

## **The role of metaphor and metonymy in constructing the image of a university\***

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to identify metaphors and metonymies used in selected documents (“About” pages, reports, strategies etc.) of leading universities in five regions: China, the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia and North America (Canada and the United States). The research framework is provided by the theory of conceptual metaphor proposed by Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). In their documents, the universities frequently employ animalization and personification, building metaphors and travel metaphors as well as the metonymy BODY PART FOR THE HUMAN BEING. The identified metaphorical and metonymic expressions are conventional, and their role is to facilitate creating the image of the universities as living, vibrant institutions, ready to change and react to the challenges posed by the modern world.

### **Keywords**

metaphor, metonymy, university documents, image construction

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## **Rola metafory i metonimii w konstruowaniu wizerunku uniwersytetu**

### **Abstrakt**

Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja metafor i metonimii stosowanych w wybranych dokumentach (na stronach „O nas”, w raportach, strategiach itp.) wiodących uniwersytetów w pięciu regionach: Chinach, Wielkiej Brytanii, Europie, Australii i Ameryce Północnej (Kanadzie i Stanach Zjednoczonych). Podstaw teoretycznych dostarcza teoria metafory pojęciowej zaproponowana przez Lakoffa i Johnsona w *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). W swoich dokumentach uniwersytety stosują najczęściej animalizację i personifikację, metafory budowlane i metafory podróźnicze, a także metonimię CZĘŚĆ CIAŁA ZA CAŁĄ ISTOTĘ LUDZKĄ. Zidentyfikowane wyrażenia metaforyczne i metonimiczne są konwencjonalne, a ich rolą jest kreowanie wizerunku uniwersytetów jako żywych, tętniących życiem instytucji, gotowych do zmian i reagowania na wyzwania stawiane przez współczesny świat.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

metafora, metonimia, dokumenty uniwersyteckie, konstruowanie wizerunku

### **1. Introduction**

Constructing an image of an institution frequently involves the use of figurative language, most notably, metaphors and metonymies. The aim of this paper is to identify these figures of speech employed in the documents of selected leading universities in five regions: China, the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia and North America (Canada and the United States).

As Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 8) point out, it is quite common to think that metaphor is solely “a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language”; furthermore, it “is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words

rather than thought or action". However, it appears that metaphor goes far beyond being just a stylistic figure found in poetry. It is observed in everyday speech, let alone advertising, political speeches and scientific texts, to mention but a few (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 2003). Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Kövecses (2002: 4) treats metaphor as "understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain". Moreover, Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 6) make the claim that "metaphor is not just a matter of language" and "human thought processes are largely metaphorical". Metaphor is then an important way of constructing meanings, understanding the world and expressing emotions. Its role goes even further:

How we think metaphorically matters. It can determine questions of war and peace, economic policy, and legal decisions, as well as the mundane choices of everyday life. [...] Is our marriage a partnership, a journey through life together, a haven from the outside world, a means for growth, or a union of two people into a third entity? The choice among such common ways of conceptualizing marriage can determine what our marriage becomes. Drastic metaphorical differences can result in marital conflict (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 243)

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003), as well as many other scholars,<sup>1</sup> discuss a number of metaphors along with the metaphorical expressions which testify to their existence. The analyzed metaphors include the following ones:

- ARGUMENT IS WAR;
- TIME IS MONEY, TIME IS SPACE, TIME IS A LIVING ORGANISM;
- LIFE IS A JOURNEY;

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<sup>1</sup> Including, among others, Barcelona (2000), Charteris-Black (2009), Fabiszak (2007), Gibbs (1999), Kalisz (2001), Kövecses (2002, 2005), Krzeszowski (1991), Lakoff and Johnson (1999), Reddy (1979), Sweetser (1987) and Uberman (2022). See also collections of papers, e.g. Barcelona (ed.) (2000), Dirven et al. (eds.) (2002), Gibbs and Steen (eds.) (1999), Görska and Radden (eds.) (2005), Ortony (ed.) (1979), Wąsik and Komendziński (eds.) (2008).

