Metaphor in the discourse of the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

Politics remains one of the most essential domains of social life and therefore has a great impact on people's conceptualization of leadership and the values it strives to transfer to its potential advocates. This paper aims to explore mechanisms of metaphor assortment undertaken by politician-speakers by examining the individual attributes as orators and the properties of their audiences of three Conservative leaders: Churchill, Thatcher and Cameron during their public service, taking into account ancient views on the art of persuasion.

1. Political discourse in the Classical Period

The beginning of the sixth century BC witnessed a profound moment in the development of state organizational structures. Athens, the birthplace of democracy, initiated a long-lasting tradition in the style of managing the body politic. This introduction was rather primitive and distant from the modern view of administering the public sphere, however, it ought to be underlined that for the circumstances at the time this new-born form of rule surpassed all political expectations. Democracy combines two nouns of Greek origin: the *demos* – the people and the *kratos* – power (Davis 1914: 147ff.). Of strategic importance for the existence of the newly arisen administration was an institution named the Ecclesia, Public Assembly, which was „(…) something more than the chief governmental organ in the state. It is the great leveling engine which makes Athens

a true democracy, despite the great differences in wealth between her inhabitants" (Davis 1960: 147). The Assembly based on a theoretical ground according to which there was a distinct possibility that in a group of many men the probability of reaching conclusions through the means of sound discussion is far more higher than in a clique faction of privileged citizens. (Cohen 2006: 34).

Athenian participatory democracy provided a centre for an unrestrained communicative melting pots. At this point one might consult Saxonhouse (2006: 29):

> The practice of free speech was entangled in the egalitarian foundations and participatory principles of the democratic regime of the Athenians, a regime that emphasized equality, not rights, and participation, not the evaluation of perform-ance associated with the practice of democratic elections (…). There is no „government" to be protected against. Freedom of speech in Athens is the opportunity for those who are considered equals to say openly whatever they may think in a world of equal citizens.

Indeed, early democracy bore resemblance to a market rather than a mainstay of civilized discussion. In conjunction with people's need to foster an elaborate form of collectiveness, the discussion became more formalized. What is important is the fact that the participants of public assemblies undertook specific standards for appointing their representatives. As Cohen (2006: 25) states: „A rhetor was a person who pursued a leadership role in the polis, and rhetoric was the essential tool for this pursuit of influence and honor. Oratory was, from this perspective, indistinguishable from political activity".

In order to appear publically and fulfill politically driven aspira-tions one had to be able to speak persuasively. Without that prereq-uisite he was non-existent. Having a desire to affect community's progression, the speaker was obliged to be reliable enough or suf-ficiently agile to persuade the audience to their ideas. For this reason, speeches assumed more methodical and accurate forms pursuing their aim in anticipation of the Assembly.

1.1. The speaker's attributes

Opulent declamatory practice in Athens brought forth an abundance of handbooks on rhetoric. However, most of these quasi-treaties were concerned with dexterous subterfuge of the Machiavellian kind (cf. Machiavelli 1992). It was not until Aristotelian considerations on rhetoric emerged, that it was so decidedly claimed that persuasiveness as a prime subject to politics should go to great lengths in order to ensure honest declamatory acts. As a result, the sincerity of speech could not have been interpreted as a set of adept conversational deceit, yet it ought to have been triggered by the orator's virtues as a prerequisite to credibility. As arguments could refer to three domains of a person's personality, Aristotle (2004: 141) observed that „there are three causes of the speakers' themselves being persuasive (…) They are *common sense*, *virtue* and *goodwill* [emphasis in the original].

Ethos stood for character and depicted all the necessary qualities which were attributable to the speaker. The qualities themselves were the virtues handed down owing to innate ability or those which had been nurtured in the demanding process of upbringing. Virtues as values were abstract notions which acquired their pragmatic overtone while operating in reality (cf. Smith 2004). In reference to a speech, inner capacities were supposed to illustrate the fact that the speaker was predisposed to assume responsibility for hypothetical non-observance and face the aftermath, for as Garver (2006: 207) postulates: „Ethical consequences are individual and permanent". The speaker who conveyed certain messages was morally burdened with the outcomes of the decisions he strived for the Assembly to undertake. The issue of morality, however, could have been perverted depending on the results the speaker himself desired to obtain. For this reason, in the context of oratorical performances morality was only an indispensable factor, not a value itself.

