

# The Metaphorical Use of Boxing Terms in Everyday Language

Lan Chen

Kristianstad University College

The School of Teacher Education

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Tutor: Carita Lundmark

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## 1. Introduction

Sports terms have become so common in everyday speech that we may not even be aware that we are using them. Sports such as baseball, boxing, football, hockey, gambling, basketball, athletics, and darts contribute much to the English language, among which the sport of boxing plays a significant and undeniable role. According to Howe (1988), the most popular sports metaphors in American political discourse are from American football, baseball, and boxing.

We have terms *ringside judge* and *ringside seat* to describe someone who follows a situation closely, and someone who is privileged with a good view, respectively. One could *K.O.* an idea. One could also *throw in the towel* when he is to stop pursuing an objective. We may hear these terms from time to time and people using them might not even realize they have uttered a term. In linguistics, we refer to this as *metaphor*. This is not surprising to cognitive linguists, though, as they perceive that metaphors are not merely in the words we use, but are even employed in our conceptual system. With regard to the cognitive linguistic theory, people conceptualize a particular concept in terms of another. The use of metaphor helps us to understand some abstract concepts much clearer – by using words which have concrete referents.

Countless previous discussions have been made on the metaphorical use of sport terms for a specific target. For example, Woelfel and his colleagues (2008) investigated the role sport metaphors play in educational leadership; Cristian Gibson & Mary E Zellmer-Bruhn discussed the use of five different metaphors (including sport) used for the concept of teamwork in an intercultural perspective; and Nicolas Howe (1988) shed light on the political discourse where terminology of sports and warfare were heavily and systematically used.

Among the various sport terminology that is pervasively used in everyday language, boxing terms, as the concrete concept, are especially common in American culture to understand abstract concepts life, but we may constantly wonder what aspects in particular are most widely applied, the reasons that one aspect rather than another is selected as a metaphorical

target of the boxing metaphor, and so on. This essay discusses the aspects that tend to make use of boxing terms metaphorically as the source and the motivations of the selection of target.

### **1.1. Aim**

The concern of this essay is to analyze how boxing terminology is used metaphorically in different contexts. The objective is to investigate the targets that these terms as the source domain are most often aimed at, i.e. what is described metaphorically by the use of boxing terms, and to analyze the possible reasons why a particular boxing term is chosen as the source to understand a particular target.

### **1.2. Material**

To find out what boxing terms there are, two websites are referred to –The Ringside Gus, a U.S.-based website that provides various information on boxing matches, and Wikipedia. Boxing terms and their explanations are mainly taken from the website The Ringside Gus, under the category featured in boxing terminology. The choice of working with the website is due to the fact that it includes a relatively full list of boxing terms while other sources seldom set aside a single category about it. But this list does not necessarily provide all the terms in use, so in addition to this, another website, Wikipedia, will also be consulted for this purpose. To find how these terms are used metaphorically, example sentences are chiefly sought out by searching through Google, but ones obtained in this way turned out to be mostly about politics and business, with just a few entries to do with other topics. Therefore, three online English dictionaries are employed as the supplement for collecting materials: *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* (2008), *Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online* (2007) and *The Free Dictionary Online* (2008). These dictionaries again function as the supplementary options to one another. Also, these famous dictionaries, based in Britain and America, respectively, are to ensure the reliability of the resources and to reduce the risk of using the language incorrectly.

### **1.3. Method**

Several boxing terms will be selected first, via the commonly used search engine Google. The selection is based on the fact that these terms have been widely used in our everyday language. To do this, the first five entries that include the metaphorical use of boxing terms will be investigated. As many of the suitable entries are from news headlines that might include only sentence fragments, the examples are then narrowed down to sentences that state a coherent and complete idea.

The contexts in which these terms are applied will further be investigated when materials are selected, based on the target domains the source is applied to, such as politics, business, etc. Then each conceptual metaphor will be analyzed and discussed in terms of three sub-sections – the main meaning focus, central mappings and entailments of the conceptual metaphor. For an explanation of terminology, see section 2.

## **2. Theoretical background**

The cognitive science studies how people conceptualize the world. It is a broad discipline, covering everything from vision, memory, and attention to everyday reasoning and language. People might very often hear the words “It’s just common sense,” but in the cognitive linguistic view, nothing is “just” common sense. One of the most fundamental results in cognitive science, one that comes from the study of commonsense reasoning, is that most of our thought is unconscious (Lakoff, 2002:4); that is, we are totally unaware of it.

Ever since 1980 when George Lakoff and Mark Johnson wrote their book, *Metaphors We Live By*, where the new view of metaphor, or the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor challenged the traditional concept of metaphor, it is widely accepted that metaphor is used in everyday life by ordinary people, not just by special talented people, and that metaphor is a process of human thought and reasoning rather than a linguistic ornament. Since then, much work has been done in this area from different angles. In this section, some necessary definitions will first be introduced and then elaborated in detail before the examples are analyzed and discussed.

### **2.1 The concept of metaphor**

Traditionally, metaphor, similar to ‘simile’ and ‘personification’, is viewed as a figurative usage of language mostly found in literary works such as poetry and novels. However, in the cognitive linguistic view, metaphor is used in everyday language without even being realized. People tend to speak of life in terms of journey, like *We’re at a crossroads in our relationship*. This way of speaking about love would be regarded by most speakers of English as normal and natural for everyday purposes (Kövecses 2002:3). In the study of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is defined as “understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain.” (Kövecses 2002:4) When people speak of life in terms of journey, the conceptual metaphor “LOVE IS A JOURNEY” is applied. This conceptual metaphor results in linguistic expressions such as the following:

We've *made a lot of headway*  
We'll just have to *go our separate ways*..

A conceptual metaphor is composed of two conceptual domains - the **source domain** and the **target domain**- and the target domain is understood in terms of the source domain. An important fact to note is that conceptual metaphors typically employ a more abstract concept (such as LOVE) as the target and a more concrete or physical concept (such as JOURNEY) as the source.

