

# Figurative Language in Selected Marvel Cinematic Universe Films

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**Ivona Drobac**

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Figurative Language in Selected *Marvel Cinematic Universe* Films

Diplomski rad

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Zadar, 2024.



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Zadar, 20. rujna 2024.

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## 1. Introduction

Being an organised system of symbols and sounds, language is a complex and dynamic means of human communication, expression, as well as mutual comprehension in a variety of situations or contexts. It can be spoken, written, or gestured and is mostly used to convey thoughts, information, and emotions. Additionally, for the purpose of this thesis, it is important to introduce the two opposing terms, i.e., *literal* and *figurative*. Bredin (1992) states that in everyday English they are seen as opposites and that this “is an opposition with very ancient roots” (p. 69). He also claims that their antonymy is firmly rooted in our cognitive history, which might be the reason there was no extensive research on this topic in the past. Furthermore, according to McArthur and McArthur (1992), the term *literal* or “plain and conventional usage” is contrasted with *figurative* or “ornamental usage” (p. 402). Due to this, figurative language can be explained as the use of various techniques, i.e., figures of speech which are perceived as “embellishments that deviate from the ‘ordinary’ uses of language” and illustrate the contrast further because they are thought to enhance the effect of either written or spoken thoughts and ideas (McArthur & McArthur 1992, p. 402). However, as time passes, there has been an increase in research on the topic and, although several classifications have been introduced (Roberts & Kreuz, 1994; Griffiths, 2006; Colston, 2015; etc.), it appears that the distinction between figurative and non-figurative is not always that apparent (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014), which will be discussed in the sections that follow.

Language may also be realised via various types of mass media, which might provide a wide range of sources and material for analysis. The Internet, print, and broadcast denote only a few examples of the most popular forms of media but, throughout this study, we will examine film. Namely, not only is it among the popular forms of media, but it also denotes a form of art through which messages and meanings might be transferred. Film, also referred to as “movie” or “motion picture,” is “a recording of moving images that tells a story and that people watch

on a screen or television” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Moreover, as claimed by Eisenstein (1957), it is “a form of sensual and imagist thought processes,” in which an abstract idea is communicated through “concrete elements,” and, subsequently, the meaning is interpreted by “the perceiver” (as cited in Ivanov, 1986-87, p. 174). Besides regarding it as a system of its own and having “fundamental units” such as “shots, edits, sequences,” etc., as well as it being open to many different forms and uses (Villarejo, 2007, p. 24-25), we will follow the previously introduced notion that it might also use written or spoken language in various ways to communicate meanings, and figurative language to make the utterances more diverse and appealing.

To narrow the scope of the study, a selection of Marvel Cinematic Universe films will be analysed. The American film franchise, Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), denotes “the most financially successful film series ever produced” (McSweeney, 2018, p. 1). It is an interlinked world of not only superhero comics, but also films, series, video games, or as Burke (2018, p. 32) states, “one of the first successful examples of transmedia storytelling”. Within the same world, the associations are formed by merging narratives, locations, and characters while keeping in mind the whole storyline of the set universe.

The purpose of this master’s thesis is to present an overview of underlying theoretical perspectives and trends within the research of figurative language, as well as to study whether and to what extent figurative language is used in our everyday lives, that is in the life around us, based on examples from a selection of Marvel films. To achieve this, the paper is divided into four sections. Following the introduction to the topic, the second section is subdivided into two segments. Firstly, the relevant literature on the concept of figurative language is presented alongside its categorizations by prominent scholars in the field. Secondly, the theoretical framework of film studies and film is outlined, focusing more on its development and production in order to establish a connection with the main idea of the paper. Moreover, a brief

explanation of Marvel films is included within the same segment. This is followed by an analysis section in which the purpose of this paper will be outlined, and the research methodology explained, as well as the selection of the films introduced and briefly described. The subsequent part of this section will include the findings of the research in the form of examples drawn from the chosen films, explained and categorized accordingly, followed by a discussion as the final subsection. Finally, the thesis conclusion will underline the important aspects and provide concluding comments on the topic.

## **2. Literature and key concepts review**

The primary objective of this section is to provide an overview of the essential theoretical framework concerning figurative language, film studies and film, as well as MCU, which are necessary to ensure a clear comprehension of the paper. It includes the relevant explanations and corresponding examples where necessary. The section is divided into two parts that introduce the literature review that should serve as a foundation for further sections.

### **2.1. Figurative language**

Language, as mentioned above, is a structured means used by people not only to introduce themselves and communicate with others, but also to express various meanings in the best way possible. The empirical and methodical study that investigates language and its structure is called *linguistics* (McArthur & McArthur, 1992, pp. 571, 608). In addition, when it comes to the study of meaning of language there are two further disciplines that should be mentioned. First of all, *semantics* which is the “study of ‘toolkit’ for meaning,” i.e., it is concerned with topics such as presupposition and implication, sense and reference, sense relations and more (Griffiths, 2006, p. 1; McArthur & McArthur, 1992, p. 914). Secondly, there is *pragmatics*, which denotes a branch that considers the use of the mentioned “tools” in purposeful conversations, that is which studies what a speaker intends to say and what a listener



infers based on factors such as the situational setting, the preceding dialogue, etc. (Griffiths, 2006, p. 1; McArthur & McArthur, 1992, p. 800). Moreover, Griffiths (2006) suggests that if we wish to understand “how figurative uses of language work” we need to combine the two (p. 79).

Figurative language has been researched across various perspectives and by many scholars such as linguists, psychologists, rhetoricians etc. A large number of figurative language studies have been concentrated on understanding rather than creating different figures, and this led to the emergence of numerous significant findings (Roberts & Kreuz, 1994, p. 159). An example of such an outcome would be the recurring indications that, when appropriate context is supplied, understanding figurative language takes no longer than understanding literal expressions (Hoffman & Kemper, 1987, as cited in Roberts & Kreuz, 1994, p. 159). As a result of this, some scholars have dismissed the *literal* and *figurative* division as having insignificant psychological importance, and Gibbs (1982, 1984, 1989) even advised scholars to abandon the debate over “what is and is not” *literal* but to instead use “an approach based on speech act theory” (as cited in Roberts & Kreuz, 1994, p. 159). In accordance with the speech act theory, Allen and Perrault (1986) claim that “discourse participants comprehend utterances when they recognize the underlying goals and intentions of the other participants” (as cited in Roberts & Kreuz, 1994, p. 159). Roberts and Kreuz (1994) conclude that “understanding when and why an utterance is produced” is essential to understand what it signifies (p. 159).

Nevertheless, there are scholars who undertake the complicated assignment of this division and, before attempting to define figurative language, we should also address this issue, i.e., present the distinction between *literal* and *figurative* use of language. Correspondingly, Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2022) proposed the criteria for distinguishing “figurativeness” from different types of “non-figurativeness.” They regard the established difference between “the *literal*, *non-literal* (but *non-figurative*) and *figurative*” lexical unit usage. To explain, they

refer to Dirven's (2002) illustration of the trichotomy using the adjective "sweet" in "sweet apple" denoting the literal use; in "sweet water" meaning "non-salty water" and referring to the non-literal but non-figurative use; and in "sweet child" as the figurative usage, while also highlighting his view that "there are degrees in figurativeness" (as cited in Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2022, p. 11). Despite this, Dancygier and Sweetser (2014, p. 3) affirm the overall evaluations contain "a circular reasoning loop," which means that the *figurative* usage is either thought to be unique or creative, or the regular one is thought to be *non-figurative*. They, along with some other scholars, argue that the discussion was focused more on metaphor than other forms (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014; Bredin, 1992; Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2022).

In contrast, Dirven (2002) examines synaesthesia, metonymy, and metaphor as the three "cognitive strategies" for *non-literal* and *figurative* meaning production. Regarding the parts of speech, synaesthesia is somewhat expected to mostly occur with adjectives, metonymy with nouns, and metaphor with all of them (Dirven, 2002, as cited in Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2022, p. 11). The same scholar adds that metonymy and synaesthesia might result in *non-literal* and *non-figurative* expansions and uses the word 'heart' – "the central blood-pumping organ in the animal or human body" – to illustrate this (Dirven, 2002, as cited in Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2022, p. 11). Namely, all utterances in which it designates "seat of emotions, mind" or "mental faculties," e.g., "from the bottom of my heart" are seen as *non-literal* and *non-figurative* simultaneously. The "non-figurativeness" here stems from the historical perception of heart as the actual location of "life, mind, memory, etc.," which Western cultures associate more generally with the brain today (Dirven, 2002, as cited in Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2022, pp. 11-12). Dirven (2002) also believes the word's *figurative* use emerges when it starts representing particular emotions, such as "My heart sank into my shoes", where heart signifies "courage" (as cited in Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2022, p. 12). He states that using language figuratively, in all of its versions, is thus nothing more than the result of simultaneous mental

processes of the sense organs in synaesthesia, association in metonymy, and likeness in metaphor (Dirven, 2002, as cited in Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2022, p. 12). Nevertheless, he argues that the tension among the two aspects is formed on a different interplay of difference and resemblance in all of them and concludes that the greater the disparity between them, the greater the extent of "figurativity" (Dirven, 2002, as cited in Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2022, p. 12). Additionally, Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen stress the importance of the degree of conceptual difference between *literal* and *non-literal* interpretation since the *non-literal* might not be seen as *figurative* if the difference is minimal (2022, p. 12).

Although there are opposing views and extensive explanations on the distinction, the common perspective for the use of language in *non-literal* ways is referred to as *figurative*. To explain, if words are used in a *literal* way, they are thought to take on their inherent meaning regardless of the context or grammatical function. It remains unaltered by the circumstances around it and this intended meaning aligns perfectly to that of individual words. On the other hand, *figurative* way of using words denotes the use of expressions which convey meanings beyond their literal sense so as to produce an emotion, idea, or a topic, in a unique way as well as to make the message more fascinating or outstanding. Historically, *figurative* use was seen as "a special human trait, requiring different cognitive and linguistic skills than those employed in ordinary life" (Gibbs, 1994, p. 1). However, it is recently regarded as omnipresent and significant in language and thought and, consequently, figurative meaning occurs in both written and spoken language; it constitutes a part of underlying language structure, which implies it is not only limited to poetry or specific languages (Colston, 2015; Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014; Katz et al., 1998). Furthermore, Mezo (1999) believes the reader is the one who should pause and consider the two meanings, i.e., *figurative* and *literal*, before merging them into a "distinct style of reading", which is both a *literal* and *non-literal* one at the same time. This type of language use draws the attention to the similarities and differences between

items in contrast, as well as “to the cultural associations and interactions of words in substitutions, and to the processes of discovering truth and validity in exaggerations” (Mezo, 1999, p. III).

As was outlined in the introduction, figurative language denotes the “language in which figures of speech such as metaphors and similes freely occur” (McArthur & McArthur, 1992, p. 402). In addition, the figures of speech are considered to be the “embellishments” whose “intended meaning” differs from the literal meanings of the used words, phrases, and sentences (McArthur & McArthur, 1992, p. 402; Glucksberg, 2001, p. V). It can be used not only to enrich literature, but also to improve the impact of written or spoken thoughts and ideas. Paul (1970) claims that “speaking figuratively is a sort of flowery way of not saying just what you mean” and that it is “quite natural” in poetry but supposedly missing from some other contexts (p. 225). Furthermore, Mezo (1999) states that the written and oral usages of figurative language differ significantly. He points out John Arthos’ view that “[figures of speech] are traditionally considered to be words and expressions (...) serving primarily as ornament and making their appeal through novelty” (Mezo, 1999, p. II). He further explains that the concept of regarding figurative utterances as an embellishment has a long history and is still present; however, perspectives have somewhat shifted, and it became valued in the interpretation of poetry (Mezo, 1999, p. III). Moreover, he suggests that the prevalent figures of speech employed within writing or “the rhetorical classes of comparison, substitution, and exaggeration” are not utilized for ornamentation any more than any other part of the language (Mezo, 1999, p. III). Apart from this he believes that anything that is written necessitates the intentional and engaged involvement, but only writing that contains the figures of speech combines both “the literal and the non-literal” (Mezo, 1999, p. IV).

According to Roberts and Kreuz (1994), figurative language is “not uncommon or exclusively poetic” but “a ubiquitous part of spoken and written discourse” (p. 159). However,

it is not always intelligible and unambiguous. They exemplify this through a metaphorically expressed sentence “My aunt is an elephant”, stating that a person who utters it might be alluding to “girth, length of nose, or fondness for peanuts” (Roberts & Kreuz, 1994, p. 159). They also highlight Grice’s (1975; 1978) hypothesis that “if discourse participants cooperate by expressing themselves as clearly, concisely, and completely as possible” then “potentially ambiguous figurative language” ought to achieve particular communicative goals better than literal language (as cited in Roberts & Kreuz, 1994, p. 159). In other words, the advantages of employing figurative language must exceed the risks of being misinterpreted. Colston (2015) adheres to this view, stating that figurative language is used by people all the time both in writing and speech (p. 3). Based on his view, we mostly “comprehend it on the fly with little difficulty”; however, we might miss something, and confusion might occur at times (Colston, 2015, p. 3). Additionally, there are times when figurative expressions are understood but are interpreted differently than the speaker or writer’s initial intention. On the other hand, there are also situations when people, for example, if used in poetry, disregard it possibly because they “see it for what it is and uncaringly (or even without noticing) continue on to other things” (Colston, 2015, p. 3).

