

Cognitive-linguistic analysis of the tambura as the target domain of a conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING

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Abstract

Even though the tambura is not a native Croatian musical instrument, today it is considered as one of the traditional national treasures of Slavonia. Seeing how songs for the tambura represent a very dominant form of folk entertainment, and today they largely belong to popular culture, it seemed only appropriate to analyse these very songs because the tambura has always been an inescapable part of all social life domains of Slavonia. Therefore, this analysis will examine what the tambura means to both song authors and recipients, is it just a folk string instrument or much more? Seeing how through lyrics it often becomes a real personified narrator for the everyman, telling of many facets of his life in his name (and it does this as an excellent narrator would) it seemed appropriate to relate the tambura to a human being. To achieve this, the purpose of this paper is the realization of conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING. In the context of contemporary research of metaphor within cognitive linguistics as per the two-domain approach, cognitive-linguistic analysis will be employed to scrutinize the entities of target domain of tambura against the entities of the source domain of human being, colourful linguistic expressions will be highlighted, their prevalence will be explored and described, and it will be attempted to explore whether they dominate the corpus of conventional or innovative metaphor. The corpus researched in this paper is comprised of several Slavonian songs for the tambura from Slavonia, the Eastern part of Croatia.

Keywords: songs for the tambura, personified narrator, domains, analysis, metaphor

1. Conceptual metaphor – introductory remarks

The theory of conceptual metaphor in the context of cognitive linguistics implies a special perspective of the metaphor. As an interdisciplinary approach to language, cognitive linguistics is preoccupied with language and cognition, that is, it studies language as a part of the cognition system, and it views it as regarding to thinking and understanding. Cognitive linguistics assumes a direct and constant interaction between cognition and language.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson were the first to create the theory of conceptual metaphor. In their monograph *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) they explain the hypotheses in the basis of the theory; metaphors are omnipresent in thinking, and also in language; metaphors are primarily a phenomenon of thinking – they influence it and they appear in different expression modes; metaphors are the systematic tracing between the two conceptual domains; conceptual metaphors often connect concrete and abstract domains; many conceptual metaphors are experientially motivated; some conceptual metaphors are universal.

Cognitive linguistic theory is explained by Ortony's publication *Metaphor and thought* (1979) and the scientists Cameron and Low (1999), Cameron (2003) who analyse the metaphor within the cognitive concept. Cameron (2003: 2) explains that “The understanding of how the metaphor is used can facilitate in better understanding the human thought process, better understanding the world or help people to better understand each other and ease communication.” Lakoff and Turner (1989: XI) state that the metaphor is so common and frequent that it is used unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort it can be easier to produce it than recognize it in speech.

In the basis of conceptual metaphor theory is the hypothesis that our conceptual system of thinking and acting is in its entirety conceptual. Metaphors are omnipresent in our language and in our thinking, they “permeate the everyday life, thinking and acting, not just the language. Our conceptualization of the world is pervaded by conceptual metaphors. The way we think, what we live through and how we act is greatly connected to metaphors (Šarić, 2019: 232).” As opposed to the traditional approach to the metaphor which connotes the link between metaphor and – exclusively and primarily – the poetic expression and rhetorical function (Aristotle, 2005), conceptual metaphor is linked to everyday thinking and expression, and within the context of contemporary research it is understood to be a mechanism of thinking that causes metaphorical expressions in language.

Cognitive linguistics describes conceptual metaphor as a mapping set of two experiential domains, target (often abstract) domain and source (often concrete) domain in the process of constructing meaning (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff and Turner 1989, 60–65; Lakoff 1993, 206–207; Martsa 2003). These mappings connote the linking of certain elements of the source domain with certain elements of the target domain, i.e., relevant aspects of the source domain are replicated in the target domain. In this paper, the mapping set from the source domain *human being* enables a special conceptualization of an object: *tambura*, and the realizations formed in the source domain condition the conceptualization and understanding of the tambura as the target domain. Through this mapping process in the context of cognitive-linguistic understanding, new knowledge is achieved about the target domain.

The source domain is usually, although not necessarily, more strongly connected with everyday experience, while target domains are less accessible, less concrete, which is why the mapping process is always carried out from the source domain to the target domain. By

conceptualizing a less accessible, more abstract notion via a more accessible and concrete phenomenon we create a metaphorical reality and, in this way, more readily shape the object of the target domain, that is we can see it in a completely different, new way. The source domain *human being* produces in the consciousness of the recipient different metaphorical realities that the one we are used to when connecting the object *tambura* with the domain of instrument.

