

Aleksandra Kujawiak

University of Lodz

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8740-3627>

aleksandra.kujawiak@uni.lodz.pl

Dysphemistic conceptualizations of politicians and politics in Internet discourse (on the example of Wpolarityce.pl and Newsweek.pl portals)

Summary. The article comprises an analysis of dysphemistic metaphors in online political discourse. The material consisted of 100 expressions excerpted from texts published between January and May 2021 on the pages of two websites: Wpolarityce.pl and Newsweek.pl. The text discusses the conceptual metaphors of politics and politicians most frequently quoted in the analysed texts, such as: POLITICS IS A SHOW, POLITICIANS ARE INCOMPETENT CELEBRITIES; POLITICS IS FOUL PLAY, POLITICIANS ARE INCOMPETENT PLAYERS; POLITICS IS AN INCOMPETENTLY CONDUCTED WARFARE, POLITICIANS ARE INCOMPETENT COMMANDERS; A POLITICAL PARTY IS A CORPSE, A POLITICIAN IS A GRAVEDIGGER; POLITICS IS AN INFANTILE PLAY, POLITICIANS ARE CHILDREN; POLITICS IS A HUNT, A POLITICIAN IS A POACHER.

Keywords: dysphemism, internet discourse, metaphor, political language

*Dysfemistyczne konceptualizacje polityków
i polityki w dyskursie internetowym (na przykładzie
portali Wpolarityce.pl i Newsweek.pl)*

Streszczenie. Artykuł zawiera analizę dysfemistycznych metafor w internetowym dyskursie politycznym. Materiał stanowiło 100 wyrażen wyekscerpowanych z tekstów publikowanych w okresie od stycznia do maja 2021 r. na dwóch portalach internetowych: Wpolarityce.pl oraz Newsweek.pl. W tekście omówiono najczęściej notowane w analizowanych tekstach metafory pojęciowe polityki i polityków, takie jak: POLITYKA TO WIDOWISKO, POLITYCY TO NIEUDOLNI CELEBRYCI; POLITYKA TO NIECZYSTA GRA, POLITYCY TO NIEUDOLNI GRACZE; POLITYKA TO

NIEUDOLNIE PROWADZONE DZIAŁANIA WOJENNE, POLITYCY TO NIEUDOLNI DOWÓDCY; PARTIA POLITYCZNA TO TRUP, POLITYK TO GRABARZ; POLITYKA TO INFANTYLIADA, POLITYCY TO DZIECI; POLITYKA TO POLOWANIE, POLITYK TO KŁUSOWNIK.

Słowa kluczowe: dysfemizm, dyskurs internetowy, metafora, język polityki

Introduction

At present, each language user can freely express their views and share their opinions on any topic thanks to the possibilities offered by the internet. Often, this leads to abuse, creation of offensive and discrediting content. Internauts have the feeling of anonymity and impunity, they use extremely negative expressions, frequently also vulgarisms. One of the areas of life criticized in the online space is politics. All actions of representatives of the government and political parties of the opposition are evaluated not only by users of forums and social networks, but also journalists. Not so long ago, one of key media discussing the topic of politics was the opinion press. However, a decrease of interest in traditional paper publications and the growing importance of the internet and texts published online have forced editorial teams of opinion-forming weeklies to digitize.

Although in the beginning websites being equivalents of traditional papers were not very popular, in time, portals such as, e.g., *Newsweek.pl* (related to “*Newsweek Polska*” weekly) or *Wpolityce.pl* (corresponding to “*Sieci*”) have gained popularity thanks to their connection to horizontal portals (Mielczarek 2020: 88)¹. Links to press texts posted on websites offering content on various topics, such as, e.g., *Onet.pl* or *WirtualnaPolska.pl*, have started generating a larger number of visits to the websites of the weeklies. However, they usually offer only parts of press texts and in order to read the whole article, one must purchase a subscription or a specific edition of the newspaper. In the case of the portals analysed in the present study, that is *Newsweek.pl* and *Wpolityce.pl*, purchasing the online subscription guarantees full access to contents from the weeklies and their thematic equivalents (e.g., “*wSieci Historii*”, “*Newsweek Historia*”, special editions of both those papers) or archive editions. The purpose of the present article is to analyse dysphemistic metaphors describing the world of politicians and politics, excerpted from texts published on the aforementioned portals: *Newsweek.pl* and *Wpolityce.pl*. I have chosen those portals based on the assumption that they should represent

¹ Tomasz Mielczarek observes that even in 2011, websites of Polish opinion weeklies were not ranked among one hundred most popular websites. In 2016, the situation was already different – *Newsweek.pl* had about 3 million users and 11% reach, and *Wpolityce.pl* about 2 users with the reach of over 6% (Mielczarek 2020: 88).

different thematic and political lines. The first one is related to “Newsweek Polska” weekly, which, since Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice] party came to power in Poland in 2015, has been openly criticizing the government and supporting the opposition. Wpolityce.pl portal – just like “Sieci” paper – belongs to conservative and pro-government media². On pages of both those portals, texts published initially in paper form are offered, along with texts written solely for the internet. The analytical material was composed of about 100 examples: phrases and sentences as well as longer parts of texts taken from online articles published in the period from January to May 2021.

