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Translating voices from the Tigris: The American Granddaughter as a case study

Falah Hussein Hanoon Al-Sari
Department of English Language, College of Basic Education, University of Misan
falahhhalsarri@uomisan.edu.ig
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-3295-3281

Abstract:

This study attempts to explore and analyze the image schemas in Kachachi's translated novel, *The American Granddaughter*, and how they foster geopolitical worldviews by employing conceptual structures working as image schemas that establish specific mental models in collective audiences upon perception. Therefore, this study applies the cognitive linguistic approach to explore and investigate those image schemas. Along with image schemas, mental models are based on individuals' embodied experiences and interaction with the physical world, be they kinesthetic or spatial. Therefore, image schemas represent an integral part of experience-based gestalt that governs the internal structure and formation of cognitive mental models. In other words, individuals draw upon image schemas as building blocks to the mental models they create about the world. The overlapping relationship between image schemas and mental models underpins the interrelationship between high-order cognitive processes and our encounter with everyday life experiences.

Keywords: Literary translation, Image schema, Cognitive models, War literature, Discourse analysis.

Statement of the Problem:

Using Kachachi's translated novel, *The American Granddaughter*, this study applies the findings of cognitive linguistic approach to explore the image schemas present in the novel. It also investigates how these cognitive structures are employed to deliver a specific influence on both political discourse and public perception. By examining the overlapping connection between language and imagistic devices, this study underlines the embedded conceptual frameworks shaping the novel.

Objectives:

By exploring and applying the findings of cognitive linguistic approach, this study attempts to fulfill the following research points:

1.Identifying and categorizing image schemas in Kachachi's translated novel, *The American Granddaughter*.

2.Highlighting how these schemas help create desired mental models in the audience.

3.Shedding light on that kind of discourse and provide critical appreciation that fills the gap in related research.

Significance:

Applying cognitive and linguistic theories on translated texts is not common. Therefore, this study significantly contributes to the field of cognitive linguistics by analyzing the notions of image schemas and mental models in the context of translation. In terms of reception, this study shows how image schemas work and develop mental models, and, therefore, it helps the audience better understand both the explicit and implicit messages in political discourse. By connecting political discourse with cognitive linguistics, this study adds to the interdisciplinary research on language, perception, and translation.

Research Questions:

1.How does the cognitive linguistic approach provide insights into Kachachi's translated novel, *The American Granddaughter*?

2.What kind of image schemas are encoded in *The American Granddaughter*?

3.How do these image schemas establish desired mental models in collective audiences?

Theoretical Framework:

This study employs explores the image schemas in Kachachi's translated novel, *The American Granddaughter*. The analysis of the translated text investigates three major structures in the novel: the Macrostructure, the Microstructure, and the Superstructure. As will be discussed later, those levels show how language use is influenced by both cognitive processes and social contexts that shape the formation of image schemas and mental modals, and, therefore, govern the way the audience constructs meaning and interpret language.

Introduction:

Kachachi moved to France in 1979 and completed a PhD in Journalism from the Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris. The American Granddaughter was shortlisted for the International Prize in Arabic Fiction (IPAF or Arabic Booker) in 2009. Kachachi left Iraq for her studies and never returned because of the violence and conflict. She has lived in France longer than she lived in Iraq and has said in interviews that she still identifies strongly with her Iraqi identity. The focus of this study is to explore and investigate the image schemas in Kachachi's translated novel, *The American Granddaughter* and the mental models that those image schemas develop in the audience.

Using excerpts from the novel as data, this study consults contemporary cultural and linguistic perspectives to explore the image schemas as representational formats for the inner structure of the mental models embedded in the novel. In socio-cognitive linguistics, van Dijk's theory conceives the mental model as a conceptual structure or pattern known as the 'idealized' cognitive model which represents an abstract and, as the name suggests, idealized representation or understanding of a specific category or domain. The prototypical understanding characteristic of the 'idealized' cognitive model helps process various domains under one umbrella conceptual

category. Therefore, the 'idealization' aspect of mental models refers to the tendency of simplifying complex aspects of reality into relevant and meaningful experiences.

Since image schemas are, as will be discussed shortly, the foundational building blocks of mental models, it is significant to address the various domains that relate to them. The first major domain is critical discourse analysis: an umbrella label under which various approaches, including social, linguistic, and historical are interrelated. Critical discourse analysis (CDA), as put forth by Wodak (2013), is:

A problem-oriented interdisciplinary research programme, subsuming a variety of approaches, each drawing on different epistemological assumptions, with different theoretical models, research methods and agenda. What unites them is a shared interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice and political- economic, social or cultural change in our globalized and globalizing world and societies (xix).

