

Metaphor analysis in top executive communication: Experiences from three studies of stakeholders' responses to CEO impression management and a study on German soccer coaches

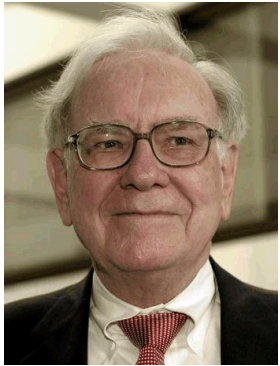
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Our research studies metaphorical communication used by executives

Examples of CEO's metaphorical communication



"By yearend, investors ... were bloodied and confused, much as if they were small birds that had strayed into a badminton game."

*Warren Buffet – CEO of Berkshire Hathaway
(2008 letter to shareholders)*

"This is not a company that needs be pulled apart and left for the chickens."

*Carol Bartz – former CEO of Yahoo
(2008 Q4 conference call)*



"Both parties have input on a plan, so I would say we are both in the front seat of the car. In Phase I, we are in the driver's seat; in Phase II, they take over the driver's seat."

*Daniel Welch – former CEO of InterMune
(2007 Q1 conference call)*

Cognitive linguistics, particularly Conceptual Metaphor Theory, provides the theoretical basis for our research

Basic assumptions of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1993) and framing view of metaphor (Black, 1962)

A metaphor is a figurative expression that refers to one entity (A) by means of another entity (B).

Typically, A is an unfamiliar, abstract entity (target domain); B is a familiar, tangible entity (source domain).

Metaphors work as frames by highlighting some aspects of an issue and downplaying others

E.g., "Our organization is a symphony orchestra" versus "Our organization is a jazz ensemble" (Hatch & Weick, 1998)

Metaphors are not just figures of speech, but figures of thought, where thinking of target domains is structured through source domains

- Cognition is, to a large extent even neurologically, structured metaphorically (e.g., POWER IS UP or TIME IS MONEY);
- The basis of thought are primary source domains such as journey, nature, and violence
- Speech quasi a priori uses metaphors. However, differences between creative use and reference to source domain.

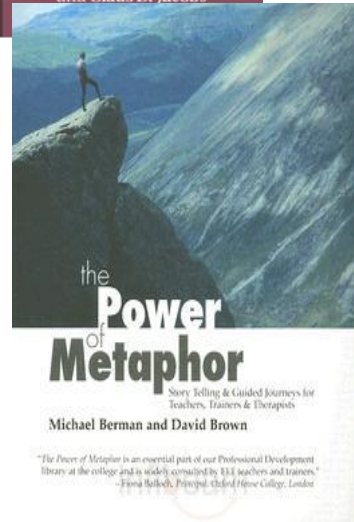
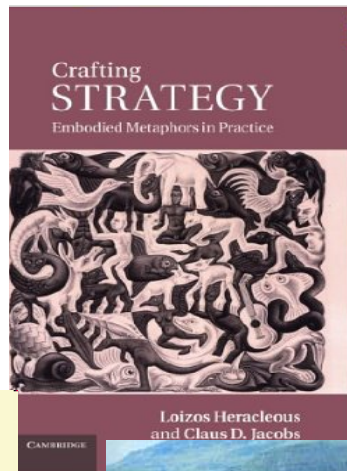
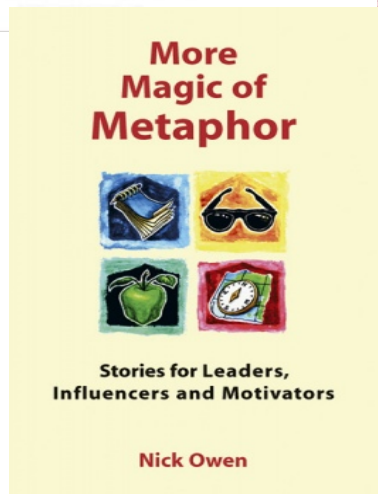
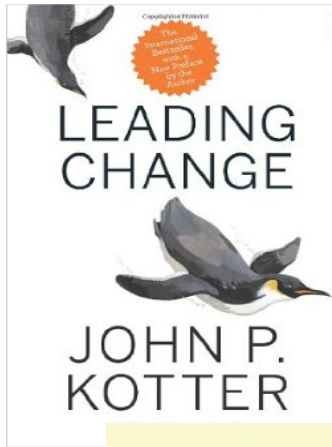
Metaphorical communication can profoundly influence audiences' reasoning about, and evaluation of, an issue

