

# A Mammoth Logistical Challenge with Slight Hiccups The Metaphorical Image of Indonesian Election 2019

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## ABSTRACT

Indonesian Election 2019 was undoubtedly the biggest single-day election in the world. The foreign media news reports on the election highlight various aspects; one of them is the logistical challenge and massive tasks of the Indonesian General Election Commission (KPU) before, during, and after Election Day. The use of metaphorical expressions in those news reports is unavoidable as they provide more persuasive and highly descriptive expressions. Various studies discuss election metaphor, but none of the studies focus on how the challenging task by the commission is perceived. This study aims to fill the gap and to examine how KPU is perceived in foreign media reports in administering the election by investigating the source domain of metaphorical expressions used to speak about KPU tasks and accomplishment and the image implied from those metaphorical expressions. The study is descriptive qualitative with Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is used as the theoretical framework. Data are taken from foreign media news reports and Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) of Charteris Black (2004) is used during data analysis and interpretation. The result shows that there are three main topics related to the election that are described metaphorically, i.e: the scale of the election, the overworked faced by the poll officers, and the general image of the Indonesian election. Thus, despite the herculean logistical challenge, the election runs smoothly with a slight logistical hiccup and has become a testimony to the resilience of democracy.

**Keywords:** *Conceptual metaphor, Indonesian election, source domain, target domain*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Election 2019, not only the biggest election in Indonesia ever but also in global history, with almost 193 million voters (Farisa, 2019) and a participation rate of over 81% (Jelita, 2019). Voters during the election voted for five separate elections at once, for the president, Houses of Representatives, Regional Representatives council, Provincial House of Representatives, and district/city House of Representatives.

The spotlight of news reports during the Indonesian election is mostly on the candidates, the party co, edition, and the voters with the political turbulence around those three, whereas the Indonesian General Election Committee (KPU) as the organizer of the election receives less attention. This study attempts to address this aspect by examining the metaphorical expressions in foreign media news used to describe the challenging task and relevant issues regarding Indonesian Election 2019 which was organized by KPU.

Researchers from various fields have addressed the Indonesian election from various perspectives, one of them is by Zuhro (2019) who focuses on the challenges of democratic consolidation in the election, though agrees that it has been a successful election, but Zuhro (2019) views that it has not been able to produce a good succession and also recommends all stakeholders to work together to improve public trust for a better democracy, whereas, in the context of metaphor in political discourse, Bratoz (2014) studies a cross-cultural comparison between English, German, and three Euro-Mediterranean languages and concludes one of them that the case study of the American elections has shown variations between the languages analysed which have cultural implications.

The study of metaphor in various discourses has been extensive since the emergence of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). CMT argues that metaphor is something that is not merely a linguistics expression, but it lies at the conceptual level. CMT has significantly invited many metaphor scholars to study metaphorical expressions in various discourses.

CMT highlights the cognitive aspects in meaning construction and it promotes that metaphorical expressions are the representation of how people perceived the world on its conceptual level.

There are two domains in CMT, (Kovecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980); the first is the source domain, and the second is the target domain. The target domain is the abstract domain that needs to be described vividly with a source domain, a more concrete domain.

Thus, in the headline below:

*“Indonesia's election ignites piety debates, causing divisions within families”* (Renaldi & Ibrahim, 2019)

Indonesian election is described metaphorically as something that can trigger a fire and become the source domain of metaphor, whereas the election becomes the target domain, an abstract concept that needs to be described vividly in metaphor. The reason behind the use of particular metaphorical expressions “**ignites**”, can be further examined by combining it with the context behind the news with critical analysis of the metaphor. As the world ignites will generate a cognitive frame of a fire, something is burning, what will be on fire, etc. thus, those implications and other entailments come from the image-schema of “ignites” can be conducted within the critical analysis method.

Hart (2010) asserts that metaphor can be viewed as a cognitive tool used to conceptualize subjective experiences and vague social situations, it triggers emotions and bridges the gap between logic and emotions. Therefore, the use of “**ignite**” in the example above is used to describe the effect of an election at that particular time in a more concrete way so that is easily conceptualized and understood. It will further provoke an emotive aspect associated with the source domain. By using “ignites”, it invites the metaphor interpreter to think about the election as something that has brought an implication by using fire source domain. It triggers the knowledge and image-schema of how something ignites, and everything associated with it, to apply to how the election causes a debate and family division.

