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# Figurative analogies and how they are resisted in British Public Bill Committee debates

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This paper studies metaphor use in British Public Bill Committee debates. It focuses on the way in which legislators frame their arguments in metaphorical terms under the form of figurative analogies. Because these figurative analogies can be misleading by oversimplifying the issue under discussion, resisting them by putting forward counter-argumentation is a crucial and necessary skill. The purpose of this paper is to explore the phenomenon of countering figurative analogies in legislative debates, and to show that resistance to figurative analogies is a complex phenomenon comprising various types of criticisms to different types of metaphor. To this end, we present qualitative analyses of a number of case studies of resistance to figurative analogies found in the British Public Bill Committee debates on the Education Bill 2010–11 by employing the three-dimensional model of metaphor (Steen, 2011) and the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation (Van Eemeren, 2010).

**Keywords:** metaphor, figurative analogy, argumentation, resistance, counter-argumentation, political discourse, legislative debates

## 1. Introduction

In legislative debates, legislators typically argue for the acceptability of a bill by referring to the desirable consequences of implementing the proposed legislation (Ihnen Jory, 2012; Van Eemeren & Garssen, 2014). Argumentation analysts call such a form of arguing ‘pragmatic argumentation’. Take, for example, the debate about introducing a representation process and judicial review as the appropriate means to challenge an official warning issued by the Charity Commission to a charity for minor breaches. Rob Wilson, the Minister for Civil Society, defends

the acceptability of this particular provision. He argues that this will create a level of bureaucracy for the Charity Commission proportionate with the low-level breaches for which such an official warning is issued. To support the assertion that official warnings are given in response to low-level breaches, Wilson compares them to yellow cards in football:

Example 1. To use a footballing analogy, I consider official warnings to be like a yellow card, whereas statutory inquiry and the corrective and remedial powers that follow are more of a red card.

In this example, Wilson employs a metaphor in which official warnings issued by the Charity Commission are compared to yellow cards in a football match. The metaphor functions as an argument to support the standpoint that a representation process and judicial review should be adopted as the appropriate way to challenge an official warning. In argumentation theory, such an argumentatively employed metaphor is referred to as a figurative analogy.

Figurative analogies do not merely encompass a comparison between two concepts from different domains, but also a proportional similarity between relations that hold within the domains (e.g., the issuing of a yellow card in response to a minor offence by a football player is analogically similar to issuing an official warning to a charity in response to a minor breach). Since this process also involves a mapping between concepts from two different domains, figurative analogies can be considered to be metaphors, which, following Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), we define as a cross-domain mapping in thought.

Research shows that metaphors such as in Example (1) can be misleading by making complex and controversial conclusions appear obvious and unproblematic (e.g., Charteris-Black, 2004; Goatly, 2007; Landau, Keefer & Swanson, 2017; Musolff, 2004). Figurative analogies could misinform legislators with regard to the acceptability of a bill by oversimplifying the issue under discussion. The metaphor in Example (1), for instance, implies that an official warning is a harmless measure without any immediate consequences for the charity involved, just like a yellow card does not have any immediate consequences for a football player. This impression is incorrect, however, as the Shadow Minister for Civil Society Anna Turley points out:

Example 2. As a football fan I liked the Minister's metaphor about yellow cards, but with a yellow card there is no immediate repercussion other than having to be a bit more careful about the next tackle. For a charity, there are potentially quite damaging repercussions of a warning, particularly given the public notification. There could be an impact on a charity's ability to fundraise, its reputation and its ability to find trustees.

In Example (2), Turley resists Wilson's figurative analogy by referring to relevant differences between the two concepts compared in the metaphor: while there are no immediate repercussions for a football player resulting from receiving a yellow card, charities potentially suffer quite damaging repercussions of an official warning, such as an impact on its ability to fundraise. Relying on a representation process and judicial review might hence not be as reasonable as Wilson's figurative analogy suggests.

Resisting figurative analogies by putting forward counter-argumentation is a crucial and necessary skill for legislators to come to a well-informed decision about the acceptability of the proposed legislation. However, despite its importance, resistance to figurative analogies has not received much scholarly attention. A number of critical studies acknowledge that there can be less desirable aspects of metaphors, which seems to suggest that there is a need for empirical research of resistance to metaphor in authentic political discourse (e.g., Charteris-Black, 2004; De Landtsheer, 2015; Goatly, 2007; Musolff, 2004), but a systematic approach to this phenomenon is lacking. Furthermore, most studies on metaphor in political discourse take a cognitive linguistic or critical discourse analytic approach, in which metaphor is regarded as an important tool for reasoning. These studies do not, however, necessarily engage in the analysis of metaphor as an argumentative device. For a full appreciation of the phenomenon of resistance to figurative analogies, we need to examine two different aspects. One, we need analyses of the metaphorical properties of figurative analogies and the resistance they elicit. Two, we need to focus on the argumentative properties of figurative analogies and the resistance against them. A combination of the analysis of the metaphorical and the argumentative properties of figurative analogies as well as of the resistance they elicit will yield complementary results that need to be integrated within one complex picture.

