When winning goals are scored: Variation in the use of sport metaphors in American and British news discourse

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Abstract

The aim of the present article is to compare the use of sport metaphors around the 2022 FIFA World Cup in spoken and written American and British English. Based on the claims of Boers (1999), our hypothesis is that there would be differences between (1) various the number of sports metaphors used during the competition and the periods before and after it, (2) between the American and the British subcorpora and (3) between the spoken and the written subcorpora. The 3 time periods examined were 3 weeks in September 2002, 3 weeks during the championship, and 5 weeks a month and a half after the event. The corpus (450, 000 words in 9 subcorpora) consists of transcripts of TV news programmes and newspaper articles. The USAS Semantic Tagger was used to identify the sport metaphors which were then analysed and categorized according to the subcorpora they belong to. The findings corroborate the first hypothesis, since the frequency of sport metaphors was the highest during the event in both American and British sources. There were no significant differences between American and British subcorpora, or between spoken and written data.

Key words: sports metaphor; news discourse; entrenched embodiment; variation; corpus analysis; semantic tagging.

1. Introduction

Global, near-global, or very important events of any kind (natural or man-made catastrophes, battles, etc.) can often initiate the use of conceptual metaphors,[1] as can be seen in the following examples:

(1) *It's the "Chernobyl of East Oakland," said Naomi Schiff, a board member with Oakland Heritage Alliance, because General Electric is proposing to "encase it in concrete and just leave it."*
GE made transformers on the 24-acre site until the 1980s. The remaining buildings, the soil and the groundwater are contaminated with polychlorinat-

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[1] Note that some of these originate as PLACE FOR EVENT metonymies, but are then reused as metaphors.

ed biphenyls, or PCBs, and other toxic chemicals, according to a draft envi-ronmental impact report before the Oakland Planning Commission.
(https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/preservationist-com-munity-want-clean-up-reuse-of-toxic-historic-east-oakland-factory/14075/)

(2) *Democratic Sen. John Kerry on Monday called the Bush administration's national security plan "the Katrina of foreign policy."*
(https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna15108090)

(3) *A horribilis szerzőszám miatt Arató László szerint ez a NAT és kerettanterv a magyartanítás Mohácsa vagy Trianonja.*
(https://www.klubradio.hu/adasok/a-nat-a-magyartanitas-trianonja -111252)
'Due to the horrible number of authors, according to László Arató, this National Core Curriculum (NAT) and framework plan are the Mohács or the Trianon of teaching Hungarian'[2]

In this article we study how the frequency of types and tokens[3] of sport metaphors vary around and during a global sporting event in news dis-course in spoken and written American and British English. The event in question is the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the world national championship that was played from November 20 to December 18, 2022 in Qatar. Although association football, or soccer for short (in most other parts of the world simply known as football) cannot compete in popularity in the United States with American football, baseball or basketball, the championship attracted certain amount of attention, though of course not as much as in the United Kingdom. Among the teams that qualified for the championship were Eng-land, Wales, USA, Canada, Australia, Ghana and Cameroon (where English is the official language along with French), with the total population of more than 500 million (more than 330 million in the USA alone). This appears to be a significant pool of English speakers potentially exposed to and using sport metaphors. England, Australia and USA advanced to the knockout stage, i.e. the round of 16, and England made it to the quarter-finals, where it lost 2-1 to France.

Before we continue, we need to clarify what we mean by sport meta-phors. Note that we do not study metaphors that have specifically to do with football. We include all sport metaphors (though in particular those involv-

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[2] Mohács and Trianon are two places that are very important in the history of Hungary, as they are related to two tragic events. Mohács is the town in the south of Hungary where the Ottoman army led by Sule-iman the Magnificent defeated Hungarian troops in 1526, leading to a decline of Hungarian Kingdom. Trianon actually refers to the Grand Trianon château in Versailles, where the Treaty of Trianon was signed on June 4, 1920. It defined the borders of Hungary within the ceasfire lines established in Novem-ber/December 1918, shrinking it to one third of the pre-war kingdom.

[3] In our case type is a specific expression, for example, *run a race*, and tokens are specific occurrences or instances of this expression in the corpus.

ing teams manipulating a ball). The practical reason for this decision is that specific football metaphors might be too few to make possible any generalizations.

We put forward the following hypothesis:

> There is a difference between various periods of time under examination.

The article is organized as follows. In Section 2 we briefly discuss literature that deals with factors that motivate the selection of particular source domains in metaphorical mappings as well as with metaphors involving SPORT as either source or target domain. We conclude this section by considering the issue of variation in the use of metaphors, in particular, not so much with different distribution across (sub-)communities of speakers, or text types, or with simple linear variation over time, but with a complex cyclic type of variation along several dimensions. We detail our methodology in Section 3. We first, present the structure of our corpus as well as how it was compiled. This is followed by a justification of the method we employed in the process of extracting sport metaphors from this corpus. The distribution of metaphors across subcorpora is analysed in Section 4 against the background of H1-H3. Finally, Section 5 rounds off the article by presenting conclusions that the distributions we have established seem to support.

2. When metaphors come and go?[4]

A recent interview with Zsolt Nagy, a Hungarian actor, published in the Hungarian-language weekly magazine *Nők Lapja* (Women's Magazine), opens as follows:

(4) *We arranged to meet Nagy Zsolt in the cultic café of the eighth district, called "The Snail," but I don't see him anywhere. At the counter, a guy in paint-stained work clothes and a cap is standing. That's him. Seeing my surprised expression, he laughs and mentions that they are renovating a space a few streets away, where his wife, Kata Oltai, will soon open a vintage clothing store that will also function as a cultural space. While waiting for our coffee, he tells me that this kind of work is not unusual for him; he has already built two houses with his own hands.[5]*

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[4] This is of course intentional pun on the title of Kövecses (2015).

[5] A nyolcadik kerület kultikus kávézójába, a Csigába beszéltük meg a találkozót Nagy Zsolttal, de nem látom sehol. A pultnál festékfoltos munkásruhában, sapkában áll egy alak. Ő az. Meglepett arcomat látva nevetve mondja, hogy pár utcával arrébb újítanak fel egy helyiséget, ahol a felesége, Oltai Kata nyit hamarosan egy kulturális térként is funkcionáló vintage ruha üzletet. Amíg a kávéra várunk, elmeséli, hogy nem szokatlan neki ez a munka, már két házat épített fel a saját kezével. (November 21, 2023).

In the answer to the last question in the interview, the actor says:

(5) *I function as an actor completely differently than I did twenty years ago. The experiences stack up beautifully. It's like a painted surface where layers keep accumulating, getting stronger and richer. If you scrape it with a spatula, there's so much beneath it. Now, being in it – he points to his paint-covered work clothes – I can only speak in painterly metaphors. (Laughs.)*[6]

It is clear that the physical activity in which the actor was engaged at the time of the interview inspired his use of "painterly" metaphors, as he himself refers to them in a metalinguistic comment.