Metaphors are based on correspondences between the two domains. These conceptual correspondences are often referred to as **mappings**. Take the LOVE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor as an example. In this case, the abstract concept “love” is understood in terms of the comparatively concrete concept “journey”. Given this conceptual metaphor, a set of correspondences, or mappings can be laid out (Kövecses 2002:7):

<i>Source: JOURNEY</i>		<i>Target: LOVE</i>
the travelers	→	the lovers
the vehicle	→	the love relationship itself
the journey	→	events in the relationship
the distance covered	→	the progress made
the obstacles encountered	→	the difficulties experienced
decisions about which way to go	→	choices about what to do
the destination of the journey	→	the goal(s) of the relationship

## 2.2. The significance of metaphor

Metaphors often build a bridge from the known to the unknown, from the familiar to the unfamiliar. They help us understand and interact with phenomena which otherwise would be too abstract and too complex. It is, therefore, not surprising that in talking and writing about such complex abstract systems as politics or society, metaphors are widely used. According to Thomas Oberlechner and Viktor Mayer-Schönberger (2002), the analysis of metaphors has been largely successful in reaching a better understanding of such complex and diverse areas as foreign policy decisions, financial markets, moral politics, sexual experience and social dilemma.

### 2.3. Partial nature of metaphorical mappings

Although in a conceptual metaphor a concrete concept, or source domain, is utilized to understand an abstract concept, or target domain, it should be noted, since virtually all concepts include multi aspects, that only a part of the source domain is mapped onto the target and only a part of the target is involved in the mappings.

The very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another [...] will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept. In allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept [...], a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept that are in consistent with that metaphor. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 10)

In other words, the metaphorical mappings from a source to a target are only partial. The following examples are taken from Kövecses (2002:81):

1) AN ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING

- a) *We've got the **framework** for a solid argument.*
- b) *If you don't **support** your argument with **solid** facts, the whole thing will **collapse**.*
- c) *You should try to **buttress** your argument with more facts.*
- d) *With the **groundwork** you've got, you can **construct** a pretty **strong** argument.*

Obviously, an argument contains several aspects. It has content; it progresses; it also varies in solidity and strength. This metaphor, as can be seen from the italic words, focuses on the strength and construction of an argument. Therefore, these aspects are highlighted, and meanwhile, other aspects are hidden. This process is referred to as **metaphorical highlighting**.

Whereas in a conceptual metaphor the focus of a target in the mappings is partial, the application of a source is the same as well. In the previous example AN ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING, the aspects of the source domain that are utilized in the mappings are the construction, structure and strength of a building. Likewise, many other aspects of the concept of building, such as the rooms, corridors, roof, location of the building, people living in them, etc., are unutilized, too. This process is referred to as the **metaphorical utilization**.

When we talk about utilization and highlighting in connection with a source and a target,



respectively, we talk about two sides of the same coin. The utilized and highlighted aspects of a source and a target are brought together in a conceptual metaphor through a detailed set of mappings between some of the elements in the source and target domain.

It is important to see that the metaphorical structuring involved is partial. The process of what elements to be utilized or highlighted in a metaphor is determined by the primary metaphors that consist of a complex metaphor (Kövecses 2002: 83). The previously-mentioned example AN ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING, which is a complex metaphor, contains two primary metaphors: LOGICAL STRUCTURE IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE and PERSISTING IS REMAINING ERECT, which, correlated with our experiential basis, captures those aspects of an argument that have to do with structure, construction, and strength.

As for a target, there are usually several sources that are applied to comprehend a target domain. As Kövecses (2002: 84) states:

Since concepts (both target and source) have several aspects to them, speakers need several source domains to understand these different aspects of target concepts.

For example, the concept of ARGUMENT, which includes such aspects as content, progress, and strength, can be conceptualized metaphorically as a container (i.e. *What is the **core** of his argument?*), a building (i.e. *She **constructed** a **solid** argument.*), and a journey (*We have **covered a lot of ground***). With different elements mapped onto a target, speakers are able to comprehend it in various perspectives.

On the other hand, metaphorical concepts can be extended beyond the range of ordinary literal ways of thinking and talking into the range of what is called figurative, poetic, colorful, or fanciful thought and language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:13). Thus, if an argument is a building, it can be constructed, collapsed, restructured; it can have solid foundations, a framework, etc. Therefore, we can say a concept is partially structured by a metaphor and it can be extended in some ways but not others.

## 2.4. Metaphorical entailments

The metaphorical mapping from the source to the target domain can be rich and complex because metaphors have many **entailments**. Entailments are at work when rich additional knowledge about a source domain is mapped onto a target. Metaphorical entailment is a common property of conceptual metaphor (Kövecses, 2002:94). Using two examples *the deadline sneaked by me* and *the days cascaded by*, Lakoff and Johnson (1999:150) show how rich these entailments can be: “Describing something as sneaking by you suggests that you don't notice it and that it is not your fault for not noticing it (...) something that cascades by you moves quickly, dazzlingly, and perhaps somewhat violently”. This is the power of metaphor; it can transport large amounts of meaning that is familiar to us from the source domain (people sneaking by, cascading objects) to an abstract concept (deadline, time).

The concept can be further illustrated with an example given by Kövecses (2002:94). In the conceptual metaphor AN ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY, one element of the source domain is that a journey takes place along a path, which then corresponds to the progress of an argument. But we also have additional knowledge about journeys, namely, that we can stray away from the path along a journey. This manifests itself in the metaphorical entailment that we can also digress from the line of an argument. In this case, we make use of an additional piece of knowledge about the concept of journey to understand a possible feature of arguments.

Each source concept has a **metaphorical entailment potential**, which means that it can potentially map extensive everyday knowledge onto the target. In the case of ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER as is elaborated by Kövecses (2002:96), we possess a great amount of rich knowledge concerning this particular source. For example, the level of the fluid in the container rises as the heat increases (*his pent-up anger welled up inside him*); the heat produces steam (*she got all steamed up*); the fluid and the steam exert pressure on the walls of the container (*he was bursting with anger*); beyond a certain limit the walls will burst as a result of too much pressure (*when I told him, he just exploded*), etc. In this conceptual metaphor, a great deal of coherent knowledge that is associated with heat is fully mapped onto the target of anger.

