

SG50: THE JOURNEY METAPHOR IN THE 2015 SINGAPORE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

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OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

- During election campaigns, politicians often try to accomplish the following two tasks:
 - to construct and reinforce **positive** political identities for themselves and their policies;
 - to construct **negative** ones for their political rivals.
- Narration/renarration of political events
 - contextualize individual stories into a bigger picture
 - meanings framed by socio-cultural and political contexts
 - a tool of manipulation biasedly constructed according to an underlying purpose

(Mona Baker, invited talk at HK PolyU, 2016)

INTRODUCTION

- “Singapore50”:

- Celebration of Singapore’s 50 years of independence from Malaysia
- Aug 7, 2015



- 2015 Singapore General Election:

- Sept 11, 2015 (initially to be held by Jan 2017)
 - *“Ruling party believed to be keen to capitalise on national pride after celebrations for city-state’s 50th birthday”*
(theguardian, Aug 25, 2015)
 - *“Early elections would reveal PAP’s lack of self-confidence in future performance”*
(THE ONLINE CITIZEN, May 22, 2015)
- During the election, the incumbent People’s Action Party (PAP) frequently commemorate SG50 to persuade voters:
 - **promote** themselves by reminding the voters of their contributions to Singapore
 - construct **negative** political identities for its rivals



INTRODUCTION

■ 2015 Singapore General Election Televised Debate:



■ Opening statements



Lawrence Wong



- Minister for Culture, Community and Youth,
- 2nd Minister for Communications and Information





Kenneth Jeyaretnam



- Secretary-General of the Reform Party
- the eldest son of J. B. Jeyaretnam (1st opposition member ever to be elected to Singapore's Parliament)

INTRODUCTION

■ 2015 Singapore General Election Televised Debate:

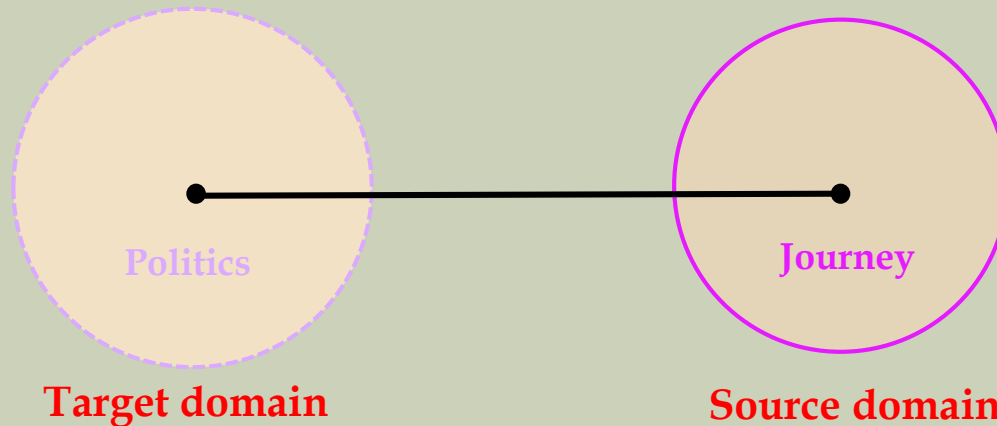
	Lawrence	Kenneth
Construction of political identities	 <p>For self: reliable and successful leadership</p>	 <p>For rival: untrustworthy, failed and lack of future direction</p>
Narration/ Renarration	<p>This election will be an election to choose a government and the leadership team for Singapore and also to set the future direction for all Singaporeans... Singapore is at an inflection point. This year we celebrate SG50. We look back and it is much that we can give thanks for... To move forward, we should look back at what we had done in the last 50 years... So we can continue to set the direction for Singapore's future, not just for the next 5 years, but for many decades, well beyond SG50.</p>	<p>Why are the PAP calling this election a year early? What's the reason that PAP are cashing in on the sympathy vote in SG50? It's because they know their policy has failed. They have failed to raise our living standard. They have no idea of what to do next.</p>

INTRODUCTION - WHY METAPHORS?

