How elites talk about their political career: Metaphors in spontaneous and informal political discourse

HEYVAERT Pauline (Université de Liège & Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium)
« The Walloon government ... I assimilate it to a Formula One where you have 9 people to drive a racing car towards victory, you have 7 people who step on the accelerator and 2 who activate the handbrake, so it is not easy.»
Introduction: research questions

1. do politicians use metaphors in spontaneous and informal discourse
2. if so, when;
3. why do they use these metaphors

Based on metaphor use → determine how politicians position themselves personally as well as their careers within the political dynamics of their country
Theoretical framework

1. Steen’s three-dimensional model (2008)

2. Deliberate metaphors

Theoretical framework: Steen’s three-dimensional model (2008)

- **Linguistic level**: direct vs. indirect
- **Conceptual level**: conventional vs. novel
- **Communicative level**: deliberate vs. non-deliberate

Metaphors
Theoretical framework: Deliberate metaphor

- **Origin:** *The Paradox of Metaphor* (Steen, 2008)
  - Processing of metaphor by **comparison** versus by **categorization**
  - Contemporary theory of metaphor offers a two-dimensional model of metaphor analysis: language & thought
    → at the cost of the communicative dimension of metaphor
  - Solution to paradox: three-dimensional model: language, thought and communication
  - A metaphor that “is expressly meant to change the addressee’s perspective on the referent or topic that is the target of the metaphor, by making the addressee look at it from a different conceptual domain or space, which functions as a conceptual source” (Steen 2008: 222)

« Deliberate metaphors are perspective changers » (Steen, 2011)
Theoretical framework: Article Perrez & Reuchamps (2014)

- Proposes to apply **Steen’s three-dimensional model** of metaphor analysis in communication to corpus of political discourse: **citizen discourse**
- Group discussions about Belgian federalism
- Dutch- and French-speaking citizens
Theoretical framework:
Article Perrez & Reuchamps (2014)

- **Findings:**
  - citizens use various **conceptual domains** to make sense of political phenomenon (Belgian federalism)
  - high proportion of **deliberate metaphors** $\rightarrow$ citizens do rely on conscious comparisons between conceptual domains in order to explain their opinion and possibly make their case more convincingly
  - **distinction** between non-deliberate and deliberate metaphors $\rightarrow$ suggests various degrees of saliency of conceptual domains in terms of which the citizens make sense of abstract political processes
Methodology

Data

- Biographical interviews conducted with Walloon politicians (French-speaking)
- Describing their personal political career within the political dynamics of their country
- 24 Walloon Members of Parliament from 4 political parties
- Length of corpus: +- 196 300 words
Methodology

Metaphor identification

- MIPVU procedure (Steen et al., 2010)
  1) Read entire corpus → global understanding of content
  2) Determine lexical units
  3) Search by terms referring to different source domains (e.g. battle, construction, relationships, etc.)
     ➡ 744 relevant contexts
  4) Basic meaning of lexical unit ↔ meaning in context (electronic version of *Le Petit Robert 2016*)
     ! As suggested by Steen (2010): historical meaning
     ➡ 673 metaphorical contexts
Methodology

Metaphor categorization

- Steen’s three-dimensional model (2008)

1. Linguistic dimension: direct versus indirect metaphors

Is the cross-domain mapping between the source and the target domain explicitly expressed or not?

**Direct:** « [...] and beyond this, on a strategic plan, it is a bit like a nuclear weapon: it’s having it without ever using it. »

**Indirect:** « We can imagine discussing texts that give a more structural skeleton to Wallonia, but that is not today’s priority. »
Methodology

Metaphor categorization

- Steen’s three-dimensional model (2008)

2. Conceptual dimension: novel versus conventional metaphor

If the meaning of the metaphorically used expression is listed among the conventional definitions in the reference dictionary → conventional

If not → novel

**Conventional:** «I want to **defend** my region much more, even if it’s on a federal level.»

**Novel:** «The Francophones are the **backpack filled with rocks** of the Flemish.»
Metaphor categorization

- Steen’s three-dimensional model (2008)

3. Communicative dimension: deliberate versus non-deliberate metaphor

To what extent do the metaphorically used expressions match Steen’s (2008) definition of deliberate metaphor? To what extent can we identify their function in communication (e.g. clarify one’s conceptualization of abstract entities, aim to convince one’s conversation partner, …)

**Deliberate:** «We are a team, all players must be on the field and shoot in the same direction. If there is one person who shoots in their own camp, it won’t work.»

