"BABES-BOLYAI" UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF LETTERS

CLUJ -NAPOCA

DECODING POLITICAL DISCOURSE:

an interplay of argument structures, conceptual metaphors and politeness principles

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

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2011

CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

The cognitive approach considers political discourse as necessarily a product of individual and collective mental processes (Chilton, 2004: 51). What is important in textual linguistic analysis is to identify the way in which alternate ways of referring to the same entities can provide different meanings. In this approach, metaphor surpasses its role as a simple linguistic device or figure of style/ trope, becoming part of human conceptualisation. Both metaphors and image schemas are conceptual structures that reflect how people perceive and understand the world around them. They constitute a means of verbalizing our everyday experiences. Lakoff (1987) advocates a transfer of features from a Source Domain to a Target Domain. The reader must be aware that metaphorical mappings involve both human and non-human entities. Metaphor is pervasive in everyday language, thought and action. Sometimes an utterance can have no meaning when it lacks its context and there are situations when the same utterance has different meanings depending on the speaker and his understanding of the world, his social and political principles, his attitude. Metaphors are devices that help define abstract concepts in terms of more concrete concepts. Thus, concepts are no longer defined only in terms of their inherent properties, but also in terms of interactional properties. Concepts and categories are open-ended and metaphors account for their change in applicability. Moreover, different wordings of the same ideas indicate subtle shades of meaning. New metaphors can even create a new reality and if people start acting accordingly, they license a shift in thinking and in behaviour, bringing about significant cultural and social changes.

2   ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Broadly speaking, the topic of research is represented by the linguistic patterns and discursive practices embedded in political discourse that serve to establish or conceal relations of power and dominance between interactants, between national, ethnic, religious, sexual, political and cultural majorities and minorities.

The analytical framework (Chapter 2) advocates a combination of formalist, functionalist and cognitivist viewpoints in the philosophy of language. It combines Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995, 2003) and cognitivist approaches to political discourse (Chilton, 2004; van Dijk, 2008) in terms of the mental representations arguers use to position other entities in relation to themselves along the three-dimensional axis of deixis: space, time, modality.

What Leech (1983) used to call 'Communicative Grammar' as an approach to grammar which aims to relate syntax, semantics and pragmatics is nowadays applicable to Discourse Analysis. Consider for instance Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to discourse as text, discursive practice and social practice.

It is at the level of text that the thesis aims to analyse the argument structures in close connection to the conceptual metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003; Goatly, 1997) that derive from these and to the politeness principles (Brown and Levinson, 1978/1987; Leech, 1983) that help the reader to connect the text with the larger areas of discursive and social practices. Argument structures reflect the way in which the speaker perceives the world that surrounds him and how he sets this experience into structures or frames. In linguistics, these entities that sustain the frame have been assigned specific roles in the sentence in order to describe the type of action (static or dynamic) or the impact of the action denoted by the verb upon the participants involved. Saeed (2003: 148) specifies the various labels employed for such roles in the literature: participant roles (Allan, 1986), deep semantic cases (Fillmore, 1968), semantic roles (Givon, 1990), thematic relations (Gruber, 1976; Jackendoff, 1972), and thematic roles (Dowty, 1986, 1989, 1991; Jackendoff, 1990).

In Goffman's terms (1974/1986), an individual's framing of an activity organizes meaning and prescribes a normative type of behaviour for the participants. In the process of interpretation, the analyst will eventually distinguish between the "primary

frameworks" (1986: 22-23), on the one hand, either natural or social, that support the frame, and on the other hand, the individual's linguistic competence (1986: 500), his ability to abide by the rules of a language. In addition, I contend that the analyst discovers also the metaphorical thought that helped the speaker to conceptualise the world (Lakoff, 1993: 203-204).

Moreover, drawing on van Eemeren's pragma-dialectical principles and techniques of discourse reconstruction (1994, 2004, 2009, 2010), the paper accounts for the fact that most of these pragmatic devices are consciously created and employed by politicians in order to persuade their audience of the feasibility of their political plans, rather than to "go beyond confrontation and polemic" (Fairclough, 2003: 44) and to find solutions that may contribute to the resolution of their controversies. Therefore, such instances allow them to outline their own individuality that dissociates them from their opponents and from all those who do not share their views. Charteris-Black (2005: 202) brings evidence in favour of what he calls "a deontic shift towards ethical discourse" that highlights the speaker's qualities by means of more inward-looking types of metaphors, thus increasing the legitimization of his behaviour, of his proposals.

