

## *Tanulmány*

George Boakye-Yiadom

**He is still not Rising:**

### **The Metaphorical Conceptualisation of the State of the Ghanaian Economy in Select Cartoons**

#### **Abstract**

This study explores the visual representation of the state of the Ghanaian economy through political cartoons. The media continue to rely on political cartoons for their success in getting their messages across. Six political cartoons related to the Ghanaian economy are purposely downloaded and qualitatively examined. The data for this study are downloaded from the Facebook and Twitter pages of 3 News' cartoonist, "Tilapia". Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and Forceville's multimodal metaphor theory form the theoretical framework of this study. In the analysis, attention is paid to the visual and verbal components embedded in the cartoons. These include: the setting, participants or characters depicted, projection of elements, and colour effects. The identified features are cross-mapped from the source domain to the target domain. The analysis and the findings reveal that the economy of Ghana is personified. The identified attributes are manifested as: the economy as a sick person, the economy in a sick bed, the economy in ICU, and the resurrected economy. Again, the cartoonist relies heavily on health scenarios because a patient recuperating is always equated to a reviving economy or a worsening patient is equated to an ailing economy. The analysis has shown how complex phenomena like economic difficulties can be represented in a visual and satirical manner. The findings again confirm the universal way of metaphorising economic challenges as the findings synchronise with that of earlier scholars like Bounegru and Forceville (2011).

*Keywords:* conceptual metaphor theory, multimodal metaphor theory, Ghanaian economy, political cartoons, visual communication

## **1 Introduction**

Since economics developed as a scientific discipline, its concepts and theories have become abstract and complex in the minds of non-economists, making them difficult to understand. The discourse around economics is perceived as requiring the use of intellect, logical thinking, and careful reasoning. Economists and journalists around the world often rely on metaphorical expressions to convey their messages because of the ambiguities characterising economics. According to McCloskey (1986: 502), Henderson (1994), and Smith (1995: 45), metaphor is now widely recognised as an inseparable part of all discourses, including economic and business discourses. Apart from the use of language in reporting on economic issues, journalists, as the fourth estate of the realm, see cartoons as a haven for the expression of their thoughts, especially when it comes to the economy. Editorial cartoonists rely heavily on metaphorical concepts to

present the state of affairs in relation to the economy. Political cartoons as a genre of visual communication have become a powerful tool in the dissemination of news. As a result, political cartoonists and their works are increasingly gaining recognition in the linguistic study. Cartoons are multimodal, consisting of the representation of verbal expressions as well as non-verbal pictorial images, mostly satirical, to convey a particular message (Kwon 2019: 12). The issues that cartoonists usually report on range from political, economic, social to religious and trendy topics. Because of the political overtones of the present research, it focuses on El Refaie's (2009: 184) definition of political cartooning: "an illustration, usually in one panel, published in the editorial or commentary pages of newspapers, which can refer to current political developments or well-known figures, but which is designed to take positions or present specific viewpoints".

However, cartoonists do not live in isolation, they present their messages on current events and trending topics. Silaški and Đurović (2019: 3) mention that the interpretation of political cartoons by readers and viewers should be rooted in their physical experience, cultural environment, and prior knowledge of the social and political situation. The cartoonists make use of the power of visual representation and metaphor as an arsenal to transform abstract ideas into concrete illustrations that can be easily grasped by the audience. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 5), the proponents of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which underpins this study, believe that a conceptual metaphor is understanding one domain of experience (that is typically abstract) in terms of another (that is typically concrete). That is, the abstraction that marks economic discourse is usually conceptualised through metaphor. In the time of Aristotle, who explains metaphor from a linguistic point of view, to Lakoff and Johnson, who study metaphor from a cognitive or conceptual point of view, there have been countless studies on metaphor in different fields. Business and finance is one area that has received much scholarly attention. This paper examines the various manifestations of the Ghanaian economy through political cartoons, to identify how the cartoonist conceptualises economy. That is, the purpose of this study is to examine how the cartoonist has conceptualised and presented the state of the economy through his artwork. Generally, the study seeks to address two research questions;

1. How is the state of the Ghanaian economy conceptualised by the cartoonist?
2. How do metaphor and metonymy interact in the conceptualisation of the Ghanaian economy?

## 2 Theoretical framework and literature review

Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and multimodal metaphor theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Forceville (1994) respectively form the theoretical basis of this paper. According to the advocates of CMT, the essence of metaphor is understanding one entity in terms of another (1980: 5). Lakoff and Johnson argue that our ordinary conceptual system of how we think and act is metaphorical. It can therefore manifest itself in forms other than language. Lakoff (1997: 2) adds to the discussion that metaphors permeate everyday life – not only language but also thought and action. Gibbs (2008: 5) also opines that people can conceptualise the world and their activities through metaphors which is an essential part of human thought.

A conceptual metaphor consists of two domains: the source and the target domain. The source is the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical entities to understand the target. Usually, source domains are perceived as concrete and familiar physical entities. Tilley (1992: 2)

states that “the target domains, which are abstracted, often belong to the internal, mental and emotional world, or to unseen and unknown domains of the physical world”. A more abstract domain (concept) is constructed through a more physical domain, either through long-term memory or as a result of a historical-cultural process.

According to proponents of conceptual metaphor theory, a metaphor is believed to be part of our everyday conversation and can manifest itself in other forms of tropes apart from language (Lakoff 1993: 210). In line of this, Forceville identified a shortcoming in the CMT in that its proponent did not leave any room for the non-verbal manifestations of the metaphor. In order to account for the non-verbal manifestations of metaphor, he proposes a multimodal metaphor theory. With this theory, Forceville (2009: 24) defines multimodal metaphors in the following terms: “Metaphors whose target and source are rendered in two different modes/modalities [...] and in many cases the verbal is one of these”. According to Koller (2009: 49), a “pictorial or multimodal metaphor requires the recipient of the text to construct a meaningful reading by processing verbal and visual elements together”. Forceville (1996: 201) suggests that three questions should be answered when identifying and interpreting pictorial metaphors: (i) what are the two terms (domains) of the metaphor, (ii) what is the primary subject (or the target domain) and what is the secondary subject (source domain) and (iii) which features of the secondary subject (or the source domain) must be projected upon the primary subject (or target domain)? Since the emergence of the theory of multimodal metaphor, a number of scholars have used it in their studies to determine its effectiveness in comparison to its verbal counterpart, the theory of conceptual metaphor. To put the study into perspective, a few studies that are relevant to the current work have been selected for review.