- LOVE IS FIRE, LOVE IS MADNESS, LOVE IS AN ILLNESS;
- THE MIND IS A MACHINE;
- AN OBJECT IS A HUMAN BEING, AN OBJECT IS AN ANIMAL;
- AN ANIMAL IS A HUMAN BEING;
- AN INSTITUTION IS A HUMAN BEING, AN INSTITUTION IS AN ANIMAL,  
AN INSTITUTION IS A BUILDING;
- A CITY IS A HUMAN BEING, A CITY IS AN ANIMAL.

In a metaphor, scholars distinguish the source domain and the target domain. As an example, let us consider one of the metaphors mentioned above, namely THE MIND IS A MACHINE. THE MIND is the target domain and MACHINE is the source domain. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 27) give the following examples which clearly point to the existence of this metaphor.

We're still trying to *grind out* the solution to this equation.  
 My mind just isn't *operating* today.  
 Boy, the *wheels are turning* now!  
 I'm a *little rusty* today.  
 We've been working on this problem all day and now we're *running out of steam*.

These examples are provided with the following comment:

The MACHINE metaphor gives us a conception of the mind as having an on-off state, a level of efficiency, a productive capacity, an internal mechanism, a source of energy, and an operating condition. [...] When a machine breaks down, it ceases to function. [...] if someone become lethargic and unable to function for psychological reasons, we would be [...] likely to say "He broke down". (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 28)

As regards metonymy, it may be defined as a "figure of speech in which the name of an attribute of an entity is used in place of the entity itself" (Crystal 1994 [1992]: 250). Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 36) highlight the difference between metaphor and metonymy:

Metaphor is principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding. Metonymy, on the other hand, has primarily a referential function; that is, it allows us to use one entity to *stand for* another.

However, metonymy should not be treated as “a mere referential device” because it also found to provide understanding (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 38f.) propose the following classification of metonymies:

- THE PART FOR THE WHOLE,
- PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT,
- OBJECT USED FOR USER,
- CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED,
- INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE,
- THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION,
- THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT.

As an example, let us present the metonymy PART FOR THE WHOLE, also called *synecdoche*. It can be identified in the following sentences:

The *automobile* is clogging our highways. (= the collection of automobiles)

We need a couple of *strong bodies* for our team. (= strong people)

There are a lot of *good heads* in the university. (= intelligent people)

I've got a new *set of wheels*. (= car, motorcycle etc.)

We need some *new blood* in the organization. (= new people)

(Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36)

In the examples presented above, the part of a whole which is selected points to the aspect of the whole on which the speaker wishes to concentrate. For instance, in the sentence *There are a lot of **good heads** in the university*, the choice of the noun *head* is not random because the head – being the location of the

brain – is inevitably associated with intelligence, and consequently, the expression *good heads* means ‘intelligent people’. “The point is not just to use a part (head) to stand for a whole (person) but rather to pick out a particular characteristic of the person, namely, intelligence, which is associated with the head” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36).

## 2. Metaphors in the educational context

Metaphors have already been analyzed in the educational context – see e.g. Cieśllicka (2002), Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Kiliańska-Przybyło (2007), Musiał (2002), Siek-Piskozub and Strugielska (2010), Strugielska and Piskozub (2008, 2013), and Stanulewicz (2009, 2017). These scholars are interested in the metaphors used by students in reference to learning, teaching and studying as well as in reference to their teachers and themselves.

Let us present partial results of a survey study carried out by one of the authors of this paper (Stanulewicz 2017). In that study, the participants – students of the Faculty of Languages at the University of Gdańsk – were asked to complete statements concerning the perception of themselves – as students, and the perception of their teachers and studying. The number of the respondents amounted to 156. The results show that they perceived studying mainly as hard work, journey, development, a stage in life, fun and entertainment, and war (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** The most frequent perceptions (incl. metaphors) of studying (based on Stanulewicz 2017)

Answers	Number of respondents	Percentage
Hard work	28	17.95
Journey, adventure	24	15.38
Development	22	14.10
Stage in life	14	8.97
Fun, entertainment	10	6.41
War	7	4.49

The answers provided by the respondents allowed for identifying sets of related metaphors. The most frequent ones include the following sets:

- STUDYING IS WORK, consequently THE UNIVERSITY IS A WORKPLACE, where THE STUDENT IS AN EMPLOYEE and THE TEACHER IS THE BOSS;
- STUDYING IS A JOURNEY, consequently THE STUDENT IS A TRAVELER/TOURIST and THE TEACHER IS A GUIDE;
- STUDYING IS WAR, consequently STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ARE ENEMIES and THE UNIVERSITY IS A BATTLEFIELD / THEATRE OF WAR.