In cognitive discourse approaches, image schemas that form mental models of different domains are commonly seen as specific kinds of knowledge structure in memory (Van Dijk, 1987). In CDA, language, ideology and power form a multifaceted structure in which those elements are overlapping and reciprocally connected, which, in turn, induces speech analysts to question ideological influence (Cap, 2013). To understand how image schemas internally structure the associated mental models, a brief account of the various critical approaches should illuminate their dialectical relationship and how they are placed within those approaches. One of the critically appreciated approaches to CDA is Norman Fairclough's dialectic-approach (1992) that refers to language as 'socially constitutive' and 'socially conditioned' simultaneously (64). This dialectical relationship allows for investigating social interaction with relation to institutional processes (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

The discourse-historical approach to CDA has been founded by Ruth Wodak as a continuation of an interdisciplinary social critique (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Discourse-historical approach emphasizes the contextual and ethnographic concerns when analyzing texts and the power and sociopolitical relations structured in them (Wodak & Savski, 2018, p.19). Wodak's approach recontextualizes categorial domains blurring the boundaries among them and putting emphasis on argumentative strategies within the socio-political contexts. Therefore, Wodak's approach is significant for CDA practitioners concerned with analyzing various discourses (Slavíčková, 2013). If most CDA approaches tend to explain discourse in terms of its institutional contexts, then, Van Dijk offers a distinctive approach that focuses on revealing the cognitive interface between societal structures and discourse processing.

Within Van Dijk's approach emerges new cognitive linguistic research that builds on the socio-cognitive dimension of text analysis (Chilton, 2004). Unlike the traditional functional perspectives in CDA that derive from Hallidayan linguistics, Chilton (2014) argues that cognition plays a mediatory role in a dialectic relationship between language and society (101). Chilton claims for a cognitive approach that adequately explains "a range of semantic and pragmatic phenomena such as implicature, conceptual blending and metaphor" (Wodak, 2013, p.

xxxii). In this new cognitive linguistic research, the linguistic choices, within a text, shape and govern the image schemas, and therefore, the mental modals and conceptual space that could be established in the process of reception (Dunmire, 2011).

Chilton's cognitive discourse approach then represents a turn in CDA in which cognitive linguistics is employed to gain insights into the work of spatial cognition in discourse processing (Hart, 2015, p. 241). Inspired by Chilton's cognitive turn, analysts have adopted the cognitive linguistic approach to explore image schemas as the internal structures of mental models grounded in short term memory, which entails scrutinizing and questioning the construal operations that include identification, framing, positioning, and structural configuration (Hart, 2014). For Hart, construal operations are essential for interpreting texts since "the locus proper of ideological reproduction is . . . not language itself but rather the cognitive processes, which language invokes" (2014 a, p. 108).

In this sense, one of the main concerns of the cognitive linguistics approach is to underline how texts work within the audience through conscious and unconscious construal operations (Koselleck, 1985). That said, image schemas and the mental models they form are not the only factors in processing a discourse. The audience tend to utilize background knowledge of syntax and lexis to comprehend texts and construct knowledge. The following table (1.1) by Holland et al. (2018) shows how mental models are situated within a communicative context.

Table (1.1) (Holland et al., 2018, p. 20)

Communicative Level	Knowledge Type
World Context	Shared general knowledge (places, people, events)
Cultural Context	Societal knowledge of social relations and roles Pragmatic knowledge (speech acts)
Genre and Text	Physical factors Intertextual relations Rhetorical modes
Conceptual Structure	Mental models Schemas Coherence (inference, reference, deixis)
Cohesion	Cohesive devices
Sentence	Syntax
Word/Concept	Lexis, concepts
Element	Letters or sounds

As the table illustrates, Holland pinpoints that on the communicative level, comprehending a conceptual structure is associated with schemas and mental models. The imagistic approach conceives meaning as a product of reasoning structured by image schemas that formulate mental models during perception. As Lakoff (1993) claims, conceptualizing a discourse requires the image schemas to "project a topological structure, and that this structure is always preserved by metaphor" (285). Evans and Green (2006) point out some image schemas that have been

identified in cognitive linguistic studies which are categorized by experiential domains: space, motion and force (190) (Table 1.2). These studies analyze how image schemas represent a basis for understanding grammatical and lexical structures. Mandler (2004) further investigates the notion of image schema in the infancy context. For Mandler, in the early stage of infancy evolves the conceptual mind and the conceptualization process due to meaningful interactions at birth which are prior to any language acquisition. In other words, these cognitive activities represent a cognitive reasoning process grounded in early bodily experience.