Thibodeau and Boroditskys' (2011) Experiment: "Metaphors we think with"

	Excerpt from newspaper paragraph participants read	Measures proposed by participants
Condition A	Crime is <i>a wild beast preying on</i> the city of Addison. [...] it seems that crime is <i>lurking in</i> every neighborhood.	Disproportionally often suggest to capture/enforce/punish (74% vs. avg. 65%) → focus on law enforcement → modify criminal justice system (e.g., institute harsher penalties, build more jails).
Condition B	Crime is <i>a virus infecting</i> the city [...] it seems that crime is <i>plaguing</i> every neighborhood.	Disproportionally often suggest to diagnose/treat/inoculate (56% vs. avg. 35%) → investigate underlying cause of the problem → social reform to treat or inoculate the community (e.g., fix economy, improve education, provide healthcare)

Both practice- and research-oriented authors advocate using metaphors in stakeholder communication

Examples from the management literature



The Role of Analogy and Metaphor in the Framing and Legitimization of Strategic Change

Organization Studies
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Abstract
Strategic change initiatives disrupt established categories a problem of justifying and legitimizing the change to stakeholders. While it has been suggested that the analogical or metaphorical framing in effecting support for strategic changes, as opposed to analogies, also argue that the overall effectiveness of analogies is dependent on (c) the degree to which these frames are to which they connect with the prior motivations of stakeholders.

Metaphor, poetry, storytelling and cross-cultural leadership

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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to describe the theory and benefits of poetry, storytelling, and metaphor when applied to cross-cultural leadership.
Design/methodology/approach – The methodology utilized is founded on preliminary research on metaphors, poetry and leadership with examples and connections based upon experience.
Findings – Explains how the use of poetry and metaphors can be utilized by a leader to build trust and demonstrate empathy; how to communicate more effectively; and, how to inspire.
Research limitations/implications – Possible future research on the psychological and sociological aspects of the messages that most impel, mobilize, and inspire people to act on complex ideas.
Practical implications – Leaders can approach communications, empathy, and trust with a tool that will enable them to inspire action in complex cultural environments.
Originality/value – There has been little published on the connection between effective leadership and the use of poetry and metaphor. Leadership requires the ability to inspire the desire to follow, and to ignite the intellect and emotions of those who follow.
Keywords Leadership, Poetry, Storytelling, Metaphors, Trust, Communications
Paper type Research paper

Introduction
There has been little research and discussion relating to the use of poetry in management, and even less relating to leadership. Some have suggested the difference between management and leadership as the difference between "hard" technical

