

A CRITICAL METAPHOR ANALYSIS OF GOVERNANCE, POWER AND CULTURE IN NGUGI wa THIONGO'S NOVEL *MATIGARI MA NJIRUUNGI*

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Abstract

The paper moors its discussion of metaphors in cognitive linguistics building on two of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel Matigari ma Njiruungi (1987). The study argues that common metaphors and metaphoric expressions used in literary discourse limit how meaning are constructed by framing messages narrowly so much so that alternate readings are delimited, resulting in less opportunity for cognitive scrutiny of such messages. The study explores the metaphors in order to establish their communicative value in conceptualizing various concepts, in this paper governance, power and culture. The study also shows the importance of language in reflecting and disclosing the systems of leadership through literary texts.

Key words: Metaphor, Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), Cognitive Metaphor Theory, governance, power and culture, source domain, target domain

1. Introduction

This paper investigates the use and role of metaphors in communication as used in Ngugi wa Thiongo's novel *Matigari ma Njiruungi* (1987). Within George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Jonathan Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analytic Approach, one of Ngugi wa Thiongo's post detention novel is analyzed to examine the cognitive, linguistic and pragmatic implications of the literary language conceptualizing governance, power and culture. The metaphoric constructions present a framework for viewing how Ngugi wa Thiongo reflects governance, power and culture in present day situation. Critical Metaphor Analysis focuses on a language user's covert and unconscious intentions through identification of metaphors, interpretation of the conceptual metaphors and keys and finally, explanation of possible motives through the interrelation of rival metaphors (Charteris-Black, 2004). Metaphoric analysis reveals how a writer can relate seemingly simple ideas (source) to a difficult or ambiguous concept (target). Paul Chilton explains that, "Metaphorical mappings, which are usually unconscious, are used for reasoning, reasoning about target domains that are ill understood, vague or

controversial source domains are intuitively understood and have holistic structure, so that if one part is accepted other parts follow” (Chilton, 2004, 52).

Since Lakoff and Johnson’s seminal work on *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), it has become increasingly clear that metaphors not only play an important role in communication, but also that they can potentially affect our thoughts and actions (Semono 2008). Metaphors could be used not only to merely assert a metaphorical meaning about people but also convey social, pragmatic information that might agree to previous statements. They also add something quite new about a situation, offering a negative opinion compared to earlier non-metaphorical and neutral description of a situation or contradict a previous positive statement about a situation by not just inferring the metaphorical meaning of a speaker’s assertion but also to recognize that he or she is contradicting the latter. In *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson define metaphor as a process by which we conceive “one thing in terms of another and its primary function is understanding”. Metaphors provide a means for understanding something abstract for example *love* in terms of something concrete or physical for instance *falling* or in terms of some kind of plot for example *madness* where there are features of an insane person’s activity that we expect. Some crucial implications from this definition are:

- Metaphors aren’t just poetic but rather determine usage in our language: that is, these metaphors inform normal ways of talking about life situations. For example, when a speaker says, “How do you spend your time?” This is not just poetic but a way of communicating. It is not easy to communicate with others about time without thinking about it in terms of *spending*, without relying on the TIME IS MONEY metaphor.
- Metaphors involve *entailments*. TIME IS MONEY entails that *time* is a limited resource and a valuable commodity.
- Metaphors help us understand an abstract thing that we cannot understand by reaching out and touching it or handling it; they are a way of *grasping* an object, turning it around to look at its various sides, which cannot be physically grasped. But each metaphor will only help us see certain aspects of a thing, not all aspects. Metaphors highlight some features of things and hide others. Equating love with falling highlights the feelings one has of being out of control; equating it with madness also captures that feeling but emphasizes that one may act in crazy ways even when not with one’s beloved.
- Metaphors are attached to the culture of the speakers. While there might be many cultures that think of Time as *a limited resource*, conceiving of time as money can perhaps only happen in a culture which sees labour as a commodity; a capitalist culture. When you read another language in translation, some sentences are translated *kuhuthira mathaa* or “spend time.” One could ask: is the word being translated actually the word *to spend*? If so, is that word also typically used in conjunction with the word *money* in the same way that it is in our language? What kind of economic system is practiced by that culture at the time that this piece of writing was produced? Practices and forms of life produce possibilities for meaning.

This paper demonstrates the advantage of adopting a three-dimensional model of metaphor in discourse that distinguishes between metaphor in governance, power and culture as it allows for a more detailed description of the similarities and differences in metaphor use in this domain of discourse; literally texts.

