Journal of Language and Literature
Vol. 25 No. 2, October 2025, pp. 515 – 535
**DOI: 10.24071/joll.v24i2.10440**
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# Coterminous Uppercut: An Analysis of Boxing Metaphors in Selected Ghanaian Political Cartoons

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**Abstract**

*This study examines the use of boxing metaphors by Ghanaian political cartoonists to communicate socio-political issues, with a particular focus on the depiction of election outcomes and the portrayal of heated arguments or legal disputes. To obtain a representative sample, ten political cartoons related to boxing scenes were downloaded from Tilapia of 3 News and Akosua of the Daily Guide. In terms of the theoretical framework that informs this study, Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and Fauconnier and Turner's conceptual blending/integration theory (CBT) are employed in conjunction with Šorm and Steen's VISMIP for analysis. The application of CMT to the data led to the identification of conceptual metaphors such as "BOXING IS ELECTION", "WINNING A BOXING MATCH IS WINNING AN ELECTION", LOSING A BOXING MATCH IS LOSING AN ELECTION, and "POLITICAL PARTIES ARE SPORTS TEAMS," etc. The analysis demonstrates that cartoonists employ boxing metaphors to portray electoral outcomes, reflecting the combative and high-stakes nature of Ghanaian elections. Once more, cartoonists persistently depict the victorious candidates in elections as triumphant boxers. Moreover, the utilization of boxing scenarios in political cartoons by cartoonists facilitates the comprehension of the message, as people are both familiar with and passionate about boxing, thereby rendering the intended meaning more readily understandable. In conclusion, the universality of boxing lends a global dimension to the message, facilitating comprehension of the cartoonist's message by a global audience.*

***Keywords**: boxing metaphors; political cartoons; conceptual metaphor theory; conceptual blending; Ghana*

**Article information**

*Received: November 17, 2024*

*Revised: June 4, 2025*

*Accepted: June 10, 2025*

## Introduction

The utilisation of multimodal communication has witnessed a surge in prevalence since the advent of social media and associated technologies. In the context of prevailing trends, some journalists are driven to explore this avenue as a means of conveying

their messages to their audience. Sport is a significant source of metaphor, and thus a key mechanism through which our communal reality is mediated. The language of sports has permeated the national discourse, exerting a significant influence on the body politics of the nation.

The employment of political cartoons as a prevalent tactic by visual journalists is a practice that offers numerous advantages. The multimodal character of cartoons, which engenders a plethora of interpretive possibilities, is a pivotal factor in their overall value, thereby enhancing the construction of meaning in cartoons. The construction of meaning in political cartoons is dependent on their multimodality. Multimodality can be defined as a type of meaning-making that involves the combination of multiple semiotic tools (Smith, 2019). Political matters are frequently framed in the context of sporting events. The use of sports-related metaphors in political discourse is a common practice, primarily due to widespread familiarity with sports. Semino and Masci (1996, p. 250) posit that the dissemination of knowledge about sport facilitates the acceptance and understanding of national issues, as it attracts interest from people of diverse backgrounds, age groups, and socioeconomic statuses (1996, p. 247). Furthermore, Segrave's (1994) work makes a significant contribution to the ongoing discourse surrounding the conceptualisation of politics in the context of sport, with a particular emphasis on boxing. The utilisation of sports metaphors during election season in English-speaking nations, notably the United States, is a recurring phenomenon, as highlighted in a BBC news article. (https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-19726898) .

The spirit of competition serves as a motivating factor in both politics and boxing arenas. The goal is to win in every situation. 'ARGUMENT IS WAR' is a famous metaphor, as stated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 2003, p. 5). The illustration shows how we interpret arguments using the metaphorical language of battle. In a similar vein, the concept of war can be applied in both political (election) and sports contexts. It can be argued that politics and athletic contexts (target domain) can be viewed in terms of war (source domain), in which both sides employ tactics, plans, defensive measures, and other methods in an effort to secure victory (Kövecses, 2002, p. 5).

The cognitive metaphor, which holds that metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon but can also be observed in other forms of communication, must be taken into account to contextualise the study (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, 1980). According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphor is the process of giving new ideas meaning by utilising preexisting ones. The proponents of the metaphorical approach distinguish between two domains: the source and the destination. The use of the source aids in the understanding of the goal.

According to cognitive linguistics, metaphors are present in a variety of other media, including political cartoons, advertisements, pictures, music, graffiti, and other forms of art and symbolism. Forceville (1996) proposes a multimodal metaphor framework to explain the metaphorical expressions found in the previously identified tropes. Forceville (1996, p. 24) defines multimodal metaphor as a rhetorical device in which the source and the target are portrayed in two distinct modalities: verbal and visual. To persuade viewers to identify with the image and its intended message, cartoons employ universal values to frame phenomena by situating the issue in question within the context of daily life (Greenberg, 2002, p. 182).

The medium of political cartooning employs metaphor and visual representation as means of conveying meaning (El Refaie, 2003; Kennedy, 1993). The function of political cartooning can be distilled into three aspects: firstly, to influence the agenda; secondly, to entertain; and thirdly, to chastise those in government who are thought to be acting incorrectly. Furthermore, cartoonists commonly employ cognitive techniques such as humour, irony, visual metaphor, and visual metonymy to convey their ideas. The use of athletic events as a platform for criticising politicians and their policies is a frequent occurrence. The popularity of sports scenes in cartoons can be attributed to the audience's passion for these subjects, to the extent that

even non-sports viewers are conversant in the language of sports.

Whilst earlier scholars such as Zhang and Forceville (2020), Alousque (2014), Dominguez (2015), and Wiliński (2020) have examined various source domains, including football and race in political cartoons, intending to attract readers and deliver their messages, it is notable that little attention has been paid to how cartoonists use boxing scenarios to visually convey their messages, especially in the African context, with a focus on Ghana.

Given the foregoing, this study aims to investigate how boxing, as a sporting phenomenon, is utilised in Ghana to convey socio-political issues. This will be achieved by using the Šorm and Steen VISMIP analytical framework and the CBT. The study will examine the cartoons' scenes, characters, and other features, in addition to the spoken words that occasionally serve as the cartoonist's main point.

The objective of this study is to explore a hitherto unexplored area of visual representation of election outcomes in political cartoons, specifically through the mapping of boxing outcomes to elections. It is hoped that this will enable the audience to gain a deeper understanding of the complex and dynamic nature of the election process. As the study is still novel, the findings will be incorporated into the existing body of literature on boxing metaphors from a visual perspective.

## Methodology

### 1. Data

The objective of this article is to examine the manner in which two Ghanaian cartoonists utilised boxing metaphors in their political cartoons. As there is no direct human interaction involved, approval from an ethical committee is not required for this study. Nevertheless, the cartoonists have been consulted and permission obtained for the use of their work. The data can be accessed on the digital platforms of the selected cartoonists, including Facebook and Twitter. Eight political cartoons on boxing were obtained from the websites of the cartoonists. Since gaining a thorough understanding of a phenomenon is the primary goal of qualitative research, Sandelowski (2010) claims that in a qualitative study of this kind, the quantity of data is inconsequential because the main goal is to understand a phenomenon or pattern.

For this study, I decided to focus on the boxing situation even though there were several cartoons with a sports theme. The data-gathering timeframe is 2016–2023. Two cartoonists, Tilapia from TV3 News and Akosua from the Daily Guide, provided the data. There are justifications for selecting these cartoonists. First of all, Tilapia, the cartoonist for 3 News, is well-known for his objectivity in publishing and his lack of political affiliation, which lends the artist legitimacy. Furthermore, Tilapia has a television station affiliation, which helps it reach a wider audience. Secondly, Akosua's cartoon was selected due to its status as the inaugural cartoon published in a newspaper during the early 2000s. Over time, it has garnered significant popularity, with former president John Agyekum Kuffour referencing it in one of his addresses. Furthermore, Oman FM (109.1), an Accra-based station that airs its "National Agenda" show weekly from 7:05 am to 8:00 am, assesses Akosua cartoons and offers commentary on their artistic merit, thereby increasing their visibility and reach. According to Rockson (2011), a significant portion of the Daily Guide's readership views Akosua as an essential component of the publication, which helps it maintain a competitive edge in the mass media market. Since the state-sponsored journal in question no longer publishes political cartoons, the attempt to secure one from them was fruitless.