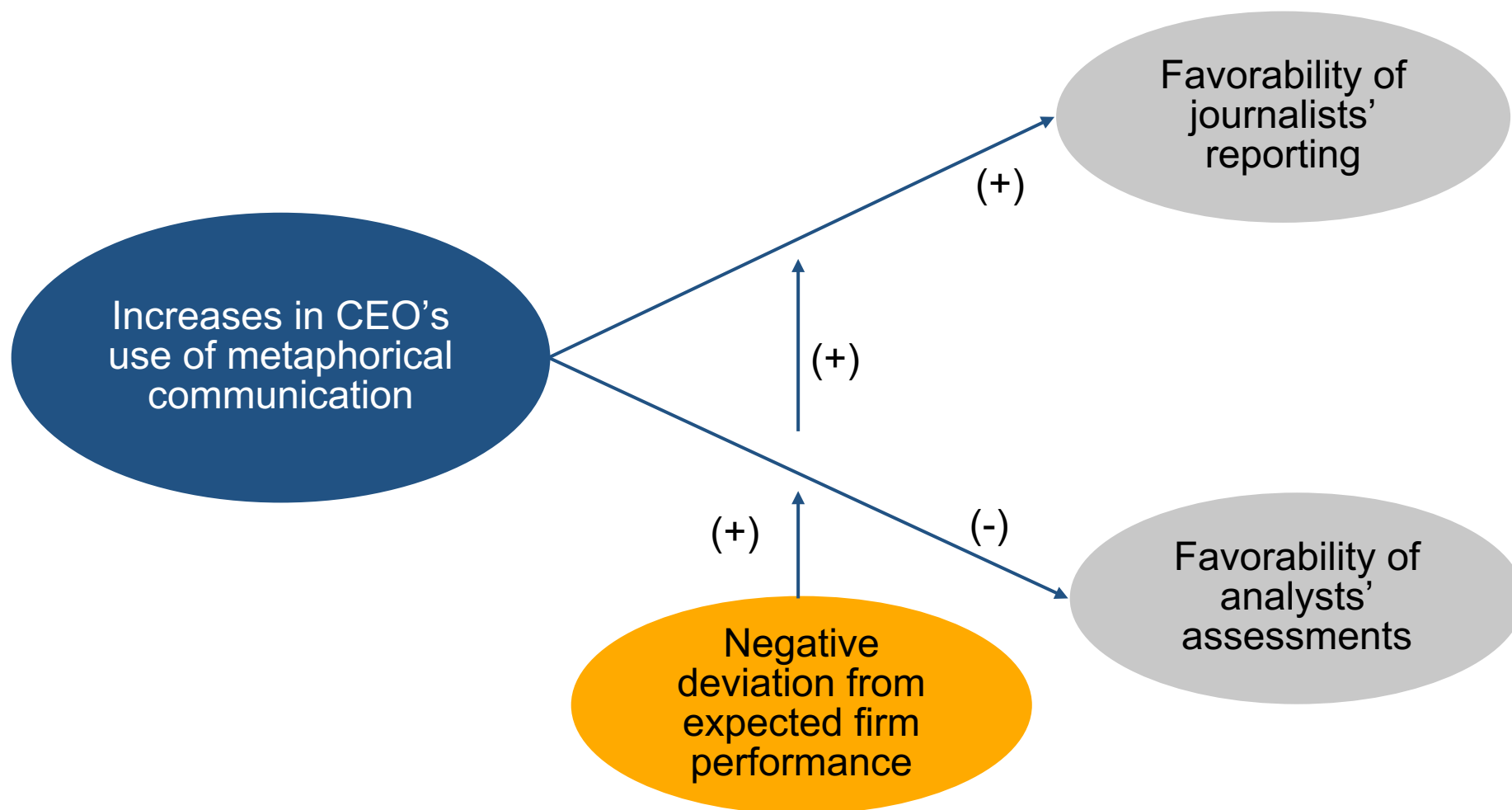
Four studies provide insight on content analysis of metaphorical communication

Overview of studies

- 1 König A., Fehn, A., Mammen, J., Luger J., Enders, A. 2017. Silver Bullet or Ricochet: CEOs' Use of Metaphorical Communication and Infomediaries' Evaluations. *Conditionally accepted at a journal; AOM Best Paper Proceedings, 2013.*
- 2 Fehn, A., König, A., Quigley, T., Graf-Vlachy, L., Mammen, J. Talk Sports, not War: The Effects of Metaphorical Framing in CEOs' Communication on Stakeholders' Evaluations of Firms. *Working Paper, University of Passau.*
- 3 König, A., Fehn, A., Puck, J., Graf-Vlachy, L. 2017. Primary or complex? Using Metaphors to Communicate Strategy in MNCs. *Journal of World Business*, 52: 270–285.
- 4 Horvath, B., König, A., Hiller, N. 2017. Cognition and Confidence: How Structural Charismatic Rhetoric Affects Team Performance. *AOM Best Paper Proceedings.*

