The Use of Metaphor in Political Cartoons; The Case of Ghana's Free Senior High School (Shs) Policy

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Abstract

'Cartoon' as a discourse genre has widely been defined as a metaphorical codification of a satirical type through which an artist subtly informs, educates, and entertains the readership (Adejuwon & Alimi, 2009; Nyoni et al., 2012; Olowolayemo, 2013). Morris (1993) asserts that an effective political cartoon can convey a politically sophisticated message condensed into a single image. El Refaie (2009) explains that cartoons help people understand complex political issues by presenting an imaginary scenario of real-life events. The cartoonists satirically and artistically present subtle issues which news editors would typically find challenging to comment on. This study examines how Ghanaian media (cartoonists) use metaphor in cartoons to present the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) Policy from its conception to delivery. The purposive sampling technique was employed in data collection. A corpus of data that topicalised Free SHS Policy from September 2017 to November 2019 was investigated. The data included ten political cartoons published by 'Tilapia' and two by The Daily Guide's cartoonist 'Akosua'. The data for this study were downloaded from the online portals of the selected media houses. The data were qualitatively analysed. The main theoretical framework used for this study was Conceptual Metaphor Theory, developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

The analysis of the data focuses on the use of familiar concepts that help in understanding the message of the Free SHS Policy. After identifying the metaphor in the cartoons, the possible cross-mappings are done from the source domain to the target domain. The properties of the source domains are mapped onto the target domains as exemplified by Lakoff and Johnson 'Love Is a Journey'. The analysis of the cartoons draws motivation from Kress and Van Leeuwen's semiotic tools (2006). Kress and Van Leeuwen postulate that there are other meaning-making areas apart from language. They propose these semiotic tools; settings, participants or characters, colour effects, font sizes, gestures, and posture. The analysis seldom relied on these semiotic tools contribute significantly to the message the cartoonists intend to put across. Analyzing the cartoons and answering the research question set for this study reveals that cartoonists used different conceptual source domains to present the message of

Free SHS policy. Noticeable conceptual source domains include food cooking, child delivery, hospital, sports, and farming. All these concepts help readers and viewers to understand the message being communicated. Furthermore, it is found that the satirical touch that comes with the cartoons reduces the severe nature of the issue.

Keywords: Metaphor, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Political cartoons, Free Senior High School Policy, Ghana.