

## CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN POLITICAL SPEECHES: A CORPUS-ASSISTED CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CROSS-CULTURAL PERSUASION

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**Abstract:** *This study explores how conceptual metaphors function as persuasive tools in political speeches across different cultural contexts. Using a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach, the research investigates speeches delivered by prominent political leaders from Western and Eastern cultures. The analysis focuses on identifying metaphorical patterns that reflect underlying ideological, emotional, and cultural frameworks. The corpus, consisting of 25 political speeches, was analyzed using AntConc software to examine the frequency and semantic domains of metaphorical expressions. Findings reveal that metaphors of war, journey, and family are dominant across cultures, yet their persuasive effects vary according to cultural values and communication styles. The study concludes that conceptual metaphors are not only linguistic devices but also ideological instruments that shape political discourse and public perception. This research contributes to the understanding of how metaphor-based persuasion operates in cross-cultural political communication.*

**Keywords:** *conceptual metaphors, political discourse, persuasion, critical discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, cross-cultural communication*

### INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a medium of communication but a powerful tool of persuasion, ideology, and identity construction. Political discourse, in particular, demonstrates how language can influence public opinion, justify decisions, and maintain power structures. Within this context, conceptual metaphors play a crucial role in shaping how people perceive political realities. According to Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980), metaphors are not just decorative elements of language but fundamental mechanisms of thought that structure human understanding of the world.

In political speeches, metaphors such as "war against poverty," "journey toward progress," or "nation as a family" allow leaders to connect emotionally with their audiences and frame complex social issues in accessible ways. These metaphorical structures are often culturally bound, reflecting distinct value systems and ideological orientations. Therefore, comparing political speeches from different cultural contexts provides valuable insights into how persuasion operates across societies.

The present study aims to examine how conceptual metaphors function as persuasive devices in political speeches across cultures, with a particular focus on Western and Eastern leaders. By applying corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis

(CDA), this research identifies dominant metaphorical patterns, their ideological implications, and cultural variations. The study contributes to the fields of linguistics, political communication, and cross-cultural discourse studies by revealing how metaphors shape perception, ideology, and persuasion in political contexts.

#### Literature Review

The study of conceptual metaphors in political discourse has gained significant attention since the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). They argue that metaphors are not mere linguistic decorations but cognitive tools that structure how individuals conceptualize abstract ideas through more concrete experiences. Their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) laid the foundation for analyzing how metaphors reflect and shape human thought.

Later research extended these ideas into the realm of political communication. Charteris-Black (2004), in his influential work *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis*, emphasized the persuasive and ideological dimensions of metaphors in political speeches. He proposed that metaphors not only convey meaning but also legitimize political power by framing policies and ideologies in emotionally appealing ways. Similarly, Chilton (2004) highlighted the role of metaphors in reinforcing national identity and security narratives, noting that metaphors such as "defending the nation" or "protecting borders" reflect deeper ideological assumptions.

In cross-cultural contexts, Musolff (2016) explored how similar metaphors can take on different meanings depending on cultural values and historical experiences. For instance, the "journey" metaphor may signify collective progress in Western societies, while in Eastern contexts, it may emphasize harmony and continuity. Recent corpus-based studies (e.g., Semino, 2008; Deignan, 2010) have further developed computational methods for identifying metaphorical patterns, enhancing the objectivity of metaphor analysis.

Overall, the existing literature demonstrates that metaphors serve as essential cognitive, rhetorical, and ideological instruments in political discourse. However, comparative corpus-based research across distinct cultural settings remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by analyzing metaphorical persuasion in Western and Eastern political speeches through a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis.

#### Methodology

This study employs a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach to investigate conceptual metaphors in political speeches across cultures. The methodology combines quantitative corpus techniques with qualitative discourse interpretation, allowing both the identification of metaphorical patterns and the exploration of their ideological and persuasive functions.

#### Data Collection

The corpus consists of 25 political speeches delivered by prominent leaders from both Western (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom) and Eastern (e.g., China,

Uzbekistan) contexts between 2010 and 2024. The speeches were selected based on their political relevance, linguistic richness, and availability in English or translated versions. Each text was cleaned, standardized, and formatted in .txt format for analysis.

