

Original Article

# Analysis of Conceptual Metaphors in Gichuka Social Discourse: An Ontological Perspective

Emise Kageni Miriti<sup>1</sup>, Nancy W. Mbaka<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Chuka University, Tharaka, Nithi County, Kenya.

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**Abstract** - This paper analyses the conceptual metaphors used in Gichuka social discourse, focusing on ontological metaphors. Its purpose is to investigate how language is manipulated by Gichuka speakers through metaphor to achieve varied social goals and shape social reality. Metaphor determines how people think and how they understand their reality. Therefore, people use metaphors both as a rhetorical tool and as a tool to enhance comprehension. The study is guided by the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson. It employs purposive sampling of five main Gichuka speech events: a birthday party, a burial ceremony, a religious meeting, menial work activity, and a dowry negotiation. It also employs pile sort tasks to group the data for analysis. Metaphor is identified using Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU). The results reveal that Gichuka's social discourse is highly motivated by metaphor. Entities, activities, states, and emotions are conceptualized as CONTAINERS, SUBSTANCES, and OBJECTS. The CONTAINER metaphor is found to be the most predominantly used ontological metaphor. Ontological metaphors are also found to perform other functions such as referring, identifying aspects, setting goals and motivating actions, and quantifying and identifying causes within the social discourse. The most prevalent function of ontological metaphor in Gichuka social discourse is referring. This study conventionalizes and invigorates the use of Gichuka social discourse metaphors. It puts the Gichuka language in the limelight, and the results of this study can be used for cross-culture studies. This study also contributes to the linguistic theory by demonstrating that Gichuka conforms to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT).

**Keywords** - Conceptualize, Discourse, Ontological metaphors, Source Domain, Target Domain.

## 1. Background of the Study

Gichuka is a Bantu language of the Niger-Congo language family (Guthrie, 1967-1971) spoken by the Chuka people of Tharaka-Nithi County. Gichuka speaking people are among the nine sub-groups of Meru, and they live on the South-Eastern slopes of Mt. Kenya, between the Thuchi River in the south (Kanana, 2011) and the Tungu River in the North.

As a figure of speech, Metaphors have been utilized by poets and rhetoricians for a long time, and authors can add or remove it from their texts as they wish (Beyer, 2011). A metaphor is much more than a figure of the speech-human conceptual system. To a large extent, it is structured by metaphor, and people depend on it to structure their thoughts and present them in a more understandable manner (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Thus, a metaphor describes one thing (target domain) in terms of a different thing (source domain), such as 'a journey,' 'buildings,' or 'food' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003; Cameron, 2002). There is, therefore, a close connection between metaphors and culture in that metaphors are formed based on a people's interaction with the world around them, which is founded on the culture they live in and, as such, can only be understood fully within the culture

of their origin (Beyer, 2011). Metaphor as a matter of thought and language falls under Cognitive Linguistics studies. Cognitive linguistics encompasses various theories and is seen as a "movement" covering a common set of core commitments and guiding principles that have led to a diverse range of complementary, overlapping, and competing theories (Evans & Green, 2006). According to Janda (2006), some of the linguists who have been influential in Cognitive Linguistics include (Brugman, 1981; Brugman, 1990; Casad, 1982, 1983; Fouconnier & Tuner, 2008, 1998; Fauconnier, 1997; Johnson, 1987, 1992; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Langacker, 1987, 1991 & Tuner, 1996, 2003, 2004). Cognitive linguistics operates on the supposition that meaning is enfolded (Littlemore & Taylor, 2014) and deals with the relationship between language and the mind.

Ontological metaphors provide a means to perceive non-physical things such as ideas, events, emotions, states, actions, and activities as entities and substances (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). They enable us to reason better about our experiences. Through ontological metaphors, we can conceptualize our experiences in terms of objects, containers, and substances without being specific about what kind of object, substance, or container we mean (Kovecses, 2010). Ontological metaphors enable us to draw comparisons



between things with no physical form, even where it is very little (Kovecses, 2002; Nordquist, 2020). These metaphors are not obvious. They may not appear as metaphors to a layman because they are used to serve limited functions such as referring, identifying causes and aspects, quantifying, setting goals, and motivating actions (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), ontological metaphors manifest in our thoughts and language so naturally that it never occurs to most of us as metaphorical. "Ontological metaphors give ontological status to general categories of abstract concepts" (Kamalu, 2020, p.34), and they serve as the basis for structural metaphors.

The existing studies on metaphors are devoted to the study of political discourse: (Berberovic & Delibegovic, 2021); media discourse: (Zhang, 2009); medical discourse: (Navarro, 2017); educational discourse: (McCarthy, 2019); economic discourse: (Ritchie, 2013) just to name a few. Their aims and breadth range from comparing and contrasting metaphors in different languages to establishing the power of metaphor in such discourses. However, few of these studies investigate metaphor use in social discourse. Metaphor use in Gichuka social discourse has not yet been studied. Therefore, this study investigates metaphor use in Gichuka social discourse with a specific focus on ontological metaphors.

