

# METAPHORIC CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SOCIAL REALITY IN THE LANGUAGE OF NEWS MEDIA

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**Abstract.** Today, social reality can hardly be viewed as the one-state-one-nation-one language ideological framework (Bauman and Briggs, 2003). The modern multilingual and multicultural communities are inclined to examine social reality in a multiple variety of socio-economic and political manifestations and forms. To understand how social reality can be explored through examining certain socio-political processes in a country, the present paper aims at analysing the role of conceptual metaphor in cases when political scandals, involving corruption charges of high-ranking officials in Latvia are considered. For this purpose, the present study has focused on the analysis of selected commentaries that deal with corruption charges which were revealed in December 2019 issues of the magazine *IR*. The Latvian-origin weekly magazine *IR* was selected deliberately because; on the one hand, it has an enormous influence on how social reality is constructed and perceived by Latvian citizens. On the other hand, it was important to reveal that the evidence-based theoretical premises on the relationship between metaphor and society in the English language are applicable and work cross-linguistically in Latvian. The research presents a case study type. With the focus on the conceptualization of corruption-related social problems, selected discursive practices that dealt with the corruption cases being revealed by the news medium *IR* were considered. The results demonstrated that the journalists of the commentaries tend to take a critical discourse perspective on the representation of corruption-related issues and political events, which can be represented at the levels of abstraction. Conceptual metaphors contributed to mental representations of political issues and communication of social reality by conveying additional negative evaluation of such an inherently derogatory concept as corruption. The metaphors CORRUPTION IS DIRT, CORRUPTION IS GARBAGE, CORRUPTION IS NUCLEAR DISASTER, CORRUPTION IS A DISEASE also fulfil a cognitive function, helping to understand the concept of corruption in terms of another more concrete concept. The use of metaphors in the commentaries may have causal effects such as bringing about changes in the readers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes.

**Key words:** conceptual metaphor, corruption-related political scandals, magazine *IR*, qualitative discourse analysis, case study

## INTRODUCTION

Social contexts and conditions have always been a subject to analysis or interpretation. It is generally known that political discursive practices are based on ambiguous use of language to reveal political realities. Thus, the concept of corruption, which can be referred to as the abuse of power for private gain by public officials, plays a prominent part in contemporary society. The consequences of corruption are dire for each member of society, as people are generally aware that corruption retards economic growth, hinders investment and leads to lower public welfare.

Latvia appears to be perceived as a country which has hardly succeeded in making serious inroads against public sector corruption (Online 1). The analysis of the corruption index data by Delna, the Latvian branch of Transparency International, reveals the inability of 'law enforcement authorities to detect and prosecute corruption cases involving officials' (Online 2). Due to its socially undesirable and hidden nature, the level of corruption in a country cannot be measured directly. It can be done by surveying the opinion of experts, general population, entrepreneurs, public officials, as well as by carrying out institutional control.

Information about various social issues is mostly obtained from the mass media, which disseminate information and generate images of the world, thus helping society to construct meaning of economic, political and social matters. It can be assumed that the media have the capability to affect society's opinion or change its attitude towards an issue. In this regard, the use of language in the media plays an essential role in the process of the 'social construction of reality' (Berger and Luckmann, 1976, cited by Conboy, 2007: 5).

The weekly magazine *IR*, as a powerful media institution in Latvia, addresses various social issues, including corruption, and has an enormous influence on how social reality is constructed in Latvia.

The theme on the use of conceptual metaphor in different discursive practices is not a novel one. It has been explored in a multiplicity of ways when the analysis on topical data was conducted. Edelman has already stated that 'metaphors, other tropes, and ambiguity encourage people in disparate social situations to define themselves, others and the conditions of their lives' (Edelman, 1988: 103-120). Journalists often employ metaphor in their writing, as metaphor 'invites a shared perception that transcends that of the semantic system' (Charteris-Black, 2004: 13), 'metaphor in language exhibits indirect meaning, producing local semantic incongruity, which needs to be connected to the encompassing semantic frame of a text, paragraph, sentence, clause or even phrase by some form of non-literal comparison' (Steen, 2011: 45). Besides, metaphor is a figure of speech that encourages people to keep a broader perspective on understanding cultural, historical, political, social realities and world views. Metaphor is often used as a strategic tool to evoke a belief that particular groups of people are involved in harmful activities that maximize a negative impact on society.

