

The Study of Political Language: A Brief Overview of Recent Research

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Abstract

This article aims to demonstrate a number of the main research methodologies used in identifying and analysing political language in world politics. The study provides a brief theoretical overview of the key research on political discourse, with particular regard to metaphor use in political discourse, the role of equivocation, rhetorical devices to invite audience applause, and the use of personal pronouns. With a consideration of the evaluation of each research methodology in a historical context, the article here is designed as an entry point for readers into the type of research methodology in political language. In addition, the article hopes not only to present a fuller picture of research on political discourse, but also to tempt researchers with the possibilities of using these theoretical frameworks in their own research.

Key words: Political discourse, Metaphor, Equivocation, Rhetorical device, Personal pronoun

1 Introduction

In recent decades, the study of the relationship between language and political behavior has drawn much attention in the linguistic ground (see e.g., Carver & Pikalo, 2008; Chilton, 2004; Fairclough, 2000; Wilson, 1990). For example, Wilson (1990) argued that metaphor, a sort of language form, can achieve three main roles in political communication. Since metaphors allow us to think, act and talk about one kind of experience in terms of another, they can help simplify complicated political arguments through reducing them to a metaphorical form. They may also be used to evoke emotions and emphasize particular goals. Finally, Wilson claimed that politicians may manipulate metaphors to unfold absurd images which can be then utilized to ridicule

their political opponents. In other words, metaphor allows politicians to present themselves in a positive light, to disgrace their opponents, to justify their own behaviour and to assert particular political issues.

This article sets out a brief theoretical overview of research on political discourse in world politics, with particular regard to metaphor use in political discourse, the role of equivocation, rhetorical devices to invite audience applause, and the use of personal pronouns. The discourse of politics has the focus of a number of studies in political communication (see e.g., Beard, 2000; Chilton & Schaffner, 1997a; De Landtsheer & Feldman, 2000; Feldman & De Landtsheer, 1998; Gastil, 1992).



Recent research topics have been focused on the role of metaphor in political discourse (e.g. De Landtsheer, 1998; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Taran, 2000; Wilson, 1990), the strategic use of equivocation (e.g. Bavelas, Black, Chovil, & Mullet, 1990; Bull, 1998), how rhetorical devices are employed by politicians to invite audience applause (e.g. Atkinson, 1983, 1984a, b; Bull, 2002, 2003) and the use of pronouns (e.g. Bull & Fetzer, 2006; Duszak, 2002; Fairclough, 2001; Gastil, 1992; Wilson, 1990). By examining four aspects of research on political discourse, the article here is designed as a starting point for readers into the type of research methodology in political language. In addition, I hope to tempt researchers with the possibilities of using these theoretical frameworks in their own research.

In the following section, the article is organised into five main sections. Section 2 provides an account of the role of equivocation. Section 3 accounts for rhetorical devices to invite audience applause in political communication. Section 4 presents the use of personal pronouns in political discourse. Section 5 provides an account of the role of metaphor in political discourse. Section 8 draws some conclusions from the research reviewed in this article.

2. Equivocation

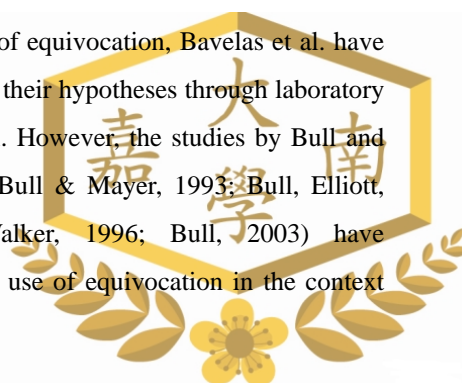
Equivocation has been defined as deliberate vagueness (Goss & Williams, 1973), strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg, 1984, 1998), nonstraightforward communication (Bavelas, Black, Bryson & Mullett, 1988; Bavelas et al., 1990) and as the intentional use of imprecise language (Hamilton & Mineo, 1998). According to Watzlawick, Beavin, Bavelas & Jackson (1967: 76), equivocation includes speech acts in human communication such as: “self-contradictions,

inconsistencies, subject switches, tangentialisations, incomplete sentences, misunderstandings, obscure style or mannerisms of speech...etc.” A major theory of equivocation has been developed through the pioneering studies of Bavelas and her colleagues (Bavelas et al., 1988, 1990; Bavelas & Smith, 1982). Their theory, based on Haley’s (1959) communication model, analyses equivocation in terms of the four dimensions of sender, content, receiver and context. In measuring equivocation, they make an assumption that “all messages that would (intuitively or otherwise) be called equivocal are ambiguous in at least one of these four elements” (Bavelas et al., 1990: 34). In other words, if any of the four elements (Sender, Content, Receiver and Context) is unclear, this will result in difficulties in understanding in human communication. Meanwhile, in defining equivocation more precisely, they have couched the four dimensions in terms of the following questions:

- Sender: To what extent is the message the speaker’s own opinion?
- Content: How clear is the message, in terms of what is being said?
- Receiver: To what extent is the message addressed to the other person?
- Context: To what extent is this a direct answer to the question?