### 2. Selection Criteria

In order for a cartoon to be selected, it must first satisfy the requisite criteria. The cartoon should comprise one or more components that are explicitly or implicitly related to boxing. Furthermore, the cartoon must fall within the specified data collection period, which spans 2016 to 2023. The selected timeframe is of particular significance as it coincides with the rise of Tilapia and the release of his work on 3 News Television in

2016. Even if Akosua of Daily Guide started publishing before 2016, using data from a different year for Akosua would not be a scientific approach. The time frame of 2016–2023 was chosen to ensure maximum objectivity, meaning that the first year of data collection is the same for both cartoonists. Additional semiotic factors, including the participants, the colour scheme, and the surrounding environment, must be easily visible and accessible in order to streamline the data processing process. The participants are the various characters employed by the cartoonist to convey their respective messages in relation to their designated roles. The colour schemes employed by cartoonists serve a crucial function in the transmission of their messages to the audience. These colour schemes act as a means of accentuating and enhancing the content of the messages, thereby contributing to the effectiveness of communication. The setting is understood to encompass the time, place, and environment in which the cartoonists produce their publications. This enhances the reader's understanding of the cartoonists' message.

## 3. Data Analysis

The data will be analysed using the methods described by Šorm and Steen (2018) in their Visual Metaphor Identification Procedure (VSIMIP). Although the original procedure had several stages, the research will focus on one key aspect: the overall comprehension of the image, which comprises multiple components. This component is the focus of the current article for two reasons: first, it covers everything the analysis aims to do; second, it is the aspect that is most open to critical examination. Describing the meaning represented in the image. In doing so, the proponents offer these key areas, which include:

### a. Identification of the visual unit

The analyst needs to consider the visual aspect and any other elements that might contribute to the comprehension and interpretation of the image. Given that the majority of cartoons comprise both verbal and visual elements, and that the relationship between these two aspects has implications for metaphor creativity and understanding, one must pay close attention to non-visual and visual components.

### b. Selection of the visual unit

The analyst should determine which elements to consider and which to disregard. The proponents encourage all analysts to include all visual elements, as they facilitate the creation of metaphors and enhance comprehension. In certain instances, the analyst may exclude aspects that have no bearing on the outcome. For instance, as illustrated in Figure 8, the background elements were disregarded because they were deemed inconsequential in determining the outcome.

### c. Relationship between the visual unit

It is the responsibility of the analyst to establish the relationship between the visual elements, either by grouping them as a whole or separating them into individual components, which offer parameters for interpretation. Also, the relationship between the visual elements can indicate which entity is the primary focus or participant in the image, thereby facilitating interpretation.

### d. Image interpretation

Once the visual components that require description have been identified, it is then necessary for analysts to ascertain the context of each image. This requires identifying the images that depict the subject matter in question. In certain instances, an image may possess a multiplicity of contextual meanings and/or discrepancies intrinsic to the image itself. The analyst and the viewer must then draw on their prior knowledge and societal awareness to comprehend the image.

### e. Image description

This entails providing a thorough explanation of each component of the image, including its unique qualities and the context in which it is present. By concentrating on the specifics of the visual components and their characteristics that lead to visual incongruity, the basis for metaphor.

### f. Determining the symbolic meaning of the image

It is incumbent upon the analyst to consider the symbolic meaning, which encompasses both denotation and connotation. The term "denotation" is used to describe the basic and fundamental sign meaning, whereas "connotation" is used to describe the secondary and standard sign meaning. As Elkins (1995, p. 53) asserts, images are categorised as either expressive (connotative) or informational (denotative). The authors argue that analysts must consider the role of pictorial elements, including shape, size, colour, and layout, in shaping the symbolic meaning of images. These elements can influence visual metaphors and, therefore, must be considered when interpreting images (Negro, Šorm, & Steen, 2018).

## 4. Previous Studies on Sports Metaphors

In their 1996 study, Semino and Masci examined the utilisation of football metaphors in the speeches of former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, with a view to understanding how he employed rhetorical devices to influence public opinion and support for his political party. This analysis underscores the significance of metaphorical language in shaping public opinion and the strategic deployment of metaphor in political discourse.

In his 2020 study, Wiliński conducted a thorough investigation into the utilisation of sports metaphors in Polish political commentary, meticulously identifying and analysing various conceptual metaphors employed in this context. These include expressions such as "A POLITICAL DEBATE IS A BOXING BOUT," "A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IS A RACE," "A POLITICAL PARTY IS A SAILING SHIP," and "POLITICS IS A SOCCER GAME." The employment of conceptual metaphors is a valuable tool in comprehending abstract political concepts, as it facilitates the representation of these concepts through the medium of more concrete entities. Dumitriu and Negrea-Busuioc (2017) conducted a study on the utilisation of sports metaphors in the posters of the Romanian Liberal Party during the 2014 European Parliament campaign. The study focused on female candidates in a male-dominated sporting environment. The analysis revealed that the strategic deployment of sports metaphors can serve to reinforce complex political messages, including those pertaining to party doctrine or the empowerment of female candidates.

In their seminal study, Huang and Tseng (2020) examined the utilisation of creative metaphors in Chinese NBA news headlines. The researchers found that these metaphors, derived from the conceptual metaphor "DEFEAT IS PHYSICAL/SOCIAL CONTROL," functioned as hooks for readers, thereby reinforcing the role of metaphors in news. Coulson (2003) posits that the blending model is particularly well-suited for analysing political cartoons, as the 'frame-blend' is immediately represented by the model, thereby prompting the viewer to break it down into its constituent 'input frames'. In their 2023 study, Lakshimi and Das (2023) identified conceptual blending as a prevalent technique in the domain of cartoons. This approach facilitates the audience's comprehension of novel frames in abstract terms.

The authors concluded that the utilisation of CBT has afforded them the opportunity to delve into the semiotic composition of cartoons, with particular reference to the anchorage provided by the metaphoric blend. Abdel Raheem (2021) employed the blending theory in conjunction with Van Djik's context model to examine impoliteness in the context of political cartoons. Pavlovic (2014) advances a congruent perspective, asserting that the conceptual blending hypothesis possesses considerable potential for further exploration in elucidating the creative, ephemeral, distinctive, and highly context-dependent evolution of meaning in political cartoons, as evidenced by their research on the subject of political cartooning in Serbia. He subsequently argues that the conceptual blending theory can be applied systematically to evaluate political cartoons.

In light of the preceding studies, it is posited that sports metaphors serve as a potent medium for conveying socio-political

concerns. This proposition finds substantiation in their capacity to resonate with the general populace. Due to the intricate nature of political cartoons, Rohrer (2004) asserts that Conceptual Integration Theory employs an enhanced schematisation of the process of meaning construction, rendering it particularly well-suited for the discourse surrounding the complex intricacies of cartoons. Despite the evident parallels that can be drawn between the present study and the extant review literature, it is the unique approach to analysis that sets it apart. This analysis employs a holistic approach, incorporating the methodologies of CBT, CMT, and Šorm and Steen, ensuring a comprehensive consideration of all visual elements. The cartoons under scrutiny employ the boxing scenario device to portray election outcomes and heated arguments between two opposing forces.

## 5. Theoretical Framework

Turner and Fauconnier (1998, 2002) integrated Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) with Fauconnier's Mental Spaces theory to develop the Conceptual Blending Theory, which provides a framework for understanding the formation of novel and creative metaphors. The concept of conceptual integration, also known as 'blending', represents a fundamental mental operation that exhibits uniform structural and dynamic properties across a range of domains, including metaphor and metonymy. Evans and Green (2006: 400) note that the crucial insight of blending theory is that construction typically involves the integration of structures that give rise to more than the sum of its parts.

