

Understanding Political persuasion: Analyzing Image Schemas as Catalysts in Campaign Strategies

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Abstract— This study delves into the role of image schemas in language with a specific focus on their presence in the construction of metaphors in political speeches delivered during the 2018 electoral campaigns in the Kurdistan Region, Iraq. Image schemas refer to recurring patterns of understanding that arise from our bodily movements through space. To achieve this, the study utilizes the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Image-Schema Theory, which investigate the presence of image schemas in political discourse. The study centers on the PATH, CONTAINER and FORCE image schemas, examining their role in the formation of metaphors and how they structure the relationship between source domains (journey and container) and the target domain (politics). Precisely, the study examines how politicians conceptualize politics as a journey or container, identifying four structural elements that define this relationship. The research also considers the persuasive techniques employed by Kurdish politicians and how they impact voting patterns. Overall, the study shows that image schemas are an essential tool in gaining public support and influencing voters, and they work as source domains for accessing target domains.

Index Terms— cognitive semantics, conceptual structures, image schema, electoral campaign.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of politics, the ability to persuade is crucial for gaining public support. However, understanding the intricacies of political persuasion has always been a complex challenge. Image schemas, which are cognitive structures that shape our understanding of the world, can play a significant role in how political messages are crafted and received. The aim, therefore, is to examine the use of image schemas in speeches delivered during the 2018 political campaigns in Kurdistan by representatives of the two major Kurdish political parties. According to Johnson (1987), our concepts are built upon our personal experiences, which are derived from our physical experiences and interactions with the natural world. As humans engage with their environment, they develop mental frameworks called image schemas, which help shape their understanding of the world. Many abstract domains are

generally understood through concrete concepts associated with our bodily experiences and interactions with tangible things in life. As a result, all human beings have access to a universal collection of image schemas such as containers, paths, links, forces, balance, scale, and cycles that structure our bodily experience (Lakoff, 1987, p. 453; Johnson, 1987, p. 29; Talmy, 1972, 1977, 1983, 1988). The study has found that the success of a political speech resides in reliance on image schemas, and how they are used to communicate the intended messages.

II. COGNITIVE SEMANTICS

Cognitive Semantics, as described by Langacker (1987, 1991), Lakoff (1987) and Talmy (2000), is a branch of Cognitive Linguistics that studies the meaning of language. This linguistic theory explains how language structure and meaning are connected to human cognition and perception. According to this theory, meaning is not only about abstract symbols and rules but also rooted in our physical and perceptual experiences. Therefore, meaning is created through the interaction of bodily experience, social and cultural context, and language itself. This perspective highlights the importance of embodiment in our comprehension of language and the role of cognitive processes in meaning creation and use. Cognitive Semantics proposes that words and grammatical structures contain inherent conceptual structures that reflect how humans experience and categorize the world. It suggests that meaning is not simply a reference to entities or relationships in the real or potential world, but reflects personal understanding based on conceptual knowledge. Cognitive Semantics also emphasizes the role of image schemas, which are supported by research in cross-modal cognition, spatial cognition, and neuroscience

III. IMAGE SCHEMA

The notion of image schema was introduced by Lakoff (1987) and Johnson (1987) in the late 1980s. However, the philosophy behind the theory traces back to the German philosopher Kant (1781) who named the concept of ‘schema:’ a non-empirical

concept formed from sensorimotor experience. As a composite notion, image schemas are neither fixed nor specific, even though they display characteristics of each. According to Johnson (1987, p. xiv, xvi), an image schema is a “recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience”. These patterns are the mental pictures created through the physical experience of meaningful reasoning. Here, experience is understood in a broad sense that includes: “basic perceptual, motor-program, emotional, historical, social and linguistics dimensions.” (1987, p. xvi). An interesting property of image schemas is that they can serve us the basis of other concepts, they structure many of our abstract concepts metaphorically. Schemas give us an insight into how people think, and how they view the world. According to Johnson (1987, p.113-126), image schemas appear in nine types. 1. Containment schema 2. Path schema 3. Force schema 4. Balance schema 5. Link schema 6. Cycle schema 7. Scale schema 8. Centre-periphery schema 9. Whole–part schema. So the study use only three main types which are *containment*, *path* and *force* schemas:

A. Containment schema

The containment schema involves placing objects within a designated area or container. It is a pattern which allows us to explore and experience our environment in ways that inform our understanding of the world and the ways that things work. In Johnson’s (1987) view, the container schema structures our knowledge of enclosed regions. It consists of a boundary separating the interior of the container from its exterior, and can also include a portal through which entities may pass. See also, Lakoff, (1987,1999), Hurtienne and Blessing (2007), Krzeszowski (1993), and Hampl (2021). In other words, as Evans (2007) states, the container schema consists of the minimum requirements of elements, which include interior, boundary and exterior. In connection with lexical concepts, parts of their meaning include: full, empty, in, out, etc. There are five kinds of containment schema: (i) Activities are containers. (ii) States are containers. (iii) Groups of individuals are containers. (iv) Land areas are containers. (v) Time is a container. A stock example is *love* as a container, as in *He was in love*, *He fell in love*, and *He fell out of love*.

