

THE USE OF METAPHOR IN BARACK OBAMA'S INAUGURATION SPEECH

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to elaborate the uniqueness of Barack Obama's inaugural speech after he was sworn in as the 44th US president at 20 January 2009. This research is a (qualitative) bibliographical study. The object of the study is the the use of metaphor in Barrack Obama's speech. There were 23 sentences chosen to represent all the metaphorical sentences of Obama's speech being the object of the study. Having analyzed the data by the perspective of Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor, the researcher drew a conclusion that Obama effectively and creatively used metaphorical expressions in convincing his people about his future plans. His remarkable speech discussing how to solve the great scale of the economic mess that now confronts the US and the common feeling of the loss of national self-confidence.

Keywords: Metaphor, Source Domain, Target Domain, and inauguration speech.

INTRODUCTION

One of the interesting problems in language study is the use of metaphor in all walks of life. One of its mysteries is the public confusion in encountering metaphorical expression that says something that is different from what it really means. Hawkes (1980:1) states "Language which doesn't mean what it says". This fact creates an impression that the user of metaphor looks like a liar or deceiver. When Juliet said to Romeo "The lights that shines from your eyes" she did not mean to say that from Romeo's eyeballs radiating or shining on the chamber they stayed. When a poet says, "A poem is a bird", he did not mean to state

that the poem can flap its wings and tail. Those two instances are only parts of many examples that create the impression of metaphor as the expression that is full of "absurdity" and "falsity" (Black in Ortony, 1993:21).

One of the interesting studies of metaphor is its in political discourses. The outstanding feature of metaphor in this case lies on its uniqueness and specification that very different to other genre of writing like business, literary of arts, science and technology. Such uniqueness refers to the poetic function of literary work to convey message or ideas to its readers (Culler, 1975:55). Culler says, "By showing what properties of language

were being exploited in particular texts and how they were extended or organized”.

Politics is a struggle for power in order to put certain political, economic and social ideas into practice. In this process, language plays a crucial role, for every political action is prepared, accompanied, influenced and played by language. This paper analyzes the discourse of political speech, namely the inaugural address of President Barack Obama. He had given the enormous domestic and global significance of the inauguration speech in times of international economic turmoil. To define what had been analyzed in this research, it had been formulated the problem of this paper: What's the uniqueness of metaphor in Obama's inauguration speech?

BASIC THEORIES

The basic theory of this paper covers three aspects as follows: (1) The definition of metaphor (2) George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's conceptual metaphor (3) The Biography of Obama. Those three aspects have a close relation to the topic discussed in this paper.

A. What is Metaphor?

In literary use, a metaphor (from the Greek: *metapherein* rhetorical trope) is defined as an indirect comparison between two or more seemingly unrelated subjects that typically uses “is a” to join the first subjects for example: “Man is a wolf”. This is an elliptical form compared to Simile sentence Man is like a wolf. A

metaphor is commonly confused with a simile, which compares two subjects using “like” or “as”. An example of a simile: “He was as sly as a fox.” In the simplest case, a metaphor takes the form: “The first subject is a second subject.” Subroto (1986:45) said that a metaphorical expression can be categorized as metaphor if it can give a new enjoyment in reading language expression, kicking out monotony and enliven inanimate object, and actualizing something that which actually crippled or paralyzed.

In the development of theories of metaphor there are several domestic and foreign linguists who had tried to describe their complex conception about metaphor. They are: Djoko Pradopo (1987), Subroto (1991), Waluyo (1991), Aminuddin (1995), Ullmann (1972), Orthony (1993), and Wellek (1993). These conceptions are elaborated as follows.

Pradopo (1987:66) explains that categorically metaphor consists of two terms that is main term or tenor (principal term) and the second term or vehicle (secondary term). The main term or tenor told about the compared entities whereas the second term or vehicle told about the comparison or the things compared. Then it was said that metaphor sees things by the medium of other entities. This metaphor explains something with the same result which actually has different meaning.

Subroto (1995:38) explains that metaphor is created particularly based on

the similarity of two referents. The first referent is called tenor and the second one is called vehicle. The similarity of both referents is the basic builder of metaphor creation.

According to Subroto (1995:39), one of important factor in the affectivity of metaphor is the distance between tenor and vehicle. If the distance of both of them is very close in their similarity level, the metaphor is less expressive, less effective. On the contrary, if the similarity level of both elements is not so real, the metaphor has expressive power. The metaphor like “black wolf” to depict “night shadow” like what has Arthur Rimbaud said in his poem is the example of effective and expressive metaphor.

