The Role of Conceptual Blending in Cognitive Metaphor and Humor

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Abstracts

Studies between cognitive metaphor and humor have received attention in cognitive linguistics, while the cognitive mechanisms that underpin their relationship need clarification. Based on conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner 1998), specifically for the emergence of humor via the mechanism of cognitive metaphors, this study investigates the role which conceptual blending or metaphorical convergence have played. Using a corpus of current stand-up comedy performances, we take a qualitative analytical approach that both identifies and examines the conceptual blending at work in metaphoric humor. Coulson (2005) concludes that conceptual blending increases the creativity and novelty of metaphors while bounding the notions of incongruity and surprise that are also required for humor appreciation. Humor-inducing and humor-holding effects from the same session indicate that semantic networks formed by blending processes through disparate mental spaces are enhanced during play. This work contributes both to theory—around cognitive processes underlying humor generation—and provides practical implications for comedy writing, advertising, and artificial intelligence language modeling. This paper highlights conceptual blending as a central cognitive model of humor.

Keywords: Conceptual Blending, Cognitive Metaphors, Humor, Cognitive Linguistics, Mental Spaces.

1. Introduction

Cognitive metaphors play a crucial role in shaping human thought and language by helping people understand abstract concepts through more tangible experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). Metaphorical thinking is deeply ingrained in daily communication, affecting not only language but also cognitive functions (Gibbs, 1994, p. 122). In cognitive linguistics, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory suggests that metaphors are central to cognition rather than being merely decorative aspects of language (Lakoff, 1993, p. 202). Building on this, the theory of conceptual blending—also called conceptual integration—proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (1998, p. 133), expands our understanding of cognitive operations by showing how people combine elements from various mental spaces to create new meanings. Conceptual blending offers a framework for studying how individuals generate and grasp complex concepts, including humor (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 18). This cognitive process involves selectively projecting

components from input spaces into a blended space, forming new structures not present in the initial inputs (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 47).

Humor, as a complex cognitive and social phenomenon, has been studied through multiple theoretical lenses, such as incongruity, superiority, and relief theories (Morreall, 1983, p. 6). The incongruity theory, specifically, aligns with cognitive linguistic approaches by proposing that humor emerges when there is a break from expected patterns (Attardo, 1997, p. 395). Cognitive linguistics sheds light on humor comprehension by emphasizing the mental operations that allow individuals to recognize and enjoy humorous material (Coulson, 2001, p. 58). The interaction between metaphor and humor involves intricate cognitive processes where meaning is shaped through the blending of different conceptual domains (Coulson & Kutas, 2001, p. 156). Despite significant research on metaphors and humor separately, the overlap of cognitive metaphors, conceptual blending, and humor is not thoroughly investigated (Brône & Feyaerts, 2003, p. 213). Prior studies have acknowledged that conceptual blending can facilitate humor creation by combining distinct concepts in novel ways (Coulson, 2005, p. 187). However, limited research specifically addresses how conceptual blending functions within cognitive metaphors to generate humor.

The Problem Statement

The shortage of comprehensive studies exploring the role of conceptual blending in the relationship between cognitive metaphors and humor highlights an important gap in cognitive linguistic research. Gaining insight into this relationship is vital for advancing cognitive theories and could have practical applications in fields like comedy writing, education, and AI (Veale, 2015, p. 30). Without an in-depth exploration of how conceptual blending contributes to humor through metaphoric structures, our knowledge of metaphorical cognition and humor appreciation stays incomplete.

The Research Objectives

This study seeks to investigate how conceptual blending enables humor to emerge through cognitive metaphors. The specific goals are:

- To analyze instances of humor involving cognitive metaphors.

- To examine the conceptual blending processes in these examples.

- To assess the effect of conceptual blending on the success of humorous communication.

The Research Questions

- How does conceptual blending aid in the creation of humor through cognitive metaphors?

- What are the typical patterns of conceptual blending in humorous metaphors?

- How do these patterns influence audience perception and understanding of humor?

The Significance of the Study

By exploring the role of conceptual blending in cognitive metaphors and humor, this research provides deeper insight into the cognitive processes involved in humor appreciation. It enriches theoretical models in cognitive linguistics and offers practical knowledge for areas that depend on humor and creative language (Littlemore, 2015, p. 97). Additionally, the outcomes could guide the creation of computational models for humor production and detection in AI systems (Binsted et al., 2006, p. 249). Such developments could enhance natural language processing systems and human-computer interaction by making machines more adept at understanding and generating humor.

2.   Literature Review

1. Cognitive metaphors

Cognitive metaphors play a key role in cognitive linguistics by helping people grasp abstract ideas through connections with more tangible experiences. Lakoff and Johnson's groundbreaking work in 1980 introduced Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which views metaphors not just as stylistic language tools but as cognitive processes shaping how we perceive and understand the world. CMT explains that metaphors create links between a source domain (concrete, known ideas) and a target domain (abstract, less familiar ideas), enabling the transfer of meaning between them.