Network integration in blending involves two or more input spaces (input space 1 & input space 2) structured by information from discrete cognitive domains, a generic space containing all information or structure relevant to all input spaces, and a blended space containing selected aspects of structure from each input space, leading to its own emergent structure (Coulson & Oakley, 2000, p. 178). Coulson and Oakley (2005, p. 1512) state that understanding meaning involves constructing blended cognitive models that incorporate some structure from multiple input models, as well as emergent structure arising through the blending process. During the blending process, the two input spaces project the roles and values from the generic space. Subsequently, the elements from each input space are projected into the blended space. The emergent structure is a result of selective projection, which is flexible and necessary for local understanding, allowing for different blends to emerge from the same input spaces. Furthermore, the emergence of an integrated structure is a consequence of three distinct blending processes. Turner (2014) posits that conceptual blending theory represents an intriguing and fruitful avenue for investigating and elucidating the mechanisms underlying human imagination. This theoretical framework also offers insights into the evolution of language, culture, and art. In their seminal work, Facounnier and Turner (2002) delineate the various types of blends or networks, which they categorise as follows: single-scope network, double-scope, simplex network, mirror network, multi-scope network, and hyper-blend network.

For visual representation, I will utilize the single-scope blend, which is most appropriate for analysing political cartoons. According to Fauconnier and Turner (2002, p. 124), a single scope is a categorisation scheme that makes sense when viewed through the SOURCE-TARGET conceptual metaphor.

## Results and Discussion

This section presents a critical analysis of the selected cartoons depicting boxing scenarios created by the two selected cartoonists.

Journal of Language and Literature
ISSN: 1410-5691 (print); 2580-5878 (online)

## 1. Presidential Election Outcomes Metaphors

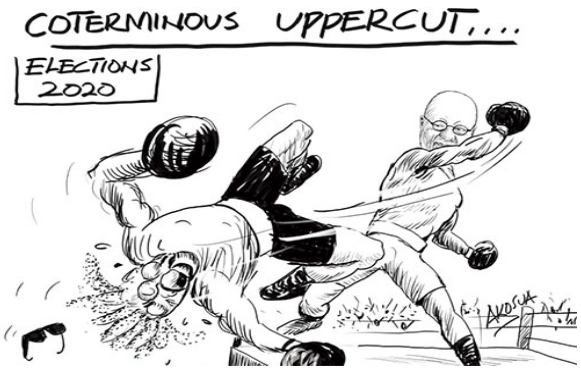



Fig1.
https://dailyguidenetwork.com/coterminous-uppercut/ (December 10, 2020)

The data is generally understood to represent a boxing match between two opponents, as evidenced by the caption of the 2020 election, which serves to highlight this message. Based on the image depiction, I construe the conceptual metaphor behind Figure 1 visually and verbally as WINNING A BOXING MATCH IS WINNING AN ELECTION. This metaphor can be literally interpreted as "KNOCKING YOUR OPPONENT IS WINNING THE ELECTIONS," which suggests the primary metaphor "VICTORY/HAPPY IS UP and LOSS/SAD IS DOWN."

The visual components of Figure 1 are represented pictorially through the single scope type of blend (see Appendix 1). In line with the Šorm and Steen procedure for selecting visual elements, the following elements merit consideration. The items identified in input space 1 are the boxers, the boxing match, the boxing ring, sunglasses, and the punches. In input space 2, the following items are identified: Ghana, the presidential contenders, the election, and the tactics employed by the candidates during their campaigns. Even though there were ten candidates for the presidency, the cartoonist compares the entire election to a boxing bout between two contestants. The two front-runners, John Dramani Mahama of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), are both envisioned as boxers.

The first step in drawing a comparison between the presidential election and the boxing bout is determining the context in which the fight will occur. The boxing ring is one way to characterise the previously mentioned location. This can be accomplished by considering Ghana as a whole or by examining the 275 constituencies where the elections were held. It is possible to draw comparisons between the tactics used by boxers to win and those used by presidential candidates to win the most votes. In the generic space that explores the parallels between the two input spaces, it is assumed that the boxers and the presidential candidates share the same goal of winning by facing off against one another. Therefore, boxers go into the ring hoping to win, whereas politicians run for office hoping to gain power. Similar thinking goes into the new emergent structure, which compares a presidential candidate's triumph to knocking out an opponent in a boxing bout.

As a result, the cartoonist depicts the election loser as a boxer who has been defeated. Figure 1 has the title "Coterminous Uppercut." A tenure is considered "coterminous" in the framework of government if it concludes on the same day as the appointing authorities. In boxing, an "uppercut" is a punch that, if thrown, renders the opponent instantly defeated and may result in their elimination from the bout. According to the caption, the ultimate victor, Nana Addo (Boxer 1), has eliminated the putative loser, John Mahama (Boxer 2), from the presidential contest. In light of this, the punches might be interpreted as a metaphor for the strategies the two boxers employed to gain the upper hand and win the election. From the analyst's point of view, the depiction of the two boxers in relation to their shorts and spectacles also connotes another conceptual metaphor; thus, the winner's dress and specs are white/light, which depicts LIGHT IS GOOD, while the loser's shorts and specs are black, which also depicts BLACK IS BAD/EVIL. This assertion is contingent upon the cultural context. In Ghana, for instance, black is a symbol of defeat, whereas white represents triumph.

In accordance with the Šorm and Steen process of visual metaphor discussion, which stipulates that every element included in the cartoon should be subjected to critical analysis, the sunglasses are seen to be flying in the direction of the losing candidate, John Mahama (Boxer 2). In consideration of the function of the sunglasses, it can be observed that the cartoonist has employed them in relation to the figure of the boxer. This is predicated on the assumption that, based on prior knowledge, the losing candidate is frequently seen wearing them. It may be posited that the sunglasses were thrown into the air because of the forceful blow that stunned him. Once again, the unsuccessful candidate is depicted with a hairstyle popular among young people. This portrayal is attributed to the candidate's self-presentation as a young individual throughout the campaign. The cartoonist's depiction of boxer 2 aligns with this portrayal. This evokes the conceptual metaphor BELIEFS ARE FASHION.

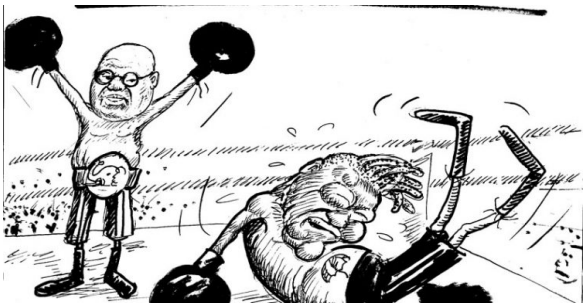


Fig 2. (https://dailyguidenetwork.com/2016-memories-for-2020-rematch/) (May 23, 2018)

There are two ways to understand this cartoon's conceptual metaphor. Firstly, it can be conceptualised as WINNING A BOXING MATCH IS WINNING AN ELECTION. Secondly, it can be conceptualised as LOSING A BOXING MATCH IS LOSING AN ELECTION. In light of the aforementioned considerations, the pictorial component is presented using Facounnier and Turner's integration network model (see Appendix 2). The visual presence of a boxing ring, boxing gloves, and boxing shorts evokes the atmosphere of a boxing scenario. I identify the two boxers, the boxing match, the boxing ring, and the boxers' gloves in Input Space 1. The 2020 general election in Ghana, the two presidential contenders, and the pre-election campaign tactics are all listed in Input Space 2. While the blended space that results in the creation of the new emergent structure is characterised by John Mahama of the NDC losing to Nana Addo of the NPP, the competition for victory between the two boxers (presidential candidates) represents the commonality (generic space) among the two input spaces.

The two presidential candidates who participated in the 2016 general elections are the leader of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), John Dramani Mahama, and the incumbent, Nana Addo Dankwa of the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The standing boxer's stance in the visual representation of the two fighters recalls the ontological metaphor VICTORY IS UP. In contrast, the boxer's lying position conjures another ontological metaphor LOSS IS DOWN.

As a result of this conceptualisation, boxing referees now raise the winners' hands to indicate victory. Similarly, throughout the voting process, raising one's hands in triumph is used as a symbol of success. The idea that winning the boxing battle would equate to winning the general election in 2020 appears plausible. From Nana Addo's posture, this can be deduced. The extent of the hits that John Mahama received is depicted by his swollen face, which is analogous to the significant vote difference between him and the eventual winner, Nana Addo Dankwa.