Closer to the topic of this article, a similar case of metaphor use in a Hungarian news article published on November 25, 2023, is motivated by a salient moment of a sports event that took place nine days earlier. Hungarian and Bulgarian national football teams played a qualifier game in Sofia on November 16, 2023. Hungary qualified directly after a 2-2 draw, with Alex Petkov scoring an own goal in the stoppage time after a free kick by Dominik Szoboszlai. Discussing the extra tax that Bulgaria intended to introduce on the transit of natural gas coming from Russia to Hungary via Serbia, the Hungarian news portal *24.hu* used the following title on November 25, 2023:

(6) *Not only did they head Szoboszlai's cross into their goal, but, Bulgarian politics also scored an own goal following Szijjártó's intervention*[7]

This was followed in the body of the article by:

(7) *In the last seconds of the match, following Dominik Szoboszlai's free-kick, the Bulgarians accidentally scored an own goal, allowing the Hungarian team to qualify directly for the European Championship. However, following this, politics quickly began its own goal production.*[8]

This salient moment of scoring an own goal apparently lingered on for at least 9 days in the collective memory so as to make a viable metaphorical source domain when discussing foreign politics.

What we see in both of these examples is that a current or just a recent state of affairs is considered to be of such personal and/or collective relevance that it may influence one's way of presenting something else in metaphorical terms. We also see that such contextual factors may range from

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[6] Teljesen másképp működöm színészként, mint húsz éve. A tapasztalások szépen rakódnak egymásra. Olyan, mint egy festett felület, amin egyre több réteg lesz, egyre erősebb, egyre gazdagabb, ha fölkaparod spaklival, annyi minden van alatta. Most így, hogy benne vagyok – festékes munkaruhájára mutat –, csak festős metaforákban tudok beszélni. (Nevet.)

[7] Nemcsak Szoboszlai ívelését fejelték a kapujukba, Szijjártó nyomán is öngólt lőtt a bolgár politika

[8] A meccsen az utolsó utáni pillanatban a bolgárok **Szoboszlai Dominik** szabadrúgása után befejeltek maguknak egy öngólt, így a magyar csapat egyenes ágon jutott ki az Európa-bajnokságra. Ám ezt követően a politika is gyorsan elkezdte az öngólgyártást.

local to global (see Kövecses 2015: 53). The actor doing refurbishing is clearly on the local end, while the football fans community experience is less local but not global, i.e., it is somewhere on the cline. The latter also involves "the knowledge about the main elements of the discourse" (Kövecses 2015: 53). In other words, one's metaphors may occasionally come from current concerns of a person or a group of people, i.e., they are results of "in vivo" priming. According to Kövecses,

> We can think of this contextual influence on conceptualization as largescale priming by context that is occurring simultaneously (and competitively) with the influence of entrenched embodiment. As a result of this interaction (this "in vivo" priming), the abstract concepts in the conceptual system and the system as such are constantly shaped and at the same time they shape the way we conceptualize the world. (Kövecses 2015: 71)

We will come back to another aspect of this "in vivo" priming issue, i.e., metaphor variation, after we have briefly discussed the link between sports and politics as the source and the target domain of metaphorical mappings, respectively.

According to cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphors make it possible to understand one conceptual domain in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2010: 4). The target domain is the one which is understood through the source domain. Typically, the source domain and the target domain are not reversible. This is generalized by Kövecses (2010: 7) as the Unidirectionality Principle, which postulates that the source domain and the target domain are irreversible because the target is usually an abstract concept while the source is a more concrete one, and the usual direction of the metaphorical process goes from the concrete to the abstract.

Kövecses (2010: 18–26) also provides a list of popular source and target domains. According to this list, the most frequently used source domains are THE HUMAN BODY, HEALTH AND ILLNESS, ANIMALS, PLANTS, BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION, MACHINES AND TOOLS, GAME AND SPORT, MONEY AND ECONOMIC TRANSACTIONS, COOKING AND FOOD, HEAT AND COLD, LIGHT AND DARKNESS, FORCES and MOVEMENT AND DIRECTION. On the other hand, among the most popular target domains are: EMOTION, DESIRE, MORALITY, THOUGHT, SOCIETY AND NATIONS, POLITICS, ECONOMY, HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNICATION, TIME, LIFE AND DEATH, RELIGION and EVENTS AND ACTIONS.

In the paragraph about the target domain of POLITICS Kövecses (2010, pp. 24–25) states that the general conceptualization of political power is in terms of physical force, but some of the aspects of politics can be understood by games and sport, as in *The president plays hardball*, or *We are about to score the winning run*.

A number of studies focusing on sport as the source domain for metaphors involving various target domains are available. Howe (1988) and Sem-

ino (2008) demonstrate that many of the metaphors found in contemporary American political discourse systematically draw on the domain of sport (in addition to the domain of war). Howe's examination of the use of these metaphors between 1980 and 1985, shows that politics is often metaphorically presented as a rule-bound contest between two opponents or teams of opponents. The concept of teams is efficiently used to create a bond between politicians and their supporters (cf. Bineham 1991). These metaphors are an essential part of the American (political) culture, but this is not limited to the American, or Anglophone context. It is true of the political scene of many other countries, as shown by Semino and Masci (1996) for Italy, or by Milić and Glušac (2009) for Serbian, by Dumitriu and Negra-Busuioc (20017) for Romanian, or Wiliński (2020) for Polish. Sport metaphors also play an important role in areas other than politics. Not surprisingly these have to do with competition. Offstein and Neck (2003) study specific metaphors based on baseball, tennis and basketball, showing how they are used in business practice and managerial decision making. Sport metaphors can also be used in therapeutic work, as shown by Jones (2009) and Spandler, Roy and McKeown (2014).

The domain of SPORT is one of the few domains, along with WAR, that can be used as either source or target domains, i.e., which exhibit reversibility. This is demonstrated in Charteris-Black (2004, ch. 6). Simó (2009) is concerned with the range of conceptual metaphors used to describe a chess game or a chess event. It is interesting that some of the sources come from other sports as well. See also Jansen and Sabo (1994), Kellett (2002), or Raffaelli and Katunar (2016).