1. Definitions of dysphemism

The term *dysphemism* comes from the Greek language (Gr. *dýsphēmos* – ominous, libellous) and – according to the definition provided in *Słownik terminów literackich* [Dictionary of literary terms] ed. by Janusz Sławiński – it is “an expression, often vulgar or obscene, which degrades or demeans the described object”, as well as the opposite of a euphemism (Sławiński 2008: 114). In Polish linguistics, however, the term *kakophemism* is used most often as an antonym of euphemistic expressions. For the first time, it was featured in the article by Zenon Klemensiewicz, entitled *Higiena językowego obcowania* [Hygiene of linguistic commerce]. The researcher classified “dirty, coarse and vulgar” terms as kakophemisms (Klemensiewicz 1965: 6). Anna Dąbrowska, author of the only monography so far dealing with euphemisms in the Polish language (Dąbrowska 2006) and *Słownik eufemizmów polskich, czyli w rzeczy mocno, w sposobie łagodnie* [Dictionary of Polish euphemisms, that is in merit strongly, in manner gently] (Dąbrowska 1998), also uses the term *kakophemism* in her studies. However, she notes that the definition by Z. Klemensiewicz leads to a narrowed understanding of the term. She refers to the scale proposed by Elisabeth Leinfellner in the study entitled *Der Euphemismus in der politische Sprache*. The researcher assumes that for a true statement which may have negative connotations, one can create kakophemisms – presenting the given object as very bad (Germ. *sehr schlecht*) – as well as euphemisms – softening that pejorative image and showing something as moderate (*mittelmäßig*). According to the Austrian linguist, the meaning of both those expressions remains the same: the same events are simply presented from two different points of view. Thus, a *kakophemism* is an expression which describes a phenomenon or object as slightly worse (Germ. *ein wenig schlechter*) (cf. Leinfellner 1971: 59–61; Dąbrowska 2006: 66–67).

² The characteristic of the opinion weeklies is adopted according to T. Mielczarek, who in his treaty entitled *Tygodniki opinii w zmieniającej się rzeczywistości* [Opinion weeklies in the changing reality] discusses the detailed profiles of both those papers (Mielczarek 2018: 153–176, 189–200).

In English literature, the term *X-phemism* is also used to describe a wide concept, encompassing various linguistic devices which can be used for taboo topics (Allan 2012: 5). They include expressions allowing to present the given object in a gentler manner (euphemisms) or, on the contrary, in a more negative light (dysphemisms), as well as neutral terms (orthophemisms) (Allan, Burridge 2006, cit. per Waśniewska 2017: 88). On the other hand, Armin Burkhardt notices existence of dependencies between euphemisms and dysphemisms. In his opinion, in the media discourse concerning politics, they name the same phenomena or objects but from two different perspectives of political opponents. This resembles the aforementioned concept by E. Leinfellner, who presents a similar view on euphemisms and kakophemisms (cf. Leinfellner 1971: 59–61; Burkhardt 2010: 361).

As concerns the Polish language, there are few studies in which the term *dysphemism* is used. If already present, it is most often an opposite of a euphemism. Dysphemisms, as noted by Sylwia Sojda, are used to create a negative image of denotations (Sojda 2012: 125). Their main purpose is to discredit, offend or downgrade the opponent (Sojda 2012: 127). Therefore, they are devices often used by journalists in various media.

Małgorzata Waśniewska analyses euphemisms and dysphemisms excerpted from texts about the war in Syria and published on the pages of "Gazeta Wyborcza" and "Rzeczpospolita" newspapers (Waśniewska 2017: 83–100). The author discusses euphemistic strategies applied in press reports about war atrocities. She also observes that dysphemisms are used mainly in texts encouraging support for victims of the war. They are usually hyperbolic expressions: exaggerating various aspects of the war, e.g., horror, appalling practices, reign of terror, etc. (Waśniewska 2017: 97).

2. Metaphor as a marker of dysphemisation

Among linguistic methods of euphemisation, A. Dąbrowska lists in the aforementioned monography, among others, semantic devices (Dąbrowska 2006: 320–374). In that category, she mentions tropes, which she defines as semantic transformations, among them: metaphors, metonymy, periphrases, antonomasia, litotes, aposiopesis, allusion, and understatement (Dąbrowska 2006). The dysphemisms analysed in this article, just like euphemisms, can also be created as a result of changes in the meaning, including the use of figurative expressions.

