible to gain some understanding of its parts. However, this new knowledge brings about a revision of the original idea of the whole which again casts a new light onto the parts which gives a better idea of the whole again and so on. Each round in the hermeneutical circle then deepens our understanding of the subject matter.

Now the network of conceptual metaphors represents an abstract whole which captures features of the discourse while metaphorical expressions represent specific parts of the discourse. On this basis, it can be argued that the bottom-up approach represents a movement from the parts to the whole, the top-down approach epitomizes the movement from the whole to the parts, and each is a half-round of the hermeneutical circle. Thus, the network of conceptual metaphors can be identified as follows. Firstly, the top-down approach generates a network of conceptual metaphors. Secondly, a variety of metaphorical expressions are deduced from these conceptual metaphors. Thirdly, these metaphorical expressions are then compared with metaphorical expressions found in the discourse. Finally, this comparison brings about a revision of the original network of conceptual metaphors and we return to the first step. This process should result in a network of metaphors which are both theoretically sound and empirically relevant.

The identification of the network of conceptual metaphors is connected with the question of its size. How large can this network be? Even though the number of the conceptual metaphors is related to the features of the discourse under study, it is also arbitrary to some extent. On the one hand, it depends on the subject matter in the sense that the more contested the area of study is in the discourse, the higher the number of competing metaphors used for its analysis is likely to be. On the other hand, this number also depends on the level of abstraction at which the conceptual metaphors are identified - the more abstract the conceptual metaphors the lower their number. For example, bilateral relation between two countries can be seen in terms of a WOUND by some and in terms of RECOVERY by others. However, both conceptual metaphors can be subsumed under a more abstract conceptual metaphor of BODY. The choice of the level of abstraction depends on the specific question the researcher asks. However, all the conceptual metaphors within the network should be at the same level of abstraction lest one be subsumed under the other.
Having identified the network of conceptual metaphors, the linguistic and logical implications of each of them need to be elaborated. Firstly, each conceptual metaphor needs to be associated with metaphorical expressions found in the discourse in an unambiguous way so that each metaphorical expression is related to only one conceptual metaphor. Secondly, it should be clarified what the logical implications of each conceptual metaphor are, defining which actions are compatible with it and which ones are not. On this basis, one identifies discursive mantinels to political actions which are implied in the metaphor.

**How to assess the network**

While the identification of the network of conceptual metaphors relied on a qualitative, hermeneutical approach, the assessment of the network, which provides for the weights of the conceptual metaphors, is quantitative. Metaphorically speaking, the network of conceptual metaphors provides us with a sieve through which the political discourse is sifted. By sifting we find out the weights of individual conceptual metaphors in the discourse. These weights allow us to establish influence of each metaphor within the discourse as well as to classify them as sedimented, conventional and unconventional. The resulting weighted network of conceptual metaphors then provides the final result of the metaphorical analysis of the political discourse.

The sifting starts with the determination of the units of analysis to be examined as regards the relative importance of the conceptual metaphors it uses. Following this, each basic unit of analysis is assessed in terms of the relative importance of the conceptual metaphors. On this basis, each basic unit is assigned a specific configuration of conceptual metaphors. Then, these configurations are summarized and features of higher units of analysis, segments and discourse, are established. Finally, these higher units of analysis are examined: sedimented, conventional and unconventional metaphors are identified and segments of the discourse are compared.

The basic unit of analysis is a political speech, an interview or an article. An alternative would be to consider specific statements as basic units. However, this could be misleading as the significance and meaning of the single statements can be assessed only with respect to the whole of the text of which they are part. Other units of analysis are constituted by these basic units. The highest unit of analysis is the one of the whole discourse. However, one can distinguish intermediate units of analysis – segments which consist of more than one basic unit and less than all the units. For example, the discourse on Czech-German relations can be studied as a whole but it can also be divided into Czech discourse and German discourse, or Czech governmental discourse and Czech media discourse, etc.
The assessment of the discursive significance of conceptual metaphors is made at the level of the basic unit, the assessments of the higher units of analysis are derived from these basic unit assessments. The analysis of the basic unit follows the questions which are usually asked when figuring out what was said or written. What is the main message of the speech? What other important issues were mentioned? What is criticised or rejected? Where is the speech ambiguous?

