

THE INTERFACE BETWEEN POLITICS AND FOOTBALL IN LANGUAGE USE: A CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY

Aliyu Yakubu YUSUF

aliyuyy@gmail.com mayyusuf.eng@buk.edu.ng

Department of English and Literary Studies
Bayero University, Kano

Abstract

This paper examines the interface between the language use in the discourse of politics and that of football. It is found out that in Kano state, people commonly portray politicians as footballers, especially during discussion on social media platforms such as Whatsapp and Facebook. Therefore, the study uses a purposive sampling procedure and selects some metaphorical expressions from 2 Facebook posts and some generated comments from the posts. The selected expressions were analyzed through the application of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory associated with Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The findings reveal that through the use of language, the social media users often depict politicians as footballers. In other words, through the mapping of football and politics as source and target domains respectively, a particular metaphor '**Politics is Football**' is established.

Keywords: Language Politics Football Interface
Metaphor

Introduction

The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), though not without its negative implications, has brought tremendous benefits in the lives of human beings. In fact, one can be hard pressed to find an area that has not been influenced by the ICT. The emergence of social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp among others has further made the world more of a global village. This helps to make cross-cultural communication far easier, as people from across the length and the breadth of the world constantly get in touch with one another via social networks. Indeed, among the many areas that have been affected by the technology boom is the use of language. Media outlets link up with the audience on Twitter or Facebook; and the audience are given chance to comment on any stories broadcast by the media. This makes it easy for people to get updates on any significant events that happen around the world. Additionally, many social media users also post updates on any trendy topics of their liking. This allows their friends to comment, like or share the post in question, thereby creating a network of communication and discussion.

Arguably, among the trendiest topics on the social media are sports and politics. In Kano state of northern Nigeria, the most popular sporting activity is

football. Therefore, alongside political happenings in the state and the country, football-related posts appear to be the topics that generate the most reactions especially among the youth. For a casual observer, it may seem that politics and football are drastically different human activities. This is so because while the former is seen as a serious venture that might determine the fate of a country as well the welfare of its citizens, the latter is merely a game that is performed for pleasure. On the Facebook however, it is found out that the youth in Kano have developed a penchant of portraying politicians as footballers. In other words, through the use of metaphors, the two most influential politicians of the state are conceptualised as football coaches (the Guardiola and Mourinho of Kano politics). Thus, this paper aims to explore the metaphorical basis that allows for the mapping of the two different conceptual fields of politics and football.

In scholarly circles, a lot of works have been written on the use of conceptual metaphor in language of both politics and football. For example, some scholars have discovered that football commentators, analysts and reporters usually portray the game of football as war (see Bergh, 2012; Yusuf, 2016; Lewandowski, 2011; Lavric et al., 2008). These scholars establish “Football is War” as a metaphor. On the other hand, the language of politics, too, has been investigated in terms of its propensity of using conceptual metaphors to explain myriads of political happenings around the world (see Bratoz, 2014; Penninck, 2014; Borcic, Koki, 2017; Kanizaj & Krsul, 2016; Karimova, 2015). Of all the aforementioned studies, only Koki somewhat gives an example of how politicians can be depicted as footballers via conceptual metaphors. It is this gap that the present study attempts to bridge.

A Brief History of Kano Politics in the Fourth Republic

Like in most places in the country, politics in Kano has predated the year 1999. But for its relevance to this study, the history of the state's politics from the beginning of the Fourth Republic to the present will be discussed. Koki (2017) remarks that Kano is one of the most politically unstable states in Nigeria. And going by the recent political history of the state, this statement is difficult to dismiss. The governorship position in Kano in 1999 was contested between Engr. (Dr.) Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso of PDP and Engr. Magaji Abdullahi of the now defunct ANPP, with the former emerging as the winner. Ever since, Kwankwaso's status as one of the leading politicians in the state was in no doubt. During his tenure (1999-2003), he managed to provoke most of the state's civil servants with his delay or non-payment of salaries. He also alienated most of his erstwhile political mentors and other leading figures of his party, most notably the former governor, Late Alhaji Abubakar Rimi and Musa Gwadabe. This coupled with his domineering personality became his undoing when he sought for reelection in 2003. Little wonder then that even his party supporters turned against him at the polls. This led to the coming of Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau of the ANPP as the new governor of the state in 2003.