In the 1980s, thanks to the study by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, the thesis on universality of metaphors and their presence in everyday life gained popularity. According to the American researchers, the way we perceive the reality is reflected in the language, including figurative expressions, and not the other way round (Lakoff, Johnson 1988: 182). Metaphors are not

strictly linguistic phenomena; they are the result of human mentality. Therefore, selection of figures of speech depends not so much on generally assumed characteristics of specific objects or phenomena, which can be compared to properties or other elements of the reality, but rather on experience of an individual. The individual perception of the reality determines and defines "experience in terms of other type of experience" (Lakoff, Johnson 1988: 182). In the present article, the conceptual theory of the metaphor is adopted according to G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, which assumes that the metaphor is a combination of two conceptual domains: the target (X) and the source (Y) through the so-called projection (Lakoff 1987: 114). Analysing the definition offered by the American researchers, Barbara Taraszka-Drożdż notes that one of the domains, the so-called conceptual areas, has many different connotations, and the other one, on the contrary, is a more general term with a smaller connotation network. Thus, a metaphor relies on transfer of conceptual structures from X to Y (Taraszka-Drożdż 2008: 121).

G. Lakoff also observes that metaphors present in our everyday life expose some aspects of phenomena on one hand while on the other hand, they limit our ability to perceive the world. However, in the researcher's opinion, thinking in metaphors is unavoidable, especially in the context of complex issues (Lakoff 2003: 30). One of the areas of life in which an average language user can have difficulties with proper assessment of the situation is politics. Metaphors in political discourse have been the object of interest for researchers for years and the topic has been discussed in many studies (cf., among others Dobrzyńska 1994, 2009; Trysińska 2004; Burzyński 2012). In particular, studies by Teresa Dobrzyńska deserve attention. The researcher points out the persuasive nature of metaphors. She observes that in texts about politics, metaphors are usually easy to comprehend and have the form of *X is Y* (Dobrzyńska 2009: 71). Also, they unambiguously assign a positive or a negative value to persons or phenomena – by transferring characteristics of one object to another one (Dobrzyńska 2009: 73). Still, the efficiency of the message – consolidation of a given image in eyes of the recipient – guarantees that the connotations, which remain hidden and can be interpreted subjectively, cannot be negated (Dobrzyńska 1994: 141). The only way to repel the attack of a political opponent, in the researcher's opinion, is to "disarm the metaphor", to create a new figure of speech with a changed valuation, belonging to the same semantic field and simultaneously being a response to the metaphor used earlier by the opponent (Dobrzyńska 1994: 145).

Metaphors referring to the world of politics usually relate to topics close to the recipient, which should make it easier for them to interpret the hidden message (Dobrzyńska 1994: 136; cf. Burzyński 2012: 91–92). Magdalena Trysińska in her study on political metaphors distinguishes semantic fields such as: war, game, sport, illness, way from-to, theatre/cinema and trade (Trysińska

2004: 139). In turn, in *Słownik polszczyzny politycznej po 1989 roku* [Dictionary of political Polish language after 1989], the following entries can be found, which are simultaneously conceptual metaphors: POLITICS AS GAME, POLITICS AS THEATRE, POLITICS AS WAR (Zimny, Nowak 2009: 330–332). Among other metaphors referring to the field of politics, listed are also metaphors based on the following terms: show/spectacle, construction, road/journey, illness and sport (Zimny, Nowak 2009: 336).

In a treaty on the use of metaphors as tools of political impact, Rafał Burzyński analyses metaphors as “keys to interpretation of political phenomena” (Burzyński 2012: 91). He develops a detailed classification in which he distinguishes metaphors related to, among others, theatre, sport, a human being, war, places, areas (e.g., technology, agricultures, economy), environment (Burzyński 2012: 91–116). R. Burzyński also pays attention to the function of metaphors in the process of discreditation of political opponents. In the researcher’s opinion, metaphors allow to create a simplified image of a politician or a party in the eyes of the recipient. Not requiring excessive commitment, they offer an easy way to present someone in an extremely negative light by referring to an object (e.g., *a political hammer*) or a statement (e.g., *political schizophrenia*) and to discredit them (Burzyński 2012: 227). The recipient is exempted from the obligation to analyse events or behaviours since the metaphor assigns a clear value to the given phenomenon.

Mohsen Bakhtiar in his article on dysphemistic conceptualization of an enemy in speeches by two Iranian leaders points out the fact that metaphors used by politicians are based on known source domains with negative value judgements, such as, e.g., an animal, crime, devil, rape, or cancer (Bakhtiar 2021: 129). In his opinion, dysphemistic conceptualizations are the basic method of creating the image of political opponents in political discourse (Bakhtiar 2021: 130).