In a rhetorical sense *logos* was a rudimentary aspect of an oratorical act defined as pure intellectualism which could not have been submitted to a speaker's interpretation due to the fact that the concept of reasoning was beyond any arbitrary conception of reality and as Garver (2006: 207) rightly states: „There is nothing individual about

reason". As far as the intricacies of the process of reasoning were concerned, they were not comprehended per se, as detached from a rhetorical act. Persuasively, logos was not objective, but subjective. It pursued its aim not by seeking the universal truth, but values that could be attributed to a particular case taking into account the influence which the audience exerted on the speaker while performing the activity of decision-making in conjuncture with an ultimate right to accept certain resolutions or to deny them.

As opposed to logos which was linked with the character of the speaker, *pathos* was attributed to the listeners who were swayed into a certain kind of emotion due to the performance of the orator. Of clear evidence was the fact that people tended to make different decisions when they operated under various emotional states. Rhetorically shaped frame of mind allowed the recipients of an elocutionary action to devise a means of approaching certain issues and to seek some indications which could have provided a sense of direction towards pragmatic proceedings (Kasteley 2006: 223). Emotions could release views which were not realized and obtainable in the process of reasoning. As Miller (2008: 31) noted: „(…) emotion is still usually treated as a singular creature of rationalism. Only a few articulate an aesthetics of emotion as a way to explain our personal theories of life and choice, our ways of imagining ourselves as occupants of good or bad stories". The assimilation of emotions into a speech comprehended pathos as a communicative instrument increasing the adeptness of persuasion which was placed entirely under the command of reasoning.

2. Metaphorical conceptualization of reality

As far as persuasion is communication, persuasion takes place in metaphorical terms. Human beings are equipped with cognitive instruments for establishing and interpreting the intricacies of life. The way language is constituted is dependent on the perception of surface utterances as indications of the underlying language system. The fundamental aim of this paper is to display the mechanisms of

metaphor which guide verbal expressions. Subsequently, the issue shifts towards the political milieu.

A fresh attitude on the recognition of mental processes acquired, fostered and transmitted by metaphorical concepts was demonstrated by the outstanding study of the issue by Lakoff and Johnson who stated that the way humans conceptualized premises was metaphorically ingrained in minds and mostly oblivious to language users (Lakoff/Johnson 1980: 5). The latter in general are not conscious of the fact that cognitive processing is a matter of the metaphor, albeit „our conceptual system (…) plays a central role in defining our everyday realities" (Lakoff/Johnson 1980: 3). This stance was advocated by Kövecses (2002: 68) who observed that the metaphor was conventionally perceived as a merely figurative and purely linguistic instrument which had no impact on thought processes. As a result, cognitive explanation was taken into account, for it strove to define metaphorical linguistic expressions as surface indications of a metaphorically-driven cognitive system.

Conceptualizing premises through metaphors is further subdivided into classes of three major categorizations demonstrated by Lakoff/Johnson (2003: 14ff.) who implied the idea of structural, orientational and ontological metaphors. Respectively, the first encompasses „cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another („It's hard to *get* that idea *across to* him", „Your reasons *came through* to us"); the second categorization refers to a notion that „organizes a whole system of concepts with respect to one another (…), most of them have to do with spatial orientation (…). Such metaphorical orientations are not arbitrary (…). They have a basis in our physical and cultural experience (…) and can vary from culture to culture" („I'm feeling *up*", He *dropped* dead", „She has *high* standards"). The third class of metaphors equip humans with „the ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances (…) we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them…" („It will take *a lot of patience* to finish this book", „Her ego is very *fragile*", „*I'm going to pieces*") [emphasis in the original].

As culture plays a cardinal role in metaphorical language, Lakoff/Johnson (2003: 23) observed that „the most fundamental values in a

culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture". However, the researchers emphasize the fact that only those cultural assets which are rooted in may be interpreted as corresponding with the metaphorical system shared by the community's members. Alongside cultural conceptions of reality, these variations might be depicted in the assortment of metaphors, however, certain metaphorical utterances may not reflect a widely-held concepts; for this reason, distinctiveness of cultures results in different source domain as a grounding for a particular expression (Ying 2007: 77ff.).

The contribution of Lakoff and Johnson's theory is valuable in that it offered a fresh outlook on the issue of metaphors, however, in the examination of political utterances it seems to be necessary to take into account two major agents of the communicative act, namely: the speaker and the audience.

3. Method: Critical Metaphor Analysis

The perception of metaphor merely as a rhetorical instrument which aims to air certain poetical expressions and emotions has been questioned by Lakoff and Jonhson. However, the fact that metaphor serves as an artistic means cannot be rejected, for it not only provides satisfaction for the senses, but it also strives to equip humans with explanatory tools of their experiences.