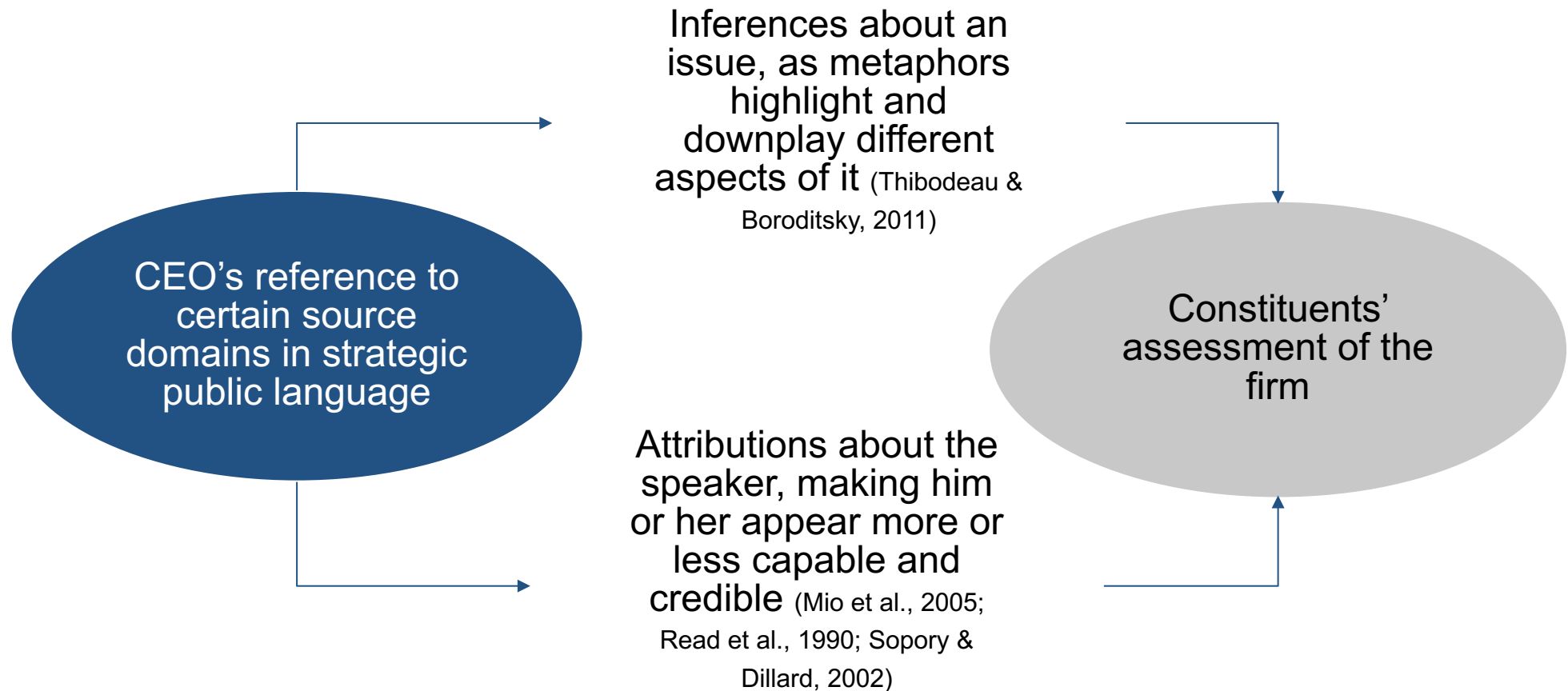
Leaders can run into intricate rhetorical dilemmas when communicating with diverse audiences

Rhetorical dilemma induced by metaphorical communication (König et al., 2017)



