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Metaphors We Manipulate with

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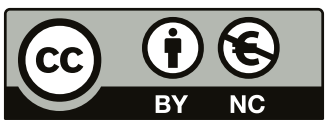

Metaphor as the Distorting Mirror of Brexit: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Metaphors and Manipulation in the Brexit Debate

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This article offers a corpus-based inquiry into the use of metaphor in the Brexit debate. This study aims to stress the link between manipulation and the metaphors that are used to talk about Brexit. It mainly focuses on the cognitive dimension of metaphor, following the Conceptual Metaphor Theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson. The methodology is largely inspired by Charteris-Black's analysis in three steps: identification, interpretation and explanation. The corpus includes political speeches from various British politicians who strongly got involved in the debate, such as Boris Johnson, Theresa May and David Cameron. In addition, two cases of multimodal metaphors are closely analysed. The article suggests looking at the links between the conceptual domains at the roots of the metaphors encountered in the corpus and the act of manipulating.

Keywords: metaphor, manipulation, cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, Brexit, multimodality

Cet article s'intéresse à l'utilisation de métaphores dans les discours du Brexit par le biais d'une analyse de corpus, en étudiant les liens qui unissent les domaines conceptuels au cœur des métaphores du Brexit et l'acte de manipulation. Cette étude a pour but de mettre au jour le lien entre manipulation et métaphores utilisées dans les discours du Brexit. On se concentrera principalement sur la dimension cognitive de la métaphore en s'appuyant sur la théorie de la métaphore conceptuelle, développée par Lakoff et Johnson. La méthodologie de cette étude s'inspire des travaux de Charteris-Black et son analyse critique de la métaphore en trois étapes : identification, interprétation et explication. Le corpus comprend des discours de personnalités politiques qui se sont particulièrement investies dans la campagne, comme par exemple Boris Johnson, Theresa May et David Cameron. En outre, deux cas de métaphores multimodales seront analysés.

Mots-clés : métaphore, manipulation, linguistique cognitive, analyse de discours, Brexit, multimodalité

Introduction

"Brexit means Brexit", but it is difficult to tell what Brexit really means. The term *Brexit* results from a blending of the lexemes *Britain* and *exit*. It was first used in 2012 on a British blog specialised in European political issues. Brexit has been the main preoccupation in the British political sphere ever since the referendum on EU membership was promised in 2013 by former Prime Minister David Cameron. This promise was made by Cameron as an attempt to secure his position at the head of the government, but little did he know about the scope of his perilous political move. The 2016 referendum profoundly divided British political affairs, and it shed light upon the ever-going conflicts surrounding the place of the United Kingdom in the European Union. As claimed by MacShane [2019: 54], "Brexit has overturned all political norms and rules". British politicians are now mainly polarised in accordance with the side they endorsed during the referendum campaign: either "Vote Leave", or "Remain". Although we are now accustomed to hearing about Brexit, there is still some fuzziness regarding what it truly encompasses, for it is an unprecedented event. It is interesting to note that an extensive number of metaphors have been used to talk about this issue – in the news as well as in political speeches. As pointed out by BBC journalist James Landale [2017], "[l]ike the thin twig of peace, the Brexit metaphor has been stretched out to a melting point". This is certainly not a matter of coincidence, for metaphor is known to be used as a cognitive and linguistic device that enables speakers to make sense of the unknown. According to Lakoff and Johnson [1980: 4], metaphors structure how we perceive the world, how we think, and what we do. Furthermore, politics is mainly a matter of persuasion and being convincing, which is sometimes achieved through manipulation. Thus, politics is linked to manipulation, and Brexit is linked to metaphor, since politicians resort to it abundantly. Consequently, it is worth wondering about the links between Brexit, metaphor and manipulation. Is there a link between metaphor and manipulation in the Brexit debate? How are Brexit metaphors related to manipulation? This article aims to answer these questions. The word *manipulation* will be used figuratively and understood as a process aiming to influence someone's beliefs and conception of an issue through unconscious mental operations. In this context of study, *manipulation* is not seen as something necessarily harmful, but as a political tool in the same way as persuasion. As claimed by Coxall [2013: 16], today, governments are mainly reliant on manipulation. In some contexts, manipulation can be used for morally wrong purposes, but not necessarily. To begin with, the theoretical framework of the study will be presented; then, the second part will be devoted to the presentation of the corpus and the methodology; the final part will dig into the interpretation of the results of the corpus-based analysis I conducted.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1. Metaphor and Cognition