When it comes to figurative language classifications, it is again interesting to see certain discrepancies among various authors. Namely, some scholars mention and focus on several types of figurative language, some mention a few but only observe certain ones, and some even introduce further categorizations. Roberts and Kreuz, for example, confirmed that this is a challenging task by pointing out Honeck’s (1986) view that “clear-cut distinctions concerning figurative utterances are difficult” (Roberts & Kreuz, 1994, p. 159). They also claim there are several possible ways of categorizing figures of speech and highlight that there is a guide, precisely Lanham’s (1991), that includes hundreds of them but also many which are not non-literal. Such an example is “apodioxis” or indignant rejection of an argument as incorrect

(Roberts & Kreuz, 1994, p. 159). In the view of Roberts and Kreuz (1994), psychological research gave rise to eight apparent types of non-literal language, which are: hyperbole, idiom, indirect request, irony, understatement, metaphor, rhetorical question, and simile (p. 159). Moreover, they believe these eight figures appear to make the basic categories of non-literal language and that a number of literary scholars acknowledged and considered them, “regardless of their categorization schemes” (Roberts & Kreuz, 1994, p. 159). Following this, and without a special “categorization scheme”, Griffiths (2006) observes irony, metonymy, metaphor, and simile. He also mentions idioms, pointing out the distinction made by Grant and Bauer (2004) that they must be learned, while figures of speech may be understood in accordance with “general cognitive principles” (Griffiths, 2006, p. 81). Dancygier and Sweetser (2014) focus on metaphor, metonymy, and irony, but also mention simile, understatement, sarcasm, personification, hyperbole, synesthesia, and oxymoron. Alongside proverb and oxymora, forms like metaphor, metonymy, irony, and idiom can be found in Gibbs’ (1994) categorization, where synecdoche is classified as a form of metonymy, and sarcasm as a form of irony. Throughout his book, Glucksberg (2001) offers linguistic, philosophical, and psychological approaches to figurative language, dealing with metaphor and idioms most closely, but also with simile and metonymy to some extent. Furthermore, particular grouping pattern can be found among a few other authors. For instance, Mezo (1999) defines and gives examples of seven popular figures of speech, dividing them into three groups: comparison, substitution, and exaggeration. In the first group he places simile, metaphor, and personification; in the second group metonymy and synecdoche; and hyperbole and litotes make up the third group of his classification (Mezo, 1999, pp. 1-2). Besides this, he relates the figures “apostrophe” and “reification” to personification. Then, using examples from a variety of corpora, Colston (2015) observes figures such as rhetorical question, metaphor, idiom, metonymy, verbal irony, hyperbole, understatement, colloquial tautology, while also investigating the problems that

might arise in understanding and categorizing them. Finally, classifying figurative language into four distinct groups, Bredin (1992), McArthur and McArthur (1992), and Paul (1970) follow a similar pattern. Namely, if we look at Bredin (1992) these are “phonetic”, “syntactic”, “semantic”, and “discursive”; for McArthur and McArthur (1992) they are “phonological”, “orthographic”, “syntactic”, and “lexical” – which are further divided into figures of “exaggeration”, “comparison”, “association”, and “part for a whole”; and for Paul (1970) the groups of figures are “grammatical”, “phonetic”, “rhetorical”, and “semantic”.

## 2.2. Film studies and film

Film studies or ‘cinematology’ denotes an academic area of knowledge that examines historical, theoretical, or interpretative aspects in regard to film and offers a wide range of connections to other fields as well as interesting topics to observe. Sikov (2010, ch. 1), claims that it addresses the challenges related to the concepts of reality and representation by establishing a starting premise which is then followed in a logical progression. This underlying premise is that all representations possess “expressive meanings” (Sikov, 2010, ch. 1). As presented by Kuhn and Westwell (2012), the first thoughtful analyses on cinema and film emerged shortly upon the medium’s first appearance; and the first historical chronicles of cinema, as well as the numerous critical journals and similar publications concerning media were released in the 1920s (Film studies entry para. 1). According to Encyclopedia Britannica,<sup>1</sup> it even gave rise to academic monographs and first university courses by the time of World War I. Additionally, in the 1930s archives were established on the blueprint of, and often connected with, art museums with the purpose of gathering films for future generations and providing the public with access to significant works for their enjoyment.

As was mentioned, film or a movie denotes a sequence of still photos on film, which are displayed onto a screen using light in “rapid succession.” This creates the illusion of “actual,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/art/motion-picture>

smooth, and continuous movement” due to the optical sensation called “persistence of vision” (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). In addition to necessitating innumerable technical talents (such as those used in photography, optics, and sound recording), the art of cinema is extremely intricate. The said new form of mass media and art appeared at the end of the nineteenth century and went on to become “one of the most popular and influential media” of the twentieth century and beyond (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). Being a commercial enterprise that delivers fictitious narratives to a broad audience, film was acknowledged as probably the first and most widespread type of entertainment shortly after its introduction. Screenwriting, acting, directing, costume and set design are just some of the areas in which it has evolved while still maintaining its mass allure (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

The connection between language and film, according to Pryluck (1975), is “a problem of long standing with no definitive answer” (p. 117). A variety of approaches employ linguistic or literary frameworks for describing film in an attempt to interpret it as art or communication, and while the ideas have been around since the first publications on film, they typically confuse rather than clarify (Pryluck, 1975, p. 117). Apart from this, the efforts appear to occur in waves, with the most recent being a collection of linguistically advanced attempts identified as *semiotics*. Nevertheless, the “language complexity” might conceal the basic issues and an analysis of the easier pre-semiotics suggestions can be beneficial in endeavouring to obtain some comprehension about the difficulties associated with using “language-based models” for the interpretation of cinema. Historically, the intersection of film and language has been investigated in 1915 by Lindsay, who compared film shots to hieroglyphics, stating that a different shot presented a different meaning; and Pudovkin later expanded this by comparing the shots to words in poetry (as cited in Pryluck, 1975, p. 117).

Some modern authors use grammatical phrases, such as “nounal concepts” or “actions that were...verblike in nature” to examine cinematic activities, linking language structure with



visual storytelling (Pryluck, 1975, pp. 117-118). While the connections are possible, careful consideration is advised. Namely, terms such as “semantics” and “syntax” might be beneficial for encapsulating notions for meaning and structure inside any sign system; however, when taken seriously – “linguistic terminology” poses issues and distorts the understanding of potentially separate sign systems (Pryluck, 1975, p. 117-118). Regardless of there being a considerable amount of research on the view of film as a language itself (e.g., Pryluck, 1975; Hudlin, 1979), for the purpose of this thesis we will follow the assumption behind the importance of language for communication in everyday life. Therefore, we will consider the actual language used in films – or more precisely – the use of figurative language in various narrative moments and dialogues.

### 2.2.1. From comics to cinema: the origins of Marvel Cinematic Universe

Before corpus analysis, it is important to briefly introduce the development and the main ideas of the chosen corpus. The entire history of Marvel began when the publisher Martin Goodman founded Timely Publications, whose first issue was published in 1939 under the title “Marvel Comics #1” (Sweeney, 2013, 133-134; Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.<sup>2</sup>). Since then, the company introduced many renowned superheroes, covered various genres, but also underwent several name changes before settling on Marvel Comics in the 1960s. This period was under the creative vision of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, and it marked the transformative era that gave birth to legendary characters such as the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, X-Men, as well as the Incredible Hulk. After going through many ownership changes, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, in 1991 it was a “publicly held company” (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). In 1996, the company filed for bankruptcy due to dubious management choices and a widespread decline in sales within the comic book industry. After overcoming bankruptcy in 1998, it started broadening its production by releasing imprints targeted at other audiences and increasing its

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/money/Marvel-Comics>

film offerings through Marvel Studios. Marvel started producing digital comics in 2007, and its parent company – Marvel Entertainment – became a part of Disney in 2009.

As was mentioned, the Walt Disney Company became the holding company of Marvel Entertainment, which includes the comics, video games, the Marvel Cinematic Universe films and series, etc., as well as several other films that are relevant as being a part of Marvel but are excluded from following the official MCU timeline. This means that the live-action adaptations of popular characters from Marvel comic books set the scene for the arrival of superhero films in 2000s, long before the launch of MCU, and it is these films that exist independently of Marvel Studios' MCU and form a franchise of their own. The film production branch of what is now Disney Entertainment – Marvel Studios – is in charge of creating all films and television series that take place within the shared universe. To explain, the term 'Marvel Cinematic Universe' was coined with the distribution of superhero films and includes both the complete media franchise and the particular *shared universe* or *world*. According to Nielsen (1995), this storytelling concept has gained significant popularity within the science fiction genre and the core concept behind it is forming a space in which multiple authors could create narratives that take place in "the same fictional universe" featuring similar settings and/or characters (p. 120). It is important to note that each story can either be independent or part of a whole alongside other films from the exact same universe. Furthermore, this interlinked world of a series of superhero films referred to as Marvel Cinematic Universe, or MCU, is described as a "cultural leviathan" by Carnes and Goren (2023, p. 1). They further point out that since it was bought by Disney, the collection of the films, which follow a common fictional narrative, has expanded from two feature films to what is now (at the time of this paper) thirty-four films, fourteen series, two specials, and several one-shots. Apart from this, the content of the films also prompted a number of shows, i.e., three ABC series; six Netflix series; and two shows streamed on Hulu and Freeform. Not only this, or the financial prosperity of the franchise, but also the

fact that many more films and series are planned for production illustrate the quality of the chosen corpus.

Marvel classified its films into several phases. The first one, commonly known as Phase One includes six films, starting with *Iron Man* (2008) and concluding with *The Avengers* (2012). The second one, i.e., Phase Two includes the second phase of six films, *Iron Man 3* (2013) being the first and *Ant-Man* (2015) the last of these. The next phase of eleven films makes Phase Three, in which *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) is the first and *Spider-Man: Far From Home* (2019) the last. These three phases are also known as “The Infinity Saga” because the main events in them relate to the so-called Infinity stones. Next, Phase Four included seven films, nine series, and two specials. If we look at the whole cinematic list, the series *WandaVision* (2021) marked the beginning of this phase, and the special – *The Guardians of the Galaxy Holiday Special* (2022) – marked its end. However, because our main interest here are the films, we will hold that it started with *Black Widow* (2021) and came to an end with *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* (2022). At the time of this paper, the film *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* (2023) marked the beginning of Phase Five, which consists of four films and five series at the moment. When it comes to the future of The Marvel Cinematic Universe, it is still expanding and the plans, as well as the order of the upcoming films, keep changing. According to the official Marvel page,<sup>3</sup> the following films: *Captain America: Brave New World*, *Thunderbolts\**, *Fantastic Four*, *Blade*, *Avengers: Doomsday*, and *Avengers: Secret Wars* are supposed to come out in the next three years. With the recent release of *Deadpool & Wolverine* and a future release of *Fantastic Four*, the further development may result in new timeline crashes and universe expansion as it might include some characters – such as Deadpool and Wolverine or the members of *Fantastic Four* – from the above-mentioned films that were excluded from following the official MCU timeline and a part of their own franchise. Some of

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.marvel.com/movies>

the latest speculations are that *Thunderbolts\** (2025) could be the last film of Phase Five. Following it, Phase Six should begin with *Fantastic Four* (2025) and conclude with *Avengers: Secret Wars* (2027). The presented remaining three phases are also known as “The Multiverse Saga”. However, due to uncertainty and continuing changes, the official direction remains to be uncovered. The complete release and chronological order of films as well as series that are currently a part of the franchise can be found below.

**Table 1 Overview of the current MCU timeline**

#	Title	Release year	Chronological order
1.	<i>Iron Man</i>	2008	3
2.	<i>The Incredible Hulk</i>		5
3.	<i>Iron Man 2</i>	2010	4
4.	<i>Thor</i>	2011	6
5.	<i>Captain America: The First Avenger</i>		1
6.	<i>The Avengers</i>	2012	7
7.	<i>Iron Man 3</i>	2013	9
8.	<i>Thor: The Dark World</i>		8
9.	<i>Captain America: The Winter Soldier</i>	2014	10
10.	<i>Guardians of the Galaxy</i>		11
11.	<i>Avengers: Age of Ultron</i>	2015	15
12.	<i>Ant-Man</i>		16
13.	<i>Captain America: Civil War</i>	2016	17
14.	<i>Doctor Strange</i>		21
15.	<i>Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2</i>	2017	12
16.	<i>Spider-Man: Homecoming</i>		20
17.	<i>Thor: Ragnarok</i>		22
18.	<i>Black Panther</i>		19
19.	<i>Avengers: Infinity War</i>	2018	24
20.	<i>Ant-Man and the Wasp</i>		23
21.	<i>Captain Marvel</i>	2019	2
22.	<i>Avengers: Endgame</i>		25
23.	<i>Spider-Man: Far From Home</i>		31
24.	<i>WandaVision</i> (Disney+ series)	2021	28
25.	<i>The Falcon and the Winter Soldier</i> (Disney+ series)		30
26.	<i>Loki</i> season 1 (Disney+ series)		26
27.	<i>Black Widow</i>		18
28.	<i>What If...?</i> season 1 (Disney+ series)		27
29.	<i>Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings</i>		29
30.	<i>Eternals</i>		32
31.	<i>Hawkeye</i> (Disney+ series)		35
32.	<i>Spider-Man: No Way Home</i>		33
33.	<i>Moon Knight</i> (Disney+ series)		2022
34.	<i>Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness</i>	34	
35.	<i>Ms. Marvel</i> (Disney+ series)	40	

36.	<i>Thor: Love and Thunder</i>		41
37.	<i>I Am Groot</i> season 1 (Disney+ series)		13
38.	<i>She-Hulk: Attorney-at-Law</i> (Disney+ series)		39
39.	<i>Werewolf By Night</i> (Disney+ series)		42
40.	<i>Black Panther: Wakanda Forever</i>		37
41.	<i>The Guardians of the Galaxy Christmas Special</i> (Disney+ special)		43
42.	<i>Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania</i>	2023	44
43.	<i>Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3</i>		45
44.	<i>Secret Invasion</i> (Disney+ series)		46
45.	<i>I Am Groot</i> season 2 (Disney+ series)		14
46.	<i>Loki</i> season 2 (Disney+ series)		48
47.	<i>The Marvels</i>		47
48.	<i>What If...?</i> season 2 (Disney+ series)		49
49.	<i>Echo</i> (Disney+ series)	2024	38
50.	<i>Deadpool &amp; Wolverine</i>		-

Adapted from <https://www.marvel.com/movies>, <https://www.marvel.com/tv-shows>, <https://www.marvel.com/articles/movies/marvel-cinematic-universe-timeline-disney-plus> and *The Marvel Cinematic Universe: An Official Timeline*, by A. Breznican, A. Ratcliffe, and R. Theodore-Vachon, 2023. Copyright 2023 by Dorling Kindersley Limited.

### 3. Figurative Language in Selected *Marvel Cinematic Universe* Films

This section of the paper contains the research methodology, a brief summary of the chosen works, the findings as well as discussion. It aims to present how the research was carried out, which films were chosen and why, as well as offer an insight into figurative language use in certain *Marvel Cinematic Universe* films.

#### 3.1. Methodology

The purpose of this research paper is to examine whether figurative language is omnipresent and easily perceived in everyday life by analysing its use in the scripted language of the selected *Marvel Cinematic Universe* films. In other terms, with this study we aim to gain insight into the existing theory, trends, and patterns of classification of figurative language, but, more importantly, to observe how and to what extent figurativeness is present within the selected *MCU* films. However, it is important to note that we have offered a comprehensive

overview of figurative language classifications in the theoretical part of this paper but will not hold strictly to any of the mentioned categorizations in our analysis, as we will focus on those that are most interesting semantically, i.e., metaphor and metonymy. Accordingly, the main focus of investigating the frequency of figurative language use within the chosen corpus shifts to specifically discovering the usage of metaphors or metonymies and evaluating the validity of the provided examples using the literature specifically relevant for the analysis. This literature was not discussed in the theoretical part of the paper because the aim of that part was to just gain a broad insight into the topic. Furthermore, we set a few hypotheses which will either be confirmed or refuted in the discussion after the results of the research. These are presented in the table below, along with their respective research questions.

