

## Conceptual Metaphor as a Means of Persuasion in Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto's Speech

Aldo Ksatria<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Indonesia

### Abstract

*The objectives of this research are to find conceptual metaphors and their persuasive functions employed by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto on his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue 2024. This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive method, grounded in the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and the categories of persuasive purposes of metaphors as outlined by Charteris-Black (2018). The research found three types of conceptual metaphors: Important is Depth (orientational metaphor), strategies are tools (ontological metaphor), and trust is a financial asset (structural metaphor). These metaphors serve various persuasive functions, including ideological, empathetic, predicative, and heuristic purposes. The findings may be valuable for those interested in using conceptual metaphors as persuasive tools to engage and influence their audiences.*

**Keywords:** *conceptual metaphor; political speech; persuasive; rhetorical device*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

President Prabowo Subianto is a prominent figure and the current leader of Indonesia. His words carried enormous weight and are responsible for representing the whole part of the country, especially on an international scene. On Saturday, 06/01/2024, he delivered a speech at the IISS forum on Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. His speech plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, influencing policy, and guiding the

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<sup>1\*</sup>Corresponding author, email: [snowleopard2908@gmail.com](mailto:snowleopard2908@gmail.com)

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direction of national discourse. To do so, he, as the speaker, needs to deploy a persuasive communication strategy to deliver his message throughout the speech so that it reaches the audience's mind. Aristotle in Charteris-Black (2018) described rhetoric as the formal study of persuasive communication, the art of discovering all the available means of persuasion. Persuasion itself, according to Charteris-Black (Dawd & Salih, 2020) refers to the intention, act and effect of changing an audience's thinking. It means that it is the effort that a speaker makes to give an effect of changing an audience's way of thinking, through the intention, act, and words that a speaker would carefully craft and choose.

Metaphor is one of many rhetorical devices. Lakoff and Johnson (as cited in Flusberg et al., 2020) mentioned that metaphors are helpful rhetorical devices because they allow speakers illustrate unfamiliar, abstract, or complex issues (like politics) using less complicated, more relatable representations. Chilton (as cited in Sari & Tawami, 2018) said that political actors often use metaphors to deliver their argumentation in order for the message to be conveyed. As a rhetorical device, Aristotle (as cited in Danesi, 2018) affirmed that the main function of metaphor is stylistic, a tool to beautify the literal and boring way of communicating. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) said that metaphor is seen and mostly known by the people as an imaginative, poetic device, and rhetorical means of an extraordinary use of language compared to common language. For this reason, metaphors are often found in literary works such as poetry, song lyrics, fairy tales, etc.

According to Richards (as cited in Joshua & Xiao, 2022) metaphor involves comparison through the technical terms of the tenor, the vehicle, and their relationship. The tenor is the idea that is being described by the vehicle, and the vehicle is the thing that describes the idea of the tenor



through the use of literal meaning that is used metaphorically. This is similar to how Perrine (as cited in Auliani f, Kismullah, 2023) defines metaphor as a comparison between two things that are essentially not alike. The components of the metaphor are the literal term, which is stated, and the figurative term which is implied. An example of a metaphor would be 'his anger was fire'. 'Anger' is the tenor; the figurative term that is explained by the vehicle. And 'fire' is a literal term to convey several attributes of the tenor. Fire is something that could be understood as intensely hot, which implies that his anger is extremely intense. Similar to fire which can burn and destroy everything in its path, his anger is potentially harmful and destructive. Fire is difficult to control; this suggests that it might be hard for him to manage or contain his anger. This example is also in line with what Aristotle (as cited in Beknazarova et al., 2021) said about metaphor. He defined metaphor as a means of rethinking the meaning of a word through resemblance of another word.

