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CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN ECONOMIC DISCOURSE OF SERBIAN AND BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Milica Bogdanović

University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
milica.bogdanovic@ef.unibl.org

Abstract: This paper explores conceptual metaphors in the realisation of the word *economy* in Serbian and English economic newspaper articles. The aim is to identify all conceptual metaphors that describe the word *economy* in both corpora, determine their similarities and differences on a cognitive and linguistic level, and show values attributed to the word *economy* on a pragmatic level. Our research has shown that the word *economy* is metaphorically conceptualised mostly as a LIVING ORGANISM, OBJECT, MECHANICAL PROCESS, CONTAINER, VERTICAL MOVEMENT and BUILDING in both corpora. The results of the analysis have proved that Serbian and English show great similarities regarding linguistic expressions and their conceptual metaphors that describe the word *economy* due to the fact that they are based on universal bodily experience. However, since the process of the word meaning construction is dynamic and inseparable from the culture in which it originates, we have found certain differences that are reflected in different linguistic expressions, different conceptual metaphors and different aspects of the word *economy* that are emphasised.

Keywords: *cognitive linguistics; conceptual metaphor; economy; economic discourse; English; Serbian.*

1. Introduction

Figurative language has traditionally been considered a feature of rhetorical and poetic expression, while today's research places metaphor at the center of the human cognitive system. Cognitive linguists who study metaphor believe that metaphor is not only a figure of speech and object of language, but part of the conceptual system, thought process and everyday way of expression (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). As a special type of mental and neural mapping, it determines the way of thinking and expressing, both verbally through linguistic realisations of metaphors, and non-verbally through images and gestures (Grady, 2010).

The basic assumption of cognitive linguistics that metaphor is ubiquitous in everyday life - both in language and in the thought process - indicates that our conceptual system is also metaphorical in nature. Linguists see the basic function of metaphor in understanding one thing in relation to the other. Metaphor

is used to explain less familiar and more abstract concepts with the help of more familiar and concrete concepts. According to the theory of conceptual metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), a metaphor is considered to be the mapping of the *source* and *target domains*. In its structure, the source domain represents a more concrete and understandable concept based on our experience, which maps some features to a more abstract and difficult to understand target domain. For example, in the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, the source domain is *travel* and the target domain is *love*. This mapping is not done randomly, but follows the laws of systematicity and coherence. This type of metaphor is called a *conceptual metaphor*. On the other hand, linguistic realisations of a conceptual metaphor are called *metaphorical linguistic expressions*. For example, the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR is most often realised through the linguistic expression *He attacked every weak point in my argument* which illustrates the understanding of an argument by means of war, where one does not mean physical conflict, rather a verbal conflict with opponents who attack other people's arguments, prepare strategies and win or lose the argument in the end (Kövecses, 2010).

Understanding conceptual metaphors requires a certain type of experience. Bodily experience is the basis for understanding metaphors and for Lakoff & Johnson (2003) it is organised in the form of image schemas, that is, experiential content (*gestalt*). One of the challenges for the theory of conceptual metaphors was the question of the experiential basis. Addressing the problem of experience, Joseph Grady (1997) divided metaphors into primary and complex, whereby complex metaphors consist of primary metaphors which are based on the mutual relationship of subjective experience with physical experience. It is this experiential basis that makes the primary metaphor potentially universal (Kövecses, 2010).

Another aspect of influence is culture and its values which are deeply embedded in every culture. Investigating the influence of culture on understanding the world, Kövecses (2010) proved that the bodily experience is not homogeneous, but consists of different aspects that, depending on the culture, are distinguished and emphasised. For example, the conceptualisation of anger in English is based on pressure and heat due to an increase in skin temperature and blood pressure, psychologically correlated with anger. Therefore, in English this conceptual metaphor includes liquid within the body as a container and the element of heat as the characteristic of liquid. However, in Chinese anger is presented as energy contained within the body in the form of the gas. This indicates that Chinese people rely on different aspects of their psychology and is explained by cultural references to Chinese medicine and the Five Elements theory that still influences Chinese. These different experiential focuses lead to the emergence of partly universal and partly culturally specific concepts, while the differences in the categorisation of source and target domains, and thus in naming conceptual metaphors, are proof that culture and bodily experience are inseparable.