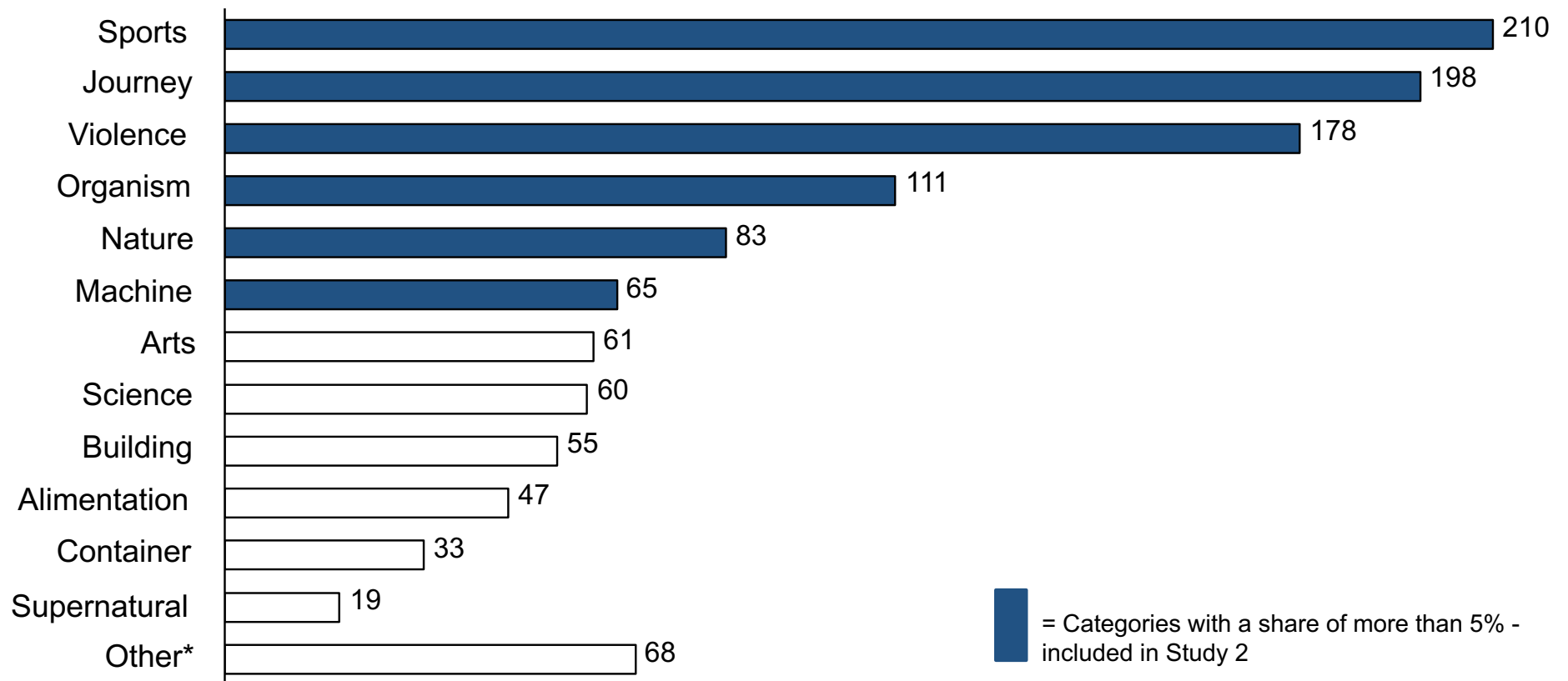
Two basic mechanisms are likely to affect how constituents respond to CEO's reference to certain source domains

General stipulations on the mechanisms (e.g., Ottati & Renstrom, 2010)



Overall, the CEOs referred to 25 source domain categories when using metaphors

Ranking of *source domains* (with number of metaphors from respective category)



