

## MULTIMODAL METAPHORICAL AND METONYMIC RENDERINGS OF PAIN IN ADVERTISING: A CASE STUDY<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** Pain is a subjective and highly complex experience that is truly difficult to communicate. Figurative language is the main means by which the difficulty of communicating pain is overcome. In recent times, the verbal conceptualization of pain has been the focus of several linguistic studies. However, the representation of pain via non-linguistic modes is yet to be explored. This paper aims to describe and analyze the metaphorical and metonymic visual and multimodal renderings of pain in the advertising of painkiller pharmaceuticals. With such a purpose in mind, I examine an advertising campaign for an NSAID drug used for the relief of (chronic) joint pain. My findings suggest that through the exploitation of pictorial and multimodal metaphor and metonymy, advertisers render common conceptualizations of pain, e.g. through the SHARP OBJECT or CONFINEMENT source domains, in order to present painkiller users with recognizable inherently cultural and emotional aspects of pain. Thus, the consumer is invited to take part in the meaning creation of the advertisement.

**Keywords:** *pain, language of pain, multimodal metaphor and metonymy, advertising*

**Resumen.** El dolor es una experiencia subjetiva y compleja que resulta verdaderamente difícil de comunicar. El lenguaje figurado es el principal medio por el que se ataja la dificultad de comunicar el dolor. Recientemente, la conceptualización verbal del dolor ha sido el foco de varios estudios lingüísticos. Sin embargo, la representación del dolor a través de los modos no lingüísticos está todavía por explorar. Este trabajo tiene como objetivo describir y analizar las representaciones visuales y multimodales metafóricas y metonímicas del dolor en la publicidad de fármacos analgésicos. Con este fin en mente, se examina una campaña publicitaria para un fármaco AINE utilizado para aliviar el dolor (crónico) de las articulaciones. Los resultados sugieren que a través de la explotación de la metáfora y la metonimia visual y multimodal, los anunciantes recurren a conceptualizaciones comunes de dolor (p.ej., a través de los dominios fuente OBJETO PUNZANTE o RECLUSIÓN) con el fin de presentar a los usuarios de analgésicos con aspectos intrínsecamente culturales y emocionales reconocibles de dolor. De este modo, se invita a los consumidores a participar en la creación del significado del anuncio.

**Palabras clave:** *dolor, lenguaje del dolor, metáfora y metonimia multimodal, publicidad*

*Finally, to hinder the description of illness in literature, there is the poverty of the language. English, which can express the thoughts of Hamlet and the tragedy of Lear, has no words for the shiver and the headache. It has all grown one way. The merest schoolgirl, when she falls in love, has Shakespeare or Keats to speak her mind for her; but let a sufferer try to describe a pain in his head to a doctor and language at once runs dry.*

—Virginia Wolf, *On Being Ill* (1926)

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## 1. Introduction

As Virginia Woolf (quoted above) suggests, the language of pain is elusive: communicating and describing pain entails great difficulty. Although pain is a very familiar experience, it is a very intimate and subjective one at the same time. As is the case with other abstract experiences such as emotions, i.e. experiences, which are intangible or difficult to quantify, pain is particularly prone to metaphorization. As a matter of fact, it could be argued that the majority of pain descriptors we use are metaphorical in nature (Lascaratou 2007: 166).

In an article titled “Redefining pain”, David Biro, MD, described pain as: “an all-consuming internal experience that threatens to destroy everything except itself *and* [which] *can only be described metaphorically*” (2011: 109). A chronic pain sufferer himself, Biro emphasizes that being able to communicate pain is of vital importance. He claims that:

People in pain commonly have difficulty expressing themselves because of the experience’s disconnection from the external world on the one hand, and because of our limited knowledge of the interior world of our bodies on the other. This is why the inexpressibility is more conceptual than linguistic in origin – it is not that we do not have enough words in our vocabulary to describe pain, but rather that the content of the experience is so blurry, so hard to pin down [...]. As such, we are forced to resort to indirect methods of thinking and speaking. We think of pain in terms of more knowable (and expressible) entities [...]. (Biro 2011: 109)

Along the same lines, neurologist Geoffrey Schott states that:

Attempts to truly describe pain indeed appear as difficult as they are frustrating, yet the need to communicate is overwhelming, and I suggest that the only option available is the resort to analogy ... [w]hether by means of metaphor or simile [...] (2004: 210).

Thus, medical professionals generally agree that it is important to pay attention to how patients convey their pain, that doing so entails major problems and that figurative language is a valid (if not the only) gateway to access that communication.

Although the language of pain has been studied and debated from multiple disciplines and perspectives, the medical and psychological fields have undoubtedly led the way in its study. The McGill Pain Questionnaire, for instance, was devised in the 1970s out of the need that doctors had for a reliable scale to assess the quality and the intensity of pain (Melzack 1975). According to Deignan *et al.* (2003: 276-279), 70 out of the total 78 pain descriptors included in the questionnaire have figurative meanings that provide either metaphoric or metonymic access to what pain may feel like.

