

# A CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR ANALYSIS OF SOME NIGERIAN PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURAL SPEECHES

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## **Abstract**

*Presidential speeches are significant in many ways in that they always touch the lives of the citizens of the country who always pay attention to them. In most cases, the speeches attract formal discussions intended at interpreting and bringing them into proper focus. This study explores the use of conceptual metaphors employed in some Nigerian Presidential inaugural speeches with a view of ascertaining how certain abstract concepts reflected in the speeches can be appropriately understood through the application of more concrete ones using Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory. A qualitative approach is adopted for analysis of the inaugural speeches which constitute the data for the study. The result of the study showed that: abstract and less delineated concepts reflected in the speeches are better understood through the application of concrete ones; and that concrete concepts represented by words are mapped onto abstract concepts which they associate with, towards determining the meaning expressed. The study concluded that these conceptual metaphors are used as linguistic tools which can be manipulated by politicians in order to promote their ideologies and personal interests.*

## **Introduction**

Speeches, as the act of delivering a formal spoken communication to the audience, have become an essential part of the political life of society, especially with regards to the speeches

of presidents that encapsulate the information about the situation of the country, the strategies the government plans to carry out, and the achievements the president intends to make after taking the oath as the president. So, the speeches provide an opportunity for the citizens to know the situation of the country. However, it is difficult for the common audience to understand, support and agree with the content of the speeches, therefore some linguistic strategies are employed in the speeches to make the content to be easily understood and agreed with. Metaphor as one of the linguistic strategies that is very pervasive in political speeches because metaphor can provide the opportunity for the audience to understand the abstract domains in terms of the concrete conceptual domains (Kovecses, 2002).

Metaphor can make the abstract political view, politics and events more concrete that human beings can easily comprehend and accept them (Jeffery and Katz, 1996). Metaphor is usually used in inaugural address which is a formal speech delivered by presidents of countries on inauguration day after swearing the oath of office. By using metaphor, the goal of politicians is not only to present facts but also to be persuasive. Metaphor is pervasive in our daily lives not only in language but also in thought and action (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) observed that metaphor is a property of concepts, so in conceptual metaphors, one domain of experience is used to understand another domain of experience. The characterization of conceptual metaphor is a set of mapping in which this set of mapping is obtained through the correspondence between the basic constituent elements of the source domain and the target domain. To know a conceptual metaphor is to know a set of mappings that provide much of the meaning of the metaphorical linguistic expression that make a particular metaphor manifest. By this mapping process, we can comprehend the meaning of metaphor easier.

Therefore, in this study, the researcher identifies the conceptual metaphors employed in some Nigerian Presidential

inaugural speeches by applying the Conceptual Metaphor Theory propounded by Lakoff and Johnson with a view of ascertaining how meanings are realized by the mapping principle between abstract and concrete concepts. The theory elaborates the correlation between two conceptual domains called mapping which also leads to an understanding of the meaning of metaphor.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is hinged on Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The choice of this theory is because it considers meaning as well as metaphorical expressions. It will also account for underlying meanings in the presidential inaugural speeches. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth CMT) originated from Lakoff and Johnson's work titled: *Metaphor We Live By* (1980). CMT is a research paradigm which proposes that metaphor is not just an aspect of language but a fundamental part of human thought with the result that most metaphorical expressions are generated from already existing patterns of metaphorical thoughts in the mind. Lakoff and Johnson's major concern in the development of CMT is why our everyday concepts are structured in one way rather than the other. Buttressing this point, Romero and Soria (2005) stated that the most basic assumption in cognitive Metaphor Theory is that there is a set of ordinary metaphoric concepts – conceptual metaphors – around which we conceptualize the world. This means that our ordinary conceptual system includes concepts which structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world and how we relate to other people.

The essence of conceptual metaphor is to understand, reason and experience one kind of thing or body of knowledge in terms of another entirely different body of knowledge. Based on the CMT approach, our thought processes are highly metaphorical because according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), "the concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect, they also govern our everyday functioning down to the most mundane details". This

means that our conceptual system plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. CMT rejects the notion that metaphor is a decorative device, peripheral to language and thought. Instead, the theory focuses on the tenet that metaphor operates at the level of thinking. It is therefore central to thought and language. In other words, we act based on our conceptual system according to the way we conceive things.