The overall aim of this paper is to explore the phenomenon of resistance to figurative analogies in authentic legislative debates, and to show that resistance to figurative analogies comprises various types of resistance to different types of metaphor. To this end, we provide a qualitative analysis of a number of cases of resistance to figurative analogies from the British Public Bill Committee debates on the Education Bill 2010–11 (hereafter PBC). To account for both the metaphorical and the argumentative properties involved, we employ the three-dimensional model of metaphor (Steen, 2011) for studying the linguistic, conceptual and communicative properties of the argumentatively utilized metaphors and the resistance against them in combination with the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation (Van Eemeren, 2010). In the pragma-dialectical approach, argumentation is viewed as part of a critical discussion in which the participants try to resolve a difference of opinion on the merits (Van Eemeren, 2010). Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004,

p.1) define argumentation as “a verbal, social and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint.” In this study, we regard figurative analogies and the resistance against them as argumentative means used by committee members to convince opponents of the (un)acceptability of a bill. The combination of the three-dimensional method of metaphor and the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation also facilitates examining metaphor and argumentation from a similar angle of discourse events as argumentative activity types (Van Eemeren, 2010).

In the next section, we describe our data and method, and also present the characteristics of British PBC debates constraining the way in which legislators argue. Subsequently, we present our analyses of the examples of figurative analogies and the resistance they elicit. We conclude that resisting figurative analogies is a complex phenomenon, comprising different types of critical responses, each of which requires an elaborate examination on its own.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Data

The case studies are taken from the debates on the Education Bill 2010–11 at Committee stage in the House of Commons, recorded by so-called Hansard reporters and then edited to remove repetitions and obvious mistakes but without taking away from the meaning (Hansard (Official Report), n.d.).

In our analyses, we concentrate on a sports analogy, first introduced by the Government and then adopted by the Opposition. We focus on these cases of resistance to figurative analogies because the argumentative exchange is an excellent illustration of the use of several figurative analogies that are resisted in various ways, either by attacking the comparison itself or by advancing criticisms pertaining to the target domain of the analogy.

### 2.2 Argumentative characteristics of British Public Bill Committee debates

For an empirically adequate account of the argumentative exchange, it is pertinent to take into account those characteristics of British PBC debates that create institutional preconditions for argumentation. In this section we describe the institutional features of British PBC's that constrain argumentative discourse.

Committee stage is the third formal phase of the legislative process in the House of Commons, following the introduction of the bill at First Reading, and

a debate on its principles at Second Reading (UK Government Cabinet Office, 2015). For each bill that goes through Parliament, a PBC is appointed. A Committee comprises a limited number of MPs, and its membership reflects the party composition of the House, so that there is always a government majority (Committee stage (Commons), n.d.). The institutional point<sup>1</sup> of PBC's is to discuss the details of a bill (Turpin & Tomkins, 2011, p.461): they examine each clause and schedule, they debate amendments to clauses or schedules, and they decide on the removal or insertion of new clauses and schedules (UK Cabinet Office, 2015).

To examine how argumentative discourse, and specifically figurative analogies and the resistance against them, are affected by the institutional setting of PBC debates, we need to examine how this 'activity type' (see Van Eemeren, 2010) creates fixed outcomes for each of the stages in the process of resolving a difference of opinion. In line with the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentative practices, there are four stages involved in this process.<sup>2</sup>

In the confrontation stage, the parties establish that they have a difference of opinion. In this stage no argumentation, and therefore no figurative analogies, are advanced. However, its outcome is important because it influences the argumentation that will later be advanced in support of the standpoint assumed by the discussion parties. The central proposition under dispute in PBC debates is: "The clause should stand part of the bill" (UK Cabinet Office, 2015). The Government, being responsible for introducing the Bill, will have a positive standpoint towards the proposition at issue. Opposition and backbench members, however, can assume a positive or negative standpoint towards the proposition at issue or simply express doubt (Thompson, 2013; UK Cabinet Office, 2015).

Before the proposition is debated that a clause stands part of the bill, amendments to the clause at issue are discussed, which are typically put forward by Opposition and backbench members (UK Cabinet Office, 2015). Generally, the Government is reluctant to accept amendments in Committee, especially when they are proposed by the Opposition (Thompson, 2013), and will accordingly assume a negative standpoint towards them. Amendments related to the same subject of debate are often grouped together and debated at the same time. In addition, committee members usually also put forward their argumentation in favour or against the clause at issue during the debate on the amendments. This

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1. Van Eemeren (2010, p.140) explains that the institutional point of a communicative activity type concerns the specific goal within a certain communicative activity type. The institutional point of Second Reading debates, for instance, is to discuss the principle(s) of a bill (Ihnen Jory, 2012).

2. The four discussion stages distinguished in pragma-dialectics are a theoretical concept, which can be employed for reconstructing argumentative discourse.

means that multiple propositions are typically under dispute at the same time. The type of dispute that originates in PBC's can consequently be characterised as a multiple mixed dispute.<sup>3</sup>

In the opening stage, the discussants agree upon the starting points.<sup>4</sup> There are a number of 'procedural' starting points imposed by PBC debates that regulate the argumentative process. First, the main goal of PBC's is to discuss the details of the bill (Turpin & Tomkins, 2011, p. 461). Second, while the Government has advanced the proposal, committee members are allowed to propose changes to the bill, which they can do by tabling amendments. Opponents can therefore not only argue against the acceptability of the clauses in a bill, but also offer counter-proposals. Lastly, the set-up of the debate is dialogical; members of the committee may intervene on each other's speeches to support or challenge what is being said.