According to Waluyo (1991:84), metaphor is an insight or approach towards object through direct or indirect comparison. Aminuddin (1995:304), explained that metaphor is:

One of the form of figurative language which created and re-created through comparison and the transfer of semantic features via direct or indirect comparison. The Indonesian metaphor of “Aku ini binatang jalang”(I am the untamed animal) for example, is a form of metaphor which used direct comparison but in the metaphor of “Jam mengerdip” something is compared to the blinking as indirect nature. Viewed to its function, the use of metaphor is functioned to enrich the nature of imagery description and the picturing of meaning of an elaboration.

Ullmann (1972:213) said that the subjects of metaphor by telling the things that we compared to. In his *Semantic Introduction to the science of meaning* explained about both things by giving term of tenor and vehicle, whereas the common feature that they have has formed the ground of metaphor. This had been stated in these following sentences.

The basic structure of metaphor is very simple. There are two terms present: the thing we are talking about and that to which we are comparing it. In Richard's terminology, the former is the tenor, the later the vehicle, whereas the feature or features they have in common from the ground of the metaphor.

It means that the basic structure of metaphor is very simple. There are two things that we are talking about the things we talk and the things we compared to. The first term of Richard from the early start is tenor (direction/objectives) and the latest is vehicle. This remains us to the idiosyncrasies of daily lexicon which form the ground of metaphor.

In the view of Ortony (1993:2), in his book entitled *Metaphor and Thought*, states:

It seems preferable, however, to attempt to relate two alternative approaches to metaphor – metaphor as an essential characteristic of the creativity of language; and metaphor as deviant and parasitic upon normal usage – to a more fundamental and pervasive difference of opinion about

the relationship between language and the world.

It means that it is better to relate two alternatives of approach in metaphor – metaphor as the main character from language creativity; and metaphor as a deviation and parasitic from the normal language toward deep fundamental difference from the opinion of the relationship between language and the world.

Furthermore, Wellek (1993:235) explained that metaphor compared two world and conveying theme through one idiom to other idiom as the works of Shakespeare (raging sea, the wild storm in the meadow, the gloomy lake).

In general, it can be concluded that what had been said by the above linguistic experts had enrich our knowledge about the theories of metaphor started from the tenor and vehicle explained by Richard (1936). Even though sometimes using different terminology outstanding linguists like Pradopo, Subroto, Waluyo, Aminnuddin, Wellek and Ullmann had just given an emphasis to the theory of Richard whereas Andrew Ortony had added by his viewpoints which insisted on the inconsistencies between “the two terms” in metaphor called as tension.

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR

It is true that all of us speak in metaphors whether we realize it or not. In *Metaphors We Live by* Lakoff, a linguist, and Mark Johnson, a philosopher, suggest that

metaphors not only make our thoughts more vivid and interesting but that they actually structure our perceptions and understanding. Thinking of marriage as a “contract agreement,” for example, leads to one set of expectations, while thinking of it as ‘team play’, “a negotiated settlement,” ‘Russian roulette,’ “an indissoluble merger,” or “a religious sacrament” will carry different sets of expectations. When a government thinks of its enemies as “turkeys” or “clowns” it does not take them as serious threats, but if they said that they are “pawns” in the hands of the communists, they will be taken seriously indeed. In *Metaphors We Live By* has led many readers to a new recognition of how profoundly metaphors not only shape our view of life in the present but set up the expectations that determine what life will be for us in the future (1980:13).

Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish- a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

The concepts that govern our thought are not just matter of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most common details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. The conceptual system used by mankind in wherever society strongly influenced our style and style of thinking and doing is metaphorical. The non-metaphorical thinking is only possible if we discuss merely physical realities. The greater the level of abstraction made by people, the greater of the metaphorical layers needed to state the result of human thinking.

Many people ignored these for several reasons. One of them is the reason that few form of metaphor is considered "dead" and has unknown origin. The other reason is that we do not know what happen on our conceptual system in our thinking. (1993:224).

The clearer depiction of the view that most of our conceptual system is metaphorical can be seen in the instances of conceptual metaphor by Lakoff and Turner (1989:3-4) that is given then name of the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. In this metaphor the mental domain)

"Journey" as the source domain is compared to mental domain of "Life" as the target domain. The conceptual mapping between the concepts is:

Life is a Journey.

