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NICKNAMES OF POLITICIANS THROUGH CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN ENGLISH

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Abstract

The article focuses on the issue of conceptual metaphors in the English-language political discourse. The authors view the research novelty in considering nicknames of politicians as language representations of certain conceptual models. The research purpose is to analyze the nicknames of politicians and to identify basic conceptual metaphors of political discourse respectively. The primary method of the study is conceptual-taxonomic analysis. The materials of the study include online political articles and political blogs. The main research results present conceptual metaphor classification made on the basis of conceptual-taxonomic analysis of politicians' nicknames. Two main cognitive nominations underlying politicians' nicknames are distinguished which are a living being and a non-living entity. The authors have categorized these basic models further and obtained the following conceptual metaphors: POLITICIAN IS A PARENT, POLITICIAN IS A ROYALTY, POLITICIAN IS A SCENIC CHARACTER, POLITICIAN IS AN ANIMAL, POLITICIAN IS A PART OF HUMAN BODY which stand for "a living being" foundation; POLITICIAN IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT and POLITICIAN IS A PLANT represent metaphors with "a non-living entity" cognitive foundation. Each of the models is accompanied with the respective examples from the political texts. The results of the research are addressed to linguists, sociologists and PR-managers who view political discourse as the object of their study.

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1. Introduction

Currently, the role of political communication in the global society is continuously increasing and insufficient knowledge of the linguistic and cultural specifics of politicians' names and nicknames including, may become an obstacle to adequate interpersonal and intercultural communication. The media in general and blogs in particular are a rich source of society's attitudes and preferences. Various political parties use the media as a PR-instrument but common voters mostly have their own opinion towards politicians of their own country and any country of the world. We assume politicians' nicknames are strongly influenced by cognitive stereotypes like conceptual metaphors. Thus, we would like to focus on the issue of conceptual metaphors and their language representation in the English-language political discourse.

2. Problem Statement

Since the personality of a politician is public, he or she is an object of close attention, "open" to evaluation, praise and criticism. This often provokes nicknaming.

Nickname anthroponym in political discourse, which is viewed as "the process of information formation with reflection of knowledge about the essence of being by human consciousness" (Soldatova, 2017), is an important component of the national cultural background. The ability of a name to accumulate connotations of both general informational, historical, and emotional-aesthetic plan allows it to perform various functions in political discourse, participating in its semantic organization.

Nicknames are an important and deeply rooted nationally coloured element of substandard anthroponymy which is one of the most important and poorly studied aspects of the interaction of society, language and thinking.

3. Research Questions

3.1. Anthroponyms in political discourse

Anthroponyms in political discourse are not only important components of the national-cultural background, which is known to representatives of a certain linguistic culture, successfully functions in it and is a precedent phenomenon. They assume global circulation and thus penetrate into other cultures as models and stereotypes, becoming elements of comparison and sources of new language formations.

In most cases these are personal qualities of a politician, origin, professional experience, and case stories from life that become source of the emergence of anthroponyms for nicknames in political discourse. In the latter case, there is reason to talk about the nickname of a politician as a *mythologem* (Budaev, 2010).

3.2. Basic notions of conceptual metaphor theory

The methodological basis of our research underlies in the works by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson dedicated to *conceptual metaphors*. The essence of the authors' concept is expressed by the following thesis: human's "common" conceptual system is metaphorical in basis (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

The theory views metaphor as the main cognitive tool that underlies the transference from one conceptual area to another. The areas mentioned acquired special names: *the source-domain* for the initial conceptual area and *the target-domain* for the area under conceptualization. While the source-domain is well-known, familiar, explored and assimilated (that is the reason why it is often presented by some kind of mankind physical experience), the target-domain is "terra incognita" – usually an abstract area for perception and cognition.

Thus, conceptual metaphor is the result of the cognitive "experience" transference from the source-domain to the target-domain. Though conceptual metaphor is a cognitive structure, it can be identified and described through its language representations on different language levels: lexical, phraseological, and syntactical.

The founders of the conceptual metaphor theory, Lakoff and Johnson (2003), identify three types of metaphors*: orientational, ontological* and *structural*. However, we would like to focus only on the ontological ones as our research data are represented by them exceptionally.

