

***Researching political metaphor cross-culturally: English, Hungarian, Greek and Turkish L1-based interpretations of the Nation as Body metaphor***

**Abstract:**

One of the key-metaphor complexes in conceptualizing national identity is that of the nation as a body or a person. It has had a long intellectual history and still figures in present-day international political discourses. But is it therefore also universally and/or uniformly understood? Evidence from an international metaphor interpretation survey conducted in 30 countries suggests that the elicited interpretations share basic common features but also vary in relation to culture- and/or nation-specific discourse traditions. To capture these aspects, we introduce the analytical tool of “scenario analysis” and compare four L1-based samples of survey data that show characteristic differences between interpretation trends. As a result, we argue in favour of a stronger recognition of culture-specific and pragmatic aspects in metaphor understanding.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural Pragmatics, irony, metaphor, metonymy, variation, universal vs. relative

## 1. Introduction

When asked to apply the “metaphor of the nation as a body” to their own nation as part of a project of cross-cultural metaphor comparison (Author 2020, 2021), four students from Britain, Hungary, Greece, and Turkey gave the following answers:

- (1) [The UK] *acts like a screaming child* that refuses to accept change. It [...] *thinks it can cope without the support of the doctor, Dr. European Union* (English, UK, 22, m)<sup>1</sup>
- (2) If my country was [*sic*] a human, it would be a *male. His body began to decay in the legs, it looks like gangrenous. [...]* *He seems to be dying, but could be saved if the legs were amputated; however, he is too proud to do that.* (Hungarian, Hungary, 22, f)
- (3) Greece is like a *mother that gave birth to “democracy” [...]* *a strong, brave and independent woman that knows how to fight.* (Greek, Greece, 21, f).
- (4) Turkey is like an *old man with Alzheimer disease. [...]* *His children [that] die (soldiers) he forgets.* (Turkish, Turkey, 29, m)

These ‘personalised’ descriptions of the nation, which are drawn from a larger survey corpus (see section 3), are remarkable in several respects, but in the first place they may surprise as answers to a prompt that only asked for a “body”-related answer. For the respective respondents, the metaphor of the NATION AS PERSON seems to have been

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<sup>1</sup> Italics in these and other examples are by the author. The added notes in round brackets indicate respondents’ first language, nationality, age and gender; in examples following no.4 language and nationality indications are abbreviated.

compatible, if not synonymous, with that of the NATION AS BODY. This association could be motivated by a metonymy BODY FOR PERSON, which in its turn may be grounded in universal folk-theoretical knowledge that prototypical 'bodies' are (like) human ones. As regards other respondents who focused exclusively on physiological conceptualizations we cannot know if they, too presupposed this metonymy – they simply did not include such a personalized conceptualization. This leaves the question open if everyone interpreting the NATION AS BODY metaphor is basing it on that metonymy, and hence, whether it is truly universal or not.

Furthermore, in the examples quoted above of the NATION AS PERSON metaphor is used as a kind of conceptual platform to construct detailed characterisations of the nation-PERSON as a *child*, or a *woman*, or a *man*. These characterisations are vivid, with dramatic and/or narrative elements, as well as being explicitly and implicitly evaluative. They implicate contentious political assessments concerning topical and historical issues at the target level (e.g. the UK's relationship to the EU, history of ancient Greece) and vague folk-scientific source concepts such as 'gangrene' and 'Alzheimer's disease', in accordance with popular, socio-culturally variable 'knowledge', i.e. *not* on the basis of direct experience or scientific consensus.

Given these variation dimensions, we may ask whether it is best to describe the cited examples as instances of one single (universal) metaphor, or as conceptually and/or pragmatically different sub-versions. To account for the latter aspect, i.e., differences in argumentative and inferential functions, we need a contrastive pragmatics framework (House & Kadar 2021) that allows us to analyse in detail the relationships between the metaphors and the context of the utterances they are part of. This paper contributes to

building such a framework by first discussing central theoretical aspects of analysing metaphor variation from conceptualist and pragmatic perspectives. We then relate these theories to selected data from an empirical survey of metaphor interpretations (Author 2021), and in conclusion we propose a distinction between two levels of variation in figurative communication.

## **2. Literature review: the ubiquity of metaphor variation**

Engaging in cross-cultural pragmatics research implies an acknowledgement of cross-cultural variation. This may be a truism but it has not always been acknowledged in metaphor research. In his 1993 chapter on “the contemporary theory of metaphor” (which also contains one of the earliest cognitive treatments of the (NATION) STATE AS PERSON metaphor, 1993: 244), G. Lakoff laid down an “invariance principle” which stated that “inherent target domain structure limits the possibilities of mappings automatically”, i.e. the matching source domain concepts are selected without the speakers’ conscious choice on the basis of universal image schemas or conceptual correspondences (1993: 215-216, 245). Accordingly, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) focused on the role of metaphorical mappings as universal principles of mental organization, which were grounded in basic bodily experience (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003: 7-13 and 1999: 9-44, Kövecses 2002: 67-106, 163-182). Psycholinguistic experiments on metaphor understanding that were inspired by CMT demonstrated the high speed and ease of processing and referent identification for conventional metaphors and thus reinforced assumptions about their “automatic” and “unconscious” character (Gibbs 1994: 80-119

and 2005: 182-187). Creative metaphors in poetry and rhetoric, whose interpretation has always been known as varied, were deconstructed as “elaborations” of more basic “primary” mappings or as “blendings” of partly incongruent source and target inputs that could give rise to counterfactual and/or fictional utterances (Lakoff & Turner 1989: 67-70, Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 221-222).

