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Metaphors of Law in Decisions of the International Criminal Court

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Abstract

This study examines the metaphorical conceptualization of LAW in a corpus of 56 decisions published by the International Criminal Court between 2022 and 2025, totaling 257,777 words. Drawing on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the Metaphor Identification Procedure, and Metaphorical Pattern Analysis, the study analyzes two high-frequency, law-adjacent content words, *chamber* and *defence*, identifying the metaphors through which legal reasoning is structured in this institutional context. The analysis observes a prominent dominance of personification metaphors, with the remaining metaphorical expressions distributed across conflict, object, and nature-based conceptualizations. The study further argues that several of the identified metaphors function as theory-constitutive metaphors, actively shaping the conceptual framework through which the court constructs and legitimizes its authority. The findings contribute to the comparative study of metaphor in legal discourse and to broader discussions of language and legitimacy in international adjudication.

Martynas Žaronaitis. *Teisės metaforos Tarptautinio baudžiamojo teismo sprendimuose*. Magistro darbas, vadovė prof. dr. Inesa Šeškauskienė, Vilniaus universitetas, Filologijos fakultetas, 2026, 48 p.

Raktiniai žodžiai: metafora, teisė, institucinis teisinis diskursas, teorinės-konstatuojančiosios metaforos, metaforiniai modeliai, Tarptautinis baudžiamasis teismas

Anotacija

Šiame darbe tiriama teisės metaforinė konceptualizacija 56 Tarptautinio baudžiamojo teismo sprendimų tekstyne, kuris buvo sudarytas iš 2022–2025 metais paskelbtų sprendimų, o bendras žodžių skaičius siekia 257 777 žodžius. Remiantis konceptualiosios metaforos teorija, metaforų identifikavimo procedūra ir metaforinių modelių analize, tiriami du dažnai vartojami su teise susiję turinio žodžiai: *chamber* (liet. (teisėjų) kolegija) ir *defence* (liet. gynyba), siekiant nustatyti metaforomis struktūruojamą teisinį argumentavimą instituciniame kontekste. Analizė atskleidžia ryškų personifikacijos metaforų dominavimą, o likę metaforiniai posakiai priklauso konfliktinėms, objektinėms ir gamtinėms

konceptualizacijoms. Darbe taip pat teigiama, kad kai kurios nustatytos metaforos veikia kaip teorinės-konstatuojančiosios metaforos, aktyviai formuojančios konceptualią struktūrą, per kurią teismas konstruoja ir pagrindžia savo autoritetą. Rezultatai prisideda prie lyginamųjų metaforų tyrimų teisės diskurse ir platesnių tyrimų apie kalbą ir legitimumą tarptautiniame teisiniame procese.

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1. Introduction

Language is rarely a neutral medium in institutional settings. In the courtroom, as in the legislature, words tend not merely to describe legal reality but to actively construct it, shaping who is granted authority, who is held responsible, and how legal concepts are understood (Fairclough 1992; van Dijk 1997). Nowhere is this constructive function more significant than in the decisions of international criminal tribunals, where the stakes of language extend to individual liberty and collective memory. The International Criminal Court (ICC), established by the Rome Statute in 1998 and operational since 2002, represents the most ambitious institutionalization of international criminal justice to date, a permanent tribunal with jurisdiction over genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression. Its written decisions, produced by a multinational judicial body operating across multiple legal traditions and two working languages (English and French), constitute a distinctive and underexplored genre of institutional legal discourse (Stahn 2015: 84–101; Cao 2007).

Among the many linguistic mechanisms that shape legal meaning, metaphor occupies a particularly significant but often overlooked position. Since Lakoff & Johnson's (1980/2003) demonstration that metaphor is not a rhetorical embellishment but a fundamental cognitive operation, i.e., a systematic mapping from a concrete source domain onto an abstract target domain, researchers have increasingly attended to the metaphorical structures embedded in professional and institutional language. Legal discourse has proved a rich site for such inquiry, as metaphors may shape how authority is construed and legitimized, how legal subjects are constituted as bearers of rights and responsibilities, and how institutional processes are rendered cognitively accessible to their participants (Winter 2001; Ebbesson 2008; Šeškauskienė 2026). In the context of legal discourse, legitimization through metaphor operates on two levels. On a cognitive level, metaphor makes abstract institutional entities more accessible by rendering them in familiar, human terms, which causes their authority to appear natural and intuitive rather than imposed (Winter 2001). On an ideological level, however, metaphorical choices are rarely neutral. By selectively mapping only certain qualities onto a target domain, metaphor highlights particular aspects of an institution while suppressing others (Fairclough 1992). In the case of legal institutions, this selective mapping tends to foreground rationality, deliberateness, and moral awareness, while backgrounding the mechanical, procedural, and fallible dimensions of judicial decision-making, thereby projecting an image of principled authority (Richard 2014). Together, these two levels of legitimization suggest that metaphor in legal discourse does not merely describe institutional reality but actively shapes how that reality is perceived and accepted. Central to this process is the concept of naturalization, understood here in the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) sense as the mechanism by

which ideologically motivated representations gradually come to appear as common sense or simply as the way things are, rendering their constructed and ideologically charged origins invisible (Fairclough 1992: 86–89). In legal discourse, a metaphor may be considered naturalized when it is no longer perceived as figurative at all, but is instead treated as a neutral or literal description of institutional reality, thereby escaping the critical scrutiny that a more visibly figurative expression would invite. Moreover, while this body of research has established the significance of metaphor in legal language more broadly, the ICC has attracted comparatively little linguistic research attention, leaving the metaphorical structures of its decisions largely unexamined. Given the court's unique institutional profile, its growing body of jurisprudence, and its expanding influence on international law and transitional justice, this gap is a noteworthy one. The present thesis seeks to address it.

The study investigates the metaphorical conceptualization of LAW in a corpus of 56 ICC decisions published between 2022 and 2025, comprising a total of 257,777 words. The analysis centers on two high-frequency, semantically law-adjacent content words, *chamber* and *defence*¹, which serve as the primary analytical targets because of the lemma *law* occurring too infrequently in the corpus for reliable analysis. The theoretical and methodological framework integrates the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003), along with subsequent developments in metaphor research (Kövecses 2002; Deignan 2005), the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group 2007), and Metaphorical Pattern Analysis (MPA) (Stefanowitsch 2004; 2006). In addition, the study examines whether the identified metaphors function as theory-constitutive metaphors (Boyd 1993; Hofnung 2025), i.e., whether they go beyond describing concepts to actively structuring the conceptual framework through which legal reasoning operates. The study pursues three research objectives: (i) to compile and process a corpus of ICC decisions and generate a frequency-based profile of law-adjacent content words; (ii) to systematically identify and categorize the metaphorical patterns associated with the content words *chamber* and *defence* in the corpus; and (iii) to evaluate the identified metaphors against the criteria for theory-constitutive metaphors as established by Boyd (1993) and Hofnung (2025). These objectives are pursued through the following research questions:

1. Which metaphors structure the target domain of LAW in ICC decisions, as evidenced through the content words *chamber* and *defence*?
2. What is the relative frequency and distribution of the identified metaphors in the corpus?

¹ The British English spelling of the word *defence* will be used hereinafter as this spelling variant was dominant in the corpus and in the documents of the International Criminal Court.

3. Do any of the identified metaphors function as theory-constitutive metaphors, and if so, in what ways do they shape the conceptual framework of legal reasoning in this institutional context?

This study may be considered significant on two levels. At the linguistic level, it offers the first systematic analysis of metaphor in ICC decisions, contributing to a growing body of research on metaphor in legal language across different courts and institutional settings (Twardzisz 2022; Kordić 2023; Chiu & Chiang 2011; Šeškauskienė & Stepančuk 2014). At the legal level, it engages with ongoing debates about the role of language in shaping reasoning and legitimacy in international courts, debates that have become more pressing as the ICC faces increasing political challenges (Koskeniemi 2006). Together, these two dimensions suggest that examining how the ICC employs metaphor can elucidate how the court constructs and maintains its authority. Consequently, the thesis is organized as follows. The literature review situates the study within four interconnected areas of research: the nature and functions of legal language and discourse, the theoretical foundations of metaphor, the role of metaphor in legal contexts, and the concept of theory-constitutive metaphors. The data and methods section describes the corpus of 56 ICC decisions and outlines how the analytical framework, combining the CMT and subsequent metaphor research, the MIP, and MPA, was applied to the content words *chamber* and *defence*. The results and discussion section presents and interprets the main findings, organized around the two dominant metaphors identified in the corpus, LAW IS A PERSON and LAW IS CONFLICT, followed by a brief treatment of the less frequent metaphors LAW IS AN OBJECT and LAW IS NATURE. Finally, the conclusions section brings together the main findings of the study, considers their theoretical and jurisprudential implications, and points to possible directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

In this section, the main issues pertaining to the present study will be discussed, including the nature and functions of legal discourse, metaphors and various theories surrounding them, how metaphors function in legal discourse, and specific types of metaphor, including theory-constitutive metaphors, which assist in conceptualizing field-specific terminology, particularly in the legal domain. In this way, the role of metaphor as a cognitive and linguistic tool that shapes both the interpretation and communication of legal concepts will be examined, considering the interaction between metaphorical language and legal reasoning and how this may clarify or constrain meaning in legal contexts.