All these questions can be answered with respect to the network of conceptual metaphors examining the extent to which each of these metaphors contribute to the constitution of the speech, article or interview. Hence, each conceptual metaphor can be assessed with respect to the given speech as either dominant or important or also used or absent or rejected. Sometimes, it happens that the conceptual metaphor is both embraced and rejected within the same unit of analysis. Such a metaphor is then assessed as ambiguous.

In principle, these assessments rely on the frequency of metaphorical expressions within the unit of analysis which are associated with the particular conceptual metaphor. The more frequently a conceptual metaphor appears in the text, the more important it is expected to be for the speaker. However, this quantitative approach may sometimes need to be qualified by a more qualitative perspective which also takes into account the extent to which particular metaphorical expressions are associated with the main idea of the speech. For example, metaphorical expressions which appear in the title are more important than others.

On this basis, each conceptual metaphor is assessed with respect to its significance within the basic unit of analysis. If two conceptual metaphors are used with a comparable significance in the speech then both are assigned the same assessment. Each unit of analysis is then characterized by a set of assessments reflecting the significance of each conceptual metaphor in the network. The assessment of each basic unit can be made by means of an overview table. The number of columns of the overview table is determined by the size of the network of conceptual metaphors (M) and the number of rows is given by the number of assessment categories (six plus one for total). The overview table consists of binary values whereby 1 means that the given conceptual metaphor is classified within the prescribed category. The value of one has to appear once and once only in each column so that the assessment of the metaphor is unambiguous.

Overview table

---

10 In their investigations of metaphors of language teaching Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 168) also use the frequency to assess the significance of metaphors in discourse. Similarly, they refer to three categories distinguishing a dominant metaphor (42 out of 95), an important metaphor (16 out of 95) and other important metaphors (2-3 out of 95).
The overview table reflects the analysis of the basic unit. However, it also provides a data for the summarization which makes it possible to characterize higher units of analysis as well. After analyzing the whole of the discourse, one ends up with N overview table whereby N is the size of the discourse (number of the basic units). The summarization consists in summing up the the data from overview tables. For example, it tells us how frequently the conceptual metaphor no. 1 appears as important in the discourse. The frequency table summarizes overview tables across N.

Frequency table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>conceptual metaphor 1</th>
<th>conceptual metaphor 2</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>conceptual metaphor M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dominant</td>
<td>0 or 1</td>
<td>0 or 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 or 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important</td>
<td>0 or 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also used</td>
<td>0 or 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absent</td>
<td>0 or 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rejected</td>
<td>0 or 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambiguous</td>
<td>0 or 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 or 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The values of x are frequencies of the occurrence in the discourse. For example, x(1,a) tells us how often we come across the conceptual metaphor no. a as dominant in the discourse. These frequencies serve as indicators of the weight of each conceptual metaphors within the network with respect to the whole of the discourse or with respect to its segment.

How to read the frequency table? Each reading is based on the comparison of the frequencies and these can be compared either in a row or in a column. Firstly, comparisons within the same row hint at sedimentation patterns. Thus, the sedimented metaphor should clearly dominate while being uncontroversial. Therefore, it will be metaphor which is closest to satisfying the following condition:
max x(1,a) and min x(5,a) and min x(6,a), where a is from 1 to M.

In contrast, unconventional metaphor is unlikely to be used frequently. Therefore, it will be metaphor which is closest to satisfying the following condition:

max x(4,a) and min x(1,a), where a is from 1 to M.

Moreover, unconventional metaphors are likely to reach high values in the third row (being merely mentioned) while they are unlikely to be rejected too frequently; because of their unconventionality they do not provide a convenient foil. Finally, conventional metaphors are likely to be frequently used in both positive and negative sense. Therefore, we are looking for metaphors which are closest to satisfying the following condition:

max x(2,a) and max x(5,a) and max(6,a), where a is from 1 to M.

Secondly, comparisons within the same column provide a useful check on the classification of metaphors arrived at by the comparisons within the row. Thus, if a conceptual metaphor no.1 is a sedimented metaphor, then x(1,1) + x(2,1) should be close to N, while x(3,1) + x(4,1) + x(5,1) + x(6,1) should be negligible. Similarly, if a conceptual metaphor no.1 is an unconventional metaphor, then x(3,1) + x(4,1) should be close to N. Finally, if a conceptual metaphor no.1 is a conventional metaphor, then both x(1,1) + x(2,1) and x(5,1) + x(6,1) should be relatively high, while x(3,1) + x(4,1) should be negligible.

