

# Language and Politics: Metaphors as Linguistic Strategies in the Issue of National Identity in Taiwan

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## **1 Introduction**

This research relates to the account of the phenomenon of metaphor used in the context of national identity, especially so-called Taiwan identity or Taiwan-first consciousness (台灣主體意識/taiwan zhuti yishi) and its related issues ( e.g., disputes over unification with or independence from mainland China) having widely been used by politicians during the 2004 presidential election campaign in Taiwan.

The focus of this research is, based on the analysis of videorecordings of Taiwanese politicians, to address the following questions: (1) What metaphors were deployed by politicians during the 2004 Taiwanese presidential election campaign? (2) What are the functions of these metaphors? (3) Do these metaphors make communication more effective? If so, how? (4) How do politicians respond to their opponents' metaphors, especially when discussing contentious political issues? Through examining these linguistic strategies, this research is intended to develop a fuller understanding of political discourse in the contemporary Taiwanese sociopolitical context.

## **2 National identity issues in Taiwan**

National identity is widely viewed as the most controversial and divisive issue in Taiwanese politics and also regarded as one in which Taiwan's parties take polarized positions (Hsieh & Niou, 1996). On the basis of Rigger (2003), Taiwan identity is intertwined with four different issues: provincial origin (ethnic/sub-ethnic identity),

nationality (ethno-cultural identity), citizenship (political identity), and policy preference (either for Taiwan independence or Chinese unification). Admittedly, considering the Taiwan identity in this way, it can be very difficult to tell the differences between ethnic, cultural, political and national identities, particularly while the discourse on Taiwan identity is intertwined with the emotional debate of independence versus unification during the election campaigns.

With an understanding of these features of national identity in Taiwan it is not difficult to observe the positions people take on the national identity issue. On the issue of independence and unification in Taiwan, some people (almost exclusively native Taiwanese) advocate that Taiwan should immediately declare independence with no fear of the military threat from China. Conversely, many native Taiwanese and most mainlanders are concerned that Taiwan should have direct dialogue with mainland China to accelerate the unification process. Nevertheless, others choose the status quo.

Meanwhile, with regard to orientation of national identity issues among political affiliations, the DPP is commonly seen for independence, the KMT for unification; the PFP and the NP (New Party) are normally regarded as more pro-unification than the KMT, while the TSU is viewed as more pro-independence than the DPP. When people mention a left and a right on the issue of independence and unification in Taiwan, the left wing means independence from China and Taiwan identity, and the right wing means unification with mainland China and Chinese identity.

### **3 Data**

The data are drawn from 1) a corpus of video-recordings of naturally occurring interactions in episodes of the country's first and leading talk show, TVBS 2100: *Let the people speak*, and 2) written texts found in the newspapers available to the public over the campaign period, roughly from early December 2003 to the end of March in

2004.

The data reported in this chapter are constructed from metaphor embedded in the issue of national identity in the talk show, TVBS 2100: *Let the people speak*. The data were also drawn from the news sections of front page, national news, and political news within three mainly national Taiwanese newspapers: the China Times (CT), the United Daily News (UDN) and the Liberty Times (LT).

#### **4 The sociopolitical and historical background of national identity in Taiwan**

In discussing national identity in the Taiwanese politics, there is no doubt that the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident of 1947 (generally referred to as ‘2-28’ or ‘228’) is primarily considered as the governing factor contributed to a deep rift and the subsequent antagonism between Taiwanese (i.e., long-time residents of Taiwan) and mainlanders (i.e., Chinese who had come to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-shek in the late 1940s). This event has even set the tone for political, social and cultural interactions between both groups for decades since then.

##### **4.1 February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident of 1947**

On the evening of February 27, 1947, six armed agents of the Taiwan Tobacco and Wine Monopoly Bureau in Taipei went to Duadiudiann (Tataocheng) on present-day Yenping North Road to investigate the sale of smuggled cigarettes. They arrested a middle-aged widow Lin Chiang-mai (林江邁), illegally selling contraband cigarettes. The agents tried to confiscate Lin's cigarettes and money, but she refused and begged for mercy. One of the agents beat Lin on the head with the butt of his pistol, making her head bleed, and she passed out. The surrounding onlookers became enraged and protested to the agents. The agents ran away and fired their guns indiscriminately into the crowd, killing a spectator, Chen Wen-hsi (陳文溪). The public became even more irate. The crowd surrounded both the police and the military police headquarters, demanding that the shooter be handed over for prosecution, but received no response.