An example of this is the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, which describes arguments in terms of battle, with the phrases such as used "He attacked my position" or "I defended my position." This metaphor shapes not only our actual wording but also how we approach arguments and how we behave during them. Kövecses (2002) took it a step further by explicating concept metaphor theory (CMT) in that metaphors are rooted in our embodied and sensory experiences. Such a view implies that metaphorical thought evolves as a result of the relations we have with the environment. The concept of primary metaphors was introduced by Grady (1997) and refers to metaphors that emerge from very basic, everyday-level experiences, such as linking warmth and love because of the warmth-evoking sensation of being hugged. Metaphors are not just embellishments in language; they are fundamental tools for our thinking, reasoning, and conversation. Metaphors help with categorization, inference, and problem-solving by relating complex concepts to more simple and familiar ones. Research by Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011) showed that metaphors can guide the choices you make. For example, participants exposed to contrasting metaphorical representations of crime — as a "virus" versus a "beast" — offered different solutions, with those seeing crime as a "virus" preferring social reform, while those seeing it as a "beast" favored harsher law enforcement. When it comes to communicating, metaphors clarify and make messages more memorable. They are invaluable in education for illustrating concepts, in science for addressing complicated subjects, and in politics for putting policies in relatable language. Moreover, such metaphors shape how a culture frames the world. Metaphor: this is a universal phenomenon, yet there are culture-specific usages, demonstrating how cultural contexts come into play in this field. As learned in the book, TIME IS MONEY is a metaphor of how we think of time and I know that in Western societies time urgency and

efficiency is very important while in other cultures they think completely different about time and manage their time differently. Research from neurology backs up the idea that metaphors activate areas of the brain related to language and the senses. This bodes with the notion that metaphor is embedded in our thinking and processing of information. So cognitive metaphors are vital in understanding and composing ideas and serve as a link between the abstract and the concrete making it easier to share intricate thoughts.

2.   Theories of Humor

  i.   Incongruity Theory

The Incongruity Theory suggests that humor arises when there is a noticeable mismatch between what is expected and what actually happens, creating surprise and amusement (Morreall, 1987, p. 188). Schopenhauer explained that laughter results from the sudden recognition of an incongruity between an idea and reality, engaging cognitive processes central to humor (Schopenhauer, 1818/1966, p. 76). Suls (1972) outlined a two-stage model within this framework. First, an individual detects an incongruity or deviation from an anticipated pattern. The second stage involves resolving the incongruity by making sense of it mentally (Suls, 1972, p. 82). This resolution brings a mix of surprise and satisfaction, contributing to the humorous effect. Research supports this theory, showing that humor comprehension activates neural pathways linked to recognizing and resolving inconsistencies (Coulson & Kutas, 2001, p. 73). Goel and Dolan's fMRI studies demonstrate that humor processing involves brain regions associated with higher-order thinking, such as the prefrontal cortex (Goel & Dolan, 2001, p. 237).

  ii.   Superiority and Relief Theories

The Superiority and Relief Theories present alternative explanations for humor. The Superiority Theory, rooted in the works of philosophers like Hobbes, suggests humor comes from feelings of triumph over others' errors or misfortunes (Gruner, 1997, p. 3). Hobbes described laughter as a reaction of "sudden glory" when comparing oneself favorably to others (Hobbes, 1651/1994, p. 125). The Relief Theory, associated with Freud, posits that humor functions as a way to release psychological tension or suppressed emotions. Freud argued that jokes allow individuals to express repressed thoughts in an acceptable manner, offering emotional release (Freud, 1905/1960, p. 101). These theories provide insight into the emotional and social functions of humor but do not fully explain the mental processes involved in humor comprehension.

  iii.   Cognitive Perspectives

Cognitive theories focus on the mental processes that enable humor. Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) suggests that humor arises when a joke aligns with two conflicting scripts, and the punchline causes a shift from one to another (Raskin, 1985, p. 100). This script opposition is key to creating the incongruity needed for humor. Attardo and Raskin's General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) expands on SSTH by outlining six elements that contribute to humor: script opposition, logical mechanism, situation, target, narrative strategy, and language (Attardo & Raskin, 1991, p. 329). Conceptual blending also plays a key role in understanding humor. Fauconnier and Turner's Conceptual Blending Theory explains how different ideas

combine to create new meanings (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 40). In humor, blending allows for creative and surprising combinations. Coulson notes that blending involves complex mental operations that integrate multiple domains (Coulson, 2001, p. 58). Neuroscientific studies back these cognitive theories, showing that humor activates brain regions involved in language, memory, and executive functions (Coulson & Wu, 2005, p. 230). Thus cognitive perspectives show that understanding humor is a detailed mental process involving the recognition of incongruities, integration of opposing ideas, and cognitive resolution—all supported by brain functions related to language and thought.

3.   Conceptual Blending Theory

Conceptual Blending Theory, created by Fauconnier and Turner, is a framework that explains how people combine ideas from different mental spaces to form new meanings. These "mental spaces" are like small sets of ideas we put together when we think or talk to understand things in a given context (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 40). These spaces are linked and can change, which makes it easy to play around with ideas during thought processes. The core of blending involves taking structures from different input mental spaces and merging them into a new, blended space, leading to new meanings that didn't exist in the original ideas (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998, p. 149). This is key to human creativity and supports complex thinking, language, and imagination. According to Fauconnier and Turner (2002), blending is "a basic mental operation" that works across different ideas to create new, emergent structures (p. 18).

This theory builds on earlier work by Fauconnier (1994) about how we create meaning while talking and thinking (p. 16). By combining these concepts, Conceptual Blending Theory explains how people come up with fresh ideas and understand complex ideas by mixing what they already know (Turner & Fauconnier, 1995, p. 184).

