

Metaphors in Political Tweets during National Elections

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ABSTRACT

The use of metaphors in political discourse has been constantly researched through the decades. Primarily, metaphors act as a rhetorical device in political discourse aimed at characterising political figures, opponents, events and citizens in persuading them towards a specific point of view. This study discovers the various types of conceptual metaphors employed in the tweets of the Malaysian Prime Minister Dato' Seri Najib Razak (henceforth, Najib) and the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (henceforth, Modi) throughout their election campaign in their respective countries. The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) as proposed by Pragglejazz Group has been adopted for examining the election tweets in-depth and to indicate possible metaphorical linguistic expressions (MLEs). Furthermore, the cognitive metaphor framework by Lakoff and Johnson has been employed in analysing the emerging conceptual metaphorical themes in the tweets of both the political premiers. Results from the analysis have portrayed fascinating underlying conceptual metaphors and metaphorical linguistic expressions in the tweets of both the political figures. The findings revealed that the use of conceptual metaphors in the political tweets induces specific understanding of how political activities throughout the election are conceptualised and expressed in denoting particular ideological stances.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphors, election, metaphorical linguistic expressions, political discourse

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INTRODUCTION

Election campaigns are associated with the decision-making process in a nation's legislative organisation. In Malaysia, the last national election was held on 5 May,

2013 while in India the campaign was held from 7 April to 12 May, 2014. The ultimate purpose of an election campaign is to instil political knowledge in a community as well as to encourage citizens' participation throughout the electoral campaign. In Malaysia, the last election campaign involved 15 political parties that were registered with the Election Commission. It also involved several unregistered political parties. Barisan Nasional (henceforth, BN), the largest political party of the country, was founded in 1973 and is currently the leading party ruling the nation. In contrast to Malaysia, India is well-known for its multi-political party system as the number of parties fluctuates every five years. In the 2014 national election in India, there were 1,703 political parties ("Number of political parties in India growing faster than the economy", 2015, March). However, only six contesting parties were registered under the National Election Commission in India. The Bharatiya Janarta Party (BJP), the leading party in India currently that also heads the government, was one of the largest participating parties in the last election.

Election campaigns provide citizens the opportunity to listen to the contending parties' manifestos before they exercise their right as citizens in voting for the party they believe is the most capable to govern the nation. An election campaign, therefore, is an important platform for disseminating ideas and beliefs to evoke specific messages or implicit denotations. Ideally, political notions broadcast through various

communicative media such as the different news media; however, technological advancement has enabled the emergence of political ideas to be disseminated just as well through social media platforms such as Twitter. Over the years, election campaigns have become increasingly competitive as political figures around the globe now employ social media platforms such as Twitter to address voters throughout the campaign. The emergence of Twitter as a communicative tool is a recent development that is pervasively being employed by politicians. More political figures and their associates have started to engage citizens through Twitter during elections to gain their support and to manipulate the cognitive perspective of the public (Wang, Can, Kazemzadeh, Bar, & Narayanan, 2012). Twitter has gained momentum in the domain of politics since 2007. The popularity of Twitter has been a contributing factor in the decision of political figures around the globe to employ the microblogging tool during major political events.

The language used on Twitter plays a major role in national elections in conveying ideas to citizens. Conveying ideas through a platform like Twitter to help win a national election is clearly a challenging task as Twitter has a 140-character limit to messages. This makes the use of language on Twitter an important matter for users to consider. It is certainly a constraint for political leaders, who must express ideas and disseminate information to a wide and diverse voter base. Hence, this study seeks

to investigate the conceptualisation of ideas related to the national election of Malaysia and India in the tweets of Najib and Modi. The evaluation of metaphors used in a national election is vital as metaphors are a distinctive way of how political figures employ linguistic and cognitive mechanisms to communicate to the public in only 140 characters in Twittersphere. Metaphorically, the conceptualisation of national elections is perceived as the foundation of the entire edifice or BUILDING as it supports the concept of nation construction.

