Metaphors of culpability and commendation in selected political campaign speeches of Buhari

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Abstract: Politics permeates every facet of human life as most human relationships have a political undertone either directly or indirectly. In an attempt to win the heart of the citizens, politicians employ different means, and the use of metaphorical expressions is one of those methods. This paper examines the use of conceptual metaphor as employed by political actors in Nigeria to convince listeners or their audience about the political actors’ perspectives and performances in the political space of the country and condemn the perspectives and performances of their political rivals, especially those from other political parties. The paper makes use of conceptual metaphor theory as the analytical theory for the study. Their approach explores metaphor as a cognitive instrument to reveal how language users connect two different fields to convey and understand ideas better or more effectively by mapping both the source and target domains to each other. Using the purposive sampling technique, three campaign speeches delivered by President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, 2018, and 2019 were used as data for the paper. In the analysis, the paper found that Mr. Buhari used conceptual metaphors like BAD GOVERNMENT IS A WEAK FOUNDATION GOOD GOVERNMENT IS SOLID FOUNDATION, CORRUPTION IS A KILLER, GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A BRIDGE, GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A LIBERATOR, etc. These conceptual metaphors are employed by Mr. Buhari to submit that the political opponents are culpable while his own party is commendable. The study concludes that the use of conceptual metaphor goes a long way in situating a political party positively in the minds of electorates. Therefore, scholars in the field of political discourse and/or political science should incorporate the teaching of conceptual metaphor in their curriculum.

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**1. Introduction**

Political campaigns are meant to convince electorates to vote for a particular candidate during an election, and one of the ways through which this is made possible is to situate the candidate and his/her political party positively in the minds of the electorates. Because of the importance of persuasion to the electoral success of political office seekers, they make use of a lot of rhetorical devices, which include metaphor. In view of this, several scholars have paid a lot of attention to different aspects of political discourse using different analytical tools and approaches. Examples include multimodal discourse analysis Ademilokun & Olateju, (2016), pragmatics Pan (2019), power and ideology Fairclough (2001), syntax, and semantics Tepavčević (2014), media and politics Bednarek (2006) and several others. A look at many of the aforementioned approaches to political discourse indicates that not much attention has been paid to political discourse in Nigeria using conceptual metaphor as an analytical tool. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by analysing three selected campaign speeches of Mr. Buhari, the incumbent president of Nigeria, using conceptual metaphor as the analytical tool.

The paper starts by considering some definitions of metaphor and goes ahead to look at theories of metaphor with an emphasis on the cognitive theory of metaphor known as Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Thereafter, the work considers the difference between source and target domains with a few examples. The methodology is also discussed before data analysis is considered. The paper also presents the findings and gives a conclusion on what the study has done.

**1.1. Theories of metaphor**

Metaphor is a conceptual phenomenon that basically relates to what happens in the mind. (Dar, 2021). Similarly, Danesi considers metaphor as “the use of a word or phrase denoting one kind of idea in place of another word or phrase for the purpose of suggesting a likeness between the two (Danesi, 2004:116). Charteris-Black refers to metaphor as the “representation that results from the shift in the use of a word or phrase from the context or domain in which it is expected to occur to another context or domain” (Charteris-Black, 2004:21). Going by these scholarly definitions, metaphor deals with the juxtaposition between two ideas, entities, or phenomena. Therefore, one is usually understood in the light of the other, or put in other words, one serves as a way of expressing the other more adequately or more clearly.

In this paper, the classification of theories is taken from the perspective of Gabeiras, (2019), who tactically differentiates between other theories of metaphor and the cognitive theory of metaphor. To start with, there is the Classic Theory. This theory perceives metaphor as something that is self-explanatory in nature. Hills (2017:7) points out that such a term moves “from its

| Source domain: Killer | Target domain: Corruption |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| A Killer is a human being. | Corruption is perpetrated by human beings. |
| A Killer can terminate the life of an individual. | Corruption can interrupt the normal flow of events in a society or country. |
| A Killer is not desirable among human beings. | Corruption is not desirable within the society or country. |
| A Killer can be seen physically. | Corruption cannot be seen physically but its effects can be seen and felt. |
Table 2. Mapping of BAD GOVERNMENT IS A WEAK FOUNDATION

| Source domain: Foundation | Target domain: Bad government |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| A foundation supports a building. | A government supports the citizens or its people |
| A foundation determines the quality or strength of a building. | A government determines the quality of life of the citizens or its people. |
| The foundation and other parts of the building are inseparable. Therefore, separating both will lead to a collapse of the building. | The government and the citizens are inseparable because, without one, the other will not be in existence. |
| The foundation is not usually visible but other parts of the building are. | The government is not usually visible but those who occupy government positions are. |
| If the foundation is defective, the entire building will also be negatively affected. | If the government is inefficient, the people will be negatively affected. |