The studies of metaphor in political discourse are conducted not only to reveal the conceptual mapping but also aims to reveal the hidden reason behind the particular use of source domain and shall reveal the conceptual reason underlying the metaphorical expressions. Chilton (2004) agrees that “Metaphor has long been recognized as important in political rhetoric” (p. 51) and further asserts that metaphor in political discourse is frequently used not just as additions to literal propositions, but as modes of reasoning (Chilton, 2004). The critical study of metaphor in political discourse has led to an alternative approach that applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) within the CMT framework.

Charteris-Black (2004) integrates both aspects with Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) and it provides the framework to explore the implicit intentions behind a metaphor. CMA focuses on the metaphorical expressions and the ideology behind the metaphor production taking into account the pragmatics context. He argues that the analysis of metaphor should combine three components: linguistic, cognitive, and pragmatic criteria to be able to gain a comprehensive explanation of metaphoric expressions. Thus, CMA in this stance makes use of the cognitive basis of CMT in mapping the target domain and source domain. Charteris-Black (2004) further asserts that metaphors are not only individually governed but also socially motivated; particular metaphors will correspond to different interests and perspectives and may carry a different ideological value.

Ezeifeke (2013) argues that CMA is an approach that takes metaphor analysis a step further by introducing the context of metaphor and their motivations and addresses the need to study metaphor in existing corpus and taking into account the pragmatic dimensions. One of the studies within the CMA method is by Nguyen and McCallum (2015) who study how the contemporary Australian news media use certain metaphoric concepts to represent maritime asylum seekers and boat arrivals and finds that metaphors can significantly contribute to the discursive construction of important political and social issues such as immigration and boat arrivals.

Unlike the previous studies which only focus on a certain aspect, this present study seeks to examine the metaphors used to describe the image of the KPU in administering the election in foreign media news, thus, taking into account all three aspects mentioned above: linguistic, cognitive and pragmatic criteria. Those three aspects are important to gain a comprehensive interpretation and the meaning of the construction behind the particular metaphor. For this purpose, analysis with the CMA framework is used in this study. Throughout this paper, the terms metaphor and metaphorical expressions are used interchangeably to refer to the linguistics expressions of metaphor, whereas conceptual metaphor refers to the cognitive level that triggers the metaphorical expressions and is written in capital letters, as the conventional way of writing the target domain source domain mapping in the CMT.

## 2. METHOD

This study is descriptive qualitative and five foreign media news articles that discuss the Indonesian election 2019, in general, are chosen as the data source. The range of the article date is varied, from before Election Day, on Election Day, and after the election. The conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is used as the theoretical framework. The sentences that relate to the organization of the election are collected and are examined if they contain metaphorical expressions.

The three steps of CMA stages in analysing metaphor in discourse Charteris-Black (2004) are used. They are: Metaphor identification, the second stage is metaphor interpretation, and the last stage is the explanation. At this last stage, further examination is conducted to explain the underlying reason for the particular metaphor chosen in discourse including and relate the elements of target domain election, with the source domain used.

During the explanation stage, all aspects related to metaphor production, metaphor meaning construction, and possible interpretation including the context and co-text of the particular metaphorical expressions and how the syntactical construction influence the metaphor will all be taken into account to gain a comprehensive picture.

In this study, the definition of a metaphor of (Steen, 2010) for identifying a metaphor is used as an anchor point who suggest that “a linguistic expression is metaphorical when its most basic sense stands in contrast to its current contextual meaning, and there is a cross-domain mapping between these two senses’ (p. 25-26). The lexical unit of metaphor identified in this study is not only a single word, but it may extend to a phrase within the discourse.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the introduction, the news report on the election will commonly focus on other highlighted aspects, therefore, examination and screening must be done carefully to the news reports on the Indonesian election.

Coding and categorization are conducted by clustering what aspects from election administering that are mostly discussed, and after data collection and categorization, there are mainly three clusters of categories as the sub-target domain, the first is the huge scale of the election, the second is the overworked and the death rate of the poll officers, and the last is the overall image of the election process itself.

