

News values and conceptual metaphors in sports news discourse

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the ways in which different news values and conceptual metaphors are used in sports news reporting. Media discourse makes conscious decisions regarding the presentation of information. Often headlines intend to draw readers in and the body text of an article intends to prove the newsworthiness of the report. A variety of linguistic tactics are applied from the headline to the text to convey the necessary message and to emphasize the news value of the article. Sports are a vital part of our culture and national identity and news media outlets shape our view of the world, which makes sports media a valid topic for research. The data in this thesis consist of 15 articles from the International Ice Hockey Federation site published during the 2021 men's world championships. The thesis utilizes discourse analysis and the concepts of news values in the analysis of headlines and conceptual metaphor theory in the analysis of the articles. The findings suggest that impact, superlativeness, novelty, and prominence are the news values most frequently construed through linguistic devices in the news reports. Impact is central to sports culture due to its competitive nature. In line with previous research, "ice hockey is war" was found to be the most frequent conceptual metaphor in the data. Other prominent themes included "ice hockey is a physical experience" and "ice hockey is a journey".

## **Tiivistelmä**

Tämä kandidaatintutkielma tarkastelee tapoja, joilla uutisarvojen ja konseptuaalisen metaforan laaja kirjo näkyy urheilu-uutisissa. Mediadiskurssiin kuuluu tietoiset valinnat siitä, miten informaatiota jaetaan lukijoille. Usein uutisotsikoiden tarkoituksena on houkutella lukijoita artikkelin pariin, ja artikkelin leipätekstin tarkoituksena on todistaa, miksi kyseisen artikkelin aihe on uutisoinnin arvoinen. Moninaiset kielelliset keinot otsikossa ja leipätekstissä varmistavat, että toivottu viesti saadaan perille ja artikkelin uutisarvo on alleviivattu. Urheilumedian tarkastelu on olennaista, koska urheilu on tärkeä osa kulttuuria sekä kansallista identiteettiä ja uutismedian eri kanavat vaikuttavat maailmankuvamme rakentumiseen. Tämän tutkielman aineisto koostuu 15 artikkelista, jotka on julkaistu Kansainvälisen Jääkiekkoliiton nettisivuilla vuoden 2021 miesten maailmanmestaruuskilpailujen aikaan. Tutkielman analyysissä käytetään diskurssianalyysia sekä uutisarvojen käsitettä otsikoiden kielellisessä tarkastelussa ja konseptuaalisen metaforan käsitettä artikkelitekstien analyysissä. Tutkielman tulokset osoittavat, että vaikutus, superlatiivisuus, harvinaisuus ja merkittävyys olivat aineistossa useimmin esiin nousevat uutisarvot. Vaikutus on urheilukulttuurille tärkeä uutisarvo sen kilpailullisen luonteen myötä. "Jääkiekko on sotaa" oli yleisin konseptuaalinen metafora konseptien samankaltaisuuden takia. Tämä löydös vahvistaa aiempaa

tutkimusta. Muita yleisimpiä konseptuaalisia metaforia aineistossa olivat ”jääkiekko on fyysinen kokemus” ja ”jääkiekko on matka”.

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## **1. Introduction**

Capturing and holding the attention of those scrolling by is a vital part of constructing online news these days. Media discourse in general is known to use various linguistic devices to obtain readers. The importance of an intriguing headline cannot be overstated, and there are multiple linguistic choices a writer makes to persuade and excite readers within an article; even the images chosen for a piece have intentions behind them. News media outlets shape our view of the world, sometimes with subtle linguistic choices. A news report must convince the reader of its newsworthiness in the headline, and the rest of the text must prove it. Sports news discourse can be considered its own genre; however, sports journalism shares features with other types of entertainment media. Sports are a vital part of both culture and national identity, which makes sports media discourse a worthy topic for research.

The aim of this thesis is to examine discourse of sports online news from a linguistic and semiotic point of view, using discourse analysis. The analysis is divided into two parts; the first part will examine how news values are construed through language in sports news headlines, in order to find out which concepts of newsworthiness are the most frequent. News values are central to news writing and essentially affect what is placed on the news agenda. The second part of the analysis will consider the body text and identify different conceptual metaphors, to find out which source domains are most frequently used in sports and how the results compare to earlier research on the topic. The data used in this study are from the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) website. The site is home for all matters regarding the international ice hockey championship games. The articles posted on the site are meant for a wide international audience.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

This section will introduce the theoretical background for the analysis as well as some key concepts and previous research conducted on the topic. Studying news discourse in sports news fits within the broad scope of discourse analysis. This chapter will briefly introduce discourse analysis, news discourse and their relevance to the thesis. In chapters 2.2. and 2.3. this section will introduce the concepts of news values and conceptual metaphor, which will be used as framework for conducting analysis.

### **2.1. News discourse and sports news discourse**

Discourse analysis studies language in use and can be used to study different types of discourse. Its purposes are to research discourse and context, and the analysis is multidisciplinary (Alba-Juez, 2009). Discourse analysis involves different branches of research; therefore, the scope of discourse analysis and discourse studies is broad and often utilizes more than linguistics, as researchers “pay equal or more attention to language use in relation to social, political and cultural aspects.” (Alba-Juez, 2009, p. 10.)

News discourse addresses different kinds of target audience demographics, classified by social factors such as age and gender (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). In sports media discourse target audiences share an interest in the sport in question. Bell and Smith (2012) noted that news discourse has changed since the introduction of online news forms. The most significant difference between traditional print news and online news is that instead of the traditional one-way communication readers can now be active participants (Bell & Smith, 2012). Online news sites regularly offer a chance to interact with a story and most online news sources ask readers to send in material, for example videos or pictures of an ongoing phenomenon. Online news sites have statistics on the effects of a headline in the form of clicks, unlike print media, where it is harder to know what in fact works in terms of individual articles.

