

# Patterns of Ironic Metaphors in Lithuanian Politicized Discourse

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**Summary.** The present article is an attempt to examine the metaphoric models of ironic assessment employed in politicized public discourse in Lithuania. The examination follows the implications of the Blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner 2002), and discusses the topicality of the dominant metaphoric patterns in online newspaper headlines and commentaries, as well as in a number of posters the political parties of Lithuania prepared for the electoral campaign. The database of 200 newspaper headlines, comments, and posters allowed to identify dominant references to political issues in terms of sport, miracles, family, business and crime. Furthermore, the analysis has shown that attention should be drawn to aspects of social cognition and culture as they appear to be an integral part of the blending structure and are crucial in successful transmission of both the intended message and the evaluative attitude. Metaphors in the mode of irony follow a double-scope conceptual integration network, as the final blend comprises not only the elements of the two input spaces of the employed metaphor but also the elements of our background knowledge.

**Keywords:** conceptual metaphors, irony, blending, politicized discourse.

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## Introductory remarks

The analysis of both metaphor and irony has undergone a variety of different approaches, as a number of different aspects have been on the focus of the investigation. In this study, irony/metaphor combination is analyzed applying Gilles Fauconnier & Mark Turner's theory of conceptual integration, or, as it is more commonly referred to, conceptual blending. According to Evans (2006), the theory of blending developed out

of two traditions of cognitive linguistics: the theory of conceptual metaphors (Lakoff, Johnson 1980) and the theory of mental spaces (Fauconnier 1985). The main claims are related to the theory of mental spaces and the concept of blending is defined as a process of conceptual mapping and integration unique to the human mind. A conceptual integration network is built where mental spaces are marked as circles, elements as dots, and relations among different mental spaces are represented by lines (cf. Fauconnier, Turner 2002). The theory provides the following generalized scheme of the mechanism of blending:

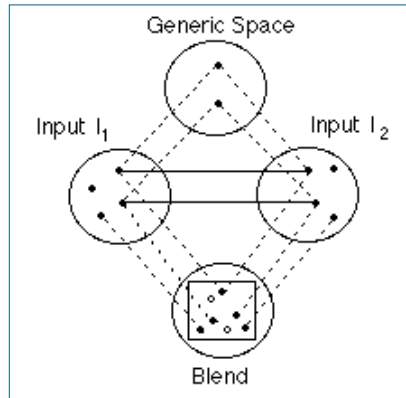


Fig. 1. A generalized scheme of the mechanism of blending

Two input spaces containing common elements<sup>1</sup> are connected through a generic space and having undergone selective projection,<sup>2</sup> elements are transferred to the blended space, which can also be referred to as a “hybrid frame” (Coulson 2001: 115). Selective projection is an indispensable part of the mechanism of blending in which the elements to be projected into the blended space are selected. Sometimes two counterpart elements from input spaces are projected, sometimes one, and in other cases, none; an element that has no counterparts in other mental input spaces can also be projected into the blended space. However, it is not only the selective projection but also the juxtaposition of elements from the inputs that leads to the “emergent structure” (Turner, Fauconnier 2002). On the basis of their generalized schemes, cross-space relations are detected and more complex schemes are built. One of the typical blending structures involves Single-Scope networks. Single-scope networks have two input spaces with different organizing frames, only one of which is projected into the blend. “Its defining property is that the organizing frame of the blend is an extension of the organizing frame of one of the inputs but not the other” (Turner, Fauconnier 2002: 126). Single-scope networks provide “a highly visible type of conceptual clash, since the inputs have different frames” (Turner, Fauconnier 2002: 129) and are the prototype of conventional (source-target) metaphors. The input space that provides the organizing frame for the blend can, employing the

<sup>1</sup> Coulson refers to such input spaces as “established domains” (2001: 115).

<sup>2</sup> Selective projection is discussed in detail in Fauconnier and Turner’s *The Way We Think* (2002: 71–73).

terminology of Lakoff, Johnson (1980), be called the “source”, and the input space that is in the focus can be referred to as the “target”.

