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Metaphor of 'Progress': A Metaphoric Rhetorical Criticism on Aminuddin Baki's Torch Movement Speech 2

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Abstract

This paper looks at the Aminuddin Baki's Torch Movement Speech 2 from the metaphorical perspective. The objective of the study is to identify the type of metaphors employed and how the metaphors are conveyed in the Speech. Numerous studies have been done on the biographical portion of Aminuddin Baki but none on all his Torch Movement speeches that he had made on the progression of the natives in Malaysia at that time. This study used a qualitative method through Neo-Aristotelian Criticism perspective in the analysis of speech. This study demonstrates the relevance of ancient Malay metaphor in modern day communication interaction.

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1. Introduction

When the notion of speech fortification is mentioned, a prominent rhetor in Malaysia, the late Aminuddin Baki comes to mind. He was known as a man of great purpose. He was committed to seeing the advancement of Malaysians by communicating educational advancement. He made considerable contributions to the revolution of education in Malaysia by giving speeches on how the nation can pace proactively into the future without falling behind.

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The late Aminuddin Baki was known as the Father of Education in Malaysia. His contribution in drafting the present education syllabus as well as being a catalyst to the educational progress of the nation was not given the appropriate attention. In reality, the late Aminuddin Baki was a visionary, thinker and patriot who aspired to see his country prosper whereby the natives would be given the respect and equal rights that they deserve.

1.1. Research context

Aminuddin Baki was a revolutionary rhetor that tried to impart change into the phlegmatic Malay culture. He disagreed with most of the standpoint maintained by the Malay heritage (Biria & Mohammadi, 2012) with regard to progress. The rhetor was capable of being disagreeable to certain deeply rooted cultural issues without inciting rebellion among the audience (Angouri & Locher, 2012). In this aspect, the tactful rhetorical methodology carefully designed by the rhetor in achieving a particular communicational goal has yet to be analyzed within the paradigms of contemporary theories. Metaphors ensure a familiar but forceful connection to be made between the listeners and the rhetoric message. It requires a soigne concoction however, since the wrong metaphor would fail to invoke the desired response from the audience, and consequently falter in creating a singular impact on the community of interest (Marra, 2012). It is therefore highly critical for the purpose of this research to solve the aforementioned problem.

1.2. Research objectives

Although there are a number of approaches in creating an impact through a speech, such as statistical conception or biographical citing, this research focuses solely on the use of metaphors in attaining the desired response from the audience. This is congruent with the level of education possessed by the audience at that time. This research aims to complete the following objectives:

- To identify the metaphors employed within a certain context.
- To determine the structure of the metaphor within the certain context of the speech.

2. Literature review

A main strategy in rhetoric is the usage of the metaphor. It is a form of figurative speech that enables indirect communication to take place. Metaphor imparts meaning by adopting external concepts. As such, it requires a flexible interpretation of dual ideas that may not be apparent at first sight. This is examined under the Contemporary Theory of Metaphor (Lakoff, 1993), which deals with the prospect of employing metaphors in mapping, reasoning and problem solving.

2.1. Rhetoric

It is the nature of men to speak for a particular purpose (Oishi, 2006). If speech is inextricably linked to a purpose, then rhetoric is the art of communicating this purpose.

2.2. Metaphor

While the role of communication in imparting message from one party to another is quite definite, its implementation is never certain (Phelan, 2011). The message can be direct in the sense that the words and phrases employed are literally congruent with their meaning (Krauss & Fussell, 1996). It is practically an advice given to a person regarding the importance of utilizing time in the optimal manner. The message is direct and clear.

You should use time the best way that you can

Another alternative of making the same statement can be seen in the following example. Unlike the first one, this sentential construct does not attempt to give any recommendations on the criticality of using time wisely. Instead, it

equates time with money, a currency to be spent most carefully.

Here, the caution given with regard to time is implied (McGlone, 2007). The receiver must ponder upon it himself.

Time is money

Comparing both statements, the question thus becomes, which would be the best approach of communicating a message to an audience? Should the message be direct or indirect? The answer to this question lies in the dimension of response that a speaker wishes to evoke in his audience. A metaphor is practically a construct that allows the communication of indirect message to take place (MacArthur et al., 2012). In a Malay culture, metaphors are often used to avoid harshness or to accentuate certain qualities. Hence metaphors could be used to help audience or society to understand a particular situation. When exposed to metaphoric sentences, audience may find it easier to understand the larger context since metaphors help to simplify things and can convey a particular shade of meaning concisely than other words (Faridah & Emma, 2005).