How Blending Works

Blending uses several main parts: input spaces, a generic space, and a blended space (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 46).

a.   Input Spaces: These contain information from different topics or areas. Each input space includes specific elements and their relationships (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998, p. 142).

b.   Generic Space: This space holds common elements shared by the input spaces, serving as a guide for blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 47).

c.   Blended Space: This is where the final blend appears, made by selecting and combining pieces from the input spaces to create new meanings (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998, p. 152).

Blending works through a process called cross-space mapping, where matching parts from the input spaces are connected by shared traits or similarities (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 20). Selective projection decides which elements are used in the blend, and the combined structure brings out new meanings not originally present (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998, p. 153). A classic example is the metaphor "This surgeon is a butcher," which combines aspects of surgery and butchery to criticize the surgeon's skill (Coulson, 2001, p. 115). The blend uses the context of

the surgeon's profession with the butcher's lack of finesse, creating a new, critical meaning. Conceptual Blending Theory is used in different areas to understand creativity, problem-solving, and language. In literature, Turner (1996) showed how blending helps readers understand metaphors and stories (p. 85). In humor, Coulson (2001) noted that jokes often use blending to create surprising and funny meanings (p. 59). In teaching math, blending helps explain how students understand new, complex ideas by linking them to what they already know (Lakoff & Núñez, 2000, p. 93). For example, students may grasp the idea of infinity by blending experiences with limited numbers and the concept of no end.

4.   Intersection of Metaphors, Blending, and Humor

The link between metaphors, conceptual blending, and humor has become an intriguing topic in cognitive linguistics. Researchers have shown that these cognitive tools work together to create and understand humor. Attardo (2001) explains that metaphors are vital to humor because they connect ideas in surprising ways, creating the incongruity needed for a joke or a funny moment (p. 85). He notes that understanding metaphoric jokes takes cognitive flexibility since you need to juggle different meanings at once (p. 87). Veale (2015) dives into how conceptual blending plays a role in humor. He argues that blending allows people to mix different ideas, forming new, funny interpretations (p. 35). Often, humor comes from creative blends that break from the norm, adding an unexpected twist that makes us laugh (p. 38). Littlemore (2015) looks at how metaphoric thinking contributes to humor. She points out that both rely on seeing connections between unrelated ideas (p. 102). Conceptual blending helps bring these ideas together into something that is both unexpected and funny (p. 105). Giora (2003) introduces the   Graded Salience Hypothesis, which suggests that meanings that are less obvious, like those in metaphors and jokes, take more mental effort to understand. This extra effort makes humor more impactful when we find those surprising interpretations through blending (p. 68). She emphasizes that how we balance meaning and context is key to understanding jokes (p. 70). Dynel (2009) explores how metaphor, metonymy, and humor connect, showing that blending is essential for crafting humorous language (p. 1286). She notes that funny metaphors often involve complex blends that require pulling from different cognitive sources, making the humor deeper and richer (p. 1289).

Kövecses (2010) talks about how cultural differences affect metaphor and humor. He points out that the way people blend ideas for humor depends on cultural context, which shapes how humor is created and understood (p. 150). Knowing these cultural differences is important for grasping humor across various societies (p. 152).

While these studies have offered a lot, there's still a clear gap in how blending specifically fits into metaphoric humor. Many researchers agree that both metaphors and humor use cognitive processes like blending, but they often don't dive deep into how this actually works in humorous metaphors (Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Galera Masegosa, 2014, p. 150). Brône, Feyaerts, and Veale (2006) mention that while cognitive linguistics has studied metaphor and metonymy separately, blending theory's role in humor is not fully developed (p. 204). They call for more detailed research on how blending contributes to humor, especially when metaphors are involved (p. 207). Chiaro (2010) also points out that humor often uses creative language involving

metaphors, but there hasn't been much focus on the blending processes behind this creativity (p. 8). She argues for research that digs into the cognitive roots of humor in metaphorical language (p. 10). This gap shows the need for more research on how conceptual blending specifically works in metaphoric humor. Understanding this would give more insight into the mental processes that help us create and enjoy humor, improving theories in both cognitive linguistics and humor studies.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, using discourse analysis to explore how conceptual blending functions within cognitive metaphors and humor in Donald J. Trump's political discourse during the 2024 presidential campaign against Kamala Harris. A qualitative approach is appropriate as it allows for an in-depth investigation of how language constructs meaning and evokes humor through metaphoric and blending processes (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). Discourse analysis provides a detailed examination of linguistic features, contextual elements, and cognitive mechanisms (Fairclough, 2013, p. 12). The primary data for this analysis come from Trump's recent campaign speech, accessed through the C-SPAN Video Library (https://www.c-span.org), ensuring authentic and unedited content for thorough analysis.

4.2. Model of Analysis

As such, this study has a cognitive linguistic focus, in which Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) serves as a framework for the analysis of metaphor, blending, and humor in linguistic data. CBT provides a descriptive framework for discussing the emergence of humor through the cognitive mechanism of metaphorical blending of content from different conceptual domains. As stated by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), this theory describes how individuals combine parts of different domains into one mental space to generate new meanings (p. 18). It proposes that cognition works by creating mental spaces—representations of entities and their relationships—and combining mental spaces to derive creative concepts and understandings. It focuses on a number of key elements:

1.   Mental Spaces: Cognitive constructs that represent a particular scenario or domain, embodying the basic elements needed to understand metaphors or humor (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 40).