Hence the clash on February 27, 1947 became the spark that set off the 2-28 Incident.

On the following morning of February 28, angry people marched on the Monopoly Bureau to protest and then charged into the bureau's Taipei branch office. The protesters beat up three of the office's clerks (some say one of them died). Later, they moved on to the Provincial Executive Office to protest and present a petition to Governor-General Chen Yi (陳儀), the governor of Taiwan. To their surprise, security forces at the office opened fire on the unarmed crowd with machine guns without warning, killing and wounding at least 10 people. By then, things had become out of control. The entire Taipei city was agitated. After a band of young Taiwanese stormed the Taiwan Broadcasting Company Station (situated at the present site of the Taipei 2-28 Memorial Museum) and broadcast the transpiring events to all of Taiwan, spawning a full-scale confrontation in all the major cities and towns across the island. On the late afternoon of March 1, the Garrison Command Headquarters proclaimed martial law.

Later, local Taiwanese leaders from officials and provincial council members organized a “2-28 Settlement Committee” to negotiate settlement conditions with Governor-General Chen Yi. While Chen promised to meet popular demands for political and economic reform, however, he also secretly asked Chiang Kai-shek in Nanjing of China to dispatch the troops to Taiwan. As soon as the troops arrived, they started to crack down and massacre people everywhere, especially the political and intellectual elite including scholars, lawyers, doctors, students and local leaders of the protest movement. The total number of victims during the 2-28 Incident is still in dispute. However, the most frequently mentioned number is estimated from 10,000 to 20,000 people.

After the bloody massacres of the 2-28 Incident, the Taiwanese fell under martial law, a time known as the “White Terror” campaign which describes the suppression of

political dissents and public discussion of the massacre under the martial law from 1949 to 1987. During the "White Terror" campaign, thousands of other Taiwanese were imprisoned or executed for their real or perceived opposition to the KMT government led by Chiang Kai-shek. Many of these remained imprisoned until the early 1980s. This campaign continued to cause pain, leaving the wounds from the incident unable to heal. For over 30 years after the incident, the trauma of the incident loomed over Taiwan's political and social life and poisoned the relationship and mutual-trust between Taiwanese and mainlanders. Until the lifting of martial law in 1987, public discussion of the incident was a taboo subject on the island.

## **5 Metaphor**

Studies have increasingly centred on the use of metaphor in politics, since Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal work provided an account of metaphor which could contribute to the construction and comprehension of social and political reality. Metaphor is, they argued, a conceptual system in which one kind of experience can be comprehended in terms of another. For example, one conceptual metaphor is HAPPY IS UP (ibid. p. 15). A conceptual metaphor is thus a link between two conceptual domains, in this example the concrete domain of direction (UP) and the abstract domain of emotion (HAPPY). The two domains that are involved in conceptual metaphor have special terms. The domain that provides the conceptual structures, "direction" in this example, to understand another domain is called the source domain, while the domain that is metaphorically understood, "emotion" in this example, through the use of the source domain is known as the target domain. The source domain is typically more concrete and less abstract than the target domain. The systematic correspondences from the source domain (UP) to the target domain (HAPPY) in conceptual structure are described as mappings. The metaphor is realized in our everyday language through a wide variety of metaphorical expressions such as "I'm

feeling *up* today”, “That *booted* my spirits” and “We had to cheer him *up*” (Deignan, 2005). The metaphorical expressions, following Deignan (2005), serve the same function as “metaphors in language” which are term *linguistic metaphors*. I therefore decided to use Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as the theoretical framework, with occasional reference to Deignan (2005).