Politicians often rely on people's subjective mental constructs ("context models" in van Dijk's terms (2009: 100)) as a strategy of threatening the interlocutor's face. Once they name a certain event in which the other was involved, they are aware of the fact that the audience will soon forget the details of the story, but they will have certainly generalized the new information which leaves its mark upon the antagonist's identity, as it sullies his/her name. Thus, the protagonists manage to plant the seeds of doubt and distrust in their audience's mind which can hardly be removed by further discourse.

3 METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

Chapter 3 deals with further operationalisation of theoretical claims. Drawing on insights into cognitive linguistics and transpersonal psychology (Maslow, 1954/1970), I argue that political discourse is meant to fill in *a mental void* engendered in the audience's mind by their needs and frustrations.

In the case of great politicians, this void is not necessarily narrower than the void of a common individual. Nevertheless, they hold the knowledge and the power to narrow or to enlarge their own mental void and that of the others, of the community. The political discourse becomes a means of narrowing people's mental gap, selling hopes and clues, but not solutions. Solutions are visible in the change of social practices that follow the discourse.

I see political discourse as a cognitive demand-supply transaction. A source domain or supplier provides the necessary commodity to fill in or to satisfy the demand. My theory of mental voids postulates a cognitive approach to a new state of affairs that involves people's effort or even their inability to adapt to new contexts or to (intriguing) change. Mental spaces as conceived by Fauconnier (1994) can be built only in commonplace situations. They rely on the actors' cognitive frames, on their background.

The mental permeability of political discourse can be proved by analyzing the diversity of reactions it brings about in people on a daily basis. Depending on the extent to which people internalize and appropriate the ideas that emerge with each speech, the political discourse can produce cognitive and behavioural change in society development.

Politicians depict reality distorting its initial model, thus yielding contradictory readings in the individual's "unconscious mind" (as Freud named it) which strives to assimilate manipulation. Drawing on Fauconnier ("In Len's painting, the girl with blue eyes has green eyes" (1994: 12)), I see political discourse as aiming to represent in the audience's mind a reality characterized by the new properties the speaker wanted the receiver to infer. Therefore, my critical analysis of the corpus of presidential speeches involved also the identification and interpretation of theta roles from Fillmore's Case grammar and of conceptual metaphors as developed by cognitive semantics.

A number of methodological stages have been proposed (Pragglejaz Group, 2007; Charteris-Black, 2004; Cameron and Low, 1999) in order to increase the reliability of the research in critical metaphor analysis. I have employed the manual corpus-driven identification of metaphors. In the second and third stages of the procedure, the ones related to metaphor interpretation and explanation, I have followed different strategies especially when working on the text of the three 2008 American Presidential Debates, which made up my 'primary' corpus. Aiming to analyse the hidden meanings of the language used in presidential speeches, I have opted to compile my own corpus of 48,000 words that would allow for an in-depth analysis of argument structures, conceptual metaphors, and politeness strategies in their discoursal and social contexts.

My contention is that conceptual metaphors are part of the code shared by groups of agents that belong to a certain social space or habitus. Decoding this transfer of meaning from a Source to a Target Domain will make us capable of outlining the principles that structure their social space.

With this aim in mind, I have compiled a 26,770-word 'secondary' corpus of presidential speeches that consists in three sub-corpora. The first sub-corpus comprises speeches held by three presidents representing Germany, Italy and Romania delivered before the European Parliament in order to study the way in which they manage to picture the identity of the country they represent within what they call the common European identity.

With a view to conducting a diachronic cut through the discourse strand of the financial crisis, I have selected excerpts from three articles that reproduce the speeches held by the American, French and Romanian presidents on this shared topic. Following the same strategies, the analysis of this second corpus pinpointed the contribution of modality, conceptual metaphors and argument structures in representing the political Self and Other.

The third secondary corpus consists in the first 1992 American Presidential Debate which has been used in order to uncover those linguistic devices that help the protagonists shape their face, while threatening their opponents'. The study starts from the claim that there must be a close relationship between conceptual metaphors, argumentation fallacies and politeness strategies to account for the mental image created in the audience's mind, which influences their decisions during elections.

4   SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND DISTANCES FROM THE SELF

Chapters 4-6 are analytical chapters proper that investigate the primary corpus of the research, namely the three debates of the 2008 American presidential elections. Drawing upon Fillmore's (1968) and Goldberg's (1995) theoretical approaches on argument structures and van Leeuwen's (1996) functionalist approach to representing social actors, Chapter 4 attempts to identify the real Agents, Patients or Benefactives lying behind the speakers' words.

