

## Conceptual Metaphors in Gordon Brown's Political Discourse (2007–2008)

Vilma Linkevičiūtė

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**Abstract.** In modern democratic societies, political life is embodied through the actions of political parties, their duly elected leaders, and various political ideologies. In this context, political discourse, which records a variety of opinions and, frequently, their conflict, becomes an inseparable element of political culture.

This article is aimed to identify linguistic metaphors and to reconstruct the conceptual metaphors which determine the origin of these linguistic metaphors in Gordon Brown's political discourse. This study presents and examines conceptual metaphors and the identification of metaphorical expressions in Brown's political texts. The majority of metaphorical expressions forms a particular system, which can be explained through their relations to conceptual metaphors—cognitive structures, existing in the sub-conscious, that determine the interpretation of the world and unfold through linguistic metaphors.

In Brown's political discourse, the implied *we–they* opposition is actualized through metaphors. His political discourse, touches on two main political subjects—the Labour Party and the Conservatives. The denominations of these subjects are ideological in nature. The Prime Minister, on the base of the *we–they* model, attributes only positive features to the Labour Party and only negative ones to the Conservatives. The conceptual metaphors POLITICS IS WAR, POLITICS IS A JOURNEY and THE STATE IS A BUILDING prevail in Brown's political discourse. These conceptual metaphors are generally typical of political discourse. Conceptual metaphors, which are the basis for text creation through linguistic metaphors, allow the features of a good leader to be attributed to Brown's personality. His opponents are implicitly granted bad characteristics.

**Keywords:** *cognitive linguistics, political discourse, conflict communication, linguistic metaphors, conceptual metaphors.*

In modern democratic societies, political discourse, which records a variety of opinions and, frequently, their conflict, becomes an inseparable element of political culture. Political discourse is an object of discourse analysis, which studies political language with special consideration of its contextual factors; political linguistics is treated as a new, institutionalized subject of cognitive linguistics.

The object of this study is conceptual metaphors in Brown's political discourse in the period of 2007–2008. This article aims to investigate how Brown's political discourse is conceptualized via WAR, JOURNEY and BUILDING metaphors, and what rhetorical implications arise therefrom. The objective of this research is to identify linguistic metaphors and to reconstruct the conceptual metaphors which determine the origin of these linguistic metaphors in the discourse of Brown. Moreover, this article aims to show that conflict communication is public discourse aimed not only at opponents but also at the electorate. Furthermore, this discourse helps to form a particular image of the opponents.

The data are 6 randomly selected speeches and interviews delivered in the period of 2007–2008 by the former prime minister of Great Britain Gordon Brown. The data has been taken from the official government and media internet sites.

The main methodological conception may be defined as follows: communicative behaviour in conflict communication

and a rhetorical form of argumentation depends on the cognitive conceptions of the speaker—knowledge, intentions, feelings. This is the main concern of cognitive linguistics. Such cognitive linguistic concepts as conceptual metaphors are analysed in this article. Descriptive-analytical method is applied in Brown's political discourse research. This is a cross-disciplinary approach encompassing cognitive linguistics, political rhetoric, argumentation theory and political science.

Political discourse has been widely analysed in Lithuania by such scholars as Lassan (1995), Cibulskienė (2006), and elsewhere by Chilton and Schäffner (2002), Connolly (1993), Hall (1992), Laclau (1985, 1996), Mouffe (1985), Van Dijk (1995, 1998), etc. Conflict has been investigated by Gurdjan (2008), Lassan (1995), Lasswell (1936, 1948), Littlejohn (1999), Van Dijk (1995), etc. However, this research is particularly relevant because it investigates aspects of political life in Great Britain and discloses the state of its political culture through conflict communication. Conflict communication in political discourse has not been investigated until now.

