

Metaphors Trump's Discourse 'Lives by': are they Mere Pervasive Linguistic Clichés or Persuasive Tools?

Abidi Hajer

University of Sfax,

Université de Route de l'Aéroport Km 0.5 BP 1169 .3029 Sfax Sfax, 3029, Tunisia

Tel:21698666788

E-mail: abidihajer23@gmail.com

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Corresponding

Author:

Abidi Hajer

abidihajer23@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The present paper re-addresses metaphor based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective. The metaphors selected pertain to political discourse, precisely Trump's statements on different occasions and from different sources (twitter, YouTube). Analyzing metaphors was achieved by recourse to the identification of source and target domains. It has been found that metaphors, albeit multi-functional persuasive tools, on so many occasions, are based on quibbles and clichéd linguistic expressions trajectories. Additionally, it has been found that metaphors acquire their effectiveness from contextual and lexical cues, in conjunction with the parameter of recipients' knowledge. Interestingly, in some other cases, implications of metaphors transcended the target of speaker/writer to include some more unexpected dimensions of meaning like acquiring positive implications at the time when negative ones are anticipated, in addition to the fact that they are also a matter of feelings.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, conceptual metaphor, Donald Trump

INTRODUCTION

As the 45th president of the United States of America, Donald Trump has a multi-functional discourse whereby many persuasive tools are strategically deployed in his political discourse among which we can cite metaphors, which are frequently ubiquitous in this discourse type and still are not investigated in tweets as a new discourse genre. This strategic use of metaphor has persuasive and manipulative ends and these two queries are going to be demonstrated in this research. Some of these metaphors are endemic to the US president; others are not novel and can happen to be common in everyday life. Hence, investing metaphors in political discourse is

deemed deliberate irrespective of its prior contextual parameters. In view of this, metaphors, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory has been selected for investigation in this paper. Thus, Charteris-Black contends, that metaphors have the advantage of supporting political positioning and ideology, create a 'myth' and trigger emotional effects in so many cases so as to leverage particular emotions (2006, p, 567). Interestingly, Mio (1997, p. 122) provides a clear categorization of metaphors in the literature. At a first level, metaphors can make political events easily understood and this is, in turn, rewarding for recipients as they feel familiar with them regarding the fact that they relieve tension. At a second level, they can make symbolic representations more reasonable, in other words, when emotion is evoked, logic is circumvented. Last but not least, metaphors can stir emotions so as to make the link between logical forms of persuasion. This view is advocated by Miller (1976) (cited in Forceville, C., & Urios-Aparisi, 2009, p. 5) who hypothesized that metaphors, are often used in a misleading way whereby the aim is to play upon emotions or to carry upon an argument while opting for distortion or overemphasis.

Language, then, is the piece of evidence which visualizes thought independently from its conscious or unconscious nature. Being extant in language and a real manifestation of it, conceptual metaphor is a widely researched topic which has been tackled from a variety of angles. Although they are easy to identify, they seem difficult to define. The underlying mechanisms of metaphors (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009, p. 3) have been mostly marked with milestone publications of Andrew Ortony (*Metaphor and thought*) (1977) and Lakoff & Johnson (*Metaphors we Live by*) (1980). These works switched the view that metaphor is primarily verbal to a predominantly conceptual phenomenon.

The article then seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) Are metaphors clichéd linguistic expressions or persuasive tools? (2) Do lexical cues intervene in the act of persuasion? (3) How manipulative metaphors are? What is the role of CDA in uncovering the hidden agenda and ideological drives?

To start with, Forceville and Urios-Aparisi consider metaphor a powerful, and necessary phenomenon that has to be studied in both linguistic and psychological theory (1976, p. 18). An interesting view by Perrine, (1991) advocates the widespread view of metaphor as essentially a comparison between, or juxtaposition of objects that are literally disparate albeit the exact nature of comparison varies from author to author in relation to the use and understanding of metaphor. An interesting distinction has been made between novel and frozen metaphors (Haynes, 1975, Richards, 1936, Wheelright, 1966). (The first category constitutes a contribution to the expressive power of language, whereas the second one has become integrated in language (example, head of state). The second old theory pertains to the interaction theory where topic is related to vehicle to come up with a new meaning. These are, also, referred to as the principal subject and the subsidiary subject. Features of the principal subject imply statements that apply in the subsidiary subject.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory: Theoretical underpinning

