

**Silva Bratož\***

*Faculty of Education*  
*University of Primorska, Slovenia*  
silva.bratoz@pef.upr.si

## PERCEPTIONS OF METAPHORS ACROSS CULTURES

### Abstract

The paper focuses on conceptual metaphors in contemporary managerial discourse from a cross-cultural perspective. It is based on the assumption that metaphors may provide valuable insights into how economic processes and participants involved in them are conceptualised and at the same time reflect aspects of cultures from which they emerge. The paper discusses the importance and role of various metaphors in managerial discourse and looks at two countries, Slovenia and Turkey, from the perspective of cultural differences by applying the Hofstede model of cultural dimensions. The second part reports the results of a survey carried out among Slovene and Turkish students of management and business studies and aimed at establishing and comparing the most salient metaphorical conceptualisations of the concepts COMPANY, MANAGER and EMPLOYEES in the two cultures. The findings suggest that there are considerable differences in the way Slovene and Turkish students view the concepts in question, pointing to important cultural implications.

45

---

### Key words

conceptual metaphors, managerial discourse, cognitive linguistics, cultural dimensions model.

---

\* Corresponding address: Silva Bratož, Liminjanska 53, 6320 Portorož, Slovenia.

## Sažetak

Ovaj rad bavi se pojmovnim metaforama u savremenom menadžerskom diskursu sa međukulturnog stanovišta. Zasniva se na pretpostavci da metafore mogu da pruže značajan uvid u način konceptualizacije ekonomskih procesa i njihovih učesnika, a da istovremeno odslikaju aspekte kultura u kojima se javljaju. Rad razmatra i značaj i ulogu različitih metafora u menadžerskom diskursu, te sa aspekta kulturnih razlika istražuje dve zemlje, Sloveniju i Tursku, primenom Hofstedovog modela kulturnih dimenzija. U drugom delu predočavaju se rezultati ankete sprovedene među slovenačkim i turskim studentima menadžmenta i poslovanja s ciljem da se ustanove i uporede najčešće metaforičke konceptualizacije pojmova KOMPANIJA, MENADŽER i ZAPOSLENI u te dve kulture. Rezultati ukazuju na znatne razlike u konceptualizacijama navedenih pojmova između slovenačkih i turskih studenata, što ima važne kulturološke implikacije.

## Ključne reči

pojmovna metafora, menadžerski diskurs, kognitivna lingvistika, model kulturnih dimenzija.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ubiquity of metaphor has been recognised in a variety of discourses essential to our everyday life, from politics and economics to specialised scientific discourses, such as medicine and physics. What is more, metaphors are seen as an important aspect or distinguishing feature of particular discourses. This is further corroborated by an increasingly greater emphasis given to comprehensive models of human cognition, communication, and culture in metaphor research (Gibbs, 2008). In this light, the study of metaphor is seen as inevitably interdisciplinary in nature, with authors in business studies, for example, relating to the work of linguists and psychologists and vice versa. What cognitive linguists and authors in other disciplines are typically interested in are issues, such as the characteristics of metaphor to make abstract and complex phenomena comprehensible or tangible and, more generally, the influence of metaphors on thought and action. In our paper we would like to argue that metaphor research from the cognitive perspective can provide a wealth of insight into how management practice is conceptualised.

The increasing complexity of organisations has led authors writing about organisations, be that from a theoretical perspective, such as Morgan (1997) and others, or, more notably, in popular management literature, pioneered by Peter

Drucker (1998), and articles in popular press, to consider the use of metaphors as tools for gaining insights and developing concepts related to organisations, as well as fostering understanding of organisational processes. In the fields related to management, metaphors have been particularly extensively discussed and studied in the area of organisation science where the main focus has been on understanding the complexities of modern organisations through metaphor. A major influence in this area is the work of Morgan (1997) which illustrates the workings of organisations through powerful conceptualisations of, for example, organisations as organisms, brains, psychic prisons, etc. In this respect, metaphors are used as tools for generating a range of insights into the nature of organisations and how they can be designed or managed.

The main objective of this paper is to show that a number of insights into the importance of metaphors as mirrors of our cultural and social environment can be gained by analysing them from a cross-cultural perspective. The first part of this paper looks at the cognitive approach to metaphor as an offspring of the cognitive linguistic framework and discusses the importance and role of metaphors in managerial discourse. In addition, it discusses Slovenia and Turkey by applying the Hofstede model of national culture (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). The second part presents the results of a survey carried out among Slovene and Turkish students, aimed at identifying and comparing the most common metaphors for three central concepts in managerial discourse, namely *MANAGER*, *COMPANY* and *EMPLOYEES*.

## 2. THE COGNITIVE VIEW OF METAPHOR

Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Lakoff (1993) and others (for an overview see Gibbs, 2008) have strengthened the connection between metaphor and thought by proposing that the conceptual system is not only involved in the processing of metaphor, but that thought is itself structured metaphorically, and that the systematicity of metaphor on the surface of language merely reflects underlying conceptual structure in which something is understood, stored and processed in terms of something else. Metaphors are an essential component of human cognition and a means of conceptualising more abstract areas of our experience in terms of familiar and concrete. They involve a source domain (usually concrete and familiar), a target domain (usually abstract or less structured), and a set of mapping relations or correspondences between them. In the conceptual metaphor *COMPETITION IS WAR*, for example, *WAR* is the source and *COMPETITION* is the target domain. This conceptual metaphor is reflected in a number of metaphorical linguistic expressions found in newspaper and magazine articles, such as:

(1) Elf last month *fell victim* to just such an impulse, when its bid *was sabotaged* by Norsk Hydro and Statoil.<sup>1</sup>

(2) America Online will need all its *combativeness* if it is to emerge unscratched from its present *battles*.<sup>2</sup>

(3) Pepsi calls for *ceasefire* in *cola wars*.<sup>3</sup>

At least two mapping relations can be identified here: COMPETING COMPANIES ARE ENEMIES AT WAR and COMPETITION IS A BATTLE. This conceptual metaphor can be said to have fairly easily identifiable mapping relations between the source and the target. In fact, in today's press one can hardly find an article dealing with competition in business which does not relate to the metaphor COMPETITION IS WAR. It is also true to say that when reading articles related to competition in business we have become so much accustomed to the concept of competition as war that we rarely think of linguistic metaphorical expressions as metaphors. By the same token, a number of metaphors analysed in this paper have lost their metaphorical charge and many would not be considered metaphors at all.