## 1. Metaphor and irony interaction

All metaphors and irony might be analyzed within the framework of blending. Yet in this study, the focus is exceptionally on the cases of metaphor that is in the mode of irony, which means that the Single–Scope network is integrated into a larger Double Scope structure, where the background knowledge and actual beliefs of the speaker are integrated to facilitate the ironic processing of the utterance. In other words, a claim is made that the humorous effect of the blend comes as an emergent element due to the shift of modes from metaphor to irony. The very idea of overlapping tropes was elaborated upon by the ancient Roman philosophers, e.g. Quintilian’s discussions on tropes served as a basis for Kenneth Burke’s (1969) claims in the 20th century. Burke in his book *A Grammar of Motives* (1969) analyses irony, together with metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, and defines them as “the master tropes” (1969: 503–17). Analogically, “four master tropes” are analyzed in D’Angelo’s article “Tropics of Arrangement: A Theory of Disposition” (1990). D’Angelo describes the text as organized in the mode of metaphor-metonymy, metaphor-synecdoche, metaphor-irony, and other possible combinations. Each trope is thus defined through the means of another trope. D’Angelo’s idea of “intertwining combinations of tropes” is supported by other academic research, e.g. the fusion of tropes has been extensively addressed by Popa (2010) with the emphasis on the priority of meaning comprehension in the case of metaphor and irony<sup>3</sup>. In modern research irony and metaphor have been analysed from different perspectives. The work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) gave a start to numerous studies where metaphor is analysed as a matter of thought rather than a trope. Consequently, recent research in metaphor (and irony among other forms of figurative language) is mainly conducted within the framework of cognitive linguistics. The scientific contributions of Lakoff (2006, 2012), Kovecses (2002, 2006), Steen (2007), Gibbs (2006), Musolff (2004), Veale (2002), Ruiz De Mendoza (2017) and many others have built a strong foundation for further research into metaphor and irony as cognitive phenomena. However, Pragglejaz Group (2007) noted that in scholars’ research metaphor identification was frequently intuitive. The lack of agreed criteria for metaphor identification led the Pragglejaz group to the development of the mechanism of metaphor identification (MIP)<sup>4</sup>. In this study, MIP has been employed for the identification of metaphors as both metaphor and irony are discussed as cognitive phenomena.

The academic interest of this work was to detect the patterns of irony in Lithuanian politicized discourse that have the underlying mental structure of conceptual metaphors. For this purpose, a variety of headlines, commentaries, and political advertisements

<sup>3</sup> Popa argues that in such cases metaphor anyway preserves the priority of meaning comprehension.

<sup>4</sup> The mechanism consists of four steps and gives detailed guidelines that allow recognising metaphors in the text.

available on popular Internet sites in 2008–2018 were collected focusing on ironic references to Lithuania, its politics, and politicians. The collected database consists of 100 headlines, 100 comments, and 10 advertisements of political parties.

Metaphor appears to be a dominant mode of irony in politicized discourse. The expression of irony through metaphor could be illustrated with the headline *Seimas: zuikis tas pats, tik varnos nebe tos* (delfi.lt) (*Parliament: the same rabbit, but different crows*), where the members of parliament are metaphorically referred to as crows (fighting for the catch<sup>5</sup>), and where acquiring financial benefit for themselves is metaphorically referred to as a rabbit (seeking for benefit is seen as the pursuit of a rabbit<sup>6</sup>).

## 2. The topicality of metaphor in the mode of irony

Ironic conceptual networks are constructed when a certain topicality is moved from one space (frame) to another, and the resulting blend is further incorporated into a bigger structure, i.e. a double scope network, together with the input space of the background knowledge, which facilitates the ironic message of the utterance. In such cases, Coulson (2001) offers the term of *frame-shifting*<sup>7</sup>, which is obvious in metaphor based ironic cases as all the elements from one mental space follow the scenario offered by the other mental space. Cibulskienė (2006) in her dissertation *Conceptual Metaphor in Lithuanian and British Discourse of Elections* claims that all thinking, in general, is metaphoric, and that discourse is based on conceptual metaphors which are represented by linguistic metaphors at the level of language. The metaphorical patterns employed for the expression of an ironic evaluative attitude towards politics appeared to focus mainly on five input spaces: sport, family, tale, business, and crime.