There have been two areas of metaphor use where CMT has not denied a relatively high degree of variation, i.e. cross-cultural contrasts and political discourse. Thus, the lexicalised, idiomatic metaphors of diverse languages and cultures have been studied as regards their underlying conceptual contrasts and the effects of such contrasts on language acquisition and multilingualism (Lakoff 1987; Idström & Piirainen 2012; Kövecses 2002: 183-198, 2005, 2009, 2015: 73-96; Niemeier & Dirven 2000; Yu 2008, 2015; Author et al. 2014). They even include cases where metaphor use by one group of speakers is misinterpreted as literal language by non-native speakers. One case concerns English as *lingua franca* use in educational contexts where learners lack similarly salient metaphor ‘matches’ in their L1s (Littlemore 2001; Cogo & House 2017; Littlemore and Low 2006; MacArthur et al. 2012). The ‘reverse’ case is exemplified by literally intended explanations of worldview concepts by speakers of minority cultures that are interpreted as metaphors by cultural outsiders, e.g., in encounters between members of indigenous cultures and Western scientists and administrators (MacArthur et al. 2015; Sharifian 2010, 2014). Such variation in metaphor understanding in the contexts of language acquisition, multilingualism and intercultural communication puts the traditional cognitive ‘automaticity/unconsciousness’ assumptions about metaphor

reception in question, especially when they are applied to more meaning aspects than mere target referent identification under experimental conditions.

Partly in response to these challenges to CMT, Z. Kövecses (2005, 2015) has proposed a solution for the ‘linguistic relativity vs. universality’ question for metaphors that seems at first sight very neat. Conceptual metaphors, he argues, may be viewed as “a gradient with bodily basis at one end, cultural basis at the other, with doubly motivated cases of conceptual metaphors in the middle, where the influence of social constructionist tendencies is just as strong as that of universal embodiment” (2015: 95). This seemingly Solomonic verdict still has, however, an inbuilt bias in favour of the ‘universalist’ side. Trivially, all metaphors can be subsumed under general, body-based mapping schemas (e.g., MORE IS UP, MEANINGS ARE OBJECTS, EMOTION IS FORCE, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, etc.), so that by comparison with them, culture-specific metaphor variation can always be viewed as a secondary phenomenon dependent on ‘primary’ universal mappings. But the fact that all complex metaphors are hypothetically construable as combinations of ‘primary’ conceptual elements does not explain the pragmatic and culture-specific motivations in metaphor understanding.

The other area of variation analysis within the cognitive paradigm has been the investigation of ideologically motivated variation of political metaphors. It was included in Lakoff and Johnson’s seminal *Metaphors We Live By* (1980/2003: 156-157) and has since become a focus for a multitude of studies that combine cognitive, corpus-linguistic and (critical) discourse-analytical approaches. Many of these studies (e.g. Ahrens 2009; Author 2004, 2016; Beer & de Landtsheer 2004; Carver & Pikalo 2008; Charteris-Black 2004, 2005, 2014, 2019; Chilton & Lakoff 1995; Goatly 2007; Hanne et al. 2015; Lakoff

1996, Lakoff & Wehling 2016; Perrez et al. 2019) analyse political metaphor variation in terms of differential preferences (measured as relative quantities of occurrences) in the use of specific metaphor variants across groups of users (of diverse ideological or party-political leanings/affiliations) of as well as across genres, topics and situational contexts. It has also inspired experimental “response elicitation” studies of metaphor reception, which have partly shown differential “framing”, i.e., attitude-reinforcing or -changing effects (Brugman & Burgers 2018; Burgers et al. 2016; Thibodeau & Boroditsky 2011, 2013, Thibodeau et al. 2019). These studies measure recipients’ responses and their physical and physiological conditions (e.g., the speed of response, eye-movement etc.) in controlled test situations, with the aim of verifying or falsifying hypotheses about the metaphors’ impact on the categorisation of target topics and on attitudes towards them. Thus, for the X IS WAR metaphor, which has been particularly prominent in discourse-oriented metaphor analyses (see e.g., Cap 2006, Goatly 2007, Hanne et al. 2015, Hodges 2011) there are now ‘matching’ experimental studies of its interpretation, e.g., in the context of climate change debates (Flusberg et al. 2017). They correlate depictions of climate change as a WAR situation and their recipients’ heightened feelings of urgency (e.g. regarding tackling climate change). But even such apparently convergent evidence from both discourse-oriented and experiment-based approaches leaves the issue of whether the respective metaphors are “a cause or a symptom of urgency” (Thibodeau et al. 2019: 183-184) open. The significance of variation in the reception of metaphor framing thus still requires further empirical research.

