

Conceptual Blending in Allegorical Political Rhetoric

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In this paper I will examine the ability of Blending Theory to represent the emergent mappings of the cognitive allegories (Harris and Tolmie 2011) used by the Managalase of Papua New Guinea to negotiate, create, and manipulate social and political relationships. Blending theory commonly focusses on the product, rather than the process of conceptual integration (Gibbs Jr 2000, Hougaard 2005). This examination of Managalase allegories will explore the dynamic interactions of speakers and their audiences that produce conceptual, oral, and social blends. It will also consider the roles that cultural concepts of genre and conventional motifs play in shaping the blending process.

Managalase political allegories, *ha'a*, are a genre of oral performance employed by politically experienced men and women with extensive knowledge of oral traditions. They are an example of a ubiquitous process (Gibbs 2011) in which cultural metaphors or motifs are employed in extended discourse. Managalase *ha'a* draw upon conventional motifs that are associated with different frames of social and political activity (i.e. arranging a marriage, creating political alliances through feasting, and making subtle accusations about others). Performances of Managalase allegories may range from brief statements, to more elaborate narratives with complex, multiple motifs and thematic constructions. They may be private interchanges between two parties, or public orations with large, responsive audiences. Even in the public arena of the village, the indirectness of these metaphorical negotiations shields the participants from explicit attributions of intent and public interpretations of political commitment. Successful negotiators acknowledge the allegorical discourse by engaging in the interaction, but failed political negotiations lead both parties to publically deny the metaphorical nature of the narrative.

Consequently, the dynamics of these performances require the speaker and his or her audience to simultaneously negotiate the acknowledgement of the genre of the performance as an allegory, develop a mutually comprehensible interpretation of the interchange, and commit themselves to a new political relationship.

Allegorical interchanges between narrator and audience exhibit the typical components of conceptual integration and blending (Coulson and Oakley 2000, Fauconnier and Turner 1998, Fauconnier and Turner 2002, Oakley 2009). Successful allegorical performances are characterized by the audience member's identification of the allegorical potential of the speech, and their recognition of the potential motifs' conventional input, generic, and blend spaces. During the negotiations, these motifs, in the hands of accomplished speakers, can be woven into

more elaborate narratives and dialogues with multiple potential mappings and corresponding new blends with additional social implications. The clever narrator requires the members of his or her audience to test and re-evaluate several possible mappings of different frames as the negotiation unfolds. Members of the audience use their familiarity with the speaker's social relations and his or her previous use of allegorical motifs to explore the potential selective projections that may compose new social relationships. If they find the possible mappings acceptable, the audience may respond with statements that complete and elaborate upon the selected projections of the allegorical discourse, thus creating the basis for new social relationships.

This analysis of Managalase political allegories provides an opportunity to explore the interplay of the cognitive, linguistic, cultural, and social dynamics that contribute to conceptual integration and blending in complex social and political interactions.

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