### 2.1 Politics is sport

A general tendency of conceptualisation of politics within the framework of the sport has been studied by Cibulskienė (2006), Būdvytytė-Gudienė (2013), and others. Lithuanian politicized discourse appears to have the underlying mental structure **POLITICS IS A SPORT** as well. Ironic headlines exploiting this mental model focus on the negative realia of the country, depicting it as a participant of a sports competition with questionable goals. The case could be illustrated with the headline “Lithuania is the Leader<sup>8</sup> of Indifference to its Citizens”. It follows the requirements set by the theory of Utsumi (2002) for an ironic utterance, i.e. it presupposes an ironic environment which is made up of the expectations

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. the Lithuanian saying *supulti kaip varnoms* – “attack like crows.”

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the Lithuanian saying “to catch two rabbits at a time.”

<sup>7</sup> Frame-shifting theory is compatible with blending theory, though it has a different focus. While Fauconnier, Turner (2002) emphasize the organizing frame in the mechanism of blending, Coulson (especially concerning humorous texts) places emphasis on frame shifting.

<sup>8</sup> The word ‘leader’, according to Oxford English Dictionary online (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>) and Lithuanian Dictionary online (<https://www.lietuviuzodynas.lt>), relates equally to governing or to sport; meanwhile ‘leadership’ in Lithuanian online dictionary is primarily defined as having the first position in sports.

of the speaker (Lithuanians wish to be leaders), an incongruity between the expectations and reality (Lithuanians do not want to lead in the field of indifference), and the negative attitude of the speaker towards this incongruity (his/her disappointment that Lithuania is the leader in a negative sphere). The ironic environment of the headline is implicitly revealed through the clash between indifference (a negative feature) and leadership (something to strive for). The mechanism of blending exploited by the headline encompasses such elements as leadership and competition. Countries are perceived as participants of sports events, the politics of the countries as a championship, indifference to their citizens as a sports event in which the aim is to win, and Lithuania as a champion of this event. Coulson holds to the idea that in blending, “*phoros*<sup>9</sup> is often modified in the course of analogy in order to facilitate parallels between it and the target” (2002: 199). In other words, we select the elements and the scenario that enable us to disclose and emphasize the desired aspects of the target domain. Within the framework of blending, this is seen as a single-scope network that has one organizing frame (in this case, the frame of sport) whose elements are mapped onto the elements of the mental input space of “Lithuania”.

The single-scope network gives an obvious conceptual clash because the input spaces have different organizing frames. As Fauconnier and Turner put it: “Single-scope networks give us the feeling that one thing is giving us insight into another thing with a strong asymmetry between them” (2002: 129). The clash results not only from the contrasting frames but also from the incompatibility of the elements of the mental spaces: indifference to the citizens, which is a negative phenomenon to be avoided, is presented as the desired result in connection with the competition frame, as something to aim for. This blended space is used as a separate input in a more complex double-scope network where the other input space is “context/author’s position/background knowledge”. As the first input space is incongruous with common background knowledge (in politics, as in sport, the aim should always be something positive, although here a negative aspect is presented as a desired goal), an ironic shift of meaning is generated which restores the logic of the utterance. The mechanism of blending deals with the clash by constructing a blended space where being a leader becomes a negative feature as the competition is held in the wrong field. The vital relations, compressions of time, space and the scenario inherent in the mental space of “Sport”, are all projected into the blended space and applied to the elements of the target (or “focus”) input space<sup>10</sup>, i.e. to the elements of the politics frame.

In this case, the compression of the whole scenario, as the entire political situation of the country is presented, at the human scale of understanding, as a single sports event. However, the most dominant outer space vital relation is that of Intentionality<sup>11</sup>. It undergoes compression and is retained in the blended space, where it gives an insight into the nature of politics as intentionally striving for more indifference. The irony of the headline delivers a critical negative evaluation directed at the politics of the country. The

<sup>9</sup> The term *phoros* was introduced by Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969); later the same phenomenon became known as a “source” thanks to the works of Lakoff & Johnson (1980).

<sup>10</sup> What Lakoff & Johnson (1980) refer to as a “target”, Fauconnier & Turner (2002) call a “focus” space.

<sup>11</sup> Intentionality as a vital outer space relation was discussed in Vengaliene (2012).

compressions enabled by the mechanism of blending reveal that Lithuania's leadership in the field of indifference is a negative and intentional activity.