Metaphorical conceptualization is largely based on the meaning focus, the main theme of the source domain, and this is the central knowledge about the source domain that is succeeded by the target domain (Kövecses, 2012), and it is shared by members of a certain communication group. The meaning focus of source domains is connected to the values and socio-cultural knowledge of a certain community. Therefore, it is no surprise that within the community of *Šokac* the object of the *tambura* will be approached differently than it would be in some other community where the *tambura* is not traditionally ingrained in the folklore.

Cienki (2017: 133) emphasizes that a certain language expression that the researcher regards as metaphorical and analyses as such, does not have to include a conceptual mapping in the case of the person who said it or in the case of the persons who read or heard the expression. Hence, a metaphor includes, alongside the source and target domains, someone who actually performs the mapping, which means that the metaphor depends on the specific interpretation of the person that uses the expression (Yu 1995), or the person that perceives and understands the expression as metaphorical, a computer which analyses the expression as metaphorical, or on the interpretation of a person applying a specific procedure (for example MIP-procedure of Pragglez group (2007)) in which certain units are categorized as metaphorical. In conclusion, the analysis of the *tambura* as the target domain of a conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING can be only one of the metaphorical realities or a starting point for some other analysis similar in nature (Omazić 2014; Hrnjak 2009).

Research of metaphors in different corpora show whether the examples contain conventional or innovative metaphors. The research also indicates that the analysis of the *tambura* as the target domain does not yet exist. Hence, preliminary research has shown that the metaphors analysed in this paper are not very frequent in corpora, *tambura* as the target domain has not been linked to the source domain of *human being*, and therefore it can be argued that this paper notes innovative connections between source and target domains, and that the metaphorical reality which the source domain projects onto the target domain is, thus far, completely unexplored.

2. Corpus and methodology

The corpus on which the theory of conceptual metaphor will be applied comprises several songs for the *tambura* from Slavonia, the Eastern part of Croatia, which have for

generations been rooted in the folklore of that part of the country. They amuse people at births, weddings, various events, they are used for the send offs to the final resting place. They encompass a large scope of social and cultural achievements, and they are considered an un-omittable part of folk culture. Although today the tambura (Turkish *tanbura* ← Persian *tn (tan)* meaning ‘string’) is a traditional musical folk treasure of Slavonia, it is not a native Croatian instrument. It first appeared in the Balkans in the 14th century, where it was brought by the Ottomans during their conquests. It was implemented in the local tradition mostly through folklore, and today it is the most prominent music idiom throughout Croatia. Aside from folk and traditional songs, the popularization of the tambura has implemented it in classical compositions, and even in pop music.

Considering that it is a very dominant form of folk entertainment, and that it also largely belongs to pop music, it seemed appropriate to analyse songs for the tambura, because the tambura is a dependable element of all domains of social life of *Šokac*. The lexeme *tambura* occurs in songs in a metaphorical form, and as preliminary research indicates, it represents more than just a string instrument to both the recipients and the authors. It is addressed as a friend, confidant, witness, consoler, and so on, and in this way, it acquires the characteristics of a living entity. To prove this, there are many Slavonian (and other) songs, composed explicitly or implicitly in the honour of the tambura. Therefore, the tambura often becomes in songs a real personified narrator for the everyman, telling of his many life stories in his stead, and much more. While doing so, it achieves all the characteristics of an excellent narrator; it contributes to creating the right atmosphere, it influences behaviour by creating in recipients certain emotional constructs, and, most importantly, it urges reflexion. With this intention in the analysed songs for the tambura, we find a true metaphorical source, which not only contributes to poetic purposes, but shapes our view of the world and our ponderings about the world.

In order to examine and analyse the conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING, it will be interpreted in the context of contemporary research of the metaphor within the scope of cognitive linguistics and the theory of conceptual metaphor, while Aristotle’s classic view of metaphor as a language figure, a certain kind of poetic decoration limited in poetics will be excluded. According to Aristotle, the metaphor is the most important attribute of a poet, because it is not learnt from someone else, and therefore it is a feature of genius. Also, the art of finding great metaphors actually reflects the art of finding similarities (Aristotle, 2005: 45). This Aristotle’s definition emphasizes the key characteristic of the metaphor – similarities between two notions, that it between the meaning of two notions.