Outside political metaphor research, the question of the reception/understanding of metaphorical utterances has also been given attention in “Relevance Theory” (RT),

which initially accounted for metaphor under the category of “loose uses of language” (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 234) within the wider framework of a pragmatic theory of “ostensive-inferential communication” (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 50, *passim*). Metaphor “and a variety of related tropes (e.g., hyperbole, metonymy, synecdoche)” are viewed here as “creative exploitations” of contextual effects of an utterance in the “search for optimal relevance” that leads a speaker “to adopt, on different occasions, a more or less faithful expression of her thoughts” (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 237), so that the hearer can work out its implications without much processing effort. Metaphors, as one main type of “loose uses” of language, are arraigned on a cline of creativity, with those at the top end (e.g., poetic metaphors) where “a variety of contextual effects can be retained and understood [by the hearer] as weakly implicated by the speaker” (1995: 236) and at the other end conventionalised, near-literal uses. Since the early theory formulation, RT proponents have expanded on their accounts of metaphor and other tropes (Carston 2002: 320-374, Carston & Wearing 2011 and 2015; Wilson & Carston 2006 and 2008), effectively distinguishing two types of metaphor understanding: “rapid on-line ad hoc concept formation” in everyday communication and “slower, more reflective interpretive inferences” that are required for creative metaphors” (Carston & Wearing 2011: 310). Of particular interest for a contrastive pragmatics approach to metaphors are attempts to merge CMT and RT approaches in a “Hybrid Theory of Metaphor” (Tendahl 2009), in which these theories “complement” each other (Gibbs & Tendahl 2006, 2011; Tendahl & Gibbs 2008). Both CMT and RT reject models of metaphor understanding that assume a laborious progression from an initial literal interpretation, to be followed by the hearer’s realisation of its falsity or absurdity and then a further mental operation that

“indirectly” works out a version of the speaker’s intended meaning. In opposition to this psychologically highly implausible account, CMT and RT also agree that the processing effort for metaphors and other “loose uses of language” need not be greater than for literal language use (Tendahl & Gibbs 2008: 1825, Wilson & Carston 2006: 408-409). On this basis, Tendahl and Gibbs propose a two-pronged approach that assigns the analysis of “enduring metaphorical knowledge” to CMT and the study of “pragmatic inferential processes” in diverse situational contexts to RT (2008: 1861). This division of labour between the cognitive and pragmatic (RT) accounts may look neat but, not unlike Kövecses’ solution, it reaffirms CMT’s universalist bias by allocating pragmatic variation (to be studied by RT) to the conceptually contingent surface level of the communicative situation, whereas “enduring metaphorical knowledge” is dealt with by the cognitive approach. In terms of our research questions, the variation in examples (1)-(4) would then just be nuances in applying one universal metaphor, i.e., NATION AS A PERSON. But is such a clear-cut separation between fixed universal metaphors and their ‘merely’ pragmatically motivated variation plausible?

At a theoretical level, this question can hardly be decided, and as we have seen, the evidence from elicitation response studies is not conclusive. As a further avenue of empirically oriented research, corpus-based analyses have so far focused on variation in metaphor use (Baider & Constantinou 2014; Batoréo, 2017, Charteris-Black 2004, Deignan 2005; Nasti & Venuti 2014; Partington 2011; Perrez et al. 2019; Tissari 2017; Author 2017, 2020, 2021; Author & Wong 2020). As a complementary approach with a focus on metaphor reception, the following section presents data from a cross-cultural survey of the NATION AS BODY metaphor that included examples (1) - (4) cited above.

### 3. Cross-cultural pragmatic variation in metaphor interpretation

The survey project was triggered by a vocabulary check in a seminar of international students in 2011, intended as a test if the newly introduced term, *body politic*, had been accurately understood. The results were intriguing: half of all their answers described nation (states) as WHOLE (HUMAN) BODIES, in terms of their anatomy, physiology, organs and health. Prominent BODY PARTS were identified with state institutions, e.g., the *head* with a Queen or King or the President of a republic; the *brain* with the government or its leader, e.g., the Prime Minister, or other high-ranking parts of the national leadership; *arms* and *legs* with the executive and administrative branches of the state, e.g., police, justice; and *hands* and *feet* with the 'working' or 'lower' parts of society, e.g., workers, farmers, or poor people. In addition to this hierarchical perspective, the BODY PARTS' interdependence was also highlighted, e.g., in statements that an *illness or injury in one organ would affect the others* and that *all organs had to work together* to function properly. Such responses were supplied not only by students who had English as their First Language (i.e., from Britain or the USA) but also by Spanish, Ukrainian, Kurdish and Arabic L1 speaking students.

The other set of responses, which were given by Chinese students, linked geographical places (cities, regions) to parts of the human anatomy and constructed on this basis analogies between BODY PARTS and the political institutions or typical activities in the respective cities and provinces. For example, the capital of the People's Republic of China, Beijing, was said to be the *heart* or *head* of the nation, Hong Kong and Shanghai

were conceptualized as *face* or *arms*; the politically separate island Taiwan and Tibet with its independence movement were depicted as *diseased*, *injured* or *troublesome organs*. Borrowing a term from political geography (Callahan 2009), we may speak of a nation's GEOBODY in the sense that a nation's geographical contours and landmarks are likened to parts of the human body with analogous functions and metonymically linked to 'matching' political institutions or functions (e.g. Beijing = CAPITAL AS BRAIN (STANDING FOR GOVERNMENT CONTROL)). Both sets of answers were valid but at the same time systematically different.