The fundamental principle of CMT is that the conceptual structure is organized by cross-domain mappings. Mapping is a term used to describe the process of conceptual projection of the source domain upon the target domain for better understanding of the concepts involved. CMT recognizes interrelating domains for the specification of meaning of linguistic units. The source domain is the conceptual domain from which metaphorical expressions are drawn in order to understand another conceptual domain. The conceptual domain that is understood in this way is the target domain. CMT established the claim that certain abstract concepts such as TIME, LOVE, ARGUMENT etc. (target domain) are better understood through concrete ones such as MONEY, JOURNEY and WAR (source domain). According to Ma and Liu (2008), “Lakoff and Johnson observe that people often talk about abstract ideas by employing the words for more concrete source field to talk about an abstract target field”. The conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, for instance, tells us precisely how argument is being conceptualized as war. Though there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle and the structure of an argument – attack, defence, counter attack etc. – reflect this. Individuals in an argument are seen as opponents in a battle which can either be won or lost. This unified way of conceptualizing argument metaphorically is realized in different linguistic expressions as follows:

- He attack every weak point in my argument.
- He shot down all my arguments.
- I have never won an argument with him.
- Your claims are indefensible.

The proponents of CMT uphold that human thought processes are largely metaphorical. In fact most metaphorical expressions are generated from already existing metaphorical thoughts in the mind. The main evidence presented in the theory is patterns of word use which will serve as a useful tool for the analysis of conceptual metaphors employed in some Nigerian Presidential inaugural speeches. The theory offers a cognitive mechanism for proper analysis of the conceptual metaphors in the inaugural speeches.

### **Methodology**

This study is a detailed description of the conceptual metaphors in some Nigerian presidential inaugural speeches. The analysis is rooted in the basic principles as presented by the Conceptual Metaphor Theory propounded by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This involves the analysis of the collected metaphorical expressions from the inaugural speeches. The lexical items used in encoding each metaphorical expression are itemized to determine the prevalent metaphor portrayed and the systematicity of the mapping with the concept involved. The analysis used interrelating domains- source and target, for specification of meanings inherent in the metaphorical expressions through the mapping principle.

Consequent to the interpretation and explanation of the metaphorical expressions, different conceptual categories are revealed. These different categories are used to understand the thought patterns inherent in language which constrain people's belief and action.

### **Analysis and Discussion of Various Conceptual Metaphors in Selected Inaugural Speeches**

Below are the various conceptual metaphors and analysis of the metaphorical expressions from the selected inaugural speeches

## **Time is Money**

1. Earlier this year, over seventy-three million eligible Nigerians endured all manner of inconveniences and wasted their time just to secure their voters cards. (Jonathan, 2011).
  
1. I salute their resolve in wasting long hours in the rain and hot sunshine to register and cast their votes. (Buhari, 2015)
2. Many citizens of this nation spent their time at the polling stations in other to cast their votes (Jonathan, 2011).
3. We must spend some time to strengthen common grounds and develop new areas of understanding. (Obasanjo, 1999).
4. In the face of doubt, skepticism and constraints, the chairman and his commissioners invested a lot of time to conduct elections. (Obasanjo, 1999).
5. Therefore, you the good people of Nigeria elected me, a man who walked through the valley of the shadow of death as your president. I believe that I am living on borrowed time (Obasanjo, 1999).
6. As a retired officer, my heart bleeds to see the degradation in the proficiency of the military. We need to budget time for a great deal of re-orientation and definition of roles, re-training and re-education to ensure that the military submits to civil authority (Obasanjo, 1999).