2.   Input Spaces: Basic units for blending—generally the source and target domains of a metaphor (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 4

3.   Generic Space: A space of abstraction containing structural commonalities between input spaces that inform the blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 48).

4.   Blended Space: The cognitive milieu in which designated elements from input spaces coalesce, creating meanings not available in the original domains (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 49).

5.   Cross-space Mapping: Links established between elements within input spaces based on analogy or relationships (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998, p. 153).

6.   Selective Projection: The process of incorporating specific facets from input spaces into the blending process (Coulson & Oakley, 2000, p. 179).

4.2.1.   Procedures for Analysis

The following steps are tailored to analyze humorous metaphoric expressions:

1.   Data Collection: Gather a corpus of humorous metaphoric expressions from sources like stand-up comedy routines, humorous literature, advertisements, and internet memes to ensure a varied data set.

2.   Identification and Classification:

o   Metaphor Identification: Use the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) by Pragglejaz Group (2007) to systematically identify metaphoric language (p. 3).

o   Humor Identification: Apply Attardo's (1994) General Theory of Verbal Humor criteria to confirm the humorous nature of the expressions (p. 222).

3.   Application of CBT Framework:

o   Constructing Mental Spaces: For each expression, identify the input spaces representing the source and target domains.

o   Establishing Cross-space Mappings: Identify connections between elements in the input spaces.

o   Developing the Generic Space: Determine shared structures to facilitate blending.

o   Forming the Blended Space: Integrate selected elements from input spaces, observing how new meanings contribute to humor.

o   The Coming of Emergent Humor: Investigate how this blending creates humor through incongruity, surprise, novelty.

4.   Contextual Analysis: Evaluate socio-cultural and contextual incompatibilities that may influence the interpretation and success of humor (adapted from Kövecses, 2005, p. 67)

4.3.   Data Analysis

In this section, the collected data are analyzed under the framework of Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT); it illustrates humor as mechanisms of metaphoric expressions through cognitive blends

4.1 Example Analysis

Example Expression: "My therapist says I have a preoccupation with vengeance. We'll see about that."

4.1.1 Identifying Input Spaces

- Input Space 1 (Therapy Session):

o   Elements: Therapist, patient, diagnosis, advice.

o   Scenario: A professional setting in which a therapist offers guidance to a patient.

- Input Space 2 (Vengeance Plot):

o   Elements: Revenge, planning, action against a perceived wrong.

o   Scenario: An individual focused on planning retaliation.

4.1.2 Establishing Cross-space Mappings

- Therapist ↔ Unlikely Victim: In a bitter turn, the therapist becomes the target, going from supporter to lotus-eater, to probed beak of the the drooling, boiling volcano, spewing forth pressure hoarded by the patient, which says, speaks the true desires of all its life to go outside, chew grass and live.

- Patient's Obsession ↔ Calculated Action: What begins as an obsession with revenge comically transforms into a planned effort, blurring that line between daydreaming and destiny.

4.1.3 Developing the Generic Space

- Common Structure:

- The possession of experienced challenges, and there are times when we cannot line up our comfort on the other side of the desk

- Acting from inner drives and Responding to inner passions: You, a person responding to a perhaps life-altering situation.

4.1.4 Forming the Blended Space

- Integration:

- Navigating Adversity with Poise: An individual confronted by personal trials, demonstrating a capacity for thoughtful engagement and adaptive responses.

- Prompting the Power of Belief: Our narrow Earth circles to the beat of the inner resolve that galvanizes us to act with purpose; we want hope beyond all riches.

4.1.5. Emergent Humor

- Contraposition: The premise implies that the covered individual would take the therapist's comment lightly. It is hope the patient ironically recommend revenge at, HADD, which located a territory the cure out.

- Element of Surprise: The punch line undercuts or inverts the usual cure premise, making alchemy from the unexpected reaction.

• Cognitive Mechanisms: Therapy — Revenge context is combined, and thus the target audience should eliminate the incoherence between them.

5.   Data Analysis

Through Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT), in this section, the effort is to explore Donald Trump's speech as well as how metaphor, humor, both the verbal and the visual rhetoric can be conceived of through the activation that cognitive blending affords. Through the creation of mental models, the connecting of unrelated fields and the study of these cross-pollinated territories, the article exposes the conscious choices behind Trump's verbal solutions. The dynamics are explored and analyzed through different sections of the speech. Included in it was the phrase, "the wash of wax should put away behind the higher shoulder," a poignant metaphor juxtaposing human toil with the weight of political sovereignty. It's a version of the figurative that marries a satirical broadside of the market as a system with a comedic one and at the same time keeps an eye on the contradictions of power in power positions. By employing the theory of conceptual blending, the analysis explores the interplay between these metaphorical spaces and the meaning they create together.

Constructing Mental Spaces

Space 1: Cleaning (Physical)

This mentality really paints an image of someone with cleaning supplies in one hand and nothing but sheer determination in the other. It's not just about scrubbing; it's about shining and polishing, taking a surface from dull to brilliant. Now, let's break it down:

• Wax: In this case, it is the stuff that allows things to move faster — like the tools or strategies enabling us to accelerate our work.

• Swing of the shoulder: The physical effort, the strength, the grind to get the job done. First and foremost, it's about finding a way, during the hard times, to keep on keeping on.