The recent range of the conceptual metaphor study is very broad, for example, from the analysis of conceptual metaphor use in literary text narratives (e.g. Trendel, 2014: 94-101) to the analysis of metaphoric conceptualization use in political discourses (e.g. Tincheva, 2020: 149-167). Thus, the present study views the use of conceptual metaphor being a means of making sense of the world and offering a richness of meanings which can create images, such as corruption or bribery, for example.

Corruption or bribery being an abstract concept, which is sometimes euphemistically called a 'facilitating payment' or 'speed/grease payment', is the target concept which needs elucidation. For instance, Negro's (2015) study concluded that corruption is often discussed in metaphorical terms in the Spanish press. Bratu and Kažoka's study (2018:59) identified the sources for metaphorical comprehension of corruption; for example, they can relate to various forms of corruption, for example, conflicts of interest, bribery and embezzlement. However, to the best of authors' knowledge, there have not been many studies of corruption-related metaphors in the Latvian language; therefore, the aim of this paper is to shed light on the use of conceptual metaphor in the coverage of political scandals, involving recent corruption-related charges of high-ranking officials in Latvia.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the seminal publication 'Metaphors We Live By' by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which posits that metaphor is ubiquitous and an essential part of thought, there has been a growing interest in the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (e.g. Charteris-Black, 2004, 2005; Gibbs, 2011; Kövecses, 2005, 2017; Steen, 2011, 2017), and the present-day understanding of metaphor is commonly based on the cognitive-linguistic approach to metaphor by Lakoff (1993).

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor can be regarded as a mapping or a set of correspondences between a source domain and a target domain, which allows for understanding an abstract domain of experience (i.e. the target domain) in terms of a more concrete domain (i.e. the source domain). As a result, the addressee experiences one thing in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 5). Kövecses emphasizes the systematic nature of correspondences: 'A conceptual metaphor is a systematic set of correspondences, or mappings, between two domains of experience' (2017: 125).

Journalists often employ metaphor as an indispensable basis of language and thought and a convenient cognitive device for organizing human experience and communicating reality in society: 'A large part of the conceptualization process in the media involves metaphor' (Kövecses, 2018: 125). Metaphor seems especially 'open' for meaning making, as journalists cannot be sure that they have succeeded in convincing the reader of the preferred meaning of social reality. Moreover, the process of meaning-making, particularly, the reception of the text, often involves implicit interpretation.

The ideas of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory have been refined (e.g. Kövecses, 2010), and other approaches to the study of metaphor have appeared. For instance, Steen (2011) supposes that the traditional cognitive linguistic approach does not consider all aspects of metaphor. Steen (*ibid.*) has expanded the approach by adding the dimension of communication to the conceptual and linguistic dimensions. The discourse analytical approach followed by Steen (2011) postulates that the three-dimensional model of metaphor encourages the explanation of the deliberate use of metaphor in communication. The scholar claims that it is relevant to pay attention not only to the linguistic forms (e.g. metaphor) and the conceptual properties (e.g. conventional versus novel) of metaphor, but also to its communicative structures and functions (such as deliberate versus non-deliberate use) (*ibid.*). This may suggest that, for instance, journalists use metaphoric linguistic expressions being aware of cross-domain mappings, as they want to alert the reader and deliberately manipulate their message for communicative purposes.

Along with other assumptions about metaphor in language use, the idea of deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors is explained in the Deliberate Metaphor Theory by Steen (2017). The scholar argues that discourse is an intentional verbal activity between the sender and the addressee. A deliberate metaphor is used intentionally in communication (*ibid.*: 1): ‘all metaphor use is intentional, but [...] some metaphor use is deliberate (intentionally used as a metaphor) while most of it is not’ (*ibid.*: 6). The use of deliberate metaphor explicitly asks the reader to ‘step outside the dominant target domain of the discourse and look at it from an alien source domain’ (Steen, 2011: 37). Thus, deliberate metaphors encourage the addressee to set up a cross-domain mapping in their mental representation of discourse in order to view one thing in terms of another and to draw relevant implicatures from that figurative comparison. It is generally known that the processes that explain how people understand each other’s intended meanings are among the central questions in cognitive approaches taken to the study of the conveyed meaning. The linguists (e.g. LoCastro, 2006) who attempted to answer this question have analysed the human capacity to convey and understand the implied meaning; thus, the notion of implicature has come into focus of the linguistic study.

