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Metaphor Use in Selected Lesotho Development Policy: Critical Discourse Analytical Approach

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Abstract

This research report provides results obtained from the exploration the metaphor used in development policy documents produced in Lesotho. Using the tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis, I explored the metaphor used in forewords of two policy documents and the ideologies that they promote. The results provided in the report reveal that the documents use a variety of metaphors, including those from the domain of journey and war. The findings show that these metaphors are not neutral linguistic elements but promote certain ideological positions.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Metaphor: Policy documents

Introduction

Research using the critical approach towards discourse have revealed the importance of exploring discourse as part of providing an understanding of social issues. Past studies have shown that discourse structures have an effect on social and cognitive structures, and vice versa (Van Dijk [1], Fairclough [2]). Cognizant of this, researchers have explored instances of talk and talk in order to uncover the different viewpoints and ideologies which are promoted by different texts (Fairclough [2]). This is important as the same viewpoints influence behavior, including the drafting of and reaction toward policy (Fairclough [3]). This research report provides the results of a study that explored the ideologies embedded in some of the development policy documents produced in Lesotho.

The literature shows that while speakers and writers can be overt in their promotion of certain viewpoints, there are many instances in which these beliefs are implicitly stated and naturalized (Faircloug [3]). One way in which this can be done is use of metaphor, which it has been revealed is an effective tool for promoting certain ideologies (Charteris-Black, [4]). Previous research shows that talk about sustainable development abound with metaphors that promote certain ideologies (Milne et al. [5]; Audebrand [6]; Silva and Almeida, [7]). Examining the metaphorical language in development policy produced in Lesotho can reveal some of the ideologies that are promoted by Lesotho's policymakers.

As one of the lower-middle-income countries, Lesotho has developed a number of policy papers that address the challenges facing the countries (World Bank, 2024). One of this is the Vision 2020, which was developed in 2000 as an alternative to the Five-Year Plans that were in the preceding years (Vision, 2020). Then there are the National Strategic Plans which have been intended to serve as 'implementation framework for the National Vision 2020, the Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union Agenda 2063' (National Strategic Plan II). The aim of the study is to uncover

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some of the metaphors that are used in Lesotho Vison 2020 and the National Strategic Plan II and their ideological functions.

The major assumption of CDA is that discourse is a site where power inequalities and stereotyping are hidden. These inequalities and negative framing are found in wider societies. Then, as people create texts, they either reproduce and promote these inequalities or resist them (Fairclough [8]; Van Dijk [1]). To uncover the inequalities and negative stereotyping, CDA employs a critical approach, which is lacking in other types of discourse studies, in its analysis of text (Fairclough [3]). This approach considers not only the patterns in a text but includes the social and cognitive structures behind those patterns. This approach was followed in the study whose findings are given in this repot, with the social and cognitive factors behind the use of metaphors appearing in Lesotho's Vision 2020 and the National Strategic Plan II explored.

Methodology

Population

The goal of the study whose results are given in this report was to uncover metaphors used in two Lesotho policy documents, namely Vision 2020 and the National Strategic Plan. The data from these two documents constituted the population of the study.

Sampling and Sampling Documents

Purpose sampling, which is the type of sampling in which members of the population that can yield the relevant data are selected (Shah and Al-Barghi 2013), was used. The forewords of the two documents were purposively selected as the samples.

Data Collection

The two documents are publicly available in both softcopy and hardcopy. The softcopies of the two documents were downloaded from the internet.

Data-Analysis

The first step was to identify the metaphors. To identify the metaphors, the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije University (MIP) (Steen et al. [9]) was employed. A development of Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) of the PRAGLEJAZZ Group [10], the procedure regards as metaphor any linguistic expression whose contextual meaning contrasts with its basic meaning. The basic meaning refers to the sense that is more concrete and is usually given first in the list of meanings provided by dictionaries such as Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell [11]), which Steen et al. [9] recommends as the primary reference tool to be used to check the meanings of words.

After this, the three-step model of analysis introduced by Fairclough (Fairclough [3]) was followed.

Results and Discussions

Metaphors that describe the documents and their functions

Both documents have metaphors that either describe them/ what they do. For example, in sentence (1), which comes from Lesotho Vison 2020, the metaphor of 'beacon' is used to both describe the document and its function.

1. This document, itself a result of wide consultations among our people, should no doubt serve as a beacon of hope in all our communities.

The use of this metaphor highlights the importance of the document, indicating that it has the potential to change the welfare of Basotho. The use of the metaphor 'beacon of hope' highlights the economic and developmental challenges Basotho are in, with the Basotho likened to travelers who are facing hardship and who then get a sight of a 'beacon of hope'.

In sentence (2), the author uses personification to highlight the one of the roles of Lesotho's National Strategic Plan II.

2. It articulates the hopes, opportunities, pressing concerns, and the preferred course of action to address them.

Sentence (1) gives the National Strategic Plan II the same attributes as human beings; similar to human beings, the document has the ability to 'articulate' some points. The use of these metaphors shows the high regard in which the two documents are held. This patterns align with those reported in previous studies in which it was indicated that discourse is a site where ideologies are promoted and resisted (Fairclough, 2017). The two personification metaphors mentioned in (1) and (2) reflect the understanding that Lesotho is in difficult position and needs the policy documents to develop.