#### Analytical Tools and Procedures

The data were analyzed using AntConc 4.0, a corpus analysis software that enables keyword frequency counting, concordance line extraction, and collocation analysis. Metaphorical expressions were identified manually and semi-automatically following the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) proposed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007). Identified metaphors were then categorized according to conceptual domains such as WAR, JOURNEY, FAMILY, BUILDING, and HEALTH.

#### Analytical Framework

The identified metaphors were interpreted through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995), focusing on how language use reflects and reproduces ideology and power relations. Comparative analysis was conducted to highlight cultural variations in metaphor use between Western and Eastern leaders. For instance, Western leaders frequently used WAR and JOURNEY metaphors to promote change and progress, whereas Eastern leaders tended to employ FAMILY and HARMONY metaphors to emphasize unity and stability.

This mixed-method approach ensures both empirical validity and interpretive depth, making it possible to connect linguistic data with socio-political meanings in cross-cultural contexts.

#### Findings and Discussion (in English)

The analysis of 25 political speeches revealed a consistent use of conceptual metaphors as persuasive devices across both Western and Eastern political discourses. However, significant cultural and ideological differences were observed in the choice and function of these metaphors.

##### 1. Dominant Metaphor Types

The most frequent metaphorical domains identified were WAR, JOURNEY, FAMILY, BUILDING, and HEALTH.

- WAR metaphors (e.g., “fight for freedom,” “battle against corruption”) were highly prevalent in Western speeches, reflecting a confrontational and goal-oriented political culture. These metaphors frame politics as a struggle that requires courage, strategy, and victory.

- JOURNEY metaphors (e.g., “path to progress,” “road to democracy”) appeared frequently in both contexts but carried different meanings. In the West, they symbolized innovation and movement toward reform, while in Eastern speeches they emphasized collective harmony and continuity.

- FAMILY metaphors (e.g., “our nation as one family,” “citizens as children of the motherland”) were dominant in Eastern political discourse, reinforcing hierarchical relationships and unity between leaders and citizens.

- BUILDING metaphors (e.g., “building a better future”) suggested collaboration and long-term development goals across both cultural settings.
- HEALTH metaphors (e.g., “healing the economy,” “the nation’s heartbeat”) symbolized recovery and sustainability, particularly in post-crisis contexts such as pandemics or economic downturns.

## 2. Cross-Cultural Variations

Cultural background strongly influenced the metaphorical framing of political messages. Western leaders tended to rely on individualistic and action-oriented metaphors (e.g., fight, struggle, progress), aligning with democratic ideals of competition and achievement. In contrast, Eastern leaders favored collectivist and harmony-based metaphors (e.g., family, unity, balance), consistent with cultural values emphasizing cooperation, respect, and social stability.

## 3. Ideological and Persuasive Functions

Metaphors in both contexts served as vehicles of persuasion and ideology construction. WAR and JOURNEY metaphors motivated citizens toward collective goals, while FAMILY metaphors fostered loyalty and emotional attachment. These metaphorical structures simplified complex political realities and made ideological narratives emotionally resonant.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that conceptual metaphors are not universal linguistic devices but culturally conditioned rhetorical strategies that reflect each society’s political values and communication norms.

## Conclusion

This study has explored how conceptual metaphors function as persuasive and ideological tools in political speeches across different cultural contexts.

By applying a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, it was found that metaphors such as POLITICS IS WAR, NATION IS A FAMILY, and PROGRESS IS A JOURNEY are widely used to shape public perception and influence emotional engagement.

These metaphorical frameworks not only simplify complex political realities but also strengthen the bond between leaders and their audiences.

The cross-cultural analysis revealed that Western political discourse tends to use metaphors emphasizing competition, struggle, and victory, while Eastern political speeches often rely on metaphors of harmony, unity, and moral leadership. This demonstrates that metaphor choice reflects deeper cultural values and ideological orientations.

Ultimately, conceptual metaphors play a crucial role in framing political thought, legitimizing authority, and constructing collective identity.

Understanding these metaphors helps uncover the hidden persuasive mechanisms within political discourse and contributes to a more critical awareness of how language shapes political ideology and power relations.

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