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Edited by Julien Perrez, Min Reuchamps and Paul H. Thibodeau.
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INTRODUCTION

Studying variation in political metaphor

From discourse analysis to experiment

Min Reuchamps, Paul H. Thibodeau and Julien Perrez

The introduction offers an overview of the literature on political metaphors, with Critical Discourse Analysis and Conceptual Metaphor Theory as starting points. It then presents the main objective of the book, viz. to study the variation in political metaphor, based on the analyses of actual data, from diverse corpora, political actors and countries. On this basis, the threefold approach to variation in political metaphor is presented: diachronic, functional and methodological variations.

Metaphor research is thriving, especially in the domain of political discourse. Recent decades have witnessed a flourishing of work that is seeking to identify and analyze the use of metaphors in politics. Much of this work has taken an ideological perspective – “the politicization of metaphor research” (Twardzisz 2013: 50). Given this surge of publications on political metaphors, it might seem unnecessary to propose another book on this topic.

However, recent developments in the analysis of political metaphors have demonstrated that one of the most distinctive features of metaphors in political discourse is their variation. That is, the same metaphor can convey different meanings and therefore can be used for very different purposes. Musolff, in *Political Metaphor Analysis: Discourse and Scenarios* (2016), shows that metaphors are characterized by their variability. To study this variability, he proposes the notion of a ‘metaphor scenario’, which is a “discourse-based, culturally and historically mediated version of a source domain” (Musolff 2016: 30). The notion of a ‘metaphor scenario’ is closely related to the theory of frames (Fillmore 1975; Taylor 1995: 87 – 90) defined as “‘schematic’ conceptual ensembles that include a selection of domain elements and an action ‘script’, which help the receiver to integrate new linguistic or other semiotic input into a context that makes it meaningful” (Musolff 2016: 30). He explains that “scenarios in themselves are not metaphor-specific or grounded in a particular source domain but should rather be seen as conceptual patterns that emerge in discourse and are made narratively and argumentatively coherent by

specific metaphors, which in turn makes them prime candidates for ‘self-fulfilling prophecies’ (Musolff 2016: 87).

Building on the existence of a few basic metaphors (such as *POLITICS IS WAR* or *THE NATION IS A PERSON*, and more generally the use of the source domains of *WAR*, *FAMILY*, *BODY* and *PERSON* for politics and political entities) that are used in different metaphor scenarios, the central question addressed in this book is how variations in political metaphors can be observed and explained. This issue raises several sub-questions. Why does the same politician use different metaphors to serve different functions? How do metaphors evolve through time? What is the influence of the discourse genre and/or the medium on the use of political metaphors? And above all, how can we apprehend and analyze political metaphors? Scholars from several disciplines seek to identify and analyze political metaphors but also to assess their impact and above all how they are used, by whom and why. The aim of this book is to bring together these scholars and to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue about metaphors in political discourse. This means bringing together scholars that do not necessarily speak to one another very often.

1. Critical discourse analysis and conceptual metaphor theory as starting points

The idea of the book is to offer a collection of papers that take Critical Discourse Analysis and Conceptual Metaphor Theory as starting points, given their respective important contribution to the analysis of metaphors in the past few decades. Both approaches have been instrumental in drawing attention to political metaphor. At their core, both emphasize that a “political metaphor thus serves primarily as a means to change meanings, and hence, to change social and political attitudes” (Musolff 2016: 136).

On the one hand, as advocated by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), discourse can be regarded as a “form of social practice” (Fairclough & Wodak 1997). Discourses can contribute to the construction of social and political reality. Specifically, “through discourses, social actors constitute objects of knowledge, situations and social roles as well as identities and interpersonal relations between different social groups and those who interact with them” (Wodak et al., 2009: 8). In political science, it is also increasingly acknowledged that ‘discourses’ are not mere words and ideas assembled in oral or text material. Discourses matter in politics. This is the motto of the new “discursive institutionalism” (Campbell & Pedersen 2001: 9–14). Discourse contributes to explaining political phenomena as “they exert a causal influence in political reality and, thereby, engender institutional change (or continuity)” (Schmidt 2008: 306).

