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METAPHORS OF ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRISIS: IDENTIFIED, INTERPRETED AND EXPLAINED

The aim of this study is to analyze how the economic and financial crisis in Lithuania is metaphorically conceptualized by three sociopolitical groups, i.e., the leading political party (the Conservatives), the Opposition and the media, with a primary focus on the methodological issues of metaphor analysis. The analysis is based on a three-step procedure originally suggested by Charteris-Black: first, linguistic metaphors are identified in the discourse; next, they are interpreted in relation to their underlying conceptual metaphors; and finally, they are explained—or, in other words, they are analysed from a rhetorical perspective (Identified → Interpreted → Explained). This paper focuses mainly on the first stage of analysis and addresses different problems which the researcher faces while undertaking metaphor analysis. The discussion of the procedure of metaphor identification and interpretation is supported with factual data and statistics. Furthermore, the paper outlines directions for future research into CRISIS metaphors.

KEY WORDS: economic and financial crisis, linguistic and conceptual metaphors, methodology of metaphor analysis.

Introduction

Metaphor in real-world discourse is increasingly becoming the focus of many cognitive studies. Cognitive metaphor theorists comprehend metaphor as a convenient way of not only talking about real life events, but also thinking about them: constructing analogies, connecting ideas, explaining abstract ideas that are difficult to grasp, conveying messages and emotions, etc. Moreover, metaphor can become an ideological tool in deliberate attempts to influence, persuade and manipulate people. Thus, nowadays metaphor is addressed as central to various types of communication across different discourses: advertising (Forceville

1996; Cook 2001), education (Cameron 2003; Littlemore and Low 2006), health (Semino 2008), science (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Semino 2008), politics (Lassan 1995, 2011; Chilton 2004; Musolff 2004; Charteris-Black 2005, 2009; Cibulskienė 2008, 2010), literature (Semino 2002, 2008; Semino and Short 2004;), etc. In this paper, the analysis of metaphors borders on two types of discourse—economic and political—as it addresses metaphors about the economic crisis used by politicians and journalists.

Political and economic processes are highly determined by political discourse, which, according to Foucault (1981), not

only reveals intentions, motives and aspirations but also hides them. Thus, recent years have seen an increasing interest by cognitive linguists in how political ideas are communicated (encoded and decoded) from the perspective of CMT (Conceptual Metaphor Theory). Cognitive metaphor theorists tend to claim that political and economic language, being one of the constituents of political and economic discourse, is metaphorical, and that the political world is constituted by public communication, which facilitates the division of the world into simpler and more easily accessible models that are easy to manipulate.

Metaphor in economic discourse

Most metaphor scholars focus their attention on the source domain—in this study, that would involve the ways in which the economy is metaphorically conceptualized. Different studies have revealed that the economy is often comprehended as WAR, HEALTH, HUMAN LIFE, A JOURNEY, etc. Although establishing source domains for the economy is of the utmost importance, it is noteworthy that metaphor scholars have also attempted to look into other aspects of economy metaphors, drawing further implications related to their usage. Scorzynska and Deignan (2006) maintain that the choice of linguistic metaphors in speaking about the economy depends primarily on the genre of economic discourse—scientific or popular business. Grounding their research on corpus analysis, they argue that on the one hand, popular business discourse is much more metaphoric than scientific discourse, while, on the other hand, popular business and scientific discourses draw on different source domains. WAR, ANIMAL/HUMAN/PLANT

LIFE, and MECHANICS are the most numerous source domains in popular business discourse, whereas scientific discourse is characterised by HUMAN LIFE, MECHANICS and JOURNEY source domains (Scorzynska and Deignan 2006, p. 93).