An accustomed place in our verbal classificatory scheme to some other unaccustomed place for special temporary expressive purposes.” Therefore, it deals with a change in the way a particular term is used in order to compare it with another term different from it. Another theory is the Romantic Theory of metaphor. This theory coincides with the Romantic period of literature and proponents of the theory are the same as the leading literary figures of the time. Gabeiras (2019:4) states that “The Romantic poets largely defended the notion of the metaphor as an organic device, fundamental to express ‘the faculty of imagination,’ and rejected the idea of metaphor being a mere tool to embellish poetic language.” From the perspective of the Romantic Theory, metaphor is essential in the projection of imagination. This implies that the more metaphorical speakers and writers are, the better they will be able to convey their imaginations

Table 3. Mapping of GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A BRIDGE

| Source domain: Bridge | Target domain: Good Government |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| A bridge connects two or more physical locations. | A good government connects its people with desired development. |
| A bridge reduces the amount of time, energy, effort, and so on needed in crossing a river. | A good government reduces the extent of struggle, pain, and so on. of its people. |
| A bridge is constructed by engineers and other professionals who are in the field of construction. | A good government is formed by those who have the desire to lead the country to the right destination. |

Table 4. Mapping of GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A SOLID FOUNDATION

| Source domain: Solid foundation | Target domain: Good government |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| A solid foundation supports a building. | A government supports the citizens or its people. |
| A solid foundation presents a building from collapsing. | A government prevents the lives of its citizens or its people from falling below the expected standard. |
| A solid foundation is desired by everybody who builds a house. | A good government is desired by every member of the state. |

Table 5. Mapping of GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A LIBERATOR

| Source domain: Liberator | Target domain: Good Government |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| A liberator performs a particular duty. | A government performs some duties. |
| A liberator is required wherever people are in bondage. | A government is required wherever there is a society or state. |
| A liberator is most likely human. | A government is not a human, but the government is run by humans. |
to their listeners and readers. Thus, the conveyance of imagination becomes limited when metaphor is missing.

Apart from the foregoing, there are also the twentieth-century theories, which are grouped into Semantic Twist accounts, Pragmatic Twist accounts, Comparativist accounts, and Brute Force accounts. Beyond these, there is the cognitive theory of metaphor, which will be given better attention in this work, and it is known as Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Proponents of the conceptual metaphor theory are George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.

1.2. Conceptual metaphor theory

Conceptual metaphor refers to the “abstract structures of thought that function as a conceptual frame in terms of which single lexical items are produced and comprehended” in a specific utterance or expression (Muller, 2008:63; Kovecses, 2016). Similarly, Charteris-Black (2004:9) submits that “conceptual metaphor represents the conceptual basis, idea or image that underlies a set of metaphors.” From these definitions, it is safe to affirm that conceptual metaphor deals with the single idea projected in terms of another set of ideas or a single one. It should be noted that the cognitive theory of metaphor identifies culture as one of the most fundamental aspects of cognition. Thus, Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2013: 315) maintains that culture plays a very important role “in the configuration of one of the most crucial meaning mechanisms in cognitive linguistics, namely conceptual metaphors”. With this assertion in mind, it is evident that the cultural context of both the encoder and decoder has a way of influencing the kinds of metaphors they will employ.

Conceptual metaphor theory differentiates between the source and target domains. Thibodeau et al. (2017) opine that the source domain is the topic or concept that someone wants to describe through the metaphor while the source domain refers to the concept that one draws from in order to create the metaphorical construction. In explaining what domains mean, Lakoff and Johnson (1993:116); Suherman (2018) submits that domains “involve understanding one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience.” (Kovecses 2017:17 ff) identifies common source domains to include the human body, health and illness, animals, plants, buildings and construction, machines and tools, games and sport, business, cooking and food, heat and cold, light and darkness, direction, orientation, etc. and many of these can be easily understood across different cultures (cf., Danesi, 2004).