3. Dysphemistic conceptualizations of politicians and politics

In the present study, those metaphors are analysed which refer to the world of politics and simultaneously assign a negative value to the phenomena they describe, so they can be considered dysphemisms. Metaphors excerpted from internet texts have been divided based on their source domains and 6 most often noted pairs of metaphors have been distinguished: 1) POLITICS IS A SHOW, POLITICIANS ARE INCOMPETENT CELEBRITIES; 2) POLITICS IS FOUL PLAY, POLITICIANS ARE INCOMPETENT PLAYERS; 3) POLITICS IS AN INCOMPETENTLY CONDUCTED WARFARE, POLITICIANS ARE INCOMPETENT COMMANDERS; 4) A POLITICAL PARTY IS A CORPSE, A POLITICIAN IS A GRAVEDIGGER; 5) POLITICS IS AN INFANTILE PLAY, POLITICIANS ARE CHILDREN; 6) POLITICS IS A HUNT, A POLITICIAN IS A POACHER.

3.1. POLITICS IS A SHOW, POLITICIANS ARE INCOMPETENT CELEBRITIES

The first group of metaphors are conceptualizations of politics as a show/spectacle directed as mass audience. Although, as observed by Rafał Zimny and Paweł Nowak, authors *Słownik polszczyzny politycznej po 1989 roku* [Dictionary of Political Polish after 1989], metaphors based on the concept of a show/spectacle can have positive value judgements, on the other hand, they also connote "lack of seriousness, pretence, irresponsibility" (Zimny, Nowak 2009: 326).

This *translatio* type is discussed in detail by R. Burzyński, who classifies among metaphors related to theatre also those figures of speech which are based on the concept of a show/spectacle. In his opinion, all social and political relations can be called a "set of spectacles" (Burzyński 2012: 102). He also quotes the thesis of Lech Rubisz, who finds metaphors of a show to be more adequate for politics than the ones referring to theatre. A show, in the researcher's opinion, is closer to the average recipient than a theatre spectacle directed at a viewer with a more sublime taste (cf. Rubisz 2009: 112; Burzyński 2012: 102).

In the collected material, a tendency can be observed to conceptualize politics as a show associated with common mass entertainment, such as, for example

- a) circus and cabaret: *W obozie antyPiS zasadził się cyrk z kabaretem, jadący w taborze cygańskim* [In the anti-PIS camp, there is a circus with a cabaret, travelling on a Gypsy caravan] (WP: 5.04)³,
- b) fashion show: *Młodzieżowy kampus Trzaskowskiego, stanowczość Budki w oczyszczaniu partii czy kokieteria Szymona Hołowni przypominają spacer po wybiegu dla modeli, ocenianych przez projektantów mody* [The youth camp of Trzaskowski, the firmness of Budka in cleansing the party or the flirtatiousness of Szymon Hołownia resemble a walk on the runway for models, judged by fashion designers] (WP: 19.05),
- c) reality show: *Na ospałą Platformę presja ze strony ruchu Hołowni może podziałać ożywczo. Będzie musiała się postarać, by na koniec to nie ona została w tym tandemie **mniejszym bratem*** [The pressure by Hołownia's movement may have a refreshing effect on Platforma. It will have to make an effort not to become the **small brother** in this tandem] (N: 31.01),
- d) concert: *PiS oczywiście próbowało na bieżąco komentować to, co zaproponowała Platforma, ale z kontr-konferencji wyszedł **koncert znanych kawałków*** [Naturally, PIS tried to comment the proposals made by Platforma on an ongoing basis, but the counter-conference turned into a **concert of well-known tunes**] (N: 6.02),

³ Example quotes are located according to the following model: name of the portal (N – Newsweek.pl, WP – Wpolarityce.pl): publication date.

- e) series: [...] *każdy z nich, zdobywszy władzę, Polakom zaoferuje to samo, powtórkę z rządów Tuska, to jednak casting na taran obozu antyPiS jest szalenie ważny* [each of them, after coming to power, will offer Poles the same, a re-run of Tusk's rule, but the casting for the battering ram of the anti-PIS camp is extremely important] (WP: 19.05) 'about R. Trzaskowski, S. Hołownia and B. Budka'.

The above examples of dysphemistic metaphors related to a show directed at mass audience (a circus show, a fashion show, a reality show on TV, a concert, or a series) offer negative value judgments of political opponents. On Wpolityce.pl website, political activities of representatives of the opposition – called the anti-PIS camp – Rafał Trzaskowski, Borys Budka and Szymon Hołownia, are compared to a circus with a cabaret, a catwalk, or a casting. Such figurative expressions depreciate actions of the opposition, present them as clumsy, not ambitious, even ridiculing. On the other hand, texts published on Newsweek.pl portal criticize actions taken by the ruling party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, for example public declarations are described using the pejorative expression *a concert of well-known tunes*. If expressions related strictly to theatre are used, then their purpose is to compare politics to a specific genre or type of literature, e.g.