“Taking discourse seriously” as advocated by Panizza and Miorelli (2013) does not entail that actors’ discourses constitute a panacea for explaining all institutional changes. Instead, the substantive argument behind discursive institutionalism is that the scientific knowledge accumulated by historic institutionalism and rational institutionalism are as extensive as their analytical frameworks restrict them. In other words, institutional evolution cannot be exclusively understood by the mere interrelationships of power and interests among strategic actors. Institutional changes *also* require the analysis of politics as the result of “discursive interactions of sentient actor [s]” (Schmidt 2009: 529). In this respect, discourse constitutes a key resource for actors in their effort to (de) legitimate the institutions they develop.

In this attention to discourse, it should be noted that a discourse “encompasses not only the substantive content of ideas but also the interactive processes by which ideas are conveyed” (Schmidt 2008: 305). This is precisely why the researchers interested in political discourse should study figurative language, and especially metaphor: because they often refer to these abstract political ideas. In this light, Fairclough explains that metaphors matter for CDA because “different metaphors have different ideological attachments” (Fairclough 2001: 119). Studying metaphors provides access to what is hidden by the discourse and by the metaphor in particular. Similarly, Charteris-Black offers a ‘Critical Metaphor Analysis’ (Charteris-Black 2004) that aims to uncover how metaphors bring about ideological bias and manipulative effect.

The interest in the study of metaphors also comes with the idea that “We live by metaphors”, which was pushed forward after the seminal work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) they developed is based on the idea that metaphors are conceptual in nature, allowing us to perceive, understand and structure our environment. Central to this process is the mapping between a target domain, which is typically an abstract entity or process, and a source domain, which is based on the sensorimotor perception of our environment. Consider for instance the conceptual metaphor *TIME IS SPACE*. According to CMT, we understand the abstract domain of time in terms of our physical experience of space (see for instance Casasanto & Boroditsky 2008; Kövecses 2010; Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Such conceptual metaphors are realized in various communication modes, including language, pictures and co-verbal gestures (see for instance Forceville & Urios-Aparisi 2009 on the multimodal character of conceptual metaphors). This is why studying how metaphors are realized in language can help us understand how we make sense of our political environment. Metaphor is a central component of human cognition; it is “a central cognitive process for abstract conceptualization and reasoning” (Johnson 2010: 412).

Conceptual metaphors can be defined as “understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain” (Kövecses 2010). They are of

particular importance in politics as has been highlighted by many scholars (see among others Carver & Pikalo 2008; Charteris-Black 2011, 2013; Lakoff 1996; Musolff 2004). This can be explained by two main factors. On the one hand, most of our political concepts are metaphorical in nature (Lakoff 1996, 2004). This means that our understanding of complex and abstract political concepts and processes is based on conceptual metaphors. This has been confirmed by numerous studies showing the importance of metaphors in various kinds of political discourse, including elite discourse (see for instance Charteris-Black 2011, 2013; Debras & L'Hôte 2015; L'Hôte 2012), media discourse (Musolff 2004) and citizen discourse (Perrez & Reuchamps 2014, 2015b).

On the other hand, metaphors are central to the domain of politics because they have the potential to frame the debate (Lakoff 2004) and indirectly convey hidden ideologies (Goatly 2007). Framing can be defined as “[...] select [ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak [ing] it more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the described item” (Entman 1993: 52). Using a particular metaphor to depict a given reality will activate a particular frame and highlight some aspects of this reality, while hiding others. Through framing, “metaphor helps construct particular aspects of reality and reproduce (or subvert) dominant schemas” (Koller 2009: 121).

This framing function of metaphors suggests that they influence or even determine the representations of a given reality in the receiver’s mind. However, in the literature, this political impact of metaphors is often taken for granted, as if the production of a particular metaphor automatically triggers different representations of a given entity (Perrez & Reuchamps 2015a). But as it has been suggested by Krennmayr and colleagues (2014: 67): “if metaphorical language can potentially influence people’s views on topics, and consequently their actions, it is important to know under which conditions people are most likely to build representations of a text they read on a metaphorical schema”. In fact, understanding a political metaphor can vary greatly across people, culture and time (Musolff 2016).

