

# VISUAL AND VERBAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PLAY METAPHOR IN LATVIAN POLITICAL CARTOONS

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## Abstract

The article's theoretical framework is set in cognitive linguistics and stylistics. It explores the progressing domain of metaphor research, which has expanded substantially since the 1970s, notably in investigating visual and multimodal metaphors in the last twenty years.

The article aims to study the visual and verbal representation of the PLAY metaphor in Latvian political cartoons, applying conceptual metaphor theory. The need for this study arises from the limited understanding of the metaphorical thought of PLAY in the Latvian language and culture.

The main research question studies the formation of the PLAY metaphor by distinguishing the conceptual mappings of game categories described by Roger Cailliois – Agon, Alea, and Mimicry.

The metaphor identification procedure of four stages – recognition, verification, comprehension, and interpretation – proposed by Anita Naciscione in 2001, is applied in case studies.

The main findings highlight the cultural significance of the PLAY metaphor in Latvian thought, language and culture. The main conclusions demonstrate that every type of game category forms a distinct group of conceptual mappings, illustrating the sustainable nature of the metaphorical thought of PLAY. The original contribution

of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of the PLAY metaphor, providing insights into metaphorical thought in human perception and understanding in cognitive linguistics.

**Keywords:** *conceptual metaphor, cognitive linguistics, cognitive stylistics, game categories, visual representation.*

## Introduction

**Cognitive linguistics** and **cognitive stylistics** are interdisciplinary fields that draw on cognitive science, philosophy, psychology, and linguistics to understand cognition and provide insights into the human mind. Cognitive linguistics focuses on understanding language's cognitive and neural basis and the role of general cognitive principles and mechanisms in shaping linguistic structures and meaning. Meanwhile, cognitive stylistics is the study of style from a cognitive perspective, examining how readers and authors engage with literary and other texts, including visual material, and how style and stylistic techniques are used to construct and convey meaning. Cognitive stylistics is influenced by **conceptual metaphor theory**<sup>1</sup>, stating that metaphors are not just figures of speech but patterns of thought reflecting the embodied nature of human cognition. Cognitive linguistics is a broader field that generally examines the cognitive basis of language, including, for instance, cognitive grammar or cognitive semantics. Often viewed as a branch of traditional stylistics, cognitive stylistics employs a cognitive linguistic approach to the study of style, comprising stylistic techniques. However, it seeks to determine the cognitive foundations of metaphors, metonymies, hyperboles, puns, and other stylistic techniques.

Since the 1970s, the intersection of cognitive science, linguistics and stylistics has given rise to a quickly growing field of metaphor research, where the exploration of mental processes intertwines with the analysis of linguistic and visual expressions. In the last 20 years, there has been a noteworthy rise in scholarship focused on visual metaphors and multimodal metaphors [see Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003; Gibbs [1994] 2002; Gibbs 2016; Forceville, Urios-Aparisi 2009; Forceville 2020].

Metaphors serve as powerful tools for shaping human perception and understanding. Metaphors often go beyond linguistic expressions, extending into the visual domain. Hence, the objective of this article is to analyse three categories of

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<sup>1</sup> Conceptual metaphor as a pattern of thought was first put forward by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in 1980 [see Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003].

the culturally significant metaphor of PLAY<sup>1</sup>: Agon, Alea, and Mimicry in Latvian political cartoons.

Political cartoons portray politicians satirically and thus deride their folly or wickedness, which is especially topical when discussing current politics and raising other recent concerns.

As the scholar of communication and media studies Thomas Knieper states, *“Political cartoon, a drawing (often including caricature) made for the purpose of conveying editorial commentary on politics, politicians, and current events. Such cartoons play a role in the political discourse of a society that provides for freedom of speech and of the press. (...) A political cartoon is also an artistic vehicle characterized by both metaphorical and satirical language. (...) When successful, political cartoons can fulfill an important criticizing and controlling function in society”* [Knieper 2023].

