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Metaphor in newspapers

Journalistic writing has been a welcome source of natural language data for metaphor research. The popularity of newspaper texts for metaphor research would seem to suggest that news is a very metaphorical register. However, most studies on metaphor in news have been small-scale or restricted in their focus, investigating only a small set of linguistic or conceptual metaphors, or have lacked a transparent method of metaphor identification.

This research presents the first investigation of metaphorically used words in newspaper articles based on a systematic and transparent method of metaphor identification that captures all metaphorical language use regardless of source domain or lexical field. Quantitative and qualitative analysis examines the distribution, form, function and patterns of metaphorical language in news texts compared to its use in the registers fiction, academic texts and conversation. The analysis is based on a database of about 190,000 words hand-annotated for metaphorical language use. Besides its cognitive linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse-analytical approaches, the work also adopts a psycholinguistic angle to investigate the influence of metaphor conventionality and metaphor signaling on people's mental representation of a news article.

The work will appeal to anyone interested in newspaper texts specifically and metaphor variation across registers more generally. It is also a helpful resource to those who are concerned with research methodology: it not only advances our knowledge of what characterizes metaphor in newspaper writing, but also furthers the development of research tools for the identification of linguistic metaphors as well as the description of conceptual mappings.

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