- *The person leading a life is a traveler.*
- *His purposes are destinations.*
- *The means fro achieving purposes are routes.*
- *Difficulties in life are impediments to travel*
- *Counselors are guides.*
- *Progress is the distance traveled.*
- *Counselors are guides.*
- *Progress is the distance traveled*
- *Things you gauge your progress by are the landmarks.*
- *Material resources and talents are provisions.*

The conception of the metaphor Life is a Journey can be applied into other examples like what have been said by (in Ortony 1993:206) like the metaphor of Love is a Journey

- *Our relationship has hit a dead-end street.*
- *We can't turn back now.*
- *We're at the crossroads.*
- *The relationship isn't going anywhere.*
- *We're spinning our wheels.*
- *Our relationship is off the track.*

It should be understood that the above metaphorical conception is not the only form, but there are hundreds and thousands form and mental domain mapping which compared on mental domain to other mental domain like what

had been elaborate by Lakoff in the metaphor of *Life is a Journey, Change is Motion, Causes are Forces, Seeing is Knowing, Thinking as Body Movement, Time Passing is a Movement Over a Landscape, etc.*

From this, the researcher can defined that according to Lakoff metaphor is the most important conceptual construction in the development of human thinking history. The conceptual system which used daily in each and every society will influence our ways of thinking and doing which metaphorical in nature.

BIOGRAPHY OF OBAMA

Barack Hussein Obama II (August 4, 1961) is the 44th and current President of the United States. He is the first African American to hold the office, as well as the first president born in Hawaii. Obama previously served as the junior United States Senator from Illinois from January 2005 until he resigned after his election to the presidency in November 2008.

Obama is a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School, where he was the president of the Harvard Law Review. He was a community organizer in Chicago before earning his law degree. He worked as a civil rights attorney in Chicago and taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School from 1992 to 2004.

Obama served three terms in the Illinois Senate from 1997 to 2004. Following an unsuccessful bid for a seat in

the U.S. House of Representatives in 2000, he ran for United States Senate in 2004. During the campaign, several events brought him to national attention, such as his victory in the March 2004 Democratic primary election for the United States Senator from Illinois as well as his prime-time televised keynote address at the Democratic National Convention in July 2004. He won election to the U.S. Senate in November 2004.

Obama began his run for the presidency in February 2007. After a close campaign in the 2008 Democratic Party presidential primaries against Hillary Clinton, he won his party's nomination. In the 2008 general election, he defeated Republican nominee John McCain and was inaugurated as president on January 20, 2009. On October 9, 2009, he was awarded the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize.

ANALYSIS

The following paragraphs are the result of analysis toward 23 sentences which contain metaphor in Barack Obama's inaugural speech text. These sentences had been analyzed by using George Lakoff's theory of conceptual Metaphor. In this analysis it can be found eight most outstanding conceptual mapping of metaphor.

No	The Names of Conceptual Metaphor
1	Changes are Movement
2	States are Locations
3	States is a Motion Over a Landscape

4	Politics is Fight/War
5	Actions are Transfer
6	Politics is A Journey
7	More is Up ; Less is Down
8	Achieving a Purpose is Agriculture

1. **Changes are Movement**

In general there are two metaphorical data in Obama's inaugural speech which showing the pattern of **Changes are Movement**.

- (1) Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath. The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace.
- (2) The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works – whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified. Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end.

In the metaphorical expression (1) the part which acts as source domain is the phrase “rising tides” and “still waters” whereas the target domain is the words “prosperity” and “peace”. As it can be seen on the phrases of “rising tides of prosperity” and “the still waters of peace” that in here, movement-either self-propelled or otherwise-can involve a change of location or stationary (e.g. shaking). If it involves a change of location, it can be associated with the words like:

forward, backward, upward, or downward directions. So, the rising tide of prosperity can be constructed as the state of prosperity has become more than before, while peace has not undergone change (still). Besides, the movements here can also be specified as FLOW OF NATURAL FORCE (“the rising tides”) and SUBSTANCE (“still waters”).

In the metaphorical expression (2) the part which acts as source domain is the phrase “We intend to move forward” and “programs will end” whereas the target domain is the ideas of US government plan to provide job for jobseekers and better social warranty.

In both metaphorical expression Obama wants to tell us that all presidents of America since George Washington until his period had taken the presidential oath and strived hard to develop America. All of their effort has the aim of raising economic development and prosperity. All of these can be achieved if there is a good political support from his people.

2. **States are Locations**

There is only one metaphorical data in Barrack Obama's inaugural speech which showing the pattern of **States are Locations**:

- (3) That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred.

(4) Yet, every so often the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms.