Bounegru and Forceville (2011) analyse metaphors in editorial cartoons depicting the 2008 global financial crisis. They identified the following source domains or frames: the economy as a natural catastrophe, the bank bailout and the health frame among others. They conclude that the media’s use of these frames play a crucial role in shaping the public perception and understanding of the crisis. Their study is worth mentioning because it provides a general view of how to analyse political cartoons in terms of conceptual metaphors considering both their verbal and visual components. In a similar vein, Dălălu (2014) examines the metaphors used in editorial cartoons to represent the euro crisis. The results of the study show that the use of certain cognitive devices highlight the actual state of the euro. For example, the use of the disease domain suggests the critical nature of the euro crisis, which requires the urgent attention of a doctor. One thing that should be emphasised is that the personification of the euro gives the crisis a human status, which is consistent with my findings. On the same subject of the euro crisis, Arrese (2015) analyses the Spanish press’ use of economic metaphors in its coverage of the euro crisis. As part of her findings, economists continue to rely on primary metaphors to present financial information. Primary metaphors are “derived directly from experiential correlations in everyday experience and judgement with sensorimotor experience which are universally accepted and interpreted from our bodily and physical orientation” (Lakoff & Johnson 1999: 49). The universality of primary metaphors may be an aid to viewers’ appreciation and understanding of the messages behind the cartoons.

Similarly, Padilla (2019) investigates the conceptualisation of the Greek debt crisis through the use of political cartoons. In order to convey their messages about the Greek debt crisis to his readers, the cartoonists use the following techniques: colours, fonts, and kinesics, among others. The cartoonist highlights the role of political cartoons as a genre that has the power to influence

audiences and entertain as well. The researcher concludes that the cartoonist uses these tools to express thoughts and views in covert and persuasive ways. His study highlights the effectiveness of political cartoons.

Charteris-Black and Ennis (2001) examine metaphors in English and Spanish financial reports following the 1997 crash. The results of the study show that the economy as an organism metaphor is used predominantly in financial reports. The researchers conclude that giving human attributes to the economy helps with the understanding of the economic situation at that time. Their conclusion confirms Lakoff and Johnson's (1980: 190) assertion that personification is the most ubiquitous type of metaphor, arguing that the representation of something as abstract as inflation in human terms has an explanatory power of a kind that is meaningful to most people. In 2014, on the same topic, Cardini explores the metaphorical representations of the financial crisis in English magazines. The results of the study indicate the financial crisis is predominately conceptualised as something negative about the human body or a damaged object.

Durović and Silaški (2017) focus on the multimodal analysis of the front covers of the Economist magazine at the time when the financial turmoil in the Eurozone flared up in late 2009. The findings show that the interplay of metaphors, metonymies and image schemas helps to convey the eurozone crisis to the public and reinforces its negative character. The interrelationship of these pictorial and multimodal cognitive tools points to their power and their ability to convey the desired messages to the target audience, which stems from the strong emotional impact of this interrelationship. Their study and this current one are related as both seek to understand the metaphorical representation of financial issues in cartoons. Likewise, Van-Hecke (2017) looks at 400 political cartoons from 12 European countries against the backdrop of the euro crisis, attempting to identify the winners and losers of the crisis. For the cartoonists to achieve their goals, they use metaphors and symbols as something more provocative than traditional media to get their message across. The analysis of the select cartoons shows that the crisis is to be understood as a crisis of solidarity and responsibility, with solidarity appearing as the most dominant frame. The researcher concludes by highlighting the role that political cartoons play in society, oversimplifying a very complex issue of this nature, offering a black-and-white account that resonates with citizens in the countries involved in the study.

Kövecses (2002: 16) and Boers (1999: 49) mention that people tend to metaphorise problems, tensions or generally difficult challenges. It is obvious that personification and health metaphors are used to conceptualise most economic and political problems. I summarise the review with a statement by El Refaie (2003: 84) that the frequent use of metaphor for the representation of a complex phenomenon, in this case, the economic crisis, can be explained by the ability of metaphor to represent the unknown, the unsolved or the problematic in terms of something more familiar and more easily imaginable. From the papers reviewed, there seems to be a recurring pattern of source domains used by researchers to frame economic issues. Namely, the economy as a sick person, the economy as a living organism, a battlefield, forces of nature, among others. In this current study, I would like to examine a Ghanaian cartoonist's metaphorical conceptualisation of the economic situation in Ghana.

### 3 Data collection and methodology

A critical qualitative approach is used in this study. I adopted the qualitative method because it is essential in identifying and describing the different aspects of the research (such as visual metaphors, participants, colour effects, posture, font size and verbal language) in order to arrive at the research findings. The methodological choice of the present paper relies on Kumar's definition of "qualitative research as it primarily describes a situation, natural phenomena, problem or actual enumeration of events, behaviours and conditions without quantifying or influencing them" (2018: 32).

The present study relies on a targeted selection of six political cartoons by a 3 News cartoonist, under the pseudonym "Tilapia", published from August 2016 to December 2022. This period has been carefully chosen for scrutiny since the cartoonist has been acknowledged to be working with *Media General* – a top-flight private media company in Ghana, of which TV 3 and 3 News are subsidiaries. The criteria I adopted in selecting the particular cartoons for analysis were based on the following reasons: (i) the cartoon must contain visual and/or verbal features and elements that portray and reflect the economy in difficulties, and (ii) the characters depicted by the cartoonist should resemble people in whose care the economy has been entrusted.

The cartoons were downloaded from the Facebook and Twitter pages of Tilapia. A lot of cartoons were downloaded, but based on the objectives set for this study, six of them were especially relevant to the study. The choice of the 3 News *Tilapia* is particularly significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, the cartoonist has consistently remained neutral in presenting national issues devoid of partisan interest which has earned him a lot of credibility from Ghanaians. Secondly, he has a great followership – thus he can reach a wider audience making the issues he presents get the mileage they deserve. Also, the genuineness of the cartoonist's presentation of national issues has earned him a lot of laurels in Ghana as the best political cartoonist.