In classical theories of language, metaphor was seen as a matter of language not thought and “metaphorical expressions were viewed as mutually exclusive” in everyday language. In classical theory, metaphor was also defined as expressions pertaining to poetry or novels (Lakoff, 1993, p. 1). A distinction, according to the author, has to be made between literal and non-literal meaning, which means that there are metaphorical and non-metaphorical concepts as in the example: “the balloon went up” which is not metaphorical. But as soon as it is distanced from concrete physical experience to talk about what is abstract or even emotional, metaphorical understanding is the norm. Lakoff observed that five instances prove the existence of metaphors (1993, p.4) and these might be viewed as detrimental in identifying metaphors. The first one is associated with generalizations governing polysemy, that is to say the use of words with related word meanings. The second generalization governs inference patterns, which implies that one conceptual domain is used in another domain. The third is associated with generalizations that govern novel metaphorical language (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, cited in Lakoff, 1993, 4).

Zooming into the fourth metaphor, the latter is concerned with the generalization governing patterns of semantic change. The last one, however, is connected to psycholinguistic experiments (Gibbs, 1990 cited in Lakoff, 1993, p. 4). Going back to the conceptual metaphor “LOVE IS A JOURNEY”, in this metaphor one domain of experience is understood in terms of another. The source domain is “journey” and the target domain is “love”. Lovers correspond to travelers, the love relationship can be a vehicle, common goals lead to common destinations, and difficulties in relations correspond to impediment to travel. Thus, the mapping pertains to that set of correspondences (Lakoff, 1993, p. 5)

Lakoff and Turner (2009, p. 1) identify metaphors starting from the conviction that they are so common in everyday language to the extent that they are unnoticeable as in the example “they passed away”. Interestingly, metaphors are not a matter of language but of thought and reason as if they were mere linguistic expressions, different linguistic expressions would be, then, different metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 3). In tandem with this, metaphor is identified as residing in thought (Lakoff & Turner, 2009, p. 2). In other words, metaphor is a product of thought. This term in contemporary research is used to refer to cross-domain mappings (Lakoff, 1993, p. 2). Another definition which unfolds on a more flat conception states that “metaphor is the dream work of language and, like all dream work, its interpretation reflects as much on the interpreter as on the originator” whereby the act of interpretation itself is a work of imagination and this implies, among other things that, understanding metaphor is as creative as the metaphor

itself (Davidson, 1978, p. 31). Metaphor relies on novel meanings to establish novel surprising linkages between two or more things (1978, p. 33). This sounds fruitful as it helps understand as best as possible a large number of concepts (Kovecses, 2008, p. 173). Despite the contributions in the literature, as far as CMT is concerned, Steen (2004, p. 1297), cited in Maalej, 2007, p. 139) has a different and distinct view about metaphor. He, for instance, argues that the reader goal, reader characteristics, and metaphor properties are factors that might either enhance or impede metaphor recognition. This seems to be comprehensive, as a recent view since the factors mentioned are deeply relevant to the study of metaphor.

In this connection, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 14) associate metaphors with three main clear and distinctive types: structural, orientational and ontological. As far as structural metaphor is concerned, the latter refers to cases where “one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another” (example: ARGUMENT IS WAR). On the other hand, an orientational metaphor, according to the authors, “organizes a system of concepts with respect to one another” (1980, p. 14), generally includes orientational or spatial concepts like “up/down, in/out (example: HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN). Finally, ontological metaphors revolve around experiences, things, etc, and these can be categorized, grouped, quantified, and reasoned like metaphors of time, communication, etc, (1980, p. 25). This thorough classification seems to a large extent comprehensive and helps understand the specificity of each which would generate a myriad of analyses and understandings.

Still in cognitive linguistics, in explaining metaphor, Kovecses (2010, p. 4) postulates that metaphor is viewed as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another and this view, again, corresponds to Lakoff and Turner’s viewpoints. For example, life is conceptualized as a journey, arguments as wars, theories as buildings, etc. The conceptual domain is, then, identified as any coherent organization of experience. However, the author draws attention to the fact that there is a distinction and a clear-cut line between metaphorical and linguistic expressions.

