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# CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN TONY BLAIR'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE (1998–2006)

### **Anotacija**

Straipsnyje siekiama aprašyti kalbines metaforas ir rekonstruoti konceptualiąsias metaforas, kurios lėmė tų kalbinių metaforų atsiradimą Tonio Blero politiniame diskurse. Politinis diskursas – diskurso analizės objektas, nagrinėjantis politines kalbas ir ypatingą dėmesį skiriantis kontekstiniais veiksniams. Politinio diskurso tyrinėjimai – viena iš prioritetinių šiuolaikinės lingvistikos kryptių, siejanti skirtingų humanitarinių mokslų – logikos, filosofijos, politinės psichologijos bei sociologijos – duomenis.

Šis tyrimas pristato bei analizuoja konceptualiųjų metaforų bei metaforinių posakių nustatymą T. Blero politiniuose tekstuose. Dauguma metaforinių posakių sudaro tam tikrą sistemą, kurią galima paaiškinti per ryšius su konceptualiosiomis metaforomis – kognityvinėmis struktūromis, egzistuojančiomis pasąmonėje, lemiančiomis pasaulio interpretaciją ir atsiskleidžiančiomis per kalbinę metaforiką.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: kognityvinė lingvistika, politinis diskursas, konfliktinė komunikacija, konceptualiosios metaforos.

### **Abstract**

This article is aimed to describe linguistic metaphors and to reconstruct the conceptual metaphors which determine the origin of these linguistic metaphors in Tony Blair's political discourse. Political discourse is an object of discourse analysis, which studies political language with special consideration of its contextual factors. Research into political dis-

course is an accelerating trend of modern linguistics that includes the findings of different branches of the humanities such as logic, philosophy, political psychology, sociology, etc. This study presents and examines conceptual metaphors and the identification of metaphorical expressions in Blair's political texts. The majority of metaphorical expressions forms a particular system, which can be explained through their relations to conceptual metaphors – cognitive structures, existing in the sub-conscious, that determine the interpretation of the world and unfold through linguistic metaphors.

KEY WORDS: cognitive linguistics, political discourse, conflict communication, conceptual metaphors.

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Political discourse is an object of discourse analysis, which studies political language with special consideration of its contextual factors; political linguistics is treated as a new, institutionalized subject of cognitive linguistics. Conflict communication in political discourse may be perceived as the main research object of political linguistics, because the attack and winning of governmental positions occur in the context of the conflict of various political forces. That conflict is expressed through discourse.

The object of this study is conceptual metaphors in Blair's political discourse in the period of 1998–2006. This article aims to investigate how Blair's political discourse is conceptualized via WAR, JOURNEY and BUILDING metaphors, and what rhetorical implications arise therefrom. The objective of this research is to describe linguistic metaphors and to reconstruct the conceptual metaphors which determine the origin of these linguistic metaphors in the discourse of Blair. The data are 11 randomly selected speeches and interviews delivered in the period of 1998–2006 by the former prime minister of Great Britain Tony Blair. Descriptive-analytical method is applied in Blair's political discourse research. This research is particularly relevant because it investigates aspects of political life in Great Britain and discloses the state of its political culture.

“The language of politics is not a neutral medium that conveys ideas independently formed; it is an institutionalized structure of meanings that channels political thought and action in certain directions” (Connolly 1993, 1). The definition of political language conveys the idea that politicians use particular words or utterances not only to express their ideas and opinions but also to achieve some specific intentions and goals. Many scholars equate the terms of political language with political discourse in their works. The identification of the metaphorical expressions

prevailing in political texts has become one of the main research trends in political discourse. The majority of metaphorical expressions forms a particular system, which can be explained through their relations to conceptual metaphors – cognitive structures, existing in the sub-conscious, that determine the interpretation of the world and unfold through linguistic metaphors.

The idea of conceptual metaphors was first introduced and investigated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). These scholars point out that “the concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people” (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, 103).

Anatolij Chudinov (2001) points out that metaphorical models are very significant in political discourse analysis because they reflect national, social, and personal consciousness, as well as the evaluation and conceptualization of various fragments of reality with the help of scenarios, frames and slots.