In the argumentation stage, PBC members advance their argumentation in favour of or against the acceptance of the details of the bill, and whether a clause should consequently stand part of the bill. In this stage, figurative analogies and the resistance against them are advanced.

The typical type of argument to support or counter prescriptive standpoints (i.e., "the clause should (not) stand part of the bill") in legislative debates is pragmatic argumentation in which a recommendation (not) to carry out a given course of action is made by highlighting its (un)desirable consequences (Ihnen Jory, 2012). Legislators can also put forward other types of (counter-)argumentation, including figurative analogies. A more detailed account of the argumentative properties of figurative analogies is given in Section 2.3.

In the concluding stage, the outcome of the argumentative exchange is decided on a vote. Considering that PBCs always have a government majority, the decision will usually be in favour of the standpoint assumed by the Government: clauses will generally stand part of the bill, and amendments proposed by Opposition and backbench members will often not be accepted.<sup>5</sup>

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3. In a multiple mixed dispute, several propositions are under discussion at the same time, and the discussion parties assume opposite standpoints with regard to these propositions. For a more detailed account of types of dispute, see Van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1992).

4. There are two types of starting points. Material starting points relate to concessions of the parties involved in the debate, procedural starting points refer to rules of debate (Van Eemeren, 2010, p. 151).

5. The objective of amendments proposed by Opposition members is not necessarily to get the amendment accepted, but to get a response of the Government minister to the amendments and to 'mark out [the] territory' that is of concern during Committee Stage in order to continue to build on it as a bill moves towards Report Stage (Thompson, 2013).

## 2.3 Figurative analogies: Argumentative analysis

### 2.3.1 *The argument scheme for figurative analogies*

Figurative analogy is a subtype of the general scheme for analogical argumentation.<sup>6</sup> According to Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992, p. 97), analogical argumentation is presented “as if there were a resemblance, an agreement, a likeness, a parallel, a correspondence or some other kind of similarity between that which is stated in the argument and that which is stated in the standpoint.” The general argument scheme for analogical argumentation looks as follows (Van Eemeren, Grootendorst & Snoeck Henkemans, 2002, p. 99):

Y is true of X,  
because: Y is true of Z,  
and: Z is comparable to X.

A distinction can be made between same-domain analogies and figurative analogies (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005; Juthe, 2005; Garssen & Kienpointner, 2011; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1958/2003; Weitzenfeld, 1984). This distinction relies on the fact that in same-domain analogies concepts from the same conceptual domain are compared, for instance ‘the education system in country A’ and ‘the education system in country B’, while in figurative analogies the compared concepts come from different conceptual domains, such as ‘a country improving its education system’ and ‘a building that is under construction’.

To decide whether an analogical argument is an instance of a same-domain analogy or of a figurative analogy, we use the MIPVU-procedure (Steen et al., 2010). This procedure has been developed to identify metaphor-related words in texts, and does not directly decide on conceptual domains. However, it does relate a comparison on a linguistic level to a cross-domain mapping on the conceptual level and can therefore function as an indication that a cross-domain mapping is at play. A more detailed explanation of MIPVU is given in Section 2.4.

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6. Argument schemes are conventionalised ways of representing the relation between what is stated in the argument and what is stated in the standpoint. The pragma-dialectical approach distinguishes three main categories of argument schemes: symptomatic argumentation, causal argumentation, and analogical argumentation (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992).



### 2.3.2 *Indicators for analogical argumentation*

To identify figurative analogies, we looked for specific expressions indicating that two concepts are compared. Van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans (2007, pp.141–153) present various types of indicators for analogical argumentation.<sup>7</sup> These indicators can be found in the presentation of the arguments and standpoints, in the opponent's critical reactions, and in the speaker's follow-up to his own argument. In the presentation of arguments and standpoints, expressions such as 'X is comparable to Z', 'X is analogous to Z', 'X is (just) like Z', and 'X is similar to Z' may indicate analogical argumentation. There are also a number of less explicit expressions indicating that a comparison is made, such as *too*, *also*, *either*, and *just as (much)*. In addition, there are a number of expressions typically occurring in the context of figurative analogies specifically: *as though*, *as if*, *that is like* or *that is like saying*. Another indication of analogical argumentation is when an opponent explicitly states that a particular comparison is not sound, which happens, for example, when relevant differences between the compared concepts are pointed out. Lastly, a speaker's follow-up to his argument in anticipation of possible critical reactions can be indicative of analogical argumentation. For instance, a speaker can refer to similarities between the concepts compared in the argumentation. The figurative analogies analysed for this study were identified based on the presence of indicators such as the utterance *it is a little like*. However, not all figurative analogies are always easily identifiable, because they are not always accompanied by indicators for analogical argumentation.

The argument scheme and the argumentative indicators allow for the identification of figurative analogies in PBC debates. Furthermore, they enable the reconstruction of figurative analogies in a schematic overview, as shown in Section 2.3.1, which demonstrates the justifying relation between what is stated in the argument and what is stated in the standpoint.