**Table 2** *Research questions and hypotheses*

<b>Research question</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>
<b>1</b> Is figurative language used in the Marvel Cinematic Universe films?	Figurative language will be used in the Marvel Cinematic Universe films because of the assumptions that it is not solely tied to poetry but can also occur in other forms of language production, either spoken or written.
<b>2</b> If used, how frequent is the usage of figurative language in the MCU films?	There will be instances of using various types of figurative language in the MCU films. Among the types of figurative language that we are interested in, there will be more metaphorical than metonymical expressions, due to the pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday life.
<b>3</b> If metaphor is the most common type occurring in the MCU films, which source or target domains will prevail and why?	There will be numerous different source domains, but the prevailing target domains will be LIFE and TIME as they denote the concepts that are important when it comes to superhero films.
<b>4</b> Will some categories of metonymies occur more frequently, both generally and in certain MCU films?	The metonymical expressions which will occur in MCU films will probably encompass a variety of categories in general. The frequency of some examples might vary depending on a certain film, but the most frequent ones will likely be connected to how we relate a <i>part</i> to a <i>whole</i> or an <i>institution</i> for the <i>people responsible</i> .

To conduct the research, multiple steps had to be taken. First, the relevant literature had to be considered and outlined in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the existing

theory surrounding figurative language, as well as film and MCU. Then, a comprehensive table of all the films from the franchise was made and they were watched for the first time before further analysis. This served as a useful method and an aid for deciding which films to select as the corpus. The inclusion criteria were the release order, diversity of characters and settings, and, to some extent, the availability of transcripts for analysis. The selection will be presented and briefly explained below. The next step included data collection and organization. This was achieved by considering the used literature and taxonomy patterns more closely to identify both the most common and semantically interesting types of figurative language by the authors. As a result, metaphor and metonymy appeared to be the most commonly discussed types, but also the ones closely related and as such make the central focus of the further analysis. The reason for this and their respective explanations will be provided below. Subsequently, the chosen films were watched again alongside their transcripts being followed. During this step all the clear-cut and several possible examples were highlighted immediately, after which an even closer attention was paid to the transcripts for documenting all instances of the prevailing types of metaphors and metonymies within the chosen films. This resulted in distributing the examples in their respective categories within this paper. Lastly, we examined the presence and frequency of figurative language use, who the examples were uttered by and in which context, and we also commented on our findings and problems surrounding the research.

### 3.2. Chosen works

Before describing the selected films,<sup>4</sup> the reason behind establishing such a selection ought to be explained. Namely, six Marvel Cinematic Universe films were chosen for the analysis according to their release order. Taking this direction with our selection, i.e., going by the release order, means that the selected films belong to the first phase which is a part of The

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<sup>4</sup> Via the respective synopses from <https://www.marvel.com/movies> and <https://www.imdb.com/>, and in terms of the overall events in the films.

Infinity Saga. This still ensures the introduction and overlapping of a number of different characters, while also allowing us to follow the story of this cinematic universe from the film that started it all when there was no “map built out that stretched all the way to the far reaches of the Multiverse” (Feige, 2023, p. 6) yet.

The first film, *Iron Man* tells the story of a billionaire genius and engineer Tony Stark who gets kidnapped by a terrorist group that demands of him to build a lethal weapon – the “Jericho” missile – for them. Using his brilliance and resourcefulness he sets out to create a high-tech suit of armour to escape captivity instead, after which he discovers the despicable scheme of his partner in the name of the company that he inherited. As a result, Tony improves his armour and makes protecting the world his new legacy.

Secondly, *The Incredible Hulk* follows a scientist Bruce Banner who is taking refuge from everything he was familiar with so that his enemies do not exploit his powers. At the same time, he is seeking a cure for the gamma radiation that poisoned his cells and makes him turn into a raging green monster whenever he gets angry. While he is trying to understand the peculiarities of his condition, an even worse creature is made, and Banner has to decide between a quiet life or embracing the heroism in being the Hulk.

The first sequel among our selection, i.e., *Iron Man 2* unfolds the life of Tony Stark after the public found out that he is Iron Man. New troubles arise as he faces the pressure of sharing his technology, which he is unwilling to as he does not want it falling in the hands of wrong people. If he wants to keep protecting those he cares about, Tony must find a replacement for the palladium core that powers the arc reactor in his chest but worsens his health, as well as deal with a new enemy that is connected to the legacy of his father.

The next film, Marvel’s *Thor* presents the story of the son of Odin that is soon to inherit the throne of Asgard. However, on his coronation, Thor responds violently when the Frost Giants, who are gods’ nemeses, enter the palace in breach of their pact. Due to this, Odin strips



Thor of his worthiness and exiles him to Earth (Midgard), and while his brother Loki plans mischief in Asgard, Thor faces a number of challenges that help him become worthy again.

Being set in 1942, *Captain America: The First Avenger* is chronologically the first film of the franchise. Focused on the early days of the Marvel Universe, it follows the story of Steve Rogers who is adamant to be part of the military despite many of his qualification fails. Rogers voluntarily participates in an experimental programme that enhances his weak body and transforms him into the “super soldier”. This initially makes him a propaganda mascot “Captain America” but eventually turns him into a hero who saved his comrades when they needed him.

The last film of Phase One, *The Avengers*, marks the first film in which the superheroes come together. When an unforeseen threat occurs, i.e., Thor’s brother Loki wishes to rule the Earth, the director of S.H.I.E.L.D. Nick Fury realizes that a team of superheroes is needed to rescue the world from the verge of disaster. Consequently, Iron Man, the Hulk, Thor, Captain America, Black Widow, and Hawkeye must team up and work together to stop Loki in his plans.

### 3.3. Findings

All the particular instances of metaphors and metonymies, which were found in the chosen MCU films will be presented, explained, and systematically organised within this part of the paper. Moreover, a brief description will precede the examples to provide a better understanding of a specific notion and facilitate their justification.

#### 3.3.1. Metaphor

Metaphor denotes the explicit or implicit comparison of two dissimilar things (Mezo, 1999, p. 1). In other words, it is a figure of speech within which a term or an expression that literally signifies one item or concept is used in combination with another to indicate a similarity between them, usually by claiming that one is the other. An explicit metaphor will compare two

things directly and with no ambiguity, whereas an implicit one will require a bit more effort as it will only hint at a comparison and not state it directly. The most influential work on metaphors was done by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson with the release of their *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, which prompted more research on the topic (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014, p. 2). Lakoff and Johnson changed the traditionally held view that metaphor only belongs to poetical language, stating that it is “pervasive in everyday life” and that it is not just restricted to language but also a part of both thoughts and actions (1980, p. 3). According to the view of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is an expression in which one conceptual domain can be understood as another, which is most commonly illustrated as the “CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN A IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN B” form and is referred to as a ‘conceptual metaphor’ (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4). Both domains are denoted by certain terms, i.e., ‘source’ or the domain from which we draw metaphorical phrases in order to comprehend the ‘target’ domains (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4). Moreover, Kövecses points out that the “metaphorical linguistic expressions” should be differentiated from conceptual metaphors, as they denote words or expressions that emerge from “the language or terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain” or the domain ‘B’ (2010, p. 4).

Based on the cognitive functions they perform, conceptual metaphors have been categorised into three major types, i.e., *structural*, *orientational*, and *ontological* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 14-25), and we use these groups to structure the lists of our examples below.

### 3.3.1.1. *Structural metaphors*

The first category entails all instances of metaphorical realizations for which there is “a relatively rich knowledge structure” within the source domain for the comprehension of targeted concepts (Kövecses, 2010, p. 37). That is, their cognitive function facilitates our understanding of the target concept through the structure of the source concept that is “highly structured and clearly delineated” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 61).

The first set of examples for such a metaphor found within our corpus is centred around the way we conceptualise the target domain UNDERSTANDING. Namely, first of these would be UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, in which expressions such as *see*, *point of view*, *outlook*, etc. reveal that the basis for the metaphor emerges from the fact that if something is easily seen, we should be able to understand it (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 48, 103). Some of the examples are simply clear illustrations of the metaphor, whereas others connect our vision to how we form opinions or think of the world as for instance in the example 3; show how we help or make someone understand something, e.g., 5; or unveil that *seeing* helps us *understand* something we initially did not consider possible, as in 6. Additionally, one of the examples – namely 28 – appears to not fit here perfectly but is included because the possible relation to the concept emerges from physical action being connected to the process of understanding. In other words, it does not refer to the literal ‘digging’ of a physical matter, but figurative, and can thus be linked to the fact that something that has been dug up becomes visible.

- 1) Tony Stark: “Oh, I *see*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Christine Everhart: “I can *see* that.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “When I get up in the morning and I’m putting on my uniform, you know what I recognize? I *see* in that mirror that every person that’s got this uniform on got my back!” (*Iron Man*)
- 4) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “You don’t *see* it...” (*Iron Man*)
- 5) Yinsen: “*Look*, what you just saw, that is your legacy, Stark.” (*Iron Man*)
- 6) Tony Stark: “I had my *eyes open*. I came to realize that I have more to offer this world than just making things that blow up.” (*Iron Man*)
- 7) Jim Cramer: “Let me *show* you the new Stark Industries business plan! *Look*, that’s a weapons company that doesn’t make weapons!” (*Iron Man*)
- 8) Tony Stark: “We’re gonna *see* if 10% thrust capacity achieves lift.” (*Iron Man*)

- 9) James 'Rhodey' Rhodes: "No, *see*, this isn't a game. You do not send civilian equipment into my active war zone. You understand that?" (*Iron Man*)
- 10) Obadiah Stane: "But, you *see*, it was just fate that you survived that." (*Iron Man*)
- 11) Tony Stark: "*See*, I was thinking maybe we should say it was just Pepper and me alone on the island." (*Iron Man*)
- 12) Bruce Banner: "You *see* that? *See* that? My ticket out of here." (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 13) General 'Thunderbolt' Ross: "You can't *see* this *clearly*." (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 14) General 'Thunderbolt' Ross: "Now she'll *see*." (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 15) Samuel Sterns: "But, *look*, we're not strolling into the park for a picnic, here." (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 16) Samuel Sterns: "*Look*, I've always been more curious than cautious, and that's served me pretty well." (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 17) Senator Stern: "*Look*, I'm no expert..." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 18) James 'Rhodey' Rhodes: "*Look*, it's me, I'm here." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 19) Tony Stark: "Let me *see* something here." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 20) Tony Stark: "Now, let's *see* what's really going on." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 21) Justin Hammer: "I'd like to *point out* that that test pilot survived." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 22) Tony Stark: "Let's *see* what I can get going on here." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 23) Nick Fury: "*See*, I remember, you do everything yourself." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 24) Justin Hammer: "I mean, you know, *look*, don't get so attached to things." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 25) Justin Hammer: "*See*, Ivan? He can't put his head in there." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 26) Tony Stark: "*Look*, that goes without saying, and I'm working on that." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 27) Tony Stark: "*Look*, here's what I'm trying to say." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 28) Justin Hammer: "Do you *dig* what I'm *getting at* here?" (*Iron Man 2*)

- 29) Happy Hogan: “*Look*, I’m not letting you go in there alone.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 30) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “Tony, *look*, I’m sorry, okay?” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 31) Justin Hammer: “I *see* what you’re doing.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 32) Jane Foster: “*Look*, the lensing around these edges is characteristic of an Einstein-Rosen Bridge.” (*Thor*)
- 33) Jane Foster: “*See*, this is the star alignment for our quadrant this time of year, and unless Ursa Minor decided to take a day off, these are someone else’s constellations.” (*Thor*)
- 34) Thor: “You’ll *see* soon enough.” (*Thor*)
- 35) Thor: “My father was trying to teach me something, but I was too stupid to *see* it.” (*Thor*)
- 36) Thor: “Here, *look*. Your ancestors called it magic, and you call it science. Well, I come from a place where they’re one and the same thing.” (*Thor*)
- 37) Loki: “There are secret paths between the worlds to which even you, with all your gifts, are *blind*.” (*Thor*)
- 38) Johann Schmidt: “I think that you are a man of *great vision*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 39) Johann Schmidt: “No, of course, but what others *see* as superstition, you and I know to be a science.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 40) Steve Rogers: “*Look*, just give me a chance.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 41) James Buchanan ‘Bucky’ Barnes: “I don’t *see* what the problem is.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 42) Steve Rogers: “*Look*, I know you don’t think I can do this.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 43) Colonel Chester Phillips: “I can *see* that you are breaking in the candidates.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

- 44) Dr. Arnim Zola: “I just don’t *see* why you need concern yourself.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 45) Steve Rogers: “It’s just not how I *pictured* getting there.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 46) Johann Schmidt: “No matter what lies Erskine told you, you *see*, I was his greatest success!” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 47) James Buchanan ‘Bucky’ Barnes: “*See?* I told you. They’re all idiots.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 48) Howard Stark: “Hard to *see* what all the fuss is about.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 49) Nick Fury: “*Look*, I’m sorry about that little show back there, but we thought it best to break it to you slowly.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 50) Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow: “*Look*, you can’t pull me out of this right now.” (*The Avengers*)
- 51) Agent Coulson: “Everything that’s happening, the things that are about to *come to light*, people might just need a little old-fashioned.” (*The Avengers*)
- 52) Steve Rogers/Captain America: “I don’t *see* how I can.” (*The Avengers*)
- 53) Bruce Banner: “Now, you *see*, I don’t get a suit of armour.” (*The Avengers*)
- 54) Steve Rogers: “*Look*, all of us...” (*The Avengers*)
- 55) Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow: “I... I don’t *see* how that’s a party...” (*The Avengers*)

Additionally, UNDERSTANDING can be perceived as GRASPING, which is grounded in the notion that if something can be taken in hand it can also be closely observed and understood (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 20). This also suggests that *understanding* something means we are *getting* it. The corresponding examples were:

- 1) Tony Stark: “I *got* you. I *got* you.” (*Iron Man*)

- 2) Tony Stark: “You *got* me?” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Tony Stark: “*Got* it?” (*Iron Man*)
- 4) Tony Stark: “*Got* it, okay.” (*Iron Man*)
- 5) Tony Stark: “I don’t *get* it.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 6) Pepper Potts: “I *get* it.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 7) Tony Stark: “Yeah, I *get* it.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 8) Tony Stark: “I don’t *get* that.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 9) Nick Fury: “You *got* this? Right? Right?” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 10) Tony Stark: “*Got* what? I don’t even know what I’m supposed to *get*.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 11) Tony Stark: “I think I *got* it, yeah.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 12) Happy Hogan: “I *got* it. I *got* it.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 13) Tony Stark: “*Got* it.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 14) Security guards: “We *got* it.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 15) Justin Hammer: “I *get* it.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 16) Tony Stark: “What did you just say? You’re done? Surprising. No, it’s not surprising. I *get* it. You don’t have to make any excuses.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 17) Nick Fury: “In case it’s unclear, you try to escape, you so much as scratch that glass...Thirty thousand feet straight down in a steel trap. You *get* how that works?!”  
(*The Avengers*)
- 18) Barton’s men: “*Got* it.” (*The Avengers*)
- 19) Tony Stark/Iron Man: “Yeah, I *got* that. Plan B.” (*The Avengers*)

The following examples deal with the target domain LOVE. As there were only a few examples, they are all listed together and include THE OBJECT OF LOVE IS APPETIZING FOOD (Kövecses, 2004, p. 26), in which a dear person such as a lover or friend can be referred to as *sugar*, *sweetie-pie*, *honey*, or similar terms; LOVE IS A DISEASE/AN ILLNESS that

demonstrates hurtful aspects of *love* (Kövecses, 2004, p. 26); and LOVE IS MADNESS which is based on the notion that *love* makes us *lose our mind* or *control* over our actions as if we let it take over our whole being (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 49).