However, what if this check fails and some of these conditions do not hold? Even though such a failure may point to a flaw in the research design, it can also hint at the segmentation of the discourse whereby individual segments use the very same conceptual metaphors in a different way. For example, whereas the given metaphors is treated as sedimented by one group of discourse participants, it can be used as conventional by others. Thus, the classification check may reveal a segmentation within the discourse which was not assumed a priori.

The segments are analysed in the same way as the whole of the discourse. Thus, each segment is assessed by means of frequency table which allows for the classification of conceptual metaphors with respect to the segment. However, segments can also be compared with one another and with the whole of the discourse. These comparisons can take place at two levels. To start with, one compare differing classifications of conceptual metaphors as sedimented, conventional and unconventional. However, this can be too rough and sometimes a more subtle comparison may be needed. This can be done by directly comparing frequency tables themselves. To be able to compare the
distributions of frequencies, they need to be normalized somehow. Therefore, I introduce relative frequencies $p$ which are defined as follows:

$$p(a,b) = 100 \times \frac{x(a,b)}{N \times M}$$

where $N$ is the size of the discourse segment and $M$ is the size of the network of conceptual metaphors.

Relative frequency can be understood as an estimation of the probability of the occurrence of the given metaphor in the given capacity within the discourse. Thus, $p(1,1)$ tells us how likely the conceptual metaphor no. 1 is to appear as dominant in the given segment. Hence, relative frequency table can be easily calculated on the basis of the frequency table.

Relative frequency table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>conceptual metaphor 1</th>
<th>conceptual metaphor 2</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>conceptual metaphor M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dominant</td>
<td>$p(1,1)$</td>
<td>$p(1,2)$</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>$p(1,M)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important</td>
<td>$p(2,1)$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also used</td>
<td>$p(3,1)$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absent</td>
<td>$p(4,1)$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rejected</td>
<td>$p(5,1)$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambiguous</td>
<td>$p(6,1)$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$p(6,M)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>100/M</td>
<td>100/M</td>
<td>100/M</td>
<td>100/M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the analyses based on the comparisons of values of $x$ can be done with respect to the values of $p$. However, the relative frequencies ($p$) from different tables can be mutually compared, as long as they refer to the same network of conceptual metaphors, which is not the case of absolute frequencies ($x$).

The relative frequency tables tell us to what extent the weights of the same metaphors differ and overlap with respect to different discursive segments. The analyses of overlaps helps us establish the identity of individual segments. Now, overlap can be defined in two ways – relatively and absolutely. Firstly, the relative overlap compares the relationships of equality and inequality. For example, we compare two segments, $p$ reflects relative frequencies within the first segment and $r$ reflects relative frequencies within the second segment. The relative overlap is then defined by two conditions:

1. $p(a,b) \geq p(a,c)$ is equivalent with $r(a,b) \geq r(a,c)$, for all $a$ from $<1, 6>$ and for all $b,c$ from $<1, M>$, and
2. $p(a,b) \geq p(c,b)$ is equivalent with $r(a,b) \geq r(c,b)$, for all $a,c$ from $<1, 6>$ and for all $b$ from $<1, M>$. 
Secondly, the absolute overlap compares the relative frequencies themselves. It is defined as follows:

\[ p(a,b) = r(a,b), \text{ for all } a \text{ from } <1, 6> \text{ and for all } b \text{ from } <1, M>. \]

While the relative overlap implies a strong structural similarity between the two segments, the absolute overlap points to their complete structural identity. Now, the absolute overlap is a theoretical possibility which is unlikely to materialize in practice. However, it provides us with a yardstick against which the deviations can be measured. Limited deviations from the absolute overlap, which do not disturb the relative overlap, tell us about subtle differences of emphasis between the two segments.

