

*The Role of Conceptual Metaphors in Political Discourse: Framing  
Public Perception*

Manel BRAHMI<sup>1,\*</sup>, Asma NESBA<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Laboratory of Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis, University of El Oued, Algeria,  
brahmi-manel@univ-eloued.dz

( <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9266-8189>)

<sup>2</sup>Laboratory of Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis, University of El Oued, Algeria, nesba-  
asma@univ-eloued.dz

( <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6038-2539>)

Received: 26/10/2025

Accepted: 04/06/2026

**Abstract:**

Political discourse is an effective tool that has a significant impact on influencing political decision making and shaping public perception. Politicians often resort to the use of metaphors in their political speeches. This study aims at exploring the cognitive effects of metaphorical language on public perception in political communication. Four American presidential political speeches were analysed through a qualitative content analysis. The results revealed that metaphors affect public opinion by facilitating the comprehension of complex political concepts, evoking citizens' emotional responses, and making politicians more persuasive in their communications. The current research contributes to the fields of cognitive linguistics and critical discourse analysis by providing comprehensive, qualitative evidence of the strategic use of metaphors in contemporary political discourse to influence public opinion and cognitive models, thereby demonstrating the methodological synergy between critical and linguistic approaches to discourse analysis.

**Keywords:** cognitive influences; metaphorical language; political discourse; public perception

\*Manel BRAHMI

## I. INTRODUCTION

Political discourse is essential to democratic societies, functioning as a crucial mechanism for conveying the beliefs, values, and policy goals of political leaders. In politics, effective communication is essential as it can influence public opinion, garner support, and ultimately determine the outcomes for politicians and policies. To achieve these goals, politicians leverage language as a strategic instrument to construct persuasive narratives that resonate with the citizens. Metaphorical language is a prominent linguistic characteristic that permeates political communication.

The incorporation of metaphors as a component of figurative language seeks to assist listeners in comprehending the significance of a word or term. Politicians adeptly utilize language to convince individuals that their perspectives, goals, and concepts are fair while endeavoring to render their messaging vivid and comprehensible to the public. To achieve persuasion and understanding, political leaders must employ a range of linguistic tools. Moreover, politicians diligently endeavor to resonate with the emotions, needs, and aspirations of their audience. Metaphors are powerful linguistic devices that can help politicians to achieve these effortlessly and in an effective manner. In fact, the purpose of politicians' speeches is not to declare facts, but to be persuasive, successful in conveying their intended meanings, and awakening their audience's emotions. For this reason, this research aims to explore how the use of language can serve politicians in their political speeches. More specifically, it endeavours to get in-depth information on the role of metaphors in the political discourse. This study then attempts to answer the following question:

How does the use of metaphorical language in political discourse influence public perception?

### 1. Literature Review

#### 1.1. Political Discourse

Politics revolves around power; the capacity to make decisions, direct and shape the behaviours of others, influence their thoughts, and values. Language, being a potent force, holds the ability to affect public opinion. Rozina & Karapetjana (2009) described language as "the universal capacity of humans in all societies to communicate" (p.113), while they defined politics as "the art of governance" (p.113). Chilton & Christina (2002) further characterized politics as "a struggle for power between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it" (p.5). According to Chilton (2004), regardless of how politics is defined, there is "a linguistic, discursive, and communicative dimension" (p.4) to political action, which is sometimes acknowledged by politicians and theorists, but it can also be unnoticed or completely disregarded.

Numerous studies displayed the formidable impact of language wielded in the political sphere, serving as a potent tool that can be harnessed in several ways to shape public opinion. Obeng (1997) claimed that politicians use language as a tool for manipulation. On the other hand, Fairclough (2002) asserted that political language is "the lifeblood or mother's milk of politicians because communication is the essential activity that links the various parts of society together and allows them to function as integrated whole" (p.85).

The tension between considering political language to be manipulative and necessary for maintaining social cohesiveness draws attention to the nuanced moral and practical functions it serves. Regardless of its apparent intent, political language functions within a dynamic public realm, continuously negotiating meaning, legitimacy, and permission. Discourse is the medium via which political beliefs, programs, and public support (or opposition) are garnered, hence studying its mechanisms is essential to comprehend democratic processes and power relations (Fairclough, 1992 and Wodak,

2009).