Ontological metaphors come into being as the result of perceiving abstract entities through physical and material ones, i.e. physical properties are attributed to non-physical matters (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Moreover, metaphors do not serve to convey the exact quality of the object features described, but highlight particular traits and elude others (Todor, 2017).

The conceptual metaphor theory, though having appeared in early 80-s of the XX century, may well be built into the trends of modern linguistics, whose interest in the discursive characteristics of language is growing. This is manifested in the allocation of various types of discourse, among which political discourse occupies an important place. The fact can be explained by the observation that due to the specifics of politics, unlike a number of other spheres of human activity, lies in its predominantly discursive nature.

3.3. Nicknames as political metaphor representations

We have chosen anthroponyms, namely the nicknames of politicians, as the subject of research.

The ways of nickname formation are numerous and reflect many trends in word formation and language development.

Though having their national features, political nicknames clearly demonstrate commonalities which prompted us an idea of considering nickname anthroponyms as metaphors and the mechanism of their occurrence as a cognitive productive model (conceptual metaphor). Moreover, metaphors add to linguistic creativity in general (Laia & Shen, 2014) and concerning political discourse in particular.

Starting a study of political metaphor expressed in a nickname, we are not to limit the research only by the political discourse. These political metaphors may embrace specific discourses considered from certain angles. For example media discourse is extremely rich in figurative language (Baryshnikova et al., 2017).

The nicknames of politicians function not only in different discourses, but also in different cultures with the cultural patterns underlying them (Ferrari & Boca, 2017), that is why understanding them as language representations of cognitive metaphors common to mankind – "human conceptualisation paradigms" in the terms of Popescu (2017) – is a guarantee of an adequate understanding of the

anthroponym and excludes political insinuations, while allowing to manipulate this metaphor in the media in different languages in accordance with the pursued goal.

4.   Purpose of the Study

The research purpose is to analyze the nicknames of politicians, to identify basic conceptual metaphors of political discourse respectively and try to reveal the cognitive foundation for metaphorical transference. The results of the research are addressed to linguists, sociologists and PR-managers who view political discourse as the object of their study.

5.   Research Methods

The primary method of the study is conceptual-taxonomic analysis developed by Boldyrev (2016). Conceptual-taxonomic analysis as a means of identifying conceptual metaphors allows us to distinguish the main metaphorical patterns of thinking about politicians which disclose themselves in political articles and blogs.

Conceptual-taxonomic analysis of politicians' nicknames suggests taking the following steps:

- Finding conceptual metaphors in the texts of political discourse;
- Analyzing the foundation for categorization used in every particular metaphor;
- Presenting the classification of respective conceptual metaphors on the basis of their cognitive foundation.

The materials of the English-language political discourse have been chosen on the basis of the method of continuous sampling. The period of study include the data of 2007-2020. The materials of political blogs, political news and scientific articles dedicated to politician's nicknames are in the focus of the study (Leonovich, 2007; Macevich & Chernushevich, 2009; Rothschild, 2019). All the materials presented in the References are available online.

6.   Findings

Having analyzed the materials of the English-language political discourse, we can present the following observations.

Nine types of cognitive foundation, therefore, nine groups of politicians' nicknames have been identified (Macevich & Chernushevich, 2009):

Activity (positive and negative): Woodrow Wilson – *"The Schoolmaster"*, Martin Van Buren – *"Martin Van Ruin"*, Harry S. Truman – *"Give 'Em Hell Harry"*, Ronald Reagan – *"The Gipper"*, Ulysses S. Grant – *"Unconditional Surrender Grant"*, Jimmy Carter – *"The Peanut Farmer"*, Neville Chamberlain – *"The Coroner"*.

2. Behavioral patterns (positive and negative): David Cameron – *"Flashman"*, Rutherford B. Hayes – *"His Fraudulency"*, Jerry Brown – *"Governor Moonbeam"*.

3. Personal traits of character (positive and negative): Abraham Lincoln – *"Honest Abe"*, Richard Nixon – *"Tricky Dick"*, Calvin Coolidge – *"Silent Cal"*, Ronald Reagan – *"The Great Communicator"*, John McCain – *"McNasty"*, Tony Blair – *"Bliar"*.