The aim of this study is to explore the intricate connection between verbal and visual conceptual metaphor representations in Latvian political cartoons and identify the conceptual mappings of the PLAY metaphor. To achieve this aim, the following tasks were set:

- 1) collect the empirical material containing stylistically significant political cartoons and select the most salient examples for case studies;
- 2) review the relevant fields of study – cognitive linguistics, philosophy, psychology, culture theory and multimodal analysis, and choose appropriate methodology;
- 3) study the visual and verbal representation of the PLAY metaphor;
- 4) identify the source and target domains of game categories described by Roger Cailliois, including Agon, Alea, and Mimicry, and describe the mappings between them;
- 5) seek to demonstrate the sustainability of figurative thought by examining how the PLAY metaphor is conceived and functions in the visual and verbal representation of Latvian political cartoons.

### Research question and methodology

Methodology in metaphor analysis is often a complicated issue mainly because of the interdisciplinary nature of metaphor. The Pragglejaz Group<sup>2</sup> came up with

<sup>1</sup> Conceptual metaphors are represented by using all capital letters to distinguish them from linguistic metaphors and indicate that they are not just a matter of language but rather concepts that belong to the realm of human thought. This convention is commonly used in cognitive metaphor theory to highlight the underlying conceptual structures used to understand and describe various conceptual domains of experience.

<sup>2</sup> “The original members of Pragglejaz were Peter Crisp (Chinese University of Hong Kong), Raymond Gibbs (University of California, Santa Cruz), Alice Deignan (University of Leeds), Graham Low (University of York), Gerard Steen (Vrije University of Amsterdam), Lynne Cameron (University of Leeds/The Open University), Elena Semino (Lancaster University), Joe Grady (Cultural Logics), Alan Cienki (Emory University), and Zoltán Kövecses (Loránd Eötvös University)” [Pragglejaz Group 2007: 37].

the idea of the MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure) method in 2007. Since then, Gerard Steen and his colleagues at Amsterdam University have been working on advancing this methodology. Methods called MIPVU (Metaphor Identification Procedure VU (*Vrije Universiteit*) University Amsterdam) and VISMIP (Visual Metaphor Identification Procedure) have been created. MIP involves comparing the contextual meaning of a word with its most basic meaning as found in a dictionary, and a word is considered metaphorical if its contextual meaning contrasts with its basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it. MIPVU is an expanded and refined version of MIP, developed at VU University Amsterdam, and it identifies units that have the potential to be realised as metaphors in people's minds. It includes direct, implicit, and borderline cases of metaphor, as well as metaphor signals and metaphor due to personification. VISMIP was developed by Ester Šorm and Gerard Steen, and it focuses on visual metaphors. [See Pragglejaz Group 2007; Steen, Dorst, Herrmann, Kaal, Krennmayr and Pasma 2010; Steen 2018].

These methods are designed to provide systematic and transparent procedures for identifying metaphors in different forms of discourse, including linguistic and visual metaphors. They are logical and functional, and they serve the purpose of safeguarding objectivity. As Raymond W. Gibbs Jr., an American scholar of experimental psycholinguistics and cognitive science, has stated, *"Even though people may rarely experience words or phrases in a conscious manner as "metaphors," we still need some way of demarking what is metaphorical and then use this as the basis for drawing further conclusions about the nature of metaphorical thought and experience"* [Gibbs 2017: 61].

A procedure chosen for this article's purposes is conceptually similar to MIP; however, it predates MIP and could have been its basis. The procedure consists of four stages – **recognition**, **verification**, **comprehension** and **interpretation**. It was offered by Anita Naciscione in 2001 [see Naciscione 2001: 33–46; Naciscione 2010: 43–55]. The procedure describes what happens when a human being processes the information when perceiving a verbal or visual example, recognises it as something they have seen or learned before, makes sure it is metaphorical, checks dictionaries and other reference books, and analyses and interprets it. This procedure ensures objectivity by a systematic approach, ensuring that each stage is followed logically and consistently. The verification stage ensures that the metaphorical expression is correctly identified and understood, reducing the risk of subjective interpretation. The comprehension stage ensures that the researcher has a deep understanding of the metaphorical expression and its context, which helps avoid misinterpretation. The interpretation stage ensures that the researcher provides a clear and logical explanation of the metaphorical expression, which helps maintain objectivity.