Political discourse has historically been the focus of politicians and historians, but it was not until the early 1980s that linguistic studies started exploring this subject matter (Wilson, 2005). For Chilton (2008), political discourse is “the use of language to do the business of politics and includes the use of applied meanings, persuasive rhetoric, and the language to arouse political emotions” (p.226). Moreover, Wodak (2009) argued that political discourse includes a variety of genres like political speeches, press conferences, interviews with politicians, and media reports on political events. A plethora of studies (Howe, 1988; Wodak, 2009; Borčić et al., 2016) has shown that the necessity of persuasion for political actions reflected in various genres, with language playing a crucial role in the political domain. More importantly, like any other types of discourse, political discourse exemplifies the close relationship between language and different social practices. Chilton (2004) made an intriguing observation, suggesting that language and political behaviour extend beyond mere instances of social practices; they rooted in cognitive features of the human mind.

This cognitive component is especially important because political discourse frequently aims to appeal to the public's preconceived notions and biases. Through the use of cognitive shortcuts, such as framing and particularly metaphor, political communicators seek to impact emotional reactions and intuitive understandings directly, avoiding purely rational evaluation. Political discourse analysis thus goes beyond a mere study of language structures to a more profound investigation of how language actively shapes and navigates humans' mental landscapes, influencing public opinion at a cognitive level (Turner, 1996 and Fauconnier & Turner, 2008). In addition, while traditionally focused on spoken and written text, multi-modal elements, visuals, gestures, tone of voice, and digital platforms, are increasingly incorporated into modern political discourse, all of which contribute to the persuasive impact and complexity of political communication (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001 and Mayr & Machin, 2012). Collectively, these components and linguistic decisions provide thorough, powerful messages that appeal to a wide range of audiences.

### **1.2. The Concept of Metaphor**

Metaphors, as a form of figurative language, finds its presence not only in political speeches and dis-courses but also across a variety of fields. A metaphor, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2020), is a “figure of speech in which a word or phrase that literally denotes one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them”. It establishes a comparison between two terms and connects dissimilar concepts without the use of “as” or “like”. Through the deliberate use of language, this comparison of two entities from “different classes of experience” results in a well understanding (Burkholder & Henry, 2009). Likewise, Beard (2000) described metaphors as the use of a word or phrase that compares one idea to another. For example, when a politician is said to be “taking flak” from an opponent, politics is being metaphorically compared to warfare, and the politician is figuratively being attacked. Conversely, it may be the politician who is “on the offensive” targeting opponents by “launching an attack” on their policies (Beard, 2000, p.19).

The general belief among most people, according to Lakoff & Johnson (1981), is that metaphor is primarily a tool for poetic imagination and rhetorical embellishment, predominantly restricted to language. However, these two scholars have found that metaphors are pervasive in everyday life, going beyond language to include humans' actions and thoughts. Lakoff & Johnson (1981) asserted that the ordinary conceptual system, which serves as the foundation for both humans' thinking and behaviours, is fundamentally rooted in metaphorical expressions.

Kovecses (2010) presented a cognitive perception of metaphors as the process of

“understanding one conceptual domain (the target) in terms of another conceptual domain (the source)” (Kovecses, 2010, p.4). Frameworks of connected knowledge serve as the foundation for the comprehension of complex concepts. Comparing these complex ideas to easily experienced things helps in understanding them. For instance, the metaphor “LOVE IS A JOURNEY.” “JOURNEY” is the more tangible notion employed to shed light on the abstract concept of “LOVE” in this instance. A trip offers a relatable lens through which to understand the less tangible idea of love. Simply, when talking about life as a journey, ideas as food... these are examples of conceptual metaphors. This view can be summarized as “conceptual domain A is conceptual domain B” (Pavlikova, 2020, p. 316), which constitutes a conceptual metaphor. Additionally, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) proposed a structured relationship between the source and target domains, which is defined by “systematic correspondences, the alignment of elements from one domain with those from the other. These connections, also referred to as mappings, are evident in the “LOVE IS A JOURNEY” metaphor, where lovers are represented by travelers and relationships by cars. The unidirectional character of these mappings, however, is highlighted by Lakoff and Johnson (1981), moving from the concrete source to the abstract target domain. The unidirectionality principle implies that although it can be thought of love as a journey, it can not be usually interpret a journey in terms of love.