Despite that Lakoff & Johnson (1980) argued that metaphor is pervasive in the everyday use of language. It means that most people do not realize that they are in fact speaking of something metaphorically. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) also argued that metaphor is not only a component of language; the human conceptual system is also metaphorically structured. Therefore, the conceptual system is a cognitive mechanism that governs how humans think and act and has the main role of defining realities. Kövecses (as cited in Siriam & Widyastuti, 2023) said that conceptual metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. He also mentioned that the conceptual domain that describes or illustrates the other domain is called the source domain. And, the conceptual domain which is being illustrated and described by the source domain is called the target domain



(as cited in Linkeviciute, 2023). It means that what people intend for other people to understand is the target domain through which the source domain is spoken, metaphorically uttered.

The research objectives of this paper are to find the types of conceptual metaphors and the persuasive function of the conceptual metaphors in President Prabowo Subianto's speech by using conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) from Lakoff & Johnson (1980) to analyze the source and target domain. And, in order to find the persuasive function of the conceptual metaphors in this research, the categories of the purpose of metaphors from Charteris-Black (2018) are used. Therefore, the research questions are: 1) What are the types of conceptual metaphors found in speech? and 2) What are the persuasive functions of conceptual metaphors found in the data?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As specified by Lakoff and Johnson (as cited in Sari & Tawami, 2018) conceptual metaphors are divided into three categories; structural metaphors, ontological metaphors, and orientational metaphors. Structural metaphor is understanding concepts in terms of other concepts in a well-structured manner. It means that the source domain is well arranged to fit the structure of the target domain, which allows someone to understand abstract concepts from the characteristic features of a more concrete concept. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) provided an example of structural metaphor, which put the concept of argument into the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. I demolished her assertion. The concept of argument is talked about in terms of war. In a war, one side will attack the enemy, and the other will defend their own territory. Thus, argument is integrated into the structure of war where two people who are arguing in a debate are bound to have someone who attacks the opponent's



assertion and someone who defends their own statement. Therefore, the target domain in structural metaphor is built upon the similar features of the source domain, making people understand abstract concepts through the characteristics of the more concrete concepts.

Ontological metaphor is a way of viewing abstract concepts such as human experience, activity, emotion, events, or ideas into an entity or a substance, which is something more concrete. The example that Lakoff and Johnson (1980) provided is a conceptual metaphor THE MIND IS A MACHINE. This metaphor shows a conception of the mind as something that has an on-off state, a level of efficiency, a productive capacity, an internal mechanism, a source of energy, and an operating condition. When a machine breaks down, it functionally stops. It means that the expression that we say when someone becomes ill due to mental exhaustion, making them unable to function like doing their usual work activity is said as "They broke down." Therefore, an entity or substance as the source domain in ontological metaphor acts as concrete concepts that represent abstract concepts such as activity, emotion, events, etc., as the target domain which makes it possible for people to understand something abstract in terms of something more familiar.

Orientational metaphor is understanding the abstract concept in terms of human spatial experiences. It also has a basis in the physical and cultural experience, hence it could actually vary from culture to culture. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) stated that orientational metaphors give a concept of spatial orientation. For example, the expression that makes up the conceptual metaphor, HAPPY IS UP, can be found in the sentence "that kid jumps up high after hearing the good news." and the metaphor SAD IS DOWN can be found in the sentence "The bad news just made my spirits sink." The upward motion is often associated with things that



could be added up, an increase of something in volume, or even praying to a higher being. This means that upward motion is associated with a positive experience in most people's thoughts. Likewise, the downward motion is associated with a negative experience. Hence, a state of being happy, the abstract concept of happiness is talked about in more concrete terms of spatial orientation up 'jumps up'. And the state of being sad, the abstract concept of sadness is talked about in more concrete terms of spatial orientation down 'my spirits sank'.

Charteris-Black (2018) stated that metaphor is effective in public communication because it draws on the unconscious emotional associations of words and assumed values that are rooted in cultural and historical knowledge. Therefore, metaphor is able to potentially persuade the audience by influencing their intellectual and emotional responses by evaluating actions, actors, and issues. Charteris-Black (2018) stated seven potential purposes of metaphor, namely: gaining attention and establishing trust, heuristic, predicative, empathetic, aesthetic, ideological, and mythic.