But not all entailments of metaphors are used. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 52) give the example of the THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor. The parts of a building as a metaphor that are often used include the ‘foundation’ of the building (*the theory lacks a **solid foundation***) and the fact that a building can be constructed (*she **constructed** that theory*). However, other entailments are not used, for example the fact that buildings often have rooms, staircases, and so on. On the other hand, they could be used to create novel expressions like: His theory has thousands of *little rooms and long, winding corridors* (1980: 53). Although we tend to think of these expressions as being figurative, they make sense to us because they are based on the same THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor as the more common expression ‘the foundation of the theory’.

## 2.5. The scope of metaphor

A single source concept can characterize many distinct target domains. For instance, the concept of BUILDING not only applies to arguments but also to theories and societies. The range of target domains that a source domain can apply to is referred to as the **scope of metaphor**.

As has been discussed, not all facets of our knowledge of a concept, or an entity, share equal status, linguistically or otherwise. Virtually all conceptual metaphors have certain specific features, which, in the cognitive linguistic view, are referred to as the **main meaning focus** (Kövecses, 2002:109) or **centrality**, as Langacker (1987:159) puts it:

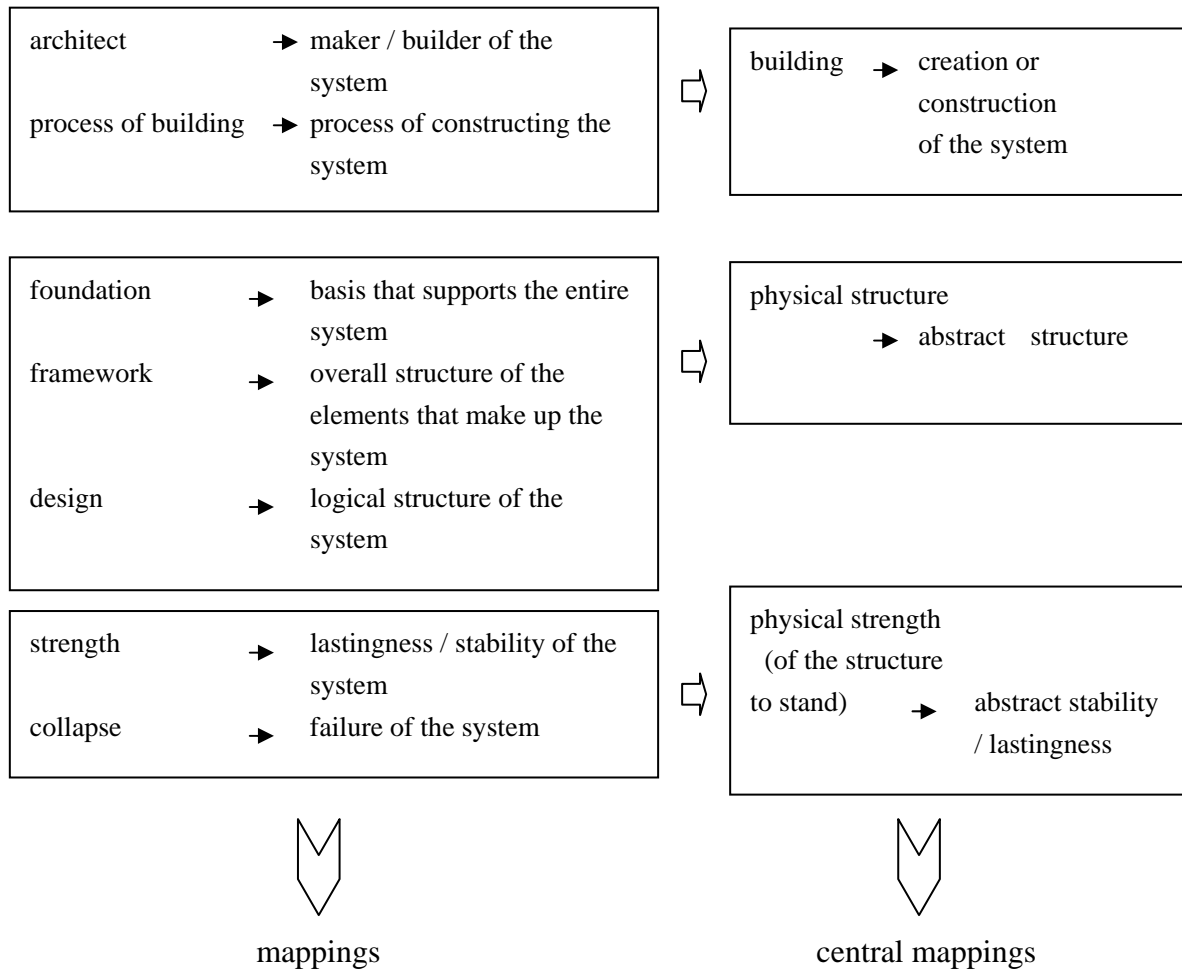
The multitude of specifications that figure in our encyclopedic conception of an entity clearly form a gradation in terms of their centrality. Some are so central that they can hardly be omitted from even the sketchiest characterization, whereas others are so peripheral that they hold little significance even for the most exhaustive description.

What this statement says is that of the various knowledge we have about a concept, or an entity, some features, or meanings are more relevant to the entity in question than others. Therefore, all specifications on the one side can uniformly be attributed linguistic significance and all those on the other side are linguistically irrelevant.

Each source domain is associated with a particular meaning focus that is (or are) mapped onto the target. According to Langacker (1987:160), the inherent nature of a specification does not fully determine its degree of centrality, but several contributing factors can be discerned; centrality tends to correlate with the extent to which a specification is conventional, generic, intrinsic, and characteristic. Kövecses (2002:110) share the same idea that the main meaning focus represents some basic knowledge concerning a source that is widely shared in the speech community, that can be found in most instances of the source, and that uniquely characterizes the source.