(Bavelas & Smith, 1982)

In their studies of equivocation, Bavelas et al. have primarily tested their hypotheses through laboratory experimentation. However, the studies by Bull and his associates (Bull & Mayer, 1993; Bull, Elliott, Palmer, & Walker, 1996; Bull, 2003) have investigated the use of equivocation in the context



of political interviews and have extended the scope of equivocation theory to natural language use, not merely in laboratory experiments.

Bull and Mayer (1993) provide an analysis of eight televised political interviews from the 1987 British General Election with Margaret Thatcher (then Conservative Prime Minister, 1979-1990) and Neil Kinnock (then leader of the Labour Opposition, 1983-1992). The findings revealed that Margaret Thatcher responded to only 37 per cent of the questions overall, Neil Kinnock to only 39 per cent. These results reveal a remarkable similarity to the findings of a different set of interviews with Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock (Harris, 1991), which also showed that both politicians gave direct answers to just over 39 per cent of the questions put to them. As a result, the evidence described above strongly supports the popular view that politicians frequently do not answer questions in political interviews. In order to analyse the data further, Bull and his colleagues (Bull & Mayer, 1993; Bull, 2003) identified 35 different forms of equivocation in political communication.

Bull et al. (1996) provide an account which is based on 18 interviews from the 1992 British General Election. They focused on the relationship between face and equivocation in political interviews and developed a typology of face-threats in questions. Nineteen different subcategories were distinguished on the basis of an analysis of face-threats in questions and divided into three major categories of face that politicians would protect, namely, 1) their own personal face, 2) the face of the party they represent, and 3) the face with regard to supporting positively significant others (such as the electorate, colleagues and members of one's own party) or not supporting negatively significant others, such as political opponents. The data indicated that face played an important role in

determining whether or not politicians answered a question. According to Bull et al., the concept of threats to face can be considered as an underlying rationale for what Bavelas et al. (1990) term an avoidance-avoidance conflict, in which all possible responses to a question lead to potentially negative consequences, but nevertheless a response is still needed.

Bavelas et al. (1990) argued that avoidance-avoidance conflicts prevail in the context of political interviews. They described a large number of situations which created avoidance-avoidance conflicts for politicians. For example, when politicians are asked to offer comments on contentious issues on which there is a divided electorate, they often try to avoid making direct responses so as not to antagonise either group of constituents. Furthermore, when asked about complicated issues but where they have to answer under the pressure of time limits, politicians are often in the dilemma of either making a simple incomplete reply or a long-winded, circuitous or evasive one. Although Bavelas et al. provided an account of situations generating avoidance-avoidance conflicts for politicians, they failed to identify any common underlying theoretical explanation for why avoidance-avoidance conflicts occur so frequently in this situation (Bull et al., 1996). However, the avoidance-avoidance conflict theorised by Bavelas et al. is a useful concept for the analysis of equivocal behaviour in political interaction.

3. Rhetorical devices to invite applause

The studies reported in this section are concerned with the way in which politicians employ rhetorical devices to invite audience applause in political speeches. In this context,



especially of politicians at election campaign rallies, audience reactions such as clapping and booing provide an important barometer of their popular appeal; hence, politicians are often aware of the value of using rhetorical devices in evoking applause to elicit agreement from their audience. As such, applause can be interpreted as a highly noticeable expression of group identity or solidarity with the speaker and the party the speaker represents. In this respect, applause would seem to play a substantial role in the development of a politician's image and career as a popular figure.

According to Atkinson (e.g., 1983, 1984a, 1984b), there are two rhetorical devices which are widely employed to invite audience applause in political speeches: three-part lists and contrasts. Atkinson (1984a) argued that the three-part list in particular can serve as a clear signal to the audience of appropriate places to applaud, given that a three-part list which lists similar items can work to strengthen, highlight or amplify a specific point in almost any kind of message (p. 60).