In general, the analysis of the data involves the following steps: (i) identifying the characters and their contribution to the message the cartoonist wants to convey to his audience, (ii) identifying the conceptual metaphor behind each cartoon, and listing the cross-domain mappings from the source to the target, (iii) describing the visual components within the cartoons selected that contribute to the cartoonist's message, (iv) explaining the verbal components that accompany the cartoons, and how they contribute to the message being put out by the cartoonist. The analysis includes explaining the preference for certain colours and the projection of the font sizes of certain characters. All this helps to reveal the hidden meanings of the cartoons.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In order not to be in breach of research ethics and intellectual property laws, permission was sought from the cartoonist before the use of the cartoons.

## 4 Analysis and presentation of the data

### 4.1

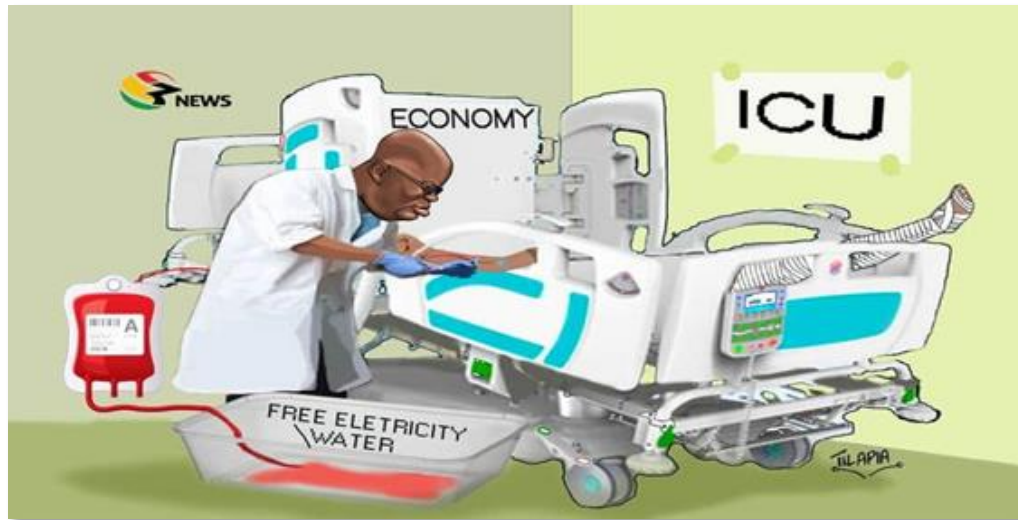


Figure 1. Treating a sick person<sup>2</sup>

The setting of the cartoon in Figure 1 evokes a hospital scenario, and to help readers and viewers understand the current economic situation in Ghana, the cartoonist uses a health metaphor. The conceptual metaphor is cued visually and verbally as **treating the economy of Ghana is treating a sick person**.

| Source domain     | Mapping | Target domain                                            |
|-------------------|---------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| The sick person   | →       | The economy of Ghana                                     |
| The doctors       | →       | President Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo                   |
| Blood transfusion | →       | means to ensure the revival leg of the patient (economy) |

Table 1. The cross-domain mappings from the source and target of Figure 1

<sup>2</sup> (27<sup>th</sup> July 2020)  
<https://www.facebook.com/TilapiaCartoons/photos/pb.100063686824366.-2207520000/312969310059326/?type=3>

George Boakye-Yiadom:

*He is still not Rising:*

*The Metaphorical Conceptualisation of the State of the Ghanaian Economy in Select Cartoons*

*Argumentum 19 (2023), 267–286*

*Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó*

DOI: 10.34103/ARGUMENTUM/2023/13

The cartoonist uses familiar and concrete entities for readers and viewers to appreciate the critical nature of the Ghanaian economy. The viewers' appreciation comes from the use of the hospital scene, which is a universal phenomenon. In applying the multimodal metaphor theory to cartoons, the roles assigned to the characters or participants enhance the understanding of the cartoonist's message. As a result, the cartoonist conceptualises the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa, as a doctor attending to a sick person. The sick person is the economy of Ghana. The cartoonist's conceptualisation of the economy exploits the human status of being sick, requiring the services of a doctor to treat the patient's ailment.

The patient (economy) on the hospital bed is an indication that the person is actually sick. The verbal component of the cartoon, (*ICU*), reinforces the hospital domain, making the intended message easy to understand. It is well known that any admission of a person to the intensive care unit (ICU) of a hospital is an indication of the severity of the illness. It is also worth noting that any person who is admitted to an intensive care unit is at a life-or-death point and is in need of a doctor's immediate attention. The cartoonist's deliberate use of the intensive care unit is worth highlighting, as it contributes to the message about the critical condition of the economy. The essence of this feature is to draw readers' and viewers' attention to the role ICU plays in the message the cartoonist wants to convey.

The cartoonist emphasises the doctor's physical resemblance to President Nana Addo Dankwa as he works diligently to ensure the patient (the economy) survives. The emphasis is on the positive value and impact of the doctor's immense role in the patient's treatment. The use of the presidency by the cartoonist in this case suggests that the president is the only one with the antidote to the illness of the patient (the Ghanaian economy). This is evident in the doctor's seriousness and demeanour.

The doctor (President Nana Addo Dankwa) gives the patient (Ghanaian economy) a blood transfusion to save his life. The blood transfusion depicted by the cartoonist suggests that the patient (the economy) lacks the basic necessities for survival. The doctor's initiative is thus to ensure the patient's survival. The act of transfusing blood is described often as one of the most important and potentially life-saving courses of action taken by medical professionals in carrying out their duty of saving lives.

To get his message across about the struggling economy, the cartoonist uses the blood transfusion exercise strategically and effectively. It is noteworthy that while the conceptualised doctor (President Nana Addo Dankwa) works assiduously to ensure the patient's survival, the blood that is supposed to save the patient's life is instead drained into a container marked *free electricity/water*. During the COVID-19 shutdown, President Nana Addo Dankwa (doctor) provided free electricity and water for three months to alleviate the hardship of the citizens. The cartoonist's message is that these supportive interventions have contributed to the deterioration of the patient's condition, as seen in the transfusion process where the blood drains into the free electricity and water container.