Zamieszanie wokół ratyfikacji Funduszu Odbudowy i przyjęcia Krajowego Planu Odbudowy to gotowy scenariusz na komedię pomyłek. Tyle że mroczniejszą, kiedy na końcu okazuje się, że mimo komediowego sztafażu mamy do czynienia z dramatem [The confusion around ratification of the Recovery Fund and adoption of the National Reconstruction Plan is a ready scenario for a comedy of errors. Just a darker one, when in the end, it turns out that despite the comedy staffage, this is, in fact, a drama] (N: 28.04).

Activities of the government are presented on one hand as a cause for humour and laughter – *a comedy of errors*, but on the other hand as *a drama*, which in the colloquial meaning connotes 'something evaluated by the speaker as very bad' (WSJP). Thus, that metaphor is yet another example of a dysphemism used to discredit the government's policy.

Politicians are, in turn, conceptualized as incapable celebrities – popular persons who serve only cheap, pitiful entertainment to the recipient, e.g.

- a) *Język Budki z suflerem. Aż strach pomyśleć, co by było, gdyby "salonowa" plejada z PO zdobyła władzę...* [The language from the prompter's box. One dreads to think what would happen if the "salon" galaxy from PO came to power...] (WP: 30.04),
- b) *Bliższy im jednak poradnik dla początkujących komediantów niż księga narodowych dziejów* [A comedy for beginners guidebook would suit them better than a book about the national history] (WP: 5.04) 'about Rafał Trzaskowski, Szymon Hołownia and Borys Budka',

- c) *Na tym tle, ten nowy słomiany "Miś" płaczący nad konstytucją a potem machający kolorowym dyplomkiem do kamerki, nie wypada tak źle [On this background, this new "Teddy bear" made of straw, weeping over the constitution and then waving a colourful diploma to the camera, does not look too bad]* (WP: 5.04) 'about S. Hołownia',
- d) *[...] a ten królik wyciągnięty z politycznego kapelusza, chwali się fotką, na której trzyma kolorowy dyplom sporządzony dla kilkulatek, że oto on, Szymon Hołownia, dzielnie zniósł szczepienie [And this rabbit pulled out from a political hat boasts with a photo on which he holds a colourful diploma made for a little kid, certifying that he, Szymon Hołownia, bravely took his vaccine]* (WP: 5.04).

The above examples show that in the analysed texts, the object of depreciation is not only the political activity itself, but also specific persons or political groups are discredited. Such metaphors connote a clearly negative assessment – although it is not based on merits but only on consolidation of a pejorative image of the given person or party through their defamation or ridicule. Platforma Obywatelska party is compared to a "salon" galaxy, and its leader – B. Budka – is presented as incapable to act independently and in need of a prompter. The expression *language from the prompter's box* is also a reference to the name of a Polish music band, Budka Suflera, and the use of that ambiguous expression in reference to a serious politician has an ironic tone. The same politician and two other leading representatives of the oppositions are shown as *comedy beginners*. S. Hołownia, leader of the new group Polska 2050, who started his political career in 2019, is criticized for his lack of experience and given depreciating names, such as a *rabbit pulled out from a political hat* or *this new "Teddybear" made of straw* in reference to the title of the comedy movie by Stanisław Bareja.

In all metaphors referring to a show, negative attributes of political activities are emphasized, characterizing them as pretend (fashion show, reality show), deplorable, lacking seriousness (circus, cabaret, comedy/drama). Politicians themselves are conceptualized as performers of those actions – comedians, incapable celebrities, seeking to hold important positions in the state.

3.2. POLITICS IS FOUL PLAY, POLITICIANS ARE INCOMPETENT PLAYERS

In political discourse, commonly used are also metaphors based on the model of POLITICS AS A GAME. Activities of politicians are compared both to sport competitions (e.g., *bouncing a ball*), games of cards and chess (e.g., *have a trump card*, *pieces on a chessboard*), market games (e.g., *trading*, *bargaining*)

or marketing games (a politician as a product, a voter as a target) (Zimny, Nowak 2009: 329–330). Among metaphors referring to this semantic field, R. Burzyński distinguishes the following types of games: individual/team, military/sport, amateur/professional, entertainment/gambling/market (Burzyński 2012: 104–112). In the analysed material, noted are mainly those metaphors which have a dysphemistic function, that is show political activity or a politician in a bad light.

Regardless of the type of game, its meaning as unfair rivalry and striving for victory at all costs is used most often:

- a) [...] *wobec innych partii opozycyjnych Lewica do końca zachowywała twarz pokerzysty, choć już układała się z PiS* [towards other opposition parties, the Left kept a poker face until the end, although it has already started to negotiate a deal with PiS] (N: 28.04),
- b) [...] *gdyby Jarosław Kaczyński nie próbował nieustannie ograć koalicjantów, to Porozumienie Jarosława Gowina nie zaryzykowałoby gry na opozycyjnej połowie boiska* [if Jarosław Kaczyński did not try to continuously outplay his coalition partners, Jarosław Gowin's Porozumienie would not risk playing on the part of the field belonging to the opposition] (N: 27.05),
- c) *Ta cyniczna gra może jednak obrócić się przeciwko władzy* [This cynical game may, however, backfire on the government] (N: 17.05).