Political cartoons from the Latvian printed press or online media platforms have been manually collected and saved in our personal database from 2010 to 2022, the database currently comprises 728 Latvian political cartoons that contain stylistically significant examples. For this article, three most salient and representative cartoons have been selected for closer examination using qualitative analysis.

It is necessary to emphasise that visual representations can be analysed via several methods and approaches – cognitive linguistic, psychological or social semiotic. Different techniques are employed to highlight the key characteristics of each visual representation.

The main research question of the article is to study how the PLAY metaphor is construed via visual and verbal components, thus identifying the source and target domains of the conceptual metaphors and verifying the universal character of this metaphor in Latvian language and culture based on political cartoons. The novelty of this study lies in its expansion of the application of conceptual metaphors to different languages and cultures, namely, the examination of the PLAY metaphor in the Latvian language and culture. This expansion is significant for conceptual metaphor theory, as it seeks to demonstrate the universality of conceptual metaphors, a key aspect of our research. Researchers can identify common patterns and structures that transcend individual languages by studying multiple languages. Cognitive linguistics acknowledges the close relationship between language and culture. By studying multiple languages, researchers can better understand how language reflects and shapes culture and how cultural differences influence language use and cognition.

### Visual Representation

Visual representation has been crucial for Western Culture since ancient Greeks began theorising about rhetoric. Aristotle, known for his focus on the visual aspect, discussed the concept of metaphorical visualisation or **bringing-before-the-eyes** in his work *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* [See Aristotle 2007: 237].

Rudolf Arnheim (1904–2007), a Gestalt psychologist and aesthetician, investigated the theory of visual perception. He contributed significantly to the exploration of human cognitive processes. Arnheim proposed that the essence of life and the world could be observed through the patterns, shapes, and colours present in the world. Consequently, he argued that examining these patterns and deciphering their significance is essential. The cognitive capacity of visual perception closely resembles thinking, with the cognitive processes and thought patterns in visual perception mirroring each other. Humans inherently possess the capability to comprehend things through visual perception. The fundamental concept of composition is ingrained in human nature, stemming from the inherent structure of the human nervous system [see Arnheim 2004a; Arnheim 2004b; Arnheim 2009]. Cartoons are essential

for drawing people's attention to different social and political problems via visual representation. Visual representations in cartoons include images, drawings, and other visual components that convey meaning. The composition of the entire image is crucial, as it combines all the elements into a coherent and meaningful whole.

Social semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen contend that visual compositions are not universally comprehensible, for instance, spatial organisation – left and right, top and bottom, centre and margin. Different societies utilise these dimensions and attribute specific meanings and values to them in alternative ways. Western culture used to favour the reading direction from left to right. However, centre-margin compositions have recently become significantly more prevalent [see Kress and Van Leeuwen 2020: 4–5]. In interpreting cartoons, the visual elements can be examined in a left-to-right sequence and centre-margin composition. Kress and Van Leeuwen also point out that it is essential to consider the composition of the entire image, how all the elements are connected, and how they are combined into a coherent and meaningful whole [see Kress and Van Leeuwen 2020: 179].

Zoltán Kövecses – a linguist who has contributed substantially to the development of cognitive linguistics, believes that metaphorical thinking extends beyond language and is present in various forms of expression, including gestures, visual representations, and visual arts: “(..) *metaphor is part of the conceptual system, it follows that conceptual metaphors will also occur in any mode of expression of that system. Research indicates that the conceptual metaphors identified in language also occur in gestures, visual representations (such as cartoons), visual arts (such as painting), and others*” [Kövecses 2020: 7–8].

Charles Forceville has been writing about visual or pictorial and multimodal metaphors since 1996 [see Forceville [1996] 2002]. In his recent book *Visual and Multimodal Communication: Applying the Relevance Principle*, he stresses that multimodal communication is based on humans' evolutionary inclination to cooperate. Forceville rigorously discusses multimodality, its definition issues, and how many semiotic modes are necessary to call it a multimodal discourse. He also criticises it as an ill-defined concept, concluding that many discourses are multimodal in practice [Forceville 2020: 64–68]. Cartoons are multimodal because they combine verbal semiotic modes (text) and visual semiotic modes (picture).