In contrast to Kwankwaso, Shekarau appears as a soft, cool-headed and easy-going personality. He rode on a collective goodwill of the people of Kano throughout his two terms as governor (2003-2011). In particular, he enjoyed the support of the state's civil servants, the clerics and the elderly people who saw him as more culturally and religiously inclined than his predecessor. At the end of his tenure, Shekarau, too, faced a mutiny within his party members who rejected his anointed candidate, Mallam Salihu Sagir Takai. Most of the ANPP stalwarts expected Shekarau to name his deputy, Engr. Abdullahi Muhammad Tijjani Gwarzo, as his potential successor. To the dismay of many, he named Takai as ANPP governorship flag-bearer. All this while, Kwankwaso had been staging a comeback by going round all the forty four local governments of the state to appease his erstwhile supporters. He built a very strong political base around young men. This led to his second coming as the governor of the state in 2011. The two political heavyweights have never been members of the same party for long. When Kwankwaso left PDP and defected to APC on the eve of 2015 elections, Shekarau moved the opposite direction. This happened again this year, with Kwankwaso returning to PDP and Shekarau to APC.

Unlike Shekarau who focused on human development and societal reorientation, Kwankwaso's second term as a governor was known for the development of infrastructural facilities in the state. In fact, Kwankwaso was fondly called by many people as the "Architect of Modern Kano". Although the state is now more than three years under the headship of Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, there are no politicians with as many huge admirers and followers like Kwankwaso and Shekarau. It can be argued that since 2003, Kano state elections have always been a straight shootout between Kwankwaso's and Shekarau's camps. It is a surprise that despite their strong fan base, the duo have clashed at the polls only once; and that was in 2003 when Shekarau emerged as the winner. So different was their approach to governance that many political analysts in the state consider them as the antithesis to each other.

A Brief History of the Rivalry between Guardiola and Mourinho

Like all other sporting activities, football is also famous for rivalries between clubs and countries. Over the last decade however, there is no personal rivalry as fierce as that between the Spanish football coach Pep Guardiola and his Portuguese counterpart Jose Mourinho. Surprisingly, the duo started off as very close associates, with Mourinho being an assistant coach at FC Barcelona and Guardiola being the team captain. Mourinho later departed Barcelona to start his own coaching career. After largely successful coaching periods in his native Portugal and then England between 2002 and 2007, Mourinho was keen to join Barcelona in 2008 when they were in search of a coach to take over the first team. He appeared to be the frontrunner ahead of all other possible alternatives; but to the surprise of football world, Barcelona announced the relatively untested Guardiola as their head coach. Ever since, Mourinho took Barcelona and Guardiola as his biggest enemies in football.

The first head-to-head game between the two rivals took place in 2009 with Mourinho coaching Italian club, Inter Milan. This kick-started a number of violent clashes between the two coaches. Rathborn (2017) reports that the duo have met a total of twenty one time as coaches of different clubs in Spain, Germany, Italy and England. Out of their meetings, Guardiola has nine victories and seven draws to Mourinho's five wins. As such, some football analysts regard their rivalry as rather one-sided. But despite Spaniard's superior head-to-head record, Kappel (2008) notes that the Portuguese has come out on top when it comes to the number of trophies won, with twenty five against Guardiola's twenty two. Because of their respective trophy hauls and the respect they command in the football fraternity, they are regarded to be among the greatest ever coaches.