This reveals that metaphor is not just a matter of language and thought but also of communication. When non-deliberate metaphors are used, they do not necessarily have to deal with the relation between the two domains that may be distinguished; an utterance is typically understood as involving just one conceptual domain, i.e. the target domain. The sender and the addressee of the message may just employ polysemous words that are conventionally used to talk about a certain issue (*ibid.*).

Several scholars (e.g. Gibbs, 2011) criticize the dichotomy between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors, claiming that ‘deliberate metaphor’ is ‘not essentially different from other forms of metaphoric language’ (*ibid.*: 21).

Although Steen (2017) admits that ‘the distinction between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphor is controversial’, the scholar emphasizes that both the phenomena fulfil different functions in language use (ibid.: 17).

The communication dimension of metaphor as a figure of speech emphasizes the rhetorical function of metaphor, which is stressed in the Critical Metaphor Analysis Theory by Charteris-Black (2004, 2005). Metaphor use in context determines the role of metaphor in communication. The scholar argues that the cognitive semantic (or linguistic) approach needs to be complemented by pragmatic functions (e.g. persuasive, evaluative and ideological in political discourse) (Charteris-Black, 2004: 12). Thus, to achieve the intended pragmatic functions, journalists may be prone to deliberate metaphor use. For example, the persuasive function of metaphor helps to see the world from a novel perspective (ibid.: 11) and affects the interpretations made by the reader (ibid.: 9).

The reader of commentaries receives world images through the lens of the journalist, which tend to evince the social reality of today but ‘still within the broad frame of the newspaper’s editorial identity’ (Conboy, 2007: 73). Social construction may be largely unconscious on the part of the image producer. In this case, images appear as transparent descriptions of reality, but the reader may be encouraged to experience not only information-transmission, but also opinion-formation or even persuasion and evaluation. Moreover, since commentaries are polysemic, readers are expected to become active in meaning construction by drawing on their experience and knowledge.

## METHODOLOGY

Following the premises of Critical Discourse Studies (Wodak and Meyer, 2016: 34), the following steps were applied to the analysis of the case study.

- 1) Preceding theoretical knowledge was consulted and activated.
- 2) Relevant social context information was collected.
- 3) All the commentaries on corruption-related issues from December 2019 issues of the magazine *IR* were selected: *Tiešs trāpījums* (*Direct Hit; here and henceforth the translations by the authors of the article*) by Aivars Ozoliņš, *Izvest miskasti* (*To Collect Garbage*) by Pauls Raudseps, *Duļķainos ūdeņos* (*In Turbid Waters*) by Aivars Ozoliņš. The choice of this period was motivated by the wide coverage of political scandals involving corruption-related cases in the mass media in Latvia. The magazine was selected because of the style of writing of the journalists who frequently use metaphoric expressions in their writing.
- 4) Assumptions based on the literature review and a first skimming of the data were made, and a research question was specified: How do conceptual metaphors help to conceptualize corruption in the selected commentaries from December 2019 issues of the magazine *IR*?

- 5) To focus on the conceptualization of corruption-related issues in *IR*, a qualitative discourse analysis was conducted. Since a conceptual metaphor is realized with the help of metaphoric expressions, metaphors in the commentaries were searched manually and identified using the inductive approach, i.e. the linguistic forms that seemed to be metaphorical were located, and later the linguistic metaphors were grouped by reconstructing cross-domain mappings on the basis of groupings of linguistic expressions.
- 6) The yielded data were analysed from the perspective of the language users participating in the discourse (i.e. readers), and the linguistic value was grouped in the categories of context, metaphor, the source domain and the meaning of the metaphor and mapping. the conceptual value of a conventional or a novel metaphor was stated, and the choice between a deliberate and non-deliberate metaphor was shown. A communicative dimension of metaphor, which underlines the rhetorical function of metaphor, was described.
- 7) A critique, relating to 'a quest for truth' (Wodak and Meyer, 2016: 34) and the interpretation and explanation of the results, taking into account the relevant context knowledge, was formulated.