Political discourse influences the life of every cell of society. This phenomenon is inseparable from politics and politics is inseparable from ideology. William E. Connolly in his book *The Terms of Political Discourse* points out that

*by the terms of political discourse, then, I refer first to the vocabulary commonly employed in political thought and action; second, to the ways in which the meanings conventionally embodied in that vocabulary set the frame for political reflection by establishing criteria to be met before an event or act can be said to fall within the ambit of a given concept; and third, to the judgments or commitments that are conventionally sanctioned when these criteria are met (Connolly, 1993, p. 2).*

The democratic system divides political power between a political majority and an opposition. Van Dijk (1995) suggests that from the ideological point of view there are *us* versus *them* dimensions,

*in which speakers of one group will generally tend to present themselves or their own group in positive terms, and other groups in negative terms (van Dijk, 1995, p. 22).*

The political majority is the political leader himself/herself and his/her colleagues from the same political party who won the majority of votes from the electorate. The political majority has the aim to motivate their right to be in power and, for this reason, they legitimate their actions. The opposition, on the contrary, carries out power control by watching the majority and expressing declarative protests, if necessary. Such a situation conditions disapproval of power actions and leads to the emergence of reasons for conflict communication.

Phillips and Jorgensen (2004) arrive at the conclusion that in hegemony theory, the conceptions of “class”, “social group” and “nation” are regarded as the product of discursive hegemony. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) suppose that groups in society are always formed during a political discursive processes. The question of identity is also very important in political discourse. According to Phillips and Jorgensen (2004), a subject acquires identity through discursive practices. An individual may have different identities, which may also vary. When shared underlying identities emerge, people start to cluster into groups; on the basis of such groups, they ignore other identities and so eliminate them from political games. Therefore, the identities that are being ignored become classified as *others*. This aspect is of crucial importance in conflict communication as analysed in this article, where one side is defined as *we-insiders* and the other as *they-outsiders*.

The semiotician Landowski compares political discourse with advertising because “these discourses are related by similar type of persuasion” (Landowski, 2007, p. 155). The nature of political discourse presented by this scholar may be related to the already presented *we-they* identity, as it is concluded that in elections, those politicians who introduce themselves as equal to the electorate and emphasize the “sensuous relationship,” are more successful than those who do not (ibid, p. 158).

Language is a very significant constituent of political discourse. Thus, according to Chudinov (2001), it is impossible to investigate political language as an autonomous phenomenon because it is too closely related to the political and economic situations of a particular country. Moreover,

*political language is perceived as a specific subsystem of the national language, which is designed for political communication (Chudinov, 2001, p. 2).*

The definition of political language conveys the idea that politicians use particular words or utterances not only to express their ideas and opinions but also to achieve some specific intentions and goals. This scholar associates political communication with propaganda, its emotive influence on society, and the intentions of politicians. Indeed, many scholars equate the terms of political language with political discourse in their works.

According to Demjankov (2002), the term “political language” has entered widespread use since its appearance in 1978 in Sieyès *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?* Initially it was treated as political discourse, intended for the elimination of privileges. Demjankov (2002) also discusses such features of political language as evaluation and aggressiveness. As he maintains, political discourse is distinguished from other discourses for its polemics, which determine the choice of words and permit military actions to be transferred from the battlefield to the theatre stage.

*Such sublimation of aggressiveness (in the opinion of some social psychologists) is determined by human nature. Therefore, polemics in political language are a particular theatricalized aggression (Demjankov, 2002, p. 33).*

In discussing evaluation, Demjankov (2002) points out that polemics are aimed at the formation of a negative image of the opponent, and at the obtrusion of other values and conceptions. As a result, terms evaluated positively by the supporters of a particular attitude are perceived as negative or even offensive by the other side.

Sheigal asserts that the main function of political language is the “fight for power” (Sheigal, 2000, p. 35). To this author, political language reflects the political reality and changes in accordance with it.

Moreover, discourse cannot exist without ideology and vice versa, ideology cannot exist without discourse. They are closely interrelated. Thus, if political discourse is being researched, it is naturally impossible to do without an analysis of the ideological attitudes of the political subjects. According to Laclau (1996), it is impossible to perceive society without ideology. Political identification takes place through the division into “insiders” and “outsiders,” which is based on affinities or differences of ideology. Khmeltsov (2004) claims that ideology analysis leads to the formation of dominant stereotypes, the “insider” and “outsider” dichotomy, the analysis of well-established clichés, narrowed collocations and discourse automation.

