

**EXAGGERATION AND DRAMATIZATION
IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE**

Elshad Assadullayev*

Abstract: With the expansion of the means of communication today, setting an agenda by powerful groups is becoming increasingly comprehensive. As this trend unfolds, people become more susceptible to manipulation. Some events may be brought to the attention of people in a favourable light, while others, rather, may be presented negatively. As such, this study supports the notion that today people are more exposed to influence than ever before in history. Two instruments of persuasion which this paper addresses are exaggeration and dramatization. Hyperbole and metaphor are two non-literal uses of language, which this article takes as the primary tools of obtaining the effect of exaggeration and dramatization. Indeed, hyperboles and metaphors are constantly used in political messages, and reproduced by media, to play with people's emotions, to create positive or negative images, to promote a system of ideas with its own "rights" and "wrongs", ultimately, to modify people's models of behaviour. Thus, exaggeration and dramatization can be considered as political resources aimed at acquiring political benefits.

Keywords: Exaggeration, dramatization, hyperbole, metaphor, discourse.

SİYASAL SÖYLEMDE ABARTI VE DRAMATİZASYON

Öz: İletişim imkanları dahilinde günümüzde ortaya çıkan ve güçlü gruplar tarafından gerçekleştirilen gündem oluşturma oldukça asal hale gelmiştir. Bundan dolayı insanlar manipülasyon tehlikesine dair daha şüpheci olmaya başlamışlardır. Bu makalede tarihsel olarak dış etkiye en fazla açık olunan zamanda yaşamaktadırlar. Bu çerçevede söylemde kullanılan abartı ve dramatizasyon iki manipülasyon aracı olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Anılan araçların etkisini analiz etmek üzere hiperbol ve metafor literal olmayan dil kullanımları olarak abartı ve dramatizasyonun etkisi ölçmek için kullanılmıştır.

*Dr. | Political Scientist | elmedenista@outlook.com | ORCID: 0000-0001-7879-4128.

Ayrıca hiperbol ve metafor medya tarafından yeniden üretilerek insanların duygularını, düşüncelerini ve siyasal görüşlerini şekillendirmeye yönelik mesajları içermektedir. Böylece abartı ve dramatizasyon siyasal hedefleri gerçekleştirmenin kaynağına dönüşmüştür.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Abartı, Dramatizasyon, Hiperbol, Metafor, Söylem*

INTRODUCTION

The rhetoric of exaggeration and dramatization can be seen as ways of exaggerating the facts in one's favour (Van Dijk, 2013: 68). Hyperbole and metaphor, separately or in combination, are two figures of speech, which help achieve the effect of exaggeration and dramatization. Exaggeration is essentially the main feature of hyperbole. Other related definitions of hyperbole point to overstatement and extremity (Burgers et al, 2016). McCarthy & Carter (2004) define it as an instrument that “magnifies and upscales reality”. Concerning dramatization, it is the process of a dramatic or theatrical depiction of events. Its effect is often reached through hyperbole and metaphor. Both tropes have the potential of persuasion. Here we can suggest that the discursive purpose of hyperbole and, to some extent, metaphor is to exaggerate and dramatize.

When we talk about hot political topics, such as the energy crisis or immigration, we often hear exaggerated and dramatized statements. Hence, immigration as an event and/or process is often metaphorically conceived in terms of national disaster, flood, tsunami, invasion. According to the cognitive or conceptual metaphor theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), a metaphor involves understanding one concept in terms of another concept. Hyperbole, in this case, provides the scale of magnitude. That is, when we use the “tsunami of immigrants”, especially when we talk about the small and irregular immigration, we amplify the actual number of immigrants. With this exaggeration comes its dramatic effect. Every disaster, tsunami, or invasion leads to losses, economic consequences, and so on. And, as in a typical theatrical play, there are villains, traitors, guilty ones, and those who will heroically save the day.

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I. METAPHOR, HYPERBOLE AND REPRESENTATION

There are different figures of speech such as metaphor, comparison, metonymy, hyperbole, and irony, that people constantly use to indirectly express their communicative intentions (see Gibbs, 1999: 148). Among them, metaphors have been extensively explored. In proposing a theory of conceptual metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson's pioneering work in 1980 (2003) revolutionized the field of metaphor research. The theory says that through metaphors, people come to know

the world. Metaphorical expression is a surface realization of cross-domain mapping, or what is called, conceptual metaphor (Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). To put it differently, linguistic representation is a product of conceptual representation (Hart, 2008).

According to the conceptual metaphor theory, metaphORIZATION occurs when there is an interaction of two structures of knowledge - the cognitive structure of the source domain and the cognitive structure of the target domain. In the mapping process, the target domain is conceptualized in terms of the model of the source, i.e., “cognitive mapping” occurs. Whereas the target domain is more abstract, less tangible, less accessible, and more difficult in terms of cognitive comprehension, the source domain is more specific and structured. For this reason, we tend to understand entities such as TIME in terms of SPACE, and LIFE in terms of JOURNEY. Metaphors are also often essential to fill the gap where there is not adequate literal language to express an idea, such as in scientific terminology (e.g. “worm-holes”, “electron cloud”, see Boyd, 1993: 486).

A more pragmatic approach is adopted in the critical discourse studies (see, critical metaphor analysis by Charteris-Black, 2004). In this instance, the metaphor can also be used intentionally for political purposes (see also Steen, 2008). As Charteris-Black (2011: 28) writes, politicians employ metaphor to tell the right story. Thus, while conceptual metaphors are part of the cognitive consciousness, the critical discursive approach treats metaphors (especially “non-primary” metaphors) as grounded in discourse (social and political domains). Subsequently, they can be entrenched at the conceptual level (Hart, 2008, 94).