2. About the Novel *Matigari ma Njiruungi*

In *Matigari* (1987), Ngugi wa Thiong'o created a fictional hero Matigari ma Njiruungi (this in Gikuyu means 'the patriots who survived the bullets'). Matigari, having fought the colonialist into the bush and having kept the flame of independence going came from the forest to possess the land for which he had

fought only to realize that the new Lords of the land, those who fought not but took the opportunity to jump onto the seats once it was vacated, had, in collusion with the colonialists, taken over his land and house and all his property, leaving him with nothing. The period where the sower does not reap what he had sown was still going on with utmost impunity. Matigari did not understand what had happened in his absence. He went about asking the people, the masses, who themselves had been beaten into cowardice by the government with the help of the security forces, where he could find justice and truth. He is quoted saying:

1. ...*Nyoota na huuta wakwa uria munene muno ni wa ngoro. Toondu ndatiinda ngiururura guuku guothe ngietha Ma na Kihooto...* (page 85)

...My only thirst and hunger are to do with my troubled spirit. I have travelled far and wide looking for truth and justice... (Page 94)

Having sworn not to use violence this time, he roamed the land, entering all corners and asking whomever he met where he could find truth and justice. And the people considered him mad in the beginning, yet he never gave up, he had hope:

2. ... *kai nikio kwerirwo gutiri utuku utakia i?...* (page 3)

... there was no night so long that it did not end with dawn (page 3)

One thing that came out clearly in this novel is the changeover from communalism (caring for all) to individualism, where each individual was busy grabbing public property. John Boy, whose education was funded by the community, refuted the ideology of communalism and advanced the individualism agenda.

3. ... *iingikwira ati wiruute meaning ya kiugo individual. Bururi uyu witu utuuraga ndumaini ni undu wa andu aitu kurigwo ni bata wa individual, bata wa mundu kiumbe haandu ha masses, muingi...* (page 43)

I would ask you to learn the meaning of the word "individual". Our country has remained in darkness because of the ignorance of our people. They don't know the importance of the word "individual", as opposed to the word "masses"... (page 23)

And through this oppression, the learned sold itself for they sought positions by toeing the line of the government and nodding and singing praises when they are called upon. They acted like puppets, responding to the strings of the puppet master. Matigari explained that:

4. *Na kweri kuerirwo ati andu ni eeri bururiini, Mwenda andu na mwendia-andu!* (page 113)

There are two types of people in this country. There are those who sell out, and those who are patriots (page 126)

This literary text is built in metaphors that conceptualize poor governance, misuse of power and inability to change the culture of impunity and adopt the culture that binds the citizens of a country together.

3. Conceptual Metaphor Theory in the Conceptualization of Governance, power and culture.

Metaphor theory was first introduced in 1980 in the book *Metaphors We Live By*, written by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. It belongs to the field of cognitive linguistics, which aims at explaining conceptual systems and language within the general study of the brain and the mind. This field explains as many aspects of language as possible, including syntax, semantics, and discourse (Lakoff and Johnson 270). According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, ideas are conceptualized as objects, words are conceptualized as the containers where we put ideas, and communication is conceptualized as the process of sending them. In an essay entitled "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor," Lakoff notes that the locus of metaphor is thought, not language, and that metaphor is a major and indispensable part of our ordinary, conventional way of conceptualizing the world, and that our everyday behaviour reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors that people use everyday such as *to win an argument* are surface manifestations of underlying conceptual relationships. They constitute mechanisms of conceptualization for understanding and expressing complex concepts or situations. According to the theory, every metaphor is based on a single idea called a conceptual metaphor that links a bodily with a non-bodily experience. In the example of *to win an argument*, Lakoff and Johnson indicate in *Metaphors We Live By* that the corresponding conceptual metaphor is ARGUMENT IS WAR. The conceptual metaphor has two domains: the source domain for example *war* and the target domain for example *argument*. The target domain represents the non-bodily concept that is being communicated, and it corresponds to the domain that we are trying to understand when using the metaphor. The source domain, on the other hand, corresponds to the bodily domain that is being used in the metaphor to understand the target domain. That is to say, the source domain is the domain from which the metaphorical expression is drawn. For instance, in one of the discourses in *Matigari ma Njiruungi*:

5. *Ngoma njii inaanagio ni guthiinjirwo* which is drawn from the bolded metaphor in the following excerpt:

6. *Oyaai thimo ya Matigari ma Njiruungi! Ngoma njii inaanagio ni guthiinjirwo. Riu ni ndahiinguka maitho na matu. Nguina hamwe na aria aitu maraathamirio ira; na aria iyo maikirio korokoroini; na aria miroongo itaano mooragirwo ruciini ruuru...*

‘You should heed the riddle told by Matigari. A thieving spirit cannot be appeased by sacrifice. I can see that now even more clearly. I shall sing with those who were detained yesterday, those gaoled the day before yesterday and fifty who were killed this very morning by the security forces: ...’