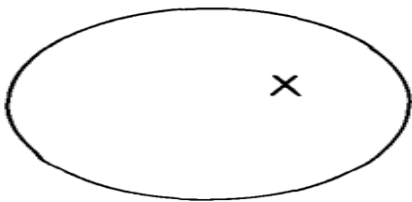


Figure (1) Containment Schema

B. Path schema

The path schema, as Johnson and Lakoff (1987, p. 49) explain, reflects our everyday experience of moving around the world and experiencing movements of other entities. It consists of three points which are a starting point (a source), an endpoint (a destination) and sequences of successive locations (a path). Elaborated further by Peña, (1998,1999), if someone goes from a source to a destination, s/he must pass through an intermediate point. Path schemas can be expressed in many ways. (i) The

means for achieving purposes are Routes. (ii) Actors are Travelers. (iii) Purposes are Destinations. (iv) States are Locations. (v) Major Choices are Crossroads. (vi) Difficulties are Impediments to Travel. (vii) Progress is Distance Travelled. Consider Hamawand’s (2016, p. 94) example *She walked from the castle through the countryside to the mansion*, where the different components of the path are profiled by the use of different lexical items. The source is *the castle*, the sequence of locations is *the countryside*, and the intended destination is *the mansion*. The expression derives from our experience of moving in the world.



Figure (2) Path Schema

C. Force schema

The force schema, according to Johnson (1987, p. 42-44) is an image schema that involves physical or metaphorical causal interaction. It includes the following elements: a source and target of the force, a direction and intensity of the force, a path of motion of the source and/or target, and a sequence of causation. Hurtienne et al. (2015, p. 249) have defined force image schemas as “cognitive representations of our naive understanding of physical force dynamic events in the world”. That is to say, this type of schema is associated with experiences of coming across an obstacle and using one’s power to control it. Johnson (1987, p. 43) mentions that force has a vector quality and directionality. There are seven kinds of force schemas which are (i) blockage, (ii) compulsion, (iii) removal of restraint, (iv) enablement, (v) attraction, (vi) counterforce, and (vii) diversion. *In He threw the ball over the fence*, for example, the subject as an entity causes the ball to move over the fence. Sweetser (1982) proposes that modality can be understood through sociophysical concepts of forces and barriers, which can arise from natural causes or social restrictions. Modal verbs, in their core senses, are connected to our everyday experiences of possibilities, necessities, obligations, etc. This understanding is extended to the realm of knowledge because we perceive our reasoning processes as being influenced by compulsions, obligations, and other modalities. Exploring the significant aspects of the FORCE image schemas, an examination of the root senses of modal verbs like *can*, *may*, *must*, *have to*, and *will* involve investigating the image schemas that emerge when we experience positive enablement to act through the removal of a barrier (*can*), the permission to choose due to the absence of potential obstacles (*may*), the compulsion exerted by forces beyond our control (*must*), the obligation imposed by external authority or moral duty (*have to*), and the presence of responsibility, volition, and a clear path towards an action or intention (*will*). The latter is particularly associated with the gestalt structure of force.

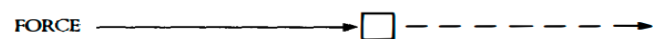


Figure (4) Compulsion Schema

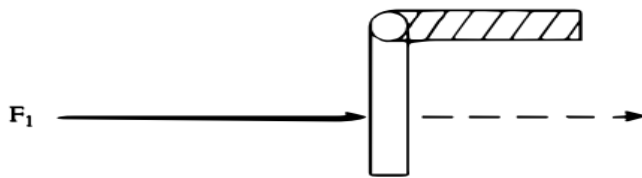


Figure (5) Remove restraint Schema

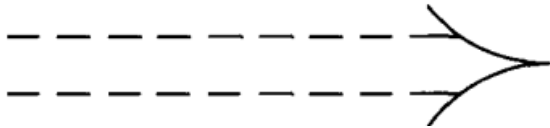


Figure (6) Enablement Schema

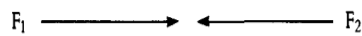


Figure (7) Attraction Schema

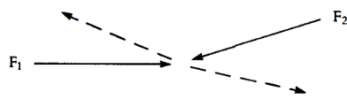


Figure (8) Diversion

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Data source

The study's data was obtained from the 2018 electoral campaign. The researchers chose two speeches from each of the leaders of the KDP and PUK which are the major political forces in the region. Qubad Talabani headed the PUK list, while Hemin Hawramy headed the PDK list, and they carried out extensive campaigns to gain support.

