



Thesis URL

'I will' vs. 'Yes, we can'

A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL SPEECHES OF GEORGE W. BUSH AND BARACK OBAMA DURING THEIR ELECTION PERIODS, WITH EMPHASIS ON THEIR CHOICE OF METAPHOR

<https://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/11083/thesis.pdf>



THEME: METAPHOR AND COMMUNICATION

Does the use of metaphor to change attitudes and opinions correlate with the conventionality/creativity of the chosen metaphors?

Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Charteris-Black's (2014) framework for metaphor analysis, this thesis focuses on the use of conceptual metaphors as cognitive tools for persuasion in political communication. According to findings from Bush's and Obama's speeches, conventional metaphors have been used much more often than novel metaphors for persuasive purposes.



1 BACKGROUND

The language used by Bush and Obama to shape their speeches combines an array of rhetorical devices and manages to convey the right message that convinces their voters that they should be elected, not only once, but twice. Given the cognitive and affective appeal of metaphors, I argue that the rhetorical effect of the metaphors employed by Bush and Obama combined with specific linguistic features has contributed to the politicians' persuasiveness.

2 HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Hypothesis: Bush's and Obama's speeches will display distinctive metaphors and rhetorical devices, since they represent the ideologies of two distinctive parties.

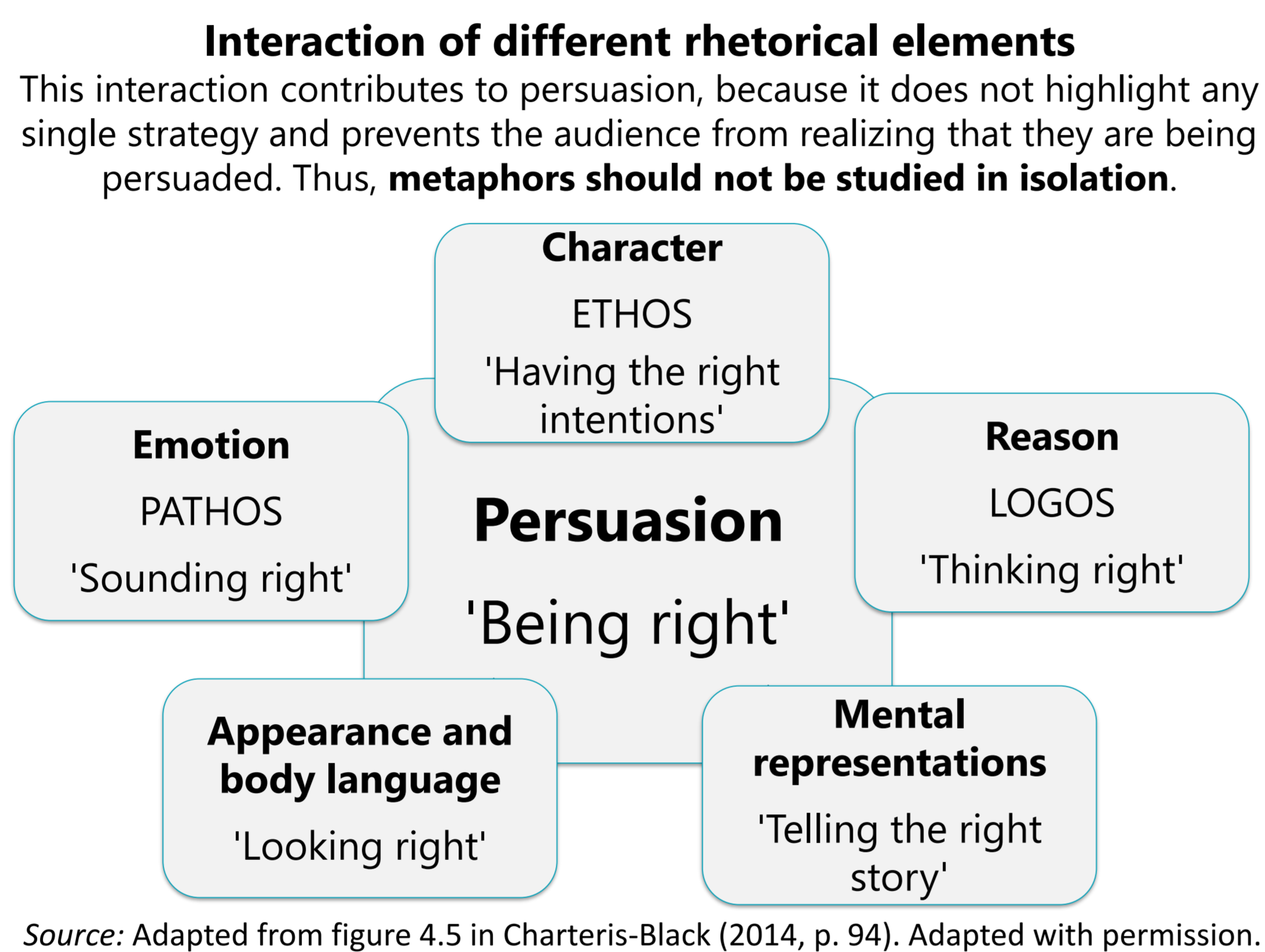
RQ1: Which rhetorical devices and which metaphors are mostly used by Bush and Obama respectively?