## 2.4 Figurative analogies: Metaphorical analysis

### 2.4.1 *The linguistic dimension of metaphor*

To identify the metaphor-related words that are part of the figurative analogy, we applied the Metaphor Identification Procedure – Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) (Steen et al., 2010). The MIPVU procedure has been developed for the systematic and reliable identification of metaphor-related words, agreement between analysts reaching over 90% in independent analyses (Steen et al., 2010). It takes the operational definition of metaphor as “a cross-domain mapping in thought” as a

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7. See also Doury (2009) for a discussion on indicators of analogical argumentation.

starting point, and identifies words as related to a metaphor in thought by contrasting their contextual meaning with their basic meaning (Steen et al., 2010).<sup>8</sup> Take the word *toothless* in the expression “the review panels are, in effect, *toothless*”. The contextual meaning of *toothless* is “lacking the necessary power or force to be effective”, while its basic meaning is “someone who is toothless has no teeth” (*MacMillan*). The contextual meaning can be explained by a comparison, as being *toothless* renders one unable to eat like a review panel might be unable to exercise the power to be effective.

In addition, the MIPVU procedure allows for the identification of literally used words rendering metaphorical expressions, i.e. direct metaphors, as in the expression “local authorities are watching what is going on in schools like *eagles*”. In this example, a direct comparison is made between local authorities and eagles. This means that the word *eagle* as a word is not itself used metaphorically in the traditional sense of the term metaphor. However, there still is a cross-domain mapping involved in comparing local authorities to eagles, and therefore this expression is labelled as a metaphor-related word. The MIPVU procedure allows in this way for the identification of metaphor-related words and for the specification of the type of metaphor on its linguistic level, as an indirect or direct metaphor.<sup>9</sup>

#### 2.4.2 *The conceptual dimension of metaphor*

Metaphorical expressions in language are considered to be reflections of underlying conceptual structures in thought (Kövecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The conceptual dimension of metaphor involves the understanding of one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. The analysis of the conceptual dimension of metaphor postulates the conceptual structures of the metaphors employed in the form of figurative analogies, and determines whether they are conventional or novel.

Conventional metaphors are cross-domain mappings that are fixed parts in the conceptual system. Contrarily, novel metaphors are newly invented examples which are not part of conventional patterns of mappings (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005; Gentner & Bowdle, 2001; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Steen, 2008, 2011, 2013). We consider a metaphor to be conventional when the contextual meaning of a metaphorical expression can be found in a corpus-based users’ dictionary. Take the previous example of review panels being *toothless*. The contextual, metaphorical meaning

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8. The basic meaning is determined by a dictionary that is preferably usage-based. Following Steen et al. (2010), we used the online version of the “MacMillan English dictionary”.

9. A detailed description of how MIPVU is to be applied can be found in “A method for linguistic metaphor identification: From MIP to MIPVU” (Steen et al., 2010).

is the second definition given by the “MacMillan English Dictionary Online”. This particular metaphor is therefore considered to be conventional. If its contextual meaning cannot be found in the dictionary, the metaphor is considered to be novel. An example would be the term *overcooked* in the sentence “[t]hat is a genuine concern, others may think that concern is overdone and *overcooked*, but [...]”. To *overcook* only has one meaning in the dictionary which has to do with food being cooked for too long, not with having concerns. The metaphor is consequently considered to be novel.

This approach cannot be used in relation to direct metaphors, because with direct metaphors there is no difference between the contextual and basic meaning. To decide whether the domains compared in direct metaphors can be regarded as novel or conventional, they will be compared to the most important source and target domains discussed in the already existing literature on metaphors. The term *eagle*, in the earlier discussed example in which local authorities are compared to eagles, is considered to be a conventional metaphor because, as Kövecses (2010, p. 19) notes, human beings are often understood in terms of properties of animals.

#### 2.4.3 *The communicative dimension of metaphor*

At the communicative dimension of metaphor, a distinction is made between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphor, which is based on whether or not distinct attention to the source domain as a separate referential aspect of the meaning of an utterance is required (Steen, 2017). To establish if a metaphor is used communicatively as a metaphor, and can accordingly be labelled as a deliberate metaphor, we applied the Deliberate Metaphor Identification Procedure (DMIP) (Reijnierse, Burgers, Krennmayr & Steen, 2018).

DMIP is a method developed for the systematic and reliable identification of potentially deliberate metaphor in natural language use. It starts out from the following operational definition of deliberate metaphor: “a metaphor is potentially deliberate when the source domain of the metaphor is part of the referential meaning of the utterance in which it is used” (Reijnierse et al., 2018), and consequently identifies potentially deliberate metaphors by determining whether the source domain of a metaphor-related word is part of the referential meaning of the utterance in which the metaphor-related word is used. An example of a potentially deliberate metaphor can be found in the utterance “In that regard, the head teacher will be rather like Captain Bligh”. The noun *Captain* and the proper noun *Bligh* are identified as potentially deliberate metaphors, because the source domain is explicitly and directly mentioned in the utterance, and therefore present as a referent in the state of affairs designated by the utterance. This example illustrates that a metaphor is potentially deliberate when a direct comparison is made. However, there are more ways in which the source domain can be part of the referential meaning of

an utterance, for example when a metaphor is novel, like the term *overcooked* discussed in the previous section. For a more detailed account of deliberate metaphor, see Reijnierse et al. (2018).