## 6 The findings of metaphor in the context of national identity

This extract comes from the episode, TVBS 2100, 28 February 2004 episode: Is the “2-28 Hand-in-Hand Rally” ethnic harmony or ethnic antagonism? (2-28 手護台灣，族群融合？對立？). In the following extract, 2100’s host, Lee Tao, dramatizes the issue of Taiwan’s contentious national identity through asking guest speakers some touchy questions such as ‘Is the 2-28 Hand-in-Hand Rally ethnic harmony or ethnic antagonism?’, ‘Who used the 2-28 Incident to mobilize supporters in the course of the “2-28 Hand-in-Hand Rally” or the “Heart-to-Heart Rally (千萬人心連心)”?’ President Chen or the KMT Chairman Lien?’, and so on. The guest speakers present their viewpoints in reply to the question posed by host Lee in turn and contest each other’s stances with regard to the symbolic performance of the 2-28 Incident through strategic communicative practices among which metaphoric usages play a significant role. The extract is first presented in Traditional Chinese followed by English translations. The metaphorical expression in focus is underlined.

### Extract:

- 李 濤：1 是的，這一點請教金恆煒先生，
- 2 所謂這 2-28 活動是值得大家省思，跟紀念的日子。
  - 3 但是，是不是反而讓整個的目的，因為距離選戰還有最後的 22 天，混淆了。
- 金恆煒：4 我想，這個，參加活動的人，其實，個人對這個活動的詮釋可能不一樣。…

- 5 我們可以看這樣的一個運動其實是還在成型中，
- 6 到底它最後能達成甚麼目的，沒有人知道，因為它在創造歷史。
- 7 歷史是往前走的。
- 8 歷史走的時候，一個人有的時候是被歷史帶著走的。
- 9 所以我是覺得有趣，對我來講，我觀察這個，這個，觀察一個歷史的新的發展。

李 濤：10 我想金恆煒先生講的，  
11 帶動整個民眾主發性的，變成政治的潮流，  
12 或者說所謂的主流民意。  
13 那麼到時候，民眾就是大家自己必須要來觀察來選擇。

邱 毅：14 基本上，我先回應剛才金先生的一段話。  
15 泛藍從來沒有反對說要去紀念 228，  
16 228 是個歷史的傷痛，是血的教訓，  
17 我們當然要記住。  
18 但是，我不贊成金先生剛才所說的，  
19 他說要被歷史帶著走。  
20 歷史是一面鏡子，  
21 歷史不是一條繩子。  
22 228 的歷史的傷痛，是讓我們拿來做為一個教訓。  
23 我們不要再去撕裂族群；  
24 不要製造族群對立。  
25 台灣不允許再出現像 228 這樣的族群衝突的流血事件。  
26 這是我們的教訓。我們必須牢記住這個歷史的教訓。  
27 但是，不是把 228 這些亡靈，  
28 不是把 228 的歷史的傷痛，  
29 拿來做為政治的工具，

30 拿來做為選舉的工具，

31 拿來做為族群對立的工具。

32 我覺得如果這樣做是欺騙，

33 是對不起 228 犧牲的亡靈，也對不起歷史。

李 濤：34 所以你還在強調說，這是消費過去的悲痛，

35 消費過去的一些亡靈。

郭俊銘：36 這個活動也不是邱委員辦的，

37 也不是連宋兩個人辦的。

38 你們怎麼來幫民進黨解讀呢？

39 你說 228 就是正名運動，

40 就是台灣建國運動。

邱 毅：41 李登輝先生說的嗎！

...

李 濤：42 這中間沒有甚麼所謂正當性或不正當性嗎？

朱高正：43 事實上我們講 228，像剛才，

44 你應該清楚，228 過去懸為禁忌

...

45 呼籲讓 228 成爲一個和平紀念日，

46 怎麼從痛苦的經驗裡面去記取教訓。

陳健銘：47 其實剛才朱教授說得很好，

48 228 在以前是個禁忌，

49 但是 228 現在是一面鏡子，

50 讓我們不要活在過去的世界裡面，

51 我們向未來眺望。

52 228 守護台灣的活動，事實上是和平守護台灣。

邱 毅：53 其實我覺得如果像陳健銘剛才所說的，

- 54 把 228 當成是歷史的鏡子。
- 55 大家來做族群的融合，
- 56 不要再讓這樣的歷史悲劇再發生。
- 57 我覺得很好啊！
- ...

李 濤：58 228 是不是在它的整個的歷史情結上面，

59 能夠在這一天，舉行它的價值的含意，

60 或者說誰在操弄整個的選舉，...