### **The concept of PLAY**

The concept of PLAY has been embedded in Western society's thinking since the time of ancient Greece. Cultural history shows that games of all kinds, for instance, the Olympic Games, play an important role in the formation and functioning of society. Johan Huizinga, a historian and cultural theorist, in his work *Homo Ludens*, explores the history and importance of play in Western culture and points out that

even today, the various elements of play are an integral part of culture. Forms of play are unconscious and conscious and are used in all situations of life, for example, in courtrooms, where each participant is assigned a role, and the rules of the game are known to everyone [Huizinga [1949] 1980]. It is, therefore, not surprising that knowledge about the concept of PLAY helps to structure knowledge. The metaphorical idea of PLAY content and form is attributed to everyday experience.

The French philosopher and writer Roger Caillois's division of games: **Agon**, **Alea**, **Mimicry**, and the study of game categories can help to answer the question of whether PLAY metaphors are sustainable. The French scholar builds on Huizinga's ideas by classifying games, exploring their types, and pointing out that many social phenomena are derived from play [Caillois 2001: 11–36]. Caillois classifies games according to their characteristics and similarities, which can be matched with metaphors of PLAY. In the theory of conceptual metaphor, the target domain of PLAY forms a whole group of conceptual mappings<sup>1</sup>.

The first category of game is **Agon**<sup>2</sup>, a concept with a long history. It refers to games based on competition and rivalry. Individual or team competitions have existed in primitive cultures and even characterised certain cultures and traits; their content is considered to form the basis of the ideas of individuals or entire societies [Caillois 2001: 14]. **Agon** metaphors refer to all situations involving confrontation, winning a prize, asserting oneself in the ranks of a team, defeating an opponent, etc. Since rivalry is not only observed in sports, it is reasonable to speak of **Agon** traits attributed to non-sporting domains. One of the most obvious areas in which **Agon** metaphors are used is politics because it is similar to a game with winners and losers. Boxing, chess and football metaphors can be considered pervasive, with rules and principles attributed to different situations in life.

The themes of politics and elections are always present in mass media discourse. The following cartoon depicts the politics before the elections as a chess game featuring well-known Latvian politicians (Figure 1).

Gatis Šļūka's cartoon "To the Elections" shows a confused voter playing chess with leaders of the main parties. The subtitle "Choosing who to vote for is like a game of chess where you have to think at least a couple of moves ahead" compares political choice to the need to think a few moves ahead in a chess game. The chess metaphor has a cohesive force because it holds together the basic idea of the image. Considering the image, alongside the chess metaphor, one can observe several allusions to the statements, political beliefs and public image of the politicians depicted. The fact

<sup>1</sup> Conceptual metaphor represents interaction of two cognitive domains: the source domain and the target domain. The target domain is structured similarly to the source domain, therefore metaphorical mappings are established between them.

<sup>2</sup> **Agon** – rivalry, competition (Greek).

# Uz vēlēšanām!

Izvēle, par ko balsot, atgādina šaha spēli, kurā jādoma vismaz pāris gājienu priekšu



Figure 1. To the Elections [Šļūka 2010a, Šļūka 2010b].

that Tatjana Ždanoka is playing with chess pieces imitating the Moscow Kremlin points to the politician's views aligned with Russia's political position towards Latvia: Kremlin is a visual metonymy<sup>1</sup> for Moscow's policy in Russia, while the cap placed next to her is very reminiscent of the former Moscow mayor. Augusts Brigmanis is holding a mask of Aivars Lembergs at the chess board, a metonymic reference to the notoriously corrupt mayor of Ventspils as the true leader of the party and the game. The game of Jānis Urbanovičs is characterised by his threat to repeat the events in

<sup>1</sup> Metonymy is a stylistic pattern operating within one conceptual domain (a semantically connected domain of experience) on the contiguity principle. In metonymy, one entity stands for another entity; for instance, A PART STANDS FOR A WHOLE (An FBI official says, "We need **eyes** everywhere": eyes  $\Rightarrow$  people, police force) or A WHOLE STANDS FOR A PART (A sports commentator says, "**England** has won the World Cup": England  $\Rightarrow$  England national football team). All capital letters indicate conceptual metonymy as a structure in one's mind.



Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, in Latvia, if he is not taken into account as a partner in the game. This is a metonymic allusion to the events in Kyrgyzstan in 2010. Raivis Dzintars participates in the game only with horses, “young foals”, as he calls them, recalling the protest action of half-naked young people in front of the *Saeima* (Latvian Parliament) building, led by Dzintars. At the same time, the image of Ainārs Šlesers, one of the corrupt oligarchs (grabbing the money from the state as a corrupt minister or here: clutching all the chess pieces to himself), is accompanied by the pre-election slogan “Be Hard”. The political move of then Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis was coordinated with the International Monetary Fund, which can be seen as part of the chosen course of action and dependent on the decisions of the International Monetary Fund and other European institutions. Although the image is based on a visual pun<sup>1</sup>, the image as a whole, forms a web of figurative strands<sup>2</sup> based on the conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS A CHESS GAME and its subordinate conceptual metonymy A PART FOR A WHOLE.

Describing such complicated images, Naciscione has stated that “*Metaphor is not alone in figurative meaning construction. Apart from metonymy, extended metaphor may incorporate other figurative modes (pun, allusion, personification, euphemism, hyperbole, irony), forming figurative networks and representing a process and a result of human thought and a conceptualisation of experience*” [Naciscione 2016: 241].

In 2024, the same conceptualisations of thinking a few moves ahead in a chess game can be observed as Latvia faces elections for the European Parliament.

Given that **Agon’s** metaphors are systematic, the metaphor generates the following series of mappings (Table 1):

**Table 1<sup>3</sup>**

**Mappings of Agon’s metaphor.**

Source	Target
<u>sports</u>	a person in a particular life situation
<u>the athletes</u>	the rivals
<u>a sports game</u>	a real-life situation
<u>the way the athlete/participant plays</u>	human behaviour during life
<u>the rules of the game</u>	the laws that must be followed
<u>the end of a game</u>	the result of a specific action

<sup>1</sup> Pun is a foregrounded lexical ambiguity [Leech 1969]. Puns are usually created when a polysemous word is used to suggest two or more meanings (commonly literal vs figurative) or the use of homonyms [Wales 2011: 349]. In this cartoon, the effect of a pun is achieved via the literal meaning in visual semiotic mode and figurative meaning in verbal semiotic mode.

<sup>2</sup> For the use of this term, see Naciscione [2010: 162, 254].

<sup>3</sup> The tables have been created by the authors of the article unless indicated differently.

The choice of the **Agon** metaphors is not random but motivated by a deep-rooted tradition of competition that indicates diachronicity and sustainability.

Caillois names **Alea**<sup>1</sup> as another type of game, the outcome of which cannot be predicted because it is determined by chance and luck rather than by the individual's ability [Caillois 2001: 17]. There are several forms of gambling – card games, roulette, dice, betting, etc. Gambling, which can be found practically all over the world, has a long history and tradition, which is undoubtedly reflected in its linguistic and visual manifestations. In addition to linguists, the phenomenon of gambling is also studied by medical scientists, sociologists and psychologists since this type of gambling influences individual health, thinking and behaviour, as well as the values prevailing in society. Gambling has a fundamental place in people's lives, as evidenced not only by the rich array of positively charged emotions (the desire to win, gambling zeal, the joy of taking risks, the joy of winning, the sorrow of losing, disappointment, etc.) but also by morbid manifestations such as panicky fear of losing, pathological gambling cravings and gambling addiction. This type of game is a convenient tool for metaphorical comparisons involving other different life experiences.

The range of these situations is so broad as to allow conceptualisation. The conceptual metaphor LIFE IS GAMBLING was identified by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. In the discourse of cognitive linguistics, this conceptual metaphor is construed via mapping an abstract domain onto a concrete domain. Scholars argue that this metaphor is based on an experiential comparison [Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003: 51]. An example from a Latvian media text mentions political poker:

*“Vēsture zina daudz šādu politisku blefu. Vai valdošās koalīcijas politiķi ir sākuši mācīties spēlēt politisko pokeru?”* [Burvis 2010.].

The example concerns a political act described as a poker game in which one of the techniques is to deceive or mislead the opponent. Politicians are compared to card players, and politics itself is compared to a card game.