2. Variation in political metaphors

The objective of this book is to go beyond the mere identification and analysis of conceptual metaphors in political discourse. It starts from the finding that recurring conceptual domains are used to characterize politics, political entities and political issues. Yet, while the same domains are often discussed, the specific metaphors used to describe them often change. Therefore, the ambition of the book is to study the variations in political metaphors and to understand which metaphors are used in

a particular political situation. This is a distinctive feature of political metaphors: they are not only metaphors in political discourse, but more than that, they are used with a political goal, that is creating political expectations and/or realizing political objectives and actions. In this context, this book focuses on variables which might influence metaphor use and cause its variation, such as gender, evolution through time, the particular political context or political function. This perspective will enable us to better understand their role in political discourse.

The objective of studying variation in metaphors is not new. Kövecses has explored intercultural and cross-cultural variation concerning the position, shape and ingredients of the heart as a container of emotions (1986, 1990, 1995, 2000). For political metaphors, Musolff (2016) has shown their variability and how this variability was used in a political purpose. On this basis, this book seeks to understand why metaphors are used in a given context. Or as Musolff puts it “Any study of metaphor that is committed to, or at least interested in, a critical investigation of how metaphors can serve to convey ideologies and negotiate power relationships, therefore, needs to focus on their multifunctionality in situations of actual use” (2016: 4).

To do so, one needs to dig into actual data, possibly a massive load of authentic data. This book relies on papers that analyze actual data, including political discourse in a variety of formats: speeches, interviews, media accounts, but also TV broadcasts or commercial ads. In order to understand variation in political metaphors, we also need to investigate different corpora and genres. These are the distinctive features of this book. Indeed, the study of metaphors is today one of the most dynamic areas of study in the field of linguistics, discourse studies, communication broadly. Therefore, the study of metaphors generally has been a crowded field of research, especially in the wake of numerous CDA- and CMT-inspired works. While this book builds on this twofold background, it aims at going beyond these approaches with a focus on the variations of political metaphors, an issue that only started to be explored recently. In this regard, this book seeks to pursue the way opened by Musolff’s *Political Metaphor Analysis: Discourse and Scenarios* (2016).

This book, however, differs from the existing research projects in trying to dig further into political metaphors, analyzing empirically-rich real-world data, in a wide variety of political contexts, discourse genres and political actors. To this end, we build on the insights provided by CDA, CMT and, at the crossroad of both, Musolff (2016)’s work. In sum, this book has three major assets in light of the current state of the field. First, it seeks to understand the variation in political metaphors (and thus going beyond their mere identification and their relationship with general conceptual frames). Second, it does so in digging into large sets of real-world data from many different locations (to name but a few: Australia, Belgium, Croatia, Greece, USA), different media (speeches, interviews, political

party manifestos), across time and actors with different functions. Third, this book brings together scholars from several disciplines, including linguistics, political science and communication studies; the collection, therefore, offers an interdisciplinary overview in studying variations in political metaphors.

Because of this comprehensive scope, this book shall attract a diverse readership. We expect that the book should find readers among the entire metaphors community and also among those interested in discourse studies, communication and political science in general. Because it is grounded in empirical analysis on real-world data, readers interested in some specific chapters will also have an interest in the book. This book is also likely to be used in classrooms worldwide as a textbook for – advanced – undergraduate and graduate students, especially those in political science, communication, linguistics and discourse studies. Last but not least, this book should have an appeal to people working in discourse practice. In the last years, a wide range of political actors, NGOs and governmental agencies are attempting to reflect upon their discourse practice. This need is particularly acute among political actors where metaphors are often used but not always in a “controlled” manner. For all these practitioners, it is good to know something about political metaphors that they are tempted to use so often. Therefore, it is essential that research can show ways to understand political metaphors and the variation in their use.

3. Structure of the book

The book studies political metaphors from three main perspectives, namely a diachronic perspective (Does metaphor use evolve through time and political context?), a functional perspective (Does metaphor use vary according to the political function a politician is fulfilling?) and a methodological perspective (Which method is used to analyze the role of metaphors in political discourse?). The different chapters in this book focus on one or more of these three dimensions.