The cartoonist's use of metonymy is a feature worth considering. According to Kövecses & Radden (1998: 38), "metonymy is a conceptual link between two entities in which one entity is used to represent another entity". The cartoonist uses a part-whole metonymy where the human leg is used to represent the whole person, perhaps the role that legs play in human life, thus, moving from one place to another.

## 4.2

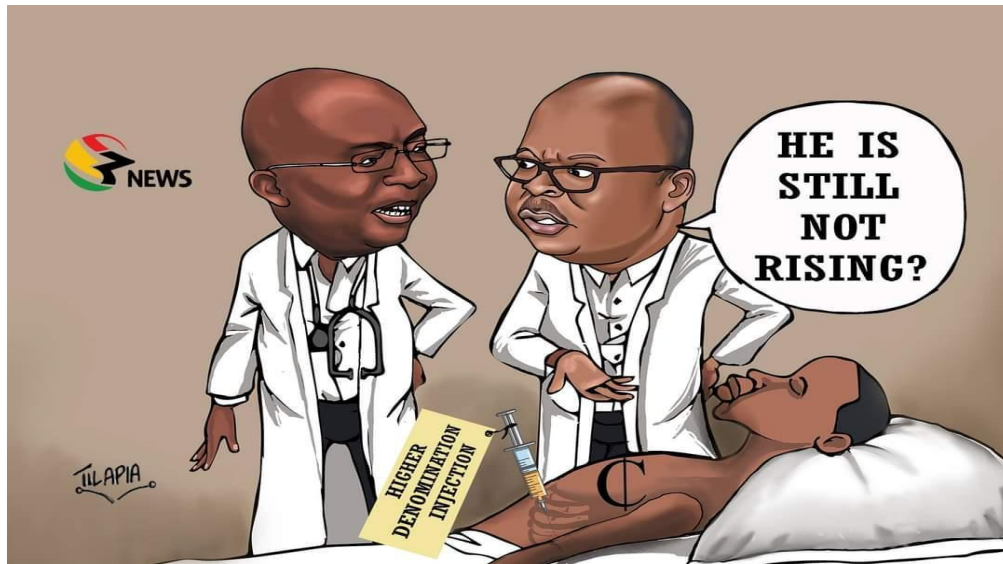


Figure 2. Injecting a sick person<sup>3</sup>

In Figure 2, the conceptual metaphor injecting the Ghanaian economy is injecting a sick person is pictorially cued and verbalised.

The cross-domain- mappings from the source to the target of figure 2:

| Source domain       | Mapping | Target domain                                       |
|---------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| The medical doctors | →       | Dr Mahamudu Bawumia and Dr Ernest Addison           |
| The sick person     | →       | Ghanaian currency/economy                           |
| Syringe needle      | →       | measures to ensure that the survival of the economy |

Table 2. The cross-domain- mappings from the source to the target of figure 2

<sup>3</sup> (10<sup>th</sup> December 2019)  
<https://www.facebook.com/TilapiaCartoons/photos/pb.100063686824366.-2207520000/161451705211088/?type=3>



To convey his message about the state of Ghana's economy, the cartoonist uses another health metaphor. The hospital scenario is reinforced by certain elements used by the cartoonist, such as a syringe, a stethoscope, a hospital bed and a doctor's coat. The use of these elements greatly supports the hospital frame. In depicting the current state of the economy, the cartoonist uses personification as a form of metaphor. The cartoonist therefore conceptualises the Ghanaian economy as a sick person. This attribution is metonymically superimposed on the upper part by the symbol of the Ghanaian currency (cedi). It is seen from the person lying on the bed. It is not surprising to see the personified economy on a sickbed, for human beings are not immune to disease. Since the economy is sick, the services of the doctors (Ghana's Vice President and the Governor of the Bank of Ghana) are urgently needed to attend to the patient.

In the cartoon under consideration, the cartoonist highlights two characters who are conceptualised as doctors. The highlighting of the characters is a reminder of the role of size in multimodal metaphor analysis. The upright position of the doctors indicates their roles and powers they have in treating the patient (Ghanaian economy). The emaciated body of the patient indicates the poor state of the Ghanaian economy, which urgently needs the attention of the health professionals (financial advisors). Their attire, which is predominantly medical, reflects this recognition.

Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, the Vice President, doubles as the head of the government's economic management team, while Dr Ernest Addison heads the Bank of Ghana, an institution mandated to regulate, supervise and direct the banking and credit systems to ensure the smooth operation of the banking system. The two conceptualised doctors are seen attending to the patient (Ghana's economy). From the cartoon under review, it can be inferred that the doctors are using all their medical acumen to ensure the patient's recovery (economy).

In order to bring the patient back to life, the doctors inject the patient (Ghanaian economy), as it is medically believed that an injection is more effective than an oral administration. The verbal inscription on the syringe needle reads *higher denomination injection*. The doctors believe that this will act as an antidote to the patient's illness.

In the above cartoon, the cartoonist adopts another conceptual element to present his message, namely metonymy. The cartoonist uses a part-whole metonymy involving the symbol of the Ghanaian currency, the cedi, to represent the Ghanaian economy. This recognition can be seen in the imprint on the top of the personified economy.

Forceville (1996: 108) advocating multimodal metaphor theory, argues that this type of metaphor is represented in two different modes: the verbal and visual. Therefore, the verbal aspect of the cartoon must also be taken into account in its application. The speech balloon attributed to the participants is an integral part of the cartoon that helps to understand the message conveyed by the cartoonist. The participants' speech bubble reads *He's still not rising up?* In the speech bubble, the doctors are stunned by the patient's condition despite the medication (injection). The doctors are astonished because they are very optimistic about the solutions they have managed to implement. Their hope for the resuscitation of the patient (the Ghanaian economy) is in the balance, hence their rhetorical question. A rhetorical question is a statement that is structured as a question in order to emphasise an idea, and draws attention to something, or stimulates discussion or reflection about something. With this in mind, the cartoonist uses it deliberately to achieve his goal of drawing readers' and viewers' attention to the doctors' frustration.