2. Conceptual metaphor in economic discourse

The research of conceptual metaphors in economic discourse gained importance due to the fact that one of the characteristics of economic discourse is

metaphoricity. Numerous authors are of the opinion that metaphor is an important feature of economic discourse (Charteris-Black, 2004). Many terms in economy are metaphorical, e.g. inflation, expansion, depression, etc. Research by linguists (Bratož, 2004) showed that mechanical and organic metaphors as well as spatial ones appear most often. For example, a well-functioning economy is represented as a machine that performs well and efficiently, or as a living organism that is in good health. Regarding spatial metaphors, economic processes are delineated as vertical and horizontal movements. Other metaphors that appear most often in the economic discourse come from the domain of sports, warfare, competition, and the like (Koller, 2004). The problem of metaphors in the newspaper articles of economic discourse was addressed by Radić-Bojanić & Silaški (2012) in their comparative analysis of English and Serbian, where they indicated universalities and differences in the conceptualization.

Metaphors are used to explain numerous dynamic changes in society. They represent the basic linguistic tool that helps people adapt to these changes (Charteris-Black, 2004). However, given that metaphors map and emphasise only certain properties of the source, while reducing or hiding others, they also have a great persuasive power (Silaški et al., 2009). Thus, metaphorically coloured language of economic discourse carries certain judgments that can influence the reader when understanding economic relations and problems. The literature lists three main functions of metaphor in economic discourse: textual decoration or illustration, a central organising principle of language and a tool for exploring specific economic problems, and a basis for expanding the domain of economic ideas (Henderson, 1986 in Skorczynska & Deignan, 2006, p. 95).

Metaphor also plays a role in expanding vocabulary. Its generative aspect implies the creation of new terms, directly or indirectly taken from other fields, which express economic ideas. For example, the terms taken from the field of hydraulics are: *liquidity, flow, leakage, money circulation, floating exchange rate* and the like (Henderson, 2004, p. 358). The power which metaphors have is mostly reflected in their choice. When economists or reporters want to describe the economy as an active agent or themselves as experts who are able to predict economic processes, they rely on *animate metaphors*. On the other hand, when they do not want to present themselves as experts because they lack knowledge about external influences or want to present market events as natural forces that are out of control, they use *inanimate metaphors*.

Our research deals with conceptual metaphors that appear when conceptualising the word *economy* in economic newspaper articles in Serbian and English. The first assumption is that in both corpora we will find a large number of similar primary metaphors that arise from the universal bodily experience of the world which the process of meaning construction is based on. Another assumption is that the influence of culture and different attitudes of the speakers will lead to the emergence of variations in conceptual metaphors. Our analysis is based on the classification of cultural variations established by Deignan et al. (1997). They divided metaphors into four types: the same conceptual metaphor and equivalent linguistic expression, the same conceptual metaphor but different

linguistic expression, different conceptual metaphors, and words and expressions with similar literal meaning but different metaphorical meaning. Considering that the first type of metaphor does not reflect cultural differences, in our paper we will discuss the other three types in more detail.

3. Methodology and linguistic corpus

Since the aim of this research is to compare the conceptual metaphors that determine the word *economy* in the economic discourse in Serbian and English, the material consists of two corpora composed of Serbian and British newspaper articles. When it comes to Serbian newspapers, we opted for Политика, while we found the material for the analysis of metaphors in British in *The Economist*. In both cases, we searched the archives of the online editions of the newspapers for 2019. The key words in our search for metaphors were *ekonomija*, *ekonomije* and *ekonomski* (economy, economies, economic) in Serbian newspaper articles, that is, *economy*, *economies* and *economic* in English newspaper articles.