Metaphor was originally studied for its ornamental function in works of literature and it was purely regarded as a mere figure of speech likely to be encountered in poetry [Gibbs 1999: 145]. However, fairly recent studies in cognitive linguistics in the 1980s showed that metaphor endorses many other functions. These studies were pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson, who conceived the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, related to the field of cognitive linguistics. Nowadays, most of the studies on metaphor come within the framework of this theory. The founding argument resulting from this theory is that metaphor not only embellishes, but also shapes the way we think. Lakoff and Johnson [1980: 3] affirm that "our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor". Following this claim, which largely reshuffled the way metaphor was apprehended by researchers, metaphor is now seen as a means to make sense of the unknown. This results from a mapping between two domains (or concepts): a source domain and a target domain. As explained by Kövecses [2002: 4], the source domain corresponds to the domain from which the metaphor is built, whereas the target domain corresponds to what is being conceptualized thanks to the source domain. Usually, the source domain corresponds to something familiar or already experienced. This mapping is represented as follows: A IS B, A being the source domain, and B the target domain. A IS B is thus the conceptual metaphor. In discourse, the conceptual metaphor will not be encountered as such, but it will be expressed through the use of linguistic metaphors. For instance, in the 2017 Conservative Manifesto, the following linguistic metaphor is used: "The UK is **embarking** upon another era in our centuries-old story" [C02]. The use of the verb *embark* in this context can be regarded as metaphorical, for it is usually used to talk about boats, so the UK is referred to as if it were a boat. The corresponding conceptual metaphor would then be: THE UK IS A BOAT.

All the more interesting about this theory is the fact that metaphor highlights some common characteristics connecting the source domain to the target domain. Frequently, the conceptual metaphor actually stems from these common characteristics. Consequently, the other defining characteristics of the source and target domains will remain in the shade, and it will be hidden. This process was coined by Lakoff and Johnson [Kövecses 2002: 88] under the name 'highlighting-hiding principle'. For example, with the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, the competitive aspect of having an argument is highlighted, whereas its collaborative dimension is hidden. This explains why the Conceptual Metaphor Theory is frequently used as the theoretical framework for the studies of metaphor and manipulation. Furthermore,

metaphor can be used as an effective means of persuasion due to the connotations engendered. A metaphor may convey a positive or negative connotation depending on the connotations of its source domain. As stated by Charteris-Black [2005: 14], "metaphorical meaning is determined by connotations aroused by the words in their literal use". Thus, a speaker may decide to use one particular source domain to manipulate their audience.