## 4.3

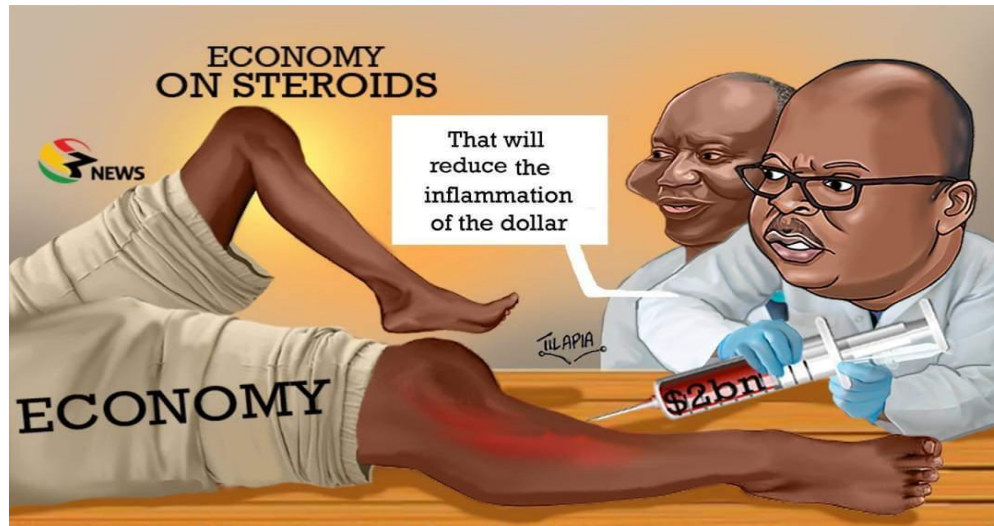


Figure 3. Injecting a bloated leg<sup>4</sup>

In Figure 3, the cartoonist takes on a familiar concept of a scenario in a hospital. The health metaphor is constructed through the cartoon's depiction of health equipment. This includes a syringe, gloves and a doctors' scrub. The equipment mentioned above helps to construct the health metaphor and to understand the cartoonist's message. The conceptual metaphor is visually construed and verbally represented as **treating the Ghanaian economy is treating a sick person**.

| Source domain            | Mapping | Target domain                                             |
|--------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| The doctors              | →       | Hon. Ken Ofori Atta and Dr Ernest Addison                 |
| Sick person/swollen leg  | →       | Ghanaian economy                                          |
| Liquid in syringe needle | →       | Solution for the patient /swollen to (economy) get better |

Table 3. The cross-domain mapping from the source to the target of Figure 3

<sup>4</sup> (24th of August 2022)  
<https://www.facebook.com/TilapiaCartoons/photos/pb.100063686824366.-2207520000/835889941100591/?type=3>

Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 4) believe that metaphor is a matter of thought or a conceptual phenomenon and therefore its analysis should be in that direction. In terms of the participants depicted in Figure 3, the cartoonist uses three people, two of whom are visibly more prominent than the third one. Thus, the cartoonist conceptualises the Governor of the Bank of Ghana, Dr Ernest Addison, and Honourable Ken Ofori Atta, the Minister of Finance, as doctors attending to a sick person (Ghana's economy). The cartoonist's conceptualisation of the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank of Ghana as health practitioners is significant because they are responsible for Ghana's economic and financial stability as this is their core mandate.

Similarly, the cartoonist conceptualises the Ghanaian economy as a sick person in need of a doctor's help. The swollen leg of the patient (the economy) is indicative of the bloated economy that needs experts to salvage the situation. The remedy for the swollen leg is an injection. In the cartoon, the doctors have administered steroids, an anti-inflammatory drug to treat such conditions.

The doctors at hand believe that the antidote for the swollen leg is an injection with a syringe needle marked *2 billion dollars*. The red liquid in the syringe represents blood metonymically symbolising life, so the doctors are giving life to the patient (Ghana's economy).

Again, the cartoonist uses a metaphor (personification) based on metonymy to convey his message, that is, a part-for-whole metonymy. According to Littlemore (2015: 4) "metonymy is a process that allows us to use a well-understood aspect of something to stand for the thing as a whole". In this sense, the cartoonist's use of legs to represent a human being is metonymic. The legs are responsible for the movement of the human body. This is why the cartoonist uses this part prominently to convey his message. The Ghanaian economy is conceptualised as a sick person, based on the verbal inscription engraved on the patient's leg. The cartoonist, therefore, uses the same idea to depict the current state of the Ghanaian economy as a sick person who needs a doctor to save his life.

Forceville, a major proponent of multimodal metaphor theory, argues that when applying his theory to any genre, attention should be paid to the verbal component of the data. The verbal component (the speech bubble) helps readers to understand the cartoonist's message. The speech bubble in the cartoon reads *this will reduce the inflammation of the dollar*. This speech complements the doctors' injection, which, if successful, will lead to the stabilisation of the patient's swollen leg (the economy).

## 4.4



Figure 4. Resurrecting a dead person<sup>5</sup>

In Figure 4, the conceptual metaphor **raising a dead economy is raising a dead person** is visually and verbalised cued.

| Source domain       | Mapping | Target domain                         |
|---------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| Jesus Christ        | →       | President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo |
| Resurrected Lazarus | →       | resurrected economy                   |

Table 4. The cross-domain mapping from the source to the target of Figure 4

The cartoonist uses here a religious concept or a biblical allusion to present his message – namely, the story of Lazarus to help readers and viewers artistically appreciate and understand the message about the economic situation in Ghana.

At the height of the COVID-19 outbreak, the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo, announced a lockdown of the major cities in order to contain the spread of the virus. During this

<sup>5</sup> (22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020)  
<https://www.facebook.com/TilapiaCartoons/photos/pb.100063686824366.-2207520000/243838833639041/?type=3>

time, economic and business activities were suspended, which obviously had a negative impact on the economy.

The personification of the economy gives it a human status, and death is part of the human cycle. Therefore, as the cartoon suggests, it is right to conclude that the economy was dead during the lockdown. This attribution can be seen in the cartoon where a person comes out of a tomb dressed in white linen. In Jewish culture, a corpse is wrapped in white linen before being buried in the grave. An important feature that confirms the death of the economy is the tomb because in most cultures a tomb metonymically symbolises death, that is, a typical place where the dead are buried.

