WAR METAPHOR STRATEGIES IN EXPRESSING COVID-19 MESSAGES IN PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHES IN KENYA IN 2020

John Habwe
Mary N. Ndung'u

Abstract:

Presidential addresses are commonly used by leaders across the globe in addressing issues pertinent to society. Such addresses were given during the wake and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya. Since the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed, the then President of the Republic of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta addressed the nation on a regular basis regarding the spread of COVID-19 and the containment measures meant to slow down its spread. In Kenyatta's speeches, there were many metaphors used while addressing the nation on COVID-19. The war metaphors were however found to be preponderant. This paper therefore investigates some of the WAR metaphors that were used in the presidential speeches in Kenya with a view to establishing what they were, why they were dominant, and how they were used in order to achieve communicative effect. The paper also makes an investigation of the conceptual nature of the WAR metaphors used in selected presidential addresses in Kenya. The paper further sought to interrogate the metaphorical implications of their usage in information management among Kenyans given that metaphorical constructions are efficient tools in helping citizens understand the complex information about COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this, data for this study were collected from presidential speeches that were delivered to the Kenyan nation. The speeches were purposively selected from among eight (8) presidential speeches given between March and October 2020. This was the period within when Covid-19 pandemic was at its peak in Kenya. The data were transcribed and analysed qualitatively. The study was guided by the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This theory sees metaphor as a means by which language users

cognitively think by way of transferring attributes from the concrete domain to the abstract domain thus making the abstract domain clearer, more simple, more understood and presented with some emphasis and even more foregrounded. The study found out that WAR metaphors were used essentially to warn, caution, inform, encourage, rally, and reassure the Kenyan people that the Kenyan government was taking charge of the entire situation. Most importantly, the metaphors were used in the oversimplification of information that was relayed to the people of Kenya in the management of COVID -19. The metaphors used were largely drawn from the Kenyan socio-cultural environment thus expected to make Kenyan people understand the complexity and nature and the effects of COVID-19.

Keywords: WAR metaphors, presidential addresses, COVID-19 pandemic, conceptualization, culture

1. Introduction

The world has over the years experienced several epidemics which have been a threat to human life. These pandemics include the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2002, the 2009 H1NI pandemic and the Ebola outbreak in 2014. Such pandemics are known to cause deaths and illnesses thus affecting the socio-economic status of nations and individuals negatively. The COVID-19 pandemic is the most recent of these pandemics and it has spread to all corners of the globe. Since it was first reported in Wuhan China in 2019, it spread to other parts of the world at an amazing rate. The entire world as a result experienced lockdowns in an attempt to slow down its spread. African countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Morocco, Egypt, Kenya, and Burundi experienced and reported high number of infections from the COVID-19 pandemic. In view of these rising numbers of COVID-19 patients, there were global efforts to stop or at the very least slow down the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. Such efforts included travel advisories, precautions, warnings, orders and other containment measures from various government departments.

In Kenya, when COVID-19 was first reported there was a big challenge that brought some issues to the fore. There was a casual attitude with which Kenyans treated it. Most Kenyans thought it was not a serious disease after all. Further, there were rumours in Kenya

especially in social media that COVID-19 was a creation of the state, and that the government was using it as a way of obtaining international funding. Following other practices elsewhere, the government shut down production units rendering many people jobless. Others were forced to work from their homes. Measures were put in place including weekly ministerial press statements by the cabinet secretary, Ministry of Health in Kenya on the status of the COVID pandemic, use of the media to keep Kenyans adequately informed on the status and precautions to take, and presidential addresses by the president which were given on a regular basis, after every two weeks, during the period between March and July 2020. Could these concerns have been the reason the president of Kenya applied WAR metaphors in his speeches? Are WAR metaphors adequately understood? Was language on the whole a critical component in relaying the critical information needed in the management of this pandemic? Were all these efforts made to ensure that COVID-19 pandemic   does not negatively impact the Kenyan population?

In an attempt to address the issues above, this paper investigates the WAR metaphors that were used in selected presidential addresses with a view to establish why they were dominant. The paper further seeks to interrogate the metaphorical effects and the implications of their usage in information management among Kenyans given that metaphorical constructions are efficient tools in helping citizens understand the complex information about COVID-19 pandemic. This was in line with WHO (2020) who outlined six crucial principles for effective communication during this pandemic: accessibility, actionability, credibility, relevance, promptness, and understandability. Governments the world over were advised to make any pandemic-related information timely accessible and use plain language. Since COVID-19 pandemic related strategies were abstract, the presidential addresses in Kenya heavily utilized metaphorical expressions which were concrete to aid in relaying information to the citizens. Through metaphor, people could arguably understand the situation and follow the guidelines to prevent the spread of the coronavirus

2. Theoretical Orientation

This paper was informed by the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) that was proposed and developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Unlike the classical model on metaphors by Aristotle which views metaphor as expressing something in terms of the attributes of another thing (Stallman, 1999:10), CMT theory sees metaphor as a means by which language users cognitively think by way of transferring attributes from something concrete

to another that is abstract, (Kövecses 2010:4); thus making the abstract thing clearer, more simple, more understood and presented with some emphasis and even more foregrounded. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), also called Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT), was expanded within the discipline of Cognitive Linguists. The theory received its prominence at the publication of *Metaphors We Live By*, (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). CMT has since then grown and expounded. CMT has a basic principle which states that metaphor operates at the cognitive level, that is, at the level of the human mind.

