Metaphorical Expressions and Ethical Appeals in Said Nursi's *Damascus Sermon*

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary cognitive linguistics views metaphor as pervasive in thoughts and conceptual in nature. There are studies on conceptual metaphors in religious discourse, but little is known about how orators make use of them and *ethos* (ethical appeals) to influence their audience. This paper reports the results of an explanatory case study of an influential Muslim thinker and theologian, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's (1877-1960) *ethos* and conceptual metaphors in his *Damascus Sermon* (1911). Specifically, this study identifies and interprets the metaphorical expressions used by Nursi which helps him establish his *ethos* to strengthen his persuasion. The classical rhetorical theory is employed to examine the *ethos* while Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) cognitive theory of metaphor is also used. The analysis of the *Sermon* involves three main stages: i) identification of phrases that indicate *ethos*, ii) identification of linguistic metaphors using the Metaphor Identification Procedure by Pragglejaz Group (2007) and iii) identification of the underlying conceptual mapping of the expressions. The findings show how Nursi's use of conceptual metaphors has contributed to the effectiveness of his ethical appeals to persuade his audience. This study sets an antecedent for future studies on conceptual metaphors in religious discourse as a mechanism for rhetorical appeals.
Keywords: *Ethos*, Conceptual Metaphors, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Damascus Sermon*

INTRODUCTION

Many ground-breaking facts on how human minds make use of metaphors have been revealed through research on cognitive sciences. Metaphors are viewed as pervasive in thoughts and conceptual in nature by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in a systematic way in their ground breaking studies of *Metaphor We Live By*. They argued convincingly that metaphor is not simply a matter of linguistic expression; rather, it helps to structure the way we understand concepts of thinking of one thing in terms of another. Studies on conceptual metaphors in religious discourse have flourished over the years, for example by El-sharif (2010), Harrison (2007), Byron (2003), Feyaerts (2003) and Jäkel (2002), but how orators influence their audience by *ethos* and

conceptual metaphors are scarce. Therefore, this study is an attempt to explain about an influential Muslim thinker and theologian, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's (1877-1960) *ethos* and conceptual metaphors through his *Damascus Sermon* (1911). The main objective of this explanatory case study is to explain the ethical appeals and metaphorical expressions utilised by Nursi in his *Sermon* to influence his audience. Specifically, this study identifies and interprets the metaphorical expressions used by Nursi which helps him to establish his *ethos.* It examines an excerpt from the *Sermon* that displays Nursi's *ethos* and focuses on his conceptual metaphors to enhance rhetorical effects in his *Sermon*.

This paper analyses Nursi's *Damascus Sermon* which is the English translation of its Turkish version that was translated from his original Arabic version, *Hutbe-I Sâmiye* delivered in the historic Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, Syria, in 1911. Nursi delivers about the six dire sicknesses and he also prescribes the six 'Words' as the remedies. They are the solutions for his audience in the final era of the Ottoman Empire where the Muslim community is facing backwardness in moral, spiritual and material matters. The publisher of the *Damascus Sermon* made a remark in the preface of the text stating that Nursi agreed to deliver the *Sermon* to a gathering of close to ten thousand, including one hundred scholars and eventually it received good response as it was printed twice in one week in 1911. This *Sermon* can be considered as a persuasive discourse because of its hidden power. Lakoff (1982) defined persuasive discourse as the nonreciprocal "attempt or intention of one party to change the behaviour, feelings, intentions, or viewpoint of another by communicative means." Furthermore, the *Sermon* which he delivered a century ago has become increasingly significant in this decade of the third millennium (Rahman & Hashim, 2012). Horkuc (2004) in his critical analysis claims that Nursi's discourse is a metaphorical interpretation of the Quran which emphasises the spiritual quality of the esoteric meaning of revelation. He also claims that Nursi used the classical Islamic scholars' oratorical language which is a rhetoric that is elusive, obscure, imagistic and highly metaphorical; therefore, his thought demands critical appraisals and a mature synthesis. He suggested further studies on Nursi's main influences, a subject which is still untouched in tracing the interaction between his ideas and his acts in order to examine his persuasive acts.