- **Metaphors** are an excellent means to narrativize and characterize oneself and others.
- Metaphors are highly valued in electoral discourse because:
 - they can be used by politicians as a cognitive heuristic device to shape the general public's mental representations of political issues;
 - they add a touch of novelty and wit to what is said, and thus greatly enhance the speaker's positive self-image;
 - they can also be used as verbal indirectness strategies to mitigate potential face-threats to both speaker and addressee.

(Miall & Vondruska 1983; Kuo 2003; Obeng 1997; Wilson 1990)

INTRODUCTION – JOURNEY METAPHORS



- “**POLITICS** IS A **JOURNEY**” is a specific realization of “LIFE IS A JOURNEY” that explains the choice of phrases (e.g. ‘forward or back’ and ‘U-turn’).
- The **JOURNEY** metaphor allows politicians to explain abstract and complex political experience through the embodied experience of movement, often with politicians projecting **themselves** as ‘**guides**’ and their **policies** as ‘**maps**’.

(Charteris-Black 2005, pp. 47)

INTRODUCTION – JOURNEY METAPHORS

- PAP's frequent use of the JOURNEY metaphor as a framing and narrativizing strategy during the election:

Lawrence

(Journey)



This election will be an election to choose a government and the leadership team for Singapore and also to set the **future direction** for all Singaporeans... Singapore is at an **inflection point**. This year we celebrate SG50. We **look back** and it is much that we can give thanks for... To **move forward**, we should **look back** at what we had done in the last 50 years... So we can continue to set the **direction** for Singapore's future, not just for the next 5 years, but for many decades, well beyond SG50.

(narration)

It's about our sense of unity and pride as **Singaporeans**, and I see this in **my own family**... My grandfather was a fisherman... It was not easy living. They did hard work, but they lived life with dignity.. They raised 7 children and they had the chance to see their children and their grandchildren enjoy a better life... And I'm sure this **applies not just to me but many Singaporeans**, including many of the opposition candidates here today would have the **similar stories** to share...



Leon Perera
(The Worker's Party)

"I would like to start by **thanking the members of PAP** here for PAP's contributions to Singapore, and thank you to the other parties as well..."

LITERATURE ON METAPHORS AS A FRAMING STRATEGY IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

■ “Ideological influence on BUILDING metaphors in Taiwanese presidential speeches” (Lu & Ahrens, 2008):

- How politicians elaborate on certain issues using different framing strategies and manipulations of metaphors, based on their respective political advantage
- Kuomintang vs. Democratic Progressive Party



- Kuomintang's use of two culture-specific metaphor patterns:

Retrospective building metaphors:

interpreted naturally relates the country to its Chinese past

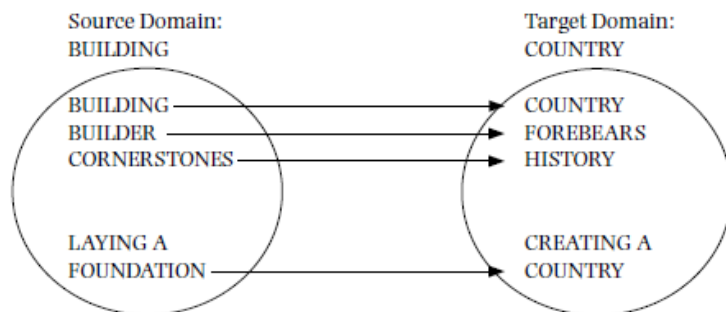


FIGURE 2. Cross-domain pairings of retrospective BUILDING metaphors.