Returning to the issue of metaphor variation, we see that it is a very complex phenomenon. Kövecses (2005) identifies a number of dimensions along which the phenomenon can be observed. Variation can be cross-cultural or of the within-culture type. In the latter case, we can distinguish further dimensions along which it can occur. These are the social, subcultural, ethnic, regional, stylistic, individual, developmental and diachronic dimension. The last two have to do with time. On the one hand, there is a process of the acquisition of metaphorical (and other figurative) expressions as part of the development of language in an individual, while on the other hand, from a diachronic perspective we can observe how certain metaphors develop, i.e. appear, change, and occasionally disappear. But there is another dimension of variation that has to do with time—a type of variation taking place over particular, shorter, stretches of time (therefore not diachronic variation proper, but rather dynamic longitudinal), not leading to unidirectional, linear changes, or to changes in the conventionalization status of the metaphor.

An example of this sort of temporal development, which is also clearly motivated by contextual factors, is described in Boers (1999). He argues that, in general, the likelihood of a given source domain used for metaphorical mapping increases as it becomes more salient in everyday experience. He demonstrates this on the domain of illness, which is tightly linked to a more general domain of the human body. He notes that "although bodily experience is probably the most basic source domain for metaphor, people's awareness of their bodies may vary as well" (1999: 49). We become more aware of our bodily existence when we experience some problems, i.e. when our body fails to function properly due to an illness. As Boers points out, many common illnesses are caused or enhanced by bad weather, typical of winter months in the northern hemisphere. In other words, illness and health become more salient domains in that period of time. He assumed that therefore health-related metaphors will be more frequently used in that period of time, i.e. health is expected to be more frequently used as a source domain for various conceptual metaphors in winter. His corpus-based study of opinion articles in *The Economist* over the period of 10 years supports this assumption, as there is a fluctuation in the use of metaphors in connection with economy over the period of time under investigation. Economy is more often talked about as being *healthy*, *sickly*, as *needing a cure*, etc. during winter months. Boers concludes that these metaphors guide our abstract reasoning, and that "the observed seasonal fluctuation may be taken as indirect evidence of the connection between bodily experience and abstract thought" (1999: 55).

Note that Boers does not narrow his study down to just a handful of concepts related to respiratory problems, such as flu and colds, as the most important diseases in winter, but to the domain of HEALTH in general. Likewise, we do not restrict ourselves to football-related metaphors, but to sport metaphors in general. We believe that the activation of lexemes associated with one subdomain also results in spreading the activation to neighboring subdomains within a hierarchically organized subsystem, as consistent with the claim that conceptual metaphors are systematically organized into branches and levels.

This sort of correlation between the salience of a given domain and its frequency as a source domain need not only obtain with domains related to the human body, but it can also be present in the case of other source domains. Note that, based on the idea of Boers (1999), our H1 predicts that is the frequency of the use of SPORT metaphors increases in periods of time when sport events of great importance in the world are organized.

3. Methodology

In this section we first present the sources for our analysis, i.e., our method of data collection, and then explain the procedure for the identification/extraction of linguistic metaphors from the corpora. This article is based on a collection of smaller corpora of authentic data from various sources. It contains more than 450,000 words in several subcorpora balanced in terms of their size. Subcorpora were compiled with three dimensions in mind, as can be seen from Table 1. The number of words in all the subcorpora is of roughly equal size, around 50,000 words each.

Firstly, we selected three target windows for the publication of the materials. One is between November 22, 2022 and December 10, 2022, i.e., during the World Cup, the other is between September 6, 2022 and September 23, 2022, i.e., well before the event of interest, and the third is February 9, 2023 and March 17, 2023, i.e., starting more than a month and a half after the final match. The periods of time that samples come from are marked by numbers 1-3. The second dimension has to do with whether the discourse belongs to the American or to the British variety of English (indicated by capital A or B).

Finally, the third dimension concerns the modality, spoken vs. written news discourse (indicated by S or W). Unfortunately, we were able to obtain samples of spoken news discourse from the periods in question only for American English. Ideally, we would have had twelve subcorpora, but ended up with just nine. Nevertheless, cross-modal and cross-regional comparisons are still possible, with certain limitations.

All the materials in the spoken subcorpora come from the news TV channel CNN. This is a news channel, but most of its programmes are not classic news, i.e., they are not scripted: what is said there is for most part genuine spoken language, not just written texts that are read aloud in front of the camera. It is rather a mix of standard news, commentaries, live reporting and talks with guests. Transcripts of most of CNN programs are available for free for at least three months following the date when they were originally aired at https://transcripts.cnn.com/. These are of course rush transcripts that may contain some spelling and grammatical mistakes, but otherwise correctly reflect what was said during the broadcast. All the anchors, reporters and guests in the programmes selected for the corpus are native speakers of English.

Table 1: Description of the corpus. AS: American spoken subcorpus. AW: American written subcorpus. BW: British written subcorpus.

Sources	Time period		Number of words
CNN This Morning CNN Tonight At This Hour Situation Room New Day CNN 10	Subcorpus 1 AS	September 6, 2022 - September 23, 2022	51,585
	Subcorpus 2 AS	November 22, 2022 - December 10, 2022	50,030
	Subcorpus 3 AS	February 9, 2023 – March 17, 2023	50,185
	Total		151,800
US newspapers and magazines *New York Times, New York Post, Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek, Barron's*	Subcorpus 1 AW	September 6, 2022 - September 23, 2022	50,731
	Subcorpus 2 AW	November 22, 2022 - December 10, 2022	51,310
	Subcorpus 3 AW	February 9, 2023 – March 17, 2023	50,381
	Total		152,422
British newspapers and magazines *The Economist, The Guardian, The Week, The Times, Financial Times*	Subcorpus 1 BW	September 6, 2022 - September 23, 2022	51,130
	Subcorpus 2 BW	November 22, 2022 - December 10, 2022	50,691
	Subcorpus 3 BW	February 9, 2023 – March 17, 2023	51,559
	Total		153,380
Grand total			457,602

Needless to say, no news texts were included in the corpus that dealt with the World Cup, or any other sporting activity. News containing lexemes like *game* (in articles on video gaming) were included, but the lexical items like *game* were discounted, as they were obviously used literally.

The size of our corpus limited the choices that we had for the metaphor identification procedure. It is clear that a manual, or a near-manual search would require too much effort and time. If we tried to identify metaphors using the MIP procedure, as described in Pragglejaz Group (2007), we would have first to globally read the texts, segmenting in the second step lexical units, and then establish in the third step their meaning in that context and determine whether they have a more basic meaning in different contexts. Even if this method is syncopated by omitting all functional words, e.g., prepositions etc., and, needless to say, if we just concentrated on lexemes that have to do with sport, this would still require an immense amount of wasted time and effort.

The other possibility, the one that makes sense in light of the corpus size, is to use an automated procedure. The central task, therefore, is to design a query that would make it possible to retrieve metaphorical expressions. Once we have it, we can use it with practically any concordancing software. Stefanowitsch (2006) describes three possibilities for the Metaphor Pattern Analysis (MPA): search for lexemes related to a source domain, search for lexemes related to a target domain, search for sentences containing lexemes characteristic of both domains. Since we are not interested in the totality of metaphors in the corpus but only in metaphors that use a specific source domain, the first strategy is what we need.