The cartoonist also represents the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo, as Jesus Christ by comparing His role in the story of Lazarus, where he commanded Lazarus to rise from the tomb, to President Akufo Addo commanding the dead economy to rise. Lifting the ban therefore means resurrecting the dead economy from the tomb. The red sash around the President is an interesting confirmation of the conceptualisation of President Akufo Addo as Jesus Christ. Jewish religious leaders are customarily required to wear a sash around their necks. The cartoonist uses this concept to complement the message he wants to convey to his readers. The message is that the economy loses strength during the lockdown, which leads to its death, and that lifting the lockdown is a means of reviving or resuscitating the dead economy.

There is another element in the cartoon worth noting, which acts as a kind of warning or caution to the other characters used in the cartoon. Background knowledge is essential to understanding the message behind this cartoon. Although the economy is coming back to life and the citizens are going about their daily activities, they continue to observe the COVID-19 protocols. This is indicated by one of the characters wearing a mask and his' balloon speech that reads *still observe social distancing!*

## 4.5

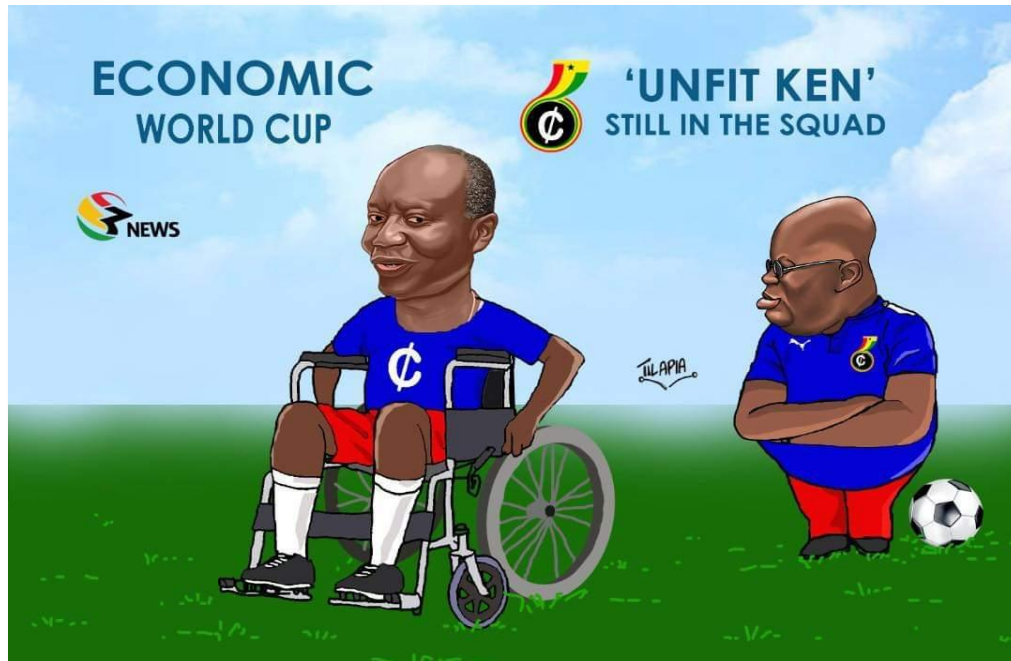


Figure 5. Injured player selected for 2022 World Cup<sup>6</sup>

The conceptual metaphor behind the cartoon in Figure 5 is pictorially construed and verbalised as **an unfit person managing the Ghanaian economy is selecting unfit players for the 2022 world cup**.

| Source domain  | Mapping | Target domain                              |
|----------------|---------|--------------------------------------------|
| Football Coach | →       | President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo      |
| Injured player | →       | Finance Minister Honourable Ken Ofori Atta |

Table 5. The conceptual mapping from the source domain to the target domain of Figure 5

The cartoonist's portrayal of Ghana's economic situation is based here on a sporting metaphor, with reference to the season in which the cartoon is published. Ghana is one of the countries that have qualified for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Federation Internationale de Football Association requires all participating countries to submit their 26-man squad weeks before the

<sup>6</sup> (11 November 2022)  
<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=542235367909353&set=pb.100063686824366.-2207520000&type=3>

*George Boakye-Yiadom:*

*He is still not Rising:*

*The Metaphorical Conceptualisation of the State of the Ghanaian Economy in Select Cartoons*

*Argumentum 19 (2023), 267–286*

*Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó*

*DOI: 10.34103/ARGUMENTUM/2023/13*

tournament begins. When Ghana coach Otto Addo and Ghana Football Association (GFA) officials released the list of players for the Mundial, Ghanaian sports journalists, football pundits, football enthusiasts and most Ghanaians accused the coach of choosing unfit, injured and underperforming players at the expense of fit and better players. These enthusiasts accused the coach of nepotism and favouritism as factors influencing his selection. In depicting Ghana's economic situation, the cartoonist relies on the above scenario to get his message across, thus, conceptualising the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo, as the head coach responsible for inviting quality and fit players (cabinet ministers) to the national team. Similarly, Ghana's constitution gives the president sole responsibility for appointing ministers and reshuffling his appointees or sacking those who are underperforming.

For some time now, Ghanaians have been complaining loudly to President Nana Addo Dankwa to change the Finance Minister for a new person with new ideas and policies because the current one has no idea of how to manage the economy and has led the country into the abyss. Despite incessant complaints from the majority of Ghanaians, President Nana Addo trusted the Finance Minister and kept him at post. To help citizens understand the current state of the economy, the cartoonist depicts the Minister of Finance, Honourable Ken Ofori Atta, as an injured footballer in a wheelchair. Despite his injury, the coach, President Nana Addo Dankwa, has kept him on the team. Ghanaians accuse the president of favouritism and nepotism, leading him to trust the finance minister even though he is underperforming.

The cartoonist compares the Ghana Black Stars coach, who invited unfit and underperforming players to the Qatar Mundial, to President Akuffo Addo's faith in the finance minister despite Ghanaians' complaints about his mismanagement of the economy.

The cartoonist uses metonymy as a conceptual component in the above cartoon, as evidenced by the person in the wheelchair with the Ghanaian currency symbol (cedi) embossed on his clothing. The use of the Ghanaian currency symbol is metonymic because it largely represents the economy. Furthermore, the cartoonist's use of a wheelchair suggests the lameness of the patient (the economy), who is not fit for the purpose for which he has been invited. With any multimodal instantiation of metaphors, all meaning-making devices should be taken into account in the analysis, and with the cartoon under review, all meaning-making devices are brought into play to facilitate understanding of the cartoonist's message. The cartoonist changes the emblem in the Ghana Football Association (GFA) logo to the Ghanaian currency (Cedi), indicating that the cartoonist has footballised the economy to convey his message. This also evokes the sports metaphor.