1.2. Metaphor as a Manipulative Device

Given that metaphor shapes the way we think of the world, it is worth considering its potential manipulative power. How do metaphors adopted to deal with certain issues manipulate or (re)shape the way we think about these issues? This question raises interest among the specialists working in the field of discourse analysis, especially when working on political discourse. Political discourse being mainly aimed at persuading, or manipulating, it is the perfect playing field to study the link between metaphor and manipulation. This link was, for instance, strongly highlighted by Charteris-Black. According to him [2005: 13], "metaphor influences our beliefs, attitudes and values because it uses language to activate unconscious emotional associations and it influences the value that we place on ideas and beliefs on a scale of goodness and badness". The "unconscious emotional associations" correspond to the mapping from the source domain to the target domain. Thus, some metaphors can be chosen, as a way to arouse specific connotations in the mind of the addressee. If the source domain is associated with a target domain that is usually negatively connoted, then it is likely to be understood and perceived in the light of these negative connotations. In this case, the link between metaphor and manipulation is blatant. This converges with Gerard Steen's [2008: 222] point of view, who claims that a metaphor used deliberately can change the addressee's point of view on the issue. Multiple examples of this practice can be found in political speeches. To illustrate this point, Enoch Powell's notorious speech known as "the river of blood" [1968] can be cited. In this speech, Powell used a metaphor comparing the immigrants to a river of blood engulfing the United Kingdom. He compared the English Channel to "the River Tiber foaming with much blood", with "blood" referring to the immigrants crossing the Channel. Associating immigrants with "blood foaming" conveys a derogatory connotation, for blood is the consequence of a wound, the sign that something painful has happened, and it is often associated with fear and disgust. The use of such a metaphor can be seen as a way for Powell to try and persuade his audience that immigration is harmful to the country. The association of immigrants and blood is unconscious as it partly depends on the knowledge of the context (here, the migrant crisis in Calais), and how the addressee conceives blood.

The persuasive power of metaphors also depends on their degree of conventionality. Conventional metaphorical expressions are particularly powerful devices to manipulate, since they are used and understood without being consciously recognised as metaphors [Semino 2008: 5]. For instance, when using verbal expressions from the conceptual metaphor *argument is war* such as "**defend** a claim", speakers as well as addressees generally do not realise that this expression is in fact metaphorical. The mapping between the two domains is made unconsciously. Conventional metaphors are effective means of persuasion, because they act on a subconscious level [Charteris-Black 2005: 13].

Additionally, metaphor is, indeed, an efficient tool to manipulate and/or persuade since it is linked to the emotional sphere. Charteris-Black [2005: 14] compares metaphors to "emotional-arousing bearers of meaning", insisting upon the emotional response metaphors can generate. According to Aristotle, emotion is one of the key elements necessary to perform an act of persuasion. In Aristotle's rhetorical triangle, *pathos* is one of the three founding principles of rhetoric, and it refers to the emotions raised by speakers in their audience [De Landtsheer 2007: 57].

1.3. Metaphor: Beyond Words Alone

As mentioned earlier, conceptual metaphors are expressed through linguistic metaphors. Yet, this statement implies that only verbal metaphors are considered. However, recent studies, such as the ones carried out by Forceville and Urios Aparisi [2009], put forward the idea that metaphor is retrieved from a wider range of means. In *Metaphor and Multimodality* [2009: 4], they claim that "metaphor is not primarily a matter of language". This claim stems from the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the belief that we think metaphorically, for metaphor shapes our thoughts, the way we understand and perceive the world. Yet, words are not the only means through which thoughts can be expressed. Hence, this leads to the claim that metaphor should be encountered through other modes of expression. According to Forceville and Urios Aparisi [2009: 4], metaphor is likely to be encountered in other semiotic modes, including music, moving images, gestures, and visual representation at large. When the source domain and the target domain are both from the same semiotic mode, the metaphor is monomodal. In contrast, multimodal metaphor is defined as a metaphor whose target and source domains are expressed through a combination of modes, so non-verbal metaphor is mainly at stake here [Forceville 2009: 25]. Forceville [2008: 469] explains that a multimodal metaphor should meet the following criteria:

(a) Given the context in which they occur, the phenomena[a] must belong to distinct categories;

(b) The two phenomena must take the form of a conceptual metaphor and can thus be illustrated by the schema A is B;

(c) The two phenomena must appear in at least two different modes.

a. The term *phenomena* used in this description coincides with Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual source and target domains.

Olena Morozova [2017: 272] argues that multimodal metaphor is allegedly more efficient to arouse emotions: "multimodal metaphors appeal to the emotional sphere while verbal metaphors predominantly appeal to reason". Multimodal metaphors are supposedly emotionally denser than verbal metaphors. However, this argument is debatable since all metaphors arouse emotions, whatever their modes, and the emotional appeal is an element difficult to measure. Besides, a metaphor found in a piece of poetry will be more likely to have an impact on the emotional sphere rather than on the logical sphere. Nevertheless, both verbal and multimodal metaphors can be used as manipulative tools, except that they do not resort to the same rhetorical strategy.