Metaphors show the relationship between two cognitive domains the 'source' domain and the 'target' domain (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). The source domain has a set of literal elements, attributes, processes and connections, connected semantically and kept together in the mind of language users. These are experienced in language via words and expressions which are related and organized in sets defined by linguists as 'lexical sets' or 'lexical fields'. The 'target' domain is the abstract domain, and it acquires its form from the source domain, through mapping of the metaphorical link, or 'conceptual metaphor'. Target domains have connections between entities, attributes and processes which reflect those in the source domain. At language level, entities, attributes and processes in the target domain are presented through words and constructions from the source domain called metaphorical constructions which are distinct from conceptual metaphors.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is anchored on a number of tenets. Only four of the tenets are relevant in the analysis of data in this paper. Firstly, there is the tenet on the conceptual nature of metaphor. According to this principle, metaphor is not simply based on language alone but shows embedded relationships between conceptual systems in the brain. These conceptual systems are referred to as domains or frames which are a reflection of the mental organization of human experience.

Secondly, the mapping process in conceptual metaphors is unidirectional. Conceptual Metaphor Theory contends that conceptual metaphorical mappings are unidirectional, that is mapping of structures is done from the source domain to the target domain and not vice versa. This is evident from example (1), where mapping is from the construction whose attributes are 'to furiously go out of control' and onto the construction 'it' (COVID-19 virus).

Thirdly, the image schemas are structured as source domains for metaphorical mapping, (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, in Evans and Green 2006:301-305) that is, the image schemas

are the knowledge structures which are sourced directly from language users' pre-conceptual embodied experience. These knowledge structures carry meaning at the cognitive level mainly because they derive from the embodied experience, which directly carries meaning. From example (1), the image schemas of COVID-19 virus include 'able to move into action across cities and countries, unstoppable, not sparing anyone and moving courageously'. These image schemas are mapped on to the target domain for conceptualization to take place.

Lastly there is the hiding and highlighting feature in metaphor. This tenet holds that in the interpretation of metaphorical constructions, the mapping of encyclopaedia entries from the source domain to the target domain allows the highlighting of certain elements of the target domain and at the same time concealing other elements. This allows interpretation of metaphors only in specific contexts of metaphor use. For instance, from example (1), only image schemas or attributes which are related to the war metaphor are used in the mapping process. Those which have no relationship such as 'settling down after an attack or even making amends with the enemy' are not considered.

3. Review of Related Literature

Over the years a considerable number of studies have documented the use of metaphors in the fight against diseases and also its role in other aspects of human life. Kobia (2008) for instance, conducted a study on the use of metaphorical language in the management of HIV/AIDS in Kenya. Kobia observed that Ololuyia speakers of Western Kenya use metaphors when discussing issues related to HIV/AIDS. This is because sex is a taboo topic in the Luhya community and cannot be discussed overtly without a metaphorical strategy which camouflages some information but at the same time relaying the intended meaning. Besides, the speakers choose to use metaphors because some of the speakers lack literal equivalents for some concepts. The metaphorical strategies help them talk about myths and reveal reality in an appropriate way thus protecting the face of the interlocutors in the Ololuyia speech community. Among the Abaluhya of Western Kenya, politeness is highly regarded. The study explored the perceived origin, spread, signs and ways of dealing with HIV/AIDS pandemic. The study is relevant to the current study as it sheds light on how CMT is used in the interpretation of conceptual, metaphors. However, the two studies differ as they have investigated two different pandemics; HIV-AIDS and COVID-19

pandemics, whose outbreak and spread are also considered to have occurred at different times historically.

In his examination of sexist overtones in Kiswahili metaphors, Simala (1998) analyses the metaphor's structural organization which aimed at arriving at the expression of content in relation to its total effect. He described, explained, and critically analysed aspects of female metaphors with the intention of explaining their function thematically. The study emphasized that metaphor is a linguistic device used to underscore the abominable male chauvinism that characterizes Swahili societal life. The current paper defines metaphor as not only as a strategy in communication but also as a conceptual mechanism which allows the Kenyan population to conceptualise the dangers and effects of COVID-19 pandemic through the WAR frame.