Following Chilton's approach to representation (2004: 56-59) as a three-dimensional axis of deixis – time, space, modality – the chapter attempts to graphically project various statements made by Senator McCain or by Senator Obama with a view to accounting for the linguistic choices the speakers make in representing 'the self' as the right authority and 'the other' as departing from the norms of morality and truthfulness.

5   (DE)CONSTRUCTING CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS

Chapter 5 aims to identify, analyse and interpret instances of cognitive metaphors created by Barack Obama and John McCain during the Presidential debates in 2008 while dealing with topics such as: financial crisis, energy independence, the health care system, education, and military conflicts. The approach is mainly based upon central developments in cognitive linguistics and seeks to provide a unified picture from syntax to semantics and to discourse. Finally, the interpretation of the collected data aims to outline features of the American socio-cultural identity as a result of the speakers' linguistic representations of American society in its individual and collective hypostases.

In the case of the first debate, I have identified the metaphorical linguistic expressions of several Target Domains that seemed to be also the foci of discussion: the financial crisis, health care, war, education, energy issues, and politics in general. When trying to approach them textually and interrelate their meaning and their set of correspondences or mappings, I have aimed at outlining Obama's metaphorical reasoning as compared to

McCain's metaphorical reasoning. Metaphors such as HEALTH IS MERCHANDISE- HEALTH IS COMMODITY, CRISIS IS DISEASE – CRISIS IS CALAMITY, POLITICS IS ETHICS – POLITICS IS WAR – POLITICS IS BUSINESS pervade the candidates' discourses and frame their standpoints, rendering the political world intelligible and empirical.

In the case of the second debate, my intention has been to pursue the discussants' metaphorical reasoning regarding domestic policy issues, on the one hand, and foreign policy issues, on the other hand. I have also explained the conceptual metaphors that arise from the questions addressed by the audience members, as they reveal the impact of reality at the grassroots level. Furthermore, I have argued that economic principles can be translated through metaphor into real politics. Boston Consulting Group strategy of resource distribution, known as BCG Growth-Share Matrix (1998), has facilitated the creation of what I have called the PRODUCT LIFE-CYCLE metaphor, according to which the country becomes a company that prioritizes its opportunities based on products' market growth and market share.

In 2011, we wonder whether Obama's 2008 Question Marks have really grown into Stars or even Cash Cows. A search, in his 2009-2011 State of the Union addresses, for concordances of lexical items such as *prioritize*, *address*, *invest*, *benefit*, *end*, *waste*, and *eliminate* that are indicative of America's current Question Marks, therefore future Stars, Cash Cows, or even Dogs has pinpointed the evolution of each strategic unit of activity under debate during elections.

As the third debate has proved to be more argumentative in nature than the previous ones, I have identified the metaphors that could be associated with each of the stages of a critical discussion as proposed by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004): the confrontation stage, the opening stage, the argumentation stage, and the concluding stage.

In order to pursue a coherent picture, I have finally integrated this cognitive view into a pragmatic approach. Therefore, I have adopted a technique similar to the one promoted by Brown and Levinson (1987), Kline (1984), Dailey, Hinck and Hinck (2008) which consists in dividing the three debates into units of thought according to the debated issues and arguments provided by the two candidates to each question in turn and identifying the direct or indirect face-threatening and face-supportive messages.

Moreover, I have employed van Eemeren's (2004) pragma-dialectical approach to text deconstruction in order to identify the patterns of rhetorical strategies within the stages of each critical discussion that will subsume one or more thought units.

My contention is that by following the metaphorical mappings unfold from the confrontation stage to the concluding stage and analysing the extent to which the patterns are preserved or altered reveals the arguer's mental connections that he makes in order to take advantage of the situation.

6   SYMBOLIC POWER AND ARGUMENTATION

The analysis conducted in Chapter 6 engenders the correspondence between argumentation schemes and types of conceptual metaphors. The aim of Chapter 6 as a whole is to analyse the political debate as argumentation both as the process of arguing and as its product, to investigate the way in which 'strategic maneuvering' (van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 1999) and its fallacies function, pointing out the linguistic devices used by the arguers to achieve their dialectical and rhetorical concerns.

Social distance coincides with the spatial distance as represented by Bourdieu's "social space" within which "the closer the agents, groups or institutions which are situated within this space, the more common properties they have; and the more distant, the fewer" (Bourdieu, 1989: 16).