2. Object of Study

2.1. Corpus

The corpus serving this research will be composed of verbal and visual data. As for the verbal data, a sample of political speeches on the theme of Brexit was collected. These speeches were taken from emblematic British politicians from either the Vote Leave or the Remain campaign. The aim will be to undertake an analysis revealing how metaphors and manipulation are related in the context of Brexit. To try and answer this question, five verbal speeches, two written documents, and two visual items will be analysed. Among these objects of study, there will be both spoken and written data. The written data include the Conservative Manifesto from 2015, in support of David Cameron, and the one from 2017, in support of Theresa May. The spoken data include speeches from David Cameron, Theresa May, Boris Johnson, and Nicola Sturgeon. A large panel of protagonists was selected when sorting out this corpus, and it is important to note that the speakers do not necessarily share the same opinion on the issue. In that respect, a more global vision of the issue will be provided, and the conception of Brexit will be analysed as regards the politicians' positions in the debate. Studying political discourse is a relevant way to enhance the link between metaphors

and manipulation since the aim of political discourse is to convince and/or persuade [Chilton 2004: 12], and to achieve persuasion, politicians often resort to manipulative techniques.

As for the visual data, the images put together in the corpus were selected with the help of a Google search with specific keywords. To find these images, collocation of the words "Britain, EU, exit" was entered into the Google search engine. Then, two images of different kinds were selected for this entry. They are both graphically designed images, one of them is the illustration of an online article about Brexit, and the other one is a cartoon which also includes verbal elements. An example of a cartoon drawing was chosen for this study since authors of cartoons often resort to humour and exaggeration in a satirical way, to denounce. Cartoons often take a stance on the issue they are drawing about, so they may want to try and persuade their audience that their point of view is more legitimate, hence the potential resort to manipulation.

2.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study stems from the hypothesis that metaphor can be used as a device for politicians to manipulate the conception of an event and the mental representation of their audience, depending on the source domain they resort to. This analysis will be motivated by the following questions:

- What are the conceptual domains at stake in the case of the metaphors referring to Brexit?
- What are the connotations aroused by the concepts?
- Why using such domains?
- Are the domains from the verbal data similar to the ones from the visual data?

2.3. Methodology

This corpus analysis will follow the methodology inspired by the Critical Metaphor Analysis as developed by Charteris-Black in *Politicians and Rhetoric* [2005]. According to him, there are three stages for the analysis of metaphor in discourse: identification, interpretation and explanation. A metaphor is easily identifiable as it triggers a semantic tension, and the word or expression used metaphorically appears in a somewhat unusual context [2005: 28]. To achieve the identification of the metaphorical expressions, steps from the Metaphorical Identification Procedure (MIP), as listed by the Pragglejaz Group [2007: 12], will be considered. When a lexical item is deemed metaphorical, I will determine whether it has a more

basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the studied context. If so, this expression will be considered metaphorical [Steen *et al.* 2010: 167]. Secondly, interpretation relies on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Finally, for the third step, the point of view and the motive of the utterer will be uncovered and explained. Why did the utterer choose to resort to this source domain in particular? What are they trying to convey? According to Charteris-Black, this method is mainly used to deal with written/ spoken corpora. Nevertheless, in this study, the same method will be used to analyse the visual data of the corpus, except that a step will be added as the semantic modes of the multimodal metaphors will also be looked at.

3. Corpus analysis

3.1. Verbal Data

The study of the corpus revealed the presence of a large number of metaphors linked to Brexit, with a variety of source domains. A total of 116 metaphorical expressions have been found in the whole corpus. This article will focus on the three most frequently encountered conceptual metaphors*:* THE EU/UK IS A PERSON (30%), BREXIT IS WAR (27%), BREXIT IS A (BOAT) JOURNEY (21%). The chart underneath lists the various source domains and the number of occurrences for each domain.