The language of pain has recently started to receive scholarly attention from a purely linguistic perspective, either within (Halliday 1998; Marmaridou 2006) or across languages (Bonch-Osmolovskaya *et al* 2009; Reznikova *et al* 2012). Metaphors for pain have been studied, for instance, from the standpoint of pain descriptions in doctor-patient interaction (Lascaratou 2007) and in general language corpora (Semino 2010). Both health professionals and linguists seem to agree on the fact that pain is verbalized by means of figurative language. Since metaphor is pervasive in human cognition and not only in language (Lakoff and Johnson 2003), it is safe to expect similar figurative conceptualizations of pain in non-verbal modes such as painting, film, photography or advertising. To my knowledge, little work has been done as regards pain conceptualizations in artistic contexts (see, for instance, Deignan *et al.* 2013: ch. 9). Despite the remarkable interest that the study of visual tropes in

advertising has generated in recent times, the conceptualization of pain by means of pictorial metaphor and metonymy in this genre is yet to be explored.

Ever since the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) and the subsequent development of the Contemporary Theory of Metaphor (CMT) (Lakoff 1993), the bulk of research devoted to metaphor and, more recently, metonymy has been particularly fruitful. Today, metaphor studies is a thriving transdisciplinary field of study relevant not only to linguistics, philosophy and psychology, but to other disciplines such as communication studies and advertising. Non-verbal manifestations of metaphor have gained attention from the 1990s onwards (Forceville 1996, 2008, 2009), and the importance of nonverbal metaphor and metonymy for CMT has been duly recognized.

In this paper I analyze the metaphorical and metonymical visual renderings of pain in analgesic drugs advertising, i.e., I examine the ways in which PAIN as a target domain is conveyed in visual and multimodal terms. With such a purpose in mind, I examine a 2008 advertising campaign for Novartis' *Voltaren Gel*, a pain relief and anti-inflammatory drug administered to alleviate chronic joint pain in conditions such as arthritis. My aim is, thus, twofold: to shed some light as regards the conceptualization of pain in advertising and to contribute to the study of the relationship between metaphor and metonymy in this genre. In the following section, I explore the language of pain, especially as regards its metonymic and metaphoric groundings. I then approach the notion of visual mono- and multimodal metaphor and metonymy before moving on to analyze a case study. I finish off with some concluding remarks.

## 2. Pain, language and metaphor

According to the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) Pain is “an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage” (1979: 250), i.e. figuratively. The IASP's definition is further elaborated in a note:

Pain is always subjective. Each individual learns the application of the word through experiences related to injury in early life [...] pain is that experience which we associate with actual or potential tissue damage. It is unquestionably a sensation in a part or parts of the body but it is also always unpleasant and therefore also an emotional experience [...] [Pain] is always a psychological state, even though we may well appreciate that pain most often has a proximate physical cause. (IASP 1979: 250)

The association still holds this as a valid definition. Pain is an essential and intimate human experience that has both a linguistic and a conceptual dimension: people do not only talk about pain, but derive theories to explain it (Lascaratou 2007: 133).

According to Semino (2010: 206) pain “in its prototypical form, occurs as a response to tissue damage, and constitutes a crucial warning mechanism whose function is to prevent harm to our bodies.” This prototypical sensation of pain is described in the specialized literature as *nociceptive pain* (i.e., pain directly resulting from physical damage). This type of pain presents relatively few problems in communication, since tissue damage is visible (Deignan *et al.* 2013: 268). *Neuropathic pain* is a less prototypical kind of pain which describes the pain resulting from problems within the nervous system (Semino 2010: 206). Common pain experiences such as migraine and backache tend to have both nociceptive and neuropathic components (Deignan *et al.* 2013: 268). This is frequent in pain that becomes chronic, such as the pain resulting from arthritis.

Pain is similar to any other abstract cultural category with no material or tangible form (e.g.: emotion; see Kövecses 2000, 2008). As an experience, pain is highly subjective and poorly delineated, which makes it difficult to conceptualize and to express satisfactorily through language (Semino 2010: 206). Thus, figurative expressions that conceptualize pain experiences abound.

Some authors have claimed that the conceptualization of pain can be considered more or less universal. Lascaratou (2007) hints at such near-universality in her account of the language of pain in Greek. In their studies on the conceptual domain of pain in a sample of over 20 languages, Bonch-Osmolovskaya *et al.* (2009) and Reznikova *et al.* (2012) claim that the types of metaphorical sources for physical pain are consistent throughout their language sample. On a similar note, Kövecses (2010) maintains that the conceptualization of emotion is universal based on the study of several different languages (including English, Chinese, Japanese, Hungarian and Wolof). Patharakorn (2010), however, offers a diverging account for the language of pain in Thai, which he claims has up to fifteen distinct terms that describe different kinds of pain (and therefore seems to rely much less on metaphorical expression).