In Chapter 1, Kathleen Ahrens proposes a comparative study of the role-dependent use of metaphor in politics, used by Hillary Clinton in her personal speeches in the roles of a U.S. Presidential Spouse, a U.S. Senator, and as a candidate for the Democratic nomination for President. To date there have been no studies that look at a single politician in different roles. The chapter focuses on WAR metaphors used by Hillary Clinton in her personal speeches in these three different roles. In order to examine her metaphor usage, three corpora are created: The First Lady Corpus, which contains 253 speeches and approximately 888,000 words, the Senator Corpus, which contains 131 speeches and approximately 360,000 words and the 2008 Presidential Candidate Corpus, which contains 106 speeches and

approximately 357,000 words. Kathleen Ahrens finds that Clinton's choice of metaphors has varied with her roles. She uses the PROTECTION IS A BATTLE frame 38% of the time and does so more frequently as Senator than Candidate and more frequently as Candidate than as First Lady. Furthermore, her use of individual conceptual metaphors has also varied with respect to her role. As First Lady, she was primarily concerned with protecting citizens and stopping disease, while as Senator and Candidate she used metaphorical language to denounce terrorism and protect privacy and to ensure economic development. In short, her metaphor's use shows a politician who chooses her battles carefully and according to the political function she is fulfilling.

Chapter 2 by Pauline Heyvaert follows on the study of metaphor variation with different politicians in the same discursive context. Namely, the Prime Minister's yearly inaugural speeches and responses in Belgium over a period of ten years. This accounts for a corpus of over one million words, including the speeches of five different Belgian Prime ministers. The results suggest that one important variable explaining the variation of political metaphors is the political situation in which a country finds itself at a given time: the more hectic the political landscape, the more metaphor variation occurs. Relying on the MIPVU method, some of the most striking potentially deliberate metaphors are discussed, with the aim of explaining why these metaphorical mappings occur in a particular political context.

In Chapter 3, Nikolina Borčić and Ivona Čulo look at the political metaphors produced by former Croatian president, Ivo Josipović before, during and after his presidency. Conceptual metaphors are believed to be strong linguistic strategies for achieving the informative-persuasive language function. This chapter approaches the subject of political argumentation based on conceptual metaphor through the prism of synergies of the political topic, discourse strategies and the use of conceptual metaphor. The research was conducted on a sample of four political interviews with former Croatian President Ivo Josipović in a weekly talk show *Nedjeljom u dva* (*Sundays at Two*) aired on the public television channel, Croatian Television Channel 1 (HTV 1) in 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2016, which took place before, during and after his term. This contribution illustrates how political metaphor use can vary according to the role a politician is fulfilling.

Chapter 4 by Ben Fenton-Smith is concerned with the rhetorical, conceptual and pragmatic functions of metaphors in the discursive management of party leadership takeovers by political actors (i.e. their first public address in the role of party leader) in Australia. The data for this chapter comprises a corpus of speeches given in the aftermath of political deposals in Australian federal politics in the past quarter century. A distinction is proposed between 'internally oriented' metaphors, which reference the leadership takeover process itself, and 'externally oriented' metaphors, which direct the focus of the speech away from the takeover. These

orientations have varying consequences, both rhetorically and politically, as exemplified by the chapter. The data are also analyzed in terms of recurrent semantic domains expressed through metaphors, namely:

1. ‘Forks in the Road’: journeys, paths, directions, movement back-and-forth
2. ‘Tough Fights’: politics as war, sport and games
3. ‘Solid Foundations’: building up, climbing up, cutting down, eroding
4. ‘Sleeves Rolled Up’: leaders as laborers.

The analysis suggests that novel metaphors are more significant than recurring ones, because (a) they are less prone to the inattention that befalls conventionalized metaphors, and (b) the mediated nature of political discourse ensures that most people only receive selected sound bites of political speeches. The extent to which certain metaphorical constructions tend to align with progressive or conservative leaders is also considered.