The agenda of a participant in a national election is crucial as it reveals the participant's ideas and beliefs. In this study, the agenda of the two Prime Ministers is revealed in how they conveyed their ideas and beliefs to citizens through the conceptualisation of lexical units. Therefore, the focus of this study was on the conceptualisation of lexical units and the emergence of conceptual metaphors in the tweets of Najib and Modi. The cognitive metaphor framework by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) was employed to discover the emerging conceptual metaphors in the tweets of both the national leaders. The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) by Pragglejazz Group (2007) was adopted to scrutinise lexical units in depth and to specify linguistic expressions. The analysis provides adequate information on the use of metaphors in the conceptualisation of the national election of both countries. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the various

types of conceptual metaphors employed in the tweets of Najib and Modi throughout the election campaigns.

Related Studies on Metaphors

The subject of the metaphor has been debated throughout the centuries since Aristotle. Aristotle referred to the metaphor as “the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is proportion” (Aristotle, 2008, p. 41). The metaphor has been perceived as a literary device that is widely used in the field of literature and language to express intense feelings about the nature of human existence. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) proclaimed the metaphor as a form of extraordinary language rather than reflective of language that is used typically in daily life. The metaphor has been traditionally viewed as a linguistic phenomenon that is used as figurative language (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014; Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Ortony, 1993; Ritchie, 2006), which suggest it is ‘decorative’, providing diverse expressions to sentences that tend to be dubious and ambiguous.

Being modern American linguists, Lakoff and Turner (1989) opposed the traditional view of the metaphor by asserting that the metaphor is not just a form of human language, but also a matter of human action and thought (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). On the other hand, to support Lakoff and Turner's

(1989) opposition to the traditional view of metaphors, Goatly (1997) proposed the following definition on metaphor:

Metaphor occurs when a unit of discourse is used to refer unconventionally to an object, process or concept, or colligates in an unconventional way. And when this unconventional act or reference or colligation is understood on the basis of similarity, matching or analogy involving the conventional referent or colligates of the unit and the actual unconventional referent or colligates. (p. 8)

The definition above denotes the metaphor as a typical form of language where relationship between two objects or concepts occurs. On the other hand, the term colligation is an old-fashioned term that discusses the syntactic relationship between different bodies of discourse (Goatly, 1997) in the case of metaphor is the source domain and target domain. In the same light, Lakoff and Turner (1989) described the metaphor as a “coherent system of concepts and a corresponding coherent system of metaphorical expressions for those concepts” (p. 9). In other words, conceptual metaphors prohibit lexemes from working in separate entities, but these syntactic features are closely bound together to produce logical coherent expressions. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphorical expressions are categorised in two distinct aspects: a) linguistic expressions where

words and sentences contain independent meanings of the particular content and b) metaphorical concepts that can be extended beyond the literal way of thought and action. Both distinctions imply the notion that “The meaning is right there in the words” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 12) as the significance of the sentence lies beneath metaphorical expressions.

Metaphors, then, are a traditional form of representation; people are bound to the custom of using metaphors in their daily life. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claimed that “[the] metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action” (p. 3). The figurative language of the metaphor leads to the occurrence of figurative expressions that conceptualise non-literary words to form a mapping domain. The source and target mapping domains that occur in metaphors enable linguists to perform cross-mapping analysis, which produces expressions beyond the literal meaning. Kovecses (2002) argued that metaphors prohibit the attachment of literal meaning to a sentence, but they are closely associated to the conceptual reality of a specific phrase. The sentence “It’s been a bumpy road” (Kovecses, 2002, p. 7) restricts literal meaning that leads to the sense of physical challenges throughout a journey; it is conceptualised to mean hardship in relationships and life.

In the domain of metaphors, various metaphor classifications are employed to categorise diverse metaphorical expressions. The presence of various metaphor categories

serves as a platform to establish coherence between sentences and words that enable cross mapping. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) established two basic conventions of metaphorical coherence that are commonly fulfilled in the domain of conceptual metaphors, namely: a) cross mapping metaphorical entailments that correspond to each other, and b) the purpose in which cross mapping is executed. The purpose of these two basic agreements is to understand the relationship and connection between direct and indirect issues or things that simultaneously reveal an abstract meaning in the conceptual metaphorical context (Ritchie, 2006).