RQ2: What images are the politicians trying to evoke by their choice of metaphors? What is probably their intention in evoking these particular images?

RQ3: What is the rhetorical effect of the combination of the chosen metaphors and the other rhetorical devices?

3 METAPHOR: A POWERFUL TOOL FOR CREATING POLITICAL MYTHS

Classical rhetoric	
Speech structure	
Aristotelian disposition: (1) Introduction (prologue), (2) narrative, (3) proof, (4) conclusion (epilogue) and (5) refutation	
Style and delivery	
Style: actual choice of words	Delivery: traits of performance
Figures of speech	
Schemes: a switch in standard word order and/or pattern, e.g. anaphora and antithesis	
Tropes: mainly an unexpected twist in the meaning of words and phrases, e.g. metaphor and metonymy.	



4 METHODOLOGY: METAPHOR ANALYSIS

Speech selection		Speech coding
Criteria		Text annotation
Directly comparable		Coding categories: artistic proofs, tropes, schemes, et al.
Vertessen and Landtscheer claim that "politicians make an extra effort to use metaphorical language at election time (2008, p. 279)		Metaphor identification
'Stump speeches' left out		Phrase approach: Metaphorical linguistic expressions (e.g. She never <i>wins</i> an argument)
First and second term		Metaphor classification
Nomination Speech		SOURCE and TARGET domains (e.g. ARGUMENT IS WAR)
Victory Speech		Metaphor explanation
Inaugural Speech		How and why metaphors were used, and which other rhetorical features have been used by a particular politician in conjunction with specific metaphors
Total: 12 speeches		
Bush	Obama	
14890 words	17860 words	

5 RESULTS:

Source Domain	Quantity	
	Bush	Obama
Personification	256	244
Reification	126	177
JOURNEY and MOTION	98	119
CONFLICT (including WAR)	43	51
UP and DOWN	32	43
CONSTRUCTION/CREATION and DESTRUCTION	30	41
TEXTURE	15	10
HEALTH and ILLNESS	14	7
STRENGTH and WEAKNESS	14	13
FINANCE	14	24
RELIGION and SPIRITUALISM	8	9
SLEEPING	7	14
WEATHER and NATURAL PHENOMENA	6	6
GROW and SHRINK	6	8
LIFE and DEATH	5	9
LIGHT and DARKNESS	4	11
CONTAINER	4	6
FIRE and HEAT	4	
BOOKS and READING	3	
ANIMALS		6
GAMES and SPORTS		5
MISCELLANEOUS	35	80
Sum	724	883
Total of unique references	599	753