- 1) Tony Stark: “All those breakthroughs, military funding, *honey*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Tony Stark: “Don’t wait up for me, *honey*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Justin Hammer: “No, no, *honey*.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 4) Obadiah Stane: “*Breaks my heart*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 5) Tony Stark: “You know, if I were Iron Man, I’d have this girlfriend who knew my true identity. She’d be *a wreck*, ‘cause she’d always be worrying that I was going to die, yet so proud of the man I’d become. She’d be *wildly conflicted*, which would only make her *more crazy* about me.” (*Iron Man*)
- 6) Jane Foster: “I come up here sometimes when I can’t sleep or I’m trying to reconcile particle data, or when Darcy’s *driving me crazy*.” (*Thor*)

A further set of examples reveals how the notion of TIME is conceptualised in connection with the source domains MONEY, LIMITED RESOURCE, VALUABLE COMMODITY. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), these three metaphorical concepts create a system of subcategorization because money is both a *limited resource* and therefore a *valuable commodity* (p. 9). For this reason, the following examples are also grouped together:

- 1) Christine Everhart: “You ever *lose* an hour of sleep your whole life?” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Tony Stark: “I’d be prepared to *lose* a few [hours of sleep] with you.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Yinsen: “We *need more* time. Hey, I’m gonna go *buy* you some time.” (*Iron Man*)
- 4) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “*Give* us a couple minutes, you guys.” (*Iron Man*)
- 5) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “What you *need* is time to get your mind right.” (*Iron Man*)
- 6) Obadiah Stane: “We’re going to *have* a great quarter.” (*Iron Man*)
- 7) Tony Stark: “I’ll *buy* you some time.” (*Iron Man*)



- 8) Agent Coulson: “You’ve *got* 90 seconds.” (*Iron Man*)
- 9) Tony Stark: “We can *amend* the hours a little bit.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 10) Jarvis: “You are *running out of* both time and options.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 11) Pepper Potts: “I think I’m actually entitled to say ‘our’ collection considering the time that I *put in*, over 10 years, curating that.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 12) Pepper Potts: “The Expo is a gigantic *waste* of time.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 13) Tony Stark: “I don’t *have* time to meet.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 14) Nick Fury: “When the Russians found out he couldn’t deliver they shipped his ass off to Siberia and he *spent* the next 20 years in a vodka-fuelled rage.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 15) Tony Stark: “I’ll *put in* a little time at the lab.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 16) Tony Stark: “*Got* a minute?” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 17) Man #1: “Well, I wouldn’t *waste* my time!” (*Thor*)
- 18) Thor: “We’ll *need* some time.” (*Thor*)
- 19) Fandral: “You’ll *have* it!” (*Thor*) [‘It’ referring to time.]
- 20) Steve Rogers/Captain America: “We only *got* about a 10-second window.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 21) Gabe Jones: “How much time we *got*?” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 22) Steve Rogers/Captain America: “There’s *not enough* time.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 23) Peggy Carter: “We *have* time.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 24) Erik Selvig: “We’ve *got* maybe two minutes before this goes critical.” (*The Avengers*)
- 25) Steve Rogers: “There’s *not enough* time!” (*The Avengers*)
- 26) Tony Stark: “Miss Potts, *got* a sec?” (*The Avengers*)
- 27) Nick Fury: “We’re *low on* time.” (*The Avengers*)
- 28) Steve Rogers/Captain America: “I *need* a minute here!” (*The Avengers*)

29) Loki: “How will your friends *have* time for me, when they’re so busy fighting you?”

(*The Avengers*)

From these we can observe that twelve examples could be closely connected to the way we talk about money, with expressions such as *need more*, *put in*, *waste*, etc. Three of them represent *time* as a *limited resource* with expressions *running out of*, *not enough*, *under*, *out of*, and fourteen examples which include expressions like *have/got*, *give*, *lose* illustrate that *time* is *valuable* to us.

The next collection of corpus examples will present how a variety of fixed expressions for a certain concept could be used to talk about life revealing to us how it is perceived in our culture. Firstly, LIFE can be seen as A PRECIOUS POSSESSION (Kövecses, 2010, p. 55) that could be *taken away*, *lost*, but, as in our case, it could also be *saved*, *wasted*, or *paid with*.

- 1) Tony Stark: “Tell me, do you plan to report on the millions we’ve *saved* by advancing medical technology or kept from starvation with our intelli-crops?” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Yinsen: “What I did is to *save* your life.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Tony Stark: “Thank you for *saving* me.” (*Iron Man*)
- 4) Yinsen: “Don’t *waste* it. Don’t *waste* your life.” (*Iron Man*)
- 5) Samson: “He *protected* her.” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 6) Justin Hammer: “I *saved* your life and you give me suits.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 7) Odin: “They have *paid*, with their lives.” (*Thor*)
- 8) Jane Foster: “I just *lost* my most important piece of evidence.” (*Thor*)
- 9) Loki: “I *saved* our lives. And Thor’s.” (*Thor*)
- 10) Volstagg: “We should be grateful to him, he *saved* our lives.” (*Thor*)
- 11) Thor: “*Taking* their lives will *gain* you nothing. So *take* mine and end this.” (*Thor*)
- 12) Frigga: “Loki! You *saved* him!” (*Thor*)
- 13) Loki: “When he wakes, I will have *saved* his life.” (*Thor*)

- 14) Army doctor: “I’m *saving* your life.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 15) Colonel Chester Phillips: “We’d *lose* more men than we’d *save*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 16) Pvt. Lorraine: “You *saved* nearly 400 men.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 17) Colonel Chester Phillips: “And the last guy you *cost* us was Captain Rogers’ closest friend, so I wouldn’t count on the very best of protection.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 18) Peggy Carter: “He damn well must have thought you were *worth* it.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 19) Bruce Banner: “So you’re saying that the Hulk – the Other Guy – *saved* my life? That’s nice. It’s a nice sentiment. *Saved* it for what?” (*The Avengers*)
- 20) Steve Rogers: “I know guys with none of that *worth* ten of you.” (*The Avengers*)
- 21) Waitress: “Captain America *saved* my life.” (*The Avengers*)

Secondly, LIFE can be seen as A JOURNEY in a way that we *walk along* and *follow* certain *paths* in life, *come across* various people or *obstacles* on the way, and our life *starts* and *ends* at certain *points*. Apart from this, people might set specific goals or destinations for their *journey*, as well as for their life by defining where they see themselves, with whom, and for what purpose.

- 1) Tony Stark: “What *direction* it should *take*, one that I’m comfortable with and is consistent with the highest good for this country, as well.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Tony Stark: “I’m swapping it up for an upgraded unit, and I just ran into a little *speed bump*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Tony Stark: “Okay, I’m sorry, am I *in your way*?” (*Iron Man*)
- 4) Obadiah Stane: “They’re making the case that you and your *new direction* isn’t in the company’s best interest.” (*Iron Man*)

- 5) Tony Stark: “That’s a *new direction* for me, for the company. I mean, me on the company’s behalf being responsible for the way that...” (*Iron Man*)
- 6) Tony Stark: “Sometimes you got to *run* before you can *walk*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 7) News reporter: “A mission that could prove fatal to anyone who *stands in their way*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 8) Tony Stark: “And now that I’m trying to protect the people that I put in *harm’s way*, you’re going to *walk out*?” (*Iron Man*)
- 9) Obadiah Stane: “I know what you’re *going through*, Pepper.” (*Iron Man*)
- 10) Pepper Potts: “He’s *been through* a lot.” (*Iron Man*)
- 11) Obadiah Stane: “Nothing is going to *stand in my way*. Least of all... you!” (*Iron Man*)
- 12) Agent Coulson: “Just stick to the official statement, and soon, this will all be *behind* you.” (*Iron Man*)
- 13) Emil Blonsky: “I’ve *run into* bad situations on crap missions before. I’ve seen good men go down purely because someone didn’t let us know what we were *walking into*.” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 14) Tony Stark: “I’m not saying that Uncle Sam can kick back on a lawn chair, sipping on an iced tea because I haven’t *come across* anyone who’s man enough to go toe-to-toe with me on my best day.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 15) Tony Stark: “It’s about what we choose to *leave behind* for future generations. And that’s why for the next year and for the first time since 1974, the best and brightest men and women of nations and corporations the world over will pool their resources, share their collective vision, to *leave behind* a brighter future.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 16) Nick Fury: “Not quite the environment you want to raise a kid in, the son you had the misfortune of *crossing paths with* in Monaco.” (*Iron Man 2*)

- 17) Justin Hammer: “Ladies and gentlemen, for far too long, this country has had to place its brave men and women in *harm’s way*, but then the Iron Man arrived, and we thought the days of losing lives were *behind us*.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 18) Nick Fury: “Which leads us to believe *at this juncture* we’d only like to use you as a consultant.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 19) Thor: “Look how *far they got!*” (*Thor*)
- 20) Thor: “That’s the only *way* to ensure the safety of our borders.” (*Thor*)
- 21) Laufey: “You’ve *come a long way* to die, Asgardians.” (*Thor*)
- 22) Thor: “Yes, but couldn’t we find a *way...*” (*Thor*)
- 23) Erik Selvig: “Anyone who’s ever going to *find his way* in this world has to start by admitting he doesn’t know *where the hell he is*.” (*Thor*)
- 24) Thor: “I’ll only be *in the way*, or worse, get one of you killed.” (*Thor*)
- 25) Hogun: “Then we are *stranded*.” (*Thor*)
- 26) Dr. Arnim Zola: “Schmidt believes he *walks in the footsteps* of the gods.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 27) Johann Schmidt: “I have not *come all this way* for safety, Doctor.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 28) Dr. Abraham Erskine: “Ladies and gentlemen, today we *take not another step* towards annihilation, but the *first step on the path* to peace.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 29) Steve Rogers: “They look like they’ve *been through hell*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 30) Johann Schmidt/Red skull: “You pretend to be a simple soldier, but in reality, you are just afraid to admit that we *have left humanity behind*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

- 31) Loki: "I've *come too far* for anything else." (*The Avengers*)
- 32) Nick Fury: "We've made some mistakes *along the way*. Some, very recently." (*The Avengers*)
- 33) Steve Rogers: "At *this point* I doubt anything would surprise me." (*The Avengers*)
- 34) Steve Rogers: "Didn't really *go his way*, did it?" (*The Avengers*)
- 35) Tony Stark: "Until then, *stay out of the way*. Tourist." (*The Avengers*)
- 36) Tony Stark: "You're *tip-toeing*, big man. You need to *strut*." (*The Avengers*) [He does not literally tip-toe but is being careful about not turning into Hulk.]
- 37) Thor: "Well, they are repulsive, and they trample everything *in their path*." (*The Avengers*)
- 38) Bucky Banner: "I didn't see an *end* so I put a bullet in my mouth and the other guy spit it out." (*The Avengers*)
- 39) Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow: "I swear on my life I will get you out of this, you will *walk away*, and never ever..." (*The Avengers*) [Not literally walk away from something but forget the situation they are in (being attacked and thus falling one level below into the interior of the Helicarrier) ever happened and leave behind the anger he felt (which triggers the Hulk); but it does not happen as he turns.]
- 40) Nick Fury: "He's *headed for* the detention level." (*The Avengers*)
- 41) Steve Rogers: "He's got the same blood on his hands that Loki does, but right now we gotta put that *behind* us and get this done." (*The Avengers*)

Another view of LIFE is as A GAMBLING GAME, in which some terms connected to *gambling* are used for certain life situations (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 155). The examples include:

- 1) General Joe Greller: "And I *pulled* you one *ace*." (*The Incredible Hulk*)

- 2) General ‘Thunderbolt’ Ross: “I know you *cached in some chips* for this, Joe.” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 3) Bruce Banner: “I’ll *take my chances*.” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 4) Steve Rogers: “I’m gonna *try my luck*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 5) Colonel Chester Phillips: “I *took a chance* with you, Agent Carter.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 6) Colonel Chester Phillips: “It’s just the *hand you’ve been dealt*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 7) Nick Fury: “I never *put all my chips on that number* though, because I was *playing* something even riskier.” (*The Avengers*)

Besides this, LIFE can also be seen as A STORY including assumptions that “everyone’s life is structured like a story” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 172), suggesting that we view situations or events in our life as parts of the story which, if asked, we tell in a coherent manner (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 172-173). A few of the following examples illustrate this notion.

- 1) Tony Stark: “But what about the whole *cover story* that it’s a bodyguard?” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Tony Stark: “It is one thing to question *the official story*, and another thing entirely to make wild accusations, or insinuate that I’m a superhero.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Tony Stark: “It is one thing to question *the official story* and another thing entirely to make wild accusations, or insinuate that I’m a superhero.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 4) Senator Stern: “And if you could just *narrate* those for us, we’d be very grateful.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 5) Justin Hammer: “BTW, big *story*. The new CEO of Stark Industries.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 6) Erik Selvig: “I just wanted to show you how silly *his story* was.” (*Thor*)
- 7) Sif: “*Stories* will be told of this day.” (*Thor*)
- 8) Thor: “Live and *tell those stories* yourself.” (*Thor*)

- 9) Steve Rogers/Captain America: “What’s the *story* upstairs?” (*The Avengers*)

Finally, apart from mapping the concept of *life* to *gambling* as we have seen above, it can also be connected to a *sport* or a *sporting game* (Kövecses, 2010, p. 35), in which case we have the following examples:

- 1) Obadiah Stane: “We’re a *team*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Obadiah Stane: “We’re gonna have to *play a whole different kind of ball* now.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Emil Blonsky: “Let’s *even the playing field a little*.” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 4) Tony Stark: “How did Hammer get *in the game*?” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 5) Tony Stark: “I tried to *play ball* with these ass-clowns.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 6) Tony Stark: “Hey, I’m *playing for the home team* Coulson, you and all your Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 7) Tony Stark: “What’s the *play*?” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 8) Brandt’s aide: “You *play ball* with us, you’ll be leading your own platoon in no time.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 9) Steve Rogers: “Come on, guys, we’re all *on the same team* here.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*) [Not a division into teams directly, but being on the same side, fighting for good.]
- 10) Tony Stark: “Yeah, apparently, I’m volatile, self-obsessed, don’t *play well with others*.” (*The Avengers*)
- 11) Thor: “Do I look to be *in a gaming mood*?” (*The Avengers*)
- 12) Loki: “A mindless beast, *makes play* he’s still a man.” (*The Avengers*)
- 13) Steve Rogers: “So, Thor, what’s his *play*?” (*The Avengers*)
- 14) Tony Stark: “Shall we *play*, Doctor?” (*The Avengers*)
- 15) Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow: “So, Banner? That’s your *play*.” (*The Avengers*)



- 16) Nick Fury: “Last year, Earth had a visitor from another planet who had a grudge *match* that levelled a small town.” (*The Avengers*)
- 17) Steve Rogers: “The only thing you really fight for is yourself. You’re not the guy to *make the sacrifice play*, to lay down on a wire and let the other guy crawl over you.” (*The Avengers*)
- 18) Clint Barton: “He’s gonna *make his play* soon though.” (*The Avengers*)

The following two examples represent the metaphor SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE PLANTS (Kövecses, 2010, p. 10). In the first example “a part of the plant” – here a *branch* – corresponds to “a part of the organization”, and in the second example “growth of the plant” relates to the “development of the organization” (Kövecses, 2010, p. 10).

