

Ikenna Kamalu

Department of English Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Patience Bara Iniworikabo

Department of English Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Metaphors in Selected Political Speeches of Nigerian Democratic Presidents

This study adopted the tenets of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) of Lakoff and Johnson in the analysis of selected political speeches of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo (OBJ henceforth), Musa Yar'Adua (UMY henceforth) and Goodluck Jonathan (GEJ henceforth). The study discovered that metaphor is a great resource in political communication and that the speakers drew from source domains that represent social, economic and political situations and conditions in Nigeria essentially as conflict and war, building, disease, journey, illness, games and sports, and as a family. The study considers ways in which metaphors facilitate the discourse on Nigerian nationhood and how the speakers exploit metaphorical expressions in communicating their ideologies to Nigerians.

Keywords: metaphors, political speeches, Nigeria, Obasanjo, Yar'Adua, Jonathan

1. Introduction

Language plays an essential communicative role in all forms of discourse. In political communication, language is deployed by political leaders to build trust and to persuade potential electorates to accept party policies and Ideologies. Chilton (2004, p.199) contends that “At the heart of what we call ‘politics’ is the attempt to get others to ‘share a common view’ about what is useful-harmful, good-evil, just-unjust. Language is the only means for doing this.” For Charteris-Black (2005), language is the lifeblood of politics. Political discourse therefore concerns itself with contest for power in which language serves as its backbone. Beard (2000, p.2) is also of the view that it is important to study the language of politics because it allows us to understand how language is used by “those who wish to gain power, those who wish to exercise power and those who wish to keep power.” He further identifies politics as a struggle to gain and retain power among members of political institutions such as political parties, government and parliament (p.36).

In public discourse, politicians address followers and invariably request that they participate in governance. Instructively, political leaders recognize language as a strategic instrument of communication and successfully manipulate it to create

manifestoes, seek endorsements and form alliances to win power. Beard (2000, p.35) postulates that “making speeches is a vital part of the politician’s role in announcing policy and persuading people to agree with it.” De Wet (2010, p.103) observes that “politicians rise to power mainly because they can talk persuasively to voters and political elites... politicians are endlessly geared to persuading voters to their own or party’s point of view.” Politicians have to resort to persuasive strategies as a result of what Brants and Voltmer (2011, p.1) regard as “public mistrust in the authority and political leadership.” In their study on political communication in postmodern democracy, they contend that “political actors, such as governments, political parties, and other elites of established political institutions, are losing control over the way in which politics is communicated and interpreted in public sphere” (p.2). To gain political relevance, political actors adopt linguistic and rhetorical strategies that enable them to communicate effectively with their audience. This makes the study of the language of politics an interesting academic exercise. The language of politics sets itself apart as the language of governance and its study in linguistic scholarship is important because it is a strategy by means of which we can infer how language is applied in social and political discourse to persuade people to support party or individual ideologies. Politics involves the struggle for power and its language proves significant because it is structured primarily with the aim of convincing the audience to buy into the speaker’s ideology. More importantly, political communication demonstrates an audience’s ability to establish meanings for ideas in contexts of their use. Adetunji (2006, p.178) reasons that an investigation into the use of language in presidential addresses is necessary because of the rigorous linguistic inquiries such addresses have been subjected to contemporarily.

The fourth republic in Nigeria started in 1999 and has lasted till date. It has had five successful general elections since then – a feat unprecedented in Nigeria’s political history. The system broadened the space for robust political participation through the formation of political parties and associations. The wish to gain power, retain power or exercise power led to the alignment and re-alignment of forces by politicians and political parties. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military head of state and also a victim of General Sani Abacha’s military dictatorship, won the 1999 presidential election and a second term in 2003. He handed over governance to Alhaji Musa Yar’Adua in 2007. President Yar’Adua unfortunately died on 5th May, 2010 before he could complete his four year mandate in 2011. His vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, completed the joint mandate as president and went ahead to contest and win the 2011 presidential election. He however lost the 2015 presidential election to the opposition, thereby making him the first sitting president to lose a presidential election to an opposition candidate, Mohamadu Buhari, a former military head of state.