According to Dalziel (2017), the main areas in which the two coaches differ significantly is in their perceived personality, playing style and philosophy as well as their relationship with their players. While Mourinho is a win-at-all-cost type of manager who gives little emphasis on ball possession and organises his teams to play defensively, Guardiola likes his teams to dominate possession and be on the offensive no matter the circumstances. Mourinho is often despised for his abrasive style, provocative comments and offensive and attention-seeking behaviour. This is in stark contrast to Guardiola who is perceived to be more innovative and more down to earth. In terms of relationship with players, both coaches are held in high esteem by most former and current players. Notwithstanding their seemingly different coaching styles, both are ranked among the greatest football coaches of all time.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study is Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth, CMT) associated with Lakoff & Johnson (1980). This theory is a reaction against the traditional view on metaphors in which they used to be regarded as being found only in literary works. During the ancient Greek period, the common belief was that there exists a line of demarcation that separates the figurative use of language from the everyday language use. Therefore, metaphors are found exclusively in literary discourse such as in poetry, plays and prose fiction (see Saeed, 2007; Kovecses, 2010). By implication, this assumption appears to suggest that only some talented, special individuals are capable of using metaphorical expressions. This traditional proposition on metaphor was first disputed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) in their CMT. The main claim of the theory, according to Cserep, (2014, p. 26) is that "...language is saturated with metaphors, rooted in recurring bodily experience, and our language is metaphorical simply because our conceptual system is metaphorical". Again, Lakoff (1993, p. 203) argues that metaphors are primarily the properties of thought and not language. As such, "everyday abstract concepts like time, states, change, causation, and purpose can also turn out to be metaphorical". In other words, human language, by its very existence, is metaphorical in nature. This is so because human cognitive abilities are also metaphorical.

Kovecses (2010, p. 4) explains that “In the cognitive linguistic view, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain”. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) add that conceptual metaphors allow us to understand one conceptual domain in terms of another. And for one conceptual field to be conceptualised in terms of another, Yusuf (2016, p. 6) notes that “there must be some grounding, some concepts that are not completely understood via metaphors to serve as source domains. It is through the source domain that the target domain can be conceptualised”. What makes one domain to be explained in terms of another is a cross-domain mappings, which Kovecses (2010, p. 7) describes as “a set of systematic correspondences between the source and the target in the sense that constituent conceptual elements of B correspond to constituent elements of A”. And since mappings are formed in the mind and laid from the source domain to the target domain (Tretjakova, n. d.), it can be argued that it is the application of the source domain to the target domain that provides the target domain with the characteristics of the source domain (Kovecses, 2010).

To exemplify target domain as source domain, Lakoff & Johnson (1980, p. 4) give the following examples of “Argument is War” metaphor: *Your claims are indefensible. He attacked every weak point in my argument. His criticisms were right on target. I demolished his argument. I’ve never won an argument with him. You disagree? Okay, shoot! If you use that strategy, he’ll wipe you out. He shot down all of my arguments.* These examples show that through systematic mapping, the target domain of argument is explained in terms of the source domain of war. Similarly, Kovecses (2010, p. 10) cites the following examples of “Social Organisations are Plants” metaphor: *He works for the local branch of the bank. Our company is growing. They had to prune the workforce. The organization was rooted in the old church. There is now a flourishing black market in software there. His business blossomed when the railways put his establishment within reach of the big city. Employers reaped enormous benefits from cheap foreign labour.* From these examples, it can be deduced that the target domain of Social Organisations is explained in terms of the source domain of Plants. It is this kind of mapping that this paper used to discuss how politics as a target domain is explained in terms of the source domain of football.