B. Procedures

The Kurdish data have been gathered from the websites of Hemin Hawramy and Qubad Talabani's official Facebook accounts.

1. The data have been introspected by the researchers, with a focus on identifying the instances of image schemas and how they are used.
2. Once all image schemas are identified and focused on, the data is quantified to highlight the most prominent ones such as containment, path-goal, and force.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

A. Hawramy's speeches

In August 2018, Hemin Hawramy, the head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)'s candidates for Kurdish Parliament's list, delivered a speech in Bahrka, Arbil. The speech contained a total of 46 image schemas, with the most common schema being containment (19), followed by force (14), and path goal

(6). Part whole schema occurred 5 times, while cycle and scale schemas each occurred only once. In another speech held in Qaradagh, Sulaymaniyah, (9) different types of image schema were identified in a total of 85 instances of image schemas delivered by Hawramy. The most prominent schema was containment (28), followed by force (25) and path goal (21). Scale schema occurred only four times, and balance schema occurred three times. Cycle, centre periphery, part and whole, and link schema each occurred only once, as it is shown in figure (9). Examples are provided below:

1) Containment schema: sample extract

Hewramî: "Tirsinokane pelamarî resmekanî kandîdekanî ême le deverî îrhabî fikrî eden, weku beyanîş basman krd diyare drrandinî posterî kandîdekanî partî bote derfetî kar bo hendê gencî xêrlexonediyuwî sinurî slêmanî û dewruberî."

Hawramy: "In an act of cowardice, our candidates' posters have been torn down in the region of 'ideological terrorism'. As I mentioned this morning, it seems that tearing the posters of the KDP candidates has turned into a good job opportunity for some misfortunate youths in Sulaymaniyah and its surroundings."

Extract (1) depicts Hawramy's dissatisfaction and negative sentiment towards tearing down the political posters that belong to the candidates on his list. He highlights how this act has an adverse impact on the political landscape, especially in Sulaymaniyah province and its surrounding areas. The containment schema is involved in this case, where he names Sulaymaniyah an area of ideological terrorism, where the act itself and the individuals who remove or damage the political posters are the contents. Hawramy metaphorically describes this act as an act of "ideological terrorism," indicating that these individuals are targeting the party's beliefs or ideas rather than just committing simple vandalism.

This comparison likens the behaviour to terrorism, which is often associated with violence and intimidation in the pursuit of ideological goals. This particular schema structures our regular reappearing experiences of putting substances into and taking them out of a bounded area.

2) Path schema: Extract sample

Hewramî: "Berewtomarkrdinî serkewtinêk erroyin keçon le rabrduda neyananî partî şokkran anşaalê lerrojî on September 30th şokî gewretiryar lê dedrêt."

Hawramy: "On September 30th, we will celebrate a resounding victory over the Party's enemies, who have been soundly defeated in the past. They will be left stunned by our triumph."

Hawramy purports that, KDP is planning to embark on a journey with the goal of achieving a great victory at the intended destination, i.e. on September 30th. The use of the path image schema helps to create a metaphor that relates politics to a journey. As KDP moves towards success, the journey becomes a roadmap towards the intended goal. Additionally, KDP aims to shape the perceptions of their followers by framing the situation positively, highlighting the defeat of enemies and upcoming victory. This approach could help to boost their followers; confidence and motivation, as the task becomes more significant and achievable

3) Force schema

Hewramî: “Çon partî twanî da’ş bşkênê, çon twanî ĩheşdî şe’bî leprde û sehêran bşkênê, çon partî twanî planî nehêşitînî qewareyi herêmî kurdistan serbigirê, partî dîmokratî kurdistan beheman hêzu gurr û twanawe, bepşitiywanî xwayî gewrew êwe lem çwar salle dest be rewreweweyî awedanî ekrê.”

Hawramy: “As the KDP successfully defeated ISIS and confronted Hashid Al-Shaabi forces in Pirde and Saheran... as it overcame the conspiracy against the Kurdistan Region; the KDP is committed to fostering all its resources to bring prosperity and support to the people during the next four years, with the help of God and the community.