One noteworthy aspect of the works is the cartoonist's use of symbols. The two boxers' shorts have symbols engraved on them, based on the data that was examined. John Mahama has an umbrella emblazoned on his shorts, while Nana Addo, the winner, has an elephant. These symbols are used metonymically, with the elephant representing the NPP and the umbrella representing the NDC. The elephant is a symbol of the NPP in Ghanaian politics, as evident in its appearance on party flags and their paraphernalia. Conversely, the umbrella depicted on the NDC flag and other items serve as the organization's symbol. Barthes (1977) discusses the pervasive influence of text (verbal elements) associated with images, highlighting its role in establishing visual meaning. The caption accompanying Figure 2 states, "2016 memories for 2020 rematch."

Journal of Language and Literature
ISSN: 1410-5691 (print); 2580-5878 (online)

The cartoonist suggests that this represents either a dress rehearsal for the 2020 elections or a rendition of the 2016 elections.




Fig. 3 (https://dailyguidenetwork.com/please-concede-defeat/) 16 September 2019

The input space (see Appendix 3) comprises two distinct categories: one about boxing (Input space 1) and another about elections (Input space 2). The two boxers, the boxing match, the boxing ring, the boxers' gloves, and the boxing referee have been identified as the key elements within the context. In contrast, the latter encompasses the two leading candidates, the 2016 general elections, Ghana, campaign strategies, and the Electoral Commissioner. The cartoonist employs the metaphor of a boxing match to represent the general election as a political contest. In light of this, the cartoonist conceptualises the two presidential candidates who participated in the 2016 general elections as boxers. The two presidential candidates were John Dramani Mahama of the NDC and Nana Addo Dankwa of the NPP, as these figures are portrayed as boxers. The cartoonist proceeds to conceptualise the boxing ring, the setting for the forthcoming boxing match, as the entire nation, with the general election as the overarching context. The cartoonist draws a parallel between the use of boxing gloves and punches as weapons employed by boxers in a boxing match and the strategies and policies deployed by presidential candidates in their campaign to win the election.

The conceptualisation of the election as a boxing match leads to the cartoonist's portrayal of the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Ghana, Mrs Charlotte Osei, an institution tasked with overseeing the organisation of free and fair elections in Ghana, as the referee for the boxing match, based on her physical appearance. The data indicates that the referee (EC Chairperson) is situated between the two boxers without either boxer's hand being raised by the referee as a sign of victory, which is a rather unusual occurrence within the context of boxing. In the context of the electoral process, this indicates the possibility of a delay in declaring the election results.

Moreover, the duration of a boxing match, which is typically comprised of multiple rounds, can be likened to the protracted period that often elapses between the conclusion of a bout and the official announcement of the result. This hypothesis is supported by the deformed face of boxer 2 (John Mahama), which suggests that the boxing match lasted for an extended period. One particularly noteworthy aspect of Figure 3 is the incorporation of symbols embossed on the shirts of the two boxers, which serve as a metonymic representation of the two political parties in question. The elephant symbolises the NPP, while the umbrella represents the NDC. In Fig. 3, all the boxers are depicted in a standing position with their hands raised, which can be interpreted as an assertion of victory in the boxing match (the election). Nevertheless, this result is unlikely to be accurate. The cartoonist's message to the audience is that none of the boxers (presidential candidates) is prepared to accept defeat, as evidenced by the raised hands. One of the boxers, Mr John Dramani Mahama of the NDC, is positioned on a stool, which can be explained as a metaphorical representation of the seat of government he seeks to occupy.

The Electoral Commission's delay in declaring the results prompted both parties to convene press conferences, during which they informed their supporters of their electoral victories. This phenomenon is exemplified in former president Mahama's "bubble speech," which reads, "Commanding lead, me be winner." In essence, John Mahama's "bubble speech" asserts his dominance in the electoral race. From his oration, a biblical text emerges: "Onaapo!" This is a reference to John 3:16. The cartoonist employs the phrase as a reinforcement of the message conveyed in the original text, which was used as a campaign slogan for John Mahama in the 2016 election.

One of the figures, clothed in regal attire, is situated outside the boxing ring and bears a striking resemblance to Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the monarch of the Asante Kingdom. The phrase "Please concede defeat" is inscribed in a speech bubble above the King's head. The former president, John Dramani Mahama, is allegedly the recipient of the message. As reported by the media, the king was pleading with the former president to accept defeat so that a peaceful conclusion might be reached.

## b. Parliamentary primaries outcome Metaphors



Fig.4
(https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2877773075912283&set=a.502860775180146)
22 June 2020

The illustration depicts the electoral process conducted in the Dome Kwabenya Constituency, located within the Greater Accra Region. Dome Kwabenya is widely regarded as one of the most significant constituencies in both Greater Accra and the country. Given the New Patriotic Party's consistent electoral success in this constituency, it is perceived as a citadel of the party's support. The conceptual metaphor underlying Figure 4 can be interpreted as follows: WINNING A BOXING MATCH IS WINNING DOME KWABENYA PRIMARY ELECTION. This can be represented literally as "KNOCKING YOUR OPPONENT IS WINNING THE ELECTIONS."

In input space 1 (Appendix 4), the following elements are identified: boxers, boxing matches, boxing ring, boxers' gloves, and punches. In space 2, the following elements are identified: parliamentary candidates, constituency primaries, Dome Kwabenya, and campaign strategies. The generic space, which is the commonality between the two input spaces, is the common desire to win. The blended space that facilitates the emergence of a novel structural configuration is identified as the act of knocking down the opponent, which symbolises the achievement of a parliamentary primary victory. In light of this, the cartoonist conceptualises the candidates who participated in the primaries as boxers. The incumbent Member of Parliament, Sarah Adwoa Safo, is challenged by Mike Oquaye Jr, as the outcome of the boxing match is equated with the outcome of the election. The election results indicate that the incumbent, Sarah Adwoa Safo, emerged victorious, presumably through a technical knockout of her opponent, Mike Oquaye Junior. This attribution is predicated on the idea that a technical knockout is the sole way to send a boxer to the canvas.

The postures of the two boxers evoke spatial metaphors based on the concept of orientation. Thus, the posture of the winner represents the metaphor HAPPY IS UP, while the posture of the loser represents LOSS IS DOWN. This can give rise to another primary metaphor; the concept of victory being represented as being in a superior position (VICTORY IS UP) while defeat is represented as being in a lower position (DEFEAT IS DOWN). Given that Honourable Adwoa Safo, the incumbent, won the election, Mike Oquaye Jr.'s stance suggests that his attempt to represent the constituency as a member of parliament has been unsuccessful.

One important aspect of Figure 4 that merits discussion is the representation of two male figures. The man in the boxing ring is Apostle Kwadwo Safo, Adwoa Safo's father. Apostle Kwadwo Safo is recognised for his philanthropic endeavors and engineering expertise. The individual outside the ring is the former Speaker of the Ghanaian Parliament, serving from 2017 to 2021, and the former Member of Parliament for Dome Kwabenya from 2004 to 2012. Mike Oquaye Jr., a failed candidate, is the son of Honourable Aaron Mike Oquaye. In addition, the cartoonist uses a symbolic depiction of physical closeness and intimacy by placing the father of the victor

Journal of Language and Literature
ISSN: 1410-5691 (print); 2580-5878 (online)

inside the ring and the father of the loser outside. The closeness of the winning candidate's father evokes the primary metaphors CLOSENESS IS SIGNIFICANT and RELATIONSHIP IS KINSHIP. By highlighting the symbolic importance of father connections in the context of electoral politics, this graphic supports the cartoonist's point. The fathers' representation offers another mental metaphor: depending on spatial orientation, the FRONT IS GOOD (winner) and the BACK IS BAD (loser).

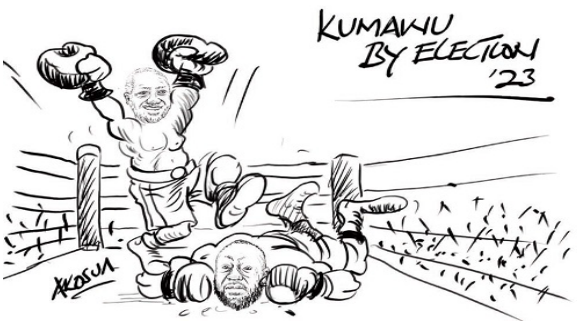



Fig.5
(https://dailyguidenetwork.com/kumawu-by-election-23/) 25 May 2023

The conceptual metaphor behind Figure 5 can be construed in two ways. One interpretation is WINNING A BOXING MATCH IS WINNING AN ELECTION, while the other is LOSING A BOXING MATCH IS LOSING AN ELECTION. The identified conceptual metaphor can be visually interpreted as follows: "TO KNOCK YOUR OPPONENT DOWN IS TO WIN THE BYE ELECTIONS."