Table (1.2) Image schemas & Perceptual Domains

Domains	Image schemas
Space	Center- Periphery – Surface – Part-Whole – Near-far- Full-empty – Contact – Merging
Motion	Cycle – Scale – Link – Process – Agent-Path-Goal
Force	Attraction – Compulsion – Enablement – Counterforce – Equilibrium – Point Balance – Blockage

In this view, the infant is able to perform a "perceptual meaning analysis" in which reasoning and conceptualization are grounded in bodily orientations, manipulations and movements (422). The following section focuses on image schemas tracing its origin and introducing established definitions.

1.1 Image Schema: Origin and Definition:

The notion of 'image schema' has sparked discussion from different and numerous angles and at various stages of analysis that has unavoidably required crossing traditional academic borders and research paradigms. In cognitive approaches (Ziem 2014), image schemas represent "units of generic knowledge in long-term memory" and they "form culturally stable patterns, as structural units consisting of a set of highly conventionalized elements" (223). Yet, for Johnson (1987), image schemas are grounded or embodied. From the standpoint of philosophy, image schemas are critically important in part because they do provide a great help to explain the way our inherently embodied mind may also be capable of abstract thinking (Wilson & Gibbs, 2007). The formation of meaning, comprehension as well as our ability to engage in abstract and intellectual process of forming a concept and explanations that rely on physical and concrete interactions with our environment are both reliant on image schemas, which are patterns or models of sensory-motor experience (Feldman & Narayanan, 2004).

However, qualitative aspects of embodied human knowledge are not well captured by our current understanding of how image-schematic structure works. Despite being introduced for the first time in 1987, it was noticeably difficult to find or construct an agreed-upon definition of image schema (Gallese & Lakoff, 2005). However, a great number of researchers, scholars and linguists have tried to define it in various fields including neuroscience, psychology, and cognitive linguistics. The first ever definition of image schema was introduced by Johnson

(1987) as "a recurring dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience (xiv).

In 2021, Dennis Tay, who focused on the role of object in the visualization and perception of image schema, has defined image schema as "a mental structure with at least one object image conceptually independent entity representing a physical object whose fundamental property is density experienceable by touch, with ensuing boundedness, shape, size, etc." (19).

When we speak about image schemas as unchanging constructions and structures with topological features in several motor mappings involving perceptions, we are not supposed to portray them as existing solely in our brain independent of the body experiences, emotions, feelings, and actions in which that brain plays a significant role. Image schemas are only found in species with specific types of brain constructions and anatomy, operating in organisms with anatomy makes-ups that allows for interaction with environments that offer incredibly specialized "affordances" for creatures like us (20-22).

As a dynamic, repetitive pattern of interactions between a human being and its surrounding environment, an image schema commonly shows up in the shapes and forms of our core sensory-motor experience. As a result, giving a phenomenological account of the underlying structural components that lay at the root of all bodily experience is one way to get started investigating the range of image schemas. We do simply aim at engaging in a reflective investigation of repetitive patterns and forms in our actual experience when we refer to a phenomenological study of image schemas.

Given that human bodies share several very particular and fixed sensory-motor capacities geared towards the dimensions and composition of our bodies as well as the shared features of the various environments in which we live and with which we interact, people should infamously ask themselves what the most basic components of their perception or comprehension, object controlling and managing, and physical movement are. Anybody may immediately recognize specific simple patterns. For instance, due to the special two-sided symmetrical bodies, we are quite well-accustomed to right-left symmetry. According to Mark Turner (1991), if we were non-symmetrical animals moving in a liquid medium without any directions: up or down, right, or left, or forward or backward, we would have seen the world in a very different way right now.

Due to the special nature of our materialization, modelling and embodiment, we project right and left, front and back, near and far throughout the horizon of our perceptual interaction with horizon as a diagram of a picture (96). Our perceptual fields' focus points fade away through a hazy horizon of likely involvements and practices that are not now at the forefront of our conscious awareness. We should not be surprised that our image has a center-periphery structure. We feel the visual schematic structures of compulsion, attraction, and blockage of motion because physical forces are constantly pulling and pushing on our bodies (112).