Adopting this strategy means that we have to build a list of lexemes related to sport that appear to be viable potential metaphorical vehicles. Because we decided to include not just specific lexemes related to football, but to sport in general, such a set of lexemes is not a small one. In addition to the issue of compiling such a list, we also have a practical problem of using these lexemes as search input. In theory, this could be done by performing a series of searches using a text processor (with subcorpora formatted as .doc, .txt, or .rtf). In practice, this is not much of an improvement in comparison with MIP—a double digit of query terms would require exactly the same number of searches. The procedure could be somewhat simplified by using the MonoConc suite (and .txt files) because it makes it possible to perform searches for multiple items by including Boolean logical operators, in our case the operator OR (also notated as |), as in *halftime | goal | referee*. There is no upper limit on the number of items, but in practice it would be sensible to stop adding items above 5-6.

The other issue is the set of lexemes relevant for the sport domain. It could be built on a purely intuitive basis (probably calling for successive additions), or on the basis of some dictionaries. A handy starting point to be considered is Palmatier and Ray (1993), especially its term index, if it is combined with a semiotic-ontological framework such as (Kövecses (1976) in order to prune the set to a viable size. Yet another possibility is to use a re-

source developed by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, specifically their project of listing semantic domains started by Ron Moe in 2001. This hierarchically organized network of semantic domains is applicable to many languages and is useful in compiling dictionaries. As of 2012, it contained 60,000 English words assigned to 9 basic ontological categories: Universe, creation, 2. Person, 3 Language and thought, 4 Social behavior, 5 Daily life, 6 Word and occupation, 7 Physical actions, 8 States, 9 Grammar (https://semdom.org/v4/1). Within category 4, Social behavior, we find the subdomain of Social activity (4.2).
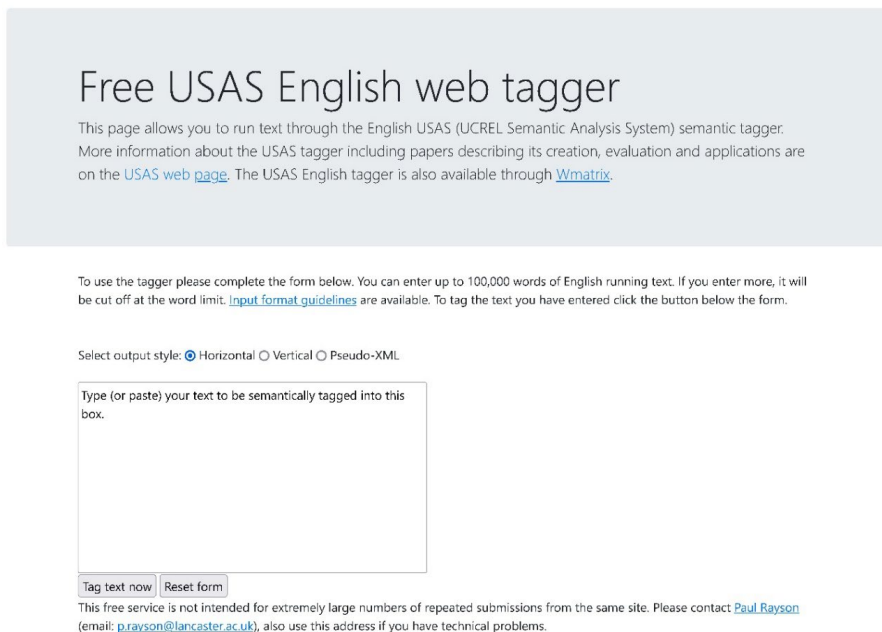

Figure 1: The domain of sports at Semantic Domains (Summer Institute of Linguistics)

Deeper in this subdomain we find 4.2.6 Entertainment, recreation, with 4.2.6.1 Game and 4.2.6.2 Sport, with more than 170 terms listed there. There are also two more specific domains, 4.2.6.2.1 Football, soccer and 4.2.6.2.2 Basketball, with additional 27 and 89 terms, respectively. These lists are very

useful, but the number of words is again quite high (although there are some overlaps) and would need to be pruned to the most relevant ones.

Another online resource that is available, USAS (UCREL Semantic Analysis System) English web tagger (https://ucrel-api.lancaster.ac.uk/usas/tagger.html), actually proved ideal for our purposes. This is an excellent, free, very reliable and easy to use framework for automatic semantic analysis of texts. It has a hierarchical structure with 21 major fields, and further more precise subdivisions (https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/usas/semtags.txt). The tags that are of interest for us are K5.1 Sports, K5.2 Games, and S7.3 Competition.

Figure 2: USAS semantic tagger interface

It makes it possible to go through a large amount of raw text in just one pass. Up to 100,000 words from a plain text file (.txt) can be entered. Note that our subcorpora are around 50,000 each. There is no need for manual crafting of search terms. The output of semantic tagging for a fraction of a corpus (342 words) is given below. Note the S7.3 tag (marked yellow) after *House races*.

(8) …

> The_Z5 Supreme_A5.1+++ Court_G2.1 has_Z5 once_Z4[i12.2.1
> again_Z4[i12.2.2 ruled_S7.1+ ,_PUNC against_Z5 Don-
> ald_Z1mf[i13.2.1 Trump_Z1mf[i13.2.2 ,_PUNC clearing_M2 the_Z5

way_X4.2 for_Z5 a_Z5 House_H1 panel_S5+c ,_PUNC to_Z5 final-ly_N4 get_A9+ ahold_A9+ of_Z5 his_Z8m tax_G1.1/Q1.2[i14.2.1 re-turns_G1.1/Q1.2[i14.2.2 ,_PUNC after_Z5 years_T1.3 of_Z5 bat-tling_X8+ for_Z5 them_Z8mfn ._PUNC

We_Z8 're_Z5 going_T1.1.3[i15.2.1 to_T1.1.3[i15.2.2 dig_A1.1.1 in-to_Z5 what_Z8 that_Z8 could_A7+ mean_Q1.1 ,_PUNC for_Z5 the_Z5 former_T2-

President_G1.1/S7.1+/S2mf ,_PUNC tonight_T1.1.2 ._PUNC

Democrats_G1.2/S2mf will_T1.1.3 have_A9+ just_A14 six_N1 weeks_T1.3 left_M1 to_Z5 dig_A1.1.1 into_Z5 any_N5 docu-ments_Q1.2 they_Z8mfn receive_A9+ before_Z5 Republicans_G1.2 take_S7.1+[i16.2.1 control_S7.1+[i16.2.2 of_Z5 the_Z5 House_H1 ._PUNC But_Z5 the_Z5 specter_Z99 of_Z5 Trump_Z1mf is_Z5 still_T2++ going_T1.1.3[i17.2.1 to_T1.1.3[i17.2.2 hang_M2 over_Z5 the_Z5 GOP_Z99 ._PUNC