In extract (4), Hawramy is discussing the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) successes in military confrontations. He specifically mentions how the KDP defeated ISIS and regained control over previously occupied areas. By highlighting the KDP ability to overcome Kurdish enemies, Hawramy wants to remind the audience of the party strength and physical power. Furthermore, he emphasizes the KDP successful military efforts against ISIS, Hashid Al-Shaabi forces, and other potential threats to the Kurdistan Region. Hawramy asserts that the KDP is fully prepared to confront any future threats with confidence. The image of force portrayed in this extract serves to depict the KDP as a powerful and capable force that can defend itself and the Kurdistan Region against external threats. Hawramy’s use of metaphors aims to create admiration and respect for the KDP accomplishments in the face of adversity. Conceptual metaphor is an expression used to convey abstract or complex ideas by mapping them onto more concrete or familiar concepts. This concept was first introduced by linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their book "Metaphors We Live By" (1980).

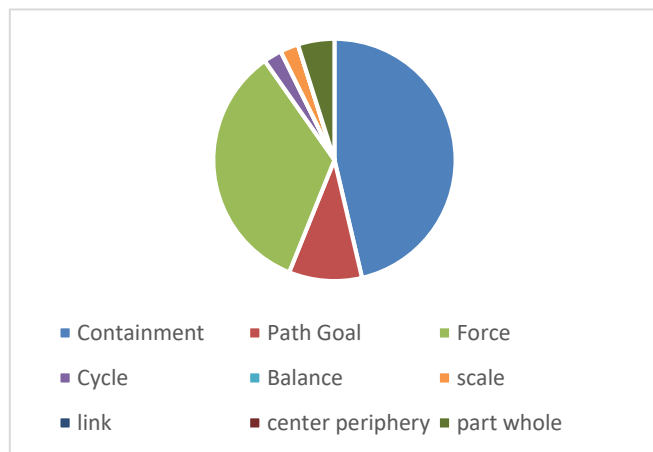


Figure (9) Image Schemas in Hawramy’s selected speeches

B. Talabani’s speeches

In two campaign events, Qubad Talabani delivered speeches on August 31, 2018 and August 31, 2020, respectively. In these speeches, Talabani made use of 63 different types of image schemas. The most frequently used schema types were the path-goal schema (22) and force schema (18), followed by the containment schema (15). The cycle schema (3) and the link and part-whole schema were each identified twice, while the

center-periphery and balance and scale schemas were the least common, each being identified only once. In the second speech, delivered in Chamchamal, the path-goal schema (21) was again the most prominent, with the containment and force schemas being used a total of seventeen times out of 66 instances. The cycle schema was identified five times, while the link and balance schemas occurred twice. The balance schema and part-whole schema were each identified only once, while there were no instances of center-periphery found

in Talabani’s speeches, as it is shown in figure (10).

1) Containment schema: Extract sample

4. Talabani: “çwar rojman mawe bo gerraneweyî hêz û hawsengî bo bedîhênan û cêbecêkrdinî rêbazekeyî mam. yekêfî hawsengî hêz yekdexatewe le kurdistan be qwetî êwe be qwetî êwe eçînewe perleman, be qwetî êwe eçînewe naw ĩkumet, be qwetî êwe hawsengî hêz degerrênînewe.”

Talabani: “Only four days are left to regain power and balance, and to achieve and implement Mam Jalal's path. With your support, PUK will bring balance to power in Kurdistan. We will return to the parliament... we will return to the government with your support, and regain the balance of power again with your support”

In this extract, Talabani uses the pronoun *we* to position himself as one of the members of the team and share responsibility with the followers and audiences. The expression " We will return to the parliament... we will return to the government with your support " employs the image schema of ‘support’ as a source of motion. This schema metaphorically associates support with forward movement and progress. It suggests that support is not only a measure of power but also a driving force that enables action, implying that with collective support, the group can regain their position in the parliament and the government. The word *ĥkumet* (Government) is conceptualized in terms of a place or a field for PUK candidates to go back.

2) Path schema: extract sample

5. Talebani: “Pêşitir wtman, pêşitir wtman şepolî sewz berrêweye, şepolî sewz geşite hemû şaru şaroçkekanî kurdistan we êsta berew sinduqekanî dengdan derrwat.”

Talabani: “We have said previously the ‘green wave’ is on its way. Now the green wave has reached to all the cities and towns of Kurdistan. And now it’s heading towards the ballot boxes.”