As for hyperbole, it mainly works by adding more semantic information within the same domain or category (Claridge, 2018). For example, a report could say “thousands of immigrants”, when it refers to a much lower number. However, as Carston and Wearing (2015: 81) indicate, hyperbole is also very easily combined with other figures of speech. As such, unlike “pure” hyperboles, metaphorical hyperbole, having a more complex structure allows you to achieve the effects of both tropes. For example, in “you’re dead disappointed, aren’t you”, *dead* means *very* (Claridge, 2011: 43).

Moreover, as hyperbole naturally exaggerates a specific aspect, this aspect likely is the most important to the discourse producer. In turn, it often puts listeners or readers in a position to recognize this most important idea. This feature makes hyperbole a powerful discursive instrument. It is able “to structure reality so that some aspects overshadow others” (Swarz, 1976: 111). This is in harmony with the discourse theory discussed by Fairclough (1995: 4), who suggested that in a representation, there are aspects that are foregrounded and aspects that are backgrounded.

Thus, as Claridge (2011:2) points out, the manipulative potential of hyperbole can be very useful in public speeches and debates. Unlike metaphor, such as primary metaphors, which we often use inevitably to be able to express ourselves, hyperbole is never a ‘necessity’ since it always offers an option (Claridge, 2011: 176). In addition, Swarz (1976: 108) notes that in society, one way or another, hyperbole is more acceptable than some other ways of distorting reality. In politics, it is employed without hesitation. A politician can say “I dedicated my entire life to ...” or “I always supported ...”, even though physically he could not really devote his “whole” life to something, such as public service or nation-building. Even after taking office, he does not work round the clock.

Studies confirm that terms with a different degree of intensity can have a different level of impact on people. Carefully selected words can be an effective persuasive tool. In a renowned experiment by Loftus & Palmer (1974), the findings showed that certain formulations can cause reconstruction in one’s memory. In the experiment, subjects were invited to watch clips of traffic accidents. Next, they were to report the observed events based on the questions asked by the researchers. However, different terms were used in the questions to capture the events. The variable in the questions is a term that describes the moment when two vehicles collide with each other. Differently worded questions pertained to the same events. Some subjects were asked, “About how fast were the cars going when they hit each other?” Others were given the question with just one amendment in a verb. These words were *smashed*, *collided*, *bumped*, *hit*, *contacted*. The spectrum of words also resonates clearly with the hyperbolic scale, as will be discussed later.

The responses exhibited that the mean speed estimate in the sentence with the verb *smashed* was 40.5 mph. The lowest estimation was given to *contacted*, 31,8 mph. According to Loftus & Palmer, the results demonstrate that the form of a question can consistently influence people’s responses. In this way, these stronger words may therefore serve to create false impressions and conclusions (Claridge, 2018). Loftus & Palmer (1974) also asserted that the use of particular words has the potential to influence the memory of a subject.

Memory is one of the most significant factors in the formation of a new social representation (Arruda, 2015: 142). Drawing its origin from the imaginary, a social representation determines the interpretation of the visual images. Therefore, it can be suggested that the various descriptions can mislead people, instigating them to “recall” an alternative version of the events that occurred. The new reality in the form of exaggerated statements is merged with the existing experience. Events are reconstructed based upon the intensity of the words provided. This is also in line with what Wagner and Hayes (2005: 170-71) write regarding the similarity in the underlying structures of social representation and metaphor. In

this sense, as they claim, metaphor is an iconic illustration of an initially non-iconic or abstract thing.

II. DECEPTION AND PERSUASION

Figurative language can be viewed as a “speech where speakers mean something other than what they literally say” (Gibbs & Colston 2012:1). Exaggeration is often approached as “a truth that has lost its temper” (Gibran, cited in Bergler, 1955: 262). Similarly, the classical definition of hyperbole says, “it sacrifices credibility in order to express a deeper truth” (Claridge, 2011: 20). Yet such “truth” could be true only to the speaker. Because it allows misrepresenting the world. That is, words about the world do not accurately describe the world. As Claridge (2018) notes, there is no appropriate word-world fit. As such, there can be identified another camp, which goes by definition that exaggeration is “a branch of lying” (Baltasar Gracian, cited in Bergler, 1995). It is interesting to note that these viewpoints emphasize contrasting aspects of exaggeration, which are *truth* and *deceit*.

Gibbs (1999: 155) mentions at least five kinds of deception. Each of them is a different way of saying things that a speaker himself doesn’t believe. These include *lying, evasion, concealment, overstatement, and collusion*. The difference between lying and exaggeration is of particular interest. As Gibbs explains, lies fabricate the facts with the intention of creating an alternate version of the truth. One can say the same about exaggeration. The deceit in exaggeration, however, is attained by magnifying the facts.

Claridge (2018) attempts to separate exaggeration from lying. To Claridge, if one compliments a person using a figurative expression “you look unbelievable”, as long as the speaker thinks at least moderately positive of the looks, it can be treated as hyperbole. Otherwise, it is a lie. In other words, in the first instance, there is an amplification of the idea that somebody looks good. But it is a lie if one thinks of a person negatively but tells him the opposite. In such a case, Claridge’s approach is to measure the degree of distinction between words and the world. The tolerable or logically appropriate difference is more in line with the hyperbolic definition. Ultimately, if a message conveys a meaning which is opposite to the real state of affairs, then such a message can be regarded as a lie.