Furthermore, with metaphors, speakers selectively use elements of a source domain to understand a target domain, resulting in an unequal and incomplete transfer of meaning between domains. Lakoff refers to this idea as “partial metaphorical utilization,” which indicates that not all aspects of the source domain are retained during the metaphorical process. For example, the metaphor of “TIME IS MONEY,” which expresses the intrinsic worth of time, this is evident in phrases like “I have invested a lot of time,” and “I can not spare more time.” Here, time is metaphorically used to represent financial ideas like saving and investing. However, money's physical attributes, such as being pocketed or kept in a bank can not transferred to time. Consequently, Lakoff and Johnson contended that each metaphorical mapping creates a distinct set of correspondences between elements in the source and target domains. These correspondences project patterns from the source onto the target once they are activated. Crucially, these cross-domain relationships are rooted in humans’ cultural and physical experiences rather than being arbitrary. This implies a close connection between the mind and body, meaning that their experiences with the physical world impact and possibly even determine their cognitive processes.

Studies on cognitive metaphors and their linguistic expressions have identified a recurring collection of source metaphors that are commonly employed to shape common target ideas. Kövecses (2010) lists a number of common source domains, such as the human body, health, animals, plants, buildings, tools and machinery, games, cooking, economic transactions, temperature variations, light, physical forces, and directions.

Based on their cognitive function, these metaphors are categorized into three types: structural, ontological, and orientational. Structural metaphors offer a comprehensive framework drawn from a tangible experience. For example, the metaphor of argument is a war, In order to understand the mechanics of a verbal conflict the terminology and tactics of war, attacking weak areas, defending our positions, even retreating are used, rather than actually fighting with swords during a dispute. Navigating the intangible battlefield of ideas is made easier by the familiarity with the strategy and results of war (Lakoff, 1987 and Kövecses, 2002). Orientational metaphors serve to ground abstract concepts in fundamental spatial perceptions. Like both “up” and “down.” Since “up” frequently indicates positive, more, or happiness (e.g., “I feel

up today”) and “down” indicates bad, less, or sadness (e.g., “She feels down”), these metaphors are ingrained in human perspective (Lakoff & Johnson 1980 and Kövecses, 2002). This is not arbitrary; there is a constant logic to the way humans relate meaning and direction, creating a logical framework for comprehending feelings and states of existence. The third type is ontological metaphors give abstract ideas life and substance. They enable to handle abstract concepts as though they were tangible things. To illustrate this with the metaphor of the mind is an entity. The speaker considers “processing information” or “having a sharp mind” as if the mind is a physical object with manipulable properties. These metaphors aid in the classification, measurement, and reasoning of experiences that lack physical form. They even include Container Metaphors (such as “full of anger”), Entity and Substance Metaphors, which transform feelings or occurrences into tangible objects that are simpler to understand and talk about (Kövecses, 2002).

### **1.3. Metaphors and Political Discourse**

In politics, metaphors are powerful and essential linguistic devices for expressing political issues, communicating ideas and ideologies in a way that elicits agreement from the audience, and imposing particular moral or ethical standards on the public (Jasim, 2018). Additionally, metaphors are employed as a persuasive tool, as Charteris-Black (2004) stated that its use in politics constitutes “a fundamentally persuasive discourse act” (p.13). Therefore, one can emphasize some aspects while ignoring others when using metaphors to persuade. Moreover, metaphors found in discourse are said to construct “cognitive models that organize thought and action” (p.88) as noted by Charteris-Black (2004). In this context, metaphors play a vital role in shaping how individuals perceive and understand political concepts and events in discourse.

Mio (1997) contended that there are more theoretical papers than empirical studies on metaphors that examine the actual efficacy of this rhetorical strategy. Consequently, it is still unclear how effective or even deceptive metaphors are. Despite this, theoretically speaking, the majority of authors agreed on that the metaphorical language is useful for demystifying complex ideas pertaining to politics, the economy, and various social issues that politicians often discuss.

As discussed by Chilton (2004) and Lakoff & Johnson (1981), conceptual metaphors play a pivotal role in political discourse by evoking familiar concepts like war, sport, disease, etc. making them recognizable by the public. Howe (1988) discovered that metaphors from sports and warfare predominate in American political discourse, giving the impression that politics is either a predetermined competition or an un-predictable use of power. Nevertheless, there is a significant problem with how women understand sports metaphors. Howe (1988) confirmed that men have historically been more involved in politics, which help to explain why sports metaphors are often used in political discourse. Furthermore, Chilton (2004), Kövecses (2010), and Lakoff & Johnson (1981) argued that politicians commonly use metaphors related to games, journeys, and personification. Thus, metaphorization becomes a vital component of political discourse.