According to Kövecses (2008: 28), “pain is conceptualized metaphorically in terms of its potential causes”. The literature on the language of pain seems to agree on the fact that we tend to describe pain experiences in terms of potential causes of physical damage such as stabs, cuts and burns (Halliday 1998, Lascaratou 2007, Semino 2010, Deignan *et al.* 2013). Expressions such as *stabbing pain* or *burning sensation* are used metaphorically when they convey pain experiences that do not directly result from physical damage (e.g., non-nociceptive pain such as migraine). This tendency to describe pain in terms of physical harm has been supported with real language data by Lascaratou (2007), who provides evidence based on doctor-patient interactions, and Semino (2010), who supports the claim with a corpus-based study. In her study, Semino analyzes the metaphors used in the description of pain experiences in English. She argues that neuropathic pain experiences are often metaphorically expressed in terms of nociceptive pain experiences, i.e., as the direct result of (external) physical harm. According to the author, most metaphorical conceptualizations of non-nociceptive pain could be captured by the source domain CAUSE OF PHYSICAL DAMAGE (2010: 208). This general (or primary) source domain would account for others such as FIRE, e.g. *burning pain*, and SHARP OBJECT, e.g. *sharp pain*, (Deignan *et al.* 2013: 271), or even TORMENTING ANIMAL (Kövecses 2008: 28).

Extant accounts of pain metaphors, however, could greatly benefit from the careful examination of multimodal media, which can provide us with a more fine-grained picture of, and shed light on, the conceptualization on pain by means of metaphor. Thus, in this paper I intend to show how pain is conceptualized in multimodal discourse in advertising.

### **3. Visual and multimodal metaphor and metonymy**

In their seminal work *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson claimed that: “if we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor” (2003: 4), and thus, that: “metaphor is primarily a matter of thought and action, and only derivatively a matter of language” (2003: 54). Accordingly, if metaphors are essential to thinking, they should not only manifest themselves in language but in every aspect of human cognition, including non-verbal modes such as visual representations (Forceville 1996; 2008). In Forceville’s opinion, non-verbal modes of metaphors should be exhaustively studied in order to arrive at a better understanding of CMT. As he himself argues: “if metaphor does not

necessarily appear in verbal guise, cognitivist scholars can hardly afford to ignore the pictorial realm” (Forceville 2002: 2).

In recent times, there has been a growing scholarly interest in nonlinguistic metaphor. Visual metaphor is among the most examined nonverbal modes of metaphor, but others, such as multimodal metaphor in advertising, film, music (several articles in Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009; Pérez-Sobrino 2014) and gesture (e.g., Cienki and Müller 2008) are attracting a great deal of attention. Charles Forceville has worked extensively on visual and multimodal metaphorical manifestations (Forceville 1996, 2002, 2008, among others). In spite of the interest that visual metaphor has attracted, no unified theory exists as of today, and it has not yet been as thoroughly studied as linguistic metaphor (Forceville 2008: 464). Visual metonymy has not attracted the same kind of attention as visual metaphor. Notwithstanding, scholars are beginning to recognize its importance (Forceville 2009; Urios-Aparisi 2009; Hidalgo-Downing and Kraljevic-Mujic 2011; Pérez-Sobrino in press). The case study I examine below points in this direction.

A pictorial or visual metaphor is a type of nonverbal metaphor in which something, the metaphor’s target domain, is *visually* represented in terms of something else, the metaphor’s source domain). Visual metaphors are *monomodal* in the sense that their target and source domains are entirely rendered in visual terms (just like verbal metaphors, which have a target and source entirely rendered in language)<sup>2</sup>. For a metaphor to be multimodal, target, source and/or mappable features must be rendered in, at least, two different modes (or sign systems) (Forceville 2008: 463). Similar definitions can be extended to metonymy in its visual and multimodal guise: either both source and target are conveyed by means of visual clues, or both domains belong to different sign systems. In the upcoming analysis I pay special attention to the ways in which mono- and multimodal metaphor and metonymy interact.

Verbal and visual (or multimodal) metaphors show important differences, as they rely (at least partially) on different mechanisms. As Green and Vervaeke (1996) claim:

Language can explicitly *predicate* a property to some subject –as when I say “Mondays are murderous”–whereas pictures cannot because the syntactic subject-predicate relation does not explicitly exist anywhere in a picture. Instead, pictures sometimes *fuse* images of things in order to combine their various properties<sup>3</sup>.

Although images can be composed to be read in a more or less linear way though, the identification of target and source domain in visual tropes is not as straightforward as with verbal tropes (Forceville 2002). Usually, target and source domain can be easily identified in verbal metaphors and metonymies thanks to linearity and grammatical rules (e.g., A is B; B for A)<sup>4</sup>. Their visual counterparts, on the other hand, do not display such linearity for disambiguating target and source domains. In order to discern them, pictorial metaphors and metonymies have to be “translated” into language to make them “experienceable” and “academically *discussible*” (Forceville 2008: 464).

It should be noted, however, that a visual metaphor can potentially have multiple interpretations. As Forceville (2008: 469) suggests, a distinction can be drawn between explicitly signaled metaphors and implicitly signaled metaphors:

In artistic contexts, a metaphor is sometimes construable even though it was not consciously intended as such by its maker. For instance, a representation may be accessed in a different cultural context, where a source domain has mappable connotations not present in the cultural

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<sup>2</sup> In both modes, however, the target does not have to be expressed explicitly.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.yorku.ca/christo/papers/fpp.htm> [accessed 29 September 2015]. This *fusion* of images is considered from a different perspective by conceptual blending theorists (see Fauconnier and Turner 2002).