**Non-deliberate:** «And yet, that is my fear given the current configuration: the Flemish had the opportunity to build their historical identity.»
Methodology

Metaphor categorization

- Steen’s three-dimensional model (2008)

3. Communicative dimension: deliberate versus non-deliberate metaphor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct &amp; novel</th>
<th>Indirect &amp; conventional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct metaphors: explicitly point to the speaker’s intention of presenting one conceptual domain in terms of another</td>
<td>Match Steen’s definition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel metaphors: involve new, original mappings between two domains</td>
<td>If not → immediate context of metaphorical expression: several references to same source domain? If so, considered as deliberate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⇒ more disposed to be considered as deliberate
Methodology

Metaphor counting

« Politicians often have a discourse which I call the handlebar discourse. This means ... it is as if a racing cyclist would do the ‘Flèche Wallonne’ without looking far ahead and would just keep on riding. »

- Every single lexical unit = considered as independent metaphorical unit
Results: overall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphorical</th>
<th>Non-metaphorical</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>673</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90,46%</td>
<td>9,54%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **DIRECT**
  - Metaphorical: 92,27%
  - Non-metaphorical: 6,54%
  - Total: 91,68%

- **INDIRECT**
  - Metaphorical: 93,46%
  - Non-metaphorical: 8,32%
  - Total: 91,68%

- **CONVENTIONAL**
  - Metaphorical: 7,73%
  - Non-metaphorical: 92,27%
  - Total: 93,46%

- **NOVEL**
  - Metaphorical: 9,54%
  - Non-metaphorical: 90,46%
  - Total: 90,46%

- **DELIBERATE**
  - Metaphorical: 8,32%
  - Non-metaphorical: 91,68%
  - Total: 91,68%

- **NON-DELIBERATE**
  - Metaphorical: 6,54%
  - Non-metaphorical: 93,46%
  - Total: 93,46%
## Results: deliberate metaphors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Deliberate</th>
<th>Non-deliberate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
<td><strong>617</strong></td>
<td><strong>673</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: deliberate metaphors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Deliberate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>56 deliberate metaphors</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Link between direct and/or novel metaphors & deliberate metaphors = more easy to assume
- Our results:
  - 5 cases of deliberate & indirect metaphor (8.93%)
  - 18 cases of deliberate & conventional metaphor (32.14%)
Results: deliberate metaphors

Deliberate and indirect (but novel):

«To last in politics, you must first settle durably on a local level, instead of wanting to ‘do the shooting star’, that’s one thing.»

Deliberate and conventional (but direct):

«One of the major problems of Belgian federalism, is that there are two of us and, eventually, we just look at each other all the time; it’s not me, it’s you.»

Deliberate, indirect and conventional:

«And Flanders, nothing can be done ... I came to the realization, you cannot make a wedding if both aren’t consenting. I don’t know, what do you think? »
## Results: Source domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Domains</th>
<th>Deliberate</th>
<th>Non-deliberate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td></td>
<td>310</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path/movement</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personification</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human body</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disease</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life &amp; death</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>56</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: Source domains
Results: Source domains

- Battle: 155 sources
- Construction: 310 sources
- Container: 5 deliberate, 2 non-deliberate
- Nature: 5 deliberate, 2 non-deliberate
- Sports: 22 deliberate, 1 non-deliberate
Results: target domains

Percentage of metaphors per target domain

- Institutions: 62%
- Political life: 38%
Results: Gender

Total number of metaphors (out of 673)

Man: 498 (74%)
Woman: 175 (26%)
Results: Gender

Number of deliberate metaphors (out of 56)

Man: 49 (87.5%)
Woman: 7 (12.5%)
Results: Gender

Source domains

- Game
- Other
- Battle
- Pain/movement
- Construction
- Container
- Human body
- Drama
- Everyday life
- Life & death
- Machine
- Disease
- Nature
- Personification
- Relation
- Religion
- Sports

Men
Women
Results: Gender

Source domains

- Game
- Other
- Path/ movement
- Container
- Human body
- Drama
- Everyday life
- Life & death
- Machine
- Disease
- Nature
- Personification
- Relation
- Religion
- Sports

Men vs Women
Use of diverse conceptual domains to make sense of the political dynamics of their country (Battle, construction, sports, relationship, etc.)

Deliberate metaphors: 8.32%
- Suggests that – even in spontaneous and informal discourse – politicians rely on conscious comparisons between domains to explain their perception of the political dynamics

Comparison between deliberate and non-deliberate:
- Suggests different degrees of saliency of conceptual domains

Results = similar to results of Belgian citizen discourse (Perrez&Reuchamps, 2014)
Conclusion

- Usefulness of applying Steen’s three-dimensional model of metaphor analysis
  - Particularly when analysing metaphor in political discourse (elite, citizen, media, etc.)

  Special focus on deliberate metaphors

- Further work: apply Steen’s three-dimensional model to corpus consisting of interviews with Scottish Members of Parliament
Thank you!

HEYVAERT Pauline (Université de Liège & Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium)
Researching and Applying Metaphor (RaAM)
July 2016, Berlin