As Claridge (2018) notes, it is also possible to treat all cases of misrepresentation as outright lies, no matter how closely word and world are matched. The use of the phrase “tsunami of immigrants” in the case of several hundred immigrants is falser than in the case of thousands of immigrants; but in any case, it gives the impression that the number of immigrants is greater than it is. That is, the connotations associated with a tsunami (or flood), its catastrophic consequences,

such as loss of life, loss of housing, the scale of the economic disaster or, in general, the chaos that it brings, do not correspond to the real state of things.

As Gibbs (1999: 156) has stated, the reason people lie is not to be merely deceitful, but to achieve a particular goal. Deception may be regarded as a deliberative act of persuasion. It is equally applicable at the institutional level. If a media outlet intentionally exaggerates, it means that it is deceiving its audience. However, one does not deceive for the sake of deception. Through “access” to people's minds, a deceptive act seeks to fulfil its persuasive goal. Thus, the persuasive goal of a political message would attempt to promote its agenda, and a commercial would target buyers' pockets. In other words, the deceptive aim is to make “them” believe “you”, but the persuasive aim determines the reason for deception. Hyperbole, in this context, is a special sort of political resource which is used to gain ends and to win the support for special procedures (Swarz, 1976: 101).

Furthermore, people normally do not want to be deceived. Thus, according to Swarz (1976), the likelihood of using the rhetoric of exaggeration is higher when there is a higher resistance on the receiving end to accepting the new reshaped reality. This is where it also connects to manipulation. To Van Dijk (2006a: 361), manipulation is different from persuasion in that it assigns a more passive role to the recipients of a message. This is due to a lack of awareness or a failure to recognize the intent. As a result, the recipients, as prescribed by Van Dijk, are subjected to manipulation. In addition to that, there are ethical considerations. Persuasion may still be seen as a legitimate method of communication. A potential buyer can say to the seller of a product: “Please convince me”. In such a case, the buyer expects the seller to make compelling arguments. On the other hand, it is doubtful that the buyer will ask to manipulate him. However, it is up to the seller what tools to use to close the deal. This happens without the buyer’s consent or awareness. In this regard, exaggeration and dramatization are proven tools of manipulation.

III. ELEMENTS AND DIMENSIONS OF HYPERBOLE

Since the main purpose of any deception is to delude, it is not easy to identify it (Gibbs, 1999: 155). Against this problematic backdrop, Burgers et al (2016) offered a systematic hyperbole identification procedure (hereafter, HIP). Previous studies have already brought to light the theoretical foundation of this procedure. The metaphor identification procedure developed by Pragglejaz Group (2007) has been particularly influential in the field. The metaphor scholars that make up the Pragglejaz Group have tried to create a reliable method for identifying words used metaphorically in spoken and written language. The method looks at its application in natural discourse. It was subsequently further revisited by Steen et

al (2010). Here, I will not focus on the technicalities of the HIP itself, I will instead describe the constituent elements of hyperbole, according to the procedure.

According to Burgers et al. (2016), hyperbole has three primary components. The first component is its scalar attribute. Here, the authors break it down into two types of scales: quality scales and quantity scales. The first type is realized through qualitative evaluation when a statement is more extreme than the intended statement. Below I provide a few illustrations of such statements. Notice that the first two of them display a positive assessment.

(1) We know we live in the greatest city in the history of the world.¹

(2) I could say it, but I don't want to say it, but some people said it was the best speech ever made by a president in Europe.²

(3) What would Bolton, one of the dumbest people in Washington, know?³

In (1), a columnist at New York Post calls New York “the greatest city in the world”. As great as New York might be, the columnist delivers a statement that cannot be proven. It is not only a matter of preference but also a matter of biased opinion. Taking into account the impressive size of the city or its worldwide popularity or other features that make the city “great”, the rationale for such a statement is understandable. In a nutshell, the columnist shares her positive thoughts about the city. In the second example, Trump qualifies his speech in Poland as “the best speech ever made by a president in Europe”. It is scarcely likely that the speech is regarded so. The final example is by Trump as well. That's an example of a negative evaluation. On his Twitter, Trump described his former national security advisor as “one of the dumbest people in Washington”. It is also unlikely for a well-educated man who has held various government positions since the 1980s to be the dumbest person in the entire government (or even in the entire city).

What makes these statements the examples of the scale of quality is the qualitative evaluation. Simply put, the statements provide a qualitative rating. On the scale, this rating might look like: the worst, the bad, the so-so, the neutral, the normal, the good, the best. As mentioned earlier, hyperbole operates in a range where the

¹ Markowicz, K. (2016). What the haters miss about the joys of New York living. *New York Post*. <https://nypost.com/2016/03/06/what-the-haters-miss-about-the-joys-of-new-york-living/>

² Samuels, B. (2019). Trump: Some say I gave “the best speech ever made by a president in Europe”. *The Hill*. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/448189-trump-some-say-i-gave-the-best-speech-ever-made-by-a-president-in>

³ Budryk, Z. (2020). Trump calls Bolton «one of the dumbest people in Washington» after former aide weighs in on martial law report. *The Hill*. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/531034-trump-calls-bolton-one-of-the-dumbest-people-in-washington-after>

meaning is similar. That is, for hyperbole to convey negativity, the meaning of “so-so” extends to “the worst ever”.