2. Review of Literature and Theoretical Perspective

Several studies on presidential speeches in Nigeria have focused on the stylistic, discourse and rhetorical strategies in speeches of Nigerian presidents/ heads of state. Ayeomoni (2005) did a linguistic-stylistic investigation of the language of the Nigerian political elite. He analysed the speeches of past presidents, heads of state,

governors, ambassadors and political advisers from the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. Yusuf (2002) centred on the dysphemisms in the language of President Olusegun Obasanjo; Ayoola (2005) was a discursive study of President Olusegun Obasanjo's July 26, 2005 address to the National Assembly; Adetunji (2005) considered deixis in Olusegun Obasanjo's speeches. Awonuga (2005) did a stylistic study of President Obasanjo's speeches. Adetunji (2009) discussed the inaugural addresses of Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo and America's President George Bush; Babatunde and Odepidan (2009) examined the pragma-rhetorical strategies in selected speeches of President Olusegun Obasanjo; while Opanachi (2009) was a discourse analysis of President Obasanjo's national address at the Nigeria Labour Congress rally of 8th October, 2003. Kamalu and Agangan (2011) was a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of President Jonathan's declaration of interest in the PDP presidential primaries. None of these studies examined any of the texts from the perspective of metaphor, except Taiwo (2013) which explored the use of metaphors in Nigerian political discourse but not specifically on presidential political speeches.

The researchers adopt the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) propounded by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) which proposes that metaphor is conceptual in nature; a matter of thought and not merely a linguistic expression found in figurative language or rhetoric. The foundation further demonstrates that metaphorical concepts pervade our everyday communication, guide our thoughts, actions and experiences and are understood primarily via conceptualization. According to Charteris-Black (2005, p.44) "Metaphor offers us a way of viewing the world differently and provides us with new senses of meaning." Fundamentally, political metaphors require listeners to correlate correspondences of experiences with the relation that holds between frames deployed by speakers. Muller (2005, p.7) observes that, "if a metaphor is not accepted by an audience and is not explored by being interpreted and discussed, then it has failed its political - communicative purpose."

3. Metaphors in Nigerian Presidential Communication

Politics is concerned with the struggle to gain and retain power. In quest for endorsement, politicians manipulate language to control the minds of the electorate. Chilton (2004, p.3) observes on one hand that, "politics is viewed as a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it." Similarly, Taiwo (2013, p.200) remarks that politicians in their communication "present themselves as builders and as those who restructure and strengthen" democratic doctrines and developmental policies. In this light, various metaphorical fields are deployed to exemplify these mappings and permit politicians to present messages of hope for good governance and economic advancement. The study reveals that the three presidents draw on a wide range of concepts in their use of metaphor. Some of the metaphors used by the presidents include those that frame politics and social experiences as conflict and war, as building and construction, as journey, as disease, as illness and health metaphor, as family metaphor, and as games and sports.

3.1. Conflict and War Metaphor

Politicians conceptualize politics in terms of battle and in this regard deploy metaphors of war to depict this representation. Beard (2000, p.26) points out that “the word ‘campaign’ itself is a reference to battle, and in campaigns political battles are won.” The warfare metaphor works when it projects knowledge about the source domain of war on to the target domain of politics, thus establishing sets of correspondences between both domains. Charteris-Black (2005) argues that the deployment of this schema is very useful in political communication because it creates numerous entailments within the familiar mental model of conflict and survival. He says that within this conceptual frame is an enemy, a territory that is fought for, allies and an ultimate purpose of victory. The war schema conceptualizes the politician as one who battles against the enemy, represented by dominant forces of poverty, corruption, insecurity, crime and the lack of basic infrastructure. In Taiwo’s words (2013, p.201), “a battle is all about establishing freedom from dominant forces. In Africa, national problems are seen as dominant forces for which they would need the mandate of the people to free them.” On American politics, Kovecses (2010, p.68) states that the American society can be seen as composed of armies that correspond to political groups, the leaders of the armies correspond to political leaders, the weapons used by the army are the ideas and policies of the political group, the objective of the war is some political goal, and so on.

In the politics of Nigeria, we conceive national problems like socio- economic ills and members of other political parties as enemies. The politician therefore is seen as the saviour who delivers the people (electorate) from the ravaging scourge of poverty, corruption and underdevelopment that has been holding them captive. This view can be seen in the texts below.