The paper speaks in favour of adding a cross-cultural perspective to the study of metaphor in discourse. A major influence in the research of metaphors across languages and cultures is the work of Kövecses (2005) on universality and cultural variation in metaphor and metonymy. Since according to the cognitive view metaphors do not function merely at the linguistic level but also on the conceptual, physical (bodily), and socio-cultural levels it should not come as a surprise that they are subject to variation across languages and cultures.

### 3. MANAGERIAL DISCOURSE

In trying to establish a definition of managerial discourse one would be tempted to simply say it is a discourse generated and used by managers. However, such a simplified and tentative description hides important aspects of this highly polemical discourse. For example, it is highly debatable whether it is a discourse used exclusively by managers. As we will show in our analysis, a number of metaphorical concepts in managerial discourse have entered common business parlance. Secondly, it is not always or perhaps hardly ever generated by practising managers. I would like to argue that managerial discourse is more often used by politicians and writers of popular management books and taken on by managers as they learn the skills of the trade and try to do their job as best they can. And lastly, such a definition hides potential ideological implications, which have made managerial discourse a very challenging and exciting topic of discussion in the past few years. Several authors have pointed to its ideological charge, seeing

<sup>1</sup> "French dressing", *The Economist*, 8 July 1999.

<sup>2</sup> "Pricks and kicks", *The Economist*, 12 August 1999.

<sup>3</sup> "Pepsi calls for ceasefire in cola wars", *The Financial Times*, 30 April 2012.

managerial discourse as a type of discourse which reflects the new spirit of capitalism, in the form of a new management ideology (see Rodríguez, 2005; Chiappello & Fairclough, 2002). Drawing on these authors, I understand the term “managerial discourse” to mean a type of discourse which reflects the management ideology promoted by modern industrialised societies and is governed by social, political and economic principles established in these societies.

The study of metaphor within managerial discourse is a particularly exciting and challenging task. Firstly, because metaphors pervade managerial discourse. They are used at all levels and areas of management, be that a meetings room or management book. Secondly, they can provide profound insights into management, help us understand how it functions and what its possible implications are. By analysing metaphors in managerial discourse we can “see what is behind” the practice of management, the things which are hidden to the inexperienced eye. Or to quote Morgan (1997: 5): “Metaphor stretches imagination in a way that can create powerful insights, but at the risk of distortion”. Conceptualising an organisation as a machine, for instance, may create valuable insights about the structure of an organisation and highlight the importance of the rational and structural dimensions in an organisation. On the other hand, it completely ignores the human aspects and may mislead people into believing that the human aspects are an unnecessary or less important dimension.

### 3.1. MANAGER metaphors

In managerial discourse, a manager is commonly perceived as a determined actor who gets things done according to a plan and resolves the issues that arise leaning on judgement, largely based on past experience and tested techniques. Three common source domains for the target domain MANAGER are SHIP’S CAPTAIN, ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR and COACH OF A FOOTBALL TEAM and they all reflect this description in many ways (Mintzberg, 1998; Perry, 2000; Bratož, 2004). They all have a certain plan they follow, the captain has a predetermined route on a map, the conductor has a musical score and the football coach a premeditated formation of players. In all three cases, sound judgement and past experience play a vital role.

Conceptualisations of MANAGERS as SHIP’S CAPTAINS and ORCHESTRA CONDUCTORS are well known and commonly used metaphors in management literature (see e. g. Drucker, 1998; Clancy, 1999). The SHIP’S CAPTAIN metaphor is related to the higher-level metaphor THE ECONOMY IS A SHIP, which is common in newspaper language (Bratož, 2004) and in which the captain is usually the president of the central bank, his assistants are his crew, the sea is the socio-economic environment of a country, obstacles (reefs, storms) are critical situations in economy, nautical instruments (anchors, compasses, maps) are various guidelines and directives. Implicit in all these nautical phrases is the assumption that managers know exactly where they are heading, how their craft works, and how their actions will affect its

course. Yet it can be argued that most of the time they operate in a world of huge uncertainty, with no reliable maps or compasses (Bratož, 2004). The SHIP as a source domain in conceptual metaphors is not popular only with economic and management topics. The metaphor can be said to have incredible generative power as it can be found in a number of situations in our everyday lives. It is used for politicians, prime ministers and presidents navigating their countries, people navigating their lives or relationships, the Internet and so on.

The MANAGER as an ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR is closely related to Peter Drucker's notorious metaphor which developed the idea of management as a specialised skill, the aim of which is to make people capable of joint performance, like players in an orchestra under a conductor's baton, but each responsible for his or her own instrumental part. "Each institution has to do its own work the way each instrument in an orchestra plays only its own part. But there is also the score, the community. And only if each individual instrument contributes to the score, there is music."<sup>4</sup> The prototypical image of a conductor is that of a person directing a performance of classical music by making visible moves with his/her baton. The performers typically constitute an orchestra consisting of four groups of musical instruments: woodwinds, brass, percussion and strings. The primary responsibilities of the conductor are to set the tempo, execute clear preparations and beats, and to listen and shape the sound of the ensemble.