<sup>4</sup> This, however, is not the only way in which verbal metaphors can be expressed.

context in which the metaphor was produced [...] In short, the construal and interpretation of such implicitly signaled metaphors depend on the interpreter, while the responsibility for the derivation of explicitly signaled metaphors is the responsibility of the maker.

Since advertising is creative expression in its own right, this observation is necessary.

#### 4. Pain and multimodal metaphor and metonymy

Visual and multimodal conceptualizations of pain have received little attention. In a 2010 lecture, Dr. David Biro, author of *The Language of Pain: Finding Words, Compassion, and Relief* (2010), suggests artistic expression as a vehicle for chronic pain sufferers to communicate pain. As an example, he mentions Frida Kahlo's self-portrait *The Broken Column* (1944). Kahlo experienced lifelong suffering after being impaled during a bus accident. Her injuries left her spine and pelvis crushed. At the time of the painting, Kahlo's health had deteriorated so much that she had to wear a corset. In the picture, the painter metaphorically "opens" her body to find the source of her pain (her broken spine, which she renders as a shattered Ionic column)<sup>5</sup>.

Projects such as The Pain Exhibit, an online visual arts exhibit from artists with chronic pain, highlight the importance that exploring and articulating pain experiences has for sufferers. Their webpage exhibits works in which artists express "some facet of the pain experience"<sup>6</sup>. Some initiatives to utilize the power of images to communicate pain have risen from the field of medicine and psychology. Such is the case of photographer and chronic pain sufferer Deborah Padfield, who collaborated with a group of patients to produce a series of photographs which aimed to convey their personal experience of chronic pain, many of which were accompanied by linguistic narrations. The work was published as *Perceptions of Pain* (Padfield 2003).<sup>7</sup>

Advertising is a multimodal genre that offers optimal conditions to study the conceptualization of pain. The context of advertising is completely different, as it is not patients who are trying to make sense of their pain, but pharmaceutical companies who are trying to convince patients<sup>8</sup> that their product is the solution to their pain.

Visual and multimodal metaphors and metonymies play a crucial role in advertising (Forceville 1996). Advertisements have a well-known fundamental aim: to sell (or to promote) products<sup>9</sup>. In order to do so, a number of attributes of a product or service are highlighted to attract and persuade potential buyers into consuming the advertised product. Metaphor and metonymy are the most widespread devices whereby such a purpose is achieved. Through the use of these figures, the product inherits the qualities and emotional values assigned to the image. In fact, advertising seems to be moving towards a heavier reliance on the visual component than on the linguistic text. Forceville (1996: 67) claims that there are at least two well-founded reasons for focusing on advertising when studying pictorial metaphors: *intentionality*, as advertising represents a 'text' genre that is motivated by clear intentions, and *pervasiveness*, as contemporary advertising contains many metaphors.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/podcasts/2010/03/16/in-pain-language/> [accessed 29 September 2015].

<sup>6</sup> <http://painexhibit.org/> [accessed 30 September 2015].

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Deignan *et al.* (2013: 279-298) for an analysis of the multimodal figurative elements of some of the artwork and texts included in Padfield's work.

<sup>8</sup> It must be duly noted that pharmaceutical companies also direct advertising at doctors, albeit through different channels.

<sup>9</sup> A secondary though at times primary goal of advertising is that of raising brand awareness.

Despite the interest that metaphor in advertising has generated, its role in the advertising of pharmaceuticals and health products has hardly been dealt with. In a recent article on pharmaceutical advertising, Delbaere (2013: 23) analyzes some of most common metaphors used to convey several target domains including MEDICINE, BODY, ILLNESS or DRUGS. Her analysis, however, does not account for PAIN. Given the lack of accounts for pain in visual and multimodal discourse, I have attempted to redress the dearth of analyses on this topic in advertising discourse.

## 5. Case study: *Voltaren Gel* ad campaign

### 5.1. Materials



Image 1: Outdoor ad Knives, released April 2008.

The analysis reported here is part of a broader ongoing study which aims to explore the visual and multimodal figurative renderings of pain in a corpus of pharmaceutical advertisements. For the present paper, I have examined the 2008 Novartis 2008 advertising campaign for *Voltaren Gel*, a brand of diclofenac, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) administered topically to reduce inflammation and as an analgesic to relief pain in (chronic) joint conditions such as arthritis<sup>10</sup>. The campaign was developed by Saatchi and Saatchi in Switzerland and the Netherlands. The four ads that comprise it were released between April and June, both as print ads (*Razors*, *Shattered glass* and *Pins*) and as outdoor ads (*Knives*). Despite the fact that the ad campaign was originally commissioned for the Netherlands, the figurative depiction of pain in these ads can be equally construed from the perspective of speakers of languages other than Dutch. In fact, the slogan is expressed in English. This specific campaign is particularly relevant to the aim of this study, as all its ads have PAIN as their main theme<sup>11</sup>.

### 5.2. Analysis

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.voltarengel.com/> [accessed 20 July 2015].