Closely related to the present study is research by Wicke and Bolognesi (2020) which analysed the discourse of COVID-19. The study focused on social media engagements. It was based on a corpus of 200 thousand tweets posted on Twitter during the month of March up to the month of April 2020. Using topic modelling approach, the study analysed the topics around which the discourse could be classified. Further, the study demonstrated that the WAR framing is used to talk about specific topics, such as the virus treatment, but not others, such as the effects of social distancing on the population. The study measured and compared the popularity of the WAR frame to three alternative figurative frames (MONSTER, STORM and TSUNAMI) and a literal frame used as control (FAMILY). The study demonstrated that while the FAMILY literal frame covers a wider portion of the corpus, among the figurative framings, WAR is the most frequently used, and thus arguably the most conventional one. However, the study concluded that, the WAR frame was not sufficient in explaining many other aspects involved in COVID-19 operations. It is noted here that social media is fairly extemporaneous and informal as compared to presidential speeches which are planned formal addresses. A lot of thought goes into the organization of the presidential speeches before they are verbalized to the public and metaphor realization is likely to be different compared to social media engagements.

In another study, Kamalu and Iniworikabo (2016) studied metaphors in political speeches of Nigerian Democratic Presidents. The study adopted the tenets of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) of Lakoff and Johnson in the analysis of selected political speeches of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo (OBJ henceforth), Musa Yar'Adua (UMY henceforth) and

Goodluck Jonathan (GEJ henceforth). The study discovered that metaphor is a great resource in political communication and that the speakers drew from source domains that represent social, economic and political situations and conditions in Nigeria essentially as conflict and war, building, disease, journey, illness, games and sports, and as a family. The study considers ways in which metaphors facilitate the discourse on Nigerian nationhood and how the speakers exploit metaphorical expressions in communicating their ideologies to Nigerians. The paper used CMT which is also used in this paper, but the two papers have different orientations and focus. Although like this paper the paper focused on presidential addresses, they differ in that the current paper unlike Kamalu and Iniworikabo's study that looked at metaphors in general this one investigates only WAR metaphors used in presidential addresses as a strategy in expressing COVID-19 messages to Kenyans.

Kiptinness and Okoye (2021) undertook a study on Media coverage of the novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) in Kenya and Tanzania: Content analysis of newspaper articles in East Africa. In this study, they used the framing theory to analyse dimensions being conveyed in the coverage of COVID-19 in Kenya and Tanzania between February 2020 and April 2020. A quantitative analysis of the *Daily Nation* and *Citizen* newspapers showed different patterns of framing of the virus. Specifically, this analysis focused on multiple frames used by the two newspapers with respect to the following topical categories: context, basic information, preventive information, treatment information, medical research, Social context, Economic context, Political context, personal stories and other. Although the *Daily Nation* published more stories than the *Citizen* Newspaper, only the frame *personal stories* were significantly higher in the *Daily Nation* compared to *Citizen* Newspapers. This paper focused on different ways of framing the virus while the current paper investigates framing COVID-19 as an enemy through the WAR metaphor.

Seixas (2021) like the present study focused on WAR metaphors studied in Political Communication on Covid-19. In this study it was established that although militaristic metaphors have been pervasive during health crisis in political and science communication, few works have examined how these linguistic devices may influence crisis communication. Drawing on critical discourse analysis (CDA) and on crisis communication literature, the author showed how political representatives have used the WAR metaphor for very different purposes in terms of crisis communication and management of the current Covid-19 pandemic. She further suggested that such findings challenge previous criticisms of the WAR metaphors as inherently negative and damaging in their operation. Finally, she discussed the possibilities of using CDA, and specifically,

metaphor analysis to inform and expand crisis communication. The paper relates to the current paper in that they both interrogate WAR metaphor in communicating COVID-19 messages. They however are guided by two different theoretical frameworks. Whereas the earlier paper by Seixas utilizes Critical Discourse Analysis this paper is informed by the tenets of CMT.

There are also studies on how COVID-19 has impacted language use and even growth globally. According to Mweri (2021) for example, COVID-19 has impacted virtually everybody in the world today by introducing various changes leading to the 'new normal'. The paper is an analysis of how English language has been able to adapt to the changes that COVID-19 has occasioned. The research established that the spread of corona virus has changed the lives of billions of people worldwide by ushering in a new set of lexica that cuts across all disciplines. In another related study, Asif et al. (2020) conducted a linguistic analysis of neologisms related to corona virus (COVID-19). The study focused on the phenomena of neologisms to explore the creation of new words during the outbreak of COVID-19. The study revealed that with the outbreak of COVID-19, word formation was utilized by majority of people with most of them using nouns, adjectives and verbs while communicating about the pandemic.

Similarly, Akut (2020) conducted a morphological analysis of neologisms during COVID-19 pandemic, it was revealed that most of the neologisms are nouns and that the morphological processes that were involved in their formation were compounding, blending and affixation. The study concluded that the neologisms formed during the COVID-19 pandemic reveal the morphological processes and the morphemic structures in English language that could be exploited in word formation processes. These studies investigated impact of corona virus on language use which is the point of convergence with the current study. On the contrary, these studies take different orientation since the current study investigates war metaphor strategies in expressing COVID-19 messages in presidential speeches in Kenya in 2020.

