

IMPLICIT VISUAL MESSAGES AND A DISCOURSE DIMENSION

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Summary: Visual representation of a phraseological image may convey implicit messages that are not directly expressed in text. This instantiation is a case of concurrent visual and verbal allusion. Interesting aspect of visual representation is the visual development of figurative meaning.

Key words: a black eye, a family tree, to hang by a thread, a spin doctor.

Black eye:

Nonverbal representation beats the expected images of two well-known British political leaders: Tony Blair and Duncan Smith. If you take a look at the newspaper page, actually the first thing that strikes you is a black eye on each face in the literal sense of the word. "Perceiving is also thinking", Arnheim argues ([1954] 1974: 5). The thought of an accident or a simultaneous personal assault is quickly discarded as you start reading the article. The two leaders have not been beaten physically but politically or rather metaphorically. The figurative meaning of a black eye (PU) comes to the fore: a defeat, rebuff, several Blow.¹⁴ The visual conveys the acute pain of failure: the pain of having been defeated. The first paragraph gives a verbal clue by way of extended metaphor: "Duncan Smith and Blair were b a t t e r e d by Brent. Tom Baldwin and Greg Hurst ask whether this is a breakthrough, or just another by-election blip" (The Times, 20 September, 2003, SL, p. 4M). In fact, the two leaders metonymically stand for their political parties (Labour and Conservative) which had failed to win the by-election.

The instantiation reveals the interconnection of stylistic techniques: it shows how a phraseological metaphor turns into a visual pun. The base form of the metaphorical PU a black eye appears neither in the text of the article nor in the headline, nor indeed is a caption present. "Pus can be visualised without mentioning a single constituent" (Fiedler 2007: 104).

A family tree:

The meaning of the PU a family tree is based on a common metaphorical mapping. In its base form the PU is a conventional phraseological metaphor, available to users of English. First the PU appears in core use, that is, in its most common form and meaning. As the example shows, no change occurs in phraseological meaning in the text; the figurative thought is not developed, nor is it sustained:

A family tree

Then for the next two hundred years the family tree shows a succession of soldiers – noble, high-spirited fellows, who always went into battle singing, right behind the army, and always went out a-whooping, right ahead of it.

Mark Twain, *A Burlesque Biography*, p. 178

In cognitive psychology the image is generally viewed as a mental representation, as a picture in the head. As Steen points out, when processing metaphors, readers are able to construct at least three different kinds of mental representation: Linguistic representation of the meaning of a metaphor, conceptual representation of the referential content, and communicative representation of the message it is attempting to convey (Steen 1994: 168).

In discourse, a phraseological image may be sustained over longer stretches of text (see Ch. 3.4), as it is in this sketch. The next paragraph contains instantial stylistic use. Creative expression of a new idea is achieved by instantiation of an extended metaphor. The metaphorical meaning is extended, creating sub-images which become part of the associative metaphorical network sustained on the basis of the image of the PU:

This is a scathing rebuke to old dead Froissart's poor witticism that our family tree never had but one limb to it, and that that one stuck out a tright angles, and bore fruit wInter and summer.

Mark Twain, *A Burlesque Biography*, p. 178

To hang by a thread:

Visual representation of stylistic use has not exhausted itself. Further development of media and multimodal possibilities offers interesting new turns in visual discourse. Identification and interpretation of stylistic use in multimodal texts is more challenging. Interaction between the visual and its verbal counterpart has “a perceptual immediacy” that is lacking in language alone (Forceville 2008: 463). It is common for magazines to use a PU on their cover and pick it up again in the cover story, which may be pages

away. The title of the cover page catches the eye. However, only the interrelation between the two modes of expression provides a full understanding of the multimodal text. For instance, the cover page of Time(Europe edition, 18 December, 1989) contains both visual and verbal allusion to the PU to hang by a thread. The cover is in three colours: the top is black, the middle is red, and the lower part is yellow: these are the colours of the German flag.

A spin doctor:

Concurrently, spin is also a direct allusion to another PU, a spin doctor, a PR professional who specialises in spin tactics to manipulate public opinion and provide a favourable bias. The meaning of the PU to skate on thin ice is enhanced by the ominous headline Heading for trouble on the front cover.

Creative expression of a new idea is achieved by an instantiation of extended metaphor, pun, and allusion in a process of meaning extension in one visual context. The visual implications of the pun help to shift from direct meaning to figurative meaning and back again. The sustained visual image becomes part and parcel of the meaning of the PU in the given instantiation. The abstract idea has been translated into visual form to render a hazardous situation. Thus, the visual representation becomes a genuine part of the concept of risk. The textual and visual representation of a thinking process is profoundly influenced by political, social, and cultural processes that lie behind the specific space and time, that is, the context.

THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE:

1. See Satcor Report on International Conference “Stop Money Laundering” (2002).
2. Dictionaries give two meanings of a black eye – direct and figurative: (1) a discoloration of the skin around the eye; (2) (fig.) defeat, rebuff, heavy blow, failure (Kunin 1967a: 294; Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary 2009; Oxford English Dictionary 2009).
- 3 A family (fruit) tree – a fruit tree bearing different varieties of the same fruit grafted on to it (Chambers 20th Century Dictionary [1983] 1987: 455).
4. For more on use of several tropes working together in natural language, see Gibbs ([1994] 1999: 449–454). For concurrent use of stylistic techniques in phraseological instantiations, see Naciscione (1976: 160–180); Ch. 5.3 of this book.
5. For a discussion of the verbal and visual potential of this proverb, see Mieder (1993: 133–149).