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly enough, Saatchi and Saatchi have exploited the concept of PAIN in other pharmaceutical advertising campaigns. For instance, a 2008 Belgian campaign for Novartis' *Mebucaine*, a sore throat medicine, featured images of food treats such as cake or pizza made up of shattered glass pieces accompanied by the slogan "When swelling hurts". See: [http://adsoftheworld.com/media/print/mebucaine\\_cake](http://adsoftheworld.com/media/print/mebucaine_cake) [accessed 15 January 2016].

This study centers on the metaphorical and metonymical renderings of pain in the Novartis advertisements (images 1-4)<sup>12</sup>. After an overall analysis of the metaphorical and metonymical features shared by all the advertisements, I will tackle each ad individually to underscore individual traits.

As noted above, pictorial metaphor can potentially have multiple interpretations. However, unlike artistic manifestations, advertising aims to convey the best possible image of a product (in order to persuade potential consumers). Thus, every element in an ad can be considered meaningful. Given the costs involved in advertising campaigns, every single detail in a particular ad is deliberately designed with conscious and calculated intentions—regardless of the subsidiary construals the interpreter may derive.

The four advertisements analyzed (images 1-4) share a core common structure. They all deliver a straightforward message: using *Voltaren Gel* liberates its user from (chronic) pain. In each of the ads a silhouette, metonymically standing for a person, is surrounded and defined by countless sharp objects—namely knives, pins, razors or shattered glass—that are capable of causing physical harm. Despite the profusion of sharp objects, the silhouette is depicted in an upright position, since using *Voltaren Gel*, as indicated by the product's image, the slogan “The joy of movement” and the tagline “What pain?”, located in the corner, liberates it from pain. The advertisement's meaning is retrievable from an intricate complex of interacting metaphors and metonymies, operating both within the visual and multimodal spaces. The knives, razors, pins and glass pieces elicit the SHARP OBJECT source domain which accounts for the figurative conceptualization of pain in the ads. As mentioned before, (POTENTIAL) CAUSES OF PHYSICAL HARM functions as one of the main source domains in the conceptualization of complex pain experiences throughout languages.

In the ads, the source domain SHARP OBJECT is readily accessible via the images, while the target domain PAIN has to be either inferred from the visual clue given by the image of the painkiller gel tube in the corner or retrieved from the verbal information in the tagline (“What pain?”). As such, the metaphor PAIN IS A SHARP OBJECT can be interpreted either in pictorial or multimodal terms. However, the verbal clues provided by both the slogan and the tagline contextualize the metaphor and disambiguate its interpretation. Thus, multimodality in these ads plays an important role in helping the interpreter access the metaphorical mappings univocally, as intended by the creator.

Several authors have pointed out that the source domain CAUSES OF PHYSICAL DAMAGE, amongst which we find SHARP OBJECTS, is the most common in the linguistic description of pain experiences (Lascaratou 2007; Kövecses 2008; Semino 2010; Deignan *et al.* 2013: ch. 9). The metaphorical expressions associated to this broad source domain have a strong basis in metonymy, as they rely on common cause-effect associations for the experience of nociceptive pain (Semino 2010: 208). In her analysis of Greek pain expressions, Lascaratou (2007: 165) noted that:

it appears that the general metonymic relationship INSTRUMENT/MEANS FOR ACTION/EVENT forms the metonymic basis of the causes of pain: a variety of instruments or forces [...] stand for different types of pain-inducing tissue damage that they may produce. Hence, the metonymic vehicle (the instrument/means/force whereby mental access to the tissue damage is provided) subsequently becomes the source domain for the metaphorical conceptualization of the painful experience [...], e.g. the understanding of the experience of pain as one with (i.e. *caused by*) a sharp object.

Thus, pain can be conceptualized in terms of metonymically-derived physical causes, regardless of its origin—whether nociceptive or non-nociceptive. Such conceptualization

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.coloribus.com> [accessed 20 July 2015].



gives rise to the (NON-NOCICEPTIVE) PAIN IS (POTENTIAL) CAUSE OF PHYSICAL HARM metaphor. Although my findings in multimodal conceptualizations of pain are consistent with those of Lascaratou (2007) and Semino (2010) as regards the metonymic grounding of metaphor, some differences arise. The multimodal conceptualization under scrutiny will help in the elucidation of this idea. The metaphor's source domain, SHARP OBJECT, has underlying metonymic motivations which are made readily accessible in the ads by the visual depiction of these sharp objects. Table 1 reflects these metonymies.

Metonymy type	Metonymy
1 INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION	KNIFE FOR STABBING RAZOR BLADE FOR CUTTING PIN FOR PRICKING (SHATTERED GLASS FOR CUTTING)
2 ACTION FOR RESULT or CAUSE FOR EFFECT	STABBING/CUTTING/PRICKING FOR PAIN STABBING/CUTTING/PRICKING FOR PAIN

Table 1: Underlying metonymies.

In each of the ads an instrument (namely a sharp object) stands for the action in which it is used (INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION). Moreover, each of these actions stands for its result (ACTION FOR RESULT; e.g., stabbing results in pain). In other terms, the cause (e.g., a stab wound caused by a knife) stands for the effect (the resulting pain) (CAUSE FOR EFFECT).<sup>13</sup> These metonymies are not isolated: they interact by means of the metonymic complex INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION FOR RESULT. Figure 1 represents this complex schematically.

