THE USE OF METAPHORS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: THE SPEECHES OF GEORGE W. BUSH

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ABSTRACT: *With the theoretical framework provided by Halliday's (1985) study on how meaning is expressed via metaphorical modes of expression, and Lakoff's (1991) study on metaphors in politics, this paper analyzes the ways in which political discourse is metaphorized, especially in relation to topics referred to foreign affairs and international policy, thus sometimes constituting a difference between war and peace. The corpus of the study is made up of six speeches delivered by President Bush between 9/11 and 4th July, 2002. Metaphors pervade political discourse. In the discourse of the American president after 9/11, metaphors are not used as mere stylistic features. The meanings about role relations put forth by interpersonal metaphors (e.g., "Every nation […] now has a decision to make. Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists") and the representation of reality through ideational metaphors (e.g., "we [America] are the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world") signify the position of the United States in the world. In other words, metaphors help construct the country's reality (paradoxically, by hiding some realities) by structuring systems of knowledge and belief, as well as ways of thinking and acting. Through them, President Bush constructs America as the hegemonic power and defines its role as one of compelling global intervention. The findings show that selections of process type and transitivity functions, as well as choices in mood and modality demonstrate that there seem to be no significant changes in the ways reality is represented and probably even in the ways reality is conceived. The texts give indications of ideas, beliefs and ideologies which need to be confronted with other sources of data from reality. The results of such confrontation reveal that there appears to be continuity as well as perpetuation of the position and role of the United States in the international context, in spite of the new world order set up by the end of the Cold War. Implications will be drawn regarding both the strengths of a Systemic Functional view of language in applications to analysis of discourse, and the insights about textual mechanisms that examination of political discourse can yield.*

KEY-WORDS: *metaphors, ideology, political discourse, critical discourse analysis.*

Metaphors have traditionally been thought of as features of literary language, especially poetry, with little relevance to other sorts of language. Previous work on metaphor –for example Lakoff & Johnson, 1980- has strongly suggested that this is not true. Metaphors are pervasive in all kinds of discourse. Moreover, metaphors are not just superficial stylistic adornments. They help us construct our reality.

Metaphors can also be looked into from the perspective of Functional Grammar. In the grammatical metaphor, a semantic configuration that would be represented congruently (i.e., non-metaphorically) by one type of clause is represented metaphorically by another. For example, *what she gave him was that box* would be the metaphorical form for the congruent correspondent *she gave him that box*. The reason for the choice of the metaphorical form is to select process type, transitivity functions, choices in mood and modality and to structure them the way the speaker wants it. It is important to say that grammatically metaphorical forms are never totally synonymous with their non-metaphorical counterparts; there will always be some semantic feature or features distinguishing the two (Halliday, 1985).

Although Halliday's approach to metaphors is different from Lakoff's, I believe it is interesting to contrast both and explore their usefulness in their application to discourse analysis. Lakoff explains that metaphors are the result of mappings between conceptual domains in the human mind. For Halliday and systemic functionalists, metaphors constitute a lexicogrammatical phenomenon; they are the result of realignments (or "cross couplings"[1]) in the realizational relationship between semantic units and grammatical ones that create a complex relationship between semantics and lexicogrammar. There is, thus, a congruent and an incongruent or metaphorical realization. For both schools, metaphorical meaning is the result of a special process for construing a certain meaning. In both cases, the purpose of using a metaphor is to get the lexis and the grammar the way the speaker wants it in order to produce a certain effect. Moreover, since in both cases the use of the metaphor presents an alternative way of constructing a picture of reality, we may even find an ideologically charged representation in the choice of metaphor. In other words, the incongruent form always has an effect which can go from the aesthetic to the ideological.

The purpose of this paper to explore the ideological representations behind the use of both kinds of metaphors in the discourse of President George W. Bush in the period between 9/11 and July 4th, 2002. The following analysis tries to characterize the metaphors that appear in the

corpus, and to determine what factors (cultural, ideological, etc.) led to the choice of metaphor. The effect of metaphors upon thinking and practice will also be considered.