The identification of conceptual metaphors is beneficial in political discourse analysis because conceptual metaphors are short formulas expressing the world-view of a political text subject in brief, or presenting the world-view model that he/she wants to insert into the consciousness of the addressees. Different interpretations of the same event are determined by different conceptual metaphors which condition the whole world-view system (ideology) – the whole value system. Moreover, conceptual metaphors include personal experience and “define our linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour” (Lassan 1995, 45).

There are two main political subjects – the Labour Party and the Conservatives – in Blair's political discourse. All positive features are attributed to the Labour Party, whereas the Conservative Party, their political opponents, are defined as a negative power with an outdated, rigid ideology that performs detrimental actions. Therefore, it is possible to identify conceptual metaphors which determine corresponding linguistic metaphors.

Clearly, in Blair's political discourse there is a dominant POLITICS IS WAR conceptual metaphor. It may be analysed in a *war* frame. It is obvious that this metaphor is generally expressed through the opposition

*WE–THEY*, where *WE*, the Labour Party, fight against *THEM*, the Conservatives, and *WE* always win this fight:

(1) *To be the progressive force that defeats the forces of conservatism.*

*For the 21st century will not be about the battle between capitalism and socialism but between the forces of progress and the forces of conservatism.* (1999)

(2) *Let us take on the forces of conservatism in education [...].* (1999)

(3) *[...] and now having defeated the force of conservatism in granting devolution, let us continue to defeat the separatism which is just the forces of conservatism by another name.* (1999)

The *force* characteristic expresses negative connotations related to war and battles. As a result, the Conservatives are introduced as negative forces which have to be defeated. Such an idea is implied in statement (1). Blair also calls the party under his leadership “forces,” but he eliminates all the negative connotations associated with this word by adding the notion of *progressive force*. The opposition between the progressive forces and the forces of conservatism, between *WE* and *THEY*, is very beneficial for the Labour Party as it depicts the party as one which has saved the British state through its fight against the Conservative forces which are introduced as enemies.

War is always associated with battles, so the conceptual metaphor *POLITICS IS WAR*, analysed on the basis of Blair’s political discourse, includes the *battle* concept, where the winning side is the Labour Party and the losing, or rather, defeated side is the Conservative Party:

(4) *Today we stand here, more confident than at any time during our 100 years, more confident because we are winning the battle of ideas; we are putting our values into practice [...].* (1999)

Blair reinforces the *battle* idea by employing the verb *fight* and the collocation *forces of modernity and justice*, which complement the already positive image of the Labour Party and its leader. Furthermore, it makes this image even more attractive to the electorate, strengthening its support for the party:

(5) *On our side, the forces of modernity and justice. Those who believe in a Britain for all the people. Those who fight social injustice, because they know it harms our nation.* (1999)

Even the political scene and the period of Labour leadership are associated with *war*:

(6) *The battleground, the new Millennium*. (1999).

In this case the country of Great Britain is identified as a *battleground*, wherein the two parties compete against each other. The members of the Labour Party introduce themselves as fighting for changes, for *the new Millennium* which will be beneficial to society. The Conservatives are perceived as fighting for their own welfare.

When characterizing *THEM*, the Conservatives, Blair presents particular actions which he and his party will take in the fight against their opponents. Therefore, in the latter context, this politician may be perceived as an active action subject.

The *fight* concept is not only employed in order to show that the Conservatives are enemies, but it is also used to emphasize all the positive and beneficial changes that have been initiated by the Labour Party:

(7) *There they are: ten pointers to what a third term Labour Government would do for Britain's hard-working families. Don't tell me that's not worth fighting for*. (2005)

(8) *And now we stand, in a position no Labour Party ever dared to dream of standing before, with a third term Labour Government beckoning. With the values for today and the ideas for tomorrow, and a policy programme that will change the country for better and for good. [...] With the courage of our convictions, we can win the third term, deliver the lasting change. It is worth the fight*. (2005)

In examples (7) and (8), the Prime Minister emphasizes the significance and complexity of the already introduced war with the help of two very similar phrases: *Don't tell me that's not worth fighting for* and *it is worth the fight*. Clearly, in this context *fight* acquires positive connotations.