- 1) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “As he does not operate within any definable *branch* of government, Iron Man presents a potential threat to the security of both the nation and to her interests.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 2) Johann Schmidt: “My apologies, Doctor, but we both knew Hydra could *grow* no further in Hitler’s shadow.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

A further conceptualization that was found in a number of utterances within the films falls under the CONTROL IS HOLDING (SOMETHING IN THE HAND) metaphor, the basis of which is the fact that if a certain object is in our hand, we can do whatever we want with it, i.e., we have full control over it (Kövecses, 2010, p. 245). From this it could also be argued that *being in control of something* means *possessing* it or *holding* it, for which corresponding examples are also given below.

- 1) Yinsen: “Your life’s work, *in the hands* of those murderers.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Raza: “But today, whoever *holds* the latest Stark weapons rules these lands.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Obadiah Stane: “You gotta let me *handle* this.” (*Iron Man*)

- 4) Tony Stark: “I don’t want this winding up *in the wrong hands*. Maybe *in mine*, it can actually do some good.” (*Iron Man*)
- 5) Tony Stark: “*Handles* like a dream.” (*Iron Man*)
- 6) Pilot #1: “I think bogey’s been *handled*, sir.” (*Iron Man*)
- 7) Obadiah Stane: “Weapons that will help steer the world back on course, put the balance of power *in our hands*. The right hands.” (*Iron Man*)
- 8) Agent Coulson: “That’s being *handled*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 9) General ‘Thunderbolt’ Ross: “You get a *hold* of yourself, young man.” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 10) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “I’ll *handle* it.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 11) Pepper Potts: “I’m gonna *handle* it, okay. Just let me *handle* it.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 12) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “*Handle* it. Or I’m gonna have to.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 13) S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent: “We’ve secured the perimeter, but I don’t think we should *hold* it for too much longer.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 14) Justin Hammer: “Sadly, that technology was kept *out of reach*.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 15) Justin Hammer: “I’ve got this *handled*.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 16) Pepper Potts: “My body, literally, cannot *handle* the stress.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 17) Pepper Potts: “I’ll *handle* the transition.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 18) Tower keeper: “You cannot control the power you *hold*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 19) Nick Fury: “Once we *get our hands on* the Tesseract, you’re in the wind.” (*The Avengers*)
- 20) Bruce Banner: “I wouldn’t have come aboard if I couldn’t *handle* pointy things.” (*The Avengers*) [He is not ‘handling’ something pointy, but controlling himself and his anger in the situations with “pointy things” (which triggers the Hulk); says this right after

Tony poked him and Rogers stated his concern of that being a threat, without wanting to offend Banner]

- 21) Nick Fury: “Until I’m certain my team can’t *hold* it, I will not order a nuclear strike against a civilian population.” (*The Avengers*)
- 22) Nick Fury: “The Tesseract is where it belongs... *out of our reach*.” (*The Avengers*)

The seventh set of structural metaphors deals with the broad target domain of EMOTIONS. Kövecses (2010) described this domain as a “superior” and, considering how there is a variety of emotions, his claim is not that surprising (p. 23). Namely, it can sometimes be difficult to identify or understand emotions and certain knowledge, e.g., that of conceptual metaphors might help us. However, as the contexts of the films do not focus on emotions, only a few such examples were found. These include considering ANGER to be HEAT/FIRE and A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER; thinking of AFFECTION as WARMTH; and lastly of ENTHUSIASM as FIRE.

- 1) Obadiah Stane: “We’re going to have to *take* a lot of *heat*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Pepper Potts: “People are relying on you to be Iron Man and you’ve disappeared, and all I’m doing is *putting out your fires* and *taking the heat* for it.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 3) Brandt’s aide: “They’ll *warm up* to you.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 4) Loki: “Ooh. “It *burns* you to have come so close. To have the Tesseract, to have power, unlimited power, and for what? A warm light for all mankind to share. And then to be reminded what real power is.” (*The Avengers*)
- 5) Tony Stark: “You really have *got a lid on it*, haven’t you? (*The Avengers*)
- 6) Tony Stark: “Why shouldn’t the guy *let off a little steam*?” (*The Avengers*)
- 7) Tony Stark: “And there’s one other person you *pissed off*! His name was Phil.” (*The Avengers*)

The subsequent list of examples presents the conceptual metaphor SIGNIFICANT IS BIG, in which the expressions like *big*, *biggest*, *giant* as opposed to *small*, *lesser*, or *little* serve to show how we think of importance (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 50).

- 1) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “He is my friend and he is my *great* mentor.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Yinsen: “Is this the last act of defiance of the *great* Tony Stark?” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Raza: “It allowed the *great* Genghis Khan to rule from the Pacific to the Ukraine.” (*Iron Man*)
- 4) Obadiah Stane: “We’re going to have a *little* internal discussion and we’ll get back to you with the follow-up.” (*Iron Man*)
- 5) Tony Stark: “I’m swapping it up for an upgraded unit, and I just ran into a *little* speed bump.” (*Iron Man*)
- 6) Tony Stark: “It’s nothing. It’s just a *little* snag.” (*Iron Man*)
- 7) Tony Stark: “And it’s contacting the socket wall and causing a *little bit* of a short [circuit]... It’s fine.” (*Iron Man*) [Here the ‘little bit’ downplays the significance of a short circuit, as the arc reactor (which he is changing for a new one in the scene) is what helps keep him alive.]
- 8) Tony Stark: “Rhodey, I’m working on something *big*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 9) Obadiah Stane: “Weapons manufacturing is only one *small* part of what Stark Industries is all about, and our partnership with the fire and rescue community...” (*Iron Man*)
- 10) Video Voice Over: “You did not tell us that the target you paid us to kill was the *great* Tony Stark.” (*Iron Man*)
- 11) Nick Fury: “Mr. Stark, you’ve become part of a *bigger* universe. You just don’t know it yet.” (*Iron Man*) [A ‘bigger’ and more significant universe than he been a part of before becoming Iron Man]
- 12) Soldier #3: “Something *big* just went off down here!” (*The Incredible Hulk*)

- 13) Tony Stark: "I'm not saying that from the ashes of captivity, never has a *greater* phoenix metaphor been personified in human history." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 14) Tony Stark: "But I did you a *big* favour." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 15) Nick Fury: "I have *bigger* problems than you in the southwest region to deal with." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 16) Nick Fury: "Howard said the arc reactor was the stepping stone to something *greater*. He was about to kick off an energy race that was gonna *dwarf* the arms race. He was on to something *big*, something so *big* that it was gonna make the nuclear reactor look like a triple-A battery." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 17) Howard Stark: "What is and always will be my *greatest* creation is you." (*Iron Man 2*)
- 18) Loki: "To ruin my brother's *big* day." (*Thor*)
- 19) Loki: "You have *great* power, Heimdall." (*Thor*)
- 20) Dr. Abraham Erskine: "You know, after the last war, my people struggled. They felt weak. They felt *small*." (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 21) Dr. Abraham Erskine: "He has become convinced that there is a *great* power hidden in the earth, left here by the gods, waiting to be seized by a superior man." (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 22) Johann Schmidt: "*Great* power has always baffled primitive men." (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 23) Peggy Carter: "But he has much *bigger* ambitions." (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 24) Johann Schmidt: "No matter what lies Erskine told you, you see, I was his *greatest* success!" (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 25) Loki: "Freedom is life's *great* lie." (*The Avengers*)

- 26) The Other: “Your ambition is *little*, born of childish need. We look beyond the Earth to *greater* worlds the Tesseract will unveil.” (*The Avengers*)
- 27) Loki: “I remember a shadow. Living in the shade of your *greatness*. I remember you tossing me into an abyss. I, who was, and should be, king!” (*The Avengers*)
- 28) Thor: “You people are so petty and *tiny*.” (*The Avengers*)
- 29) Steve Rogers/Captain America: “Our *biggest* guns couldn’t touch it.” (*The Avengers*)  
[Not literal guns, but their most significant assets.]

According to Kövecses (2010), the target domain PEOPLE can be explained via the source domains ANIMALS, PLANTS, PLANTS (FRUITS), or COMMODITIES (pp. 56, 123, 153, 298). Only the first of these makes the basis of the following list of examples, in which cases some human behaviours are linked to those of animals:

- 1) Man #1: “That one there. Faster. Faster. Grab that *dog*. Put him with the others. What the hell is this? Shoot this *dog*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Emil Blonsky: “Now, she’s an annoying *bitch*.” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 3) Happy Hogan: “All right, it’s a *zoo* out there, watch out.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 4) Justin Hammer: “He was a *lion*.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 5) Ivan Vanko: “And the *sharks* will come.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 6) Justin Hammer: “Listen, we got to get these *bitches* out of here.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 7) Peggy Carter: “And these are your only two options? A *lab rat* or a *dancing monkey*?” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 8) Steve Rogers/Captain America: “We only got about a 10-second window. You miss that window, we’re *bugs on a windshield*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 9) Loki: “And you’re doing a marvellous job with that. The humans *slaughter* each other in *droves*, while you idly fret.” (*The Avengers*)

- 10) Tony Stark: “Wait, you’re on that list? Are you above or below *angry bees*?” (*The Avengers*)
- 11) Steve Rogers/Captain America: “They’re *fish in a barrel* down there.” (*The Avengers*)
- 12) Clint Barton/Hawkeye: “Stark, you got a lot of *strays* sniffing your *tail*.” (*The Avengers*)

The next set of examples will be grouped together but present several ways in which people tend to view IDEAS. The first two examples stand for the notion that IDEAS are PLANTS (FRUITS), the next example for IDEAS being perceived as RESOURCES, followed by two examples for IDEAS ARE FOOD, and final one for IDEAS ARE FASHIONS.

- 1) Raza: “His escape *bore unexpected fruit*.” (*Iron Man*) [Unexpected fruit being the “weapon” he invented in the cave, the first Iron Man suit.]
- 2) Colonel Chester Phillips: “Aerial reconnaissance has proven *unfruitful*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 3) Tony Stark: “And that’s why for the next year and for the first time since 1974, the best and brightest men and women of nations and corporations the world over will *pool* their resources, *share* their collective vision, to leave behind a brighter future.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 4) Tony Stark: “He never even told me he liked me, so it’s a little tough for me to *digest* when you’re telling me he said the whole future was riding on me and he’s passing it down.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 5) Bruce Banner: “Steve, tell me none of this *smells a little funky* to you?” (*The Avengers*)
- 6) Nick Fury: “There was an idea, Stark knows this, called the Avengers Initiative. The idea was to bring together a group of remarkable people, see if they could become something more. See if they could work together when we needed them to, to fight the battles that we never could. Phil Coulson died still believing in that idea, in heroes. Well, it’s an *old-fashioned* notion.” (*The Avengers*)

The further five examples include certain fixed expressions drawn from the source domain MOVEMENTS to denote the targeted concept of CHANGES (Kövecses, 2010, pp. 150, 163).

- 1) Tony Stark: “Nothing, I’m just *going into* cardiac arrest...” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Pepper Potts: “Obadiah, he’s *gone insane!*” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Pepper Potts: “The Expo is your ego *gone crazy.*” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 4) Nurses: “He just *went nuts.*” (*Thor*)
- 5) Colonel Chester Phillips: “Senator Brandt, I regret to report that Captain Steven G. Rogers *went* missing behind enemy lines on the third.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

Then, a COMPANY may be understood in terms of A BUILDING (Kövecses, 2010, p. 136), which is presented in the following example from the corpus:

- 1) Obadiah Stane: “I *built* this company from nothing!” (*Iron Man*)

Furthermore, the examples below have to do with an undoubtedly well-known target domain ARGUMENT, which might be explained through concepts such as WAR, BUILDING, JOURNEY, or CONTAINER (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 4, 46, 89; Kövecses, 2010, p. 92). Within the chosen corpus four instances of ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY, and one of ARGUMENT IS WAR were found:

- 1) Tony Stark: “If you will *direct* your attention to said screens, I believe that’s North Korea.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 2) Senator Stern: “I’d *like to go on and show*, if I may, the imagery that’s connected to your report.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 3) Pepper Potts: “Don’t tell me that we have the best patent lawyers in the country and then not *let me pursue* this.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 4) Dr. Abraham Erskine: “We will *proceed.*” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)



- 5) Tony Stark: “‘Personality overview. Mr Stark displays compulsive behaviour.’ *In my own defence*, that was last week.” (*Iron Man 2*)

The final list entails instances of what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) labelled as the “general metaphor CREATION IS BIRTH” (p. 75). The scholars explain that both the “agricultural growth” and the experience of birth serve as a foundation for the broad concept of *creation* which is not only centred on the *formation* of “a physical object” but can also be broadened to include the abstract notions (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 75).

- 1) Justin Hammer: “Howard Stark. Really a *father* to us all, and to the military-industrial age.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 2) Jane Foster: “S.H.I.E.L.D. Whatever they are, they’re gonna do everything in their power to make sure this research never *sees the light of day*.” (*Thor*)
- 3) Tony Stark: “Stark Tower is *your baby*.” (*The Avengers*)
- 4) Pepper Potts: “Twelve percent of my *baby*?” (*The Avengers*)

### 3.3.1.2. *Oriental metaphors*

Another type of metaphorical actualisations organises an entire system of notions in regard to one another and gets its name from the fact that the majority of them include general spatial orientations such as *up* and *down*, *on* and *off*, *front* and *back*, *in* and *out*, etc. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 14).

Within this category, the first collection of examples illustrates the CONSCIOUS IS UP and UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN conceptual metaphors. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the physical basis for this concept is that for most mammals, including humans, sleeping is done while lying down and awakening when standing up (p. 15).