Another study which investigated metaphors in political circles is by Sacco (2009). In this study, metaphorical reframing and the role of metaphor in the United States government, by President Obama was investigated. Obama sought to address the gaps in the health sector so as to provide stability and direction to the American economy. Metaphor was a central tool in this endeavour. The key procedure was geared toward revealing the covert

intentions via the interconnections of rival metaphors. The study found three common metaphorical constructions in these interactions: These were metaphors of embodiment/health, foundation/building and journey metaphors. Notable also were studies by Sabir (2015); Habwe (1999); Jeremy (2012); and Pennick (2014) who concluded that politicians find metaphors important in expressing messages that seem tricky and which require tact.

Other studies which have investigated metaphor guided by CMT and found relevant to the current paper are for example by Ndung'u and Marete (2019) which investigated metaphorical constructions and mappings at the Kiswahili word level. The paper realised that an analysis of Kiswahili metaphorical linguistic expressions, specifically the word category, through the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) resolves problems in meaning determination through meaning enrichment. Such problems result from having referring expressions which create the problem of over-determination in which meaning remains too abstract, overly vague, and unclear in under-fictionalized contexts. Through CMT, concepts or sense construals are mapped from the source domain mostly in verbs to the target domain mostly in nouns or nominals in the Kiswahili clause structure. The central issue of the paper was to investigate how the referential paradigm is improved by the higher paradigm of meaning expression in Kiswahili word level metaphorical constructions. The paper explored the process of easier conceptualisation of Kiswahili linguistic expressions through metaphor. The analysis was on how metaphorical constructions at the Kiswahili word level makes meaning more intelligible by doing the following: making abstract expressions concrete; bringing into perspective metaphorical interpretations; providing experiential metaphorical interpretation of arguments meaning; and providing internal focus of personification attributes by foregrounding metaphor and back grounding referential interpretation as a low-level meaning which is not dependent on context.

Of significance also is a paper by Ndung'u and Habwe (2019) which investigated metaphorical construction and interpretation of the Kiswahili compound and complex clauses. This paper investigated Kiswahili metaphorical constructions at the complex clause level. It argued that whereas Kiswahili metaphor has been studied for a considerable length of time grammatical features of Kiswahili metaphor are poorly understood and therefore required revealing. Further the conceptual aspects of the Kiswahili metaphors have not been conclusively studied to date. This paper therefore seeks to determine how these metaphorical expressions are constructed and how they express the conceptual metaphor. Conceptual Metaphor Theory as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and

Langacker's theory of Cognitive Grammar (CG) (1987, 1991) were used in informing the study. The paper therefore examined the form-meaning components in a Kiswahili clause in order to identify how they are syntactically and semantically structured in the construction of metaphor. The data research was largely library based. The data was obtained from purposively selected Kiswahili plays that had used metaphor in their expression. It was revealed by this study that the cultural context is important in understanding metaphorical constructions. The verb at the clause level is crucial in the construction process because it relates with other elements in the construction of metaphor. When a metaphor is constructed with a relative clause, the verb in the relative clause is the one that is the source domain and therefore responsible for the mapping process.

Lastly, there is the study by Ndung'u M.N. (2019) which investigated the grammatical structures of figurative language in Kiswahili metaphorical constructions. The study was an investigation of how Kiswahili metaphorical constructions are lexically, syntactically, and semantically structured. The study was library based and was to a large extent qualitative. The data were sourced from four Kiswahili literary texts: Mazrui (2003), wa Mberia (2004), Arege (2009) and wa Mberia (2011), which were purposively selected. Data was collected by reading the literary texts, identifying the metaphorical constructions there in and listing them to make it easier for classification into lexical, phrase or clause categories. The study was guided by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) which was supplemented by Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987) and Construction Grammar (Goldberg's 1995) approaches. The three theories were used as tools of analysing the data as they guided on the identification of Kiswahili metaphorical grammatical constructions in the selected literary texts, investigating and explaining how they are structured in the formation and interpretation of metaphor, and determining the extent to which they express socio-cultural context and embodied experiences of language users. It was revealed that the concepts of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Cognitive Grammar, and Construction Grammar can be utilized in the interpretation of Kiswahili metaphorical constructions. In the study it was also revealed that the verb and the noun are the two major lexical categories in the formation of Kiswahili metaphorical constructions that evoke metaphor. However, other lexical categories like the adjective, adverb, and prepositional phrases are understood and interpreted metaphorically in the context of nouns and verbs. The study further revealed that in the Kiswahili clause, the verb manifests the source domain while the target domain is manifested by the noun and its immediate constituents in a construction. Other constructions which evoke metaphor are the DO, IO, complements, and subordinate

clauses in compound and complex sentences. The Kiswahili verb interacts with other constructions for metaphorical interpretation to occur. These include the noun phrase in the argument position, the adjectival phrase, noun phrase, prepositional phrase, and other complements within the predicate position. In examining the Kiswahili lexical, phrasal and clausal levels, it was revealed that meanings of constructional elements such as verbs and nouns are relativised to frames or cognitive models which include the language users' knowledge of their referents. This knowledge includes social cultural contexts and the encyclopaedic entries of the referents and entities targeted. Finally, the study has brought into perspective areas for future and further research which are largely on use of other construction grammar theories and on interrogation of sense relations, under Goldberg's Cognitive Grammar, such as antonymy, homonymy, and synonymy. The study has thus provided pioneering research on the analysis of Kiswahili metaphorical constructions by examining how they are utilised in the building of conceptual metaphors while expressing the socio-cultural contexts and embodied experiences of language users.

