

**NEGATIVE - POSITIVE BALANCE: CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN
SPEECHES OF AMERICAN PRESIDENTS
(“THREAT OVERCOMING” PERSUASIVE STRATEGY)**

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ABSTRACT

The study deals with the cognitive approach to investigation of conceptual metaphors in speeches of American presidents. According to G. Lakoff, conceptual metaphors are cognitive mechanisms that structure the perception of socio-political reality in the minds of population. Conceptual metaphors, used by a particular president, form the scope of key concepts crucial to balancing negative and positive in minds of people. Investigation of these mechanisms within a considerable period of time provided new data for conceptual metaphor role in influencing and changing mindsets of population. The obtained data can be used for further research not only in the USA, but in other countries. The goal of the investigation consists in identifying key conceptual metaphors of “threat to the nation” and “counteracting / overcoming threat” in president’s speeches from R. Reagan to D. Trump. Much attention is paid to the methodology of metaphor identification. Methods, employed in research, are: method of conceptual analysis, method of cognitive modeling of complex conceptual categories; method of mental spaces blending. The research was based on published speeches of American presidents. The result of the study was in finding out how conceptual metaphors of “threat” and “threat counteracting / overcoming” helped each president bring to the minds of people the balance of negative and positive in perception of political, economic, and sociocultural threats.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, socio-political reality, mindset, speeches of presidents, threat, counteracting / overcoming threat

INTRODUCTION

The election campaign of 2016 in the United States gave fresh impetus for conceptual metaphor studies. Before, during and after the campaign George Lakoff stressed the role of conceptual metaphors for shaping the minds of the nation. He highlighted the importance of metaphors and framing in political language, and he proved the role of particular metaphors that indirectly influenced the choices of people voting the way they did [1]. He stated that much of unconscious thought is metaphorical. People speak and think metaphorically every day, most often without even paying attention to thinking and speaking this way. Conventional metaphors demonstrate the presence of *conceptual metaphors* in people’s minds, a mode of metaphorical thought. “Given commonplace experience in the world and given a neural system, thousands of everyday metaphorical thoughts arise spontaneously. It happens around the world, and it mostly goes

unnoticed, carried out by your neural system. *Certain kinds of metaphorical thought, which go largely unnoticed, are central to our politics, as we shall see*" [1]. According to G. Lakoff, conceptual metaphors are cognitive mechanisms that structure the perception of socio-political reality in the minds of population.

This study is devoted to conceptual metaphors in speeches of American presidents. The political rhetoric issue involves a great number of publications. A considerable number of publications were devoted to speeches of American presidents in office in the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI century [2], [3]. However, balancing negative-positive in persuasive strategy in presidential speeches with employment of conceptual metaphors hasn't been much dwelt upon. Our hypothesis is that conceptual metaphors, used by a particular president, form the scope of key concepts crucial to **balancing negative and positive** in minds of people. Investigation of metaphorical cognitive mechanisms within a considerable period of time provided new data for conceptual metaphor role in influencing and changing mindsets of population.

The goal of this article within a larger study of sociocultural threats consists in identifying conceptual metaphors of "threat to the nation" and "counteracting/overcoming threat" in US presidents' speeches from R. Reagan to D. Trump and demonstrating how conceptual metaphors work as persuasive tools in balancing negative and positive in their messages to the nation.

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL THREAT ON WORLDVIEW

In this study we proceed from some data presented by neuroscientists and psychologists on how sociocultural threats impact worldview and patterns of behavior. Threat apprehension and threat overcoming anticipation in social interaction depend on deeply embedded in brain conceptual structures and behavioral patterns. The SCARF model [4] is a summary of important discoveries from neuroscience about the way people interact socially. The model is built on three central ideas:

1. The brain treats many social threats and rewards with the same intensity as physical threats and rewards.
2. The capacity to make decisions, solve problems and collaborate with others is generally reduced by a threat response and increased under a reward response.
3. The threat response is more intense and more common and often needs to be carefully minimized in social interactions.

The SCARF model involves five domains of human social experience: **Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness**. Status is about relative importance to others. Certainty concerns being able to predict the future. Autonomy provides a sense of control over events. Relatedness is a sense of safety with others - of friend rather than foe. Fairness is a perception of fair exchanges between people.

These five domains activate either the 'primary reward' or 'primary threat' circuitry (and associated networks) of the brain. For example, a perceived threat to one's status activates similar brain networks to a threat to one's life. In the same way, a perceived increase in fairness activates the same reward circuitry as receiving a monetary reward [4].