Methodology

As discussed earlier, the aim of this paper is to find out how the conceptual field of politics is fused within the conceptual field of football through the use of metaphor. Thus, the data for the study is extracted from some Facebook posts and comments related to Kano state politics. Using a purposive sampling technique, the paper selects three Facebook posts as well as some comments generated from the posts. In total, the paper samples fifteen (15) expressions that appear to portray politicians as footballers. In some few instances where the selected expressions are in Hausa, they are translated into English using free translation method as given by Ahmad (2016). The selected expressions are then analysed using CMT as the theoretical basis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents the sampled sentences and briefly analyses them to show how they are drawn from the source domain to discuss the target domain. The analysis is done in such a way that sentences which talk about related ideas are grouped together. It is through the analysis that one can actually see how the conceptual field of politics can be understood in terms of the conceptual field of football. The following are the fifteen (15) sentences generated from the selected Facebook posts and comments:

1. My football mind shows me the Guardiola and Mourinho of Kano politics.
2. They are both winners and losers.
3. One wins roughly and loses sorely, the other wins smoothly and loses stately.

These sentences are used to depict the two most influential politicians in Kano: the former governors Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau and Engr. Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso. While the former is equated to the Spanish football coach Guardiola, the latter is portrayed as the Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho. The comparison is done because of the perceived parallel that can be drawn between the two sets. As is the tradition with politics and football, both Shekarau and Kwankwaso as well as Guardiola and Mourinho are bound to win some contests and lose some. However, their style of winning and their reaction to losing is what mark them different. While Kwankwaso is compared to Mourinho who wins roughly and loses sorely, Shekarau is compared to Guardiola who wins smoothly and loses stately. Perhaps, there is a perceived character trait that inform the analogy between both sets of personalities.

4. There should be Arsene Wenger amidst them.

This sentence makes reference to the current Kano state governor, Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, who is depicted as Arsene Wenger (former Arsenal's French coach). This could be because Wenger is a less successful and less revered coach compared to Guardiola and Mourinho. Being less influential than either of the two powerful politicians, Ganduje does not enjoy the same die hard following as the duo of Shekarau and Kwankwaso, just as Wenger did not enjoy the same success as Guardiola and Mourinho.

5. You are referring to stylist [sic] and beautiful attacking football that is linked to Guardiola and the boring, disgusting and parking the bus of Mourinho.
6. It's more to do with their differing pre and post-match interviews.
7. Pep mostly elicit [sic] sympathy in case he loses, while Mourinho provoke [sic] mockery both as winner and loser.

The above sentences basically compare the coaching styles of Guardiola and Mourinho with the political styles of Shekarau and Ganduje respectively. Shekarau is widely seen as a person who often elicits sympathy even from his detractors. On the other hand, the provocative style of Kwankwaso is equated to the coaching style of Mourinho who is widely mocked and derided whenever he loses. This could be because of their character of not being gracious in victory.

8. The transfer window is still open [sic] and the expected signing continues.

In football, there is a time called 'transfer window' in which clubs are allowed to buy new players and sell their players who are surplus to requirements. Similarly, in Nigeria, politicians have the habit of defecting from one political party to another. Thus, the act of defection from one party to another is explained in terms of transfer of players from one club to another. In other words, since Shekarau and Kwankwaso have just exchanged parties, there are possibilities that more people in Kano will join them in their 'new parties'. But unlike in football where the transfer window is opened just twice a year and no transfer is allowed outside the two windows, politicians do not have any restrictions as to when they can defect from one party to another.

9. The league will start soon.

This sentence makes reference with the fact that the election season is fast approaching Nigerians. Therefore, election here is portrayed as football league. This analogy is done because in both election and league, there is always a fierce competition from which a winner and a loser emerge. Again, primary elections conducted by parties to determine their flag-bearers can be seen as a pre-season tournaments in football, where clubs play a lot of friendly matches as warm ups and in preparation for the season ahead, just like how political parties conduct primaries in preparation for the general election.

10. Let us see the role of FIFA.

11. I hope it (FIFA) will give fair treatment without marginalisation.

In the two sentences above, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is conceptualised as the world football governing body (FIFA). INEC has for long been perceived as a pawn of the government, just like FIFA is perceived to be manipulated by some big European clubs and countries. In other words, there is a belief, especially among the fans of opposition parties, that the ruling party always uses INEC to rig election in its favour. Likewise, there is a conspiracy that FIFA always favours big footballing clubs countries in terms of officiating during tournaments. The second sentence above expresses wish that the INEC will conduct free and fair election this time around.