UK and US students familiar with the lexical item *body politic* in present-day English, which focuses on the aspects of hierarchical ordering and interdependence of all parts of the NATION AS A BODY (*Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* 1999: 149; *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* 2002, vol. 1: 258), were of course likely to produce a WHOLE BODY interpretation, which is in accordance with that lexical meaning tradition. However, as similar responses from students without English as L1 showed, lexical familiarity was not a necessary condition for such an interpretation. The TERRITORY AS GEOBODY-based interpretations by Chinese students, on the other hand, seemed to be a group-specific preference, and not so much conditioned by any lack of linguistic familiarity but rather by culture-specific preferences.

### **3.1 Corpus-construction**

As the initial group of informants (n=14) was far too small to furnish reliable conclusions, a larger sample of responses was needed as well as a standardised questionnaire that also avoided the term *body politic* with its historical 'baggage' (Author 2010: 69-78).

With a small research team, we devised the following task: “The concept of ‘nation’ can be described by way of a metaphor or simile that presents it in terms of a human body. Please apply this metaphor to your home nation in 5-6 sentences”. The vagueness of the source and target concepts (NATION, BODY) was designed to leave room for creative interpretations. Beyond that main question, we asked the respondents (who remained anonymous) to provide minimal sociolinguistic information to ensure comparability of results.<sup>2</sup>

The questionnaire was distributed from 2012 onwards, with the very generous, freely given support of colleagues and students, in language- and communication degree programmes at 51 universities in thirty countries, resulting in nearly 2100 completed questionnaires. Some of these failed to answer the question in a meaningful way and were discarded from the database, which left a total of 1850 relevant responses. By eliminating micro-samples of a few L1 backgrounds in single figures, we settled on a corpus of 1772 responses that were grouped into 24 different L1 backgrounds.<sup>3</sup> The two interpretations types that we had encountered in the 2011 test (NATION AS A (WHOLE) BODY and GEOBODY) and the PERSON version used in examples (1)-(4) reappeared many times in the corpus and formed distinctive interpretive patterns in the sub-samples. Such patterns can be regarded as “scenarios” in the sense of conceptual clusters combining lexical material (structured in semantic fields and appearing as collocations),

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<sup>2</sup> As can be expected the age-range of respondents was concentrated in the 18-15 bracket, with many samples including near-100% of informants in that bracket. The gender distribution was slanted in favour of female informants, with usually 55+ % and in some cases 70+ % female students. Only a few samples from the Middle Eastern region had male majorities.

<sup>3</sup> The selected L1 samples in the corpus were: Arabic, Bulgarian, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Croatian, Dutch/Flemish, English, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Pasto and/or Urdu, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Turkish, Ukrainian.

and textual-pragmatic material, i.e. story-lines and evaluative implicatures (Lakoff 1987: 284-287, Taylor 1995: 87-90, Author 2006). Scenario-based corpus analysis has been employed in a number of studies of metaphor *use* in public discourse (Deignan 2010; Heyvaert 2019; Semino 2008, 2016; Semino et al. 2018, Author 2006, 2016) but not yet in the investigation of metaphor *interpretation*.

When applied to the corpus of NATION AS BODY responses, the scenarios of WHOLE BODY, GEOBODY and PERSON covered the vast majority (80%+) of answers, but we found two further sub-variants that were conceptually distinct, i.e., depictions of the nation as PART OF A (LARGER) BODY and as PART OF EGO'S (i.e., the writer's) BODY. The following four examples illustrate these additional scenarios:

- (5) Turkey is like a *heart that connect [sic] east countries to west countries like blood cells in vessels*. (T, T, 20, m)
- (6) England is like an *appendix*, not very significant anymore but *can still cause trouble* and make you realise it's there if it wants to. (E, UK, 18, m)
- (7) The *hair on your head* is like the cities in Hungary besides Budapest the capital city *which is like your face*. (H, H, 20, f)
- (8) Wherever I go *Greece hurts me. (Greece is like a woman)* (GR, GR, 21, f)

In examples (5) and (6) the respective nations are not seen as WHOLE BODIES but as PARTS of a larger BODY, which are then varyingly explicated, with different functional and symbolical values attached to them. In examples (7) and (8) the respective nation is equated with the writer's own body or body part, thus expressing identification. Together

with these ‘supplementary’ scenarios of BODY PART and PART OF EGO, the three main scenarios of (WHOLE) BODY, GEOBODY and PERSON, covered all responses in the survey. The multitude of recorded BODY/PERSON-related source-concepts, which ran into more than one hundred for many L1-samples, could thus be summarised into five “scenario”-clusters.

Coding for source concepts was carried out by a team of four coders, on the basis of the “Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit” (MIPVU)-model (Steen et al. 2010), and for scenarios on the basis of collocation patterns and pragmatic links (e.g. explicit evaluation and irony/sarcasm), by the same team.<sup>4</sup> Of course, pragmatic implicatures could only be established if sufficient context (in the sense of manifest context) was provided in the answer. Many short responses did *not* provide enough context to allow unambiguous pragmatic assessments, and the division between positive and neutral evaluations (which together formed the vast majority of all scenario uses) was often fuzzy. We therefore eventually only coded explicitly negative and ironical (implicitly negative) scenario versions as well as the (few) non-evaluative humorous ones.