Here, the post colonial leaders are given the attribute of a thieving spirit (*Ngoma*). Therefore, we can say that the source domain is the thieving spirit (*ngoma*), which is associated with what the leaders mentioned in *Matigaari ma Njiruungi* are doing to the ruled and especially those who are fighting for truth and justice. The target domain represents those that are being ruled who are said not to ‘appease the spirit by sacrifice’ (*inaanagio ni guthiinjirwo*), The connections or correspondences between the source and the target domain are called mappings. We can say that the conceptual metaphor ‘*Ngoma njii inaanagio ni guthiinjirwo*’ is the result of a mapping between the two domains. Conceptualizing bad governance through the use of negative metaphors like that of *a thieving spirit* as used in *Matigaari ma Njiruungi* is fairly common.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson distinguish between conventional metaphors; common metaphors that conceptualize our ordinary experiences, and imaginative/creative metaphors; those that provide a new conceptualization of our experiences. Metaphors such as

7. *Guoya muingi ni gikuu kia muoyo’uk.* 28 (too much fear breeds misery in the land pg 31) is an example of a conventional metaphor.

This gives the metaphor FEAR IS DEATH. The concept of fear which is brought about by poor governance makes one or the society to lose faith in itself and this is conceptualized to mean that one is not living anymore and his spirit is already dead.

8. *Ukuru ukamuuma, withi ukamucoka uthiu’* (It seemed to have wiped age off his face, making him look extremely youthful’ page 31),

Life experiences and challenges make one to become bold and be ready to fight back a system of governance that has no value for its citizens. The citizens have to unite in order to fight back the ruling

system that is oppressing the society through bad governance. That is why one has to help change the old system of leadership and *wear a youthful face*, a more energetic one to face the challenges that come as result.

9. *Thaayu wa uici na utunyani'* (The peace and the stability to ensure theft and robbery).

This metaphor communicates the use of power after self rule in most African countries. There was a call by the leaders who took over power from the colonialists for people to put down war tools and take up working tools in order to work towards the promotion of love, peace and unity in the country. In the presence of peace, the leaders robbed off the country off its riches, they took land that had been surrendered by the white man and owned it individually instead of making it public land to benefit the masses. This state is conceptualized by the metaphor, PEACE IS ROBBERY.

Examples of imaginative/creative metaphors include,

10. A school is a prison.

11. *Kwigita ti guoya*. (To guard oneself is not cowardice.)

From the metaphor *Kwigita ti guoya*, (To guard oneself is not cowardice.), the use of power by leaders to rule makes the citizens to reserve their energy and opt not to fight against oppression because they understand that they have no means of fighting back the government. It's noted that their silence does not interpret to cowardice but a way of looking for better means to have their voices heard by those in power.

According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, both types of metaphors; conventional and imaginative, shape the way we understand the world. As our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, what we do every day, what we experience, and the way we think are very much matters of metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson note that cultures have multiple metaphors for a single source domain. For example, in English,

12. *a. argument is war*,

we get related metaphors which share the same source domain, like

b. argument is a building (the foundation of your argument is weak),

c. argument is a path (the argument leads to a surprising conclusion),

d. argument is a vehicle (let's see where this argument takes us),

e. argument is a game (good point, but how are you going to counter his next move?).

However, Lakoff and Johnson argue that cultures also have some source domains attached to a single metaphorical expression. These expressions are idiosyncratic, and they cannot be extended to other parts of the whole. For example, the expression *the foot of a mountain* whose conceptual metaphor is *a mountain is a person* is rarely extended to say *a shoulder of the mountain*.