*War* in Blair's speeches is related not only to the *fight* against the Conservatives, not only to a political attack, but also to the liberation of the nation and its citizens:

(9) *A new Britain where the extraordinary talent of the British people is liberated from the forces of conservatism that so long have held them back [...]*. (1999)

(10) *To liberate Britain from the old class divisions, old structures, old prejudices, old ways of working and of doing things, that will not do in this world of change.* (1999)

(11) *And this will be a progressive future as long as we remember that the reason for our struggle against injustice has always been to liberate the individual.* (2005)

In the examples presented above, the Labour Party is introduced as rescuers of the nation *from the forces of conservatism*, as liberators from *the old class divisions* and all obsolete things which do not correspond to the new state being created on the basis of the Labour changes. The liberation idea is based on the verb *to liberate*, which attributes all positive features to the party-rescuer and evokes positive connotations. Therefore, it also expresses negative connotations of the party-opponent and reveals the open conflict between the concepts of *WE* and *THEY*. The conflict idea is also expressed by the noun *struggle* (see example (11)) which reflects the characteristics of a tough war requiring tremendous power and thus, with the help of the possessive pronoun *our*, grants the Labour Party more merits.

In a speech delivered in 2000, Blair attributes the *saviour* characteristic to the Conservatives. However, in the speech context it acquires only negative connotations because it is related to the opponents' self-interest:

(12) *[...] how could a healthy body politic defend the political privileges of hereditary peers [...].* (2000)

Although example (12) does not directly indicate who defends the privileges of peers, every British citizen, or any person interested in the British political situation, can be sure that this abstract presentation of the politician advocating such privileges is meant to implicate the Conservative Party.

Another conceptual metaphor that prevails in Blair's political discourse is *POLITICS IS A JOURNEY*. According to Jurga Cibulskienė (2005), the two major parties in the UK (Labour and the Conservatives) conceptualize social life and politics with the help of *journey* lexis. Systematic metaphorical expressions presuppose the usage of the *POLITICS IS A JOURNEY* metaphor in the political and social life of Great Britain.

The linguistic metaphors determined by the conceptual metaphor reveal the idea that the path of Labour leads forward, towards changes and progress, while the Conservatives either put obstacles in the path or, worse, attempting to change its direction, to turn it back.

The conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS A JOURNEY and its forward direction are evident in the following statements:

(13) *I can go one way. I've not got a reverse gear.* (2003)

(14) *This is our challenge. To stride forward where we have always previously stumble.* (2003)

(15) *The British people aren't a people on the way down.* (2005)

Example (13) illustrates that Blair talks only about himself, introduces himself as an active action subject and characterizes himself as a strong-minded person. In this case it is possible to observe a meaning relation with the *strength* concept, because a strong-minded person does not renounce his attitude and cannot be stopped by any difficulties. The next example, with the help of the pronoun *we*, attributes the metaphor of moving forward to all the members of the Labour Party. The complexity of this motion is introduced through the noun *challenge*, which is also related to the already mentioned pronoun, revealing the fact that the situation requires tremendous effort. However, the members of the Labour Party are able to tackle the *challenge*. In the last statement the direction of movement is changed – instead of a way forward, the implication of a way up is evident. This expresses and complements the positive nature of such a *journey*.

The way forward or up is inseparable from the way leading to various Labour achievements, and presents the representatives of the latter party as the first people to have chosen such a way:

(16) *Standing up for Britain means [...] moving Europe closer to the USA [...].* (2000)

(17) *We've never been here before. We've never come this far.* (2003)

The positive nature of the Labour actions is presented through an indication of the distance of the way: *We've never come this far*. This expresses the first Labour term through one hundred years and predicts a second term of office. These words express the positive connotation of the *journey*, revealing the idea that the way chosen by the Labour Party seems proper and attractive to the electorate. Moreover, these words, which indicate that particular actions have been completed, enable the target audience to perceive Blair as an active action subject. Example (16) introduces one of the aims of this forward *journey*: to move Europe closer

to the USA, which in the broad context of politics is perceived as the leader of the world. This once again supports the positive connotation of the way forward metaphor.