Many scholars equate the terms of political language with political discourse in their works. The identification of the metaphorical expressions prevailing in political texts has become one of the main research trends in political discourse. The majority of metaphorical expressions forms a particular system, which can be explained through their relations to conceptual metaphors—cognitive structures, existing in the sub-conscious, that determine the interpretation of the world and unfold through linguistic metaphors.

The idea of conceptual metaphors was first introduced and investigated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). These scholars point out that

*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. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980, p. 103).*

According to these scholars, our conceptual system is metaphoric and based on linguistic data. Moreover, our everyday language is full of common metaphors, reflecting the *mapping of domains*.

*Metaphorical mappings, which are usually unconscious, are used for reasoning, reasoning about target domains that are ill understood, vague or controversial...source domains are intuitively understood and have holistic structure, so that if one part is accepted other parts follow (Chilton, 2004, p. 52).*

Metaphor includes at least two domains.

*The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called the source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain (Kövecses, 2002, p. 4).*

Musolf's (2004) ideas complement the above presented theoretical background on domains, as he claims that cognitive metaphor theory involves conceptual, semantic, rhetorical, historical and ethical domains.

Lassan (1995) assumes that the generation of an ideological text has three levels: binary oppositions, conceptual metaphors and expanding these oppositions as well as metaphors. In her opinion, conceptual metaphors exist in the basis of discourse ideology and provide the foundation for its development. Chudinov (2001) points out that metaphorical models are very significant in political discourse analysis because they reflect national, social, and personal consciousness, as well as the evaluation and conceptualization of various fragments of reality with the help of scenarios, frames and slots. Charteris-Black points out that

*metaphor is a means by which politicians use metaphors to model adaptation to change. Metaphors arouse moral beliefs associated with the creation, maintenance or restoration of control; they may also be employed for criticism of over-controlling regimes of power. Metaphors are a means for overcoming conflicts arising in the emotional and moral systems and for the restoration of balance in the moral and emotional order (Charteris-Black, 2008, p. 4).*

The identification of conceptual metaphors is beneficial in political discourse analysis because conceptual metaphors are short formulas expressing the world-view of a political text subject in brief, or presenting the world-view model that he/she wants to insert into the consciousness of the addressees. Different interpretations of the same event are determined by different conceptual metaphors which condition the whole world-view system (ideology)—the whole value system. Moreover, conceptual metaphors

include personal experience and “define our linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour” (Lassan, 1995, p. 45).

There are two main political subjects—the Labour Party and the Conservatives—in Brown's political discourse. All positive features are attributed to the Labour Party, whereas the Conservative Party, their political opponents, are defined as a negative power with an outdated, rigid ideology that performs detrimental actions. Therefore, it is possible to identify conceptual metaphors which determine corresponding linguistic metaphors.

In Brown's political discourse, the frequency of usage of the traditional WAR, JOURNEY and BUILDING metaphors determines his implementation of the corresponding conceptual metaphors into the addressees' consciousness, thereby determining their political thinking.

The prevailing conceptual metaphor in the Prime Minister's political discourse is POLITICS IS WAR. Brown's concept of war is totally different from the same concept used by his predecessor. Blair perceived it as *war against the Conservative Party*, while Brown perceives it as *war for the state's benefit*, which, as is evident from the implications contained in the following statements, was absent during the period of Conservative government:

- (1) *Sometimes people say I am too serious and I fight too hard and maybe that's true. But these experiences taught me what families all across Britain know: that things don't always come easy and there are things worth fighting for. (2007)*
- (2) *And I can also announce that Douglas Alexander will be the general election co-ordinator so that we are ready not just to fight but to win a general election. (2007)*
- (3) *So I am only standing here today because a previous generation fought for education for all, demanded an NHS for all, dared to stand up for a common purpose, opportunity for all, and in their generation, unleashed the power of opportunity to change lives. (2008)*