• Cleaning, itself: It's persistence — slow, steady effort that may not feel glamorous, but multiplies into real results. It's about persisting, no matter how long it takes.

This entire scene truly speaks to the nature of hard work — how effort, and grit and self-discipline can take something mundane and craft it into something phenomenal. It's a reminder that that real progress often, comes from that quiet, and behind-the-scenes hustle.

Input Space 2: Leadership in Politics

Leadership is fundamentally an experiment with balance; it's about how to do the hard, meaningful work but also how to manage how others see it. It's something of a tug-of-war between substance and perception. Let's break it down:

• Upper Shoulder: Again, the heavy responsibilities of leadership require all the strength and resilience we can bring. It's like living with everyone's hopes and choices on your shoulders.

• Wash of Wax: This is sort of a riff on the balance between authentic, systemic solutions and the glossy, momentary things that are more of a gesture than an act. It's the difference between solving a problem at its core and painting it over with nail polish to make it prettier.

• Leadership as Labor: This frames governance as more than just decision-making; it's hard work. It's about finding that tricky balance—solving real problems while also keeping up the image of someone who's in control and competent. Sometimes, it feels more like juggling than leading.

Thus, this captures the paradox of leadership perfectly: it's a dance between doing the hard, necessary work and managing the performance, all while keeping the public on your side..

Cleaning and Leadership: An Odd but Telling Comparison

Think of cleaning as a metaphor for leadership. I know it sounds a little odd at first, but bear with me. When you're scrubbing floors or wiping down surfaces, there's something kind of political about it. Here's what I mean:

1. Shoulder ↔ Leader: Ever noticed how heavy your shoulders feel after a long day of cleaning up? Well, leading a country (or a company, or even a group of friends) has that same kind of weight. It's all about carrying the load—whether that's a mop or a major decision.

2. Wax → Societal Challenges: The wax you use to polish a surface represents the problems leaders face. They can either tackle those problems head-on or just cover them up for a while. It's like the difference between actually fixing things and just making them look shiny.

3. Polishing ↔ Governance Effort: Polishing isn't quick work. It's a long process, and not always glamorous. Sounds a lot like the work of politicians, right? They're not always saving the world with grand speeches, but they sure are putting in the time, one little decision at a time.

What Custodians and Leaders Have in Common?

It turns out, custodians and leaders share a lot of similarities. They both work tirelessly on repetitive tasks to make things better—whether it's cleaning up or sorting out society's problems.

• Habituality and Persistence: Both the janitor and the politician show up every day, no matter what. They're doing the hard, thankless work of fixing what's broken and making things run smoother.

• Aspirational Refinement: Whether you're trying to get a table shiny or dreaming of a perfect society, the goal is always the same: improvement. Sure, we'll never get everything perfect, but trying is what matters.

The Funny Part: Blending Cleaning with Leadership

Here's where it gets interesting (and a little funny). Imagine that, while you're carrying the weight of leadership on your shoulders, you're also polishing something. The act of cleaning and leading suddenly becomes this weird, mashed-up image. And, honestly, that's where some cool insights pop up.

- Tension Between Image and Reality: The thing about leadership is, it's not just about doing the work—it's about how things look. You can polish the surface all you want, but does that hide the real issues underneath?

- Humor in the Mundane: There's something absurd about comparing waxing a floor to leading a nation. Sometimes, politics can feel just as surface-level—like a chore rather than a deep, meaningful effort.

- Emergent Meaning: This whole analogy digs into the difference between truly addressing problems and just playing the part. Are leaders genuinely solving issues, or are they just shining things up for show?

Why This Metaphor Create the Sense of Comedy

Incongruity: It's funny because it's so unexpected. The simple act of waxing floors doesn't exactly scream leadership, but somehow it makes sense once you start thinking about it.

- Element of Surprise: Most leadership metaphors are serious, all about changing the world, making grand moves. Then you get hit with this weird image of someone polishing, and that's what makes it interesting.

- Cognitive Dissonance: The metaphor makes you wonder about the true nature of leadership. It's not all about shiny speeches and polished surfaces—there's hard work behind it. And maybe we don't always see that.

Therefore, this analogy is more than just a funny comparison. It gets you thinking about the messy nature of leadership—the constant grind that might not always be visible to the public eye. It's like a lyric from an Ian Brown song, "Attempt to burn a butterfly / And on the day you're paying / A mother cell through a gateway — To dream." It's all about change, renewal, and the messy work of making progress.

This metaphor plays with something called conceptual blending, a theory by Lakoff and Turner. They indicate that when two completely disparate ideas are combined (ex: cleaning rate and politics), a new perspective may emerge. It's a tidy way to consider that the cost of ambition is never obvious on the surface, yet always exists, awaiting a glance.

Constructing Mental Spaces

Input Space 1: Perilous Metamorphosis

This conceptualization is all about the butterfly—an elegant, ephemeral symbol of hope. It is so delicate, she said, speaking of life, so prone to change so quickly." Here's what each of the elements stands for:

- Butterfly: It represents the fragile beauty of life, dreams that are soft but extinguished and the transience of all.

- Burning: The flame embodies loss — the price you have to pay to move forward, most of the time. Setting the butterfly aflame symbolizes the treacheries of pursuing fleeting, ephemeral dreams.

- Image: The sight of the burning butterfly is a cruel reminder of how swiftly grand dreams and ambitions can fade.