Data were collected from the five social events through recording. The audial recordings were transcribed and translated into English. Metaphors were identified using Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (PRAGGLEJAZZ, 2007; Steen, Dorst, Hermarmann, Kaal, Krennmayr & Pasma, 2010), grouped using pile sort tasks (Cienki, 2005) and the metaphors so identified were classified into the various types within the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 2003)

## 2. Results

The following are the results of the ontological metaphors realized in the five speech events. Their context of use, their types, and their uses are discussed in detail. ONM1 to ONM25 are ontological metaphors drawn from a birthday party.

**ONM 1** *Rīu ga nkūria ūkūrū, nīKenda kīatho kīthīrwa kīrī na mūbango*

Now I am asking for advice so that the occasion may have the order

**ONM 2** *Na ūfīnduta bau*

And you cannot convince me otherwise

**ONM 3** *NīKenda ūgeni wetū ūkindīria*

And so that our visitation can be significant

**ONM 4** *Na nīkenda tūrīkia mūcibi ūnu wa kūrīa*

So that we can conclude the eating session

The utterances in ONM 1, ONM 2, ONM 3, and ONM 4 are made by the Master of Ceremony of the day (henceforth, MoC). She uses CONTAINER OBJECT and SUBSTANCE metaphors to talk about actions, states, and activities. These are the source domain through which other abstract things (target domain) are understood. The MoC makes the utterance in ONM 1 as she consults with the kitchen staff. *Ūkūrū* It is used metaphorically to refer to advice. Asking for it makes it conceptualized in terms of a SUBSTANCE metaphor that one can ask for and get. The speaker elaborates that she is consulting so that there can be order in the occasion. The birthday activity is seen as an event and, thus, a container in which a substance (order) can be put. The speaker uses the phrase *ūfīnduta bau* metaphorically to affirm what she believes in ONM 2. The speaker means that she cannot be convinced otherwise. Firmness is conceptualized through a STATIONARY CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor, the source domain through which the abstract target domain (firmness) is understood. *Ūkindīria* in ONM 3 is used to perceive the act of visiting (visitation) as a substance capable of settling in a container and remaining firmly put. The speaker uses the metaphor to impress upon the servers to handle the high table prudently to avoid offending the visitors so that their visitation becomes significant and their friendship continues. in *mūcibi* ONM 4 is used metaphorically to refer to the period of feasting that preceded all the other activities at the birthday party. The speaker alludes to scenes in a play or tape-recorded music to tell the people that the period for eating is over. This is a metaphor commonly used among the youthful Gichuka speakers to indicate an ongoing activity in an event or a cunning scheme. The activity of eating on this occasion is seen as a substance in a container.

**ONM 5** *Twiganīrīrie ciongo na meciria bamwe, twīkanīrīrie nīra ūno nīyo tūthīite na tūthīnīra ūnu*

We put our heads together and agree that this is the road we are taking, and we go that way

**ONM 6** *Nīkenda īndī ūrīa ūgīkinya, tūgekīra mūti gīturo kīmw*

So that when that time comes, we shall put the tree upon one shoulder

**ONM 7** *Nīūntū nīūrathūngīre rwīmboni na nīūrathūngīre kīgīrīni...*

Because you have joined the dance and entered the circumcision hall.

ONM 5 and ONM 6 are utterances by one of the guest speakers who aspire to vie in the coming general elections. He appeals to his audience using metaphors about the need to unite and speak in one voice when that time comes. In ONM 5 and ONM 6, uniting in doing something is seen as an activity in an event: *kwiganīria ciongo bname*. Thus, unity is seen in terms of SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER metaphor: *mūti* that can now be put on one shoulder, voting in one direction for him. The same metaphor is used in many

other social contexts among the Gichuka-speaking people when appealing for unity and harmony in carrying out an activity. In ONM 7 *rwĩmboni and kīgĩrĩni* has been used metaphorically. Politics is perceived as a container with substance- aspirants- in it. Metaphor has been used to address one of the aspirants that have joined Chuka politics for the first time, and it obliges the aspirant to carry on and do the needful. The metaphor compares getting into politics to a boy who gets into the circumcision room and they have no option but to go on and get circumcised. This metaphor is used among the Gichuka-speaking people in the social discourse when a person gets themselves into a situation where they cannot backtrack to encourage people to move on.

**ONM 8** *Antũ ma mũcũĩ nĩmebange mace marugũre mũcũĩ*

Let the family members organize themselves to come and start the gifting session

**ONM 9** *Aumĩte kũũrĩa ciana cietũ cionthe imamĩ*

He comes from where all our children are sleeping

**ONM 10** *Rĩu tũkundie nyĩmbo ta ĩria*

At this time, give us music like milk

ONM 8, ONM 9 and ONM 10 are utterances of the MoC. In ONM 8, it is time to give gifts to the "birthday baby" and *kũrugũra mũcũĩ* It has been used to refer to the act of the family members kicking off the gifting session so that others can follow. In a real sense, no physical home is being opened. ONM 9 and ONM 10 have been used to quantify. Saying that our children are *sleeping is used concerning the community children who have benefited in large numbers from the university* established in the locality, where the main guest of the day is a leader. The students are not sleeping, but being there in big numbers is referred to as such. ONM 10 is used to appeal to the DJ of the day to offer lots of music to grace the occasion; hence metaphor is used to quantify music.