There_Z5 's_A3+ his_Z8m presidential_G1.1/S7.1+ cam-paign_X7+/Q2.2 ,_PUNC the_Z5 investigations_X2.4 into_Z5 his_Z8m conduct_S1.1.1 ,_PUNC and_Z5 the_Z5 behavior_S1.1.1 of_Z5 his_Z8m allies_S5+ ,_PUNC on_Z5 Capitol_Z1mf[i19.2.1 Hill_Z1mf[i19.2.2 ._PUNC GOP_Z99 Leader_S7.1+/S2mf Kev-in_Z1mf[i20.2.1 McCarthy_Z1mf[i20.2.2 is_Z5 acting_A1.1.1 like_Z5 the_Z5 Speaker-in-Waiting_Z99 ._PUNC But_Z5 now_T1.1.2 ,_PUNC there_Z5 is_A3+ another_A6.1- "_PUNC Hard_O4.1 no_Z6 "_PUNC declaration_Q2.2 ,_PUNC against_Z5 him_Z8m ._PUNC Congressman_G1.2/S2.2m Ralph_Z1mf[i21.2.1 Nor-man_Z1mf[i21.2.2 ,_PUNC of_Z5 South_Z2[i23.2.1 Caroli-na_Z2[i23.2.2 ,_PUNC is_A3+ the_Z5 latest_T3--- Republican_G1.2/S2mf ,_PUNC who_Z8 is_Z5 threatening_E3-/Q2.2 to_Z5 vote_G1.2 ,_PUNC against_Z5 McCarthy_Z1mf ,_PUNC for_Z5 Speaker_Q2.1/S2mf ,_PUNC on_Z5 the_Z5 House_H1 floor_H2 ,_PUNC in_Z5 January_T1.3 ._PUNC That_Z8 brings_M2 the_Z5 number_N5 of_Z5 possible_A7+ "_PUNC No_Z6 "_PUNC votes_G1.2 up_A13.4[i24.3.1 to_A13.4[i24.3.2 five_A13.4[i24.3.3 ._PUNC

He_Z8m joins_A2.2 Matt_Z1mf[i25.2.1 Gaetz_Z1mf[i25.2.2 ,_PUNC Matt_Z1mf[i26.2.1 Rosendale_Z1mf[i26.2.2 ,_PUNC Andy_Z1mf[i27.2.1

Biggs_Z1mf[i27.2.2 ,_PUNC and_Z5 Bob_Z1mf[i28.2.1 Good_Z1mf[i28.2.2 ,_PUNC who_Z8 've_Z5 all_A13.2 signaled_Z99 they_Z8mfn 'll_T1.1.3 oppose_S8-/E2- McCarthy_Z1mf ._PUNC

> If_Z7 current_T1.1.2 margins_N5 hold_M2 ,_PUNC in_Z5 the_Z5 House_H1 races_S7.3+ that_Z8 are_Z5 not_Z6 yet_T1.1.2 called_Q2.2 ,_PUNC McCarthy_Z1mf will_T1.1.3 only_A14 be_A3+ able_X9.1+ to_Z5 afford_I1.1 to_Z5 lose_X9.2- four_N1 votes_G1.2 ._PUNC This_Z8 presents_A9- quite_A13.5 a_Z5 math_N2 prob-lem_A12- ,_PUNC and_Z5 could_A7+ lead_A2.2[i29.2.1 to_A2.2[i29.2.2 some_N5 serious_A11.1+ drama_K4
>
> ,_PUNC on_Z5 the_Z5 House_H1 floor_H2 ,_PUNC on_Z5 Janu-ary_T1.3[i30.2.1
>
> 3_T1.3[i30.2.2 ._PUNC McCarthy_Z1mf was_A3+ at_Z5 the_Z5 Mex-ican_Z2 border_M7/G1.1 ,_PUNC today_T1.1.2 ,_PUNC to_Z5 make_A1.1.1 more_N5++ promises_S6+ ,_PUNC and_Z5 act-ing_A1.1.1 like_Z5 he_Z8m 's_A3+ a_Z5 sure_A7+ thing_O2 ._PUNC

Subcorpora that are semantically tagged like this can be saved as .txt or .doc files, and a search for one of the three tags mentioned above in the word processor will find all the lexemes belonging to the domain we are interested in. The hits can be checked one by one, and decided whether they are instances of literal use or of figurative, i.e., metaphorical use. Needless to say, there is occasionally ambiguity that needs to be resolved by the analyst. To give an example, we came across the expression *to score a winning goal*. The particular news section was about racially-charged controversy caused by a remark by a Buckingham Palace official, the late British Queen's lady in waiting. The CNN correspondent says the following:

(9) *Well, it's something that many of us people of the color in the U.K. were -- you know, commonplace 25 or 30 years ago. I think our mistake has been being lulled into a false sense of security that those days were over. There are some two and a half million people of color who see themselves as British. You only have to look at our soccer teams, for instance, and the stars like Marcus Rashford. Nobody asks him where he's really from when he **scores a winning goal**.* (*CNN Tonight*, December 1, 2022)

This expression seems to be congruent with the event of interest, the Football World Cup, but it is obvious from the context that the expression in question is here used literally, and not metaphorically.

4. The analysis of the corpus

As we made it clear in the previous section, we did not expect to find only metaphorical expressions specifically related to football, i.e. association football (or soccer), but expressions that may be related to other types of sports as well. What is more, some of these expressions are shared by American

football and association football, and some are used in several types of sports. Let us first provide some examples of the metaphorical expressions that we have identified.