The next image further highlights the presence of the metaphor of **Alea's** game category. At important and decisive moments, the decision is entrusted to the wheel of fortune, to mere chance (Figure 2).

Cartoonist Ēriks Ošs, in his cartoon “A Wheel of Fortune”, depicts the voter's choice in the extraordinary elections on 17 September 2011, representing it as a gambling game. The verbal text reads, “Well, what shall we vote for?”

<sup>1</sup> **Alea** is Latin for dice, risk, and gamble.

<sup>2</sup> History is full of such political bluffs. Have the politicians in the ruling coalition started to learn how to play political poker?



Figure 2. A Wheel of Fortune [Ošs 2011b].

The conceptual metaphor LIFE IS GAMBLING usually presents a series of mappings that include all the qualities that characterise gambling and the nature of gamblers (Table 2):

**Table 2**  
**Mappings of LIFE IS GAMBLING metaphor.**

Source	Target
<u>players</u>	the people in different situations
<u>the way the player plays or reacts during the game</u>	human behaviour during life
<u>the games</u>	certain game-like situations
<u>the rules of the game</u>	societal norms and laws
<u>a move</u>	a decision in a specific situation
<u>the game outcome – win or lose</u>	the result of a particular situation

Caillois’s classification indicates that games are not only competitive and exciting but also illusory. This is what he calls **mimicry**<sup>1</sup>. Caillois includes in this category all the elements that are characteristic of theatre, such as the portrayal of certain roles and choosing the most comfortable model of behaviour or a role model [Caillois 2001: 19–23]. Given that the principles of theatrical play are rooted in culture, its

<sup>1</sup> Mimicry – imitation.

characteristics appear in metaphors that reflect the understanding of life. They can be seen as potentially universal metaphors since a tradition of stage and imitation exists in many cultures, and their principles have been compared to different situations in life.

In cognitive linguistics, PLAY has been put forward as a source domain that includes a whole range of knowledge. It has been most extensively studied by Kövecses, who discusses the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A PLAY, common in American culture, pointing out that this metaphor best describes American thinking [Kövecses 2005: 185–186]. However, given the history of theatre and the widespread use of the metaphor, there is a reason to believe that it is representative of many cultures. Every day people are in the public space, and in order to comprehend it, it is metaphorically perceived as a stage, while the actions people take and the postures they assume, are similar to the roles played on this stage. Kövecses has developed a series of mappings that reflect the essence of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A PLAY (Table 3):

**Table 3**

**Mappings of LIFE IS A PLAY metaphor<sup>1</sup>.**

Source	Target
<u>an actor</u>	a person
<u>the actors</u>	the people with whom the person interacts
<u>the actor's manner of acting</u>	human behaviour
<u>characters</u>	the roles in life

These mappings show that for conceptual metaphors based on the source domains GAME/PLAY, the target domain is LIFE and its derivatives, such as public, social, political, economic, and private life. In the press, political commentators often use metaphors to describe what is going on, clearly indicating the presence of key elements of theatre – imagery, role-playing and what is going on behind the scenes.

The image “Changing the Protagonist” illustrates the metaphor of THEATRE PERFORMANCE, which accurately describes politics (Figure 3).

It can be assumed that the public is the spectators, metonymically represented by the rows of chairs (a chair  $\Rightarrow$  a spectator occupying the chair); the presidential candidate, Valdis Zatlers, who hopes to be elected for a second presidential term, has come on stage. The stagehands are backstage, one of whom is Brigmanis of the ZZS (the Latvian Farmers' Union) party. They have prepared a pit into which the

<sup>1</sup> This table is based on LIFE IS A PLAY mappings recorded by Kövecses [see Kövecses 2005: 185–186].