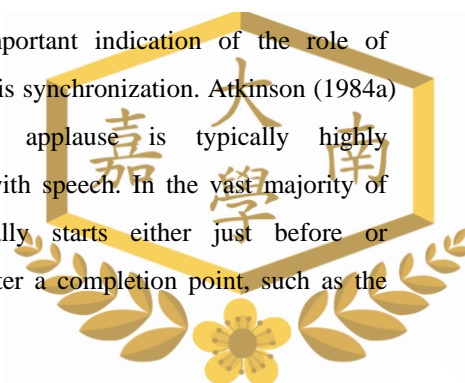
The other rhetorical device frequently used for obtaining applause is the *contrast*. Atkinson (1984a) proposed that contrasts can work to project a distinct completion point for the message in question, since audience members have to make up their minds not only *whether* they will applaud, but also *when* to applaud. If the speech is delivered in such a way as to project appropriate applause points, this will facilitate the audience in coordinating their behaviour, and reduce the chances of exposing themselves to public ridicule and humiliation through solitary applause.

Since the study carried out by Atkinson was grounded on the detailed qualitative analysis of particular examples of rhetorical structures, it can be criticized as highly selective. To address this issue, a follow-up study was conducted by Heritage

and Greatbatch (1986) with more comprehensive sampling of political speeches. They analysed all the 476 speeches that were televised from the 1981 British party political conferences (Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties). They examined seven basic rhetorical formats (contrasts, lists, puzzle-solution, headline-punchline, combinations, position taking, and pursuits). Their results showed that nearly 70 per cent of all the collective applause was associated with these seven rhetorical devices. In particular, contrasts and lists were by far the most effective: contrasts were associated with around 33.2 per cent of the incidences of collective applause during speeches, lists with 12.6 per cent. In short, nearly half the collective applause was related to the two rhetorical formats originally identified by Atkinson.

In seeking to take account of the role of speech content, Atkinson (1984a) observed that there is a limited range of simple types of message which tend to be considered as applaudable: favourable references to individual persons, favourable references to "us", and unfavourable references to "them". In one sample, Atkinson (1984a: 44) pointed out that these three types occurred in 95 per cent of the bursts of applause at British political party conferences. Similarly, Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) found that applause was related to a quite limited range of message types. They further argued that the probability of these message types receiving applause appeared to be greatly increased by employing appropriate rhetorical devices.

Another important indication of the role of speech content is synchronization. Atkinson (1984a) observed that applause is typically highly synchronized with speech. In the vast majority of cases, it usually starts either just before or immediately after a completion point, such as the



end of a sentence (p. 33). By the same token, Heritage and Greatbatch (1986: 112) reported that most applause was typically initiated within 0.3 seconds of sentence completion. In addition, Atkinson (1984a: 24) pointed out that applause reaches its peak very rapidly, typically after the first second. This would suggest that it is quite impossible for audience members to time the appropriate place to applaud within a short period of time unless the speaker provides them with advance notice of when and where to clap:

If displays of approval are seldom delayed for more than a split second after a completion point, and frequently start just before one is reached, it means that speakers must be supplying their audiences with advance notice as to precisely when they should start clapping. Otherwise, it is quite impossible to see how anyone would ever be able to respond so promptly...
(Atkinson, 1984a: 33-34)

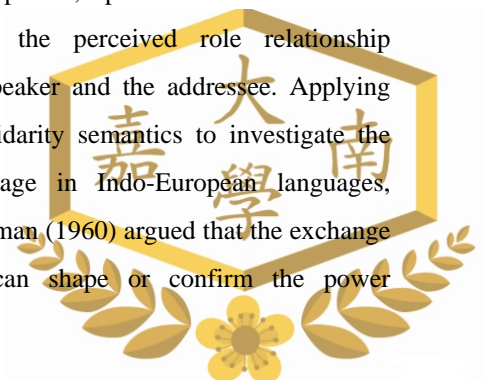
This is exactly what rhetorical devices accomplish. As noted above, Atkinson (1984a: 18) argued that rhetorical devices help the audience behave in a coordinated way in order for them not to risk exposure to public ridicule and humiliation by applauding in isolation.

Although Atkinson (1984a) and Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) provided several highly influential insights into the analysis of political speeches, they failed to analyse the issue of collective applause with regard to non-rhetorically formatted statements. To address this issue, Bull (2000) conducted a detailed analysis of non-rhetorically formatted statements that received collective applause. Fifteen statements that received collective applause without rhetorical formatting

were selected from the speeches delivered by the leaders of the major British political parties (Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat) to their own party conferences in the autumn of 1996. Bull's (2000) analysis showed that applause to these statements at political rallies was unsynchronized with speech in the majority of cases (60 per cent). The applause either began well before a completion point or was actually interruptive. Moreover, in every non-rhetorically formatted example, the applauded statement comprised a statement of political policy. In other words, the audience was responding to the political content of the speech, but not to rhetorical devices. From this perspective, Bull (2000) argued that some aspects of political statements may be so politically significant or so popular with the audience that they will be applauded, regardless of whether they make use of the rhetorical devices identified by Atkinson and Heritage and Greatbatch.