Through the cognitive-linguistic approach, by using the process of mapping, the target domain *tambura* will be correlated to the source domain *human being* as its superordinate. Within the source domain this paper will also look at its subordinates, such as lexemes *singer, friend, consoler, wretch, snatcher, seductress, housewife, companion*, and many other alternatives within the said conceptual metaphor. According to Prasit Karpklon in *Language*

and Thought (1980: 145), metaphors can motivate imagination and generate emotions in people more effectively than literal expressions. Researching these songs for the tambura makes it clear that metaphor is the basic cognitive structure which makes it possible to comprehend a concrete tactile concept based on more concrete visual concepts. Through their regard of the tambura as a human being, the lyrics of these songs talk of emotions expressed primarily figuratively, whereby the instrument is personified as a human being, the stated source domain.

This kind of perspective of the metaphor as a cognitive ability to connect two domains in the context of the tambura includes certain knowledge of the corpus, which enables the conceptual analysis of Slavonian lyrics – songs for the tambura. This knowledge makes possible the connection between the entities of the two domains and enables the recognition of settled connections. The duality of conceptual metaphor is therefore visible on the level of culture which is a factor responsible for differences and cultural limitations, as well as on the level of embodiment of ordinary motivations via physical experiences. Initial suggestions of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Lakoff 1993; Gibbs 1994) were based on the claim that conceptual metaphor is an instrument which enables the understanding of complex domains via simple domains which are closer to our basic personified experience (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 56-68). Hence, the cognitive value of conceptual metaphors was reduced to explaining the motivation of the starting concepts. The analysis model is therefore based on Langacker and Kövecses's proposition of central knowledge. Central knowledges are a metonymic principle of motivation of conceptual metaphors, and they apply to a community. The dual character of the metaphor is also visible in the way we analyse it primarily as a settled structure of knowledge (in Lakoff and Johnson's initial theory of conceptual metaphor) or by linking the domains in real time (via conceptual integration). This paper offers integration and advocates a middle solution where both models are used depending on the characteristics of the analysed material (Stanojević, 2009: 340).

3. Corpus analysis

The article will analyse the back sides of types of conceptual metaphors and their models according to the principles of conceptual metaphor established by Lakoff and Johnson (1980); the dual-domain approach where every metaphor consists of the source domain and target domain, where the source domain enables the understanding of the target domain, and the connection based on the principle of *A is B*, which will have numerous motivational links. (Lakoff, 2004: 7–14).

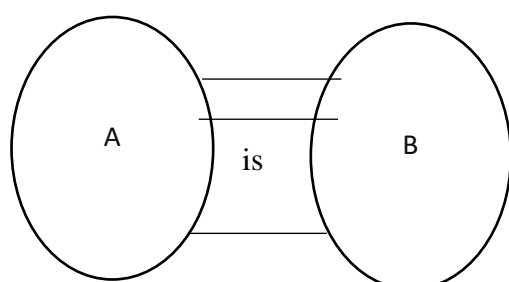


Figure 1: Schematic display of general mapping

Source: (Own production)