Furthermore, Lakoff (1987) proclaimed that metaphors can be particularly productive, whereby expressions and specific lexical items are employed to express various “conceptual metaphors in a greater or lesser extent” (p. 384). The lexical items employed are the conceptual metaphoric expressions that permit linguistic expressions to be elaborated (Lakoff, 1987), signalling cross mapping entailment. Previous studies on building metaphors are a dynamic source domain that portrays the concepts of a strong edifice in framing ideological stances.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), AN ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING that involves the deepest part of the structure; therefore, an argument is similar to the concept of building. Chilton and Ilyin (1993) examined the notion of the building metaphor in the political discourse on the common European House in various

languages and it was found that A SOCIETY IS A BUILDING (Goatly, 1997), and people are part of the building in an unjust society. In the same light, Charteris-Black (2013) studied the employment of the building metaphor in the American political context and a purposeful metaphor that was established was the SOCIAL ORGANISATION IS A BUILDING. The conceptual metaphor comprises teamwork in building the nation together as a team, and solidarity which unites the entire nation to progress towards social goals.

Likewise, Lu and Ahrens (2008) investigated the Taiwanese presidential speeches in portraying the ideological notion of the country. Based on the inspection, it was found that the conceptual metaphor of A COUNTRY IS A BUILDING means the achievements of the country in the past are the cornerstones of the building, while the BUILDERS ARE FOUNDERS of the country. Similarly, Koteyko and Ryazanova-Clarke (2009) studied the building metaphor in Russian political discourse and revealed that RESTORATION or RECONSTRUCTION of governmental instruction is vital in building a strong and great hierarchal levels that are one above another. Meanwhile, Hellín-García (2013) argued that GOVERNMENT IS THE BUILDER who maintains and forms the nation into developing a democratic ruling country in which politicians are regarded as DEMOCRATIC EDUCATORS. In contrast to the building metaphor, Xue, Mao and Li (2013) scrutinised the building

metaphorical expressions in the American President inaugural speeches. Based on their observation, the government and politicians are the builders of the nation. However, citizens hold the ultimate role in building the society. In this study, the AN ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING conceptual metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is adopted to stipulate the concept of nation construction that occurs throughout electoral campaigns as this concept portrays the national identity and unity of both the nations. The success of the building concept largely depends on the role of politicians as nation constructors who manoeuvre the national elections to make the election campaigns a victory.

The studies above showed the emergence of conceptual metaphors in various political discourse that occurred in America, Taiwan and Russia. However, this study attempts to fill the gap by investigating the conceptual metaphors of two political representatives in Asia, namely Najib and Modi, in their political tweets during national elections. The next section illustrates the Metaphorical Linguistic Expressions (MLEs) that are the prominent component of metaphors.

Metaphorical Linguistic Expressions (MLEs)

In the domain of metaphors, there are various metaphor classifications that are employed

to categorise the diverse metaphorical expressions. The presence of various metaphor categories serves as a platform for establishing coherence between sentences and words that enables cross mapping. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) established two basic conventions of metaphorical coherence that are commonly fulfilled in the domain of conceptual metaphors, namely: a) cross mapping metaphorical entailments that corresponds to each other, and b) the purpose in which cross mapping is executed. The purpose of these two basic agreements are to understand (Ritchie, 2006) the relationship and connection between direct and indirect issues or thing that simultaneously reveal an abstract meaning in the conceptual metaphorical context.

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Table 1
Conceptual Metaphors and Metaphorical Linguistic expressions

Conceptual Metaphor	Metaphorical Linguistic Expressions
IDEAS ARE FOOD	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I just can't swallow that claim. 2. That argument smells fishy. 3. What he said left a bad taste in my mouth. 4. That's food for thought. 5. All this paper has in it raw facts and half-baked ideas. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 46-47)
IDEAS ARE PLANTS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That idea died on the vine. 2. He has a barren mind. 3. She has a fertile imagination. 4. It will take years for that idea to come to full flowers. 5. Here;s an idea that I'd like to plant in your mind. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 46-47)

To date, the analyses of conceptual metaphors in various types of discourse have mainly focused on two aspects i.e. the study of underlying conceptual metaphors in discourse analysis and the use of metaphoric language through lexical expressions as a channel to disclose aspiration and ideology in the political domain (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). However, in this extensive field of metaphors, these two aspects converge with the intention of demonstrating how metaphoric language is employed to serve political and other discourse purposes. The following sections explain the types of conceptual metaphor employed in studies as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