On March 27, 2023, the Honourable Philip Atta Basoah, an NPP member of parliament who represented the residents of Kumawu Constituency, passed away, leaving his seat empty. The constitution of Ghana stipulates that, regardless of the number of months left in an incumbent member's tenure, a by-election must be called to replace the vacancy left by their death. In view of this, the actual contest was between the two major political parties, namely the NPP and the NDC.

Applying Fauconnier and Turner's (2002: 29) selective projection principle of mapping from input space 1 to input space 2, the two boxers in input space 1 are mapped to the contesting candidates in input space 2. The boxing match in input space 1 is mapped onto the by-election in input space 2. The boxing ring in input space 1 is mapped to the Kumawu constituency, where the election took place. Similarly, the boxers' gloves, punches, and blows, which serve as their weapons in Input Space 1, are mapped to the candidates' campaign strategies to win the election. The competitiveness and desire to win displayed by both candidates are the generic spaces that run through both input spaces. The novel emergent structure that emerged from the two input spaces is represented by the phrase "knocking your opponent down," which is indicative of the outcome of the Kumawu by-election (see Appendix 5).

The cartoonist employs a boxing metaphor to portray Kwasi Amankwa of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and Ernest Yaw Anim of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) as boxers in a boxing match. The posture of the two boxers evokes a metaphorical interpretation of victory and defeat. The eventual winner, Yaw Anim of the NPP, is depicted standing with both hands raised, while the loser, Akwasi Amankwa of the NDC, is seen on the floor. This depiction construes the primary metaphor VICTORY IS UP AND DEFEAT IS DOWN. The data indicates that the winner's facial expression is characterised by a smile and a sense of excitement, which are typical of boxers or individuals who emerge triumphantly in such a contest.

### c. Policies Debate Banter Metaphors




Fig. 6. 29 November 2023
(https://dailyguidenetwork.com/24hr-economy-jabs/)

The cartoon in Figure 6 was published after the two principal political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), had selected their respective candidates for the forthcoming 2024 general election. The conceptual metaphor that can be identified from this cartoon is AN ELECTION IS A BOXING MATCH. This can be interpreted visually as JABBING YOUR OPPONENT IS POLICY INTRODUCTION.

Since the word "jab" is frequently connected to boxing, the cartoon title, "24-Hour Economy Jabs," conjures the idea of a boxing scenario. Additionally, the cartoon's other visual components complement the boxing frame.

In light of the aforementioned evidence, the two boxers identified in input space 1 (see Appendix 6) are mapped to the two presidential candidates of the major political parties, as identified in input space 2. It can be reasonably deduced that the vice president of Ghana, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, who also serves as the flagbearer of the NPP, and the former president of Ghana, Mr. John Mahama, who also serves as the flagbearer of the NDC, are the two boxers. One might argue that critiquing economic policies can be viewed as a form of rhetorical jabbing, similar to the tactics employed in a boxing match. This notion is closely related to the metaphor that has been proposed to compare the sport of boxing to the electoral process. In this context, one party employs strategies to undermine and displace the other in order to secure a victory.

As the NPP's vice president and flagbearer, Dr. Bawumia is also responsible for leading the government's economic management team and ultimately overseeing the management and supervision of the economy. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that his political rival, Mr. Mahama, made fun of him, as seen in Fig. 6. One possible remedy for Ghana's present economic problems is Mr. Mahama's suggestion of a 24-hour economy, which seems to be a criticism of Dr. Bawumia's economic policies.

The verbal component accompanying the cartoon and attributed to Mr. John Mahama, the presidential candidate of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), reads, "Manifesto policy, e go be kre kre," which can be interpreted as Mr. Mahama's sarcastic critique of the economic policies proposed by his opponent, Dr. Bawumia. In particular, he is suggesting that these policies are impractical, poorly conceived, and potentially detrimental to the Ghanaian people.

The generic space that encompasses the common trait between the two input spaces is the can-do spirit and the determination to win. The blending of the two input spaces, which results in the novel emergent structure, can be considered tantamount to criticising a campaign policy or attacking one's political opponent in a boxing match. The cartoonist once again portrays former President Mahama as a youthful candidate, this time through his hairstyle, which is typically associated with the younger demographic.




Fig. 7.
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=804023798397174&set=a.502860775180146 (3 November 2023)

Before the NPP's 2023 presidential race for the 2024 general elections, Figure 7 was released. The cartoonist uses a wrestling metaphor, portraying the two front-runners as wrestlers, to help viewers understand the electoral process for choosing the flagbearer. The conceptual metaphor that can be identified with Figure 7 is COMPETITION IS ONE-ON-ONE PHYSICAL AGGRESSION.

The two wrestlers in input space 1 are mapped to the two presidential candidates in input space 2. The generic space that is shared between the two input spaces can be represented as a desire to compete and win in order to lead the party. The novel emergent

structure resulting from the blended space can be represented as a wrestler who wins the wrestling match, and also wins the NPP presidential primaries (see Appendix 7).

While Input Space 1 symbolises the well-known concept of wrestling, Input Space 2 is conceptualised as presidential candidates (Appendix 7). Even though there are more than two contenders for the flagbearer position, the cartoonist sees the two front-runners—H.E. Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, and Hon. Kennedy Ohene Agyapong, the incumbent Member of Parliament for Assin Central Constituency—as wrestlers. The capacity to comprehend the unknown in terms of the known is a fundamental belief of proponents of cognitive linguistics. By utilising a popular and widely accepted wrestling concept, viewers can understand the intensity of the competition between the two contenders. The cartoonist wants the audience to understand that the winner of the wrestling bout will be elected flag bearer, and the wrestling scene effectively highlights this point. The depiction is reminiscent of the conceptual metaphor WINNING A WRESTLING MATCH IS WINNING THE NPP PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES.

The accompanying captions or spoken elements are entitled "The Showdown." Upon suspecting foul play during the special delegates' conference, one of the candidates, Honourable Ken Agyapong, is said to have made the following statement. He was indicating that he would engage in a confrontation with the incumbent President, Nana Addo, and his Vice President, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia. As defined by www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com, a showdown can be understood as an argument, a fight, or a test that will settle a long-standing disagreement. This indicates that Honourable Ken Agyapong is entering the contest with a comprehensive range of strategies at his disposal, intending to neutralise any potential threats, disagreements, and intimidation tactics employed by his opponents.

In their visual metaphor identification technique, Šorm and Steen (2018) emphasise the significance of symbols. The elephant is a crucial component of this content, deserving of further investigation. An elephant serves as the NPP's emblem. It should be mentioned that Figure 7 depicts the elephant in a somewhat peculiar manner. One of the amputated ears has been replaced by a butterfly. In a metonymic sense, the ear represents the act of listening (EAR STANDS FOR ATTENTION), which can be interpreted as a sign that the NPP has ceased to engage with the general membership of the party. The elephant's lost ear can symbolise Honourable Alan Kwadwo Kyeremanten's resignation from the elephant's family. Prior to his resignation, Alan served as the Minister of Trade and Industry from 2017 until 2023. He placed third out of ten candidates for the flagbearer position at the NPP's special delegates' conference. He revealed his intention to withdraw from the NPP at a press conference following the meeting. Subsequently, he publicised his intention to stand as an independent candidate in the 2024 general election. He forms an organisation called the Movement for Change, which is represented by a butterfly. As a result, the elephant losing its ear stands in for the NPP, which is losing Alan Kwadwo Kyeremanten, one of its important members.

It could be seen as a statement that the butterfly is weak while the elephant is strong. This resignation could therefore have the effect of weakening the party's position in the run-up to the 2024 general elections.




Fig. 8.
([https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=694259931930260&set=a.502860775180146](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=694259931930260&set=a.502860775180146)) (25 July 2022)

The cartoonist employs wrestling, another sports metaphor, to depict the "near fight" that broke out in Ghana's Parliament House during discussions of a new tax, known as the

Electronic Transfer Levy (E-Levy). All mobile money platforms, especially those run by telecom firms, are required by the tax system known as E-Levy to charge a fee to customers who transact using these platforms (http://gra.gov.gh > e-levy).