The concept of PATH SCHEMA is based on the idea that PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, with the ‘green wave’ (şepolî sewz) representing people moving towards the ballot boxes. This metaphorical representation suggests that just like physical objects, the green wave has the ability to move towards its intended destination, forming a path schema. This schema views politics as a journey, with the green wave symbolizing progress toward the goal of winning the election. By utilizing the path-goal schema, Talabani is providing clear direction for the audience to participate in the electoral process. This schema encourages active engagement in the democratic process, suggesting that by fulfilling the path, the desired goal can be achieved. Therefore, the green wave serves as a powerful symbol of progress.

3) Force Schema: sample extract

6.Talabani: “Êmeysi yekêti çon le rojgarî teng û tarîkda be nisko razî nebuwîn û bangewazî şorrşî nwêman rageyand. awhaş detwanîn payz û rengî zerdî xezan bigorrîn bo beharî dllixoşkerî bujanewew awedanî.”

Talabani: “As members of PUK, we have refused to succumb to collapse during difficult times and have declared a new revolution. Likewise, our efforts can aim to transform the dreary yellow hues of autumn into the refreshing spring of innovation and reconstruction.”

The extract (6) highlights how the PUK refused to give up or fall apart during challenging times. They used the term "razî nebuwîn" (refuse), which refers to the BLOCKAGE SCHEMA, as he refuses to accept defeat and instead announces a new revolution aimed at removing all obstacles.

Talabani's use of the modal verb "detwanîn" (can) in his statement indicates the PUK's ability to act in the absence of barriers, matching the ENABLEMENT SCHEMA. Therefore, the statement conveys optimism and a belief in human agency's power to bring about positive change. It encourages a proactive and forward-thinking mindset, suggesting that, with the right approach, even unfavourable situations can be transformed into more hopeful and promising ones.

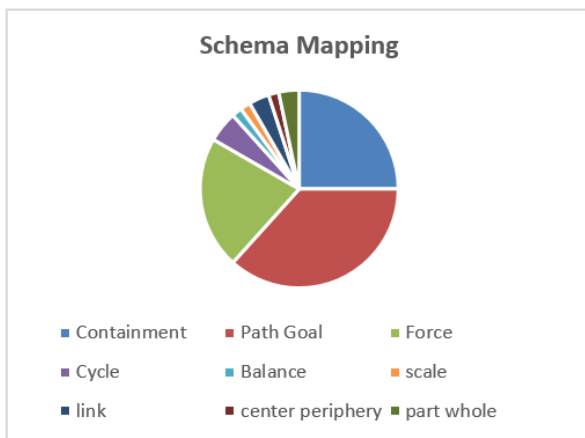


Figure (10): Image Schemas in Talabani’s speeches

VI. DISCUSSION

Data analysis as represented in the previous section indicates the pervasiveness of image schemas in the selected speeches of both the representatives of the competing parties as presented in the table below:

(Table 1)

Overall distribution of Image schemas in the selected speeches

Name	NO. of Image schemas in the first example speech	No. of Image schemas in the second example speech	Total
Hemin Hawramy	46	85	131
Qubad Talabani	63	66	129

The first column in the table above presents the number of image schemas in the first speeches given by Hawramy and Talabani. The second column presents the number of image schemas in the second speeches given by Hawramy and

Talabani. The third column presents the total number of all types of image schemas occurring in the speeches of both politicians. Nine different types of image schemas were used as conceptual devices in the speeches of Hawramy and Talabani to express their opinions about events and defend their campaigns but at different frequencies. For instance, in Hawramy’s speech, the most common image schema is containment (47), followed by force schema (39) and path-goal schema (27) as shown in figure (9). The study found that the schema of containment mostly involves IN-OUT-INTO orientation.

In contrast, in Talabani’s speech, the most prominent image schema is path-goal (43) followed by force (35), and containment (32) as shown in figure (10). The basic structure of the path-goal schema includes three elements: the SOURCE (a starting point), a DESTINATION (end point), and a number of contiguous locations which connect the source and the destination (PATH).

CONCLUSION

This study dealt with the use of image schema in political speeches given in the electoral campaign in 2018. An image schema is a mental representations that capture our understanding of objects, actions, and spatial relationships based on our perceptual experiences. The study found that three types of image schemas were at work. The first relates to containment, which involves the idea of something being inside or contained within another object. The second relates to path, which involves movement through space. The third relates to force, which involves our sensory and motor experiences with physical interactions and movements. Both politicians use the containment schema in their speeches to effectively communicate their message, manage complexity, control the narrative, and enhance their powers of persuasion. Moreover, the path schema allows politicians to create a compelling narrative around their political journey.

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