#### 3.1 *The Huge Scale of The Election*

The description of the Indonesian election as a challenging task is described in a few metaphorical expressions, but all of them mostly highlight the distribution of election logistical needs to all over the polling station across the country.

##### **Extract 1**

The official results of the election – *a mammoth logistical undertaking* in *a nation stretched across* thousands of islands – are not expected for another month (Lamb, 2019).

##### **Extract 2**

But conducting the eight-hour vote in *a country that stretches more than 5,000 km* (3,000 miles) from its western to eastern tips proven to be both *a Herculean logistical feat* and deadly for officials, who had to count ballot papers by hand (Reuters, 2019).

*Mammoth* and *Herculian* are used as the source domain to describe the logistical challenge of the election process, both are used to give the sense of enormousness of the scale of the election. Both words seem similar and highlight the elements of the huge scale, nevertheless, a closer look into each word shall be conducted if the other elements and a cultural variation may imply from the metaphorical use of both words.

Mammoth is a pre-historic animal that is frequently found in European and American mythology. Jandacek (2018) reports that around the world there are many Mythological Beings, which are based on the mammoth (or other related elephants). The use of mammoth as metaphorical words to describe the task highlights the element of the size, is used to describe the election.

Whereas Herculian is derived from Hercules, the figure in Greek mythology and has gone through a derivational process to be used as an adjective – means having the characteristics of-. This reference to Hercules reflects the physical strength, the huge size.

Using the almost similar words of mammoth and herculean to describe the logistical challenge of the election, implies that the logistical challenge is unbelievably an extraordinary physical task. One point to note is the particular metaphor choice of the source domain, such as mammoth and herculean, as it culturally dependent, means that European (particularly Greece people the for the herculean metaphor) will have a different cultural image-schema on the Herculian which will be different from Asian for instance.

In Extract 1 and Extract 2, the large region of Indonesia is described with the verb “*stretched across*” and “*stretches*”. The choice of this particular verb to describe the expanse area of the country implied the extent of the coverage area in preparing and conducting the election. It also o plays a significant role in upholding the huge challenge faced by the deflection section, particularly logistical issues.

In Extract 3 below, the aspect of logistics is also addressed, but the highlight is on how common this challenging process is taken for granted and might be overlooked by many.

##### **Extract 3**

It is a logistical feat that illustrates many *of the oft-hidden processes* that, beyond the simple act of casting ballots, underpin democratic societies (Bland, 2019).

Extract 3 above uses the word ‘*oft-hidden*’ which metaphorically suggests that the huge work is barely noticed, and what people see is only the simple ballot process. Behind the election, there has been a process of logistics distribution. The choice to choose the metaphorical expression as *oft-hidden* processes implied that this process has been overlooked by many.

The ‘*oft-hidden*’ as metaphor source domain above can be considered as universal, in a way that it is triggered from a universal concept. It also *may* activate an image schema of the whole elements of the verb “hide”. Image schemas constrain the metaphorical mapping to guarantee that the topology of the source domain is coherent with the internal structure of the target domain (Lakoff, 1993).

A further examination of the context reveals that it is the element of unseen things that are highlighted from the word hidden, not the element of intentionally makes things unseen from others. This is important in achieving the implied meaning of the metaphorical use in Extract 3 above. Therefore, although other entailments may occur from hiding image schema, it is the highlighted element that is brought forward. In this case, some elements are highlighted and the other is downplayed, as in metaphorical mapping, not all elements are mapped from source domain to target domain (Landau, Robinson, & Meier, 2013).

### ***3.2 The overworked and the high death rate of the poll officers***

The second aspect that becomes the focus of the news report after the election is overworked which must be faced by-poll officers, that it led to death. This is described in a few metaphorical expressions:

#### **Extract 4**

Now questions are being asked as to whether *a deadly price has been paid* for this - in the lives of election officials (BBC, 2019).

The first Indonesian election with casting ballots for five different votes has been described as something that resulting a *deadly price to be paid*. Although the metaphorical expressions used in hypothetical questions implied this type of election must be reconsidered.