The ironic assessment of Lithuania's state politics through the frame of sports can be considered conventional<sup>12</sup>. The tendency and a similar blending pattern can also be traced in such headlines as: *Lithuania is Europe's Vice-Champion in Drinking* (*Lietuva – Europos girtavimo vice čempionė*, delfi.lt) (in this case, drinking is elevated to the status of a representative feature of the country – which triggers an ironic interpretation), *Lithuania is the Leader of Parallel Worlds* (*Lietuva – paralelių pasaulių lyderė*, delfi.lt) (the writer assumes the position of an ironist who sees the rich and prosperous Lithuania promised by politicians as a parallel world to the real Lithuania we live in), *In the championship of alcohol consumption Lithuania takes 8<sup>th</sup> place* (*Alkoholio suvartojimo rungtynėse Lietuva- aštuntoje vietoje*, zebra.lt), *The leader of inadequate taxes* (*Neteisingų mokesčių lyderė*, bernardinai.lt, zebra.lt), *Lithuanians – the champions of self-treatment* (*Lietuviai-savigydos čempionai*, veidas.lt), *Lithuanians among the leaders in bribery* (*Lietuviai – tarp kyšininkavimo lyderių*, delfi.lt, 15min.lt), *Lithuanians are the leaders in fake licenses* (*Lietuviai – suklastotų vairuotojų pažymėjimų lyderiai*, lrytas.lt), *Death atlas: Lithuania is among the “leaders” once again* (*Mirtingumo atlasas: Lietuva – vėl tarp Europos “lyderių”*, delfi.lt), *Lithuania – an absolute leader in youth suicides* (*Lietuva-absoliuti lyderė vaikų savižudybėse*, zebra.lt). In nearly every one of these cases, the irony results from the clash of a positive sports frame and the negative frame of some social problem.

## 2.2 Politics is a tale

Another group of ironic references (headlines, commentaries) directed at Lithuania often involves an imagined, unreal world, where Lithuania is named as a land of miracles. This field corresponds to the topicality of folklore metaphors analyzed by Petraškaitė-Pabst (2006), and can be regarded as a certain variant of the POLITICS IS A TALE metaphor. The elements of the ironic reference are easily mapped from the space of the unreal into the mental space of actual Lithuania by relying on common background cultural knowledge. The main focus of the ironic assessment is on the incompatibility of reality (politics) and illusions (tales). The ironic shift that places politics into the frame of miracles communicates the implications of illusions.

An implicit reference to Lithuania as a land of miracles appeared in a few headlines<sup>13</sup> and a number of comments, all of which communicate an ironic critical attitude by employing the mental input space of miracles. Miracles, tales, and dragons are commonly associated with folk tales or children's books. Meanwhile, in the news, elements of folk tales are unacceptable, and their deliberate use does not only draw the reader's attention but also signals figurative meanings. In the case of *The Tales of The Land of Miracles*:

<sup>12</sup> The metaphor POLITICA IS SPORT is not ascribed to the three most frequent conceptual metaphors but mentioned (among several more) as typical in Cibulskienė's dissertation (2006).

<sup>13</sup> Lithuanian headlines abound in everyday realia defined in terms of miracles; however, at this stage of research, only the ironic headlines addressing Lithuania have been selected.



*A Dragon and a Boy (Stebuklų šalis: slibinas ir bernelis)* the motifs of tales are employed to ridicule the political situation in Lithuania. The headline implicitly refers to politicians as naïve children, to magnates of business and the government as storytellers, to the Leo project<sup>14</sup> as a three-headed dragon, etc. Petraškaitė-Pabst (2006), in her analysis of political conceptual metaphors, ascribes such metaphors to the field of folklore and draws attention to the frequency of these metaphors in the Lithuanian mass media. Therefore, it might be said that metaphorical reference to politics as a folk tale is relatively conventionalized; in addition to its appearance in headlines, similar references can be found in articles (e.g. Petraškaitė-Pabst (2006) cites the following cases: *when we join the EU we will see rivers of milk and banks of pudding (kai įstosime į ES, paplūs pieno upės su kisieliaus krantais)*, *a fairy-tale-like life (pasakiškas gyvenimas)*, or the EU as *a land of miracles and the good fairy*), as well as in the readers' comments on websites.