The studies cited above demonstrate the centrality of metaphor in language use. The present study therefore focuses on WAR metaphors in Kenya using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980) which maintains that one conceptual domain can be understood in terms of another domain. The paper thus investigates the conceptual nature of WAR metaphors used in selected presidential addresses in Kenya because little research has engaged it and therefore poorly understood to date. We seek to understand what WAR metaphors are used and what their conceptual structure is. This study further aims at investigating the motivation for such metaphors in handling of the COVID-19 pandemic activities in Kenya and thus providing an explanation on the suitability of the WAR metaphors used.

4. Methodology

This paper investigated the conceptual nature of WAR metaphors used in selected presidential addresses in Kenya. In order to achieve this, the paper investigated some of the WAR metaphors that were used in the presidential speeches with a view to establish how they were formed, how they conceptually frame the war metaphor and what conceptual implication they have in communicating issues on COVID-19 pandemic. The paper further interrogated the metaphorical implications of their usage in information management among Kenyans given that through conceptualization ideas or concepts are formed, developed and clarified (Evans and Green, 2006). Of significance to note is that the metaphorical constructions used were efficient tools in helping citizens understand the

complex information about COVID-19 pandemic. The data for this study were obtained from the library sources through internet services such as State House website and YouTube where all the interactions for presidential addresses on COVID-19 pandemic are recorded and stored. Five (5) presidential addresses to the nation were purposively selected from eight (8) presidential speeches. These are the 2nd, the 4th, the 6th, the 7th and the 8th presidential addresses by President Uhuru Kenyatta to the nation on 25th March 2020, 16th April 2020, 16th May 2020, 23rd May 2020, and 6th June 2020, September 2020 and October 2020 respectively. The speeches were selected as they were read out by the president, Mr. Kenyatta at the onset and height of the COVID-19 pandemic and thus provided necessary and relevant data for analysis according to the objectives of this paper. The speeches contained information to Kenyans on containment measures on how to prevent and control the spread of the virus. In those speeches the president used WAR metaphors which would assure Kenyans that the government was in control of the situation and thus minimized panic among the citizens.

In the eight presidential addresses, metaphorical expressions that conceptualize COVID-19 and related activity as WAR were selected purposively. The speeches that were selected for this study were in English; one of the official languages in Kenya besides Kiswahili according to the 2010 constitution. English tends to be more preferred in Kenya in giving presidential addresses compared to Kiswahili. Out of the total number (20) of metaphorical constructions selected, only 12 were considered for analysis as they were rich in metaphorical expressions whose attributes contribute to the conceptualization of the WAR metaphor. This was guided by the nature of data which is related in expression and reference to the same WAR frame but presented through different metaphorical constructions. The data selected were then analysed in accordance with the principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The selection of 12 metaphorical expressions was satisfactory as it would be representative for the study in investigating the conceptual nature of the WAR metaphor in transmitting information on COVID-19 to Kenyans. This study was largely qualitative since it identified metaphors and analysed them through presentation of data, analysis and discussion. The tenets of CMT were applied in the analysis of data bearing in mind that Conceptual Metaphor Theory has a basic principle which states that metaphor operates at the cognitive level, that is, at the level of the human mind and not language as it was earlier thought.

5. WAR Metaphors in Presidential Addresses in Kenya in 2020

Presidential addresses in Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic season (2020) were replete with metaphorical expressions. Although there are metaphors from other frames, it is noted that a considerable number of metaphors came from the WAR frame. For instance, Kenyatta uses WAR metaphorical expressions in a speech delivered on 16 May 2020 when he says,

(1) It is however, clear we have not delivered the **final blow to this enemy that has invaded our community and** the world at large.