4. Personal pronouns in political discourse

This section provides a brief review of research on personal pronouns, with particular reference to political discourse. Previous studies have shown that the employment of pronouns may serve communicatively to present various aspects of the speaker's attitudes, social status, gender, motivation and so forth (Wilson 1990: 46). The classic work of Brown and Gilman (1960) indicated that in Indo-European languages such as German, French, Italian and Spanish, pronominal selection is influenced by the perceived role relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Applying power and solidarity semantics to investigate the pronominal usage in Indo-European languages, Brown and Gilman (1960) argued that the exchange of pronouns can shape or confirm the power



dynamics and solidarity of a relationship. A reciprocal use of address forms implies relative equality and solidarity, while a non-reciprocal use (e.g., I say *Usted* to you, but you say *tu* to me) signifies social distance and an unequal power relationship, with the dominant speaker using the informal pronoun. Seen in this light, personal pronouns play an important role in negotiating social status in interaction. In other words, personal pronouns may perform not only a person deictic function, but also a social deictic function in discourse.

In the deictic function of personal pronouns, Helmbrecht (2002) explicates one of the classic uses of personal pronouns with respect to the case of the first person plural pronouns (e.g., English *we*):

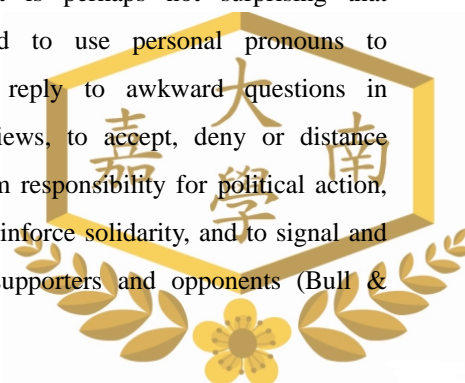
One almost universal means to refer to speaker-groups are first person non-singular pronouns such as English *we*, German *wir*, and French *nous*. The usage of the first person plural pronouns consists of at least three important operations. Firstly, the speaker refers to a set of human individuals which were introduced in some way or other in the previous discourse. Secondly, he determines this set of people as a group, and thirdly, he explicitly states that he is a member of this group excluding others from membership of this group at the same time. (Helmbrecht 2002: 31)

Further, Helmbrecht (2002: 42) indicates that the employment of the first person plural pronoun *we* is closely associated with the linguistic establishment of social groups. Speakers publicly demarcate social groups with regard to their hearers by using this pronoun. At the same time, they reveal their

membership of these groups. This prototypical usage of *we* pronouns provides a strong approach to establish and reinforce social identities.

On pronoun choice by politicians, R. Lakoff (1990) argued that personal pronouns work subliminally on the addressee and do not stir suspicion as nouns might, even when their meanings and functions have been strategically manipulated. In her study of the late U.S. President Reagan's employment of the first-person plural pronoun *we* in a public speech delivered on television to announce his decision to run for a second term as President in 1984, Lakoff (1990) argued that Reagan's employment of *we* is often ambiguous in its referential domain, leaving the American people uncertain whether or not they are being referred to. Lakoff (1990) further demonstrated that such ambiguity in Reagan's use of the pronoun *we* may create either a dichotomous or connective effect in the American people since Reagan employs hearer-inclusive *we* to establish solidarity with the hearer, and hearer-exclusive *we* to signify his role as U.S. President and his administration.

Similarly, as proposed by Pyykkö (2002: 246), "the pronouns do not carry their own concept meaning, they get their meaning from the nouns, in whose stead they are used. This makes it easy to hide behind the pronouns and to use *we* as a central political force of influence." Given the essentially ambiguous nature of personal pronouns acting in the reconstruction and negotiation of identities and social roles, it is perhaps not surprising that politicians tend to use personal pronouns to equivocate in reply to awkward questions in political interviews, to accept, deny or distance themselves from responsibility for political action, to create and reinforce solidarity, and to signal and identify both supporters and opponents (Bull &



Fetzer, 2006; Fairclough, 2001; Skarzynska, 2002; Wilson, 1990).

In the strategic use of pronouns, Gastil (1992: 484-485), along with Wilson (1990), further proposed that politicians are likely to strategically manipulate their pronominal references for four reasons.

Firstly, politicians make use of pronouns to set forth their ideological views on specific issues. For example, they may refer to the government as *us* or *it* depending on their view of the public's role in governance.