The following style conventions are used in this article: upper case is used to represent conceptual metaphors; the excerpts containing metaphoric expressions from the commentaries in the Latvian language are shown in parentheses; the excerpts containing metaphoric expressions have been translated into English by the authors of this article and placed in single speech marks. Metaphoric expressions are shown in italics.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Violation of the accepted social or moral communication codes, negligence of new social and/or political conditions can be also considered as subjects to different interpretations by journalists. The mass media often give publicity to those groups of people who are placed in prioritized social situations, and the mass media use stylized utterances for sets of statements or forms of expressions which are clear to those who are involved in communication. This is done to minimize society's attention to wrong-doing(s) and/or to maximize truth-hiding interaction beneficial to those directly involved in corruption-related cases (for example, *the Riga Zoo* case in Riga, Latvia, which refers to an informal secret meeting of the parties in the government at that time at the Riga Zoo, where they agreed on a particular Latvia's presidential candidate). Thus, it should be emphasized that the language employed for depicting social reality depends on the social or situational context in which the language is used, and 'the spectacle that language constructs is dynamic: concerned with [...] challenges and differences of opinion over how to deal with them' (Edelman, 1988: 106). As a result, the subject for

the subsequent discussion focuses on the analysis of three selected corruption-related instances as they have been revealed by the Latvian magazine *IR*.

### 1 TIEŠS TRĀPĪJUMS (*DIRECT HIT*) BY AIVARS OZOLIŅŠ

On 9 December 2019, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Control imposed sanctions on Aivars Lembergs, mayor of Ventspils since 1988, and four legal entities associated with him, based on the so-called Magnitsky Act. Mr. Lembergs was described as an oligarch with substantial influence in politics who has 'corrupted law enforcement officials' and 'subverted politicians' for his own economic gain (Online 3).

It is expected that the main headline expresses the highest macroproposition of the article, signalling the most relevant information. The main headline of the article '*Direct Hit*' (*Tiešs trāpījums*) is a metaphor. The headline does not give an immediate summary of the article; therefore, the conceptual value of the metaphor is that of a deliberate metaphor and a novel metaphor. The sub-headline 'USA sanctions against Lembergs will be beneficial to Latvia' (ASV sankcijas pret Lembergu nāks par labu Latvijai) helps the reader understand the theme and the context. We can read that, in fact, the purpose of the USA sanctions is to prevent and diminish the economic and political influence of Lembergs rather than paralyze Latvian economy.

This is further supported by another headline above the second column, which is printed in white letters on red background. It uses the source domain of war, namely, 'Oligarchs' central *bunker destroyed*' (Oligarhu centrālais *bunkurs sagrauts*). The noun 'bunker' in the meaning of 'dug-out fortification' (Online 4) can be traced back to the 20th century or World War I when aerial bombardment started. The bunker is usually hidden underground; it is a shelter with strong walls to protect the people inside it. The metaphoric use of the bunker creates an image of a place where oligarchs feel safe, protected and unharmed.

Using the source domain of illness, the bunker is referred to as '*a site of infection*' (*infekcijas perēklis*), and Mr. Lembergs is its 'long-term host' (ilggadējs saimnieks) and '*a parasite*' (*parazīts*). This implies that corruption is wide-spread, and Mr. Lembergs lives by profiting from illegal activities. The same source domain is employed to refer to the decisions taken by the government 'in order to confine *the site of infection*' (lai norobežotu *infekcijas perēkli*), which may endanger other business and governmental structures.

After the lead paragraph, which serves the introduction function, the main events are introduced with the help of war metaphors: 'The intercontinental *direct rocket hit of sanctions* drove the Latvian senior oligarch out of *his bunker* to brawl again' (Sankciju *starpkontinentālais raķešu tiešais trāpījums* izdzina Latvijas oligarhu senioru no *bunkura* ārdities atkal). Mr. Lembergs is not safe any longer, and, although he denies all the accusations in the public space, decision makers can finally act: '*The blast has destroyed [...] the radioactive "what says Lembergs" cloud*' (*Sprādzieni ir iznīcinājis [...] radioaktīvo "ko saka Lembergs" mākonī*).