1. Grammatical Metaphors

Functional Grammar defines metaphors as variations in the expression of meaning rather than just variations in the use of words. In other words, Functional Grammar looks at metaphors from a different perspective, not asking "how is this word used?" but "how is this meaning expressed?" or "How is grammar structured to make the text effective in the achievement of purpose?" Once we look at metaphors in this way, we recognize that lexical selection is just one aspect of lexicogrammatical selection, or "wording"; and that metaphorical variation is lexicogrammatical rather than simply lexical. In short, many metaphors can be located in lexical expressions as well as in the grammatical variation that accompanies them. Halliday (1985) explains that while written language typically attains a high lexical density often accompanied by a relatively simple grammatical structure, spoken language is usually grammatically complex and often accompanied by a relatively simple choice of words. Consequently, metaphorical complexity is typical of written language. In the case of presidential speeches, they are originally written texts delivered orally. Thus, since they are written texts, one might expect to find some kind of metaphorical complexity in them; however, as they are intended to be read out loud, they share more the characteristics of spoken than of written language. In spite of this difficulty, a few examples have been spotted that will show the way meaning is expressed metaphorically.

Since metaphors are sensitive to metafunction, this study focuses on what Halliday considers the two main types of grammatical metaphors in the clause: ideational (i.e., metaphors of transitivity) and interpersonal (i.e., metaphors of mood).

2. Ideational metaphors

In ideational metaphors, lexicogrammatical features are re-arranged to put forth a certain view of reality. They constitute an alternative way of constructing a picture of reality.

As from the very day of the attacks on the Twin Towers, the American president's speech stated the feelings of the nation as well as the government's intention to confront and defeat those that had caused such

great damage to the country. The following excerpts show how one type of clause is expressed as another type and that processes and qualities (attributes) are construed as if they were entities, through the process of nominalization:

> *The search* is under way for those who are behind these evil acts.

> (George W. Bush, 11 Sept. 2001: par. 10)

> *Victory against terrorism* will not take place in a single battle, but in a series of decisive actions against terrorist organizations and those who harbour and support them.

> (George W. Bush, 15 Sept. 2001: par. 2)

In the first case, and in transitivity terms, the congruent form *we are searching those who are behind these acts* (i.e.; a material process clause) has become a grammatically metaphorized existential process clause. The material process of the former has become the thematized existent in the latter, which is made to stand out as new information. Similarly, the second example presents a noun group as a thematized existent (*victory against terrorism*), which presupposes that America will certainly defeat the enemy. A third example reads as follows:

> *Our grief* has turned to *anger*, and *anger* to *resolution*.

> (George W. Bush, 20 Sept. 2001: par 6)

Here, the change rather consists in the creation of a parallel construction in which the mental process (*grieve*) has become the agent of a material clause, with the second element of the sequence (*anger*) subsequently acting as goal and then as agent, and, finally, the noun resolution has turned from an attribute (*resolve*) to a goal or affected. The use of nouns in a kind of chain structure seems to highlight the steps in the process leading the American government from a passive attitude into a pro-active one.

Further examples of nominalization – a typical process leading to grammatical metaphors – can be seen in the speeches George W. Bush delivered on the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance (14 Sept. 2001) at the National Cathedral, and before a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001:

> […] Americans showed *a deep commitment to one another*, and an *abiding love for our country*.

> (14 Sept. 2001: par. 15)

> We have seen the state of the Union in *the endurance of rescuers*, working past exhaustion. […] We have seen *the decency of a loving and giving people* who have made the grief of strangers their own.

> (20 Sept. 2001: par. 4)

In both examples above the grammar is structured through nouns or noun phrases (*deep commitment to one another, abiding love for our country, the endurance of rescuers, the decency of a loving and giving people*). The first example presents a verbal nominalization (commit > commitment), whereas the second one includes two verbal nominalizations (love [v] > love [n] and endure > endurance) and one adjectival nominalization (decent > decency). The effect in the use of nominalization is to take information for granted and thus presuppose that the qualities conveyed by the nouns are inherent to the American people.

According to Halliday (1985), one special case of nominalization is seen in 'pseudo-cleft' sentences. On September 20, 2001, President Bush tries to explain to the American people why his government is ready to attack Afghanistan first, and eventually any other part of the world threatened by terrorism:

> What is at stake is not just America's freedom.

> (George W. Bush, 20 Sept. 2001: par. 35)

A group of elements here (i.e.; *what is at stake*) takes on the functions of a nominal group in an identifying clause. The nominalization serves a thematic purpose since in the Theme-Rheme structure it is the Theme that is the prominent element. However, the theme is also equated (or identified) with the Rheme and thus, 'pseudo-cleft' sentences are also called thematic equatives. Generally, one important feature of this type of constructions is that they add the semantic component of exclusiveness. In the example above, that exclusiveness is broken by the negative polarity of the identifier (*not just*). The function of the metaphorical choice is to produce a certain Theme-Rheme structure

which has specific effects. In other words, there is a reason for the choice of the metaphorical mode instead of its congruent counterpart, and the reason has to do with the way in which meaning is construed.