Chart 1. Distribution of the source domains

Source domains	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Personification (including *divorce*)	35	30%
War	31	27%
(Boat) journey	24	21%
Object	13	11%
Container liquid	8	7%
Disease	4	3%
Game	1	1%
	Total 116	

3.1.1. The EU/UK is a person

Another possible concept to talk about Brexit involves personification and talking about the nations as if they were human beings. Conceptualising countries as persons is common and not specific to this context. For example, France is often conceptualised as Marianne, the figure of liberty, and the

United States as Uncle Sam. In Theresa May and David Cameron speeches, the UK and the EU are often regarded as two friends. According to Chilton [1995: 39], conceiving a nation as a person can give the impression that the nation can enter into social relationships, either as enemies, neighbours, or friends. For instance, Theresa May declared:

> I want us to be the **best friends** and **neighbour** to our European *partners*.
> [...] a country that goes out into the world to build relationships with *old friends*
> After Brexit, Britain wants to be a **good friend** and **neighbour** in every way [C05]

These are only a couple of examples, but the occurrence "friend" appears at least 11 times in that same speech. It shows that May clearly wanted to insist on the fact that she was in favour of a "soft Brexit" and willing to maintain good relations with the EU. Consequently, this might be the ideology she tried to hammer in the head of her audience through the use of such metaphors. Resorting to the concept of *person* allows her to build this bond between the two nations, and to insist upon the importance of maintaining this bond.

In the Conservative Party Manifesto for the 2015 general election, the *nation as a person* conceptual metaphor allows the speaker to build even closer links between the UK and the EU. As shown in the following example, the nations are considered as family members, thus two people related by blood:

> Yes to a **family** of nation states [C01]

Conceiving entities such as nations as if they were human beings allows politicians to make sense of them in human terms, with experiences that we may have experienced and that are close to us [Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 34]. Besides, this idea of closeness may arouse empathy, and thus connects to the emotional sphere of the addressees. This highlights the link between metaphor and manipulation when personification is used as the source domain. For instance, when the EU and the UK are conceived as a married couple about to get a divorce, empathy can be felt as divorce is often something heart-breaking. An example will be tackled in the next part devoted to the visual data.

3.1.2. Brexit is war

war is a source domain frequently encountered in political discourse, and even more during tumultuous political campaigns [Beard 2000: 22]. Then, it is no surprise that this concept is one of the most frequently encountered in

the corpus. Politicians, just like great warriors, fight. But instead of fighting with weapons, they fight with words. According to Lakoff and Johnson [1980: 62], this conceptual metaphor is often used in political speeches as it helps us to rationalise and understand an irrational argument thanks to something easier for us to understand: physical conflict. Metaphors tapping into the source domain of *war* may be used to convey the idea of a conflict between individuals, political parties, or government [Semino 2008: 62]. This is presently what is done by Nicola Sturgeon in the two occurrences below:

> The UK government's plan still seems to be in a **state of complete chaos** [...] and then be forced to **capitulate** [C07]

Sturgeon was a strong opponent to Brexit, and by using metaphors from the conceptual domain of *war*, she exemplifies her disapproval and her position against the withdrawal from the EU. With words, she declares herself at war with the Leavers, and she positions herself as the leader of a glorious anti-Brexit army.