61 是不是的的確確是會影響到選舉的一個關鍵，

62 我們這點在現場也有胡忠信先生加入。

胡忠信：63 我覺得這個很有意義，...

64 台灣在那麼短時間，228 事件到現在，事實上是沒有流血的，

65 這一點共同資產是應該大家一起珍惜的。

66 歷史是一面鏡子，剛才所說的，

67 那個鏡子不是每天攬鏡自照，那個鏡子是開車者的後視鏡，

68 你看著後視鏡，你是要掌握現在邁向未來，

69 我覺得過去的衝突，過去的爭論，我覺得就好像把它當後視鏡一樣。

Lee: 1 Right. Mr. Chin Heng-wei, what do you think of the 228 Hand-in-Hand Rally?

2 Does this event deserve people to ponder on and commemorate it?

3 However, since the election campaign has only 22 days to go, the purpose of it has been mixed up.

Chin: 4 I think the participants in the event might have their own interpretation of the event. ...

5 In fact, we can see this event as a developing movement.

6 What will it be in the end? Nobody knows because it creates history.

7 History is moving forward.  
8 While history is moving forward, from time to time, a person will follow  
up history.  
9 Therefore, it is very interesting for me to observe this new development of  
history.

Lee: 10 I think what Mr. Chin Heng-wei just said is  
11 to mobilize the public who has the initiative in generating the political  
movement,  
12 or the so-called mainstream public opinion.  
13 Then, people should take their observations and make their choices by  
themselves when the time comes.

Chiu: 14 Basically, I, first, respond to the remark Mr. Chin has previously made.  
15 The pan-blue never opposes commemorating the 2-28 Incident.  
16 The 2-28 is the historic sorrow and the bloody lesson.  
17 Certainly we should keep it in mind.  
18 But I disagree with what Mr. Chin just said is that  
19 history makes people follow its trend.  
20 History is a mirror.  
21 History is not a piece of rope.  
22 The **2-28** historic tragedy is to let us treat it as a lesson.  
23 Let us be no ethnic division between us;  
24 let us stop stirring up ethnic rivalry between us.  
25 Taiwan does not allow bloody tragedy of the ethnic conflict to happen  
again.  
26 This is our lesson. We should firmly keep this historic lesson in mind.  
27 However, we should not take the souls of the victims of the **2-28**

28 and the historic sorrow over the **2-28**  
29 as a tool for political purposes,  
30 as a tool for electoral purposes,  
31 and as a tool for the purposes of ethnic rivalry.  
32 I think that if we did so, it would be an act of deceiving.  
33 We should apologize to the souls of the victims of the **2-28** and to history  
as well.

Lee: 34 Therefore, you [Chiu] still emphasized that people consume past sorrow  
[over the **2-28**]  
35 and the past souls [of the victims of the **2-28**].

Kuo: 36 This event is not organized by Legislator Chiu  
37 or Lien-Soong [the KMT chairman Lien and the PFP chairman Soong] as  
well.  
38 How can you [from your viewpoint] help the DPP to interpret the event?  
39 you said **2-28** is 正名運動/zheng-ming (the “name change” movement/  
Taiwan Name Rectification Campaign)  
40 and is 台灣建國運動/taiwan chien guo (the advocacy of the creation of a  
Republic of Taiwan).

Chiu: 41 Mr. Lee Teng-hui [former President Lee] said so.  
...

Lee: 42 Is there anything justifiable or unjustifiable about the “2-28  
Hand-in-Hand Rally”?

Chu: 43 In fact, we are talking about the **2-28** as mentioned earlier.  
44 You are well aware that discussion of the **2-28** was a taboo for the past.  
...

45 I strongly suggest letting the **2-28** be a Peace Memorial Day,

46 and let us learn a lesson from a bitter experience of the **2-28**.

Chen: 47 Indeed, what Professor Chu just said is quite right.

48 The **2-28** was a taboo in the past [before the lifting of martial law in  
1987],

49 but now the **2-28** is a mirror.

50 Let us do not live in the past.

51 We should look ahead for the future.

52 In fact, the “**2-28** Hand-in-Hand Rally” is peaceful to protect Taiwan.

Chiu: 53 Indeed, I think that if the **2-28** is as what Chen Chien-ming has just said,

54 it is a mirror.