Secondly, pronoun selection is able to reveal how close or distant the speaker is to the topic under discussion or to the participants involved. For instance, Maitland and Wilson (1987) and Wilson (1990), analysed personal pronouns used by three influential British politicians: Margaret Thatcher, Neil Kinnock and Michael Foot. For example, they argued that Mrs Thatcher was skilled at the use of the first person singular pronoun *I* in establishing rapport with her audience and in expressing her inherent attitudes and sincerity. By shifting from the pronoun *I* to the pronoun *we*, Mrs Thatcher could separate her role in private from the public figure as a leader of the Government and the Conservative Party. She also employed the pronoun *we* to convey positive connotations in reference to those groups, countries or individuals who were in agreement with her; conversely, the use of the pronoun *they* with negative connotations allowed Mrs Thatcher to distance herself and her Government from opposition groups.

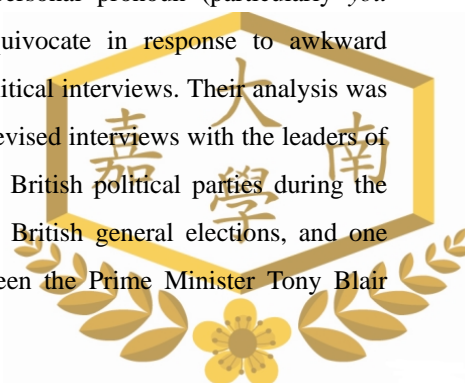
Thirdly, politicians are able to get hearers involved in their argument through making use of the pronoun *we* to include them. In this respect, both the politician and subject matter may weaken the hearer's own independent thinking, which makes hearers more receptive.

Fourthly, the choice of personal pronouns can designate the attributions of responsibility. Wilson (1990: 48), for instance, indicated that the use of pronouns *it*, *I* and *we* in similar sentences will express the different distribution of responsibilities. Consider the sentences as follows:

- (1) Due to the rising balance of payment deficit...
- (a) *it* has been found necessary to increase interest rates.
 - (b) *I* have found it necessary to increase interest rates.
 - (c) *we* have found it necessary to increase interest rates.

Wilson stated that when a government official is explaining an increase in interest rates to the public, the speaker can choose (a), (b), and (c) to speak to people, whereas each of them varies in the distribution of responsibilities in term of the speaker's choice of personal pronouns. In (a) it has an agentless passive such that the actor is unidentified; in (b) it has a clear case of personal pronoun *I*; nevertheless in (c) the case is ambiguous: the *we* may contain the speaker along with other members of the government, or the *we* represents the nation or the state since the speaker is a government official.

Personal pronouns can also be used to indicate vagueness and imprecision as well as precision. Bull and Fetzer (2006) tested the hypothesis that politicians might make use of the potential ambiguity of personal pronoun (particularly *you* and *we*) to equivocate in response to awkward questions in political interviews. Their analysis was based on 20 televised interviews with the leaders of the three major British political parties during the 1997 and 2001 British general elections, and one interview between the Prime Minister Tony Blair



and Jeremy Paxman, broadcast just before the war in Iraq in 2003. They analysed question-response sequences on the basis of Bavelas et al.'s (1990) theory of equivocation and Goffman's (1981) concept of footing. Bull & Fetzer found that there was no evidence that politicians made use of the potential indeterminacy of personal pronouns in an attempt to equivocate in response to awkward questions in political interviews.

Instead, they proposed three reasons for the use of pronominal shifts by politicians (*ibid.* p. 31). One reason is to deflect personal criticisms. In Extract 5 presented in their study, for instance, they noted that Tony Blair used a pronominal shift from *I* to *we*, (referring to the government), when he responds to defend his credibility with the public.

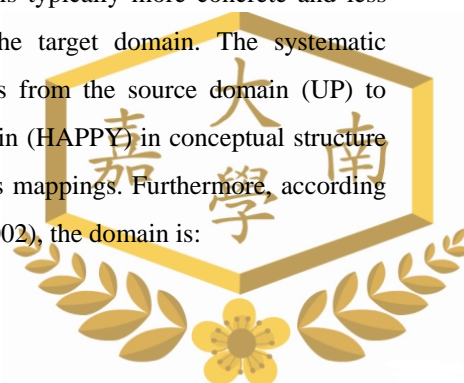
The second reason is to dodge awkward choices. In Extract 6, for instance, Bull & Fetzer (2006) observed that when questioned by an audience member about the issue of race relations in the Conservative Party (questioner: '...continual *Tory half truths* about the so-called problem of immigration...'), William Hague replied only for himself, not the Conservative Party's stance (WH; ... the Conservative Party had no proposals to change our immigration laws, and that *we* recognise...*we* should not be closed off. What *I* am talking about is abuse of the asylum. And in *my* experience...It's the asylum system *I* want to sort out'). To answer the question would either admit or deny the utterance '*Tory half truths*'; nevertheless, WH strategically equivocated by using the pronoun *I*, rather than the pronoun *we* (indexing the domain of the Conservative Party), so as to restrict himself to giving a statement about his personal stance on asylum seekers.