Implied passive construction suggests an implied subject, which in this case, the policymaker and all involved in the decision of conducting the election with this new system. Price has been paid may also trigger an image-schema of what the payment is intended for. Analyzing the context, and the history of the election, in this particular context, the initial plan for a single election was intended to cut costs.

The death of the polling officers is the result of the trial and is metaphorically expressed as the deadly price that is used to pay the plan.

The choice to use particular metaphorical expressions “a deadly price has been paid” highlights that the overwork and the death of the polling officers is something that must be considered for the next election, better planning should be put in place to prevent the recurrence.

This is further in line with Extract 5, that raise the same issue and highlight one of the plans for a medical check-up is a focus of discussion after the election:

#### **Extract 5:**

The controversy over the deaths *has now sparked a debate* about health checks being implemented in the future for election officials (BBC, 2019)

The death of a polling station officer is described metaphorically in the context above as something that sparks a debate. A debate is viewed as a fiery debate with the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS FIRE, and the fire is sparked by the controversy of the poll officer’s death. The particular choice of “spark a debate” invites a vivid cognitive frame that the issue is very important that it triggers many parties to give an opinion on this issue.

In the following metaphorical expression, the metaphor “under fire” is used to describe the disappointment and anger of many parties to the overwork and the death of polling officers, and they address that to KPU.

The conceptual metaphor ANGER IS FIRE is linguistically manifested in the metaphorical expressions in Extract 6:

#### **Extract 6**

The KPU *has come under fire due* to the *rising death toll* (Reuters, 2019).

In Extract 5 and Extract 6 above, the source domain FIRE is used for a different target domain, in Extract 5, the conceptual mapping is AN ARGUMENT IS FIRE and is linguistically expressed with the metaphor “sparked a debate”, whereas in Extract 6, the conceptual metaphor AN ANGER IS FIRE triggers the metaphorical expression “The KPU has come under fire”, means as a source of anger.

Kovecses (2010) affirms that FIRE is one of common source domain in metaphor and become target domain for various abstract target domain and states that a large number of target concepts are characterized by the “source concept of (heat of) fire”. Various specific kinds of actions, events, and states are understood as “fire” (p.145). Two of the conceptual metaphor mapping, as seen in Extract 5 and Extract 6 consecutively, is them is ANGER IS FIRE and ARGUMENT IS FIRE.

The choice to use particular metaphorical expressions is to give a persuasive impact, when anger or an argument/debate is metaphorically described as FIRE or HEAT, it triggers an embodiment experience of the heat or the fire, which is very intense. Furthermore, other elements that are associated with fire will unconsciously be carried over during the interpretation of metaphor by the metaphor interpreter and will trigger further entailments. Such as, what cause the fire, how to put out the fire, and control is needed to prevent a bigger fire which will be more destructive.

### **3.3 The general image of the election process**

The third aspect that relates to the process of election is the final result of the process itself. The metaphorical expression “despite some hiccups” in Extract 7, also used in Extract 8, “some logistical hiccups.

#### **Extract 7**

*...and despite some hiccups, the process appeared to run smoothly* in most areas (Lamb, 2019).

#### **Extract 8**

Similar to Extract 7, hiccups are also used metaphorically in Extract 8 but highlights the logistical distribution challenges.

Across the archipelago, there were also *several logistical hiccups* (Lamb, 2019).

Hiccups relate to our embodied experience and our knowledge about what hiccups are provided a descriptive image when it is used metaphorically to refer to some obstacles. When we have hiccups, it is a little bit annoying, but it doesn't entirely disturb us to do normal activities, thus, this is not a significant disturbance. This knowledge and experience about hiccup will help metaphor interpreter in decoding the intention of metaphor producer in delivering the level of obstacles during the election.

The choice of metaphor producer to use “hiccups” to metaphorically describe the election obstacle suggest that the perception of the whole process is still considered as a minor issue, particularly compared to the big scale of the election. In particular to Extract 7, the metaphorical expression of “some hiccups” is followed with “to run smoothly”. The choice of using an event as an animate thing that can move without difficulty as the source domain to speak about the process of the elections provides an image that the election is viewed as a fairly good electoral process.