2.1. Legal Language & Discourse

Contemporary linguistic analysis perceives discourse as language in use within specific social, institutional, and situational contexts, encompassing not only linguistic forms but also the communicative practices, participants, and purposes that shape meaning production (Fairclough 1992; van Dijk 1997). Within this framework, legal discourse refers to the use of language in legal settings and institutions, including courts, legislation, and legal practice, and is characterized by specialized terminology, archaic and Latin expressions, formulaic structures, and highly conventionalized communicative practices (Tiersma 1999; Gibbons 2003). It is therefore not limited to linguistic forms alone but is deeply embedded in institutional procedures, power relations, and communicative conventions. In discourse, different genres can be identified as recurring communicative forms that serve specific institutional and social purposes. Genres can be defined as categories allocated based on external factors such as audience, purpose, and activity type (Lee 2001: 38), i.e., texts grouped in accordance with cultural traditions and communicative functions. Genres are also linked to expressions of status and power, in other words, genres are connected with the organization of culture and social purposes around language (ibid. p. 42). Additionally, genre can be understood as part of communicative events through which users achieve shared communicative goals (Swales 1990: 58). Analogous to other discourse domains, such as academic discourse, where genres include research articles, lectures, and abstracts (Hyland 2006: 13–14), legal discourse comprises a range of institutional genres such as judgments, decisions, orders, and opinions (Bhatia 1993; Tiersma 1999). Various professions and disciplines have their own jargon and communicative practices shaped by their specific needs. As a result, a wide range of specialized discourse genres has developed.

Legal discourse, in a similar way to academic discourse, is characterized by long, complex, and redundant sentence structures, conjoined phrases, impersonal constructions, and archaic or formulaic expressions

such as *aforesaid*, *witnesseth*, or *to wit* (Tiersma 1999: 3). Additional features include ritualized structural patterns, technical terminology, and highly specialized vocabulary, including a substantial body of Latin expressions and archaic phrasing inherited from centuries of legal tradition (Mellinkoff 1963), which may hinder accessibility for non-expert users in courtroom and legal contexts (Gibbons 2003). This reflects a duality in legal discourse, where formal complexity ensures precision and consistency in legal interpretation and decision-making, while simultaneously limiting accessibility and reinforcing disparities of knowledge and power between legal professionals and laypersons (Bhatia 1993; Conley & O'Barr 1998). As a result, reform movements such as the Plain English Movement have sought to simplify legal language in order to improve transparency and public understanding of legal texts (Tiersma, n.d.); however, due to institutional conservatism and professional tradition among lawyers and judges, legal discourse has largely retained its complexity and rigidity.

Legal discourse is further shaped by institutional context, particularly in the case of international courts, where multilingualism, cross-jurisdictional legal traditions, and institutional hybridity play a significant role in shaping textual production (Koskeniemi 2006: 144; Shaffer & Ginsburg 2012). International courts often operate through what can be described as institutional legal discourse, in which language is influenced by contributors from diverse legal and linguistic backgrounds, contributing to a form of International Legal English shaped by translation practices and multilingual drafting (Cao 2007; Biel 2014). Institutions such as international courts function within complex multilingual and multi-jurisdictional environments, where differing legal traditions and languages shape the production and interpretation of legal texts (Šarčević 1997). The ICC exemplifies this hybrid legal environment most clearly, drawing upon multiple legal traditions and involving judges and legal professionals from various national systems, which influences both drafting practices and interpretive conventions (Stahn 2015). Although distinctions are traditionally made between legal instruments such as judgments, decisions, and orders, these categories may exhibit variation across jurisdictions. For example, in the United States, a judgment is defined as including a decree and any order from which an appeal lies (Fed. R. Civ. P. 54(a)). In contrast, in international legal contexts such as the ICC, the term *decision* may function as a broader and less strictly defined category. At the ICC, certain procedural criteria must be met for a ruling to qualify as a decision under Article 74 of the Rome Statute, including judicial presence during deliberations and evaluation of evidence (ICC 2018: 53). Nevertheless, such definitions remain context-dependent rather than strictly uniform across legal systems, reflecting the flexibility required in international adjudication. In the following subsection, metaphors and the concepts surrounding them will be discussed.

2.2. Metaphor

Metaphor is widely regarded to be a ubiquitous phenomenon which has garnered considerable attention from researchers over the past century. The prevalence of metaphors in discourse was first explored in the seminal book by Lakoff & Johnson (1980/2003), in which a novel approach to analyzing metaphors was established, the CMT, which holds that metaphors involve a mapping between two domains: the more abstract TARGET domain which is conceptualized through a more concrete and physical SOURCE domain. An example of this can be given through the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, which is observed in linguistic metaphorical expressions such as *I demolished his argument, your claims are indefensible*, etc. (ibid. p. 4). Since its introduction, the CMT has been substantially refined and expanded upon by subsequent researchers, who have extended it into corpus-based, cross-linguistic, and discourse-specific contexts (Kövecses 2002; Deignan 2005). Metaphors are considered to be omnipresent in not just various discourses, but in our cognitive faculties, i.e., our system of thought is considered to be structured by metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003: 56), and as such, they assist us in the comprehension of very complex concepts. These concepts are understood through metaphorical mappings, i.e., systematic correspondences between the TARGET and SOURCE domains, in which certain aspects from both domains are used to create a link between the concepts (Kövecses 2002: 6). For example, in the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, in the sentence *we aren't going anywhere*, three distinct constituents are highlighted: *going somewhere* insinuating travel to a destination, the word *we* indicating the travelers of the journey, and as such *the travelers, the travel itself, and the destination* are the three central points of the metaphor (ibid.). Creating such links between different concepts facilitates more efficient comprehension of abstract or difficult ideas, a property that proves particularly valuable in legal discourse, where metaphors may be vital to understanding complex concepts.

Nevertheless, a clearer understanding of metaphor in legal discourse requires distinguishing it from metonymy, which is often closely related but operates differently. The distinction between metaphor and metonymy can be deemed significant, as Deignan (2005: 73) indicates that while metonymy operates as an intradomain phenomenon in which a word stands for something in the same conceptual domain, metaphor involves a cross-domain mapping in which a concept from one domain is projected onto an entirely different one, e.g., the metonym *university*, referring to a higher education institution, stands in the same domain as the people who work in the institution. In intermediate cases, which Deignan (ibid. pp. 76–77) describes as ‘metaphor from metonymy,’ an expression first acquires meaning through metonymic grounding, i.e., expressions which are now used metaphorically had originally derived their meaning from a metonymic relationship rooted in bodily or physical experience, such as *cold* meaning

‘frightened’ or any other negative emotions under the metaphor EMOTIONS ARE TEMPERATURES. This grounding is then extended metaphorically into a new domain, often producing interpretive ambiguity between literal and figurative readings. This assessment aligns with the observations of Ebbesson (2008: 262) on the role of personification in legal language, where the attribution of human qualities to abstract legal entities, such as corporations being treated as ‘persons’ capable of holding rights, acting in good faith, or being found guilty or negligent, reflects a deeper metaphorical logic that shapes how law is understood, applied, and legitimized. For Ebbesson (ibid. pp. 262–263), such anthropomorphism is not applied merely for rhetorical convenience but is employed as a conceptual mechanism that actively structures legal reasoning and defines the boundaries of legal subjecthood, determining which entities are granted standing and which are excluded from legal protection altogether. Building on these theoretical distinctions, the following subsection will examine metaphors in legal discourse in greater detail.

2.3. Metaphor in Legal Discourse

Though metaphor research has become increasingly popular over the years, research into metaphors in legal discourse has been relatively underexplored in the grand scope of all such research in various genres, despite metaphors being highly prevalent in legal language, and in spite of the notion that legal experts seek to avoid ambiguity or indirectness in their statements (Twardzisz 2022: 2). Metaphors can assist in shaping and conveying ideas to other participants in legal proceedings, allowing complex legal concepts to be understood through more physical and concrete terms. The use of metaphors in legal discourse allows for a better understanding of the logic used by lawyers, the (in)validity of legal argumentation, and the analogies used can also prime us toward more positive or negative perceptions of certain concepts or beliefs (Ebbesson 2008: 260). As such, analyzing metaphors in legal contexts can allow researchers to examine the cognitive and ideological assumptions embedded in legal language and practice. In the present study, the term *ideological* is used in the sense established in CDA (Fairclough 1992: 86–96; van Dijk 1997), referring to the way metaphors can make a particular view of legal authority seem natural and unquestionable, rather than something that has been actively constructed through language use. Furthermore, legal discourse appears in many of our everyday activities, e.g., bus tickets being implicit legal agreements, employment and the documents of the process are all in the legal domain, familial relations being governed by family law, and many more examples (Gibbons 2004: 285).

Research in the field has looked into various areas and branches of law, including international, civil law, courtroom discourse, etc. A study by Del Mar (2017) investigated metaphors in international law and discovered that metaphors had an impact on deciding factors in international legal systems, e.g., the

metaphor of CRYSTALLIZATION helped shift the dynamic from a state-practice heavy approach into an opinio-juris based system, i.e., the legal obligation to follow fair and just practices.