### 3. Resistance to a sports analogy

The analysed examples of resistance to figurative analogies come from a PBC debate on the Education Bill 2010–11 that took place on March 24, 2011. In this debate, the committee members discuss clause 20 concerning the requirements for schools to participate in international surveys. The issue under discussion is an amendment put forward by the Shadow Minister for Education, Kevin Brennan. In line with the characterisation of PBC debates as an argumentative activity type, the issue under discussion is a prescriptive standpoint: Brennan proposes that there should be ‘a health check’ (i.e., approval from the UK Statistics Authority) on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data produced by compulsory participation in international surveys. He supports this standpoint by advancing a pragmatic argument: the measure is necessary because the Secretary of State has a record of misusing and selectively quoting statistical data, and introducing the measure would have as a positive effect that the Secretary of State could not do this anymore.

To justify his assertion, Brennan points to the Secretary of State’s misuse of statistical data: in his speech at Second Reading, by ignoring that in the PISA survey 2000–2009, which shows that England moved down in the world rankings for science, literacy and mathematics, the number of countries participating in the survey dramatically expanded. Brennan’s argumentation can be reconstructed as in Figure 1.

The argumentation structure originates from subordinative argumentation, in which each argument is in turn supported by another argument. A subordinative argumentation structure is only as strong as its weakest link in the sequence of arguments. Disproving one of the arguments consequently undermines the entire argumentation in defence of a standpoint (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, p.92). This means that disproving that the Secretary of State misused statistics at Second Reading challenges Brennan’s whole argumentation in support of the standpoint that a health check is necessary. Richard Fuller, a member of the Government, hence opposes Brennan’s assertion that the Secretary of State misused statistical data during his speech at Second Reading. In doing so, he employs the following figurative analogy:

1. There should be a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data produced by compulsory participation in international surveys
  - 1.1. The Secretary of State has a record of misusing statistical data
    - 1.1' It is undesirable that the Secretary of State misuses statistical data
      - 1.1.1. The Secretary of State has misused statistical data in his speech at Second Reading
        - 1.1.1.1a The Secretary of State said that the statistics between 2000–2009 show that all children were failed by labour
        - 1.1.1.1b He ignored that in the PISA survey 2000–2009, which shows that England moved from 4th to 14th in the world rankings for science, 7th to 17th in literacy and 8th to 24th in mathematics, the number of countries participating in the survey has dramatically expanded

**Figure 1.** Reconstruction of Brennan's argumentation in favour of a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data produced by compulsory participation in international surveys<sup>10</sup>

Example 3. I am very interested in this. I have heard the hon. Gentleman talk about it before. If I am in a race and I get the gold medal, and then a new engine enters the race and beats me, should I still get the gold medal?

Following MIPVU, all words in the sentence "If I am in a race [...] get the gold medal" are identified as direct metaphor-related words (the words do not display a difference between their contextual and a more basic meaning). On a conceptual level, the domain of education is understood in terms of the domain of sports. Sport is a common source domain in politics and the metaphor can consequently be identified as a conventional metaphor (Semino, 2008). Lastly, as a direct metaphor, the source domain is explicitly present in the referential meaning of the utterance.

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10. Specific numbers are assigned to specific propositions in the reconstructions of argumentative discourse. First, standpoints are assigned a number (e.g. number 1). Second, a single argument is assigned the number of the standpoint to which it refers, followed by a number of its own (e.g. 1.1). An unexpressed premise that has been made explicit is given in parentheses. Bridging premises are assigned a number followed by an apostrophe (e.g. 1.1'). To show that an argument is part of multiple argumentation, all supporting the same standpoint, each argument is assigned the number of the standpoint followed by a number of its own (e.g. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.). To show that arguments are part of a coordinative argumentation structure, in which the arguments have to be taken together in order to defend the standpoint, they are all assigned the same number, followed by a letter (e.g. 1.1a, 1.1b, 1.1c, etc.). Subordinative argumentation is indicated by the use of decimal points (e.g. 1.1.1. for a subargument, 1.1.1.1. for a subsubargument, etc.).

The metaphor hence plays a role *as* metaphor in communication between language users and is deliberate; in order to understand Fuller's utterance in the context of this particular debate, the committee members must make an online comparison between PISA rankings and an engine in a car race to derive its point.

Because Fuller's metaphor is presented as a direct metaphor and requires an online comparison between a source and a target domain, it can have a communicative function as an argument in the form of a figurative analogy. From an argumentation-analytical perspective, it is striking that Fuller presents the figurative analogy in the form of a rhetorical question (Fahnestock, 2011, p. 299). As Van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans (2007, p. 94) argue, rhetorical questions often function as proposals to accept the proposition expressed by the rhetorical question as a shared starting point, and as an argument at the same time. In this fragment, Fuller presupposes that Brennan will accept the propositional content of the utterance as a shared starting point, and at the same time employs the rhetorical question as an argument for his standpoint. Considering the adversary nature of British Parliamentary debates, and that the Government is typically unwilling to accept amendments proposed by Opposition Members, we can assume that Fuller's utterance is a critical reaction to Brennan's argument that the Secretary of State misused statistics in his speech at Second Reading. This view is supported by the fact that Fuller and the Secretary of State are both Members of the Government party, and therefore, Fuller can be expected to defend the Secretary of State's statements. We can consequently conclude that Fuller's figurative analogy functions as a counter-argument aimed at refuting Brennan's argument that the participation of more countries in the PISA rankings suggests that a lower place in the rankings does not mean a decline a quality. Since this undermines Brennan's whole argumentation in support of the standpoint that a health check in the way that the Secretary of State uses statistics is necessary, Fuller's argumentation can be reconstructed as in Figure 2.