**ONM 11** *Nĩntũma tũkwenda atongoria marĩa monete mbere-*

That is why we want progressive leaders

**ONM 12** *Ūrĩ wa ndebe cĩrĩ*

You have two debes

**ONM 13** *Nĩna binya ta yawe*

I do not have the such ability as his

**ONM 14** *Nanĩnkenagĩra matunda ma wĩra ũnu*

And I am impressed by the proceeds of that work

ONM 11, ONM 12, ONM 13, and ONM 14 are utterances by another of the guests who rises to speak. In ONM11, the speaker refers to the kind of leaders the community wants. By referring to the older man who has the birthday and who has been a political bigwig for a long time,

he uses the words *kwona mbere* metaphorically to identify the aspect of progressive leadership. It does not mean literally looking and seeing ahead. *Debe cĩrĩ* ONM 12 is an ontological metaphor referring to the polygamous state of marrying and maintaining two wives. The state of having two wives is conceptualized in the CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor. Like the way a debate would require regular care and maintenance because it is made of tin to remain strong and useable, so is a wife. The statement is meant to complement the older man who has the birthday for being able to marry and take care of two wives.

The speaker compares himself to the older man in ONM 13. *Binya*, which means physical strength, has been used metaphorically to identify the aspect of having financial muscle or wealth. He uses it to mean that he cannot marry and maintain two wives as the older adult did. ONM 14, the speaker is talking about work progress in the nearby school, which he has helped to develop. He uses a CONTAINER metaphor to conceptualize work. Work is perceived as a container capable of producing and holding fruits. *Matunda* in Gichuka is often used to refer to good work results.

**ONM 15** *Ta niũ nĩkanda kiugo,*

Like me, I cannot preach

**ONM 16** *Gĩkĩ nĩkĩo kĩbĩa gĩakwa, baba nĩboakiri yathirĩre*

This is my sorghum, and that is where my thinking stopped

**ONM 17** *Twĩna kabinda ga kũrũtha maisha metũ*

We have time to fix our lives/to better our lives

**ONM 18** *Antũ metũ kamagatũũra thĩnani?*

Will our people live in poverty?

**ONM 19** *Nĩtwenda ũtongoria ũria mũtheru ũthĩ na mbere*

We want clean leadership to continue

ONM 15 is said by the MoC as she ushers in the speaker of the word. *NĩKanda* is used metaphorically concerning the act of preaching. The word is conceptualized through the BRITTLE OBJECT metaphor as a substance capable of being broken and crushed with one's teeth; thus, it is very difficult for the speaker to do so. This indicates her incapacity to handle matters concerning the Bible's interpretation because that is not her specialization. ONM 16, ONM 17, ONM 18, and ONM 19 are utterances by another of the guest speakers. He introduces his wife metaphorically as *kĩbĩ* In ONM 16, which means *sorghum*, the action or the ability of a woman to bear children is compared to sorghum; hence, a CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor is used to depict her as such. He continues saying, "*That is where his thinking stopped.*" This is to bring a touch of humor. This refers to his inability to love anyone else after meeting his loved one, meaning he is content with her. Life is referred to metaphorically in ONM 17 as a CONTAINER OBJECT and a MACHINE capable of being fixed. The speaker argues that

people can still better their lives, and there is time to fix everything they wish to by engaging the right leaders. In ONM 18, the state of poverty is metaphorically seen in terms of a CONTAINER metaphor capable of holding a substance- subjects/people are engaged in it, and they can only get out of it through progressive leadership, as the speaker continues to say. ONM 19 appeals to those present to consider the kind of leaders they want to put in place. Leadership is conceptualized through the CONTAINER metaphor, which can metaphorically be clean or defiled. *Mũtheru* is used metaphorically to characterize incorruptible leadership.

**ONM 20** *Mbere ya nthiria...*

Before I finish...

**ONM 21** *Mũntũ nĕkĭrĭrwe maũa rĭrĭa arĭ mwoyo*

A person should be praised when they are alive

**ONM 22** *Nĭtũthũte wega, na rĭu tũgũkinya*

*bangĭ thũinĩ wa nyambura ĩno*

We are going on well, and now we have reached another place in this ceremony

In ONM 20, the speaker wants to conclude what he is saying. A speech is seen metaphorically as an event with an activity. It has a start and a finishing point. Thus, it is seen in terms of the CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor. The speaker in ONM 21 implies that people should praise a person when he is alive, like the older adult who has a birthday; they should not wait until one is dead. *MaũA*, which means flowers, has been used as a source domain through which abstract concepts such as praise (target domain) are understood. Praises and compliments are perceived as a substance that can be put on someone. In ONM 22, the activity of progress in the day's program is metaphorically referred to as an activity within an event and, thus, a substance in a container. In the same utterance, the ceremony is metaphorically seen as a container object with substance- people- in it.

**ONM 23** *Tũcũthĭrĭrĭtie ngai atũtethie*

We are looking up to God to help

**ONM 24** *Gũkũ gwetũ tũtigĩtwe thuba tontũ*

*ũtongoria wa ciaca ũrĭ mworu, tũtĩbua. Na kwogu, kauntĩ ĩno yetũ ĩrĭ na thũina mĩngĩ mũno*

We have been left behind because our political leadership is stale/rotten. We cannot make it.