Aristotle (as cited in Charteris-Black, 2018) advised speakers to build a connection with the audience by attracting their attention. Thus, the need to get the audience's attention, which is one of the purposes of metaphor: gaining attention and establishing trust, can be achieved by the usage of metaphor. Besides gaining attention, metaphor could also be employed to establish trust and show that the speaker has the right intention. The heuristic purpose of metaphor is to simplify issues that are abstract and complex, which would make the issues more understandable to the audience. Heuristic purpose also frames the issue to favor the speaker. The predicative purpose of metaphor is to make use of certain lexical unit characteristics and attributes to highlight and conceal positive and or



negative features of the related issues. Similar to heuristic purpose, predicative purpose could be used to frame the issue to favor the speaker. The empathetic purpose of metaphor is, as the name itself suggests, how metaphors are able to evoke an emotional response, to arouse the audience's feelings so that they will favor the speaker. The aesthetic purpose of metaphor is to make the speech form seen as well-formed, and balanced, also have the look of having good quality. This can be achieved by the evenly distributed metaphor with the same main theme from the prologue to the epilogue. The ideological purpose of metaphor is to use metaphor to help illustrate the worldview and the ideology that the speaker has, therefore making the speaker more favorable if his worldview and ideology are the same as the audience. And last on the list, the mythic purpose of metaphor is to captivate the listener by telling tales that reveal concealed aspects of consciousness. Emotions like grief, terror, happiness, and joy are powerful, intense, and frequently driven by unconscious forces. Myth offers a narrative-based description of these feelings.

Studies on conceptual metaphors have been conducted by various researchers. Sari and Tawami conducted research in 2018, "Metafora Konseptual Pada Wacana Retorika Politik." Their research has two objectives which were to identify the types of conceptual metaphor in a political discourse; more specifically rhetoric during regional head elections, and to study the cognitive process mechanisms that occur in the formation of linguistic metaphors from political conceptual. Their research used qualitative descriptive method along with the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) to find out the types and the cognitive process mechanism of conceptual metaphors. The results found that all three types of conceptual metaphors; ontological,



structural, and orientational metaphors were used in the specific political discourse and found that political actors have used all types of conceptual metaphors as a means of persuasion.

Another researcher: Malah and Taiwo conducted a research in 2020 titled “Conceptual Metaphors in President Muhammadu Buhari’s Political Rhetoric.” They aimed to find out about the types of conceptual metaphors and their rhetorical functions deployed in President Buhari’s political rhetoric performance. Their research employed qualitative approach. And they used the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) to find out the types of conceptual metaphors; and also, Charteris-Black’s (2009) Contemporary Model of Metaphor and Political Communication to find out the rhetorical functions of conceptual metaphors in political communication. The results in their research show that HUMAN metaphor is used the most, followed by WAR and JOURNEY domain. Furthermore, the function of those metaphors was to establish his ethical integrity, heighten emotional impact and communicate his anti-corruption and political ideologies. Their research on the conceptual metaphor and its rhetorical function deployed by the President; concluded that Buhari's political speech relies heavily on conceptual metaphors as a means of persuasion.

Abdel-Qader and Al-Khanji also made a study in 2022 titled “Conceptual Metaphor in COVID-19 Speeches of the American President Joe Biden.” Their research has three objectives which aimed to; (1) uncover the most frequent source domain categories of conceptual metaphors used in COVID-19 speeches of Joe Biden; (2) seek the density of metaphor usage in various speech delivered by Joe Biden; and (3) the main functions of metaphors found in the speeches. Their research used mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative methods with semantic



cognitive approach. They used the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) to analyze the metaphors according to the source domain and find out their functions by the four notion of purposeful metaphors by Charteris-Black (2005). The results show that the most common used source domains are unity, object, person, spatial and war metaphors. Their research also found out that the speeches on Urges America to Wear Masks is denser in metaphor than COVID-19 Response & Vaccine and Biden's Speech on Corona Virus. And their functions of metaphors are identified as simplifying, convincing people and for emotive functions.