As the results of the study demonstrate, studying can be perceived as a pleasant and challenging activity (travelling) or as an unpleasant experience (war).

### **3. Research material**

For the purposes of this study, we use a corpus of the annual reports, plans and most recent internationalization planning documents, as well as the “About” pages found on the websites of selected universities located in China, the United Kingdom, Europe (excluding the UK), Australia and North America (Canada and the United States).<sup>2</sup> The selected universities are among the top universities in their countries or districts (a majority of them are found in the top 100 of QS World University Rankings 2023).

The corpus has been compiled with the use of AntConc 4.1.0 (Anthony 2022). The sizes of the subcorpora vary from 25,546 to 100,707 words. It must be explained here that the sizes of the subcorpora depend on the numbers and sizes of the relatively recent documents available on the websites of the particular universities at the time of gathering material for this study. The total size of the corpus amounts to 261,140 words. Table 2 presents information about the five subcorpora.

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<sup>2</sup> This corpus was created for the purposes of the doctoral dissertation of one of the authors of this paper (Yang 2024).

**Table 2.** Information about the subcorpora

Region	Universities	Size (number of tokens)
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Peking University</li> <li>– Tsinghua University</li> <li>– Zhejiang University</li> <li>– Fudan University</li> <li>– Ningbo University</li> </ul>	100,707
United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Imperial College London</li> <li>– University of Edinburgh</li> <li>– University College London</li> <li>– University of Cambridge</li> <li>– University of Oxford</li> </ul>	65,022
Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich</li> <li>– Technische Universiteit Delft</li> <li>– Paris Sciences &amp; Lettres – PSL University</li> <li>– University of Copenhagen</li> <li>– Technical University of Munich</li> </ul>	37,300
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Australian National University</li> <li>– Monash University</li> <li>– University of Melbourne</li> <li>– University of Queensland</li> <li>– University of New South Wales</li> </ul>	25,546
Canada and United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– McMaster University</li> <li>– University of British Columbia</li> <li>– University of Alberta</li> <li>– University of Toronto</li> <li>– Carnegie Mellon University</li> </ul>	32,565
Total		261,140



Metaphorical expressions have been identified with the use of various key words as search terms. This study is not quantitative, so we do not intend to provide the raw and relative frequencies of the metaphorical expressions.

#### 4. Metaphors identified in the university documents

This section concentrates on metaphorical expressions identified in the university documents.<sup>3</sup> The metaphors these expressions exemplify are classified by source domain.

##### 4.1. Animalization and personification

In the documents, we can find metaphors which present the universities as living organisms. Such metaphors may be formulated generally as A UNIVERSITY IS A LIVING ORGANISM, and more specifically as A UNIVERSITY IS AN ANIMAL and A UNIVERSITY IS A HUMAN BEING. Selected examples containing metaphorical expressions which illustrate the use of these metaphors are presented below. As can be easily seen, the universities – like living organisms – are portrayed as having an important body part, namely the heart.

- (1) Top education and research are **at the heart of the oldest and largest technical university** in the Netherlands. (Technische Universiteit Delft)
- (2) Whether it be research to understand humanity or the science that underpins our existence, **at our institution's very heart** is the creation of knowledge. (University of New South Wales)

The location of a university – a city, region or even continent – may be presented as a living organism with a heart as well, e.g.

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<sup>3</sup> The examples presented in sections 4 and 5 are also discussed in Yang (2024).