- 1) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “When I get *up* in the morning and I’m putting on my uniform, you know what I recognize?” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Tony Stark: “Obie, what are you doing *up*?” (*Iron Man*)

- 3) Tony Stark: “That lovely lady you woke *up* with.” (*Iron Man*)
- 4) Tony Stark: “Jarvis, you *up*?” (*Iron Man*)
- 5) Betty Ross: “Bruce, wake *up*.” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 6) Tony Stark: “Focus *up*.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 7) Tony Stark: “Wake *up*, Daddy’s home.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 8) Loki: “Father has *fallen* into the Odinsleep.” (*Thor*)
- 9) S.H.I.E.L.D. agent #2: “Agent *down*.” (*Thor*)
- 10) Nick Fury: “I have men *down*.” (*The Avengers*)
- 11) Agent Maria Hill: “A lot of men still *under*.” (*The Avengers*)
- 12) Young girl [*Hindi*]: “My father’s not waking *up*!” (*The Avengers*)
- 13) Steve Rogers: “When I went *under*, the world was at war. I wake *up*, they say we won.”  
(*The Avengers*)
- 14) Nick Fury: “Agent Coulson is *down*.” (*The Avengers*)

Next, the concept of HAVING CONTROL or FORCE is structured within the source domain UP, and its opposite BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL or FORCE can be understood in terms of the source domain DOWN (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 15). The examples from the corpus are:

- 1) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “Tony, you gotta get upstairs and *get on top* of this situation right now.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 2) Odin: “In the end, their king *fell*.” (*Thor*)
- 3) Odin: “Only one of you can *ascend* to the throne.” (*Thor*)
- 4) Thor: “No, the Earth is *under* my protection, Loki.” (*The Avengers*)
- 5) Natasha Romanoff: “Loki has him *under* some kind of spell, along with one of ours.”  
(*The Avengers*)

6) Tony Stark: “There’s no throne, there is no version of this, where you come out *on top*.”  
(*The Avengers*)

7) Loki: “You will all *fall* before me.” (*The Avengers*)

A further orientational type of metaphors that was found within the corpus is MORE IS UP, LESS IS DOWN, whose physical foundation is simply the fact that if more of an object or substance is added to a pile or a container, the level of it rises (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 16).

1) Tony Stark: “Please don’t turn *down* my music.” (*Iron Man*)

2) Video Voice: “The price to kill Tony Stark has just gone *up*.” (*Iron Man*)

3) Jarvis: “The suit’s at 48% power and *falling*, sir.” (*Iron Man*)

4) Jarvis: “We are *up* to 80 ounces a day to counteract the symptoms, sir.” (*Iron Man 2*)

5) Tony Stark: “Cycles per second were a little *low*. You could have doubled *up* your rotations.” (*Iron Man 2*)

6) Newsreel announcer: “Meanwhile, overseas, our brave boys are showing the Axis powers that the price of freedom is never too *high*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

7) Sergeant Duffy: “Pick *up* the pace, ladies!” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

8) Nick Fury: “Where are the energy levels now?” Agent Coulson: “*Climbing*.” (*The Avengers*)

9) NASA Scientist: “Doctor, it’s *spiking* again.” (*The Avengers*) [‘It’ denotes the activity of the Tesseract, the increase in energy levels from it.]

10) Nick Fury: “But you’re not the only people out there, are you? And you’re not the only threat. The world’s *filling up* with people who can’t be matched, that can’t be controlled.” (*The Avengers*)

11) Tony Stark: “A nuclear deterrent. Because that always calms everything right *down*.”  
(*The Avengers*)

- 12) Nick Fury: “One more turbine goes *down* and we *drop*.” (*The Avengers*)

Moreover, several following examples reflect the FORESEEABLE FUTURE EVENTS ARE UP (and AHEAD) conceptual metaphor, which is grounded in the fact that usually “our eyes look in the direction in which we typically move (ahead, forward)” and whether we approach an object or vice versa, it appears larger (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 16).

- 1) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “What’s *up* with the love-in?” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Pepper Potts: “I don’t know what he’s *up* to.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Pepper Potts: “What are you *up* to, Obadiah?” (*Iron Man*)
- 4) Tony Stark: “What are you *up* to later?” (*Iron Man 2*)

The following examples illustrate the HIGH STATUS IS UP versus LOW STATUS IS DOWN metaphor. Namely, there are both social and physical foundations to this metaphor, which are that status corresponds to “(social) power” and that the “(physical) power” is UP (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 16).

- 1) TV Reporter: “Tonight’s red-hot red carpet is right here at the Disney Concert Hall, where Tony Stark’s third annual benefit for the Firefighter’s Family Fund has become the place to be for L.A.’s *high* society.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Obadiah Stane: “Recruit our *top* engineers.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Tony Stark: “You look like you got friends in *low* places.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 4) Peggy Carter: “I see your *top* squad is prepping for duty.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 5) Erik Selvig: “She’s an energy source. We turn off the power, she turns it back on. If she reaches *peak* level...” (*The Avengers*)

Then, denoting health, happiness and well-being in general, GOOD can be perceived in terms of source target UP, and the opposite target concept BAD in terms of source DOWN (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 16).

- 1) Tony Stark: “What direction it should take, one that I’m comfortable with and is consistent with the *highest* good for this country, as well.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Obadiah Stane: “And what we do keeps the world from *falling* into chaos.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Bruce Banner: “I got *low*.” (*The Avengers*)

Lastly, the following examples illustrate one of the two target domains that were not listed within the consulted literature, namely INVISIBLE, which can be explained via the source domain DOWN and would have the conceptual metaphor VISIBLE IS UP as its opposite.

- 1) Obadiah Stane: “I want you to promise me that you’re gonna *lay low*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Tony Stark: “Uh-huh. You told me to *lay low*. That’s what I’ve been doing. I *lay low*, and you take care of all...” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Jarvis: “Yes, that should help you keep a *low* profile.” (*Iron Man*)

### 3.3.1.3. *Ontological metaphors*

The final type of metaphors we present are defined as the ways in which we perceive ideas, activities, emotions, events, etc. as either substances or entities and their foundation emerges from our experiences with physical objects (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 25). The metaphors that fall under this category help us complete several cognitive functions, e.g., identify causes or aspects of, quantify, or refer to specific experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 26-27).

The first list of examples we provide for this group are some further approaches to how LOVE is thought of. To begin with, THE OBJECT OF LOVE might also be seen via the source domain A SMALL CHILD within which the linguistic expressions *babe* or *baby* reveal to us

that a lover or a person dear to us could be viewed as requiring care and protection similarly as a *small child* needs it. Alongside it, OBJECT OF LOVE can also be seen as A POSSESSED OBJECT in which a *loved one* is considered to be someone *ours*, but because it is perhaps “very natural and obvious for most of us when talking about the loved one” it went unnoticed by scholars observing metaphorical realizations of love (Kövecses, 2004, p. 27). From our corpus we have as follows:

- 1) Cab Driver: “What’s the matter, *baby*?” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 2) Tony Stark: “I don’t *have* anyone but you.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Pepper Potts: “You’re *all I have*, too, you know.” (*Iron Man*)

The following examples illustrate another view of the target concept IDEAS, i.e., they reflect the perception of them as OBJECTS. This conceptual metaphor suggests that we can “get them from outside ourselves” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980. p. 148), but also that we can *have* them as physical possessions.

- 1) Pilot #1: “I’ve *got* no idea.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Obadiah Stane: “Do you really think that just because you *have* an idea, it belongs to you?” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Obadiah Stane: “You *had* a great idea, Tony, but my suit is more advanced in every way!” (*Iron Man*)
- 4) Bruce Banner: “You don’t *have* any idea how powerful this thing is.” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 5) Elon Musk: “Yeah, I’ve *got* an idea for an electric jet.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 6) Tony Stark: “*Got* any other bad ideas?” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 7) Senator Stern: “It proves that the genie is out of the bottle and this man *has* no idea what he’s doing.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 8) Pepper Potts: “Do you *have* any idea what that entails?” (*Iron Man 2*)

- 9) Tony Stark: “I *got* an idea.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 10) Loki: “I *had* no idea Father would banish him for what he did.” (*Thor*)
- 11) Thor: “For the first time in my life, I *have* no idea what I’m supposed to do.” (*Thor*)
- 12) Search team leader: “You *got* any idea what this thing is exactly?” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 13) Peggy Carter: “You *have* no idea how to talk to a woman, do you?” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 14) Steve Rogers: “You’ve *got* no idea.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 15) Steve Rogers: “I *had* some ideas about the uniform.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 16) Thor: “You *have* no idea what you’re dealing with.” (*The Avengers*)

Next, several instances of the metaphor SOCIETY IS A PERSON (Kövecses, 2010, p. 68) were found. The said metaphor is grounded in the notion that, like a person, society can be thought to have humanlike qualities, i.e., that it can have its own mind, properties, and wishes, on which it is able to act on, and a body or a functioning organism that can get ill due to some factors outside or within it.

- 1) Ceremony narrator: “Today, Tony Stark has changed the face of the weapons industry by ensuring freedom and protecting America and *her interests* around the globe.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Tony Stark: “That’s how America *does* it.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Howard Stark: “Technology holds infinite possibilities for mankind, and will one day rid *society of all its ills*.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 4) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: ““As he does not operate within any definable branch of government, Iron Man presents a potential threat to the *security* of both the nation and to *her interests*.”” (*Iron Man 2*)

- 5) Colonel Chester Phillips: “And now *America’s golden boy* and a lot of other good men are dead ‘cause you had a crush.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 6) Johann Schmidt/Red skull: “Arrogance may not be a uniquely *American trait*, but I must say, you do it better than anyone.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

The fourth collection of examples revolves around the ways in which we think of MIND as A CONTAINER, which is “a projection of entity status with in-out orientation onto our cognitive faculty” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 214).

- 1) Tony Stark: “With that *in mind*, I humbly present the crown jewel of Stark Industries’ Freedom Line.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Betty Ross: “Are you *out of your mind*?” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 3) Pepper Potts: “Are you *out of your mind*?” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 4) Howard Stark: “The moment you think you know what’s going on *in* a woman’s head is the moment your goose is well and truly cooked.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 5) Bruce Banner: “That guy’s brain is *a bag full of cats*, you could smell crazy on him.” (*The Avengers*)

The following instances are some further conceptualizations of TIME. In the first conceptual metaphor, within which time is structured as A MOVING OBJECT, time is thought to be moving, e.g., future moves towards us or we move towards it (Lakoff & Johnson, 2010, p. 42).

- 1) Tony Stark: “Please, don’t harangue me about stuff that’s *way, way, down...*” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) General: “We *look forward* to your weapons presentation.” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Odin: “But the day *will come* when one of you will have to defend that peace.” (*Thor*)
- 4) Odin: “Though the day *has come...*” (*Thor*)



- 5) Loki: “It’ll *come*.” (*Thor*) [‘It’ referring to Thor’s “day of triumph”.]
- 6) Jane Foster: “Years of research, *gone!*” (*Thor*)
- 7) Erik Selvig: “That was years of his life, *gone!*” (*Thor*)
- 8) Steve Rogers: “And the *past* few years, it just didn’t seem to matter that much.”  
(*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

Moreover, time can be understood in terms of the TIME IS A CONTAINER conceptual metaphor. The expressions that form this view are grounded in the notion that certain activities and occurrences are linked to “bounded time spans” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 59).

- 1) Pepper Potts: “The MIT commencement speech...” Tony Stark: “Is *in* June.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “When I get up *in* the morning and I’m putting on my uniform, you know what I recognize?” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Tony Stark: “And if they don’t, I’ll probably be dead *in* a week.” (*Iron Man*)
- 4) Obadiah Stane: “We haven’t had a breakthrough in that *in* what? Thirty years.” (*Iron Man*)
- 5) Tony Stark: “And [*in*] three, two, one.” (*Iron Man*)
- 6) Tony Stark: “And [*in*] three, two, one.” (*Iron Man*)
- 7) Tony Stark: “[*In*] Three, two, one.” (*Iron Man*)
- 8) Tony Stark: “*In* three, two, one.” (*Iron Man*)
- 9) Betty Ross: “I haven’t spoken to him *in* a couple of years.” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 10) General ‘Thunderbolt’ Ross: “We’d have had snipers on target *in* three more minutes.”  
(*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 11) Tony Stark: “I’m not saying that the world is enjoying its longest period of uninterrupted peace *in* years because of me.” (*Iron Man 2*)

- 12) Justin Hammer: “*In* the last six months, Anthony Stark has created a sword with untold possibilities.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 13) Tony Stark: “Whatever happens [*in*] the next 20 minutes, just go with it.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 14) Tony Stark: “First vacation *in* two years.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 15) Jarvis: “Anton Vanko was a Soviet physicist who defected to the United States *in* 1963. However, he was accused of espionage and was deported *in* 1967.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 16) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “Sir, I personally guarantee that *within* 24 hours, Iron Man will be back on watch.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 17) Tony Stark: “The after-party starts *in* 15 minutes.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 18) Natasha Romanoff: “Wheels up *in* 25 minutes.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 19) Ivan Vanko: “What your father did to my family [*in*] *over* 40 years, I will do to you *in* 40 minutes.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 20) Loki: “*In* time.” (*Thor*)
- 21) Loki: “Our people need a sense of continuity, in order to feel safe *in* these difficult times.” (*Thor*)
- 22) Jane Foster: “Don’t worry, I’m fine, but just in case you don’t hear from me *in* the next hour, just come by the crater site and try and find me, okay?” (*Thor*)
- 23) Howard Stark: “Ladies and gentlemen, what if I told you that *in* just a few short years, your automobile won’t even have to touch the ground at all?” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 24) Howard Stark: “I did say [*in*] a few years, didn’t I?” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 25) Colonel Chester Phillips: “Our goal is to create the best army *in* history.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

- 26) Sergeant Duffy: “Nobody’s got that flag *in* 17 years!” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 27) Steve Rogers: “And [*in*] the past few years, it just didn’t seem to matter that much.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 28) Dr. Abraham Erskine: “Serum infusion beginning *in* five, four, three, two, one.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 29) Roeder: “Your Hydra division has failed to deliver so much as a rifle *in over* a year.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 30) Johann Schmidt: “Hydra is assembling an arsenal to destroy my enemies in one stroke, wherever they are, regardless of how many forces they possess, all *in* a matter of hours.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 31) Brandt’s aide: “You play ball with us, you’ll be leading your own platoon *in* no time.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 32) Colonel Chester Phillips: “If I read the posters correctly, you got someplace to be *in* 30 minutes.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 33) Howard Stark: “He gets across the Atlantic, he will wipe out the entire Eastern Seaboard *in* an hour.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 34) Agent Coulson: “Campus should be clear *in* the next half hour.” (*The Avengers*)
- 35) Natasha Romanoff: “Gentlemen, you might want to step inside *in* a minute.” (*The Avengers*)
- 36) Natasha Romanoff: “That’s still not gonna find them *in* time.” (*The Avengers*)
- 37) Loki: “The soldier. The man *out of* time.” (*The Avengers*)
- 38) Steve Rogers/Captain America: “I’m not the one who’s *out of* time.” (*The Avengers*)
- 39) Natasha Romanoff: “He killed eighty people *in* two days.” (*The Avengers*)

- 40) Tony Stark: “*In* a few hours, I’ll know every dirty secret S.H.I.E.L.D. has ever tried to hide.” (*The Avengers*)
- 41) Pilot: “Detonation *in* two minutes, thirty seconds, mark.” (*The Avengers*)
- 42) Tony Stark: “I got a nuke coming in, it’s gonna blow *in* less than a minute.” (*The Avengers*)
- 43) News reporter: “And I have to say, *in* all my years of reporting, I have never seen anything like this.” (*The Avengers*)

The last example for this group presents the VISUAL FIELD IS A CONTAINER metaphor, the basis of which is drawn from “the correlation between what we see and a bounded physical space” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 58).