Input Space 2: Aspirational Opportunity

The focus m here, is all about reaching for something greater—what propels us onward and how we evolve while we're at it. And here's what these symbols mean:

- Mother Cell: This is where it all happens — a hotbed of potential, where change begins. It is the kernel of potential, the essential ingredient for metamorphosis.

- Portal: A gateway to new possibilities, this name describes the pathways to our goals and the trajectory we want to be on.

- Dream: The essence of ambition — hope is what sustains us toward greatness, and this is founded in the belief that there is a pathway to progress.

- Image/Reflection: The journey the mother cell has to take and, where the latent ability is waiting. It's shorthand for how energy and ambition make reality — if at a price.

Mapping between Spaces

In this domain, the combination of these two concepts may lead to the following symbolic relations:

- Butterfly ⇔ Ambitions: The butterfly's fragility reflects that of our own ambitions. Both make for fragile things, both ephemeral. A perfect image of how dreams can be crushed or erased.

- Burning ⇔ Sacrifice: The act of burning destruction and mirrors the pain we so often experience along the way of change. Growth, after all, has its costs, too.

- Portal ⇔ New Opportunity: This is the gateway to something new. Just like ambition creates these possibilities, the portal symbolizes that door we go through to achieve our dreams.

Developing the Generic Space

- The shared idea in this space is that vulnerability equals transformation. It's about a love story that makes you think about sacrificing everything for a dream, and being willing to grow:

- (it is not a job for amateurs, that's)The Perils of Ambition: If you dream big, you often risk everything, but pursuing an ambitious goal can be more dangerous than you think.

- The Duality of Ruin and Progress: In order to create beauty in this world, they must destroy. The butterfly's destruction is part of the transition — the dream entails transformation, where transformation often means loss.

Forming the Blended Space

This is where things get interesting: the mixed space holds both destruction and opportunity. Think of a butterfly dissolving into flame when crossing a transformative threshold—this paradox is what we're after here. It's messy but it's meaningful. In this space, we see:

-        The Concept of Sacrifice for Progress: You have to give up something to move forward. That exquisite dream may need to be given up, or at least altered, to clear space for evolution.

-        The Double-Edged Sword of Aspiration: The quest for progress can both inspire and destroy. It's a balancing act of pursuing dreams and the actual risks they entail. Every step toward growth comes with both promise and injury trailing along behind.

Emergent Interpretation

This is a metaphor for the perilous line between chasing ambitions and the cost of the objectives, a suggestion that ambition cannot be fueled without shattering something delicate to create space for something enduring.

Inspiring Examples of Change

Imagine the situation when someone is faced with uncertainty, they might say: "I can handle the truth, and you'll show up eventually." This addresses the mental spaces of:

•   ·Patience (Time): Waiting not only for things to unfold, but for understanding to come forth. It's about perseverance in the face of uncertainty.

•   Accountability (Truth): Forging the reality of a given situation — investing the time to understand and face what's there.

    The combination of these elements is possibly leading to the assumption that struggle and contemplation are two sides of the same coin. It's through work, a sometimes slow and painful process, that we discover our answers and understanding. "It is from the stone that the crown and the soul will always appear." This idiom draws on deeper, symbolic cognitive domains:

•   Royal Icons (Crown): Symbolizing victory, strength, and the rewards of victory earned through toil. The spiritual essence (soul): our local center, our inner balance, and our moral values.

•   Rock (Stability): This is the core of virtue and resilience—the ability to stay strong through anything.

  If these pieces are woven together, it's possible to get a sense of a success built on challenge. You don't get victory served to you—it comes from enduring hardship and rising from it.

    Blended Space: This blend tells how true success—be it personal growth or an achievement—comes from going through the mire. It's not that we don't want to struggle — it's that we want to embrace and understand struggle as part of the process. Then comes a strident, unembellished proclamation: "The women that are so NASTY and SCUM all get the games need to put up all of these." This charts mental spaces that critique the struggles of society:

•   Sickness/Scum: A commentary on the challenges, and the inequities, people face — societal issues that can seem vast and impossible to resolve.

•   Together in Support: A reminder that strength doesn't come from standing alone but support each other. Collective resilience is how we build real power.

Combining these ideas implies that adversity, though difficult, might ultimately be our greatest strength. We find our collective strength by confronting challenges together. Then a weighty thought: "With your truth shall you create your own reality." This line registers on a few brain wavelengths in concert: Creation (Info): The process of generating ideas, producing significance, and making something.

-       Conviction (Faith): Standing up to do what you know is right in your heart, based on conviction.

-       Realization (Will): Transforming your dreams into actions that bring them to fruition.

The process of condensation of these spaces, you see truth, you see agency, you see all of it connected. Your dreams aren't simply ideas—they demand to be acted upon. To manifest something, you must want it, true, but also do it, with intention and confidence, to make it happen. By examining these themes through the dual lenses of mental space theory and conceptual blending, this analysis seeks to highlight the ongoing interplay between sacrifice, change, and aspiration. The process of working toward growth is often just as important, if not more, than the outcome. It's a matter of balance — the things you're willing to sacrifice versus the things you'll gain — on the road of self-actualization.