Following Bourdieu and the interface between his theory on social space and Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987) and Leech's (1983) works on politeness, another issue to be examined is the extent to which social distances are inscribed in the interactants' language.

Scollon and Scollon (1995: 74-75) distinguish between two main patterns of rhetorical strategies:

1. the inductive (topic-delayed) pattern of discourse when the supporting arguments precede the standpoint. This is rather a strategy of indirectness employed by the speaker in order to abstain from candor.

2. the deductive pattern of discourse in which case the speaker introduces his/her standpoint first and provides further details every time s/he regains the floor.

The pragma-dialectical strategies of deconstructing the text will help us account for the antagonistic views of the participants "since the vision that every agent has of the space depends on his or her position in that space" (Bourdieu, 1989: 18).

It is this sense of one's place that leads McCain to speak like a warrior and Obama like a preacher. In effect, McCain's long experience in the country's conflictual foreign policy is liable for his image.

In his symbolic struggle for power, McCain's record he keeps mentioning represents his credentials, the symbolic capital he holds which entitles him to impose his views and his scale of values.

Lacking the same amount of symbolic capital, Obama structures his speech in such a way as to be rooted in people's daily experience. His power to distinguish between groups, "to make explicit social divisions" (Bourdieu, 1989: 23) and to speak on behalf of the middle class granted him sufficient recognition as the polls showed.

Furthermore, I have argued that conceptual metaphors represent another linguistic means of identifying (un)reasonable argumentation moves. In fact, this kind of approach is based on the claim that a type of argumentation necessarily engenders a certain type of metaphor, as explained below:

1. symptomatic argumentation generates *defining metaphors*, such as: DEFENCE IS SACRIFICE, FREEDOM IS SACRIFICE, AMERICA IS A MORAL AUTHORITY.

2. argumentation by analogy provides instances of *analogous/descriptive metaphors*, such as: POLITICS IS VISION, DIVISION IS FAILURE, ENEMIES ARE ANIMALS, NATIONS ARE PERSONS, CRISIS IS A DISEASE.

3. causal argumentation leads to the creation of *metonymical metaphors* that I further on divided into two subtypes:

3a. *Resultative metaphors* are one-way metaphors, such as: ECONOMIC STRENGTH IS MILITARY STRENGTH. They also include the so-called *slippery-slope metaphors*, as their judgement leaves no other alternative but the predication of catastrophic consequences.

3b. *Equative metaphors* are two-way metaphors that allow the Source and the Topic terms to exchange places. The Topic can be both defined and substituted by the Source terms as in the following examples: WAR IS POLITICS/POLITICS IS WAR;

4. argumentation by dissociation generates *alternative metaphors* which involves the representation of the Topic in terms of opposite values. For instance, WAR IS (LACK OF) ETHICS, POLITICS IS (LACK OF) ETHICS.

The argumentation becomes unreasonable and fallacious when it engenders a different type of metaphor than the expected one.

The effectiveness of Obama's speech lies in the coherence of his representations and the preservation of arguments in supporting his standpoints. Faced with so many accusations, Obama restricts the disagreement space by choosing to deal only with those issues that are of real importance for the country. His objective is mainly dialectical, rather than rhetorical, as he attempts to clarify the position he assumes despite McCain's criticism.

7   THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN PRESIDENTIAL DISCOURSE

Chapter 7 investigates the secondary corpora of my research consisting of European presidential speeches to which I have added the first 1992 American presidential debate. The analysis substantiates the role of the analytical framework in the construction of identity.

Thus, I have selected first the speeches held by three presidents representing Germany, Italy and Romania delivered before the European Parliament in order to study the way in which they manage to picture the identity of the country they represent within what they call the common European identity.

Second, I have chosen illustrative excerpts from three newspaper articles that reproduce the speeches held by the American, French and Romanian presidents on the financial crisis with a view to analyzing the linguistic means that frame the real Agents and Patients of the crisis.

All the three speakers consider that the solution to the crisis lies in people's attitude. I imagine the concept of ATTITUDE as located at the crossroads where the deontic axis meets the epistemic axis of modality. As conceived by the three presidents, the concept

of ATTITUDE represents the crowning achievement of deontic and epistemic features, such as: sincerity, confidence, trust, wisdom, unity, optimism, solidarity, sacrifice. They encourage the nation to be optimistic, to stay united, to change their roles from Patients into Agents whose acts and initiatives will diminish the 'apocalyptic' situation.