### **1.4. Previous Studies**

According to Lesz (2011), metaphors have a crucial impact on people perceptions and comprehensions of complex ideas, frequently without conscious awareness. She noted that even native speakers may not always recognize metaphors in ordinary speech, leading to an unconscious internalization of these linguistic structures. Pikalo (2008) and Karimova (2016) provide additional evidence for this hidden impact, which emphasizes the power of metaphors to quietly mold beliefs and perspectives.

Metaphors can invigorate discourse, increasing the impact and emotional resonance of expressions. For instance, comparing a politician to “a Hitler” can elicit strong emotions and affect how the public views them. Politicians frequently use

metaphors to stir emotions, as noticed in well-known speeches like Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" and Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream", all of which to evoke strong feelings in their audience (Mio et al., 2005). Arguing in the same regard, Mio et al. (2005) claimed that more inspiration among supporters appears to be associated with the rising use of metaphors in political discourse. The main reason for this is that these speeches' emotional depth successfully conveys the required actions. Moreover, according to a study by Mio et al. (2005) on the charisma of US presidents, those who employed more metaphors in their inauguration addresses were considered more charismatic. Passages rich in metaphors were particularly inspiring, suggesting that metaphors are powerful tools for inspiration.

Wei (2001) examined the function of metaphors in influencing thought and communicating ideas, emphasizing their significance in Taiwanese election campaigns. She collected information about the interactions between voters, readers, and campaigners from newspaper and online coverage of the 1997 Taiwanese elections. Wei examined the sociocultural elements that contributed to the development of novel and potent metaphors using a cognitive and cultural framework developed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980). According to her research, metaphors that accurately depicted the sociocultural landscape of Taiwanese politics were influenced by recent social events and distinct cultural backgrounds. Her research also provided a socio-cultural analysis of particular political metaphors, demonstrating that their strategic uses extended beyond basic cognitive processes. By utilizing the cognitive approach proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Wei's work also enabled linguists to investigate both culturally unique and universal characteristics of conceptual metaphors. It proved that although conceptual metaphors come from basic human experiences, varied cultural backgrounds influence how humans perceive and employ metaphors. Therefore, Wei's (2001) study highlighted the vital role of socio-cultural contexts in the development and application of metaphors.

Unlike Wei (2001), who focused on Taiwanese political news, Vestermark (2007) studied how America is personified metaphorically in political speeches. Vestermark used Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Cognitive-Semantic Approach to examine the personification of America in the inaugural addresses of Ronald Reagan (1981), George H.W. Bush (1989), Bill Clinton (1993), and George W. Bush (2001). Her research focused on these presidents' use and interpretation of metaphors in order to identify the underlying ideas they wanted their audiences to understand. Vestermark used this method to pinpoint conceptual metaphors and investigate how they gave human characteristics to America, a non-human entity, while also elucidating the speakers' potential intentions.

Using a combination of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Cognitive Linguistics, Taiwo (2008) examined metaphors in Nigerian political speech. He concentrated on identifying metaphors and examining how discourses projected the source and target domains in their metaphorical expressions. Based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Theory of Conceptual Metaphor, he determined the three target domains that provided conceptual metaphors in his data: the nation, politicians, and politics. Taiwo (2008) specifically described the conceptual mappings of politics as battle and politics as a journey, as well as the conceptualizations of the nation as a family and as a person.

## II. Methods and Materials:

### 1. The Research Approach

The researchers adopted a qualitative approach to gain deep insights about the use of metaphors in political discourse and their impact on audience perception. This approach was thought to be the most suitable since it allows for a thorough, nuanced investigation of linguistic phenomena, allowing researchers to uncover the intricate ways that metaphors operate in certain political contexts. As Creswell & Creswell (2017) highlighted, this approach commonly centers on the methodical portrayal and thorough ex-amination of the attributes of a phenomenon or subject (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Moreover, It enables in-depth exploration of a specific case or carefully selected cases Gilbert & Stoneman (2015), which aligns with this study's focus on a small number of political speeches. Qualitative approach enables a rich interpretation of the textual material, going beyond surface-level observations to comprehend the cognitive and communication strategies incorporated into metaphorical language.