(10) *But the fact that this judge - this circuit court, this particular panel, said no, said you can't take your ball and go home and keep it there, no one can test you on it, how significant is that given that the lower court judge was doing what was really unprecedented to have this special master?* (CNN Tonight, December 1, 2022)

(11) *Russia says President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping are set to meet face to face on the sidelines of a summit in Uzbekistan next week.* (CNN New Day, September 9, 2022)

(12) *The whole world should be lined up against what Mr. Putin is doing.* (CNN New Day, September 15, 2022)

(13) *And this really was a result of those marathon negotiations that were hosted by Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh and the rail and union officials.* (CNN New Day, September 15, 2022)

(14) *Sen. Raphael Warnock's win in a runoff election over GOP challenger Herschel Walker comes after two years in which Vice President Kamala Harris provided a tiebreaking vote in the 50-50 Senate.* (Wall Street Journal, December 8, 2022)

(15) *"He handpicked a number of candidates that proved not to be competitive, and Republicans lost a number of races that, had he not gotten involved, we probably would have won,"* says former GOP Representative Tom Davis. (Time, November 21, 2022)

(16) *Bailing in the World Bank is a non-starter.* (The Economist, February 25, 2023)

While many of the expressions we have found are well-known and possibly found across languages, e.g. *to score a (wining) goal*, *to get footballed*, *scoreboard*, *race*, etc., some may be in need of a brief comment. *On the sidelines*, illustrated in (17), is an expression that has to do with sports played in a court or in a playing field, such as American Football or soccer, and denotes the two lines defining the sides of the court or the field as well as the area behind these lines, where the non-playing members of the team sit. The nominal part, *sideline*, can also be used as a verb:

(17) *On the contrary, Mr Xi, who became China's leader in 2012, has sidelined him, leaning more heavily for economic advice on Liu He.* (The Economist, March 4, 2023)

The expression is figuratively used to indicate a position in which one is not actively participating. In other words, one is observing rather than taking part in the action.

In team sports, a *starting lineup* is, related to the phrasal verb *line up*, is an official list of the set of players who will participate in the event when the game begins. Cf. the following instances of their metaphorical use in our corpus:

(18) *A more complex lineup seemed to emerge on December 7th in Moore v Harper, a case that could re-engineer the way federal elections are conducted*. (The Economist, December 10, 2022)

(19) *The whole world should be lined up against what Mr. Putin is doing.* (CNN New Day, September 15, 2022)

Run out the clock means 'to maintain control of the ball in the closing minutes of a game, i.e., to protect a lead by using up as much possible time that remains in a game or match without giving the opposing team a chance to score, but it is also used metaphorically to mean 'to stall or cause a delay that gives one an advantage.' Finally, the *expression in one's wheelhouse* was originally used in maritime contexts to refer to the place where the captain or the skipper stands and where the ship's steering wheel is located. In the second half of the 20th century, it was taken over to baseball to denote the area of the batters greatest striking power. In the 1980s, 'wheelhouse' started being used to refer to a person's areas of expertise (https:// www. quickanddirtytips.com/articles/what-does-in-your-wheelhouse-mean/). *A close call* is used to refer to 'a narrow escape from or avoidance of a situation, often an unfavourable or dangerous one,' or to 'a decision or judgment that is difficult to make due to each possibility being nearly equal in one's consideration' but also to 'a contest or competition whose winner is not clear due to very close competition or results that are difficult to distinguish.'

An interesting picture emerges when the corpus is broken down into subcorpora and we compare the frequencies for particular metaphorical expressions over the three periods of interest, broken by the variety (American English vs. British English) and modality (spoken vs. written language), as can be seen from the series of tables and figures that follow.

Table 2: Metaphorically used expressions belonging to the source domain of SPORT in the subcorpora of spoken American English news discourse (AS) over the three periods, ordered alphabetically

Expression	The number of occurrences in the AS subcorpora			
	Subcorpus 1	Subcorpus 2	Subcorpus 3	Total
blow	0	5	0	5
close call	0	1	0	1
frontrunner	0	0	1	1
game	1	7	2	10
get footballed	1	0	0	1

in a wheelhouse	1	0	0	1
joust	0	0	1	1
lined up	2	0	0	2
marathon	1	0	0	1
on the sidelines	4	0	0	4
play	2	10	5	17
play for time	0	0	1	1
player	2	2	2	6
race	1	6	0	7
red flag	0	3	3	6
run	5	1	1	7
run out the clock	0	1	0	1
runoff	0	1	2	3
score a goal	0	1	0	1
sideline	0	0	3	3
stakes	0	0	6	6
team	0	3	4	7
Total	20	41	31	92

The above table, just like Tables 3,4 and 5 below, can be read as a sort of heat maps. The color of individual cells in these tables visualizes the frequency of the metaphorical expression in question. White cells indicate that the given expression was not attested in a particular subcorpus/time period. Expressions with the frequency between 1 and 3, are shaded light blue, those with 4-6 tokens are shaded orange, and those above 7 appear in red cells. This makes it possible to immediately identify the most frequent expressions in a particular subcorpus. It is easy to see that the most frequent expressions tend to occur in the middle period, i.e. in Subcorpus 2.
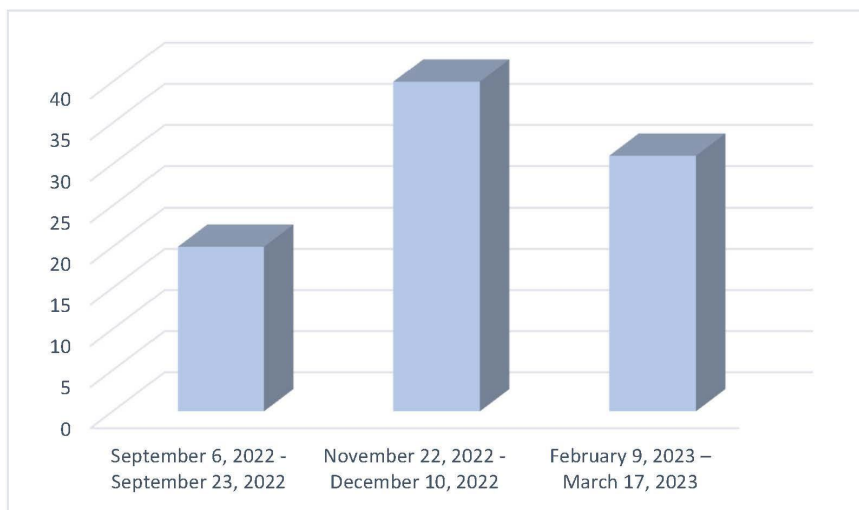
Figure 3: The frequency of metaphorically used expressions belonging to the source domain of SPORT in the subcorpora of spoken American English news discourse (AS) over the three periods

Table 3: Metaphorically used expressions belonging to the source domain of SPORT in the subcorpora of written American English news discourse (AW) over the three periods, ordered alphabetically