The aim of the final section is to develop a study on the candidates' politeness strategies in the first 1992 American presidential debate, to analyse the extent to which they threaten the political face of their opponents and defend their own.

I have argued that there must be a close relationship between conceptual metaphors, argumentation fallacies and politeness strategies that accounts for the mental image created in the audience's mind, which influences their final decision during elections.

CONCLUSIONS

The study has been conducted on authentic texts that are likely to outline the speakers' beliefs as they are in real life. The excerpts under focus have proved the added value of the co-text when interpreting conceptual metaphors. As regards the context, it should be appropriately used especially when making pragmatic inferences. I have adopted an "a priori" approach, characterized by hypothetico-deductive theoretization (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004: 74) that is aimed at identifying the role of argument structures, conceptual metaphors, and politeness in conflict regulation, on the one hand, and on the other hand, in identity construction. Nevertheless, empirical observation has engendered some inductive insights as well, regarding for instance (as presented in chapter 6.1) the correlational patterns between argumentation schemes and their corresponding metaphor types.

My analysis of argument structures and conceptual metaphors pertains to what van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004) call an "audience-oriented reconstruction" by which the analyst identifies the "rhetorical transformations" that contributed to persuading the audience. However, as such a rhetorical analysis seems "to lean strongly on introspection and individual intuition" (2004: 25), I have also carried out a "resolution-oriented reconstruction" by concentrating my empirical descriptions on the arguers'

linguistic ability to defend their standpoints or to violate the rules of the critical discussion, thus hampering the conflict resolution.

My contention is that conceptual metaphors are part of the code shared by groups of agents that belong to a certain social space or habitus. Decoding this transfer of meaning from a Source to a Target Domain will make us capable of outlining the principles that structure their social space. The contrastive analysis of the arguers' metaphorical reasoning will highlight the boundaries of the "disagreement space" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004: 54). The use of different Vehicle terms for the same Topic-terms will determine "what is at stake at a particular juncture" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004: 54). Furthermore, I argue that the focus on argument structures and conceptual metaphors from a cognitive view highlights the arguers' inner perspective and gives us a clue about their mental processes on which they lean their argumentation. I view my original contributions as both theoretical and methodological.

I deem my theoretical study as representative in the field owing to the new perspective I have opened by placing political discourse at the crossroads of cognitive and transpersonal psychology. My claim, that political discourse aims to fill in *a mental void* that persists in people's mind as a result of their needs and frustrations, needs to be further investigated and supported by plenty of evidence from psychology-related disciplines.

Furthermore, the association of Critical Discourse Analysis with cognitive linguistics, pragmatic theories of politeness, and pragma-dialectics in a coherent analytical framework represents the methodological contribution of my research.

This particular combination has led to the identification of new metaphor types (Chapter 6.1) pertaining to the argumentation schemes used by the protagonists in a critical discussion.

Rather than to speculate about the speakers' intentions, the identification and interpretation of conceptual metaphors (Chapter 5) has highlighted which aspects of the debated matters are promoted and which aspects are downplayed, how economic principles can be translated through metaphor into real politics (subchapter 5.3.1), and the extent to which systematic metaphors such as POLITICS IS ETHICS (subchapter 5.3.2) can outline the values that sustain the political creed of one party or another.

Insights into marketing strategies – analysis, planning, implementation, and control – (Kotler, 1997) have been claimed to be encoded in the PRODUCT LIFE-CYCLE metaphorical reasoning (subchapter 5.3.1). The Boston Consulting Group matrix enables the analyst to determine what information is relevant to reveal the underlying meanings that arise in interaction when economic facts are disputed. The matrix functions as an internalized symbolic representation of the real policy of a country.

We might conclude that, in the end, this was a **moral victory**, inasmuch as Obama managed to prove more discernment and correctness than his opponent did. He is aware of his own fallibility and altogether able to acknowledge the other.

Following Habermas, a political order becomes legitimate if it has made the object of rational argumentation that has raised *universal* validity claims and has met the approval of all the parties involved in the critical discussion.

Obama's arguments are conducted from a Habermasian 'moral' point of view, even though some of them did not have the force to gain legitimacy through consensus, but due to their underlying universal values of social justice and equality.

On the contrary, McCain seems to defend the virtues of a neo-liberal economic system (Ietcu, 2006), according to which moral behaviour involves assuming full responsibility for one's fate, engaging in competition, taking risks, and expecting no benefits from the government.

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