The examples above are taken from the first speech delivered by Brown as the Prime Minister in the Labour conference (2007), from an article published in *The Independent* (2007) and the 2008 speech delivered in the Labour spring conference in Birmingham. Here the POLITICS IS WAR metaphor is formed with the help of the verb *to fight*, which is aimed at showing the correct and positive direction of the actions taken by the Labour government and indicating the advantageous nature of such actions. Conflict communication with the opponents is not directly expressed in these cases, but as is the analysis in the previous chapter has already made clear, the *fight* for welfare means the *fight* against the Conservative governing principles and their politics. Moreover, the phrase *I fight too hard* (see example (1)), expressed in the first person with the help of the key word, does not only disclose the personal characteristics of the Prime Minister, but also indirectly implies his personal actions and dedication to the *fight* for the welfare of the state.

Labour's successful presentation of itself as the only party that fights for the rights and welfare of its society is emphasized by the introduction of the nouns *force*,

*struggle* and *battle*, which are especially stringent in the conflict communication:

- (4) *Once our struggle was to secure minimum standards, then to extend opportunity.* (2007)
- (5) *Our foreign policy will reflect the truth that to isolate and defeat terrorist extremism now involves more than military force—it is also a struggle of ideas and ideals.* (2007)
- (6) *These forces—properly harnessed by a purposeful and progressive government—can mean that Britain will not only survive but thrive in the years ahead.* (2008)

Examples (4–6) imply that there was a strong necessity to fight for the enumerated issues due to the opposition's objections or even resistance to them. As the Conservatives are the opponents of the Labour Party, the conclusion can be drawn that they object to or even fight against any positive changes. Implications such as these raise tension between the two competing parties and form the intended stereotypes, which are very relevant in the conflict communication.

Another conceptual metaphor whose linguistic expression may be analysed in Brown's political discourse is POLITICS IS A JOURNEY. This metaphor performs the same function as POLITICS IS WAR, namely, it points the way towards all the changes and reforms introduced by the Labour Party which are going to transform Great Britain into a wealthier and more prosperous state and bring much benefit to its citizens. This politician prefers to express the JOURNEY metaphor through the key noun *journey*:

- (7) *The next stage of our country's long journey to build the strong and fair society.* (2007)
- (8) *As we set out on the next stage of our journey this is our vision: Britain leading the global economy [...].* (2007)

In order to draw a contrast between the Conservative and the Labour Parties, Brown employs the binary *WE–THEY* model and emphasizes the work performed by the party under his leadership with the help of the pronoun *our*, attached to the *journey* linguistic metaphor. A *journey* has a beginning and an end, it is a voluntary action, but it can also connote the concept of surprise. A *journey* may also have a heroic nature or be dangerous. The Prime Minister complements *journey* with the adjective *long* in order to indicate and emphasize the complexity and significance of his work.

The POLITICS IS A JOURNEY metaphor and its evaluative potential may be analysed in Brown's political discourse not only on the basis of the direct *journey* expressions, but also with the help of verbs that indicate movement along a chosen path:

- (9) *And we will move forward with our new Australian-style points-based approach to immigration.* (2007)
- (10) *We have already taken the unprecedented step of publishing the legislative programme in draft and inviting comments and views.* (2007)

The enumeration of a series of specific actions (see examples (9–10))—*we will move, we have already taken [...] the step*—enables the target audience to perceive this politician as an active action subject.

The positive connotations of the *journey* metaphor are expressed in Brown's political discourse, reinforcing the idea that his chosen way leads to reforms and detailing their positive results for the state and society:

- (11) *Step by step we will raise investment in the state school pupils [...].* (2007)
- (12) *[...] and moving this country further towards our goal of full employment.* (2007)
- (13) *Now we have to move to the next stage of the Opportunity Revolution [...]. Now we must move to the next stage of the Opportunity Revolution [...].* (2007)
- (14) *[...] we will move ahead with radical reforms to create 21<sup>st</sup> century NHS personal to people's needs.* (2008)

In examples (12–14), POLITICS IS A JOURNEY is expressed using the verb *move*, and this journey's direction is indicated by the adverbs *ahead* and *further* and the phrase *to the next stage*. The destination of this journey is also indicated: *NHS personal to people's needs, full employment and opportunities*. It is possible to state that the way that leads to reforms implicitly expresses conflict between the members of the Labour Party and the Conservatives, because the way chosen by the latter party did not lead to beneficial changes. The significance of this movement towards change is introduced by the modal verbs *have* and *must*, related to *move* in example (13). It again enables the target audience to perceive Brown as an active action subject. In example (11), the *journey* metaphor is expressed through the phrase *step by step* and through the indication of the reform that these steps lead to.