In the mental space of miracles, all the elements necessary for the blend are activated. As discussed above, all the mental spaces integrated into the same structure by conceptual blending influence one another. The blended space of the “land of miracles” undergoes further elaboration and is used as a mental input space in a more complex structure, i.e. in a single-scope network. The second input space of the structure is the implied input space of Lithuania. The author relies on the reader to identify the implied referent by relying on the shared background knowledge, context and vital relations (e.g. the vital relations of Property and Similarity). The matching counterpart elements are projected into the generic space and selectively projected into the mental blended space. As a result, the blended space establishes a scenario in which Lithuania magically manages to achieve energy independence due to the “Leo” plan and those who designed it. The blended space is integrated into a double-scope network with the input space of “context/author’s position/background knowledge”, which contains contradictory information, e.g. that the plan of Leo will not make all sources of energy in Lithuania independent of foreign interests, that VP Market (the designer of the plan) is out to make a profit, and that the members of Parliament voted for the project not because it was reasonable but because they were given “sweets” in the form of 20 million Litas<sup>15</sup>. The contrasting input spaces generate a clash which leads to an ironic shift of meaning: the author looks with irony at the situation in Lithuania and at those who believe in “miracles”. The pretended belief in miracles is incompatible with the actual situation and cannot be interpreted literally. Similarly, the same cognitive pattern is followed in the headline *The Tales of the Land of Miracles. Gediminas’ Dream (Stebuklų šalies pasakos. Gedimino sapnas, delfi.lt)*, which refers to Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas and his plans. The metaphor simultaneously reveals the opposition between Lithuania and land of miracles while pointing out the incongruity. To communicate the idea, the writer uses a commonly known sphere, i.e. folk tales. As Lassan (Лассан 2002) argues, the aim to transform an abstract concept,

<sup>14</sup> A project that aimed to guarantee the independent electricity production and fair management; the project was said to lack transparency and ignore the Constitution (see [https://lt.wikipedia.org/wiki/LEO\\_LT](https://lt.wikipedia.org/wiki/LEO_LT)); the project still undergoes investigation.

<sup>15</sup> The currency of Lithuania till 2015.

an idea, into an obviously sensual picture poses the necessity to find a metaphor which could equate an ambiguous aspect of an entity to a well-known realia: metaphor is built in such a way as to use a keyword as a hint for communicating the subject's model of behaviour in a world where opposing values exist. In this way, the author communicates not only how the focus/target space should be understood, but also how the content of the mental focus space should be assessed. In this case, the communicated assessment is that of ironical negative attitude.

The double scope integration network, according to Fauconnier and Turner, "provides human beings with the ability to do remarkable compressions" (2002: 353) and enables the reader to build two contradictory scenarios as an inseparable whole while, at the same time, comprehending the input spaces as separate entities. The double-scope mechanism not only achieves the goals defined by Fauconnier and Turner (i.e. to "compress what is diffuse" and to "give the global insight" (2002: 346)) but also makes the ironic attitude explicit. The ironic attitude is adopted when evaluating both the country (where "miracles" take place) and the Prime Minister (whose ambitions are similar to those of the Grand Duke).

The tendency to give an ironic assessment to politics via the frame of tales can also be traced in such headlines as:

*The Art of Envelopes and its Interpretation in the Land of the Looking-Glasses (Vokų menas ir jo interpretacija kreivų veidrodžių krašte, delfi.lt), The Agreement of Three parties or the Swan, Pike, and Crab (Trijų partijų sutartis, arba Gulbė, lydeka ir vėžys, delfi.lt), The Socialdemocratic Tale of Grasshoppers about Getting Ready for Winter (Socialdemokratinė žiogų pasaka apie pasiruošimą žiemai, delfi.lt), About Tales, Fables, and Story-tellers (Apie pasakas, pasakėčias ir pasakorius, delfi.lt), etc.*

Furthermore, the commentaries excessively refer to Lithuania as the land of miracles whenever ridiculing a commonly unacceptable pattern of behaviour or political action, as in:

*Yet, Lithuania is a land of miracles – here the salaries grow the fastest and we live the best; it's a pity we cannot see this (Taigi Lietuva stebuklų šalis – čia ir alga greičiausiai kyla ir gyvenam geriausiai, gaila tik kad nesimato, delfi.lt).*

A typical idea of such political ridicule, according to Raskin (1985), is that politics, a political leader or the whole way of life of a certain country are not the way they should be; the real situation is different from the one portrayed, and this creates the ironic effect.