Therefore, our county has a lot of problems

**ONM 25** *Tika nđina ũnene ũrĭa mũnene*

*ũ mũno, ĩndĩ mũkanenkeria ũnene tũkethĭrwaũrĭ neneni tũnkĭrũtha bũnene*

I do not have a lot of political influence, but if you allow me and we get into leadership, we shall do great things.

In ONM 23 the speaker uses metaphor to refer to reliance on God. *Looking* does not mean using physical eyes to look. It is metaphorically conceptualized. In ONM 24 and

ONM 25, the speaker metaphorize's several issues affecting the community. First, in ONM24, he says *people are left behind* because of *stale political leadership*. Economic growth in society is seen in terms of race and, by extension, an event where the fast are ahead of others. At the same time, the slow remain behind, either in a state of stagnation or moving in the opposite direction (retrogression). The state of stagnation is metaphorically perceived as *being left behind*, while economic growth is conceptualized using the CONTAINER metaphor. It is a container with substance in it, just the same way an event has participants. Bad leadership is also metaphorically conceptualized using the SUBSTANCE metaphor, where it is referred to as *stale* food or something that has gone bad. In ONM 25, the speaker quantifies leadership when he says he is not as influential in the position because he does not have *much power*. The speaker further uses the CONTAINER metaphor to refer to political leadership. He says they will be in leadership when he is finally voted in. Leadership is conceptualized through the CONTAINER metaphor, where those who win are said to be in, while those who lose an election are perceived to be out. ONT 26 to ONM 45 are ontological metaphors realized from a burial planning occasion.

**ONM 26** *Ūyũ ũrĭkĭtie gwĩtwa nĩ mwathani...*

The one that God has already called...

**ONM 27** *Gũtĩwe ũKenaga atigwa. Athĩ, nĩ wĩgucaga ũntũ*

No one is gland when they are left. When they go, we feel something

**ONM 28** *MũChuka, ona ũgakua wĩna mĩaka*

*ĩgana rĭa twenti, no ũmenyerwe kĭrĭa kĭrakũrĭre*

For a Chuka person, even if you die at a hundred and twenty years, the reason must be found.

**ONM 29** *Kanitha ĩrĭa ĩrĭ ndũani*

Church that is in war

**ONM 30** *Makucaga marĩ thũinĩ wa ngai*

They that die in the Lord

In utterances ONM 26, ONM 27, ONM 28, ONM 29, and ONM 30, the speaker encourages the bereaved during a burial ceremony. *Gwĩtwa* in ONM 26 is used metaphorically to refer to the act of dying. This metaphor mitigates the hard effects of death, and it is conceptualized as only an act of being *called* by God. The finality of death is implied in ONM 27, where dying is conceptualized as *going*; thus, the bereaved are seen as being left, and people are bound to feel sad. The speaker in ONM 28 talks about how the Chuka people interpret death. He says there is no natural death among the Chuka people; there must always be someone involved or a reason one dies. *Kĭrakũrĭre* which literary means *to eat one up* has been used to conceptualize the act of causing death metaphorically. The people who are alive and struggling to live are referred to using a CONTAINER metaphor as being in a war in ONM 29. This metaphor is used to perceive those who have died having won the battle

and to help those who remain to evaluate how they live (fighting). CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor has also been used in ONM 30 to conceptualize the state of being right with God at the point one dies.

**ONM 31** *Gĩkuũ nĩ daracha ya kuuma kĩrĩ kanithani urĩa ũrarĩa kũthĩ kanitha ũrĩa ũtoretie*  
Death is a bridge from the warring church to the triumphant church

**ONM 32** *Watuĩka mũntũ mũng'inyu mũno kanithani, tigana na antũ, antũ nĩ arito*  
When you become a firm Christian, you should leave people alone people are complicated.

**ONM 33** *Wegua nĩũkũthĩ rūgendo rūrũ thĩ na ngai*  
If you are to engage in this journey, you should do so with God

**ONM 34** *Tiga gũtinda ũgĩkua nkoro, kwabota kwĩgua kana kau ũkwonabau nĩko gagakũgiria methori monthe.*  
Don't let your heartbreak. Maybe the child that you see there might be the one to wipe all your tears

The expression in ONM 31 refers to death as a *bridge* through which people get to the other side of life. It is thus conceptualized as a container object capable of holding a substance. In the same expression, life is also conceptualized as a container where people are held as they struggle to live, and when they die, it is conceptualized as getting out. In ONM 32, the speaker encourages people to believe in God firmly. The state of believing firmly is seen as an immovable container object. In the same expression, *arito*, which means *heavy*, is used to characterize the nature of people. The strenuous relationships with people likely to entangle one in life are conceptualized as a HEAVY CONTAINER object metaphor. The speaker advises that one should be careful when dealing with people if they are keen on making it in their spiritual walk. Life is referred to as a journey in ONM 33. It is conceptualized as an event with participants and, hence, a container with substance. In ONM 34, the speaker uses a BRITTLE CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor to refer to the state one gets into when losing a loved one. *Gũkua nkoro*, which means *to break the heart*, is used to depict the state of losing hope. In the same expression, the speaker encourages people to take heart, for there is hope even after being left by those they feel were their help.