Given the openness of the task, the responses varied in length: some had only one laconic statement; others were more verbose. Whilst some responses included many sentences that all focused on one scenario, others contained several scenarios. Hence, the number of scenario instances was higher than that of submitted responses. In total, the 1772 selected questionnaires yielded 2486 scenario instantiations. In the following sections, we will present findings for the English, Greek, Hungarian and Turkish L1

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<sup>4</sup> As the coding team was quite small, training and coding processes could be checked and discussed for all samples until consensus was reached.

samples, with a particular focus on culture-specific allusions and pragmatic aspects of evaluation and irony.

### 3.2 The English L1 sample

The sample of responses from informants with English as their First Language was collected across Britain, the USA, New Zealand and Australia, as well as from various European universities. It includes 183 responses altogether, 59 by British nationals, 34 by US, 42 by New Zealand and 46 by Australian nationals, one by an Irish and one by a Canadian national. This sample generated 232 scenario instances, which showed the following distribution:

| <i>Number of scenarios overall: 232 (= 100%)</i> |      |         |           |             |        |
|--|------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|
| <i>Scenarios</i>                                 | BODY | GEOBODY | BODY PART | PART OF EGO | PERSON |
| <i>Tokens</i>                                    | 103  | 59      | 23        | 2           | 45     |
| <i>Percentages</i>                               | 44%  | 25%     | 10%       | 1%          | 20%    |

TABLE 1. *Scenario distribution: English L1*

Given that *body politic* lexicalisation goes back 500 years and that the English/British political theory traditions conceptualizing the nation state as a body even reach back to the Middle Ages (Harvey 2007; Nederman 2004), there can be little surprise that the (WHOLE) BODY scenario is the dominant one in the English L1 sample, together with its standard implications of hierarchical structure and interdependence (i.e., top-down orientation, functional and aesthetic hierarchies of life-essential vs. non-essential, ‘superfluous’ and ‘lowly’ organs and limbs). It is followed by the GEOBODY-scenario,

which assigns the respective national capitals such as London, Washington, Canberra and Wellington 'top' status (*head, brain or heart*). These responses were similar to the Chinese students' answers in the 2011 test. However, in contrast to the consistently affirmative Chinese answers, the GEOBODY-scenario is also used in the English L1 sample to relegate some places or regions to the 'lower' regions in the nation-BODY, e.g., *backside, appendix, anus*. In a similar argumentative or polemical vein, the BODY PART scenario allows authors to comment on institutional and/or social aspects of the *body politic* that they want to hold up to praise or, more often, ridicule (see example 6 above). The GEOBODY- and BODY PART scenarios are thus particularly exploited by the English L1-speakers to achieve ironical or sarcastic effects of denigrating aspects of their respective nation.

PART OF EGO examples are only minimally in evidence whereas the NATION AS PERSON scenario, which accounts for one fifth of all instances, includes the most detailed characterizations. They depict the respective nation in a personal (e.g., age-specific) role, with (supposedly) corresponding 'typical' behaviour and provide an evaluative commentary expressing ethical and/or emotional identification or distancing, as in the following examples (see also example 1 above):

- (9) England is an *ageing person*, one that has been going for a long time. [...]  
England used to have many other *clothes* (colonies) to dress itself in.  
However, it has since given away all of it's [*sic*] *clothes*. (E, UK, 18, f)

- (10) My nation is *fat*. Lying supine, its *head is in the center* [...] Its fat is a combination of future pregnancy, a bloated [*sic*] past and an uncontrollable *metabolism*. (E, US, 25, m)
- (11) New Zealand is like a *little brother chasing after the nations of the world* and *clamouring for attention*. (E, NZ, 18, f)
- (12) I would equate Australia to a *body during adolescence*. Ideologies are developing and changing at a rapid pace, though not without internal conflict. *The brain is exposed to new hormones* such as the older generation of Australia is exposed to multiculturalism and expected to adjust to it. The *parasites* are the people who reject these inclusive notions. (E, AUS, 18, f)

Together with implicitly evaluative GEOBODY and BODY PART conceptualizations, such explicitly critical, normatively slanted, personalized depictions add up to 94 judgmental comments in the English L1 sample. When calculated as a percentage of all scenario instantiations in the sample, the overall score yields a figure of 41%, which is the highest across all sizeable cohorts (i.e. those with more than 50 scenario instances). Of these, 39 depict the respondents' home nations in a partly or wholly negative, 'serious' perspective, 45 ridicule it ironically/sarcastically and 10 give it a sympathetic-humorous characterization. We detected some subtle differences between the distinct national cohorts, although the imbalance of sub-sample sizes made it impossible to gauge their statistical significance. The British sub-sample is characterized by matching amounts of critical and ironical comments ( $n = 18$  for each type) and a small minority of four

humorous comments, yielding 40 instances altogether. The ironical remarks in this sub-sample are usually polite, focusing mainly on vaguely ‘problematic’ or ridiculous BODY PARTS and employing euphemisms (*appendix, belly button, backside*). In the smaller US cohort with an overall number of examples for all three types (n = 17) criticism appear to be more sarcastic rather than ironical, with references to *bipolar brain function, Frankenstein-like* features and deadly *cancer* threatening the *body politic*. The New Zealand sub-sample includes 14 relevant examples, the majority of which are not strongly evaluative but rather creative, humorous references to the nation as an inexperienced PERSON (*young girl/boy*), as being *emotional*, or as a BODY PART of uncertain status (*middle toe*). The 23 examples in the Australian sub-sample show a predilection for taboo body parts and drastic conceptualizations (*butt, nether regions, ass, parasites*) that serve outspoken and sarcastic criticism.