Metaphorically speaking, sports provide another rich source of archetypes. And of all kinds of sports, football<sup>5</sup> is undoubtedly the most popular sport worldwide. It is therefore not surprising to find so many analogies to football in public discourse. For example, the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt was known to compare himself to a quarterback<sup>6</sup> trying out different strategies to overcome the challenges of the Great Depression. Indeed, the role of the coach, as well as different playing positions in football are often associated with certain qualities and skills in business and a number of football jargon expressions have entered the field of business as technical terms, such as the expression *team*, which hardly anybody today recognises as a football term, let alone a metaphor. Business terms, such as *strategy*, *tactics*, *objective*, *attack* and others, which are military terms usually associated with wars, can also be seen as FOOTBALL metaphors. In fact, it can be argued that some entities in the WAR domain were first mapped onto the FOOTBALL domain and from there onto BUSINESS. This is also in line with the conclusions of Koller (2003) and Charteris-Black (2004) who argue that military imagery frequently coincides with metaphors related to the sport domain. In this respect, the MILITARY COMMANDER metaphor can be seen as partly overlapping with

<sup>4</sup> "Prolific father of modern management", *L. A. Times*, 12 November, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Both football under FIFA rules or soccer and American football.

<sup>6</sup> In American football, the quarterback role is one of the most visible and important roles on the team. As the leader of the offensive team, the quarterback has a great deal of responsibility both in calling plays and making decisions during the play.



the FOOTBALL COACH concept but, at the same time, evoking strong images of discipline, strictness, indisputable authority and hierarchy.

### 3.2. COMPANY metaphors

Companies and organisations have been conceptualised in many different ways; as *brides* and *bridegrooms* in mergers, as *enemies at war* and *white knights* in takeovers, *bulls* and *bears* on the stock market and so on. This natural impulse to generate metaphorical expressions related to companies and organisations is hardly surprising considering the complex and abstract nature of organisations. By attaching a human face to a company, such as when a company in a merger is referred to as a *bride*, for example, can help us understand the intricate relationships between two companies forming a merger (Bratož, 2010). This chapter focuses on some of the most commonly identified metaphorical conceptualisations of companies, i.e. a COMPANY as a FAMILY, BRAINS, SPIDER'S WEB, ANT HILL, HUMAN BODY and MACHINE.

An important characteristic of metaphor is that it can be used generatively in building a model, such as employing the analogy found in family relationships to describe types of companies (*parent/mother* company, *sister* company, *daughter* company, etc.). It is interesting that in this model, companies are seen as female (there are no father or brother companies), while the typical family in many, and certainly the Western civilisation, implies a *pater familias* who holds the highest authority in the family. In fact, it is fairly common for company management today to refer to their company as a family, encouraging this conceptualisation also among employees. The identification of a group of individuals working together as a family is also common in Japanese industry. Implicit in this metaphor of a FAMILY is the expectation that the individuals will be loyal to each other and would typically share common values. In addition, they would have a clearly defined hierarchy with the dominant member or members of the family holding authority over the other members. Conceptualising an individual company as a family may encourage a feeling that the company will always exist, that members will always stand up for each other and help each other out through difficult times.

The metaphor of the COMPANY as BRAINS stresses information processing capacity, innovation and learning. It is organised around the implicit theme of cognition since company reality is shaped by processes of thinking, knowing, reasoning, calculating, and learning. It is related to Morgan's metaphor of organisations as brains, according to which organisations "are able to grow, develop, and change their personalities along with changing experience. They would, in short, be intelligent, self-organising brains that reflect all the qualities of what we describe as a 'learning organisation'" (Morgan, 1997: 101). Marshak (1996) points out that in such organisations, strategies need to be based on sound intelligence and careful reasoning in order to avoid any errors in judgement. With

the development of cognitive science and the gaining of new insights into the working of the brains, the ORGANISATIONS AS BRAINS metaphor is becoming increasingly viable.

The COMPANY as a SPIDER'S WEB metaphor suggests a structure of intricate interconnections. This reflects a type of organisation in which all the component parts are well connected to each other and in which networking, communicating and interacting play an essential role. Another aspect of the source domain that could be mapped onto the target has to do with the way the spider mends its web when it breaks. Rather than leaving it as it is or even tearing it apart, the spider usually reweaves the torn part, creating stronger connections across the weakened parts of the web. This image may suggest a company which is focused on keeping all its components well connected as a whole rather than hastily dispensing with or reorganising its critical parts.

In an attempt to understand how they live and function, ANTS have been conceptualised as WORKERS or SOLDIERS, having complex social relationships and living in highly organised colonies. Ants have often been used in fables and children's stories to represent industriousness and cooperative effort.<sup>7</sup> However, the traits mapped onto the target from the source domain are not necessarily or not always positive. 'To work as an ant' can also imply an uninspiring, uncreative, aimless activity, working day in day out in a strictly hierarchical environment where the management/head (i.e. the queen ant) dictates all the rules. This is related to the popular image of a production plant where shop-floor workers work silently and unenthusiastically along the assembly line.

The last two metaphors can be said to be in direct opposition to each other. On the one hand, we have the conceptualisation of a COMPANY as a HUMAN BODY with a number of powerful mapping relations; of body parts as company units, the head as the management of the company, we can speak of the pulse or even the DNA of a company. A widespread metaphor related to the HUMAN BODY concept sees the company as a patient, suffering from various diseases and pains or just recovering from a period of illness. The conceptualisation of a COMPANY as a HUMAN BODY is related to the concept of organic organisations, which are based on flexibility, adaptive ability, communication and lack of rigid procedures. As an advocate of organic organisations, Adizes (2004: 61), for instance, makes use of the HUMAN BODY metaphor: "If one finger breaks, your whole body feels it. There is empathy. And not only that: When one finger breaks, the other four fingers on that hand will try to compensate for the loss. That is organic consciousness." On the other hand, the conceptualisation of the COMPANY as a MACHINE emphasises impersonal relationships and conveys an image of control, reliability, predictability, rationality and resilience. Mechanistic organisations work well when the environment is

---

<sup>7</sup> A number of idioms reflect this positive aspect of their personality in English, such as 'to be as busy as an ant hill', 'to be diligent as an ant', and in Slovene 'to work as an ant' (*delati kot mravljica*), 'to be diligent as an ant' (*marljiv kot mravljica*).



relatively stable, processes are standardised, when precision is important and people conform to the rules.