In the context of political communication, the „metaphor is therefore central to critical discourse analysis since it is concerned with forming a coherent view of reality" (Charteris-Black 2004: 28). The deconstruction of the metaphor is based on three stages: identification, interpretation and explanation (*cf.* Fairclough 1995). Charteris-Black (2004: 35ff.) approaches the identification stage on two levels; the first is „a close reading of a sample of texts with the aim of identifying candidate metaphors"; the second level of examination strives to decipher whether the primary concept on which the metaphor is developed is conventional or innovative. Cognitive and pragmatic correlation intends to form a constitution

for interpretation which consequently derives from identification of metaphorical concepts. Taking into account the fact that this analysis is involved in the political communicative milieu, the explanation stage will have to incorporate the intricacies of social surroundings and the role of a social actor who attempts to obtain their persuasive objectives. It should be pointed out that „evidence for the ideological and rhetorical motivation comes from the corpus in which metaphors occur rather than from the intuition of the analyst" (Charteris-Black 2004: 39).

The aforementioned factors contribute to Critical Metaphor Analysis devised by Charteris-Black. The underlying motivation for this approach is an attempt to understand „*why particular metaphors are chosen in specific discourse contexts*" (Charteris-Black 2004: 243) [emphasis in the original]. Critical Metaphor Analysis advocates the cognitive view on the perception of the metaphor in the sense that it seeks explanatory motives for its particular assortment in mental processes. However, „cognitive semantics (…) conceals a dimension of metaphor that is revealed by Critical Metaphor Analysis; this is the way the metaphor selection in particular types of discourse is governed by the rhetorical aim of *persuasion*" (Charteris-Black 2004: 247) [emphasis in the original]. This point is shared with Forceville (cf. Forceville 1996), who perceives pragmatic factor as an obligation for the fulfillment of the semantic stance. Thus, bearing in mind the ultimate objective of rhetorical maneuvers „metaphor choices may be governed by cognitive and semantic and pragmatic considerations and by ideological, cultural and historical ones" (Charteris-Black 2004: 248).
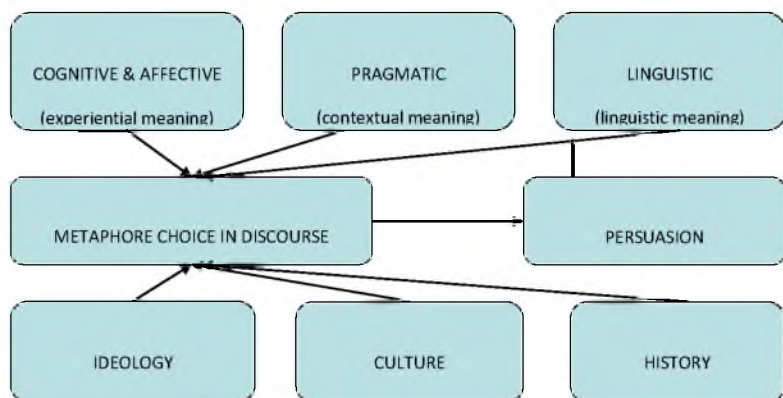
Fig. 1. Charteris-Black's discourse model for metaphor (2004: 248)

The model concentrates on two major domains: individual and social resources. The first comprises three constituents – cognitive and affective („thoughts, feelings and bodily experiences of the world"), pragmatic („understanding of what will be effective in particular contexts of use") and linguistic („lexical fields and the various word senses that are available"). The social domain encompasses ideology („primarily political or religious viewpoint"), culture and history" (Charteris-Black 2004: 248).

3.1. Analyzed sample

For the scope of this paper, two speeches per politician have been selected for the analysis, however, the author has analyzed ten speeches per politician The examination of Churchill's speeches led to selecting those which would be most representative for the rhetor's stance. The speeches derive from a collection of Winston Churchill's edited by his grandson (Churchill 2007). Thatcher's corpora encompass the speeches which concern the most heated issues of British politics in the 1980s. The corpora were received from Thatcher's home website: http://www.margaretthatcher.org/. where all the speeches had been qualified as key in Thatcher's oratorical

collection. Cameron's rhetorical activities are rather homogenous in nature. The selected speeches concentrate on the acts which demonstrate the Conservative leader's strategy of attempting to be alluring to the public in the most distinct manner. The Cameron examples are found on Cameron's website: http://www.davidcameronmp.com/.

4. Analysis

Winston Churchill was a figure who had been given a great opportunity and the great burden of participating in the uneasy times of the Second World War. The responsibility that Churchill had to shoulder was depicted in his speeches.