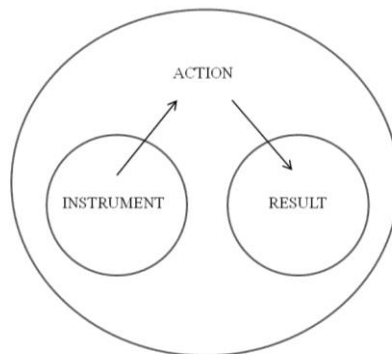


Figure 1: Metonymic complex (source expansion plus source reduction).

This metonymic complex would involve (1) a source-in-target metonymy with domain expansion whereby KNIFE stands for STABBING (i.e., INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION) and (2) a target-in-source metonymy with domain reduction whereby STABBING stands for PAIN (i.e., ACTION FOR RESULT)<sup>14</sup> (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza and Perez 2001; Ruiz de Mendoza and Peña 2008; Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera-Masegosa 2011).

The metonymic basis of the conceptualization of the causes of pain proves fundamental for an adequate interpretation of the phenomenon. Apparently, this metonymic complex would suffice to account for the figurative conceptualization of pain. However, *Voltaren Gel* is not administered against nociceptive pain, i.e. the pain derived from external open injuries

<sup>13</sup> The cause-for-effect metonymic relationship established here is not, according to Kövecses, the most common (“the metonymic relationship effect-for-cause seems to be more widespread” [2010, p. 182]).

<sup>14</sup> According to Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez (2001: 327), “source-in-target metonymies [...] involve domain expansion (i.e. by mentioning part of a domain we invoke it fully), while target-in-source metonymies involve conceptual reduction and the consequent highlighting of part of a domain”.

(potentially caused by sharp objects). It is used in the treatment of non-nociceptive pain, i.e., pain other than that which results from direct external physical aggression. Thus, the ads present us with a metonymically-derived metaphorical representation of complex pain experiences in which non-nociceptive pain is understood in terms of nociceptive pain. In other words, a complex (internal) pain experience such as (chronic) joint pain, which usually have both nociceptive and neuropathic component, is rendered as pain resulting from (external) tissue damage, inflicted by means of a sharp object. As pain in its most prototypical manifestation is nociceptive pain, the metaphors used to describe more complex pain sensations resort to the more basic pain experience. Thus, pain is conceptualized *via* potentially dangerous instruments that can harm and hence cause pain. i.e., PAIN IS A (POTENTIAL) CAUSE OF PHYSICAL HARM.

Let's now turn our attention to the depiction of the potential consumer and the way in which advertisers exploit consumer empowerment (cf. Rubin 2001; Gilbody et al. 2004; Chananie 2005; Donohue et al. 2007; Jill and Ronald 2008; Atherly and Rubin 2009). In these ads, advertisers build on the idea of empowerment (brought about by the overcoming of pain) through visual metaphor and metonymy. The person, a (chronic) pain sufferer, is represented by means of the metonymy SILHOUETTE FOR PERSON. The silhouettes in the ads are outlined by the sharp objects which inflict harm and, consequently, pain. However, their postures reveal carefreeness and joyfulness: they are not restrained by pain. On the contrary, they are depicted practicing acrobatic movements. These silhouettes seem to be pointing or moving upwards (they are portrayed either jumping or lifting their arms). This gives rise to another well-known conceptual metaphor: GOOD IS UP, from which we may derive others such as HEALTH IS UP (as opposed to ILLNESS IS DOWN). Other source domains for health such as LIGHT or BRIGHTNESS can also be inferred from the visual silence (the empty silhouettes). The silhouettes reflect movement, as if they were escaping freely and effortlessly the potential pain inflicting objects. Thus, OVERCOMING PAIN IS MOVING FORWARD or more generally, SUCCEEDING IS MOVING FORWARD (Goatly 2007: 366). This liberation from the pain is also indicated by the empty silhouette; the only place within the ads that is not covered with the sharp objects.

The ad seems to be saying that pain does not hold *Voltaren* users back. Thanks to *Voltaren*, they can lead normal and even extraordinary lives. The silhouettes are portrayed performing acrobatic movements in spite of the fact that the product's target audience—people who suffer from chronic joint conditions—covers an older age bracket. The pain sufferer is thus empowered by this image: they will be able to achieve outstanding deeds.

The metaphor CONTROL IS UP (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 18) is coherent with the other UP metaphors and also accounts for the idea of empowerment that the publicists try to get across. Using *Voltaren* allows users to take control of their pain and thus of their own lives. In language, CONFINEMENT and IMPRISONMENT are common source domains for pain, which is sometimes depicted as PAIN IS CAPTOR/PRISON (Deignan *et al.* 2013: 272). The fact that the silhouettes emerge amid the (POTENTIAL) CAUSES OF PHYSICAL HARM entail that they are *breaking free* of their *captor*, i.e. pain.