Regarding the quantitative scale, it exaggeratedly provides numerical, statistical, or temporal information. Below are some clear-cut cases from the daily conversations, as provided by Burgers et al (2016). The waiting period between the order of the coffee and its delivery cannot exceed a reasonable waiting period, which makes the samples (4), (5), and (6) cases of exaggeration. It is also clear that they express negative sentiments. The final example (7) shows that hyperbole may also contain small numbers. That is, the hyperbole exaggerates the speed of the service, which certainly cannot be delivered within a second. Given that rapid service is considered good, it is a positive assessment.

(4) It took the waiter a week to get me my coffee.

(5) It took the waiter a month to get me my coffee.

(6) It took the waiter a year to get me my coffee.

(7) It took the waiter one second to get me my coffee.

The second element of hyperbole according to HIP is the difference between the propositional and intended meaning (Burgers et al, 2016). It can be seen in the examples above. The propositional meaning is a “bigger” or “more extreme” version of the intended meaning. The intended meaning set out in the examples above speaks of a long waiting period. The propositional meaning intensifies this idea. What is normally measured in minutes is now measured in weeks or months. Likewise, in example (2) on the quality scale instead of “the best speech ever” the intended meaning is more like “good speech”. As Burgers et al (2016) debate, the intended meaning is closer to a neutral evaluation than the propositional meaning.

Finally, hyperbole cannot be fully grasped outside the context, which makes it a pragmatic phenomenon. Thus, as the authors offer, hyperbole should be approached in the light of the ontological referent. In other words, knowledge of the subject is crucial in determining whether a particular statement is hyperbole. Without prior information, false statements may be mistaken for true statements. Furthermore, the level of overstatement may not correspond to the true magnitude of an event. For instance, it is unthinkable that anyone would have waited for their coffee for a year. Yet, from this expression, it is understandable that the wait must have taken a great deal of time, say 20 minutes. However, someone sitting at the next table could witness that it has only been 5 minutes.

We shall take a closer look at some of these issues. Below are a few more examples of exaggeration. To illustrate, former US President Donald Trump is known for his extensive use of hyperbole. As a CNN journalist said, “For President Donald Trump, a big inaccurate number is almost always preferable to a slightly smaller accurate number. Even when the truth is in his favour, Trump

tends to choose the lie” (Dale, 2019). Various fact-checking articles tracked some of the statements by Trump.

(8) [Drug overdose deaths] ... dropped for the first time in more than 30 years.⁴

(9) Thanks to my administration's aggressive actions since taking office, we have successfully lowered drug prices for the first time in 51 years.⁵

As the New York Times reports, by 2018, overdose deaths in the United States have dropped for the first time since 1990, or 28 years ago (Goodnough, Katz and Sanger-Katz, 2019). As far as drug prices are concerned, at the time the speech was made, prices fell for the first time in 46 years (Rizzo, 2019). On both occasions, by magnifying the real figures, Trump misled the public. To Dale (2019), it is as if Trump’s teleprompter has been set “to automatically translate the word almost to more than”. In his book “The Art of the Deal”, Trump shares his perspective on hyperbole.

People may not always think big themselves, but they can still get very excited by those who do. That’s why a little hyperbole never hurts. People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular. I call it truthful hyperbole. It’s an innocent form of exaggeration — and it’s a very effective form of promotion (cited in Lozada, Washington Post, 2015).

Based on the examples above, one can also see the huge manipulative potential of numbers. Argumentation with numerical data implies objectivity. Statistical data seem to be exact information and contribute to creating a scientific aura. This rhetorical device is called the “Number Game” (Van Dijk, 2013, 2018). The numbers aim to represent “facts”, “empirical evidence”, or a sort of “quantitative research” better than mere opinions expressed in words. Thus, the narrator is seen as a holder of those precise facts. It is virtually impossible to hear a news report on certain topics without providing figures. Imagine news about protests, riots, accidents, hostage situations, school shootings, poverty, unemployment, and so on (see Van Dijk, 1988: 88). Thus, there is indeed plenty of room to use numbers for exaggeration purposes.

It should be noted that in the cases above when Trump uses numerical exaggeration, the information he shared with the public cannot be validated without research. In other words, we must either know the subject or do thorough

⁴ Factbase. (2019). Transcript Quote-Speech: Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Greenville, North Carolina - July 17, 2019. <https://factba.se/transcript/donald-trump-speech-maga-rally-greenville-nc-july-17-2019>

⁵ C-SPAN. (2020). President Trump Signs Executive Order on Lowering Drug Prices. C-SPAN.org. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?474183-1/president-trump-signs-executive-order-lowering-drug-prices>

research to be able to identify the deception. For this reason, the aforementioned cases require additional extra-textual information.

Also, as illustrated by Claridge, (2011: 7-9) the hyperbolic scale can be divided into three basic types: semantic, pragmatic, and argumentative. A hyperbole of semantic scale rests upon its linguistic features. The examples of quality and quantity provided above are also examples of semantic scale, which depends on contrast in the lexicon. For instance: “so-so, bad, the worst”, “failure, fiasco, disaster”, “cool, cold, freezing”, and so on.

The pragmatic scale is not grounded solely in language. It usually mirrors the speaker’s vision of events. As Claridge (2011: 8) explains “Extralinguistic facts inform these scales and a change in the world or in speaker assumption will lead to different scales; the latter highlights the potentially subjective nature of hyperbole”. Examine the following statements.

(10) Sochi Watch: Why Tsar Putin Released His Arch-Nemesis.⁶

(11) *Но Путин — наш царь, которому мы доверяем.*⁷

But Putin is our tsar, whom we trust.