In texts published on Newsweek.pl portal, foul play is attributed to the Left, which is accused of double-dealings: holding talks both with the government and the opposition, as well as to the ruling party PiS and its leader Jarosław Kaczyński (cf. *attempt to outplay the coalition partners, a cynical game*).

Dysphemistic metaphors based on the concept of a game are also used in descriptions of politicians, presenting them as incapable, lacking talent and skills of players, e.g.,

- a) *Trzaskowski? Chyba jednak bardziej salonowy frontman niż parlamentarny gracz* [Rather a salon frontman than a parliamentary player] (WP: 17.05),
- b) *Po prostu Budka nie umie w "gabinety"* [Budka simply does not know how to do the "officy" stuff] (WP: 17.05),
- c) *Wygląda na to, że Borysowi Budce brakuje nie tylko charyzmatu frontmana, [...], ale również rasowego gracza, który w zaciszu gabinetów rozgrywa partie politycznych szachów* [It seems that Borys Budka lacks not only charisma of a frontman, [...] but also of a pedigree player who plays games of political chess from the comfort of offices] (WP: 15.04),

- d) [...] *Borys Budka po raz kolejny pokazuje, że nie tylko nie umie być frontmanem a la Donald Tusk, ale również sprawnym gabinetowym rozgrywającym w rodzaju Grzegorza Schetyny* [Borys Budka again shows that **he does not know how to be** not only a frontman like Donald Tusk, but also an **efficient office quarterback** like Grzegorz Schetyna] (WP: 17.05).

In texts published on Wpolarity.pl portal, main representatives of the parliamentary opposition – R. Trzaskowski and B. Budka – are accused of not so much lack of honesty, but rather incapability to play party games, e.g., the first one is deprived of abilities required in the world of politics (*being a better frontman than a parliamentary player*), while B. Budka is attributed, for example, the lack of ability to *play political chess, be an efficient office quarterback*. It is also stated, in colloquial Polish, that Budka *does not know how to do the “officy” stuff*.

All those expressions comparing political activity to foul play or an incompetent sports competition/ chess game/ poker game connote negative value judgements: they ridicule and depreciate politicians and their activities.

3.3. POLITICS IS AN INCOMPETENTLY CONDUCTED WARFARE, POLITICIANS ARE INCOMPETENT COMMANDERS

Presentation of politics in the category of war is considered, as noted by R. Zimny and P. Nowak, the most popular conceptual metaphor related to politics (Zimny, Nowak 2009: 325). In the analysed texts, politics is also conceptualized as military operations:

- a) [...] *Budka jako lider nie porywa mas, a i w montowaniu szerokiego frontu opozycyjnego idzie mu odwrotnie od zamierzonego efektu* [Budka as a leader fails to inspire masses, and in assembling a broad **opposition front, he does the opposite of what he intended**] (WP: 17.05),
- b) *Za to ludzie Budki i ludzie Trzaskowskiego zaczynają w tej wojnie wyciągać maczety* [Budka’s and Trzaskowski’s people **start to pull their machetes in that little war**] (N: 24.04),
- c) *Podobnego zdania był Szymon Hołownia, który miał za mało armat, żeby się napalać na władzę* [A similar opinion was expressed Szymon Hołownia, who **had too few canons to charge for the power**] (WP: 7.05).
- d) *Jakich nowych koncepcji nie zawierałby Polski Ład, rządząca partia ciągle będzie toczyć te same wojny* [Whatever new concepts the Polish Order contains, the ruling party **will keep fighting the same wars**] (N: 20.05),

- e) *Senacka opozycja jest jak rycerz, który wygłasza mowę o honorze, a potem niechcący obcina sobie ucho* [The opposition in the Senate is like a knight who makes a speech about honour and then cuts his ear off by mistake] (N: 28.05).

Actions of PO leader B. Budka are described as clumsy assembly of a broad opposition front, since the politician achieves opposite results to what was intended. All steps taken by politicians supporting R. Trzaskowski and B. Budka are presented using the depreciating diminutive *wojenka* [little war]. This is done in order to depreciate actions of the whole party, present them as not serious and ridiculous, not worthy even to describe them as *wojna* [war]. On the other hand, members of the group are accused of brutality and too radical actions (cf. *start to pull machetes*). The ruling party is presented as always doing the same battles for power, which do not bring any results. In turn, the opposition in the Senate is compared to a knight making speeches about honour and then cutting his ear off a moment later, which is another example of a discrediting and ridiculing metaphor.