The structure of an English language news report often follows a similar organizational pattern, which represents an “inverted pyramid” (Thomson & White, 2010). The important details are given at the beginning of the report and typically the article does not follow a chronological order. Sports reports start with the important information, which for post-game reports is the outcome, and often later summarize the events in a chronological order. Thomson and White (2010) stated that the importance of certain details is determined by cultural and ideological factors. In sports, the outcome is often the detail that matters the most to readers and is often first clarified in the headline. Headline’s function

is to attract readers, not simply summarize information, and headlines are often not written by the author themselves (Bell, 1991).

Peterlicean and Berariu (2020) focused on sports news headlines and discursive strategies employed in them. The findings showed that figurative language was often used in headlines and authoritative remarks and provocation were the most frequent discursive strategies employed in them. According to Peterlicean and Berariu (2020), it was typical of sports news headlines to rely on the reader's knowledge of the subject matter and to include wordplay. Sports news typically makes numerous references to past events, such as past games against the opposite team and the last game a team has played. Headlines were also in the center of research by Monsefi and Mahadi (2016) that targeted the use of wordplay in news headlines and analyzed the language using taxonomy of wordplay as a reference point. The study concluded that wordplay in headlines had many purposes, from strengthening the impact of the headline, facilitating discourse, bringing social actors into focus, or blurring them, creating an atmosphere of sympathy and empathy, exaggerating, or downplaying the importance of an event, and creating lasting impression with visual and auditory wordplay (Monsefi & Mahadi, 2016). Sports reporting post-match can influence the reader's perception of the events. Tan et al. (2021) noted that newsworthiness in sports news often comes from negative sentiments. This was especially true in their research that was conducted during the COVID19 pandemic.

Discourse in ice hockey has been studied to some extent. Pietikäinen (2021) examined "the speculative design's capacity to co-produce knowledge about contradictions and potentialities of work in professional ice hockey" (p. 1), with an ethnographic approach, the study drew on the concept of assemblage. The study found that hockey designs showed the multiplicity of hockey work and highlighted the role of discourse in the work of hockey professionals (Pietikäinen, 2021). Shin et al. (2020) researched the role of media discourse of South Korean national ice hockey team's naturalized athletes, with focus on imagined community and ethnic nationalism in construction of ethnic and national identity. Naturalized athletes are athletes in the national teams with a foreign national background. The findings demonstrated that media discourses highlighted importance of the Olympic team's success, described naturalized athletes as "saviors" and emphasized their acculturation of Korean culture (Shin et al., 2020). This thesis additionally aims to provide more information in the field of sports media discourse and ice hockey reporting, as it seems that the discourse in International Ice Hockey Federation has not been studied before.

## **2.2. News values**

News values essentially answer the question; what makes something newsworthy. Bednarek and Caple (2012, chapter 3) discuss news values and identify nine different categories: *negativity*, *timeliness*, *proximity*, *prominence*, *consonance*, *impact*, *novelty*, *superlativeness*, and *personalization* as the main news values. The word ‘value’ is loaded with meaning. News values are not neutral, they “reflect ideologies and priorities held in society” (Bell, 1991, p. 156). Linguistic devices are often used to emphasize news values in text.

According to Bednarek and Caple (2012), *negativity* is a news value because news stories often concern the unfortunate events happening in the world. A major natural disaster for example will be covered in news all over the world. *Timeliness* is the relevance of the event in terms of time, something that just happened is often more newsworthy than something that happened four years ago. The next news value, *proximity*, concerns the geographical location of the news story or the cultural nearness of the event and whether it is relevant for the area of the publication. (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). For example, Finnish domestic politics seldom make news in the United States; however, as the United States is a nation with significant global influence, their domestic politics make news more often in Finland. Similarly, something that concerns the EU area is less likely to make news in another continent, because it has less news value there.

Bednarek and Caple (2012) defined *prominence* as high-status individuals, such as celebrities, organizations, or politicians. When aspects of a story become newsworthy because of the stereotypes and expectations people have it is called *consonance*. *Consonance* can often go hand in hand with other news values, such as *negativity* or *prominence*. *Impact* means the effects or consequences of an event. An event that has global impact is more likely to have news value everywhere. *Novelty* is about the rarity of the event; unusual events are more likely to be newsworthy. The idea of *superlativeness* as a news value is that the bigger, the more known something is, the more news value it has. *Personalization* on the other hand concerns the human-interest aspects, inclusion of a news actor who is willing to tell their story, for example. Newsworthiness in an article is construed through discourse and image (Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

Next, some of the linguistic devices that can construe the news values stated before will be introduced. The summary follows the definitions established by Bednarek and Caple (2012, Chapter 3). The linguistic devices are evaluative language, references to emotion, negative vocabulary, references to time, verb tense and aspect, references to place, references to nation or community, first-person plural pronouns, intensification and quantification, metaphor, simile, role labels, references to effects and impact, comparison, quotes from ‘ordinary’ people, references to individuals, repeated word



combinations and story structure. (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). These will be introduced in more detail below.