Likewise, Boris Johnson also resorted to the *war* domain in his 2016 Vote Leave Speech, except that it does not convey the same image. In the following occurrence, he compares the day of the EU membership referendum, June 23*rd*, to Independence Day:

> I believe that June 23*rd* will be **Independence Day** [C04]

I believe this expression to be metaphorical since "Independence Day" with capital letters is generally associated with the Fourth of July in the United States and the commemoration of the *Declaration of Independence*; the meaning of this lexical item in that context differs from its basic meaning, which is historically older. Thus, there is a discrepancy between the contextual meaning and the historical meaning, and this is one of the hints mentioned in the Metaphorical Identification Procedure [2010: 167]. In the course of history, independence has often been obtained after a series of armed conflicts and bloody wars, as was the case for the United States, for instance. This is why this metaphorical expression can be interpreted as tapping into the domain *war*. Here, Johnson conveys his firm commitment against the European Union and portrays himself as a great warrior, (verbally) fighting for the independence of the United Kingdom. This is one way of interpreting this occurrence, but of course, other interpretations are conceivable.

On another note, Theresa May resorts to the *war* domain for other purposes. What is striking in her speeches is the recurrence of the term "allies", borrowed from the semantic domain of *war*, to describe the members of the EU:

our friends and **allies** in the EU
a partnership of friends and **allies** [C06]

Contrary to Boris Johnson, she places herself on the same side of the argument as the EU. She is not fighting against, but with the EU. It highlights the cooperative aspect between the UK and the EU to resolve the Brexit crisis. It hints at the fact that she was not clearly in favour of a Brexit *stricto sensu*, but rather amicable negations in partnership with the EU. All in all, the *war* metaphor allows the creation of a frame in which protagonists take on different roles: the leading figure (the politicians), the opponent (members of the opposition), the victims (the British and/or European citizens) and the entity that is fought for (here, for instance, the EU membership) [Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 5]. This represents correspondences between the source and the target domains.

3.1.3. Brexit is a journey

As can be deduced from the analysis of the corpus, the concept of *journey* serves as a source domain for many metaphorical expressions. This conceptual metaphor belongs to the *source-path-goal* schema developed by Lakoff [1987: 275]. The *source* represents the starting point, the *goal* represents the destination, and the *path* stands for the steps of the process leading to the *goal*. The *journey* metaphor originates from the Bible. Charteris-Black [2005: 45] argues that it explains how choices can be made between good and evil paths, and how God can be perceived as a guide. Generally speaking, movement is positively connoted as it is a synonym of progress, whereas being static is negatively connoted, as it involves being stuck, thus not reaching the intended goal [Charteris-Black 2005: 199]. However, the path can sometimes lead to a place where the utterer does not want to go, thus being linked to the idea of "evil path" in the Bible. For example, in his speech at Bloomberg Institute, David Cameron used the following metaphorical expressions:

People feel that the EU is **heading in a direction** that they never signed up to
The British people have **set themselves on a path** to an inevitable exit
The EU would be greatly diminished by **Britain's departure** [C03]

The collocation of the *journey* metaphor with negatively connoted adjectives, such as "inevitable" and "diminished", shows that Cameron preaches the voters not to follow the path of Brexit.

The same concept was also used by Boris Johnson in 2016:

The EU is **moving completely** in the wrong **direction** [C04]

Here also, the JOURNEY metaphor is combined with a negatively connoted adjective: "wrong", which gives the impression that heading to the EU and being close to the EU is not the way to go.

Theresa May also resorted to the same concept in her speech at Lancaster House:

It [Brexit] will **lead toward** a bright future
We will follow a better **path** [C05]

In these occurrences, Brexit is conceived as a path leading to the ultimate goal: "a bright future". The *path-goal* schema is, in that context, designed to picture Brexit as something to look for.

In Nicola Sturgeon's speech and the 2017 Conservative Manifesto, conceptual metaphors related to the concept of *journey* can also be noticed, and more specifically a journey involving a boat:

[...] **embark** on these negotiations with a sensible and credible position [C07]

To **emerge** from Brexit as a strong and united nation
The UK is **embarking** upon another era [C02]

The metaphorical items here, "emerge" and "embark", convey an optimistic perception of the future. Both verbs are inchoative and indicate the beginning of a process. The journey has just begun, and although the issue of the referendum put Scotland in a difficult position, the Prime Minister expresses her faith in the future of the country. It may also be a way for her to appear as a strong leader and show that she knows where she is going.