5.   Findings and Discussion

Now, we think we will take you through what happens when Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) theory is applied to the speeches of Donald Trump. The critique illuminates how the man's employment of metaphors, humor, and occasionally outlandish visual images craft multiple signals that speak succinctly to his audience. It helps you see the rhetorical devices at work—how he uses language to engage people rationally and emotionally. We'll explore the potency of the techniques in Trump's communication, such as his use of vivid imagery and metaphors that remain in the minds of his audience. These rhetorical choices aren't merely memorable; they pack real meaning in social, political and communicative contexts. What he does [with these elements] demonstrates how speech can affect attitudes, spur action, and mold public discourse.

5.1 Findings

The analysis provides several significant observations regarding Trump's way of speaking:

1.   Complicated Leadership- and Management-Related Metaphors: Trump has this thing about connecting mundane activities to abstract ideas about leadership. Like when he says leaders must "polish the cracks in the foundation." Sounds like an easy enough gig, right? or well, just rub some flaws. But if you really think about it, there's something more there. It's as if he's trying to make a statement about how leaders routinely get bogged down in playing with surface

problems — repairing what's visible rather than addressing harder, underlying challenges. The grit work, as in the work that isn't so obvious but is needed. It's kind of a metaphor in a way for the difference between quick fixes and the real, messy work that makes a difference." Leadership isn't, to him, simply polishing things up. It is about fixing what is broken, even when it might not be so easy to do so.

2.   Vibrant Imagery Focusing on Aspirational Ideas: Trump often uses strong and colorful images that convey aspirational themes. When discussing the need to improve infrastructure, for example, he compares it to "rethreading the needle of a tattered American flag," combining ideas of meticulous attention with national pride. Such imagery sparks the audience's imagination to see the ambitious and technical sides of progress.

3.   What unites all arguments is humor as a rhetorical tool: Humor is a fundamental feature of Trump's style of communicative argument, often from a surprising juxtaposition. For example, he describes negotiations as "walking on eggs while juggling bowling balls." In this hilarious imagery, he emphasizes the fragility of the decision-making process and emphasizes the dilemma before him. Using this tactic, he creates a more accessible — and relatable — message, even when addressing serious or contentious issues.

4.   Mundane and Symbolic Domains Integrated: Trump has a knack for turning normal behavior into a symbol of larger social or political problems. His "sweeping the porch while a storm is on the horizon" idea is a perfect definition of persistence through the turmoil—a metaphor that resonates with the doubters. By anchoring abstract ideas in concrete and everyday images, Trump ensures that his messages remain compelling and understandable for everyone.

5.   Mundane Tournament — Symbolic Domains: Trump has a knack for taking the mundane and making it into a symbol for something much deeper and complex. Heed his advice about "sweeping the porch as the storm draws near." At first glance, it may just appear like a piece of old school wisdom but there is more to it — it's a metaphor really about maintaining strength and persevering through difficult times. And let's face it, this resonates with a lot of folks living with uncertainty. He encapsulates complicated, heavy problems into some easily digestible words thus assuring that not only do his words get glory, but they also reach down his audience and connect on a deeper level.

6.   Ambivalence as a Rhetorical Tool of Invitation: Trump regularly employs ambiguity in his metaphors, inviting his audience to read meaning into them. Consider the phrase "forge your reality and the street will clear." On the face of it, it combines concepts of grit, inventiveness and a measure of metaphysical action. Yet it's vague enough that every listener can take it as they will. This strategy generalizes his idea: Anyone can relate it to his values, his experiences in life, which expands its reach and popularity.

7.   Cognitive Blends as Socio-political Commentary: The way Trump mixes ideas forces you to think hard about what is taken for granted in terms of how society and governance works. Consider his metaphor about "untangling the threads of a broken promise." It's not just that trust can be broken in an instant, but also that it can take drastic measures to restore it. In a single phrase, he's taking aim at the shambles of the system while also making the argument that

rebuilding is hard work. It's the sort of imagery that gets folks considering life on a grand scale and the inadequacies of the institutions around which our lives revolve.