To a great extent, it should be said that the source domain is used to understand the target domain. The source domain, on the one hand, is that domain that is easier for both the speaker and listener to understand. Thus, it is the area that presents a common ground for discourse participants. On the other hand, the target domain is the (relatively) difficult experience or idea to understand. It constitutes the unknown idea, concept, message, etc. that the speaker or writer wants the listener or reader to understand. Therefore, the source domain is important to understand the target domain as the discourse participants move from the well-known to the unknown concepts or ideas.

Specific examples can be cited from the literature to illustrate the idea of source and target domains and how both are mapped to each other. For instance, Lakoff gives a popular example as LOVE IS A JOURNEY and submits thus: “The LOVE-AS-JOURNEY mapping is a set of ontological correspondences that characterize epistemic correspondences by mapping knowledge about journeys onto knowledge about love” (Lakoff, 1993:207). Therefore, our knowledge of the journey helps us to understand how love operates between two people or lovers because it relates love to different “locations” one gets to in a journey. Additionally, it makes it possible to think about the different stages one passes through in love in the light of different places or locations a traveler passes through before getting to their final destination. While the different locations may be important to the entire journey because of specific experiences met there, the final destination is usually the ultimate.

Citing different utterances that buttress LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson (44) have the following expressions: “Look how far we’ve come”, “We’re at a crossroads”, “We’ll just have to go our separate ways”, “We can’t turn hack now”, “I don’t think this relationship is going
anywhere”, etc. The expressions have some portions presented in italics to indicate the movement aspect, and this implies that the idea of love can be better understood using our knowledge of journey. The first expression, “Look how far we’ve come”, indicates distance. When this is considered from the perspective of journey, it implies that the traveler(s) has/have (probably) almost reached their destination. When the distance is also applied to the love relationship between the two lovers, it indicates that the two parties have been together for long and should therefore forge ahead to get to their final destination. Depending on what the love relationship is, things like marriage, avoiding divorce in marriage, making new commitments to each other, etc. could serve as the final destination of the lovers.

Beyond the source and target domain in metaphor, Kovecses (2018) notes that the “scope of metaphor focuses on the issue that how many and what kind of target domains a single source concept can characterize” as a single source domain can express different target domains and vice versa. Therefore, there are instances when a single source domain can be used to express two or more target domains because such a source domain is not limited to a single target domain. Similarly, there are instances where a particular target domain can be expressed or explained with different source domains. The source domain of JOURNEY, for instance, can be used to express the target domain of LIFE, LOVE, and MARRIAGE. Therefore, conceptual metaphors like LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LOVE IS A JOURNEY and MARRIAGE IS A JOURNEY can be used by discourse participants. In these instances, life, love, and marriage can be understood in terms of various points a traveller gets to in a journey and while a speaker (or writer) can make use of it to express an idea, the listener (or reader) can also decode the meaning appropriately.

1.3. Methodology
For this paper, campaign speeches from President Muhammad Buhari were used as samples of campaign speeches by Nigerian politicians. A purposive sampling technique was used to arrive at the three speeches that preceded three different elections, which were won by the political party of the President, the All-Progressive Congress (APC). His speeches have been chosen because he has won elections twice and the third speech which was used to campaign for a governorship candidate also yielded a positive result as the candidate also won the election. The first speech, entitled “My Covenant with Nigerians”, was delivered on 16 March 2015, shortly before the general election, which Buhari won and gave him his first tenure in office. The second speech was delivered at an APC campaign rally in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State on 10 July 2018. The speech was meant to campaign for Dr Kayode Fayemi, the APC standard-bearer who eventually won the election. The third speech, entitled “Next Level”, was delivered on 19 November 2018, in Lagos State, Nigeria as the APC flags off her campaign to return Buhari to office. Therefore, this paper adopts a qualitative approach to data analysis as a means of exploring the conceptual metaphors used as rhetorical devices as well as other rhetorical devices employed by Buhari to appeal to his listeners.

1.4. Metaphors of culpability and commendation
A tripartite approach for data analysis has been adopted in this study. In this wise, the conceptual metaphors of culpability found in the data are first identified and discussed a table is presented for each conceptual metaphor to give an overview of the mappings between the source and target domains and this is followed by the conceptual metaphors of commendation before a discussion of other rhetorical devices employed by the President. In discussing the conceptual metaphors, the comparison between the source and target domains is highlighted to bring to the fore the ideas which the President tried to pass across to his audience. Since three speeches are used as the data, examples are chosen across the three of them to buttress the point of each category of the analysis.