Another salient feature which adds to the global effect of the ads is the contraposition of visual silences, represented by the silhouettes, and the *horror vacui* present in the rest of the composition, filled with countless sharp objects. This multiplicity of sharp objects accounts for a hyperbolic use of metaphor: the pain is excruciating. However, *Voltaren* users are able to escape it and regain control; they are able to throw off the yoke of pain and embrace freedom thanks to the product. Such exaggeration is a case of visual hyperbole. Hyperbole, which has been defined as “a figurative expression that involves intentional, exaggerated statements (visual or verbal) [...] that provide emphasis, heightens effect, or elicit strong impressions or responses” (Callister and Stern 2007: 2), plays an undoubtedly

pivotal role in advertising. In this ad campaign hyperbole holds a very special place not only for its aesthetic result but for the complex relationship it establishes with other figures (namely metaphor and metonymy).

In what follows, I comment on the individual traits that set each of the ads apart. Pain in Image 1, *Knives*, is conceptualized as PAIN IS A KNIFE or PAIN IS A STAB (some of the knives portrayed are plunged into the background). This conceptualization of pain has metaphorical realizations in language as well. Linguistic expressions in English such as *stabbing pain* or *sharp pain* or Dutch *stekende pijn* can be traced back to this conceptual metaphor. Such expressions function metonymically when they describe pain that results directly from physical damage and metaphorically when no such damage is involved (Semino 2010: 205). Similar such expressions abound in countless other languages such as Greek *perna enas ponos... ke me sfazi* ('a pain passes ... and slaughters me') (Lascaratou 2007: 164), German *einen stechenden Schmerz fühlen* ('to feel a stabbing pain') or Spanish *tener un dolor penetrante* ('to have a penetrating pain').



Image 2: Print ad Razors released May 2008.

The metaphorical grounding for Image 2, *Razors*, is very similar to that of Image 1: PAIN IS A RAZOR (CUT). Razors are extremely sharp objects that can cause serious injuries resulting in painful experiences. Thus, once again, chronic pain is conceptualized by means of (external) tissue damage. The silhouette in this ad is portrayed practicing flares (an acrobatic element performed by male gymnasts). Even though the silhouette's arms are not pointing up vertically, its leg is pointing straight upward, so the metaphor HEALTH IS UP can still be inferred. The contrast between the razorblades, and all the terrible connotations they imply, and the acrobat silhouette is especially noteworthy.

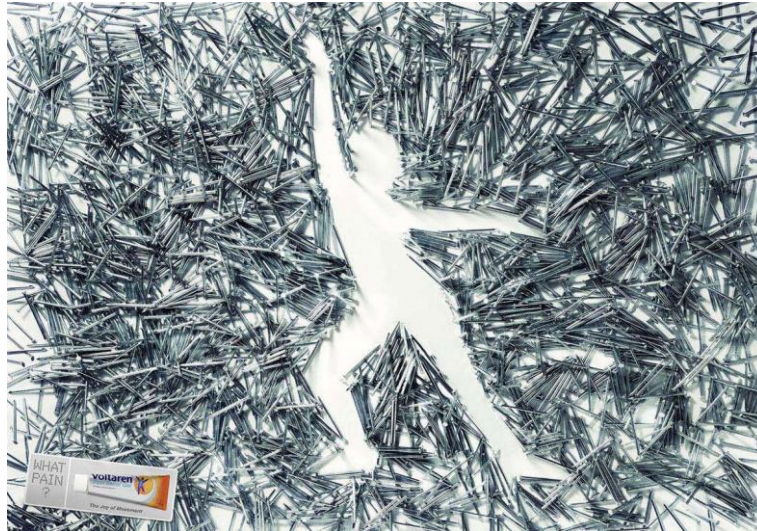


Image 3: Print ad Pins released June 2008.

*Pins* (Image 3) depicts the metaphors PAIN IS A PIN/NAIL OR PAIN IS A STING/PRICK(LE)/ (TINGLE). The potential harm (and subsequent pain sensation) that might be inflicted with a pin or a nail is theoretically less dangerous than that produced by a knife or a razorblade. This conceptualization of pain as pins, needles or nails also has metaphorical realizations in language. In English, the metaphorical expression *pins and needles* is commonly used to describe paresthesia, a sensation of tingling, pricking or numbness very common in patients suffering from conditions such as arthritis or carpal tunnel syndrome. In Spanish, expressions such as *dolor punzante*, *dolor agudo* or (*sentir*) *un pinchazo* conceptualize pain in terms of piercing, pricking or stinging (PAIN IS A STING/A PRICK, PAIN IS A[N] AWL/PIN/NEEDLE).<sup>15</sup>



Image 4: Print ad Glass released May 2008.

The metonymic grounding INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION in the metaphor PAIN IS SHATTERED GLASS (Image 4) is not as clear-cut as in the previous instances of the metaphor PAIN IS A SHARP OBJECT: shattered glass is not a tool *per se*<sup>16</sup>. However, it is sharp and hence can harm

<sup>15</sup> However, as one reviewer notes, while *pins and needles* is used to describe a tingling sensation, the Spanish expressions refer to more intense pain experiences.

<sup>16</sup> Arguably, in all four ads, one does not necessarily need to posit the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. It could also be suggested that the sharp objects are stationary and the person can move freely in the middle of them because the gel makes them immune to their cuts.

and cause pain (SHATTERED GLASS FOR CUTTING FOR PAIN, PAIN IS SHATTERED GLASS). The source domain here is consistent with the more general (POSSIBLE) CAUSES OF PHYSICAL HARM.