Evaluative language according to Bednarek and Caple (2012) realizes opinion through language, for example assessments of positivity, negativity, importance or unimportance, expectedness, or unexpectedness. Linguistic evaluation can construe multiple news values, the news value of *negativity* can be shown by usage of words that describe an event or a news actor as negative. Evaluation of a news actor as important construes *prominence*. This is achieved using words such as “famous” and “superstar” in relation to a news actor. Events can be identified as significant when words such as “historic” “vital” are used and the presentation construes the news value of *impact*. Evaluative language and word choices can also construe *novelty* and *consonance*, which reference something as unexpected or casual (Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

Bednarek and Caple (2012) introduced intensification and quantification as further linguistic devices that construe news values. They often show *superlativeness* and *impact*, through language that emphasizes the number of amounts, size, duration, force, or degree. It includes comparative and superlative adjectives, for example “the hardest hit”. Next is comparison, which construes *novelty*, *superlativeness* and sometimes *consonance*. Comparison noting *novelty* is common when something happens for the first time in a long time, and *consonance* when the event is in line with former events. Comparison can construe *superlativeness* by noting that something is more “x” than something else. The fourth device, references to emotion, describe the emotional behavior of a news actor and can construe news values of *negativity* (negative emotions), *personalization* (individual’s emotions), *impact* (if the emotions are caused by an event), and *novelty* (references to surprise etc.). Negative vocabulary on the other hand is used to construe *negativity* and *impact*. It is important to note that negative vocabulary may not show the writer’s opinions or evaluations, unlike evaluative language (Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

Word combinations can construe *consonance* and show frequent associations. Bednarek and Caple (2012) used the word “shark” and its association with Australia as an example. The association between the word combination makes “Australia shark” a common search term. Metaphor and simile can use common and widely known metaphors to establish *consonance* and *superlativeness*. Another linguistic device that construes news value is reference to time or place, and the references establish *proximity* and *timeliness*. References to nation or community establish *proximity*, similarly as the usage of first-person plural pronouns such as “we” and “ours”. Role labels in media language establish *prominence* of news actors and sources, and story structure construes *consonance*. Quotes

from 'ordinary' individuals and references to individuals construe *personalization*, by introducing a relatable news actor. These are the main linguistic devices that construe newsworthiness and news values according to Bednarek and Caple (2012).

### **2.3. Conceptual metaphor and semantic frames**

Metaphors allow us to communicate using concepts that are familiar from another domain or context. Metaphors are used in spoken as well as written language. "Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 454). They are deeply embedded in our culture. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) used argument as an example of a concept, and "argument is war" as an example of a conceptual metaphor. "Argument is war" is conveyed through the language we use, there are battles, there are fights and there are winners and losers as well as peace. The concepts are cultural, not universal.

Caballero (2012) explored the role of metaphors in a sports community, the article examined metaphors in online tennis post-match commentary articles and the community conversations happening around the articles. The findings of the study suggested that sports fans used metaphors as much as the journalists, they might for example refer to a player as "the king" of the sport. The study referenced different metaphorical themes such as "tennis is war" and "authority of power" (Caballero, 2012).

Vorobei et al. (2021) analyzed the metaphorical model "sport is war" in Chinese sports media discourse, using frame-slot analysis as a method. Other metaphorical models identified in the study of Chinese sports discourse are "sports is theater", "sport is family" and "sport is a way of life", but "sport is war" was the most prominent one. This thesis will take a similar approach in the second part of the analysis, where conceptual metaphor in sports discourse will be considered through the frame-slot model. Another recent study focused on war metaphors in sports news as well, researching how the adjectives combined to them change the polarity of the metaphor (Tan et al., 2021). They discovered that adjectives are crucial in news reporting and they influence and change the polarity of a war metaphor; good news can be turned into bad news with an adjective and vice versa (Tan et al., 2021). Research by Shekhovskaya (2020) suggested that sports discourse has specific features and sublanguage, terms related to ice hockey specifically. "In sports discourse, semantic frames and slots allow shaping the sports media language via relationships of figurative meanings with an extralinguistic context" (Shekhovskaya, 2020, p. 89). Shekhovskaya (2020) additionally introduced

metaphorical models of MetaSelf related to sports discourse and according to the study, the MetaSelf, “the metaphor of self” was frequently present in sports media and thinking.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) identified three types of conventional metaphor: structural, orientational and physical. The structural metaphor uses one concept to define another, often using concepts from an unrelated domain. The example “argument is war” mentioned before is a structural metaphor. Physical metaphor involves “the projection of entity or substance status upon something that does not have that status inherently” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 461). Physical metaphors are so common in our everyday conceptualizing that they often go unnoticed. An example of a physical metaphor is “fear of the dark” or “brutality of war”. Orientational metaphor “organizes a whole system of concepts with respect to one another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980. p. 461), most of them have to do with spatial orientation. One example given in the article is the conceptual metaphor “happy is up, sad is down” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

### 3. Data and methods

This section will introduce the material that will be used for the analysis in chapter 4 as well as the methods used for analysis. The purpose of the study is to examine the use of linguistic devices construing news values and their frequency in sports news headlines, and the frequency of different conceptual metaphors in sports discourse. The linguistic focus will be on the semantic aspects, the meaning of words and phrases and how they construct newsworthiness and metaphors. This thesis will also draw on methodology used in previous studies to help with the analysis.

#### 3.1. Articles

The data consists of 15 articles (see Appendix) from the 2021 men's ice hockey world championships. According to their website (*Who we are*, n.d.) IIHF is the "governing body of international ice hockey" that controls the international rulebook and dictates officiating guidelines amongst other things. The IIHF site is an international website that presents information on games and their outcomes, news, and the game schedule. Game reports and summaries are released after each game. The site also publishes other relevant articles about the games and team dynamics during the ongoing tournament. The content on the IIHF site is directed at anyone interested in international hockey. International games appeal to a wide audience, not only sports fanatics. It is worth noting that IIHF is a non-biased international organization and it reflects on the content. Game reports also gather an audience amongst those who have watched the game. According to Caballero (2012), sports fans do not watch the post-match commentary to find out what happened, because they have often already watched the game. Instead, they wish to relive the action and compare their opinions and expressions with others (Caballero, 2012). Social media networks build a community for those interested and the news can be discussed on other platforms such as Twitter. The IIHF site itself does not have a comment function on the site.