In the context of conflict communication with the Conservatives, the conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS A JOURNEY determines linguistic metaphors which enable Blair to treat his opponents as obstacles in the path of progress:

(18) [...] *where the closed doors of snobbery and prejudice, ignorance and poverty, fear and injustice no longer bar our way to fulfillment.* (1999)

(19) *Britain has the potential to be the bridge between Europe and America and for the 21<sup>st</sup> century the narrow-minded isolationism of right-wing Tories should not block our path to fulfilling it.* (1999)

(20) *At every age, at every stage, education is the surest guarantee of a fair future. At every age and every stage we are breaking down the barriers that hold people back.* (2003)

(21) *So Mr Howard's policies aren't going anywhere.* (2005)

Only in examples (19) and (21) are the exact opponents *right-wing Tories* and their representative Mr. Howard indicated, where they are treated as obstacles in the way that leads to the future. In the other examples the opponents are implicated with the help of the following phrases: *the closed doors of snobbery and prejudice, ignorance, etc.; the barriers that hold people back*. The negative connotations of the *journey* are evoked by the verbs attributed to the opponents: *bar, block, hold, aren't going* and the noun *barriers*. On the other hand, the positive direction of Labour's *way to fulfillment* is contrasted with the negative actions of the Conservatives. In this context, *fulfillment* is related to positive Labour changes and reforms. Therefore, the oppositions expressed through linguistic metaphors create a positive image of the governing party and, conversely, a negative image of the opposition party.

Looking back on Blair's political discourse, it is evident that he perceives his country as a building; it is thus possible to analyse one more conceptual metaphor, THE STATE IS A BUILDING. All construction of any kind of building starts from laying foundations. As a result, the Prime Minister associates his politics regarding the state with strong foundations:

(22) *I do say the foundations of a New Britain are being laid.* (1999)

(23) *We laid foundations.* (2003)



Example (22) contains the implication that the Labour Party is laying the foundations of a New Britain, because the concept of New Britain belongs to the political Labour discourse and it is related to their actions and governing. As 1997 is the start of the Labour governing period, the Present Continuous tense is used in the phrase *foundations are being laid*. The year 2003 marks the result complemented by the pronoun *we*: *We laid foundations*. These words should only evoke positive connotations because they implicate the idea that the state was weak until the Labourists came to power, because it did not have any foundations. As a result the foundation of the country is a merit of the Labour Party. This implication is supported by the following words, which directly express the idea and reveal the open conflict situation between the two competing parties:

(24) *David Cameron's Tories? [...] They haven't even laid the foundation stone.* (2006)

Linguistic expressions of conceptual metaphors formed on the basis of Blair's political discourse are used not only to compete with the Conservatives and to form a negative image of them, but they also add extra positive features to the image of the Labour Party.

The conceptual metaphor analysis of Blair's conflict communication allows the following conclusions to be drawn:

1. The conceptual metaphors POLITICS IS WAR, POLITICS IS A JOURNEY and THE STATE IS A BUILDING prevail in Blair's political discourse.

2. In the speeches delivered by this politician, the conceptual metaphors generally typical of political discourse are realized. It is possible to observe that a conceptual metaphor has an evaluative potential – the evaluations expressed through linguistic metaphors and belonging to the same conceptual metaphor may differ and acquire both positive and negative connotations.

3. In Blair's political discourse, the opposition *WE–THEY* is actualized through metaphors. Through the metaphor POLITICS IS WAR Blair presents himself and the Labour Party as the protectors and liberators of the state and its citizens, while the opponents are presented as enemies. Through the metaphor THE STATE IS A BUILDING, the idea that the members of the Labour Party have laid and strengthened the foundations of the state while the Conservatives did nothing is expressed. The concep-

tual metaphor POLITICS IS A JOURNEY allows Blair to use linguistic metaphors with positive and negative evaluations. Therefore, the Labour way forward is evaluated positively and the opponents are treated as obstacles slowing progress along the way.

4. Conceptual metaphors, which are the basis for text creation, allow Blair to attribute the features of a good leader to his own personality through linguistic metaphors. His opponents are saddled with bad, stuck-in-the-middle and even dangerous characteristics.

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## Vilma Linkevičiūtė

### KONCEPTUALIOSIOS METAFOROS TONIO BLERO POLITINIAME DISKURSE (1998–2006)

#### Santrauka

Politinis diskursas – diskurso analizės objektas, nagrinėjantis politines kalbas. Jis yra politinės lingvistikos, kuri laikoma nauja, institalizuota kognityvinės lingvistikos disciplina, objektas. Šios disciplinos tyrimo objektu galima laikyti konfliktinę komunikaciją politiniame disкурse, kadangi valdžios puolimas ir laimėjimas vyksta per įvairių politinių jėgų konfliktą, išreiškiamą diskursu.