Take the previously-mentioned metaphor AN ARGUMENT IS BUILDING as an example (see example 1). Most of the metaphorical expressions have to do with the strength (solid, support, collapse, buttress, shaky, fall apart), structure (framework, groundwork), and the creation (construct) of an argument. Conventionally, buildings have a groundwork and foundation on which a framework is structured; buildings should be solid; otherwise, they are likely to fall apart or collapse. This is basic and central about buildings and most people within the same speech community share this typical knowledge of buildings.

The central knowledge that is captured in mappings is the **central mapping**, and other mappings derive from it. Let us see this process in the ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING metaphor. As has been discussed, the concept of BUILDING can be applied to several targets, such as societies, theories, which can be generalized as COMPLEX SYSTEMS. The relationship of main meaning focus and central mappings can be illustrated in the following graph:



These central mappings can be recast as primary or simple metaphors:

- CREATION/CONSTRUCTION OF AN ABSTRACT SYSTEM IS (THE PROCESS OF) BUILDING
- ABSTRACT STRUCTURE OF A COMPLEX SYSTEM IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE
- ABSTRACT STABILITY/LASTINGNESS IS PHYSICAL STRENGTH OF THE STRUCTURE TO STAND

Kövecses (2002:112) generalizes the following characteristics of central mappings: 1) conceptually, central mappings lead to the emergence of other mappings, 2) culturally, central mappings reflect major human concerns relative to the source in question, 3) motivationally, they are the mappings that are most motivated experientially, either culturally or physically, and 4) linguistically, they give rise to metaphorical expressions that dominate a metaphor.

### 3. Analysis and discussion

It is undeniable that boxing has contributed a significant number of metaphors to the English language. Someone may be *down for the count*; something of beauty is a *knockout*; when people give up, they *throw in the towel*, although they may be *saved by the belt*. A dirty tactic is a *low blow*, as is hitting *below the belt*; one is candid by telling it *straight from the shoulder*, and politicians *toss their hat into the ring*. Among other boxing terms common in everyday speech are *bob and weave*, *main event*, *pull no punches*, *roll with the punches*, and *go the distance*. Speakers of English may describe someone of importance as a *heavyweight* as opposed to a *lightweight*, and an excellent location at an event is a *ringside seat*. While in life, people may hope to have someone *in their corner*.

In this part, the use of boxing terms will be analyzed and discussed first in terms of its scope, (i.e. the target domains). Then for each conceptual metaphors that use boxing terms, the central mappings, aspects of the target that are highlighted and ones of the source that are utilized, and finally, the entailments will further be investigated.

#### 3.1. The scope of the boxing metaphor

Metaphors may be selected deliberately without much individual reflection. The selection is influenced by the situation in which those metaphors are used; different situations may evoke different metaphors for politics or business, in the same individual. Moreover, metaphors are culturally rooted. Some metaphors may come more naturally than others—not because of individual preference or situational context, but because of the metaphors society prefers. In other words, we may not just speak a metaphor; the metaphor—culturally rooted and induced—may speak through us.

Games and sports are characterized by certain properties that are commonly utilized for metaphorical purposes. The concepts conveyed through the game of boxing as the source domain appear to characterize not just one target concept but several, such as POLITICS, BUSINESS, LIFE, CAREER, MORALITY, DEVELOPMENT and CHANGE. The examples are thus

categorized in accordance with the target domains. To avoid repetition, these examples will not be listed here; instead, the categorized examples can be found in the sub-sections in the following part where an individual conceptual metaphor is analyzed and discussed.

Of course, there are other target domains utilizing the same source domain. The examples listed, however, are some of the most commonly used models that are sorted out by the search engine Google on the Internet. One thing to note is that most of the examples with POLITICS as the target concept are about the U.S. presidential election which had just ended when the writing began.

The following paragraphs will elaborate each conceptual metaphor in terms of their main meaning focuses, central mappings and entailments.

### **3.2. POLITICS IS A BOXING GAME**

The realm of politics contains a variety of aspects, such as politicians and their roles, elections and political events (including diplomatic affairs, conflicts and so on). Government is included in the list, too, because when boxing metaphor is applied, it usually aims at the actions or events that the particular government is involved in. Now let us first see the following examples:

- 2) *Sens. John McCain and Barack Obama **landed some punches** Friday night, but neither delivered a **knockout blow** in the first presidential debate featuring the two party nominees.*
- 3) *She's seriously considering **throwing her hat in the ring** and declaring herself a candidate for the election.*
- 4) *Obama and McCain **Square Off** on Solar.*
- 5) *Local government... **down and out** in Canberra.*
- 6) *Obama names **heavyweight** economic team (New York Federal Reserve president Timothy Geithner to serve as his Treasury secretary).*
- 7) *McCain denies he's **taking mandatory eight count**.*
- 8) *Commentator Andrew Sullivan has described Barack Obama's strategies against Hillary Clinton in the 2008 Democratic primaries, and against John McCain in the Presidential election as "**classic rope-a-dope**".*
- 9) *McCain needs **knockout blow** in second debate.*
- 10) *An Iraq **Uppercut** for Bush.*
- 11) ***Sucker punches** and **below-the-belts** can be expected as we enter the **slugfest** season of political attack ads.*

- 12) *Barack Obama has accused Republican rivals John McCain and Sarah Palin of a **low blow** after the vice-presidential candidate said he “pulled around” with terrorists.*
- 13) *Musharraf **down for the count**?*
- 14) *Her extraordinary intelligence and speaking ability made her a political **heavyweight**.*
- 15) *Zimbabwe is **on the Ropes**.*

Boxing terms are found in all examples concerning politics, with some sentences about governments (examples 5 and 10), some about politicians (examples 6 and 14), and most about election (the rest of the examples).

### 3.2.1. Main meaning focus

The main meaning focus is the major theme contained in the source domain that is conventionally fixed and agreed on within a speech community. It represents some basic knowledge concerning a source that is widely shared in the speech community, that can be found in most instances of the source, and that uniquely characterizes the source. Typically, in the case of A BOXING GAME as the source domain, it includes various elements, namely, boxers, coaches, referees, the boxing ring, the fight, strategies adopted in the game, and boxing skills, etc.