From the three previous research above, all of them aimed to uncover conceptual metaphors and the persuasive functions of conceptual metaphors. It appears to be an obvious connection between this research and previously conducted studies. This research expands on previous research by identifying types of conceptual metaphors used in political speeches but also examining their persuasive functions using the seven categories outlined by Charteris-Black (2018). However, the significant difference between this research and the previous research lies not only on the new data which is focused on a speech spoken by the latest Indonesian President in a political and strategic discourse which of course would affect the findings as there is a cultural difference. But also, on the seven categories of persuasive purposes of metaphor, which on the Abdel-Qader and Al-Khanji's research only had four categories of purposeful metaphor as it was written back in 2005.

### **3. METHODS**

According to Lune & Berg (2017), qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. Gunawan (as cited in Soenjaya & Sari, 2022) defined qualitative research as a type of research that seeks to describe



and interpret the meaning of a phenomenon of human behavior or their life in a certain situation. Therefore, for this research, the researcher employs the qualitative descriptive approach. Data is acquired from an eighteen-minute-long YouTube video titled [FULL] *Pidato Prabowo di Shangri-La Dialogue 2024, Tegaskan Indonesia Siap Bantu Korban Gaza*. The researcher observed and made notes of text that will potentially become the data from the speech by listening carefully to the video. Then, by applying CMT in order to identify the source domain and the target domain, the categorization of the conceptual metaphors can be found. Afterward, the seven purposes of metaphor were used to find the persuasive function of the conceptual metaphors found in the data. Lastly, the result and discussion part of this research was limited to only one of each type of conceptual metaphor.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Structural Metaphor

Data 1. “We are witnessing an increase in geopolitical tensions and continuous challenges of multilateralism due to the gravity and intensity of open conflict, blatant violations of international law, and the continued widening trust deficits between states.”

The concept of something that is in a deficit state indicates the amount of which something is less than you should need. A deficit usually revolves around money; it means that the amount of money that you have is lacking compared to what you need to spend. Subianto employs the word deficit to illustrate how trust is important, a valuable resource that can be depleted or accumulated and needs to be managed, similar to how financial assets work. A financial deficit indicates a shortage of funds, thus signifies a critical lack of trust, an essential thing for stable international relations. While a financial deficit can lead to



economic instability, bankruptcy, and hardship, the consequences of a trust deficit can lead to diplomatic instability, making it difficult for countries to collaborate, negotiate, and resolve conflicts. The characteristics or structures of the source domain financial asset help the audience to comprehend the importance of the target domain trust. Therefore, the abstract concept of trust is talked about in terms of the concrete concept of a financial asset which built the structural metaphor trust is a financial asset.

The heuristic purpose of the metaphor is one of the two that can be identified from data (1). The heuristic purpose of this metaphor is to highlight the growth of lack of trust among nations through the simplification of issues that are happening such as the geopolitical tensions, continuous challenges, open conflict, and violations of international law that have worsened this declining state of trust. It also frames Subianto in a positive evaluation of a political actor in the audience's mind, because it makes him look aware and care about what would happen if the trust among countries continued to decline. The metaphor that Subianto employs through the financial asset source domain embeds a metaphorical idea in people's subconscious and suggests to them the potential risks they may eventually encounter. As the ideological purpose of the metaphor, Subianto believes that trust has to be maintained properly, through honest communication and faithful interaction to achieve peace, hoping and encouraging the audience to seek ways of improving trust among them as a foundation for international peace.

#### **4.2. Ontological Metaphor**

Data 2. "We are convinced that only dialogue and cooperation can be the effective tools for achieving these goals in our planet, which in reality has



become smaller and smaller. Collaboration is the only way to achieve prosperity and harmony.”

Data (2) shows that Subianto, as the President of Indonesia, is convinced that the only strategy to achieve common objectives among countries is through dialogue and cooperation. He sees these two strategies as effective tools to use. Dialogue and cooperation, as though they are not tangible, are understood as tangible instruments that can be wielded or handheld to be used to accomplish the objectives. This implies that just as how tools are used to perform tasks and help solve problems, dialogue, and cooperation are strategic methods used to address international issues and achieve goals. Ontological metaphors help the audience understand abstract concepts by treating them as physical objects. Therefore, strategies are tools conceptualized strategies, non-tangible things, dialogue, and cooperation, as physical tools.

