

Metaphors, Cognition, and Action: Conceptual Metaphor Analysis of President Akufo-Addo's Speeches in the COVID-19 Crisis

Authors : Isaac Kwabena Adubofour, Esther Serwaah Afreh

Abstract : Political speeches are structured in ways that ensure that the ideology of the leader is communicated in ways that the opinions of the audience are influenced towards certain lines of action, and in crisis situations like the outbreak of a global pandemic, public opinion and action are influenced through speeches. The foregoing explains the presence of metaphors in presidential speeches. Crises require, among other things, that the thoughts, emotions, and actions of the population are controlled in dealing with the problems at hand. The primary question this study assesses is how the use of metaphors in crisis situations, like the COVID-19 pandemic, influences thought, determines the policies a government adopts, and influences the reactions of the people. The study focused on twenty-four (24) addresses of the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo, on the COVID-19 pandemic and his government's efforts to manage the crisis. The nature and relevance of presidential speeches and the presence of metaphors in such speeches have been investigated. However, there is a paucity of research on the connection between the presence of metaphors in presidential speeches and their influence on thought and action. Especially within the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is pertinent to investigate how the presence of metaphors in presidential addresses influences social thought and action. Thus, the current study sought to investigate the potential for metaphor use to influence thought and action on a national scale during the COVID crisis. The speeches were collected from the website of the presidency. The analysis was done using Metaphor Identification Process by the Pragglejazz Group (2007) with conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) as the theoretical foundation. The findings of the study show that the President's adoption of war metaphors may not have been ideal since it triggered thoughts, policies, and social actions in line with war. For instance, the reference to health workers as heroes, heroines, and frontline workers praised the efforts of these workers over the efforts of the rest of the population, and that may have contributed to the apathy that arose among the citizens in dealing with the pandemic. This prioritization of the frontline workers explains why their taxes were forgiven for a considerable period. The government further absorbed utility bills of citizens during the pandemic. All these financial commitments may not have been advisable for a developing country like Ghana, but the authors argue that the actions may have been influenced by the metaphor that was adopted. Another finding that is explored is the problem of stigmatization in the country during the pandemic and its connection with the war metaphor. This investigation expands the research on metaphors, social thought and action, and crisis communication. Its contribution to metaphor use, thought, and action suggest its potential implication for education and other fields.

Keywords : conceptual metaphor theory, COVID-19, crisis communication, presidential addresses, risk communication

Conference Title : ICCMFL 2022 : International Conference on Conceptual Metaphors and Figurative Language

Conference Location : Oslo, Norway

Conference Dates : June 23-24, 2022