A different approach to metaphor in economic discourse is taken by Nicaise (2010), who looks at metaphor usage from a critical discourse perspective. He uses a logistical regression model within the critical discourse framework to establish the relationship between metaphor and its context of use in the economic domain. He maintains (p. 65) that metaphor use is influenced by such independent variables as the text producer (ideology, medium, gender), the recipient (specialist or layman), the objective (to persuade, inform, etc.), and the content (concepts). All these variables work in accordance with the geographical and temporal environment, which also includes language, community, season, etc. Employing this comprehensive model, Nicaise analyzes the following source domains in which the economy is conceptualized metaphorically: WAR, SPORTS, WEATHER, HEALTH, MOBILITY, MECHANICS, etc.

Other metaphor scholars focus on contrastive metaphor usage in economic discourses. For example, Charteris-Black and Ennis (2001) compare the use of linguistic and conceptual metaphors in a corpus of English and Spanish financial reports. They state that although the two languages show considerable similarities in conceptualizing the economy as an organism, market movements as physical movements, and downward movements as natural disasters, there are sharp differences across the languages: the Spanish financial discourse distingu-

ishes itself by its use of metaphors based on psychological mood and personality, whereas the English financial discourse makes use of maritime metaphors. A similar study carried out by Charteris-Black and Musolff (2003) is also contrastive, being based on English and German financial discourse. It focuses on the way the euro is reported metaphorically, and the findings suggest that the euro is mostly conceptualized as up and down movements and also via a HEALTH metaphor in the financial reporting of both languages. Despite the obvious similarities, the authors point out that English financial reporting often resorts to combat metaphors in which the euro is seen as an active agent (pp. 164–167), whereas German financial reporting envisions the euro as a passive beneficiary of the actions of institutional bodies (pp. 171–173).

There have also been a number of attempts to analyze the metaphoricity of Lithuanian economic discourse. The findings support the Western cultural tendency to conceptualize economic issues through particular metaphors. Urbonaitė and Šeškauskienė (2007) made a contrastive investigation of HEALTH metaphors in Lithuanian and British economic discourses. Their findings suggest that the most common way to conceptualize economic issues is through the conceptual metaphors A PROBLEM IS AN ILLNESS and IMPROVEMENT IS MEDICAL TREATMENT. Arcimavičienė's (2009) research into Lithuanian economic and business discourse shows that personification, being the most typical case, goes together with the metaphors HEALTH, CONSTRUCTION, JOURNEY, etc. They demonstrate the value system underlying current economic and business discourses.

Rationale and research questions

As already noted, previous studies of Lithuanian economic discourse focused on possible source domains of economy metaphors. In contrast, this article treats the economic crisis as a target domain that is just one aspect of economic discourse. The rationale for choosing *economic crisis* as the research object is closely related to the 2008–2011 ecopolitical situation in the world: the ongoing worldwide financial and economic crisis has significantly affected our lives, and, as noted above, metaphorical analysis of real-world discourse is of primary importance if we want to establish links between sociocultural reality, language, and thinking. Thus, the research questions posed in this article are the following: What is the crisis from the cognitive point of view, i.e., do we think about it metaphorically? If so, what are its linguistic realizations? The focus of the article is on the methodological steps which are taken to analyse the metaphors of CRISIS. To make the study more informative, the concept of crisis is viewed from different perspectives, i.e., across various sociopolitical groups in Lithuania. The study describes how the economic crisis is metaphorically comprehended by *the incumbent governing party* (the Conservative Party), *the opposing parties* and *the media* (journalists).

Corpora

Accordingly, three corpora containing 115,170 words (the Conservative Party), 116,392 words (the opposing parties), and 109,883 words (the media) were constructed. Scorczynska and Deignan (2006) distinguish two types of economic discourse—*scientific business discourse* and *popular*

business discourse—that differ markedly in their functionality. *Scientific business discourse* is perceived as scientific texts written by and intended for researchers, whereas *popular business discourse* refers to journalistic texts which discuss current economic problems, whose addressees are both experts and non-experts. The present research focuses solely on popular business discourse, as the aim of the study is to analyse how non-experts conceptualize the economic crisis. In other words, the economic discourse merges with political discourse, and as Scorczynska and Deignan (2006) suggest, the analysis of two different economic discourses should yield quite different results.