1.5. Metaphors of culpability
This section highlights and discusses the metaphors of culpability in the selected speeches. The conceptual metaphors in this category include CORRUPTION IS A KILLER, BAD GOVERNMENT IS A WEAK FOUNDATION (created by past administration). The identified conceptual metaphors will be discussed in detail in the following sections for better understanding.
2. Corruption is a killer

Table 1 presents instances of CORRUPTION as a killer. In one of the speeches of Muhammadu Buhari prior to the 2015 general election, he used the expression “No matter how vast our resources, if they are not efficiently utilized, they will only benefit a privileged few, leaving the majority in poverty. I believe if Nigeria does not kill corruption; corruption will kill Nigeria.” This expression generates the conceptual metaphor CORRUPTION IS A KILLER. The conceptual metaphor draws a comparison between corruption and a killer just to underscore the fact that corruption is as deadly as a killer, just as a killer is not desirable in any society, corruption should not also be encouraged in the country. Therefore, he suggested that his countrymen should “kill” corruption before corruption kills them.

The source domain used in this conceptual metaphor is that of death as represented by the word “killer”. This is easy to use because the idea of death, though means different things to different people based on things like their religious background, etc., is easily known by the people. On the contrary, the issue of corruption is not as open to the people as that of death. Therefore, he used the idea of death to express the grave consequences of corruption to a country.

3. Bad government is a weak foundation

Table 2 presents instances of corruption as a weak foundation. The expression “Judging by the prior depth of decay, deterioration, and disrepair that Nigeria had sunken into, we are certain that these past few years have put us in good stead to trudge on the Next Level of building an even stronger nation for our people” generates the conceptual metaphor BAD GOVERNMENT IS A WEAK FOUNDATION. This is seen in the light of the problems the previous government has caused in the country. Specifically, the words “building an even stronger nation” suggests that there must be a foundation because that comes early in the process of building a house. Muhammadu Buhari, in this excerpt, suggests that the previous administration in the country has laid a weak foundation for the country and her economy as well as other aspects of life because there was “depth of decay, deterioration and disrepair”. The conceptual metaphor BAD GOVERNMENT IS A WEAK FOUNDATION draws a comparison between bad government and weak foundation. By this, the speaker believed that the listeners knew the consequences of a weak foundation on a building or house. Therefore, he referred to the activities of the previous government as weak foundation, which cannot support a strong or firm building where the building refers to the country and her activities.

The source domain of the conceptual metaphor is a house (specifically the foundation) while the target domain is the government of a country and her activities like economic activities, educational development, etc. Since it was believed that an average listener understood the importance of a strong or solid foundation to a building, the President compared the government of the other party as a weak foundation that is not capable of supporting the growth of the country in different ways. For instance, the weak foundation will not be able to support the country economically, educationally, etc. but will make all such things fall. This is another way of expressing the metaphor of culpability.

3.1. Metaphors of commendation

This section highlights and discusses the metaphors of commendation found in the selected speeches. The conceptual metaphors in this category include the following: GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A BRIDGE, GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A SOLID FOUNDATION, GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A LIBERATOR, GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A JOB CREATOR, etc. The identified conceptual metaphors will be discussed in detail in the following sections for better understanding.

4. Good government is a bridge

Table 3 presents instances of good government as a bridge. The expression “The nation’s wealth is now being invested in capital projects to expand infrastructure and connect people, goods, and opportunities by rail, road and air”, generates the conceptual metaphor GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A BRIDGE. The conceptual metaphor draws a comparison between “good government” and a “bridge”. Good government is desired by every society while a bridge, which is a physical entity, connects two areas and gives
room for easy movement or navigation. By implication, good government, though desirable, is not physical yet the activities of the government are. Therefore, the government is likened to a bridge, and it performs the functions of a bridge by bringing people closer to their dreams just like a bridge makes it easy for people to get to their location without much trouble. It should be added that the bridge does not just surface but there are different stages the construction goes through before the bridge becomes a reality. In a similar manner, good government also goes through different stages before it can be installed in a society. One of the stages is that electoral stage, which is considered as very important for politicians. Thus, the speaker, Muhammadu Buhari, appealed to the people to help his political party “construct” the bridge so the people will enjoy good government.

The source domain here is that of a bridge, which is visible while the target domain is good government, which is not visible. By drawing the attention of the listeners to the various things the government has done or has been doing, the President tries to compare his government to a bridge. He tries to convince the audience that his government has been bringing the people closer to their dreams by embarking on capital projects. Therefore, the government connects people from different sides or areas. This can be referred to as a metaphor of commendation because it tries to situate the government positively in the minds of the listeners.

5. Good government is a solid foundation

Table 4 presents instances of good government as a solid foundation. The expression “...we have laid the foundations for a strong, stable and prosperous country for the majority of our people. But even as we lay the foundation for a stable and prosperous nation, we acknowledge there is still much to do” generates the conceptual metaphor GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A SOLID FOUNDATION. From the perspective of building construction, whether locally or in the sophisticated era, everybody knows the importance of a good foundation. Without a solid foundation, the building will be shaky, unstable, and not fit for living. This means that any building with a weak foundation has the potential to fall and possibly trap its occupants or even kill them.

This conceptual metaphor draws a comparison between good government and a solid foundation. The rationale for this is because people know that a solid foundation is a step toward having a good house. Therefore, electing a good government serves as the first step towards achieving a desirable society. The source domain is the foundation of a house while the target domain is government. Because it is easier for people to come to terms with the importance of a solid foundation, Buhari used this metaphor to help his listeners to understand that good government means is key to adequate societal development.

6. Good government is a liberator

Table 5 presents instances of good government as a liberator. Another metaphor of commendation found in the data is GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A LIBERATOR. This conceptual metaphor is generated by the expression “We liberated 17 Local Government Areas from the grip of insurgency.” The expression states in clear terms that the Buhari administration has been able to release some local government areas from the shackles of insurgency. Therefore, Mr President’s expression was meant to praise his administration in a particular breath and condemn the previous administration in the same breath because he meant that the previous administration paved the way for such local government areas to be captured by terrorists.

The conceptual metaphor, GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A LIBERATOR, draws a comparison between good government and a liberator. Knowing quite well that members of the audience understood the insecurity circumstances facing the country as well as how some people and/or local government areas had been held captives by terrorists, Mr President painted a good picture of himself, his political party, and his government to the people by telling the audience that the affected villages or local government areas have been liberated. This was meant to show the people how well the administration had performed in terms of securing the lives and property of the Nigerian people. In a similar breath, he meant that the previous government had failed in doing this.
6.1. Findings

One of the findings in this research work is that politicians try to present their opponents in bad light while presenting themselves and their political parties in good light. Based on this, Buhari made use of certain metaphors to nail or condemn the opposition political party, PDP, while absolving his own political party, APC of any blame or wrongdoing. It has also been found that the metaphors of culpability used by Buhari include CORRUPTION IS A KILLER and BAD GOVERNMENT IS A WEAK FOUNDATION. In a similar breath, he used metaphors of commendation for his party, himself, and his administration. Some of them include GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A BRIDGE, GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A SOLID FOUNDATION, and GOOD GOVERNMENT IS A LIBERATOR.

The paper has also found that the target domain of government has been represented or explained by different source domains. For instance, Mr. Buhari has been able to compare government to the foundation of a building, a bridge, and a liberator. While he likened the government of the opposition party to a weak foundation, he referred to the government of his own party as a solid foundation. He also referred to his own government as a bridge and a liberator. All these buttress the fact that a single target domain can be expressed using different source domains.

Besides the forgoing, the work has also found out that Buhari used the above-mentioned conceptual metaphors to appeal to the emotion of his audience and also situate his political party, himself, and his administration positively in the minds of his listeners, the other Nigerians, and by extension, the entire world.

7. Conclusion

This paper has taken a critical look at the metaphors employed by Muhammadu Buhari in some of his selected campaign speeches. It has to be stated that Buhari used the metaphors to create a positive impression about himself, his political party and his administration in the minds of the people who were mostly electorates while he used similar metaphors to create a negative impression about the opposition party and its government to the same set of people. The paper concludes that drawing metaphors from the common domains to both the speakers and the listeners goes a long way to improve effective communication between the source and the destination. Thus, political office seekers and indeed communicators generally are advised to understudy how metaphors work as this will help them to convey their messages better and clearer to the audience.

Additionally, scholars in the field of political discourse and/or political science should incorporate the teaching of rhetoric in their curriculum so that their candidates will be able to learn and master the art of persuasion.

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