In case (10), President Putin is called a “tsar”. Tsar is considered a sovereign far more powerful than a president. That is, the gradation is in terms of power, from the president to the tsar. In that sense, citizens also turn into “holops”, i.e., slaves. Also, if in this context tsar is used with a negative flavour, the following example shows rather a positive evaluation. A retiree calls the president “our tsar”. While the two examples show the same gradation, the meaning is different. In the first instance, and/or generally in cases of a similar context within the democratic or liberal discourse, “tsar” is used to refer to a lack of fair elections and freedom of expression. Concerning example (11), we can say that the term “tsar” is a natural part of the national consciousness.

The third type of hyperbole focuses on argumentative strength. Claridge (2011: 9) states that different arguments, targeted at the same conclusion, have different implications. Hence, using the terms “tsar”, “dictator”, “sultan” or “totalitarian regime” from a manipulative standpoint may be more convenient in liberal discourse than using terms such as “strong president” or “weak democracy”. This type of argumentation, which is also pragmatic in nature, can be more effective in instances such as influencing the voters’ behaviour or encouraging protests the government. These arguments can be impactful in creating certain sentiments

⁶ Kozłowska, H. (2013). Sochi Watch: Why Tsar Putin Released His Arch-Nemesis. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/20/sochi-watch-why-tsar-putin-released-his-arch-nemesis/>

⁷ Verbisky, M. (2020). «Путин — наш царь»: Как голосуют по поправкам во дворах Екатеринбурга. *The Village*. <https://www.the-village.ru/weekend/report/384037-vote-pandemic>

among the population towards a group of people or a country, which also will pay its dividends when negative emotions are converted into hateful actions. By saying “it’s freezing” to someone, you signal the need to put on a coat more convincingly than by saying “it’s cold” (Claridge, 2011). In this regard, Claridge treats hyperbole as a part of the intensification phenomenon. Intensification also makes hyperbole economic, because instead of explaining something in several words, using hyperbole, one can more efficiently reformulate the same idea with fewer but stronger words (Claridge, 2011:50).

IV. EXAGGERATION THROUGH METONYMY

While metaphor is a way of perceiving one thing in terms of another, metonymy, on the other hand, is when one thing is used to refer to another thing. In other words, metaphor involves mapping between domains. Metonymy, in contrast, maps within a single domain (Deignan, 2005; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Kövecses & Radden (1998: 39) define metonymy as a “cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain”. There are numerous examples of metonymies, like GUN FOR SOLDIER, PEN FOR WRITING, PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT. For instance, the cases of PLACE FOR INSTITUTION could be the Pentagon for the US Department of Defence, and the Kremlin for Russia’s presidential administration, and so on. Thus, metonymy is another figure of speech with great persuasive potential.

Another definition of metonymy, given by Gibbs (Deignan, 2005), indicates that metonymy is when an easily perceived part of something represents the whole thing. This is also the definition of synecdoche, which is generally considered a subtype of metonymy (see Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). It is used when the part refers to the whole, and vice versa, such as THE BODY PART FOR THE PERSON, as in “two heads are better than one”. Furthermore, when we say “head” we refer to a person, we don’t use another part of the body, because with this phrase the head is associated with the mind. Two heads are better in the sense that it improves the likelihood of resolving an issue that requires human intelligence. “We need more hands” may be associated with some sort of *manual* labour, where *human hands* are the decisive attribute. Thus, metonymy allows us to focus more specifically on certain aspects of a thing. In the context of the present article, this characteristic can also be used for exaggeration purposes.

Let us consider the cases of *totum pro parte*, that is, THE WHOLE FOR THE PART metonymy. When we say, “the host country won the gold medal,” it means that an athlete or a team won the medal. The statement “Exxon has raised prices again” mentions the entire company, not the few who are responsible for the decision (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Similarly, America often refers to the United States of

America, and so on. This feature of metonymy can be used to amplify the meaning. For instance, “entire country supports”, “whole town wants”, are typical cases of PLACE FOR INHABITANTS metonymy, which is based on THE WHOLE FOR THE PART metonymy. Often these cases have hyperbolic significance because they reinforce the intended meaning. The *whole place* embodies *all the inhabitants* as if absolutely all people are united and driven by the same idea, which is a rare case (Littlemore, 2015: 33-34).

In addition, terms such as *all, always, forever, everything, never, nobody*, suggest a potential hyperbolic use. To illustrate, “he always wears a hat” (for more regarding “always” and “never”, see Lindley, 2016), “he has been everywhere”, represent the cases where whole stands for the part. The first case depicts a person who *usually* wears a hat. In terms of a scalar explanation, this could be described as *periodically, usually, always*. In the second case, it is understood that the person has visited *many* places in the world or that he travels more than people usually travel.

THE PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy provides even more sophisticated examples of hyperbolic meaning. For instance, social stereotypes, according to Lakoff (1990), can be viewed as cases of the metonymic model. A subcategory of people may have a socially recognized status that stands for the category as a whole. It defines certain cultural expectations about a group, depending on the characteristics of that subcategory. For example, the metaphor IMMIGRANT AS A CRIMINAL is also a subcategory that can be applied to the entire category of migrants, even if most of them are not criminals. Cultural expectations about a group of people draw prototypical roles for all its members. Furthermore, exaggeration is especially common when stereotyping is directed at outgroups (McCauley, 1995: 240). It is also noteworthy that both exaggeration and stereotyping share the evaluative aspect in their definitions (see Van Dijk, 1993). Through evaluation, both draw the line between the real and the representative. This effect of generalization is illustrated in the sample below.