Presidential speeches are apprehended by the public as discourse representing at some points current and past risks and dangers, alarm factors, expected or remaining crisis

situations, catastrophic events, etc. In accordance with SCARF model people's response to threat is more intense and more common and often needs to be carefully minimized in social interactions. One of the objectives of presidential messages, concerning threats, is to balance negative and positive in mindsets of people, minimizing fear and increasing **Certainty, Autonomy, and Relatedness**. Below we'll show how conceptual metaphors contribute to that.

Psychological aspect of apprehended threat was studied in [5]. The model was experimentally tested with a sample of undergraduates who responded to one of three hypothetical scenarios describing a future New Zealand that was secure, threatening, or essentially unaltered.

J. Duckitt and K. Fisher claim: "Social worldviews are conceptualized as individuals' beliefs about the nature of the social world. They would be influenced by individuals' socialization and personality, and hence would be fairly stable over time. However, they would also directly reflect social reality. Consequently, when social situations change dramatically in an apparently enduring fashion—either becoming more dangerous and threatening, or becoming more like a competitive jungle—individuals' social worldview beliefs should change correspondingly. These changes in individuals' worldviews would then activate the motivational goals of either social control and security (thereby increasing authoritarian ideological beliefs) or power, dominance, and superiority over others (thereby increasing social dominance ideological beliefs). Thus, the model suggests that social situations will have an impact on ideological beliefs, such as authoritarianism or social dominance, through changing individuals' worldviews—that is, their conscious interpretations and beliefs about the nature of their social realities"[5].

In situations, when current and past risks and dangers, alarm factors, crisis situations, catastrophic events relate to a nation or nations, heads of states are entrusted with responsibility to minimize danger, alarm or crisis apprehension. They will have to communicate to the nation messages, demonstrating activation of their motivational goals to exercise social control and security on behalf of people.

From the perspective of neuroscience and psychological research we can conclude that the role of negative-positive balancing in presidential discourse is crucial. Moreover, we claim that conventional metaphors in language and conceptual metaphors as cognitive structures play a considerable role in lingua-cognitive balancing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material for the study consists of 50 transcripts of presidential speeches, published on <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches> (Miller Center, University of Virginia). 10 speeches of R. Reagan, W.J. Clinton, G.W. Bush, B. Obama, and D. Trump each were chosen for analysis. The preliminary goal of the analysis was to mark in speeches "threat" and "overcoming threat" contexts. The main goal was to identify conventional metaphors in marked contexts and employ cognitive linguistics methods for their further investigation. The conceptual analysis method, method of cognitive modeling of complex conceptual categories, and method of mental spaces blending were used in the study. These methods allowed us to interpret conceptual

metaphors as cognitive mechanisms related to cognitive domains "THREAT" and "THREAT OVERCOMING".

We build on the following definition of conceptual metaphor, partly based on G. Lakoff and M. Turner works, but mainly worked out for the purposes of our research. "Following G. Lakoff, we take to mean conceptual metaphors as conventional cognitive structures built on projection from source domain to target domain. Proceeding from M. Turner's statement, that meaning is not in words but in schemas in the mind, we view conceptual metaphors as integral part of language speakers' cultural paradigm. Conceptual metaphors represent lexical meaning either on the propositional level or on schemas" [6].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Here we present 5 extracts from presidential speeches of R. Reagan, W.J. Clinton, G.W. Bush, B. Obama, and D. Trump, where we analyze a balance of positive and negative meanings in context and discuss a key metaphor for each context. Curly brackets separate negative-meaning context {N}, square brackets – positive-meaning context [P] and round brackets are used for the part of the text, where metaphor is found (M)

1. Ronald Reagan. "State of the Union Address, 26 January 1982"

N {A recognition of what the Soviet empire is about is the starting point. Winston Churchill, in negotiating with the Soviets, observed that they respect only strength and resolve in their dealings with other nations.}

P [That's why we've moved to reconstruct our national defenses. We intend to keep the peace. We will also keep our freedom. We have made pledges of a new frankness in our public statements and worldwide broadcasts.]

M (In the face of a climate of falsehood and misinformation, we've promised the world a season of truth—the truth of our great civilized ideas: individual liberty, representative government, the rule of law under God.) [7]

The negatively-charged context is followed by positively – charged one and the metaphoric context accomplishes the extract. We mark the succession as N-P-M /N-P/ /N- P / in slashes means that in the metaphoric part of the extract positive meaning is opposed to negative and follows it.