### 3.3. EMPLOYEES metaphors

Employees in a company are often referred to using the following expressions: “workforce”, “human resources”, “workers”, “colleagues” and “cadre”. All five expressions seem to be perfectly literal and more or less appropriate in relation to employees. Yet if we try to look at them from a metaphorical perspective, we can see that they may uncover important aspects of how employees in a company are perceived. Although one can certainly find many objections to including WORKER and COLLEAGUE as source domains for EMPLOYEES metaphors, there are also a number of reservations to seeing them just as close synonyms. First, the term “worker” is often associated with manual work, so using it for all employees (employers and management included) could be seen as a metaphorical extension. Second, a “colleague” is not just another person working in the same office as you, but can also be an associate in your profession. Moreover, you would not normally call a colleague somebody whom you do not know and who works for the same company in a different town, which means the expression “colleague” is usually reserved for people who you work with and have a certain kind of relationship, usually positive.<sup>8</sup> And finally, would you call your boss a colleague, or a worker? While he or she can be an employee like you, you would not normally refer to them as your colleagues or workers. Finally, unlike the English use of “cadre”, which is restricted to particular military or political contexts, the Slovene word “kadri” is used to refer to employees in a much more neutral sense, although, etymologically speaking, it also derives from military terminology.

A number of popular management concepts, such as “corporate culture”, “employee motivation”, “employee satisfaction”, and “teamwork spirit”, enhance the idea of EMPLOYEES as COLLEAGUES. Management students are undoubtedly well aware of these views as they browse through management books for their exams. Implicit in this concept is the idea that employees are not subordinates and bosses, but that they work in a collaborative climate toward a common goal, in an atmosphere where mutual trust and personal dedication are the norm. In an attempt to increase productivity this concept is often promoted by the management and employers, who have long realised that an increase in loyalty leads to an increase in productivity.

Although HUMAN RESOURCES and WORKFORCE can easily be recognised as metaphors, they, too, have entered managerial discourse as business terminology.

---

<sup>8</sup> This is even more evident in Slovene where the expression “kolega”, which is often used instead of “sodelavec” (“co-worker”) does not only mean somebody you work with but also somebody you are in a friendly relationship with.

The metaphor EMPLOYEES ARE A RESOURCE can be seen as an example of a dead metaphor, i.e. a metaphor that has become so conventional and commonplace with constant use that by now it has lost its vigour. However, as Kövecses (2002: ix) points out: “The ‘dead metaphor’ account misses an important point; namely, that what is deeply entrenched, hardly noticed, and thus effortlessly used is most active in our thought”. Most contemporary economic theories treat employees and labour as a resource or commodity, on a par with raw materials. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 236-7) argue that when we accept this metaphor and assume that the cost of resources defined in this way should be kept down, the cheap labour becomes a good thing, on a par with cheap oil. They suggest that the blind acceptance of this metaphor can hide the reality of degradation of a human being, their values and beliefs as well as human dignity. The conceptualisation of EMPLOYEES as HUMAN RESOURCES has become so commonplace that few people would consider it an obvious case of metaphor, dead or alive. Although just a dead metaphor, it is alive in the most important sense – it governs our thought. A number of modern management terms reflect a similar way of thinking as the metaphor EMPLOYEES ARE A RESOURCE, such as *human capital*, *downsizing*, *redundancy*, *human resource accounting*, *human resource management* and others (Bratož, 2010).

The Slovene expression “kader” with its adjectival and verbal derivatives “kadrovski, kadrovati/kadrirati” is widely used as business terminology related to the practice of recruitment in a company, and more generally to the role of Human Resources. However, the expression also has rather strong political connotations, referring to a small core of committed political party members, in charge of providing leadership, as well as training new party members and placing them in important positions in the country. In addition, the agent noun “kadrovik”, somebody responsible for selecting and recruiting<sup>9</sup> new employees in a company, equivalent to a recruitment officer in English, was also used to refer to the ambiguous role of a political official during and in the first years following World War 2 who was responsible for dealing with “moral and political questions in a certain field” (Bajec et al., 1994: 373). These may be the reasons why the expression tends to carry a slightly pejorative connotation.

#### 4. SLOVENIA AND TURKEY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

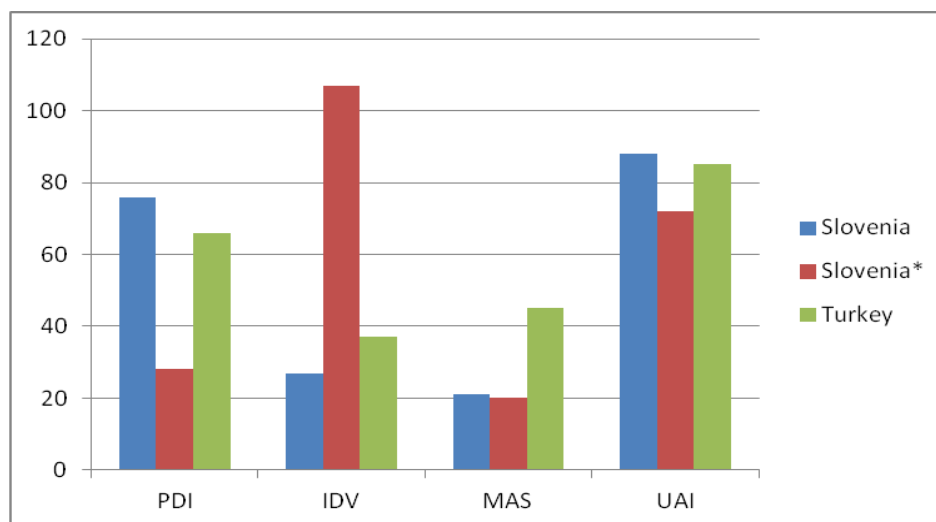
In the past three decades, research into cultural differences has yielded several theories and approaches. Two well-known approaches to cross-cultural differences have been developed by Hofstede (1997) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998), who propose a set of cultural dimensions along which