During the men's world championships 2021 IIHF posted about 150 articles on the tournament that took place from 21<sup>st</sup> of May to 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 in Riga, Latvia. For the scope of this thesis, 15 articles were chosen for a closer analysis based on the following criteria: the articles had to be pre-game or post-game reports from different matches, or player or team evaluations from which the 15 articles were chosen at random. Power rankings, articles that focus on rules of the tournament, COVID19, ticket sales and general press conferences were excluded from the selection. This selection criteria excluded about fourth of the articles. Otherwise, all articles by a glance seem to have a quite similar structure and headlines. The articles are free to read on the IIHF website. The articles are written by

four different sports writers, it is likely that the site has a team who are instructed with writing the articles.

### **3.2. Methods of analysis**

Discourse analysis offers a broad scope for research. This thesis will consider discourse in the form of news discourse and metaphorical discourse. The concept of news values (as explained in further detail in chapter 2.2.) will be analyzed with the focus on the linguistic and semantic aspects that build the newsworthiness of a headline. The analysis is done as a close reading. The news values are identified through an inspection of linguistic tactics applied in the headlines to find out which news values are demonstrated most frequently through linguistic choices. The analysis will include discussion about the frequency of the news values and possible reasons for the results.

The second part of the analysis focuses on the conceptual metaphor, using conceptual metaphor theory and the frame-slot method for the analysis. The aim is to find out which conceptual metaphors occur most frequently and how many different metaphorical expressions belong to each domain. This will help identify how frequently metaphors are used in sports discourse and what kind of metaphorical discourse is typical for sports news reporting. This thesis will also discuss why the most prominent categories seem to be frequent. Metaphors are deeply embedded into our everyday discourse and at times can be hard to spot. The analysis is conducted as a close reading of each individual text to find the different metaphors used in them.

This thesis will identify conceptual metaphors, metaphorical expressions taken from a source domain to a different target domain and use the frame-slot method to further analyze the metaphors. Fillmore (1982) explained frames as:

any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits: when one of the things in such a structure is introduced into a text, or into a conversation, all of the others are automatically made available. (p. 111)

Sullivan (2013) demonstrated that words can only be interpreted when a person has access to their frames and frame elements. As an example, the verb “exercise” belongs to the frame “exercising” and the frame includes elements such as an exerciser, means and the purpose (Sullivan, 2013). This thesis will draw on the approach used by Shekhovskaya (2020), which considers semantic frames to

consist of slots. Slots are “elements of the situation, that make up some part of the frame, some aspect of its specification” (Chudinov, 2001, as cited in Shekhovskaya, 2020).

## **4. Analysis**

The analysis will be conducted in two parts. The first chapter will focus on news values and how linguistic choices in the headlines portray them. The second section will focus more on the metaphorical aspects, identifying the concepts and conceptual metaphors that can be established within the context of sports news discourse. Metaphor is also considered a linguistic device that construes news value and will be briefly dealt with in the first section, with the focus on the headlines. The second part of the analysis will consider the body text of the articles and the conceptual metaphors in them. The analysis chapters contain discussion about the results.

The 15 headlines chosen for the analysis are all short and compact, six words or less. Most IIHF headlines from the 2021 world's seemed to be short. It is a stylistic choice and it might tell us about the assumptions the site makes about their readers and their knowledge. The ice hockey world championships are a major event for each participating country and the local papers in each nation will report on the events as well. Perhaps it is assumed that those who seek the news from the official IIHF site already have a lot of background information and interest in the subject, which removes the need for a long and elaborate headline. Even in the few words the headlines manage to convey the main messages and the themes of the articles. For post-game summaries the result of the game can be interpreted from the headline. Sports news do not rely on ambiguity much, although ambiguous description of the contents in the headline is quite common for other types of entertainment news. It would be possible to utilize ambiguity to some degree as the outcome of a game is never pre-determined. The outcome can be expected or unexpected, which will usually show in the headlines through notions of novelty, impact, and consonance. Sports news reporting uses these devices to its advantage but seems to be more to the point in the headline and less prone to clickbait titles that can mislead readers.

### **4.1. News values and linguistic choices in headlines**

This thesis will start the analysis of the headlines from the point of view of news values, defined in chapter 3.2., and linguistic features affect the interpretation. Many of the articles are game reports that are routine publications for the site, expected after or before each game. The news values construed sometimes have clear implications in the headlines. In general, the articles have the most news value for the target audience. The analysis is divided into chapters based on the most frequently occurring news values in the selected headlines (see Table 1. at the end of section). Most of the headlines construe multiple different news values.

#### 4.1.1. Impact

Impact was found in 10 out of 15 headlines, which makes it the most prominent news value in the data. Impact was often construed through conclusions of a tournament game. In seven headlines impact was central to the end results of a match between two teams. The headlines used different phrases to construe impact and to clarify which team won, which has impact in the tournament where to proceed a team needs as many wins as possible. The articles often mentioned both participating nations in the headline, yet two headlines only mentioned the winning party. These two headlines considered key games, such as quarterfinals and the gold medal game, “Canada wins ‘little miracle’ gold”. In the final rounds the most important detail is the winning team, who will proceed in the competition or in case of semifinals the winners proceed to the gold game and the losing team will play for bronze. As sports reporting relies on a reader’s previous knowledge, it can also be assumed that the writers predict that those who follow the outcomes will already know which teams are in the finals, and the losing team does not need to be clarified in the headline.