The reconstruction indicates that Fuller assumes a negative standpoint with regard to the proposition put forward by Brennan. Furthermore, the reconstruction shows that the rhetorical question has been transformed into an assertive: (1.1.1).1 'Just like in a race in which you win the gold medal, if then a new engine enters the race and beats you, you no longer win the gold medal'. Fuller uses the domain of car races to convey an argument relating to the topic of the debate: the Secretary of State's (mis)use of statistics. To appropriately interpret Fuller's argument, the relation between the debate topic and the figurative analogy must first be explicated, which is done by making the cross-domain mapping between car races and England's place in the PISA rankings. Accordingly, the figurative analogy is used to implicitly express another type of argument, namely argument from sign: (1.1.1) 'If the UK moves down the list when other countries are added, they

- (1.) There should not be a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data produced by compulsory participation in international surveys
- (1.1) The Secretary of State did not misuse statistics in his speech on Second Reading
- (1.1.1) If the UK moves down the list when other countries are added, they are no longer in the top of the PISA rankings
- (1.1.1)' This is a sign that the Secretary of State did not misuse statistics
- (1.1.1).1 Just like in a race in which you win the gold medal, if then a new engine enters the race and beats you, you no longer win the gold medal
- (1.1.1).1' A car race is comparable to the PISA survey rankings

**Figure 2.** Reconstruction of Fuller's critical response to Brennan's assertion that there should be a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistics

are no longer in the top of the PISA rankings', while it also functions as support for the argument from sign that it implicitly expresses. According to Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992, p. 2), symptomatic argumentation is presented "as if it is an expression, a phenomenon, a sign or some other kind of symptom of what is stated in the standpoint". In our example above, the fact that the UK is no longer in the top of the PISA rankings because other countries were added is a sign, according to Fuller, that the Secretary of State did not misuse statistics. The argument that the UK is no longer in the top of the PISA rankings when it moves down the list when other countries are added is in turn argued for by mentioning that this is also true for an engine in a car race which does not win the gold medal anymore if another car enters the race and wins.

To defend his standpoint that there is a need for a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data against Fuller's criticism, Brennan puts forward the following counter-analogy:

Example 4. The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point. It is a little like looking at the rankings in the English Premier League [...] If the Premier League in England, Serie A in Italy and the Bundesliga in Germany were combined, and instead of finishing in the top 10 of the premiership in one year, the very next year we finished lower down the table of the three championships combined, that does not suggest that the quality of our play had declined. It simply means that more teams are playing in the league, so it is utterly irrelevant. He can win his gold medal in the Commonwealth Games, but if he does not win at the Olympics, it does not mean he is any worse an athlete.

The following pieces of the fragment are identified as metaphorical and direct: “the rankings in the English Premier League”, and “If the Premier League [...] he is any worse an athlete”. Like Fuller, Brennan employs a direct, conventional sports metaphor, in which the PISA rankings are compared to football championship tables. Just like the previous metaphor, this metaphor is identified as a potentially deliberate metaphor, because it is a direct metaphor (the source domain is present as a referent in the state of affairs designated by the utterance). This view is additionally supported by the preposition *like*, which explicitly signals that the PISA rankings are compared to rankings in the English Premier League.

Brennan’s metaphor, just like Fuller’s, requires an online comparison between a source and a target domain and can, therefore, fulfil an argumentative function as a figurative analogy. Argumentatively speaking, Brennan advances a counter-analogy. He puts forward his analogy as an alternative analogy to the one employed by Fuller, and consequently aims to refute Fuller’s figurative analogy as an acceptable argument. At the same time, the figurative analogy supports Brennan’s own argument that the Secretary of State misused statistical data in his speech at Second Reading and that, consequently, a health check is necessary. Accordingly, Brennan’s argumentation can be reconstructed as in Figure 3.

- (1.) There should be a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data produced by compulsory participation in international surveys
- (1.1) The Secretary of State misused statistical data in his speech at Second Reading
- (1.1)’ It is undesirable that the Secretary of State misuses statistical data
- (1.1.1) Moving down the list while more countries take part in the survey does not mean a decline in quality of education
- (1.1.1)’ This is a sign that the Secretary of State misused statistical data in his speech at Second Reading
- (1.1.1).1 Just as in football, if the Premier League, Serie A and the Bundesliga were combined and instead of finishing in the top 10 of the Premiership in one year, the next year you finish lower down the table of the three championships combined does not mean that the quality of play has declined
- (1.1.1).1’ Football rankings are comparable to the PISA survey rankings

**Figure 3.** Reconstruction of Brennan’s counter-analogy in response to Fuller’s figurative analogy



The reconstruction demonstrates that Brennan's analogy implicitly expresses an argument from sign, just like Fuller's figurative analogy. The argument from sign supports a pragmatic argument concerning the undesirability of the Secretary of State misusing statistical data, which justifies the prescriptive standpoint that a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data is necessary.