Whereas in Extract 9 below, a different focus of an election process is highlighted which is the election system.

#### **Extract 9**

Burdened by a long history of military rule, and an abortive attempt at electoral democracy in the 1950s, Indonesia's voting system has been designed to make *it hard to steal elections* (Bland, 2019).

It speaks about how the election system is designed to prevent any form of fraud. The system refers to in Extract 9 above is the whole process that has been set and regulated, from the procedures of voting, the manual process of counting which can be witnessed by anyone, until the result is uploaded to the system. The discussion about election fraud has widely become the focus of many election watchers. Lopez-Pintor (2010) agrees that “Electoral fraud can be defined as any purposeful action taken to tamper with electoral activities and election-related materials to affect the results of an election, which may interfere with or thwart the will of the voters” (p. 9).

The choice to use the metaphor “hard to steal” to speak about Indonesian voting systems implies that the preventive precaution has been put in place adequately to avoid election fraud. Stealing an election metaphorically describes the way people use various actions in affecting the election result in one's favor.

In Extract 10 below, the process of election is highlighted as proof of the ability to adapt and quickly recover from the previous era:

#### **Extract 10**

“The eight-hour vote across a country that stretches more than 5,000 km (3,000 miles) from its western to eastern tips was both a Herculean logistical feat **and testimony to the resilience of democracy** two decades after authoritarianism was defeated” (Times, 2019).

The focus of explanation in Extract 10 is the description of the election as “testimony to the resilience of democracy” By describing the election as a testimony to the resilience of democracy, it implies that the Election has been viewed as proof that the nation has been on the correct path towards a democracy only two decades after reformation era.

The most important implication of the word “resilience” is the ability to recover quickly, and it suggests a positive image that can be drawn from that particular metaphorical expressions. The co-text in Extract 10 also provides an interpretation that this election has become proof of the ability to move toward the correct direction of democracy twenty years after the reformation era.

From the metaphor explanation in Extract 1 to Extract 10 above, there are various elements from the source domain that are mapped into each target domain. The source domain Mammoth and Herculean for instance highlights the elements of the huge scale and the physical

strength and is used to speak about the logistical challenge.

An election as property source domain can be seen in the use of soft-hidden and “hard to steal”, but the highlighted elements lie in on the particular verb used. Another source domain is FIRE which is used in Extract 5 and Extract 6, with the different target domains.

This study attempts to view how the image of KPU in administering the Indonesian election 2019 by conducting a study on metaphorical usage in foreign media within the CMA framework. The process of identifying the metaphor, interpreting the metaphor, until the explanation of metaphor in each Extract has provided a picture of how the election is perceived through metaphorical use to speak about the election in foreign media news reports.

From the perspective of the critical study of metaphor in the discourse, many aspects should be taken into account, from the cultural variation of particular source domain used, from the cognitive aspects on how the image-schema of the particular source domain, from being able to identify the highlighted elements that are mapped into the target domain and examining the similar characteristics with the target domains.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study focuses on how metaphor can reveal a hidden conceptual image used in the reports of the Indonesian election in five foreign media news. Although the reports on KPU are implicitly provided, the description of the task performed by KPU from the foreign news reports on the election in metaphor can be conducted by identifying the most challenging aspect mentioned, and the most frequent issue highlighted. The scale of the election with its *mammoth and herculean* logistical challenge is one of the main issues that are discussed most and described metaphorically. The various metaphors that vividly describe the huge scale of election particularly the logistical challenge are also metaphorically described as an ‘*oft-hidden*’ or barely noticed process. The second issue is the overwork of the election faced by polling officers and is metaphorically viewed as a *deadly price* of the election. There are several obstacles during the elections and are metaphorically described as ‘*some hiccups*’ but overall, the election is viewed as “*run smoothly*” and is viewed as “*testimony to the resilience of democracy*”.

From the chain of metaphorical descriptions above, in particular to the foreign media news description of how KPU organizes its task, it has been perceived as a successfully organized election process with reasonably acceptable obstacles considering the huge scale of the election and the size of the nation. The election is also viewed as a recovery in upholding democracy

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