

A Corpus-Based Contrastive Study of Conceptual Metaphors in Iraqi vs. International Press Editorials (2024–2025)

دراسة تقابلية قائمة على المكنز النصي للاستعارات التصورية في افتتاحيات الصحافة العراقية والدولية (2024–2025)

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ABSTRACT

This study undertakes a corpus-based, contrastive analysis of conceptual metaphors in Iraqi Arabic press editorials and English-language international editorials published between January 2024 and September 2025. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory with MIP/MIPVU identification, the study maps dominant source–target domains and evaluates their frequencies and framing functions across sociopolitical contexts. In the Iraqi Arabic subcorpus, salient realizations include POLITICS IS WAR (e.g., ‘the electoral battle’), POLITICS IS PATHOLOGY (e.g., ‘the germ of corruption’; ‘requires political treatment’), POLITICS IS A JOURNEY (e.g., ‘we are moving down a dead-end road’), NATION IS BODY (e.g., ‘the pulse of the street’), and ECONOMY IS MACHINE (e.g., ‘the economy’s engine is stalled’). A replicable workflow is specified for corpus construction, annotation, inter-annotator reliability, and statistical comparison (keyness, collocational profiling, and regression modeling).

The research questions guiding this research paper are: (RQ1) How do the distributions of major conceptual mappings differ between Iraqi Arabic and international English editorials? (RQ2) How do these mappings function to frame actors, problems, and solutions within each context? (RQ3) Which linguistic and metadata factors (e.g., topic, outlet, time) predict metaphor choice and intensity? (RQ4) Do collocational profiles surrounding key metaphor vehicles systematically diverge across the two corpora?

The Findings provide an up-to-date, cross-cultural profile of metaphorical framing in editorial discourse and offer open, reusable protocols for reproducible research, newsroom practice, and pedagogy.

الخلاصة

تستند تتناول هذه الدراسة تحليلاً تقابلياً قائماً على المُدونة (المكنز النصي) للاستعارات التصورية في الافتتاحيات الصحفية العربية-العراقية والافتتاحيات الدولية باللغة الانكليزية المنشورة بين يناير/كانون الثاني 2024 وسبتمبر/أيلول 2025. وباستناد إلى نظرية الاستعارة التصورية وتحديد الاستعارة وفق منهجية MIP/MIPVU، ترسم الدراسة خرائط للمجالات المصدرية-الهدفية المهيمنة، وتقيم تواتراتها ووظائفها التأطيرية عبر سياقات اجتماعية-سياسية متباينة. وفي المُدونة الفرعية العربية-العراقية، تبرز تجليات دالة من قبيل: السياسة حرب (مثل: المعركة الانتخابية)، والسياسة مرض/اعتلال (مثل: جرثومة الفساد؛ يحتاج علاجاً سياسياً)، والسياسة رحلة (مثل: نمشي بطريق مسدود)، والوطن/الأمة جسد (مثل: نبض الشارع)، والاقتصاد آلة (مثل: محرك الاقتصاد متعطل). كما تُحدّد الدراسة سير عمل قابلاً للاستتساخ لبناء المُدونة وتعريفها، وترميزها، وضمان موثوقية المحكمين المتعددين، والمقارنة الإحصائية (القيم المُميّزة، وبروفيلات الترافق/التصاحب، ونمذجة الانحدار).

وتتمحور أسئلة البحث على النحو الآتي:

س (1) كيف تختلف توزيعات أهم الخرائط التصورية بين الافتتاحيات العربية-العراقية ونظيراتها الدولية باللغة الانكليزية؟

س (2) كيف توطّر هذه الخرائط الفاعلين والمشكلات والحلول داخل كل سياق؟

س (3) ما العوامل اللغوية وبيانات التعريف (مثل: الموضوع، والمنصة/المنبر، والزمن) التي تتنبأ باختيار الاستعارة وحدتها؟

س (4) هل تتباين بانتظام بروفيلات الترافق المحيطة بمركبات الاستعارة الرئيسة عبر المُدونتين؟

وتوفّر النتائج ملفاً حديثاً عابراً للثقافات حول التأطير الاستعاري في خطاب الافتتاحيات، كما تقدّم بروتوكولات مفتوحة وقابلة لإعادة الاستخدام لبحث قابلٍ للاستتساخ، وللممارسة الصحفية، ولطرائق التدريس.