Mr. Lembergs has been charged with bribery, money laundering and abuse of office since 2008, but he has denied all the charges and has not been tried for the corruptive cases yet, thereby causing a loss of Latvian public funds. The use of the source domain of nuclear disaster/ aerial danger existing in the form of 'a direct rocket hit' indicates that 'the missile', namely, the sanctions were guided. Thus, it is seen that the metaphor of war is used to reveal corruption as an enemy that has been targeted and destroyed with the help of international sanctions.

The main events categories are revealed as various consequences in the following paragraphs. For instance, the reader's attention is drawn to the demerits of nuclear power: 'the hit of the seismic waves' (*trieciena seismiskais vilnis*), which has a far-reaching effect. Resorting to the source domain of building, the author is optimistic and voices that this is the end of Mr. Lemberg's rule 'the collapse of Lemberg's empire' (*Lemberga impērijas sabrukums*).

The results above show some interesting findings. CORRUPTION IS an ILLNESS dominates the commentary. Corruption is framed as an illness or an infection that damages the country's reputation and worsens its economy. Another central metaphor CORRUPTION IS a NUCLEAR DISASTER conjures up the idea of the Chernobyl disaster, which a large part of Latvians are familiar with as the worst nuclear power plant accident in history having a detrimental effect on the environment and people's lives. Measures taken to fight corruption are framed as war: ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVITY IS WAR.

## 2 IZVEST MISKASTI (TO COLLECT GARBAGE) BY PAULS RAUDSEPS

There have been several corruption scandals at the Riga City Council. In September 2019, the Environment Protection and Regional Development Ministry of the Republic of Latvia declared the state of emergency in Riga due to the alleged crisis in the sector of waste collection and management, which is a sector prone to corruption.

The main headline conveys the highest macroproposition of the article, evoking the image of a social problem that will be dealt with, namely, garbage collection in Riga. The sub-headline 'A road to garbage boxes until ballot boxes leads through a minefield' (*Ceļš uz atkritumu urnām līdz vēlēšanu urnām ved caur mīnu lauku*) helps the reader see the relation expressed with the help of the conventional use of the metaphor 'road' – between the waste management issue and municipality elections. 'Road' is a non-deliberate metaphor in the sense that it does not involve the intentional use of metaphor between the journalist and the reader. Needless to say, waste management is profitable business in Riga, and it has been linked with the corruption of high-ranking officials. The deliberate metaphor 'a minefield' gives rise to the activation of the source domain concept as 'an area of land or water that contains mines' (Online 5). A mapping of the negative attributes of the source domain, namely a complicated situation that has many hidden problems and dangers, to the target domain takes place.



The author evokes the image of a dangerous situation in the Riga city, in particular with waste management because of several reasons: 'reasons to kiss off since 2009 ruling kleptocracy in Riga are all around us like *garbage* from an overturned container' (iemesli patriekt kopš 2009. gada Rīgā valdošo kleptokrātiju mētājas mums visapkārt kā *netīras drizas* no apgāzta konteinera.). First, by using the noun 'kleptocracy' in its literal meaning of uncontrolled political corruption, the journalist warns that decisions in Riga are taken by those who make themselves rich and powerful by stealing from the residents of Riga. Second, an image of a dirty city is created, symbolically relating this to the current problems in Riga. Some of them are mentioned explicitly, but the journalist says: 'Who has a larger *sack* may collect more and more *dirt* like this' (Kam lielāks *maiss*, var salasīt vēl un vēl šādas *šmuces*.). The dissolution of the Riga City Council is a question of time. The journalist concludes by saying that '*mountains of garbage* have been piling high in Riga throughout years. It will not be easy to scramble out' (Rīgā *mēslu kalni* krājušies gadiem. No tiem izrausties nebūs viegli.). The noun phrase '*mountains of garbage*' is used metaphorically to refer to the mounting problems in the Riga City Council, evoking a cross-domain mapping between two conceptual domains.

The results of the analysis allow us to conclude that the most prototypical metaphors in the commentary are the conceptual metaphors CORRUPTION IS GARBAGE and CORRUPTION IS DIRT, which draw an analogy mapping negative attributes of the source domain – garbage and dirt – to the target domain – corruption and corruption-related problems.