Politics is very often conceptualized by means of war and sports partly because it is affluent in contradiction and competition. In the present case of the POLITICS IS A BOXING GAME metaphor, the competition between two boxers for political events or organizations is utilized and focused on. Most of the politics-related examples mentioned above have to do with the fighting process in a boxing game, the tactics adopted in a game, and the competing boxers themselves. This metaphorical utilization is motivated by the fact that when people refer to politics as a boxing game, they usually assume that there are two rival political figures, i.e. politicians, governments, parties, etc. who engage in events and each endeavors to take control over a certain political situation and hold power, in the same way that two boxers fight in order to win the game and prove to be the more powerful one. Therefore, the focus of the metaphor is, more specifically, on the fighting between the boxers. Of course, the fighting might require some tactics to increase chances of victory. At the same time, the competition between two rival political figures is highlighted in the target domain.



### 3.2.2. Central Mappings

From the analysis of the example sentences, the mappings that constitute this metaphor are as follows:

POLITICS IS A BOXING GAME

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| (a) launching a political campaign        | → | declaring a boxing game (e.g. example 2)                 |
| (b) preparing for a political campaign    | → | preparing for a boxing game (e.g. example 3)             |
| (c) the contests in a political campaign  | → | the fights in a boxing game (e.g. example 4)             |
| (d) winning / losing a political campaign | → | winning / losing a boxing game (e.g. example 5)          |
| (e) politicians / political organizations | → | boxers (all examples)                                    |
| (f) political strategies                  | → | strategies adopted by the boxers (e.g. examples 7 and 8) |

The first three mappings deal with the different phases involved in a boxing game, and therefore can be generalized into one mapping, that is, the processes of a boxing game. Hence, we can capture the main meaning focus of the POLITICS IS A BOXING GAME metaphor like this:

- |   |   |                          |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| (a) progress of a political campaign      | → | process of a boxing game |
| (b) politicians / political organizations | → | boxers                   |
| (c) political strategies                  | → | boxing tactics           |

These mappings can, therefore, be recast as the following primary metaphors: THE PROCESS OF A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IS THE PROCESS OF A BOXING GAME (as indicated by examples 2 through 5), POLITICIANS OR POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE BOXERS (as indicated by all examples), and POLITICAL STRATEGIES ARE BOXING TACTICS (as indicated by examples 7 and 8). The three metaphors are the central mappings of POLITICS IS A BOXING GAME, from which other mappings derive.

### 3.2.3. Entailments

When we use the POLITICS IS A BOXING GAME metaphor, we also have additional knowledge about the boxing game. For example, a boxer can declare a fight (e.g. *to throw the hat in the ring*); he can make powerful punches that might cause his opponent's failure; he can even make a punch that is not allowed by the rules (e.g. *to punch below the belts*) etc. We can

represent these metaphorical entailments as follows:

A SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL CAMPAIGN OR ACT IS A POWERFUL PUNCH.

- 2) [...], but neither (Senates John McCain and Barack Obama) delivered a **knockout blow** in the first presidential debate featuring the two party nominees.
- 9) McCain needs **knockout blow** in second debate.
- 10) An Iraq **uppercut** for Bush.

Both the *knockout blow* and the *uppercut* refer to powerful punches in a boxing game, yet they may have different effects on the boxer being hit, in that a knockout blow could directly result in the opponent's failure while an uppercut may not have the same effect. That is why the lack of success and even minor defeats in the war against Iraq launched by Bush Administration is considered to have caused Al-Qaeda to be operationally stronger, which might impose hazard on America, although might not necessarily result in its ultimate failure in the war. On the other hand, a *knockout blow* in a presidential debate means a point made by a candidate in the debate which is so powerful that it could eventually help a candidate to win the election.

INDECENT POLITICAL ACT IS A FOUL PUNCH.

- 11) *Sucker punches* and *below-the-belts* can be expected as we enter the slugfest season of political attack ads.
- 12) Barack Obama has accused Republican rivals John McCain and Sarah Palin of a **low blow** after the vice-presidential candidate said he "palled around" with terrorists.

*Sucker punches*, *punches below the belts* and *low blows* are officially forbidden in a boxing game and a boxer who commits one of these fouls are considered to play the game unfairly. Since politicians are like boxers in a game, these acts can perfectly apply to those political acts done in unfairness, or indecently.

THE SITUATION OF A POLITICIAN/POLITICAL ORGANIZATION/NATION IS THE POSITION OF A BOXER IN A GAME.

- 13) Musharraf **down for the count**?
- 15) Zimbabwe is **on the ropes**.

This entailment is similar to the primary metaphor LOSING A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IS LOSING A BOXING GAME (see 'central mappings d') because the situation of a boxer in a game concentrates on his possibility of winning or losing in a particular moment, yet the result is

unknown. The two examples are similar in that they utilize terms which indicate a dangerous situation where both Musharraf, the Pakistani dictator, and Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's leader, were reported to be under pressure to share their power inside their countries, respectively.

POWERFUL POLITICIANS ARE HEAVYWEIGHT BOXERS.

14) *Her extraordinary intelligence and speaking ability made her a political **heavyweight**.*

A *heavyweight boxer* is sure to engage in tougher boxing games than a *lightweight boxer* does, and thus is usually considered as much stronger. The example sentence uses this term metaphorically for a politician who is of great importance or influence. This term is commonly found in many other realms aside from the political discourse.