### 2. Data Collection

The study's data includes four American presidential political speeches randomly selected from delivered speeches of two American presidents, namely Barak Obama and Donald Trump. These speeches were delivered on diverse occasions and covered several topics. Specifically, Obama's two speeches include an address to the nation on the BP Oil Spill in which Barak Obama addressed the nation to discuss the environmental disaster after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. It was delivered on the 15th of June, 2010. The second one is a farewell speech which was delivered as a final goodbye speech to his supporters. It was delivered on the 20th of January, 2017. The other two speeches by Donald Trump consist of one concerning an inaugural speech in which Trump marked the beginning of his presidency, which was delivered on the 20th of January, 2017. The last speech is his address to a joint session of congress in which he discussed his legislative agenda and policy proposals. (The links to the analysed presidential speeches are attached in the appendix).

The speeches analysed in this research are the transcriptions of the published texts of those deliveries. The data was collected from distinct websites that are dedicated to United States presidential speeches and public policy.

### 3. Data Analysis

The researchers utilized qualitative content analysis to examine the dataset, permitting an "empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication" (Mayring, 2004, p.2). It is a technique for analyzing textual data and which involves more than just counting words or extracting factual data. As defined by Patton (1990), it is a process of making sense of qualitative material to identify important consistencies and meanings. Hence, the analysis identifies, analyzes, and decodes the intentions behind metaphorical expressions in political speeches, using specific examples from the data.

## III. Results and discussion :

This study's analysis of four political speeches demonstrated the use of both structural and ontological metaphors by US presidents.

### Obama's BP Oil Spill Speech Analysis

"... oil spill assaulting our shores and citizens ...". By using this metaphor, Obama simplified the complicated environmental disaster to a conflict with a harmful

force. By personifying the American oil spill as an attacker, the president made it easier for the citizens to understand the severity of the situation and comprehend the need for quick actions.

“...millions of gallons of oil that have spilled into the Gulf of Mexico is an **epidemic** one that we will be fighting for months and even years”. The analogy of the oil spill being an epidemic upholds the feeling of fear, urgency, and collective responsibility. Obama created a sense of impending crisis and the need for a coordinated effort to fight it by comparing the spill to a rapidly spreading disease.

“... **a hand guiding us through the storm** towards a brighter day...”. By this metaphor, the president evoked hope and fortitude. He comforted those who were negatively influenced by the disaster and assured them that better days will come through his equation of unseen guiding force with divine protection.

“... so that being able to **fight the spill**...”. In this context, fighting the spill serves as a call to actions, inspiring cooperation to resolve the crisis. It supports the notion that the government and the country are actively engaged in facing the environmental catastrophe, giving rise to confidence in their capacity to successfully address the issue, making Obama more persuasive in his speech.

### Obama's Farewell Speech Analysis

“... you know, **Michelle and I have really been milking this goodbye** thing, so it behooves me to be very brief”. Obama treated an abstract as a physical object. He conveyed the abstract concept of goodbye using the word “milking” to make it seems concrete.

“...just to say this is just **a little pit stop**. This is not a period; this is a comma in the continuing story of building America”. Using this metaphor, Obama provoked feelings of progress and continuity, assuring the Americans that the process of constructing America will go on after the present time.

“... **for all of you that have put your heart and soul**, not just in our campaigns, but into making schools better ...”. Obama used this metaphor to praise and acknowledge the commitment and efforts of the Americans. By recognizing and appreciating their efforts, he tapped into the citizens' sense of accomplishment, which motivates them to carry on their hard work. This increases his persuasion by validating the Americans' actions and achievements.

By analysing some instances of metaphors in Obama's speeches, it is obvious that he benefited from his adept use of metaphors because they resonate with citizens emotions, make difficult and abstract political issues understandable, and support his strong arguments for change and unity. He effectively communicated his vision for America and appealed to the common values of the American people by using the metaphorical language.

### Trump's Inauguration Speech Analysis

“...**embraces the stars and stripes in your choices**, and let the American spirit support local industries and workforce”. In this metaphor, Trump simplified the economic strategy that is adopted in America, which is prioritizing domestic products and workforce over foreign alternatives, making this economical issue comprehensible.

“The time for empty talk is over, now **arrives the hour of action**. Do not let anyone tell you it cannot be done. No challenge can match the heart and fight and spirit of America.” A confident and unwavering outlook was firmly established in this

metaphor. It evokes images of growth and responsibility. By employing this metaphor, Trump improved persuasion through inspiring the citizens and motivating them to act and cooperate to create a better future for the country.

“From this day forward, **a new vision will govern our land**. From this moment on, it is going to be only America first”. This metaphor sets the stage for a significant change in strategies and viewpoints, indicating that a crucial transformation in how the nation runs is about to occur and it will place American interests above all else. Utilizing this metaphor, Trump emphasized the sense of sovereignty and independence, which can be persuading to those who value national interests over international issues.