Now we proceed to the analysis of the metaphor. The source domain concept CLIMATE is projected onto the target domain concept POLITICAL SITUATION OF FALSEHOOD AND MISINFORMATION; the source domain concept SEASON is projected onto the target domain concept POLITICAL SITUATION OF TRUTH. Two source domain concepts are opposed as *pars pro toto*, where CLIMATE is general, conceptualizing dominating POLITICAL SITUATION OF FALSEHOOD AND MISINFORMATION and SEASON is limited in time, conceptualizing POLITICAL SITUATION OF TRUTH IN the US. So, the conceptual metaphor is POLITICAL SITUATION is WEATHER. From the point of view of persuasive strategy implementation the extract is well-balanced so that positive context and conceptual structure of the metaphor suppress negative concepts.

2. Bill Clinton. "State of the Union Address, 27 January 1998"

N {I ask Congress to join me in pursuing an ambitious agenda to reduce the serious threat of weapons of mass destruction. This year, four decades after it was first proposed by President Eisenhower, a comprehensive nuclear test ban is within reach.}

P [By ending nuclear testing, we can help to prevent the development of new and more dangerous weapons and make it more difficult for non-nuclear states to build them.]

M *Metaphor (And I think we should say to all the people we're trying to represent here, that preparing for a far-off storm that may reach our shores is far wiser than ignoring the thunder 'til the clouds are just overhead)* [8].

The negatively-charged context is followed by positively – charged one and the metaphoric context accomplishes the extract. We mark the succession as N-P-M /N-N- N/ /N-N-N/ in slashes means that in the metaphoric part of the extract there are three negative meanings, conceptualizing threat (FAR-OFF STORM, THUNDER, CLOUDS OVERHEAD).

The source domain for the metaphor is THUNDERSTORM. The target domain is MASS DESTRUCTION. The conceptual metaphor MASS DESTRUCTION is THUNDERSTORM. People consider thunderstorms as threatening natural phenomena, so employing this conceptual metaphor Bill Clinton activates deeply hidden fears of dangerous weather storms. At the same time his persuasive strategy is aimed at achieving positive effect. He warns people to be wise enough to get prepared for possible situations of mass destruction by reducing production of nuclear weapons.

3. George Bush. "Address on the U.S. Response to the Attacks of September 11"

N {After all that has just passed -- all the lives taken, and all the possibilities and hopes that died with them -- it is natural to wonder if America's future is one of fear. Some speak of an age of terror. I know there are struggles ahead, and dangers to face.}

P [But this country will define our times, not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world.] (Applause.)

N {Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war.}

P [The advance of human freedom -- the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time -- now depends on us]

M (Our nation -- this generation -- will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future) [9].

The negatively-charged context is followed by positively – charged one and the metaphoric context accomplishes the extract. We mark the succession as N-P-N-P-M /P/.

Speaking about persuasive strategy, we see that negative and positive contexts are well-balanced. As for the metaphor, closing the extract, it has positive meaning due to the metaphorical meaning of the verb *to lift* "if a weight or burden lifts or is lifted from you, you stop worrying about something and feel happier". The conceptual metaphor here is represented in the mind as image schema GOOD IS UP. Another image schema in this

metaphorical expression is DARKNESS IS FRIGHTENING. It's been deeply rooted in people's subconsciousness since prehistoric time.

4. **Barack Obama.** "January 20, 2009: Inaugural Address"

N {That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet}

P [In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that (M) **greatness is never a given. It must be earned.**

M (Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted—for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame) [10]

The negatively-charged context is followed by positively – charged one and the metaphoric context accomplishes the extract. We mark the succession as N-P-M /P-P/.

Metaphors: ACHIEVEMENT is MONEY; LIFE is JOURNEY. These conceptual metaphors were many times discussed in publications, so we don't add comment to them. The only remark is that they are widely used in speech.

5. **Donald Trump.** "February 15, 2018: Statement on the School Shooting in Parkland, Florida"

N {No child, no teacher, should ever be in danger in an American school. No parent should ever have to fear for their sons and daughters when they kiss them goodbye in the morning}.

M (Each person who was stolen from us yesterday had a full life ahead of them)

P [- a life filled with wondrous beauty and unlimited potential and promise. Each one had dreams to pursue, love to give, and talents to share with the world. And each one had a family to whom they meant everything in the world].