1.2 Types of Image Schema:

Johnson has presented a list of some types of image schemas in 1987. This list includes examples such as

Table (1.3)

Image schema type	Sub-image schema type	Example
Spatial motion	Include motion from a place to another.	Center-periphery/ Containment/ Path Source-path-goal/ Cycle/Cyclic climax
Force	In which motion is affected by force which causes a change	Compulsion/ Scale/ Counterforce Diversion/ Removal of Restraint Enablement/ Attraction/ Link
Balance	In which balance is achieved	Axis Balance/Point Balance/ Twin-Pan Balance/ Equilibrium

However, Lakoff has classified other image schemas:

Table (1.4)

Transformational	Spatial
Linear path from moving object (one-dimensional trajector)	Above
Path to endpoint (endpoint focus)	Across
Path to object mass (path covering)	Covering
Multiplex to mass (possibly the same as Johnson's undefined Mass-Count)	Contact
	Vertical Orientation
Reflexive (both part-whole and temporally different reflexives)	Length (extended trajector)
Rotation	

Two other famous scholars: Mandler and Canova have categorized schemas hierarchically in 3 different categories:

Table (1.5)

Spatial	Image schema	Schematic integrations
The primitive building chunks that give us the chance to comprehend what we perceive	Representation of the simple spatial and recurring events using the primitive building blocks.	The first representation of conception in which we convert non-spatial ideas by projecting feeling for non-spatial perception to blends structured by image schema

Image schemas in *The American Grandaughter*:

   Nariman Youssef chooses to leave certain words and expressions untranslated in her English translation of *The American Granddaughter*. They are words that form specific image schemas which are essential in shaping the cultural aspect of the novel. In addition to particular foods (dolma, mejaddareh) and expressions (Bismillah, shnou, wallah), there are also people and historical events that are glossed, including Farhud, Mahjar, Majnun, Mossadegh, Nasser, Nuri Pasha, Rashid Ali, and Sayyab. These terms are significant in Iraqi and Middle Eastern history,

politics, and literature and thus do not require explanation in the original. The translation draws attention to these words through italicization and the glossary augments a reader's understanding of the text. This foreignizing strategy serves as a reminder that the text is a translation that comes from a particular cultural context.

In *The American Granddaughter*, English is sometimes represented through transliterated words, but there are other moments when English appears in the text; this literally disrupts the act of reading because of the difference in script and the change in direction of reading. Brief dialogue in English is sprinkled throughout, but there are other moments when the text instead reports that a character is speaking English through the phrase *bil-inkilīziyya* (in English). The incorporation of multiple languages underlines the multiplicity of perspectives and experiences on and of the Iraq War.

The following excerpt shows where both characters and themes are framed within the cultural space, which can symbolize identity and belonging:

If sorrow were a man, I would not kill him. I would pray for his long life. For it has honed me and smoothed over the edges of my reckless nature". "It has turned the world and everything in it a strange color with unfamiliar hues that my words stutter to describe and my eyes fail to register". "Maybe I was color-blind before. Or was my eyesight perfect then, and is the color that I now see the wrong one? Even my daughter has changed. I no longer laugh from the depths of my heart like I used to, unashamedly showing the crooked line of my lower teeth that Calvin once likened to a popular café in the wake of a brawl. Calvin meant to be flirty that day". "But flirting no longer suits me now. Who would flirt with a woman who bears a cemetery inside her chest?" (7)

In these lines, the phrase "cemetery inside her chest" provides a metaphor suggesting that the narrator carries grief and loss within her, portraying sorrow as something that occupies space within her being. This visual representation highlights the weight of her emotional burden and the complexity of her internal world. Moreover, it successfully renders the linguistic and thematic context of the novel. More to the same effect, the sentence, "It has honed me and smoothed over the edges," conveys a journey of transformation. The use of "honed" suggests a process of sharpening or refining, indicating that sorrow has led to personal growth. The image schema here reflects the movement from recklessness to a more tempered state.

The reference to color represents perception and emotional states in: "Strange color with unfamiliar hues" which shows the narrator's struggle to describe her experience suggesting a shift in how she views the world, tied to her sorrow. This schema emphasizes the transformation of her reality and how grief alters her vision. On the other hand, the sentence "Maybe I was color-blind before" provides a rhetorical question that highlights a sense of lost innocence or clarity. The contrast between past and present suggests a significant transformation shaped by experiences of sorrow. Here, the image schema of change emphasizes the impact of grief on her identity.