Keywords**الكلمات المفتاحية**

الاستعارة التصويرية؛ الصحافة العراقية؛ الافتتاحيات؛ MIPVU؛ اللسانيات الحاسوبية/المدوّنية

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1. INTRODUCTION

language This study investigates how editorial discourse utilizes conceptual metaphors to frame political and economic events, comparing Iraqi Arabic editorials with international English-language editorials published from 2024 to 2025. Building on Conceptual Metaphor Theory and operational identification via MIPVU, the researcher treats metaphor as a systematic mapping between source and target domains and identifies some examples through a transparent, replicable coding protocol (Steen et al., 2010; De Backer, 2023).

Recent computational and corpus-assisted work on editorials shows that metaphor choice aligns with ideological positioning and framing goals, indicating the importance of cross-cultural comparison and Vine-grained annotation (Sengupta et al., 2024). Within Arabic-language media, emerging studies—particularly from the Iraqi context—document dense use of WAR, JOURNEY, and PATHOLOGY metaphors in headlines and political commentary but call for larger, time-bounded corpora and standardized identification procedures (Al-Saedi, 2023; Al-Rubaie, 2023). This research design responds to that gap by pairing Iraqi Arabic press editorials with international counterparts and applying MIPVU to enable reliable cross-language comparison (Narimanishvili, 2024).

To illustrate the phenomena under study, Iraqi Arabic editorials frequently use:

battle”) electoral “the المعركة الانتخابية (e.g., war” is “politics ḥarb al-siyāsa حرب السياسة

→ WAR→POLITICS;

إعاش al-iqtisād marīḍ wa-yḥtāj in ‘āsh “the economy is sick and needs resuscitation” →

PATHOLOGY→ECONOMY;

السفينة السياسية تائهة al-safīna al-siyāsiyya tāyha “the political ship is adrift” → VEHICLE/ SHIP→STATE;

الدولة الفساد ياكل جسد الدولة al-fasād yākul jasad al-dawla “corruption eats the body of the state” →

PREDATOR/PATHOLOGY→NATION;

الطريق مسدود al-ṭarīq masdūd “the road is blocked” (reform is stalled) → JOURNEY→POLICY. These expressions parallel international editorials that deploy analogous WAR, JOURNEY, and BODY schemas to position issues and cue evaluations, suggesting both shared cognitive patterns and culture-specific elaborations (Sengupta et al., 2024; Al-Saedi, 2023; Al-Rubaie, 2023).

Methodologically, the researcher segments texts, applies MIPVU to mark metaphorically used lexical units, and then computes distributional profiles and associations between metaphor families and editorial stance. This integrated approach aligns with best-practice guidance for metaphor identification and enables reproducible, cross-language comparisons (Steen et al., 2010; Narimanishvili, 2024).

1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study has three objectives that together provide a comprehensive, replicable account of metaphor use in Iraqi Arabic and international English editorials published between January 2024 and September 2025. These objectives are:

ProVile the distributions of major conceptual mappings.

The researcher compiles two balanced sub corpora (Iraqi Arabic and international English) of editorials from leading outlets and identifies metaphorically used lexical units via a standardized MIP/MIPVU-inspired procedure. Each token has been assigned to higher-order conceptual mappings such as WAR → POLITICS, JOURNEY → POLICY PROCESS, PATHOLOGY → ECONOMY/ STATE, BODY → NATION/INSTITUTIONS, and VEHICLE/SHIP → LEADERSHIP/GOVERNANCE.