Some studies deal with courtroom discourse analysis (Chiu & Chiang 2011; Šeškauskienė & Stepančuk 2014), wherein the former study found that the FIGHT metaphor was ubiquitous in Taiwanese legal discourse, indicating a tendency of the legal system to be conceptualized through FIGHT or WAR metaphors (including terms such as *defence*, etc.), which can lead to more aggressive conceptualizations that could prime participants in legal proceedings toward more hostile positions. In the latter study that analyzed US Supreme Court hearing transcripts, it was discovered that the target domain LAW was either mainly objectified or personified via the metaphors LAW IS AN OBJECT and LAW IS A PERSON, showcasing a tendency that we tend to give humane or physical traits to abstract domains. Another study by Twardzisz (2022) that focused on metaphors with the target domain LAW found that LAW is conceptualized as an OBJECT, PERSON, or GRASPABLE IDEA, showcasing similar tendencies to other studies.

Furthermore, other studies have discovered how metaphors may affect our perception of various issues, whether positively or negatively. A study by Berger (2002) found that while metaphors in legal discourse may have some positive rhetorical usage and allow for more positive outcomes, they can also have an indirect obstructive effect and diminish the fluidity of legal thought, leading to misinterpretations and varying outcomes in judicial contexts. Another study by Deignan & Armstrong (2015) analyzed metaphors of punishment in Scottish policy discourse and observed how such language can affect legal proceedings and public opinion, e.g., the usage of *court* to metonymically refer to judges and participants to legal proceedings may depersonalize the judicial process and alleviate responsibility from those with responsibility and power in the system. To add to this, words such as *payback* express negative connotations via metaphors, wherein justice is conceptualized as an agent that brings forth revenge or seeks out reparations. As such, it is important to critically analyze the usage and frequency of such metaphors in legal discourse in order to observe what kind of impact may be lying beneath phrases and words that would generally be disregarded as having an effect. Though there is ample research completed in numerous fields in legal discourse, there is still a lack of research into the metaphoricity of specific court practices, especially in criminal law, and the thesis seeks to examine how the target domain LAW is conceptualized in written decisions of the ICC. In the following subsection, theory-constitutive metaphors will be presented, which assist in field-specific categorizations of metaphors.

2.4. Theory-Constitutive Metaphors

Recent research on metaphor has introduced further developments in metaphor classification, particularly with regard to theory-constitutive metaphors (TCMs). TCMs can be described as metaphors that facilitate the creation of terminology for field-specific concepts, i.e., they introduce theoretical terms for phenomena that had not previously been conceptualized in such a way (Boyd 1993: 482). In this sense, they enable complex or abstract concepts to be understood more easily by relating them to more concrete or familiar domains. It is worth distinguishing TCMs from so-called *dead* metaphors — while a *dead* metaphor has lost its cognitive structuring function and is processed as literal language (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003: 55), a theory-constitutive metaphor remains actively operative in shaping how experts within a given field reason and make decisions, even when it goes unnoticed by its users (Hofnung 2025: 440). Many metaphors in science, for instance, have been adopted to explain phenomena that are otherwise difficult to conceptualize, such as *wormholes*, *atoms* being described as *miniature solar systems*, *the brain* as a *computer*, or *thinking* as *information processing* (Boyd 1993: 486). Such metaphors are also observed in politics, the legal domain, and other fields that rely on specialized terminology.

Furthermore, Hofnung (2025: 437) finds that legislators tend to employ TCMs when grappling with unfamiliar legislative issues. However, by shaping how such issues are conceptualized, TCMs can also influence decision-making processes. In particular, they may create a dichotomous framing, i.e., a structuring of discourse in which certain aspects of a problem are highlighted while others are obscured, potentially leading to biased or incomplete interpretations. This understanding of framing aligns with Entman (1993: 52), who defines it as the selective highlighting of certain aspects of a concept while backgrounding others. In the present study, framing is treated as a discourse-level effect of metaphorical mapping, reflecting the same logic of selective highlighting and concealing rather than as a separate theoretical framework. The study by Hofnung (2025: 450) further notes that the EPIDEMIC constitutive metaphor was frequent in debates on domestic violence, where such metaphorically induced framing influenced both policy discourse and policymaking. By portraying the issue through the EPIDEMIC constitutive metaphor, using expressions such as *social contagion* or preventative framings targeting perpetrators as if they were carriers of a disease, this framing encouraged legislators to adopt a more empathetic stance toward victims, thereby shaping policy decisions.

However, as with metaphors more generally, while certain aspects are highlighted, others remain hidden, meaning that such representations do not capture the full complexity of the issue, despite their usefulness

in facilitating the understanding of complex ideas. In the following section, the data and methods of the study will be discussed, outlining the data collected for analysis and the procedures employed.

3. Data & Methods

The corpus of the study (the **ICC corpus**) consists of 56 decisions published online by the International Criminal Court between the years 2022–2025, which amounts to 257,777 words. Only decisions were selected for corpus compilation, as judgments and other types of documents released in the selected timeframe were too short and lacked sufficient content for analysis, leading to their omission. All decisions concern criminal cases of a global scope, many of which are related to war crimes. The data were analyzed using *AntConc* (Anthony 2023), specifically its Keyword in Context function. The resulting concordance lines were subsequently exported to an Excel file, where they were sorted and categorized, after which the analysis was conducted. High-frequency function words (e.g., *the*, *of*, *to*, *and*, etc.) were omitted, and the remaining content words were analyzed on a case-by-case basis. The analysis relied on a content word frequency list as the lemma *law* and its grammatical variants occurred too infrequently in the corpus to support a reliable analysis. Consequently, to ensure analytical validity, semantically related, law-adjacent terms (*chamber* and *defence*) were selected for analysis. These terms were chosen as they occur in legal discourse and reflect institutional and procedural aspects of the legal domain, thus having relevance to the concept of law. For example, content words such as *committee*, *rights*, *government*, *convention*, etc., can be observed in the United Nations Parallel Corpus (Ziemski et al. 2016), while in the EUR-Lex corpus (Baisa et al. 2016), which consists of European Union law and other EU public documents, content words such as *commission*, *regulation*, *council*, *state*, *decision*, *directive*, etc., can be identified.

Furthermore, each instance of a selected content word occurring in a text was analyzed to see whether metaphors could be identified. The metaphors were identified based on the key metaphor research traditions, such as the CMT (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003), which provides the foundational framework for understanding metaphor as systematic cross-domain mapping, as well as subsequent metaphor research, such as Deignan’s (2005) corpus-based approach, which further refined the analysis of metaphorical usage in naturally occurring language without challenging the core assumptions of the CMT.

In addition, the MIP (Pragglejaz Group 2007) was applied. The full set of MIP steps is provided below:

1. Read the entire text–discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
2. Determine the lexical units in the text–discourse.

3. (a) For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in context, that is, how it applies to an entity, relation, or attribute in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). Take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit.
- (b) For each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context. For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be
 - More concrete; what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell, and taste.
 - Related to bodily action.
 - More precise (as opposed to vague)
 - Historically older.

Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit.

- (c) If the lexical unit has a more basic current–contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it.

4. If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical. (Pragglejaz Group 2007: 3)

It is important to note that only selected steps of MIP were operationalized for the present study, namely steps 2–4, as these were directly relevant to the identification of metaphorical expressions in the corpus. Step 1 (reading the entire text for general understanding) was not analytically operationalized, as the data were already pre-processed through concordance analysis. Furthermore, in step 3 of MIP, only the distinction between contextual meaning and more basic contemporary meaning was applied. Historical meanings were not considered, as lexical semantic evolution and diachronic variation were outside the scope of the present study and could potentially introduce interpretive instability. Instead, only contemporary basic meanings were taken into account, in line with the Pragglejaz Group's (2007) emphasis on bodily experience, perceptual salience, and concreteness as indicators of basic meaning. Moreover, MPA was applied for the present study, taking into consideration the framework provided by Stefanowitsch (2004). A metaphorical pattern is defined as 'a multi-word expression from a given source domain (SD) into which one or more specific lexical items from a given target domain (TD) have been inserted' (Stefanowitsch 2006: 66), and in the case of this thesis, the target domain will be LAW. The target domain was determined by the nature of the corpus as the decisions were published by a court, thus entailing that the content words in the present analysis would be considered to be in the legal domain. This approach is compatible with embodiment-based accounts of metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003, 1999; Kövecses 2002), in which abstract domains are structured through bodily and experiential grounding, reflected in the tendency for abstract legal concepts to be expressed through more physically grounded source domains. The combination of MIP and MPA as an integrated methodological framework for the study of metaphor in legal discourse has been developed, refined, and consistently

applied across an extensive body of research on legal language, originating in a study of metaphors in courtroom hearings using the CMT and MIP to identify source domain patterns in oral legal arguments (Šeškauskienė & Stepančuk 2014), extended through a cross-linguistic corpus analysis of metaphors in EU directives on criminal matters combining target-domain vocabulary extraction with metaphorical pattern identification (Šeškauskienė et al. 2016), and most recently applied to the metaphorical conceptualization of human rights in legal translation (Šeškauskienė 2026). The methodological design of the present study draws directly on this framework as established across the works cited above, applying MIP (Pragglejaz Group 2007) for the identification of individual metaphorical expressions and MPA (Stefanowitsch 2004; 2006) for the analysis of recurrent cross-domain mappings. In the following section, the results of the study will be presented.

