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The Phenomenon of Metaphorization in American Political Discourse (Based on President Obama's Speeches)

Abstract

The paper studies the phenomenon of metaphorization in American political discourse. Metaphor has long been a hot topic for scholars. Traditionally, it has been reviewed as a pure poetic phenomenon and a rhetoric device. Contrary to the traditional viewpoint, American linguists Lakoff and Johnson consider metaphor not only as a form of human language, but also as a matter of human action and thought. Our paper attempts to apply the conceptual metaphor theory to political discourse analysis to describe, classify and explain metaphors in political speeches. Through the study of twelve speeches delivered by Barack Obama, our research focuses on conventional metaphors and new, creative metaphors. By giving a detailed analysis, this paper will present a systematic study of these conceptual metaphors and revealing how they work in the political world. The functions of these metaphors in politics will also be discussed.

Barack Obama's rhetorical style is broadly acknowledged to be one of the most outstanding examples of communication strategy in recent political oratory. His political success reinforces the thesis that language is a powerful tool to influence people. The relationship between power, discourse, and cognition provides the theoretical framework for the present analysis of Obama's speeches, which rely on literal meanings and above all on figurative ones. By analyzing these speeches I will demonstrate how metaphor is a powerful strategy since *first*, it facilitates the understanding of abstract concepts in a short time span; *second*, it conveys positive images that benefit the orator; and, *finally*, because the message conveyed is doubly powerful as it works through both auditory and visual channels at the same time, a verbal message and a mental image.

The conclusion of my study is that political discourse seems to be a clear piece of evidence where rhetorical language is seen in action. Consequently, one reason for Obama's success is that his linguistic choices are conveyed in captivating metaphors which often emerge from the American values.