<sup>9</sup> The expression “to recruit” is itself linked to military terminology as it was originally used only in the sense of “enlisting new soldiers”.

dominant value systems can be ordered. Several countries and national cultures have been classified, analysed and compared on the basis of the proposed dimensions. Focusing on the Hofstede model of value dimensions, we will look at the scores given to Turkey and Slovenia and discuss the observations relevant to our case study.

Conceptualising culture as a computer, Hofstede (1997: 5) defines it as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another”. In this model, national cultures are classified along five cultural dimensions: (1) power distance (PDI), which refers to the extent to which less powerful members of organisations or institutions within a national culture accept and expect that power is distributed unequally; (2) individualism vs. collectivism (IDV), which indicates the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups; (3) masculinity vs. femininity (MAS) dimension, which differentiates between societies in which gender roles are clearly distinct and those where the roles are allowed to overlap; (4) uncertainty avoidance (UAI), which focuses on the ways people deal with the fact that the future is unknown; and (5) long-term vs. short term orientation (LTO) which deals with the time aspects and cultures’ attitudes towards the past, present and future (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

Hofstede’s work has often been criticised for reducing culture to an overly simplistic five dimension model and for failing to capture the dynamic nature of culture over time (see Kirkman et al., 2006). In spite of this criticism, however, there has been a proliferation of studies based on the proposed cultural dimensions framework. The findings related to Hofstede’s work have often been used as sources for comparing various national cultures. In this respect it is important to note that the data for Slovenia were collected by Hofstede in 1971 when Slovenia was still part of former Yugoslavia and the scores were given for the whole country. The results of a more recent study, carried out by Jazbec (2005) using the Hofstede model, show that there are considerable differences in the scores for Slovenia between the two studies. Figure 1 below shows data collected by Hofstede (1997) in 1971 and the data compiled by Jazbec (2005) in 2004.



**Figure 1.** Cultural dimensions for Slovenia (1971), Slovenia\* (2004) and Turkey

Figure 1 shows Hofstede's<sup>10</sup> comparison of Turkey and Slovenia based on the first four of the above cultural dimensions. As we can see from the graph, Turkey scores high on the PDI dimension, which means that it is characterised by a strong dependence on hierarchy and centralisation of power. This also means that subordinates expect to be told what to do and the boss is seen as a father figure.<sup>11</sup> As we can see, Hofstede's results place Slovenia closer to Turkey while Jazbec's place it much lower on the scale, among countries where hierarchy is established for convenience and managers rely on individual employees and teams for their expertise. One of the reasons for this difference can be found in the perception of the role of communist party leaders in the former Yugoslavia, which was based on values such as power, hierarchy and authority.

According to the IDV dimension, Turkey would be classified as a collectivist culture. In collectivist societies people are committed to in-groups, such as families or organisations where loyalty is paramount and relationships are valued above everything else. With a score of 27, in Hofstede's study Slovenia is perceived as more collectivist than Turkey, while in the study conducted by Jazbec it is placed on the other end of the scale, which means it reflects a highly individualistic culture in which people look after themselves and their immediate families rather than expressing loyalty to larger groups. Similarly to above, the difference between the two scores for Slovenia can be attributed to the fact that the older data were collected in former Yugoslavia which was strongly characterised by socialist values and collectivist social patterns.

<sup>10</sup> Compare also results from the Hofstede Centre available at <http://geert-hofstede.com/turkey.html>.

<sup>11</sup> This is consistent with the study carried out by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) who place Turkey among the so-called familial countries, where the leader is seen as a father and the hierarchies are extremely steep.

As we can see from Figure 1, the most consistent difference between Slovenia and Turkey is in the MAS dimension, where Turkey scores 45 and Slovenia 19/21. This score indicates that both countries are feminine, with Turkey placed almost in the middle of the scale towards masculinity and Slovenia firmly established on the feminine side. Feminine countries value equality, solidarity and quality, conflicts are resolved by compromise and consensus is important. On the other hand, masculine cultures' values are competitiveness, assertiveness, materialism, ambition and power. In addition, status is important and gender differences are more pronounced.

Figure 1 also shows that both countries score high on the UAI dimension, which means that they have a high preference for avoiding uncertainty. Countries exhibiting high uncertainty avoidance need laws and rules in order to minimise anxiety. People like security and punctuality.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to give a full account of the cultural dimensions and the way they work, it is nevertheless important to note that they do not function independently but are often combined to give a better picture of the values of a particular culture. For example, a combination of high scores in PDI and UAI produces societies which are highly rule-oriented and where leaders have ultimate power and authority, which could be concluded for Turkey (Figure 1).