4. Results & Discussion

4.1. Data Overview and Metaphor Frequency

This section presents the frequency analysis of the two target content words, *chamber* and *defence*, and outlines the frequency of metaphorical expressions identified in the ICC corpus. Following corpus compilation, the analysis began with the generation of a raw frequency list provided by *AntConc* (Anthony 2023). This allowed for the observation of content words in the corpus after the omission of function words such as articles, conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, etc. The word frequency data is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. *Frequencies of content words in the ICC corpus*

Rank	Rank (with function words)	Word	Raw frequency	Normalized frequency (per 1,000,000 words)
1	10	chamber	3355	13015.13
2	13	decision	2536	9837.96
3	15	request	1824	7075.89
4	16	victims	1690	6556.05
5	20	defence	1537	5962.52
6	21	prosecutor	1520	5896.57
7	24	appeals	1379	5349.59
8	26	trial	1207	4682.34
9	28	appeal	1173	4550.45
10	30	article	1155	4480.62

The content words *decision*, *request*, and *victims* were omitted after pilot analysis due to a high number of instances of the words appearing solely in titles of the decisions or being used as referents to court cases or court-adjacent entities, e.g., *Pre-Trial Chamber's **Decision** on Sentencing, **Victims** and Witnesses Unit, **request** for leave*, etc. Additionally, in many cases, the limited context made it difficult to determine metaphoricity, for example, words such as *decision* and *request* were mainly observed within titles of documents issued by the court, resulting in insufficient data for analysis. Thus, the content words *chamber* and *defence* were selected for the study. In the following subsection, the most frequent metaphors in the dataset related to law or the legal domain will be presented and discussed as the principal findings of the study.

4.2. Metaphors in the ICC corpus

Of 3,188 cases analyzed, 1,969 were used metaphorically, accounting for approximately 61.76% of the total number of the law-related words. The most frequent metaphors were LAW IS A PERSON and LAW IS CONFLICT, whereas LAW IS AN OBJECT and LAW IS NATURE were comparatively rare. This may indicate a tendency to conceptualize law as a more concrete entity. The data are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. *Metaphors and metaphorical expressions in the ICC corpus*

Metaphor	Number of Metaphorical Expressions	Percentage (%)
LAW IS A PERSON	1,816	92.23
LAW IS CONFLICT	144	7.31
LAW IS AN OBJECT	7	0.36
LAW IS NATURE	2	0.1
Total	1,969	100

The prevalence of the LAW IS CONFLICT metaphor in the present dataset is consistent with findings from other studies examining metaphor in legal discourse. Šeškauskienė (2026) identified the CONFLICT source domain as the second most frequently represented metaphor in the analysis of the word *right(s)* in the *Handbook on European Non-discrimination Law*, accounting for 29% of all metaphorical cases in the English sub-corpus. Within this domain, rights were predominantly conceptualized as valuable entities under threat and in need of protection, with contextual clues including verbs such as *violate*, *infringe*, *safeguard*, and *protect* (ibid. p. 11). This protective dimension of the conflict metaphor, in which the emphasis falls on shielding rather than attacking, reflects the specific institutional context of human rights discourse, where the primary concern is the preservation of rights rather than adversarial contestation between parties. A comparable yet more apparent adversarial conceptualization is evident in Taiwanese legal discourse, where the metaphor LITIGATION IS A FIGHT is frequent. Following procedural reforms, legal language increasingly incorporates lexical items such as *attack*, *defence*, and *oppose*, reinforcing an adversarial structure in legal discourse (Chiu and Chiang, 2011).

In contrast, the PERSON source domain offers a conceptualization of law in terms of human agency, intention, and authority. Rather than framing legal processes as sides of opposition, the LAW IS A PERSON metaphor attributes capacities such as acting, deciding, permitting, or constraining. This anthropomorphic mapping turns law into an active, governing entity, thereby emphasizing control and intentionality rather than struggle. Notably, the present dataset demonstrates a considerably higher frequency of the PERSON source domain than has been reported in previous studies. In spoken courtroom

discourse analyzed by Šeškauskienė and Stepančuk (2014: 107), the PERSON source domain accounted for approximately 32.58% of metaphorical expressions, remaining the second most frequent metaphor to OBJECT-based conceptualizations. Similarly, in human rights discourse, although PERSON metaphors are observed, they are not pervasive in the dataset to the same extent, accounting for merely 4.3% of the cases (Šeškauskienė 2026: 8). By contrast, in the present analysis, LAW IS A PERSON emerges as the most prominent source domain, suggesting a possible shift toward a stronger agentic conceptualization of law in international courts. This increased reliance on personification may reflect genre-specific or contextual factors, such as a heightened focus on institutional authority, decision-making, and intentional action, where law is construed less as a passive system or abstract structure and more as an active participant in legal processes.

The metaphors identified in the present study are interpreted within the framework of the CMT (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003), and subsequent metaphor research (Kövecses 2002; Deignan 2005), which together provide the theoretical foundation for understanding metaphor as a systemic mapping between conceptual domains. Within this framework, the target domain LAW is conceptualized through more concrete source domains such as PERSON, CONFLICT, OBJECT, and NATURE. It is important to note that the target domain LAW does not depend on the explicit presence of the word *law* in the data. Rather, it was inferred from lexically and semantically related items that evoke the legal domain, e.g., *the Chamber's powers* or *the Defence contends that*, etc. Consequently, terms such as *defence*, *chamber*, and other items with more salient legal meaning were analyzed as instantiations of the target domain LAW.

As can be seen in Table 2, the metaphor LAW IS A PERSON was by far the most frequent, with LAW IS A CONFLICT following it, along with other metaphors. In the following subsections, the LAW IS A PERSON and LAW IS CONFLICT metaphors will be discussed separately, while the less frequent metaphors in the dataset will be discussed briefly at the end.

4.2.1. LAW IS A PERSON

In the present study, LAW is conceptualized as a PERSON in the majority (92.23%) of the metaphorical cases identified. This strong tendency toward personification can be explained by the inherently abstract nature of legal institutions, which, as non-human entities, are incapable of independently performing actions in a literal sense. As a result, human agency is projected onto the concept of law in order to render its functions more cognitively accessible and discursively manageable. This pattern is consistent with the embodiment hypothesis in cognitive linguistics (Lakoff & Johnson 1999; Kövecses 2002; Gibbs 2026: 4), according to which abstract concepts are structured and understood through bodily and experiential

knowledge, leading to the systematic mapping of human actions, intentions, and capabilities onto non-human domains such as law. This leads to the widespread attribution of human capacities to law, encompassing not only cognitive abilities such as reasoning and judgment, but also communicative and behavioral actions such as speaking, directing, and exercising authority. The dominance of the PERSON source domain observed in the present corpus is broadly consistent with findings from other studies of metaphor in legal discourse. Twardzisz (2011: 245–247) identified person-based conceptualizations, including COMPANY IS A PERSON and ENTITY IS A PERSON, as prominent patterns in commercial contracts, indicating that the attribution of human properties to non-human legal entities may be a widespread feature of legal language across genres. Similarly, Kordić (2023: 1647) notes that in international law, metaphors focusing on personhood and fragile objects are particularly frequent, suggesting that the tendency to humanize abstract legal constructs may be especially pronounced in contexts where institutional actors must be understood as bearing agency and responsibility across jurisdictions. In spoken legal discourse, Dundon (2024) observed that case names in US appellate hearings (e.g., *Harris v. New York*) are progressively personified as the interaction develops, with participants assigning speaking, thinking, and arguing capacities to them, a finding that aligns with the present study's attribution of cognitive and communicative capacities to the *chamber* and the *defence*. Through such projections, abstract legal processes are conceptualized in terms of familiar human behavior, thereby structuring legal meaning through personification. This dominant pattern of conceptualization was thus classified under the LAW IS A PERSON metaphor, rather than metonymy, on the basis that references to mental capacity are treated as metaphorical mappings rather than referential substitutions. More precisely, the expressions examined in the present study involve a cross-domain projection of human properties onto an inherently non-human abstract entity, which, following the distinction provided by Deignan (2005: 73), places them at the metaphorical rather than metonymic end of the spectrum, given that no intra-domain substitution is observed but rather a reconceptualization of law in terms of human experience and more concrete conceptual domains. Furthermore, the LAW IS A PERSON metaphor may be understood as a TCM within Boyd's (1993) framework, as it does not merely operate as a linguistic expression but actively shapes the conceptual framework through which legal institutions are understood, reasoned about, and operationalized. In legal discourse, treating institutional entities such as *chambers* or the *defence* as persons is a functional necessity that enables legal reasoning to proceed, whereby agency, responsibility, intention, and judgment are assigned to entities that would otherwise resist meaningful participation in legal processes. Ebbesson (2008: 262) similarly notes that the personification

of legal entities such as corporations is so deeply embedded in legal thinking that it largely escapes critical scrutiny, suggesting that it operates not as a live metaphor but as a naturalized legal concept.

Hereinafter the cases will be marked according to the content word being analyzed, i.e., cases for the content word *chamber* will be marked as CH_X, while cases for the content word *defence* will be marked as DEF_X wherein X is the case number in the Appendix of the study. The cases provided below highlight examples of cognitive aspects being employed for the personification of law.