Three persuasive purposes of strategies are tools metaphor could be identified. The predicative purpose of the metaphor, which utilizes lexical units of effective tools, highlighted the positive features of Subianto’s ideas that dialogue and cooperation are indeed the perfect tools to be used for fixing the current issues and achieving the common goals. He also highlighted the negative features of other nations’ greed by which he used the lexical unit ‘smaller’ to indicate that the world is getting more divided due to war, hence it is getting ‘smaller and smaller.’

This metaphor also served an ideological and empathetic purpose. It shows the importance of mutual respect and democratic participation of international world leaders by emphasizing the need for effective and peaceful diplomatic solutions to conflicts as global cooperation from each of them is needed. This reinforces the belief that collaboration is key to solving these shared challenges. And, by presenting that dialogue and



cooperation as tools, it reassures the audience of their utility in solving real-world problems, encourages active participation and engagement, and underscores the interconnectedness of the international community. This helps the audience feel more connected and supportive of the strategies that foster a sense of collective responsibility and unity to achieve prosperity and harmony.

#### **4.3. Orientational Metaphor**

Data 3. “Indonesia is firmly committed to deepening inclusive dialogue, concrete collaboration, as well as upholding international laws, especially respect for the national sovereignty of all states and the territorial integrity as enshrined in the United Nations Charter.”

Subianto said that Indonesia is serious about having a commitment and impactful engagement in international relations, such as having meaningful inclusive conversations, and collaboration, upholding international laws, and respecting other national sovereignty in order to achieve peace. Thus, the lexical unit ‘deepening’ as the source domain, illustrates the target domain of importance. In particular, how Indonesia sees the importance and significance of these issues and shows an attempt that Indonesia is willing to cooperate with the other countries. Orientational metaphor organizes concepts based on the human spatial system, providing a sense of orientation that relates to physical experience. Thus, the metaphor importance is depth suggests that the deeper something is, the more important or significant it is. The researcher would like to specify it more and suggest that the more specific conceptualization of the metaphor importance is depth in this case is more is down; less is up.

However, unlike the traditional metaphor that Lakoff and Johnson (1980:16) mentioned in their book, more is up; less is down, which reflects on how humans conceptualize quantity and value that the idea of having



higher quantities or values is associated with vertical height, like if you add more of a substance to make a pile of it, the level goes up. Here, that idea is being reversed and it reflects how a greater importance requires going deeper which implies that 'down' signifies more depth and thus more importance. While less importance, less depth, is associated with being more superficial 'up'. This reversal highlights an ideological commitment to thorough, significant engagement and the rejection of superficiality, which is the ideological purpose of the metaphor. The empathetic purpose of this metaphor is that it fosters empathy by emphasizing the seriousness, openness and inclusivity of Indonesia's approach to dialogue and collaboration with other countries. As it shows that Indonesia is genuinely committed to and invested in peace, it further stimulates the audience to trust and be confident of Indonesia's intentions and actions.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, conceptual metaphors serve as powerful tools of persuasion, effectively shaping the audience's perceptions and attitudes through nuanced and relatable imagery. In President Prabowo Subianto's speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue 2024, the use of metaphors such as importance is depth, strategies are tools, and trust is a financial asset vividly illustrates complex ideas, making them more accessible and impactful. By framing deep engagement and collaboration as essential for global peace and stability, and trust as a critical yet fragile asset, these metaphors not only clarify the speaker's points but also evoke emotional and cognitive responses that align the audience with his vision. This strategic use of language underscores the importance of metaphorical thinking in political rhetoric, highlighting its role in bridging abstract concepts with concrete understanding, thereby enhancing the speaker's



persuasive power and fostering a more profound connection with the audience. As a result, understanding and employing conceptual metaphors can be crucial for anyone seeking to influence and inspire through speech. The researcher of this current research acknowledges the limitations and that there is much room for improvement. Also, the researcher would suggest more thorough research about conceptual metaphors in the context of persuasion, perhaps in a different kind of discourse.

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