4. Appearance description: Winston Churchill – *"Winnie"*, Donald Trump – *"The Orange Hairball of Fear"*.

5. Reflective physical qualities: Margaret Thatcher – *"The Iron Lady"*, Bill Clinton – *"Slick Willie"*.

6. Spatial characteristics: William Henry Harrison – *"Tippecanoe"*, Gordon Brown – *"Squatter at No. 10"*.

7. Zoonyms: Winston Churchill – *"British Bulldog"*, Arlen Specter – *"Snarlin' Arlen"*.

8. Evaluative-emotional (exalting and neglecting) attitude: Zachary Taylor – *"Old Rough and Ready"*, Harold Macmillan – *"Supermac"*.

9. Evaluative and patriotic attitude: Abraham Lincoln – *"The Great Emancipator"*, George Washington – *"The Father of Our Country"*.

If to speak of conceptual metaphors proper, we can identify the following hierarchy of models. Mainly they can be classified into two main groups, where the first one represents living beings (people and animals) and the second one includes non-living entities (physical objects and plants).

The first set of models is based on the comparison of the politicians with living beings. This foundation may be further classified. It is noteworthy to say, that this model is rather developed and includes five different nominations: a parent, a royal family member, a (film) character, an animal and conditionally we can add one more nomination which is a part of human's body. This hierarchy is presented in Figure 01.
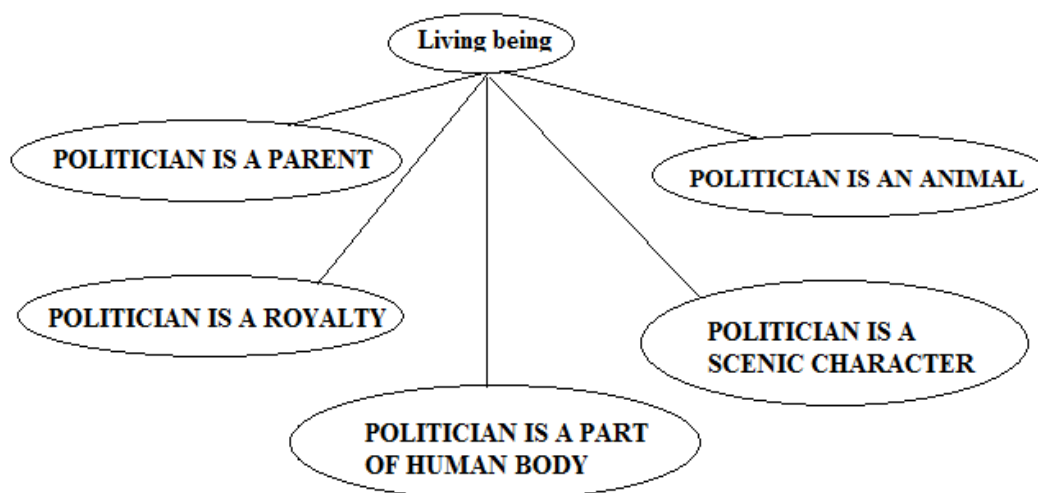

Figure 1. Nicknames of politicians presented as living beings

It is noteworthy to mention the fact that the conceptual metaphor POLITICIAN IS A PARENT has positive connotation exclusively whereas the conceptual metaphor POLITICIAN IS A ROYALTY possesses negative, ironic, neglecting and even contemptuous connotations.

In addition, the metaphorical model POLITICIAN IS A SCENIC CHARACTER is strongly connected with the stylistic device of allusion as well as the metaphor POLITICIAN IS A PART OF HUMAN BODY brings to memory the stylistic device of synecdoche.

The table below represents the distinguished conceptual metaphors with the respective examples (Table 01).

Table 1. Conceptual metaphors in politicians' nicknames (living being)