Brennan's figurative analogy, in turn, is resisted in two distinct ways by two Government Members: criticisms directed at the target domain of the figurative analogy are put forward and the comparison itself is refuted. Graham Stuart advances counter-argumentation pertaining only to the metaphor's target domain (PISA rankings), while he ignores the source domain (sports):

Example 5. The hon. Gentleman [Brennan] claims that what the Secretary of State said was untrue and that everything he has said has shown that that is not the case. What the hon. Gentleman has just said is not true. He has said that the Secretary of State said that absolute standards have fallen, but it was relative standards that fell. The whole point of having standings is to be able to compare with elsewhere. When we drop down to 24th on the PISA table – which was set up to give a picture of where we sit internationally – we should take that seriously.

In this fragment, no figurative analogy is advanced. Stuart only advances arguments countering Brennan's argument that the Secretary of State misused statistics. Like Fuller, Stuart is a member of the Government party and can therefore be expected to be unwilling to accept an amendment tabled by an Opposition Member and to assume a negative standpoint with regard to the proposition under discussion. Therefore, his counter-argumentation is reconstructed as in Figure 4.

As a Government Member, Stuart assumes a negative standpoint regarding the proposition put forward by Opposition Member Brennan, and argues that the Secretary of State did not misuse statistics. In defence of this argument, Stuart advances coordinative argumentation in which two arguments, (1.1).1a and (1.1).1b, are combined to emphasise that dropping to place 24 is a serious problem and that the Secretary of State never said that absolute standards had fallen like Brennan suggested, but that it was relative standards that fell.

In addition, Fuller criticises Brennan's argumentation again, but in a different way than Stuart: he attacks the similarities between the concepts compared in the metaphor, and argues that the quality of education in the countries added to the PISA survey is not comparable to the quality of play of the football teams competing in the world-leading championships that were mentioned in the figurative analogy:

- (1.) There should not be a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data produced by compulsory participation in international surveys
- (1.1) The Secretary of State did not misuse statistics in his speech on Second Reading
- (1.1).1a Dropping down to place 24 is a serious problem
- (1.1).1b The Secretary of State has not said that absolute standards have fallen like Brennan suggests, but that it was relative standards that fell
- (1.1).1.a–b(1) With regard to relative standards, a lower place in the PISA rankings is relevant
- (1.1).1a–b(1).1 The whole point of PISA rankings is to be able to compare UK students' performance to that of students' in other countries

**Figure 4.** Reconstruction of Stuart's critical response to Brennan's figurative analogy

Example 6. He [Brennan] was making the point about PISA studies in his metaphor that it is as though we are adding football teams from Serie A, the Bundesliga and so on. I did some research about which countries have been added. Which of the following countries would appear, as he would say, in the Bundesliga or the Premiership? There are plenty of choices. For example, Azerbaijan was added. Is that important? The Kazakh Republic was added. Is that a country we ought to be falling down behind? Other countries are Serbia, Moldova, the Kyrgyz Republic, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. There are other countries if hon. Members wish to hear them. Those countries do not seem to relate to the premiership teams that he would say are a fair comparison.

Fuller hence counters Brennan's figurative analogy by pointing out relevant differences between the two concepts compared in the analogy. By refuting Brennan's figurative analogy, Fuller again aims at undermining Brennan's argumentation in favour of the proposition that there should be a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data. Accordingly, Fuller's argumentation can be reconstructed as in Figure 5.

The reconstruction demonstrates that Fuller upholds his negative standpoint that a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data is not necessary, because the Secretary of State did not misuse statistics in his speech on Second Reading. He defends this position by arguing that the quality of education in the countries added to the PISA survey is not very high, showing that Brennan's figurative analogy is not correct.

- (1.) There should not be a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data produced by compulsory participation in international surveys
- (1.1) The Secretary of State did not misuse statistics in his speech on Second Reading
- (1.1).1 There is a decline in quality of education in the UK
- (1.1).1' This is a sign that the Secretary of State did not misuse statistics
- (1.1).1(1) The countries that have been added to the PISA survey do not have a high quality of education
- (1.1).1(1).1a These countries include Azerbaijan, Kazakh Republic, Serbia, Moldova, etc.
- (1.1).1(1).1a' This is a sign that Brennan's football analogy is not correct
- (1.1).1(1).1a'.1 The quality of education of the countries added to the PISA survey is not comparable to the quality of play of the football leagues referred to by Brennan

**Figure 5.** Reconstruction of Fuller's critical response to Brennan's figurative analogy

That Fuller considers the refutation of Brennan's figurative analogy as a refutation of Brennan's whole argumentation in favour of the need of a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data is supported by a subsequent comment by Fuller:

Example 7. With respect, we are making these points because the hon. Gentleman [Brennan] said that the Secretary of State said something that was untrue. He then tried to use a metaphor to buttress this strong assertion. His metaphor and argument are falling down because the truth is that the addition of those countries was not comparable to the standards we should expect for our children in this country.

In this fragment, Fuller explicitly states that Brennan's argumentation in support of the standpoint that the Secretary of State misused statistics in his speech at Second Reading is refuted by showing that the metaphor does not hold, because the quality of countries added to the PISA survey is not comparable to the quality of football teams playing in world class championships such as the Premiership, Bundesliga and Serie A. This indicates that Fuller recognises that Brennan deliberately used a metaphor as an argument to support the standpoint that the Secretary of State misused statistics, and that he is aware that he himself is refuting the metaphor as a valid argument. The fragment can be reconstructed as in Figure 6.

