Conceptual metaphor theory

1 Identifying conceptual metaphors

Identify the conceptual metaphors in these sentences. State each metaphor in small capitals, with the target domain first, and the source domain second:

(1) His career hit the buffers.
(2) The face went from its usual colour to bright crimson.
(3) The prime minister went on the attack against the opposition’s criticisms.
(4) My car is refusing to start.
(5) She’s been very distant lately in our relationship.
(6) My favourite part of the piece is coming up.
(7) Tomorrow is a big day.

2 Mappings in a single conceptual metaphor

Consider the following examples, which all relate to a single, underlying conceptual metaphor:

(1) Is that the foundation for your theory?
(2) The theory needs more support.
(3) The argument is shaky; it’ll collapse soon.
(4) Who designed that theory?
(5) What is the form of the argument?
(6) Here are some facts to shore up the theory.
(7) So far we’ve only put together the framework for the theory.

a. What is the conceptual metaphor that underpins these examples?
b. Now state the mappings as a table.
c. Which linguistic examples provide evidence for which mappings, and why?
3 Correlation versus resemblance metaphors

Consider the following examples. Explain how the metaphors that underlie them illustrate the distinction between metaphors motivated by resemblance versus those motivated by correlation:

(1) My boss is a real pussycat.
(2) So far, things are going smoothly for the democrats in the election campaign.

4 Metaphors in political discourse

Below is the text of a speech given by Tony Blair, British politician, as he sought re-election as British Prime Minister in 2005. Carefully read the text.

a. Identify the conceptual metaphor(s) Blair uses to characterise i) his role as Prime Minister, ii) his relationship with the British people, iii) his political career, and iv) the electoral choice at the forthcoming General Election.

b. Provide the evidence from the speech that support these conceptual metaphors.

A fight we have to win

Sunday 13 February 2005
Speech by Tony Blair, Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party to Labour’s Spring Conference, Sage Centre, Gateshead

What a wonderful Centre this is. I would like to thank all the staff who have looked after us so brilliantly and a particular thank you to the police and security, who have done a great job.

And say thank you to the people of Gateshead and Tyneside, with apologies for disruption. But it’s been a great place to come to. Just four years ago a derelict industrial land. Now one of the finest concert halls in the world. And before it even opened, it had already benefited more than a million people through its education work.

Just along from this magnificent Centre is the Baltic Exchange, one of Britain’s newest galleries for contemporary visual art. Along the waterfront, once derelict – are houses, businesses, galleries, restaurants. Joining Gateshead to Newcastle is the Millennium Bridge designed by Wilkinson Eyre, and along that waterfront too, once a place of empty factories and ghosts of times past, the new housing, hotels and business park. There is still poverty. There is still hardship. There are still too many lives untouched by change. But to anyone who doubts Britain has got better since we took over from the Tories in 1997, I say: come to Gateshead; see what the people here have achieved; and then understand why we, in the New Labour Government, who have worked with them, are so passionate about winning that historic third
term so that never again are people as talented as this, who can achieve so much, neglected and left behind by an uncaring Tory Government.

I had a tremendous time on Friday touring the country. Loved every moment of it. Enjoyed the Q&A yesterday, and anyone who texted or e-mailed a question – and there were a lot – will get a reply from me. I’m back. And it feels good. Back in the North East, to thank the people from Sedgefield who gave me the chance to serve in Parliament, and have given me strength and support every day that I’ve been there.

Back with the Labour Party that has given me the honour of leadership, first of the party and then, more important of course, of the country. Back with a relentless focus on the job of delivering better lives for Britain’s hard working families, because that is my job, and I never forget it.

In this second term, in particular after September 11th, events have sometimes taken me far from home. But no matter how far, I have never forgotten the top line of my job spec – to work for Britain, and the British people. They are the boss. Always have been. Always will be. And none of us, not me, not any of us, should ever forget it.

It is good to be back in a fight with the Tories. And make no mistake – this is a fight. A fight for the future of our country. A fight that for Britain, and the people of Britain, we have to win.