- 1) Pilot #1: “I’ve *got* the bogey *in my sights*.” (*Iron Man*)

### 3.3.2. Metonymy

The second type of figurative language that we consider is, according to Dancygier and Sweetser (2014), another frequently discussed type among the traditional studies of figurative language, but also one with much more profound cognitive origins (p. 100). This type is metonymy, and it refers to the substitution of a word or phrase that is closely connected to or linked with the literal word or term intended (Mezo, 1999, p. 2). It denotes a figure of speech that is “closely related to and sometimes hard to distinguish from *metaphor*” (McArthur & McArthur, 1992, p. 656). This is due to the reason that both convey association, but while metaphor does it via comparison, metonymy does so through possession and adjacency (McArthur & McArthur, 1992, p. 656). In addition, Lakoff and Johnson make a distinction between the two stating that they are “different *kinds* of processes” (1980, p. 36). To explain, metaphor is – as we have seen above – a means of structuring one concept in terms of a different one and its main objective is comprehension, whereas metonymy predominately serves a “referential function”, i.e., it enables using one thing to represent another (Lakoff & Johnson,

1980, p. 36). The difference between the two is that, in addition to being primarily a referent, metonymy also entails that understanding is provided. Apart from this, it is important to note that there is “a special case of metonymy”, traditionally referred to as synecdoche (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 36). According to Colston (2015), synecdoche is “a part-for-whole metonymy” or a figure of speech that “aligns the entirety of some referent” with some of its weaker or associated features (pp. 42, 88). Among the consulted literature it is either discussed separately or included within metonymy. However, since the authors whose work was primarily consulted for the validation of corpus analysis, namely Lakoff and Johnson (1980), include it within metonymy, the same approach is adopted in this paper.

Because they enable us to use one entity to refer to another, metonymies are also “conceptual in nature” and can be identified through linguistic terms (Kövecses, 2010, p. 173). However, while metaphors have ‘source’ and ‘target’ domains, metonymies have ‘vehicle entities’, that direct the attention or provide “mental access” to another, and ‘target entities’ to which this access is delivered (Kövecses, 2010, p. 173). Similarly to metaphor, most metonymic phrases are not standalone but can be categorised into bigger clusters that exhibit a specific link between two different types of entities (Kövecses, 2010, p. 172), and we use some of these clusters to explain and list the examples from our corpus in the following paragraphs.

To begin with, THE PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy entails that many parts could represent a whole, but certain parts determine which aspect is to be focused on (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 36). The examples from our corpus are:

- 1) Tony Stark: “I’m sorry, this is the ‘*fun-vee*.’ The ‘*hum-drum-vee*’ is back there.” (*Iron Man*) [‘Fun-vee’ being the vehicle (military Humvee) with “fun” people, and ‘hum-drum-vee’ with less or no fun people.]
- 2) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “How was the ‘*fun-vee*?’” (*Iron Man*) [See above.]
- 3) Major Allen: “Can I please get *eyes* on target?” (*Iron Man*)

- 4) Obadiah Stane: “Weapons that will help steer the world back on course, put the balance of power in our *hands*. The *right hands*.” (*Iron Man*)
- 5) General ‘Thunderbolt’ Ross: “Give me *eyes* down there!” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 6) Agent Coulson: “I need *eyes* up high, with a gun.” (*Thor*)
- 7) Laufey: “I hope it’s true, so that you may know your death came at the *hand* of Laufey.” (*Thor*)
- 8) Colonel Chester Phillips: “Get *your ass* up out of that dirt and stand in that line at attention till somebody comes tells you what to do.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 9) Colonel Chester Phillips: “The Strategic Scientific Reserve is an Allied effort made up of the *best minds* in the free world.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 10) Dancing girls: “Forceful and ready to defend *the red, white, and blue*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)”
- 11) Steve Rogers: “Couldn’t call *my ride*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 12) Colonel Chester Phillips: “I want every *Allied eyeball* looking for that main Hydra base.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 13) Nick Fury: “I want *every living soul* not working rescue looking for that briefcase.” (*The Avengers*)
- 14) Agent Coulson: “We’re sweeping every wirelessly accessible camera on the planet. Cell phones, laptops... If it’s connected to a satellite, it’s *eyes and ears* for us.” (*The Avengers*)
- 15) Nick Fury: “You forced *our hand*. We had to come up with some...” (*The Avengers*)
- 16) Agent Jasper Sitwell [Intercom]: “All *hands* to stations.” (*The Avengers*)
- 17) Agent Jasper Sitwell [Intercom]: “All *hands* to crash stations immediately.” (*The Avengers*)

- 18) Nick Fury: “I want *eyes* on everything.” (*The Avengers*)
- 19) Tony Stark: “Would you like a *drink*?” (*The Avengers*)
- 20) Steve Rogers/Captain America: If you want to get up there, you’re gonna need a *ride*.”  
(*The Avengers*)

Apart from this, there was one instance of a “special case” of this metonymy, i.e., THE FACE FOR THE PERSON in the example:

- 1) Luchkov [Russian, subtitled]: “The famous Black Widow is just another *pretty face*.”  
(*The Avengers*)

The following examples present the PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT metonymy, which impacts our thinking and actions in a way that if, for example, we are thinking of *a Van Gogh*, we will not only consider the standalone piece of art, but also connect it to the artist alongside his techniques, artistic vision, or the contributions to the history of art as well as have a deep respect for any piece of the author’s artwork (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 39).

- 1) Pepper Potts: “He’s got another buyer for *the Jackson Pollock* in the wings.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Samuel Sterns: “What... We could get *the Nobel* for this!” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 3) Pepper Potts: “You are not taking down *the Barnett Newman* and hanging that up.”  
(*Iron Man 2*)
- 4) Tony Stark: “Gold faced, brown band. *The Jaeger*.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 5) Tony Stark: “I think she wants *the Gallagher*!” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 6) Timothy ‘Dum Dum’ Dugan: “Not exactly *a Buick*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

Then, several instances of the OBJECT USED FOR USER metonymy were found, which suggest that in our minds we can refer to a person by some object they are using at a certain moment:

- 1) Pepper Potts: “They’ve been dry-cleaned and pressed, and there’s a *car* waiting for you outside that will take you anywhere you’d like to go.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “Call off *the Raptors*.” (*Iron Man*) [Aircraft nickname for the people controlling them.]
- 3) Soldier: “*Snipers* are covering Alpha sector.” (*The Incredible Hulk*) [People using snipers.]

Next, in the INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE metonymy, the institution will be closely related to the people in them and connect the whole institution to the actions of the people inside. This is exemplified in the following:

- 1) Tony Stark: “That’s how *America* does it.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) Pepper Potts: “You know, we’ve been approached already by the *DOD*, the *FBI*, the *CIA*...” (*Iron Man*)
- 3) Tony Stark: “I would have asked him how he felt about what *this company* did.” (*Iron Man*)
- 4) Newscaster: “*Stark Industries!* I’ve got one recommendation! Ready? Ready? Sell, sell, sell! Abandon ship! (...) Let me show you the new *Stark Industries* business plan! Look, that’s a weapons *company* that doesn’t make weapons!” (*Iron Man*)
- 5) Obadiah Stane: “The *board* is claiming you have post-traumatic stress.” (*Iron Man*)
- 6) Obadiah Stane: “Tony, the *board* has rights, too.” (*Iron Man*)
- 7) Obadiah Stane: “I think I got the *board* right where we want them.” (*Iron Man*)
- 8) Christine Everhart: “‘Cause I was referring to *your company’s* involvement in this latest atrocity.” (*Iron Man*)
- 9) Christine Everhart: “Well, *your company* did.” (*Iron Man*)
- 10) Major Allen: “Put me through to *State*.” (*Iron Man*)



- 11) CAOC Analyst #4: “Wasn’t *Air Force!*” (*Iron Man*) [Responsible for the interference in Gulmira.]
- 12) Major Allen: “We got the *CIA* on the line?” (*Iron Man*)
- 13) CAOC Analyst #4: “It wasn’t *Navy.*” (*Iron Man*) [See 11).]
- 14) CAOC Analyst #1: “Wasn’t *Marines.*” (*Iron Man*) [See 11).]
- 15) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “As for the unexpected turn of events on the ground in Gulmira, it is still unclear who or what intervened, but I can assure you that the *United States government* was not involved.” (*Iron Man*)
- 16) Obadiah Stane: “It’s a shame the *government* didn’t approve it.” (*Iron Man*)
- 17) General ‘Thunderbolt’ Ross: “Let me emphasize that what I’m about to share with you is tremendously sensitive, both to me personally and the *Army.*” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 18) General ‘Thunderbolt’ Ross: “As far as I’m concerned, that man’s whole body is property of the *US Army.*” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 19) Samuel Sterns: “I hate the *government* just as much as anyone, but you’re being a little paranoid, don’t you think?” (*The Incredible Hulk*)
- 20) Marshal: “You are hereby ordered to appear before the *Senate Armed Services Committee* tomorrow morning at 9 am.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 21) Pepper Potts: “*Stark* is in complete disarray.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 22) Tony Stark: “If it pleases the *court*, which it does.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 23) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “I’ve been on the phone with the *National Guard* all day, trying to talk them out of rolling tanks up the PCH, knocking down your front door and taking these.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 24) James ‘Rhodey’ Rhodes: “*Edwards Tower*, this is Lieutenant Colonel James Rhodes, inbound from three miles east at 5,000 feet...” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 25) Justin Hammer: “Now I need suits. The *government* wants suits.” (*Iron Man 2*)

- 26) General: “This ought to get the *Senate* off my ass.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 27) Justin Hammer: “For *America* and its *allies*, *Hammer Industries* is reporting for...”  
(*Iron Man 2*)
- 28) Pepper Potts: “I need *NYPD*, please.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 29) Man #1: “Looked like the whole *Army* was coming when we left.” (*Thor*)
- 30) Jane Foster: “Well, whatever it is, the *government* seems to think it’s theirs.” (*Thor*)
- 31) Erik Selvig: “*S.H.I.E.L.D.* showed up and he wasn’t heard from again.” (*Thor*)
- 32) Jane Foster: “*S.H.I.E.L.D.* Whatever they are, they’re gonna do everything in their power to make sure this research never sees the light of day.” (*Thor*)
- 33) Erik Selvig: “But you won’t be able to convince the *scientific community* of any of it.”  
(*Thor*)
- 34) Search team leader: “A *Russian oil team* called it in about 18 hours ago.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 35) S.H.I.E.L.D. Lt: “*Base*, we’re in.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 36) S.H.I.E.L.D. Lt: “*Base*, get me a line to the Colonel.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 37) Newsreel announcer: “Meanwhile, overseas, our brave boys are showing *the Axis powers* that the price of freedom is never too high.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 38) Newsreel announcer: “Together with *Allied forces*, we’ll face any threat, no matter the size.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 39) Colonel Chester Phillips: “All the grovelling I had to do in front of Senator What’s-His-Name’s *committees*?” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

- 40) Dr. Abraham Erskine: “So many people forget that the first country the *Nazis* invaded was their own. (...) So he sends the head of *Hydra*, his research division. (...)” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 41) Johann Schmidt: “His serum is the *Allies*’ only defence against this power we now possess.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 42) Krueger: “Hail *Hydra*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 43) Johann Schmidt: “*Hydra* is assembling an arsenal to destroy my enemies in one stroke, wherever they are, regardless of how many forces they possess, all in a matter of hours.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 44) Brandt: “Colonel Phillips, my *committee* is demanding answers.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 45) Colonel Chester Phillips: “As of today, the *SSR* is being retasked.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 46) Colonel Chester Phillips: “We are taking the fight to *Hydra*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 47) Steve Rogers: “Sergeant Barnes said that *Hydra* shipped all the parts to another facility that isn’t on this map.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 48) Howard Stark: “Although *Hydra*’s not going to attack you with a pocketknife.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 49) Johann Schmidt/Red skull: “Tomorrow, *Hydra* will stand master of the world, borne to victory on the wings of the Valkyrie. (...) Hail *Hydra*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 50) Steve Rogers: “I’m not gonna stop until all of *Hydra* is dead or captured.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)

- 51) Colonel Chester Phillips: “*Hydra’s* last base is here.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 52) Nick Fury: “NASA didn’t authorise Selvig to go to test phase.” (*The Avengers*)
- 53) Bruce Banner: “*S.H.I.E.L.D.* How did they find me?” (*The Avengers*)
- 54) Clint Barton: “*S.H.I.E.L.D.* has no shortage of enemies, Doctor.” (*The Avengers*)
- 55) Clint Barton: “Especially if *S.H.I.E.L.D.* knows you need it.” (*The Avengers*)
- 56) Bruce Banner: “So, why didn’t *S.H.I.E.L.D.* bring him in on the Tesseract project?” (*The Avengers*)
- 57) Tony Stark: “I should probably look into that once my decryption programme finishes breaking into all of *S.H.I.E.L.D.’s* secure files.” (*The Avengers*)
- 58) Tony Stark: “In a few hours, I’ll know every dirty secret *S.H.I.E.L.D.* has ever tried to hide.” (*The Avengers*)
- 59) Tony Stark: “An *intelligence organization* that fears intelligence? Historically, not awesome.” (*The Avengers*)
- 60) Natasha Romanoff: “Before I worked for *S.H.I.E.L.D.*, I uh... well, I made a name for myself. (...) I got on *S.H.I.E.L.D.’s* radar in a bad way.” (*The Avengers*)
- 61) Steve Rogers: “Phase Two is *S.H.I.E.L.D.* uses the Cube to make weapons.” (*The Avengers*)
- 62) Bruce Banner:” I’d like to know why *S.H.I.E.L.D.* is using the Tesseract to build weapons of mass destruction.” (*The Avengers*)
- 63) Natasha Romanoff: “*S.H.I.E.L.D.* monitors potential threats.” (*The Avengers*)
- 64) Young cop: “It’s going to be an hour before they can scramble the *National Guard.*” (*The Avengers*)
- 65) Police sergeant: “*National Guard?* Does the *army* know what’s happening here?” (*The Avengers*)

- 66) Agent Maria Hill: “Sir. The *Council* is on.” (*The Avengers*)
- 67) World security council #2: “Director Fury, the *council* has made a decision...” (*The Avengers*)
- 68) Nick Fury: “I recognize the *council* has made a decision, but given that it’s a stupid ass decision, I’ve elected to ignore it.” (*The Avengers*)
- 69) News reporter: “The *army* is here trying to contain the violence but clearly, it is outmatched.” (*The Avengers*)

The following collection of examples encompass THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT metonymy in which *the place* is used to provide the mental access for and refer to *the event* that occurred or is connected to it:

- 1) Christine Everhart: “Listen, is it the first time you’ve seen each other since the *Senate*?” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 2) Nick Fury: “I’ve been hearing about the *New Mexico* situation. Your work has impressed a lot of people who are much smarter than I am.” (*Thor*)
- 3) Steve Rogers: “I need the casualty list from *Azzano*.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 4) Loki: “Can you wipe out that much red? Dreykov’s daughter, *São Paulo*, the hospital fire?” (*The Avengers*) [After Natasha says how she wants to wipe out red from her ledger, he brings up to a certain event that Barton told him about and she dreads the thought of.]
- 5) Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow: “Just like *Budapest* all over again!” (*The Avengers*)
- 6) Clint Barton/Hawkeye: “You and I remember *Budapest* very differently.” (*The Avengers*)

Furthermore, a few examples of THE WHOLE FOR THE PART metonymy were found, for which Kövecses mentions the example “*America is a powerful country*” (2010, p. 173).