MATERIAL AND METHODS
T *Ethos* refers to the trustworthiness or credibility of the writer or speaker. Classical rhetoricians taught about ethical appeals through good sense, good moral character and good will (Kinneavy, 1971). Good sense (*phronesis*) is the ability of an orator to show his adequacy, professionalism, and grasp of the subject matter. It indicates that the orator knows and observes the principles of valid reasoning, is capable of viewing the situation in a proper perspective, has read widely and has good taste and discriminating judgment. For example, in a sermon, when the speaker mentions verses from the Scripture, it reflects his resourcefulness and therefore good sense. Good moral character (*arête*) has a broad definition as the result of virtues such as justice, courage, temperance, magnanimity, magnificence, gentleness, prudence, wisdom and all such qualities, as being excellences of the soul. Aristotle (2007) links these virtues to action. When an orator manages to show these virtues in himself through the
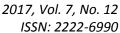
use of language, he has appealed to good moral character. Good will (*eunoia*) helps the orator to convince the audience that he wishes good things for them selflessly. The orator can build confidence by exploiting a mental picture of the nearness of what keeps us safe and the absence or remoteness of what is terrible: it may be due either to the near presence of what inspires confidence or to the absence of what causes alarm (Aristotle, 2007). It is also the quality of having favourable feelings towards one's audience.

Conceptual Metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson states that metaphors are a mode of thought and more specifically, metaphors are a cognitive mechanism which is employed to help people make sense of their experience. The notion of conceptual metaphor emerged when Lakoff and Johnson found evidence that "ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature" in linguistics. Thus, it is: "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson 2008).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) distinguished two types of metaphors: linguistic metaphor and conceptual metaphors. Linguistic metaphor is metaphorical expressions in texts, conversation or any written or spoken discourses while conceptual metaphors are the underlying metaphors. They mentioned in their *Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language* that conventional metaphors which have gone unnoticed or not discussed are actually pervasive in our ordinary everyday way of thinking, speaking and acting. Thus, our ordinary conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. According to them, on the basis of linguistic evidence, most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature. They found a way to identify in detail the structure of how we perceive, think and do through the system as the essence of metaphor is understanding one kind of thing or experience in terms of another.

According to Lakoff (1993), there are two conceptual domains proposed in the structure of conceptual metaphor (e.g., LOVE IS A JOURNEY):
i. Target domain LOVE: the conceptual domain that we try to understand as it is an abstract domain that we cannot see or so easily comprehend.
ii. Source domain JOURNEY: the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions. Source domain helps to structure target domain. It is a concrete domain where we can see, feel, touch and understand. The statement of conceptual metaphors is stated in small capital and bold for metaphorical expressions. LOVE IS A JOURNEY is an example of a metaphorical concept to structure what we do and how we understand to characterise the relationship between two concepts. The metaphorical concept of the conceptual metaphor is systematic; the language we use to talk about the aspect of the concept is systematic. The metaphorical expressions in LOVE IS A JOURNEY are expressed through sentences, e.g., **'aren't we going anywhere**', **'go somewhere'**, **'we are at a crossroads', 'a long, bumpy road',** etc. form a systematic way of talking about the love in the aspects of journey. Metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way and a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept which are not coherent with the metaphor. According to Conceptual Metaphor theory, a conceptual metaphor is a mental

representation of an instance of linguistic metaphorical expression where structures and concrete entities are applied in order to describe more abstract concepts (Kövecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This model of metaphor analysis, suggested by Lakoff & Johnson, adopts an analytical structural framework by which a metaphor is recognised as a conceptual phenomenon that connects one notion with an idea.

According to Kövecses (2010), when rich additional knowledge about the source domain is mapped onto a target domain, it is called metaphorical entailment. It is the common property of conceptual metaphors and also one of the central claims of Conceptual Metaphor theory. The metaphorical entailments bring a range of entailed attributes that are durable and multifaceted from which inferences are made through the influence of subsequent thinking and expression. For example, LOVE IS A JOURNEY- In a marital relationship, the metaphorical expression "**We're going in different directions**" indicates the metaphorical idea of going in different directions and it entails that the spouses are incompatible with their marriage and have different life goals (Lakoff & Johnson 1999). Conceptual metaphor's important function in the cognitive linguistic approach by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) notion has stimulated many linguistic and interdisciplinary studies on the role of metaphors, for example, Charteris-Black, (2000), Henderson (1986), Lindstromberg (1991) and Smith (1990). As stated by Lakoff and Johnson, the conceptual systems of cultures and religions tend to be metaphorical in nature and conceptual metaphors contribute to studies concerned with the intersection of language, cognition and society.