(12) *Всех местных людей предупреждают, что беженцы носят ножи [...].*⁸

All local people are warned that refugees carry knives [...].

So, with the help of THE PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy, by focusing on certain aspects of the whole, one can oversimplify and/or overgeneralize the characteristics of the whole. Consequently, the entire group of people will be stigmatized according to the characteristics of some of its members. In other words, it can lead to a whole group being discriminated against based on the attributes assigned to them (see Goffman, 1963). By emphasizing these attributes,

⁸ КР. (2015). Хроника гибели Германии: Чтобы улажить беженцев, католическая церковь отказывается крестить младенцев. <https://www.kp.ru/daily/26426/3299114/>

or better yet, caricaturing them (McCauley, 1995: 238), it helps to increase the difference between “us” and “them”.

Furthermore, exaggeration often occurs via a metonymic chain. For example, an “illegal” immigrant can be associated with both “legal” migrants and terrorists. As Charteris-Black (2006: 574) describes, “particular example of an immigrant, ‘the terrorist’, represents a sub-category of immigrants – ‘illegal immigrants’ – that in turn represents the whole category of ‘immigrants’”. The link between illegal immigrants and terrorists falls within the realm of criminality (violated law). Thus, the chain goes from THE TERRORIST FOR THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT to THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT FOR THE IMMIGRANT (see Charteris-Black, 2006). In addition, the chain can be further expanded to THE IMMIGRANT FOR MUSLIM, which will eventually allow terrorists to be associated with Muslims.

Furthermore, Herrero-Ruiz (2018) proposed two other types/interpretations of metonymies that evoke hyperbolic effects. The first type is known as situational metonymy. Based on the works of Lakoff (1990), this type of metonymy may consist of the following elements: precondition, embarkation, center, finish, endpoint. For instance, to get to the airport, “a man waved down a taxi”. The prerequisite for such a situation is the availability of access to the car. “Embarkation” means boarding a vehicle. The “center” assumes being in the car. The “finish” means arriving at the destination and exiting the vehicle. The last phase indicates that you are at your destination. The structure of this Idealized Cognitive Model is common to the situational type. Thus, it is metonymically feasible to use one specific element, such as precondition (availability of a car), to denote the entire process. Herrero-Ruiz (2018: 56) argues that if processes can be addressed as scenarios with temporal phases, then a particular phase can be employed to either highlight or downplay the contextual impact. The initial stages of the scenario can contribute to mitigation. Likewise, the use of the later parts of the process can heighten the effect, especially when other figures of speech accompany the metonymy.

The second type is effect-cause metonymies. An idea can be exaggerated by using the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy. That is, exaggeration is achieved by the way of amplifying the outcome of an action. CAUSE FOR EFFECT metonymy, on the other hand, may help to mitigate the meaning of a message. As Herrero-Ruiz (2018) notes, logic is closely related to the logic of situational metonymy. “He pulled the trigger” euphemistically softens the meaning of “he killed”, which entails that somebody died. Being killed is the result of pulling the trigger, which, in this context, is the cause of death. In a like manner, as Herrero-Ruiz points out, in the expression “he drank the cup dry”, the effect of exaggeration is obtained by accentuating the degree of the emptiness of the cup. In other words, the cup is now so empty that not even a single drop of liquid remains. Therefore, as both aforementioned types of metonymies can generate hyperbolic understandings, this

makes them useful in discussions on political and social issues. Check out the examples below. Each is tied to recent COVID-19 vaccine debates.

(13) Please, please, get vaccinated, [...] It makes a big difference.⁹

(14) They could then go door-to-door to take your guns. They could go door-to-door to take your bibles.¹⁰

(15) Nobody should mandate somebody else to inject poison into their body, [...]. There's not enough research on this vaccine.¹¹

The words of the first example (13) come from US President Biden. The message calls on people to get vaccinated against COVID-19. He points to the big difference, that is, the big change that vaccines make. Example (14) is a response to Biden's policy of advocating vaccination. Due to the decline in vaccination rates, the Biden administration has called for a door-to-door campaign. The initiative facilitates the involvement of officials and volunteers to help people; "neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood, and oftentimes, door-to-door — literally knocking on doors" as Mr. Biden said (The Associated Press, 2021). In this regard, condemning the Democrats' policy, a Republican politician said that the same mechanism could subsequently be used to confiscate people's guns and bibles. The GOP representative emphasized the political repercussions, i.e. the loss of some rights due to the democrats' vaccine push. The words in example (15) belong to an unvaccinated civil servant. The first part of the statement uses a metaphor that maps the severe consequences of the POISON domain onto the domain of VACCINE. At the same time, the use of the term "poison" may have a hyperbolic impact. Since most drugs and vaccines might have side effects, the overall negative impact of the vaccine on the population can also be exaggerated, to the point that its use is considered harmful rather than beneficial. As for the second part, it conversely downplays the positive impact of the vaccine. By focusing attention on the research stage, the stage preceding a fully tested drug, the utterance casts doubt on its efficacy.