The choice of texts comprising the three corpora was determined by the topic discussed in the article, namely, the economic crisis. The governing party (or the Conservative Party) corpus was compiled from texts presented on the official website of the Conservative Party. The Lithuanian Parliament is characterized by multi-party representation; therefore, usually several parties make up the Opposition coalition. The Social Democrats, Labour Party and Order and Justice Party seemed to be the most numerous amongst those opposing the leading party. Thus, the corpus of the Opposition was constructed by compiling three small corpora—of 68,870, 34,821 and 12,701 words respectively. The texts discussing the economic crisis were selected from their official party and party leaders' websites. Furthermore, a media corpus was compiled using one of the most popular Lithuanian newspapers, *Lietuvos Rytas*, which has the largest circulation. The *Commentaries* column, which displays

a diversity of journalists' viewpoints on political, social, and economic events, was chosen to make up the media corpus. At first glance, the corpus representativity is not so high that it could be seen as an attractive basis for empirical studies. Although the corpora under analysis are relatively small, in Semino's (2008) terms, while it is advantageous to use large corpora which will probably lead to plausible results, small-scale corpora are used to discover the differences and similarities across genres at particular points in history because they provide insights of rhetorical and ideological implications. This idea is supported by Musolff, who puts it in the following way: "relatively small special corpora can play an essential heuristic role. Even though they are not fully representative, they provide a good practical basis for establishing discourse areas that are likely to yield interesting results" (2004, p 66).

The time period of the research was objectively determined by the socio-economic situation in Lithuania. Due to the fact that the first signs of the economic crisis appeared in Lithuania in the autumn of 2008, the constructed corpora cover the span of October 2008–May 2011. Thus, the present research is confined to the political discourse of a certain period of time within a particular country, namely, the economic crisis in Lithuania. These circumstances determined the size of the corpora.

Methodology and results

In recent years, political discourse analysis has undergone cross-fertilization (Goatly 2007, p. 2) between cognitive research into metaphor and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Consequently, Charteris-Black

(2005) named this approach to the analysis of political discourse *Critical Metaphor Analysis* (CMA), according to which conceptual metaphor is regarded as a cognitive mechanism of ideology. The essence of this approach lies in a three-stage procedure (p. 26)—first, metaphors are identified; next, they are interpreted; and finally, they are explained (*Identified* → *Interpreted* → *Explained*).

It has to be admitted that, for some time, the metaphor identification procedure has been sidelined by metaphor analysts. Only recently has more serious attention been directed towards working out a valid and reliable procedure for metaphor identification. Perhaps the most notable and detailed procedure was first developed by the Pragglejaz group (2007). A later version, MIPVU¹, was designed by Steen and his co-workers (2010). It has to be emphasized that linguistic metaphors (metaphors in language) come into the focus of the research, and it is necessary to differentiate them from their underlying conceptual metaphors (metaphors in thought). According to this procedure, the first step is to undertake a close reading of the text-discourse; next, the lexical units in the text are identified and their meaning in context is established. Afterwards, it has to be determined if a lexical unit “has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context” (Semino 2008, p. 11); then, if the basic meaning is incongruent with the contextual meaning, the lexical unit is marked as metaphorical.