In the same connection, Forceville & Urios-Aparisi (2009, p. 10) have almost a similar view as that of Lakoff and Turner. Understanding metaphor and systematic mappings is, for the authors, unconscious. In explaining the domain of mappings they claim that “where we know a conceptual metaphor, we use the linguistic expressions that reflect it in such a way that we do not violate the mappings that are conventionally fixed for the linguistic community”. This implies that understanding a domain in terms of another inevitably includes a number of fixed correspondences (mappings) between both source and target domains, and thus, knowing conceptual metaphors corresponds to identifying mappings that apply to source and target domains (2009, p. 14). The authors classify metaphors differently according to two major principles: common source domains and common target domains. The first includes the human body, health, illness, buildings and constructions, machines and tools, games and sport, money and economic transactions, cooking and food, heat and cold, light and darkness, forces, movement

and direction. The second encompasses emotion, desire, morality, thought, society/nation, politics, economy, human relationships, communication, time, life, death, religion, events, actions, etc.

On the other hand, Elzbieta Gorska (2008a, p. 18), in criticism for CMT observed that proponents of latter theory have almost exclusively focused on what is viewed as “purely verbal manifestations of conceptual metaphor”. In view of this, Muller and Cienki (2009, p. 30,) ,for instance, consider that in addition to verbal metaphors other types of monomodal metaphors encompass pictorial or gestural metaphors which are only realized in visual mode. The theory of multimodal metaphor was, then, developed by Muller (2008a, 2008b) and Muller and Cienki (2009). These metaphors are inherently modality independent and they have to be seen as general cognitive activity as well as capacity which humans have (Muller, 2008b, p. 228).

Interestingly, Maria Dolores (2016, p. 4) went further to give another interesting claim while assuming that “after a first generation of scholars extended the notion of embodiment to exclude the social and cultural basis of our conceptual and linguistic structures.

A more recent framework by Fauconnier and Turner (1996, 1998) sought to study much of the linguistic data in an attempt to unify the latter and the analysis of metaphor. This framework is referred to as Blending Theory (BT, henceforth), which shares many aspects of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Actually, both treat metaphor as conceptual rather than linguistic. Also, both involve systematic projection of language, imagery, and both propose constraints for this projection, etc. However, they are different in some aspects. Whereas CTM established relationships between pairs of mental representations, BT allows more than two. While CMT typically focuses on entrenched conceptual relationships, BT is often concerned with novel conceptualizations (Grady, Oakley, Coulson, 1999, p. 101).

Critical discourse analysis

Metaphor, as Maalej (2007) contends, has received short thrift in critical discourse analysis. It is customary in CDA, precisely in theoretical models like Fairclough’s socio-cultural approach (1980) and van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach (1995, 1998) whose emphasis has been put on ideology, power relations, syntax, modality, lexis, etc. In view of this, the argument of Charteris-Black (2004, p. 243) seems plausible enough to reconsider metaphor in CDA. He, in this connection, states that “proposing a discourse model of metaphor based on CMT is to be able to argue convincingly that it encompasses theoretical features, which makes it possible for discourse to work critically regarding its pervasiveness in language, thought, action, etc. On the other hand, Hart (2011) studied metaphor from a cognitive linguistic approach while linking it to the issue of immigration solely. Additionally, Musolff (2012) investigated metaphor and drew attention to how metaphor can contribute to CDA. Wodak and Meyer (2015, p. 18) summarize studies in

discourse and divide them into two major groups. The first pertains to the deductive one who proposes a closed theoretical framework like the dialectical-relational and the socio-cognitive approaches. The second pertains to inductive approaches whose thrust remain at the ‘meso-level’ while selecting case studies problems and data collection like corpus linguistics approach, social actions approach, etc. In what comes next, a figure that accounts for the previously mentioned claims:

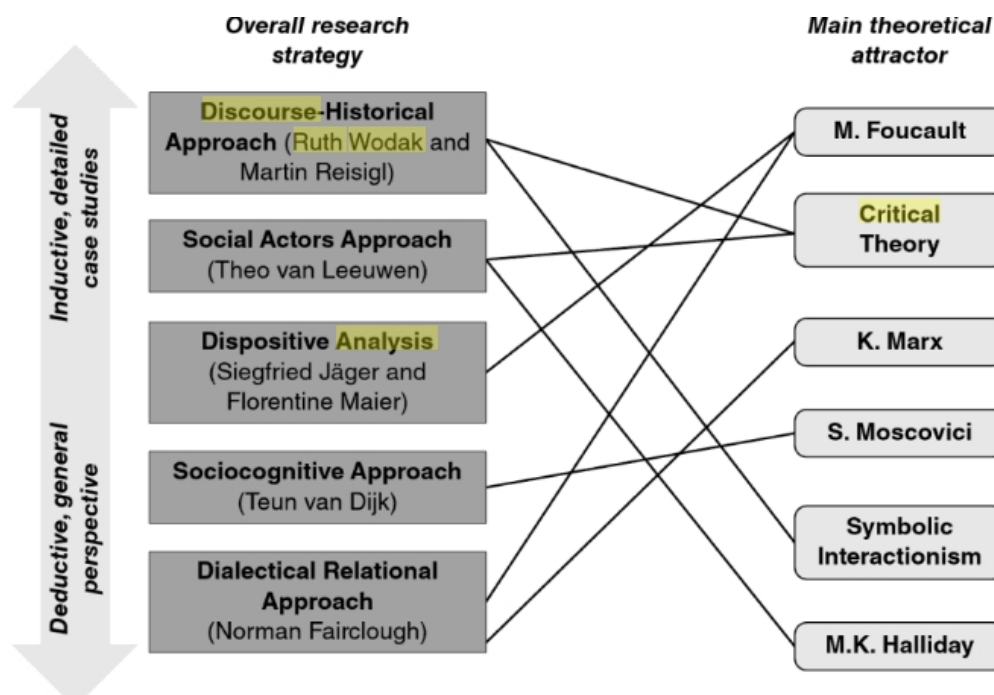


Figure 1.1. Overall research strategies and theoretical background (Wodak and Meyer, 2015, p. 18)

This has been among the triggering factors for the choice of metaphor in the analysis of sentences which pertain to political discourse. In the following section the methodology of CM analysis is going to be accounted for.

RESEARCH METHOD

Scanty attention has been paid to metaphor in the political arena. Actually, it has been remarked that Trump’s political discourse would immensely constitute a convenient ground for metaphor selection as these are ubiquitous whether in tweets, videos, media, etc. This mere fact makes political discourse worthy of attention as this discourse type is pervasive in everyday life, be it in media, daily talk and others. Given the pervasive nature of metaphors, it was decided that studying them based on Lakoff& and Jhonson’s theory would contribute to a better understanding of their use in political discourse. In view of this, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT, henceforth) is going to be applied to analyze a number of priori selected metaphors.

Methods of analysis

This study did not look at the study of metaphor from a traditional way while studying metaphor from a CMT. Adopting critical studies of discourse and integrating different tools is not novel as some theorists pioneered in this regard. What is novel, however, is the dimensions of

metaphor analysis which are studied critically and how the ‘other’ is represented cognitively for persuasive and manipulative aims.

Scholars like Fairclough (2017) adopted a critique, explanation and action process opting for change in line with CDA’s scope a form of social analysis and aims which support political action and change for a better life. Power, ideology and institutions are criticized (2017, p. 12). Interestingly, van Dijk (2013) looked at discourse from a different perspective based on the belief that discourse plays a role in the reproduction of ideology and thus, a socio-cognitive account has been given. Many tools are allowed to be adopted like speech acts, rhetoric, style, narrative structures, etc. One more theory has been adopted by Wodak claiming that CDA is as discourse as discourse analysis. In view of this, phonological, morphological, syntactic, stylistic, rhetorical strategies, among others can be studied which is not too distinct from van Dijk’s view. And thus, she comes to the conclusion that there is no ‘a’ or ‘one’ method of CDA (2015, p. 2).

As this research deals with small-scale corpus (metaphors) it was decided that qualitative analysis is a suitable choice for the analysis. Actually, opting for CMT was triggered by the intriguing components of the theory. In view of this, identifying both source and target domains has been rated comprehensive and viable in delineating these particular domains. Interestingly, this same identification is going to reverberate throughout the analysis as its task is not a mere statement of two different trajectories for the sake of practical reasons, but rather, to embrace other discourse dimensions which would impinge upon hearers and/or receivers. The core of the argument is that departing from and by recourse to the two mandatory underpinnings of the CMT (source and target domains) it is expected that the task of the researcher would be based on a clear, well-defined, structured and most of all in-depth and thorough method of analysis.

Notwithstanding Blended Theory contribution, CMT constitutes the core of metaphor study as it has established clearly and comprehensively the underpinnings of a novel conception that seems to have a substantial effect in modern research. Hence, the process of metaphors is always directed from the source to the target domains. In other words, one experience is understood in terms of another. For instance, the metaphor “build a wall and crime will fall” is built on two domains that have to be identified. The nature of the relationship between source and target has also to be explained, in addition to meaning implications.