- (3) **Located in the heart of London**, Imperial is a multidisciplinary space for education, research, translation and commercialisation, harnessing science and innovation to tackle global challenges. Imperial is home to 17,000 students and 8,000 staff. (Imperial College London)
- (4) At ETH Zurich, students discover an ideal environment for independent thinking, researchers a climate which inspires top performance. **Situated in the heart of Europe**, yet forging connections all over the world, ETH Zurich is pioneering effective solutions to the global challenges of today and tomorrow. (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich)
- (5) [...] we will provide world-class educational facilities, creating an environment that fosters stronger connections with industry and government **in the heart of Brisbane** [...] (University of Queensland)
- (6) Every building, every department and every period of time has its own story. While some of these stories have been recounted many times over, a great number remain to be written. Beginning as a cluster of buildings set in a large park on the fringe of the city, with four professors and 16 students, **the University now sits at the heart of a thriving international city**. (University of Melbourne)

The vision of a university, as well as strategies and approaches it adopts, may also be treated in its documents as living organisms which have hearts, e.g.

- (7) Supporting student wellbeing is **at the heart of our approach** to providing the greatest opportunity for all our students to excel. We will work to strengthen the partnership between colleges, academic departments and faculties, and central services to provide the welfare support that our students need to flourish. (University of Oxford)
- (8) Attracting talented students and researchers from around the world, creating a welcoming environment for them and equipping them with the means to achieve their full potential in service of scientific, technological, economic and societal progress are the challenges to which France must rise. PSL is making key contributions to this collective national effort,

placing international appeal **at the heart of its strategy**. (Paris Sciences & Lettres – PSL University)

- (9) Forging global partnerships and connectivity is **at the heart of UQ's vision** to deliver knowledge leadership for a better world. (University of Queensland)

It is worth noting that some of the quotations presented above contain other metaphors as well. For instance, (4) and (9) include the metaphorical expressions *forging connections all over the world* and *forging global partnerships and connectivity*. These expressions exemplify the conventional metaphor THE UNIVERSITY IS A FORGE, i.e. the workshop of a smith or blacksmith. In (3), the expression *harnessing science and innovation* is underpinned by the metaphor SCIENCE AND INNOVATION ARE HORSES or other animals which can be harnessed. Also in (3), the sentence *Imperial is home to 17,000 students and 8,000 staff* explicitly points to the metaphor A UNIVERSITY IS HOME.

#### 4.2. Building metaphors

The university documents frequently employ words from the lexical field CONSTRUCTION. It should be emphasized here that the words *construction*, *build* and *foundational* – which are linked with building metaphors – belong to the most frequent lexical content words in three of the five corpora: Chinese (*construction*, *build*), Australian (*build*) and North American (*foundational*) (Yang 2024). Let us consider several examples.

- (10) Integrate domestic and foreign innovative **resources to build a number of interdisciplinary research institutions** with international influence. (Tsinghua University)
- (11) While the University of Melbourne can **build on past successes**, we must also lift our sights. We can and should be leading in advancing Australia as an ambitious, forward-thinking country, increasing its reputation and influence globally. In so doing we can **build on the advantage of our location** in one of the world's most exciting and fast-growing

cities, in a region which is rapidly becoming a hub for education, research and collaboration. We can only do this if we **build a strong community among all who pass through our doors**, in an environment that is inclusive and celebrates diversity, bringing in highly talented people who will be supported and engaged during their time at the University, and who will continue to be part of our community thereafter. (University of Melbourne)

- (12) We seek to inspire people, ideas and actions, and to **build together a creative and dynamic institution** comprised of - and connected with - inspiring people, ideas and actions. The word inspire has another meaning for us, related to its original meaning of “to breathe in”: to do so through deep engagement with societal partners, new forms of academic inspiration and the pursuit of opportunities to serve society better. (University of British Columbia)
- (13) Together, we continue to defy gravity by taking on what might seem unattainable today and generating the ideas and talent needed to **build a more equitable, sustainable and prosperous future**. (University of Toronto)
- (14) U of T has continued to grow its Career Learning Network (CLNx) which helps students find pathways to meaningful work by matching them with jobs, providing skills development tools, and connecting them to industry partners to **build their professional networks**. (University of Toronto)

The above examples containing the verb *build* illustrate the use of the following building metaphors: A UNIVERSITY (/RESEARCH INSTITUTION) IS A BUILDING: examples (10), (11), (12); THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY IS A BUILDING: example (11); THE FUTURE IS A BUILDING: example (13); A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK IS A BUILDING: example (14).