Conceptual metaphors are grounded in everyday, bodily experiences common to human beings. In addition, the theory establishes that abstract thoughts are largely, though not entirely, metaphorical. Abstract concepts have a literal core that is extended by metaphors, often by many mutually inconsistent metaphors. Abstract concepts are not complete without metaphors. For example, love is not love without metaphors of magic, attraction, madness, union, and nurturance. The most important aspect of metaphor is inference. Conceptual metaphor allows inferences in the sensory-motor domains to be used to draw inferences about other domains. For example, in the conceptual metaphor:

13. *Guoya muingi ni gikuu kia muoyo* pg 28 (too much fear breeds misery in the land pg 31),

This metaphor allows the reader to make the following inferences: that when people are made to live in too much fear they will end up having lives full of misery and no progress will be evident in their lives. In

Metaphor theory, these inferences are called entailments. They may include other metaphors. They arise from our beliefs and experiences about the concepts underlying the metaphors. For example,

14. *Guoya muingi ni gikuu kia muoyo* (too much fear breeds misery in the land)

The following entailments may arise depending on the person's beliefs and experiences: people deserve to be given the opportunity to live without fear in order for them to prosper. Such an entailment may have further entailments, which result in a large net of entailments. Lakoff and Johnson say that when the network fits, the experiences form a coherent whole as instances of metaphor. What we experience with the metaphor is like a reverberation down through the network of entailments that awakens and connects the reader's imagination on how people deserve respect and freedom.

4. Critical Metaphor Analysis in metaphors that conceptualize governance, power and culture.

Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) is one of the several approaches to discourse analysis that derive from CDA. It was developed by Jonathan Charteris-Black (2004), in his book *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis*, as an approach for analyzing metaphors in political discourse. The purpose of this methodology is to identify the covert intentions and ideologies underlying language use.

CMA consists of three stages: identification, interpretation and explanation of metaphors. Metaphor identification deals with determining which metaphors are present in a text, and whether they show semantic tension between a literal source domain and a metaphorical target domain. Metaphor interpretation aims at determining the type of social relations that are constructed through the metaphors identified. Metaphor explanation deals with the way metaphors interact within the context in which they occur. (2004: 34-35). A metaphor is a linguistic representation that results from the shift in the use of a word or phrase from the context or domain in which it is expected to occur to another context or domain where it is not expected to occur, thereby causing semantic tension. It potentially has linguistic, pragmatic and cognitive characteristics. Only those metaphors that satisfy these criteria are considered. Charteris-Black argues that any word has the potential to be a metaphor if the context makes it such and if the speaker intends it such. Metaphors are not a requirement of the semantic system, but are matters of speakers' choice. Cognitive semantics and Critical Metaphor Analysis are important linguistic contributions towards a theory of rhetoric for communication. By classifying metaphors into source domain, the analysis can be improved as this allows us to determine trends and compare the two corpuses.

5. Metaphors Conceptualizing Governance, Power and Culture in *Matigari ma Njiruungia* and *Murogi wa Kagoogo*.

For someone to understand the concept of a metaphor, he[she] should interpret it internalize, perceive and map it from the source domain to the target domain. The metaphorical mapping can only be interpreted by considering the shared attributes between the source domain and the target domain. This argument is supported by Torangeau and Sterberg (1982) who point out that the suitability of a metaphor depends on whether the vehicle and the topic are different and whether the domains are unrelated.

The following section present metaphors form *Matigari ma Njiruungia* (1987).

5.1. Metaphors on Governance and Power.

Since *Matigari ma Njiruungia* was written after Kenya and many other African countries had gained self rule, the metaphors in the book are about governance, power and culture. They have been used by the author; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, to expose ills in the society and to explain that even after independence, colonialist way

of leadership was not different from what was handed over to the Africans. The only difference was that leadership was for Africans by Africans. Examples of these metaphors are:

15. Tuuge thina ni uriagirwo? Tuuge wagi wa andu amwe ni guo woni wa andu aria angi. (We say, poverty can be taken advantage of? When some people are lacking others are in plenty?)
16. Kiremi mooko ma muingi ni kigariure. (That which has defeated many has been worked on.)
17. Wa muingi ukuagwo na magoto kana kiondo kiri mahoro. (That of the masses is carried with less care.)
18. Njamba ti ikere. (A hero is not his big body.)
19. Guoya munene uturagia ukia mucii. (Too much fear brings poverty home.)
20. Kihoto kiunaga uta mugeete! (Justice defeats strong muscles)
21. Ciunagwo uu na uu kimenyi akamenya, kirimu agatigwo kihaaro agitondoir. (Things are done or said this and that way, the wise get the meaning and the foolish are left dumbfounded.)
22. Kihoto kia mundu muikarire kiumaga uta-ini mugeete. (The justice of a weak man comes from a tightened bow.)
23. Mutuunywo na mutunyani moonangire kiharo nganja igathira. (The accuser and the accused meet on the ground to settle their scores.)
24. Gucira muno ni ugwati. (Too much interrogation is dangerous.)
25. Wa kirimu wiritimagia na muugi. (That of the foolish is used by the wise.)
26. Matigari ma njiruungi. (Remains of the bullets)
27. Kihoto kiunaga uta mugeete! (Justice defeats strong muscles)
28. Ngoma njii inanagio ni guthinjirwo. (A thieving spirit cannot be appeased by sacrifice)
29. Ati mbeembe imwe mbuthu itikirio kubuthia ikunia igima? (One rotten maize grain poison the whole sack.)
30. Kwigita ti guoya. (To guard oneself is not cowardice.)