Text 1:

The **fight against** corruption is a **war** in which we must **all enlist, to safeguard** our common wealth.

(GEJ’S Inaugural Address, 29 May, 2011)

Text 2:

We are determined to intensify the **war** against corruption, more so because corruption is itself central to the spread of poverty.

(UMY’S Inaugural Address 30 May 2007)

Through the evocation of war schema, GEJ conceptualizes the Nigerian people as soldiers whose duty it is to guard the resources of the nation. “Common wealth” suggests joint ownership of the nation’s assets, while the inclusive pronoun “we” expresses unity of purpose in the campaign against corruption. Corruption is personified, through inference, as one that steals or destroys common wealth hence the need for a collective action against it. The metaphor suggests that corruption is a formidable force that needs to be confronted with military force and might. The locution, “enlist”, is derived from the domain of the military and ideologically enjoins every Nigerian to join forces against corruption. President UMY also draws from the

domain of the military to express his resolve to eradicate corruption from the Nigerian society. This representation demonstrates the President's resolve to tackle corruption vigorously as he focuses on its immediate consequence - "the spread of poverty." UMY also personifies corruption as being responsible for poverty and other social ills. This provides a justification for the declaration of war against it. Both GEJ and UMY conceptualize corruption as a dangerous and destructive enemy/opposition that needs a strong military might and resolve to eradicate.

3.2 Building and Construction Metaphor

Through the metaphorical source domain of building and construction, politicians present themselves as foundation layers, builders and those who are able to implement structural reforms and strengthen democratic principles through various government policies. Thus, political leaders deliver their messages of hope with a promise of good governance and an increase in the standard of living. Words and expressions from the domain of building such as **build**, **pull down**, **foundation**, **re-lay** and **rebuild** are conceptual frames that represent the politicians' utmost desire to address the yearnings and expectations of the citizenry. This schema affords the audience the opportunity to construct mental representations and ontology that deal with building experience. A strong foundation gives strength and support to a building and one without it risks an inevitable collapse. The building foundation connotes the basis of a policy or political ideology. The pillars of a building give strong support to prevent a collapse - this is represented by the policy and ideology of the regime. The construction of the building corresponds to the creation of a theory or policy, while the collapse of the building systematically corresponds to its collapse.

Text 3:

I commend the leadership of our great party, from the ward level to the national level for their untiring efforts in **laying a solid** foundation for our party.... In the second coming, we will **re-lay the foundation** of the norms and standards of democratic practices, good governance and ethical behaviour in public life.

(OBJ'S Acceptance Speech, 15 February, 1999)

"Laying a solid foundation" implies that party policies and ideologies are buildings and the speaker's party men and women are builders. The speaker expresses gratitude to those with whom he shares identical political beliefs for "laying a solid foundation", which within the Nigerian historical context implies internal democracy in the ruling party and civil rule in Nigeria. The metaphor of re-laying the foundation suggests the existing foundation/structure erected by the military was not solid enough for democratic practices hence the need for the foundation to be re-laid.

Text 4:

I pledge to **build** a team of worthy Nigerians to join me in the great task of uplifting this nation and its people to be worthy members of the world community.

(OBJ'S Inaugural Address, 15 May, 1999)

The speaker conceptualizes the nation as a building. He perceives himself as a builder and uses a metaphor from the domain of building to refer to the economic team of technocrats (he plans to set up) that will assist him build a virile nation. He demonstrates that he has good intentions and is also passionate about creating a positive image for the country and its citizens in the international scene. This understanding also suggests that governance requires collaboration and unity of purpose between political leadership and followership just as a solid building/construction requires the collaboration of several professionals.

Text 5:

Our goal is to **build** on the accomplishments of the past few years....The administration of President Obasanjo has **laid the foundation** upon which we can **build** your future prosperity.

(UMY'S Inaugural Address, 30 May 2007)

In text, the speaker makes use of building metaphors that refer to concepts such as the policies/ideologies of government, and the nation as a building/structure. He refers to himself as a builder – building on the foundation erected by his predecessor – President Obasanjo. This implies some form of ideological commonality between UMY and OBJ. Both are from the same People's Democratic Party (PDP) and share a common vision on the Nigerian project. UMY's speech implies a nation is like a huge building or structure that is in a continuous process of construction – one lays the foundation while subsequent leaders (builders) build on it. Again, promising to build on the existing foundation implies his successor must have laid a solid foundation for political and economic growth in Nigeria. This is in contrast to Text 3 above where OBJ pledges to “re-lay the foundation” which implies the structures he inherited were either dysfunctional or obsolete.