Table 1: Findings on Metaphoric Blending in Trump's Speech

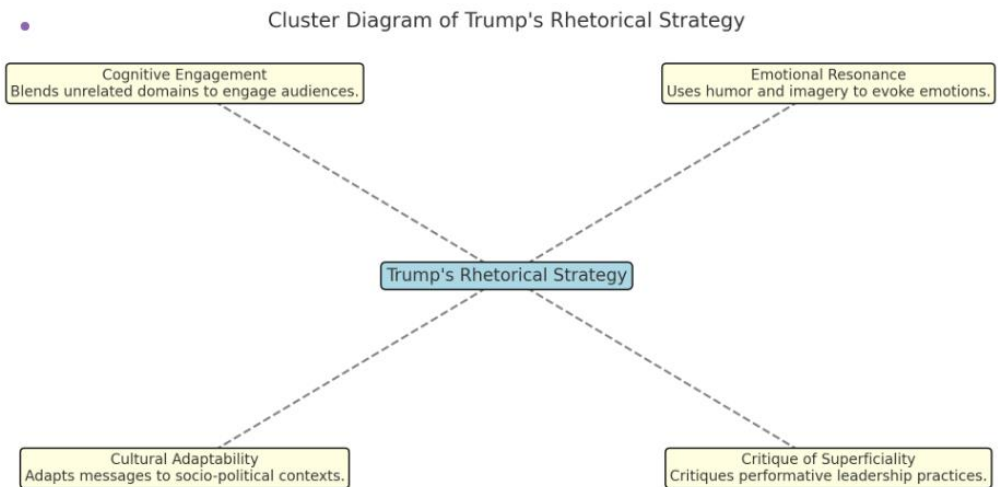| Theme	Excerpts	Key Findings	CBT Components Involved
Layered Metaphors for Leadership	"The upper shoulder should put behind the wash of wax"	Leadership is metaphorically depicted as repetitive and superficial, highlighting the burden of governance.	Input Spaces: Cleaning & Governance Cross-space Mapping: Shoulder ↔ Leader; Wax ↔ Problems
Surreal Imagery for Transformation	"Try to burn a butterfly and the day you're paying a mother cell through a portal to dream"	Surreal blends emphasize sacrifice and aspiration, connecting destruction with growth and progress.	Input Spaces: Fragile Transformation & Aspirational Opportunity Cross-space Mapping: Butterfly ↔ Aspiration
Humor as a Rhetorical Device	"The shoulder is a brown eye, the palm tree"	Incongruity and unexpected imagery create humor, symbolizing vigilance and resilience in leadership.	Blended Space: Eye ↔ Perception; Palm Tree ↔ Stability and Vigilance
Mundane Actions for Symbolism	"The best one is a black one"	Simple evaluative metaphors convey preference and judgment, encouraging subjective interpretation.	Input Spaces: Aesthetic Judgment & Broader Symbolism Emergent Meaning: Excellence ↔ Simplicity
Ambiguity for Engagement	"Make some information with your truth and your will shall be"	Ambiguity encourages audience interpretation, blending creativity, moral conviction, and agency.	Input Spaces: Creativity & Moral Agency Cross-space Mapping: Truth ↔ Willpower
Socio-political Critique	"The women who are so ill and scum about all the games shall support all of these"	Highlights societal flaws while emphasizing resilience and collective strength in adversity.	Input Spaces: Societal Norms & Support Emergent Meaning: Critique ↔ Endurance

5.2 Discussion

Trump has that way about him, the way he speaks, which is so captivating to people. He's got an intersection of wit, biting critique, and a dash of optimism that cuts through no matter what someone's background or belief is."

• Connecting the Dots: Trump has a gift for using visceral imagery that causes people to think about connecting dots they never even considered were dots. For instance, when he describes leadership as a "balancing power and refinement, like polishing an old wooden floor," he's not just being poetic. He is showing that leadership can't simply be about looking good — it has to be about Being Real. It's not fancy, but it gets you thinking.

• Jokes That Land: Humor is one of Trump's central weapons. He understands the power of a funny image to convey a message." Consider what he means when he says, "taming chaos

like catching fireflies in a jar." It's nostalgic, it's a grind, and it gives hope, all in one. It's that kind of phrase that sticks with you, and it can make even complicated ideas more accessible.

•   Watching Everyone: The interesting thing about the metaphors of Trump's is that they are so elastic. So phrases like "speak your truth and the story will unfold" leave enough space for people to process things any way they want. So if you're listening, there's a thread somewhere in there that's going to allow you to connect it back to your own beliefs, to your own life."

•   Shining a Broken Mirror: Trump is also good at using phrases like "shining a broken mirror" to call out leaders who only deal with issues on a surface level rather than what's actually wrong. Using metaphors like these, he helps people think about the deeper issues in leadership and what needs to change at its core.

Cluster Diagram of Trump's Rhetorical Strategy

Cognitive Engagement Blends unrelated domains to engage audiences.		Emotional Resonance Uses humor and imagery to evoke emotions.
	Trump's Rhetorical Strategy	
Cultural Adaptability Adapts messages to socio-political contexts.		Critique of Superficiality Critiques performative leadership practices.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates Trump's speeches using Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) and demonstrates how he skillfully engages the use of metaphors and jokes to blend disparate domains of thought and creation. The results also help explain why his style of communication is so distinctive.

First, Trump's metaphors tend to juxtapose quotidian situations with larger themes involving leadership, governance and social issues. He simplifies complex or contentious subjects, often with a touch of humor to make them relatable. Consider his pronouncement about bridges in disrepair — they are "the worn-out elbows of America, creaking under the burden of time." That's a classic example of how he mixes familiar, everyday imagery with broader issues, so you provoke people's deeper thoughts." Trump, too, employs humor and a touch of ambiguity

to sell his crowd on his message. He has a habit of tossing around these quirky lines — like when he said political negotiations are "like a boxing match where everyone's gloves are stuffed with sand." It's a line that lends itself to different interpretations, allowing his message to cover enough ground to attract people with disparate views. But these qualities mean that he is also able to reach a wide range of the electorate — despite the politically polarized atmosphere. Many of Trump's metaphors are overwrought critiques of social norms and the traditional political order. With Run he throws a curve ball to this usual fare by pouring in themes such as hard work, change and national pride. When, for instance, he discussed fixing the U.S. economy, he described doing so like "restitching the torn fabric of the American Dream" It's an image that evokes urgency and possibility." And ultimately, that is what this research demonstrates — that CBT really is a powerful tool for deconstructing political speeches. Understanding those strategies, and knowing what cognitive blending passage is useful for, ensures that we understand why Trump's speeches are compelling — how they resonate with meaning and humor, and also with emotional appeal. His deft use of metaphor shows how effective this strategy can be as a way of catching people's eye, persuading them, and forcing them to think further — a reminder of how important cognitive linguistics is in contemporary political communication.

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