

**ETHNIC CONFLICT AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF
METAPHORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE SRI LANKAN
ENGLISH NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS**

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INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the metaphorical construction of issues pertaining to the ethnic conflict and international perceptions found in the editorials during 2001-2007. According to Andriessen (2005, p.7), "metaphors are the basis of our understanding of reality". This study identifies the types of metaphors and frames/scripts used for legitimization and de-legitimization of the issues.

In this paper, the discourses of dichotomy in the editorials are identified. In addition they describe the ideological and attitudinal positions of the editorials and their discursive practices.

METHODOLOGY

Discourse Analysis is useful in analyzing the ways of social construction in editorial discourse through a Social Constructionist Approach (SCA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Fairclough (1989). In CDA, Canagarajah (1999) notes that "critical linguists interpret how speech genres and texts may serve the ideological interests of the powerful" (p.30). This study focuses on the metaphorical discourse in them. It also focuses on the discursive practices behind ideological and attitudinal positions and the discourse constructions by the editorialists. The use of the term *discourse* or *discourse analysis* has been increasingly used in mass media of communication.

This study takes up selected editorials (around 75 in numbers) of the Sri Lankan English newspapers (Lake House, Upali, Wijeya, and Leaders) which appeared during the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the government and the LTTE from 2001 to 2007, with the objective of relating the discourse themes with rhetorical and metaphorical features and ideologies using the method of discourse analysis of Van Dijk (1995).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General ideological principles are visible by explicit statements about the causes consequences, and resolution of the conflict and moral values propagated by Western democracies. Demonising (Rojo 1995) the opponent by means of explicit statements of THEIR bad actions and drawing historical parallels with "demons of the past", the study highlights the moral values of the West and the Sri Lankan government in this context. There is boasting about OUR achievements and positive self presentation by explicitly referring to the military and political achievements of the past.

Metaphorical constructions negatively refer to the roles of the UN, India, USA, EU, International Community, and the Sri Lankan government, the militants and the minority communities. It was reinforced by the use of scripts of International history challenging both the peace process and CFA based on the imperialistic wars fought by the allies in the past. It is through such scripts that *boundaries of difference* between US (being Good) and THEM (being Bad) are projected. The West is *accused* of hypocrisy. Metaphorical construction consists of the "hidden" nature of the peace process; *the blame* for it is placed on the intervention.

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Polarisation Schema (van Dijk, 1998: p.58; Fowler, 1991) are explicit between US and THEM, where US stands for the 'democratic Sri Lanka' and THEM for the International Community including the global powers.

The good values metaphorically attributed to US are democracy, morality, negotiability and compromise. The negative values metaphorically attributed to THEM are violence, dictatorship, non-negotiability and intransigency.

Opinion Coherence is maintained in the metaphorical scripts which form vertical and horizontal intertextual links (Fairclough, 1992, p.103) with events and ideas recorded and published in the past, attributing the same or similar bad qualities to the opponent: (van Dijk, 1998-dictatorship), (Fairclough, 1995-"punishing the enemy" paternalistic schema), (Rojo, 1995-demonisation), (Lakoff, 1992- villain-victim schema).

Implicitness is evident in the comparison between fighting terrorism in Sri Lanka and global war on terrorism, and in the threat in the Indian and international security by "terrorists groups " National and international history was amply used to account for the military or forced political solution that is not recent, but is an "old demon" produced by Tamil Nadu and British, and India from the 1950s onwards. In terms of *historical continuity*, the present war/conflict and intervention and resolution are placed last in the long list of wars Sri Lanka has fought against the Tamil militants and Western Colonial rulers.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Metaphorical Construction reveals that the editorials remain as the texts of 'cultural nationalism'. The stylistic aspects may misconceive the importance of persuasion and reduce the rhetoric to a mere 'surface phenomenon'. It links the content with social context by seeing them as a part of a discourse. It looks at the text's implicit aspects such as hidden political agendas, underlying analogy and its presuppositions. The newspapers are successful in its agenda and mission. This clearly endorses that metaphors may help structuring the argument.

In the metaphorical analysis, the regularity of each type of metaphor/script/frame was highlighted (Semino and Masci, 1996, pp.262-266). Ignoring the differences concerning the types of metaphors used in various media, this study analyzes the most pervasive, recurring metaphors and scripts in the thematic domains of conflict, international relations, and intervention. Schmitt, (2000) says, it can bring out "patterns of relationships, latent structures of meaning, communicative strategies etc. outside the language under study".

This research provides a metaphorical social construction of the editorial discourse on the ethnic conflict and international relations. It focuses on the interplay of socio-political factors that have created particular images of the participants in the conflict, international intervention and conflict resolution. The constructed images are seen as rich with paradox and contradiction and inadequate to account for the complexity of the issue. The dichotomic constructions of the ideological and attitudinal positions reveal cultural and linguistic nationalism. This study has traced metaphorical constructions of linguistic manifestation and manipulation in the media texts.

This study investigated the English newspapers but it recommends an extensive discourse analysis of the metaphorical construction of the native language newspapers, Sinhala and Tamil, on their political discourse. It persuades the newspapers to challenge the stereotypes and provide the 'other picture' with another model of analogy as well for what the ethnic conflict and international relations can be.

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