- (1) <...> *the issue was central to the **Chamber's** determination of the Compensation Claim.* (CH₇₁)
- (2) <...> *specifying the discrete error in the [Trial] **Chamber's** approach or its conclusions* <...> (CH₉₆)
- (3) *In the view of the **Defence*** <...> (DEF₁₄₆₉)
- (4) *It argues that the reasoning of the **Chamber** in the Impugned Decision is 'incorrect' for two reasons.*
(CH₈₈₅)
- (5) *As to the **Defence's** observations on the alleged lack of clarity* <...> (DEF₉₄₇)

The cases provided highlight aspects of human cognition, wherein the notions of agency and independent thought are transported onto an entity incapable of doing so. Artificially made entities such as court chambers, subdivisions, or parties to a case are unable to commit actions on their own merits and need to have human representatives subsumed under their names to complete such tasks, whether it be thinking or expressing an opinion. The notion of human thought is central in the provided cases, as various parties supply opinions, arguments, and supporting details in order to determine the final outcome of the proceedings. Cases (1)–(5) illustrate the attribution of cognitive processes of determination, reasoning, approach, view, and observation to institutional entities. These expressions could potentially be subsumed under the MIND IS AN AGENT metaphor, which is itself subsumed under the broader LAW IS A PERSON metaphor, wherein entities such as the *chamber* or the *defence* are rendered as capable of deliberation and judgment. Expressions such as *the reasoning of the Chamber* in case (4) or *in the view of the Defence* in case (3) indicate an interior mental mechanism, which has capacities of belief-formation and the projection of reasoning onto legal bodies. Additionally, in terms of TCMs, this enables the attribution of properties such as error, correctness, or clarity to an institutional entity, allowing for evaluative judgments without undermining legal reasoning. A noteworthy feature of these cases is that the cognitive capacities attributed to the *chamber* and the *defence* are consistently understood as rational and deliberative. The individual that emerges is not portrayed as a creature of impulse or emotion, but as engaging in structured intellectual processes such as reasoning, observation, and systematic problem-solving. This selective mapping is significant, as it foregrounds those aspects of human cognition most closely associated with authority, expertise, and institutional legitimacy, while backgrounding less

formalized or more spontaneous dimensions of human thought. This finding resonates with the observations indicated by Šeškauskienė & Stepančuk (2014: 112–115) that personification in courtroom discourse tends to emphasize agentive and deliberative capacities, constructing legal entities as rational actors capable of bearing responsibility for their decisions. In the following cases, a more ‘active’ type of agency can be observed, in which the court entities are required to physically assist or guide a person with an issue:

- (6) <...> *would have been appropriate for the Prosecution to seek the **Chamber's guidance*** <...> (CH₇₄)
- (7) *This was notably in compliance with the Pre-Trial **Chamber's direction** that* <...> (CH₁₀₄)
- (8) <...> *given that this article contemplates a Pre-Trial **Chamber's intervention** only upon the application*
 <...> (CH₁₂₀)
- (9) <...> *the **Defence specifically sets out** the general parameters of the alleged errors* <...> (DEF₁₄₂₄)
- (10) <...> *as directed by the Appeals **Chamber*** <...> (CH₃₉₆)
- (11) <...> *this would trigger the **Chamber's powers** to review that decision* <...> (CH₁₃₁)

Cases (6)–(11) shift from purely cognitive attribution to volitional and directive agency, in which institutional entities are conceptualized not merely as thinking but as actively guiding, directing, and intervening. Expressions such as *guidance* in case (6), *direction* in case (7), and *intervention* in case (8) evoke a human figure in a position of authority who oversees another person's conduct, which is a metaphorical mapping that draws on the source domain of interpersonal human relationships, particularly those involving hierarchical guidance. The metaphorical expression *the Chamber's powers* in case (11) is noteworthy, as it extends the personification into the domain of human agency, suggesting that the *chamber* possesses capabilities analogous to intentional action. This reinforces the theory-constitutive function of the LAW IS A PERSON metaphor in such instances as it constructs legal authority in terms of human directive agency and naturalizes hierarchical institutional structures. In this manner, judicial power is conceptualized through the metaphor of a purposeful and responsible agent. The human figure evoked in these cases resembles a figure of institutional authority such as a superior, a supervisor, or a guide rather than an equal or a peer. The *chamber* directs, triggers, and intervenes, while the *defence* sets out parameters. These are not the actions of an ordinary individual but of an entity defined entirely by its institutional role and hierarchical position. The physical and social dimensions of human existence, including vulnerability, personal relationships, and individual history, are absent from this conceptualization. What is mapped onto the institutional entity is a highly abstracted and role-bound version of personhood that is stripped of individuality and defined solely by function. This interpretation is consistent with Kordić's (2023: 1648–1650) analysis, where legal institutions are frequently structured

through complex system metaphors such as LAW IS A HUMAN and LAW IS A POWER, emphasizing agency, control, and authority. In this sense, the metaphor does not reproduce a full human subject but constructs a specifically judicial form of personhood oriented toward the exercise of institutional force rather than the broader spectrum of human experience.

As previously mentioned, the notion of cognitive processing is applied to courtroom entities not just through the act of thinking, but also through communicating and expressing opinions. Examples of courtroom entities expressing beliefs and assertions are provided below.

- (12) *The **Chamber** will not address his submissions on this matter <...> (CH₉₂₄)*
- (13) *<...> ex parte communication between the **Chamber** and the VWU <...> (CH₁₆₅₉)*
- (14) *<...> the validity of the Trial **Chamber's** suggestion to put a plaque on <...> (CH₁₄₀)*
- (15) *The **Chamber** notes that, indeed, the legal framework does not provide <...> (CH₂₅₅)*
- (16) *<...> the **Chamber** finds reasonable grounds to believe that <...> (CH₁₆₃₂)*
- (17) *The **Chamber** is not persuaded by the arguments of the Defence <...> (CH₄₇₂)*
- (18) *<...> this reasoning was adopted by Pre-Trial **Chamber** <...> (CH₁₂₁₆)*

Cases (12)–(18) showcase the aspects of communication and knowledge in the LAW IS A PERSON metaphor, wherein institutional entities are construed as capable of addressing, noting, finding, suggesting, and being persuaded. These metaphorical expressions are particularly intriguing because they project not only the outward behavior of communication but also internal facets of knowledge, i.e., belief, attention, and reciprocity toward argumentation. The verb *finds* in case (16), for example, implies a process of active inquiry and judgment, while *is not persuaded* in case (17) attributes an apparatus of rational thinking to the *chamber*, which can be affected by argumentation and allow the *chamber* to participate in said arguments. Such metaphorical expressions can be considered TCMs as they do not simply describe what the *chamber* does but define what kind of entity it is, i.e., one capable of being convinced, of noticing, of adopting positions. This could potentially have legal consequences, as the metaphor underwrites the legitimacy of judicial decision-making by framing it as the product of a reasoning mind rather than an institutional mechanism. The communicative person that emerges in these cases is notably asymmetric in character. The *chamber* addresses, notes, finds, and suggests, but it does not converse, negotiate, or listen in any reciprocal sense. Communication is therefore presented as an expression of institutional authority rather than as a form of social exchange. This asymmetry aligns with Dundon's (2024: 205) observation that personification in legal discourse functions as a tool of information management, allowing participants to attribute actions to institutional entities in a streamlined and authoritative way. The *chamber's* persuadability in case (17) is also framed through the

passive voice, as it is described as being persuaded rather than actively engaging in persuasion. This construction suggests that the institution's rationality is acted upon by external argument rather than participating in dialogue, reinforcing the hierarchical nature of the judicial role while at the same time presenting the *chamber* as a rational evaluator that remains open to reasonable arguments.

The following cases demonstrate the metaphorical attribution of emotional qualities to courtroom entities.

(19) <...> *the Appeals **Chamber** is satisfied that the participating victims were indeed consulted.* (CH₄₈₃)

(20) <...> *the **Chamber** is satisfied with the content of the said communication <...>* (CH₄₉₃)

(21) *The **Chamber** is concerned that a symbolic lump sum payment <...>* (CH₅₁₉)

(22) *The **Chamber** is mindful that Mr Ongwen is indigent <...>* (CH₅₂₆)

Cases (19)–(22) extend the personification into the domain of human emotion, attributing emotional and attitudinal states such as satisfaction, concern, and mindfulness to institutional entities. This represents perhaps the most pronounced instance of the LAW IS A PERSON metaphor in the dataset, as it moves beyond cognitive or communicative agency into the realm of discernible experience and ethical awareness. The attribution of *concern* in case (21) and *mindfulness* in case (22) is particularly noteworthy as these expressions do not merely humanize the *chamber* but embed it with something akin to moral sensitivity, suggesting that the institution is not indifferent to the human consequences of its decisions. This personification and attribution of emotion serve an important legitimizing function in legal discourse, wherein the metaphor reinforces the perception of the judicial entity as not merely an institution of legal authority, but also as just and humane. In terms of TCMs, these expressions may help sustain the institutional sentiment that courts, as collective entities, can bear something analogous to moral responsibility. However, the emotional register attributed to the *chamber* in these cases is characteristically restrained and impersonal. The *chamber* is described as *satisfied*, *concerned*, and *mindful*, states that convey measured attentiveness and moral awareness rather than strong feeling. Particularly absent are expressions of enthusiasm, frustration, doubt, or any other emotion that would suggest a fuller affective life. The person that emerges in this emotional register is one whose feelings are fully institutionalized, controlled, appropriate, and oriented toward rational decision making rather than the expression of individual experience. This selective attribution of emotion is itself ideologically significant, as it constructs the court as humane without rendering it vulnerable or subjective. This finding resonates with Richard's (2014) observation that metaphor in legal discourse functions to persuade and legitimize rather than to euphemize. In this context, the affective vocabulary attributed to the *chamber* performs precisely that role by projecting an image of moral attentiveness that supports the authority of

its decisions. The final cases in the present subsection, which were deemed important for the analysis, are presented below.