2.3. Speech

When searching for clarity as a guiding principle for business prose, Kallendorf and Kallendorf (1985) said that the artful use of figures of speech gives what could be a prosaic document, considerable persuasive force and helps to establish the image of the organization. Myers and Kesslers (1980) conducted a study on the speeches given by leaders of the largest organization in America. Based on the study, three general corporate strategies were introduced to eliminate problems. They were – influencing government policy, education on economic for the public and increasing social responsibility of the business part.

3. Methodology

This is a content analysis research that uses the neo-Aristotelian criticism, which perceives rhetorical criticism as a tool of elucidating rational truth. Metaphoric criticism is an approach that emphasizes mostly on a very specific strategy implemented within rhetoric. By employing metaphors, the meaning attached to a concept can be dynamically changed (Rodriguez Marquez, 2010). The ability of metaphor to alter the perception of a message makes it very alluring (Cirillo, 2005; Ibarretxe-Antunano, 1999; Kemp, 1991) and compel the audience to be more receptive. This study analyses the metaphoric content of Aminuddin Baki's Torch Movement Speech 2 which emphasizes on 'Progress'.

4. Analysis and discussion

Metaphorical meaning combines the meaning of both tenor and vehicle to derive the mapping that exists between the two (Tourangeau & Sternberg, 1982). Consistency is crucial here. The overall meaning of both must complement each other for the metaphor to work. Once the meaning is clarified, its impact is probed more closely. Given the unavailability of audience and exigence from 1960s, only the desired impact of the rhetorician is scrutinized in depth. Metaphors detected in Baki's speech are interpreted based on several themes.

4.1. Delay in progress

Progress is the key in any developing country. During the time, the progress of the nation was not exactly balanced between races. This can be attributed to the influence propagated by the British prior to the independence of the country in order to maintain control over the multiracial community. The system exerted control through separation of communal roles. The crossing the river (Helvacioğlu, Helvacioğlu & Tuncer, 2011) metaphor cited below is basically a figurative expression that urges the Malays to be more competitive in their pace towards success. Although the competitor is not stated explicitly within the metaphor, it is quite readily apparent that it is referring to the other races that live in the country.

*Kita baharu mencapai pengayuh, orang telah sampai ke seberang.
We have only begun to reach for the oar; when others have crossed the river.*
(Baki, 1964)

4.2. Metaphorical element

In this particular metaphor, the oar, an object that allows the movement of a small water vessel is central to the analysis (Helvacioğlu, Helvacioğlu & Tuncer, 2011). Understanding the mechanism of the oar in devising water borne actuation is necessary to appreciate the message carried by the metaphorical artefact. The oar must be handled by a passenger to work. The passenger needs rowing to create a circular movement with the oar to push the boat forward (Černe, Kamnik, Vesnicer, Gros, & Munič, 2013). This movement provides two functionalities. Obviously, to instigate a forward propulsion for the vessel, secondly, to determine the direction of the vessel. Here, the passenger must be able to contrive the course and force for the vessel. Crossing the river with a vessel comprises a series of steps. Informally, the individual must acquire a boat and position himself within it. Then, he must gain control on the oar or the paddle of which the entire motion depends upon. Once this is done, the rowing process must be enforced consistently to propel the vessel towards the other side of the river (Cabrera, Ruina, & Kleshnev, 2006). It must be reminded also that the river is not a static medium. On the surface, it is reasoned that life involves a principal amount or positive actions must be deployed within a particular time (Barrow & Tipler, 1986). Delayed positive actions incite penalty. It is therefore imperative to be on time.

4.3. Metaphorical meaning

Progress is the key in any developing country. The metaphorical meaning of the oar is closely tied to progress. More specifically, the water vessel utilized to allow movement inside the river can be perceived as the means of being or staying in progress (Brown et al., 2011). This could refer to the infrastructure required for progress to be viable. Progress does not rely on infrastructure alone. Instead, it is also made possible with the presence of certain apparatus or tools (Barbati et al., 2014). The oar in the metaphor that insinuates this particular connotation whereby the community is provided with a series of assistance to ensure progress. For instance, the government at that time had developed education solely for the sake of progress. If the oar projects the apparatus of progress, then the river can be interpreted as progress itself. Similar attribute is seen on the notion of progress, which is never stagnant and always evolving (Lu, & Liu, 2014). In addition, the current of the river that flows in tangent of the vessel is metaphorically the external forces that disrupt the aspiration for progress. To cross the river, the individual must reach for the oar and maintain control over it. Thus, the act of reaching for the oar is metaphorically the inception of effort that drives the direction and stage of progress. In this respect, the Malay community during that period is portrayed as those who have only begun to make the steps needed for growth when others have preceded so much further (Ciravegna, Majano & Zhan, 2014).