### Trump’s Address to a Joint Session of Congress Analysis

“Each American generation **passes the torch of truth, liberty, and justice** in an unbroken chain, all the way down to the present. That torch is now in our hands, and we will use it to light up the world.” This metaphor uses the image of torch being passed from one individual to another to represent the trans-mission of fundamental values and norms throughout history. The torch stands for the idealized light of justice, liberty, and truth that directs society towards development and moral uprightness. He indicated the idea of collective efforts in protecting and promoting these principles. This metaphor is viewed effective in this speech because it simplified the abstract concepts of truth, liberty, and justice into a concrete and relatable image.

“**Dying industries will come roaring back to life**. Heroic veterans will get the care they so desperately need. Our military will be given...” This metaphor inspires a feeling of hope and optimism for struggling industries. Trump created an emotional response by implying that these industries will experience a revitalization and a return to prosperity under the current administration’s policies.

“... our **borders must be a fortress of integrity, a guardian of the rule of law**...”. This metaphor created a strong argument, allowing the president to be more persuasive in highlighting the requirement for strict and legal immigration control.

Overall, president Trump’s use of metaphors in his speeches was successful in evoking strong feelings and strengthening his ability to persuade as well as facilitating the understanding of difficult abstract political ideas.

### Discussion

This study’s findings illustrate the significant impact of metaphorical language in political discourse, corroborating and expanding upon prior research in cognitive linguistics and political communication. The examination of speeches by Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump demonstrates that metaphors function as potent rhetorical instruments, clarifying intricate political concepts, eliciting emotional reactions, and augmenting persuasive efficacy, thereby significantly influencing public perception.

In accordance with Lakoff and Johnson’s (1981) conceptual metaphor theory, the findings affirm that politicians often utilize metaphorical mappings to make abstract political concerns more concrete and relevant. Obama employed the structural metaphor of “a crisis is a war/epidemic” when describing the BP oil disaster. This metaphorical mapping reflects the conceptual domain of warfare/sickness onto the abstract domain of environmental catastrophe, therefore activating pre-existing cognitive models of teamwork, urgency, and shared threat to evoke a strong emotional response and support prompt policy action. Trump’s metaphor of “dying industries roaring back to life” redefined economic recovery as a vibrant, biological resurgence, rendering a typically technical policy discourse more comprehensible to the public. These findings align with

Charteris-Black's (2004), (Brugman et al. (2019), Anber (2023), and Zhabayeva (2024) claims that metaphors create cognitive frameworks that structure political thought, emphasizing that metaphorical language is not only decorative, but fundamentally influences comprehension. While prior research (Chilton, 2004; Kovecses, 2010) has demonstrated the ubiquity of conceptual metaphors in political discourse, the present study emphasizes how contemporary leaders adapt these language tools to media savvy audiences. In contrast to Howe's (1988) emphasis on sports and warfare metaphors in American political rhetoric, the analysis uncovers a wider array, encompassing organic growth ("roaring back to life"), architectural ("fortress of integrity"), and journey metaphors ("passing the torch"), indicating an evolution in the utilization of political metaphors shaped by changing public concerns and digital communication styles.

Furthermore, this research further substantiates and elaborates on Mio's (1997) assertion that metaphors are persuasive as they engage shared cultural and emotional contexts, aligning with de Saint Preux & Blanco (2021), Efeoğlu Özcan (2022), and Juszczuk et al. (2025) that metaphors not only simplify information but also trigger emotional engagement, which can lead to stronger support or opposition to policies and political actors as well as increasing audience trust and emotional response. This study also addresses a gap identified by Mio (1997), the lack of empirical investigations on metaphor effectiveness, by qualitatively assessing authentic political speeches, thereby offering solid proof of metaphor functionality in real discourse. The study's data validates Charteris-Black's (2004) and Lapka (2021) findings that metaphors possess persuasive power, selectively highlighting specific elements while minimizing others, thereby intentionally influencing public perception. Moreover, these data exemplify how political figures customize metaphors to align with their ideological agenda, indicating that metaphor usage is not monolithic but varies according to political style and audience expectations.