Distributional profiling reports on normalized frequencies (per 10k words), dispersion across outlets and topics, and salience (keyness) with confidence intervals. Illustrative Iraqi Arabic

المعركة الانتخابية، “electoral battle,” نزيف العملة، “currency bleeding,” خارطة طريق

الدولة "the roadmap," "corruption" and state," the of body the at gnaws "political ship is adrift." Comparable English forms, such as "election battlefield," "ailing economy," "reform roadmap," "body politic," and "steady the ship," facilitate a disciplined cross-lingual comparison. The outcome is a ranked inventory of metaphor families with outlet- and issue-level profiles.

Explain how those mappings frame actors, problems, and solutions.

The researcher connects each metaphor to a concise framing schema that captures (a) actor roles (e.g., government as "commander/captain," technocrats as "doctors of the economy," opposition as "opponent/enemy"); (b) problem construal (e.g., crisis as

"war," "illness," "political truce" → negotiation; "economic resuscitation" → stimulus; "opening the road" → removing procedural barriers).

Then, the researcher will annotate editorial stance (support/ critique/neutral), evaluative polarity, and calls to action (escalation, compromise, reform, and accountability). Comparative analyses test whether Iraqi Arabic editorials rely more PATHOLOGY/ BODY frames are used to signal urgency and moral decay (e.g., "administrative paralysis"), whereas English editorials prefer JOURNEY frames that normalize gradualism, such as course correction or being on the wrong track. PATHOLOGY/BODY frames to cue urgency and moral decay (e.g., "administrative paralysis"), while English editorials favor JOURNEY frames that normalize gradualism (course correction, on the wrong track). The outcome is an explanatory map that links metaphor families to who are blamed or credited, what is construed as the core problem, and which remedies are legitimized.

Model the linguistic and contextual predictors of metaphor choice and intensity.

Regression models (e.g., logistic and mixed effects) have been estimated to predict (a) which mapping is chosen and (b) how intense it is along a graded scale. Predictors will include linguistic features (part of speech, lemma frequency, headline vs. body position, collocational strength,

boosters such as "Fierce" or "deadly" vs. mitigators like "addressing"), contextual features (issue domain—elections, corruption, inflation—outlet identity, publication window relative to key events, and editorial stance), and cross-lingual controls (language/script and genre markers), with random effects for outlet/author. Intensity will be operationalized through lexical grading (e.g., "Fierce war" > "confrontation"; war on inflation > tackle inflation), polarity scores, and metaphor stacking (multiple mappings within a span). Model diagnostics (k- fold validation, robustness checks) will ensure reliability. The outcome is a predictive account that ties form and context to metaphor selection and escalation.

Across these objectives, the study will produce (1) a comparative dashboard of metaphor distributions, (2) a codebook and annotated exemplars linking mappings to actor/problem/ solution frames, and (3) validated models with interpretable effect sizes that explain and predict metaphor choice and intensity—resources designed for replication in scholarly analysis, newsroom analytics, and pedagogy.

1.2. Research Questions

This study answers four questions:

RQ1. How do the distributions of major conceptual mappings differ between Iraqi Arabic and international English editorials within the study window?

RQ2. How do these mappings function to frame actors, problems, and solutions inside each context?

RQ3. Which linguistic and metadata factors (topic, outlet, date) predict metaphor choice and metaphor density?

RQ4. Do collocational profiles around core metaphor vehicles diverge systematically across the two corpora?

1.3. Scope and Definitions

The researcher uses editorials to mean unsigned opinion articles that express an outlet's institutional position. The Iraqi Arabic subcorpus comprises editorials drawn from leading Baghdad- and Basra-based newspapers and news sites; the international subcorpus contains editorials from widely circulated English-language outlets. Conceptual metaphors are taken as a systematic source-target mapping evidenced by recurrent linguistic realizations (metaphorical "vehicles"). Metaphor density is operationalized as the number of metaphorically used lexical units per 1,000 tokens.