Apart from the lexeme *build*, it is possible to encounter other words from the lexical field CONSTRUCTION: *pillar*, *bridge* and *pipeline*. The following examples demonstrate that the building metaphors may involve not only BUILDINGS as the source domain, but the other structures as well.

- (15) **The strategy focuses on three pillars**, emphasizing how UNSW can celebrate the themes of Culture and Country, Give Back, and Grow Our Own. (University of New South Wales)
- (16) **The Centre serves as a bridge between the Business School and the world of business**, aiming to develop a greater understanding and more efficient management of risk, and to promote investment and productivity. (Imperial College London)
- (17) Under the research and innovation domain, we are absolutely committed to having an impact across **the entire research and innovation pipeline**. (University of Queensland)

### 4.3. Travel metaphors

The universities frequently employ travel metaphors to refer to the process of studying (cf. Stanulewicz 2017) or pursuing an academic career. These metaphors, illustrated with examples (18)–(21), may be formulated as follows: STUDYING IS A JOURNEY and ACADEMIC CAREER IS A JOURNEY.

- (18) We will continue to enhance the portfolio of activities, opportunities for professional development, and extra-curricular experiences available to our students. **We will continue to develop an outstanding student service, streamlined processes and systems which underpin the student journey**. We will continue to engage students at all points of their time at Imperial and beyond, so that they feel part of our vibrant global community, and become engaged alumni. (Imperial College London)
- (19) The education we provide will be **linked to the new frontiers** of ANU research. Academics who translate outstanding research into great teaching will be highly esteemed and rewarded. Our campus culture will be vibrant, inclusive to all and defined by the practice of **supporting our students along their journey at ANU**. We will invest strongly to reimagine and remake the way we serve and support our

- students, pursuing a seamless and quality experience from pre-enrolment to graduation and beyond as part of their alumni membership. (Australian National University)
- (20) The McMaster Office for the Development of English Language Learners (MODEL) is a free service to help students develop their English language proficiency. As well, McMaster strives to create a healthy environment to **support our students in their journey to graduation**. (McMaster University)
- (21) Enhance the social cohesion and wellbeing of our community through evidence-based strategies. We will also prioritise a collegial culture among our staff community. Be the leading Australian research-intensive university measured by recruitment and support of students from Indigenous, rural and low-SES backgrounds. Renew our recruitment practices to drive our equity and diversity goals, with particular **emphasis on the staff journey, including development, performance and promotions**. Have enriched data capability to ensure our decision making leads to greater equity and diversity. (Australian National University)

In general, travelling has positive connotations, so the universities, inviting students and teachers to participate in the journey arranged for them, create an image of pleasant activities with a spirit of adventure. The travel metaphor may also be used to talk about the development of a university or its transformation, e.g.

- (22) In 1998, the four universities with the same roots merged to form the new Zhejiang University and **embarked on a new journey to create a world class university**. (Zhejiang University)
- (23) We are advancing the **digital transformation of the university** and are actively accompanying all members of the ETH community **on this journey**. (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich)

#### 4.4. Other metaphors

In the analyzed university documents, one may encounter other metaphors as well, including the following ones:

- EDUCATION AND RESEARCH ARE PLANTS, e.g.
  - (24) The University of Toronto is dedicated to fostering an academic community in which the **learning and scholarship of every member may flourish**, with vigilant protection for individual human rights, and a resolute commitment to the principles of equal opportunity, equity and justice. (University of Toronto)
- STUDY OPTIONS ARE PLANTS / ANIMALS, e.g.
  - (25) We will create **hybrid study options** that provide students with the best of both worlds. (University of Queensland)
- A STARTUP IS A PLANT, e.g.
  - (26) Entrepreneurship is a key means by which our staff and students apply their work for wider societal benefit. By learning alongside researchers who are experts in their fields our students gain the practical, entrepreneurial and intellectual skills to tackle societal problems. Entrepreneurial activity requires support and nurturing at all stages in the journey – from the creation of ideas, the safeguarding of these through intellectual property, the development of entrepreneurial skills to **enable startups to flourish**. A diverse range of support is required at each stage. (Imperial College London)
- A UNIVERSITY (/STAFF) IS A TAILOR,  
EDUCATION (COURSES, MODES) IS CLOTHES, e.g.
  - (27) Offer diverse **modes of educational delivery tailored** to students' and society's needs. This includes face-to-face, online, work-integrated and modularized learning, professional experience and lifelong educational opportunities. (University of New South Wales)