Accordingly, in this study, linguistic metaphors were identified by applying the

abovementioned MIPVU. The procedure, however, was slightly modified and adapted to the present research, as the aim was not to find all metaphorically used words; rather, it was to focus on possible metaphorical conceptualizations of the economic phenomenon of crisis. This was performed in three steps. The first step was to search for the concept of crisis and its collocational patterns. Deignan (2005, p. 193) stresses the importance of collocations in conventional or novel metaphor usage as a starting point for further research. This was done using the Antconc concordance program. The obtained collocations were analyzed in terms of their metaphoricity. The second step was to identify other possible metaphorical conceptualizations of the crisis. While performing a pilot manual search for possible conceptualizations in which crisis was the target domain, it was noted that certain words and expressions were used synonymously with it. The words *sunkmetis* (“hard times”), *sunkumai* (“hardship”) and *nuosmukis* (“decline”), which have strong evaluative components, substituted for the concept of crisis in the target discourses. The collocational patterns of these words were also searched for in the corpora using the Antconc concordance program. It must, however, be noted that strings of 10–20 words with *krizė* (“crisis”), *sunkmetis*, *sunkumai* and *nuosmukis* as the key words do not often give accurate information about the comprehensive view of text metaphoricity. The first close reading of the texts revealed that there were other metaphors which could not be identified by any key words, despite being clearly comprehended as ways to talk about the crisis. Thus, the third step included a more extensive search for metaphors

¹ MIP stands for Metaphor Identification Procedure. VU stands for Vrije Universiteit, the university in Amsterdam that developed the procedure.

based on a close second reading of the texts and a manual search for metaphors which were not observed while doing the corpus analysis. Consider one of the examples:

- (1) *Tai desperatiški žingsniai, rodantys, jog konservatoriai visiškai nesuositvarko su ekonomine situacija visas viltis dėdami į pasaulinį ekonomikos atsigavimą, kuris kaip potvynis turėtų nukelti nuo sekulmos ir mūsų valtį. Tačiau kas atsitiks, jei kylant vandens lygiui pastebėsime, kad mūsų ekonomikos valtis yra visiškai skylėta?* (2011-02-01)

These are desperate steps; they demonstrate that the Conservatives' method of dealing with the economic situation by pinning all of their hopes on a global economic recovery—which, like a rising tide, should free our boat from the shallows—has completely failed. What, indeed, will happen when, as the waters rise, we discover that our economic boat is full of holes? (aut. trans.)

This is an example of the JOURNEY metaphor, in which the crisis is seen as an obstacle preventing the economy from moving. The crisis is comprehended as a low tide which has stranded a boat (i.e., the country's economy) in shallow water. If I relied only on a corpus approach, this

example and many others would have been left out. The example thus demonstrates that some metaphors can be missed if we employ only a corpus approach. One might argue that only an insignificant part of all the metaphors is lost while using this approach. My results, however, indicate the opposite: in my manual search I found roughly one-third of the total of all the linguistic crisis conceptualizations (see Figure 1).

This suggests that the importance of manual search should not be underestimated. Combining corpus analysis with manual analysis is likely to yield more accurate and reliable results of text metaphoricity, which in turn leads to valid and reasonable conclusions. Yet, the ability to combine the two methods is substantially limited if the corpus of texts is too large to process manually.

As indicated above, the three subcorpora were first searched for the key words *crisis*, *hard times*, *hardship* and *decline* using the Antconc concordance program. Perhaps the most cumbersome step was to decide which instances of *crisis* and its equivalent collocations were used metaphorically and which were non-metaphorical. Cameron and Maslen (2010, p. 108) point out the necessity of clear criteria in the process of

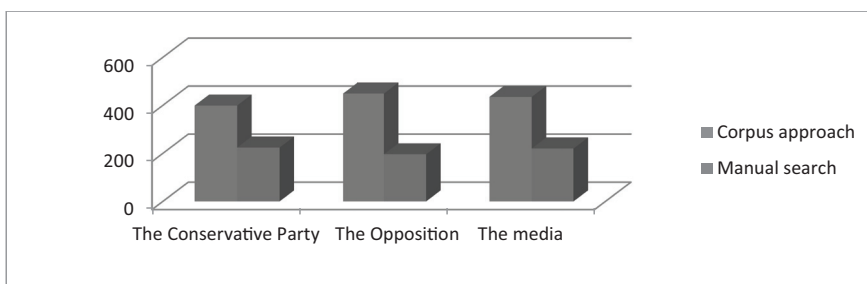


Figure 1. The ratio between linguistic metaphors found while employing corpus approach and manual search.