In the metaphorical expression (3) the part which acts as source domain is the phrase “in the midst of” and “Our nation is at war against a far-reaching” whereas the target domain is “crisis” and “network of violence and hatred”. By saying these the metaphorical expressions gave an impression that the states of American crisis located on certain position. A position which located in the middle position; not on the edge or peripheral position. It’s what the cognitive linguists had stated as “Spatial metaphor”. Metaphorical expressions which showing a position of object in the frame of “space” or spatial one. American citizens are facing the crisis and also have the feeling of fear of the long distance threat of international terrorist which they think spreading violence and hatred every place. By stating this the president acknowledges the ongoing war on terror; however, he makes no clear reference to the “terrorist organization” of al-Qaeda.

In the metaphorical expression (4) the part which conducts as source domain is the phrase “Amidst gathering clouds and Raging storm” whereas the target domain is “The oaths” or “The presidential oath of American president”. The metaphorical expression in the phrase of “Oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms” can be elaborated as ‘Amidst’ itself means ‘In the middle of something,

especially something causing excitement or fear’. So, the ‘gathering clouds and the raging storms’ metaphorically refer to the state of strong feeling of sadness, anxiety by American people about the bad socio-economic of recent time.

3. *States is a Motion Over a Landscape*

It can be seen that there is merely one metaphorical data in Barrack Obama’s inaugural speech which showing the pattern of ***States is a Motion Over a Landscape***:

(5) These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land – a nagging fear that America’s decline is inevitable, that the next generation must lower its sights.

In the metaphorical expression (5) the part which plays role as source domain is the phrase “Across our land” whereas the target domain is “A sapping confidence”. According to Lakoff’s conceptual metaphor the manner of action is manner of motion towards a landscape. Forces which affecting action are forces affecting motion. Progress made is distance traveled or distance from goal.

The phrase “A sapping of confidence across our land” gave us impression that confidence as an abstract thing treated as a concrete thing which can come across over a land. In this metaphor Obama wants to tell us that American people are now

facing the fear of weakening confident in their psychological condition spreading all over the country. A deep rooted fear about the unavoidable decline of American economy and hegemony. In this part Obama wants to describe the current condition of America and his plan for big improvement towards the country.

4. *Politics is Fight/War*

It can be found that there are two metaphorical data in Barack Obama's inaugural speech which showing the pattern of ***Politics is Fight/War***:

(6) Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred.

In the metaphorical expression (6) the part which conducts as source domain is the phrase "At war" and "against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred" whereas the target domain is "our nation". In this quotation it can be found the talk of a country's political condition in terms of fight or war. In the domain of fight or war we can actually be a winner or a loser. We see how a politician in political arena faces other politician as an opponent. He attacks other politician's position and he defends his own. Possibly he will gain and lose ground. He plans and uses strategies. If he finds a position indefensible, he can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things a politician does in politics are partially structured by the concept of war. Though there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle, and

the structure of an argument—attack, defense, counter-attack, etc. —reflects this.

It can be clearly seen that in the ***Politics is Fight/War*** metaphor that expressions from the vocabulary of war or fight, e.g., attack a position, indefensible, strategy, new line of attack, win, gain ground, etc., form a systematic way of talking about the battling aspects of the world of politics. It is no accident that these expressions mean what they mean when we use them to talk about politics. A portion of the conceptual network of battle partially characterizes the concept of politics, and the language follows suit. Since metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way, we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activities.

On above quotation we can set out that Barack Obama is using the concept of FIGHT or WAR to conceptualize politics in terms of ***Politics is Fight/War*** metaphor. American people are at war against the dangerous group which Obama called as the global terrorism networking.

5. *Actions Are Transfer*

In general there is one metaphorical data in Barack Obama's inaugural speech which showing the pattern of ***Actions Are Transfer***

(7) The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.

In the metaphorical expression (7) the part which acts as source domain is the phrase “that precious gift, that noble idea” whereas the target domain is “to carry forward and “passed”. This metaphor can be analyzed as the speaker is a certain generation. They do their action by putting the ideas (treated as objects) into words (containers) and send them (along a conduit) to another generation as a bearer who takes the idea/objects out of the word/containers.

This is the idea of Reddy, the linguist who had conducted much time for experimentation on metaphor. He has made analysis on documents with more than a hundred types of expressions in English. He said that in this case actions are conceptualized as objects transferred from an agent to a patient, as when one gives someone a kick or a punch. We know (as part of target domain knowledge) that an action does not exist after it occurs. In the source domain, where there is a giving, the recipient possesses the object given after the giving. But this cannot be mapped onto the target domain since the inherent structure of the target domain

says that no such object exists after the action is over.

6. *Politics is a Journey*

There are two metaphorical data in Barack Obama’s inaugural speech which showing the pattern of ***Politics is a Journey***:

(8) This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth.