### 3.3 The Hungarian L1 sample

The Hungarian L1 sample was elicited at two Hungarian universities and its scripts (n = 53) make up just one third of the English L1 sample but it still generates 83 scenario instantiations. Their distribution is broadly in line with the English L1 scenario pattern, as it has the (WHOLE) BODY scenario in first and GEOBODY in second place:

| <i>Number of scenarios overall: 81 (= 100%)</i> |      |         |           |             |        |
|---|------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|
| Scenarios                                       | BODY | GEOBODY | BODY PART | PART OF EGO | PERSON |
| Scenario tokens                                 | 40   | 26      | 2         | 5           | 8      |
| Percentages                                     | 49%  | 32%     | 3%        | 6%          | 10%    |

TABLE 2. *Scenario distribution: Hungarian-L1*

As in the English L1 sample, the BODY scenario is used to articulate notions of hierarchy and interdependence among the BODY PARTS. However, the nation-BODY is also viewed as being larger than the present-day nation-state because the nation's territory has been reduced, which leads to overlaps with the GEOBODY scenario:

- (13) I think members, people of a nation are connected with each other just *like parts of the body by having a common descent*, history and language. [...] during the history, our country, the territory of Hungary was *cut* several times, the borders were drawn through other countries and families were *torn from each other like a body without some parts of the body*. [...] A lot of Hungarians live all over the world but wherever they live they will *remain parts of the body*. (H, H, 54, f)

In this example, the nation's people-BODY is viewed as larger than its actual GEOBODY. A similar line of argumentation can be found in references to former parts of the nation's territory that nowadays belong to neighbouring countries, as *amputated*, *torn*, *lost* or *mutilated limbs*. The background for these conceptualizations is the partition of Hungary after World War I in the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty, which is recalled in the following examples:

- (14) In the Trianon Peace Treaty we lost big parts of our country, therefore we have the term '*truncated Hungary*' (H, H, 26, f)

- (15) *Our bloods [sic] were torn away from the nation in 1920 [but] the country managed to stood [sic] up (in Hungarian literally: stood into its sole) [...]*  
(H, H, 25, f)

Such responses confirm discourse-historical findings Hungary (Molnár 2001: 262; Putz 2016, 2019) about the enduring trauma of the Hungarian nation losing large parts of its territory and of its population in the 1920 Treaty, which sustains a remembrance culture motivated by the perceived unjust dispossession of essential parts of the nation-BODY. The BODY PART scenario is only minimally represented in the Hungarian L1 sample, with just two instances. One of these humorously depicts the nation as *wavy hair*, the other one as a *fist* (“fights for European liberty”, H, H, 21, m). In the second case the BODY PART *fist* stands metonymically for a (brave) PERSON, i.e., it thus overlaps with the PERSON scenario, which is confirmed by the rest of the response: “like a *waymaker* which walk [sic] in front of the queue”. PART OF EGO is also only marginally represented: its instances have the collective Self as referent, visualised as *blood*, *heart* and *face*, which are usually employed to profess the writers’ patriotism. The PERSON-scenario is slightly larger (10%) and has three instances affirming the nation’s strong *soul* or *spirit*. A unique characterization is that of *a sick man who desperately needs a leg amputation but refuses it, due to his pride* (see example 2 above). Uniquely, this interpretation turns the above-mentioned conceptualization of national *amputation*. In example (2), the amputation is not viewed as a historical catastrophe but as the nation’s sole chance for survival. Mostly, however, the concept of *amputation* in the GEOBODY scenario relates to

the experience of territorial and demographic loss and informs most of the Hungarian L1 sample's 14 critical and/or ironical comments (= 17% of scenario instances).

### 3.4 The Turkish L1 sample

The sample of responses by informants with Turkish as first language has 83 scripts, most of which were collected in Turkey, plus seven more from European and Australian universities. Its scenario table differs sharply from those of the English and Hungarian L1 samples by favouring the BODY PART scenario, with PERSON in second place:

| <i>Number of scenarios overall: 134 (= 100%)</i> |      |         |           |             |        |
|--|------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|
| Scenarios  | BODY | GEOBODY | BODY PART | PART OF EGO | PERSON |
| Scenario tokens                                  | 17   | 9       | 60        | 19          | 29     |
| Percentages                                      | 13%  | 7%      | 45%       | 14%         | 21%    |

TABLE 3. *Scenario distribution: Turkish L1*

Some BODY PART conceptualizations are combined with the GEOBODY scenario, often with the implication that Turkey is a CONNECTING PART that links other nations within a larger BODY-WHOLE (see also example 5 above):

- (16) Turkey is *like a brain [...] between Asia and Europe*. (T, T, 22, f)
- (17) Turkey's [...] *head is its geographical position, attracting lots of attention from other countries*. (T, T, 19, f)

Whilst in these cases the PART function is geographically grounded, the majority of BODY PART concepts in this sample combine physiological and symbolic features which link them with the PART of EGO and PERSON scenarios:

- (18) Turkey is like a *heart for us. Cause [sic], heart is an organ that contains our emotions. [...]. Like heart our country is vital for us.* (T, T, 19, f)
- (19) Turkey is like a *human's brain. You can have a beautiful face or fascinating body. It doesn't matter if your brain doesn't work they all throw away [sic].* (T, T, 20, f)

The main motivating factor for these HEART and BRAIN conceptualizations appears to be their essential status for the nation's existence and proper functioning. The HAND-FINGERS-FIST complex, with 10 instantiations altogether, is used to highlight mutual help and/or complementarity of different parts of the nation (e.g., "My home nation is like the two *hand [sic]* in a body. [...] They [...] can *work better when they are together*"; "[Turkey's] separate regions [are] like *fingers and [...]* when they came together they *make anything they want*"; "whenever it is in dangerous situations [Turkey] *comes together like [fingers] which create a fist*"). Other ORGAN/BODY PART conceptualizations focus on Turkey's relationship with the rest of the world, in terms of an open-minded, altruistic attitude or of a relationship of dominance:

- (20) Turkey is the *eyes of the world, opening to other nations* (T, T, 32, m)

- (21) My nation is like an *injured arm*. *Although it has so many injuries, it gives hand [to] everybody needing help.* (T, T, 22, f)
- (22) Turkish nation is like a *neck* because *Turkiye [sic] is a power country in the Middle East* (T, T, 22, f)
- (23) Turkey is like a *trunk*. [...] *Trunk carries the heart, [...], therefore trunk is the most strong part [sic] of the body.* (T, T, 19, m)

In these examples the PART OF BODY conceptualization includes a symbolic function that links it to quasi-personal activities and characteristics of the nation (open-mindedness, helpfulness, power, strength), which are usually positively connoted. In such uses, the BODY PART and PERSON scenarios are integrated in a conceptual “blend” (Fauconnier & Turner 2002). Literally speaking, a BODY PART cannot have personal traits, such as consciousness or conscience, but in the blended scenario-space the symbolic functions of organs such as *brain* and *heart*, which conventionally stand for reason and emotion, are endowed with agency (see 24 and 25), and even the *skeleton* can be credited with personal achievements (26):

- (24) Turkey is *heart*. *Turkey is emotional. Turkey decides something emotively.*  
For instance I think Turkey shouldn't go to war but [it] did. (T, T, 33, f)
- (25) My home nation is like a *brain*. *Everything which is occurred [sic] on human body is stored in brain.* [...] if we lose our *conscience* of nation, we lose everything of our past and lose all our *personality*. (T, T, 23, f)

- (26) The Turkish nation is like a *skeleton in human body*, it not only keeps the whole country in one piece but also creates the strong and holy [sic] social values (T, T, 20, m)

Like the BODY PART and PART OF EGO scenario blends, those of BODY PART and PERSON often serve to express a (mainly positive) ethical evaluation of present-day Turkey's role in the world. Such patriotic praise of the nation forms the great majority of responses; critical and/or ironical evaluations only account for 10% of all scenario instances (n=14).

### 3.5 The Greek L1 sample

The Greek L1 sample is the smallest of those selected here, with 32 scripts altogether, which generate just over 50 scenario instantiations. Due to its small size, comparisons with the other samples can be only tentative, as the percentages may be distorted, but they are distinct enough to warrant further investigation:

| <i>Number of scenarios overall: 51 (= 100%)</i> |      |         |           |             |        |
|---|------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|
| Scenarios                                       | BODY | GEOBODY | BODY PART | PART OF EGO | PERSON |
| Scenario tokens                                 | 4    | 2       | 13        | 2           | 30     |
| Percentages                                     | 8%   | 4%      | 25%       | 4%          | 59%    |

TABLE 4. Scenario distribution: Greek L1

The outstanding feature is the strong domination of the PERSON scenario; it is in turn dominated (11 out of 30 instances) by stereotypical depictions of Greece as a *mother figure* of ancient fame (see also example 3 above):

(27) My country, Greece is the *mother of democracy*. (GR, GR, 21, m)

This *female authority* figure can even be elevated to the status of a *goddess* who “wears a light, white dress” and holds a “torch of fire that leads the world towards democracy and philosophy” (G, G, 21, f). It seems plausible to assume that publicly known artistic representations of ancient Greek goddesses serve as the models for the stereotype of Greece as a beautiful and at the same time motherly figure. The character traits associated with her are *generosity* and *hospitality* (e.g. to refugees), *protectiveness*, *courage* and *independence*.

There are, however, further sub-strands of nation-personalization in this sample. One is that of Greece as a FEMALE VICTIM, comparing her past *glory/beauty* with today’s impoverished status (on account of the post-2009 socio-economic crisis, which was relatively recent at the time of data collection 2015-16):

(28) *Greece is like a woman with long, curly black hair. She wears a long, white, ancient greek [sic] style dress which indicates her long glorious past, her dress, however, is ripped due to the hard times she has been through.* (GR, GR, 25, f)

The other sub-strand is masculine-gendered and associated variously with positive, negative and mixed attributes, e.g. as a “*sophisticated man* who has enlightened the whole world in relation to culture and arts”, an “*egocentric man* who does not care for (the young) his family” or an “*65 year old man, who is wise and clever but he hasn’t be*

*[sic] able yet to use his intelligence to become happy*". One unique personalisation is that of the nation as an over-excited *child* that needs support:

- (29) Greece is like a *selfish crying child who always pursues to be the centre of attention. When in trouble, the little Greek becomes tormented and disorientated, gets lost and desperately seeks hope in an attempt to compensate for its own immature nature. When in euphoric state, the little Greek kid gets overenthusiastic [and] passionate but vulnerable.* (GR, GR, 23, f).