Additionally, *journey* is a concept easily identifiable and experienced by most human beings; it involves a physical movement from a starting point to an end point. Charteris-Black [2005: 199] argued that the starting point is usually in the present and corresponds to something rather familiar, whereas the end point is generally in the future, thus still unknown. Consequently, using *journey* as the source domain to talk about Brexit may be a way for political leaders to talk their audience into thinking that they have a clear idea of where they are now, and know precisely where they want to lead the citizens. It places them at the front of the stage, in a leading – even God-like – position [Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 10]. The use of such metaphors allows politicians to manipulate the way they are perceived by their addressees, and this is related to their *ethos*, which is one of the three persuasive devices

mentioned by Aristotle together with *pathos* and *logos*. For instance, even though Theresa May was not the most popular Prime Minister in the history of the UK, she tried to place herself as a leading figure by using *journey* metaphors. Besides, it is worth noting that some of the terms used in the speeches are involved in the act of manipulation, for they convey a positive or negative opinion on Brexit. For example, in Theresa May's occurrence cited above, "It [Brexit] will *lead* toward a bright future", the adjective "bright" conveys a positive image of Brexit, so the conceptual metaphor *Brexit is a journey* associated with this adjective endorses a positive connotation. In opposition, Cameron's following statement: "The EU would be greatly diminished by Britain's *departure*" stresses the negative impact of Brexit, for the adjective "diminished" associated with the metaphor is negatively connoted. This is related to the notion of semantic prosody, which is another potentially manipulative device, especially when combined with metaphors. Semantic prosody is defined by Louw [1993: 157] as "a consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates". Thus, it is always important to take into account the co-text surrounding the metaphorical items to grasp their full effect.

3.2. Visual Data

Figure 1: "What a British divorce from the EU would look like"[1] ., illustration by Jonathan McHugh, *Financial Times*, February 2018 [C08]

Figure 1 served as an illustration for the online article from *The Financial Times* entitled "What British divorce from the EU would look like". This image is metaphorical, in that it compares the process of Brexit to a divorce, giving the conceptual metaphor *Brexit is a divorce*: the source domain of divorce is used to talk about the target domain of Brexit. This conceptual metaphor is frequently encountered in articles and in the news. The two statues on top of the cake represent the two partners who are about to get a divorce. The woman can be interpreted as a personification of Britain, for, historically, Britain has often been personified as a female figure. For instance, on the British coin, Britain is personified as a female named Britannia. The husband, probably standing for the EU, does not seem to be in a good place, as indicated by its stumbling position and the shade covering him. This could be interpreted as a bad omen for the EU. As for the knife planted in the

1 Description: image showing a wedding cake. The inside of the cake is red, white and blue, hinting at the Union Jack. The icing is designed as the European flag. The cake is topped with two wedding figurines (a bride and a groom). A knife is stuck right in front of the groom, casting a shadow over him. The groom seems to be wavering

heart of the European flag, it may represent the issue of the referendum as a stab in the back of the EU. This may invite the viewer to conceive Brexit as an act of treason, as an act that will harm the EU.

Figure 2: "Abandon Ship"[2], a cartoon by Ben Garrison, March 2018 [C09]

Figure 2 is a political cartoon made by Ben Garrison. This was published on his Twitter account the day following the referendum. The European Union and the United Kingdom are depicted via a combination of multimodal metaphors which include visual and verbal contents. First, both Unions are depicted as boats, giving the conceptual metaphors *Britain is a boat* and *the EU is a boat*. The title given to the cartoon, "Abandon Ship", participates in the elaboration of the conceptual metaphors, so the metaphor is here multimodal (the source domain is verbally transcribed). It is interesting to note that the EU is depicted as a boat which is about to drown due to "economic failure", whereas the UK is sailing towards the setting sun, thus escaping the danger faced by the EU. Consequently, this could be perceived as a way to manipulate the viewers into thinking that leaving the EU will save the UK from the shipwreck that is triggering the potential collapse of the EU. These multimodal metaphors manipulate our conception of the EU as something dangerous, and consequently also manipulate our perception of Brexit as something beneficial and positive for the United Kingdom. Conceiving the UK as a boat may be directly linked to the historical past of the UK. It echoes the glorious days of the British Empire largely resulting from overseas trade and possessions facilitated by its geographical location. This accounts for the fact that *boat* is a frequent source domain for metaphorical representation of the UK, both visually and verbally, and this suggests the creation of bridges between the visual and the verbal data.