### 3 DUĻĶAINOS ŪDEŅOS (IN TURBID WATERS) BY AIVARS OZOLIŅŠ

This article is written at the time when a new governor of the Bank of Latvia has been agreed on by the coalition government. The former governor has been charged with soliciting bribes from retail banks.

It is expected that the main headline '*In Turbid Waters*' (*Duļķainos ūdeņos*) conveys the highest macroproposition of the article; however, it does not help the reader understand what the article is about. As it can be understood from the sub-headline and the commentary, the source domain of water is used to conceptualize the political milieu in which the elections of a new governor of the Bank of Latvia take place. The journalist has selected to describe the situation as not transparent and opaque. The sub-headline 'There was an oligarch candidate for the position of the governor of the Bank of Latvia, too.' (Latvijas Bankas prezidenta amatam bija arī oligarhu kandidāts) helps the reader understand what the commentary is about. An *oligarch* often has the additional connotation of corruption, and one of the candidates being an oligarch might suggest the idea of trading in influence, which is typical of political corruption. Thus, the headline has the conceptual value of a novel and deliberate metaphor, as the cross-domain mapping between the domains has been facilitated.

At the end of the lead paragraph, the source domain of games/sports is used by referring to the process of the search of candidates as ‘a very strange *play-making*’ (ļoti dīvaini *saspēli*) by some influential interest groups. Play makers in football, for example, are the ones whose main job is to control the flow of the team’s offensive play. The journalist draws the readers’ attention to the fact that consultations and ‘political *manoeuvres*’ have taken place before the official decision (*politiski manevri*, protams, notika labu laiku pirms oficiālās lemjšanas). Besides, ‘political *manoeuvres*’ are used in inverted commas emphasising a transferred meaning taken from the source domain of war. the noun ‘*manoeuvre*’ has been borrowed from the French language and means a ‘planned movement of troops or warship’ (Online 5). The importance of the governor’s position at the Bank of Latvia is indirectly revealed by saying that the choice of a candidate might be ‘a theme of potential *conflict*’ (potenciāla *konflikta* tematu). ‘Conflict’ being an ‘armed encounter, battle’ (Online 5) can be seen as a conventional metaphor since it is unlikely that a cross-domain mapping will be undertaken by the readers to infer its meaning.

The journalist implies that consensus-seeking remains the norm when nominations and elections of high-ranking positions are involved; it can be assumed that there has been horse-trading between the parties and that they might have agreed on a candidate behind closed doors. ‘Partners have admonished people from the New Harmony Party *to hold their horses* – their position quotas have already been used.’ (Jaunās Vienotības cilvēkiem partneri bija piekodinājuši, lai *stāvēt pie ratiem*, viņu amatu “kvota” esot izlietota). The text in the Latvian language uses the noun ‘cart’, which is a horse-drawn vehicle, and the phraseological unit ‘*stāvēt pie ratiem*’ means ‘mind your own business’, which is used to tell someone to stop and consider carefully their decision or opinion about something (Online 4).

‘Threat’ and ‘fight’ as conflict words are metaphors because their literal meanings refer to physical combat, while they refer to political action aimed at controlling corruption, money laundering and other illegal actions in the commentary: ‘*real threats* for Latvia to be included in the Moneyval “*Greylist*” already in February’ (*reāli draudi* Latvijai jau februārī nokļūt Moneyval ‘*pelēkajā sarakstā*’). However, they are non-deliberate metaphors, as, although they may evoke some kind of mapping across conceptual domains, it is doubtful that the source domain of war or fighting is activated in the processing of the metaphors. Latvia has received a warning that it might be placed in the Blacklist of the countries that support money laundering activities. The noun ‘*enforcement*’ as in ‘Financial Crimes *Enforcement Network*’ (finansiālo noziegumu *apkaršanas tīkls*) comes from Old French and implies compelling of obedience to a law (Online 5). The Latvian version has a more explicit relation to the source domain of war, the noun ‘*apkaršana*’ means waging war against something.

The term *money laundering* in the commentary ‘to fight against *money-laundering*’ (*cīnīties pret naudas atmazgāšanu*) is an expressive means used to

refer to global financial crime, illegal money which is moved through banks to make it seem legal. The literal sense of the verb 'to launder' means washing, drying and ironing clothes. Hülse writes that 'money laundering transforms "dirty money" into "clean money", illegal into legal' (2008: 99).