⁹ Shear, M. D., & Weiland, N. (2021). Biden Calls for Door-to-Door Vaccine Push; Experts Say More Is Needed. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/06/us/politics/biden-vaccines.html>

¹⁰ Vlamis, K. (2021). GOP Rep. Madison Cawthorn said offering vaccines door-to-door could lead to the government confiscating guns and bibles. *Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/madison-cawthorn-vaccines-effort-could-lead-to-taking-guns-bibles-2021-7>

¹¹ The New York Times. (2021). Covid-19 Updates: What We Know About the C.D.C.'s New Mask Guidance for Vaccinated People. <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/07/27/world/covid-delta-variant-vaccine>

V. EXAGGERATION AS DRAMATIZATION

Studies reveal that figurative language is employed more often when its users want to express their emotions and, we can argue, it is more accurate in communicating these emotions than the literal language (Claridge, 2011: 78-9). Thus, figurative language offers access to the expression of emotions. The main function of dramatization can be regarded as evoking emotions. Van Dijk (1991) sees dramatization as a type of hyperbole. In this regard, as it was earlier defined, exaggeration can be treated as “a truth that has lost its temper”. Hyperbole enables to focus on specific aspects of reality in such a way as to “bring about awareness of values and norms associated with those aspects in an emotionally charged way” (Swarz, 1976: 101). In fact, hyperbole can play a part in all three aspects which make up Aristotelian persuasion. As Claridge (2011: 217) points out, with respect to *logos*, hyperboles can exaggerate the facts. As for *ethos*, the discourse producer must be careful because the overuse could lead to a loss of reliability. And when it comes to *pathos*, hyperbole enables some facts to seem more vital, fearful, desirable, distressing, and so on. In other words, it causes statements to be filled with sentiment. This is also why exaggeration is often correlated with informal language, which, contrary to formal language, is narrative, emotional, and more interactive (Lindley, 2016: 236).

The effect of dramatization can also be achieved with the help of certain metaphors. As it has been discussed, conceptual metaphors link two distinct domains, where one domain, which is more abstract, is cognized in terms of the more physical domain. As such, “boiling with anger” is a linguistic realization of the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS A HOT FLUID, and, similarly, “burning with love” is an example of metaphor LOVE IS FIRE. Such examples are notable because they transmit the intensity element (Kövecses, 2000: 4-5). Kövecses (2000: 41) provides some examples of conceptual metaphors which specifically entail intensity: INTENSITY OF EMOTION IS AMOUNT/QUANTITY, INTENSITY OF EMOTION IS HEAT, INCREASE IN THE INTENSITY OF EMOTION IS GROWTH, INTENSITY OF EMOTION IS STRENGTH OF EFFECT. Each of these metaphors is based on more general conceptualizations, like INTENSITY IS HEAT, which feeds INTENSITY OF EMOTION IS HEAT.

So, strong and visual metaphors stimulate the hyperbolic effect. Beyond that, they can be loaded with emotions. For this reason, metaphors such as based on source domains of disaster, war, disease, and others provide some of the most colourful images. To illustrate, Hitler pictured the Jews as parasites. A parasite means a harmful creature that lives at the expense of the host organism. As Chilton (2004: 52) explains, what we know about parasites - that they get into the body, and that they cause disease - maps onto the frame of human beings. Rash, (2005) provides that this metaphorization is part of the Great Chain of Being model. As such, Rash writes that there is a big gap between the entity of people and the entity of

parasites. Musolff (2010:17), in this regard, points out that this metaphor stresses the contrast rather than the gradual difference.

This is also where it connects to hyperbolic interpretation. The intensity given to the metaphor could be underscored by the scale of the Great Chain. In terms of the hierarchy of the beings, from the greater beings to the lower beings, and in terms of the size, from big to small, parasites are forms of life that should be placed at the lower section of the scale. Small, in this case, by the way of established conceptual metaphors, such as IMPORTANCE IS SIZE and VALUE IS SIZE, means insignificant and worthless. Cognitively, any hyperbole may be approached as a basic mental process, which is bonded to the primary metaphors such as IMPORTANT IS BIG (Claridge, 2011: 176, also see, Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Dramatization, in this case, is achieved through the link with the illness. Because parasites suck the life from an organism. All the following connotations include serious emotional experiences. These days, the use of similar metaphors is especially common in immigration discourse. *Nation* in “body politics” is understood as an *organism*. The parasite is an alien substance that enters the organism and causes the disease, which, as Santa Ana (2002) has noted, sooner or later always involves some sort of pain. Thus, as in dramatic narratives, the strong sickness brings much pain and tears. The death (for example, the downfall of a nation in immigration discourse) is ultimately what happens if there is no cure.

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But in this scenario, there may also be a “hero”, for example, a political party that can provide “heroic act”, that is, political measures. Thus, structurally political and social events are often also conceptualized in terms of the THEATRE source domain, where there are heroes, villains, victims, etc. For example, the utterance “political arena” is based on WORLD POLITICS IS A STAGE metaphor. Similarly, the metaphors of the lower category incorporate NATIONAL POLITICS IS A STAGE, POLITICIANS ARE STAGE ACTORS, also, A MANIPULATED POLITICIAN IS A PUPPET, HIDDEN AUTHORITY IS A PUPPETEER, and so on. Thereby blending politics and dramaturgy. Examine the sample below. The statement is taken from a Sunday political program aired on the main Russian federal television broadcasting network.

(16) На фоне реальной драмы миллионов людей на политической сцене Европы дают комедию ужасов и абсурда. Пример бессилия — как следствие — клоунады — был представлен на прошедшей неделе в Европарламенте.¹²

In the context of the true drama of millions of people on the European political scene, they provide a comedy of horror and absurdity. An example of powerlessness - as a result - clownery - was presented last week in the European Parliament.