**ONM 35** *Nĩũjũkagia kanitha na nĩra ya ũbũthũ? Kanitha mũũkie na ũrito*  
Do you take the church lightly? The church should be taken with the weight it deserves

**ONM 36** *NĩakũMonia bũrĩa magũire gwĩkara thĩni wa ũthamaki nĩkenda maũntũ mathũ wega*  
He is showing them how they ought to stay inside the kingdom so that everything can go well with them

**ONM 37** *Mekara ngwatanĩRoni ĩnu maũntũmonthe makathũ wega*

If they stay in that fellowship, everything will go well with them

**ONM 38** *Tũkoragwa tũrĩ o bantũ ta bau, rĩrĩa ũmwe wetũ atũTiga nĩũntũ twĩgucaga tũrĩ thĩni wa ũntũ ũnu*

We are at times in such a situation when one of us leaves us because we are normally stuck inside that situation

**ONM 39** *Mabotithagie gũtũura ũtũuro mwĩchũru mabotithagie kũthĩ na mbele mũno*  
Help them to live full lives, help them to move forward

In ONM 35, the day's preacher appeals to those who do not take religious matters seriously to consider their ways. The church has been referred to in this expression through the CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor. *Ūbũthũ* and *ũRito* is aspect of containers that are metaphorically used to indicate the different attitudes people harbor towards the church. They either take the church seriously for granted. The state of believing in God is conceptualized in ONM 36 as a container in that people can stay. A fellowship is also conceptualized in the CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor in ONM 37. It is capable of holding people in it.

Moreover, thus, the speaker in these two expressions is asking people to take abode in the fellowship and the kingdom and stay there, where not even death, pain, or loss can get them out. The state of grieving, which is so difficult, is conceptualized in terms of the CONTAINER metaphor in ONM 38. The speaker observes that people find themselves in such a state at one time but eventually get over it. CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor is also used in ONM 39 as the preacher prays for the family members to conceptualize the quality of life. In this expression, the life lived by God is conceptualized as a *full* life. In the same way, a container can be empty, full, or half full, and so is the quality of life that people live.

**ONM 40** *Rĩrĩa wamenya ũrĩ mũgendi, tigana na nteto cia mbindu*

When you get to know that you are a sojourner, you should stop all issues of darkness

**ONM 41** *Ma magũca gũkũruta wegani wa ngai, tigana namo*

Leave those that come to pull out of the grace of God

**ONM 42** *Nĩnkwona twĩ gĩntũ kĩmwe thĩni wa rūgendo rūrĩa tũthĩte*

I can see we are one in the journey we have

**ONM 43** *Tũrĩ ĩgiita rĩa Covid*

We are within Covid period

**ONM 44** *Ūbatie gũtũura ũkĩmenyaga ũrĩ mũgendi, tĩka wĩgwatĩrite nthĩ ĩno tene na tene*

You are supposed to live knowing that you are a sojourner; you do not possess this world forever and ever

**ONM 45** *Tũrĩ athĩni na etũki gũkũ mũburo ũyũwa riũa*  
We are travelers and passers-by here under the sun

In ONM 40, *darkness* is used metaphorically to conceptualize the life lived in sin. The preacher encourages the people to live right with God because they understand that they are not living here on earth permanently. The grace of God in ONM 41 is conceptualized as a container capable of holding people in, and they are safe there. The speaker urges the people not to let anyone pull them out of it. In ONM 42, the state of uniting is conceptualized as *a thing*. So when people are united, they are seen as one thing. In ONM 43, the speaker urges people to be careful because of COVID-19. The COVID period is conceptualized through a CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor, and all the people are conceptualized as the substance in the container. In ONM44, the semi-permanent nature of the life lived on earth is referred to metaphorically. The people are urged not to *hold* the world as if it will be theirs forever. In ONM, 45 people are referred to metaphorically as travelers and passers-by in this life. This implies that life here on earth is not permanent, and thus people should prepare for death. This brings out the inevitability of death. ONM 46 to ONM 56 are ontological metaphors collected from religious discourse.

**ONM 46** *Mwaa ng'ina .nĩ tontũ arĩ nabaarĩa ena mbebo mũno*

The sister was a distance away, engulfed in a lot of colds

**ONM 47** *Martha arĩ na wĩtĩkio ũkwagagaga*

Martha had unsteady faith

**ONM 48** *Ndega kũmenya kĩrĩa ndetĩrwe*

*ũthamakini ũyũ*

That I should not know what I was called for in this kingdom

**ONM 49** *Weũ na niũ, tũrũngame mwanyani*

*tũkinyanĩrĩrie itũmi cia mwathani gũtwita*

You and I should stand in the gap and bring to accomplishment God's purposes of calling us

**ONM 50** *Ũgekara mucĩ ona ũrĩ mũbonoku,*

*ũbonokio ũkathĩ ũkĩthiraga mwanki*

**ONM 51** *Nĩmatũrĩre ku mĩaka mĩngĩ mũno nkinya*

*magĩkinya bantũ makĩthĩrũa nĩ kĩrĩgĩrĩro*

They had stayed there for so many years until they reached a point of losing all hope