### **Target Concept: Time**

### **Source Domain: Money**

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), “time in our culture is a valuable commodity. It is a limited resource that we can use to accomplish our goals”. Actually, it has become customary to pay people by hour, week or year because the concept of work across cultures is typically associated with the time it takes and time is precisely quantified. Thus time is conceptualized as money which is the concrete concept. This gives speakers insight into the nature of the relevant concepts that structure everyday activities in relation to

time. Thus speakers understand and experience time as the kind of thing that can be spent, wasted, budgeted, invested wisely or poorly, saved or squandered (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Speakers' everyday experience with money is used to conceptualize time. The above examples from the inaugural speeches uphold the systematic means of conceptualizing time as money. The conceptual mapping in the above conceptual metaphor reveals the source domain as money, resulting in the conceptual metaphor

### **Time is Money.**

Examples 1 and 2 above show that time an abstract concept can also be wasted as one would waste money as indicated when people waited to secure voters cards and cast their votes. In examples 3 and 4 we discover that one can indeed spend time as through a good amount of money has been spent. In the other examples (5-7), the lexical items, invested, borrowed and budgeted are drawn from the semantic field of money and have been consciously employed to project the concept of time. Though the two concepts are different phenomena, the meaning of these lexical items imply the same thing in the context of time and the action is structured to bring out the image of the concept. This means of conceptualizing time as a physical or valuable commodity is common across various cultures and it shapes the human understanding of time. When time is conceptualized as money, the understanding of time will be measured with predominant characteristics and collocates of money in different languages. Another important fact to note is that the emotional relevance that follows money as a valuable commodity equally characterizes the understanding of time. For instance, when one loses time, perhaps doing nothing or something that does not worth the time, the person is usually angry as though he lost money. Again if someone spends time on another person and that person does not show appreciation, the person that spent the time will likely be angry as though he has spent money on someone without positive result.

Time across cultures remains a valuable concept, though linguistic manifestations may differ. Time plays unavoidable role in our everyday life and activities just like money does.

### **Time is Space**

7. The incursion of the military into government has been a disaster for our country for thirty years. (Obasanjo, 1999).
8. We have been ruled for eight years by one of our nation's greatest patriots President Obasanjo. (Yar'Adua, 2007).

### **Target Concept: Time**

#### **Source Domain: Space**

The above metaphor is the conceptualization of time as a physical location that is measurable from one point in location to another. Physical locations are usually measured from one place to another. The distance between one location and another is measured by the space between the two locations. Such natural way of measuring physical concepts is projected upon an abstract concept TIME in the conceptual mapping. The understanding of time as space is prominent in expressions where an action starts at a point in time and ends in another point in time. The measurement of events that start from one point in time and continues is through space (time) that exists between the commencement point in time and the time the event ends. From example 8 above, we discover that the event of military incursion into government started at a particular point in time and continued for a space thirty years and President Obasanjo lamented that “esprit-de-corps” among the military has been destroyed and professionalism has been lost. Also the action of ruling by President Obasanjo as exemplified in 9 above commenced at a particular point in time and lasted for a space of eight years. Space remains the yardstick for quantifying time.



### **Time is an Object**

9. We must be given time to plan to ensure progress, justice, harmony, unity and above all to rekindle confidence amongst our people (Obasanjo, 1999).
10. It is only fair to say that I look forward to reciprocation by National Assembly, to the gestures and undertakings, so that we can put the recent past behind us and begin anew for the benefit of the country. (Obasanjo, 2003).

### **Target Concept: Time**

### **Source Domain: Object**

Time is an abstract concept which is difficult to explain. However human beings conceptualize time metaphorically as an object. The source domain OBJECT provides linguistic materials for a vivid understanding of the abstract concept TIME. In other words time is seen as a concrete object which can be given to someone as in example 10 above or something that can be put behind us as seen in example 11. These examples portray such conceptualizations.

### **Time is a Person**

11. Much time has passed since we arrived for this inauguration, therefore we must demonstrate leadership, statesmanship, vision, capacity and sacrifice to transform our nation. (Jonathan, 2011).