The metaphor of POLITICS AS WAR allows to combine two images: political actions and warfare. Although the image of war evokes negative associations of death and destruction, the warfare metaphors used in the context of political relations allow to strengthen the message, exaggerate some aspects of activities of parties and their leaders. Therefore, showing operations of a party as inept military actions, not bringing the desired results, has a hyperbolizing function – however, only negative characteristics of the described elements of the reality are being exaggerated.

3.4. A POLITICAL PARTY IS A CORPSE, A POLITICIAN IS A GRAVEDIGGER

Another dysphemistic conceptualization is presentation of A POLITICAL PARTY AS A CORPSE. R. Burzyński observes that such metaphors – referring to experiences familiar to voters, touching on existential topics, strong emotions, often trauma, are solemn, with the purpose to deeply move the recipient (Burzyński 2012: 111). The metaphor of a *political corpse* is assigned by the researcher to a specific politician (Janusz Palikot) and his opinions – in the recipient's mind, it is permanently attached to that person (Burzyński 2012: 185).

In the analysed material, however, described as a corpse is not a specific person, but the whole political group, Platforma/Koalicja Obywatelska:

- a) *Borys Budka jako grabarz potęgi Platformy Obywatelskiej* [Borys Budka as the gravedigger of Platforma Obywatelska's power] (WP: 19.05),

- b) Borys Budka *kopie Platformie Obywatelskiej grób* [Borys Budka is digging a grave for Platforma Obywatelska] (WP: 5.04),
- c) Wyniki sondaży wskazują, że Polska 2050 jest skazana na współpracę z Koalicją Obywatelską. [...] Tyle że ze strony Szymona Hołowni i spółki nie widać szeroko otwartych ramion. [...] Po co *reanimować trupa?* [Poll results indicate that Polska 2050 is forced to cooperate with Koalicja Obywatelska. [...] Only Szymon Hołownia and co. do not show open arms. [...] Why *resuscitate a corpse?*] (WP: 15.04),
- d) W dodatku budowanie przez prezydenta Warszawy ruchu społecznego w oderwaniu od partii jest dość powszechnie w PO odbierane jako *próba pogrzebania Platformy* [In addition, building of a social movement by the president of Warsaw in isolation from the party, is perceived in PO quite commonly as *an attempt to bury Platforma*] (N: 10.05).

A politician – B. Budka, PO's leader – is conceptualized as a gravedigger for its party – a person who in their actions contributes to a crisis and fall of the group. The party itself is presented as a corpse, which will not be resuscitated by another politician, S. Hołownia. In the last example, R. Trzaskowski is mentioned as the one who has a hand in the death of his party by forming a new citizens' movement (cf. *attempt to bury Platforma*). The pompous tone of those figures of speech is supposed to raise the profile of the event which, in essence, is an inside crisis within the party. Not only the bad situation, but also the impact of individual politicians on it is exaggerated.

3.5. POLITICS IS AN INFANTILE PLAY, POLITICIANS ARE CHILDREN

In the analysed texts, there are also metaphors with negative value judgements, based on the model of POLITICS AS AN INFANTILE PLAY. The [Polish] noun *infantylia* – created with the suffix *iada* – is found in texts published on Wpolityce.pl website. Its meaning corresponds to the meaning of the lexeme *infantile* (WSJP: 'behaving like a child, immaturely and naively, in spite of being an adult'). Actions of politicians are, therefore, conceptualized as primitive, lacking a deeper thought, and compared to children's behaviour:

- a) [...] *kandydat na prezydenta, premiera, prymasa i męża opatrnościowego pozuje dumnie przed aparatem z kolorowym dyplomkiem dla przedszkolaków* [the candidate for the position of president, prime minister, primate, and saviour *proudly poses in front of the camera with a colourful little diploma for a pre-schooler*] (WP: 5.04) 'about S. Hołownia',

- b) *Ale w toku tej wielkiej narodowej infanlyliady tak trzeba pokazywać różnice polityczne – bo można opowiadać o błędach Andrzeja Dudy czy Mateusza Morawieckiego, ale potem trzeba pokazać, choćby palcem, na tych chłopców w krótkich spodenkach, z balonikami, czapeczką ze śmigielkiem, którzy bardzo by chcieli zapisać się na kartach historii jako sternicy państwa polskiego* [But in the course of that great national infantile play, political differences must be shown in that way – because one can talk about mistakes of Andrzej Duda or Mateusz Morawiecki, but then, one must point, even with the finger, to those boys in shorts, with little balloons, tiny helicopter hats, who would very much like to write their names in history books as helmsmen of the Polish state] (WP: 5.04) ‘about R. Trzaskowski, Sz. Hołownia, B. Budka’,
- c) *Kaczyński na żadne niepewne głosowanie nie zamierzał bowiem iść. Wiedział o tym Włodzimierz Czarzasty, dlatego postanowił opuścić przedszkole szefów PO i PSL i przenieść się do podstawówki, a może nawet od razu do liceum, z maturą włącznie* [Kaczyński did not intend to participate in any uncertain vote. Włodzimierz Czarzasty knew that; that is why he decided to leave the kindergarten of PO and PSL bosses and transfer to a primary, or maybe even secondary school, the final exam included] (WP: 7.05),
- d) *Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz wciąż liczył na to premierostwo techniczne, więc trwał na przedszkolnym leżaku* [Włodzimierz Kosiniak-Kamysz still hoped to be a technical prime minister, so he stayed on his kindergarten bed] (WP: 7.05).