Text 6:

We have taken initiatives to **build** a steady future for our prosperity and ourselves.

(UMY'S Independence Day Speech 1 October, 2007)

President UMY in the text above focuses on building for the future. The metaphor frames “future” as a building/structure that has to be constructed – a stable or frail future depends on how it is constructed by its builders. The “future” in question refers to the political, social and economic situations of the nation. However, he does not specify members of the “we” group who have taken the initiative with him to build a steady future for the country. This could be referring to members of his political party, ministers and economic team. The president gives the need for “our prosperity and ourselves”, as a justification for trying to build a steady future for the good of all Nigerians. Hence, he is not building for a section of the country but for all.

Text 7:

Our democracy is stable. Its **foundation** is strong and firm.... We must strengthen our collective memory, draw strength from our history, and **build** bridges of unity to take our country to greater heights.... In truth, Nigeria is still **a work in progress** and we

are challenged everyday to keep **building** in spite of the various obstacles that we face.

(GEJ'S Independence Day Speech, October 1, 2011)

GEJ, like OBJ and UMY, sees the Nigerian nationhood as a building project and makes reference to its foundation which he appraises as being strong and firm. The multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of Nigeria demands "building of bridges" across religious and ethnic divides. He therefore frames the ethnic, religious and ideological differences as natural or artificial barriers which demand connecting bridges to hold together. The bridge metaphor expresses the desire for unity in diversity and for political communication between groups. Nigeria being "a work in progress" connects with other construction metaphors in the texts – foundation/build/building which implies that Nigeria's nationhood (and democracy) is still evolving even though its foundation is strong and firm. The work in progress also metaphorizes the social, economic and political challenges facing the nation. The general idea behind the building frame is that it represents positive evaluations of an administration. The idea of "rebuilding" represents a change or transformation to actualize the hopes and aspirations of the people. This metaphoric construct plays a significant role in presidential discourse because "people are attracted to an individual who offers them a future that is better than the past and who gives them hope by making anything possible" (Charteris-Black 2005:27).

3.3 Disease Metaphor

The menace of corruption in Nigeria is driven by the disease metaphor and is likened to a cancer that requires "cutting out" and "containing" as cure. Disease metaphors, according to Deborah Stone (in Mio 1997:124), implies notions of "spreading ideas", "infecting others", "epidemics", "breeding grounds", "healthy and sick economies" and "cures." Stone argues that it is the responsibility of governments "to promote the infection of good ideas and to 'cure' or at least 'immunize against bad ideas.'" In text 8 below, corruption corresponds to an uncontrollable cancerous growth, while its cure corresponds to the stringent measures taken by governments to curb its menace and spread.

Text 8:

Corruption, the greatest single bane of our society today, will be tackled head-on at all levels. Corruption is incipient in all human societies and in most human activities. But it must not be condoned. This is why laws are made and enforced to check corruption, so that society would survive and develop in an orderly, reasonable and predictable way. No society can achieve anything near its full potential, if it allows corruption to become **the full blown cancer** it has become in Nigeria.

(OBJ'S Inaugural Address, 29 May, 1999)

The speaker perceives enforcing enabling laws against corruption as a possible cure or remedy to the festering wound inflicted on Nigeria by corruption. Victims of full blown cancers have little chances of survival but the president is optimistic the

cancerous wound inflicted on Nigeria by corruption can be cured if appropriate anti-corruption laws are enforced. Corruption as cancer means it impedes growth and development, and can metaphorically lead to the death of a society that condones it.

3.4 Illness and Health Metaphor

The mental representation of illness and restoration in political communication signals a nation in a deteriorating health condition. The metaphor here is that just as human beings fall sick, nations too, can become sick. A weak economy, an unstable government and a nation bedevilled by social vices and extreme division metaphorically represent a sick nation. Thus, politicians metaphorize themselves as the physician who nurtures and restores good health to the ailing nation ravaged by illness, injury and disease.