The motivation of using the metaphor of crossing the river to impart the notion of progress is rather astute from the common sense perspective that can be easily grasp by those intended. Baki (1964) had hoped to stress the essentiality of not just setting goals, but also in taking timely actions to achieve our goals in creating a better future for the nation (Fardinpour & Reiners, 2014). Studied more intricately in term of procedural aspect, the notion of progress is construed of three important elements. They are setting goal, planning and taking action. Setting goal is the part of deciding to cross the river. Planning involves the enumeration of steps to be taken in order to realize the goal (Papies, Aarts & de Vries, 2009). Taking action is the actual implementation of the steps formed during the planning stage. The part of the metaphor that mentions “*we have only reached for the oar*” can have two connotations when analyzed procedurally. It is connected to the transition between setting goal and taking action.

Another possible ramification of the metaphor can be traced back to the delay that transpires between actions. If crossing the river is seen as a series of consecutive actions, then Baki (1964) could also be implying that taking too much time on a particular action that will render compulsive delay to the overall rate of progress (Luciano & Regis, 2014).

4.4. Metaphorical impact

Without much contention, it is rather apparent that the rhetorician wishes for the Malay community to cease their

phlegmatic movement towards development, and start to display growth (Ngare, Nyamongo & Misati, 2014) as their other racial counterparts. This is the true intent of the metaphor in question, which aims to spark a realization among the audience in responding positively to the progress achieved by others. To understand the impact more clearly, the idea of competition must be understood. It is known that competition is a keen motivator that ensures progress in the corporate world (Marzbali et al., 2014) Healthy competition is a compelling stimulus to self-development.

4.5. Metaphorical comparison

The metaphor at hand can be compared to a famous eastern metaphor that relates progress to gait (Asadi-Shekari, Moeinaddini & Shah, 2014), or the act of walking towards a very destination. Imagine a person taking a long journey to the other side of the world. In doing so, he must travel many miles and sacrifice a significant portion of his time. Still, every arduous journey must begin with an act, as metaphorically implied below in a quote by Lao Tzu (Pheng, 1995):

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a step.

However, unlike the vessel-oar metaphor that mostly emphasizes on the need to accelerate progress, the aforementioned metaphor is more concerned with the need of starting the journey itself (Pomfret, 2012). It is portrayed in this metaphor that every difficult vocation (journey of a thousand miles) must have a marginal initiation (begins with a step) and thus, to provoke inception of the listeners.

The message to be conveyed in the metaphor is rather staple. It hopes to desensitize the fear of making an attempt (Shechner et al., 2014). Specifically, when the amount of effort required to complete a series of tasks seem almost herculean. To note, although most individuals have the audacity to dream for success, only a handful would actually try to make the first step of achieving it. A majority of people would dwell on the conceptualization stage (O'Connor et al., 2013). In order to compare the two metaphors more fluidly, a common ground for analysis is needed. This is done by performing a mild transmutation (Liu & Owyong, 2011) on both of them. Below, two respective metaphors are derived, where each contains a similar meaning to the original one.

We have only begun to reach for the oar, when others have crossed the river
PROGRESS IS LIKE CROSSING THE RIVER WITH OTHERS. DON'T GET LEFT BEHIND
The journey of a thousand miles begins with a step
PROGRESS IS A LONG JOURNEY THAT BEGINS WITH A STEP

It is certain that both metaphors are trying to incorporate the concept of 'progresses from the perspective of taking action. The first one utilizes the act of crossing the river to convey the implied notion, while the second one employs the endeavor of making a journey. Although both involve the idea of states evolving through time, the second metaphor adumbrates a more lengthy process in its interpretation (Shen, 1999). Both metaphors emphasize on different aspects of progress as well. Although the first metaphor regards the competition as one of the deciding factor in progress, the same cannot be said for the second metaphor. In the second metaphor, care is given more towards the internal battle encountered by those involved in making progress. Doubt and hesitation is the challenge that must be subdued for progress to start and prolonged (Mathisen & Arnulf, 2013). Finally, two principles can be gathered from the analysis of the two metaphors. The first metaphor asserts the need to perform progress efficiently with regard to time as the main commodity. On the other hand, the second metaphor disregards competition completely and persuades the audience to begin, regardless of the impact that may entail the event of inception.

5. Conclusion

The delay of progress is expressed through the use of the river crossing metaphor. It highlights the need to move speedily in making progress by comparing different stages of development between supposedly two parties that are attempting the same goal within nearly identical timeline. Fast progress is vital, especially when competition is prevalent. The metaphor is compared with another well-known metaphor from the eastern culture that focuses on the criticality of beginning the progressive effort, regardless of its possible impact. This offers a more comprehensive perception on the idea of progress as a whole.

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