Furthermore, it could be argued that Image 4 presents us with a new metaphor: ARTHRITIC JOINTS ARE SHATTERED GLASS. Arthritis is a degenerative condition that deteriorates the joints. With over 100 different types, arthritis can be described as the inflammation of the joints, which results in pain, swelling, stiffness, and limited movement. Some forms of arthritis even cause irreversible damage to the joints. The condition involves the breakdown of cartilage, which normally protects the joints allowing for smooth movement. Cartilage also absorbs shocks when pressure is placed on the joint. Without the usual amount of cartilage, the bones rub together, causing pain, swelling (inflammation), and stiffness<sup>17</sup>. The metaphor, thus, visually renders arthritic joint deterioration in terms of shattered glass. The fact that all of the visual source domains, except for SHATTERED GLASS, are made of metal, a hard and solid material, also evokes characteristic properties of arthritic joints, which become stiff and lack flexibility. Moreover, SHATTERED GLASS as a source domain could be related to the BRITTLE OBJECT metaphor (THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT), which “allows us to talk only about psychological strength” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 28). In this context, it could be understood as the psychological strain that chronic pain sufferers have to endure, as it has just been mentioned in the case of *Razors*.

## 6. Concluding remarks

In this paper I have analyzed the multimodal metaphors and metonymies employed the rendition of pain in an analgesic drugs advertising campaign. Previous studies on pharmaceutical advertising have explored the ways in which these tropes are used to conceptualize illness, medicine or the body (cf. Delbaere 2013). Notwithstanding, the concept of pain had yet to be explored. In this specific campaign, pain was conceptualized primarily as the metonymically grounded metaphor PAIN IS A SHARP OBJECT. The source domain SHARP OBJECT coincides with what Semino (2010: 209) considers the dominant domain for the figurative description of pain experiences, namely CAUSES OF PHYSICAL DAMAGE.

As has been mentioned, the fundamental goal of advertising is to highlight a number of the product's attributes so that potential consumers purchase the product. Through the exploitation of metaphor and metonymy, advertisers visually render common conceptualizations of pain, which, in most cases, have corresponding verbal expressions, in order to present patients of arthritis and other chronic joint conditions with familiar and inherently cultural and emotional values of pain. Thus, the consumer is invited to take part in the meaning creation of the advertisement. Furthermore, the ads present chronic pain sufferers with a 'solution' to their pain, as the pain-free silhouettes depict. In this way, the conceptualization of the product's aim, to suppress pain, is an active process in which not only the advertiser, through the slogan, but also the consumer, through the silhouette, is involved. The notion of empowerment is actively exploited in the campaign. Using the advertised product means taking control of pain and thus taking charge of the situation: the only way to manage pain, it seems, is to fight its most inward and isolating aspects, which the product can help users achieve.

As has been shown, metonymy and metaphor interact in an elaborate way to give rise to an equally complex conceptualization of pain. The intricate interaction between both tropes

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0002223/> [accessed 29 June 2015].

creates a complex yet accessible conceptual gateway to the interpretation of pain experiences. As some have claimed, multimodal metaphor and metonymy in advertising tend to have a source domain rendered in images and a target domain rendered verbally (Hidalgo-Downing and Kraljevic-Mujic 2011: 175-176). Such was the case in this specific campaign, where the target domain (PAIN) could be accessed verbally (but also visually or through inference) while the source domain (SHARP OBJECT) had to be accessed visually. Although the verbal cue might not be necessary, it aids in the disambiguation of the metaphor PAIN IS A SHARP OBJECT. However, pragmatic inference from visual clues might suffice to retrieve the metaphor. After all, partial omission of meaning is a characteristic feature of advertising discourse (Urios-Aparisi 2009: 97).

In the campaign under study, a conventional metaphor for the conceptualization of pain was exploited in a creative way. The publicists deliberately chose to use this metaphor (and not a different one) to get their message across. This presents us with a deliberate use of metaphor in the sense of Steen (2008: 223):

Deliberate metaphors are those cross-domain mappings that involve the express use, in production and/or reception, of another domain as a source domain for re-viewing the target domain. Deliberate metaphor is a relatively conscious discourse strategy that aims to elicit particular rhetorical effects. This is what distinguishes deliberate metaphor from all nondeliberate metaphor.

Despite the fact that the campaign's target audience was Dutch, the conceptualizations of pain illustrated in the ads have proven to be equally admissible in English: as some have claimed, the conceptualization of pain seems to be at least partially universal. Could these ads, however, be displayed anywhere? It is plausible that some cultures might not tolerate them for being too aggressive or tasteless. Visual hyperbole plays a very important role in this sense (e.g., the connotations of suicide elicited by the razorblades).

Although this paper has dealt with a very concrete case study, it would be necessary to contrast it with a larger corpus of drug-related ads in order to further characterize the multimodal conceptualization of pain in advertising. Nonetheless, I hope my analysis has shed some light on the matter. The conceptualization of pain *via* visual and multimodal metaphor and metonymy in advertising as well as in art should be taken into consideration if we wish to arrive at a more comprehensive account of the conceptual dimension of pain.

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