The speaker in ONM 46 is a preacher. He was narrating the Bible story of Mary and Martha when their brother Lazarus died before Jesus came around and raised him up. *Ena mbebo mũno*, which translates to *feeling cold*, is used to metaphorically refer to the feeling of distraughtness Mary was in as a result of grief. This state is also quantified *a lot*. In ONM 47, the speaker uses metaphor to characterize Mary's faith. She is said to have had unsteady faith: *wĩtĩkio ũkwagagaga*. Naturally, a thing as abstract as faith is incapable of moving or being still. This means that one time she believed; other times, she wavered. The kingdom in ONM 48 is conceptualized as a CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor. The speaker is talking about how they were called into the kingdom. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) state that we impose boundaries on non-physical objects. Lakoff and

Johnson explain that since we are physical beings with an inside and an outside, we view and orient other things as having an inside and an outside, even where no physical boundaries define a container. Thus, the speaker talks of *being in the kingdom*, which brings out the idea of a container (kingdom) with substance (people). In ONM 49, the Christian's call to stand up for their mandate of being called into the kingdom and being actively involved in intervening through prayers for others is metaphorically referred to as *standing in the gap*. There is no physical gap, but it is conceptualized as such. The speaker in ONM 50 encourages those present to attend church and not stay at home after the COVID-19 scare. The reference to one's *faith going cold* is metaphorical. It means losing touch with matters of faith and, subsequently, God. In ONM 51, backsliding is referred to metaphorically. The people of Israel are seen to have *lost all hope* after being in exile for too long. It is impossible to *lose* something as abstract as hope, and this is a symbolic abstraction.

**ONM 52** *Nĩ tontũ ũboro ũnu ka ũthĩcaga ũgĩkagĩrwa binya*

Because that word goes on being reinforced

**ONM 53** *Agekarĩra ona wathani*

Will sit on lordship

**ONM 54** *Kwĩna wĩra mwathani atwĩtũre*

*kĩbonokoni*

There is some work that God called us for in salvation

**ONM 55** *Gũtũngana thĩinĩ wa ikundi*

To meet within/ in groups

**ONM 56** *No mũntu ũgacũa bũrĩa akagaa*

*ũthamaki*

One has to find ways through which one can inherit the kingdom

In ONM 52, the speaker talks about the importance of attending fellowships or Christian gatherings for a Christian. The state of being encouraged is conceptualized using the BUILDING or CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor. The Christian faith must be reinforced or maintained to stay longer. Thus the speaker argues that when one regularly attends fellowship, their faith, like a building, is strengthened. In ONM 53, the preacher encourages the brethren to be vigilant and alert in their Christian walk, or else Satan will invade them and overrule them. *Gwĩkarĩra* has been used metaphorically to conceptualize the demonic oppression by Satan if Christians allow him room. *Kĩbonokoni* in ONM 54 is an expression used to conceptualize the state of being saved and remaining firm in the CONTAINER metaphor. Thus people are said to be called by God to carry out certain mandates for salvation. Meeting in groupings where people gather for prayers is also conceptualized in the CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor in ONM 55. The people are said to meet *in* groups. In ONM 56, the kingdom is quantified and conceptualized metaphorically as something capable of being inherited. ONM 57 to ONM

74 are ontological metaphors collected from menial work activity.

**ONM 57** *Mūntū agūca mūno*

The person has come too close

**ONM 58** *Inu ũ cia kwaria nĩ cia gūkunĩkĩra na kauga*

That is not to be talked about; it is to be concealed with a bowl

**ONM 59** *Ndamūcūtha ũgu nkamūona ndani*

I look at her like that, and I see her inside out

**ONM 60** *Mūntū mūka ũrĩ na mbuku na karamu*

A woman that has a book and a pen

**ONM 61** *Īndĩ akandĩka twathĩnja...*

And she plans that when we slaughter...

The utterances in ONM 57, ONM 58, ONM 59, ONM 60, and ONM 61 are used by different speakers to talk about different subjects as they work. In ONM 57 *gūca mūno* is used metaphorically to quantify some people's provocative mannerisms that are so intrusive and offensive towards others. In Gichuka, this expression is normally used to warn someone of dire consequences when their social mannerisms go beyond the limit. In ONM 58, the expression *cia gūkunĩkĩra na kauga* is used metaphorically to refer to that aspect of a conversation that people do not want to pursue further, either because it is an embarrassment or because the magnitude of the offense and pain it has caused serves as a reminder of something ugly that people do not wish to revisit. Even if it has to be discussed, it is done with many reservations. Metaphor is used in ONM 59 to identify aspects. The speaker feels contempt toward the subject of his speech. To *see someone inside out* is used to mean that the speaker despises the subject of his discussion. In ONM 60, the speaker has used metaphor to refer. A woman with a pen and a book simply imply one that has been to school, though the speaker meant to despise the subject because of her social mannerisms that were not commensurate with the kind of education she bragged of having attained. In ONM 61, *kwandĩka*, which means *to write*, has been used metaphorically to indicate motivation to action. The speaker uses it to reference one of her hirers who cunningly schemes and strategizes on how to disadvantage other people.

**ONM 62** *Ndamūthimire, ndona nĩankuua ta kanyomba ga kurũ*

I discovered that she carries me like a dog's house (kennel)

**ONM 63** *Rĩria ndeguire laini iria enacio*

When I heard the plans that she had...