Colours are also seen as an important means of meaning making when it comes to cartoons as a genre of discourse. In the above cartoon, the cartoonist uses certain colours to decorate the characters (coach and player); these colours are blue, red and white, which form the flag of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and metonymically represents the party in power at the time the cartoon was published. Therefore, the cartoonist deliberately uses these colours to decorate the characters because colours help to understand the message the cartoonist wants to convey that these characters are responsible for the country's economic problems.



## 4.6



Figure 6. Recuperating a sick person<sup>7</sup>

The conceptual metaphor is visually formulated and verbalised as **resurrecting the Ghanaian cedi (economy) is reviving a sick person**.

| Source domain     | Mapping | Target domain                                  |
|-------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------|
| Sick person       | →       | Ghanaian currency/cedi/economy                 |
| Medical doctors   | →       | Finance minister Honourable Ken Ofori Atta     |
| Blood transfusion | →       | means to revive the sick person                |
| Oxygen mask       | →       | injecting of the IMF money to ease the economy |

Table 6. Cross-domain mapping from the source to the target of Figure 6

In the cartoon Figure 6, the cartoonist uses another scenario in a hospital to convey his message about the current economic situation in Ghana. The setting is an intensive care unit (ICU) or emergency ward of the hospital. The classification of the setting as an ICU or an A&E unit is evident from Figure 6, judging by elements within the cartoon such as the electrocardiogram

<sup>7</sup> (16<sup>th</sup> December, 2022)  
<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=573328644800025&set=pb.100063686824366.-2207520000&type=3>



(ECG). The use of this hospital unit indicates the seriousness of the patient's illness. The cartoonist uses a metonymically motivated metaphor to convey his message, which is the personification of the economy. Personifying the economy gives it a human status and characteristics. The metaphor is motivated metonymically because the cedi symbol has been superimposed on the sick person. It is an interaction of metonymy and metaphor because the Ghanaian cedi is used to represent the Ghanaian economy. Now that the person (economy) is sick, a doctor's help is needed to save the sick person.

The cartoonist conceptualises the Finance Minister, Honourable Ken Ofori Atta, as a doctor attending to the patient. This conceptualisation is essential to the message the cartoonist wants to convey as Honourable Ken Ofori Atta leads the economic management team to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to seek a loan facility.

Also, the size of the visual elements is one of the key devices that help readers to understand the cartoonist's message. The physique (thin and sickly) of the person (economy) on the sickbed represents the actual state of the economy, lacking the bare necessities for proper growth. In order to cure the patient, the doctor (finance minister) is seen giving a blood transfusion, which is considered effective. The cartoonist, knowing the importance of blood transfusion, uses it to convey his message that the sick person needs a life-saving procedure, thus, blood transfusion, as depicted in the data under review. Another step is to administer an oxygen mask by the doctor (finance minister). The essence of the cartoonist's use of an oxygen mask is to provide additional oxygen to the suffocating person. It is therefore appropriate for the clinician to use supplementary oxygen with the hope of relieving the patient's respiratory distress. The IMF loan comes as a relief to the patient (the Ghanaian economy). The cartoonist shows the doctor transfusing blood and giving oxygen to the patient as the IMF pumps a \$3 billion loan into the Ghanaian economy.

A prominent feature of the above cartoon worth considering is the use of screens by medical professionals. This equipment is used by clinicians to monitor physiological parameters or specific patient conditions. It can also display data and record information about the patient's recovery progress. The cartoonist uses the same principle, showing the recovery of the patient (the Ghanaian economy) on the monitor. There is an inscription showing the recovery process of the patient (the economy) on the monitor.

The monitor shows that one dollar is equal to 10 cedis, and then changes from 10 to 9 cedis. The inscription is an indication of the cedi's continuing resurgence against its main competitor, the dollar. The zigzag graph on the screen visually represents the instability and constant changes of the cedi, thus, the fluctuation of the cedi.

The analysis is extended to include the verbal components (speech balloon) appearing in the cartoon, since they help to understand the cartoonist's message, as they are assumed to be the words of the characters depicted in the scene. The speech bubble attributed to the doctor (the finance minister) says "Welcome back!", indicating that the dead person (the economy) or the patient who was unconscious has now gained strength and has risen from the unconsciousness. Meanwhile, the speech bubble attributed to the patient (the economy) says, *Has the price of kenkey<sup>8</sup> drop? I need some mashed kenkey, please.* This statement is a confirmation that the patient was indeed dead or unconscious and is on the road to recovery. Here the cartoonist uses a source-in-target metonymy, in which the source (kenkey) is included in the target food.

---

<sup>8</sup> "Kenkey" is a maize-based staple food consumed by the majority of Ghanaians. It is relatively affordable and can be eaten at any time of the day.

## 6 Conclusion

Based on the cartoons selected, the results of the discussion show that the cartoonist relies heavily on health metaphors to portray the economic situation in Ghana. The reliance on the use of health metaphors to conceptualise economic situations is significant because health metaphors do not appear to be culturally specific or supported by cultural beliefs, but are familiar and potentially universal to most people. The universality of health concepts can be an aid to readers' and viewers' appreciation and understanding of the message behind these cartoons. It is noted that in the discussion of economic challenges, a recovering patient is always identified with a recovering economy or a deteriorating patient with an ailing economy. The cartoonist, therefore, uses the following prominent health-related concepts to depict and conceptualise the state of the Ghanaian economy: economy in the ICU, economy on the steroid, economy in the emergency unit, economy revival, and economy in the wheelchair. These concepts evoke the health frame, suggesting that solutions to economic challenges will require medical responses as well as medical treatments for disease. The cartoonist's predominant use of personification as a form of metaphor is evident in all of the select cartoons. The personification of the economy giving it a human touch helps viewers and readers to better appreciate and understand the cartoonist's message about the state of the economy. This confirms Kövecses' (2008) assertion that the dominant conceptual metaphor in the language of the market economy is that of the human body. Boers (2003) also argues that the constant use of the personification of the economy is due to the fact that the bodily experience of human beings is more or less the same all over the world. In this sense, the cartoonist's use of the human leg, which is responsible for movement, as a metonymic representation of the whole person is recurrent. Furthermore, in the select cartoons analysed, we have observed that the cartoonist uses metonymy as a cognitive device since its interaction with metaphor has a profound effect on people's reasoning about the state of the economy. The cartoonist's deliberate use of metaphor and metonymy serves as a means of persuasion, criticism, irony and satire. The cartoonist also depicts the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, the Vice-President, Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, the Governor of the Bank of Ghana, Dr Ernest Addison, and the Minister of Finance, Honourable Ken Ofori Atta, as doctors attending to the sick economy, presumably because it is their constitutional mandate to look after the welfare of the economy. Finally, the analysis of the cartoons confirms what some researchers such as Bounegru and Forceville (2011), Kövecses (2002) and Boers (1999) have already suggested about the ability of metaphors to conceptualise complex phenomena such as the economy, which is always characterised by abstraction.

