

A Cognitive-Linguistics Approach to ‘Framing’ Strategies in American Political Discourse

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Abstract: Political discourse features its abundant use of linguistic devices to serve particular political purposes. Previous studies on this phenomenon are mainly focused on their rhetorical effects, or mere metaphorical/metonymic underpinnings. This study, based on data collected from 100 latest *New York Times* U.S.-Politics articles, explores the framing strategies that the writer or speaker employs for producing special political effects. These strategies, which apply to discourse either intrasentential, or intersentential, or even across paragraphs, fall into 6 general categories: frame creation, frame insertion, frame integration, frame connection, frame merging, and frame contrasting. Through a more in-depth analysis of the relevant data, we find out that the strategies in question fit in quite well with the renowned psychology-oriented Framing Effect. Hence we propose that the Framing Effect be expanded to cover the above-mentioned 6 strategies, which are assumed as significant in terms of psychological or cognitive effects. These effects will be dealt with within a cognitive-linguistics framework, which integrates mental space theory with prototype theory, cognitive grammar, construction grammar, and frame semantics.

Key words: cognitive linguistics; framing strategies; framing effect; political discourse;

Two instances of the CUT frame in our data:

Democrats argued that Mr. Ryan’s budget would balance only on the backs of the poor, **cutting** taxes for the wealthy while **eviscerating** the social safety net.

Dispute Over a Balanced Budget Is Philosophical as Much as Fiscal

“But I can’t do that. I can’t responsibly do that as long as I have this **hara-kiri** Congress threatening to **drive a long knife through** our recovery.”

Fear of U.S. Cuts Grows in States Where Aid Flows

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