In example (2) President Kenyatta, uses three metaphorical expressions; *Final blow, this enemy* and *has invaded*. The expression *final blow* is a WAR metaphor which in Conceptual Metaphor Theory terms provides the concrete domain that is mapped onto the target domain *success.* The conceptual features mapped from *final blow* are features like *hitting, struggle strength, destroy and defeat*. The expression *final blow* as a WAR metaphor is clearer and easy to follow and therefore suitable for the Kenyan context as compared to the target domain-*success* which is essentially abstract and complex to follow. COVID-19 was a fairly new disease that was not well understood at the time by most people in Kenya and the world at large. The conceptual metaphor expression *this enemy* is certainly more accessible to the Kenyan people as it exposes the dangers of COVID 19 more easily. The Kenyan people understand the schemata of an *enemy* better than that of COVID-19. The conceptual attributes of an *enemy* help the audience process the seriousness of the disease at hand. In this case, *enemy* is a concrete domain, and it is mapped on to COVID-19 which is a target domain. An *enemy's* schema in the Kenyan cultural context is one who attacks and sometimes without warning, has no mercy, unfriendly, destructive and one whom people must avoid at all costs and be careful about. This is because besides causing destruction the enemy at war could easily kill. All these features of the enemy are mapped onto COVID-19 which is the target domain. By using the WAR frame, Kenyatta intends to reinforce a certain perspective and also influence thought regarding the perception of COVID-19 to Kenyans. Many people without medical knowledge at this time were thinking COVID-19 was a minor ailment and sometime behaved casually. However, with the use of the WAR metaphor, *this enemy,* Kenyatta gets to convey the correct information, indicating that they are dealing with something that is more serious than they initially thought. It is for this reason that Lakoff and Johnson (1980) underscored the centrality of metaphor use in human communication. It is this reference to

COVID-19 as an *enemy* that is a precursor to the giving of orders, directions and protocols to the Kenyan people by the president.

Equally, the use of the conceptual metaphor *invaded* is another construction in example (2) which cannot be taken literally. It is used to expresses the coming of the *enemy* referred to above. *Invaded* as a concrete domain is easily understood by language users in the Kenyan community and it is conceptually mapped on to the act of *coming* which is a target domain. It is important to note here that *invaded* is a WAR expression that maps the *use of force*, *destruction, danger*, *unfriendliness,* and *loss of life*. It communicates frightening conceptual features not present in the target domain and therefore easy to interpret for this purpose of persuasion.

In another example Kenyatta refers to this *enemy* again by saying,

> **(2) A brutal and unforgiving enemy** is at our wall. **He is trying to gain entrance** using every door and every window. He is asking every Kenyan to sneak him in so that **he can attack us all.**

The metaphorical construction, *a brutal and unforgiving enemy* used by the president in example (3) is mapped onto COVID-19 virus by giving the disease human attributes like brutality and unforgiving through the process of personification thus making the metaphor even clearer and forceful and hence oversimplifying understanding. Brutal and unforgiving constructions maps features like *hate, destructive, strength* on to the construction *enemy* and therefore amplifies it more unlike in the earlier example when only the construction *enemy* is used.

Kenyatta also uses constructions such as …*he is trying to gain entrance*; *he is asking Kenyans to sneak him in…so that he can attack us all*. Notice the use of *attack* in the last construction. It is a WAR frame metaphor which is meant to warn and put Kenyans on high alert. Personification is largely used in the preceding examples to communicate a conceptual metaphor. *Attack* is a concrete domain that is mapped on to *infection* which is a target domain. The conceptual features that are mapped are like the use of *force*, *suffering* and *destruction.* With this expression Kenyatta communicates caution, alertness which would not be realized with the use of *infection*. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003: 33); Lakoff (1992); Lakoff and Turner (1989), use of personification allows language

users to comprehend a wider variety of experiences relating to nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities. This is successfully done by mapping the attributes of a human entity through the highlighted metaphorical constructions and whose meaning is more accessible compared to those of a nonhuman entity which if used would render comprehension more difficult.

In an apparent reference to COVID-19 as *an enemy*, Kenyatta says the following about the *enemy*,

> (3) He **multiplies his forces rapidly,** with one infected person able to infect dozens of others if insufficient measures are not put in place. Or if all of us do not take heed of the dangers and behave accordingly a lot shall be lost.

In example (4) the president uses the style of personification while referring to the pandemic. He describes what the enemy is able to do through the metaphorical construction *he multiplies his forces rapidly*. This expression is a WAR metaphor that is presented as a concrete domain mapping features like, *strength, fighting, being armed* which is conceptualized as an *increase in the number of COVID-19 infections* which is a target domain. This conceptual metaphor that uses a WAR frame has a schema that is understood easily and is easy to process thus providing or communicating information on how dangerous the virus is to the Kenyan people.

This is a clear description of what an ENEMY is capable of doing while preparing for war and while ready to attack in a fighting scenario. For the ENEMY to defeat his opponent in WAR, he has to ensure that his army is well equipped, has enough numbers, has reserves in place and the front-line soldiers could be increased anytime they are required so as to ensure that the opponent does not fight back more strongly and win the battle. For Kenyans to conceptualize the force and aggression of the pandemic, the use of the concrete attributes of an ENEMY at WAR are used; the multiplication or duplication of the virus in its spread among the people is compared to that of an enemy in war. This is understood to mean that the virus has the capacity to infect one person and in a span of time, if precautions are not taken, it spreads very fast to infect dozens of others. Further, the WAR metaphor is understood through the call by the president to Kenyans to *take heed of the dangers* likely to occur or else *a lot shall be lost*, meaning that Kenyans are likely to lose the WAR in case they do not follow the precautionary measures and guidelines given by the Ministry of Health in combating the COVID-19 virus.