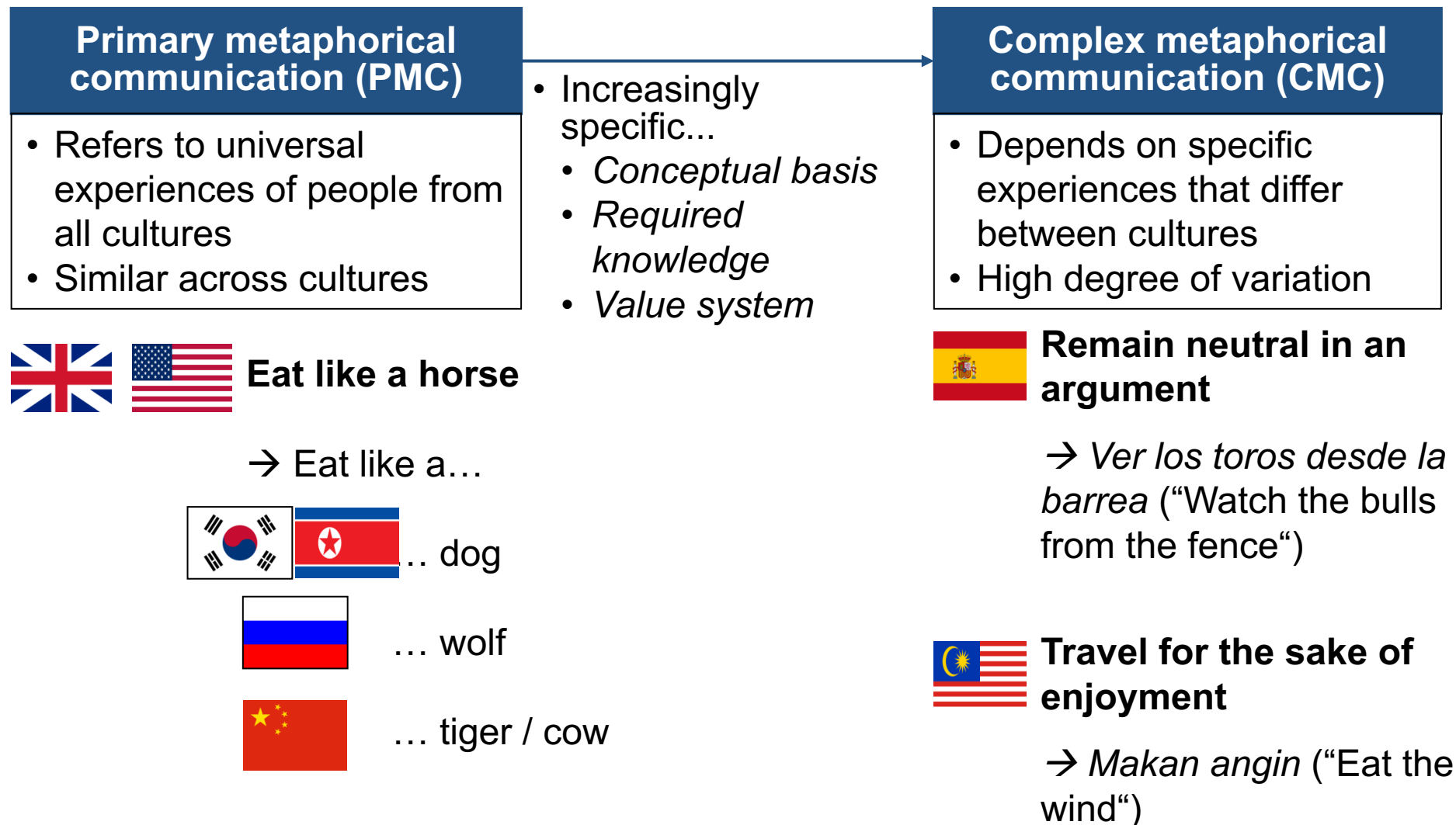
*13 *source domain categories* that had only a share of 1% or less in the overall sample where combined in the category “other”. These were (number of metaphors drawn from this category in brackets): ‘crafts’ (12), ‘agriculture’ (10), ‘clothing’ (8), ‘light / darkness’ (7), ‘person’ (7), ‘object’ (6), ‘marriage’ (4), ‘valuables’ (4), ‘cleaning’ (3), ‘crime’ (3), ‘substance’ (2), ‘monarchy’ (1), ‘show’ (1)

Descriptions and Examples of Most Prevalent Source Domain Categories

Source Domain Category	% of Sample	Source Domains Referring to:	Example Citation	Exemplary occurrences in CMT Literature
Sports	18%	Sports-related rules, terms, tactics or movements; sports facilities (e.g. arena); types and duration of sports matches and games (e.g. gambling, puzzles, super bowl, inning).	<i>"It feels like we just finished the preseason and we're suited up now and ready to play the Super Bowl again."</i> (Steve Bennett, Intuit, CC Q1 2007)	game (Eubanks, 1999); race, puzzle (Lakoff, 1994); gamble, play (Özçalışkan, 2003a)
Journey	17%	Actions and items associated with aviation, driving, sailing and boating; general terrain, road and weather conditions; navigation and itinerary.	<i>"Both parties have input on a plan, ... so I would say we are both in the front seat of the car. In Phase I, we are in the driver's seat."</i> (Daniel Welch, InterMune, CC Q1 2007)	journey (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980); destinations (Kövecses, 2003); change of location, departure, motion along a path (Özçalışkan, 2003b)

The formation and interpretation of metaphors depend on the originating and receiving contexts

Cultural differences in metaphor use



The model hypothesizes on the fit between the level of metaphor complexity and strategy in an MNC