55 People can live in ethnic harmony

56 and the **2-28** historic tragedy will no longer happen again.

57 I think it is very good.

...

Lee: 58 Considering the implications of the whole historic complex about the

**2-28**,

59 can we hold the “**2-28** Hand-in-Hand Rally” on 28 February

60 or say who manipulates the whole election?...

61 Is it (the “**2-28** Hand-in-Hand Rally”) indeed a key issue to influence the  
election?

62 About this issue, we are joined now here in the studio by Mr. Hu  
Chung-hsin.

Hu: 63 I think this is meaningful.

64 In fact, the bloody conflict has never happened in Taiwan within short time  
since the **2-28** Incident.

65 We should treasure this common shared accomplishment together.

- 66 What we just said is that history is a mirror.
- 67 The mirror is not the commonly used one but a driving mirror (or rear-view mirror).
- 68 When you are looking in the driving mirror, you can control the present moment and move towards the future.
- 69 I think we can see the past conflict and dispute as a driving mirror.

In the above extract, guest speakers mutually use the 2-28 Incident as a metaphor for mapping the source domain of the traumatic event of the 2-28 Incident onto the target; hence, this structures a conceptual metaphor HISTORY IS THE 22-8 INCIDENT and allows them to make their point of view in their own way. Some treat it as an object lesson that should not be repeated, instead of a tool to call for ethnic reconciliation; the others consider it a campaign to promote Taiwan independence. As Linn and Gur-Ze'ev (1996) argued, the Israeli and Palestinian communities use the Holocaust as a metaphor for their own purposes. According to Deignan (2005), the conceptual metaphor HISTORY IS THE 22-8 INCIDENT is realised by metaphorical expressions such as “歷史是一面鏡子 (History is a mirror)”, “歷史不是一條繩子(History is not a piece of rope)”, “228 就是正名運動 (2-28 is the “name change” movement)”, “228 就是台灣建國運動 (228 is the advocacy of the creation of a Republic of Taiwan)”, “228 成爲一個和平紀念日(the **2-28** be a Peace Memorial Day)”, “228 在以前是個禁忌 (The **2-28** was a taboo in the past)”, and “228 現在是一面鏡子 (now the **2-28** is a mirror)”.

In lines 10-13, Lee offers a summary formulation of the co-guest speaker, Chin's account for history (see lines 4-9), which challenges and accuses the position of Chiu since he is a member of the KMT-PFP alliance (the pan-blue camp) and his pan-blue camp had to take full responsibility for the historic tragedy (as described in Section

4.1).

Instead of launching an immediate rebuttal of the host Lee's the construction of the statement accusation in lines 10-13 that the 2-28 Incident has become the so-called mainstream public opinion, Chiu returns his response in lines 14-33 with a token agreement 'never opposes' in line 15 to show his respect the so-called mainstream public opinion which mainly involves the majority of voters, especially the non-aligned voter. He subsequently constructs a dismissal of the challenge 'but I disagree with what Mr. Chin just said is that history makes people follow its trend' in lines 18-19 to indicate that he is a member of the pan-blue camp. If Chiu confirmed what Chin has said about the notion of history, he would run the risk of offending his allied KMT and those pan-blue camps who voted him out. Then, Chiu reformulates the agenda of his talk after the use of the topic shift 'but' in line 20 and onwards elaborates on his account for history (here meaning the 2-28 Incident) constructing his position and providing the grounds for it.

In the line 20, Chiu links the metaphorical expression “歷史是一面鏡子 (History is a mirror)” to the conceptual metaphor HISTORY IS THE 2-28 INCIDENT. This leads to conceptualize an image of “a mirror is the 2-28 Incident” which projects the source domain of the traumatic event of the 2-28 Incident onto the target domain of “a mirror”. In this sense, the audience in front of television soon associates concrete material of the 鏡子(mirror) with history or the **2-28** Incident. From line 20 onwards Chiu moves to reformulate the agenda of his talk and damp down sociopolitical discord stirred up by the 2-28 Incident by designing two metaphors “History is a mirror” and “History is not a piece of rope” as mitigated forms. Chiu establishes his position through punning on the Chinese word for 鏡子/ jing zi (mirror) and 殷鑑/ yin jian (reflection) which means an object lesson from history. Since the term 鏡子(mirror) provides a function of reflecting on the object lesson from the