On the other hand, deviations from the relative overlap, if numerous, may point to deeper structural differences between the two segments suggesting existence of fundamental differences of perspectives between the groups of discourse participants. The first condition of the relative overlap is more important than the second one as it refers to the comparisons within the same row on whose basis the sedimentation patterns are established. In this respect, this condition can be further specified in the sense that one only compares the distribution of row maxima and row minima in the table while abstracting from the comparisons of other relations of (un)equality. In this connection, a soft overlap can be defined as a condition under which the row maxima and minima are distributed in the same way in both tables which guarantees the shared identification of sedimentation patterns.

**Conceptual metaphors of European future**

I use the case of the European finality debate to demonstrate how the outlined methodology can be applied in practice. The finality debate, which preceded the European Convention and the European Constitutional Treaty, generated hundreds of contributions reflecting on the nature of the European Union and its future. The analysis is supposed to answer two questions. Firstly, how does the weighted network of conceptual metaphors of the EU look like? Secondly, what are the segments of the debate and how do they differ? The limits on space do not allow for a full presentation of the analysis which can be found elsewhere (Drulák 2004). Therefore, I only outline its major steps and present some of the results.

**What discourse and whose discourse**

The European finality debate was a pan-European debate. Not only did all the leaders of the EU member states and most of the leaders of the then EU candidate countries take part in the debate, but it also provoked a flood of
proposals by representatives of civil society. Therefore, it is analysed as debate within the transnational speech community of European integration. Within this community I focus on the highest state representatives looking into 74 speeches of the political leaders of EU member and EU candidate countries.\(^1\) Hence, I study the discourse of European leaders assuming that they communicate in a shared language of European integration.

**Finding the network**

The identification of the network of conceptual metaphors starts top-down with examining major theories of European integration which cover most of the conceptual space of reflection of European integration: realism, liberal intergovernmentalism, federalism, neofunctionalism, institutionalism, multi-level governance perspective and postmodern approaches. On this basis, I identify the conceptual metaphors of the EU as MOTION, EQUILIBRIUM, CONTAINER, and NEW MIDDLE AGES.

The metaphor of MOTION is a bit peculiar and hence its brief discussion is in order. The Western thinking is not used to seeing the world in terms of motions and flows. Its categories are based on the model of container – a steady, closed entity with clear borders (Lakoff 1987). Given the problems we have thinking in terms of motions rather than terms of containers, we are forced to fit most things into the container metaphor. Instead of being conceptualized as a motion, the EU is conceptualized as a series of snap-shots, which temporarily halt the motion. These snap-shots are then filtered through the usual common sense, which results in labels which are either empty (“unidentified political object”, “ever closer union”), hybrid (“between super-state and international

organization”), or self-contradictory (“international state” or “federation of sovereign states”). These strange expressions are the result of attempts to understand motion by means of conventional language and therefore they should be considered as metaphorical expressions of the metaphor of MOTION even though they do not point to it directly.

Now, the bottom-up move is needed to revise these metaphors. I make two steps in this respect. Firstly, I compare the identified conceptual metaphors with the results of a grand-scale research of the metaphorical corpus of the British and German media discourse (Musolff 2001). It turns out that a significant part of this corpus is accounted for by “path/movement/speed metaphors” (Musolff 2001: 179-181), addressing the EU in terms of for example trains, ships, bicycles, which corresponds to the conceptual metaphor of the EU AS MOTION. Moreover, the metaphors of EQUILIBRIUM and CONTAINER can also be related to a variety of of metaphors gained from the corpus. In contrast, no metaphorical expressions hint at the metaphor of NEW MIDDLE AGES. Secondly, I look into the speeches to find metaphorical expressions which are not covered by the four metaphors. On this basis, another metaphor of Europe is found which conceptualizes the EU as a JOINT-STOCK COMPANY.

Hence the final network consist of four conceptual metaphors of the EU: MOTION, EQUILIBRIUM, CONTAINER and JOINT-STOCK COMPANY. These conceptual metaphors are related with the metaphorical expressions used in the speeches as follows.

EUROPE AS A MOTION

The MOTION is expressed by vocabulary which refer to journey (e.g. “new steps”, “leaps forward”, “moving forward”, “brave steps into uncharted territory”, “avoiding a drifting off course”), to speed (e.g. “accelerate the integration”, “slowing-down the train”), to moving objects (e.g. “new locomotive”, “the flame of Europe”) or to change and to motion in general (e.g. “constant changes”, “continuous process”, “future direction of integration”, “permanent treaty-making”, “never-ending circle of treaty change”, “avant-garde”).