P [I want to speak now directly to America's children, especially those who feel lost, alone, confused or even scared: I want you to know that you are never alone and you never will be. You have people who care about you, who love you, and who will do anything at all to protect you. If you need help, turn to a teacher, a family member, a local police officer, or a faith leader. Answer hate with love; answer cruelty with kindness.][11]

The negatively-charged context is followed by positively – charged one and the metaphor here closes the negatively-charged extract. We mark the succession as N - M /N-P/ P - P.

We've identified two conceptual metaphors, one is TO KILL A PERSON IS TO STEAL A PERSON, the second is image schema FUTURE IS SOMETHING AHEAD.

To sum up the analysis we present a summary table of all characteristics of persuasive strategy, revealed in the process of study.

Table 1. Persuasive strategy and conceptual metaphors

President's name	Persuasive goal	Number of negatively charged paragraphs	Number of positively charged paragraphs	Succession of negative – positive contexts, including metaphors	Conceptual metaphors
1	2	3	4	5	6
R.Reagan	Posing threat; Counteracting threat	1	1	N-P-M /N-P/	POLITICAL SITUATION IS WEATHER
W. Clinton	Posing threat; Overcoming threat	1	1	N-P-M /N-N-N/	MASS DESTRUCTION IS THUNDERSTORM
G. Bush	Acknowledging fear of terrorism; Overcoming fear	2	2	N-P-N-P-M /P/	GOOD IS UP; DARKNESS IS FRIGHTENING
B.Obama	Acknowledging crisis; Reaffirming America's power	1	1	N-P-M /P-P/.	ACHIEVEMENT IS MONEY; LIFE IS JOURNEY
D. Trump	Posing threat; Overcoming fear	1	2	N - M /N-P/ P - P.	TO KILL A PERSON IS TO STEAL A PERSON; FUTURE IS SOMETHING AHEAD

CONCLUSION

The results of the study demonstrate that presidential speeches are a type of discourse in which negative-positive balance of successive paragraphs of the text is an essential part of persuasive strategy. The research data also show that conceptual metaphors are largely involved into persuasive strategy building. They become conceptual attractors in each cluster of negatively-positively balanced contexts. We see (table 1) that conceptual metaphors, used in speeches, activate frames of everyday and, consequently, deeply rooted in conceptual structure, experience: WEATHER, THUNDERSTORM, UPWARDS, DARKNESS, MONEY, JOURNEY, KILLING, AHEAD. Linguacognitive mechanisms, such as conceptual metaphors, play an important role, connecting everyday experience with abstract and frightening situations of modern life. Persuasive strategy, focused on "threat counteracting /overcoming" includes conceptual

metaphors into its arsenal as a strong though invisible weapon, affecting people's minds.

The article presents examples from five presidential speeches with the focus on "overcoming threat" persuasive strategy. Extended research has shown that methods, described in the article, can be applied to all speeches of the corpus. What is even more important, the method of negative-positive balancing contributes to the study of sociocultural threats and their counteracting/overcoming in mindsets of people.

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NEW VALUES OF EMOTIVE LEXICON IN MODERN DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to analyze change of emotive value in lexical units of Russian language in modern discourse. To describe the studied material (lexical units) 1) componential analysis (the analysis of value of lexical units), 2) questionnaire method 3) the method of observing of functioning of emotive lexical units in the texts extracted from The Russian National Corpus are used.

The description in aspect of emotivity of twenty four lexical units was carried out step by step. The conclusion on attribution of a lexical unit to a word, expressing positive or negative value, was based on the results of the analysis of semantic data of given units in various linguistic dictionaries. This analysis shows that the selected lexical units can be estimated as emotive, showing positive attitude towards a subject of the speech in more than 50% of all cases.

The questioning we have carried out allows understanding the way the native speakers understand emotivity of analyzed lexical units. The result of the questioning shows that the native speakers perceive more than 70% of the lexical units presented for the analysis as words with positive value. A semantic shift in understanding of emotive lexical units by the native speakers of Russian language can be observed.

The reasons of semantic shift in meaning of some lexical units are connected with "stylistic enhancement" [1:183], which is shown in texts of The Russian National Corpus. Some lexical units possessing approving emotive value (by results of the analysis of dictionaries and questionnaires) are losing it in modern discourse, in the other lexical units change in the meaning of the word occurs under the influence on non-linguistic factors: a lexical unit obtains new cultural meaning. The steadiest against changes are words in which the emotivity in the same time is the basic meaning of the word.

As the use of lexical units having positive or neutral value promotes effective speech interaction, and use of lexical units having negative connotation leads to inefficiency of communication, our research allows solving a range of problems of communication studies, linguocriminalistics and method of teaching Russian language.