The study's findings provide intricate implications for discourse analysis and multidisciplinary research, based on the identified cognitive and persuasive roles of metaphorical language in political discourse:

Relationship between Cognitive Linguistic and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): this study validates an integrated approach to political discourse analysis. The underlying metaphorical structures are methodically identified and categorized by the Cognitive Linguistic analysis (e.g., identifying "epidemic" as a conceptual framework). Importantly, the CDA component then indicates the socio-political motivations and the underlying ideological power dynamics. For instance, the CDA interprets Trump's "fortress of integrity" metaphor as a rhetorical device that is purposefully employed to support nationalist thoughts and justify a strong border policy. This synergy calls for integrated approaches to avoid reductive analysis in future discourse studies.

#### **IV. Conclusion:**

In conclusion, this research demonstrated the crucial role that conceptual metaphors play in con-temporary American politics. Through a qualitative analysis of key presidential speeches, the results confirm that metaphors serve as cognitive short cuts that effectively make difficult, abstract policy issues understandable to the general audience. Additionally, the deliberate use of these frameworks activates potent emotional and moral schemas, which greatly increases the persuasive efficacy of political communication. Importantly, it has been shown that the strategic use of metaphors improved politicians' ability to persuade by allowing them to create memorable and vivid stories that have a deeper impact than literal language might.

Beyond these empirical findings, this study significantly contributes to the methodological field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Cognitive Linguistics. This study offers a good model for comprehending the strategic use of language in forming the audience's cognitive reality and influencing political thought by meticulously mapping the metaphors' structural and ontological nature (the linguistic contribution) and then interpreting their ideological purposes and sociopolitical motives (the critical contribution).

Although this study provides enough evidence, a qualitative analysis of a small number of speeches inevitably limits its breadth. Thus, it is essential to conduct more research that analyzes a larger, more varied corpus, incorporating quantitative methods. A more thorough and comprehensive understanding of the ubiquitous nature and diverse cognitive effects of metaphors in various political contexts and communication channels would be made possible by such initiatives. To further enhance this crucial area of research, future investigations could particularly explore the long-term cognitive effects of frequently used conceptual metaphors. Additionally comprehensive studies should study the cross-cultural comparisons to comprehend how the demographics of the audience and various social circumstances influence how persuasive metaphors are interpreted and how effective they are.

– **Referrals and references:**

- Anber, M. M. (2023). Metaphor in Political Discourse. *Journal of Tikrit University for Humanities*, 30(12, 2), 336–345.
- Beard, A. (2000). *The language of politics*. London.
- Borčić, N., Kanižaj, I., & Kršul, S. (2016). Conceptual metaphor in political communication. *Zbornik Sveučilišta u Dubrovniku*, 3, 73–94.
- Brugman, B. C., Burgers, C., & Vis, B. (2019). Metaphorical framing in political discourse through words vs. concepts: A meta-analysis. *Language and Cognition*, 11(1), 41–65.
- Burkholder, T. R., & Henry, D. (2009). Criticism of metaphor. In *Kuypers, J.A. (ed.): Rhetorical criticism: Perspectives in action*. (pp. 97–114). Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Charteris-Black, J. (2004). Critical metaphor analysis. In *Corpus approaches to critical metaphor analysis* (pp. 243–253). Springer.
- Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice*. routledge.
- Chilton, P., & Christina, S. (2002). Introduction: Themes and Principles in the Analysis of Political Discourse. In *Paul Chilton and Christina Schaffner (eds.) Politics as Text and Talk: Analytic Approaches to Political Discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Chilton, Paul. (2008). Political Terminology. In *Karlfried Knapp and Gerd Antos (eds.) Handbook of Communication in the Public Sphere. Handbooks of a Applied Linguistics* (Vol. 4). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- de Saint Preux, A. D., & Blanco, O. M. (2021). The power of conceptual metaphors in the age of pandemic: The influence of the WAR and SPORT domains on emotions and thoughts. *Language & Communication*, 81, 37–47.
- Efeoğlu Özcan, E. (2022). Pull the weeds out or perish: Using pandemic metaphors to strengthen in-group solidarity in Turkish political discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 37(2), 171–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926488.2021.1994840>
- Fairclough, N. (1992). Discourse and social change. *Cambridge: Polity Press*.
- Fairclough, N. (2002). *New labour, new language?* Routledge.
- Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M. (2008). *The way we think: Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities*. Basic books.
- Gilbert, N., & Stoneman, P. (2015). *Researching social life*. Sage.
- Howe, N. (1988). Metaphor in contemporary American political discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 3(2), 87–104.
- Jasim, S. A. (2018). An analysis of metaphor in selected political speeches. *Journal of Kerbala University*, 14(3), 16–25.
- Juszczyk, K., Konat, B., & Fabiszak, M. (2025). The heart attack of the Polish health service: Metaphors, arguments, and emotional appeals in political debates. *Language and Cognition*, 17, e12.
- Karimova, V. S. (2016). *Metaphor in Political Discourse: Basics, Concepts of the Linguistic Nature of Metaphor Political Discourse as a Subject of Political Linguistics*. LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.  
<http://dspace.khazar.org/bitstream/20.500.12323/3492/1/Metaphor%20in%20political%20discourse.pdf>