- (23) <...> *the Trial **Chamber's** piecemeal and selective approach to its assessment of* <...> (CH₁₃₀)
- (24) <...> *the possibility for the Appeals **Chamber** to steer the reparations process back in the right* <...> (CH₃₅₀)
- (25) <...> *and articulated in a manner that would permit the Appeals **Chamber** to gauge the scope/extent of the appeal* <...> (CH₃₃₇)
- (26) <...> *subject to the **Chamber's** inherent authority to decide otherwise* <...> (CH₇₃₀)

Cases (23)–(26) illustrate the attribution of evaluative agency to institutional entities. Expressions such as *approach* in case (23), *steer* in case (24), *gauge* in case (25), and *inherent authority* in case (26) project onto the *chamber* the ability to navigate, measure, and exercise judgment. Also worth noting is the evaluative dimension introduced by *piecemeal and selective approach* in case (23), wherein the *chamber* is attributed a human-like methodology and evaluated in terms of the manner in which it exercises that methodology, suggesting that institutional entities can perform tasks either thoroughly or inadequately, via an unsystematic, fragmented piecemeal, much as a human agent might. The spatial metaphor observed in *steer* in case (24), i.e., LAW IS A MOBILE VESSEL, is grounded in the core meaning of *steer*, which refers to controlling the direction of a vehicle or guiding movement along a particular path (Cambridge Dictionary n.d., s.v. *steer*). In this instance, the term is used metaphorically to describe the reparations process as an entity that can be directed through space, thereby mapping navigational and steering-related physical experience onto an abstract procedural domain. This corresponds to the CMT perspective in which abstract institutional processes are understood in terms of embodied experiences of movement and spatial control (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003; Kövecses 2002). Such metaphorical mappings are frequently associated with navigation and journey schemas, which provide a cognitively accessible structure for understanding procedural progression. The use of *steer* may also reflect the broader historical prominence of maritime and navigational imagery in English metaphorical patterns, where institutional and abstract processes are frequently conceptualized in terms of movement, direction, and control. This tendency has been attributed in part to the deeply embedded role of seafaring and maritime culture in British history, wherein centuries of naval tradition have left a considerable imprint on the English lexicon, giving rise to numerous expressions of nautical origin (Quinion 2005) that have since been extended metaphorically into non-maritime domains. Moreover, *inherent authority* in case (26) may be highlighted for its suggestion that the human-like capacities of the *chamber* are not externally

retrieved but are intrinsic, further consolidating the notion of transported personhood upon institutional entities.

Taken together, the cases examined across all subcategories of the LAW IS A PERSON metaphor point toward a distinctive and partial conception of personhood. The human being that emerges from the metaphorical language of ICC decisions is neither a fully realized individual nor a socially embedded person in any ordinary sense. It is instead a highly selective projection, a rational, hierarchically positioned, and functionally defined agent whose personhood consists entirely of institutionally relevant capacities, including the ability to reason, to direct, to communicate authoritatively, and to display measured moral awareness. As Dorst (2011) notes in an analysis of personification across discourse types, the source domain of the HUMAN BEING is far from static, and personification rarely involves the wholesale attribution of all human properties. Rather, it entails the selective mapping of those aspects of personhood that serve a particular communicative function. In the ICC corpus, what is absent from this projection may be deemed significant for analysis as what is present. The *chamber* and the *defence* are not attributed physical embodiment, personal history, social relationships, vulnerability, or a full range of affective experience. They do not tire, doubt, or disagree with themselves. The person constructed by the LAW IS A PERSON metaphor in ICC decisions is therefore an idealized institutional actor, a being defined entirely by role, rationality, and authority. This selective and idealized form of personhood enables the metaphor to function in a theory-constitutive capacity, in the sense described by Boyd (1993), legitimizing the operations of the court by presenting them as the purposeful and morally responsible acts of a reasoning agent rather than as the outputs of an impersonal institutional mechanism, as discussed by Ebbesson (2008) and Winter (2001). In the following subsection, the LAW IS CONFLICT metaphor will be discussed in detail.

4.2.2. LAW IS CONFLICT

LAW is conceptualized as a CONFLICT in 144 cases (7.31%). In courtroom discourse and other areas of legal discourse, legal affairs are handled through a manner of argumentation, and argumentation may become conceptualized through a FIGHT or WAR metaphor. The metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR has also been highlighted by Lakoff & Johnson (1980/2003: 4), noting that though arguments may not involve a physical sense of battle, they can be conceptualized via combat terminology, i.e., attacking, defending, counterattacking, etc. Thus, such language, characteristic of courtroom discourse, could potentially have a priming effect, in the sense that repeated exposure to conflict-related lexical choices may activate associated conceptual frames of confrontation and violence, thereby influencing how legal proceedings are perceived, namely as occurring in an adversarial or conflictual environment. Moreover, a study

completed on Taiwanese legal discourse found that legal statutes and judgments in Taiwan contained far more cases of the LITIGATION/LAW IS A FIGHT metaphor than texts before the 2003 referendum in the country, indicating a shift toward a more aggressive conceptualization of courtroom proceedings (Chiu & Chiang 2011). The cases provided below highlight examples of law being conceptualized as a conflict or physical altercation.

(27) *Accordingly, this **Defence's** challenge is rejected.* (DEF₈₄)

(28) *The Chamber further directs the **Defence** to raise any challenge <...>* (DEF₅₀₁)

(29) <...> *since the Prosecution's witnesses are by definition hostile to the Defence.* (DEF₆₁₄)

(30) <...> *but rather to 'protect the rights of the Defence' <...>* (DEF₁₂₉₁)

Various elements of war are mapped onto the language of courtroom proceedings in order to make the interpretation of law more salient and cognitively accessible. Opinions and counter-opinions are treated as clashes, whereby one side initiates the argument, thus attacking the opponent or *defence*, while the *defence* has to 'shield' itself from those arguments and engage in a counterattack to defend its position, i.e., provide its own arguments. Cases (27)–(30) illustrate the CONFLICT metaphor across a spectrum of intensity. The noun *challenge* in cases (27) and (28) represents a relatively conventionalized instance of the metaphorical mapping, in which the act of contesting a legal position is framed as an act of confrontation or provocation, a conceptualization that is highly prevalent in legal discourse. Additionally, the word *raise* in case (28) may evoke the physical act of lifting or brandishing a weapon, strengthening the combative framing. Furthermore, *hostile* in case (29) and *protect* in case (30) carry more vivid combative connotations. The attribution of hostility to witnesses aligns them with enemy combatants, implicitly framing the courtroom as a space of opposing forces rather than a neutral arena of fact-finding. Similarly, *protect the rights of the Defence* in case (30) draws on the source domain of PHYSICAL SHIELDING, conceptualizing legal rights as something vulnerable to attack and in need of defensive action. These metaphorical expressions suggest that the LAW IS CONFLICT metaphor in legal discourse carries varying degrees of conventionalization, ranging from deeply embedded, relatively unmarked expressions to more semantically salient and grounded formulations. This aligns with Deignan (2005: 74–77), who notes that conventional metaphors may become so routinized in language use that they are no longer perceived as figurative by language users in general. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the term *defence* is itself semantically rooted in the domain of conflict, deriving from the Latin *defensio*, meaning the act of warding off or protecting against attack (DMLBS, s.v. *defensio*). As noted by Ebbesson (2008: 261), expressions such as *defence* and *defendant* in courtroom procedures reflect the underlying metaphor of legal proceedings as acts of war, wherein one party must win and the other must lose instead of reaching

a mutual understanding. This observation is significant for the present study, as it suggests that the LAW IS A CONFLICT metaphor may be ubiquitous not merely at the level of individual expressions but also at the level of institutional terminology as the word *defence* already encodes a combative conceptual frame before any additional metaphorical language is layered upon it. This aligns with the theory-constitutive function of legal metaphor discussed previously as the framing of conflicts is deeply ingrained into the structure of legal discourse, shaping how participants understand their roles, their relationships to one another, and the nature of the proceedings.

Moreover, cases involving the word *argument* were subsumed under the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor, which can be considered a sub-mapping of the broader LAW IS CONFLICT metaphor, as legal argumentation is commonly conceptualized in terms of conflict and opposition.

(31) Finally, the **Defence** argues that the Prosecutor's bias could reasonably be perceived <...> (DEF₈₇₃)

(32) Contrary to the arguments of the Defence and as argued by the Prosecution <...> (DEF₅₇₀)

(33) The **Defence** argues that this should be applied to educational fees and courses <...> (DEF₈₇₄)

Cases (31)–(33) illustrate the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor as identified by Lakoff & Johnson (1980/2003: 4), wherein the act of presenting a legal position is framed through the vocabulary of combat. The verb *argues* can be deemed one of the more conventionalized expressions in the frame of this metaphorical mapping in legal discourse, with its frequent use resulting in the backgrounding of its underlying combative semantic sense. For example, according to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d., s.v. *argue*), the word *argue* may imply the meaning of speaking angrily to someone during a disagreement. Nevertheless, the metaphor may be considered important for the analysis as it sustains the underlying conceptual frame in which legal proceedings are structured as an adversarial contest between opposing forces, each seeking to overcome the other's position. This is consistent with the findings of Deignan (2005: 83), which demonstrate that the semantic relations of antonymy, which are characteristic of the source domain of WAR, are systematically preserved in the target domain of ARGUMENTATION, such that presenting a position inherently implies the existence of an opposing one to be overcome. This oppositional logic is further reinforced in cases (34) and (35), which are provided below, where the conflict framing becomes more explicit.