## 5. CASE STUDY: SLOVENE AND TURKISH STUDENTS' CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF *MANAGER*, *COMPANY* AND *EMPLOYEES*

57

### 5.1. Methodology

The case study was carried out by means of a survey. The questionnaire consisted of three closed-ended questions in which the respondents were asked to choose the most suitable metaphorical conceptualisations of the concepts *MANAGER*, *COMPANY* and *EMPLOYEES*. The Slovene respondents were 64 management students, aged between 19 and 23, studying at the University of Primorska, Koper, Slovenia. The Turkish sample consisted of 52 business studies and economics students, aged between 19 and 24, studying at the Yasar University in Izmir, Turkey and was collected during an Erasmus teacher exchange in Izmir in 2008. The respondents were asked to select the most suitable metaphor for *COMPANY* from the following source domains: *HUMAN BODY*, *MACHINE*, *FAMILY*, *BRAINS*, *SPIDER'S WEB* and *ANT HILL* (see Figure 2). In the second question, they could choose from the following metaphorical conceptualisations of *MANAGER*: *SHIP'S CAPTAIN*, *ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR*, *COACH OF A FOOTBALL TEAM*, *MILITARY COMMANDER*, *DOCTOR* and *LION* (see Figure 3). The last set of expressions, related to the target domain *EMPLOYEES*, is essentially

different from the two above in the sense that it deals with less obvious cases of metaphor. The respondents were asked to choose the best expression for EMPLOYEES from the following source domains: WORKFORCE, HUMAN RESOURCES, WORKERS, COLLEAGUES and CADRE (see Figure 4).

It needs to be stressed that the lists of source domains are, inevitably, to a certain extent arbitrary and limiting in terms of choice. However, being well aware that with the development of managerial discourse metaphorical concepts have to be added to or removed from the list, it was not my intention to produce an all embracing or definite list. Furthermore, the metaphors included in the lists are far from neat in terms of metaphor status. While conceptualising a MANAGER as a LION may be seen as an obvious instance of metaphor, analysing EMPLOYEES as HUMAN RESOURCES may just be taken as a case of synonymy. This, again, was a conscious decision which reflects the purpose of this study, namely to gain an insight into various aspects of management discourse by analysing relevant and not necessarily self-evident metaphorical concepts.

## 5.2. Results

As we can see from the graph below (Figure 2), the three most common metaphorical conceptualisations for the concept COMPANY selected by the Turkish students were BRAINS (27%), FAMILY (25%) and MACHINE (19%), while the lowest score was given to the source domain ANT HILL (6%). Contrary to the Turkish respondents, the majority of Slovene students chose ANT HILL (27%) as the most appropriate metaphors for COMPANY, with SPIDER'S WEB (20%) and FAMILY (19%) in the second and third place.

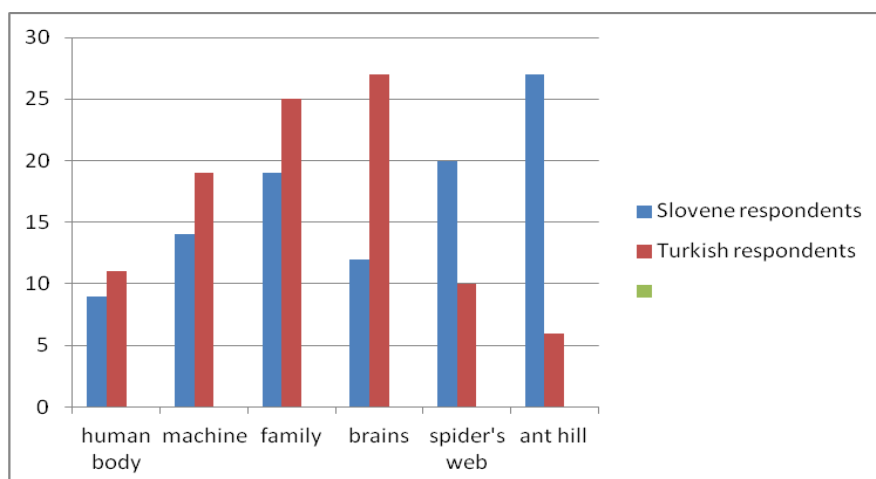


Figure 2. Metaphorical conceptualisations of COMPANY (in per cent)



Figure 3 below indicates that the most suitable source domain for the concept MANAGER chosen by the Slovene students was SHIP'S CAPTAIN (42%), followed by ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR (30%). These results are considerably different from the answers given by the Turkish respondents who selected FOOTBALL COACH (36%) as the most appropriate metaphor for MANAGER. Another difference worth noting is the relatively high score given to LION (15%) and MILITARY COMMANDER (13%) by the Turkish students compared to their Slovene counterparts (6% for LION and 9 % for MILITARY COMMANDER).

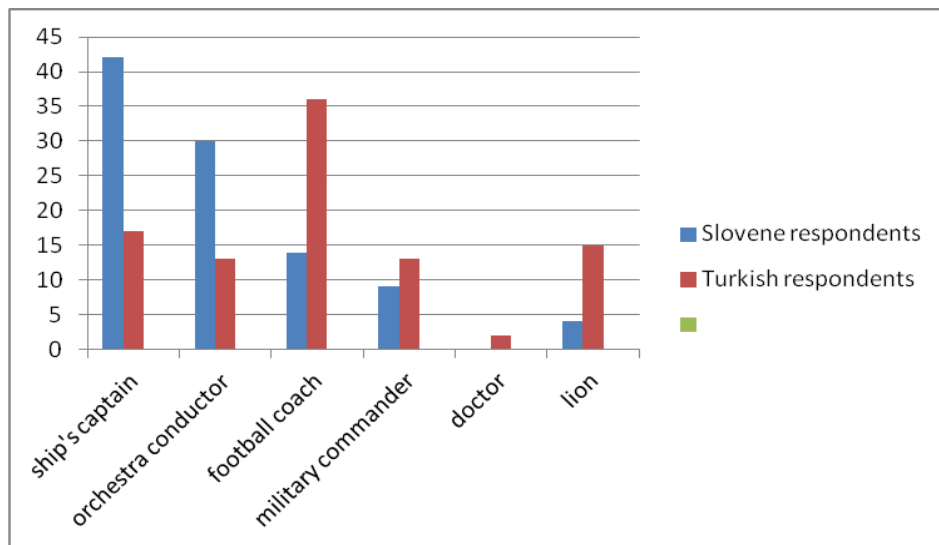


Figure 3. Metaphorical conceptualisations of MANAGER (in per cent)