This Prime Minister, like his predecessor, conceptualizes the state as a building. This is reflected in his political discourse, where the conceptual metaphor THE STATE IS A BUILDING firstly determines a linguistic metaphor that indicates the foundations of the building, which are the merit of the Labour government:

- (15) *And everything we build—we build on a strong foundation of economic stability.* (2007)
- (16) *Because in Britain, with our international reach, our flexibility, our openness, our scientific creativity, our stability, our language—now the language of the world—our successful membership of the European Union and our long term investments in energy and infrastructure we have the foundations for our future success.* (2008)

Clearly, Brown associates the *foundations* of the state with the success and economic stability in the country. Example (15) once again indicates that these *foundations* are strong. The fact that the *foundations* of the state were laid by the Labour Party is disclosed by the usage of pronoun *we* and its relation with *foundations*. The positive nature of this construction is expressed through the phrase *the foundations for our future success* and the proposition

introducing the idea that everything built by the Labour Party is built *on a strong foundation of economic stability*. Such propositions and the usage of the latter linguistic metaphor form a positive image of the Labour Party and its leader in the eyes of the electorate. Moreover, they enable the target audience to perceive Labour's opponents as a contrast, evoking negative connotations. The negative connotations are even more obvious in the following statements, where the BUILDING metaphor is also envisaged:

- (17) *I believe that Britain needs a new type of politics [...]. A politics built on consensus, not division. A politics built on engaging with people, not excluding them.* (2007)
- (18) *I want our children and their children to say that in the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there lived a generation that built a Britain, where the talent you had mattered more than the title you held.* (2008)

In example (18), the Labour government is implicated through the phrase *in the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, and its merits for the state are marked by *a generation that built a Britain*. It should be emphasized that both of the Prime Ministers who have represented the Labour Party prefer to indicate and emphasize the 21<sup>st</sup> century in their speeches. Considering that Great Britain was governed by the Conservatives for most of the 20th century, it is possible to conclude that this preoccupation with the new century has a special significance: to remind the audience that times change. Conflict with the opponents who are negatively evaluated is implied through the characteristic of a newly built state, where talent is more important than one's title. The title in this context directly refers to the Conservatives. In another example, (17), the place of the state in THE STATE IS A BUILDING metaphor is replaced by the concept of politics. The phrase *new type of politics* stands for the members of the Labour Party, who identify themselves with novelties. The conflict between two opposing parties is expressed through a direct counterposition: *a politics built on engaging with people, not excluding them, a politics built on consensus, not division*. THE STATE IS A BUILDING perception is supported by the fact that in the English language, as in many other languages, politics and the state are understood as buildings.

The analysis of conceptual metaphors in Brown's political discourse leads to the following conclusions:

1. The conceptual metaphors POLITICS IS WAR, POLITICS IS A JOURNEY and THE STATE IS A BUILDING prevail in Brown's political discourse.
2. The speeches delivered by this politician contain conceptual metaphors that are broadly typical of political discourse. It is possible to observe that a conceptual metaphor has an evaluative potential—the evaluations expressed through linguistic metaphors and belonging to the same conceptual metaphor may differ and acquire both positive and negative connotations.
3. In Brown's political discourse, the implied *we–they* opposition is actualized through metaphors. Through

the metaphor POLITICS IS WAR, Brown presents himself and the Labour Party as fighters for the wealth of the state and its citizens, while the opponents are implicitly presented as doing nothing for the improvement of the situation (though not as enemies). Through THE STATE IS A BUILDING metaphor, the idea is expressed that only the Labourists have laid the foundations of the state, given it strength and a basis for a bright future. Moreover, this implies that the Conservatives did not contribute to the building of the foundation. The conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS A JOURNEY helps Brown to use linguistic metaphors having both positive and negative evaluations. Therefore, the Labour way forward, leading to reforms, is evaluated positively while the opponents are implicitly blamed for not choosing such a way.

