

**Metaphors President John Dramani Mahama lives by: A
cognitive linguistic study of some speeches of his Excellency Mr.
John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana
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Abstract:

The paper describes the metaphorical structure of the domains of corruption, life and death in some speeches of Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana within the framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), put forward by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), with the goal of showing the coherent conceptual organisation underlying the various expressions about the domains. The following conceptual metaphors were identified: CORRUPTION IS A PERSON, CORRUPTION IS AN ADVERSARY, LIFE IS A JOURNEY or LIFE IS A PURPOSEFUL JOURNEY, LIFE IS A BURDEN and DEATH IS LOSS OF LIFE. The analysis reveals that metaphors go beyond pointing to the similarities between entities; rather they stand as a means of organising and understanding reality and that, conceptual metaphors are grounded in the nature of our everyday interaction with the world or our social and bodily experiences.

Keywords: metaphorical structure, conceptual metaphor, conceptual organisation, reality and bodily experiences

1. Introduction

Traditionally, metaphors were the exclusive domain of literature, analysed alongside other devices. In more recent years, however, cognitive linguists have shown that metaphors play a major role in language. Lakoff & Johnson (1980), for example, have used metaphors to argue

that much of our everyday talk (and, hence, as they claim, much of our thought, and much of our reality) is structured metaphorically. To them, metaphor is, thus, central to the creation of meaning. This paper is a cognitive linguistic study of some metaphors in some speeches of Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana. It examines the metaphorical structure of the domains of *corruption*, *life* and *death* within the framework of the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), put forward by Lakoff & Johnson (1980).

The aim is to show the coherent conceptual organisation underlying the various expressions about these domains and also to show that conceptual metaphor plays a crucial role in conveying the central ideas in the speeches of the President. The central ideas are usually found within the inferential patterns that are drawn from a metaphorical process. Again, metaphors are often grounded in culture and can hence serve as a good resource for the investigation of cultural beliefs expressed in language (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, Lakoff and Johnson 1999, Lakoff 1993 and Kövecses 2002, 2005 and Özçalışkan 2003). By analysing the metaphorical structure of these domains, I hope to show some of the cultural beliefs of the President and of Ghanaians about these domains.

2. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The theory was originally put forward by Lakoff and Johnson in their *Metaphors We Live By*. According to Rohrer (2006:123), “they dubbed the notion of ‘conceptual metaphor’, both in order to distinguish it from the prior tradition of ‘linguistic metaphor’ (or ‘literary metaphor’) and in order to emphasise that conceptual metaphors are a matter of cognition and conceptual structure.” In the words of Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3):

“Our concepts structure what we perceive...and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right to suggest that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then...what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor”.

Cognitive mappings between conceptual domains form the backbone of the metaphor theory. Metaphor is defined as understanding one domain of experience, a source domain, in terms of another domain, a *target domain* (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Thus, metaphor is treated as a systematic correspondence or a mapping between a *source* and a *target*. The source domain

is conceptualised as being more closely related to physical experience (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), or as being more inter-subjectively available (Grady 1997), than the target concepts. Unlike the target concept, the source concept involves “image content” that is tied to bodily sensation and perception, and thus constitutes a rich source for inferences that are projected onto the target domain (Grady 1997).

The metaphorical mapping involves a fixed set of correspondences between the respective entities in each domain. For example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrated that the conceptual domain of ARGUMENT is structured in terms of WAR based on linguistic evidence such as the following:

(1) Your claims are *indefensible*.

He *attacked every weak point* in my argument.

His criticisms were *right on target*.

I *demolished* his argument.

If you use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out*.

(Lakoff & Johnson 1980:4)

The mappings for this metaphor are as follows:

Source (War/ Debate)		Target (Argument)
Position	→	Opinion
Debate Participant	→	Combatant
Have an opinion	→	Occupy a position
Agreement	→	Same position
Disagreement	→	Different position
Argument	→	Conflict
Allies	→	Allies
Adversaries, Opponents	→	Adversaries, Opponents

Here, WAR is understood to be the source domain, which is mapped onto the target domain of ARGUMENT. In this case, mapping knowledge from the domain of WAR onto the domain of ARGUMENTS allows us to reason about one in terms of the other (Lakoff 1993:207). Our

everyday thinking contains thousands of conventional metaphorical mappings of this sort, the processing of which is mainly unconscious and automatic (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). The conceptual metaphor theory thus serves as a useful methodological tool to analyse how different domains of knowledge are metaphorically structured.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) distinguished three kinds of metaphor – structural metaphors, ontological metaphors and orientational metaphors. With structural metaphors, the source domain provides a relatively rich knowledge structure for the target concept. In other words, speakers understand target A by means of the structure of source B. For example, the concepts of LIFE and DEATH are structured according to journeys. Ontological metaphors provide an ontological status to general categories of abstract target concepts (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:25 and Kövecses 2002:34). What this means is that we conceive of our experiences in term, of objects, substances and containers in general, without specifying exactly what kind of object, substance or container is meant.

3. Data and Method

The data were gathered from three addresses delivered by Mr. John Dramani Mahama, the President of the Republic of Ghana. The first is an address he delivered at the 2nd Conference of the Association of Anti-corruption Authorities in Africa which was held at the La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra on September 16, 2013. The second was also delivered to the 68th United Nations General Assembly on Thursday, September 26, 2013. The third was also an address he delivered at the Speech-World Leaders Forum at Columbia University on September 23, 2013.

For metaphor identification, I relied on the procedure by the Praguejazz Group (2007). This is summarised below.

- i.. Read the entire text–discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
- ii.Determine the lexical units in the text–discourse
- iii.For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in context and then also determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context, where basic meanings may be more concrete easier to

imagine, to see, hear, feel, smell, and taste, bodily action, more precise and historically older.

- iv. If contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with each other, then the lexical unit should be marked as metaphorical.

(The Praguejazz Group 2007:3)

This procedure for metaphor identification served as a guide in my attempt at identifying the metaphorically used words and expressions in the speeches. As I read all the speeches, I looked out for metaphorical linguistic expressions about the domains under study. I, then, grouped them into the major metonymic and metaphorical mappings for the analysis and discussion in relation to the CMT. In the paper, all the conceptual metaphors are shown in capitals. Linguistics examples extracted from the various sources have also been italicised. For the purposes of the study, all the three speeches have been numbered and labelled as follows: SP1, SP2 and SP3, where SP stands for speech. The sentences in all the speeches have also been numbered for easy identification. In the analysis, sentence 2 in speech two, for example, has the label SP2 -S2. Similarly, SP1 – S5 represents sentence 5 in speech one.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Conceptualisation of Corruption

Lakoff and Johnson (1980:33) have noted that the most obvious ontological metaphors are those where the physical object is further specified as being a person. They point out that “this allows us to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with non-human entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics and activities.” In Speech One, corruption is personified. However, the metaphor is not merely CORRUPTION AS A PERSON; it is more specific, namely, CORRUPTION IS AN ADVERSARY. This does not only give us a specific way of thinking about corruption, but also a way of acting towards it. In the speech, corruption is conceptualised as a menace that can affect us. The linguistic constructions that exemplify this include the following:

SP1-S56: I hope that this second conference will not only lead to strengthening dialogue and mutual cooperation between African Anti-corruption Authorities but will also result in greater understanding amongst you of the challenges that lie

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ahead and of the need for greater *collaboration in tackling the menace of corruption.*

SP1 -S13&14 Corruption is no longer a local matter but a transnational phenomenon *that affects all societies, nations and economies.* 14 It knows no borders.

As a menace, corruption is conceptualised as very costly:

SP1- S7 Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen, we all know that *the cost of corruption to Africa is huge.*

SP1-S 8 Only recently, the World Bank revealed that *corruption is responsible for the increase in cost of goods and services in Africa by 20%.*

SP1- S9 According to the report, *Africa also loses \$148 Billion annually to corruption, an estimated 25% of Africa's GDP.*

Not only is it costly, it is also conceptualised as a channel for theft of public revenue.

43 This directive and its implementation is part of efforts toward stemming *the massive theft of public revenue through corruption,* in the public sector.

As a way of acting towards this adversary, the government takes the necessary economic actions. These actions include declaring war on corruption:

SP1 - S6 It is my sincere hope that such collaboration would significantly contribute *to fighting corruption on our continent.*

SP1 - S11 *... fighting corruption in Africa must occupy centre stage if we should improve the lives of our people.*

SP1 - S12 *Africa needs to stand up against corruption and we should do so together.*

To enable government to fight the adversary, the necessary strategies are set up to combat it. Some of the strategies outlined in the speeches have been provided below:

SP1 - S15 *... international cooperation to prevent and control corruption is an imperative.*

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- SP1 - S17 *We continue to strengthen the legal and institutional framework against corruption.*
- SP1 - S18 *The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the constitutional body responsible for fighting corruption; the Economic and Organised Crime Office (EOCO); and other institutions that deal with corruption in one way or the other, are being strengthened.*
- SP1 - S19 *We have passed a number of anti-corruption legislation, including The Public Procurement Act, the Whistleblower Act, and the Anti-Money Laundering Act.*
- SP1 - S20 *A Right to Information Bill is also currently under consideration by Parliament while a Witness Protection Bill is being worked on by the Attorney-General.*
- SP1 - S21 *Just last week, the Conduct of Public Officers' Bill, a new bill expected to check corruption in the public sector, was approved by Cabinet.*
- SP1 - S22 *The bill will give legal backing to the Code of Ethics for Ministers of State and Political Appointees, elaborate on our Constitutional provisions on conflict of interest situations for public officers, and generally enhance my effort to run a clean, open, transparent and accountable government.*

4.2 Metaphors of Life and Death

In Ghanaian culture, as it is in most cultures of the world, the life span of a person involves three main stages: birth, life, and death. Typically, the birth of a person is conceptualised as an arrival of that person into the world. Life is also conceptualised as a journey initiated by this arrival into the world, and death as a departure that ends the journey. These correspond to

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three basic metaphors: BIRTH IS ARRIVAL, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, and DEATH IS DEPARTURE. In the speeches under examination, life is conceptualised as a journey. With this metaphor, the person leading the life becomes the traveller undertaking it. Goals in life correspond to destinations, and difficulties encountered correspond to impediments to travel. In SP2 – S125, the President indicates how far we, as the travellers, have come on the journey of life. Similarly, in SP3 – S1 below, the President describes the journey of life of the “talented young people” as they being on their way to becoming future world leaders.

SP2 - S125 *We have come a long way* since the end of the last global war, yet the makeup of the U.N. Security Council is not a reflection of that development.

SP3 - S1 It is a pleasure and an honour to have been invited to Columbia University to take part in the World Leaders Forum and to address this audience full of talented young people, many of whom, I am sure, are already *well on their way to becoming our future world leaders*.

The journey itself may take various forms. In the speeches under consideration, the journey of life is construed as a purposeful journey on foot. The journey on foot may either take the form of walking or the form of marching. This idea of taking *a decisive walk* is indicated in SP2- S38 below. In that sentence, the word *stride* which, according to the Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary, means a “walk with long decisive steps in a specified direction” has been used to convey that idea.

SP2 - S36-38 36 But we cannot allow terror to defeat us. 37 This must strengthen our resolve. 38 *Our stride will not be broken*.

In SP3 – the italicised in S14 below also shows that the journey can also take the form of marching:

SP3 – S11-14 11 In 1957 when Ghana became the first sub-Saharan nation in Africa to gain its independence, it spearheaded a revolution on the

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continent. 12 Country after country followed, each one claiming its liberation from colonial rule. 13 It was a revolution that was led by the people, by visionaries, men and women who believed that the future they saw for their country was possible. 14 *It was a goal well worth fighting for, a destination well worth marching toward, a dream for which they would sooner die than have deferred.*

It is worthy of note that in the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, goals in life are conceptualised as destinations of the journey. This idea is captured in SP3-S14 above where fighting for a just course in life is conceptualised as a goal or “a destination well worth marching towards.”

The journey of life is also conceptualised as a difficult and painful event that requires a lot of effort and suffering on the part of the traveller. This actually gives us the metaphor LIFE IS A BURDEN. The difficult and painful nature of the journey is captured in the manner of motion expressed by the verb *stagger* in the expression *staggered our way through* in S23 below. According to the Free Dictionary online, *to stagger* means “to walk or move unsteadily as if about to fall.” This indicates the difficulty with which the movement was done.

SP2 - S20-24 20 There was a time when the ruthlessness of dictators seemed to be the order of the day. 21 For decades the corruption, greed and depravity of a few caused the suffering of an entire continent. 22 We so easily could have succumbed to the wars, the poverty, the diseases; but we did not. 23 *We staggered our way through*, year after year, but eventually we made it. 24 We survived.

The difficult and painful nature of the journey of life serves as the basis for the construal of life as a battle (S44, 53 and 59 below), and for which people avoid being defeated (S36 below). The following sentences from the speeches illustrate this:

SP2 –S44 44 *After its own bout with terror*, Mali made a solid return to democracy by conducting an election that all observers, even the sceptics and the cynics, hailed as being free, fair and peaceful.

SP2 - S50-53 50 We like to make mention of how the world has become a global

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village, especially when speaking of technology, culture, and travel. 51 The facility of that global village exists for warmongers and terrorist groups as well. 52 They are using it to recruit new members, expand their cells, create intercontinental networks, obtain weapons, and conceal their identities as well as locations. 53 *If we are to fight back*, we must also work cooperatively.

SP3 - S58-59 58 The world we live in today, with its laptops, smart-phones social media, is dramatically different from the world that existed in the late 1950s and 1960s. 59 *But the principles for which we fight remain the same.*

SP2 - S36 *But we cannot allow terror to defeat us.*

In some cases the struggles in life can be so intense that they lead to death, the point at which the journey of life ends. Thus, dying constitutes one's exit from life. In the speeches under examination, the exit is conceptualised as loss of life – DEATH IS LOSS OF LIFE.

SP3 - S15-22 S15 It was a revolution that was led by poets and professors, by singers and lawyers and day labourers; the wealthy as well as the working class, anyone who dared to give voice to that vision. 16 They were the politicians of that era, the leaders who were destined to shape a new world. 17 And the price many of them paid was steep. 18 Nelson Mandela was jailed, as was Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka and Fela Anikulapo Kuti. 19 There were many who lost days, months and years of their lives in prison. 20 *There were also many who lost their lives entirely.* 21 Christopher Okigbo was killed, as was Patrice Lumumba, Steven Biko, Sylvanus Olympio, and Eduardo Mondlane. 22 Untold numbers of others fled into exile.

SP3 -S129 129 In closing, I would like once again, to pay my respects to *those who have lost their lives* in Kenya, in Syria, in Palestine, in Egypt,

in Libya, in Pakistan, in Iraq, in Nigeria, in Mali, in Somalia, in Turkey, in India, in the United States and all the other places where terrorists have attacked in this year alone.

5. Summary and Conclusion

The paper has been an attempt to describe the metaphorical structure of the domains of corruption, life and death in some speeches of Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, with the goal of showing the coherent conceptual organisation underlying the various expressions about corruption, life and death. The analysis has revealed the following conceptual metaphors of corruption: CORRUPTION IS A PERSON and CORRUPTION IS AN ADVERSARY. The following metaphors of life and death were also revealed: LIFE IS A JOURNEY or LIFE IS A PURPOSEFUL JOURNEY, LIFE IS A BURDEN and DEATH IS LOSS OF LIFE. The analysis of the expressions in the three speeches has revealed that metaphors go beyond pointing to the similarities between entities; rather they stand as a means of organising and understanding reality and that, conceptual metaphors are grounded in the nature of our everyday interaction with the world or our social and bodily experiences.

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