(9) Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted – for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things – some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labour, which have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom.

In the metaphorical expression (8) the part which acts as source domain is the phrase “This is the journey we continue today” whereas the target domain is American Political life. By saying the sentence of “This is the journey we continue today” gave an impression that the American people are the traveler having a journey to certain destination.

In the metaphorical expression (9) the part which conducts as source domain is the phrase “Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted”

whereas the target domain is also American political life.

It can be seen from both quotation that the principle for understanding the domain of politics can be applied in terms of the domain of journeys. The principle can be stated informally as a metaphorical scenario: The people involved in political life are travelers on a journey together, with their common life goals seen as destinations to be reached. The political activities and relation is their vehicle, and it allows them to pursue those common goals together. The relationship is seen as fulfilling its purpose as long as it allows them to make progress toward their common goals. The journey isn't easy. There are impediments, and there are places (crossroads) where a policy or a political decision has to be made about which direction to go in and whether to keep traveling together.

The metaphor involves understanding one domain of politics in terms of a very different domain of journeys. More technically, the metaphor can be understood as a mapping (in the mathematical sense) from a source domain (in this case, journeys) to a target domain (in this case, politics). The mapping is tightly structured. There are ontological correspondences, according to which entities in the domain of politics (e.g., the political activists/politicians, their common goals, their difficulties, the political activities, etc.) correspond systematically to entities in the domain of a

journey (the travelers, the vehicle, destinations, etc.).

7. More is Up; Less is Down

In general there is one metaphorical data in Barack Obama's inaugural speech which showing the pattern of **Changes are Movement**:

(10) Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered.

In the metaphorical expression (10) the part which acts as source domain is the phrase "badly weakened", "have been lost", and "shuttered" whereas the target domain is "economy, homes, jobs, and business.". By saying the sentences of "Our economy is badly weakened, and homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered" Obama wants to indicate a physical basis of American current economic condition that if there is a decrease in physical objects to a container or pile like the weakened economic condition like homes have been lost, jobs shed and businesses shuttered. It means the economic level goes down. But otherwise if there is an increase in the substance or physical object to a container, the level goes up.

The elaboration given in the contemporary theory is that the MORE IS

UP metaphor is grounded in experience-in the common experiences of pouring more fluid into a container and seeing the level go up, or adding more things to a pile and seeing the pile get higher. These are thoroughly pervasive experiences; we experience them every day of our lives. They are experiences with a structure-a correspondence between the conceptual domain of quantity and the conceptual domain of verticality: MORE corresponds in such experiences to UP and LESS corresponds to DOWN. These correspondences in real experience form the basis for the correspondence in the metaphorical cases, which go beyond the cases in real experience: in Prices rose there is no correspondence in real experience between quantity and verticality, but understanding quantity in terms of verticality makes sense because of the existence of a regular correspondence in so many other cases.

8. Achieving a Purpose is Agriculture

It can be analyzed that there is one metaphorical data in Barack Obama's inaugural speech which showing the pattern of **Achieving a Purpose is Agriculture**:

(11) To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West – know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy.

In the metaphorical expression (11) the part which acts as source domain is

the phrase “seek to sow” whereas the target domain is “the conflict”. This quotation told us that the principle for understanding the domain of agriculture can be applied in terms of the domain of achieving a purpose. This has a unique metaphorical story line: The people who want to achieve a common goal are farming the land together, with their common life purpose seen as the farming crops as the result of their effort.

CONCLUSION

Having analyzed the data, the researcher can draw the conclusion that Obama has effectively and creatively used metaphorical expressions in convincing his people about his future plans. His remarkable speech discussing how to solve the great scale of the economic mess that now confronts the US and the common feeling of the loss of national self-confidence. These problems not so many people are seriously questioning. He has used the domain of “Movement” in explaining “Change”, the domain of “Location” over “States”, the domain of “Motion Over a Landscape” used to elaborate “States”, the domain of “War/Fight” had been used to describe “Politics”, the domain of “Transfer” in explaining “Actions”, the domain of “Journey” in describing “Politics” and the domain of “Agriculture” had been used in describing “Achieving a Purpose”.

Finally, the researcher suggest that there are many opportunities and facets to make a lingual research about this study

particularly a research on the metaphorical expression of world's famous speech like Barack Obama's inauguration speech. This work requires deeper and broader observation, interpretation and analysis. The study towards this most outstanding figurative language offers deeper interpretation about the linguistic unique feature of formal speech. This suggestion is aimed to all language researcher and the students of English department, particularly the program of English linguistics.

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