12. Scoring an early goal gives you a psychological edge and unsettles your opponent.

13. Failure to score an early goal is what gave chance to [sic] corruption to fight back.

14. Things would have been different had our darling president scored this early goal on corruption.

The aforementioned sentences are drawn from football to explain how Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari, failed to appoint ministers in his first six months in office as well as how he fails to bring the corrupt government officials to book. In football circle, it is a widely held belief that scoring an early goal gives you a psychological boost and a platform from which to approach the rest of the game. Conversely, it gives your opponents an early psychological blow and put them on the back foot. Thus, when you fail to score an early goal, the chances are that your opponents will become more confident as the game goes on. In politics too, a new President or Governor must give an early first impression. They must let the people know that their government is willing to bring positive changes and

deal with any wrongdoers. This will help make the citizens behave in line with the laws of the land. It is believed that Buhari's failure to score an early goal is what allows corruption to fight back.

15. *Kwankwaso ya ba wa Buhari kafa.* (Kwankwaso has performed a stepover on Buhari)

In a football game, there is a skill of dribbling called stepover. It involves moving the legs skillfully so as to fool a defender to go the wrong way. The sentence is used to refer to Kwankwaso's defection from APC to PDP which happened just a day after he met with Buhari. It was expected that the meeting was held to soothe the aggrieved senators of APC. Surprisingly, Kwankwaso left the party a day after. Therefore, the above sentence is used in reference to how he 'fooled' Buhari into believing he (Kwankwaso) was staying in APC.

Discussion of Findings

"The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). As explained earlier, this kind of understanding is possible through systematic mapping of the source and target domains. For many metaphorical expressions, one of the common source domains used for mapping is games and sport. As Kovecses (2010, p. 20) puts it, "Games and sport are characterized by certain properties that are commonly used for metaphorical purposes". That is to say, people commonly use games and sport as source domains to explain different target domains. Lakoff (1993) also notes that the term 'metaphorical expression' is used to refer to an individual linguistic expression that is sanctioned by a mapping. It is the mapping that will tell precisely how the target domain is conceptualised in terms of the source domain. As far as this study is concerned, the following table illustrates the cross-domain mapping that allows politics to be explained in terms of football:

Source Domain	Target Domain
Football coaches and players	Politicians
Pre and post-match interviews given by coaches and players	Media interview given by politicians
Winning and losing football games	Winning and losing elections
Football's transfer window	Defection from one party to another
Scoring an early goal in a game	Dealing decisively with anyone who violates the laws of the land
Football governing body (FIFA)	Nigerian electoral body (INEC)

According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980, 1999), one of the main features of metaphor is its pervasiveness both in language and thoughts. Similarly, scholars such as Turner (1996), Lakoff & Kovecses (1987), Stockwell (2002) hold that metaphors are also omnipresent in many discourses that are essential to our life such as politics, economy, religion, literature, time, morality and emotions. Thus, it is this ubiquity of metaphors that allows for conceptualisation of politics as football. Based on the data generated for this study, it can be deduced that

politicians and footballers have a lot in common in that they are followed and supported by many people. Because of this, they enjoy a considerable loyalty from their fan base. This provides a ground for which the language of politics and that of football can be compared and contrasted. Therefore, this paper found out that through metaphorical mapping, social media users (Facebook, in this case) are able to portray politicians as footballers, and political activities as football-related happenings. This is possible because CMT enables one to explore the systematic correspondences that exist between source and target domains respectively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both politics and football are important human activities in their own ways. While the former is one of the ways in which leaders of people are elected, the latter began as a game, but, “has long ceased to be a mere sport; it is just as much a socio-economic phenomenon, an arena for big business and big businessmen around the globe” (Bergh & Ohlander, 2012, p. 12). Additionally, many people including coaches, players, analysts, commentators, writers and club owners earn a living from football. And although football is often described as a beautiful game and politics a dirty one, a parallel can still be drawn between them in that both involve fierce competition from which a winner and a loser emerges. Perhaps, it is this similarity that allows for metaphorical comparison between the two. In other words, through the application of cross-domain mapping, the domains of politics and football are now metaphorically fused, so that the conceptual field of politics can be seen as a sub-domain of the conceptual field of football. Thus, **Politics is Football** metaphor is established.