In ONM 62, the speaker uses metaphor to identify and explain the cause of her apparent withdrawal from working for a particular person. *Ndamūthimire* has been used metaphorically to mean that the speaker carefully assessed the treatment that she was being accorded by her employer and concluded that she was being mishandled and misused

hence her resolve not to work for her again. *Gūkua ta kanyomba ga kurũ* It is metaphorical and depicts a heightened level of devaluing others who are underprivileged, the same way one would carry a dog's house without caring very much about it because it is meant for dogs. It should be noted that in Chuka, a dog is generally a despised animal. The speaker uses the expression *laini* to imply plans or ideas in ONM 63. In this instance, ideas or plans are metaphorically conceptualized as a substance. Thus, the person who has the idea is seen as a container with a substance (idea) in it.

**ONM 64** *Ka atūthomire ũthũku, ka atwocire ũrimu*

She misunderstood us; she has taken us for granted

**ONM 65** *Mūntū atigankuaga wana ũgu*

One should not carry me stupidly

**ONM 66** *Ona kũmama ndomu...*

Even sleeping in the dorm...

**ONM 67** *Na rĩria ũrĩ bo, arĩ na kanyua kega mūno ũ*

When you are present, she speaks so nicely

**ONM 68** *Kwĩnawe ũtindĩkitwe nĩ ũria ũngĩ*

There is one that is being influenced by the other.

*Ka amūthomire/ amwocire ũrimũ* ONM 64 is used to indicate the motivation for the action of a person treating another inhumanly. The speaker uses this expression metaphorically to imply taking a person for granted and treating them with impropriety. In ONM 65, the speaker is lamenting improper handling by an employer. *Gūnkua wana* has been used metaphorically to imply thinking of someone as being stupid and thoughtless, thus handling them inappropriately. *Sleeping in the dorm* in ONM 66 has been used to refer in a derogatory manner to being literate or having been to high school. The behaviour of the said person is contemptuously contrasted with those who have never been to a boarding school, and it does not quite measure up. In ONM 67 *kanyua kega* has been used metaphorically to identify the aspect of hypocrisy in the person being talked to. She is said to pretend to be good when one is present, but they are left talking ill about them when one leaves. In ONM, 68 *gūtindĩkwa* refers to an imbalanced relationship between two people where another influences one person. This kind of relationship is conceptualized in terms of a CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor. This brings out the character of the one that is pushed as one that has no mind of their own and is subject to control by others.

**ONM 69** *Rĩu nkũgwatithania mūcibi*

Now, I understand

**ONM 70** *Atigirwe bururu erwa nĩ kabata ũĩ-*

Was left completely and was told it was over

**ONM 71** *Ka atigite anankereria kurũ nyama?*

Did she leave the meat with the dog?

*Nkũgwatithania mūcibi* in ONM 69 is an expression used mostly by youthful people in Gichuka social discourse

to metaphorically refer to the act of making sense of something difficult to figure out. An OBJECT metaphor has been used to conceptualize how that happens because understanding is arrived at by picking bits of hints here and then making sense. In ONM 70, *kabati* is an expression that is used metaphorically, especially by the youthful people in Gichuka social discourse, to depict a hopeless situation or a gone case. The speaker uses it to explain the desperate situation that one wife found herself in after leaving her husband with a house girl after they had disagreed, and then there was a lockdown due to COVID-19, so she could not go back. The metaphor enhances the irony in this situation because the wife had pretended to be away for a short while for the husband to learn a lesson, but she ended up being away for too long and lost the husband to the house help. In ONM 71, *meat* and *dog* are used to metaphorically refer to the compromising situation the wife mentioned above. *The dog* is the husband, while the *meat* is the house help the husband eventually moved in with. This is a commonly used expression in Gichuka, like *leaving milk with the cat*. The cat will have no option but to drink the milk since it loves it too much.

**ONM 72** *Gakūrũthanĩra maroro-*  
She despises you

**ONM 73** *Nthumo tanau nthamboni nĩku itũraga*  
It is in the washing ceremonies that such sayings are found

**ONM 74** *ũnu ũkũremwa ni ngurubu...*  
One who has been unable to manage a group...

In ONM 72 *maroro* is used to identify and indicate the aspect of contempt in a person's manner of behavior towards others. The speaker in ONM 73 uses a CONTAINER OBJECT metaphor to conceptualize the washing ceremony event. The speaker says that sayings are found in the washing ceremony. (A washing ceremony (nthambo) is a cultural activity in Chuka performed three days after circumcision. It is meant for the circumciser to check on how the initiates are healing. The community also brings foodstuff to feed the initiates) The metaphor implies that sayings are substances found in the container (nthambo). In ONM 74, the speaker talks in a derogatory manner about a person they cannot continue relating with as usual because she is unreliable. A group is conceptualized as an event with participants; hence one can operate well inside it or be unable to do so and thus has to get out. A group is thus conceptualized in terms of a container object metaphor in which a member can get into (join) or get out. ONM 75 to ONM 80 are ontological metaphors collected from a dowry negotiation occasion.