The phrase "I no longer laugh from the depths of my heart" connects emotional expression with physicality, suggesting that her capacity for joy has been diminished. The schema here ties laughter to the heart, indicating how deeply intertwined her emotional state is with her bodily experience. The rhetorical question after this sentence reflects the narrator's perception of her social interactions post-sorrow. The imagery of "flirting" juxtaposed with "cemetery" illustrates a disconnect between her past and present selves, emphasizing feelings of isolation and mourning.

In the following excerpt, several image schemas emerge that contribute to the characterization of the Mosul relatives and the social dynamics at play:

I liked my Mosul relatives, with their shiny backcombed hair and pale rosy faces. They would visit us at Christmas or when they came down to Baghdad to attend business at a government office or to see a good doctor". "They sat silent and worried on the edge of the wooden Thonet-style chairs that were common at the time. They sat as if ever ready to stand up, be it to receive a tea tray, welcome a new arrival, or give the seat up to an elder, supporting small paunches with the right hand and running through the beads of a rosary with the left. (10)

In these lines, the relatives are described as sitting on the "edge of the wooden Thonet-style chairs." This imagery suggests a sense of being on the periphery, both physically and emotionally. Their position indicates a state of readiness, highlighting feelings of anxiety or apprehension as they navigate social interactions. The relatives are depicted as "supporting small paunches with the right hand," which symbolizes a balance between their physical presence and social expectations.

This imagery conveys a sense of restraint, suggesting they are trying to maintain composure and propriety while being in a foreign or uncomfortable setting. The phrase "ever ready to stand up" suggests an anticipatory stance. This schema reflects their role as guests who are attentive and responsive to social cues, indicating a cultural expectation of hospitality and respect. Their readiness to serve (e.g., receiving a tea tray, welcoming others) highlights the importance of social roles in this context. The act of "running through the beads of a rosary" introduces a spiritual or ritualistic element. This imagery conveys a sense of contemplation or prayer, suggesting that their presence is imbued with cultural and religious significance, further enriching their characterization.

Through these image schemas, the excerpt paints a vivid picture of the Mosul relatives, highlighting their physical presence, social roles, and emotional states. The interplay of container, balance, movement, ritual, appearance, and social interaction schemas enriches the narrative, offering insights into cultural norms and the complexities of familial relationships. This analysis reveals how the characters navigate their identities within a specific social context, reflecting broader themes of belonging and cultural expectations. The following excerpt further establishes the cultural identity of the novel. It illuminates themes of identity, belonging, and cultural transition:

"CHEEEEESE". "The photographer gave his standard instruction for us to show our teeth". "We all followed like actors in a Colgate advert and smiled for the camera. Less than a week later, the photograph would be delivered to us, enlarged and in transparent wrapping. We would grab it eagerly and make various comments as we passed it around. I would then carry it carefully to my room and put it in the expensive frame that I'd bought specially from the home accessories section at Macy's". "It would finally settle on the mantelpiece in our living room, displaying the four of us formally dressed and posing in the garden of our house on the day that we became Americans". "How we had waited for that day!", "Looking at that picture, it's easy to see that my father had dressed up, especially for the occasion in his dark blue suit, the one made by Mujawwadi, the tailor in Baghdad's new market" (20).

The *mantelpiece* serves as a prominent container in this context. It holds the photograph, symbolizing the significance of the family's transition to American identity. The act of placing the photograph here signifies pride and the desire to showcase their new status. The phrase "the day that we became Americans" reflects a journey or transition. It suggests a significant turning point in the family's identity, marking their movement from one cultural context to another. This schema indicates both a physical and metaphorical path toward assimilation. The mention of "less than a week later" introduces a timeline that structures the events surrounding the photograph. This schema reflects anticipation and the importance of time in marking significant moments in their lives, contributing to the narrative of their evolving identity.

Conclusions:

1.The exploration of image schemas in the translation of *The American Granddaughter* by Nariman Youssef reveals the intricate ways in which characters navigate their identities amid cultural transitions.

2.Through containers that symbolize emotional burdens, paths representing journeys of transformation, and appearances that reflect social expectations, the novel crafts a rich tapestry of experience. Rituals and communal interactions further emphasize the importance of family and shared memory in shaping identity.

3.These schemas illuminate the ongoing struggle between heritage and assimilation, highlighting the characters' efforts to reconcile their pasts with their present circumstances. The vivid imagery and metaphorical language throughout the text not only enhance emotional resonance but also invite readers to engage deeply with themes of belonging, loss, and the multifaceted nature of identity.

4.Youssef's work underscores how image schemas serve as powerful tools for understanding the complexities of cultural identity in a changing world.

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Declaration of Competing Interest:

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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