Selection criteria

The metaphors that have been selected for analysis have been retrieved from two different sources precisely, twitter and YouTube. It should be noted, however, that the number of metaphors does not exceed four. Since this small-scale research is basically quantitative, it was viewed that one type of analysis would, to a large extent, fit this study. In a similar vein, the

metaphors selected are all uttered by the US president Donald Trump while he is in government (president) in connection to a variety of issues, precisely, immigration, media and Corona Virus. These metaphors are used in different contexts which have been characterized with tension, divergent views over many overarching issues and extensive media coverage of events.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The use and meaning of metaphors seems to be dynamic as they are inherently evolutionary. Interestingly, metaphors generate meaning, in so many cases, when users change. And thus, they contribute to the development of language and culture. Because they are ubiquitous in text and talk, metaphors are not only substantial components of literary texts. It has been stated in the literature that metaphors are part of thought and are resilient in use though not always easy to be understood. The intriguing nature of metaphors has a role in anchoring much of the intended meaning, in many cases coercively.

In what comes next, a tweet communicated on January 26, 2019 by Donald Trump calling for restrictive immigration laws states the following:

“Build a wall and crime will fall”

The source domain in this very metaphor pertains to crime whereas the target domain converges with the act of falling. This orientational metaphor is based on the relation between concepts. Crime is perceived as a moving entity which can fall. Falling, in this case, or going down is equated with victory. So “down” has a positive implication and does not imply negative action or undesirable outcomes. The wall, once built, would dismantle strength of crimes and anchor peace and safety among the American community.

In this connection, the defeat of crime is substantially dependent on building the wall. Hence, attributing the act of falling to an abstract entity makes it concrete and easily understood. The implications of this metaphor are viable in how they present crime as a concrete object that can be defeated only if a wall is built. If a wall is not built crime will soar. Although this metaphor is not novel as crime is likely to be equated with time in other metaphors, it is creative as it baldly infiltrates and arouses fear, covertly entices the people to revolt, and even draws attention to the precarious condition the Border is facing.

Zooming on the second metaphor, the latter is retrieved from twitter on January 13, 2019 and it states the following:

Thousands of illegal aliens who have committed sexual crimes against children are right now in Texas prison

The metaphor above equates immigrants to illegal aliens. The source domain is manifested in aliens and the target domain pertains to immigrants. These are supposed to be fictional beings from another world whose essence is unknown, and thus, frightening. These people are not naturalized citizens of the country they are living in. An illegal alien is, then, an outsider, weird,

unknown, unfamiliar, and a hypothetical or fictional being from another planet. Source and target domains, though not novel as metaphors have a binary and blended dimension.

On one hand, illegal immigrants are claimed to be foreigners and this is true as anyone who is not a descendant of an American mother and/or father or not born in the states can be claimed to be a foreigner. On the other hand, ‘alien’ has another implication which embraces the meaning of the unknown, strange, unfamiliar, anonymous, etc. The US president deliberately deployed the term ‘alien’ as it has a two-fold magnitude. This, among other things, makes his discourse more persuasive as it is close to everyday language and easily understood.

Metaphor, in the above case, has proved to be a vehicle which is loaded with meaning: fear arousal, irony, disdain of the other, hatred, etc. What is also remarkable about this metaphor is how much it targets feelings. It is true that CMT states that metaphor is a matter of thought, but one might also draw attention to how it is a matter of feelings and judgmental attitudes. Thought is more likely to govern rational utterances, but one should acknowledge, as well, that thought can generate feelings and reflect them in language. Metaphors, therefore, can be claimed to be a matter of feelings, novel and continuously taking an updating trajectory.

The previous two metaphors are evidence that they are pervasive in language and persuasive in nature. As to whether they are a matter of linguistic clichés, one might assume that they are constantly updated, reconstructed, non-finite, just like novel sentences which are mere reflections of novel thoughts, many of them are entrenched beliefs.

The next metaphor pertains to corona virus; it has been retrieved from the following address: [www.youtube.com > watch22 sept. 2020](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22sept.2020) — Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly, US President Donald Trump accused China of being responsible for the spread of the ...

The metaphor states the following:

We have waged a fierce battle against the invisible enemy; the China virus.

The source domain corresponds to war and the target domain is manifested in the invisible enemy (the virus). And thus, it can be claimed that viruses are enemies. In view of this, war against the virus, which is an abstract entity, is concretized. A war, for instance, presupposes preparedness, material, equipment, etc. In a war there is a loser and a winner. Throughout the war there are expected losses: human, equipment, money, etc. The common target of those who wage the war is to win with the least of losses. However, danger persists as the enemy is invisible and this makes the war’s outcomes unpredictable.

