Cognitive Linguistics Meets Language Ideologies: Should liberals use conservatives’ metaphors?

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The fate of the world may depend on the metaphors we use!
Liberals should talk like Conservatives

Liberals should use the same rhetorical strategies that Conservatives use:

• Reframe issues in terms of new metaphors.
• If the metaphors don’t exist, invent them!
Conceptual Metaphor Theory

\[ X_f = \frac{\left( \sum_{i=1}^{n_f} w_{if} c_{xif} X_{if} \right)}{\left( \sum_{i=1}^{n_f} w_{if} c_{xif} \right)} + b_f \]

- **time**
  - long vacation
  - short concert
  - approaching deadline

- **ideas**
  - rising expectations
  - middle class
  - low price

- **math**
  - large sum
  - small divisor
  - narrow distribution

(Clark, 1973; Gruber, 1965; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Talmy, 1988)
But do we *think* in Conceptual Metaphors?

CMT: People talk in metaphors, therefore they think metaphorically.

Skeptic: They may talk metaphorically, but how do you know they really *think* metaphorically?

CMT: Just listen to the way they talk!
Experimental evidence for CMT

LONG TIME = LONG DISTANCE

HIGH PITCH = HIGH LOCATION

SIMILARITY = PROXIMITY

GOOD = UP, BAD = DOWN

(Casasanto, In Press; Casasanto & Boroditsky, 2003; Casasanto & Lozano, 2006)
But, wait…

*Maybe* Liberals should talk like Conservatives

…but only if what works for Conservatives will also work for Liberals.
Our Plan

1. A closer look at this proposal
   - What does Lakoff suggest Liberals do?
   - Will these suggestions work?

2. Conceptual Metaphor & Language Ideologies
   - Are all metaphors created equal?
   - Do Liberals and Conservatives expect people to talk differently?
   - Do different metaphors have different social meaning?
Rhetorical Strategies

Votes
Reframing Taxes

Conservatives’ Metaphor:

“Tax relief” activates $\text{TAX} = \text{AFFLICTION}$

Liberals’ New Metaphor:

“Country Club dues” activates $\text{TAX} = \text{MEMBERSHIP FEE}$

(Lakoff, 2004)
Renaming Tort Reform

Conservatives: Tort Law needs “reform”
Liberals: Tort Law protects us

Conservatives: Tort Law
Liberals: Public Protection Law

Conservatives: Trial Lawyer
Liberals: Public Protection Attorney

Conservatives: Frivolous lawsuits
Liberals: Protection from corporate negligence

(Lakoff, 2004)
Shades of Newspeak?

**Liberals**
Tort is Public Protection Law
Taxes are Country Club Dues

**Conservatives**
Clear Skies Initiative
Operation Iraqi Freedom

**Orwell’s ‘Ingsoc’**
War is Peace
Freedom is Slavery
Ignorance is Strength
Shades of Newspeak?

Liberals’ objection:

“Those conservatives are bad people; they are using Orwellian language. They are saying the opposite of what they mean. They are deceivers. Bad. Bad.”

(Lakoff, 2004. Pg. 22)
Shades of Newspeak?

FAQ

The notion of reframing sounds manipulative. How is framing different from spin or propaganda?

(Lakoff, 2004, pg. 100)
Rhetorical Strategies

Votes
Rhetorical Strategies

Identity

Votes
Identity & Voting

“People do not necessarily vote in their self-interest. They vote their identity. They vote for who they identify with.”

(Lakoff, 2004, pg. 19)
Identify and win!

Bush to a room full of Southern Baptist clergy:

“How do I speak to the soul of the nation?”

Bush to his speechwriter:

“I want you to hear this…”
Identify and win!
Identify and win!

Kerry on Bush’s 2004 Republican Convention Speech:

“All hat, no cattle.”
Mis-identify and lose!

John Kerry

All Hat No Cattle
Rhetorical Strategies

Identity

Votes
Rhetorical Strategies as Sociolinguistic Resources

• Rhetorical strategies like renaming / reframing with new conceptual metaphors have social meaning.

• People have language ideologies about them!

• These rhetorical strategies may be linked to a Conservative identity.
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Not just buzzwords...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Naming for Framing</th>
<th>Ordinary Metaphors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loaded</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Ubiquitous</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Two ordinary metaphors

BAD STUFF

DARK

DOWN
How do Conservatives and Liberals use ordinary metaphors?

DARK

LOW

BAD STUFF
Bush’s metaphors

…the only way to defeat the terrorists is to defeat their dark vision of hatred and fear…
(President Discusses Progress in War on Terror to National Guard, Feb. 9, 2006)

…one day this untamed fire of freedom will reach the darkest corners of our world.
(President Bush's second inaugural address, Jan. 21, 2005)

You [veterans] were there for dark times...
(President Bush's speech to the American Legion National Convention, Aug. 31, 2006)
Kerry’s metaphors

…the credibility of this administration is so low, that they have great difficulty…
(Interview with Larry King, July 8, 2004)

…from that moment on, it's been downhill with North Korea.

…this administration has let them down…
(Transcript of John Kerry Responding to Attacks on his Remarks)
How ‘metaphorical’ are these metaphors?

a dark time

a low point
Experiment 1
Which is more metaphorical?

Question 1

A. There’s a dark side to entering politics.
B. There’s a down side to entering politics.

Which statement seems more metaphorical (A or B)? __________
Which statement makes entering politics sound worse (A or B)? __________

Question 2

A. It was a dark time in our country’s history.
B. It was a low point in our country’s history.

Which statement seems more metaphorical (A or B)? __________
Which historical era sounds worse (A or B)? __________
Not all metaphors are created equal.
Experiment 2
Do Liberals and Conservatives expect different metaphors?

We all want to make a difference, but there's a **down side** to entering politics.

Or

We all want to make a difference, but there's a **dark side** to entering politics.

The Great Depression was a **dark time** in America's history.

Or

The Great Depression was a **low point** in America's history.
Politics affects metaphor attribution

![Graph showing the impact of political orientation on metaphor attribution.](image-url)
We all want to make a difference, but there’s a **down side** to entering politics.

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We all want to make a difference, but there's a **dark side** to entering politics.

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The Great Depression was a **dark time** in America’s history.

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The Great Depression was a **low point** in America's history.
Some metaphors are more conservative than others

Interaction of Metaphor X Political Orientation ($F(2,62)=3.34$, $p=0.04$)
Summary

• DARK is BAD metaphors are more “metaphor-y” than DOWN is BAD metaphors.

• Conservatives expect people to use DARK is BAD metaphors more, but Liberals expect people to use DOWN is BAD metaphors more.

• Everybody thinks DARK is BAD metaphors are more conservative than DOWN is BAD metaphors.

More “metaphor-y” metaphors are both expected by conservatives and attributed to conservatives.

Different types of metaphors have different social meaning!
How can Liberals communicate their message?

1. Choose rhetorical strategies that are consistent with a liberal identity.
   - Avoid alienating other liberals.

2. Avoid rhetorical strategies that they can’t use authentically.
   - Avoid alienating conservatives.
How can we help?

Cognitive Linguistics tells us that how we talk about issues affects how people think about them.

Sociolinguistics tells us that how we talk about issues affects how people think about us!
JOHN KERRY
ALL HAT NO CATTLE
Thanks!

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