Figurative language was often used to convey the message and to construe the news value of impact. Some headlines that emphasized game results used the following expressions: “Czechs down Danes in a bizarre shootout” and “Norway spoils Kazakh party”. The word “down” is used as a verb and indicates a win for Czechia, although the word itself does not take the meaning of winning or losing. The meaning is realized by the fact that we consider the orientational metaphor that up is good and down is bad to be obvious in the western culture. “Spoiling someone’s party” is wordplay that indicates two things in the context of the hockey tournament: Norway won and ruined a streak of success for Kazakhstan. The impact of the game on the Kazakh team is intensified by the choice of words, as metaphorically “ruining” something as positive as “a party” is considered to have major negative impact.

Other cases of impact saw evaluation of impact and emotional responses. First, “Cehlarik sparks the Slovak engine” construes impact, the positive impact of Cehlarik’s gameplay on the Slovakian team. Correspondingly, the headline “Anger and bewilderment over Swedish ‘fiasco’” considers “anger and bewilderment” to be the negative impact of the fiasco. Impact can also be anticipated by predictions of the future. The headline “Finns eye repeat, Canada seeks revenge” does this by anticipating and assuming the position of the two teams before they face each other. The prominence of the news value impact in the headlines can be explained through the nature of sports culture. Impact is a vital news value for team sports as they often focus on competition. Competition leads to results, and results have impact one way or another.



### 4.1.2. Superlativeness

Superlativeness could be identified in eight headlines, in sports news it builds excitement and anticipation, as well as the sense of community and passion for the sport. In the data superlativeness was frequently construed through intensification, comparison, metaphor, and references to emotion. Intensification includes the use of lexicons that cannot be considered neutral. Sensationalized and intensified word choices are common tactics in news writing to increase the news value of an event. The headline “Germans sense Olympic echo” mentions the Olympics, the most renowned international sports tournament in the world, which along with the metaphor construe superlativeness. Understanding the implications of the “Olympic echo” in this context would require a reading of the article or more background information, as the word “echo” suggests that past events are referenced in the headline, an echo of the past.

Two articles focused on comparison of teams before the nations played against each other. Comparison is seen as a linguistic device that can often construe superlativeness. In “Finns eye repeat, Canada seeks revenge” superlativeness is construed through comparison, and additionally the emotionally loaded noun “revenge”, that has intense implications. Another case of intense emotional reaction is referenced in the headline “Anger and bewilderment over Swedish ‘fiasco’”. “Anger and bewilderment” are not neutral responses; therefore, the assessment has more news value.

### 4.1.3. Novelty

The headlines showcased six instances of the news value novelty. Novelty is a central news value; it concerns the unexpectedness of an event. Rare news generally will gather more interest from the public; therefore, it comes as no surprise novelty is construed through linguistic choices in multiple headlines. Novelty in headlines can usually be identified in use of linguistic devices and word choices such as “unexpected” itself. In the six headlines that construe the news value of novelty, four included linguistic evaluation and word choices that clearly construed novelty and two used comparisons to construe novelty.

The word choices “bizarre” and “little miracle” have visible implications of unexpectedness through the use of evaluative language. “Bizarre shootout” implies that something unexpected happened in the shootout round, “bizarre” as an evaluative adjective carries the meaning of a strange event. Similarly, “little miracle” in a headline indicates surprise. The expression was in double quotation marks in the headline, but it was not a direct quote mentioned in the article and therefore it is

considered to be evaluative. Evaluation does not equal to the writer's opinion in all instances, for example, the article with the headline "Swedish 'fiasco'" has 'fiasco' in single quotation marks. The text clarifies that the quote was taken from a Swedish sports news site. Quotation marks are often used to indicate direct quotation, and these two instances required an inspection of the whole text to find out whether they were evaluative language or direct quotations.

Furthermore, "Canada stuns ROC in overtime" is a headline that construes novelty with the use of a visual word choice "stun" and even mention of "overtime". Overtime in hockey is a short extra period that the teams proceed to if the game ends in a tie. The word choice "stun" implies a shock, unexpectedness. It may not indicate that the result is shocking in a general sense, instead it seems to imply that the result shocked the ROC team. The headline "North Americans too close to call" is an evaluation of two equal teams, with implications that the results are difficult to predict, which builds newsworthiness and the news value of novelty through comparison of two equally competitive teams. In sports rare occurrences have high news value. The 2021 ice hockey tournament saw multiple unexpected events and outcomes, such as Sweden being out of knockouts for the first time ever and teams winning another for the first time in history.

#### **4.1.4. Prominence**

Prominence was identified in five articles. Prominence considers high status individuals and role labels. In four instances prominence was identified through a mention of a specific player and an evaluation that gave the player a high status, and one headline gave teams role labels that construed prominence. The headline "Boyle 'C's' bright future" used "C" as wordplay (read as sees a bright future) and a high-status role label. The "C" in hockey is a letter associated with a team captain, and it is printed on the team captain's jersey. The mention of a team captain has prominence and prominent news actors and their evaluations have higher news value. Similarly, the headline "Mangiapane playing like MVP" also granted Mangiapane a prominent status through the evaluative simile "playing like MVP". MVP is a title given to one player who does exceptionally well at the end of the tournament. Essentially the headline lures in readers to see why Mangiapane is considered such a great player. "World Champs Finns vs Upstart Germans" is a headline that construes prominence by using role labels to highlight potential in both teams. "World Champs" grants the Finnish team credibility as a winning contender and the label "Upstart" displays that the German team has the drive and skill to make for an interesting showdown. The role labels identified in the headline were evaluative, yet neutral enough for the International Ice Hockey Federation. Prominence is important in sports culture, as well-performing players and coaches are granted a high status and news reports

that refer to famous names will likely gain more traction. As an example, evaluations of a game become more newsworthy when they are given by experts and star players who participated in the event. In sports culture it is also common to invite retired players and coaches to consult.