Conceptual metaphors	Language Representations
POLITICAN IS A PARENT	George Washington – "The Father of Our Country" George Washington – "The Stepfather of His Country" (given by his political opponents) James Madison – "The Father of Constitution" Thomas Jefferson -"The Father of Declaration of Independence" Abraham Lincoln –"Father Abraham" Lyndon Johnson – "Big Daddy"
POLITICIAN IS A ROYALTY (used in the ironic key)	Rutherford B. Hayes – "His Fraudulency" John Tyler – "His Accidency" James Madison – "His Little Majesty" Donald Trump – "King Twit" Grover Cleveland — "His Obstinacy" John Adams — "His Rotundity"
POLITICIAN IS A SCENIC CHARACTER	Arnold Schwarzenegger – "The Governator" Rahm Emanuel – "Rahmbo" Ron Paul – "Dr. No" Donald Trump – "Voldemort" Ronald Reagan- "Errol Flynn of B Movies"
POLITICIAN IS A PART OF HUMAN'S BODY	Gordon Brown – "Big Clunking Fist" Donald Trump – "Tiny Hands Trump"
POLITICIAN IS AN ANIMAL	Sarah Palin – "Sarah Barracuda" David Cameron - "Dave the Chameleon" Margaret Thatcher - "Attila the Hen" Theodore Roosevelt- "The Old Lion" Margaret Thatcher –" The Great She-Elephant" Tony Blair - "America's Poodle" Donald Trump – "Orange Slug" Franklin Roosevelt – "Kangaroosevelt" Abraham Lincoln – "Ourangoutan at the White House" Theodore Roosevelt– "Bull Moose" James Polk – "First Dark Horse" Martin Van Buren – "Fox" ("Kinderhook Fox") Thomas Jefferson – "Red Fox"

The second set of models where politicians are compared with non-living entities can be categorized into two more conceptual metaphors whose underlying nominations are physical objects and plants. These metaphors are presented in Figure 02 respectively.
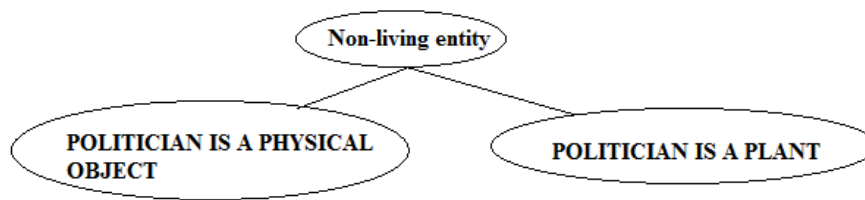
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Figure 2. Nicknames of politicians presented as non-living entities

The respective examples representing their cognitive model can be seen in Table 02.

Table 2. Conceptual metaphors in politicians' nicknames (non-living entities)

Conceptual metaphors	Language Representations
POLITICIAN IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT	*Margaret Thatcher – "The Iron Lady"*
	Tony Blair – "Teflon Tony"
	Benjamin Harrison – "The Human Iceberg"
	Tom DeLay – "The Hammer"
	Harold Macmillan – "Mac the Knife"
	Bill Clinton – "Slick Willie"
	Mitt Romney – "Mittens"
	Donald Trump – "Slimy Orange Hair Ball"/"The Great Orange Hairball of Death and Destruction"
	Ronald Reagan — "Bowl Number 5"
	Andrew Jackson – "Old Hickory"
POLITICIAN IS A PLANT	*George H. W. Bush – "Poppy"*

Thus, we can point out the fact that the conceptual metaphor whose cognitive foundation is the nominations of living beings seems to be more productive and highly developed in comparison with the model whose cognitive foundation lies in the nominations of physical objects and plants.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, we would like to make the following observations.

The English-language political discourse is rich in conceptual metaphors. These cognitive models may present a positive as well as a negative attitude of the public towards its object of its evaluation – every particular politician.

The cognitive foundation of political conceptual metaphors may be conditionally categorized into "living" and "non-living". This basic classification can be subjected to further categorization on the basis of the objects mentioned.

We have identified five subordinate metaphors in the basic model which presents a politician as a living being: POLITICIAN IS A PARENT, POLITICIAN IS A ROYALTY, POLITICIAN IS A SCENIC CHARACTER, POLITICIAN IS AN ANIMAL, and POLITICIAN IS A PART OF HUMAN BODY.

It is worth mentioning that two of these conceptual metaphors (POLITICIAN IS A SCENIC CHARACTER and POLITICIAN IS A PART OF HUMAN BODY) are strongly connected with the

stylistic devices of allusion and synecdoche respectively. Whereas two more cognitive models (POLITICIAN IS A PARENT and POLITICIAN IS A ROYALTY) possess strong but opposite connotations: the nomination of a parent expresses warm and kind attitude while the nomination of a royal family member brings negative or ironic charge. The cognitive foundation of "non-living" gives birth to two conceptual metaphors: POLITICIAN IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT and POLITICIAN IS A PLANT. The first of the mentioned models can be subcategorized further, but then more proving data should be included in the research.

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