Churchill's rhetorical performance encompasses three major periods: Cassandrian (1937-1939), Tyrtaeusian (1939-1945) and Caesarian (1945-1946) as appropriate terms made up by the author depicting the oratorical intricacies of particular periods. As far as the Tyrtaeusian period is concerned, it was marked as a heyday of Churchill's rhetorical activity. In his first speech as Prime Minister, Churchill took the floor from an intriguing standpoint. Evidently, he might have constructed an imaginary dominant communicative relationship between Great Britain and Nazi Germany in order to elevate the spirits of parliamentarians; however, the composition of rationalism and indomitably expressed dignity was of greater rhetorical value. Offering nothing „but blood, toil, tears and sweat" (Churchill 2007: 206), Churchill instilled faith into the audience, for trust and devotion might be evoked with determination when faced peril. Great Britain stood for a defender of world-wide cultural continuity which demanded dedication deprived of partisan divisions. Hitler's politics was named „a monstrous tyranny" which called for „victory at all costs" (Churchill 2007: 206). The speech ended with Churchill's invocation to the parliamentarians to desist with political dissonance and express preparedness in the times of trial. Presumably that was the reasons for the phrase to remain in everyday language.

Churchill, as Tyrtaeus, motivated his companions to fight. The speeches which succeeded may be interpreted as rhetorical reinforce-

ment and progression of „Blood, toil, tears and sweat". Addressing the public, the great statesman aimed to consolidate the British community against Hitler's politics. Churchill named the citizens „men of valour" who should „arm [themselves]" (Churchill 2007: 209). This armament was to be considered in terms of both physical and mental state. Oratorically, the Prime Minister did not pledge to gain victory. His credibility both as a leader and a rhetor was strengthened by statements conveying messages of the unpredictability of future events. However, this stance had not been comprehended as a lack of military vision or relinquishment of responsibility. The „hideous apparatus of aggression" (Churchill 2007: 208) of Nazi politics was communicatively exploited by Churchill to proclaim that the British would struggle notwithstanding the outcome of combat. This attitude was followed by a dignity outcry according to which the fate of Europe and mankind was in the British's hands; therefore, the measures would be taken *per fas et nefas.*

Margaret Thatcher came into a legacy of turbulent and withering times of the Cold War as well as an unquiet socio-economic situation in Great Britain. Competent and firm, as Prime Minister she operated with persistence which was reflected in her oratorical performances.

Thatcher had already been a leader of the opposition, when she delivered the speech „Britain awake" in 1976. Thatcher played on the citizenry's sense of peril on the Russians side. She castigated the USSR for imperialistic inclinations. Firstly, the speaker rebutted the allegations of her opponents („Perhaps some people in the Labour Party think we are on the same side as the Russians!") to make a further indirect comparison of the USSR to Nazi Germany, especially to the course of economic measures undertaken in the years preceding the WWII invasion („They [Russia] put guns before butter, while we put just about everything before guns"). Secondly, Thatcher highlighted the urgent necessity for Britain to take steps in the process of maintaining world peace. However, she stressed the role of the Conservatives as those who possessed the requisite knowledge of how to manage political matters which consequently achieved two objectives: the harsh reprimand of the ruling party and

the Conservatives' consciousness of fiery social issues („We in the Conservative Party are determined that Britain should fulfill that role (…). (…) the longer Labour remains in Government, the more vulnerable this country will be"). Additionally, Thatcher announced her stance somehow warning the British about the actions she was devoted to initiate („(…) the Conservative Party has the vital task of shaking the British public out of a long sleep"). Furthermore, the title of the speech is quite significant and expressive, for it denominates Labour's inertia towards cases of great concern simultaneously emphasizing a need for dynamic political alternation associated with the Conservatives [speeches and citations are found on http://www.margaretthatcher.org/].

„The lady's not for turning" speech concerned the course of the Conservatives with regard to a stereotype which was employed by Thatcher. In terms of social and economic conditions, Prime Minister struggled with criticism, therefore she engaged in sustaining her political stance by a particular expression: „To those waiting with bated breath for that favourite media catchphrase, the 'U'turn, I have only one thing to say. 'You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning'". The statement is rhetorically valuable in reference to its ideological overtone. Predominantly, this declaration operates in a stereotype. Firstly, Thatcher responded to her opponents claiming that a sudden change of policy by the government was totally unlikely. However, the elucidation made use of a stereotype based on attributes commonly ascribed to the relation man-woman, binary opposition of firmness-weakness. Thatcher's political conduct might be associated with actions comprehended as typical of man: decisive, strong-minded, unquestionable. These qualities as characteristic of male provenience are evidently stereotypical; however, Thatcher while defending her governmental strategy quite intentionally alluded to a stereotype. Prime Minister stated that „the lady's not for turning" evoking dignity, womanly sensitiveness and pride: ladies could not be treated objectively. This oratorically driven utterance claimed that any interferences with her political attitudes were doomed to be considered not only reasonless, but also they would essentially be viewed as a flagrant transgression of rudimentary

manners [speeches and citations are found on http://www.margaret-thatcher.org/].

