Metaphors in Belgian political discourse: a new look on the identification of deliberateness

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Outline of the presentation

1. Goal of the talk
2. Personal background
3. Starting point of the project: *The Paradox of Metaphor - Deliberateness* (Steen, 2008)
4. Outline of the project
   a. Intro
   b. Aim
   c. Methodology
   d. Data
5. Conclusion
Goal of the talk
Personal background

Master

Germanic Languages and Literature
(Dutch – English)

Thesis: How French-speaking learners of Dutch talk and gesture about placement events

PhD

Research project ADAPOF: A Discursive Approach to the Paradox of Federalism
(Supervised by Julien PERREZ & Min REUCHAMPS)

Ongoing projects: Belgian Federalism is a Tetris, Basic Income, Citizens’ panel, etc.

Linguistics ❤️ Political Science
1st year as PhD

- Work on shared projects ADAPOF

- Discovery of the Paradox of metaphor and distinction between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphor

- Application of Steen’s three-dimensional model to Belgian political corpus:
  “Metaphors in spontaneous political communication: A case study of the use deliberate metaphors in informal political interviews”
Starting point of the project:
*The Paradox of Metaphor – Deliberateness*

Most metaphor are processed by **lexical disambiguation**, and not by **comparison**

**Solution to this paradox:** 3-dimensional model of metaphor analysis

1. Linguistic level: direct versus indirect
2. Conceptual level: conventional versus novel
3. Communicative level: deliberate versus non-deliberate
The idea of deliberate metaphor = hotly debated issue in literature

➡️ especially from theoretical point of view
➡️ need for empirical work on how the notion of deliberate metaphor may be conceived

➡️ treat deliberateness “as an empirical question” (Steen, 2011)
Metaphors in Belgian political discourse: a new look on the identification of deliberateness

Not all metaphors = equal

| metaphors which are produced/perceived as metaphors = more likely to activate + ratify certain properties of a particular representation (→ deliberate) |
| metaphors which constitute the type of language use that people usually use to talk about certain topics will not have the same effect (→ non-deliberate) |
A few examples...

But we can truly support them. That is our historical responsibility. It's an important support we're going to provide [...]  

There are two ways to do politics and run a country, like there are two ways to steer a ship. Either your only concern is to keep the ship floating, without specific beacon, without a specific purpose. You just keep on floating in a direction whatsoever. Or you have a mission, a vision, a dream. You have a clear purpose in mind, even if you know that you sometimes may have to venture wild waters and severe storms.

Today's policy statement is build on the same foundations. But determination and thoughtfulness do not mean anything without the third foundation of this policy statement: commitment.
Aim of the project

Instead of determining whether metaphor = potentially deliberate (yes/no)

take different approach by means of extensive corpus analysis

⇒ list a criteria which can be taken into account as potential indicators to distinguish

- metaphors which are produced/perceived as metaphors = more likely to activate + ratify certain properties of a particular representation

- metaphors which constitute the type of language use that people usually deploy to talk about certain topics will not have the same effect
Aim of the project

Instead of binary opposition (deliberate versus non-deliberate): continuum

Today’s policy statement is build on the same foundations. But determination and thoughtfulness do not mean anything without the third foundation of this policy statement: commitment.

But we can truly support them [...] It’s an important support we’re going to provide.

There are two ways to do politics and run a country, like there are two ways to steer a ship. Either your only concern is to keep the ship floating, without specific beacon, without a specific purpose. You just keep on floating in a direction whatsoever. Or you have a mission, a vision, a dream. You have a clear purpose in mind, even if you know that you sometimes may have to venture wild waters and severe storms.
Methodology

1. Application of MIPVU to corpus

2. DMIP: identification of potentially deliberate metaphors

3. Determining degree of deliberateness
   3a. Use of criteria described in Krennmayr (2011)
   3b. Additional criteria
Methodology

1. Application of MIPVU to corpus

- Bilingual corpus Dutch – French
- Dutch: Pasma (2011)
- French: “under construction”

⇒ Problems?

Need for specificity about operationalisation issues and identification decisions
Methodology

MIPVU: Dutch


- Dictionary: *Van Dale*

Some issues:
- Polywords: 1 or separate lexical units?
- Nouns defined by nominalisation: e.g. « achteruitgang » vs. « vooruitgang »
- SCVs: e.g. « draaien om » vs. « omdraaien » ⇒ SCVs = 1 lexical unit
- Expressions: « terug op gang trekken », « aan de macht komen », etc.
Methodology

MIPVU: French

What dictionary should be used?
- *Le Petit Robert* (electronic version)
- Depending on dictionary → entries can differ → results can differ (cf. Reijnierse 2010, 2011)

Some issues:
- Compounds: « Gasfabriek » vs. « Usine à gaz »
- Multiword expressions:
  - « winkelen » vs. « faire des courses »
  - « door » vs. « à cause de » / « à travers »
Methodology

Conceptual analysis $\Rightarrow$ Use of WMMatrix

- Decide on suitable domain labels for SD and TD

- “Lexical fields can provide an initial point of entry into (...) conceptual domains” (Steen 2007, p. 190)