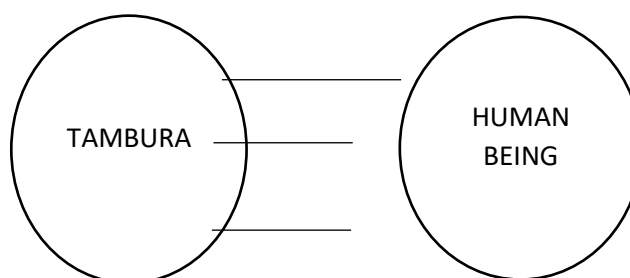


Figure 2: Concrete schematic display of mapping

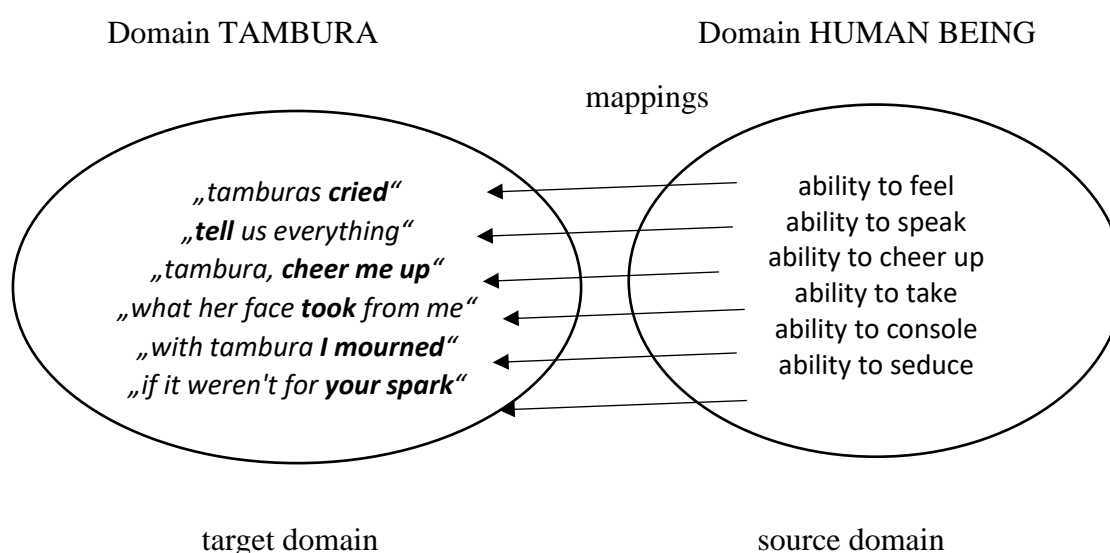


Figure 3: Mappings from domain HUMAN BEING into domain TAMBURA

Source: (Own production)

The given graphic depiction of mapping is a generalized illustration of an exhaustive analysis of conceptual metaphor shown in the following verses of tambura poems. This paper attempts to more closely explain and analyze the connection between the notion of tambura and the notion of human being, through the verses, via tambura as the key component, and using the principle of similarity. Simply put, when the tambura “weeps” in the verses, in the consciousness of a narrator from Slavonian cultural region, a poetic image of a personified object which takes on the ability to feel is produced. According to the identical principle of associating certain actions with the referent of *human being*, in which *tambura* takes place, in the consciousness of the narrator from the abovementioned cultural region, poetic images where *tambura* is equalized with the referent of a *human being* are automatically formed. It is common for tambura to possess the ability to feel, speak, comfort, seduce and so on, because through it, and with it, we facilitate communication on a metaphorical level.

Through the agency of conceptual metaphor and when using certain metaphorical expressions, in our minds a process of cognitive connecting of domains based on the principle of similarities takes place, of which we are not even aware. For example, when the song authors or singers talk directly to the tambura as a human being, they ask it to *leave them be, not to watch, not to sleep, to mourn, cheer, rest, talk about them, to tell stories*. Therefore, this paper shows through reading lyrical patterns that – via said metaphorical expressions – the conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING can be analysed, *tambura* as a concrete notion can be conceptualized through the source domain *person*. The source domain *human being*, as analysis will show, will provide us, according to the principle of similarity, the basic information needed for correlating with the second domain, the target domain *tambura*, which needs to be defined. In this way, the less accessible concrete prevalence, which does not coincide with a clear and easily imaginable mental picture, will be grasped and communication about it will be enabled. These mental representations through the conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING will be shaped into comprehensible structures, while also forming meaning overlap, and will bring different knowledges into a correlation of similarity.

According to Lakoff (1992: 40) it is important to emphasize that “The possibility of mutual understanding and communication depends on how much our conceptual system coincides with the conceptual systems of our interlocutors. It is clear that this conceptual system then becomes a shared platform for mutual understanding for all those who share the same metaphorical (conceptual) patterns of thinking, i.e., those who belong to the same language (but also cultural) community.” Therefore, it comes as no surprise that certain conceptual metaphors are differently interpreted in different cultures because knowing metaphorical concepts, which permeate our thinking, is a precondition for understanding concrete language (metaphorical) utterances. “The conceptual system contains thousands of conventional metaphorical mappings which form a highly structured subsystem of the conceptual system” (Lakoff 1992: 39). This system of conceptual metaphors is the very one that structures our everyday conceptual system, including the most abstract concepts, and the one behind our everyday language (compare: Lakoff 1992: 3).