Šio straipsnio tyrimo objektas – konceptualiosios metaforos Tonio Blero politiniame disкурse (1998–2006). Straipsnyje siekiama ištirti, kaip T. Blero politinis diskursas konceptualizuojamas per KARO, KELIONĖS ir PASTATO metaforas bei kokios iš to kyla retorinės implikacijos. Tyrimo

uždavinys – aprašyti kalbines metaforas ir rekonstruoti konceptualiąsias metaforas, kurios lėmė tų kalbinių metaforų atsiradimą T. Blero politiniame diskurse. Tyrimo medžiaga yra 11 atsitiktinai parinktų buvusio Didžiosios Britanijos Ministro Pirmininko Tonio Blero kalbų. Aprašomas analitinis metodas taikomas Didžiosios Britanijos vadovo politinio diskurso tyrime. Šį tyrimą galima laikyti aktualiu, nes jame analizuojami politinio gyvenimo aspektai apima visą politinį gyvenimą bei parodo politinės kultūros būklę.

Dažnai politiniame tekste yra sąmoningai vartojamos metaforos, siekiant sudaryti tam tikrą retorinį efektą. Metaforos vartojamos kaip viena iš netiesioginės komunikacijos priemonių, padedanti politikams siekti tikslų.

Dauguma metaforinių posakių sudaro tam tikrą sistemą, kurią galima paaiškinti per ryšius su konceptualiosiomis metaforomis – kognityvinėmis struktūromis, egzistuojančiomis pasąmonėje, lemiančiomis pasaulio interpretaciją ir atsiskleidžiančiomis per kalbinę metaforiką.

Galima teigti, kad konceptualiųjų metaforų išskyrimas yra naudingas politinėje diskurso analizėje, nes konceptualiosios metaforos yra trumpos formulės, kompaktiškai išreiškiančios politinio teksto subjekto pasaulėvaizdį arba tokį pasaulėvaizdžio modelį, kurį jis nori įtraukti į adresatų sąmonę. Skirtingas to paties įvykio interpretacijas lemia skirtingos konceptualiosios metaforos, kurios turi įtakos visai pasaulėžiūros sistemai (ideologijai) – vertybių sistemai. Be to, konceptualiosios metaforos apima mūsų patirtį ir „apibrėžia mūsų lingvistinį ir nelingvistinį elgesį“ (Lassan 1995, 45).

T. Blero politiniame diskurse yra du pagrindiniai politiniai subjektai – leiboristai ir konservatoriai. Leiboristų partijai priskiriami visi teigiami bruožai, o oponentai – Konservatorių partija – apibūdinami kaip neigiama jėga, turinti pasenusią, nekintančią ideologiją bei atliekanti žalingus veiksmus.

Šiame tyrime visi domenai yra organizuojami opozicijos *MES–JIE* pagrindu. T. Blero politiniame diskurse ši opozicija išreiškiama per konceptualiųjų metaforų kalbinę realizaciją, kurioje *MES* pristato Leiboristų, o *JIE* – Konservatorių partijas.

Šio vadovo politiniame diskurse dominuoja tokios konceptualiosios metaforos: *VALSTYBĖ – TAI PASTATAS*, *POLITIKA – TAI KELIONĖ* ir *POLITIKA – TAI KARAS*, apskritai būdingos politiniam diskursui.

T. Blero politinio diskurso pagrindu analizuojama konceptualioji metafora POLITIKA – TAI KARAS apima *kovos* sąvoką, kuri išreiškia idėją, jog laiminčioji pusė – Leiboristų partija, o pralaiminčioji, iš esmės nugalėtoji pusė – Konservatorių partija. *Kovos* sąvoka vartojama ne vien tik norint parodyti, jog konservatoriai – priešai, bet ir norint akcentuoti visus teigiamus bei naudingus Leiboristų partijos pradėtus pokyčius.

Metaforos POLITIKA – TAI KELIONĖ nulemtos kalbinės metaforos atskleidžia idėją, jog leiboristų kelias veda į priekį, į pokyčius bei progresą, o konservatoriai yra tik šiame kelyje pasitaikančios kliūtys, kurios stengiasi pakeisti kelio kryptį, pasukti ją atgal.

VALSTYBĖ – TAI PASTATAS konceptualioji metafora, išreikšta per kalbines metaforas, leidžia suvokti, jog šis politikas sieja savo vykdomą valstybės politiką su tvirtais pamatais, o oponentus įvardija kaip visiškai neprisidėjusius prie šios statybos proceso.