- Semantic fields & lexical fields $\neq$ conceptual domains, but closely related
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## Methodology

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2. DMIP: Deliberate Metaphor Identification Procedure (Reijnierse, 2017)

« There are two ways to do politics and run a country, like there are two ways to steer a ship. Either your only concern is to keep the ship floating, without specific beacon, without a specific purpose. You just keep on floating in a direction whatsoever. Or you have a mission, a vision, a dream. You have a clear purpose in mind, even if you know that you sometimes may have to venture wild waters and severe storms. »

⇒ is source domain part of referential meaning of the utterance?
Methodology

3a. Use of criteria described in Krennmayr (2011, p. 154-155)

- Is the metaphorical unit **signalled** (e.g. by a simile or other signalling device)?
- Is the metaphorical unit in the **form of A = B**?
- Is the metaphorical unit **expressed directly**?
- Is the metaphorical unit **novel**?
- Is the metaphorical unit **surrounded by metaphorical expressions from compatible semantic fields**, which are somehow connected?
- Is the metaphorical sense of the unit particularly **salient** through, for example, alluding to the topic of the text?
- Does the metaphorical unit participate in **word play**?
- Does the metaphorical unit **elicit rhetorical effects** such as, for example, persuasion or humor?
3b. Additional criteria

- **Frequency** (high frequency vs. low frequency, even hapax)
- **Need for conversational inferences** (to what extent do we need to have context in order to understand what is said)
- **Possibility alternatives:**
  
  Few or no alternatives possible ⇒ strongly shared, low saliency vs.
  
  Alternatives = available ⇒ activate one representation over another
“The temperature rises” vs. “Belgian Federalism is a Tetris game”

- High frequency as MRW
- No need for conversational inferences to understand
- Few alternatives possible to say the same
- Strongly shared

- Tetris as MRW = very novel, very rare, low frequency
- Need for conversational inferences, need for context in order to be understood
- Alternatives are available
- Metaphorical sense is not lexicalized, not strongly shared
Combination of steps mentioned previously:

⇒ describe use of deliberate metaphor based on systematic identification of a large number of metaphors in discourse

⇒ quantitative and qualitative perspectives:
  - quantitative: provide insight into distribution and frequency of DM in language use
  - qualitative: manifestations of DM to analyse functions and forms of DM
Political discourse = ideal:

Situated in a space of “conflicts” between representations of topics and issues

Lends itself quite naturally to the use of metaphors that are likely to highlight and activate certain properties of particular representations
Data: Belgian political discourse

- **Chosen corpus**: Belgian governmental declaration
- **Timespan**: 2006 – 2016 (10 years)
- **Size of corpus**: approximately 1 million words
Brief overview
June ‘07: Federal elections
⇒ Negotiations to form governmental coalition
⇒ Characterized by disagreement between Dutch- and French-speaking parties: need and nature of constitutional reform
⇒ Political crisis

November ‘07: Negotiations are still ongoing
⇒ Longest formation period in Belgium

December ‘07: Interim Government
⇒ 194 days without government

March 20, 2008: New government
Prime Minister: Yves Leterme

At that moment: political, economic and ideological instability

**June ’10: Federal elections**
⇒ Widen gap between political parties

- Wallonia: PS (left-wing party)
- Flanders: N-VA (right-wing party)

**December 25, 2010:**
⇒ 195 days without government

**February 17, 2011:**
World record: 249 days of political crisis

**December 6, 2011:**
New government with Elio Di Rupo as Prime Minister
⇒ 541 days without government

Second Belgian political crisis (2010 – 2011)
Agreement regarding the Sixth State Reform is reached: 
*Butterfly Agreement*
May 2014: Federal elections

⇒ Beginning of new government with Charles Michel as Prime Minister

“Swedish Coalition”

⇒ 1 French-speaking party (MR) + 3 Dutch-speaking parties (N-VA, CD&V, Open Vld)
⇒ surprising and novel majority
Overall analysis of the corpus

- Adapted version of MIPVU: other years
  - not taking into account all lexical units
  - concordance search to find potentially relevant context
  - to what extent is it necessary to fully apply MIPVU?
- Further analyse MRWs with DMIP
Extra: “in-between cases”

Metaphorical

Deliberateness

In-between cases
Extra: “in-between cases”

“In-between” cases

“Wafelijzerpolitiek” (waffle iron politics); “Usine à gaz” (gas plant)

➢ Not MRW according to MIPVU
➢ Yet, not without importance in political discourse
Conclusion

- Define deliberateness in terms of degree ⇔ yes/no
  - Contribution to ongoing debate on deliberate metaphors

- Use of extensive political discourse (10 years, 1 million words)

- Linguistic + conceptual + rhetorically-oriented + discourse-analytical approaches

- Still some methodological issues left:
  - MIPVU
  - WMatrix
  - Additional criteria
  - ...

- Provide material for further research on existence of deliberate metaphor
Thank you!

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