References

- Ahmad, M. (2016). Linguistic versus cultural factors in mass media translation: The case of Hausa films. In M. O. Bhadmus (Ed.), *The Nigerian cinema: Reading Nigerian motion pictures* (pp 331-348). Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- Bergh, G. (2011). Football is war: A case study of minute-by-minute online football commentary. In *Veredas*, pp. 83-93.
- Bergh, G. & Ohlander, S. (2012). “Free kicks, dribblers and WAGs: Exploring the language of ‘the people’s game’”. In *Moderna språk*. 1
- Borcic, N., Kanizaj, I. & Krsul, S. (2016). Conceptual metaphor in political communication. In *JEL Classification*, pp. 73-94.
- Bratoz, S. (2014). Metaphors in political discourse from a cross-cultural perspective. In *IJEMS* 7 (1), pp. 3-23.
- Cserep, A. (2014). Conceptual Metaphor Theory: In defence or on the fence? *Argumentum* 10, pp. 261-288.

- Danziel, A. (2017). Jose Mourinho Vs Pep Guardiola rivalry: Trophies, head-to-head history. Accessed on 23/10/2018 at footiecentral.com/jose-mourinho-vs-pep-guardiola-rivalry-history-head-to-head-trophies/
<https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story-fbid=1406179839484552&id=100002776488261>.
<https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story-fbid=10217389361956000id=1532802073>.
- Kappel, D. (2018). The 11 Managers with the most trophies in Europe. Accessed on 23/10/2018 at www.soccerladuma.co.za/news/articles/categories/english-premier-league/the-11-managers-with-the-most-trophies-in-europe/289182.
- Karimova, V. S. (2015). Metaphors in political discourse. Accessed on 23/10/2018 at www.researchgate.net/publication/311068586.
- Koki, H. A. (2017). "A cognitive semantic study of selected Hausa metaphorical expressions as used by Kano state politicians". An Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Department of English and Literary Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
- Kovecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lakoff, G. (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor In A. Ortony (Ed) *Metaphor and thought* (202–252). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lakoff, G. & Kövecses, Z. (1987). The cognitive model of anger inherent in American English. In D. Holland & N. Quinn (Eds) *Cultural models in language and thought* (195–221). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lavric, E., Gerhard, P., Andrew, S. & Wolfgang, S. (eds) (2008). *The linguistics of football*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Lewandowski, M. (2011). The rhetoric of violence in Polish and English soccer reporting. In I. Koutny, & P. Nowak (Eds.) *Language, communication, information* (87–99). Poznan.
- Penninck, H. (2014). "An analysis of metaphor used in political speeches responding to the financial crises of 1929 and 2008". An unpublished Masters Dissertation. University of Gent.
- Rathborn, J. (2017). The history of Jose Mourinho vs Pep Guardiola: Every game, every goal and

every bust-up ahead of the Manchester derby. Accessed on 23/10/2018 at www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/mourinho-guardiola-history-manchester-derby-876541.

Stockwell, P. (2002). *Cognitive poetics: An introduction*. London: Routledge.

Turner, M. (1996). *The literary mind: The origins of thought and language*.

Oxford: Oxford

University Press.

Yusuf, A. Y. (2016). "Conceptual metaphor in the language of football commentary". In Ganga

Journal of Language and Literary Studies. 5 (4), pp 2-17.