In the further course of the analysis we had to determine the meaning of the word *economy* in both languages. According to the dictionary Речник српскога језика published by Матица српска (2011, pp. 328-329), the word *ekonomija* has four meanings, of which we included only one meaning of the noun “economic system; economic activity, economy” and one meaning of the adjective “related to the economy, economic”. In our analysis of the Serbian corpus we also included the word *privreda* (*economy*) which is defined as “a set of activities related to the production, distribution and circulation of products” (Речник српскога језика, 2011, p. 1019). Namely, the English word *economy* was previously translated as *privreda* in Serbian, while the word *economics* was translated as *ekonomija* (Ekonomski rečnik, 2006). In the last twenty years, the word *economy* has been increasingly translated as *ekonomija*, and, over time, the meaning of the words *ekonomija* and *privreda* has become equal in use. On the other hand, *Collins CoBuild Dictionary* (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com>) states that the word *economy* has eight meanings. For the purposes of this study, we chose two meanings of the word *economy* which say it is “the system according to which the money, industry, and trade of a country or region are organized” and “the wealth that it gets from business and industry” and one meaning of adjective *economic* “concerned with the organization of the money, industry, and trade of a country, region, or society”.

After that it was necessary to determine the metaphoricity of the expression in discourse, that is, to differentiate the metaphorical expressions from nonmetaphorical expressions. We opted for the most commonly used MIPVU method developed by a group of authors named *Pragglejaz group* (see more in: Steen et al., 2010). In order to avoid intuitive conclusions and ambiguity in determining the basic meaning of lexical items, in our research we used dictionaries Речник српскога језика (2011), *Ekonomski rečnik* (2006), *Englesko-hrvatskosrpski rječnik* (Filipović, 1970), *Collins CoBuild Dictionary* (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com>), *Oxford Online Etymology Dictionary* (<https://www.etymonline.com>) and *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (<https://www.ldoceonline.com>).

By analysing the material we found out that the corpus of articles in Serbian contains 216,144 words, while the corpus of articles in English consists of 287,832 words. One reason the English corpus contains more words than Serbian is the length of articles, and the other is the fact that the English corpus consists of articles which make a higher word count. From the total number of words in the articles, 2,237 metaphors were singled out, of which 1,388 metaphors are in Serbian and 849 metaphors are in English. Although the corpus in English contains more words and longer texts on average, the corpus in Serbian showed a higher frequency of metaphors. By reviewing the articles, all expressions that more closely define the word *economy* were singled out. After that, with the help of MIPVU procedure, metaphors were separated from non-metaphorical expressions and a list was compiled in both corpora. Our research confirmed the expectation that certain conceptual metaphors will appear in both corpora, such as ECONOMY IS A PATIENT (Serbian corpus with 37 metaphors and English corpus with 41 metaphors), ECONOMY IS A PLANT (Serbian corpus with 337 metaphors including growth metaphors which can relate both to plants and humans, and English corpus with 65 metaphors including growth metaphors), ECONOMY IS A VEHICLE (Serbian corpus with 19 metaphors and English corpus with 17 metaphors), etc. The reason is partly the same experiential basis that is reflected in the primary metaphors, but also the fact that some articles in Serbian were taken from British and American magazines. Given that the authors of the articles come from different cultures, certain differences are also expected. As we have already stated, according to Deignan et al. (1997), cultural differences are reflected on three levels: the same conceptual metaphor but different linguistic expression, different metaphors and different metaphorical extensions of the same expression, whereas the fourth type of metaphors, that is the same conceptual metaphor with equivalent linguistic expression, does not reflect cultural differences. Therefore it is not included in our research.

4. Results and Discussion

As already mentioned, in our analysis of metaphors in both corpora we found 1388 metaphorical expressions in Serbian language, while 849 metaphors were found in English language. These expressions are categorised according to the source domain they belong to. Our research has shown that the source domains we found are similar in both corpora. The word *economy* is metaphorically conceptualised mostly as a LIVING ORGANISM (Serbian corpus contains 834 metaphors, while English corpus contains 336 metaphors, which presents 60% and 39, 57%, respectively), OBJECT (Serbian corpus contains 101 metaphors, whereas English corpus contains 137 metaphors, presenting 7, 27% and 16, 13%, respectively), MECHANICAL PROCESS (Serbian corpus with 66 metaphors and English corpus with 103 metaphors, presenting 4, 75% and 12, 13%, respectively), CONTAINER (Serbian corpus with 67 metaphors and English corpus with 85 metaphors, presenting 4, 82% and 10%, respectively), VERTICAL MOVEMENT (Serbian corpus with 20 metaphors and English corpus with 32 metaphors, presenting 1, 44% and 3, 76%, respectively) and BUILDING (Serbian corpus