In his acceptance speech, President Obasanjo promises to “heal” the various divisions that plague the nation, and restore it to its once harmonious state. President Yar'Adua undertakes to “ease the pains” of the present day, while President Jonathan considers “healing the wounds of the past.” In this metaphor frame, “wounds” and “pains” represent the undesirable conditions experienced by the citizenry in times past and in the present. Healing, on its part, concerns the efforts of the presidents to make a difference and to avoid a relapse.

Text 9:

I will endeavour to **heal divisions**, and to **restore** the harmony we used to know in this country.

(OBJ'S Acceptance Speech, 15 February, 1999)

Text 10:

Let us join together, to **ease the pains** of today while working for the gains of tomorrow.

(UMY'S, Inaugural Speech, 30 May 2007)

Text 11:

We must take steps to **heal the wounds** of the past and work together, as a people with a shared destiny under one flag.

(GEJ'S Independence Day Speech, 1 October 2011)

Texts 9, 10 and 11 suggest the speakers acknowledge that the Nigerian nation is sick and needs the services of a healer/physician. “Divisions,” “wounds” and “pains” are used to conceptualize the negative effects of corruption, mismanagement and underdevelopment on the nation, while the material processes “restore,” “ease” and “heal” metaphorize intentions to offer solutions to the ills plaguing the Nigerian nation. The understanding in the use of illness and health metaphor is that it takes cognizance of the fact that challenges exist to which the politicians are desirous of proffering solutions. OBJ expresses the hope that he alone (I – pronoun of exclusion) is capable of restoring the divisions in the country, while UMY and GEJ reach out to others (us/we – pronouns of inclusion) for collective efforts at easing the pains and healing the wounds of the nation. The pronouns frame UMY and GEJ as good team

players who are willing to work jointly with both in-group and out-group members to see to the healing and restoration of the ailing country.

3.5 Politics as Journey Metaphor

The conceptual mapping of politics as a journey represents long term purposes that define a better future for the people as they advance in the journey on nationhood. This construct connotes the idea of a people on a journey, the country as a marching and a walking nation, while political leaders are represented as those who guide their followers (viewed as fellow travellers) safely, until they arrive at the nation's ultimate destination. Charteris-Black (2005) observes that journey metaphor frame is one that provides a mental representation and thus allows various aspects of political experience to be understood and expressed through embodied experience of movement. He contends that journey metaphor is rhetorically attractive to politicians and leaders because it can be turned into a whole scenario when they represent themselves as "guides", their policies as "maps", and their supporters as "fellow travelling companions." Presidents Obasanjo and Yar'Adua deploy the metaphor of the **milestone** to portray the distance covered by the country as a marching nation while metaphorical expressions such as **path** and **roadmap** give a sense of direction to the country as a walking nation.

Text 12:

We have no plans of abandoning the **path** of reform or succumbing to the opportunistic pronouncements of a few at the expense of the people.... We will not be **derailed** nor **diverted** by the unscrupulous ones.... We have opened **new paths** for cooperation, trade and cultural exchanges with the Caribbean while strengthening our relations with South America.... We must find time to **pause**, take a look at the past, our present and the future that we have mapped out and take critical decisions on how we plan to **reach our destination**. ...Nigeria is not where it should be but we are sure that the **road map** is there.

(OBJ'S Independence Day speech, 1 October 2005)

In text 12 above, the speaker demonstrates total commitment to the cause of leadership and resolves that his administration will not be distracted from realizing pre-determined objectives. The terms, "abandon", "derail" and "divert", are expressions employed to illustrate misguided or failed policies in the course of governance. Those who undermine the policies of his administration are framed as "unscrupulous." The speaker employs the journey frame "opened new paths" to conceptualize a new trade relationship with the Caribbean and an access to a free market that will remove constraints on trade. The metaphor expresses the idea of a country open to enterprise while strengthening relationships with old allies. This metaphorical expression has a significant influence on the speaker's audience because it enables them to appraise achievements of past and to evaluate the present. A critical appraisal of the past and the present indicate that Nigeria is not where it should be on the journey to greatness but the speaker raises hopes by affirming that "the road map" through which we can "reach our destination" has already been mapped out. The

rhetorical objective of the metaphor derives from an experience of several failures in the country's journeys towards greatness. This is as a result of the mismanagement and misplacement of economic agenda by past leaders and administrations. This explains why the nation must pause – a metaphor for sober reflections, to take count of the miles so far covered and how much that still lies ahead. The road map in reference is an expression of optimism in terms of new measures, actions and attitudes the administration adopts to ensure a stable march into the future.