Anastasios Vogiatzis, in Chapter 5, examines the use of figurative language in five speeches delivered by the Greek Prime Minister (PM) George A. Papandreou during the Greek financial crisis (2010–2011). These speeches were short proclamations broadcast live on Greek television. The aim of these speeches was to officially introduce to the public the collapse of the Greek economy, and most importantly, the change in the financial policies of the government which would be, or were, characterised by harsh economic measures such as job cuts, reduction of wages and pensions, as well as cuts on social spending to name just a few. The metaphors used in the speeches examined here build either positive or negative frames which appear in clusters within the speeches, especially in what concerns their positive or negative value. What makes these metaphors far more interesting is that they are placed, metaphorically, in a straightjacket, i.e. the *fiscal straightjacket*.

In Chapter 6, Liane Ströbel analyzes the use of sensorimotor-based concepts during and after presidential campaigns: Emmanuel Macron and Donald Trump. Sensorimotor-based concepts (SBCs), a variation of political metaphors, are frequently used in political discourse. The particular challenge with this kind of metaphor is that for a long time they kept ‘under the radar’. SBCs are basic level concepts and can be used frequently and iteratively to convey a subliminal story line. The chapter seeks to call attention to SBCs and to the extent to which this subgroup of metaphors orchestrates a wide pragmatic range of precise, persuasive functions, by discussing differences in their usage during the French and U.S. presidential campaigns. In particular, in the speeches of Emmanuel Macron and Donald Trump before and after their respective election.

Jan Kovář, in Chapter 7, offers a political, rather than a linguistic, analysis of the variation of metaphors produced by political parties. Indeed, political parties

play an important role in offering the voters different choices on the European Union (EU) and European integration. From a methodological point of view, the literature on party positions on European integration and closely related literature on Euroscepticism largely relies on coding of election manifestos and expert surveys/judgments. This paper opts for a different approach based on the analysis of metaphors used by political parties in the discourse about the future form of European integration. Although the analysis of metaphors has become a popular tool for examining international politics, the application to studies of European integration and the EU has been scarce. On the basis of key conceptual metaphors used in discourses on the future of the EU that are identified from relevant literature as well as the corpus itself, Jan Kovář analyses Czech political parties' election manifestos issued for the 2004, 2009 and 2014 European Parliament elections. The analysis is, subsequently, connected to party positions on European integration and Euroscepticism.

For the last empirical contribution of the book, Chapter 8 by Paul Thibodeau, James Fleming and Maya Lannen explore methodological variation in the study of political metaphor, focusing on a comparison of two approaches: the Critical Discourse Approach (CDA) and experiments (a Response Elicitation Approach; REA). What kinds of political metaphors have been investigated on the two approaches and what insights have these studies revealed? What are the strengths and limitations of each approach? As cognitive psychologists, Paul Thibodeau, James Fleming and Maya Lannen have more experience with experiments, and their discussion is grounded in an exposition of the logic and mechanics of experimental design. But they advocate for methodological pluralism because understanding political metaphor is a multifaceted, interdisciplinary endeavor. Some research questions are better addressed through discourse analysis; others are better addressed with experiments; scholars should use the method that is best suited to addressing their research question.

The concluding chapter by Paul Thibodeau, Julien Perrez and Min Reuchamps synthesizes the contributions of each individual study into a cohesive whole. One goal is to provide a summary of the findings and implications of the studies at the intersection of the different disciplines interested in political metaphors: linguistics, discourse studies, communication and political science, to name but a few. Are there consistent themes and implications of the studies, for example? What do these findings mean for researchers, developing theories of political behavior? And what are the real-world implications of the studies? A second goal is to identify opportunities for future work. What else can we learn about the role of metaphor in politics using the methods described in the book? This is a long journey that is proposed to the readers in search of the variations of political metaphors.

The original character of this book lies in its intention to go beyond the observation that metaphors are a key characteristic of political discourse and to identify patterns of how external factors that are bound to the broader political context (such as the political role, the institutional context of the country, the gender of the politician, the policy field) might influence the choice of a particular conceptual metaphor or its linguistic realizations. This constitutes a first step towards a more comparative approach to political metaphor studies, aiming at understanding which types of metaphorical mappings are produced by which political actors in which political context, and with which political goals.

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