## References

- Arrese, Á. (2015): Euro crisis metaphors in the Spanish press. *Communication and Society* 28(2), 19–38. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.28.2.sp.19-38>
- Boers, F. (1999): When a bodily source domain becomes prominent: The joy of counting metaphor in the socio-economic domain. In: Gibbs, R. W. & Steen, G. J. (eds.): *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 47–56.
- Boers, F. (2003): Applied linguistics perspectives on cross-cultural variation in conceptual metaphor. *Metaphor and Symbol* 18(4), 231–238. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327868MS1804\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327868MS1804_1)

- Bounegru, L. & Forceville, C. (2011): Metaphors in editorial cartoons representing the global financial crisis. *Visual Communication* 10(2), 209–229.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357211398446>
- Cardini, F.-E. (2014): Analysing English Metaphors of the Economic Crisis. *Lingue e Linguaggi* 11, 59–76. <https://doi.org/10.1285/i22390359v11p59>
- Charteris-Black, J. & Ennis, T. (2001): A comparative study of metaphor in Spanish and English financial reporting. *English for Specific Purposes* 20(3), 249–266.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(00\)00009-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(00)00009-0)
- Dălălaşu, D. (2014): The use of Pictorial and multimodal metaphors in editorial cartoons depicting the Euro crisis. *GIDNI* 7, 23–34.
- El Refaie, E. (2003): Understanding visual metaphors: The example of newspaper cartoons. *Visual Communication* 2(1), 75–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357203002001755>
- El Refaie, E. (2009): Multiliteracies: How readers interpret political cartoons. *Visual communication* 8 (2), 181–205. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357209102113>
- Forceville, C. J. (2009): Non-verbal and multimodal metaphor in a cognitivist framework: Agendas for research. In: Forceville, C. J. & Urios-Aparisi, E. (eds.): *Multimodal Metaphor*, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 19–42. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110215366>
- Forceville, C. J. (1994): Pictorial Metaphor in Advertisements. *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 9(1), 1–29. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms0901\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms0901_1)
- Forceville Charles (1996): *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising*. London: Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203272305>
- Gibbs, R. W., Jr. (ed.) (2008): *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511816802>
- Henderson, W. (1994): Metaphor and economics. In: Backhouse, R. (ed.): *New Directions in Economic Methodology*. London, New York: Routledge, 343–367.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203204085.ch16>
- Koller, V. (2009): Chapter 3. Brand images: Multimodal metaphor in corporate branding messages. In: Forceville, C. J. & Urios-Aparisi, E. (eds.): *Multimodal Metaphor*, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 45–72. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110215366.2.45>
- Kövecses, Z. & Radden, G. (1998): Metonymy: Developing a cognitive linguistic view. *Cognitive Linguistics* 9(1), 37–78. <https://doi.org/10.1515/cogl.1998.9.1.37>
- Kövecses, Z. (2002): *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0047404503254051>
- Kövecses, Z. (2002a): Cognitive-linguistic comments on metaphor identification. *Language and Literature* 11(1), 74–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/096394700201100107>
- Kövecses, Z. (2008): Conceptual metaphor theory: Some criticisms and alternative proposals. *Annual Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 6(1), 168–184. <https://doi.org/10.1075/arcl.6.08kov>
- Kumar, R. (2018): *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*. Los Angeles, London: SAGE.
- Kwon, I. (2019): Conceptual mappings in political cartoons: A comparative study of the case of nuclear crises in US–North Korean relations. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 143, 10–27.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.01.021>
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980): *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1999): *Review of Philosophy in the Flesh: The embodied mind and*

- its challenge to Western thought. *Computational Linguistics*, 25(4), 631–634.
- Lakoff, G. (1997): How unconscious metaphorical thought shapes dreams. In: Stein, D. J. (ed.): *Cognitive Science and the Unconscious*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 89–119.
- Littlemore, J. (2015): *Metonymy: Hidden shortcuts in language, thought and communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107338814>
- McCloskey, D. N. (1986): *The Rhetoric of Economics*. Brighton: Harvester Press. <https://doi.org/10.1080/003467687000000015>
- Padilla, X. A. (2019): Political cartoons on Greek debt crisis: A cognitive and pragmatic approach. *Linred: Lingüística en la Red* 16, 1–19.
- Silaški, N. & Đurović, T. (2017): Saving the euro—a multimodal analysis of metaphors depicting the Eurozone crisis. *Ibérica* (33) 125–146.
- Silaški, N. & Đurović, T. (2019): The journey metaphor in Brexit-related political cartoons. *Discourse, Context & Media* 31. 100318. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2019.100318>
- Smith, G. P. (1995): How high can a dead cat bounce? Metaphor and the Hong Kong Stock Market. *Hong Kong papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching* 18, 43–57.
- Tilley, C. Y. (1992): *Metaphor and material culture*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Van Hecke, M. (2017): Imag(in)ing the eurocrisis: a comparative analysis of political cartoons. *National Identities*, 19(1), 129–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2016.1199541>

George Boakye-Yiadom  
 University of Debrecen, Doctoral School of Linguistics  
 4032 Debrecen  
 Egyetem tér 1.  
 boakye-yiadom.george@arts.unideb.hu