Palola (2009) has researched on Khalil Gibran's writings and found that Gibran uses conventional metaphors by extension, elaboration and composition as well as those which have not been developed at all. However, Gibran predominantly uses unconventional conceptual metaphors of life, death and love due to his cultural and religious background and in this way creates understanding between different religious beliefs. Alshehab (2015) investigated metaphors imbedded in two translations of Holy Quran which could eventually shed light on the significance of metaphors in the Scripture. His study aimed to search to what extent the two translations of the Scripture can cover the accurate meaning of the Arabic metaphors, and the methods of translating them. His findings revealed that the translations of Arabic metaphors in the chosen Holy verses by both translators are accurate and precise and the two translators used different synonymies that could cover the actual interpretation of the underlined metaphors in the Holy verses. Shokr Mohamed's (2006) paper on the metaphorical concept in the Quran demonstrated how the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY pervades the Quran and the findings revealed within the same scope some related linguistic metaphors, such as "the straightway", "the way of hell" and "companions of the fire" using the Cognitive Theory of metaphor as created by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Some Quranic metaphors were explored to show how this theory can be the most effective tool for conducting such an analysis. However, Alshehab & Shokr Mohamed's studies focused on the metaphorical aspects without delving further into the rhetorical aspects of the expressions where else metaphors work as a tool for rhetorical effects and the Quran is rhetorical and metaphorical. The Quran is

written in a language wholly divergent in syntax and structure and it is distinguished by its excellence of rhetoric and metaphor (Behbūdī & Turner, 1997).

This research is analysed using classical rhetoric theory to identify and interpret Nursi's *ethos*, while in order to analyse the metaphorical expressions, Conceptual Metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (2008) which stated that metaphors are in fact, a mode of thought is applied. The *Sermon* was analysed qualitatively by the first author and verified by the other authors. Classical rhetorical theory for ethical appeals was used for analysing its dimensions which consists of good sense, good moral character and good will, while Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory was followed as a framework to analyse conceptual metaphors. The analysis was done in three stages as follows:

Stage 1: Identification of phrases indicating *ethos*

Based on the classical rhetorical theory, the dimensions of *ethos* were analysed. The *Damascus Sermon* was read completely and the phrases which indicate ethical appeals were identified.

Stage 2: Identification of linguistic metaphors

Then, an excerpt that contains the phrases was selected. In order to identify the linguistic metaphors, the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) by Pragglejaz Group was used. The MIP procedures are as follows:

i) Read the entire text–discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.

ii) Determine the lexical units in the text–discourse

iii) (a) For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in context, how it applies to a relation, or attribute in the situation evoked by the contextual meaning. Take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit.

(b) For each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context. For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be - More concrete [what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell, and taste]; Related to bodily action; More precise (as opposed to vague); historically older; Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit.

(c) If the lexical unit has a more basic current–contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it.

iv) If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical (Pragglejaz Group, 2007).

At this stage, each sentence in the selected phrases was analysed using MIP to understand the function of each lexical units and establish the lexical units in the context (i.e., how it applies to an entity, its relation in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). The lexical units which had more than the basic contemporary meaning in the excerpt and evoked the words that were concrete were also analysed. If the contextual meaning contrasted with the basic meaning, it was marked as metaphorical. Oxford online dictionary and thesaurus were used to identify whether the lexical units are metaphorical.

Stage 3: Identification of the underlying conceptual mapping of the expressions

In order to identify metaphorical expressions, Lakoff's conceptual metaphor framework was used. The rich additional knowledge from metaphorical entailments was also used to interpret and elaborate the aspects and elements of the source.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stage 1: Identification of phrases that indicate *ethos*.

The following is a selected excerpt which has the phrases that indicate Nursi's *ethos*:

…in the Middle Ages, are six dire sicknesses. The sicknesses are these:

Firstly: The rising to life of despair and hopelessness in social life. Secondly: The death of truthfulness in social and political life. Thirdly: Love of enmity. Fourthly: Not knowing the luminous bonds that bind the believers to one another. Fifthly: Despotism, which spreads, becoming widespread as though it was various contagious diseases. Sixthly: Restricting endeavour to what is personally beneficial. I shall explain, by means of six 'Words,' the lesson I have learnt from the pharmacy of the Quran, which is like a faculty of medicine. This lesson constitutes the medicine to cure our social life of those six dire sicknesses (Nursi 1996).