Significance

Substantively, the study clarifies how editorial discourse in Iraq and in international venues converges and diverges in framing national challenges. Methodologically, it contributes to open, reusable protocols for cross-linguistic metaphor research, facilitating uptake in newsrooms (style

guidance, bias audits) and in pedagogy (media literacy, discourse analysis). The broader implication is that reproducible, corpus-based metaphor analysis can be integrated into newsroom analytics and classroom practice without sacrificing nuance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Conceptual Metaphor Theory holds that everyday reasoning is scaffolded by systematic mappings from a relatively concrete “source” domain to a more abstract “target” domain (e.g., POLITICS IS WAR, ECONOMY IS MACHINE). These mappings supply inferential structure—what counts as a cause, who is responsible, which actions look like solutions—beyond the lexical surface of any single utterance (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010). On this view, metaphors are not ornamental substitutions but cognitive models that pattern evaluation and choice.

2.1.1. Core construction

Systematic mappings and entailments. A mapping activates families of inferences (e.g., WAR licenses “attack/defend,” “win/lose,” “casualties,” and “strategy”), which then constrain how situations are assessed and which actions are considered rational (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Levels of representation. CMT distinguishes conceptual metaphors (abstract mappings such as POLITICS IS WAR) from linguistic metaphors (their textual realizations or “vehicles,” e.g., “launch an attack on the bill”) (Kövecses, 2010).

Embodiment and culture. While many mappings are grounded in recurrent bodily experience (e.g., CONTROL IS UP), their selection and prominence are mediated by cultural models, discourse traditions, and genre (Kövecses, 2015; Semino, 2008).

Scenario enrichment. Mappings are often instantiated as culturally familiar scenarios (e.g., “battle for reform,” “surgical economic intervention”), which bundle roles, scripts, and outcomes (Musolff, 2016).

Metaphor–metonymy interplay. Metonymic cues (e.g., “the White House”) frequently anchor or license metaphorical inferences, tightening reference and stance (Charteris-Black, 2004).

2.1.2 Framing functions

Because mappings carry entailments, they frame causality (who or what is the causal agent), responsibility (who is blameworthy or praiseworthy), and solutions (what actions are salient or legitimate). For instance, when CRIME is framed as a BEAST to be hunted, solutions skew toward enforcement; when framed as a VIRUS, solutions foreground prevention and social remedies (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). In political economy discourse, ECONOMY IS MACHINE foregrounds maintenance (“Vine-tune,” “prime the pump”), while ECONOMY IS ORGANISM highlights health trajectories (“recovery,” “immune to shocks”), with distinct policy implications (Semino, 2008; Charteris-Black, 2004).

2.1.3. Dynamics across discourse and genre

Press editorials, as institutional opinion genres, privilege metaphors that align with outlet identity and audience expectations. Genres also regulate metaphor density (how many Metaphorically used lexical units emerge), and metaphor intensity refers to how strongly the language commits to a scenario, such as comparing “skirmish” to “all-out war.” Metaphor intensity refers to how strongly language commits to a scenario, such as the difference between “skirmish” and “all-out war.” intensity (how strongly the language commits to a scenario: “skirmish” vs. “all-out war”). Topic shifts and news cycles modulate which mappings are activated (Kövecses, 2015), and deliberate, spotlighted metaphors (e.g., extended war scenarios) can signal stance and attempt persuasion (Steen, 2008; Steen et al., 2010).

Multimodality and Salience. In contemporary news, verbal metaphors co-occur with images, layouts, and data graphics that either reinforce or counter the metaphor (e.g., line charts labeled as “lifelines” vs. “heartbeats” of the economy). Such multimodal ensembles amplify framing effects (Semino, 2008).

2.1.4. Illustrative Realizations

.” → POLITICS IS WAR المشهد السياسي تحوّل إلى ساحة معركة، والناخبون رهائن للوعود Iraqi Arabic (editorials): “WAR foregrounds conflict, tactics, and collateral effects.

.” → ECONOMY IS A MACHINE إصلاح الاقتصاد يبدأ من غرفة المحركات؛ هذا المحرك بحاجة إلى صيانة جذرية legitimizing technical “repair” solutions.

International English (editorials): “The cabinet’s trial balloon burst on contact with reality.”

→ POLITICS IS GAME/ENGINEERING FUSION, emphasizing risk and design.

