THE USE OF METAPHORS IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract. Metaphors play a central role in shaping political communication, as they allow politicians to frame complex issues in ways that resonate with public opinion. This article explores the use of metaphors in contemporary English political discourse, focusing on speeches, debates, and media coverage from the past two decades. The study identifies the most frequent metaphorical domains – war, journey, family, and economy – and analyzes their persuasive functions. The results show that metaphors not only facilitate comprehension but also serve as tools of persuasion, ideology, and identity construction.

Keywords: metaphor, political discourse, cognitive linguistics, persuasion, ideology.

Introduction. Political discourse is not merely a matter of transmitting information but also of framing, persuasion, and identity construction. Language is central to politics, and within language, metaphors are particularly powerful. They help politicians present complex social, economic, and international issues in ways that align with ideological goals and appeal to public emotions. In contemporary English political discourse, metaphors structure debates on war, migration, economics, and national identity. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of conceptual metaphor laid the foundation for understanding metaphors as cognitive tools, not just stylistic devices. According to their framework, metaphors shape how people think about abstract concepts by mapping them onto more concrete domains. This article applies cognitive linguistic theory to analyze the prevalence and function of metaphors in English political discourse, illustrating how they both reflect and construct political realities.

Literature Review. The study of metaphors in political communication has expanded significantly in recent decades. Charteris-Black (2005) argued that political metaphors are key instruments of legitimization, allowing politicians to frame their policies as natural or

necessary. Musolff (2016) explored the "body politic" and "family" metaphors, showing their persistence across cultures.

In the context of English-speaking countries, especially the UK and USA, metaphors of war and journey are particularly prominent. For example, war metaphors have been widely used in campaigns against poverty ("the war on poverty"), drugs ("the war on drugs"), and, more recently, COVID-19. Charteris-Black (2011) emphasized that such metaphors mobilize collective effort but also polarize society.

Cognitive linguistics provides a useful lens for analyzing these patterns. Lakoff (1991) noted how political ideologies are often built upon metaphorical conceptualizations, such as the "nation as a family." Semino (2008) extended this to media discourse, demonstrating how journalists adopt and reinforce metaphorical framings.

Methodology. The research adopts a qualitative discourse-analytic approach. Data sources include selected political speeches, debates in the British Parliament and the US Congress, and media coverage from 2000-2023. The analysis follows these steps: identification of metaphorical expressions; categorization of metaphors according to conceptual domains (war, journey, family, economy); interpretation of pragmatic functions, such as persuasion, legitimation, and identity construction; this approach highlights both the frequency of metaphors and their ideological significance in political discourse.

Results and Discussion. The analysis reveals four dominant metaphorical domains in contemporary English political discourse:

1. War Metaphors. Politicians frequently use war metaphors to frame social and economic issues as battles that require unity and sacrifice. Phrases such as "fighting climate change" or "the war on terror" create urgency and justify extraordinary measures. These metaphors mobilize action but may oversimplify complex problems.

2. Journey Metaphors. Political progress is often framed as a collective journey, with metaphors such as "moving forward," "the road ahead," or "a path to recovery." This framing emphasizes progress, continuity, and shared purpose, appealing to optimism and perseverance.

3. Family Metaphors. Leaders often refer to the nation as a family, emphasizing care, protection, and responsibility. Terms such as "our national family" or "protecting our children's future" personalize political issues, making them emotionally accessible. However, such metaphors can also reinforce hierarchical and paternalistic ideologies.

4. Economic Metaphors. The economy is conceptualized through metaphors of health ("a sick economy," "economic recovery") and machinery ("the engine of growth," "gears of the market"). These metaphors simplify abstract economic processes and help justify policy measures, but they may obscure underlying complexities.

While metaphors facilitate comprehension, they also constrain thought by framing issues in particular ways. For example, framing immigration as a "flood" or "invasion" carries negative connotations that influence public attitudes. Thus, metaphors are not neutral but ideological tools.

Conclusion. Metaphors are indispensable in contemporary English political discourse. They enable politicians to simplify complex issues, evoke emotions, and mobilize collective action. However, their power also lies in shaping thought and guiding public opinion along specific ideological lines. Understanding the use of metaphors is therefore crucial for critical engagement with political communication.

Future research should focus on cross-cultural comparisons and the role of digital media in amplifying metaphorical framings. For educators and students of linguistics,

metaphor analysis provides valuable insights into the interplay between language, cognition, and power in political life.

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