This excerpt clearly illustrates Nursi's *ethos* through his good sense as he reveals his adequacy of grasping the subject matter of the situation that his audience are going through. Nursi is also capable of viewing the condition in proper perspective when he lists the six sicknesses sequentially and specifically. Nursi demonstrates his awareness of the critical stage of human's spiritual sicknesses. He provides a sense of urgency when he uses the phrase "dire sicknesses" which reflects the extreme or alarming phenomena as the Muslim's life was at stake with the western progress. Eventually, they face weakness of faith and backwardness in civilisation due to the internal sicknesses which affect their morality.

Nursi reflects his good moral character through his good intention of wanting to share what he has learned when he says "I shall explain." According to www.thesaurus.com, an online source, good intention is synonym for compassion and generosity. When Nursi mentions that "I shall explain, by means of six Words," he claims that he will explain the meaning of the six 'Words' from the Quran. Nursi acknowledges the importance of being attached to the meanings of wordings, as it will allow thoughts to flow along their normal course or for the flowers of eloquence to open; thus, concentrating on meaning requires greater and deeper care and study as he explained in *The Reasoning* (Nursi 2008). Nursi also demonstrates his good sense when he mentions the six 'Words,' as he is referring the 'Words' to the Scripture of God which is the Quran. Thus, he reflects his resourcefulness which is also one of the attributes of good sense. He prescribes an inclusive and useful cure from the lesson he has learned from "the pharmacy of the Quran." "The lesson" which is taken from "the faculty of medicine" reflects soothing and secured remedies as solutions. Nursi is capable of viewing the critical situation and he reasonably provides the best solutions from an authentic source which is the 'Word' of God. This reveals his ability as an orator to show his professionalism as he manages to grasp the subject matter which eventually reveals his good sense again. In this excerpt, Nursi also displays his good will when he delivers his *Sermon* by sharing the knowledge that he has learned as he

wishes good for their social life. This eventually reflects his selflessness too as the remedies that he has prescribed is to cure social life as a means of healing from the "six dire sicknesses." Thus, Nursi establishes his competency and credibility through his wisdom, eloquence and foresights as it is the beginning stage of his speech and this eventually creates a good impression as being God-conscious.

Stage2: Identification of linguistic metaphors.
Based on the MIP procedure, the linguistic metaphors were identified in the excerpt. The following are some of the linguistic metaphors that convey the metaphorical expressions: "**dire sicknesses**," "**death**," "**spreads becoming widespread as though it was various contagious diseases**," "**pharmacy of the Qur'an, which is like a faculty of medicine**" and "**the medicine to cure our social life of those six dire sicknesses**."

Stage 3: Identification of the underlying conceptual mapping of the metaphorical expressions.
In this stage, two conceptual metaphors were identified which are as follows: IMMORALITY IS AN ILLNESS   and SCRIPTURE IS REMEDY.

IMMORALITY IS AN ILLNESS
Through the metaphorical mapping, some rich metaphorical expressions were drawn from the conceptual metaphor. Nursi uses "**dire sicknesses**" to express the critical symptoms of the illness which reflect the negative conditions. The critical symptoms indicate the condition left untreated, neglected and left to decay. Since the symptoms do not refer to a physical but a spiritual illness, the elements that are affected are the heart, mind and soul through weakening of faith in God where the mind is not God-centred and the soul is not attached to God. Thus, it entails to negative attributes which eventually cause immorality. When Nursi mentions "**dead**", he expresses his thoughts that the critical illness can cause the destruction of feelings of the heart that leads to dishonesty. Eventually, it demolishes all good moral values. Through "**spread**" and "**widespread**" Nursi expresses how the illness can affect the large community through bad moral influence. Thus, the unhealthy practices of the heart, mind and soul may eventually lead to immorality in the community. At this stage, Nursi mentions "**contagious diseases**" as when the community's morality is weak, dying, spreading as not going under any treatment, their dignity will be at stake and their uncontrollable deeds of immorality will spread and cause social illness. Nursi demonstrates his rich usage of metaphorical expressions through his conceptual metaphor of immorality is an illness**.** Through his good sense, like a physician, he has identified the believers' spiritual illness by diagnosing them one by one through his metaphorical expressions. The target domain of immorality is a noun that means ethically objectionable behaviour. It conveys the sicknesses that have dominated the hearts, minds and souls of the believers until they are so self-centred and fail to be God conscious or God centred. Thus, the characteristics of the illness from the source domain that Nursi conveys are structured into the target domain as they lead to dire immorality. Nursi highlighted the internal sicknesses as dire sicknesses and then eventually diagnosed the first spiritual sickness of the heart followed by the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth. Through his wisdom and good sense,