4. Conceptual metaphors, which are the basis for text creation through linguistic metaphors, allow the features of a good leader to be attributed to Brown's personality. His opponents are implicitly granted bad characteristics.

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Vilma Linkevičiūtė

#### Konceptualiosios metaforos Gordono Brauno (2007–2008) politiniame diskurse

Santrauka

Straipsnyje siekiama aprašyti kalbines metaforas ir rekonstruoti konceptualiąsias metaforas, kurios nulėmė tų kalbinių metaforų atsiradimą Gordono Brauno politiniame diskurse. Politinis diskursas – diskurso analizės objektas, nagrinėjantis politines kalbas ir pasisakymus bei ypatingą dėmesį skiriantis kontekstiniams veiksniams. Politinio diskurso tyrinėjimai – viena iš prioritetinių šiuolaikinės kalbotyros kryptių, jungianti skirtingų humanitarinių mokslų – logikos, filosofijos, politinės psichologijos bei sociologijos – duomenis.

Šis tyrimas pristato bei analizuoja konceptualiosios metaforos bei metaforinių posakių nustatymą G. Brauno politiniuose tekstuose. Dauguma metaforinių posakių sudaro tam tikrą sistemą, kurią galima paaiškinti per ryšius su konceptualiosiomis metaforomis – kognityvine struktūra, egzistuojančia pašąmonėje, lemiančia pasaulio interpretaciją ir atsiskleidžiančia per kalbinę metaforiką.

Šio vadovo politiniame diskurse dominuoja tokios konceptualiosios metaforos: VALSTYBĖ – TAI PASTATAS, POLITIKA – TAI KELIONĖ ir POLITIKA – TAI KARAS, bendrai būdingos politiniam diskursui. Šios konceptualiosios metaforos rekonstruojamos remiantis statybos, kelionės ir kovos kalbinėmis metaforomis.

G. Brauno politiniame diskurse implikuotoji opozicija *MES–JIE* išreiškiama per šių konceptualiųjų metaforų kalbinę realizaciją. Per metaforą POLITIKA – TAI KARAS, G. Braunas pateikia save ir savo vadovaujamą partiją ne kaip kovotoją su Konservatorių partija, o kaip kovotoją už valstybės ir jos piliečių gerovę. Oponentai implikuotai pristatomi kaip savo valdymo laikotarpiu nedarę nieko dėl šalies gerovės.

VALSTYBĖ – TAI PASTATAS konceptualioji metafora nulemia kalbinę metaforą, išreiškiančią pamatus, kurie yra leiboristų valdymo nuopelnas, bei implikuoja, kad konservatoriai neprisidėjo prie pamatų.

Konceptualioji metafora POLITIKA – TAI KELIONĖ leidžia vartoti kalbines metaforas su teigiamu ir neigiamu vertinimu. Ji išreiškia kelią link visų Leiboristų partijos inicijuotų pokyčių ir reformų, kurios transformuos Didžiąją Britaniją į turtingesnę ir labiau klestinčią valstybę bei bus naudingos piliečiams. Oponentai implikuotai kaltinami tokio kelio nesirinkimu.

Konceptualiosios metaforos, kurių pagrindu sukurtas tekstas, per kalbines metaforas leidžia G. Braunui priskirti gero vadovo, o jo oponentams skirtos implikacijos suteikia jiems neigiamą charakteristiką.

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#### About the author

**Vilma Linkevičiūtė**, PhD, a Lecturer at the Department of Foreign Languages, Kaunas Faculty of Humanities, Vilnius University, Lithuania.  
*Academic interests:* cognitive linguistics, political discourse, conflict communication.

*Address:* Department of Foreign Languages, Kaunas Faculty of Humanities, Vilnius University, Muitinės g. 8, LT-44280 Kaunas, Lithuania.  
*E-mail:* linkeviciute@vukhf.lt