### **Target Concept: Time**

### **Source Domain: Person**

In the above conceptual metaphor, linguistic materials from the source domain PERSON which is a concrete concept have been projected upon the target domain TIME an abstract concept for its better understanding. Time has been conceptualized as a person who can move and pass. Ordinarily, 'passed' as a lexical item is used to explain the movement in a specific direction of a person that

goes by but in the above expression ‘passed’ is used on ‘time’ which is not a person who can move. The above metaphorical expression shows that Nigeria has not changed over time since the independence of Nigeria years ago. Nigerian citizens are informed by this metaphor that Nigeria has been independent long ago and yet transformation has not been achieved. Therefore President Jonathan’s administration wanted to set Nigeria as a bigger and better nation than before by demonstrating leadership, statesmanship, vision, capacity and sacrifice that will transform the nation. There is a cross domain conceptual mapping from source domain (PERSON) to target domain (TIME). Time is conceptualized as a person and conceptually can experience the same process as a person who can move from one place to another.

### **ADMINISTRATION IS A PERSON**

12. This administration is laying the foundation and taking bold steps in transforming our country and liberating our people from the shackles of poverty. (Buhari, 2015)
13. The administration of President Obasanjo has laid the foundation upon which we can build our future prosperity (Yar’Adua, 2017)
14. The urgent task of my administration is to provide a suitable environment for productive activities to flourish. (Jonathan, 2011).
15. I believe that this administration must deal with the following issues even in these difficult times of near economic collapse. The crises in the oil-producing areas, food supply, food security and agricultural, poverty alleviation etc (Obasanjo, 1999).

### **Target Concept: Administration**

#### **Source Domain: Person**

The understanding of an abstract concept ‘administration’ as a person has portrayed the belief of the conceptual metaphor theorists

which involves the understanding of one domain of experience in terms of a very different domain of experience. The conceptual metaphor involves the comprehension of an abstract entity ‘administration’ in terms of a more concrete entity ‘person’ that has life and can do things. Examples 13 above shows ‘administration’ as a person who is laying foundation and taking bold steps in transforming the country and liberating the people from the shackles of poverty. In the other examples above, administration has been conceptualized as a person who has an urgent task to be performed which is to provide a suitable environment that will enable productive activities for the nation to flourish. Again the attribute of dealing with issues has been given to the abstract concept ‘administration’ thereby conceptualizing it as a person who will deal with the issues mentioned in example 16 above.

### **Nation is a Person**

16. We shall uphold and stand for the core values that gave our nation birth (Obasanjo, 1999)
17. All thanks be to Almighty God for bringing us to this critical juncture in the life of our country. (Obasanjo, 1999).
18. I urge fellow citizens to remain steadfast and committed to the values and aspirations of our nation. (Jonathan, 2010)
19. The lesson we have learnt is that the resolution of the Niger Delta issues is crucial for the health of the nation. (Jonathan, 2011)

### **Target Concept: Nation**

### **Source Domain: Person**

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), “Personification is a special type of ontological metaphor where the object is further specified as being a person”. In other words, a wide variety of experiences with non-human entities can be described in terms of human motivations, characteristics and activities. Therefore by adopting the human metaphor, it is possible to make people

understand other phenomena in human terms such as motivation, characteristics and actions.

In the above examples (17-20) from the inaugural speeches, nation has been conceptualized as a person. From the above metaphorical expression (17), above we discover that usually the lexical item “birth” is used to explain the very beginning process of a person’s life but it has been used for the nation and nation is not a human being. Nation and person are from two different conceptual domains. Therefore, there is a cross conceptual domain mapping between the two concepts. Birth is the beginning process of a person’s life. Thus the beginning process of a nation’s life has been conceptualized as the beginning process of a person’ life. In this metaphor, some linguistic materials and attributes of a person are mapped onto nation which helps people to easily understand several specific concepts of a nation. In other words, nation has been conceptualized as a person that can be given birth to. Example 18 portrays the conceptualization of the abstract entity ‘country’ to be understood in terms of a more concrete entity that has life. The metaphorical expression shows that ‘country’ as a person has been alive and things have been happening in the life of the country. Consequently, President Obasanjo is thanking God for bringing his administration to the critical juncture in the life of the country. The conceptualization in example 19 portrays nation as a person who has values and aspirations. Thus the citizens were admonished to remain committed to the values and aspirations of the nation. Also the metaphorical expression in example 20 shows that nation has been conceptualized as a person whose health has been affected by the Niger Delta issue. The statement means that the resolution of the Niger Delta issue is very important to the health of the nation in that it will bring about healing and wellbeing to the nation.