3. Interpersonal metaphors

Grammatical metaphors can also make meanings about role relations and attitudes between participants, their status and their feelings about what is said. The interpersonal metaphors this analysis explores are those associated with mood. These allow for the expansion of the interpersonal semantic system and thus provide speakers with additional, powerful resources for enacting social roles in the complex network of relations that make up the fabric of a community of any kind. In the incongruent realization of mood, for example, a statement may be used to make a request, or a question may be used to make a statement. The speeches of the corpus present some examples of such incongruent realizations. The text of the September 20, 2001 speech is structured through a series of rhetorical questions, leading to the justification of American intervention in Afghanistan:

[…] Why do they hate us? […]

[…] How will we fight and win this war? […]

[…] What is expected of us? […]

(George W. Bush, 20 Sept. 2001: par. 24, 28, 38)

The statements *they hate us, we will fight and win this war, and we will have to contribute to this conflict*, are realized metaphorically through questions that presuppose facts, feelings and courses of action involving the American people. In the sequence of questions, the text seems to appeal to the nation's understanding of the situation as one in which one can interpret that because terrorists hate America and the American people, America and the American people have to fight with calmness and resolve and without fear because victory in the end will be theirs. These elements in the speech try to persuade the audience that the best course of action –that of intervention- is the one proposed by the president.

Elsewhere in the same speech, as well as in a previous speech of the series, the text presents another kind of interpersonal metaphor:

You will be asked for your patience; for, the conflict will not be short. You will be asked for resolve; for, the conflict will not be easy. You will be asked for your strength, because the course of victory may be long.

(15 Sept. 2001: par 7)

The commands *be patient, be resolute and be strong*, are realized metaphorically by hypotactic clauses in which the speech function is represented as a proposition which is a figure of saying (realized in a statement) that projects the original proposal (a command). Congruently, then, these statements would act as commands and, in relation to this, an interesting feature to notice here is the fact that the agents have been effaced in all cases, and the analyst may wonder who would require that the American people make such efforts: will the agent of the command be the president himself, the American government or the historical / political circumstances surrounding the country at that moment? It is important, for the purpose of answering these questions, to be aware of the metaphorical representations present in the text in order to understand how the text is made effective in the achievement of purpose.

4. Lakoff's Metaphors

According to Lakoff & Johnson (2003), the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. War and fairy tales, for instance, are completely different kinds of things; they belong to different conceptual domains. However, in our conceptual system, both war and fairy tales enter a network of metaphorical relations or mappings (Lakoff, 2003: 246) between conceptual domains in the human mind. In this sense, then, metaphors are not a property of individual linguistic expressions and their meanings, but of whole conceptual domains. Thus, any concept from the source domain –that is, the domain supporting the literal meaning of the expression- can be used to describe a concept in the target domain –the domain the sentence is actually about. In the metaphors that concern us here, the concept of fairy tale would form part of the source domain, and that of war would belong in the target domain.

5. War as fairy tale

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush communicates to the American public his Administration's plans of "a

comprehensive assault on terrorism". The need for such intervention is presented in the speeches through a WAR AS FAIRY TALE metaphor. The source domain is that of a fairy tale in which there is a villain, a victim and a hero; and the metaphor outlines a scenario depicting a crime committed by the villain against the innocent victim:

> Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money, its goal is remaking the world –and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere. (Radio Address of the President to the Nation. 15 September, 2001: par. 14)

The crime takes place due to an imbalance of power and the effect of it is a moral imbalance:

> The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics –a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam. The terrorists' directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans, and make no distinction among military and civilians, including women and children. (Idem: par. 15)

The villain is inherently evil; reasoning with him is impossible and that is why the hero –with helpers or alone- decides to make all necessary sacrifices to defeat the villain and liberate the victim. Through victory the moral balance will be restored. The speeches of George W. Bush imply that it is America's duty to restore that balance:

> History has also issued its call to your generation. In your last year, America was attacked by a ruthless and resourceful enemy. You graduate from this Academy in a time of war, taking your place in an American military that is powerful and honourable. Our war on terror is only begun, but in Afghanistan it was begun well. ((President Bush's Graduation Speech at West Point. 1 June, 2002: par. 11)