3.3. Data Triangulation

Interestingly enough, this short corpus-based analysis, based on an analysis carried out on a larger scale [Rodet 2018], revealed that metaphors – verbal and visual – are omnipresent in the Brexit debate, and most of them, especially in the verbal data, are so conventional that they often go unnoticed. The source domains differ from the verbal data to the visual data. In the verbal data, the source domains of *war, journey* and personification are more frequently encountered, whereas in the visual data the *boat* and

2 Description: two ships heading towards opposite directions. In the background, a ship with the Union Jack raised on its mast is peacefully heading towards the setting sun. In the foreground, a ship with the EU flag is sailing through a storm labelled "economic failure". The sea is rough, and "waves of immigration" are hitting the ship. A shark labelled "political correctness" is swimming towards the passengers with its mouth wide open. The ship is dangerously standing at the edge of an underwater cliff. It is clearly about to sink.

divorce domains are encountered. However, links can be made between the *journey* metaphors in the verbal data and the *boat* domain in the visual data, since sailing on a boat somehow includes a journey and a motion from one point to another. Likewise, parallels can be drawn between the use of personification in the verbal data and the *divorce* metaphor in the visual data (see Figure 1). Conceptualising Brexit as a divorce induces that the UK and the EU stand for a couple of human beings. It is interesting to note that in both cases, imagery is involved. With visual metaphors, the image is directly presented under our eyes. However, verbal metaphors generate mental imagery unconsciously. A mental representation stems from the mapping between the source and the target domains, and it is generated by words that are heard or read. In a sense, verbal metaphors go further in the act of manipulating, for they turn words into mental imagery. Words are manipulated in order to shape the conceptualisation of an entity.

Nevertheless, as pointed out by Charteris-Black [2005: 197]: "metaphor is most effective when interlaced with other figures of speech to become part of a wider system of meaning creation". The analysis of the verbal data revealed the importance of taking into account the semantic prosody of the other lexical items of the utterance in which the metaphorical expressions appear. As for the visual data, it stressed the importance of cultural and historical references of the metaphorical items. In both images, the conceptual metaphors rely on references to the history of the United Kingdom.

Concluding remarks

The results of this study show that metaphor is omnipresent in the Brexit debate, sometimes insidiously, sometimes more noticeably. The use of metaphor allows politicians to play with their *ethos*, depending on the concepts they resort to. For example, by using metaphors from the concept of *war*, Boris Johnson presents himself as a strong leader, ready to fight for the interests of the UK. The same thing can be said about Nicola Sturgeon, who refuses to "capitulate". As for Theresa May, the repetitive use of metaphors comparing the EU and the UK to a group of friends shows that she wants to appear as a friendly person who does want to maintain good relations with the EU. Consequently, metaphor can be seen as a way for politicians to manipulate the conception of an event following the stance they endorse. The cases of Theresa May and Boris Johnson perfectly illustrate this point. May was not necessarily strongly in favour of Brexit, hence her tendency to use positively connoted domains that strengthen the collaborative dimension between the UK and the EU. Conversely, Boris Johnson, leader of the Vote Leave campaign, prefers to use concepts related to violence, and it shows

his profound disagreement with the EU. Thus, just like a distorting mirror, the conception of Brexit varies from one point of view to another. In that respect, metaphors can definitely act as manipulative devices.

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