historic 2-28 Incident, and then could create positive thinking of forgetting the tragic 2-28 Incident, hence the term 鏡子(mirror) can serve to detach people from the historic 2-28 Incident through reflecting on the object lesson from the historic 2-28 Incident while looking in it. In other words, Chiu uses the linguistic metaphor “歷史是一面鏡子 (History is a mirror)” in line 20 to urge people of Taiwan to look forward to the future, not to dwell on the past tragedy, not to use the 2-28 Incident as a political weapon, and to avoid repeating the same mistakes. He attempts to reconcile Taiwan’s disparate sociopolitical national identity discourses caused by the tragic 2-28 Incident. This is because Chiu is a member of the KMT-PFP alliance (the pan-blue camp) and his pan-blue camp had to take full responsibility for the historic tragedy. While it seems reasonable to assume that if his pan-blue camp intends to win the Taiwanese 2004 presidential election in a two-way race under plurality rule, it should distance itself from its authoritarian past and positively present itself as a new, democratic party to attract the support of the non-aligned voter. Consequently, Chiu takes advantage of the 2-28 Incident metaphor to frame constructive utterances for the concept of history in response to Chin’s talk in lines 3-6.

Akin to the “歷史是一面鏡子 (History is a mirror)” metaphor, “228 是一面鏡子 (the 2-28 is a mirror)” in line 49 spoken by Chen, a TSU legislator and a strong advocate of Taiwan independence, also serves as a metaphor. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 147), some metaphors in our conceptual system, such as structural metaphors, can create similarities. Accordingly, the “歷史是一面鏡子 (History is a mirror)” metaphor establishes similarities between 歷史 (history) and 鏡子 (a mirror). In doing so, the “228 是一面鏡子 (the 2-28 is a mirror)” is also a metaphor, given the 2-28 Incident is a kind of history. Similarly, the “228 是個禁忌 (the 2-28 was a taboo)” in line 48 spoken by Chen is a metaphor as well, on the basis of Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 147).

In line 48, Chen reappropriates the previous guest speaker Chu's remarks in line 44, "the 228 過去懸為禁忌 (the 2-28 was a taboo in the past)" in his opening comments in framing "a specific ideological position"( Wilson 1990:125) which is concerning the tragic 2-28 Incident for Taiwanese. In particular, the 禁忌(a taboo) metaphor implies a badly negative concept to its target domain. By juxtaposing the "228 是個禁忌" (the 2-28 was a taboo) metaphor and the"228 是一面鏡子" (the 2-28 is a mirror) metaphor to bring out a striking contrast between the past Taiwanese history and the present one, Chen draws a domestic historical dichotomy between the past authoritarian KMT regime and the present democratic DPP government. In other words, he utilizes the 禁忌(a taboo) metaphor to link a negative image of the KMT, which resulted in the bloody 2-28 tragedy 60 years ago, whereas he establishes a positive picture of the ruling DPP, which give Taiwanese people hopes and a democratic regime on grounds of the properties of 鏡子(mirror) metaphor in Taiwanese society (as mentioned above). Accordingly, he can successfully elicit positive self-presentation of the "2-28 Hand-in-Hand Rally," organized by the ruling DPP and its ally, the TSU in line 52, which reaches the political maneuverings. Meanwhile the metaphors Chen uses here also serve to position his political stance.

To sum up, given its conceptual system of the common shared experiences in Taiwan, the term 2-28 Incident is treated as specific and multiple meanings or symbols to be used by different people or groups for various purposes and targets in the social-political discourse of Taiwan. In other words, the term 2-28 (Incident) underlines certain features while suppressing others, which functions as a metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). In this respect, the term 2-28 (Incident) itself is just serving as a metaphor in the context of the socio-political discourse of Taiwan. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 140), what people of Taiwan experience with such a metaphor is a sort of reflection down through the network of metaphorical

entailments that evokes and connects the collective memories of the traumatic 2-28 Incident and serves as a guide for future actions.

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