Conceptual metaphor, as well as other cognitive abilities, is characterized by duality: they can be settled and common, but they can also originate as a part of discourse and are almost certainly not a part of our settled knowledge. In this way, by comparing two domains, from which arises a metaphor, can originate a relatively stable connection between certain domains. Other metaphors are constructed in certain situations, or in the moment. Accordingly, “conceptual metaphor is, on the one hand, an ability as part of our knowledge, and on the other hand, it is the ability which we use at the right time” (Stanojević 2013: 55) which is definitely the case with tambura and human being as target and source domains of this paper. It should be noted that culture is the key element in understanding conceptual metaphors, because belonging to a certain culture is determined by the same conceptual metaphors shared by members of a culture. It is easy to conclude that the same goes for

domains that arise in conceptual metaphors, and therefore also for conceptual metaphors themselves. To conclude, what the verse examination will show is only conditionally the conclusion of this analysis and can be used as a basis for further research of the same or similar field.

Notional conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING can be illustrated with verses that describe the tambura:

*Hey, tambura, tonight let me be
Hey, tambura, play more quietly
Your strings ... make the moon cry
Your notes wake the tears
Your song opens the soul.*

Source: (Krunoslav Kičo Slabinac, Ej, tamburo [Hey, tambura])

With the intention of concretization, the personified tambura takes on the ability to do everyday things. It lets someone be, it grants others' requests to play more quietly, not to look at someone unhappy, it cheers someone up. Certain parts of the tambura, like strings, notes, songs are also in a position of a personified entity that has the ability to cry, evoke memories, get an admission from someone. The tambura empathizes, the tambura listens, the tambura adapts. The elements of the source domain human being replicate into the elements of the target domain tambura by connecting through the entities of feelings and the ability to do certain activities and are incorporated in the conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING.

*Hey, tambura, you old story,
Hey, tambura, you old house.
You mourn and owe,
then cheer up and rest
and speak all about us,
hey, tambura my friend.*

*Hey, tambura you tell us everything...
you are my true love,
you contain lovely words.*

Source: (Arteški bunar [Artesian well], Oj, tamburo [Hey, tambura])

In line with this description, conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING is described through a personified tambura that has the ability to mourn, owe, cheer up, sunset. The tambura is comprehended in verses through notions like sage (you old story), housewife (you old house), narrator (you speak, lovely words), companion (love) and through the characteristics of those persons.

Old tamburas *started crying*
took their song across the plain.

Source: (Krunoslav Kićo Slabinac, *Zaplakale stare tambure* [Old tamburas started crying])

Sorrow will set out *from your strings*
Old tambura, my only *friend*.

Source: (Romanca [Romance], *Tamburo stara, jedini družo* [Old tambura, my only friend])

with tambura *I mourned* the crushed dreams...
hey, tambura *don't go to sleep*...
tambura *give me peace*.

Source: (Zlatni dukati [Gold ducats], *Ej, tamburo* [Hey, tambura])

The metaphors TAMBURA IS A SENSITIVE SINGER, expressed with an affective verb *cry*, and TAMBURA IS A SENSITIVE FRIEND, manifested through the phrase *sorrow from your strings*, are defined through the emotions that dominate certain parts of the verse, and they are sorrow, suffering, pain. Through the metaphoric expression *mourn dreams* the tambura becomes the conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A SHOULDER TO CRY ON, and its ability to be awake and empathise makes it a consoler that becomes one with its singer in his pain. From the emotionally charged metaphorical picture, the conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A CONSOLER is created.

Even though, within the superordinate conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING, the tambura, as a person, has been attributed with mostly positive human characteristics, like strength and credibility, empathy and sensitivity, wisdom and so on, we have noticed in the verses a few negative characteristic connotated to the personified tambura:

Hey, tambura, *you wretch*
that *took her face* from me,
because if *not for your spark*,
she would not have chosen another.

Source: (Gromovi [Thunderbolts], *Ej, tamburo, nesretnice* [Hey, tambura, you wretch])

Conceptual metaphors TAMBURA IS A WRETCH, TAMBURA IS A SNATCHER, TAMBURA IS A SEDUCTRESS are realized through analogies of similarity with the person that selfishly takes from others, consciously uses their beauty for negative purposes and for realizing their own goals by satisfying their whims.

Said examples of subordinate conceptual metaphors within the context of superordinate conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING are less conventional examples, because their conventionality cannot be confirmed through the existence of a large number of metaphorical language expressions that occur from the mentioned metaphor. The

paper shows the exceptionless occurrence of innovative poetic metaphors (Lakoff and Turner 1989).