Expression	The number of occurrences in the AW subcorpora			
	Subcorpus 1	Subcorpus 2	Subcorpus 3	Total
forerunner	0	1	0	1
game	1	3	0	4
game-changer	1	0	0	1
in play	0	1	0	1
play	0	0	5	5
play off	0	0	1	1
player	1	0	0	1
playing field	0	2	0	2
race	2	10	8	20
rematch	0	1	0	1
replay	1	0	0	1
run	0	1	4	5

replay	2	15	0	17
scoreboard	0	0	1	1
sideline	1	0	0	1
stakes	2	2	0	4
team	12	13	15	35
tiebreaking	0	1	0	
winner	0	1	0	1
Total	23	51	34	108
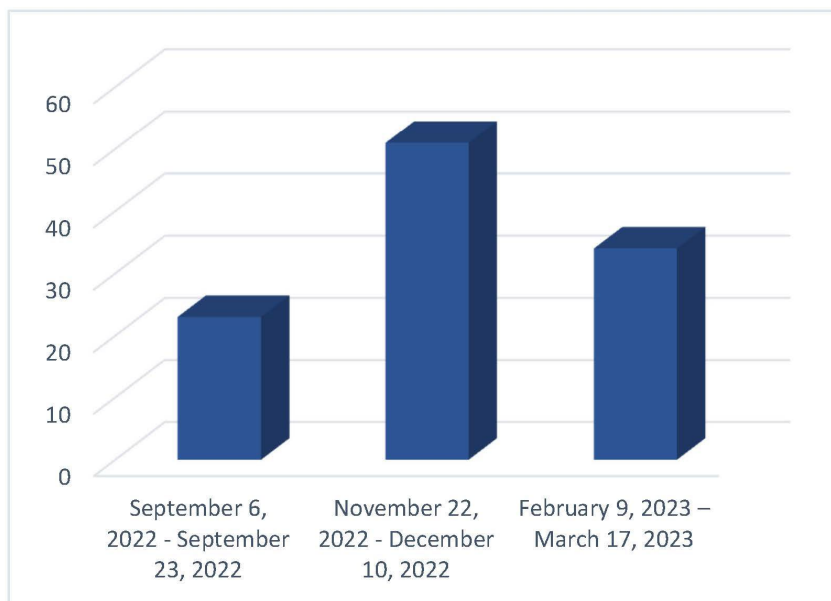
Figure 4: The frequency of metaphorically used expressions belonging to the source domain of SPORT in the subcorpora of written American English news discourse (AW) over the three periods

Table 4: Metaphorically used expressions belonging to the source domain of SPORT in the subcorpora of written British English news discourse (BW) over the three periods, ordered alphabetically

Expression	The number of occurrences in the BW subcorpora			
	Subcorpus 1	Subcorpus 2	Subcorpus 3	Total
blow	0	2	2	4
contest	0	4	0	4

|			
forerunner	0	1	0	1
game	1	1	2	4
hardball	0	2	0	2
lineup	0	1	1	2
match	0	1	0	1
non-starter	0	0	1	1
play	1	0	3	4
play the ball	0	1	0	1
playing field	0	1	0	1
race	6	1	4	11
run	3	0	0	3
run out of time	0	1	0	1
score	0	3	1	4
sideline	0	2	2	4
team	6	7	6	19
win	4	0	0	4
winner	2	0	2	4
Total	23	28	24	75
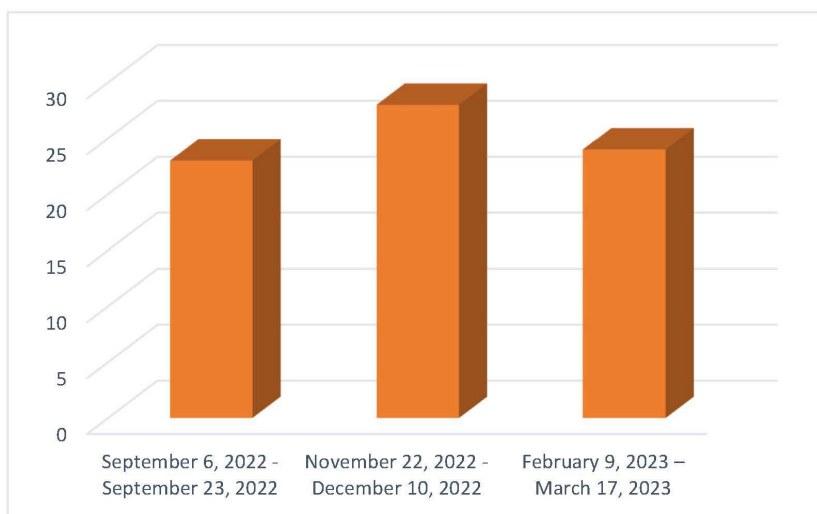
Figure 5: The frequency of metaphorically used expressions belonging to the source domain of SPORT in the subcorpora of written British English news discourse (BW) over the three periods

Table 5: Overview of metaphorically used expressions belonging to the source domain of SPORT in all the subcorpora, ordered alphabetically

Expression		The number of occurrences in the corpus			
		Subcorpus 1	Subcorpus 2	Subcorpus 3	Total
blow	AS	0	5	0	5
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	2	2	4
close call	AS	0	1	0	1
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
contest	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	4	0	4
forerunner	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	1	0	1
frontrunner	AS	0	0	1	1
	AW	0	1	0	1
	BW	0	0	0	0
game	AS	1	7	2	10
	AW	1	3	0	4
	BW	1	1	2	4
game-changer	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	1	0	0	1
	BW	0	0	0	0
get footballed	AS	1	0	0	1
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
hardball	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	2	0	2
in play	AS	0	0	0	0

	AW	0	1	0	1
	BW	0	0	0	0
in a wheelhouse	AS	1	0	0	1
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
joust	AS	0	0	1	1
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
lined up	AS	2	0	0	2
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
lineup	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	1	1	2
marathon	AS	1	0	0	1
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
match	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	1	0	1
non-starter	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	1	1
on the sidelines	AS	4	0	0	4
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
play	AS	2	10	5	17
	AW	0	0	5	5
	BW	1	0	3	4
play for time	AS	0	0	1	1
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
play off	AS	0	0	0	0

	AW	0	0	1	1
	BW	0	0	0	0
play the ball	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	1	0	1
player	AS	2	2	2	6
	AW	1	0	0	1
	BW	0	0	0	0
playing field	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	2	0	2
	BW	0	1	0	1
race	AS	1	6	0	7
	AW	2	10	8	20
	BW	6	1	4	11
red flag	AS	0	3	3	6
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
rematch	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	1	0	1
	BW	0	0	0	0
replay	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	1	0	0	1
	BW	0	0	0	0
run	AS	5	1	1	7
	AW	0	1	4	5
	BW	3	0	0	3
run out of time	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	1	0	1
run out the clock	AS	0	1	0	1
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
runoff	AS	0	1	2	3

	AW	2	15	0	17
	BW	1	0	3	4
score	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	3	1	4
score a goal	AS	0	1	0	1
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
scoreboard	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	0	1	1
	BW	0	0	0	0
sideline	AS	0	0	3	3
	AW	1	0	0	1
	BW	0	2	2	4
stakes	AS	0	0	6	6
	AW	2	2	0	4
	BW	0	0	0	0
take one's ball	AS	0	1	0	1
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	0	0	0	0
team	AS	0	3	4	7
	AW	12	13	15	35
	BW	6	7	6	19
tiebreaking	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	1	0	1
	BW	0	0	0	0
win	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	0	0	0
	BW	4	0	0	4
winner	AS	0	0	0	0
	AW	0	1	0	1
	BW	2	0	2	4
Total		66	120	89	275

