ABSTRACT

In political discourse, which is described as a complex domain, metaphor functions as a useful tool for understanding and interpreting the world of politics. Within a Cognitive Linguistic framework, the main purpose of this thesis was to study metaphor as a conceptual process. In this connection, the thesis is fundamentally based on the theory of conceptual metaphor that was first discussed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and later developed and expanded by these authors, among others, at Berkeley and elsewhere (e.g. Grady, 1997, 1999; Grady & Johnson, 2002; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Ruiz de Mendoza, 1999, Ruiz de Mendoza & Otal, 2002; Sweetser 2000).

We have analysed 130 conceptual metaphors whose linguistic realizations have been extracted from two magazines: Time and Newsweek. The analysis makes use of a mixed inductive-deductive method. This has enabled us to identify new aspects of metaphorical language and has provided evidence for new hypotheses. First, we have considered the generic metaphors studied by Lakoff and his colleagues and proved that “The Event Structure Metaphor” includes mappings which are not only dependent on the idea of a journey but also involve others concepts such as sports, gambling, war, meals, medical practice, partnership, mission. We have thus discovered three generic-level metaphors: ACTIONS ARE EVENTS, ACTIONS ARE ACTIONS and ACTIONS ARE STATES. We also assessed the role of certain cognitive mechanisms, such as enrichment between image schemas and propositional models; we have supplied evidence in favor of the existence of a conceptual continuum between structural and ontological metaphors on the one hand, and between metaphor and metonymy on the other; in this respect, we have studied a number of interaction patterns between metaphor and metonymy, and have discussed and observed the prominence of one of them, the metonymic expansion of metaphorical source. Second, we have been able to determine the role of experiential grounding in some current metaphors in the language of politics (e.g. POLITICAL POSITIONS ARE LOCATIONS, POLITICAL PURPOSES ARE DESIRED OBJECTS). As a final parameter, we have been able to show that metaphor has an important role in determining the performative value of many expressions.