(34) The **Defence** also opposes this proposal <...> (DEF₆₈₄)

(35) <...> that if the **Defence** wishes to challenge aspects of the decision <...> (DEF₁₄₇₀)

Cases (34) and (35) showcase how conflict is framed through the language of opposition and challenge. The verb *opposes* in case (34) maps the act of disagreeing with a legal proposal directly onto the domain

of physical confrontation, while *wishes to challenge* in case (35) frames the dispute of a judicial decision as a deliberate act of provocation and conflict. Together, these cases suggest that the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor in legal discourse goes beyond argumentation itself and extends to the broader procedural actions of the *defence*, showcasing that the LAW IS CONFLICT metaphor is observed not only in direct adversarial exchanges but also in more routine acts of disagreement and contestation in courtroom proceedings. In the following subsection, the two least frequent metaphors of the study will be briefly discussed.

4.2.3. Other metaphors

The least frequent metaphors were LAW IS AN OBJECT and LAW IS NATURE, with 7 and 2 cases, respectively. The low frequency of these metaphors does not allow for extensive in-depth analysis within the present dataset; however, it may reflect the specific nature of the legal discourse under investigation, in which metaphorical patterns are more strongly dominated by personification and conflict-based mappings. This contrasts with findings in other studies (Šeškauskienė & Stepančuk, 2014; Šeškauskienė, 2026), where OBJECT metaphors were more prominent, suggesting that metaphor distribution may vary depending on genre, corpus composition, and institutional context. Consequently, only a brief overview of the identified cases will be provided.

(36) <...> *alleging deficiencies in the **Defence's** Notice of Appeal* <...> (DEF₄)

(37) *On 16 March 2021, Trial **Chamber** VI was dissolved* <...> (CH₁₆₇₈)

(38) <...> *it ensures that the Appeals **Chamber** is formed in a matter respecting equitable geographic representation* <...> (CH₅₂₂)

(39) *The Trial **Chamber** in the present case, which has indeed been seized* <...> (CH₈₇₇)

Cases (36)–(39) showcase conceptualizations of legal institutions and documents as physical objects susceptible to processes of material creation, degradation, and manipulation. The words *dissolved* in case (37) and *formed* in case (38) draw on the source domain of physical substances or structures that can be assembled and broken apart, framing institutional existence as something tangible. Case (37) further instantiates the LAW IS AN OBJECT metaphor through the verb *dissolve*, which in its basic meaning refers to a solid being absorbed into a liquid or a liquid absorbing a solid (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d., s.v. *dissolve*). In this context, the Trial Chamber, an abstract institutional entity, is conceptualized as a solid physical object that undergoes a process of dissolution, as though submerged in a liquid, such as a corrosive acid, that causes it to break down and cease to exist as a distinct, bounded entity. This mapping renders the termination of an institutional body in strikingly material terms, framing what is in reality an administrative or procedural act as a physical process of decomposition. The metaphor is noteworthy in

that it implies the *chamber's* prior existence as something tangible and cohesive, and its dissolution as a loss of that material integrity, much as a solid object loses its form and boundaries when absorbed into a surrounding liquid. The word *seized* in case (39) is of theoretical interest as well, as it projects the physical act of grasping or taking hold of something onto the *chamber*, conceptualizing the jurisdiction of a court over a case as a form of physical possession. The word *deficiencies* in case (36) showcases a similar conceptualization of an abstract legal document as a physical object capable of having structural flaws or gaps. While the low frequency of this metaphor prevents making generalizations, these cases may suggest that the metaphorical mapping for LAW IS AN OBJECT serves to make abstract institutional processes more concrete and tangible, which complements the personifying aspect of the dominant LAW IS A PERSON metaphor in the present study. Lastly, the two cases of LAW IS NATURE are provided below:

(40) <...> arguments about the procedural nature of the **Defence's grounds of appeal** (DEF₄₇₄)

(41) They submit that granting suspensive effect in relation to any of the **Defence's grounds of appeal** either has no substantive basis <...> (DEF₁₄₁₅)

Cases (40) and (41), though very limited in number, may be deemed interesting conceptually. The use of *nature* in case (40) to describe the character of a legal procedure draws on the source domain of the NATURAL WORLD, framing legal properties as if they were inherent and organic rather than constructed. The words *grounds* in both cases and *basis* in case (41) draw on the domain of PHYSICAL TERRAIN, conceptualizing legal reasoning as something that requires stable, material foundations upon which arguments can be built. Despite the low frequency, these cases may point toward a LEGAL REASONING IS CONSTRUCTION metaphor that may merit closer attention in larger datasets. In the following section, the conclusions of the study will be drawn.

5. Conclusions

This thesis set out to investigate how law is metaphorically conceptualized in the decisions of the International Criminal Court, pursuing three research objectives: (i) to compile and process a corpus of ICC decisions and generate a frequency-based profile of law-adjacent content words; (ii) to systematically identify and categorize the metaphorical patterns associated with the content words *chamber* and *defence* in the corpus; and (iii) to evaluate the identified metaphors against the criteria for theory-constitutive metaphors as established by Boyd (1993) and Hofnung (2025). Through the application of the CMT (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003) and subsequent metaphor research (Kövecses 2002; Deignan 2005), the MIP (Pragglejaz Group 2007), and MPA (Stefanowitsch 2004; 2006), a total of 1,969 metaphorical instances were identified across 3,188 analyzed cases. Four metaphors were identified: LAW IS A PERSON, LAW IS CONFLICT, LAW IS AN OBJECT, and LAW IS NATURE. Their distribution

was observed to be noticeably uneven: LAW IS A PERSON is overwhelmingly dominant, accounting for 92.23% of all metaphorical expressions, followed at considerable distance by LAW IS CONFLICT at 7.31%, with LAW IS AN OBJECT and LAW IS NATURE each contributing marginal frequencies. This distribution points to a consistent metaphorical pattern in the court's institutional language, which can be interpreted from both a cognitive-linguistic and an institutional perspective.

The dominance of the PERSON source domain is not in itself surprising, as the tendency to render abstract legal entities through the projection of human properties has been documented across diverse legal genres and jurisdictions. What is noteworthy in the present corpus is the scope and systematicity of this personification. The *chamber* and the *defence* are not merely attributed agency in a general sense; they are endowed with differentiated human capacities spanning cognition (*reasoning, determination, approach*), communication (*noting, finding, suggesting, addressing*), emotion (*satisfied, concerned, mindful*), and directive authority (*guiding, directing, intervening, steering*). The overall effect is the construction of a selective and idealized form of institutional personhood, one that is rational, hierarchically positioned, and morally attentive, but lacking the vulnerability, individuality, and fuller emotional range associated with human experience. In ICC decisions, the purposes of this selection are primarily legitimizing, i.e., by presenting the court as a reasoning, intentional, and morally aware agent, the personification metaphor supports the authority of its decisions and frames institutional power as purposeful and responsible action.

Turning to the third objective, the analysis demonstrates that the LAW IS A PERSON metaphor functions as a theory-constitutive metaphor in the senses provided by Boyd (1993) and Hofnung (2025), as it does not merely describe what institutional entities do but actively constitutes the conceptual framework through which legal reasoning proceeds. Without the attribution of agency, intentionality, and judgment to entities such as *chambers* and the *defence*, legal discourse as it is currently structured would likely face significant communicative challenges. The metaphor is, in this sense, load-bearing, as it enables the court to assign responsibility, evaluate conduct, and produce authoritative decisions in a way that would be impossible if these entities were treated as the purely mechanical outputs of procedural rules.

The second most frequent metaphor, LAW IS CONFLICT, is distinctive in character in the ICC corpus. Rather than foregrounding the aggressive, attack-oriented framing typical of adversarial common law jurisdictions, the CONFLICT metaphor here is predominantly oriented toward protection and challenge, framing legal proceedings less as battles to be won than as structured arenas of contestation in which rights must be safeguarded. This protective orientation likely reflects the institutional function of international criminal justice, in which legitimacy depends on balancing adversarial argument with the

protection of defendants' rights and victims' interests. The finding that *defence* is itself semantically rooted in the CONFLICT domain, deriving from the Latin *defensio*, meaning the act of warding off attack, further suggests that the LAW IS CONFLICT metaphor operates at the level of institutional terminology as much as at the level of individual lexical choice.

The minor metaphors LAW IS AN OBJECT and LAW IS NATURE, though marginal in frequency, are not negligible in theoretical interest. The object metaphors (*dissolved, formed, seized, deficiencies*) materialize institutional existence in physical terms, rendering procedural acts as processes of assembly and dissolution. The nature metaphors (*grounds, basis, nature*) draw on physical terrain to conceptualize legal reasoning as something requiring stable foundations. Together, these patterns suggest a supplementary tendency of materialization that complements the dominant personification, rendering the abstract institutional world of international criminal law in terms of familiar physical experience, in accordance with the embodiment hypothesis of cognitive linguistics (Lakoff & Johnson 1999; Kövecses 2002).