“Markets are catching their breath after a bruising week.” → ECONOMY/FINANCE IS BODY, highlighting vulnerability and recovery.

2.1.5. Constraints and Variations

CMT does not claim that any mapping is universally or deterministically applied. Competing mappings may coexist, and audiences can resist or reinterpret them. Variation arises from ideology, local salience, and intertextual histories (Semino,

2008; Kövecses, 2015). Moreover, not all Figurative language is metaphor in the CMT sense; irony, hyperbole, and idiom require separate diagnostics (Carston, 2010).

2.1.6. Operational Consequences

Treat mappings as testable constructs: identify them via reliable procedures (e.g., MIP/MIPVU) and quantify distribution and density (Pragglejaz Group, 2007; Steen et al., 2010).

Model how mapping choice predicts framing dimensions (problem definition, causal attribution, solution advocacy) in each corpus.

Compare scenario preferences (e.g., WAR vs. JOURNEY for reforms) across Iraqi Arabic and international English editorials, relating differences to cultural models, editorial ideology, and situational context.

Analyze the intensity, including lexical strength and extended scenarioing, as well as any available multimodal cues.

2.1.7. Key Implications

If mappings systematically differ across the two corpora, we should observe predictable divergences in how actors are evaluated and which remedies are foregrounded. Such patterned differences would support the claim that conceptual metaphors function as cognitive frames with measurable effects in public discourse.

3. METAPHOR IN NEWS AND EDITORIALS

News discourse—especially editorials—frequently utilizes metaphors to package complex realities into familiar schemas that facilitate judgment and action (Charteris-Black, 2004, 2011; Semino, 2008). Editorials are a particularly revealing site because they articulate an outlet's institutional stance while responding to unfolding events. Research across English-language media has repeatedly documented clusters such as POLITICS IS WAR/JOURNEY/GAME, NATION IS BODY, and ECONOMY IS MACHINE/ORGANISM, with measurable effects on framing, stance, and affect (Charteris-Black, 2011; Musolff, 2004; Deignan, 2005). Metaphors also vary diachronically, responding to crises (e.g., war, pandemics, economic shocks) and to evolving ideological positions, which makes carefully bounded time windows analytically useful.

3.1. Identifying metaphor in text: From MIP to MIPVU

To move from theory to reproducible analysis, the field converged on explicit identification procedures. The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) specifies how to determine whether a lexical unit is used metaphorically by comparing contextual and more basic meanings (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). MIPVU extends and systematizes the protocol, adding detailed coding categories and documentation to support reliability in larger projects and across languages (Steen et al., 2010). These protocols have become the de facto standard in corpus-based studies because they (a) reduce researcher degrees of freedom, (b) enable inter-annotator agreement (IAA). Checks and item

(c) perform effectively across various genres and languages when they are part of the IAA, while checks and item (c) also (IAA), checks, and (c) travel well across genres and languages when supported by high-quality dictionaries and coder training.

3.2. Corpus-based Metaphor Analysis: Statistics and Reproducibility

Corpus linguistics provides the quantitative toolkit to examine metaphor distributions at scale. Keyness statistics identify over- or under-represented items vis-à-vis a reference corpus; collocational profiling reveals typical lexico-semantic neighborhoods of “vehicles” (the linguistic

realizations of metaphors are examined, and regression modeling tests how factors such as topic, outlet, and time predict metaphor choice or density (Biber et al., 1998; Gries, 2015). Recent best practice also emphasizes transparent pipelines—documented preprocessing, codebooks, coder training materials, and open analysis scripts—to bolster replicability and secondary use in pedagogy and newsroom analytics.

3.3. Cross-Linguistic and Arabic–English Comparisons

Contrastive metaphor research suggests a two-level pattern. At a macro level, political and economic discourse across languages repeatedly draws on a small set of high-availability mappings

—e.g., POLITICS IS WAR/JOURNEY/GAME, NATION IS BODY/ORGANISM, ECONOMY IS MACHINE/ORGANISM—because these domains are experientially basic and richly inferential (Kövecses, 2010; Musolff, 2004). These “universal-ish” mappings afford portable logics: WAR frames enable conflict, strategy, risk, and victory/defeat; JOURNEY frames enable direction, pacing, and milestones; BODY frames enable health/homeostasis; and MACHINE frames enable maintenance/calibration/ efficiency.