The CBT network model allows us to map the wrestlers in input space 1 to members of parliament (politicians) in input space 2. Similarly, the punches in input space 1 can be mapped to the argument strategies. The generic space that is common to both input spaces can be interpreted as a fierce and intense competition to win, exemplified by the actions of wrestlers and politicians alike. The novel emergent structure is conceptualised as a wrestling match, wherein the blended space represents a rejection of the E-Levy (see Appendix 8).

The conceptual metaphor that can be construed from Figure 8 is A WRESTLING FIGHT IS A PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE. The conceptualisation is derived from the observation that the introduction of a new bill in Parliament gives rise to a debate between the two sides, namely the majority and the minority. Another metaphor that can be identified with Figure 8 is A PHYSICAL FIGHT IS E-LEVY ADVOCACY. This conceptualisation can be attributed to the vehement opposition expressed by the Minority Caucus in Parliament towards the Bill, which President Nana Addo Dankwa presented to Parliament through his Finance Minister, Honourable Ken Ofori-Atta. The cartoonist portrays Honourable Kyei Mensah Bonsu, the Majority Leader, and Honourable Haruna Iddrisu, the Minority Leader, as wrestlers in the context of the ongoing dispute.

The cartoonist employs a metonymic representation of the leaders as wrestlers, which can be understood as a representation of the leaders as PART FOR THE WHOLE. As such, the leaders in question represent all the political parties to which they belong. In Parliament, the members of the NDC are represented by the Minority Leader, whereas the Majority Leader represents the members of the NPP. It is the duty of these leaders to steer their parties through parliamentary discussions. The cartoonist views the minority's opposition to the E-Levy bill as a wrestling bout between the majority and minority leaders, taking into account the previously described facts.

Understanding the function of colour as a semiotic tool is essential to comprehending visual communication. The cartoonist has chosen to depict the Majority Leader, Honourable Osei Kyei Mensah, using the NPP's colours—blue, red, and white—as shown in Figure 8. Regarding the minority group, the Honourable Haruna Iddrisu, the group's leader, wears a captain's armband that incorporates the colours green, black, white, and red, which are also present on the NDC flag (see Figure 8). A person who resembles the Minority Chief Whip, the Honourable Alhaji Mohammed Muntaka, the Member of Parliament for the Asawasi Constituency, is with the Minority Leader. This similarity stems from the physical attributes of the person in question. During legislative sessions, Muntaka is well known for his outspoken support of the Minority Leader. His popularity is further enhanced by the fact that he is seen as an ardent supporter of many causes. The audience's reaction to the cartoonist's message serves as an illustration of the passionate discussion that followed the bill's first introduction in Parliament. The debate was on the verge of devolving into a fiscal dispute between the two opposing parties. The visual representation provides a clear illustration of the minority's opposition in Parliament to the Electronic Transaction Levy (E-Levy). The verbal components accompanying the data 'E-Levy returns' appear to serve to reinforce the visual representation and the cartoonist's message, which he seeks to convey to his readers.

## Conclusion

A comprehensive analysis of the selected cartoons, employing the conceptual blending theory, conceptual metaphor, and the Šorm and Steen visual metaphor procedural approach, guided by the research questions formulated for the study, is anticipated to reveal the latent meanings embedded within them. As Coulson (2002: 12) puts it, blending has the cognitive abilities that support the framing of election topics in terms of a familiar

boxing domain. This is confirmed by Musolff, who argues that political metaphor scenarios must be consistent with discourses already familiar to their recipients to be recognised as shorthand narratives (2006: 137).

The analysis of the data reveals the following conceptual metaphors: ELECTION IS A BOXING MATCH, WINNING A BOXING MATCH IS WINNING AN ELECTION, LOSING A BOXING MATCH IS LOSING AN ELECTION, ELECTION IS A COMPETITIVE SPORTS EVENT, DEBATE IS A ONE-ON-ONE PHYSICAL FIGHT, etc. It is acknowledged that political cartoons can be considered a complex phenomenon, subject to various interpretations depending on the background information and the viewer's perspective.

The study's findings indicate that the use of boxing scenarios and visual elements by cartoonists to illustrate election results enhances readers' comprehension of the intended message. The study hypothesises that political cartoons exhibit a relational quality and possess the capacity to transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries. This renders them more effective than verbal counterparts, particularly when conceptual blending is employed for the analysis. This approach establishes the political cartoon as a valuable medium for communication, particularly in addressing complex socio-political issues. It thus establishes visual communication as a viable form of communication that merits equal attention to its verbal counterpart. Nevertheless, the complete potential of the medium cannot be realised unless the viewer is equipped with the requisite background information, character profiles, and contextual knowledge surrounding the publication in question.

It is worth noting that in a few of the cartoons examined, the losing candidates are depicted as boxers, being defeated by opponents who ultimately prevail. This visualisation can be attributed to the cartoonists' familiarity with boxing, where the winner occasionally strikes down the loser. This also resonates with the orientation metaphor of spatial relationships, where GOOD is always UP and BAD is always DOWN. In this case, the WINNERS ARE always UP, and the LOSERS ARE always DOWN. Once more, it is evident that the artist's portrayal of physical activity is influenced by the assertive, competitive, and intense environment that is characteristic of Ghanaian electoral processes.

Again, the linguistic components (bubble speeches) that accompany the cartoons under review have been analysed. The analysis suggests that these components serve to either reinforce, elaborate, or summarise the artist's intent. The purpose of this is to enhance the reader's comprehension of the message conveyed.

A further expansion of the data may yield additional findings. In the context of future studies, it would be advantageous to examine the utilisation of sporting imagery, such as cartoons depicting football (soccer) and athletics (races), within the paradigm of Ghanaian political discourse. This emphasis on boxing scenarios in visual communication is a salient point that this study has highlighted. This could help to elucidate the role such imagery plays in the dissemination of political messages.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1 corresponds to Figure 1