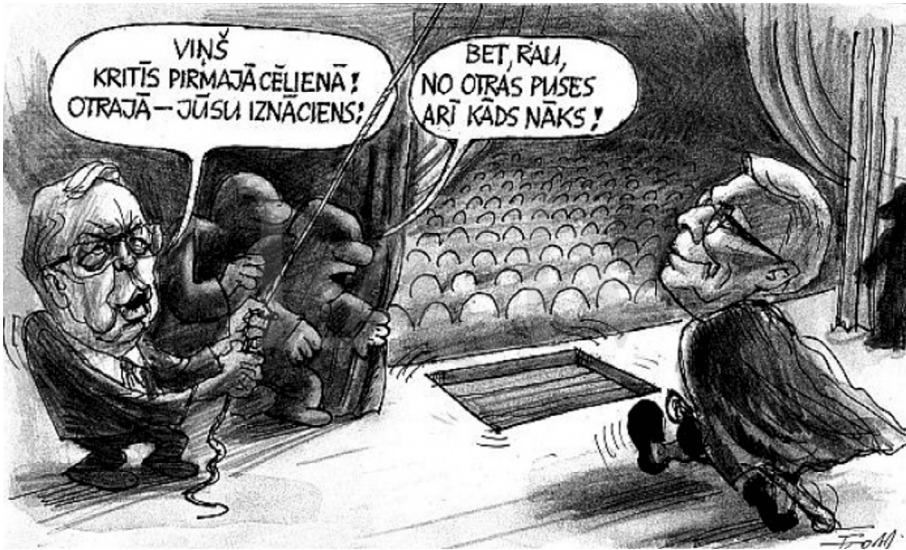


Figure 3. Changing the Protagonist [Ošs 2011a].

protagonist will fall. Metaphorically, they wish to eliminate their political opponent as they have their own presidential candidate. Brigmanis says, “He will fall in the next act! Your entrance!” The stagehands comment, “But, look, someone is coming from the other side, too!” The appearance of new political opponents can be unpredictable.

Caillou’s classification of the game systematises knowledge and experience and divides the source domain **PLAY** into three subgroups – **Agon**, **Alea** and **Mimicry** (Table 4).

**Table 4**

**PLAY is Agon, Alea and Mimicry.**

Target	Source
LIFE	<div style="text-align: center;"> <b>PLAY</b>                        Agon    Alea    Mimicry                 </div>
PUBLIC	
POLITICS	
ECONOMICS	

The target and source domains attest to the sustainability of the metaphorical thought of **PLAY** that is present in the Latvian language and thought. The metaphorical idea of **PLAY** is expressed by various metaphors, which can differ considerably in their

visual and linguistic manifestations. Cartoons usually employ visual representations and verbal texts. Anita Naciscione discusses the sustainability of figurative thought brought about by visual and verbal interaction: “*Visual representation is a non-verbal mode of expression perceivable by sight. (...) Visual expression of text usually goes together with the verbal. In visual representation, the process of creating a mental picture in one’s mind relies on close ties between the visual and the verbal, and knowledge of the political, socio-cultural, and semiotic implications. Visual representation creates new meaning, stretches our imagination, and sustains figurative thought*” [Naciscione 2010: 175].

Knowledge of the metaphorical nature of abstract concepts helps uncover different socio-cultural patterns and explore in depth the value systems that shape these patterns. Two domains of experience are compared; the source domain concerns experiences related to the play experience.

### Conclusion

This article has explored the intricate connection between verbal and visual conceptual metaphor representations in Latvian political cartoons, focusing on the metaphor of PLAY through the categories of Agon, Alea, and Mimicry proposed by Caillouis. By examining political cartoons, this article aimed to identify the conceptual mappings of the PLAY metaphor and demonstrate the sustainability of figurative thought in the Latvian language and thought.

Each conceptual metaphor is based on one type of game as a source domain, and life, politics, and economics as a target domain form a separate group of conceptual mappings. Target domains and source domains testify to the sustainability and salience of the metaphorical thought of PLAY. The knowledge about PLAY is deeply rooted, and the metaphorical thought of PLAY is conveyed by various metaphors that may have visually and linguistically distinctive expressions. The analysed examples highlight how the idea of play is consistently represented through metaphors.

Political cartoons use satire to critique politicians, making them relevant to current political and social issues. By examining these cartoons, the article emphasises how PLAY metaphors are used to critique political figures, underlining their importance in Latvian visual and verbal discourse. The analysed cartoons demonstrate that the metaphor of PLAY is a significant part of the Latvian language and thought expressed through a variety of visual and verbal elements.

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