- Kövecses, Z. (2002). Emotion concepts: Social constructionism and cognitive linguistics. In *The verbal communication of emotions* (pp. 109–124). Psychology Press. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781410606341-7/emotion-concepts-social-constructionism-cognitive-linguistics-zolt%C3%A1n-k%C3%B6vecses>
- Kovecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. Oxford university press.
- Kress, G. R., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication. *Routledge*. <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130000798172506880>
- Lakoff, G. (1987). The Death of Dead Metaphor. *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, 2(2), 143–147. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms0202\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms0202_5)
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: Univ. Press, Chicago/IL.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1981). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago press.
- Lapka, O. (2021). Language of persuasion: Analysis of conceptual metaphors in political discourse. *The Grove-Working Papers on English Studies*, 28, 85–110.
- Lesz, B. (2011). *To shape the world for the better: An analysis of metaphors in the speeches of Barack Obama* [Master's Thesis, Universitetet i Tromsø]. <https://munin.uit.no/handle/10037/3540>
- Mayr, A., & Machin, D. (2012). How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction. *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis*, 1–240.
- Mayring, P. (2004). Qualitative content analysis. *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, 1(2), 159–176.
- Mio, J. S. (1997). Metaphor and politics. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 12(2), 113–133.
- Mio, J. S., Riggio, R. E., Levin, S., & Reese, R. (2005). Presidential leadership and charisma: The effects of metaphor. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(2), 287–294.
- Obeng, S. G. (1997). Language and politics: Indirectness in political discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 8(1), 49–83.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. SAGE Publications, inc. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1990-97369-000>
- Pavlikova, Ž. (2020). The Concept of Metaphor in Political Speeches (Metaphors in the Electoral Speeches of Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the 2020 Presidential Elections). URL: [https://Conferences.Euba.Sk/Jazykapolitika/Www\\_write/Files/2020/Pavlikova.Pdf](https://Conferences.Euba.Sk/Jazykapolitika/Www_write/Files/2020/Pavlikova.Pdf) (Дата Звернення: 10.08. 2021).
- Pikalo, J. (2008). Mechanical metaphors in politics. In *Political Language and Metaphor* (pp. 57–70). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203931233-11/mechanical-metaphors-politics-jernej-pikalo>
- Rozina, G., & Karapetjana, I. (2009). The use of language in political rhetoric: Linguistic manipulation. *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 2009(19), 111–122.
- Taiwo, R. (2008). Metaphors in Nigerian political discourse. *Selected Papers from The*, 193–205.
- Turner, M. (1996). *The literary mind: The origins of thought and language*. Oxford University Press.
- Vestermark, I. (2007). *Metaphors in politics: A study of the metaphorical personification of America in political discourse*. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:1021458>
- Wei, J. M. (2001). The pragmatics of metaphor in Taiwanese politics. *Virtual Missiles Metaphors and Allusions in Taiwanese Political Campaigns*. United States: Lexington Books.
- Wilson, J. (2005). *Political discourse. The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Routledge.
- Wodak, R. (2009). *The discourse of politics in action: Politics as usual*. Springer.

Zhabayeva, S. (2024). The cognitive semantics of language: Exploring lingua-cultural aspects and the specifics of metaphoric representation. *ВЕСТНИК ЕВРАЗИЙСКОГО ГУМАНИТАРНОГО ИНСТИТУТА*, 3, 7–15.

– **Appendices**

Obama's Address on BP Oil Spill (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2010/06/16/president-obamas-oval-office-address-bp-oil-spill-a-faith-future-sustains-us-a-people>)

Obama's Farewell Speech (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/farewell>)

Trump's Inaugural Speech (<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/>)

Trump's Address to a joint Session of Congress  
([https://ballotpedia.org/Donald\\_Trump%27s\\_address\\_to\\_joint\\_session\\_of\\_Congress\\_\(February\\_28,\\_2017\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Donald_Trump%27s_address_to_joint_session_of_Congress_(February_28,_2017)))