Although CMT accounts for metaphors of this kind, and despite their pervasiveness, these are persuasive and novel conceptions of wars and enemies. This claim may support the argument that metaphors are infinite and able to generate meaning and even account for and/or mirror

thought and feelings. Hence, metaphors though entrenched linguistic clichés are always updated and follow novel trajectories in an attempt to generate influence on the public and draw attention to what might unwittingly occur in case of defeat.

The notion of victory persists in the tweet communicated on July 1, 2017, which states the following:

“I had to beat fake news, and did”

The metaphor above concretizes news, and thus, the source domain is war against an enemy and the target domain is fake news (the enemy). The source domain, as it has previously been mentioned, presumably presupposes a winner and a loser. Interestingly, the US president claims that he is under the obligation to beat fake news and finally did. The target is presented as an enemy whose existence presupposes the existence of danger and misleading. Notwithstanding the representation of the adversary (in a war against the president), news media might acquire its strength from the propaganda administered by the president and thus, the metaphor might fail to gain persuasive ends and meet the argumentative rigor Trump looks for. Repetitive allegations might work for the benefit of the target despite the fact that they might, as well, become normalized beliefs. What is noticeable is that news media face the president’s claims with resistance, a constant one.

Whether such a metaphor is purely a product of thought is also questionable. Once again, the metaphors conveyed are, in parallel a matter of feelings, subjectivity, value-judgments, etc. This means, among other things, that political discourse is not away from irrational, subjective and even judgmental practices through text and talk.

Given the aforementioned metaphors, it might be assumed that metaphors, being ubiquitous in text and talk, undergo a process of creation, updating, in a non-finite fashion. For this, the study of metaphors presupposes taking into account, as well, contextual cues, participants and ideological matters in order to decipher meaning and its implications.

It is customary that CDA’s main objectives are to study power abuse (institutional power, for example), domination, and how discourse can lead to their reproduction in society. And thus, being trans-disciplinary, CDA opts for, among other things, showing how people with institutional power and elites use discursive strategies to maintain inequalities like limiting the freedom of others and influencing their minds based on certain strategies (persuasive, ideological, etc). One of the tasks of the analyst in CDA is to use some tools like metaphor in both text and talk for the purpose of mitigation and emancipation. Hence, the objective is to contribute to ‘righting’ the social ‘wrongs’ with either negative critique or positive critique. Negative critique stands solely for the analysis of social ‘wrongs’, however, positive critique refers to how to remedy them. Consequently, power relations which are established via ideologies are reflected in language.

Ideology, as a case in point, has been a factor that is utilized in metaphor to dismantle belief systems, stereotypical images, judgmental views in some cases and new policies relative to a new agenda whose core objective is to restrict or even ban immigration. Indeed, anchoring new

measures with no resilience in the Trump era seems to impinge upon language, which is the real manifestation of both thought and feelings. Hence, in addition to some linguistic clichés and novel use, metaphors are vehicles that transmit and communicate a whole belief system that fits the Republican agenda in the first place. From this standpoint, the metaphor describing immigrants as aliens entails a specific attitude towards this specific group of people with different cultures and backgrounds. The same attitude persists in connection to media, China who is an economic rival and a rising power.

As such, sifting through the selected metaphors proved that these are manifold as they are clichéd linguistic expressions and persuasive tools, a product of thought and a reflection of feelings. And thus, it can be assumed that, as a tool deployed in political discourse, metaphor can presumably infiltrate all intended meanings and messages even without mitigation.

CONCLUSION

This research has been an attempt to further show the relevance of CMT to the analysis of political discourse. It has also approached metaphor from a new discourse genre regarding the dearth of research in this very area of enquiry. It has also attempted to show the links and dimensions of both source and target domains and how these are capable of generating new meaning in language. However, it has come to the conclusion that metaphor is not only a matter of thought but rather a matter of feelings. These constitute, nonetheless, a basic component in metaphors, just like thought. In sum, metaphors are claimed to be an amalgam of thought and feelings as these are not separable, and are an integral part of humans in general and human language in particular. This means, among other things, that metaphors should always be studied with respect to both notions. This research has, therefore, a theoretical contribution. It has attempted to further demonstrate how metaphors can be persuasive tools in contemporary political discourse and how they constitute quibbles to manipulate the public and arouse fear from the OTHER. Moreover, by recourse to a critical study of metaphors, it is possible to uncover hidden political agendas and mental representations. Finally and for future research, the same discourse genre can be investigated by other tools of analysis like speech acts, deixis, or presupposition.

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