Reconstruction metaphors:

The country is a demolished building that should be rebuilt by the populace

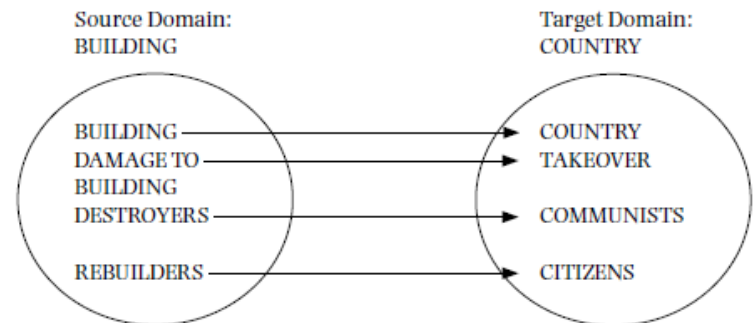
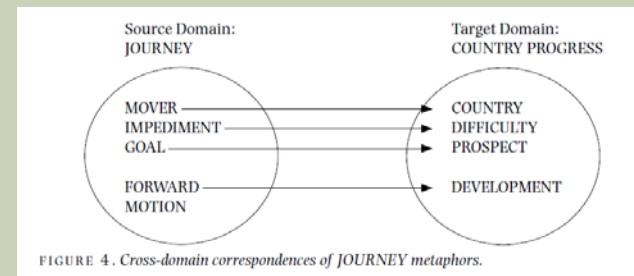


FIGURE 3. Cross-domain pairings of RECONSTRUCTION metaphors.

LITERATURE ON METAPHORS AS A FRAMING STRATEGY IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

- **Democratic Progressive Party** (against Taiwan identifying with China)
 - Avoid using building metaphors
 - Use JOURNEY metaphor instead

Distribution of BUILDING metaphors and alternatives		
	Candidates	Percentage
BUILDING metaphors	Chiang Kai-shek	17.01
	Chiang Ching-kuo	23.31
	Lee Teng-hui	26.95
	Chen Shui-bian	2.90
JOURNEY metaphors	Chiang Kai-shek	4.86
	Chiang Ching-kuo	9.82
	Lee Teng-hui	9.58
	Chen Shui-bian	17.03



(Lu & Ahrens, 2008)

- News reports concerning Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965
 - Malaysians: frequent use of MARRIAGE metaphor to conceptualize the Singapore-Malaysia relationship
 - Singaporeans: avoid using the metaphor, which is not in line with its political interest

(Wee, 2001)

OBJECTIVES

- How different ideologies behind metaphors can be negotiated to construct political identities to influence public opinion?
 - To examine PAP (People's Action Party)'s use of JOURNEY metaphors during the 2015 Singapore General Election
 - To compare the opposition parties' re-adoption of the metaphor as a counter response
- To examine the impact of location/genre differences upon politicians' use of JOURNEY metaphors

METHODOLOGY

■ Database:

- 4 popular campaign speeches
- 60 news articles from *Channel NewsAsia*
- 2015 Singapore General Election Televised Debate

■ Period:

- September 3rd -13th, 2015



CHANNEL NEWSASIA



Types of metaphors

Visual metaphors

Conceptual metaphors



(Wong & Yap, 2016)

JOURNEY metaphors:

e.g. destination, direction, forward, journey, move, path, road, way

(Wong, Yap & Tay, 2016)

“Top down” approach:

- Conceptual metaphor “Politics is a journey”;
- linguistic expressions compatible with it

(Krennmayr, 2013)

PRELIMINARY DATA ANALYSIS

■ Distribution of JOURNEY metaphors and alternatives

■ Televised debate:

Themes	Freq.	Examples
Journey	9	To move forward , we should look back at what we have done; If you want to travel fast then go alone, but if you want to travel far then you need to go together as a team; to set the future direction for all Singaporeans
Position	8	starting point
Construction	7	build our nation together
Unity	5	partnership between PAP and the people

Themes	Freq.	Examples
Journey	8	to change the direction of the country, which is going in the wrong direction quickly
Motion	7	Rankings fallen
Emotion	7	Sad fact of life
Personification/ Physical action	4	depress Singaporeans' wages

News articles:

Party	Freq.	Source domain							
		destination	direction	forward	journey	move	path	road	way
PAP	28	2	2	5	3	1	11	2	0
Others	5	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	1

Speeches:

Party	Freq.	Source domain								
		destination	direction	forward	journey	backward	path	chase	way	pathways
PAP	21	1	1	9	3	1	3	2	0	1
Others	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0

➤ Use of JOURNEY metaphors in the 3 different settings

Genre types	Observations	
	PAP	Others
Televised debate	Consistent	↓
News articles		
Campaign speeches		

PRELIMINARY DATA ANALYSIS

The incumbent PAP's use of JOURNEY metaphor:

■ Constructing positive political identities:

- “We committed ourselves to *taking Singapore forward together*. After *50 years* of this *journey*, I think we are entitled to *look back* and to rejoice. We have shown the world who we are. We are Singaporeans.”
- This election was for the people to assess *how the PAP has done*, he added, and whether they would *continue to trust* the party to “lead them *forward* into the future”.

■ Constructing negative political identities for rivals:

- “You know there are cruise ships that go on a journey to *nowhere*. These are *gambling ships*, very exciting.”
- “Our *journey* was not *paved* by the *talkers*, the *critics*, or to men who just point out how the strong men stumble.”
- The SDP was only interested in politics, not residents, she said: “They are using emotions, populist policies and *leading Singapore down the slippery road* that many other countries are trying to come back up but cannot.”

PRELIMINARY DATA ANALYSIS

The incumbent PAP's use of JOURNEY metaphor:

- intimately linked to the history and culture of Singapore, including sea-going vessels :
 - “If you go with the PAP, you are actually embarking on a cruise ship with a definite **destination**. You know the **destination**, you know the **journey**, the **path** taken by the **cruise ship**.”
- To highlight the milestones and challenges of the country in the past 50 years, and the partnership between PAP and the people
- For rivals:
 - “You know there are cruise ships that go on a journey to **nowhere**. These are **gambling ships**, very exciting.”



Singapore River: Centre of trade, commerce and finance

PRELIMINARY DATA ANALYSIS

The opposition parties' re-adoption of JOURNEY metaphor:

- WP leader Low Thia Khiang then said that the PAP's cruise ship was the **Titanic**: "*There are **not enough lifeboats**, no preparations or provisions for failure.*"
- He later said at a WP rally that while the PAP has been on a cruise ship, Singaporeans have been on a **sampan** (a flat-bottomed Chinese wooden boat).



<https://www.byline.com/column/23/article/358>

CONCLUSION

- We examined PAP's use of JOURNEY metaphors in terms of frequency distribution and patterns
- We also compared the difference between PAP and the opposition parties' use of JOURNEY metaphors
 - PAP
 - Frequently relate to SG50, Singaporeans' own culture and history, reminding the voters of their contributions to Singapore
 - Opposition parties
 - Avoid using the JOURNEY metaphor, which is not in line with its political interest (except during the “face-to-face” televised debates)
 - Genre type
 - PAP: Consistent
 - Opposition parties: Varied with different locations

CONCLUSION

- Despite the rivalry, and sometimes the vitriol as well, both parties are aware that the verbal sparring is part of 'the political game'.
- Among the skills needed is the ability to 'attack' and 'counter-attack'.
- The subtle and skillful use of verbal indirectness strategies including characterization metaphors is useful in creating positive political identities for selves and negative ones for others.

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Thank you~

	Speech	Time	Views
	PAP: Speech by DPM Tharman Shanmugaratnam (Jurong GRC) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrcRB3C72rk	27 mins	89,761
	PM Lee Hsien Loong speaks at PAP lunchtime rally https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZ8VP0TDT7c	55 mins	34,525
	General Elections 2015 - 06.09.2015 – Leon Perera https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMhiKWfBvHc	15 mins	206,853
	SDP: GE2015: Chee Soon Juan speaks at the SDP rally at Bukit Panjang, Sep 4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUKpgmY-FKk	24 mins	158,461