Nursi specifies the six spiritual illnesses as despair and hopelessness, deceit, enmity, disunity, distress and individualism through the conceptual metaphor which eventually relates to religious norms. Metaphorical expressions are used by Nursi to persuade his audience in order to make them aware of the extreme or alarming phenomena as their life is at stake with the western progress and their backwardness due to the internal sicknesses which affect their morality. Thus, this excerpt identifies Nursi's *ethos* through diagnosing the six types of illnesses among Muslims. Nursi makes ethical appeals through the right choice of metaphorical expressions as a means of persuasion. One way for a dominant scholar like Nursi to have influenced his audience could have been his masterful way of using metaphors.

SCRIPTURE IS REMEDY

When Nursi mentions the "Words", he is referring to the words of God which consists of knowledge and advices. Thus, Nursi is referring to the "Words" as the Scripture. The elements of the Scripture are arranged in chapters and verses as guidance for mankind to lead a life filled with good moral values. The expression "**pharmacy**" indicates the place where source of the remedies can be found. Some rich metaphorical entailments can be drawn from the metaphorical mapping of the metaphorical expressions. The elements of the source entail various types of advices, guidelines, precautions and warnings to adhere to good morality for healthy spiritual life. The "**faculty of medicine**" indicates the vast potentiality of the Scripture which has the inherent power to heal from immorality. The faculty reflects the various departments where various remedies are provided for the illness of the heart, mind and soul. Nursi mentions that through the Scripture "**cure**" for all illnesses are possible as the healing properties in the Scripture can be used to treat the illnesses which eventually lead to good moral living. Religious texts, also known as Scriptures, or holy books are the texts which various religious traditions consider to be sacred, or central to their religious tradition. Nursi reflects his good intention through his good moral character when he confesses that "I shall explain." Nursi is referring to the six "Words" as the lesson from the Quran to bring the sense of particular definition to convince his audience through his *ethos*. Thus, he uses the expression "**the pharmacy of the Quran which is like the faculty of medicine**" to strengthen the significance of the source and context of the "Words." His metaphorical expressions strengthen his good will as he wishes well for his audience. He uses these expressions as he has already grasp the subject matter and reflects his good sense by being resourceful when he mentions the Quran, the Scripture of God that contains the remedies for the "six dire illnesses." Thus, Nursi portrays well his good sense, good moral character and good will through his metaphorical expressions as he values the significance of the wisdom and the healing properties that can be obtained from the "Words."

This paper supports the claims of Charteris-Black (2011) that metaphor is essential to a leader's persuasive force especially when other rhetorical strategies interact for effectiveness. This study also supports the claims of El-sharif (2011) through his findings in a religious discourse that the interpretation of metaphors in language and discourse is a vital factor that affects persuasiveness as metaphor emphasise its undeniable role in the context of persuasion. The

phenomenon of metaphor is viewed by cognitive scholars as the key to understanding the cognitive activities of the language use, as metaphor is primarily a cognitive process, a conceptual phenomenon (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

CONCLUSION

Through a close examination of a selected excerpt that identifies Nursi's *ethos*, this paper managed to reveal his metaphorical expressions through a systematic correspondence between two conceptual domains (source and target domains). The analysis of this case study would enable us to understand how Nursi utilises persuasive language to influence his audience. Eventually, the findings reveal how Nursi achieves persuasion in the explication of *ethos* through the use of conceptual metaphors in his *Sermon* which results in effective rhetorical appeals contribution. Further study is necessary to explain how orators utilise conceptual metaphors in religious discourse as a mechanism for rhetorical appeals of ethical, emotional and logical reasoning.

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