In the same speech, we see the president of Kenya describing the enemy through the following expression,

> (4) Given enough opportunities, **this enemy will lay waste** our families, our children, our parents, our neighbours and our friends. **He will find the least aware among us** and use them to carry him to the most vulnerable.

The metaphorical construction in example (5) used in Mr. Kenyatta's address show another use of personification. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003:34), personification not only gives language users a very specific way of thinking about a specific situation or framing, but also a way of acting toward it, in this case in the framing of the WAR metaphor. People think of the VIRUS as an adversary that can attack them, hurt them, steal their lives from them, and even destroy them. This is alluded by the metaphorical construction *this enemy will lay waste our families*. The metaphor PANDEMIC IS WAR therefore gives rise to and justifies action by the government of Kenya to declare WAR on COVID-19 pandemic and expecting all the Kenya citizens to follow the guidelines given by the Ministry of Health: keeping social distance, sanitizing, washing hands with soap and running water and staying at home. Failure to do so on the side of Kenyan citizens would enhance the pandemics ability to attack the most vulnerable in the society, which is the case of the virus having caused death to those having pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, HIV and AIDS, and cancer. The construction *he will find the least aware among us* as used in the speeches by the president also points back to that.

Kenyatta also uses the following metaphorical construction on 6th June 2020 where he says,

> (5) Permit me to close by saying that **this Disease is beatable if we work together**; listen to and apply the regulations, guidelines and protocols issued by the Ministry of Health; and **keep our eyes on slaying the enemy.**

In example (6), the President uses the construction *this disease is beatable if we work together.* The choice of the metaphorical construction *beatable* is ideal in the circumstances. Kenyatta uses the constructions to say if Kenyans were to unite and follow the guidelines given by the Ministry of Health, they would succeed in the treatment of COVID-19. The construction *beatable* is a concrete domain which is used to communicate the WAR metaphor. The WAR metaphor *beatable* as mentioned above could only be understood through its schema which is within the linguistic and cultural reach of the

Kenyan language users. That is, in times of a disaster, unity, order and defence are necessary for the nation to come out as the winner. Mapping in this metaphor is from the construction *beatable* whose attributes are mapped onto the *management* of the disease which is the target domain. Consequently, conceptual features like *struggle*, *strength*, *win, use of force success* are transferred on to the target domain. It is important to note that *beatable* in this context refers to all the strategies of managing the ailment including all the protocols for prevention and treating all conditions associated with COVID-19 pandemic. This seems to agree with Wocke and Bolognesi (2020) when they studied tweets that there is a liking of WAR metaphors when it comes to treatment and management of COVID-19 in social media.

In example (6), Kenyatta also says … *and keep our eyes on slaying the enemy.* The president uses this conceptual metaphor *slaying* the *enemy* which is the concrete domain that maps features like *destroying, succeeding, wiping out* on the target domain which is *finishing COVID-19.* The WAR metaphor of *slaying* is more ideal in communicating and resonates well with the Kenyan audience at this point in time when information has to be reconstructed for appropriate briefing. It communicates the idea of completely dealing with the virus in a way that the construction *finishing* cannot communicate.

On May 23rd the president of Kenya Mr. Kenyatta used a WAR metaphor to express hope for a nation that was in despair. He said:

(6) I urge all of us to remain true to our economy and confident that the endurance we are so famous for will **drive us to victory**

In example (7) *drive us to victory* is a WAR metaphor that maps feature like *struggle*, *movement* and *winning* onto the target domain which is *success.*

In yet another example of WAR metaphor, on June 6th, Kenyatta says,

(7) Later on, more measures to contain the **havoc** visited upon us by COVID19 were put in place.

The WAR metaphor *havoc* lies in the WAR domain. It is commonly used as a dead metaphor in many other domains to refer to adverse effects for a number of things. It needs to be pointed out that metaphors are largely contextual in their operation (Kövecses 2015).

As a concrete domain in the WAR frame, it maps features like *destruction and loss*, rendering useless to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, Kenyatta uses the construction *havoc* to communicate the adverse effects of COVID-19 that have left many people sick, bed ridden and some dead and the pandemic's effects still threatening to bring down the entire economy.

It is important to note that the metaphorical constructions used in the presidential addresses are full of hope and assurance to the nation of Kenya. This is evident when we look at the following examples as used by Mr. Kenyatta,

> (8) I am as anxious as all of you, to get back to building this country. However, we will only be able to do this the sooner **we sharply suppress the growth of infections**.