- 1) Ceremony narrator: “Today, Tony Stark has changed the face of the weapons industry by ensuring freedom and protecting *America* and her interests around the globe.” (*Iron Man*)
- 2) News reporter: “When Mr Stark announced he was indeed Iron Man, he was making a promise to *America*.” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 3) Justin Hammer: “For *America* and its allies, Hammer Industries is reporting for...” (*Iron Man 2*)

The eighth list of examples illustrates the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy for which Kövecses introduces the example “*She shampooed her hair*” (2010, p. 173).

- 1) Pepper Potts: “What, are you gonna *google* her now?” (*Iron Man 2*)
- 2) Steve Rogers: “Keep our boys *armed* and ready, and the Germans will think twice about trying to get the drop on us.” (*Captain America: The First Avenger*)
- 3) Steve Rogers/Captain America: “Thor, you’ve got to try and *bottleneck* that portal, slow ‘em down. You got the lightning, *light* the bastards *up*.” (*The Avengers*)

Finally, Kövecses introduced the TIME FOR AN OBJECT type of metonymy with “*The 8:40 just arrived*” as its example (2010, p. 173). The following example shows this notion:

- 1) Nick Fury: “I got a *two o’clock*.” (*Iron Man 2*)

#### 3.4. Discussion: data overview and research limitations

Following a thorough literature review and a close observation of the selected films, our objectives were to get a better understanding of figurative language and analyse the presence of certain types of figurative language in the chosen corpus. Based on this, the research involved

multiple stages such as a closer observation of the literature and films, a selection of the films and types of figurative language, and, lastly, data collection, validation, and organization. The research corpus included six Marvel Cinematic Universe films and two figurative language types. As a reminder, the films were *Iron Man* (2008), *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), *Iron Man 2* (2010), *Thor* (2011), *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011), *The Avengers* (2012), i.e., the films that make up Phase One of the MCU, and the types were metaphor and metonymy because they were the most interesting ones when it comes to our “cognitive activities” (Kövecses, 2010, p. 171), and the ways in which we think of certain concepts or use the language to explain our perception of the world.

Considering our research questions and hypotheses, it can be argued that figurative language was used in the Marvel Cinematic Universe films, which in turn supports the views that it is not only present in poetry but can also be found in other situations, uses of language, and works of art or media types around us, as in films in this case. However, in contrast to discovering figurative language in poetry, uncovering it in films seems to have required a more intentional effort and preliminary steps prior to analysis. What is meant by this is that, before our analysis, we first had to make sure there were no missing parts from the scripts. This required watching the films slowly along with the scripts and even rewinding or pausing for certain scenes, which took time but also helped us understand the overall contexts and highlight all possible examples. When this was done, we could proceed with the analysis for which a lot of focus was needed, and which was also done more than once so that nothing is overlooked. Secondly, we could see that various types of figurative language were used within our corpus; however, due to the fact that we focused mainly on metaphors and metonymies we cannot comment more on the frequencies of those other types, so we leave this as an idea for some further research. Additionally, among the ones we focused on, the greater number of the examples included metaphorical rather than metonymical expressions, which strengthens the

fact that metaphors are pervasive in everyday life. Then, given the prevalence of metaphors, there were many different source and target domains. An overview and examination of these will be given in the following paragraph. Finally, as we could have seen above, some types of both metaphors and metonymies proved to be more productive than others. In the case of metonymy, some categories or clusters had more realizations both generally and across the films, which we will also comment below.

In terms of the results of the research, a total of four hundred and twenty-eight examples of metaphors and one hundred and twelve instances of metonymies was discovered. First, let us examine Table 3, which displays all the occurrences of conceptual metaphors that were identified in the corpus.

**Table 3 Overview of conceptual metaphors found in the corpus**

<b>Structural</b>		
UNDERSTANDING	IS SEEING	55
	IS GRASPING	19
(THE OBJECT OF) LOVE	IS APPETIZING FOOD	3
	IS A DISEASE/ AN ILLNESS	1
	IS MADNESS	2
TIME	IS MONEY	12
	IS A LIMITED RESOURCE	3
	IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY	14
LIFE	IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION	21
	IS A JOURNEY	41
	IS A GAMBLING GAME	7
	IS A STORY	9
	IS A SPORTING GAME	18
SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS	ARE PLANTS	2
CONTROL	IS HOLDING (SOMETHING IN THE HAND)	22
EMOTION (ANGER, AFFECTION, ENTHUSIASM)	IS HEAT/FIRE	3
	IS WARMTH	1
	IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER	3
SIGNIFICANT	IS BIG	29
PEOPLE	ARE ANIMALS	12
IDEAS	ARE PLANTS (FRUIT)	2
	ARE RESOURCES	1
	ARE FOOD	2
	ARE FASHIONS	1
CHANGES	ARE MOVEMENTS	5
COMPANY	IS A BUILDING	1
ARGUMENT	IS A JOURNEY	4



	IS WAR	1
CREATION	IS BIRTH	4
		= 298
<b>Oriental</b>		
CONSCIOUS/ UNCONSCIOUS	IS UP/ IS DOWN	8/ 6
HAVING CONTROL/ BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL	IS UP/ IS DOWN	4/ 3
MORE/ LESS	IS UP/ IS DOWN	7/ 5
FORESEEABLE FUTURE EVENTS	ARE UP (and AHEAD)	4
HIGH STATUS/ LOW STATUS	IS UP/ IS DOWN	4/ 1
GOOD/ BAD	IS UP/ IS DOWN	1/ 2
VISIBLE/ INVISIBLE	IS UP/ IS DOWN	0/ 3
		= 48
<b>Ontological</b>		
(THE OBJECT OF) LOVE	IS A SMALL CHILD	1
	IS A POSSESSED OBJECT	2
IDEAS	ARE OBJECTS	16
SOCIETY	IS A PERSON	6
MIND	IS A CONTAINER	5
TIME	IS A MOVING OBJECT	8
	IS A CONTAINER	43
VISUAL FIELDS	ARE CONTAINERS	1
		= 82
Total = 428		

From this it is evident that a total of thirty-two target domains and thirty-seven source domains were discovered. The majority of them, as well as listed examples, are structural metaphors, indicating that this was the most productive category. This discovery proves to be consistent with the widely held belief that they offer “the richest” source for expanding upon different concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 61; Kövecses, 2010, p. 37). Subsequently, by the amount of “cognitive structuring” they provide, the category of ontological metaphors would be ranked second, and orientational metaphors would be last, which again aligns with the observations made by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), as well as Kövecses (2010). Also, the prevailing target domain proved to be LIFE, with five source domains and a total of seventy-five examples. However, *time* didn’t prove to be as significant a concept as it was expected, because the target

domains UNDERSTANDING, SIGNIFICANT, or CONTROL all surpass it in the number of examples.

Next, Table 4 provides an outline of the number of metonymies found in our corpus.

**Table 4 Overview of metonymies found in the corpus**

THE PART FOR THE WHOLE	20
THE FACE FOR THE PERSON	1
PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT	6
OBJECT USED FOR USER	3
INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE	69
THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT	6
THE WHOLE FOR THE PART	3
INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION	3
TIME FOR AN OBJECT	1
Total = 112	

Within these nine groups of metonymies, the most frequent were instances of INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE, with sixty-nine metonymic expressions illustrating it, and the two least frequent were examples for THE FACE FOR THE PERSON cluster found in *The Avengers* and for TIME FOR AN OBJECT found within *Iron Man 2*.

Lastly, we present a consolidated table that includes quantitative information regarding metaphors and metonymies identified in particular films.

**Table 5 Overview of findings in specific films**

Film	Metaphors			Metonymies
	Structural	Orientalional	Ontological	
<i>Iron Man</i> (2008)	72	17	19	24
<i>The Incredible Hulk</i> (2008)	17	1	5	6
<i>Iron Man 2</i> (2010)	73	7	17	17
<i>Thor</i> (2011)	31	4	10	8
<i>Captain America: The First Avenger</i> (2011)	44	3	19	26
<i>The Avengers</i> (2012)	61	16	12	31
	= 298	= 48	= 82	Total = 112
	Total = 428			

Following this, when it comes to metaphor count, *Iron Man* ranks highest with a total of one hundred and eight examples and *The Incredible Hulk* ranks last with a total of 23 examples. On the other hand, when it comes to the overall number of metonymies for a certain film, *Captain*

*America: The First Avenger* would rank first with twenty-six examples, and *The Incredible Hulk*, having only 6 examples, would once again come last.

Nonetheless, the aims as well as the whole process of our research changed a few times as certain obstacles occurred. First of these was the poor quality of the transcripts obtained due to the lack of correct and available ones. This prolonged the analysis part of the research as the transcripts were then obtained from two sites but still had to be checked while watching the films again to ensure that nothing is wrong or missing in the analysis. In future research, it would be better to do this step at the very beginning, as a part of the first time watching the films one thinks to examine. Another one was the complexity of the topic in the sense that it is broad and there are numerous perceptions on it that do not always coincide with one another. For instance, one might consider either the differentiation between literal and figurative language or the fact that there are no clear-cut categorizations of figurative language. In addition, although it can be challenging to detect figurative language, careful consideration of the context and a lot of focus might help avoid making mistakes. Consequently, this research was narrowed down to include only two specific categories, with the requirement that they are supported by established theory. A potential approach for further research might be to focus only on a single scholar's classification, so a greater variety of types is included based on the chosen scholar's classification. Moreover, an alternative selection of films could be made, or a completely different corpus.

#### 4. Conclusion

The dynamic mode of human communication used for expressing ideas or sharing information, i.e., language can be literal or figurative. Besides being used only in communication in person, language can also occur in different types of mass media such as the Internet and film. The use of figurative language was traditionally considered to be a unique human characteristic, necessitating distinct linguistic and cognitive abilities than those used in everyday life. Nonetheless, the increase in research on it led to the recognition of its prevalence and importance in thought and language as well as its inclusion into other forms of written and spoken language apart from, for example, poetry. The aim of this master's thesis was to present an overview of the existing theory and research trends in the study of figurative language and, more importantly, to analyse the use of figurative language in Marvel Cinematic universe films. After learning more about figurative language classifications and the fact that some types may not always be figurative, following a certain categorization was discarded and the focus was placed solely on metaphors and metonymies. Namely, these two types were the most frequently discussed ones among a number of prominent scholars but are also interesting semantically as they both convey association, but metaphor through comparison, while metonymy through possession and proximity. The corpus included six MCU films that form the first phase of the franchise (*Iron Man*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Iron Man 2*, *Thor*, *Captain America: The First Avenger*, and *The Avengers*). A total of four hundred and twenty-eight metaphors and one hundred and twelve metonymies was found. Two of our hypotheses, about the existence of figurative language outside poetry and the prevalence of metaphor in everyday life, were confirmed. Another two were partly confirmed and partly proven wrong. To explain, the target domain LIFE proved to be significant in the context of superhero films, but the domain TIME was of less significance, at least in the chosen six superhero films. When it comes to metonymy, the most frequent were the examples for INSTITUTION FOR THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE

metonymy instead of THE PART FOR THE WHOLE, which changes the expected ranking. It was also discovered that *Iron Man* had the greatest number of metaphors, *The Avengers* had the greatest number of metonymies, whereas *The Incredible Hulk* had the lowest number of both metaphors and metonymies.

Finally, this thesis aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the theory of figurative language and include as many examples as possible within the analysis. However, some concepts only had a small number of realizations of both metaphorical and metonymical expressions, which points to the fact that some concepts were not of a great significance in the examined six films. Nonetheless, this research might be a starting point for the further inclusion of more films of the same franchise, or a different corpus completely.

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## **7. Figurative Language in Selected *Marvel Cinematic Universe* Films: Summary and key words**

Figurative language was traditionally regarded as a unique trait of humans that was tied solely to poetry. However, due to the increase in research, its prevalence in everyday life was recognised and it became included in the analyses of other forms of spoken and written language. This master's thesis examines the use of metaphor and metonymy in Marvel Cinematic Universe films. The corpus included six MCU films that are part of the first phase of the franchise (*Iron Man*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Iron Man 2*, *Thor*, *Captain America: The First Avenger*, and *The Avengers*). A total of 428 metaphors and 112 metonymies were found and they were all distributed into specific categories. When it comes to metaphors, the most numerous were the examples for the target domain LIFE, and in the case of metonymies the examples in which INSTITUTION stands for PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE. Apart from this, the greatest number of metaphors was found in *Iron Man*, of metonymies in *The Avengers*, and the lowest number of both was found in *The Incredible Hulk*.

**Keywords:** figurative language, metaphor, metonymy, Marvel Cinematic Universe

## **8. Figurativni jezik u odabranim *Marvel Cinematic Universe* filmovima: Sažetak i ključne riječi**

Figurativni jezik tradicionalno se smatrao jedinstvenom ljudskom osobinom koja je bila vezana isključivo za poeziju. No zbog porasta istraživanja, prepoznata je njegova raširenost u svakodnevnom životu te je uključen u istraživanja drugih oblika govornog i pisanog jezika. Ovaj diplomski rad analizira upotrebu metafore i metonimije u *Marvel Cinematic Universe* filmovima. Korpus uključuje šest MCU filmova koji su dio prve faze franšize (*Iron Man*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Iron Man 2*, *Thor*, *Captain America: The First Avenger* i *The Avengers*). Sveukupno je pronađeno 428 metafora i 112 metonimija, a koje su raspoređene u određenu kategoriju. Kada se radi o metafori, najbrojniji su bili primjeri ciljne domene ŽIVOT, a u slučaju metonimije primjeri u kojima INSTITUCIJA zamjenjuje LJUDE ODGOVORNE (ZA INSTITUCIJU). Najviše metafora bilo je u filmu *Iron Man*, metonimija u *The Avengers*, a najmanji broj jedne i druge u *The Incredible Hulk*.

**Ključne riječi:** figurativni jezik, metafora, metonimija, *Marvel Cinematic Universe*