Several directions for future research may be suggested. The most immediate need is for corpus expansion: with a larger and more chronologically diverse dataset, it would be possible to investigate whether the metaphorical patterns identified here are stable across time, chamber composition, and case type, or whether they vary systematically with contextual factors such as the gravity of the charges, the nationality of the judges, or the procedural stage of the proceedings. Cross-institutional comparisons with other international courts such as the International Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights, or the Inter-American Court of Human Rights would illuminate whether the patterns identified here reflect the specific institutional culture of the ICC or a broader feature of international judicial discourse. Finally, the ideological dimensions of the metaphors identified in the thesis, particularly the legitimizing function of institutional personification, warrant further critical analysis connecting corpus-linguistic methodology to the frameworks of CDA (Fairclough 1992; van Dijk 1997). Such analysis would advance understanding of how the language of international criminal justice not only reflects but actively produces the institutional power it enacts.

6. References

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Santrauka

Šiame darbe tiriama teisės metaforinė konceptualizacija 56 Tarptautinio baudžiamojo teismo sprendimų tekстыne, kuris buvo sudarytas iš 2022–2025 metais paskelbtų sprendimų, o bendras žodžių skaičius siekia 257 777 žodžius. Tyrimas grindžiamas konceptualiosios metaforos teorija (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003), metaforų identifikavimo procedūra (Pragglejaz Group 2007) ir metaforinių modelių analize (Stefanowitsch 2004; 2006), t.y. metodologine prieiga, kurią ankstesniuose darbuose išplėtojo ir nuosekliai taikė I. Šeškauskienė (Šeškauskienė & Stepančuk 2014; Šeškauskienė et al. 2016; Šeškauskienė 2026). Analizės objektas yra du dažnai pasitaikantys su teise susiję turinio žodžiai, *chamber* (liet. (teisėjų) kolegija) ir *defence* (liet. gynyba), pasirinkti kaip pagrindiniai analizės įrankiai, kadangi lema *law* (liet. teisė) tekстыne pasitaikė per retai pagrįstai analizei atlikti. Tyrimas siekia trijų tikslų: (i) surinkti ir apdoroti Tarptautinio baudžiamojo teismo sprendimų tekstyną bei sudaryti dažnumu pagrįstą su teise susijusių turinio žodžių profilį; (ii) tekстыne sistemingai identifikuoti ir suskirstyti metaforinius modelius, susijusius su turinio žodžiais *chamber* ir *defence*; ir (iii) nustatyti, ar kurios nors iš jų veikia kaip teorinės-konstatuojančiosios metaforos, formuojančios teisinio mąstymo struktūrą, remiantis Boyd (1993) ir Hofnung (2025) kriterijais.

Analizėje aptiktos keturios metaforos: TEISĖ YRA ASMUI, TEISĖ YRA KONFLIKTAS, TEISĖ YRA OBJEKTAS ir TEISĖ YRA GAMTA. Jų pasiskirstymas pasirodė ryškiai netolygus: vyraujanti metafora TEISĖ YRA ASMUI sudaro 92,23% visų metaforinių posakių. Jai gerokai atsilieka TEISĖ YRA KONFLIKTAS (7,31%), o TEISĖ YRA OBJEKTAS ir TEISĖ YRA GAMTA pasitaiko itin retai. Personifikacijos atveju, turinio žodžiams *chamber* ir *defence* suteikiamos skirtingos žmogiškosios savybės: pažinimo gebėjimai (*reasoning* (liet. samprotavimas), *determination* (liet. apsisprendimas), komunikaciniai veiksmai (*noting* (liet. pažymėjimas), *finding* (liet. konstatavimas), *addressing* (liet. kreipimasis), emocinės būsenos (*satisfied* (liet. patenkintas), *concerned* (liet. susirūpinęs), *mindful* (liet. atidus) ir vadovavimo įgaliojimai (*guiding* (liet. vedimas), *directing* (liet. nukreipimas), *steering* (liet. vairo valdymas). Taip kuriamas atrankus ir idealizuotas institucinis asmeniškumas: racionalus, hierarchiškai įtvirtintas ir moraliai atidus, tačiau stokojantis pažeidžiamumo ir individualizmo, būdingo tikrajai žmogiškajai patirčiai.

Darbe taip pat tiriama, ar nustatytos metaforos veikia kaip teorinės-konstatuojančiosios metaforos pagal Boyd (1993) ir Hofnung (2025) nustatytus kriterijus, t.y. ar jos ne tik apibūdina tai, ką daro instituciniai subjektai, bet ir aktyviai formuoja konceptualią struktūrą, per kurią plėtojamas teisinis argumentavimas. Analizė rodo, kad metafora TEISĖ YRA ASMUI šia prasme yra atraminio pobūdžio: be agentyvumo,

intencionalumo ir sprendimo galios priskyrimo tokiems subjektams kaip *chamber* ir *defence*, teisinio diskurso komunikacinė struktūra iš esmės neveiktų. TEISĖ YRA KONFLIKTAS metafora Tarptautinio baudžiamojo teismo sprendimuose pasižymi savitu pobūdžiu: vietoj agresyvaus, su kova siejamo kadravimo, būdingo priešiškosios teisės tradicijoms, ji orientuota į apsaugą ir teisių gynimą, vaizduodama teisinius procesus kaip kovos arenas, kuriose saugomos proceso dalyvių teisės. Nors TEISĖ YRA OBJEKTAS ir TEISĖ YRA GAMTA pasitaiko itin retai, jos išlaiko teorinę vertę, materialiuoju pavidalu įtvirtindamos abstrakčią institucinę realybę.

Tyrimo rezultatai prisideda prie lyginamųjų metaforų tyrimų teisinio diskurso srityje ir platesnių diskusijų apie kalbos vaidmenį formuojant tarptautinio teisingumo institucijų autoritetą ir legitimumą. Perspektyviausiomis ateities tyrimų kryptimis laikytinos tekstyno plėtra, Tarptautinio baudžiamojo teismo palyginimas su kitais tarptautiniais teismais ir išsamesnė aptiktų metaforų ideologinių dimensijų analizė, pasitelkiant kritinės diskurso analizės metodologiją.

Summary

This thesis investigates the metaphorical conceptualization of law in a corpus of 56 decisions of the International Criminal Court, covering decisions published between 2022 and 2025 and totaling 257,777 words. The study draws on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003), the Metaphor Identification Procedure (Pragglejaz Group 2007), and Metaphorical Pattern Analysis (Stefanowitsch 2004; 2006), a methodological framework developed and consistently applied across a body of research on legal language (Šeškauskienė and Stepančuk 2014; Šeškauskienė et al. 2016; Šeškauskienė 2026). The two target content words, *chamber* and *defence*, were selected as the primary analytical entry points, as the lemma *law* occurred too infrequently in the corpus for reliable analysis. The study pursues three objectives: (i) to compile and process a corpus of International Criminal Court decisions and generate a frequency-based profile of law-adjacent content words; (ii) to systematically identify and categorize the metaphorical patterns associated with the content words *chamber* and *defence* in the corpus; and (iii) to evaluate the identified metaphors against the criteria for theory-constitutive metaphors as established by Boyd (1993) and Hofnung (2025).

The analysis identified four metaphors: LAW IS A PERSON, LAW IS CONFLICT, LAW IS AN OBJECT, and LAW IS NATURE. Their distribution proved markedly uneven. The dominant metaphor, LAW IS A PERSON, accounts for 92.23% of all metaphorical expressions, followed at considerable distance by LAW IS CONFLICT at 7.31%, while LAW IS AN OBJECT and LAW IS NATURE each contribute marginal frequencies. With regard to the personification metaphor, the *chamber* and the *defence* are attributed differentiated

human capacities: cognitive abilities (*reasoning, determination*), communicative actions (*noting, finding, addressing*), emotional states (*satisfied, concerned, mindful*), and directive authority (*guiding, directing, steering*). The overall effect is the construction of a selective and idealized form of institutional personhood, one that is rational, hierarchically positioned, and morally attentive, yet lacking the vulnerability and individuality associated with fuller human experience.

The study further examines whether the identified metaphors function as theory-constitutive metaphors in the senses of Boyd (1993) and Hofnung (2025), i.e., whether they not only describe what institutional entities do but actively constitute the conceptual framework through which legal reasoning proceeds. The analysis demonstrates that law is a person in this sense load-bearing, i.e., without the attribution of agency, intentionality, and judgment to entities such as *chambers* and the *defence*, the communicative structure of legal discourse as currently organized would be difficult to sustain. The LAW IS CONFLICT metaphor, meanwhile, is distinctive in character in the corpus of the study. Rather than foregrounding the aggressive, combat-oriented framing associated with adversarial legal traditions, it is oriented toward protection and the safeguarding of rights, framing legal proceedings as structured arenas of contestation rather than battles to be won. The minor metaphors, LAW IS AN OBJECT and LAW IS NATURE, though marginal in frequency, are theoretically significant: they materialize abstract institutional reality, rendering procedural acts in terms of physical processes and stable terrain.

The findings contribute to the comparative study of metaphor in legal discourse and to broader discussions of the role of language in shaping the authority and legitimacy of international justice institutions. Future research is recommended to expand the corpus, to compare the International Criminal Court with other international courts, and to examine in greater depth the ideological dimensions of the metaphors identified in the thesis through the frameworks of Critical Discourse Analysis.

Appendix

The analysis of metaphoricity conducted on the extracted concordance lines from the ICC corpus is available in the Appendix (*Metaphors of Law in Decisions of the ICC_Appendix.xlsx*), attached to this thesis.