Metaphor and Politics

The emergence of the metaphor in politics is an abstract overview as it encompasses significant political acquaintances such

as journalists, Members of Parliament, councils, government and international bodies. The metaphor in politics is a form of rhetoric as it occurs in documents and speeches. Recent studies have investigated metaphors and discourse that are relatively associated with cognitive forms (Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Semino, 2008). It is patent that metaphors occur in the micro-level interaction where wordings and phrases denote important linguistic meanings that are then conceptualised to produce realistic denotation (Chilton, 2004; Semino, 2008). The realm of the metaphor in politics has brought about abstract roles for this linguistic feature in political discourse as its cognitive processes produce specific representations of a politician in the political domain.

The main objective of the metaphor in political discourse is to create characterisation among political figures, their opponents, political agenda and events

and the citizens. Political premiers are more likely to employ metaphors in their discourse to inspire, motivate and build the electorate's confidence (Mio, Riggio, Levin, & Reese, 2005). Literally, metaphorical language and expressions are utilised to persuade the public towards a certain point of view and to explain particular political stances (Ahrens, 2009; Ottati, Rhoads, & Graesser, 1999) and it is highly used as a rhetorical tool. The art of coercion in political metaphors is used as a rhetorical weapon that contains figurative expressions that are utilised as condemnation and criticism. In the context of metaphor and persuasion, Peel (2002) asserted that persuasion in metaphor "undergo[es] a series of changes that take readers step by step through a persuasive process as an argument would" (p.43).

Rhetoric in metaphors continues to function as a tool for conveying meaning, triggering emotional reactions (Mio et al., 2005) and portraying linguistic expressions that may sound offensive. Although the use of metaphors in political speeches draws in issues from the surrounding environment, yet metaphors are employed to create messages that are more vivid and that increase the retention of the specific message. In accordance with the field of political discourse, political activities may be conceptualised and expressed as an aim or journey in achieving a target destination or purpose. Mapping in this domain is more likely to focus on determination, struggle amid success and solidarity among citizens.

METHODS

This study employed the qualitative research design to analyse the qualitative data (tweets of Najib and Modi) and to identify the types of metaphorical linguistic expression that emerged in the political tweets.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a period of three months prior to the national election, which in Malaysia were from February to April 2013 and in India, from January to March 2014. A total of 592 tweets were collected from the official Twitter account of Najib, while 545 tweets were gathered from the official profile of Modi as made available on Twitter. Thus, the total number of tweets gathered was 1137. After reading and examining the tweets, refinement of the specified data was achieved by excluding tweets that were posted in the Malay (413 tweets) and Hindi (10 tweets) languages. The exclusion process was necessary as this study aimed to analyse tweets that were originally posted in English only. The refinement process was also conducted to achieve the objective of this study without disregarding other aspects of this study. Hence, a total of only 714 tweets were eventually analysed. The selected tweets were examined through in-depth reading to scrutinise for metaphorical expressions. The first phase of analysis included the identification of metaphorical expressions with reference to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. The purpose of this

method was to identify the figurative and literal meanings of each tweet and the possible expressions.

Data Analysis

In line with the systematic metaphor analysis, the Metaphorical Identification Procedure (MIP) proposed by Pragglejazz Group (2007) and this procedure was further developed by Gerard Steen and his associates. MIP is a procedure in which linguistic expressions are metaphorically recognised on the basis of lexical units derived from a specific discourse structure (Steen, Biernacka, Dorst, Kaal, López-Rodríguez, & Pasma, 2010). A prominent aspect of MIP is that it involves individual to complex form of metaphorical expressions to achieve a higher level of reliability. In the second phase of analysis, MIP was employed to detect the metaphorical meaning of both political figures' tweets during the national election. In accordance to the MIP the occurrence of four stages was evident. The procedure is cited below:

1. The entire discourse was read thoroughly and irrelevant tweets were discarded. This was to establish general understanding of the overall meaning of the tweets in the election context.
2. Lexical units in the text were determined.
3. (a) For each lexical unit in the text, meaning was established in context i.e. how it applied to an entity, relation or attribute in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). What came before and

after the lexical unit was taken into account.