The polls can tell one story, but the story that counts is the one unfolding in the minds of millions of people around the country as they face up to the fundamental choice facing the country – forward or back. And that story will not be told until the only poll that matters – the general election. The Tories may be a mess. Their policy incoherent. Their tax and spending plan an economic disaster waiting to take our prosperity away. Their leader a representative of everything the country voted in 1997 to get rid of. I said no complacency in 1997. I said no complacency in 2001. I say it again now. Where we have lost support, we go out and try to win it back.

Where we have lost old friends, we try to persuade them to come back to the fold.

Where we have made mistakes, we say so. Where we have done well, we shout it out with pride and passion and energy. Where we know we can make a difference in the future, we set out our stall for the people with confidence. Because now they are thinking, reflecting – do we go forward with Labour, or back to the Tories.

Our task is to persuade them to go forward. To vote for us not as a rejection of the others but as an endorsement of what we are trying to do for the country.

I understand why some people feel angry – not just over Iraq but many of the difficult decisions we have made. And, as ever, a lot of it is about me.

I think a lot about my relationship with the country. Everyone thinks they know you. Everyone has a view. Sometimes the view is
settled. You’re a good thing. Sometimes it’s settled the other way. You’re a bad thing. And sometimes people change their mind according to their mood, according to what’s happening in the country, in the world, in their own lives, in the swirl of what passes for political debate.

And it’s not a bad idea to think of it in terms of it being like any relationship: you, the British people and me, the person you chose as your Prime Minister.

When I first became leader of the Labour Party, everywhere I went, I could feel the warmth growing, the expectations rising.

Then came the euphoria surrounding our victory. I remember saying at the time it was all a bit unreal, because people would expect miracles. We have delivered a lot, but no miracles. Politicians don’t deliver miracles. And life is not about euphoric moments. It’s about steady change for the better. So after the euphoria, came the steady hard slog of decision-making and delivery. And the events that tested me. And the media mood turning, and friends sometimes being lost as the big decisions mounted, and the thousand little things that irritate and grate, and then all of a sudden there you are, the British people, thinking: you’re not listening and I think: you’re not hearing me. And before you know it you raise your voice. I raise mine. Some of you throw a bit of crockery.

And now you, the British people, have to sit down and decide whether you want the relationship to continue. If you decide you want Mr Howard, that is your choice. If you want to go off with Mr Kennedy, that’s your choice too. It all ends in the same place. A Tory Government not a Labour Government. Going back not moving forward.

But for me, I believe in you, the British people as much as ever. I have learnt some lessons in these past years. This job is a harsh teacher but a wise one. As we sought power, reached out for new support, fought to establish ourselves on fresh political terrain, the accusation was of ‘all things to all people’.

And I soon learnt that however pleasant popularity is, ‘all things to all people’ never lasts for long. Then as I struggled with the levers of power, saw with a genuine urgency the challenges a new world was thrusting on Britain, I was determined to do the right thing. But for a political leader, ‘doing the right thing’ in reality is only ever ‘doing what I think is the right thing’. And if you’re not careful, ‘doing the right thing’ becomes ‘I know best’.

So, starting with the Big Conversation, I went back out, and rather than talking at, talked with people. And I learnt. I learnt that when I’m working hard, trying my damnedest and wondering, frustrated, why people can’t appreciate the delivery, it’s easy to forget life is still so tough for so many people, a real life daily struggle, not for a life of luxury but just to get by. And I learnt that the best policy comes not from courting popularity or mere conviction, but comes from
partnership between politics and people, from the blend of listening and leading; that people don’t expect miracles, but they do demand dialogue; that they aren’t disinterested in politics or even disengaged but they do feel disempowered. I learnt that on some issues, sometimes you just have to agree to disagree, like Iraq, though hopefully now, with 8 million people in Iraq coming out to vote, we can all agree, however we got here, we should stay as long as the Iraqis want us to help ensure democracy not terror determines their future.

I learnt that the best policy comes from a true partnership between Government and people. And I learnt that no matter how powerful the position you hold, no matter how powerful others think you are, you can achieve very little alone.

More together than we achieve alone – the heart of our party’s new constitution and as true for the country.

So this journey has gone from ‘all things to all people’ to ‘I know best’ to ‘we can only do it together’. And we all know which is best of those three.

A partnership. Forward together. It’s your choice.

I’m still the same person. Older. A little wiser, I hope. But still with the same commitment and belief. And I believe together we still make the best team for Britain and its future. Indeed throughout, my values never changed.