The use of money-laundering metaphor is highly conventionalized not only in the English language: 'it is so entrenched in the official vocabulary of global finance that its metaphorical status is often forgotten' (Hülse, 2008: 99), but also in the Latvian language, as the journalist of the commentary has chosen a metaphor instead of the term '*nelegāli iegūtu līdzekļu legalizācija*', which explicitly explains the meaning of the illegal act.

Illegal activities are referred to by mentioning '*shell companies*' (*čaulu kompānijas*), which is a company that is used to hide a person's or another company's illegal activities (Online 4). The reader might not know the meaning of the term; therefore, in order to understand it, cross-domain mapping is evoked: a shell is a container filled with explosives; thus, corruption-related problems are framed as dangerous.

The commentary 'In turbid waters' demonstrates that CORRUPTION RELATES TO CRIMINAL LIABILITY. The terms used in the text under analysis, such as 'to launder money', 'shell companies', 'Moneyval Greylist' are non-deliberate metaphors; their usage does not limit itself only to the area of finance, but it also refers to different types of businesses and taxation. These metaphors, in fact, reveal concepts related to the area of finance that are expressed metaphorically as specific terms, which bear identical semantic meaning, for the concepts hardly exist.

Thus, it can be stated that ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVITY IS WAR is central in the examined commentary because war metaphors highlight the physical struggle that is necessary to achieve social goals.

## CONCLUSIONS

Political scandals which are often caused by politicians or state officials charged with corruption are treated as a burning social issue and receive a wide coverage in the media. Metaphor used in the media is an effective means of creating a coherent presentation of social reality and conveying images for interpreting the world. It was revealed that the evidence-based theoretical premises on the relationship between conceptual metaphor and society in the English language are applicable and work cross-linguistically in Latvian.

Metaphor fulfils a cognitive function, facilitating the understanding of one concept in terms of another. The conceptual metaphors CORRUPTION IS DIRT, CORRUPTION IS GARBAGE, CORRUPTION IS NUCLEAR DISASTER, CORRUPTION IS a DISEASE, CORRUPTION RELATES TO CRIMINAL LIABILITY, ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVITY IS WAR are aimed at affecting the reader's

perspective on corruption and political scandals involving corruption. Consequently, the reader is invited to perform a cross-domain mapping between two conceptual categories, each being coherent organization of experience. The above analysis reveals that when a deliberate metaphor is employed to explain the target domain of corruption, the reader needs to evoke the image of the source domain of a disease, dirt, war, garbage, nuclear disaster, criminal activities and liability.

Besides, metaphor often offers a mental representation that reflects a world-wide shared system of beliefs as well as a different and an unusual way of looking at the world. This suggests that, to some extent at least, human experience and human conceptualization of corruption are largely shared across languages. Although metaphor is open to multiple interpretations and allows readers to bring their own meanings to a text, an evaluative framework is created by the contrast that is set up between two conceptual categories. As a result, commentaries as discourse events may bring about changes in the readers' knowledge, beliefs and attitude.

Since corruption-related metaphors have a derogatory meaning, their use in the commentaries reflects negative evaluation of corruption as a serious social problem. By exploiting the associative power of language, metaphor evokes affective responses because it draws on value systems embedded in the society where corruption as an entity is generally viewed as negative experience. It can be assumed that the negative representations of political scandals involving corruption with the help of source domains activate emotional associations and evoke emotional responses; as a result, negative evaluative meanings are shared by the majority of readers.

The coverage of political scandals, such as recent corruption charges against the former governor of the Bank of Latvia or the United States' Magnitsky sanctions over the alleged corruption of the suspended mayor of Latvia's seaport city of Ventspils, as well as problems pertaining to the waste collection and management sector in the Riga City Council, which point to corruption, reveal inequality in society.

Identification of conceptual metaphors is inevitably subjective, like all qualitative judgements, and the small sample size examined in this study does not allow for generalizations. Yet, it is hoped that the analytical method applied has helped to shed some light on the use of corruption-related conceptual metaphors across languages. A further study of the conceptualization of corruption in the media in Latvia may provide more useful insights into the universality of conceptual metaphors.

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