Text 13:

This is a historic day for our nation, for it marks a **milestone in our march** towards a maturing democracy.... Today we are talking about Nigeria's potential, to become one of the largest economies in the world by the year 2020. That is a measure of how **far we have come**.... Fellow citizens, I ask you all to **march** with me into the age of restoration.

(UMY'S Inaugural Speech, 30 May 2007)

A milestone suggests an indicator of progress in the course of a journey. President Yar'Adua uses the metaphor of a milestone to refer to the nation's first civilian to civilian transition since independence in 1960. The expression "march" suggests an orderly, progressive and well-coordinated movement towards a political objective. Through the journey schema, the speaker gives an insight into the policy direction of his administration which aims at building on the successes of the immediate past administration. UMY enjoins his audience to work collaboratively with his administration in order to realize the chief objective of making Nigeria "one of the largest economies in the world by the year 2020." In all, the journey metaphors imply the nation is yet to attain the desired heights in social, economic and political accomplishments.

Text 14:

Today, I remember that day and the processes leading to it with profound gratitude to God Almighty and to all Nigerians who have worked very hard to enrich our **journey** from military dictatorship to inclusive democratic governance.... We must remember **where we are coming from**, so we can appreciate **how far we have travelled**...

(GEJ'S Independence Day Speech, October 1, 2011)

Text 15:

As we prepare to mark the centenary, therefore, today offers us an opportunity to reflect on our **long journey** to nationhood and the **progress we have made so far**... In our **journey** to greatness as a nation, we have built an economy that is robust and erected enduring infrastructure and institutions of democracy....

(GEJ'S Independence Day Speech, 1 October, 2013)

In texts 14 and 15, GEJ uses journey metaphors to remind his audience of the nation's past history – from military dictatorship to an emergent democracy. He frames this period in Nigeria's political history as a period of a journey for self-discovery. Every journey has a beginning (...where we are coming from) and a destination (attainment

of greatness as a nation). A journey may either be short or long. The speaker tells his audience that Nigeria's journey is a long one (...our long journey to nationhood). He urges his audience to be sober in their reflections on "the progress we have made so far." The extensive use of the journey frame by GEJ is a form of rhetorical appeal for understanding with his administration. He does not want his audience to expect miracles from his administration given the facts of the country's historical journeys since independence. He uses journey metaphors to establish a link between the past and the present. The rhetorical motivation for the deployment of the metaphors is to give a positive evaluation of his performance as president and to provide policy direction for the administration. He wants his audience to understand that it has been a long journey since independence but the democratic governance in place is a mark of progress.

3.6 Games and Sports Metaphor

Competition among opponents is an essential aspect of the sports metaphor. In this metaphoric representation, politics is perceived as a contest, a race or some sport between political opponents, where winners and losers eventually emerge. Mihas (2005, p.136) points out that "the metaphorical framework of politics as a game profiles competitiveness of the political players and their teams, readiness, preparedness, and excitement of the spectators in the real world, the glory of winning and the shame of defeat. The sports metaphor underlines the player's drive to win the prize, whether it is the presidency or any other office..." The political situation in Nigeria also presents a scenario in which political actors perceive political contests as a race between opponents. Victory at the polls corresponds to winning in a competition and the office won in an election corresponds to a trophy won in a competition.

Text 16:

In anticipation of our success in this **presidential race**As I said when I originally declared my intention to **run in this race...**
(OBJ'S Acceptance Speech, 15 February, 1999)

Text 17:

In this race, I have the honour to have as my **running mate**, Architect Namadi Sambo, the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
(GEJ'S Declaration of Candidacy, 18 September, 2010)

The metaphorical constructs in texts 16 and 17 conceptualize the presidential elections as a competitive sport that offers the presidency as its prize. In text 16 the speaker has won the ultimate prize – the presidency. This implies there are losers in the same competition in which he emerged victorious. His speech is like a cheerful wave to excited spectators after winning a trophy in a competition. In text 17, however, the speaker is yet to participate in the competition but has chosen a running mate. The metaphor frames politics as a team work hence the need for a running mate. In all, presidential contest in Nigeria is conceptualized as a race for an ultimate prize.