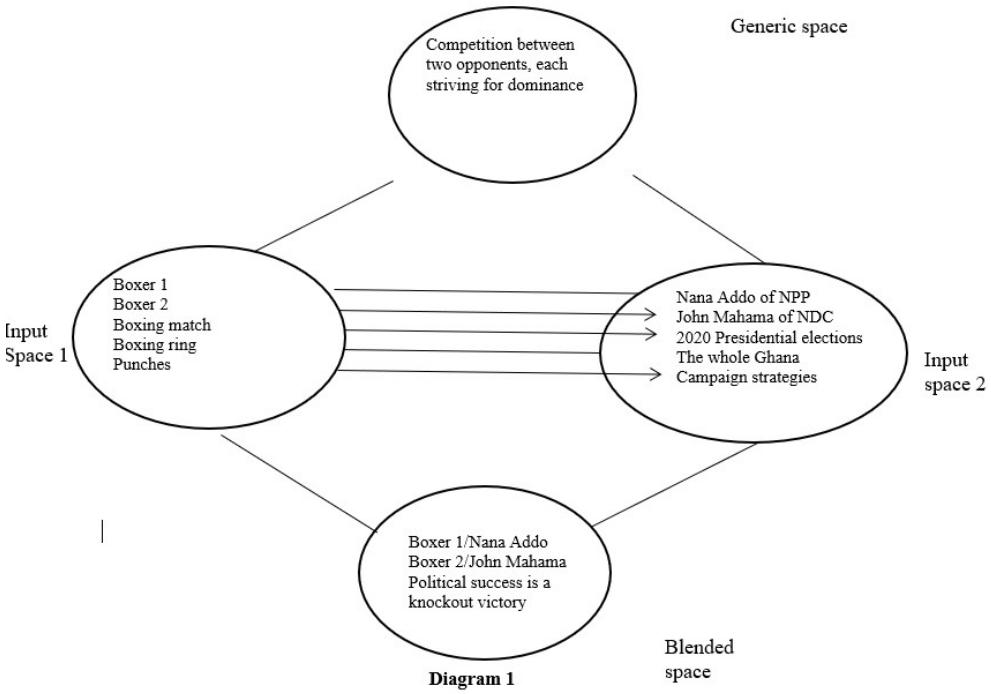



**Diagram 1**

## Appendix 2 corresponds to Figure 2

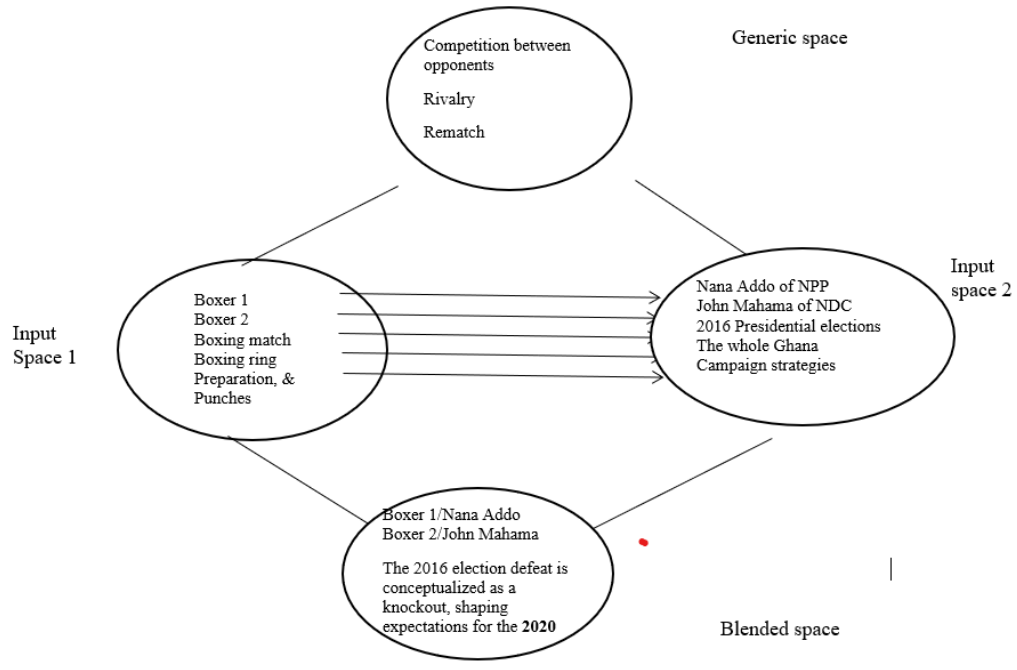



**Diagram 2**

## Appendix 3 corresponds to Figure 3

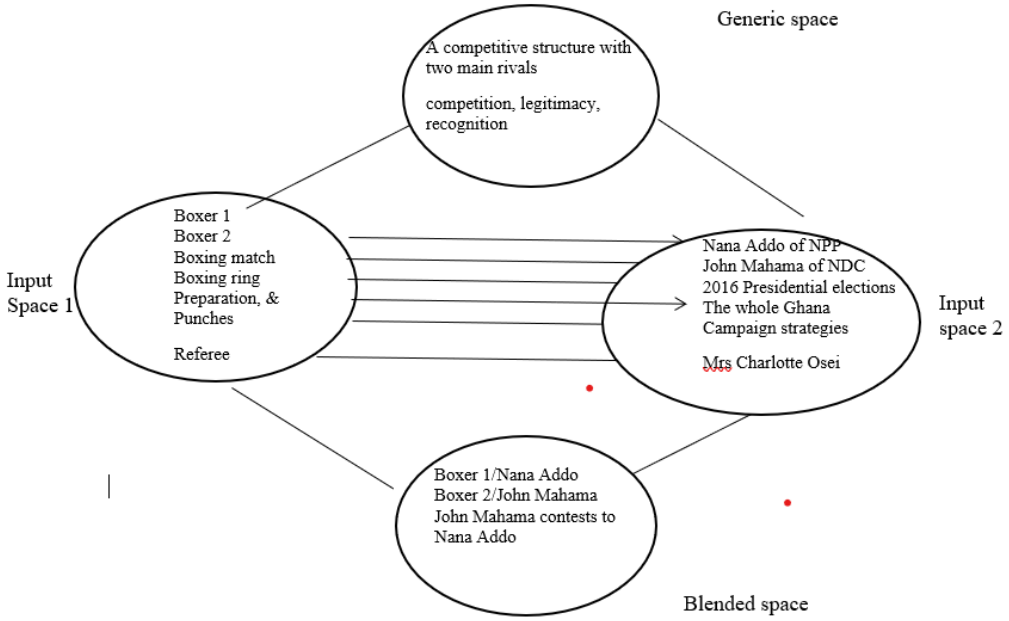



**Diagram 3**

## Appendix 4 corresponds to Figure 4

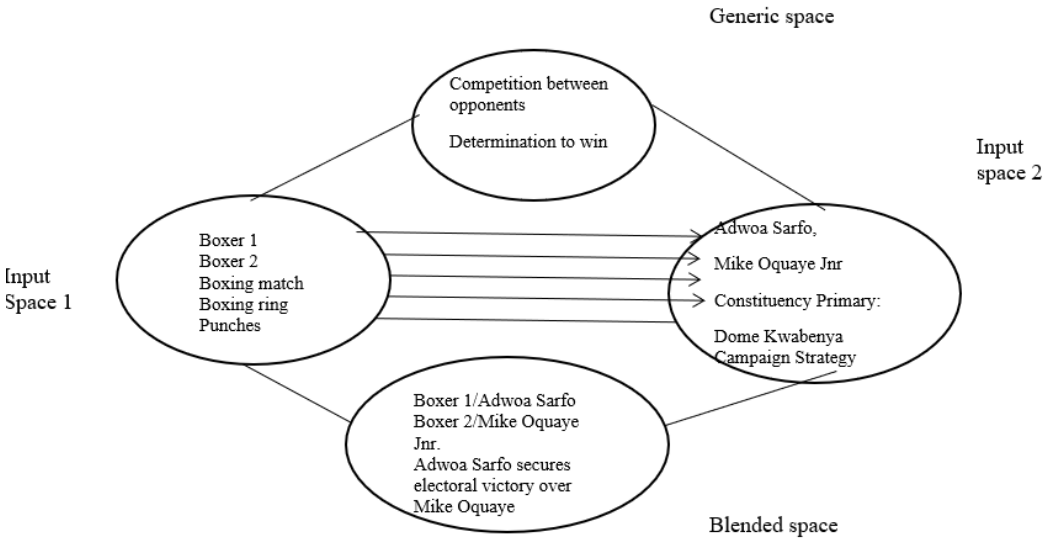