#### **4.1.5. Other news values**

Additionally, two headlines construed timeliness with linguistic devices. All articles were timely in reference to the ongoing tournament at the time of the publication, which means timeliness is not considered for all of them. Timeliness in this case must be more specific and explicit in the linguistic choices. The two headlines that showcased timeliness construed it with word choices, such as “Boyle ‘C’'s bright future”, which makes reference to possible positive future events. Bednarek and Caple (2012) explain that references to future events are sometimes used to increase the news value of timeliness and to place something on the news agenda.

Negativity was only identified in one headline, “Anger and bewilderment over Swedish ‘fiasco’”. This headline uses negative language such as “fiasco”. Negativity is considered a central news value; therefore, it was unexpected it was only discovered in one instance. The reason for this might be the nature of the IIHF site, as an unbiased organization which hosts the games excessive negativity towards a team or a player would not be considered ethical. National news outlets might report on the tournament from a different point of view and use more negativity in headlines. For the same reasons the headlines hardly had positive evaluations. Positivity was evident in two headlines through positive evaluation of individual players. Consonance on the other hand was found in one headline, “Finns grind out quarter-final win”. The expression “grind out” inspires sentiments of a routine win, a mechanical ordeal. It is evaluative language construing consonance in the sense that the writer has evaluated the game as an uneventful one.

Other news values were not identified through linguistic choices in the selected headlines, making personalization and proximity the only news values that were not found in the data. Many of the headlines naturally included mentions of the participating nations. However, proximity was excluded from consideration. As the site and the event are international, geographical proximity was not relevant in the mentions of participating countries and cultural nearness was not expressed.

Table 1. *News values in sports news headlines.*

Frequency of news values found in the data:
Impact: 10
Superlativeness: 8
Novelty: 6
Prominence: 5
Timeliness: 2
Positivity: 2
Negativity: 1
Consonance: 1

## 4.2. The conceptual metaphor

The conceptual metaphor analysis is divided into chapters that analyze the different conceptual metaphors found in the data, emphasis on the most frequent ones. The conceptual metaphors are divided into frames and frames into slots when necessary. Multiple examples from the data are included to showcase the metaphors. A conscious effort was made to exclude most idioms from the analysis. First conceptual metaphor considered is “ice hockey is war”, next is “ice hockey is a physical experience”, then “ice hockey tournament is a journey” and the last chapter in this section briefly discusses other less visible themes.

### 4.2.1. Ice hockey is war

With sport as the concept, as expected the most frequently used conceptual metaphor in the data is “ice hockey is war”. This is realized by a wide variety and range of lexicons that originate from the domain of war in the data. As previous research has shown, war metaphors are extremely common in our everyday conceptualizing of the world (Tan et al., 2021; Vorobei et al., 2021; Caballero, 2012). Due to the extent of war and violence related metaphors they have been divided into the following frames for the analysis: “hostility”, “stages of war” and “fighters”.

The frame “hostility” includes the slots “actions of war” and “weapons of war”. Actions of war includes verbs, the most frequently used violent verb in the data was “beat”, often in reference to a team winning over the other. Other actions of war included “shoot”, which was used as a verb, “shoot the puck”. The word “shoot” is commonly used in ice hockey to conceptualize the action of a player

trying to move the puck towards the goal. Examples of the slot actions of war (1, 2, 3) are highlighted below with the relevant expressions underlined.

Example 1. “We couldn’t break down that defense” (Canada stuns ROC in overtime)

Example 2. “I tried to shoot and it didn’t turn out being a very good one.” (Cehlarik sparks the Slovak engine)

Example 3. “Guys getting out to block shots and sacrificing themselves.” (Boyle “C”’s bright future)

Weapons of war are illustrated through Examples (4) and (5). The slot weapons of war included “a shot”, which was used frequently as a noun, and other expressions that had fewer appearances, such as “defensive shell”. The word “shot” was often paired with other war-themed lexicons, the metaphorical expression “fired a shot” came up in the data multiple times. These expressions have become so common that in the conceptualizing of ice hockey these are generally understood and frequently used.

Example 4. “Kubalik sent a dangerous shot on goal that Olkinuara got a glove on.” (Finns grind out quarter-final win)

Example 5. “showing off the early release that has proved such a potent weapon in this tournament.” (Bertschy shoots down GB)

The frame “stages of war” includes the slots “during the war” and “results of war”. The games between two different teams were often described as a “battle”. The word was often combined with evaluative adjectives, such as “key”, “emotional” and “tremendous”. The slot during the war additionally contained the usage of “offence” and “defence”, words that are used to describe the different roles of players. They are common conceptual metaphors in sports, but originally refer to warfare. Examples (6) and (7) below illustrate the slot during the war.

Example 6. “It should all make for a tremendous battle of North America on Saturday.” (North Americans too close to call)

Example 7. “the British defence found things too hot in the latter half of the middle frame.” (Bertschy shoots down GB)

The results of war slot were often conceptualized by actions that resulted in death or sacrifice, as shown in Example (8). The act of getting or attempting to get revenge was also prominent in the data, the word “revenge” was used five times in total. Other results of war include Example (9), which uses the war-themed lexicon “surrender”.