### **2.3 Politics is a family**

The third group of metaphoric-ironic references directed at Lithuania in a politicized discourse follows the cognitive model of the metaphor **POLITICS IS A FAMILY**. The traditional roles of the family model are exploited to describe political relationships with



other countries. Consequently, the references to mother, father, and brother are typical in metaphorical irony. Nominations like Mother (Mummy) Russia, Brothers Latvians, the Big Brother, Daddy Fuehrer, are used extensively to communicate the evaluative attitude towards certain political situations or events. The family that is typically associated with proximity is exploited ironically to emphasize the distance from what is conveyed on the literal level and to ridicule those who are naïve and believe the explicit direct message.

Mother Russia (Russian: Россия-Матушка) is a national personification of Russia, appearing in patriotic conversations, political speeches, posters, and visual art. The usage of the term “mother” in reference to a nation or culture symbolizes the “spirit of collectivity”. However, in Lithuanian politicized discourse, the metaphoric reference to Russia as the mother never communicates a positive evaluation, the negative load could be said to be conventionalized in the Lithuanian politicized discourse: the negative ironic meaning of the metaphor in this environment has been conventionalized and has become the most salient meaning. The image of the mother who is generally associated with protection and care is exploited to imply danger and aggression. It is interesting to note that the nomination always comes in the diminutive form. Diminutives are commonly used with the purpose of expressing positive sentiments like tenderness and intimacy. However, according to Carvalho et al. (2009), they can also be sarcastically and ironically used to insult or depreciate the entity they represent<sup>16</sup>. This can be confirmed when diminutives are used in reference to well-known personalities, such as political entities (e.g. “Socratezinho” for the Portuguese prime minister, José Socrates (2005–2011), or political formations. Russia is not referred to as “mother”, but as “mummy”/ “mom”, which even more expands the distance between the domains (non-ironic and ironic meanings). Consequently, the diminutive form of the reference can be seen as an irony marker.

The tendency to give an ironic assessment to politics by exploiting the diminutive forms of family relationships can be traced in a variety of headlines and commentaries in Lithuanian media. Consider the following cases: *Priglaudė motinėle Rusija (Embraced by Mummy Russia, balsas.lt)*, *Motule Rusija, ko tu pyksti? (Mummy Russia, Why are You Angry?, delfi.lt)*, *Pirmyn į praeitį, motušė Putino Rusija (Let's Go Back to the Past, Mummy Putin's Russia, delfi.lt)* *Kniaziau, nesisielokite, jus priglaus matuška*<sup>17</sup> *Rusija (Duke, do not Worry, Mummy Russia will Care for you, lrytas.lt)*, etc. Similarly, the tendency is retained in articles and their commentaries:

<...> dėvėdamas žalią slepiamąją uniformą, jis ne vien tapo rytų Ukrainą krečiančių neramumų veidu, bet ir sustiprino įsitikinimą, kad už riaušių Donbase ir Luhanske stovi motinėle Rusija.

... wearing a military green uniform, not only did he become the face of the unrest in the east of Ukraine, but he also reinforced the belief that behind the riots in Donbas and Luhansk there is Mummy Russia. (delfi.lt).

<sup>16</sup> In Portuguese.

<sup>17</sup> “Matuška” is a form that is not used in Lithuanian and shows the case of code-switching as the pattern of Russian diminutive suffixation is employed.

*Tik tokių pavyzdžių nėra ir juos teks sufantazuoti, kaip ir kitas pasakėles apie motušę Rusiją, kuri mus labai myli. Taip myli, kad norėtų stipriai apglėbti ir niekada nepaleisti. Iš meilės viskas. Tik iš meilės.*

*It's only that we do not such cases and they will have to be made up, like all the other tales about Mummy Russia who loves us dearly. Loves us so much that it wants to embrace us hard and never let us go. And all this is for love. Love only. (delfi.lt)*

In all the cases above the reference to Russia as Mummy is in the same position as the references to Hitler as Daddy: *Apie fiurerį tėvelį, kurį reikia maldele minėti...* (*About Daddy Fuehrer whom we must in Prayers Mention*, delfi.lt). The irony of diminutives is obviously the case of acute irony.

