

ABSTRACT

A cognitive linguistic approach is employed here to examine how cartoonists utilise metaphors, metonymy, and conceptual blends to create meanings from Ghanaian political, economic, and social issues through visuals. Studies of Ghanaian political cartoons (Rockson, 2024; Boakye-Yiadom, 2020; Ohemeng, 2020; de-Graft Aikins & Akoi-Jackson, 2020; Oduro-Frimpong, 2021; Amankwah & Asuamah, 2016; Oduro-Frimpong, 2013) have primarily focused on specific events. The cognitive processes underlying the creative use of various conceptual devices in Ghanaian political cartoons have not been closely examined by Ghanaian researchers. This research examines how Ghanaian cartoonists employ conceptual elements to frame and critique socio-political and socio-economic issues in Ghana, with a particular focus on recurring thematic domains such as economy, health, sports, trade/journey, and religion. One hundred and twenty (120) political cartoons were retrieved from two media outlets: Tilapia of 3 News and Akosua of the Daily Guide. Tilapia disseminates its publications on social media platforms, specifically Facebook and Twitter, whereas Akosua disseminates her publications in print through newspapers and online. Moreover, the paper emphasises the persuasive and evaluative role of such visual strategies, allowing cartoonists to criticise governance, reveal societal contradictions, and shape people's opinions. Cartoons have become one of the most useful political communication tools, overcoming linguistic and literacy barriers by combining various semiotic means: visual imagery, textual means, symbolism, and references to cultures. This dissertation contributes greatly to the study of cognitive linguistics and visual communication. It offers a subtle description of meaning creation in multimodal political discourse in the Ghanaian context. The current research adds to the existing body of knowledge by looking into the future concerning the cognitive and cultural aspects of cartoon interpretation. Moreover, it shows how the use of well-known experiential

domains, such as sports elements, health and hospital elements, travel or journey concepts, religious and biblical allusions, and deployment of personification as a ubiquitous form of linguistic device. contributes to better engagement and understanding of the cartoonists' intended message by the audience. Notwithstanding the efficiency and potency of political cartoons in communicating complex messages in simple terms, it is sometimes challenging to interpret and understand the intended message when one is not abreast of the issues surrounding the publication, the settings and the used characters. This has been known to impede the process of actualising the real message behind the selected cartoons.