The reconstruction shows that by explicitly arguing that Brennan's figurative analogy does not hold, Fuller affirms his position that a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data is not necessary. The refutation

- (1.) There should not be a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data produced by compulsory participation in international surveys
- (1.)<sub>1</sub> The Secretary of State did not misuse statistics in his speech at Second Reading
- (1.)<sub>1.1</sub> Brennan's figurative analogy in support of the premise that the Secretary of State misused statistics in his speech at Second Reading does not hold
- (1.)<sub>1.1.1</sub> The addition of the countries added to the PISA survey is not comparable to the standards that should be expected for the children in the UK

**Figure 6.** Reconstruction of Fuller's meta-comment on his own counter-argumentation refuting Brennan's figurative analogy

of the figurative analogy leads to the refutation of Brennan's entire argumentation in support of the standpoint that the Secretary of State misused statistics and that therefore a health check is necessary.

#### 4. Conclusion and discussion

Our investigation of the phenomenon 'resistance to figurative analogies' has shown that argumentatively exploited metaphors can elicit different types of critical responses. Our case studies of figurative analogies and the resistance against them from a British PBC debate have explained the different role and effects of such figurative analogies and how they are resisted in various ways.

The analyses of the metaphorical properties of the figurative analogies in Examples (3) and (4) indicate that the argumentatively employed metaphors are direct, conventional and deliberate. Extensive corpus linguistic research by use of MIPVU by Steen et al. (2010) has shown that a great majority of all metaphors (99%) are conventional cross-domain mappings expressed as indirect metaphors. Furthermore, Reijniere et al. (2018) found that only 4% of all metaphor use can be considered as potentially deliberate. The two metaphors, functioning as figurative analogies, examined in this study are therefore somewhat exceptional. The analyses of these examples suggest that figurative analogies comprise the use of deliberate metaphors in which direct analogical cross-domain mappings are made to support a controversial standpoint. This can be explained by the fact that the metaphors functioning as figurative analogies fulfil a communicative function *as* metaphors, namely as analogical arguments. As distinct argumentative devices, such deliberate metaphors in the form of figurative analogies can also be resisted by means of eliciting argumentative criticisms.

Our analyses of the argumentative properties of the figurative analogies in Examples (3) and (4) moreover reveal that they both function as counter-arguments. Example (3) is a countermove advanced by the speaker aimed at refuting another speaker's assertion that the Secretary of State misused statistics in his speech at Second Reading. In response, the latter puts forward a counter-analogy to contest the figurative analogy. Furthermore, the analyses of the figurative analogies demonstrate that a subordinative argumentation structure develops, because the figurative analogies implicitly express arguments from sign, for which they also function as the supportive argument. This suggests that figurative analogies can be employed to implicitly express at the same time a different type of argumentation, which provides opponents with various opportunities for resisting figurative analogies. They can direct their criticisms at the comparison made in the figurative analogy, or they can advance criticisms pertaining to the target domain of the argumentatively employed metaphor.

We demonstrated how the figurative analogies are resisted in various ways: the analogy itself can be refuted in diverging ways, and criticisms can be directed to the target domain of the metaphor. In Example (4), Brennan advances a counter-analogy to contest Fuller's figurative analogy put forward in Example (3). This move leads to the refutation of Fuller's argumentation in support of the standpoint that there should not be a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data. In Example (5), Stuart resists Brennan's figurative analogy advanced in Example (4) by putting forward counterarguments pertaining only to the target domain of the figurative analogy, while ignoring the source domain. In doing so, Stuart refutes Brennan's argumentation in favour of a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data, and supports the opposite standpoint that a health check is not required. In Example (6), Fuller resists Brennan's figurative analogy by pointing at relevant differences between the compared concepts. This move also undermines Brennan's argumentation in favour of a health check on the way in which the Secretary of State uses statistical data, while affirming Fuller's standpoint that a health check on the Secretary of State's use of statistical data is not necessary.

In this study, we analysed cases of resistance to figurative analogies in one particular British PBC debate to explore its complexity and the wide range of aspects involved. The analysed set of examples does not represent an exhaustive account of all possible ways in which figurative analogies can be resisted. Juthe (2016), for example, presents a number of other ways to counter figurative analogies, such as extending the figurative analogy to come to an opposite conclusion. Future studies could further investigate the types of resistance present in political debates. Additionally, an interesting issue to be addressed by future research is the effectiveness of the various possibilities for resisting figurative analogies. Landau,

Keefer and Swanson (2017), for example, have shown that critically extending a metaphor can be more persuasive than providing counterarguments directed to the target domain when people gain a strong epistemic benefit from the metaphor. However, more types of resistance exist, and other aspects besides epistemic benefit might influence its effectiveness. Another point to consider is that not all figurative analogies are always resisted. Future research could take a quantitative approach in order to uncover how often figurative analogies are used, by whom they were advanced, and how many of them elicit resistance.

With this study we have taken a first step in uncovering the complexities of the phenomenon resistance to metaphor. Resisting metaphors seems to be an elusive but critical skill for legislators. A better understanding of the phenomenon is needed to advance our knowledge of metaphor as an argumentative tool as well as develop a critical awareness amongst legislators about the misleading properties of metaphors and to provide them with the tools to resist these metaphors.

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