The use of the expressions *a pre-schooler* or *boys in shorts*, as well as diminutives (*dplomek*, *baloniki*, *czapeczka ze śmigielkiem* [little diploma, little balloons, tiny hat]) in descriptions of two adult politicians, representatives of political groups, is an example of depreciation. Metaphors based on the concept of CHILDREN may evoke positive associations, but in this case, they serve as dysphemisms: they are used to emphasize immaturity, lack of experience, naivety of politicians.

3.6. POLITICS IS A HUNT, A POLITICIAN IS A POACHER

In the analysed texts, a tendency to attribute specific actions to politicians can be observed. S. Hołownia, not so long ago known as a TV host, whose political standing increased significantly after the presidential election of 2020, became the object of interest for journalists. They paid attention mainly to all steps taken by the politician in order to encourage members of other groups to join his party, Polska 2050, e.g.:

- a) Szymon Hołownia nieustannie stara się **kłusować w klubie Koalicji Obywatelskiej** [Szymon Hołownia continuously tries to **poach in Koalicja Obywatelska's club**] (N: 16.05),
- b) Dlatego **kłusuje po klubach opozycji**, żeby zgromadzić choćby własne koło, które organizowałoby mu takie medialne eventy [That is why **he poaches in opposition clubs** to raise at least his own group, which would organize such media events for him] (N: 31.01),
- c) [...] wartość Hołowni wynika z tego, że **łowi on wyłącznie po stronie opozycyjnej**, zabierając Zjednoczonej Prawicy co najwyżej wyborców Gowina [Hołownia's value is based on the fact that he **fishes only on the opposition side**, taking at most Gowin's voters from Zjednoczona Prawica] (N: 31.01).

In texts published on Newsweek.pl portal, the politician is conceptualized as a hunter, a poacher, which is yet another example of a dysphemistic metaphor. The activity of Sz. Hołownia – establishment of a new party and acquiring its members – is compared to a hunt.

4. Summary

The presented metaphors reflect conceptualization of politics and politicians in a manner characteristic for the discourse in Polish media – internet and press. The analysis of the collected material shows that standards of courtesy when talking about public persons have stopped being a value not only in tabloids (cf. Marcjanik, Bloch 2011: 247–248), but also on internet portals, featuring also texts published in traditional press. The use of dysphemistic metaphors which depreciate and ridicule politicians and their actions become common in the Polish media discourse.

Regarding members of a party, metaphors are used which are based on concepts of comedians, incapable players or soldiers, gravediggers, children or poachers, while politics is foul play, clumsily conducted warfare, a circus, a fashion show, a movie, infantile play, a reality show, a comedy, etc. Politics is conceptualized as mass entertainment and described in the convention of a genre typical for mass audience. Combining politics with entertainment, the so-called *politainment*, and tabloidization of the message – as observed by Ewa Szkudlarek-Śmiechowicz – leads to banalization of texts about politics (Szkudlarek-Śmiechowicz 2016: 105), which – since related to exercising authority in a state – does not, in fact, belong to the entertainment scene.

In the analysed texts, some models known from descriptions of politics are being repeated – one refers to semantic fields of war, game, movie/theatre, circus, etc., however, only negative characteristics of the denotations are invoked. Such metaphors have a persuasive and manipulative function,

they discredit political opponents by presenting them in a negative light. Also, labelling tendencies can be observed, that is naming individual politicians using descriptive and evaluative expressions, marked negatively and repeated in various texts (Zimny, Nowak 2009: 314–315). In texts published on Newsweek.pl portal, Szymon Hołownia is conceptualized as the one who “fishes”, “poaches”, and on Wpolarityce.pl portal – as childish and infantile. B. Budka, in turn – considering the articles published on the second of those websites – is the one who will “bury” PO. Such metaphors, lacking in sophistication, but commonly used in the media discourse, are designed to convince the recipient to assume a specific point of view – a negative opinion on the described activities or politicians. This is not difficult since – as noted by M. Trysińska – language users often stop to notice the metaphoric tone of expressions which have become a kind of linguistic clichés (Trysińska 2004: 140).

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