Example 8. “condemning Sweden to last place in Group B and immediate elimination” (Anger and bewilderment over Swedish ‘fiasco’)

Example 9. “and this marked the first game all tournament that Finland surrendered as many as three goals” (Canada wins “little miracle” gold)

The frame “fighters” is represented by the slots “leaders and troops” and “enemies”. There were four occasions where experienced players or coaches were called “veterans” (Example 10), which is a war term that is these days a recurrent evaluation of experience in a field. It is an example of a highly usual metaphor in different target domains. The source domain is war, and in this case the target domain is sports. Other metaphors saw the players and teams as “attackers”, “defensive machines” and “shooters”, or “troops” (Example 11). “Rival” was used to describe the position of the opposite team to the other as well, as illustrated in Example (12) below.

Example 10. “Soderholm has relied heavily on a veteran and a youngster to carry to play in key situations” (World Champs Finns vs Upstart Germans)

Example 11. “This year, Jalonen’s troops are beginning to follow the same template” (World Champs Finns vs Upstart Germans)

Example 12. “Then came another classic hockey rivalry with a meeting against the USA.” (Finns eye repeat, Canada seeks revenge)

Since the war metaphors were prominent in the data, a question arises as to why sports are often conceptualized through war. Tan et al. (2021) believed that the domains of war and sports were comparable to each other, and therefore war terms could be used to conceptualize sports. Vorobei et al. (2021) supported this view, “the use of military metaphors in sports discourse is a natural reaction of linguistic consciousness to the conceptual similarity of these two discourses in many extralinguistic indicators.” (p. 40). As found in this thesis as well, ice hockey which is a sport that focuses on competition and includes team play is often described as “war” through extensive use of words that are related to warfare. The similarities of the two domains can be assessed. A match is regularly referred to as a “battle”, the players are “troops” and victory and loss can be described as “doom” or even “life and death”. Examples of these were found in the data, which supports the idea that war metaphors are extensively used in sports.

The concept of competition can be understood through the conceptual metaphor of “competition is war” in general. In both war and sports there are rivals and enemies. Rivalries are in the center of sports, often in national and international games teams have their own “nemesis”. For example, this was referenced in the article titled “World Champ Finns vs. Upstart Germans”. The article claims that

“Finland vs Germany doesn’t have the same ring as Finland vs Sweden, Czech Republic vs Russia or the other semi-final, USA vs Canada.” (O’Brien, 2021, June 5). This shows that in the world of hockey there are also key rivalries and teams that are considered the nemesis of another team, much like in warfare. Sports are also considered violent to a degree, tackling rival players is encouraged in gameplay to gain advantage, although harmful violence will be penalized.

#### 4.2.2. Ice hockey is a physical experience

Another feature of sports is physicality. Sports are physically demanding and include action and movement of the body. This shows in the type of metaphors that are used in sports discourse. This thesis considers the conceptual metaphor “ice hockey is a physical experience” to show through the frames: “body” and “physical activity”. Physical metaphors often consider the whole team to be a united living organism.

Frame “body” is divided into the slots “parts of the body” and “physical pain”. The slot “physical pain” considers expressions that detail physical pain to express something other than physical pain. Below, Example (14) illustrates this. The “headache” in the example means that the player is causing trouble, which is understood through a common metaphor from another domain. Other assessments, such as the Example (13) conceptualizes the two teams being even through the metaphor “neck-and-neck”. Many metaphorical expressions that include the body and physical pain are common in all communication.

Example 13. “they were often neck-and-neck with West Germany before finally pulling ahead in the latter part of the decade.” (World Champs Finns vs Upstart Germans)

Example 14. “Andrew Mangiapane is causing a major headache for every ‘tender he’s faced in Riga during his abbreviated World Championship.” (Mangiapane playing like MVP)

Frame “physical activity” is divided into two slots, “action” and “being”. Action is understood through expressions that cover actions of physical activity in a metaphorical sense. In the data the frequency of the metaphors was evident with verbs such as “stumbled”, “picked up” and “carried” used to reference something other than the literal act portrayed by the verb. The expression “silence” in Example (15) meant that key players were kept from scoring, not silenced in the literal meaning of the word. The slot “being” includes expressions that consider a team to metaphorically be a living, being organism that exist or ceases to exist. This includes the idea that a loss means death and success “keeps the team alive” (Examples 16 and 17). “Life” in this sense is seen as comparable to a team progressing in a tournament, as life is something that continues and death is the ending.

Example 15. “Finland managed to largely silence that devastating trio.” (Finns eye repeat, Canada seeks revenge)

Example 16. “A 2-1 win for the Germans kept Canada alive.” (Finns eye repeat, Canada seeks revenge)

Example 17. “That goal came just 1:13 into the period and gave the Norwegians life.” (Finns take care of Norway)

The frequency of the conceptual metaphor “ice hockey is a physical experience” can be explained by the fact that we conceptualize the world through concepts that are familiar to us. Physical experiences and the body are familiar concepts to all humans, and often metaphorical expressions such as “he is giving me a headache” are understood through the collective experience and understanding of a headache. A headache is known to be something troublesome and painful, which therefore makes it a commonly understood metaphor. Similarly, the concept of “life” can be considered the continuation of something due to the similarity of the concepts, and the concept of “death” is often metaphorically regarded as the end of something. Accordingly, physical metaphors such as “neck-and-neck” are effortless to imagine through familiar concepts and imagining the actual physical experience makes the metaphor easy to conceptualize.

#### **4.2.3. Ice hockey tournament is a journey**

Next in terms of frequency is the concept of the tournament as a journey, a way, a road. The competition is comparable to a journey, as the tournament takes place over a brief period, in 2021 it was 17 days. The tournament has a clear beginning and an ending, as does a journey. The conceptual metaphor “ice hockey tournament is a journey” is considered through the frame “the journey”.