Whilst the source-narrative in this example is highly detailed, the target meaning is only vaguely implying a reference to present-day political problems. The passage reads like the start of an essay about the 'troubles' of the young Greek nation-*child*, more than like a political comment. It strikes an ironical, moderately critical note, not unlike the *old man* characterisations cited earlier. The altogether six critical and ironical responses in this sample yield 12% of scenario instances.

#### **4. Discussion**

The four L1 samples provide evidence of cross-cultural variation in conceptualizing the NATION AS A BODY. Their contrasts are not absolute but distributional in relative frequency of occurrences of scenarios. As the samples differed in size as well as in homogeneity, the findings can only be regarded as indicative and need to be corroborated by further research. Nevertheless, some preliminary insights can be formulated.

In the first place, the conceptual metaphor of the NATION AS BODY is evidently accessible to all four groups discussed here, and to all other groups in the larger corpus (Author, 2021). Its *cross-cultural interpretability* is thus beyond doubt. This finding in itself does not prove *universality* but when put together with evidence from another 20 language background makes it highly probable (Author 2021: 179). It also makes good sense to assume that the BODY, as arguably the phenomenologically most closely experienced source domain for humans, is used in all cultures to conceptualize their social and/or political structures. But this assumption does not imply *uniformity* of conceptualization, as the existence of five basic scenarios across the samples studies here (and again across the whole corpus) demonstrate. Thus, the English and Hungarian L1 groups prioritize the scenarios of the NATION AS A WHOLE BODY and GEOBODY, but only the Hungarian L1 uses the latter as a vehicle to articulate collective traumata about national *truncation* experiences. The Turkish L1 sample, on the other hand, highlights the NATION AS A BODY PART, most often to emphasise the nation's versatility, strength and power as part of a patriotic narrative. The Greek L1 sample exploits mainly the NATION AS PERSON scenario, both for praise of Greece's historical importance as *mother of democracy* but also to deplore its current distress and disorientation.

In all these cases, it is the scenarios rather than the abstract schematic mapping, BODY - NATION, that serve as platforms for inferences and pragmatic effects, such as irony or explicit criticism. The scenarios can fulfil this function because their narrative-evaluative bias (e.g. about the interdependence and hierarchy of BODY PARTS, the identity-building projection onto EGO, or the character traits of nation-PERSON) enables users to allude to stereotypical assumptions. e.g. about the *head-heart* relationship, the *loss of a limb* and

the danger of *parasites* for the body, the gender/family role of *mother*) that can be developed into arguments in favour of specific evaluative stances.

The other main dimension of contrast between the L1 samples concerns the relative amount of critical, ironical and/or humorous comments. Their frequency is the highest in the English L1 sample (with clusters of different types in particular nation sub-samples, i.e. UK for irony, US and Australia for sarcasm and ‘black humour’, and New Zealand for gentle/neutral humour). The percentages for the other samples discussed here are significantly lower, i.e. between c. 10-20%. In the Greek and Hungarian L1 samples (12% and 17%, respectively) irony, humour and criticism relate mainly to specific topical or historical experiences (post 2010 financial crisis and Trianon Treaty). The Turkish example is not wholly devoid of such cases, as example (4) shows, but they amount to just about 10%. In other samples of the survey, their percentages are even smaller, down to small single figures (Author 2021). The great majority of the NATION AS BODY metaphor scenario instances thus seem to be applied in a vaguely affirmative tendency of “banal nationalism” (Billig 1995).

## **5. Perspectives for further research**

In this article we have shown that the study of variation phenomena in elicited metaphor interpretation data contributes to cross-cultural pragmatics. The observed variation patterns can be related to culture-specific discourse traditions and trends in thinking and speaking about one’s nation. Whilst the general NATION AS BODY metaphor seems to be based on a schematic, *universally accessible* conceptual mapping, it is at the level of scenarios (WHOLE BODY, GEOBODY, BODY PART, PART OF EGO, PERSON) that culture-specific

clustering and pragmatic inferences drawn from them can best be analysed. The cross-cultural contrasts in such inference patterns (e.g. evaluative assumptions about BODY or PERSON characteristics, use of irony) need to be further validated, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In particular, the cultural traditions they are based on have only been briefly alluded to here and warrant a much deeper analysis involving socio-cultural and political information). But they show that the 'universal-vs.-relative' dichotomy, or even a 'gradient' view (universal experience-based → culture-specific variation phenomena) is over-simplifying, as it fails to recognise the amount of variation. Instead, the scenario-based approach can do justice both to universal conceptualization strategies such as the semantic 'embodiment' of the nation and to contrastive, culture-specific preferences in its pragmatic configuration. Future studies could explore the contrastive patterns that have been identified here, to corroborate and/or correct them in quantitative terms (e.g. by using more balanced and representative samples) and also in qualitative terms (e.g. by testing informants' knowledge of cultural traditions in nation-symbolization).

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