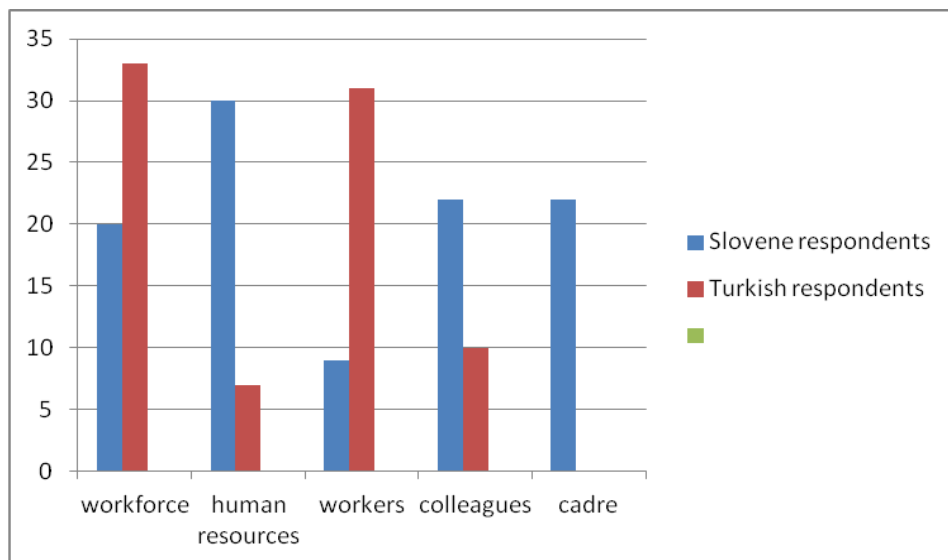


Figure 4. Metaphorical conceptualisations of EMPLOYEES (in per cent)

As we can see from Figure 4 above, the majority of Slovene respondents selected the source domain HUMAN RESOURCES (30%) for EMPLOYEES, followed by COLLEAGUES (22%) and CADRE (22%). On the other hand, the vast majority of Turkish students chose WORKFORCE (33%) and WORKERS (31%) as the most suitable conceptualisations of EMPLOYEES, while HUMAN RESOURCES was rated the lowest in the Turkish sample (7%).

## 6. DISCUSSION

The results of the survey presented above suggest that there are clear differences in the way Slovene and Turkish students perceive three central concepts in managerial discourse through metaphors. Drawing on the model of cultural dimensions developed by Hofstede (1997) we will discuss some of the ways in which these differences can be said to have cultural implications.

The metaphors for COMPANY which were most popular with the Turkish students draw on the source domain BRAINS and FAMILY. It can be argued that the high scores given to the two metaphors suggest that the Turkish respondents conceptualise companies in contrasting ways. The BRAIN metaphor suggests the conceptualisation of a company as a complex system with a strong emphasis on reasoning and structure. On the other hand, the FAMILY metaphor is consistent with the high scores of Turkey in the PDI and UAI dimensions combined with the low score in the MAS dimension which broadly characterise collectivist, rule-oriented cultures with a strong emphasis on family values and hierarchical relationships. The FAMILY metaphor scored relatively high also with the Slovene students, which contrasts with the extremely high scores for the IDV dimension reported by Jazbec (2005). The most surprising result in this section was the high score given by the Slovene respondents to the source domain ANT HILL, which, as we saw above, recalls a lethargic image of a production plant full of unenthusiastic workers. A possible interpretation of this is that the image of companies as ant hills and employees as ants is a remnant image of the socialist period.

As we can see from Figure 3, there are considerable differences in the way managers are conceptualised by the Slovene and Turkish respondents. The vast majority of Turkish students selected FOOTBALL COACH as the most appropriate metaphor for MANAGER suggesting a correlation with the high scores in the IDV and PDI dimensions which characterise countries where power is centralised and loyalty is valued above all. This image is further corroborated by the higher scores for the source domains MILITARY COMMANDER and LION compared with the Slovene sample. The high rank given by the Turkish students to the FOOTBALL COACH metaphor can also be attributed to the status of this sport in Turkey. Football is undeniably the most popular sport in Turkey, with a long history which can be traced to the Ottoman Empire.

The Slovene respondents, on the other hand, favoured SHIP'S CAPTAIN and ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR as the most suitable MANAGER metaphors. While both source domains evoke images of powerful individuals and degrees of hierarchy, these images are not as pronounced as in the FOOTBALL COACH, MILITARY COMMANDER and LION metaphor. In addition, other qualities of managers are implied, especially with the ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR metaphor, such as the role of the individual's expertise and specialised skills, which is more characteristic of individualist societies. We can argue that this is consistent with the high score of Slovenia in the IDV dimension and the low score in the PDI dimension. In addition, the high rank of the FOOTBALL COACH metaphor in the Turkish sample compared to the Slovene sample can be related to the relatively high score Turkey received in the MAS dimension compared to Slovenia, which means that we can expect masculine values, such as competitiveness and assertiveness, to be more widespread in Turkey than in Slovenia.

Another interesting aspect emerges by comparing the Slovene students' results for managers and the COMPANY metaphors results above. It could be argued that the ANT HILL metaphor, with the image of a large community of workers feeding an assembly-line, is at odds with the conceptualisations of the manager as an ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR and SHIP'S CAPTAIN, which both reflect organisations where each worker is taken as an individual, an indispensable and valued member of a team.