3.7 *The Nation as a Family Metaphor*

This metaphorical construct portrays the nation as a family, the government as parents, citizens as children, and the African continent as the larger family. The family metaphor highlights the father's solemn duty to protect, to secure, serve and guard his family (Mihis 2005, p.136). The mental constructs of “the nation as a family” is an accurate metaphor that highlights common effort, dedication and a sense of purpose as requisites for a united country. It establishes a father's authority over his children and in the context of Nigerian politics, serves to admonish citizens to embrace unity and oneness in a country characterized by ethnic and religious differences.

Text 18:

To our **larger African family**, you have our commitment to the goal of African integration. Let us work together as one united **family**.
(OBJ'S Acceptance Speech, 15 February, 1999)

The speaker conceives the African community of nations as Nigeria's extended family members and expresses the country's readiness for an alliance. The notion of extended family and common bonds among individual families is highly regarded in traditional Africa. The reputation of an individual is measured by how they relate with members of their nuclear and extended families. This understanding is appropriated in the diverse levels of interactions between sister nations in Africa. The invitation extended to other sister African nations by the speaker is informed by his cultural knowledge of the notion of extended family in Africa. The speaker wants other African nations, as members of the African family, to support the democratic processes in Nigeria.

Text 19:

I ask you fellow citizens to join me in rebuilding our **Nigerian family**, one that defines the success of one by the happiness of many.
(UMY'S Democracy Day Address, 30 May, 2007)

UMY conceptualizes the Nigerian nation as a family, where the success of a single member brings about feelings of joy and happiness in the entire fold. This metaphor draws from the notion that Nigeria is a family of many children who share common paternity. Nigeria is like a polygamous family – one father and different mothers. The children are bond in common paternity even when they are from different mothers. Consequently, the success of any member of the larger family brings joy to others. The differences in language and ethnicity, religion and culture metaphorize differences in motherhood but do not diminish their bond in brotherhood and oneness. The speaker evokes this metaphor from the cultural history of the people so as to project the ideology of peace and unity among the various groups that make up Nigeria.

Text 20:

We must, therefore, remain as **one family**, and work together to defend our country.
(GEJ'S Democracy Day Address, May 29, 2011)

Text 20, like 18 and 19 above, sues for peace and unity in Nigeria by evoking the one family metaphor. Internal unity is an essential ingredient for national stability and for defence from external aggression. Politicians exploit metaphors that give the citizens a sense of oneness, particularly in a society like Nigeria where loyalty and allegiance to one's ethnic group supersedes loyalty to the nation. Most Nigerians privilege their ethnic and religious identities over their national identity and this has resulted in many ethno-religious crises in Nigeria. The need for oneness explains why most Nigerian presidents would evoke family metaphors in their political communication to remind their compatriots of their common ancestry and family ties.

4. Conclusion

Data analysis reveals that our thoughts and perceptions about politics are structured in metaphor which pervades our everyday experiences. It shows that a proper interpretation of a metaphoric utterance ultimately requires a listener's knowledge of mappings or correspondences between the literal senses of words used in their source domains and the distinct figurative meaning they have gained in political culture. The study reveals that metaphors dominate presidential discourses and draw attention to the role of language as a symbolic system which functions in the construction of political reality. The study confirms that though the three political leaders addressed their followers in linguistically distinct patterns, their thoughts in the most basic style, are replete with similar metaphoric expressions, through which a deeper conception of meaning is categorized. Metaphors characterize a speaker's oratorical style and essentially provide a clearer notion of their intended meaning. Metaphors enable social actors to communicate their ideologies more forcefully and more persuasively because they cognitively appeal to the hearer's knowledge about their culture, history and social situations.

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Authors: Ikenna Kamalu & Patience Bara Iniworikabo

Affiliation: University of Port Harcourt

Department: Department of English Studies

City/State/Zip Code: Port Harcourt, Rivers State, +234

Country: Nigeria

Email: cikamalu@yahoo.co.uk

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