- A STRATEGY IS A LIQUID, e.g.  
(28) Consultation during the planning process resulted in **the distillation of 20 strategies** that will help shape the university in the coming years. (University of British Columbia)
- A PARTNERSHIP IS A CHEMICAL SUBSTANCE,  
A UNIVERSITY (/UNIVERSITY STAFF) IS A CHEMIST, e.g.  
(29) We will develop and implement a research partnership and translation strategy to cultivate and **catalyze mutually beneficial partnerships** for research translation and commercialization at scale. (University of Queensland)
- A PARTNERSHIP IS A FARMER'S FIELD,  
A UNIVERSITY (/UNIVERSITY STAFF) IS A FARMER, e.g.  
(30) We will develop and implement a research partnership and translation strategy to **cultivate** and catalyze **mutually beneficial partnerships** for research translation and commercialization at scale. (University of Queensland)

We can classify these metaphors as follows:

- biological: EDUCATION AND RESEARCH ARE PLANTS, STUDY OPTIONS ARE PLANTS / ANIMALS, A STARTUP IS A PLANT (*flourish, hybrid*);
- agricultural: A PARTNERSHIP IS A FARMER'S FIELD, A UNIVERSITY (/UNIVERSITY STAFF) IS A FARMER (*cultivate*);
- chemical: A STRATEGY IS A LIQUID, A PARTNERSHIP IS A CHEMICAL SUBSTANCE, A UNIVERSITY (/UNIVERSITY STAFF) IS A CHEMIST (*distillation, catalyst, catalyze*);
- relating to crafts: A UNIVERSITY (/STAFF) IS A TAILOR, EDUCATION (COURSES, MODES) IS CLOTHES (*tailored*).

## 5. Metonymies identified in the university documents

As regards metonymies used in the university documents, the most frequent metonymy is PART FOR THE WHOLE, to be more



specific, BODY PART FOR THE HUMAN BEING. Let us consider the following examples:

- (31) Following the Huddie Report on non scientific subjects at Imperial, the Department of Social and Economic Studies was founded Industrial Sociology and Economics. Aubrey Silberston (pictured right) held the first Chair of Economics, Dorothy Wedderburn, Professor of Industrial Sociology was the first **Head of Department**. (Imperial College London)
- (32) A number of research groups, centres and the PhD students met and discussed strategic challenges and opportunities. They submitted various memos to the Strategy Panel via the **Head of Department**. These inputs have been discussed by a strategy panel which prepared the input for a strategy day for the entire Department staff and facilitated the continuous discussion of the strategy. (University of Copenhagen)
- (33) According to a UoT study of 10,000 of our PhD graduates from 2000–2015, 46% of the international and permanent resident PhD graduates found employment in Canada, resulting in significant **‘brain gain.’** (University of Toronto)
- (34) We will focus on the fundamental task of establishing moral education, create a caring environment for development, carefully build a stage for teachers and students to realize their value in life, fully mobilize their enthusiasm, initiative and creativity, enhance their sense of belonging, acquisition and happiness, **join hands with global alumni** to create a first-class career, build a common home for teachers, students and alumni, and create an institutional culture that makes people more respected. (Zhejiang University)
- (35) This is particularly acute for the development of data and algorithms, which affect almost every aspect of daily life, business and government. Design and governance choices are crucial to the impact of a data-empowered (rather than data-driven) society. These have the potential to **concentrate power in the hands of a small number of individuals and organisations**, but also to significantly empower currently marginalised individuals and groups. A data-empowered society will require a more collaborative, democratic and inclusive approach to the way that choices are

made, as well as a much more data-savvy population. (University College London)

- (36) [...] all departments and faculties of the administrative system shall work hard to implement them under the coordination of the President's Office. Members of the university leadership team should implement **a system of heart-to-heart talks**, regularly exchange ideas and views, and support and coordinate with each other. (Peking University)