The results for the EMPLOYEES metaphors in Figure 4 show that a third of Slovene respondents perceive employees as HUMAN RESOURCES, while the majority of Turkish students prefer WORKFORCE or WORKERS. It is also significant to note that HUMAN RESOURCES was rated the lowest in the Turkish sample. As we saw above, Turkey is considered a collectivist society with a strong emphasis on belonging to in-groups and WORKFORCE/WORKERS can be said to fit this description much more than the tenuous concept HUMAN RESOURCES. By the same token, the high rating of the HUMAN RESOURCES metaphor in the Slovene sample suggests an individualist culture, which is consistent with Jazbec's (2005) score for Slovenia in the IDV dimension. It is also worth noting that the terms "workers" and "workforce" were traditionally used to refer to employees in Slovenia but have been recently replaced by the more 'modern' expression "human resources". This is confirmed by Kuzmanič and Sedmak (2006) who concluded that in the transition from the so called self-management (socialist) discourse to managerial discourse in Slovenia the term "worker" has been replaced by the terms "human resources" and "employees".

## 7. CONCLUSION

The overall objective of this paper was to examine ways in which metaphors reflect the culture from which they emerge. To this purpose we analysed

metaphors related to three key concepts in managerial discourse, i.e. COMPANY, MANAGER and EMPLOYEES from a cross-cultural perspective. The results of the survey conducted among Slovene and Turkish students of management suggest that there are clear differences in the way students perceive these three concepts in managerial discourse through metaphors and that this can be attributed to cultural factors. The differences in the choice of metaphorical concepts were discussed against the Hofstede model of cultural dimensions. It can be argued that some of the results clearly reflect the description of the two countries in individual dimensions, such as the choice of the FOOTBALL COACH metaphor for MANAGER, which is consistent with the relatively high scores for Turkey in the power distance dimension and low score in the individual/collective dimension. On the other hand, it was more difficult to give a consistent account of the Slovene students' choices of metaphors since the two sets of data classifying Slovenia in terms of the cultural dimensions model were at variance with one another. In this light, we are also well aware that some interpretations of cultural implications are more tentative than others.

To conclude, the pervasiveness of metaphors in managerial discourse offers a number of opportunities for metaphor research. For example, individual management practices can be analysed by looking at the metaphorical concepts and the discourse which promotes them. Another important point to consider is that the development of the framework of models through which economic phenomena and management practices are interpreted has been almost entirely Anglo-Saxon and largely Anglo-American, since in the transition from the socialist to the capitalist system a number of conceptual metaphors have been transferred or imported together with the new managerial discourse. Capturing these changes through the analysis of different metaphors and metaphorical concepts used in the process from a cross-cultural perspective would present an ambitious research challenge. And finally, while metaphors are never as neat and tidy as we might like, they enable us to gain important insights into our cultural and social environment.

[Paper submitted 1 Sep 2013]

[Revised version accepted for publication 29 Sep 2013]

### References

- Adizes, I. (2004). *The ideal executive: Why you cannot be one and what to do about it*. Santa Barbara, CA: The Adizes Institute Publishing.
- Bajec, A. (et al.). (1994). *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* [Dictionary of the standard Slovenian language]. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije.
- Bratož, S. (2004). A comparative study of metaphor in English and Slovene popular economic discourse. *Managing Global Transitions*, 2(2), 179-196.
- Bratož, S. (2010). *Metaphors of our time*. Koper: Faculty of Management.
- Charteris-Black, J. (2004). *Corpus approaches to critical metaphor analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Chiapello, E., & Fairclough, N. (2002). Understanding the new management ideology: A transdisciplinary contribution from critical discourse analysis and new sociology of capitalism. *Discourse & Society*, 13(2), 185-208.
- Clancy, J. J. (1999). *The invisible powers: The language of business*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Drucker, P. F. (1998). *The practice of management*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Gibbs, R. W. (Ed.). (2008). *The Cambridge handbook of metaphor and thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1997). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Hofstede, G., & Hofstede, G. J. (2005). *Cultures and organizations, software of the mind, intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival* (revised and expanded 2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Jazbec, M. (2005). *Medkulturno komuniciranje kot sestavni del poslovnega izobraževanja* [Cross-cultural communication as an integral part of business education] (Unpublished Master's thesis). Fakulteta za družbene vede, Univerza v Ljubljani, Slovenija.
- Kirkman, B. L., Lowe, K. B., & Gibson, C. B. (2006). A quarter century of culture's consequences: A review of empirical research incorporating Hofstede's cultural values framework. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37(3), 285-320.
- Koller, V. (2003). *Metaphor clusters in business media discourse: A social cognition approach*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.86.8386&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Kövecses, Z. (2002). *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kövecses, Z. (2005). *Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kuzmanič, T. A., & Sedmak, S. (2006). Globalization, transition and the discourse of management. *Managing Global Transitions*, 4(2), 101-113.
- Lakoff, G. (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (2nd ed.) (pp. 203-251). London: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Marshak, R. J. (1966). Metaphors, metaphoric fields and organisational change. In D. Grant, & C. Oswick (Eds.), *Metaphor and organisations* (pp. 147-163). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Mintzberg, H. (1998). Covert leadership: notes on managing professionals. *Harvard Business Review*, 76, 140-148.
- Morgan, G. (1997). *Images of organisation*. London & New Delhi: Sage Publication Ltd.
- Perry, B. (2000). Football management as a metaphor for corporate entrepreneurship? *Working papers Series WP 002/00*. Wolverhampton: University of Wolverhampton.
- Rodríguez, C. J. F. (2005). The transformations of management discourse: sociology and discourse analysis. Paper presented at the 37th World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology *Frontiers of Sociology*, Stockholm.
- The Hofstede Center (2013). Retrieved from <http://geert-hofstede.com/turkey.html>.
- Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (1998). *Riding the waves of culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

**SILVA BRATOŽ** is Assistant Professor of English at the Faculty of Education of the University of Primorska, Slovenia, where she teaches several courses in the area of ELT. She earned her PhD in linguistics from the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. She has researched and published in the area of ESP, second language teaching and acquisition, cognitive linguistics, discourse studies, and metaphor theory. Her current research focuses on analysing the role of metaphor in specialist discourses, exploring the potential of classroom interaction in English, and applying cognitive linguistics principles in second language teaching.