However, the diminutive signalled irony is not necessarily always negative. The same marking can function to signal a friendly teasing and carry a positive load of irony. This is the case when Latvians are referred to as brothers in Lithuanian media<sup>18</sup>: „Braliukai“ *latviai susiviliojo aukso spindesiu* (*Brothers Latvians Lured by Gold*, delfi.lt), „Braliukų“ *patarimas lietuviams: pamirškite litą* (*Tip from Brothers Latvians: Forget the Litas*, lrytas.lt), „Braliukai“ *gaili lato* (*Brothers Regret Losing the Litas*, delfi.lt), etc. The metaphoric irony that is employed to refer to Latvians as brothers not only employs the diminutive form but also tries to echo the Latvian morphology of the word (in Latvian: brālis) and to substitute Lithuanian o with Latvian ā. Subsequently, it can be said that the graphological change (as well as irony in general) can serve as a means not only to expand but also to reduce the distance.

## 2.4 Politics is business

The forth typical underlying metaphor in ironic references is the conceptual metaphor **POLITICS IS TRADE** (or **POLITICS IS BUSINESS**), which is extensively used during the election period as political parties start accusing one another of “sales”, “trade”, “dirty business”, etc. Consider the headline *Čia Lietuva. Viskas parduodama* (*This is Lithuania, Everything is for Sale*, delfi.lt). It ridicules the tradition of the culture of consumerism and the materialistic way of thinking. Such irony is ascribed to the category of literalness by Barbe (1995), as the irony of the headline coincides with the explicit non-ironic level of the utterance. The irony lies in the belief that whatever absurd the literal message is, it coincides with the common beliefs of the citizens. Such literal irony can also be traced in headlines *Pigiai parsiduodantys brangūs ponai* (*Dear<sup>19</sup> Sirs Selling themselves at Low Prices*, lrytas.lt), *Lietuvos „už sviestą“ neparduos?* (*Lithuania won't be Sold for Butter?*, l24.lt), *Parduodama Lietuva* (*Lithuania for Sale*, delfi.lt), *Už eurą pardavinėjama Lietuva – ar tai daugiau negu 30 sidabriniai?* (*One Euro for Lithuania – is That More than 30 Silver Coins?*, delfi.lt), *Lietuva: suraikyta ir parduota* (*Lithuania: Sliced and*

<sup>18</sup> The reference to Latvians as brothers was detected in a number of headlines, articles, and commentaries; however such references are more typical in sports, culture, and industry contexts.

<sup>19</sup> The headline also plays on words as Lithuanian “brangus” can be translated both as “dear” or “expensive”, implying that the politicians want to be paid much.

*Sold*, balsas.lt), and in numerous articles' commentaries where readers discuss who and how "sells" Lithuania. The underlying metaphor of **POLITICS IS TRADE** (or **POLITICS IS BUSINESS**) initially follows a single scope integration network that is typical for all metaphoric blends with the input spaces containing sales related elements (market, buyer, seller, commodities, money, etc.) and politics related elements (politicians, decisions, votes, influence, bribes, etc.). The blended space puts together elements from incompatible mental spaces (in the market of politics abstract commodities (e.g. votes) that can be sold and bought) and is further incorporated into a double scope network that exploits the input of background knowledge and common beliefs. The resulting blend does not strike the reader as incomprehensible, on the contrary, the ironic meaning is easily processed and much appreciated by the readers who join the amiable community of those who share the ironic (or even sarcastic) attitude and join the game of pretence. One of the most popular article commentaries presents Lithuania as a commodity which features are described following the typical description patterns of the advertisements:

*Parduodama Lietuva: – Maža jauki šalis, pačiame Europos centre, žalios spalvos, 21 metų, mažai naudota. – Su patogumais: vaizdas į jūrą – Šildymas centrinis...*

*Lithuania for sale: a small cosy country, in the very centre of Europe; green colour; 21 years old<sup>20</sup>; used; special features: view to the sea, central heating...* (delfi.lt).