The third reason for politicians is that the employment of the self-reference involved in collective *we* may be a way of showing personal

modesty. In Extract 14, for example, they noted that while asked about his personal role as the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, Paddy Ashdown diplomatically replied with collective *we*, which may be understood as the Liberal Democratic Party, rather than the pronoun *I*. In other words, he made use of a pronominal shift in footing to attenuate his own personal role and at the same time evade the question posed.

5. Metaphor in political communication

Metaphor, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 159), plays a central role in the formation of social and political reality. From a cognitive point of view, metaphor is, they argued, a conceptual system in which one kind of experience can be comprehended in terms of another. For example, one conceptual metaphor is HAPPY IS UP (*ibid.* p. 15) (in the metaphor literature, small capitals are used to show a conceptual metaphor). A conceptual metaphor is thus a link between two conceptual areas, or domains, in this example the concrete domain of direction (UP) and the abstract domain of emotion (HAPPY). The two domains that are involved in conceptual metaphor have special terms. The domain that provides the conceptual structures, "direction" in this example, to understand another domain is called the source domain, while the domain that is metaphorically understood, "emotion" in this example, through the use of the source domain is known as the target domain. The source domain is typically more concrete and less abstract than the target domain. The systematic correspondences from the source domain (UP) to the target domain (HAPPY) in conceptual structure are described as mappings. Furthermore, according to Kövecses (2002), the domain is:



Our conceptual representation, or knowledge, of any coherent segment of experience. We often call such representations concepts, such as the concepts of BUILDING or MOTION. This knowledge involves both the knowledge of basic elements that constitute a domain and knowledge that is rich in detail. This detailed rich knowledge about a domain is often made use of in metaphorical entailments.

(Kövecses 2002: 247-8)

Kövecses has repeatedly argued that “both source and target domains are characterized by a number of different dimensions of experiences, such as purpose, function, control, manner, cause, shape, size, and many others” (p. 247). He has termed these “aspects of domains” and observed that each of them contains elements: entities and relations. He indicated that metaphorical mappings between a source and a target are grounded on these elements. In the example of HAPPY IS UP, the knowledge of elements from the source domain of upward direction and movement is mapped onto the target domain of emotion. This metaphor is realized in our everyday language through a wide variety of expressions. Given the metaphorical expressions below, the upward orientations of the general concept of UP are associated with the happy emotion, with words such as *up*, *boosted*, *high*, *rose*, and *on top of the world*:

I'm feeling *up* today.

That *boosted* my spirits.

We had to cheer him *up*.

Feeling *on top of the world*.

You're in *high* spirits.

My spirits *rose*.

Lighten *up*!

He lit *up*.

Nevertheless, in discussing the issue of mappings across domains in conceptual structure, Kövecses (2002) reported that a single target domain could be and frequently is connected to a number of source domains such as:

AN ARGUMENT IS A CONTAINER: Your argument has *a lot of content*. What is the *core* of his argument?

AN ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY: We will *proceed in a step-by-step* fashion. We have *covered a lot of ground*.

AN ARGUMENT IS WAR: He won the argument. I couldn't *defend* that point.

AN ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING: She *constructed a solid* argument. We have got a *good foundation* for the argument. (Kövecses 2002: 80)

Each of these metaphors highlights a number of different aspects of the concept of argument, including the issue of the content of an argument, the nub of its points, the progress made, the issue of control over the argument, its construction, and its strength. Thus the CONTAINER metaphor focuses on issues of content and nub, but hides the aspects of progress, control, construction, and strength. As many concepts are multifaceted, it will often be the case that one source domain is not sufficient to characterize a target.

Kövecses (2002) illustrated how the process of highlighting and hiding jointly operates in metaphorical mappings with the example of the ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING metaphor. He considered the following metaphorical expressions which realize this metaphor:

We've got the *framework* for a *solid*



argument.

If you don't *support* your argument with *solid* facts, the whole thing will *collapse*.

You should try to *buttress* your argument with more facts.

With the *groundwork* you've got, you can *build a strong* argument.