Conceptual metaphors used	Politician
AMERICA IS A PERSON	B & O
AMERICA IS SYMPATHETIC	B & O
CHALLENGES ARE ENEMIES	B & O
CONSERVATIVE POLITICS IS STALE FOOD	O
DESIRABLE STATES/THINGS/EVENTS ARE VALUABLE COMMODITIES	B & O
DIVIDES ARE DISEASES	B & O
FUTURE IS A DESTINATION	B & O
MOVEMENT FORWARD IS GOOD	B & O
POLITICS IS A JOURNEY	B & O
POLITICS IS WAR	B & O
PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS TRAVELING ALONG A PATH TOWARD A DESTINATION	B & O
TAXATION IS AN AFFLICTION	B & O
TERROR IS HEAT	B
THREATS ARE VILLAINS	B & O
TIME IS MONEY	B & O

Hypothesis partially confirmed
Both politicians rely, actually, on **familiar source domains** and **similar rhetorical devices**. However, the way Bush and Obama employ their metaphors and combine them with **specific linguistic features** is indeed different and reflects not only the politicians' characteristic **style**, but also the **ideologies** of the parties that they represent.

Being Right	
Bush	Obama
Having the right intentions	
The 'regular guy'	'Living proof of the American Dream'
Van Dijk's ideological square (1) emphasize the good things about <i>us</i> , (2) de-emphasize the bad things about <i>us</i> , (3) emphasize the bad things about <i>them</i> , and (4) de-emphasize the good things about <i>them</i>	
Sounding and looking right	
Bush's 'war on terror' and his metaphors of fear	Obama's hard path to a better future
Thinking right and telling the right story	
Strict Father model	Nurturant Parent model
First term: Need for change	
Second term: Need for continuity	
Bush: 'I will'	Obama: 'Yes, we can'
Rhetorical style went through a significant shift after the attacks of 9/11	Rhetoric shaped by his background and extraordinary personal accomplishments
Political myth: 'honorable liberator' who is willing to make hard decisions to build "a safer world and a more hopeful America"	Political myth: triumphant warrior who has overcome obstacles in his trajectory, and who is ready to lead the country in an arduous journey to a better future, where unalienable rights, such as "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" can be available to every American
A myth marked by a frequent use of "I will...", reflecting Bush's determination in combating terror and tyranny as a personal mission that he would carry "whatever it takes"	A myth well encapsulated in Obama's famous campaign slogan "Yes, we can"

REFERENCES

Charteris-Black, J. (2011). *Politicians and rhetoric: The persuasive power of metaphor* (2nd. ed.). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
 Charteris-Black, J. (2014). *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
 Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (2nd. ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
 Lakoff, G. (2002). *Moral politics: How liberals and conservatives think* (2nd. ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 Lakoff, G. (2014). *The All New Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.
 Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage Publications.
 Vertessen, D. and De Landtsheer, C. (2008). A Metaphorical Election Style: Use of Metaphor at Election Time. In T. Carver and J. Pikalo (Eds.), *Politics, Language and Metaphor* (pp. 271-285). London: Routledge.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Studies on how metaphors are used to frame specific issues for ideological purposes have been closely linked to discourse analysis, and political communication, in particular. However, the general view of metaphors as conceptual tools that allow individuals to focus on specific aspects of one domain to discuss other domains may lead to the conclusion that **metaphors** are, in fact, **inherently ideological**. Thus, I would like to analyze **how metaphors are used to frame a specific topic across different genres, including ideologically inclined texts** (e.g. political discourse) and **texts for non-ideological purposes**, such as informative texts (e.g. encyclopedia entries) and expressive texts (e.g. poems).

CONTACT ME

Aline Alves-Wold

Assistant Professor

T (+47) 48 19 76 29

E aline.alves-wold@uis.no

E aline.alves.wold@gmail.com

University of Stavanger

Norway