Many cases of the metaphorical **POLITICS IS TRADE** (**POLITICS IS BUSINESS**) irony are visualized. The visual ironic metaphor was used as one of the main election posters of the Liberal Party in 2013<sup>21</sup>. The slogan *Atsilyginsime už balsus* (*We will pay back for your votes*) echoes a well-known case of political parties "buying" the votes from the electorate of marginal social groups: prisoners, alcohol or drug addicts, etc. Here the party plays on words – the phrase "we will pay back for your votes" is instantly recognizable, however, in later posters the further elaboration of the statement gives a different shade of meaning as the party promises to pay back in the currency of the victories of common sense. Such linguistic game can be seen as the case of trumping games in the meaning of Veale<sup>22</sup>, and the irony of the statement becomes explicit as the speaker looks with irony at the electoral body that assumingly believed the metaphorical promise of paying back.



Fig. 2. A poster of the Liberal Party

<sup>20</sup> Reference to the period of Independence.

<sup>21</sup> More: <http://www.liberalai.lt/>

<sup>22</sup> The trumping game has to do with a reversal of meaning due to certain elements that come later in the utterance.

The same topic was addressed a few years ago in a series of electoral posters of Lithuanian TPP party<sup>23</sup>, where the business metaphor was ironically exploited in a similar way. The underlying conceptual metaphor of **POLITICS IS BUSINESS** is further elaborated into **POLITICS IS A DIRTY BUSINESS / A CRIME**, or to be more specific, the posters played around the common belief that politicians steal from the country, from the people. **POLITICS IS THEFT** is the conceptual metaphor that is dominant in ironic communication in article commentaries but rare in articles or article headlines as such statements might be considered libel and the authors might be sued. Yet, being common in everyday discourse, the ironic metaphoric reference was also visualized in the electoral campaign of the TPP political party in 2008<sup>24</sup>. Having been continuously accused of stealing (from European funds, from the budget, from common citizens) the politicians deliberately exploited the reference ironically in their pre-election posters:



Fig. 3 A poster of TPP political party

The poster reads: *We won't steal from you. We can earn on our own...* It quite openly shows some well-known female politicians in the disguise of prostitutes (at the same time incorporating into the network the metaphor of **POLITICS IS PROSTITUTION**). The irony here is directed not at the politicians in the picture but at the paranoid and bitter reader who, by being exposed to the poster, is deprived of the possibility to add anything else... As the leader of the party, Valinskas joked: *You can't always look ironically at yourself, sometimes you have to target irony at others* (delfi.lt).

## Conclusions

In conclusion, it should be said that a number of Lithuanian ironic headlines and commentaries make use of a metaphoric mode, as the integration structures exploit the mental models of conceptual metaphors. Such cases follow double-scope integration, as the background knowledge is not only integrated but also facilitates an ironic shift of meaning.

<sup>23</sup> More: <http://www.liberalai.lt/>

<sup>24</sup> The political party "Tautos prisikėlimo" was established by showmen as an opposition to the populist governing parties.

Politics is most commonly defined in terms of sport (32%) or business and crime (35%). References to politics within the framework of a tale (18%) and a family (15%) are equally significant, though not so frequent. The majority of the above-discussed metaphors are conventional in the discourse of many countries<sup>25</sup>, while a few are not only more typical of Lithuanian discourse (the metaphors of miracles or family relationships) but can also be seen as well-established conventional ironies, as the ironic message is conveyed instantly, relying on the common knowledge. However, irony creates communities – the irony is instantly comprehensible only to those who are well familiar with the tradition of ironically addressing Lithuania as the land of miracles, or have the background knowledge of the Lithuanian political discourse. Therefore, the case of an actual promise of a political leader not to sell the country for a piece of butter instantly leads to perceiving the irony of the headlines where the price of Lithuania is equalled to the price of butter. The use of the conventionalized models turns certain patterns into trite-ironies, enables them to be accessible easier and facilitates the possibility of their further elaboration in politicized discourse. Attention should always be drawn to aspects of social cognition and culture, as cultural background shapes the structure of the conceptual integration networks and facilitates the blends that are the result of a variety of voices and images interacting over time. Therefore, when discussing blending within a Lithuanian environment of politicized discourse, the specific cultural/social processes peculiar to that environment are to be seen as integral parts of the blends.

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