with 40 metaphors and English corpus with 21 metaphors, presenting 2, 88% and 2, 47%, respectively) in both corpora. Serbian corpus contains metaphors whose source domains are ENVIRONMENT, MIRACLE, MUSIC, NATURAL DISASTER, ROAD and WATER, which are not found in English corpus. On the other hand, English corpus includes metaphors with the source domains CARDS and LANDSCAPE which are not represented in the Serbian corpus. Due to the limited space in the paper, we will explain the most common conceptual metaphors and their source domains.

By analysing the most frequent source domain LIVING ORGANISM (Serbian corpus with 834 metaphors and English corpus with 336 metaphors, presenting 60% and 39, 57%, respectively) and the conceptual metaphor ECONOMY IS A LIVING ORGANISM in English and Serbian corpora, we discovered that in both corpora the economy is represented as a human being, animal or plant in terms of growth, physical appearance, strength, health, mental states, emotions and relationships with other entities. For example, a successful economy is conceptualised as a strong and healthy organism, while a bad economy is depicted as a weak organism.

...gives market confidence that the **economy** will keep up its strength.
(*The Economist*, 22 Aug.)

SAD imaju snažnu ekonomiju i relativno visoku stopu rasta BDP.

(Политика, 9 Sept.)

(The US has a strong economy and a relatively high GDP growth rate.)

In addition, the cyclical movements of the economy are described by linguistic expressions such as *thriving*, *buoyant* and *prosper*s indicating the phase of prosperity or economic boom, while the expressions *on the brink of recession* or *stagnation* show the phase of depression and decline in activity.

Metaphorical expressions that describe the economy as an object in the conceptual metaphor ECONOMY IS AN OBJECT (Serbian corpus with 101 metaphors and English corpus with 137 metaphors, presenting 7, 27% and 16, 13%, respectively), as the second most frequent conceptualisation in both languages, delineate economy as an object that has its own shape and size, competes on the market, and is divided into parts, that is, into different sectors. The size of the economy determines the strength and the position on the world market. Therefore, the bigger the economy, the more powerful and influential it is.

Povećanje carina i neizvesnost trgovinskih politika najvećih ekonomija najpre utiču na investicije... (Политика, 9 Nov.)

(The increase in tariffs and the uncertainty of the trade policies of the largest economies first affect investments...)

Sentiment is coloured by the travails of Germany, the currency zone's largest economy... (*The Economist*, 14 Nov.)

The third most frequent source domain in Serbian corpus and the fourth in English, includes linguistic expressions that form the conceptual metaphor ECONOMY IS CONTAINER (Serbian corpus with 67 metaphors and English corpus with 85 metaphors, presenting 4, 82% and 10%, respectively). By means of the preposition *in*, this metaphor most often depicts the economy as a space that has its own boundaries. These metaphors are a reflection of our everyday experience with the boundaries of a space and its physical containment. The activities that take place in the economy as a container are mostly related to biological and mechanical processes. For example:

Dodaje da će se rast zarada značajnije osetiti u ekonomiji. (Политика, 27 March)

(He adds that the increase in wages will be felt more significantly in the economy.)

...growth in the euro area has lagged behind that in other advanced economies... (*The Economist*, 24 Jan.)

Mechanical metaphors, as the fourth most frequent source domain in the Serbian corpus and the third most frequent source domain in English corpus (Serbian corpus with 66 metaphors and English corpus with 103 metaphors, presenting 4, 75% and 12, 13%, respectively), depict the economy as a machine or a vehicle that works independently if certain rules are followed. Its efficiency shows the success of the economy, measurable by performance and results. In other words, a successful economy is a machine that works well, while the problems of the economy are expressed as problems of the machine or a vehicle.