From König et al. 2017, p. 276

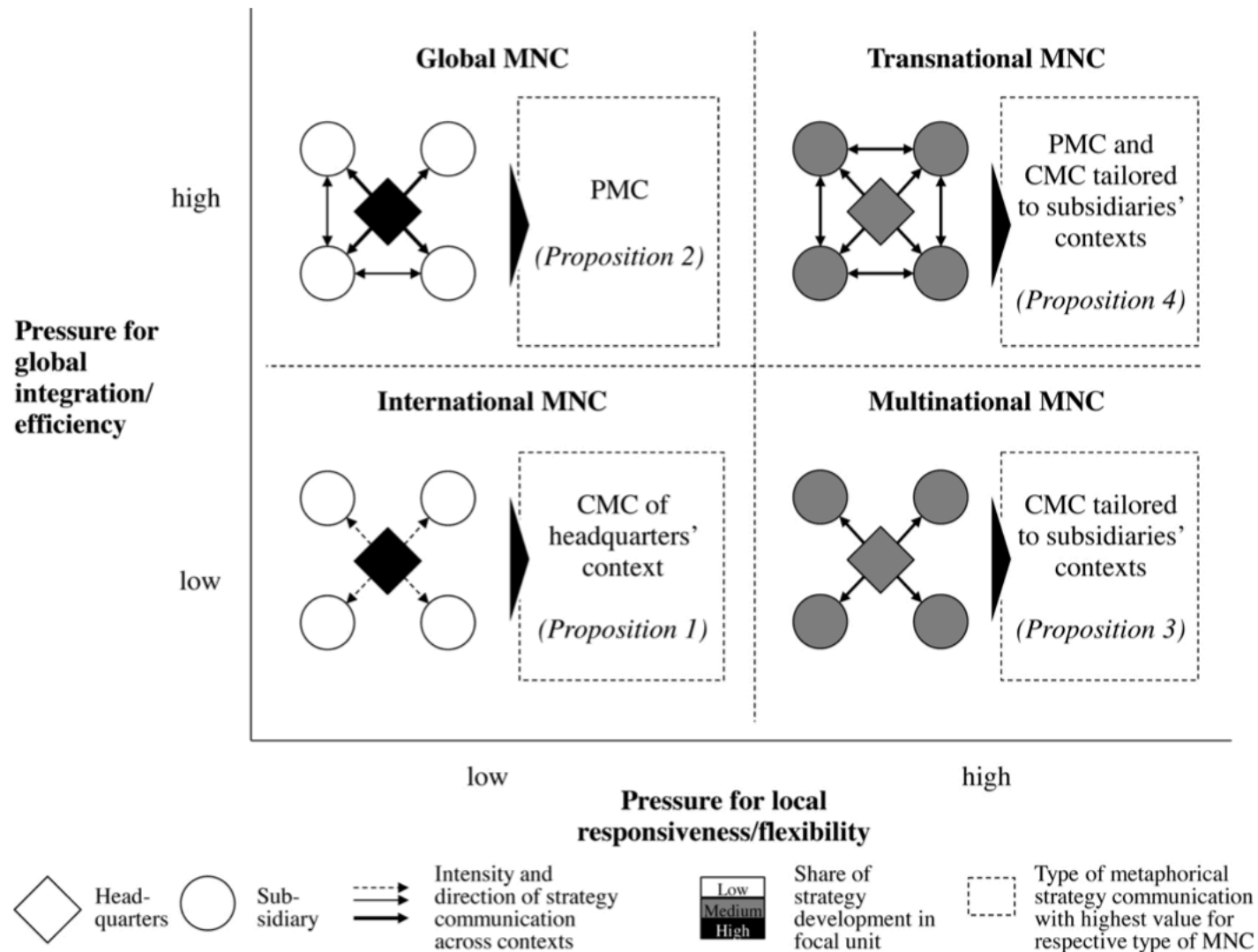


Fig. 1. Framework of the Types of Metaphorical Strategy Communication with Highest Value for Generic Types of MNC Strategies.