Moreover, as argued, this conceptual metaphor relates to a variety strange expressions used to describe Europe. Several metaphorical expressions are part of the Euro-speak (e.g. “community method”, “Monnet method”, “supranational method”), some stress what was achieved so far (e.g. “keeping institutional balance”), others refer to Europe being unique (e.g. “a unique construction”, “sui generis institutional framework”, “a super-power of its own kind”) and still others point to hybrids and oxymorons (e.g. “constitutional treaty”, “pooling sovereignty”, “sharing sovereignty”, “sharing powers”, “federation of nation states”, “super-power but not superstate”).

EUROPE AS A CONTAINER
The metaphorical expressions of CONTAINER understand the EU in terms of building or its parts (e.g. “European edifice”, “foundations”), in terms of a homogeneous space (e.g. “forging Europe”, “unification”, “abolition of dividing lines”, “single judicial area”), or in terms of body (e.g. “being at the heart of Europe”). Moreover, this category also includes all the explicit comparisons between the EU order and the internal order of the state (e.g. “European constitution”, “European foreign minister”, “separation of powers”, “checks and balances”, “federal model”, “European sovereignty”, “European society”) as well as statements which describe the EU as an actor (e.g. “being a driving force”, “speaking with one voice”, “European general interest”).

EUROPE AS AN EQUILIBRIUM OF CONTAINERS
The EQUILIBRIUM metaphor can be expressed in the traditional vocabulary of interstate relations (e.g. “balance of power”, “treaty” instead of “constitution” or “constitutional treaty”, “alliance-building”, “balanced institutional arrangements which serve the interests of all member states”, “co-operation between member states” or “partnership of democratic states” instead of their “integration”), in vocabulary which addresses the interaction of states and their mutual position (e.g. “contending national interests”, “equality between member states”) and in vocabulary tackling states as supreme actors (e.g. “restoration of former sovereignty”, “directoire”, “democracy is rooted in states”).

EU AS A JOINT-STOCK COMPANY
“Europe able to deliver”, “ownership of Europe by citizens”, “mission statement of Europe”, “added value of Europe”.

What are the implications of the network? The metaphor of a MOTION makes it possible to think about the EU as an ongoing process without any final goal. It is at odds with the ideas of European finality, European borders or European agency. The metaphor of a CONTAINER provides a conceptual bridge between state institutions and structures, on the one hand, and the EU institutions and structures, on the other. The EU is then conceptualised as a sort of imperfect state. The metaphor of an EQUILIBRIUM emphasizes the role of nation states as true agents of the European integration while being at odds with European agency and continuing integration. The metaphor of a COMPANY focuses on efficiency of the integration considering the EU as a provider of all sorts of services.

Weighted networks

The identified network of conceptual metaphors has been applied to all 74 speeches. Each speech has been considered as a basic unit of analysis. The summarization has been done at the level of the whole of the discourse and at
the level of two segments: discourse of EU members and discourse of EU candidates. The results are summarized in the three relative frequency tables. The discussion of the results starts with the whole of the discourse whose features are summarized in the Table 1.

Table 1: The EU finality debate (relative frequency table in %, N=74)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>motion</th>
<th>container</th>
<th>equilibrium</th>
<th>company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dominant</td>
<td>16 max</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9 max</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also used</td>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>5 max</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absent</td>
<td>0 min</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22 max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rejected</td>
<td>0 min</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 max</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambiguous</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 max</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The patterns depicted in Table 1 reveal a clear classification. The discourse is based on a sedimented metaphor of MOTION, two conventional metaphors of CONTAINER and EQUILIBRIUM, and an unconventional metaphor of COMPANY. The distribution of row maxima and row minima does not suffer from any inconsistencies in columns which would disturb the classification. However, the column comparison is valuable as it points to differences of use of the two conventional metaphors. Namely, the metaphor of EQUILIBRIUM seems to be more contested than the one of CONTAINER. An extreme rarity of unconventional metaphors is also worth of notice.