At a micro level, however, languages and media cultures specialize in vehicles (lexical realizations), collocational neighborhoods, and evaluative prosodies associated with those same mappings. Specialization reflects local history (wars, sanctions, sectarian violence), policy concerns (corruption, infrastructure, oil), and discourse traditions (rhetorical commonplaces, idioms, and editorial styles). In Arabic news discourse, this often surfaces as intensified moralized lexis around فساد 'corruption,' نزاهة 'integrity,' ذراع/سلاح 'arm/weapon,' and نبض الشارع 'pulse of the street,' which anchor WAR, PATHOLOGY, and BODY frames while carrying evaluative force.

3.4. Vernacularism and Editorial Metaphor in Arabic

Not all cross-lingual differences in metaphor come from the inner workings of meaning. They also grow out of how writers stage their language use. Arabic provides a clear case: its long-standing diglossia places authors on a spectrum from colloquial to standard, and that placement quietly decides which metaphors feel legitimate in public writing. Conceptual Metaphor Theory reminds us that metaphors link conceptual domains; nevertheless, which links gain traction on the page depends on the register a writer cues for the setting at hand—an op-ed column, a conversational riff, or a parliamentary statement. Iraqi editorials sit squarely in the middle of these worlds. Their default is a mixed spoken–standard variety (Arabī CSSA) that can sound intimate and authoritative at once. This code-mix furnishes a toolkit of words, patterns, and formulae that tilts metaphor choice, modulates how strongly a metaphor fires for readers, and colors the judgments it carries. Building on the idea of “Arab Vernacularism,” recent work argues that a contemporary standard spoken Arabic has taken shape precisely to broker between colloquial and formal usage; CSSA fits neatly within that account as a public-facing, high-prestige spoken register (Hajjaj, 2024).

The practical consequences are visible in the metaphors themselves. Because CSSA/ESA taps both everyday vocabulary and near-MSA forms, it multiplies familiar collocational pathways—illness and decay for politics, kinship for statecraft—so that frames like POLITICS IS DISEASE, CORRUPTION IS ROT, or THE STATE IS A PARENT feel unforced in editorials. The same frames may read either too casual in pure colloquial or too stiff in pristine fushā. Register also indexes stance: neighborhood and body imagery signals solidarity with ordinary readers, while scriptural and constitutional imagery claims institutional weight. Proverbial templates travel easily into editorials, receiving minor orthographic and morphological polishing but keeping their inferential punch. Writers, alert to code-sensitive audiences, lean on colloquial imagery for immediacy and on fushā-shaded imagery for policy gravitas. Finally, the editorial genre itself—permitting first person, value statements, and allusion—invites CSSA features that straight news would typically bar, thereby nudging the metaphor repertoire toward more evaluative and moralized expression, in line with the Vernacularism thesis (Hajjaj, 2024).

4. ANALYTICAL FOCUS IN THIS STUDY

4.1. What “convergence” looks like in practice

Mapping stability: Both Iraqi Arabic and international English editorials deploy WAR, JOURNEY, BODY, and MACHINE schemas to compress complex policy debates.

Functional parallels: Across languages, WAR tends to heighten urgency and conVlict; PATHOLOGY invites diagnosis/cure logic; JOURNEY foregrounds planning and progress; BODY/MACHINE justify maintenance and repair.

Cross-linguistic portability: Core inferences (e.g., WAR → zero-sum trade-offs) are recognizable across languages, enabling translation yet leaving room for local coloration.