David Cameron is the current leader of the Conservatives, elected in 2005. In his opening speech as the Leader of the Opposition, Cameron provided a summary of the Conservative politics he strove to implement. Entitling his speech „A voice for hope, for optimism and for change", Cameron defined the rhetorical situation according to which the country was immersed in inertia and the rebuilding of the current state of affairs seemed to merely be a commonsense resolution. Thus, rational solutions were ascribed to the Conservatives and their leader who perceive a „(…) need to change the way we feel", „(…) need to change the way we think", „need to look at the problems of international terrorism (…)".Cameron alluded that the government undervalued the gravity of social issues. This neglect resulted in the criticism of Labour voiced by Cameron: „I don't believe that Labour can meet these challenges, they are yesterday's men, with yesterday's measures". The phrase conveyed a subliminal message of obsolescence of politicians who were no longer needed and had to be replaced. The speech was finished with a quasi-apostrophe: „If you want me and all of us to be a voice for hope, for optimism and for change, come and join us. In this modern, compassionate Conservative Party, everyone is invited". However, it contained an oxymoron which evoked a certain feeling of paradox. Modernity and conservatism are not notions that go together in a collocation sense. Logically, the phrase was contradictory; yet, it remained comprehensible [speeches and citations are found on http://www.davidcameronmp.com/]

Cameron's objective was to aggregate an image of a competent leader who could prove himself as Prime Minister. „Providing an exciting, competent and credible alternative „and „It's time for change" were speeches which evoked a sense of fatigue with the politics of Labour and the budding experience of political novelty represented by the Conservatives. Declaring that „(…) we [the Conservatives] have become the powerful new voice for change, optimism and hope in our country", Cameron displayed himself as a speaker who consciously undertook this course of politics. The usage of his key

„change" was striking. Cameron claimed that „(…) changes we have to make must go faster, wider and deeper". Consequently, the leader expressed his preparedness to put forward allegedly revolutionary political plans and bring them into completion. However, Cameron's speeches emphasizing change and responsibility were deprived of content-related resolutions. The leader touched upon the surface of political proposals. Cameron was „ready with a message that (…) inspires every person in this country - a message of change, optimism and hope". Cameron verbally assured the citizenry of his advanced arrangements without providing a substantial core of putting the plans into practice. Thus, Cameron's elucidations remained purely academic, for they constituted merely a communicative alternative devoid of realistic overtone [speeches and citations are found on http://www.davidcameronmp.com/].

Notwithstanding the fact that Churchill, Thatcher and Cameron all belonged or belong to the Conservative Party, their contribution to the advancement of British politics is disproportionate. Churchill is perceived as a political genius who shepherded the United Kingdom through the grueling times of the Second World War. Thatcher was a politician who elevated British politics introducing necessary, however unpopular, reforms. Cameron's rhetorical expressions are examined solely at level of a political opponent; thus, his performances cannot fully depict his leadership capabilities in comparison to those of the Prime Minister. But he will have the chance to prove himself now as the newly-elected leader of the British government.

5. Conclusions

Examining metaphor is a laborious process encompassing effort on numerous planes of communication and comprises the capability of the speaker-decoder who strives to convert their thoughts into a meaningful persuasive discourse. Of utmost significance is the author's interpretation of the links occurring between the agents of communicative acts through the analysis of the employment of

deliberate expressions which pursue their rhetorical objectives. The purpose of the oratorical performance is the speaker's sole ambition. The assortment of metaphors is dependent on the speaker's social role (*i.e.* leader, innovator, oppositionist). The speaker is obliged to have specialized knowledge of the accessibility of particular metaphors by their audience and the current ideology followed by potential supporters. The analysis showed that the more accurate metaphors are in terms of socio-cultural circumstances, the more effectively they are acquired. Additionally, the speaker's genuine motives may be revealed by the Critical Metaphor Analysis, however not entirely, for humans possess a certain dose of spontaneity and indefiniteness. For this reason, a credible representation of the speaker would be perceived from a perspective of time.

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