### 3.3. BUSINESS IS A BOXING GAME

The source domain of boxing terms is widely applied to business as the target. The realm of business includes various commercial events and acts that companies are involved in. for example:

BUSINESS IS A BOXING GAME

16) *Facebook, Google **Square Off** Over Who Controls Your Data.*

17) *Microsoft uses **bob and weave** for high quality DVD images.*

18) *Orco **getting beat to the punch** on offering.*

19) *When Chrysler was **on the ropes** in 1979, CEO Lee Iacocca put together a display of new models and took it on the road to demonstrate that Chrysler had a future.*

20) *Fedex staff expected to **box clever** to keep customers happy.*

21) *Experts: SCO (Santa Cruz Operation) (Group) is going **down for the count**-- with SCO recent filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, the experts believe that SCO's end is near.*

22) *At **Knockdown Stone** we take great pride in providing traditionally finished Cotswold Stone of the very finest quality.*

23) ***KnockOut** is a free Microsoft Outlook companion product that allows you to easily monitor the state of Outlook on your computer.*

24) ***JAB Electronic Components**: An electronic components distribution company owned and operated by Radio Amateurs Primarily for Radio Amateurs & Hobbyists.*

#### 3.3.1. Main meaning focus and central mappings

Similar to the POLITICS IS A BOXING GAME, this conceptual metaphor focuses on the

competition between business opponents. The famous website Facebook “banned Google's Friend Connect service” so as to prevent its competitor Google from taking over its customers, which is very much like two boxers *squaring off* each other (example 16). Orco Property Group's new project was obstructed by its rival, Immoeast Group, when the latter made a more attractive offer in the market (example 18). Example 19, too, clearly focuses on the contest between two companies. Although we cannot find obvious opponents in examples 17 and 20, we assume that Microsoft and Fedex both adopt ways to win over customers and thus beat their rival companies.

A prominent thing to note, as is shown by example 22 through 24, is that boxing terms are not only used for business events, but are frequently employed as the names of companies or of products. Of course these names have been given for various reasons and are probably highly subjective; yet there is undoubtedly a motivation for a particular name, though, which is expected to be capable of promoting the commercial value of the company or the product in the market. As the boxing game is regarded as a sport of fierce competition, when a boxing term is applied as the source domain for a name, the person who gives it apparently expects it to be something that is more powerful and intensely attractive to customers than its rival companies or products. Evidence can be found from the names *Knockdown*, *Knockout* and *Jab* (examples 22 through 24), each of which indicates a company/product so powerful (at least potentially) that it is like a forceful punch to an opponent boxer.

Analysis of these examples might give us an idea that the target domain of POLITICS and BUSINESS resemble each other very much in that both manifest the intense competition between two boxers in a boxing game, which then leads to the resemblance of the central mappings and entailments.

- (a) progress of a business event → process of a boxing game (e.g. example 16 and 18)
- (b) companies / products → boxers
- (c) advertising / marketing strategies → boxing tactics (e.g. example 17 and 20)

Based on the central mappings, there can be three primary metaphors:

THE PROCESS OF A BUSINESS EVENT IS THE PROCESS OF A BOXING GAME, COMPANIES ARE BOXERS,

and ADVERTISING/MARKETING STRATEGIES ARE BOXING TACTICS.

### 3.3.2. Entailments

The source domain of boxing games entails some additional knowledge. A powerful punch might cause the opponent's failure in a bout. The process of a boxing match would end with a winner and a loser. This additional knowledge contributes to metaphorical entailments such as follows:

SUFFERING A FINANCIAL CRISIS IS TO LOSE A BOUT

19) When Chrysler was **on the ropes** in 1979, CEO Lee Iacocca put together a display of new models and took it on the road to demonstrate that Chrysler had a future

21) Experts: SCO (Santa Cruz Operation) (Group) is going **down for the count**-- with SCO recent filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, the experts believe that SCO's end is near.

If a boxer is faced with a defeat in a boxing game, he is *on the ropes*, and even *down for the count*. For companies, going bankruptcy is like being defeated in a boxing game. Therefore, both examples indicate a situation where a company suffers from a financial crisis, and is about to go bankruptcy.

### 3.4. LIFE/CAREER IS A BOXING GAME

First let us see a list of metaphorical expressions utilizing A BOXING GAME as the source domain.

LIFE/CAREER IS A BOXING GAME

25) Losing the court case was a **body blow** to animal rights campaigners. [career]

26) Suffering from a **one two punch** by both Sedna and Saturn, it is important to seek out appropriate drug therapy and mental health counseling to obtain the emotional support needed during this difficult time. [life]

27) We ought to do something to cheer Bob up. He's really **on the ropes** these days. He didn't get a promotion, and a few days later his wife fell ill and is still in the hospital. [life]

28) Britney: **down for the count**?-- Spears' "comeback" performance on MTV turned out to be the worst of her life. [career]

### 3.4.1. Main meaning focus and central mappings

When A LIFE or A CAREER is conceptualized in terms of A BOXING GAME, the aspect of the source domain that is at work is similar to the target of politics and business. Life and career can be viewed as a boxing match because both of them are, in a way, as competitive as a boxing match. With the absence of a clear opponent when it comes to life, we assume hardships, troubles or difficulties to be our rivals, who are likely to knock us down if we do not fight with them. As far as career is concerned, people have to compete with rivals or co-workers in their jobs. In both cases, they might have ups and downs, just as boxers might beat their opponents down and out one time and be beaten another time. Along the course of a life and a career, people meet with difficulties and challenges that require courage, strength, strategy and guide from friends in order to move along, and these are the same qualities that a boxer needs in order to achieve victory. We can generalize this by assuming the metaphor LIFE / CAREER IS A BOXING GAME.

### 3.4.2. Entailments

Other examples reflect the many metaphorical entailments that are mapped from this source to the target of life and career.

MEETING WITH DIFFICULTIES IN LIFE/CAREER IS BEING HIT IN A BOXING GAME.

- 29) *Social workers are **punch-drunk** from the criticism they have received in recent months.*
- 30) *This man doesn't **pull** any **punches**. I wouldn't like to get into an argument with him*
- 31) *He **knocked down** my business plan, saying I couldn't raise the money to do it.*
- 32) *I was thinking of applying for that job but Carol **beat me to the punch**.*

These four examples deal with difficulties that anyone might meet with either in life (example 30) or career (examples 29, 31 and 32), yet example 29 is slightly different from the other three in that it is more about the effect caused by the difficulty - a situation when social workers are confused at the criticism and don't know what to do, in the same way a boxer feels dizzy and directionless after having had a hard punch from the opponent – than the difficulty itself. On the other hand, examples 30 through 32 apparently indicate the action of meeting with difficulties rather than the effect.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES IN LIFE/CAREER IS AVOIDING BEING HIT

33) *The poor woman has been jeered at and threatened with her life, but she just **rolls with the punches**.*

A boxer has to step back or to one side when being hit so that he does not receive the full force of the attack. *Rolling with the punches* can be seen as a tactic or a necessary act of avoiding being hit. When this is applied metaphorically to life or career, it not only refers to the act of handling difficulties, but indicates the ability to handle difficulties firmly, smartly and flexibly as well.