identifying linguistic metaphors. For this reason, the MIPVU (2010) was employed, and the collocations were analyzed in terms of their basic and contextual meanings. To decide on the basic meaning of the concept *crisis*, the *Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language* was consulted first. It presents the following definitions: *a sudden and severe turn of events; a difficult transitional state* (aut. trans.). To be on the safe side, the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (2007), which is recommended for use in the MIPVU, was also consulted. The definitions run as follows: *1. an urgent, difficult, or dangerous situation; 2. a dangerous situation in someone's personal or professional life when something could fail*. Therefore, if a *crisis* collocation seemed to be used to refer to a situation or particular time, it was counted as non-metaphorical. For example,

(2) *Mes manome, kad toks pinigų švaistymas krizės metu yra amoralus, netoleruotinas ir prieštarauja pačios*

Vyriausybės propaguojamai visuotinei taupymo politikai.... (2010-02-22)

We believe that in these times of crisis, squandering money in this way is immoral, intolerable, and contradicts the Government's own avowed money-saving policies.... (aut. trans.)

The collocation *krizės metu* ("in these times of crisis") in example (2) is seen as non-metaphorical. Figure 2 presents the ratio between metaphorical and non-metaphorical *crisis* collocations across different discourses. It indicates that the majority were used metaphorically.

Table 1 summarizes the results of the *Identified* stage. It shows the number of linguistic metaphors found via a three-step approach across the discourses of the Conservative Party, the Opposition and the media. The results demonstrate that the text metaphoricity in terms of the number of tokens of linguistic metaphors across the three socio-political groups is likely to be similar.

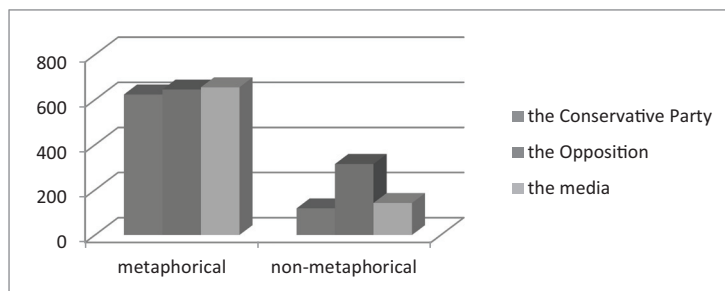


Figure 2. The ratio between metaphorical and non-metaphorical crisis collocations across the discourses of the Conservative Party, the Opposition and the media.

Table 1. Tokens of linguistic metaphors of the CRISIS conceptualization.

| Discourse types | Step 1 <i>Crisis</i> (corpus analysis) | Step 2 <i>Crisis</i> synonyms (corpus analysis) | Step 3 Manual search | Total |
|------------------------|---|--|-------------------------|-------|
| The Conservative Party | 285 | 114 | 224 | 623 |
| The Opposition | 383 | 66 | 196 | 645 |
| The media | 380 | 55 | 220 | 655 |

Although the number of linguistic metaphors used in conceptualizing the economic and financial crisis is not significantly different, it is important to look into their underlying conceptual metaphors. This was performed in the *Interpreted* stage. In this stage, the relation between the linguistic metaphors and their underlying conceptual metaphors was established. The most recurrent thematic elements, motivated by the essential metaphorical concept and being in hyperonymical relations with it, were also identified. According to Kövecses, “[On the one hand,] metaphorical linguistic expressions make conceptual metaphors manifest, and, on the other, we can use these metaphorical expressions to arrive at metaphors in thought” (2005, p. 8). To continue this idea, it seems that the amount and frequency of linguistic metaphors correlate with the stability and entrenchment of a particular conceptual metaphor in the mind. Secondly, it is obvious that the identified linguistic metaphors (metaphors in language),

underlying the conceptual metaphors, tend to construct certain scenarios, for example, JOURNEY, WAR, ILLNESS, etc. Speaking more technically, we have to establish conceptual correspondences (mappings) between the target (CRISIS) domain, which is more abstract, and the source domains, which are more concrete and/or understandable.