Frame “the journey” is conveyed through use of terms that consider the tournament as a journey to complete, the teams as passengers on the journey and the games as stops along the way. The word “journey” itself is used in a few instances, a coach is quoted describing the tournament as an “incredible journey” for their team, for example. Other assessments see a “bright future” for a successfully performing team and the idiomatic expressions “went all the way” and “find a way” were employed in a few instances. Example (18) below conveys the metaphor of the tournament journey through “the road to gold”, where road is used as a visual metaphor to represent a journey towards a destination, the destination being the gold medal. The road was similarly utilized to describe the metaphor of a journey in other expressions; “en route to the gold medal”; “opening the road back into both the game and the tournament”. The journey is naturally considered something that eventually



ends, as shown in Example (19). The conceptual metaphor of “ice hockey is a journey” sees the teams as active participants in the journey. A direct quotation from a team coach (Example 20) reinforced the assessment of the tournament as a journey to continue until its end. Future is often considered to be ahead of us, so the expression also considers movement towards future events.

Example 18. “The road to gold.” (Finns eye repeat, Canada seeks revenge)

Example 19. “but this was a roster that left a vacant spot among the forwards until the bitter end.” (Anger and bewilderment over Swedish ‘fiasco’)

Example 20. “It’s awesome to see from the group, but we gotta keep going.” (Mangiapane playing like MVP)

#### 4.2.4. Other themes

The three conceptual metaphors detailed in the previous chapters had the most appearances in the data, but the game of ice hockey was conceptualized through other source domains as well. This part will briefly discuss the other less prominent conceptual metaphor themes identified in the data. Other themes include story, food, and motor vehicle related lexicons for example. All of these were found in at least three metaphorical expressions in the text. The theme “story” in this case includes lexical choices with references to fairytales, stories, and theater, such as the phrase “sub-plots in the game” and Example (21). Food themes saw teams as “hungry” organisms with a “healthy appetite for goals” and included plenty of wordplay, as shown in Examples (22) and (23) below. Motor vehicle references consisted of vocabulary related to driving a vehicle through expressions such as “ride the momentum” and “driving the offence”, and “fast and furious”, which is additionally a pop-culture reference. Other cultural references saw lexicons such as “unorthodox” and “blessing” from the source domain of religion used in the data. In addition to these the orientational metaphor could be identified in some instances, with phrases such as “greater heights” and “rise to success” used to convey the “good is up” metaphor.

Example 21. “They’re eager to take the next step in their Cinderella run.” (North Americans too close to call)

Example 22. “the media had billed this early start in Riga the ‘English breakfast.’” (Bertschy shoots down GB)

Example 23. “After that, though, the Swiss got cooking.” (Bertschy shoots down GB)

The metaphor considers what we already know and uses it to conceptualize something else, therefore current and timely events are likely to influence the way language is used as well. The phrase “in the third period as the Finns went into lockdown mode” might have been influenced by the ongoing COVID19 pandemic and the lockdowns that took place in various nations. Plague, another illness, has left a mark in our vocabulary and conceptualizing as well, so it can be assumed the COVID19 pandemic will and has already left a mark as well.

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis had two research aims. The first aim was to find out how news values show in sports news headlines through linguistic choices and which news values are the most frequent. The second aim was to examine conceptual metaphors in sports reporting to find out the most frequent metaphorical themes and to discuss the results in relation to previous research.

The first part of the analysis considered the headlines, identifying impact and superlativeness as the news values that showed most frequently through linguistic expressions. Impact can be considered a central news value in the world of sports, because of the way sport culture functions. Competition is a vital part of sports and the outcome of the competition is significant. Superlativeness in the data was construed mostly through metaphor, intensification, and references to emotion. In addition, novelty and prominence were evident in a handful of the selected headlines. Other news values were not frequently spotted. The most surprising detail was that only one instance of negativity as a news value and two instances of positivity could be found. The reason is likely the fact that IIHF is a non-biased international organization, and a certain level of neutrality towards team performance is expected from their reports. Clear positive or negative evaluations in the articles are often given by the players and the coaches.

The second part of the analysis focusing on metaphors confirmed that “ice hockey is war” was, as expected, the most frequent conceptual metaphor and theme for lexicons used in the tournament articles. The domain of war is comparable to competition and rivalry, and therefore widely used in the context of sports reporting. The thesis identified “ice hockey is a physical experience” as another frequent conceptual metaphor in the data. Ice hockey is a physical sport, which has to do with the finding, but conceptualizing considers what we already know, and the most common physical experiences are familiar to most. “Ice hockey is a journey” was another frequent theme in the data. Since an international sports tournament has a clear beginning and an end, it is highly comparable to a journey in a metaphorical sense. Unexpectedly, not many metaphorical references sourcing animals, other fast-paced sports, or nature for metaphors could be found. Sports teams use animals in team names and comparisons between predatory animals are common. However, this thesis only found two instances with metaphorical references to animals in the articles. Nature in general was not a frequent theme in the data, against expectations. On the other hand, COVID emerged as a new theme, which shows that the surrounding world affects sports media discourse.

This thesis was an overview of the topics and limited due to the lesser amount of data. A selection including all articles published during the 2021 tournament would have given more accurate results in a general sense. The selection was made for the scope of the thesis to make data inspection manageable. The thesis does, however, showcase that even short headlines manage to construe a variety of news values through the linguistic choices, as news values are central to all types of news reporting. The thesis also supports the idea that sports discourse borrows lexicons from a wide range of source domains to construct metaphors. Future research could focus on comparing the prominence of linguistic choices construing news values in commercial and non-commercial settings in sports discourse. Research that compares the use of conceptual metaphors in sports media discourse in different languages could be considered to see if any differences can be identified.

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