Donald Trump's trade war has not derailed the **global economy**. (*The Economist*, 9 May)

Nemačka ekonomija plavi kroz problematične vode. (Политика, 25 July)

(**German economy** is sailing through troubled waters.)

The source domain BUILDING (Serbian corpus with 40 metaphors and English corpus with 21 metaphors, presenting 2, 88% and 2, 47%, respectively), is a very common domain that more closely describes the abstract target domain ECONOMY in terms of vertical movements. These expressions were found in both corpora. However, the number of expressions is greater in Serbian corpus. In BUILDING metaphor, language expressions that reflect the primary metaphor UP IS GOOD point to the importance of solid foundations and stability of the building, and they are used to describe a strong economy. Expressions like *support*, *stabilise*, *bolster* in the English and *počiva na* (*based on*) and *podržimo* (*support*) in the Serbian corpus form a conceptual metaphor A STRONG ECONOMY IS A BUILDING WITH A SOLID FOUNDATION.

Efforts to stabilise an **economy** often lead to booms in asset prices...
(*The Economist*, 26 Jan.)
...a danas je Srbija zemlja sa stabilnom ekonomijom. (Политика, 5 Feb.)
(...and today Serbia is a country with a stable economy.)

In accordance with the primary metaphor DOWN IS BAD, the problems and failures of the economy are projected using expressions such as *shaky* and *undermine* in English, that is *podriva* (*undermine*), *destabilizuje* (*destabilise*), *razaranje* (*destruction*) in Serbian.

...neuspeh u rešavanju trgovinskih tenzija mogao dodatno da destabilizuje usporavanje **svetske ekonomije**. (Политика, 21 Jan.)
(...failure to resolve trade tensions could further destabilise the slowdown in the **world economy**.)
...faces with shaky economic indicators... (*The Economist*, 4 July)

In both corpora, a number of metaphors of the source domain VERTICAL MOVEMENT are noted (Serbian corpus with 20 metaphors and English corpus with 32 metaphors, presenting 1, 44% and 3, 76%, respectively). This domain is very significant because it conceptualises economic movements as vertical movements of an object. This type of spatial metaphors can also be found in other source domains, such as LIVING ORGANISM, BUILDING, and FLYING. Linguistic metaphors of the source domain VERTICAL MOVEMENT are based on the primary metaphors UP IS GOOD/DOWN IS BAD, and accordingly they create conceptual metaphors UPWARD MOVEMENT IS A GOOD PERFORMANCE OF THE ECONOMY and DOWNWARD MOVEMENT IS A BAD PERFORMANCE OF THE ECONOMY. In other words, the good functioning and progress of the economy is expressed by verbs and nouns that have an upward trajectory, such as *rebound*, *bounce back*, *rise*, *boost*, *emerging*, *uzlet* (*takeoff*) and *uspon* (*rise*). The poor functioning of the economy in the English corpus is represented by verbs and nouns that have a downward trajectory, for example *stumble*, *plunge*, *go down*, *fall*, *downturn*, *fallout* and *slump*, but also by adjectives like *sagging* and *sluggish*, and in the Serbian corpus by nouns such as *sunovrat* (*plunge*), *pad* (*fall*) and *posrtanje* (*stumbling*). In accordance with the results of the research by Charteris-Black & Ennis (2001), which showed that movements take place in the air, on water and on the ground, we also found similar examples in both corpora.

Now imagine the **world economy** goes into a tailspin. (*The Economist*, 16 Feb.)
A cela priča o zaduživanju Grčke je poučna za Srbiju u najavljenom **ekonomskom usponu**. (Политика, 30 July)
(And the whole story about borrowing by Greece is instructive for Serbia in the announced **economic rise**.)

Despite numerous similarities, certain differences were found in the Serbian and English corpora, and they relate to the frequency and different linguistic expressions within the same conceptual metaphor, as well as to words and expressions with similar literal meaning but different metaphorical meaning.