CLEVER WAYS TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULTIES IN LIFE/CAREER IS USING BOXING TACTICS

34) *Obviously he would have to **box clever** in the witness stand to avoid implicating himself.*

FAILURE IN LIFE / CAREER IS DEFEAT IN A BOXING MATCH

35) *Nobody loves you when you're **down and out**.*

### 3.5. MORALITY IS A BOXING GAME

In a boxing game, some punches are considered as illegal and should be avoided by a boxer. Violation of some rules can result in a point deduction of a boxer. When the boxing game is utilized metaphorically, some rules are applicable at the same time. Foul punches that are used commonly are *below the belt*, *sucker punches*, *low blows*, and *kidney punches*, etc. For example:

36) *Bush family wounds America **below the belt** line.*

37) *The gossip column landed one **low blow** after another.*

When the boxing terms of foul play are applied in everyday language, they usually refer to a behavior that is not acceptable by the society, that is indecent and that would be despised by the public. Interestingly, the source domain of boxing game does not provide any terms that refer to a behavior of high morality. Of course, in the rules of the boxing game, there are good and admirable punches, such as uppercuts and jabs, but they are usually considered as good boxing tactics, which, when used metaphorically, are applied to the target domain of strategy, instead of morality. Therefore, the conceptual metaphor can be better conceptualized as IMMORAL BEHAVIOR (IN LIFE, etc.) IS FOUL PLAY IN A BOXING GAME.

### 3.6. DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE IS A BOXING GAME

Apart from the conceptual metaphors mentioned above, there are some other expressions that are heard in terms of different aspects of human life, such as medicine, law, environment and so on. For example:

38) *Researchers **knock out** HIV.*

39) *Ohio should **beat** casinos **to the punch** by setting rules in advance*

40) *Is battered Arctic Sea ice **down for the count**? -- A few years ago, researchers modeling the fate of Arctic sea ice under global warming saw a good chance that the ice could disappear.*

41) *'Beauty machine' makes average face a **knockout** with a single click.*

#### 3.6.1. Main meaning focus

When A BOXING GAME is used as the source domain, it majorly concentrates on the competition between the boxers, and this point has been reinforced by previous discussions. This, too, is the case with examples 38 through 41, though no clear opponents are found in these sentences. In example 38, HIV is regarded as the hidden opponent that researchers have to fight against by doing medical experiments, and when researchers finally find a proper treatment, they are considered to have knocked out the virus. Similarly, example 39 assumes casinos to be the opponent that Ohio government has to fight against by setting rules in advance. Example 40 differs from the previous examples because the situation described is by no means a progress, but rather retrogression. It has been repeatedly reported that the green house effect has resulted in many climatic changes around the globe, and is the direct cause to the extinction of the Arctic Sea ice. In this case, therefore, the Arctic Sea ice is like a boxer who is beaten down for the count by the green house effect, the other boxer. One thing in common is that these three sentences are concerned with the development or change of a situation. Hence, we can come to the conceptual metaphor DEVELOPMENT / CHANGE IS A BOXING GAME, and the meaning focus is on competition.

Example 40 is slightly different from the other three sentences as *knockout* is used so conventionally in English to mean something or someone that is strikingly attractive and impressive that people might not realize it is a metaphor. But this is exactly how metaphor



works in a person's mind. There is a motivation to this word in this sense, anyway. A face cannot knock out anything, but it definitely causes emotional changes on the one who sees the face. The one who sees the face feels dizzy or stunned as if having been knocked in a boxing game. This can be further supported by the commonly used metaphor EMOTION IS MOTION, in which EMOTION is conceptualized by MOTION. For example, "He's gone crazy". This metaphor is motivated for the fact that our emotional state is revealed through our body and we construct metonymies and thereafter metaphors from this basic experience (Sandström, 2006). Therefore, the opponents of the competition actually exist between the face and the person who sees the face. Yet the focus is more on the effects caused by the act of knock than on the competition itself.

## 4. Conclusions

Boxing terms are not limited to the game itself, but are found pervasively in the English language. They are metaphorically used in many aspects of human life, such as POLITICS, BUSINESS, LIFE, CAREER, MORALITY, DEVELOPMENT and CHANGE, etc. When these targets utilize boxing terms as the source domain, they highlight the competitive sense of the source, except for the MORALITY metaphor, which mainly deals with an act that is not acceptable morally and is compared to the foul play in a boxing term. In each case, the target assumes that there are two competitive parties like the boxers in a game and the competition will finally end with a winner and a loser. In the POLITICS and BUSINESS metaphors, the competition is particularly salient since we can always find rivals in both target domains, such as politicians, governments, or parties in the POLITICS metaphor and companies or products in the BUSINESS metaphor, respectively. In the LIFE/CAREER and DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE metaphor, although less obvious, there are rivals as well. In the course of a life and a career, a person might inevitably encounter various difficulties, with which he has to fight; otherwise he might be depressed and frustrated just like a boxer who is *knocked down and out*. DEVELOPMENT / CHANGE metaphor is somewhat complicated, as it might contain both advancement and retrogress. A progress is regarded as the result of the competition between people who has made the progress and the obstruction that hinders the progress. As for the case of retrogress, the cause of the retrogression seems to become the winner in the competition.

Apart from that, a boxing game might also contain tactics to achieve victory. This is particularly obvious in the metaphor of POLITICS and BUSINESS, as both political and commercial events require strategies.