- (b) For each lexical unit, it was determined if there were a more basic contemporary meaning in contexts other than the given context. For our purposes, basic meaning tended to be

- More concrete (what they evoked was easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell and taste)
- Related to bodily action
- More precise (as opposed to vague)
- Historically older

Basic meanings were not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical units.

- (c) If the lexical unit had a more basic current/contemporary meaning in contexts other than the given context, it was decided whether the contextual meaning contrasted with the basic meaning but could be understood in comparison with it.
4. Where the answer to 3-c was yes, the lexical unit was marked as metaphorical.

Adapted from: Pragglejazz Group (2007, p. 3)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This segment analyses, identifies, categorises and explains the various types of conceptual metaphor and Metaphorical Linguistic Expression (MLEs) in the election tweets of both the premiers. The underlying

conceptual metaphors were identified based on the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP). In relation to the CMT proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), a typical conceptual metaphor consists of a target domain and a source domain, and the mappings from the source domain help to form a richer understanding of

the target domain. Based on the analysis, the most prominent conceptual metaphor portrayed in the tweets of Najib and Modi was the ELECTION IS A BUILDING metaphor. Figure 1 exhibits some of the MLEs that were obtained from the tweets of both the premiers.

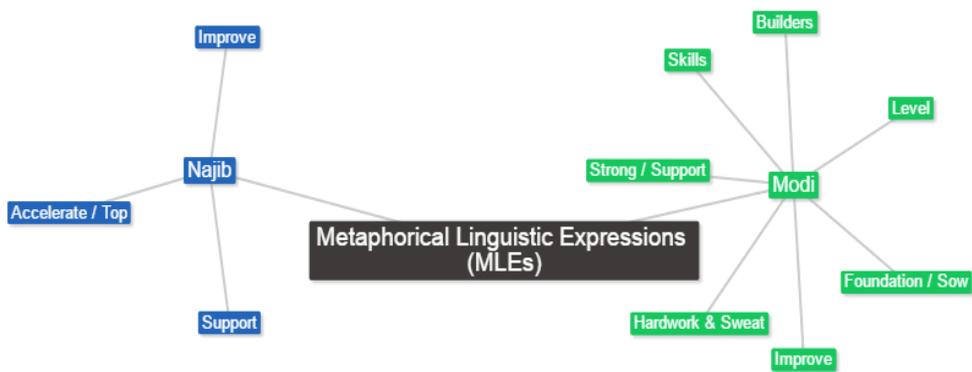


Figure 1. Metaphorical linguistic expressions in the tweets of Najib and Modi

The conceptual metaphor of Election is a Building is pervasively employed in the political discourse, signifying interesting expressions that are highly conventional and abstract. The concept of building as a source domain is then mapped onto the target domain, which is the election. The concept of building resembles a strong edifice that shares similar features as a society. In a society, citizens and politicians are building and they are the builders who construct and reconstruct the nation through intense struggle, hard work, patriotism and dedication. Significantly, this conceptual metaphor entails metaphorical linguistic expressions that are related to the concept

of a building and society. The Election is a Building metaphor further addresses two entailments, which are POLITICIAN ARE NATION CONSTRUCTORS, CITIZENS ARE LABOURERS and THE NATION IS AN EDIFICE..

Metaphor 1: Politicians are Nation Constructors

In the Malaysian context, the notion of nation constructors is observed through the immense effort of Najib as a builder in taking the nation to greater heights. The Metaphorical Linguistic Expressions (MLEs), ‘accelerate’ and ‘top’, are linked to the physical progress of the government

in creating a quick transformation that continues to portray the country as one of the top-rating nations among developing nations. The metaphorical expressions, ‘accelerate’ and ‘top’ portray that Najib as a nation builder intends to form a nation that places people’s priority first as this will enhance the state of a healthy and democratic nation. The term ‘improve’, according to the Oxford dictionary, means consistent progress that increases the quality of life. An example indicated in the Oxford dictionary is, “The situation has improved dramatically during the last few months.” Based on this example, it can be assumed that the term “improve” is related to the living and working conditions that will further enhance citizens’ lives.