The struggle also shows that the hero embodies all those attributes that make him a hero and place him far above the villain:

> […] the political parties and both Houses of Congress have shown a remarkable unity […] A terrorist attack designed to tear us apart has instead bound us together as a nation. Over the past few days we have learned much about American courage –the courage of firefighters and police officers who suffered so great a loss, the courage of passengers aboard United 93 who may well have fought with the hijackers and saved many lives on the ground. (Radio Address of the President to the Nation. 15 September, 2001: par. 5)

Thus, the villain-terrorists were confronted by the hero-passengers to save the innocent victims on the ground.

In the target domain, then, war is presented as necessary in order to restore the moral order and freedom. The discourse of President Bush tries to justify America's armed intervention through the metaphorization of war as a fairy tale. Bin Laden, Al Qaeda and the Taliban government of Afghanistan are seen as villains while the United States stands as the hero who will pay any cost and bear any burden in the pursuit of peace and freedom for all.

Sometimes, the mapping interrelations between domains are not all that clear and this lack of clarity may be part of the strategies typical of discursive practice. It is at times difficult to plainly establish the link between the source domain and the target domain because it is rather implicit and needs a second reading to be fully understood. As the metaphor is presented to the audience, the audience comprehends it naturally, without questioning if the metaphor may be hiding certain realities which, in the interest of the discourse producer, should remain hidden. Whether the mapping is clear or not becomes a secondary issue; the metaphor has been effective enough to produce the desired result.

6. Conclusion

How a particular domain of experience is metaphorized is one of the stakes in the struggle within and over discourse practices, and one aspect of discursive change with significant cultural and social implications is change in the metaphorization of reality. Whether a figure of speech in a rhetorical sense, or a form of lexicogrammatical variation stemming from a functionalist perspective, metaphors enable us to explore features of discourse and understand certain meanings though through different paths. While the former is more inclined to stylistics, focusing on

qualitative analysis; the later is more inclined to linguistic analysis and focuses on quantification. The methods, thus, are different but the aims may well coincide.

As a non-specialist in Systemic Functional Grammar I do not expect this to be an exhaustive and detailed study of the use of grammatical metaphors in political discourse but rather a first approach to considering the language of politics from a different point of view and to drawing some partial conclusions as to whether it is possible to find common ground between the two fields of study. Both kinds of metaphors express meaning indirectly and, as a result, both present and interested representation of reality.

Both analyses of metaphors give some indication of beliefs and ideologies. Even if these beliefs and ideologies need to be corroborated against other sources of data from reality (e.g.; through consideration of the situational and socio-cultural contexts), we may safely say that that through both analyses lead to the same interpretation as regards ideology.

Through grammatical metaphors of an ideational and interpersonal kind, the presidential discourse highlights some concepts and dismisses others. The preference for nouns, the use of 'pseudo-cleft' constructions and changes in mood structure presuppose certain attributes of the USA (e.g.; America is strong, resolute and hegemonic through her triumph over terrorism) as well as a certain course of action (i.e.; intervention) with a certain aim (i.e.; global peace and freedom). At the same time, to the convenience of the American government, some realities are hidden because, if brought to light, consensus may be broken.

Through the war as fairy tale metaphor the presidential discourse seeks the consensus of the American people to carry out a policy of global and permanent intervention to protect and preserve the interests of the USA, especially economic (c.f.; the oil business) and political (the overthrowing of rogue governments and the setting up of American-friendly ones). The justification is a purely moral one: American intervention is for the sake of peace and security everywhere on earth.

Thus, the ideology of supremacy and intervention is transmitted through both types of metaphors. Both the lexical and grammatical choices uphold a set of ideas, beliefs and policies that favour an omniscient America and a dependent world. In both cases, metaphors are used to

convey one simple message: in spite of the attacks, American economic, military and moral superiority remains unchallenged.

7. Corpus

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------. "Discurso del Día de la Independencia". Julio 4 de 2002.

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[1] According to Halliday (2004) semantic units are mapped onto grammatical ones through realizational correspondences. For example, a sequence is realized by a clause complex; the combination of a figure, a proposition (proposal), and a message is realized by a clause. Other realizational correspondences or couplings are the following: a participant is realized by a nominal group, a process by a verbal group and a circumstance by an adverbial group or prepositional phrase.