**Diagram 4**

## Appendix 5 corresponds to Figure 5

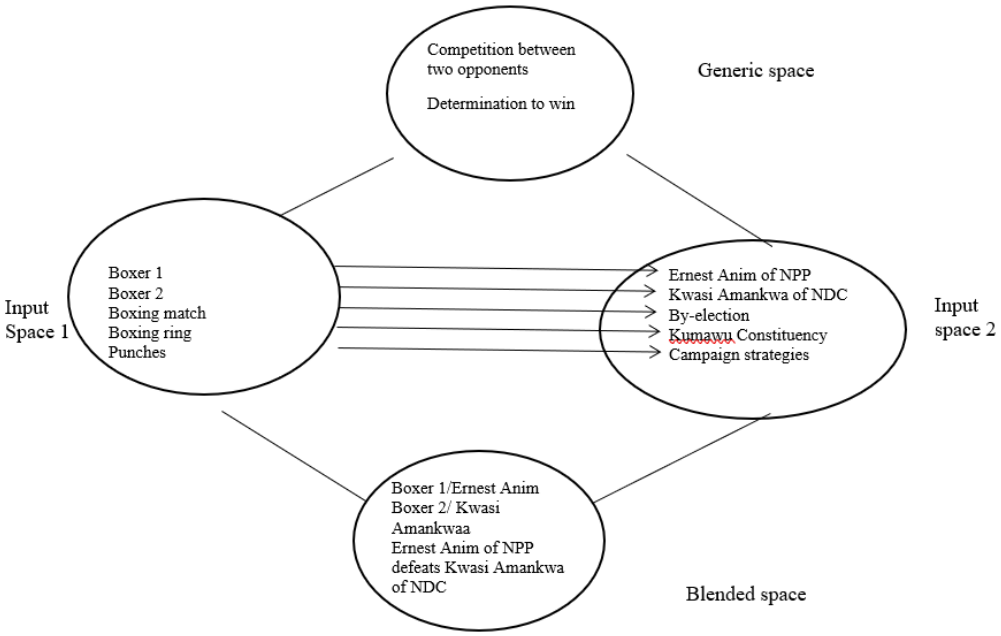



**Diagram 5**

## Appendix 6 corresponds to Figure 6

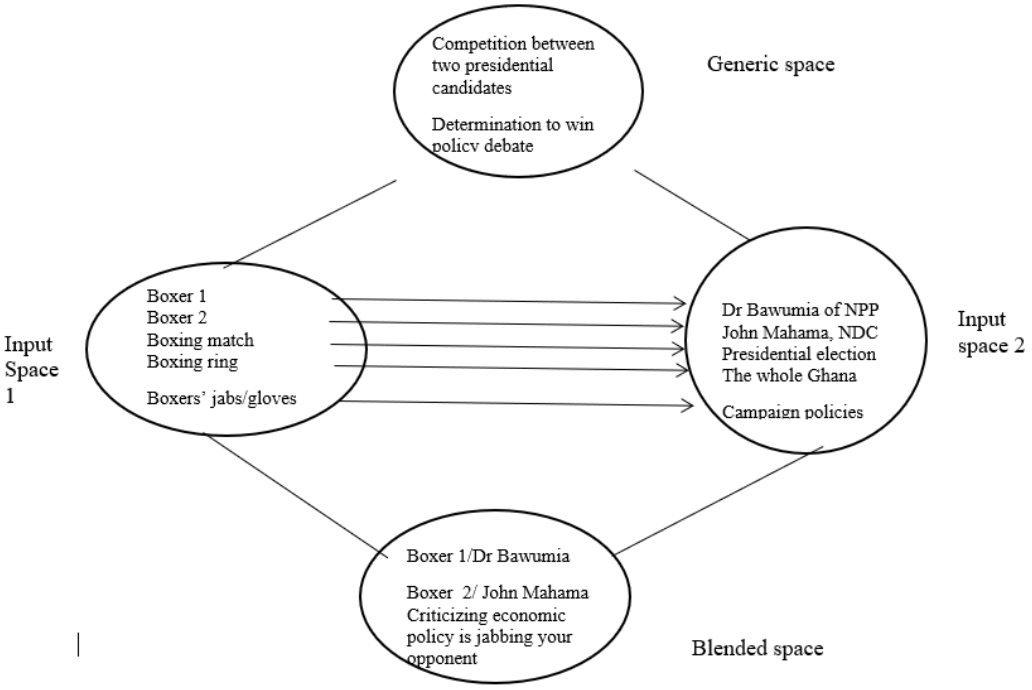



**Diagram 6**

## Appendix 7 corresponds to Figure 7

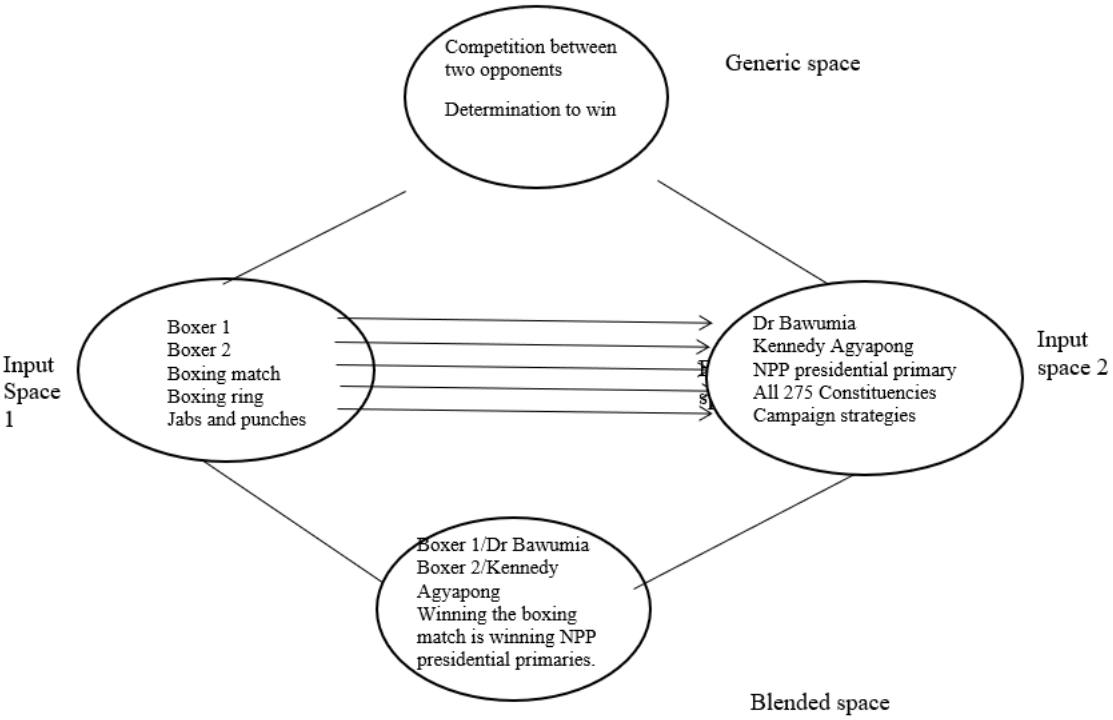



**Diagram 7**

## Appendix 8 corresponds to Figure 8

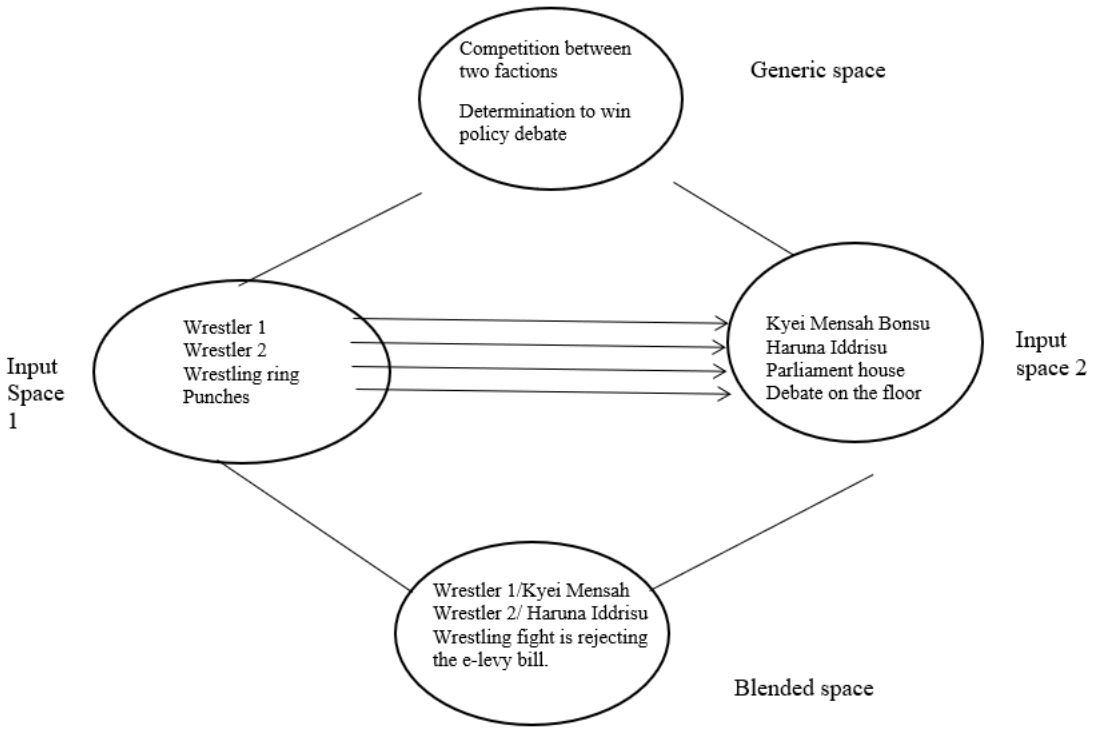



**Diagram 8**