Therefore, while interpreting the CRISIS linguistic metaphors, I related them to their conceptual metaphors according to the metaphorical scenarios they create. The chart below (Figure 3) presents the number of metaphorical tokens underlying the established conceptual metaphors in the target discourses. The totals of linguistic metaphors are listed on the vertical axis, while the conceptual metaphors are listed on the horizontal axis.

Hence, the analysis of the discourses of the Conservatives, the Opposition and the media shows that the economic and financial crisis is comprehended via the metaphors of PHYSICAL FORCE, JOURNEY, ILLNESS,

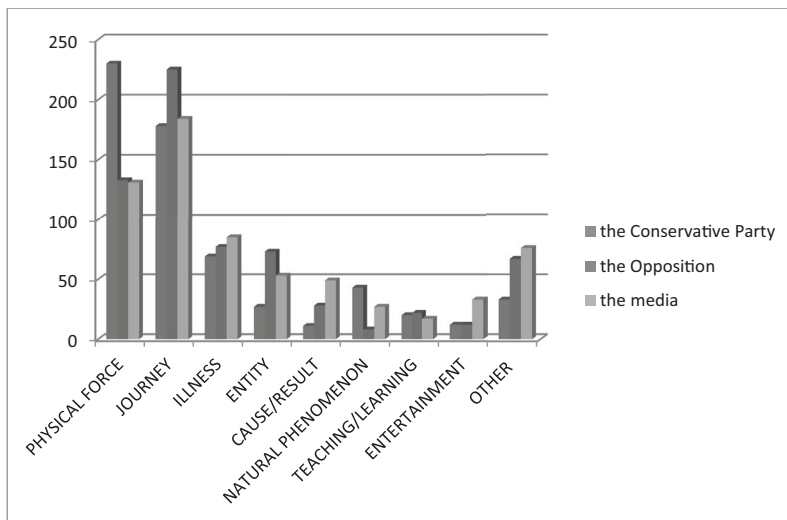


Figure 3. The prevailing conceptual metaphors and their linguistic expressions in the discourses of the Conservative Party, the Opposition and the media.

ENTITY, CAUSE/RESULT, NATURAL PHENOMENON, TEACHING/LEARNING, ENTERTAINMENT, and some others.

The third stage, *Explained*, focuses on the ideological motivation of language use. Here, metaphor is understood as a persuasive and rhetorical tool of argumentation. According to Charteris-Black (2005, p. 28), “Critical Metaphor Analysis therefore enables us to identify *which* metaphors are chosen and to explain *why* these metaphors are chosen by illustrating *how* they create political myths.” This idea roughly corresponds to Lassan’s (1995, 2011) proposed creation of an ideologized discourse, where she also sees metaphor as a cognitive mechanism of ideology. In other words, an attempt is made to look into how the three analyzed participants of political discourse each legitimize themselves in their attempts to overcome the economic crisis, while, at the same time, delegitimizing the other two.

Conclusions

The analysis of the *crisis* and its equivalent collocations shows that the economic and financial crisis in Lithuania is mostly conceptualized metaphorically: around two-thirds of all collocations were metaphorical.

The corpus approach that was used to search for metaphors of the *CRISIS* turned out to be insufficient, due to its inability to find those metaphorical conceptualizations

of the economic and financial crisis that cannot be searched for with key words. Thus, a combination of the corpus approach with a manual search yielded more accurate and reliable results of the metaphorical crisis conceptualization.