**ONM 75** *Gantĩkwenda gũcoka ba bakũrũ nĩ tontũ barĩa bakũrũ ntaarĩ bo, mbicĩ kũrũmĩrĩria- mĩguĩ ĩria ngerete. Yakũgererwa nticĩ kũrũmĩrĩria*  
I do not wish to return to the old issues because I was not there. I don't know how to follow up on arrows I

have not shot. I don't know how to follow those that have been shot for me by someone else

**ONM 76** *Na twambĩrĩria mũcũ mwerũ, ũrĩa ngai onanĩtie. Tontũ nĩwe mbete*

And we have started a new home that God has revealed because He is the ring

**ONM 77** *Waũmba gũkubia ikathĩ ikĩmonyokaga*  
You can fend for things and some slip and fall on the way

In ONM 75, the speaker is a different negotiator from the one who had earlier come to negotiate. He says that he does not wish to build or act on the agreement arrived at earlier because he was not there. *Kũgererwa mĩguĩ* It is used metaphorically to motivate the action that he wants to take. It refers to the earlier dowry arrangements that the previous negotiator had made. He says metaphorically that he *follows the arrows that he has shot*. This means he wishes to make his dowry propositions which he can honour. In ONM 76, the speaker uses metaphor to refer to the fact that the bride-to-be and the groom-to-be have been permitted to go on with the wedding plans. That alone is referred to as *the new home*. An OBJECT metaphor is used where God is said to be *the ring*. This refers to the belief that God will be the uniting factor between the two who intend to marry. In ONM 77 *gũkubia and ikĩmonyokaga* has been used metaphorically to identify the cause of why the groom-to-be took so long after the first visit. The metaphor explains that he had to take his time to look for the dowry and save in bits to put together what he has brought, although it is little. The metaphor is meant to persuade the bride's father to accept the offer on the table and allow the two to continue with the wedding plans.

**ONM 78** *Ciamonyoka no nkinya ũthũ ũkĩthĩranagia rĩngĩ tũrĩa tũgwĩre ũkigaga bantũ bamwe kaĩrĩ*  
If they slip and fall, you must go back, collect whatever has fallen, and put it together.

**ONM 79** *Menya ta rĩu ũkambibinya, ũkona wakama ng'ombe yathira ĩria, ona ũkarũma pliers ũKambĩrĩria gũkama rĩngĩBau to ndamu?*

You know, like now, if you press me- if you milk a cow until the milk is exhausted, even if you use a pair of pliers, you will end up milking blood

**ONM 80** *Na nonkwona no yeterithĩrĩtie tika yakinya no lita mĩrongo ĩthatũ*

And I can see that it is still stimulated. It has not even produced thirty liters

The speaker, by using *Ciamonyoka no nkinya ũthũ ũkĩthĩranagia* in ONM 78 metaphorically implies that sometimes it is difficult to get the requirements for the dowry all at once, so one has to save little by little. In ONM 79, the speaker protests against high-handedness by the bride's side. *Kũmbibinya, and gũKama ng'ombe*, which means *to squeeze and milk a cow*, has been used metaphorically to conceptualize the aspect of the bride's people making



unnecessary demands. *Na nonkwona no yeterithiri* Tie-in ONM 80 is used by the bride's negotiator to answer back to the protestations of the groom's people. It implies that the groom's side still has more to put on the offer table. They have not exhausted their pockets.

**Table 1. Summary of the Ontological Metaphors Used in Gichuka Social Discourse**

Metaphor Type/Use	Frequency	Percentage
Container metaphors	39	48.75
Referring metaphors	17	21.25
Identifying aspects	9	11.25
Quantifying metaphors	6	7.5
Setting goals and motivating action	4	5.0
Identifying causes	3	3.75
Brittle/Heavy object metaphors	2	2.5
Total	80	100

Table 1 shows the ontological metaphors used in the five (5) speech events studied. A total of eighty (80) ontological metaphors were collected. The ontological metaphors are CONTAINER metaphors and BRITTLE/HEAVY OBJECT metaphors. The CONTAINER metaphor is inclusive of container objects and substances. The ontological metaphors are also categorized based on their functions: referring, identifying aspects, setting goals and motivating actions, and

quantifying and identifying causes. Out of the eighty (80) ontological metaphors realized, thirty-nine (39) are CONTAINER metaphors, which is 48.75 %. The study also realized two (2) BRITTLE OBJECT, which forms 2.5%. Ontological metaphors serve various limited purposes in Gichuka's social discourse. Seventeen (17) metaphors are used for referring, 21.25%. The ontological metaphors used for identifying aspects are nine (9). This accounts for 11.25%. Those used for quantifying are six (6), 7.5%. The metaphors for setting goals and motivating action are four (4). This accounts for 5.0%. Moreover, three (3) metaphors are used for identifying causes. This is 3.75% of the metaphors that were analyzed.

### 3. Conclusion

The predominant ontological metaphor that frames Gichuka's social discourse is the CONTAINER metaphor, followed by metaphors used for referring to and identifying aspects in descending order. The prevalence of CONTAINER metaphors is that physical beings have a bounded surface and an in-out orientation, which is projected onto most things and are conceptualized as having an inside and an outside just the way we are (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Therefore, the Gichuka-speaking people project their view of self as containers to most entities, states, and activities. These findings compare with Karnedi's (2015) findings, where CONTAINMENT metaphors were the most predominantly used in the SL (source language) subcorpus.

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