Journey metaphors used that refer to development

There data shows two instances in which journey metaphors are employed to talk about development. Both Lesotho Vison 2020 and Strategic Plan II used these metaphors. An example of a metaphor that has structured development is given in (3). In (3) the author of the foreword of the Strategic Plan II frames economic progress among Basotho as movement towards a certain destiny and those whose lives do not change as being 'left behind'.

3. Achieving the planned results and leaving no one behind will ossify the trust in government and political institutions. Journey metaphor.

The metaphor given in (1) | serves an important role of highlighting the plight of those whose lives not change; they are left behind and do not reach the desired goals that everybody wants to attain. The downside of using this metaphor, however, is that it can, to some extent, downplay the negative effect of being in this situation as it does not highlight many challenges that are brought about by lack of development. Also, changing a situation of a person who has been left behind is often much easier than addressing the issues of underdevelopment. However, the use of the metaphor may suggest that changing the situation of people who are affected by lack of development is as easy as rectifying a situation in which some people had been left behind.

Furthermore, this metaphor denies people agency in 'the journey' in which they get 'left behind'. The use of the metaphor suggests that there is someone – based on the context it appears to

be the government – that make people to move along.

Apart from downplaying the difficulties that might be there in addressing lack of development, journey metaphors may also downplay the urgency that is needed to make the necessary change as a journey is a often gradual process. Previous studies have shown that journey metaphor encourage a business-as-usual approach (Milne et al. 2020).

Metaphors used to talk past achievements in the agricultural sector

There are two cases in which metaphors are used to refer to past achievements in the agriculture sector. Both metaphors appear Lesotho Vision 2020. One of these metaphors is given (4)

4. Although at that time agriculture was already the backbone of Lesotho's economy, the discovery of diamond at Kimberly created an unprecedented demand for grain.

Sentence (4) comes from the part where the focus is on the past achievements of Lesotho, which the author shows that are no longer replicated. One of these achievements are in agricultural, which the author highlights the importance of by using a body metaphor and likening to the 'backbone' of Lesotho. Since a body can barely function when the backbone is not well-functioning, the use of this metaphor shows that it is difficult for Lesotho to progress economically when the agricultural sector is not well-functioning.

While the use of the metaphor given in (4) plays in an important rule in highlighting the importance of agriculture to Lesotho's economic it has a disadvantage of prescribing only one route towards development and ruling out other alternatives such as investing in water and diamonds which can also serve as the backbone of Lesotho's economy. Furthermore, portraying agriculture as the 'backbone' of Lesotho may influence policymakers to push for investment in the agricultural sector even when this may not yield any returns. There is also a possibility that any trends made, such as good harvests by non-commercial farmers, might be regarded as good indications of economic growth.

Metaphors used to show an increase in some trends

There are three cases in which metaphors are employed to show an increase of negative trends. All these metaphors appear in Lesotho Vision 2020. In one instance, there is a use surface metaphor to talk about poverty, with the author indicating that 'poverty is deepening'.

In another case in which metaphor is used to talk about the growth of negative trends is in the discussion of unemployment. Employing a common conventional metaphor, the author indicates that unemployment is high, with the adjective high used to highlight the fact that many people are unemployed.

Thirdly, there is a case in which the spread of corruption and nepotism are likened to the spread of cancer. The sentence made this comparison is given in (5).

5. Corruption and nepotism are spreading like a cancer in our institutions.

The comparison of corruption and nepotism to cancer shows that they are not wanted. Also, this comparison highlights the danger posed by these practices.

However, using this metaphor may lead to fatalistic attitude similar to the one people have towards cancer. Also, structuring nepotism and corruption as cancer, whose spread cannot be blamed on anyone, may exonerate the government for allowing this situation to take place and justify inaction on the part of government which, however, has a role to ensure that these practices are rooted out.

The data shows one instance in which a metaphor is used to describe a positive economic change. The text that employed this metaphor is given in (6).

6. I will seek to consolidate efforts and deepen consciousness for an urgent need to accelerate economic growth.

In (6), we see the use of a common metaphor in economics where 'growth' is used to highlight an increase.

5.5. War Metaphors used to describe supporting democracy and human rights

The data shows one instance in the National Strategic Plan in which war metaphor was used. This text is given in (7).

7. We also need to defend democratic governance and stand for the protection of human rights, inclusion, peace and security, environmental protection, and build resilience to climate change.

In (7), the author frames a support against democracy and human rights as a defense. While this metaphor has an advantage of mobilizing support for these institutions, its use has a disadvantage as it frames other people as enemies. Casting other people as enemies make it possible for them to be persecuted, including in situation in which they are not guilty of any wrong doing. This type of frame may give government license to be brutality towards those that are cast in the role of 'enemies'.

Additionally, revious studies have shown that the use of this metaphor may portray some people and institutions as heroes (Audebrand [6]). This might be the case even if the acts of such people and institutions are not beneficial to the other members of the community.

Conclusion

The research report has provided some information about the use of metaphor in the selected Lesotho policy documents. The study has shown that, as proposed by previous studies such as Charteris-Black [4], Milne [5], Seepheephe, [12] and Seepheephe and Makha [13], different document, including policy documents, use metaphor as a tool for promoting certain ideologies. The tool has revealed that, in line with what CDA has proposed, the promotion of these ideologies can be implicit [14-16].

Declaration of Interest

None

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None

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