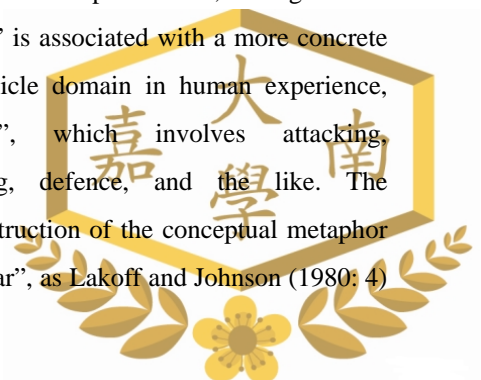
(Kövecses 2002: 81)

Here the metaphorical expressions, which Kövecses noted, made an association with the construction of a building through words such as *build*; with the general structure via words such as *framework*; and with its strength through words such as *buttress*, *solid*, *strong*, and *support*. However, he also pointed out that many aspects of the concept of a building were not typically used in the metaphorical understanding of arguments. For instance, buildings typically have rooms, corridors, windows, and doors; there are people living or working in them; they are perhaps built in a unique architectural style. But these aspects of buildings are not conventionally applied to the ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING metaphor. Thus, the mappings between a source and a target are merely partial. This property seems to highly account for the phenomenon of politicians highlighting certain political arguments and hiding others.

So far we have seen that only certain aspects of a source domain are conceptually used and activated in the understanding of a target domain. One may however quite reasonably ask why are just certain aspects involved and not others? Grady (1997) proposes a solution to the question in terms of "primary metaphors", referring to simple, basic mappings with close reference to an experiential basis, motivating metaphorical expressions within a number of various segments of experience (e.g. MORE IS UP, PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS,

(ABSTRACT) ORGANIZATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE, and PERSISTENCE IS REMAINING ERECT). Grady argued that primary metaphors function as simple mappings and can be conflated to form "complex metaphors", which are consistent with the conceptual metaphors of cognitive metaphor theory. To this end, he reanalysed the conceptual metaphor THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS and found that it is generated by the interaction of two primary metaphors: (ABSTRACT) ORGANIZATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE, and PERSISTENCE IS REMAINING ERECT. Kövecses (2002) pointed out that the former is generated by the basic mappings between the physical structures (e.g., that of a building) and the abstract structures; the latter works through erect or vertical physical experiences. As a result, the combination of these two primary metaphors gives us what we know about the THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor. Seen in this light, Deignan (2005) argued that a number of the mappings which are usually characterised as conceptual metaphors may be not basic level structures at all, but can be broken down in terms of more fundamental links.

In referring to metaphor in use, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explicated how metaphor assists in understanding a new domain in the light of a domain with which people are familiar. They provided a typical illustration of the conventional conceptual metaphor "argument is war" in the conceptual system of English speakers. The abstract concept, which is the topic domain, is "argument". The "argument" is associated with a more concrete concept of vehicle domain in human experience, namely "war", which involves attacking, counterattacking, defence, and the like. The successful construction of the conceptual metaphor "argument is war", as Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 4)



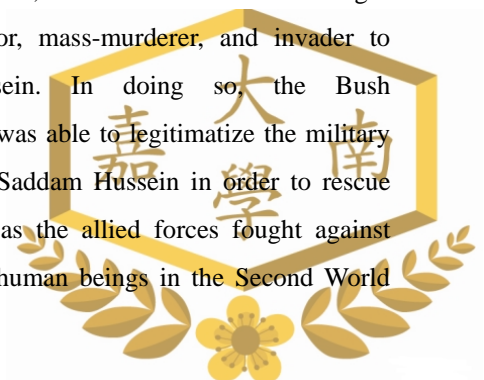
note, is that such metaphor is strongly entrenched in the ordinary conceptual system of a particular culture so as to structure how we talk, how we act, and how we think.

In this regard, the main significance of this concept for research on political discourse is that it treats metaphor as having both heuristic and interactional functions. Heuristically, metaphor may serve as a conceptual instrument which allows interactants to think of novel, complex and remote domains. Interactionally, metaphor can help avoid conflict between interactants on the grounds that it affords space for restructuring and negotiating the understanding of specific meanings and references. As a result, metaphor works to safeguard and maintain positive or negative face for interactants, and facilitates the maintenance of interactional continuity as well as topical cohesion (Chilton & Ilyin 1993; Obeng 1997). Furthermore, on the subject of new metaphors that are imaginative and creative, Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 139) argue that they provide new meaning to what we know by extending and making sense of conventional metaphors, or by constructing new metaphorical associations, such as the metaphor LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART. Given the cognitive implications of metaphorical associations, the employment of new metaphors can alter our basic conceptual system and lead us to create a new reality (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 145).