As the source domain of boxing entails rich additional knowledge, such as powerful punches and their effects on the opponent boxer, and the rules, etc. This additional knowledge thus results in entailments to the metaphors of POLITICS, BUSINESS and LIFE/CAREER.

The discussion about different target domains utilizing boxing terms as the source domain and their meaning focus shows how the boxing metaphor work in everyday language. However, it

is important to note that this paper does not state exactly why this source domain is applied in these particular targets, or what motivates the mappings between the source domain and the multiple targets.

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## Appendix: A glossary of boxing terms

**Beat someone to the punch:** good fighters are quick to react by punching the other fighter before they are hit. (from *The Free Dictionary*)

**Below the belt:** Mainly used in combat sports such as boxing and kickboxing, the term below the belt is referred to all the area of the body that lies, as the term indicates, below the line of the belt, including the genital area, legs, and crotch. In these sports, as in many others, punches must not be struck below the belt, as it is deemed unfair and contrary to sportsmanship. The term is also used in modern parlance to describe a comment or action which is considered abusive, overly hurtful or plain unfair. (from *Wikipedia*)

**Bob and weave:** Bobbing moves the head laterally and beneath an incoming punch. As the opponent's punch arrives, the fighter bends the legs quickly and simultaneously shifts the body either slightly right or left. (from *Wikipedia*)

**Box clever:** to behave in a clever and sometimes slightly dishonest way to try to achieve a result you want. (from *The Free Dictionary*)

**Down and Out:** Lack of prospects, penniless. A boxer who is utterly defeated. Knocked down to the canvas and out of consciousness. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**Down for the Count:** A boxer who is knocked down for the count of ten. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**Heavyweight:** Heavyweight is a division, or weight class, in boxing. Fighters who weigh over 200 pounds (14 st 4 lb/91 kg) are considered heavyweights by the major professional boxing organizations. (from *The Free Dictionary*)

**Jab:** A jab is one of the four main punches used in boxing. Several variations of the jab exist, but every jab shares these characteristics: while in a boxing stance, the lead fist is thrown straight ahead and the arm is fully extended. It is an overhand punch; at the moment of impact, the pronated fist is generally held in a horizontal orientation with the palm facing the ground. (from *Wikipedia*)

**Kidney Punch:** A kidney punch is a blow to the lower back which is illegal in boxing due to the damage it causes to ones kidneys. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**Knockout:** A knockout (also referred to as a K.O.) is a winning criterion in several full-contact combat sports, such as boxing, kickboxing, Muay Thai, mixed martial arts and others sports involving striking. A knockout is usually awarded when one participant is unable to rise from the canvas within a specified period of time, typically because of fatigue, injury (serious or temporarily incapacitating, e.g. a bleeding cut above the eye can blind a fighter), loss of balance, or unconsciousness; that is, the person may literally be knocked out. A

technical knockout (also referred to as a T.K.O.) is often declared when the referee or other judges (such as official ring physician, the fighter, or the fighter's cornermen) decide that a fighter cannot continue the match, even though he did not fail the count.[1] British records refer to TKOs as either "retired", if the fighter refuses to continue, or "R.S.F.", for Referee Stopped Fight. (from *Wikipedia*)

**Knockdown:** A knockdown occurs when a boxer get hits and touches the floor with any part of the his body other than his feet, is being held up by the ropes, or is hanging on, through, or over the ropes and cannot protect himself or fall to the floor. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**low blow:** A low blow is any punch that falls below the beltline. In other words, if you punch someone in the gonads, the privates, the family jewels, the place where the sun don't shine, etc... you have just given a low blow. (from *How-to-box.com*)

**On the Ropes:** Refers to a boxer on the verge of defeat who has been knocked against the ropes and kept there by his or her opponent's blows. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**One-two punch:** A combination of two blows delivered in rapid succession in boxing, especially a left lead followed by a right cross. (from *The Free Dictionary*)

**Pull One's Punches:** A boxer is said to pull his or her punches when he or she uses less force than capable of, holds back from using all ones strength. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**Punch:** Basic punches in boxing are the jab, straight right (cross), uppercut and hook. Then you have the corkscrew delivered off a jab or cross and the wide swinging uppercut called the bolo punch. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**Punch-Drunk:** In boxers it refers to Dementia pugilistica, a neurological disorder triggered by repeated blows to the head over an extended period of time. Symptoms include slurred speech, dementia, dazedness, confusion and inappropriate behavior resembling alcoholic intoxication. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**Roll with the punches:** step back or to one side as you are being hit, so that you do not receive the full force of the attack. (from *The Free Dictionary*)

**Rope a Dope:** Rope a dope was used by Muhammad Ali in his 1974 fight against George Foreman. It involves lying back on the ropes, shelling up and allowing your opponent to throw punches until they tire themselves out and then you exploit their defensive flaws and nail them. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**Square off:** to take a position that shows you are ready to fight. (from *The Free Dictionary*)

**Standing Eight Count:** A standing eight count occurs when the referee stops the fight and counts to eight. During this time the referee will determine if the boxer can continue. In some amateur and professional fights a knocked down boxer must take a mandatory eight count even if he or she has gotten up immediately. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**Sucker Punch:** An unexpected punch that catches a person completely off guard. The term sucker punch dates back to 1947 in the sport of boxing. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**Throw / toss your hat in the ring:** to do something that makes it clear you want to compete with other people, especially to compete for a political position. (from *The Free Dictionary*)

**Throw in the Towel:** To throw in the towel also, to throw in the sponge is to end the fight, to give up, acknowledge defeat. When a boxer's second (his trainer or corner man) feels his boxer is taking a beating and doesn't think he can or should continue the fight he throws a towel or sponge into the ring to stop the carnage, to end the fight by TKO. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**(Take) Mandatory Eight Count:** A mandatory eight count is an 8 second count that a fallen boxer must take when he gets back on his feet. It allows the referee time to decide whether the boxer can continue the fight. (from *The Ringside Gus*)

**Uppercut:** Upper cuts are thrown at close range. The jaw or the solar plexus is the target. It's an infighter's best weapon. (from *The Ringside Gus*)