The metaphors suggest that Najib and Modi, as constructors of buildings, aim to create a comfort zone for their citizens through the implementation of various projects. The construction of the concept of BUILDING in the national election campaign portrayed a consistent effort by Najib and Modi to construct a futuristic nation in aspects such as the political, social and economic. The results and findings of this study corroborated with the findings of Lu and Ahrens (2008) and Hellín-García (2013), who claimed that POLITICIANS ARE NATION CONSTRUCTORS and builders are politicians who possess a significant role in developing and maintaining a democratic nation. Therefore, the findings supported Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) notion, ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING. Figure 2 portrays the notion of nation constructors.



Figure 2. Concept of politicians as nation constructors

Metaphor 2: Citizens are Labourers

In contrast to the concept of POLITICIANS ARE NATION CONSTRUCTORS, the category of CITIZENS ARE LABOURERS was observed throughout the election campaign. The occurrence of this entailment was not found in the Malaysian election campaign, but this notion occurred throughout the election campaign in India.

MLEs such as ‘builders’, ‘hardwork and sweat’ and ‘skill’ are associated with the abstract concept of citizens as nation builders. Interestingly, this concept links well with the Indian citizens’ profile as hardworking labourers who constantly battle to make India a better nation. The MLE ‘builders’ denotes the power of citizens in helping the nation to develop an identity of its own. In this context, female voters are viewed as nation builders as 12.2% (“Women MPs in Lok Sabha: How have the numbers changed?”, 2016) of women are politically elected as representatives of various departments in government. Female voters’ participation in the election is able to empower women’s contribution towards nation-building. Hence, women as builders has been a significant boost to the growth of

India, especially during elections. Another MLE that is apparent in this notion is the term ‘hardwork and sweat’. According to the Oxford dictionary this term signifies the tendency of a person to complete a task with immense effort; ‘sweat’ specifically refers to perspiration that is released by the body when strenuous physical work is carried out. The emphasis on these terms implies that nation builders or voters who invest effort and hard work into nation-building during the election must constantly deal with challenges or opposition from external forces that may hinder or influence their progress in electing a capable leader to form a holistic nation. In addition, the term ‘sweat’ points to after the vote casting, when voters have personally cast their vote, or done their duty, in the venture of building a nation of calibre. Apart from these terms, another term that is comprehensive in this concept is the MLE of ‘skill’. The word ‘skill’ refers to capability in performing an action or completing a task. In this case, nation builders or voters require skill to transform the nation, and voters should be constantly equipped with electoral knowledge and updates on legislative issues of the country. Voters with skill are essential in building an all-rounded nation, beginning with electing a suitable national leader.

Based on the analysis, the concept of CITIZENS ARE LABOURERS simply means that the citizens of their nation have been consistently assisting Najib and Modi in building the nation towards a greater future. In addition, citizens who are skilled in aspects such as the social, politic and

economic ensure that the nation building process is a success. Thus, the concept of labourers is mapped on the citizens because citizens are lower in the hierarchy to the ruling class. This finding opposes Charteris-Black’s (2013) notion of SOCIAL ORGANISATION IF A BUILDING that emphasises on teamwork between political figures and citizens in the process of nation-building. Meanwhile, the findings of this study focused on citizens as labourers who engaged in the physical work of helping the nation to build a solid edifice. Figure 3 displays Modi’s use of the concept of citizens as labourers in his tweets.



Figure 3. Notion of citizens are labourers

Metaphor 3: The Nation is an Edifice

The conceptual metaphor THE NATION IS AN EDIFICE is another metaphorical entailment beneath the conceptual metaphor Election is a Building. In this concept, the abstract action of nation-construction is metaphorically described as sowing a framework, laying a foundation and cornerstones in the process of construction.