As opposed to Kövecses' opinion (2002: 44) that most of the poetic language is based on conventional conceptual metaphors because they are automatic, mostly unconscious and we use them effortlessly (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 62), this paper argues that poetic metaphor cannot be arbitrary nor can it be left at the discretion of the author because it has to adhere to the limitations of basic conceptual metaphor in order to be understandable. All of the mentioned metaphors retain their link with the basic conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING, on which the poetic expression is based. The referred metaphor is the basis for authors of songs for the tambura to build their metaphorical expression. In cognitive linguistics this approach to metaphorization is described as different expression of the same basis which is realized through various language expressions or poetic phrases.

Analysis shows a significant link between the poetic metaphor (Žic Fuchs 1992) with the basic conceptual metaphor because we can only understand the mentioned poetic metaphors with the help of metaphors on the conceptual level, seeing that the poetic metaphors do not have equivalent conventional metaphors. Conventional metaphors are understandable without a context and applicable in different contexts, as opposed to the mentioned poetic metaphors which can speak of a convention only on a conceptual level, but the poetic language expressions themselves are, in their essence, unconventional.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this paper, within a cognitive-linguistic paradigm, was to demonstrate and analyze the conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING. Methods on a conceptual and textual level were employed to gain a more complete depiction of concepts and ways of conceptualization in the Croatian language. According to the cognitive-linguistic theory, conceptual metaphors are the metaphors we live by. The conceptual metaphor (the existence of the conceptual metaphor) TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING itself points toward a specific cultural model within Croatian people, a model of Slavonian tradition, which leads to, and indicates the distinctiveness of this culture. Several centuries worth of tradition within this culture indicate a great and intimate bond of the people of Šokci with the string instrument, as was confirmed in this research.

Corpus analysis of songs for the tambura has shown that analysed metaphors are not frequent in everyday communication. Tambura as a target domain has not even, until this research, been related to source domain *human being*, which is why this paper has ascertained the presence of innovative links within the target and source domains. After the final analysis it can be concluded that within the corpus of songs for the tambura there exists an unexplored metaphorical reality that the source domain has projected onto the target domain.

By analyzing the metaphor of tambura in the context of tambura poems, and juxtaposing it with the human being, through which it takes on many characteristics of humans, we start to form a much more valuable and intimate relationship with this string instrument. Tambura is not, in the eyes of the authors of poems, seen merely as the accompanying instrument in tambura songs, but it becomes much more than, it becomes a friend, a pillar, a consoler, a shoulder to cry on, a companion. In songs it is metaphorized into a personified narrator for the everyman, speaking of many scenarios of his life in his stead, which is an excellent starting point for exploring conceptual metaphors, as was shown in the analysis.

The examination of conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING was implemented in the context of contemporary research of metaphor within the scope of cognitive linguistics and the theory of conceptual metaphor, and Aristotle's views of metaphor as a language figure, poetic decoration of sorts, was excluded. Through the cognitive-linguistic approach via the process of mapping, the target domain *tambura* was correlated with the source domain *human being* as its superordinate. Apart from the source domain of conceptual metaphor, the paper also examined its subordinates (*singer, friend, consoler, wretch, snatcher, seductress, housewife, companion*).

The conducted analysis has shown the exceptionless occurrence of innovative creative poetic metaphors in which the tambura is identified with a person that in every way mirrors the characteristics of certain types of people. All the mentioned metaphors retain their connection with the base conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING, on which the poetic expression of the tambura music is based. Therefore, the said conceptual metaphor is the basis on which the authors of songs for the tambura built their metaphorical expression.

The comparison of source and target domains in the context of cognitive-linguistic analysis is useful for multiple reasons; it shapes a new perspective of tambura because it has previously not been an object of this kind of analysis; by innovatively describing tambura we enable a better understanding of the fascination with this object which is the central motive of numerous tambura poems, we understand the connection between the author of the poems and the performers with the tambura, and we come to appreciate its multiple roles, from entertaining, empathic to therapeutic, and finally we complete the theory of conceptual metaphor with this, until now, unique analysis of tambura within the framework of literary discourse and folk poems.

The paper serves as a preliminary research for further, more exhaustive, analyses of the conceptual metaphor TAMBURA IS A HUMAN BEING in the Croatian language within the cognitive-linguistic paradigm (Filipović 2012). Additionally, it serves as a resource for further research of collocations within the theory of conceptual metaphor (Hrnjak 2009; Omazić 2014) as well as research of grammar in language metaphors. On the bases of the findings, a contribution when learning the Croatian language in the context of metaphors is also possible.

In conclusion, this analysis is only one of the metaphorical realities and can be used as a starting point for some other similar or completely different analyses.

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