Table 6: The comparison of the frequency of metaphorically used expressions belonging to the source domain of SPORT across the subcorpora

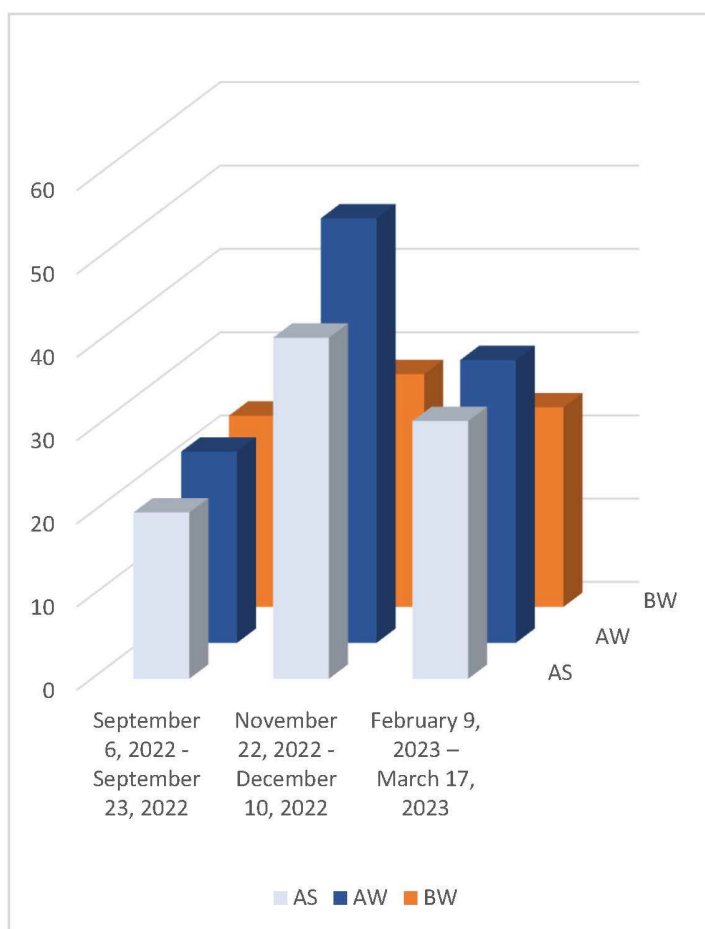|	The frequency of metaphorically used expressions across the subcorpora			
	Subcorpus 1	Subcorpus 2	Subcorpus 3	Total
AS	20	41	31	92
AW	23	51	34	108
BW	23	28	24	75
Total	66	120	89	275

Figure 6: The frequency of metaphorically used expressions across the subcorpora

As can be seen from the above, the rise and the drop in the frequency of sport metaphors can be observed across regional varieties and across the modalities (for American English), and is consistent. Except for AW3, no other subcorpus from the first or the third period exhibits more metapors than any subcorpus for the central period of time.

We should bear in mind that the subcorpus for the first period contains news about events in September, just around the start of the National Football League Season in the US, the most popular sport in the country. On the other hand, the political campaign for the midterm election of November also started in that period. These facts may have of course affected the frequencies of sports metaphors in the corpus.

Another relevant point is that the second subcorpus contains twice as many sport metaphors; however, they are mostly from the field of sport in general and American football, despite the fact that the Football World Cup started this month. Nevertheless, our hypothesis seems to be verified: there are indeed more metaphors with SPORT as the source domain in the period marked by an important sport event than in the control subcorpus. This proves that a salient, topical domain is more likely to end up as the source domain for metaphorical mappings.

It must be also pointed out that the corpus contains samples of spoken language only for American English. The results may have been different if the comparison had also included samples from other regional varieties of English, spoken in countries in which association football (i.e. soccer) is culturally more important than in the USA. Needless to say, it would be also interesting to expand this type of research with a larger corpus spanning over more periods of time.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be stated that the findings of the study corroborate our hypothesis concerning the temporal variation in the use of sport metaphors in the American and British media discourse. Specifically, we investigated the use of sport metaphors before, during and after the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the world national championship that was played from November 20 to December 18, 2022, in Qatar.

Our study of American spoken and written and British written news texts from the three periods shows that the occurrence of sport metaphors was the highest in the period of the event in each of the subcorpora, i.e., sport metaphors peaked consistently across both spoken and written, as well as across American and British subcorpora. This is in keeping with the findings of some other, similar studies, e.g. Boers (1999), showing that there

seems to be a cyclic variation in the use of certain types of metaphors during certain periods of time.

The frequencies in the pre- and post-event corpora were similarly below the level of the frequency of the metaphors in the central time period, but not exactly the same. Their frequency in the post-event period was somewhat higher than in the pre-event period. It would be interesting to continue with investigating the frequency of the use of sport metaphors in further time periods, earlier and later than the three periods in this study, in order to see whether their frequencies were roughly identical or not, and whether the downward trend continued after the third period in question.

However, some more or less unexpected differences have been observed, too, between the two regional varieties. Although association football or soccer is much more central to the British culture, sport metaphors seem to be more widely attested in our American English subcorpora across the three periods of time, and consistently so. This might be in part explained by the fact that the National Football League Season in the US, the most popular sport in the country, begins in September (just before the period of the first subcorpus) and by the November campaign for the US midterm elections (partly overlapping with the period of the second subcorpus). These two factors may have prepared the stage for sport metaphors, the trend which was later strengthened by the World Cup. It should also be mentioned that the differences between the two major regional varieties may be attributed to some more general cultural differences. Kövecses (1996: 241–253) states that creativity and the spirit of renovation are the characteristics of American English, which can be explained with the necessity of adjusting the language to the circumstances in the New World and later the intention to form a new national identity different from the British. According to Kövecses (1996: 262–263), metaphor and metonymy have a crucial role in the creation of neologisms, and in the case of American English, SPORT is one of the most common source domains which is widely used for POLITICS.

It is also somewhat surprising that hardly any specific association football metaphors have been found, even in the British subcorpora. Last but not least, it is also surprising that the frequency of football metaphors did not peak more significantly in the British November/December subcorpus, the time period ending with December 10, 2022, the day until which England were doing well, progressing to the quarter-finals, losing 2-1 to the defending champion France. It may be the case that there is a sort of time-lag between the events and an elevated number of characteristic metaphors. This may also be behind the fact that the frequencies in the third time period were higher than in the first.

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