Even though the analysis of the discourse does not signal the presence of segments, as there are no inconsistencies between rows and columns, a comparison of EU members and EU candidates is worthwhile. These two segments are analysed in the tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: EU members (relative frequency table, N=43)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>motion</th>
<th>container</th>
<th>equilibrium</th>
<th>company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dominant</td>
<td>17 max</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9 max</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also used</td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td>6 max</td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td>6 max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absent</td>
<td>0 min</td>
<td>0 min</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19 max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rejected</td>
<td>0 min</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7 max</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambiguous</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 max</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: EU candidates (relative frequency table, N=31)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>motion</th>
<th>container</th>
<th>equilibrium</th>
<th>company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dominant</td>
<td>14 max</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8 max</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also used</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 max</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absent</td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25 max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rejected</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambiguous</td>
<td>0 min</td>
<td>8 max</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What has been said about sedimentation, and about the position of sedimented and unconventional metaphors with respect to the whole of the discourse equally applies to the discourses of both EU members and EU candidates. However, the two segments differ with respect to the position of the two conventional metaphors. Briefly, while EQUILIBRIUM is more contested than CONTAINER in EU members discourse, it is the other way round in EU candidates discourse. This difference can be found out by both absolute and relative comparisons. Hence, it points to deeper structural differences between the discourses. Interestingly, EU candidates did not reject any conceptual metaphor nor did they use any unconventional metaphor.

How can these results be interpreted given the implications of the conceptual metaphors? Firstly, even though the original goals of the debate were to provide the EU with a clear finality and to come up with new, unconventional ideas about Europe, the debate itself was dominated by a metaphor which contradicts the very idea of finality while hardly any unconventional metaphors appeared. Hence, our limited sample suggests that the finality debate might have been a business as usual rather than a great leap forward. Secondly, there were no fundamental differences between the EU members and the EU candidates as far as the perspectives of the EU are concerned. All the same, EU candidates were relatively more reluctant to see the EU as an imperfect state, they instead prefered the model of the EU as a group of states which tended to be rejected by the EU members. The unwillingness of the EU candidates to explicitly reject anything may be put down to their strategic considerations. Namely, they might have tried to avoid an open criticism of anyone’s pet project lest their accession be jeopardized.

**Conclusions**

The method which has been outlined in this paper can contribute to a clearer methodological reflection of metaphor in the empirical study of IR. The metaphorical discourse analysis is divided into three steps. Even though all the
steps are informed by a dialogue between applied linguistics and IR research, it
is in the first step that the applied linguistical perspective is the most prominent.
Thus, the analysis starts with the identification of the speech community which
should be researched. The identification of the area of international interactions
is necessary but it is not sufficient as long as it is not clear which layers of the
discourse and which participants to the discourse are to be examined. The
concept of speech community helps us to clarify this and to avoid an unreflected
mixing in one analysis of contributions which are subject to differing discursive
norms.

The second step is hermeneutical and it brings about the network of
conceptual metaphors. The hermeneutics mediates between a data-based,
bottom-up identification of metaphors and a theory-based, top-down
identification. The very concept of network provides for a plurality of
conceptual metaphors in the discourse rather than focusing on a single
conceptual metaphor, as some IR studies do, which is then seen as the metaphor
which rules over the given area. However, this plurality makes it necessary to
assess, rank and compare the identified conceptual metaphors with one another.

These assessments are done in the third, quantitative step. The
quantification is based on the frequencies of metaphorical expressions related to
the set of conceptual metaphors. These frequencies are primarily measured at the
level of individual contributions to the discourse such as speeches, interviews or
articles. However, they are then summarized at the level of the whole of the
discourse or at the level of its segments. These frequency summarizations yield
the characteristics of discourse or its segments in terms of metaphors. Also, the
distributions of frequencies of various segments can be compared pointing to
differences between groups taking part in the discourse.

On this basis, discursive conditions of political action can be established.
However, the political action also includes non-discursive elements which
cannot be addressed by this approach. Moreover, the identification of discursive
conditions relies on the assumption that conceptual metaphors indeed structure
their target domains in coherent ways which may not be the case everywhere.
Despite these limitations, a link between metaphors, discourse and political
action has been established by previous studies in IR and the outlined method
could contribute to the further study of this link.
Literature:


