

# A STUDY OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN TWO SELECTED PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURAL SPEECHES IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*Conceptual metaphors continue to receive scholarly attention from discourse analysts taking political discourse seriously. This study therefore extends the current knowledge by examining conceptual metaphors in two selected presidential inaugural speeches of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan with a view of determining the underlying conceptual metaphors used to depict good governance, nation building and a promise for a better tomorrow. The study's theoretical impetus is Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The results of the investigation show conceptual metaphors such as journey metaphors that depict good governance which includes "a Journey defines a path"; "Difficulties are barriers and burdens"; "Policy making is a Journey" etc, Building metaphors depicting nation building such as "nation as builders"; "Nation is a building; and War metaphors depicting a promise for better tomorrow such as "corruption is war, politics is war"; "Social evils are enemies" etc. The study further revealed that these conceptual metaphors are used by the presidents to heighten emotional impact and show themselves as those that care more for the interest of the people above their political ambitions. The study concludes that conceptual metaphors are vital resources for construction of persuasion and motivation in presidential inaugural speeches.*

## **Introduction**

The inaugural speech is very important to the new President and his administration. In fact, it can be said that each Presidential inauguration revolves around the inaugural address which will have a lasting influence upon the nation. The day of the Presidential inauguration is the first time the newly elected President will stand before his people as the leader of the nation instead of a presidential candidate. The newly elected President often takes advantage of this opportunity to address the nation's divisions, publicize his fundamental political principles and policies for the next four years and also project the country's place in the world. The inaugural speech also sets the objective for the new government and promises a bright future to the public.

The major aim of the inaugural speech is to lay out briefly and justify the principles that will become the guide for newly elected President in the administration of the government. More importantly, it is aimed at convincing a national audience of the appropriateness and benefits of the new administration, moulding public opinion, inspiring public for action, putting the new government in a favourable position and seeking great support from the audience. Every President knows that it is his moment when giving the speech and at that moment, the whole nation or even the world is watching him. It is his first opportunity to make a good impression to the public. What he says will be regarded as a standard to measure the achievement and fulfillment of the promises made by his government. This can also help to form his image in the country. Besides, he can use this opportunity to appeal to more people to support his government and his party. Supporting the above view, Wilson (2005) observes that "the inaugurals are designed not just to state the president's political visions and missions but also to win as much support as possible from his audience".

In addition to his leadership qualities, negotiation skills and administrative abilities, a president should also employ a variety of

rhetorics to create emotional impact and attain the goal of persuading people to support him. Philips (2011) explains rhetorics as “a technique of using language effectively and persuasively in spoken or written form”. Such rhetorics include antithesis, parallelism, and metaphor among others. These will help him to communicate effectively. Among these rhetorics, metaphor appears to have been used widely and has served the purpose more effectively, which to a great extent enhance the force and vividness of language as Jeffery and Katz (1996) point out that “metaphors in politics are applied to convey policies, convince and persuade the public for actions or to characterize political opponents”. Seipenskaite (2013) also notes that, ‘Metaphor has long been recognized as an important stylistic device in political language. It helps to gain audience’s attention, hide particular aspects or express attitudes towards political issues’. She goes further to say that generally, a good speech contains a great deal of various metaphors because they are the most influential means of achieving more attention of the audience. They also help listeners to visualize what is meant by certain phrases or expressions. Thus, it perfectly emphasizes the president’s political motivations as Edelman (1977) argues that “metaphors are employed in order to provide the motivation or justification to think or behave in a particular manner”. Therefore many presidents adopt metaphor widely in the inaugural speeches. Most of the time, the intended meanings which the presidents want to convey to their audience are embedded in conceptual metaphors employed in the speeches.

The analysis of such conceptual metaphors becomes necessary in order to discover and expound the intended signification of the language used in the speech, that is, the meaning which the speaker designed it to convey to the hearers. The conceptual metaphor framework will serve as a veritable tool for identifying underlying meanings in presidential speeches such as the ideological stance behind a speech thereby providing a lucid and in depth interpretation of such speeches. In order to achieve this, the

two selected presidential inaugural speeches of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan have been chosen as a source of data for this study. This is because, unlike the speeches of ordinary citizens, presidential speeches attract scholarly attention due to the significant position occupied by presidents in the country. Their speeches aim at convincing citizens, boosting their morale, motivating the confidence of people and seeking the largest amount of support from their citizens. This present study is motivated to add to the scholarly attention presidential speeches have received and are still receiving. It focuses on conceptual metaphor analysis of two selected presidential speeches in Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Metaphor Theory**

Research on Metaphor has experienced a long history from traditional view which considers metaphor as a figure of speech to the current cognitive view which brings out the conceptual metaphor theory. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are connected with human cognitive system, and are not only reflected in our daily language but in our thought and action. In the view of cognitive linguistics, metaphor stands for conceptual metaphor. The term conceptual metaphor was originally put forward by Lakoff and Johnson in their book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) in which metaphor was looked upon as a cognitive tool that we live by. According to Kovecses (2002), a conceptual metaphor consists of two conceptual domains: source domain and target domain, the former is the conceptual domain used to understand another conceptual domain and the latter is the conceptual domain which is understood by the concept of the source domain. The metaphor is understood via a mapping (a set of systematic correspondences) from source domain (eg entities, basic things, people familiar with) to target domain (more abstract, vague things). For instance, in the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, LOVE is the target domain that needs to be understood via the concept of the source domain (JOURNEY). In other words,

we use mapping from our daily experience of journey onto the knowledge of love. From the vocabulary of journey we can find some essences of it; for example traveler, vehicles, moving forward, obstacle, getting lost, destination etc which form a systematic way to analyze the traveling aspects of love. The following are some metaphorical expressions about the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor as listed by Kovecses (2002).

- We are at a crossroad.
- We have gone far.
- We just have to go to separate ways.
- It has been a long bumpy road.
- We cannot turn back.
- The relationship is a dead end street.
- We are stuck.
- I don't think this relationship is going anywhere.
- Where are we?

From the above expressions, the relationship between metaphors and metaphorical expressions is that we use the conceptual metaphors to structure the language used in our daily lives. As a matter of fact, conceptual metaphors typically employ one abstract concept (LOVE) as a target domain and a physical or concrete concept as a source domain (JOURNEY). The metaphorical expressions given above as examples are common in our daily language.

Conceptual metaphors are systematic mapping across conceptual domains. As mentioned before, the domain which is mapped is the source domain whereas the recipient of mapping is called the target domain. Mapping is a process where experience from the source domain is mapped onto the target domain, making the relatively abstract target domain more concrete (Kovecses, 2002). However, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) also point out that

when mapping happens, it has its characteristics. First of all, it is unidirectional. A mapping only goes from source domain to the target domain, and not the other way round. Secondly, mappings are partial, which means that only a part of the source domain is mapped onto the target domain. For instance, in the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, not all aspects of the journey domain can be mapped onto the love domain because there is no correspondence between the two domains in many aspects.

The proponent of CMT upholds that metaphor is a cognitive mechanism in which one experiential domain is understood in terms of another experiential domain. Therefore the theory will be usefully employed for the analysis of conceptual metaphors used in the two selected Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan.

### **Methodology**

Based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory as propounded by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the examples of conceptual metaphors depicting good governance, nation building and a promise for a better tomorrow will be extracted from the inaugural speeches and analyzed to show how they make abstract concepts in politics more concrete.

According to different source domains, every metaphor will also be classified into several specific conceptual metaphors each of which will be discussed and analyzed in accordance with different but specific metaphorical expressions.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

Below are the conceptual metaphors in the two selected inaugural speeches of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan depicting good governance, nation building and a promise for a better tomorrow and the analysis of the metaphorical expressions that yielded them.

## **A Journey Defines a Path**

1. The nation is set on an assured path to becoming properly grounded in stable democracy. (Jonathan, 2011).
2. We are ready to take off on the path of sustained growth and economic development. (Jonathan, 2011).
3. Today, I will set on a better path, an agenda for a nation that competes with confidence. (Obasanjo, 2003)
4. The beacon of light that will guide us on our path of duty and service will among other attributes encompass a democratic instinct, a keen sense of justice and compassion, due process and unwavering focus on the goal of serving our country. (Jonathan, 2015).

### **Target Concept: Path**

#### **Source Domain: Journey**

One thing we know about journeys is that a journey defines a path (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Such paths are followed to specific destinations in governance. The above conceptual metaphor has to do with the goal of the journey, the fact that it must have a beginning, proceed and make progress towards the destination of the journey. Above are some instances of metaphorical expressions from the inaugural speeches which will illustrate the above metaphor. From the above examples, the journey of governance is set on a path that leads towards achieving some goals which is the destination. Some of these goals include stable democracy economic growth, sustained growth and economic development as exemplified in 1-4 above. In example 3, President Obasanjo is set on a path whose destination is to build a nation that competes with confidence. President Jonathan's domestic policy in example 4, is conceptualized in terms of a journey towards serving the nation with a keen sense of justice and compassion, due process and an unwavering focus. This metaphor forms a path that invites Nigerian people to participate in the journey. The politicians use these conceptual metaphors to intimate/convince the citizens that they are

working towards building a nation that will boast of a better tomorrow.

### **Governance is Defence**

5. The government will ensure that all Nigerian citizens and residents are entitled to the protection of life and property. (Obasanjo, 1999).
6. A determined effort will be made by the government to protect every citizen by cutting down significantly the incidence of violent crimes. (Obasanjo, 1999).

### **Target Concept: Governance**

#### **Source Domain: Defence**

Government as a body with the power to enforce laws to control a country, exercises sovereign authority in the country in order to defend them. In the above conceptual metaphor, governance is conceptualized as a defense. In examples 44 and 45 above, government is described as a body which can protect the nation and its citizens from harm and violence. We discover that the intention of the speaker was to accentuate the fact that government is an institution which always watches and protects the interests of the nation. This kind of conceptual metaphor and the metaphorical expressions that convey it are used in order to raise the nation's trust in the government as the one that defends them from violence and protects life and property.

### **Difficulties are Barriers and Burdens**

7. I am mindful that I represent the shared aspiration of all our people to forge a united Nigeria. Let us resolve that there will be no turning back or hesitation on the road to Nigeria rich in dignity and abundant with opportunities for all citizens. (Jonathan, 2011).



8. At home we face challenges of insecurity, pervasive corruption, the hitherto unending and seemingly impossible fuel and power shortages. (Obasanjo, 2003)).
9. I know your pain, because I have been there. Look beyond the hardship you have endured. See a new beginning, a new direction, a new spirit. (Jonathan, 2011).
10. Fellow compatriots, lift your gaze towards the horizon. We have come to a turning point, a moment for a hard decision (Jonathan, 2011).
11. Let us accept that high responsibility not as a burden but the chance to secure a great future with unity, hard work and collective sacrifice. (Jonathan, 2011).

**Target Concept: Difficulties****Source Domain: Barriers and Burdens**

The above examples from the inaugural speeches illustrate the conceptual metaphor which appears in speeches addressed in relatively earlier years when Nigeria was on its way to freedom from insecurity, corruption, terrorism and unemployment. There were key moments when they needed to sum up the courage to overcome the difficulties. It is against this background that President Obasanjo puts in his inaugural address the fact that there are challenges of insecurity, pervasive corruption, power and fuel shortages but he calls on the people not to succumb to hopelessness and defeatism. He encourages them that the problem will be fixed in order to achieve the goal. This shows that different metaphorical expressions are adopted in order to achieve different effects. Meanwhile in example 7, President Jonathan uses ‘no turning back or hesitation’ on the road to a united Nigeria to encourage people to be brave. Once they have taken the burdens, they should go ahead without hesitation. By this, he is telling the people to stick firmly to the course so as to reach the destination. In addition, sometimes, more important events in history are milestones on the journey, just like example 10 shows. Here he uses the metaphorical expression

‘turning point’ which shows a very important event that may change their future, thus encouraging them to grasp this opportunity at the moment. Even though some negative aspects are unavoidable in the journey to freedom, this metaphor always offers a strong positive orientation for people to move forward. For instance in example 11, President Jonathan shows the importance of taking the burdens and at the same time makes people believe that a bright future is ahead. He uses different metaphorical expressions for different purposes. In example 11, burdens show that the difficulty does exist where as in example 9 new beginning and new direction show that even though people may have heavy burdens and barriers on their way, they look beyond it to see a bright future in the new beginning.

### **Policy Making is a Journey**

12. Democracy is taking firm root in our land and Nigerians are collectively and confidently moving our country forward according to the National Anthem injunction: ‘to serve with heart and might, one nation bound in freedom, peace and unity’ (Obasanjo, 2003).
13. Our administration is committed to establishing the rule of law in every aspect of our national life because the rule of law is a path that leads to setting up an efficient and prosperous state. (Obasanjo, 2003).
14. This administration will create an auspicious atmosphere necessary for the reforms, difficult decisions and hard work to lead the country on the path of development and growth. (Obasanjo, 1999).
15. There is now a national consensus that our chosen route to national development is democracy. (Jonathan, 2011).
16. As we move in this administration, all the rules and regulations designed to help honesty and transparency in dealing with government will be restored and enforced. (Obasanjo, 1999).

## **Target Concept: Policy Making**

### **Source Domain: Journey**

In the above conceptual metaphor, policy making has been conceptualized as a journey in which Presidents are involved as they handle the issue of good governance. In order to govern a nation properly and effectively, the President need to have a strategy. The examples above are the linguistic manifestations of the conceptual metaphor in the inaugural speeches. Analyzing the given examples, we use our everyday experience with traveling to understand the intentions and actions of the Presidents in their policy making and governance. Our notion of journey or traveling is that it is something related to motion, destination, course or new experience. Therefore, it is obvious that these linguistic expressions that yield the conceptual metaphor POLICY MAKING IS A JOURNEY have been used by the Presidents as a way of convincing the nation that they as heads of states are going to work hard, actively and properly in order to lead the country to a better future. This will be achieved through policies they make which will lead to democracy, growth and development which will be bound with freedom, peace and unity.

### **Social Evils are Enemies**

17. My administration will seek collaboration at bilateral and multilateral levels to improve our capability in combating trans-border crimes. (Jonathan, 2011).
18. Boko Haram is not only the security issue bedeviling our country. The spate of kidnappings, armed robberies, herd men/farmers clashes, cattle rustlings all help to add to the general air of insecurity and crisis in our land. (Obasanjo, 2003).
19. The issue of crime requires as much attention and seriousness as the issue of corruption. (Obasanjo, 1999).
20. A determined effort will be made to cut down significantly the incidence of violent crimes and the crises in the oil-

producing areas which led to loss of lives and property. (Obasanjo, 1999).

21. The crisis in the Niger Delta demands our urgent attention. Ending it is a matter of strategic importance to our country. (Jonathan, 2015).

### **Target Concept: Social Evils**

#### **Source Domain: Enemies**

As a country grows economically or otherwise, any force that prevents its progress and development are its enemies. As a matter of fact, the social evils or drawbacks of a country can to a great extent hinder the progress of a country. For the Nigerian people, social evils or any other force which hinder the progress of Nigeria are their enemies. Thus in the conceptual metaphor SOCIAL EVILS ARE ENEMIES, the source domain (enemies) is mapped onto the target domain (social evils). From the above examples we discover that both Presidents raised the issue of social evils in their inaugural speeches ranging from trans-border crimes, Boko Haram, Herds men/farmers clashes, kidnappings, destruction of lives and properties e.t.c These evils are disasters which can cause disorder in a country, destroy a country's economy and make a society become unstable thus affecting the people's daily life as well as the quality of their lives. In other words, social evils can ruin everything that the people are holding onto such as peace and freedom. Thus by presenting these social evils, the politicians are telling the people that these evils are enemies which are powerful and if Nigerian government ignore them and do not know how to face and deal with them, they will become a great danger for the whole society. At the same time, the politicians are implying that when confronted with these enemies, a determined effort will be made to cut down on them significantly just as example 20 indicated. By pointing out these enemies, the politicians are also encouraging people to participate actively in social activities so as to maintain peace and freedom in Nigeria. By so doing, they are

trying to maintain good governance. In example 21, the President is pointing out the importance of attending to the Niger Delta crisis and the need to end it. By so doing, he is trying to encourage the people that as government maintains a defense against terror and destruction, peace and freedom will prevail in the country.

### **Nation as Builders**

22. Let us work together to build a great country that we will be proud of (Jonathan, 2015).
23. Let me salute the Nigerian workers who built our communities, cities and country. (Jonathan, 2015).
24. Fellow Nigerians, let us arise in this New Dawn to build a nation where harmony and stability will rule. (Obasanjo, 1999).
25. With God as our guide and with 120 million Nigerians working with me, with commitment, sustained effort and determination we shall build a nation with democracy and freedom (Obasanjo, 1999).
26. Let us work together, let us build together, let us bequeath a greater Nigeria. (Jonathan, 2011)

### **Target Concept: Nation**

#### **Source Domain: Builders**

The above conceptual metaphor and the expressions that manifest it (i.e examples 22-26) have been used by the Presidents with the intention of pointing out that the nation has to actively participate in the creation of a better future for the country. The process of building requires assiduity, zeal, patience, diligence and prudence. Thus we understand that the desire for the improved lives of the people will be a challenging task for the nation and they must embrace it. Thus nation has been conceptualized as builders.

### **Nation is a Building**

27. I also wish to pay tribute to our founding fathers, whose enduring sacrifices and abiding faith in the unity and greatness of our country, laid the founding for the nation. (Jonathan, 2011).
28. My fellow citizens, I am humbled and honored that you have elected me to represent this generation in the task of building a just and humane nation, where its people have a fair chance to attain their fullest potentials (Obasajo, 2003).

### **Target Concept: Nation**

#### **Source Domain: Building**

The building metaphor captures the aspects of the construction of a building which is common in people's lives. A building has a foundation and other structures. In political speeches the nation, society and its structures are usually target domains. In order to build and protect an edifice, efforts are needed from everyone. Some metaphorical expressions stand out from the inaugural speeches to illustrate the above conceptual metaphor. From example 27 above, nation has been conceptualized as a building whose foundation has being laid by the founding fathers through their enduring sacrifices and abiding faith. Also in example 28, the nation is seen as a physical structure to be built where its people will have a fair chance to attain their fullest potentials. In this metaphor, the source domain building provides linguistic materials for a vivid understanding of the abstract concept nation. One can actually build nation as a physical structure.

### **Confidence is a Building**

29. This we must do to ensure progress, justice, harmony, unity and above all to build confidence amongst our people. (Obasanjo, 1999).

### **Target Concept: Confidence**

#### **Source Domain: Building**

The above conceptual metaphor involves the conceptualization and understanding of an emotional process 'CONFIDENCE' in terms of a physical structure. From example 29, we discover that confidence has been conceptualized as a physical structure which can be built up amongst the people. When the people are confident, they will fully support the government and the nation will be moving forward.

### **Corruption is War**

30. Corruption, the greatest single bane of our society today will be tackled head-on at all levels. (Obasanjo, 1999).
31. No government can successfully win a war against corruption without involving the people who are victims of corruption. (Obasanjo, 1999).
32. The fight against corruption is a war in which we must all enlist so that the limited resources of this nation will be used for the growth of our common wealth. (Jonathan, 2011).
33. We are ready to embark on a war against corruption which has caused unpatriotic Nigerians to engage in advanced fraud. (Obasanjo, 2003).
34. We are determined to intensify the war against corruption, more so because corruption itself is central to the spread of poverty. (Obasanjo, 2003)

### **Target Concept: Corruption**

#### **Source Domain: War**

From the examples above (30-34), the metaphorical expressions that point to war are used to portray corruption as an enemy that has the potential to destroy the nation. In this way, corruption is perceived and structured in terms of war to describe the dehumanizing effect of corruption to the society. Corruption itself is central to the spread of poverty. Its corrosive effect is all too

visible in all aspects of the national life of the citizens. The effects of corruption, just like those of war, are devastating. The effects cut across all spheres of life--social, economic and environmental. War can cause destruction, poverty and even death. These are also the traits of corruption as can be seen in examples 30 and 34 above.

War brings about depression, anxiety and disorder. This is also typical of corruption because people suffer poverty as a result of economic decline brought about by corruption. In war situation, the masses are the direct victims. In the same vein, in a nation that is known for corruption, the people suffer, the economy suffers and the whole system does not function well. The lexical items tackled head-on, win a war, kill, embark on a war and fought are obviously drawn from the field of war for the purpose of projecting the image of protection and defense by the politicians. They also take advantage of this image that construe harm to win the loyalty of the people and gain massive support /solidarity. This is why all the presidents in their inaugural speeches are bent on waging war against corruption. Corruption has been conceptualized as war which usually has devastating effect on the nation. The lexical items drawn from the semantic field of war have their literal meanings but they have been consciously employed to project the concept of corruption. Though the concepts are two entirely different phenomena, the meaning of these words imply the same in the context of corruption and the action is structured to bring out the image of the concept. Corruption has taken the structure of war such that the entailment of war would help bring corruption to terms of understanding. Corruption has indeed been conceptualized as a war to be fought and won.

### **Politics in War**

35. I will continue to fight for all citizens to have access to first class education.
36. I will continue to fight for electricity to be available to all our citizens.



37. I will continue to fight for improved medical care for all our citizens.
38. I will continue to fight for jobs to be created through Productive partnership.
39. We fought for decolonization. We will now fight for democratization (Jonathan, 2011).
40. Let me once again thank our international friends who fought for democracy alongside with us. (Obasanjo, 1999).
41. We will leave no stone unturned to fight against those criminals who have continued to bleed the Nigerian economy. (Obasanjo, 2003).

**Target Concept: Politics**

**Source Domain: War**

In Political Leadership, politicians struggle to put in their best in order to improve the lot of their subjects. They work so hard to get things done to the extent that it is a kind of battle. President Jonathan and others present themselves as fighters for the wealth and wellbeing of the nation. Some metaphorical expressions from the inaugural speeches illustrate the above conceptual metaphor. In the above conceptual metaphor, the lexical item ‘fight’ is used in order to highlight the desire to present plans and strategies on how to improve people’s lives as President Jonathan indicated in examples 35-38 above. Moreover, the concept of fight is used quite often in order to emphasize that the President is going to fight for his country, its citizens and their families. He also stated that he will create jobs for the citizens through productive partnerships. President Jonathan in example 39 declared that they have fought for decolonization and will now fight for democratization just like soldiers fighting for their country in a war. The concept of war is also portrayed as President Obasanjo in example 40 thanked the international friends who fought alongside with Nigeria for democracy. Finally, in order to revive the Nigerian economy, the

criminals who caused the Nigerian economy to bleed must be fought.

In conclusion, it could be pointed out that the years of transition for the different presidents were difficult years for Nigeria because the country had to get to grips with serious challenges especially in its economic situation and security problems. This is why the concept of war ran through the inaugural speeches of the presidents.

### **Conclusion**

The presidential inaugural speech is an important kind of political discourse. The president will take advantage of the speech to publicize his fundamental political principles as well as policies. It plays an important role in the president's political life. In order to make clear to the public the public political views and stands of the new government, metaphors are adopted by politicians in their addresses to make their speeches more convincing. The study analyzed conceptual metaphors in two selected presidential inaugural speeches of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan by applying the principles of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson. Through the investigation, several specific conceptual metaphors were revealed. It is also discovered from the analysis that the source domains of the identified conceptual metaphors are closely related to people's daily lives and experiences which make the abstract political speech understandable for common people. This in turn plays a very important persuasive role by arousing strong emotional responses.

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