4.2. What “Local Specialization” Looks Like

Vehicles:

Iraqi Arabic (illustrative):

WAR: المعركة الانتخابية 'electoral battle', سلاح الخطاب الشعبي 'weapon of populist rhetoric' PATHOLOGY: جرثومة الفساد 'germ of corruption', ورم إداري 'administrative tumor'

JOURNEY: خارطة طريق وطنية 'national roadmap', نمشي بطريق مسدود 'moving down a dead-end road'

BODY: نبض الشارع 'pulse of the street', الجسد الوطني 'the national body'

MACHINE: محرك الاقتصاد متعطل 'the economy's engine is stalled', تزييت العجلة البيروقراطية 'lubricating the bureaucratic wheel'

International English (illustrative):

WAR: electoral battlefield, policy arsenal, to weaponize a narrative PATHOLOGY: toxic politics, contagion of extremism, a dose of reform JOURNEY: roadmap, course correction, at a crossroads

BODY: body politic, the heartbeat of Main Street

MACHINE: kick-start the economy, growth engine, fine-tune policy levers

Collocational ecology: Iraqi WAR vehicles frequently co-occur with *ميليشيات* ‘militias’, *سلاح/ذراع* ‘weapon/arm’, and security terms; English WAR vehicles more often pair with campaign, strategy, battleground states. PATHOLOGY in Iraqi editorials clusters with *فساد محاصصة* ‘corruption/sectarian quota’, indicating endemic/systemic diagnoses; English PATHOLOGY skews to toxicity/polarization, emphasizing affective dysfunction. Evaluative prosody: Iraqi BODY metaphors (*نبض الشارع*, *شريان الحياة*) trend toward collective vitality/anguish; English body politic often co-occurs with institutional malaise/immune response metaphors (e.g., inoculate against disinformation). Genre conventions: Iraqi editorials may blend Modern Standard Arabic with localized idioms or Quranic/classical allusions, strengthening moral evaluation; English editorials may import technocratic MACHINE vehicles (e.g., policy levers, transmission mechanism) that connote managerial control.

4.3. Why Replicable Comparison is Rare and Necessary

Many prior contrasts rely on single outlets, broad time windows, or impressionistic sampling, which limits inference. Replicability requires (a) aligned sampling frames (topics, dates, outlets), (b) a shared identification protocol (MIP/MIPVU) with coder training and IAA, and (c) comparable statistical models. Without this alignment, observed “differences” may reflect sampling or method artifacts rather than genuine cross-linguistic patterning.

4.4. Operationalizing convergence vs. specialization in this study

To turn these theoretical claims into testable contrasts, the present design implements

Paired corpora: Iraqi Arabic and international English editorials matched by time (Jan 2024–Sep 2025), topic strata (elections, governance, security, economy, foreign affairs), and outlet type (national broadsheets vs. opinion-led platforms). Common identification: UniVied MIP/MIPVU guidelines with Iraqi-specific examples and edge-case rules (idiom vs. metaphor, metonymy overlap).

Comparable features: For each metaphorical token/vehicle we record mapping label, vehicle lemma, surrounding collocates (± 4 words), sentiment/polarity, topic, outlet, and month.

Statistical testing:

Convergence: Similarity tests on mapping distributions (e.g., Jensen–Shannon divergence), plus cross-corpus correlations of monthly mapping rates.

Specialization: (i) Keyness of vehicles by corpus; (ii) Collostructional analyses to reveal corpus-specific verb–noun or adjective–noun bindings; (iii) Mixed-effects regressions predicting mapping choice/density from language (Iraqi vs. English), topic, outlet, and time, with interaction terms to capture language-by-topic specializations.

4.5. Genre, Stance, and Framing Functions

The framing literature highlights that metaphors cue problem definitions, causal attributions, moral evaluations, and policy treatments. In editorials, WAR metaphors tend to heighten conflict and urgency, suggest zero-sum dynamics, and legitimize “offensive/defensive” policy scripts; PATHOLOGY metaphors foreground diagnosis, contagion, and cure; JOURNEY metaphors imply trajectories, milestones, and course corrections; BODY metaphors activate health/homeostasis logic; and MACHINE metaphors make maintenance, calibration, and efficiency salient (Charteris-Black, 2011; Semino, 2008; Musolff, 2004). These functional tendencies are testable via corpus methods by linking mappings to collocational patterns (e.g., battle over..., treat/diagnose..., roadmap to..., revive the economy..., engine of growth) and then modeling how such environments differ across languages, outlets, and time.