Nevertheless, Lakoff and Johnson also argue that metaphors provide us with a partial rather than total comprehension of what concepts are. In this respect, metaphor may draw attention to one specific aspect of a concept and hide or play down others. Thus, metaphor helps to simplify the complicated message for public understanding, but it may also be used to distort reality and mislead individuals (Nogales, 1999). As G. Lakoff (1991: 71)

points out, metaphors “limit what we notice, highlight what we do see, and provide part of the inferential structure that we reason with.” For example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrate how President Carter employed the metaphor “the moral equivalent of war” to deal with the energy crisis. The war metaphor activated a coherent network of entailments in listeners, such as “enemy,” “a threat to national security,” “setting targets,” “reorganizing priorities,” “establishing a new chain of command,” “marshaling forces,” “imposing sanctions,” “calling for sacrifices,” and so on. The war metaphor spotlighted some features of reality and avoided others. Carter’s war metaphor not only provided a means of seeing reality, but also orchestrated a political campaign for policy formulation and political and economic action, given that it can link to certain inferences: “there was an external, foreign, hostile enemy; energy needed to be given top priority; the populace would have to make sacrifices; if we didn’t meet the threat, we would not survive” and so forth (ibid. pp. 156-157). On the other hand, President Carter deftly hid issues against his political appeals, such as irreversible destruction of the environment caused by exploiting mineral resources.

Furthermore, Lakoff (1991) also revealed how the Bush administration made use of metaphors to justify the military action in the Gulf War. For instance, one of the well-known metaphors is “Saddam Hussein is Hitler.” The Bush administration metaphorically linked an enemy leader to a tyrant, and attached Hitlerian images such as dictator, mass-murderer, and invader to Saddam Hussein. In doing so, the Bush administration was able to legitimize the military action against Saddam Hussein in order to rescue Kuwaitis, just as the allied forces fought against Hitler to save human beings in the Second World



War. Conversely, what the metaphor hides is that hundreds of thousands of bombs were dropped on the Iraqis, rather than on one person, Saddam Hussein. Thus, the metaphor hides the fact that many thousands of people were killed, maimed, or harmed in the war.

6 Conclusion

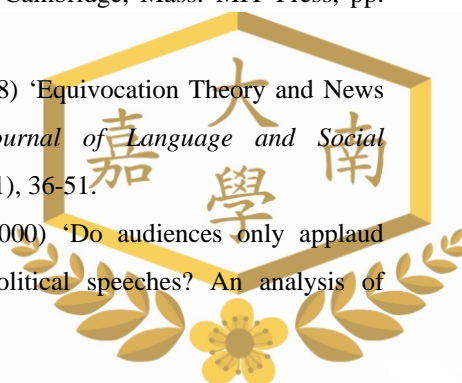
In conclusion, the investigations reported in this article serve to improve our comprehension of how politicians manage language of politics in political communication. For instance, Section 2 has shown that politicians tend to equivocate in response to awkward questions posed; they capitalize on rhetorical devices, such as three-part lists and contrasts, to invite audience applause to reflect their greater popularity, group identity or solidarity with the speaker and the party the speaker represents in political speeches; they use strategically personal pronouns to designate their attitudes, social status, gender, and motivation.

The studies reported in this article have also shed light on the use of metaphor in political communication, with particular reference to the roles of metaphors in political contexts as well as the importance of metaphor in political persuasion. For example, Lakoff & Johnson (1980) showed how metaphor can foreground certain domains while suppressing others. In other words, metaphor helps to simplify complicated messages for public understanding, but it may also be used to distort reality and mislead individuals. Simultaneously, from a cognitive point of view, metaphor also performs as a heuristic way of exploring desired new realities and policies. Thus, the Bush administration has been shown to make use of a wide range of metaphors to justify the military action in the Gulf War (Lakoff, 1991). Finally, the study will hopefully be used to serve as the

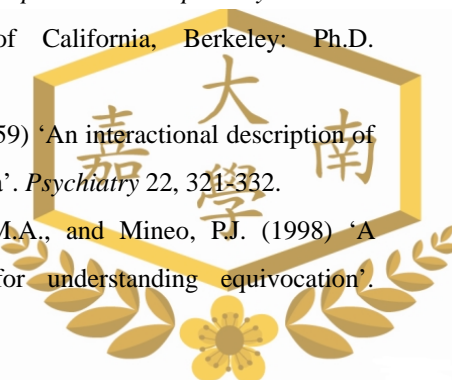
springboard for further research on the relationship between language and politics.

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政治語言研究：晚近研究簡述

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摘要

本文旨在陳述、說明常被用於辨識、分析當前政治語言的主要研究方法、及其功能。本文針對下列主要的政治語言理論模式，提出簡明扼要的探討、分析。這些理論模式包括：隱喻模式、規避模式、鼓掌互動模式、與人稱代名詞替換模式。藉著探討這些政治語言理論模式的歷史淵源、及探討、分析各個模式的應用，本文意在對政治語言研究有興趣者，提供一個入門的理論架構。于此，本文不僅希望能夠讓人更充分了解政治語言的本質與研究，並且希望能夠吸引它的研究者，運用這些理論架構於他/她們的研究裡。

關鍵字：政治言談、隱喻性言詞、規避言行、修辭策略、人稱代名詞