In the examples quoted above, namely (31)–(36), people are not referred to with words such as *student*, *teacher* and *staff member*. Instead, the following names of parts of the human body are used: *head*, *brain*, *hand* and *heart*. In the academic context, the use of *head* and *brain* is connected with intelligence (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36). Moreover, the passages containing the expression *head of the department* – (31) and (32) – also exemplify the metaphor A UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT IS A HUMAN BEING, with the *head*, standing for the leader of the department, being its most important part. These cases illustrate the phenomenon of metaphonymy, combining metaphor and metonymy (see e.g. Goossens 1990). It needs to be stressed that expressions such as *head of the department* are highly conventionalized and used in not only in the academic context, but also more generally, in reference to people managing departments at other workplaces and organizations.

## 6. Conclusions

Summing up, the most frequent metaphors encountered in the analyzed university documents include the following ones:

- A UNIVERSITY IS A LIVING ORGANISM, e.g. *at the heart of the oldest and largest technical university*;
- THE LOCATION OF A UNIVERSITY IS A LIVING ORGANISM, e.g. *situated in the heart of Europe*;
- A UNIVERSITY IS A FORGE, e.g. *forging global partnerships and connectivity*;

- A UNIVERSITY IS A BUILDING, e.g. *build together a creative and dynamic institution*;
- THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY IS A BUILDING, e.g. *build a strong community among all who pass through our doors*;
- THE FUTURE IS A BUILDING, e.g. *build a more equitable, sustainable and prosperous future*;
- STUDYING IS A JOURNEY, e.g. *support our students in their journey to graduation*;
- ACADEMIC CAREER IS A JOURNEY, e.g. *emphasis on the staff journey, including development, performance and promotions*.

As has been signalled, the metaphor STUDYING IS A JOURNEY also emerged in the survey study conducted by Stanulewicz (2017). Both universities – as institutions – and students can perceive studying as travelling, which is a pleasant activity, including quest and discovery.

The universities employ metonymies in their documents as well. The most frequent metonymy is the synecdoche, i.e. PART FOR THE WHOLE. To be more specific, the creators of the documents employ the metonymy BODY PART FOR THE HUMAN BEING, e.g. *brain gain* or *head of the department*, the latter also exemplifying the metaphor A UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT IS A HUMAN BEING.

The analysis clearly demonstrates that the metaphorical and metonymic expressions used in the university documents are conventional. This probably results from the intention to sound understandable. Unusual metaphors and metonymies might be less comprehensible to readers, including mainly prospective students and employees, especially those for whom English is a foreign language.

The employment of metaphors and metonymies, along with some other linguistic devices and choices, contributes to the creation of positive images of the universities. As can be seen, through the use of animalization and personification, the universities – like many other institutions – present themselves as animate beings. A university, portrayed as a living creature, stands higher than inanimate matter in a slightly modified

classical concept of the Great Chain of Being (taking into consideration not only minerals but also everything else that is inanimate). A university which is described as if it were a human being is closer to its people – teachers and students. The building metaphors, in turn, aim at presenting universities as constructions made by people. These metaphors highlight the collective act of the creation of the institution, simultaneously emphasizing the strong foundations and durability of the construction. The travel metaphors promise pleasure and adventures to those who boldly decide to set out on the journey.

Summing up, the metaphorical and metonymic expressions, as conventional as they may be, create the image of the universities as living, vibrant and friendly institutions, ready to change and react to the challenges posed by the modern world. The universities attract students and teachers with the image of a journey, which emphasizes not only the opportunities to experience the adventure of discovering unknown lands, but also the traits of the travellers: those who embark on the journey are courageous and inquisitive, driven by ambition and prepared to take risks.

This present study is qualitative. A further step in the research would naturally be a quantitative study of metaphorical and metonymic expressions in the texts of the compiled corpus. Providing the frequencies of particular expressions as well as of the metaphors which underpin them would indicate not only their popularity in the documents, but also the principal figurative ways of creating the positive image of the universities, simultaneously contributing to the construction of their institutional identities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> As regards constructing university identities, see e.g. Yang (2019, 2024).

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