The mentioned metaphors in *Matigari ma Njiruungi* have been used widely to communicate against bad governance and poor leadership. The metaphors used do not reflect the exigencies of sustainable development or the dynamics between the leaders and the ruled but reflects how the rulers have misused their position to exploit the citizens.

1.3.1.2. Metaphors on Culture

Culture is defined as the quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners, scholarly and pursuits. This include the beliefs, customs and arts of a particular society, group, place or time. It is also a way of thinking, or behaving or working that exists in a place or organization. Culture is conceptualized through the following metaphors:

31. *Murata wa ciiko niwe murata wa biu.* (A friend in need is a friend in deed.)

This metaphor is characterized by the metaphor FRIENDSHIP IS DEEDS. Friendship is viewed as an ongoing process where two parties are engaged in a certain activity. This activity brings two people together both in times of happiness and in times of sadness. That is why the metaphor is used to represent the expected relationship between the leaders in a country and the citizens. This is contrary to the situation in *Matigari ma Njiruungi*.

32. Gutiri kiega kiumaga hega, gutiri utuku utakia. (Nothing good comes easily, there is no night that does not dawn.)

This metaphor is conceptualized by the metaphor PAIN IS GAIN. This means that in a country citizens are expected to work hard to reap the fruits of their labour. In *Matigari ma Njiruungi* peoples efforts are taken advantage of by their leaders who pay themselves from the profits that result from citizens hardwork while the citizens are left struggling in poverty. They work in the farms owned by the rich where they get paid very minimal wages. They swear to fight back in order to get the fruits of their labour.

The following metaphors are used in *Matigari ma Njiruungi* to conceptualize culture in terms of people's BELIEFS, CUSTOMS and ARTS during the post independence period.

33. Gutiri urume ukirite urume wa kurua maitho na ngoro. (There is no bravery more than that of circumcising the eyes and the heart.)
34. Muugi ndari mihere ya uhoro. (A person who speaks is very poor at listening.)
35. Nyumba yakagio mwaki ni atumia. Kiri ngoro gitihotana. (A house is lit fire by women. That which is in the heart cannot win.)
36. Munyaka wi mbere ya kahiinga! (Luck is ahead of challenges)
37. Meetumi magunirwo ni gwituma. (Those who speak not were saved by their silence.)
38. Reke njokere uhoro mbara nginyo. (Let me say it again from the beginning.)
39. Mukungi akorire muceemi. (A thief found a robber)
40. Ngaragu ndihoyagwo uhoro. (Hunger knows no greetings)
41. Kuumagwo ni gucokagwo. (East or west home is best.)
42. Utamerithitie ndatigaga kuhanda. (One who has not harvested doesn't stop planting.)
43. Muici ni wa thiku mirongo ina! Mwaura ni auragwo! (The days of a thief are forty. The receiver becomes the recipient.)
44. Mutino nduui ati ndokeirwo ni uu! (Deal with situations as they arise/It's not easy to predict the inevitable.)
45. Gutiri wa iregi utuire. (Those who put resistance live less.)
46. Ikihia mwene ni ootaga. (As it burns, the owner also enjoys the heat.)

From the above examples we see that metaphors reflect processes of thinking and therefore serve as a good resource for the investigation of mapping in thought and language. This results from the notion that metaphor is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but more fundamentally a conceptual process that structures our world. Metaphors are constrained and motivated by structures of our embodied experience and these metaphors in turn constrain our reasoning.

Conclusion

This paper has explored metaphors in *Matigari ma Njiruungi* in order to establish their communicative value in conceptualizing governance, power and culture. The paper has interrogated communicative value of metaphors. It has examined the relationship between metaphors and how they are used in communication. The analysis in this study has been done in respect to a literary novel and in accordance with the imagery actions in the novel, with no fixed time, and no fixed place. It is evident that proverbs and metaphors used in the text can be analysed in Cognitive Linguistics using Conceptual Metaphor theory and Critical Metaphor Analysis. The author, Ngugi wa Thiongo has used this metaphors in order to communicate the ills in the society which took place just after independence and which were leading the country in to doom as a result of poor governance and misuse of power. So he decided to speak against it. The metaphors used have been used figuratively to communicate different concepts.

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