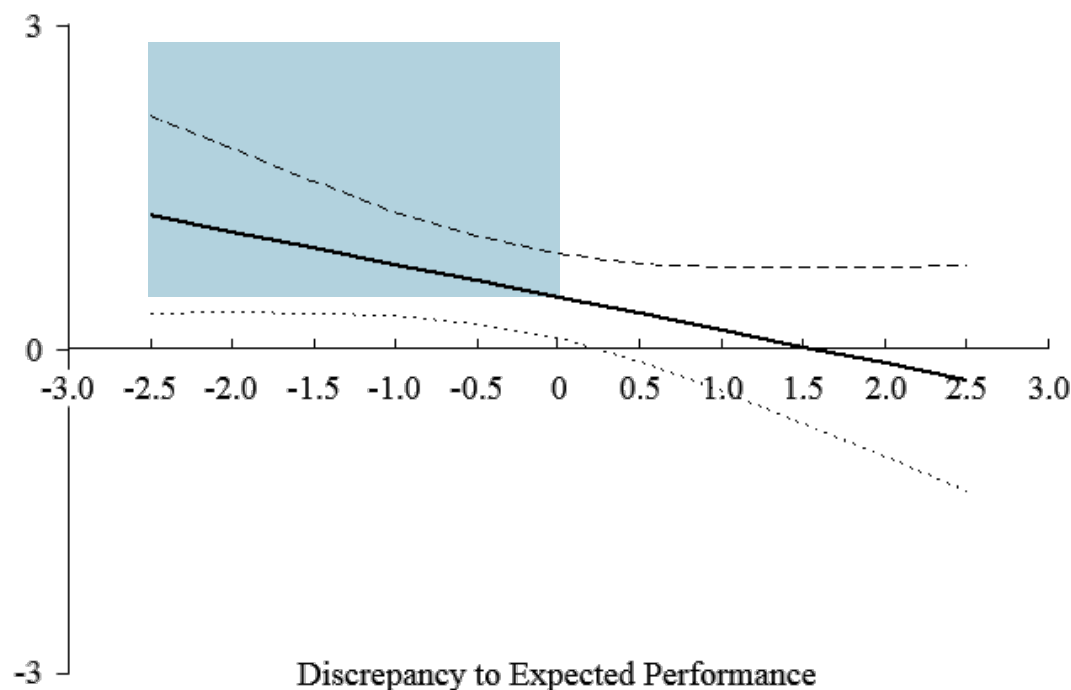
We distinguish two dimensions of structural charismatic rhetoric: Cognition-oriented and confidence-transmitting

Overall dimension	Definition	Rhetoric Elements
Cognition-oriented charismatic rhetoric	All elements of structural charismatic rhetoric that influence receivers' sensemaking of a given situation by providing rhetorical frames (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Cornelissen & Werner, 2014)	Metaphorical communication <i>All figurative linguistic expressions that convey thoughts and feelings by describing one domain, A, through another domain, B" (König et al., 2017: 1)</i>
		Stories <i>A sequential, usually chronologically ordered, account of past, anticipated, or fictional events involving two or more agonists, whereby sequentiality and action – accounted for in terms of intentions, deeds and consequences – indicates some kind of causal and/or moral principle (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1995: 15)</i>
Confidence-transmitting charismatic rhetoric	All elements of structural charismatic rhetoric that signal a particularly high self-efficacy of the leader and transfer this perception to the receivers' sense of self-efficacy	Hyperboles <i>Purposeful exaggeration of a narrative, descriptive (McCarthy & Carter, 2004: 150).</i> Absence of filled pauses <i>Little or no use of brief utterances in a spoken conversation, typically between thoughts, that can occur in different forms, such as um, uh, err, or hmm and are common in spontaneous speech (Brennan & Williams, 1995)</i>

Negative discrepancy to performance reference point positively moderates the effects of charismatic rhetoric

Figure 1. The Interactive Effects of Discrepancy to Expected Performance and Structural Charismatic Rhetoric on Team Performance.

Marginal Effect of Structural Charismatic Rhetoric (mean-centered)



- Change induced by a marginal increase in structural charismatic rhetoric
- - - 95% confidence interval low
- - - 95% confidence interval high

Illustrative: For a team three times below expected performance in the last three matches, one unit more of charismatic rhetoric (approximately 27 words per hundred words) improves the goal difference on average by 1.2 goals.