In example (9), the WAR metaphor is communicated through the construction *sharply suppress the growth of infections*. For a successful fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the president is urging Kenyans to be ready to unite and never to give up until the virus is completely wiped out. This is in comparison to a situation during the time of WAR where two opponents have to use all their might. In the long run the oppressed party has to ensure that the enemy is completely and finally defeated. It is the same case with the efforts Kenyans are urged to put in place in order to weaken the virus and finally win the WAR against the infections. This as earlier mentioned can only be possible through adherence to the guidelines given by the Ministry of Health in Kenya. The WAR metaphor that is communicated is expressed through the construction *suppress* which acts as the source domain and whose attributes are mapped onto the target domain, *lowering*. The construction *suppress* is used to map attributes such as *force, strength, might, power, skill,* and *strategy* on *lowering* which is the target domain in this context.

Another metaphor of hope drawn from WAR frame is used in the following example,

> (9) We will **emerge** knowing that we have a mighty strength in our unity, our resilience as a people will see us through this pandemic.

The use of the metaphorical expression *emerge* is not limited to the WAR domain. It could be used in other contexts. However, when it is used in the WAR domain it expresses winning of a WAR. This usage in example (10) refers to the usage in a war given the

context of Mr. Kenyatta's speech. The expression is understood with ease because the schematic information such as *coming to view or come out especially after a struggle, be visible, and with renewed strength* makes it construed as the source domain through which the WAR metaphor is understood. This shows that after suppressing the efforts of the *enemy*, COVID-19, Kenyans will rise up again and regain control of their affairs including their freedom from the virus and therefore going back to participate fully in building the Kenyan economy. As indicated earlier, the metaphor *emerge* would also be understood through its attributes such as *successful return, strength,* and *freedom*. These attributes are mapped onto *come forth* which is the target domain that would be complex for Kenyans to process.

In another expression in September 2020 Kenyatta says,

(10)   …. and this **clash** of two rights places us on the horns of dilemma.

The construction *clash* is used as a WAR metaphor and it is meant to reinforce the intensity of the disagreement between the people who want the economy opened in spite of COVID-19 pandemic being on the rise, and those people who felt Kenya was not ready to open its economy. As a concrete domain *clash* maps its attributes of *strength, intensity and force* on the idea *disagreement* which is the target domain. This expression helps Kenyans to think in a particular way. In effect, it reorders their thinking and how they would react to the situation at hand (Lakoff & Johnson1980; Cameroon 2003; Khan & Awaz 2015).

The president of Kenya, Mr. Kenyatta in another instance also uses WAR metaphorical constructions in talking about the effects of COVID-19 on the Kenyan economy. For example, he says,

(11)   This COVID-19 pandemic is not only a health crisis; it is fundamentally an economic crisis. Jobs have been lost, businesses have closed, and the **economy is on a go-slow. To combat the effects of this down-turn,** my Administration has had to take additional measures.

In example (12), the choice of the construction *to combat the effects of this down-turn* which are largely aspects of struggle are therefore mapped on to *correcting* the shape the economy had taken, that is, non-performance and non-profitability acts as the abstract and target domain respectively in this metaphorical construction. *Combat* is a WAR frame

metaphor used as a concrete domain mapped on *to correct.* When it is so used it maps attributes such as *struggle, engagement, force, strength* and *strategy.*

In a speech delivered in October 2020 Kenyatta says:

(12) The COVID-19 *positivity rate* we were all happy and excited about when it dropped has now **shot up** to an incredible 15%.

In example (13) *the positivity rate of COVID-19* is metaphorically being expressed as having *shot up. Shot up* is a WAR frame metaphor which is being mapped on to *increase* as a target domain. This metaphorical phrase makes expressing of this information clear and have the force to let Kenyans see the worrying changes. *Shot up* maps features like *short time, force, high numbers,* and *hitting* which are mapped onto the construction *increase* and are clear in expressing the increasing numbers of COVID-19 infections because the schema of *shooting up* provide an easier access to more Kenyans who would easily understand the construction *increase.* From the expression *shot up* one can understand that there is need to act because the situation would be getting out of hand. Most WAR metaphors used in the speeches cited above tend to be physical. They are used to map on fairly abstract entities; target domains, thus affording the abstract entities clarity.

6. Conclusion

This paper investigated WAR metaphors as used in presidential speeches in Kenya in the year 2020 to address issues of COVID-19. The research identified, described, analysed, and interpreted some WAR metaphors occurring in selected speeches with the aim of establishing why they were preferable in expressing a considerable number of messages related to COVID-19. At this point in time Kenya was facing a difficult time of having to engage a medical crisis jointly as a nation. The present research found out that in this difficult situation, the President of the republic of Kenya Mr. Kenyatta was compelled to use WAR metaphors to warn, caution, inform, reassure, rally, reconstruct some world views and generally sensitize the Kenyan people about the dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects. Metaphors were also used to offer hope to the Kenyan people. Most of the attributes of WAR metaphors were associated with strength, struggle, winning and therefore success. The metaphors besides oversimplifying information on COVID-19 were used as a way of rallying Kenyan people to act jointly on the containment measures

that were suggested by the Ministry of Health in Kenya and whose key points were being relayed in presidential speeches. The WAR frame metaphors which were localized and therefore easy for the Kenyan people to follow were an embodiment of struggle and winning of the fight against COVID-19**.**

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