### **Time is a Container**

24. I commend the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) for the leadership they gave the country in the last eleven months. (Obasanjo, 1999).
25. Progress has been made in recent weeks by our security forces but victory cannot be achieved by basing the command and control centre in Abuja (Buhari, 2015).
26. I am determined with your full cooperation to make significant changes within a year of my administration. (Jonathan, 2015).
27. I have worked out measures which must be implemented within the first six months. (Obsanjo, 1999).
28. Instead of progress and development which we are entitled to expect from those who governed us, we experienced persistent deterioration in the quality of government in the last decade and a half particularly during the last regime. (Obasanjo, 2003).

### **Target Concept: Time**

### **Source Domain: Container**

It is within the human conceptual system to conceptualize things as physical CONTAINERS with inside-out-side orientation. Concerning container metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain that we are physical beings bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins and we experience the rest of the world as outside us. In other words, each of us is a container with a bounding surface and an in-out orientation. Therefore, it is within the human conceptual system to conceptualize things as physical containers with in-side-outside orientation. Consequently we project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces and also view them as containers with an inside and an outside. In the same vein, it is common among humans to conceptualize certain abstract entities and emotional phenomena as containers.

The above conceptual metaphor shows a natural way of conceptualizing time in terms of a container which is a physical object with bounded entity which encircles ‘when’ certain actions are performed. Actions taking place in time are conceived as though they are happening within the ‘container’ as shown in the above examples. From example 25, we discover that the action of leadership rendered by General Abdusalami Abubakar and members of the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) was as if it was done within a container which is the last eleven months (Time). In example 26, the progress made by the security forces is conceptualized as if it was done in a container which is ‘recent weeks’. In the same vein, the significant changes in example 27 which the administration determines to make will be done in a container which is ‘within a year. In addition, example 28 above shows that measures which must be implemented by the president were conceptualized as if they will be implemented inside a container which is the first ‘six months’.

Finally from example 29, the persistent deterioration in the quality of governance particularly during the last regime was experienced by the nation in a kind of ‘container’ which is the last decade. These examples portray the container image schemas which embody human experience.

### **Summary of the Conceptual Mapping Revealed in the Analysis**

Here is the summary of the conceptual mapping between concrete concepts and their targets as they are projected in the inaugural speeches in order to create the image structures implicit in them. These are revealed in line with Lakoff and Johnson’s cognitive mechanism/ procedure of inferring conceptual metaphors from linguistic expressions.

This is achieved through cross-domain mapping which is the process of conceptual projection of the source domain upon the target domain for better understanding of the concepts involved. This involves identifying concrete concepts represented by words

and mapping them onto abstract concepts they associate with towards determining the meaning expressed. This is to enable a revelation of the underlying meanings of the conceptual mappings that have been projected by the politicians through the inaugural speeches to establish the ideologies that promote the interest of the politicians.

## **Conclusion**

From the analysis, it was observed that the conceptual mapping between concrete concepts and their target counterparts in the inaugural speeches enhanced the creation of the image structures implicit in them. This is revealed in line with Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive mechanism of inferring conceptual metaphors from linguistic expressions. The study shows that conceptual metaphors can create a new world of experience using the complex interaction of meaning, language and life through patterns of word use which is the main evidence presented in the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The study also revealed that the corpus is replete with several specific conceptual metaphors which include metaphors of time, person, container etc. Some abstract concepts were clearly understood in terms of the concrete ones through the mapping principle. It was discovered from the analysis that the source domain of these metaphors are closely related to the people's daily life and experiences which makes the abstract political speeches understandable for common people thus together playing a very important persuasive role by arousing strong emotional responses. Through the metaphors employed by the presidents, they want to convince the citizens that their administration is doing their best for the good of the country.

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