The MLE ‘sow’ and ‘foundation’ according to the Oxford dictionary refer to the notion of planting or spreading a solid underground base of a building, for

example, “Sow the seeds in rows” and “The concrete foundations have been laid.” An essential part of a building is its foundation, commonly known as the centrepiece. Similar to the concept of building, the nation-building procedure requires a cornerstone that will ensure the endurance of the entire building as it would prevent the building from collapsing. In the 2014 election in India, Modi urged the nation to create a foundation for the country by casting their votes for BJP as the party could help develop the nation in aspects such as infrastructure, law and order, tourism, job creation and economic inflation. The enhancement of the foundation concept implied that Modi’s vision of nation-building was to establish a distinctive identity among other political players who aimed at taking advantage of the nation. Similar to the idea of nation-building, the term ‘level’, according to the Oxford dictionary, denotes the height of something in relation to the ground, for instance, “The floodwater nearly reached the roof level” and “The building is equipped with a multi-level parking lot.” In this context, the word ‘level’ portrays the floor of a building or a layer of the ground that takes a person from one level to another. Throughout his use of the concept of nation-building, Modi asserted the need to develop the nation to a higher level to create change for the nation as states in India had been regressing in development as a result of the political, economic and

social changes of the late 1990s. According to the Oxford dictionary, the term ‘support’ and ‘strong’ present similar notions which are, providing physical power that supports or lifts up something, for example, “People have strong feelings about this issue” and “The government supported citizen in all aspects.” The words ‘support’ and ‘strong’ imply that the structure of the building has to be concrete in order to support the nation from being defeated by the other contesting parties. However, the term ‘support’ in the national election of both the countries indicated that the building needed to be supported by the builders by electing a trusted representative to form a strong edifice. A strong and supported building enhances national integrity and promotes solidarity of the nation.

The study revealed that the nation was conceptualised as a building whereby the nation shared similar characteristics as a building. During the national election in Malaysia and India, the concept of nation-building supported the idea of unity and harmony as a unified nation contributes to the success of the election, and this further encourages the society to stand together regardless of political clichés. Hence, the findings of the current study corresponded with those of Lu and Ahrens’ (2008) concept of A COUNTRY IS A BUILDING, which relates to the unified structure of the nation. Figure 4 displays the theme of the nation is an edifice in Najib and Modi’s election tweets.

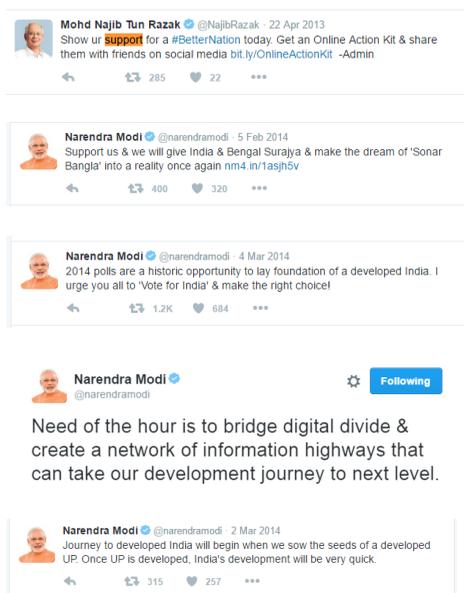


Figure 4. Concept of nation is an edifice

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the metaphorical linguistic expressions of the conceptual metaphor, ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING, based on Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) notion of conceptual metaphors in the tweets of Prime Ministers Najib and Modi during the last national election of Malaysia and India, respectively. The employment of metaphors in the tweets of both the premiers is prominent in denoting implied notions and as a tool to encourage civilians to cast their vote for these individuals. The different types of conceptual metaphor portrayed in the discourse of both political figures regenerate and stimulate twitteratities to comprehend the tweets fully, assisting readers in grasping the underlying meanings. The findings of this study have shown how

choice of words can be vital for emphasising political stance and notions as seen in the tweets of Najib and Modi. Hence, three metaphorical entailments have emerged to describe the concept of the last national election in Malaysia and India: POLITICIANS ARE NATION CONSTRUCTORS, CITIZENS ARE LABOURERS and THE NATION IS AN EDIFICE. The engagement of these metaphorical expressions highlight certain aspects of solidarity among Najib, Modi and their citizens in building the nations’ dignity while maintaining a solid edifice throughout the election. It is fascinating to note the various types of conceptual metaphor projected in the tweets focused on national unity in Malaysia and India during the national election as the main aim of an election is to unify citizens from diverse walks of life. In addition, the outcomes of this study will further contribute to the existing literature and body of knowledge on the understanding of human cognition and the particular concepts pertaining to these nations’ electoral background.

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