First, the frequency of metaphors of the source domain LIVING ORGANISM is much higher in the Serbian corpus than in the English corpus. The reason for this is the large difference in the number of expressions related to economic growth (322 examples in the Serbian corpus compared to 56 examples in the English corpus) and development (133 examples in the Serbian corpus compared to 57 examples in the English corpus), which indicates that growth and development are one of the key problems of the Serbian economy. Another reason is the translation of the English word economy as *privreda* and *ekonomija* in Serbian.

Second, in the conceptual metaphor ECONOMY IS A LIVING ORGANISM, the corpus in English shows a larger number of linguistic expressions that include parts of the body than in Serbian (English corpus with 18 metaphors and Serbian corpus with 8 metaphors, presenting 2, 12 % and 0, 57 %, respectively). In both corpora, these expressions illustrate the activity of the economy. While in the English corpus these expressions represent action verbs that imply a certain part of the body, such as *choking off* and *stomach*, in the Serbian corpus the expressions are represented exclusively by nouns, such as *srce* (*heart*) and *glas* (*voice*). Among these expressions, the expression *bloodless* appears only in the corpus in English and can be characterised as culturally specific. Namely, Western culture is still under the influence of Hippocrates' humoral theory about the four fluids that determine the four temperaments. An imbalance of fluids in the body that causes the presence of a larger amount of blood is characteristic of sanguine. On the other hand, the absence of blood indicates that the organism has ceased to function. Also, the Serbian corpus abounds in metaphors that include the term *siva ekonomija* (*grey economy*), which were not found in the English corpus. In organic metaphors, *grey economy* is presented as a disease that must be suppressed and prevented, and the conceptual metaphor that the expression makes is ECONOMY IS A DISEASE.

Third, by comparing the linguistic expressions in the mechanical metaphors in both corpora, it was observed that in the Serbian corpus, the changes occurring in the economy and indicating a new model of functioning in the future are shown by the expression *ekonomska integracija* (*economic integration*), which is not found in the corpus in English.

Fourth, in the container metaphors, linguistic expressions in the English corpus do not provide much information about the container, but they give much more details about the activities that take place in the economy as a container and mostly refer to mechanical and biological processes. In Serbian, the economy as a container is also described with little general information, but the expressions related to the activities are much more diverse compared to the English corpus. They include activities related to sports, warfare, vertical movements, speed, building and the like.

Fifth, regarding different metaphors and their extensions, we found examples in the English corpus. As already mentioned, the container metaphors in the English corpus describe the economy in relation to the activities that take place in it. Among the biological metaphors, the expression *had a hand* was observed, which was metaphorically extended to help and participation, thus creating the conceptual metaphor HELPING AND PARTICIPATING IS GIVING A HAND.

He has undoubtedly had a hand in Japan's tentative **economic recovery**...
(*The Economist*, 17 April)

Finally, at the pragmatic level our research has shown the similarity in the choice of the aspects of the economy that are emphasised in both languages, for example, in the mechanical metaphors showing successful economy as a well functioning machine. On the other hand, organic metaphors in Serbian language delineating economy as a disease that should be suppressed and prevented reflect views and emotions of speakers. Therefore, the pragmatic role of metaphor is unquestionable and deeply rooted in the culture from which it originates.

5. Conclusion

In our research we analysed the conceptualisation of the word economy based on the metaphors from the economic discourse in Serbian and British newspaper articles. Corpus analysis confirmed the assumptions about the existence of similarities and differences in linguistic expressions and their conceptual metaphors regarding the word economy. The issue of universality and cultural variations is one of the most complicated issues in conceptual theory as there are certain “cultural filters in each language that filter biological features to a particular conceptual domain” (Dobrovolskij & Piirainen, 2005, p. 16). Thus, by using different linguistic expressions within the same metaphor, it is possible to focus on different aspects of the economy. Different expressions and metaphors indicate different views of cultures. As Cameron & Deignan (2006) state, metaphors arise from the two-way interaction of language and thought, whereby various factors such as beliefs, attitudes, values and emotions of the participants play a major role in the emergence of certain types of metaphors. Culture is inseparable from language, and metaphors, created for various discourse purposes, in addition to their ideological content, impose attitudes and emotions of members of social and cultural groups. Our analysis has proved the indivisibility of linguistic, cultural and social factors that participate in the process of meaning construction.

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