¹² Vesti. (2015). Европа может стать мусульманской в обозримом будущем. Вести недели. <https://www.vesti.ru/article/1757822>

Firstly, the politics surrounding the European migration crisis is considered a “scene” (or stage). The statement shows to what extent the European authorities are helpless and cynical. To the point that they seem funny and absurd to people who understand the current processes. By “knowing” “the true drama” the state-owned television channel depicts Russia as the bearer of the truth. Then, there is also the “clownery” metaphor. Using “clownery” means that this is not just any stage, but a circus stage. This can also be understood as an exaggeration of the level of incompetence. Europe is seen so incapable that it is even funny. Through conceptual mapping, European politicians are then viewed as clowns and European Parliament as a circus. Moreover, it can be argued that Russia is presented as a laughing spectator that watches the clowning. The statement also utilizes the “number game” rhetoric. Considering the date, in 2015 the total number of migrants who entered Europe was just over a million (BBC, 2016). Though the real number is indeed high, the given number is still an exaggeration. Words like “horror” make things even more dramatic. Similarly, the theatrical term “prelude” in the example from a major Russian tabloid below, indicates that this is just an introduction to the main act in the chain of tragedies.

(17) [...] миграционный поток - всего лишь прелюдия к цепи трагедий и перерождению Европы.¹³

[...] the migration flux is just a prelude to a chain of tragedies and the rebirth of Europe.

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(18) Драматизма ситуации добавили местные журналисты. В разгар беспорядков девушка с камерой намеренно сбивала их с ног.¹⁴

Local journalists have added to the drama of the situation. In the heat of the riots [amid the unrest; the unrest was in full swing], a young woman with a camera was deliberately knocking them down.

Moreover, consider case (18) above, which uses the lexeme “heat” from the FIRE domain. It is used in a sense that a process (narrative of the European Migration Crisis) is in culmination or climax, i.e., at the highest point of tension. This selection of words assists in visualizing the moments. Indeed, it is not uncommon to see how the various phases of an event (“start”, “end”, “during”) are described in visually intense words. For example, the statement “угасание белой расы”¹⁵ from a Russian news outlet in the context of the European migration crisis means “the extinction/end of the white race”. The synonym for the word “end” literally means, “fire fading away”, or also “lights going out”. Likewise, “debate started”

¹³ КР. (2015). Боевики ИГ перешли в наступление на Европу. <https://www.kp.ru/daily/26429.5/3301452/>

¹⁴ Vesti. (2015). Отношения Европы и беженцев накаляются. <https://www.vesti.ru/article/1736195>

¹⁵ КР. (2015). Станет ли нашествие мигрантов с Ближнего Востока закатом Европы. <https://www.kp.ru/daily/26431/3303620/>

can be paraphrased as “debate flared up”. Various languages, such as Turkish, show similar logic. For example, “tartışma alevlendi”, or “skandal patladı” (scandal exploded). The continuous process can be expressed as a “boiling process” such as in “passions are boiling”. This is based on the metaphor INTENSE EMOTIONS IS HEAT and INTENSITY IS TEMPERATURE. In fact, many of these examples indicate the intensification in the degree of temperature.

Lastly, allusions also can contribute to dramatization and exaggeration. Any event can be compared or associated with another event of greater scope. They include not only dramatic events in the history of humanity but also mythic and legendary stories. For example, the Trojan War, the Fall of the Roman Empire, the Great Migration of People, the Colonization era, the Second World War, the Lord of the Rings, Odysseus, are amongst many others which can be mentioned. Events, actors, incidents, and results in these stories can intermingle with modern realities. Furthermore, storytelling techniques may also be transferred to political speeches and news reports. To illustrate, fiction narratives, either cinema or novel, often employ weather conditions to mirror the mood of an episode or a scene. Rain can symbolize grieving and crying. In different contexts, a moment can be described as rainy, cold, or hot.

CONCLUSION

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Exaggeration can trick people’s perceptions, it plays with their emotions, and offers an alternative vision of events. There are discourse domains where figurative expressions and symbols are precisely used for persuasive reasons (Claridge, 2018). Advertising and politics have been traditionally such fields. Hence, it is imperative to know the intention of the discourse producer. The receiving end of discourse must be capable of distinguishing between true and false messages.

Exaggeration helps to impose agenda on the audience (see Swarz, 1976: 113). In politics, it is used to manipulate facts, to stigmatize the “scapegoats”, to create memorable slogans. Exaggeration enables to discredit political rivals, to amplify “their” failures (and downgrade their success), to magnify “our” achievements (and understate our bad decisions). This is also what is called the “ideological square”. In other words, according to Van Dijk (2006b: 734), ideological discourse contains four strategies: Emphasizing their bad things, de-emphasizing their good things, emphasizing our good things, and de-emphasizing our bad things. Thus, users of exaggeration, concentrating on specific aspects and ignoring others, are able to structure reality in certain ways that are beneficial to them.

Politicians and media organizations frequently exaggerate and dramatize events, especially when it concerns opposing political powers or minority groups. They do not overlook the power of this rhetorical instrument to convey an ideological

message. It operates at all levels of the political hierarchy. With the help of these tropes, the media tend to sensationalize events. Heavy dramatization is not restricted to merely tabloids (see Bednarek, 2006: 194), it is present in most genres and styles.

Exaggeration can be considered a form of deception. It portrays the world the way it is not. It could be compared to a sort of magnifying lens. When people look through it, they are deluded, as what they see is only the modified reality. At the same time, as not everything is hyperbole, by identifying where the lens is applied you can also understand what is of importance to those who try to misrepresent the reality.

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(!) *The author/authors declared that all processes of this study are in accordance with research and publication ethics, and comply with ethical rules and principles of scientific citation. Otherwise, The Journal of Political Psychology is not responsible.*