The three analyzed socio-political groups (the Conservative Party, the Opposition and the media) tend to conceptualize the economic and financial crisis through similar conceptual metaphors. Establishing mappings and counting of linguistic metaphors revealed that the *PHYSICAL FORCE*, *JOURNEY*, *ILLNESS* and *ENTITY* metaphors are those around which these political groups build their thinking about the crisis. The Conservatives conceptualize the crisis via the *PHYSICAL FORCE* metaphor most frequently, with the *JOURNEY* metaphor being the second and the *ILLNESS* metaphor being the third. The Opposition and the media favour the *JOURNEY* metaphor followed by the *PHYSICAL FORCE* and *ILLNESS* metaphors.

The present paper focuses more on the methodological issues of the *CRISIS* metaphor analysis: it elaborates on the stage of metaphor *Identification* and touches upon the stage of *Interpretation*. This is considered to be part of a larger study which will centre on the *Interpreted* stage of every conceptual metaphor in detail, and will later consider the stage *Explained*, i.e., the rhetorical implications of the *CRISIS* metaphor.

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EKONOMINĖS IR FINASINĖS KRIZĖS
METAFORŲ ANALIZĖ: NUSTATYMAS,
INTERPRETAVIMAS IR PAAIŠKINIMAS

Santrauka

Šiame darbe keliami du tikslai. Pirma, analizuojama, kaip trys skirtingos sociopolitinės grupės (valdančioji konservatorių partija, opozicija ir žiniasklaida) metaforiškai konceptualizuoja ekonominę ir finansinę krizę Lietuvoje. Antra, pagrindinis dėmesys yra kreipiamas į metaforų analizės metodus, t.y. metaforos analizuojamos remiantis Charterio-Blacko (2005) pasiūlyta trijų etapų procedūra – pirmą, lingvistinės metaforos yra nustatomos diskurse; antra, jos yra siejamos su konceptualiosiomis metaforomis; trečia, jos yra analizuojamos iš retorinės perspektyvos (nustatymas → interpretavimas → paaiškinimas). Didžiausias dėmesys yra skiriamas pirmam analizės etapui, kuriame pabrėžiamos problemos, su kuriomis itin dažnai susiduria tyrėjas, analizuodamas metaforas. Metaforos nustatymo ir interpretacijos procedūros aprašomos kartu su faktiniais pavyzdžiais ir statistiniais duomenimis. Darbe taip pat pateikiamos tolimesnio KRIZĖS metaforų tyrimo gairės.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: ekonominė ir finansinė krizė, lingvistinės ir konceptualiosios metaforos, metaforų analizės metodai.

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Zainteresowania naukowe: semantika kognitywna, metafora konceptualna, dyskurs polityczny

ANALIZA METAFOR KRYZYSU GOSPODARCZEGO I FINANSOWEGO: USTALENIE, INTERPRETACJA I WYJAŚNIENIE

Streszczenie

Niniejsza praca ma dwa cele. Pierwszym jest analiza metaforycznej konceptualizacji kryzysu gospodarczego i finansowego na Litwie w języku trzech różnych grup społeczno-politycznych (rządzącej partii konserwatystów, opozycji i mass mediów). Drugim jest zastosowanie metod analizy metafor, a mianowicie zaproponowanej przez Jonathana Charterisa-Blacka (2005) trzyetapowej procedury: 1) ustalenie metafor językowych w dyskursie; 2) powiązania metafor językowych z metaforami konceptualnymi; 3) analiza metafor z perspektywy retorycznej (Ustalenie → Interpretacja → Wyjaśnienie). Największą uwagę poświęcono pierwszemu etapowi analizy, wyszczególniono najczęstsze problemy, jakie stają przed badaczem przy analizie metafor. Opis procedur ustalenia i interpretacji metafory ilustrują przykłady i dane statystyczne. W pracy wskazano również kierunki dalszych badań nad metaforami KRYZYSU.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: kryzys gospodarczy i finansowy, metafory językowe i konceptualne, metody analizy metafor.

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