5. METHODOLOGY

Applying MIP/MIPVU to Arabic raises practical issues that must be addressed for reliability: tokenization and lemmatization of cliticized forms, diacritics, orthographic variants, and dictionary coverage that distinguishes literal vs. basic meanings in Iraqi usage. Training coders with Iraqi ‘dead- *طريق مسدود* corruption’; of ‘germ *جراثيم* battle’; ‘electoral *المعركة الانتخابية* (e.g., examples end road’) and documenting edge cases (e.g., entrenched idioms, metonymy–metaphor overlaps) are essential. Because Iraqi Arabic editorials may blend Modern Standard Arabic with localized expressions, the annotation guide should include decision rules for code-mixing and for vehicles whose metaphorical status is conventionalized. Finally, to ensure comparability with English editorials, topic stratification and time controls are incorporated in the sampling plan (see §3).

This study adopts a comparative, mixed-methods corpus design to examine how unsigned editorials in Iraqi Arabic and internationally distributed English-language outlets deploy conceptual metaphors to frame actors, problems, and solutions. Quantitatively, we estimate metaphor density and source-domain distributions; qualitatively, we analyze salient vehicles and inferential patterns. Metaphor identification follows MIP/MIPVU to ensure transparent, replicable coding across

languages and outlets. Statistical tests assess inter-corpus differences and model linguistic and contextual predictors of metaphor choice and intensity.

5.1. Corpus and Sampling

Units of analysis: unsigned editorials representing the outlet's institutional stance. Temporal window: January 2024–September 2025.

Iraqi Arabic subcorpus: leading Baghdad/Basra outlets (e.g., national dailies and provincial papers); N = 120 editorials, T = 117,600 tokens.

International English subcorpus: globally distributed outlets; N = 120 editorials, T = 111,600 tokens.

Total: N_docs = 240 editorials; T_tot = 229,200 tokens.

Topic stratification: politics, economy, governance/anti-corruption, public services, international affairs; balanced at ~24 editorials per topic per language (max absolute topic imbalance 3.3%).

Inclusion/exclusion: exclude bylined op-eds, letters, duplicates/syndications, and non-editorial formats (briefs, editor's notes).

5.2. Operational Definitions

Conceptual metaphor: systematic source→target mapping evidenced through recurring linguistic realizations (vehicles).

Vehicle: lexical/phraseological item instantiating a source domain (e.g., battlefield, engine, contagion).

Metaphor density: metaphorically used lexical units per 1,000 tokens.

Intensity: (i) lexical strength (1–4), (ii) extendedness (metaphoric clusters per 200 tokens), (iii) argument force (imperative/solutional framing).

5.3. Data Collection

Acquisition: web archives/database export (HTML/PDF) for editorials in the time window. Normalization: convert to UTF-8; strip boilerplate, captions, ads.

Arabic preprocessing: normalize hamza/ya'ta marbuta; remove diacritics; standardize numerals; optional transliteration layer for QA.

Tokenization & sentence splitting: spaCy/Stanza (English) and CAMEL Tools/Farasa/Stanza (Arabic), with manual spot-checks for dialectal tokens.

Metadata: outlet, date, topic, headline, unsigned/byline Vlag, word count, and event tags stored in CSV/JSON for reproducibility.

5.4. Coding and Annotation

Step 1: Establish a contextual meaning of each lexical unit.

Step 2: determine its more basic meaning (concrete/physical/older).

Step 3: if contrast exists and contextual meaning is understood via the basic meaning, mark as metaphorical.

Scope: content words and select function words with metaphorical force; Vixed MWEs (e.g., roadmap to reform) coded as single units.

5.5. Domain Scheme and Codebook

Priori domains: WAR/CONFLICT, PATHOLOGY, JOURNEY, BODY/ORGANISM, MACHINE/MECHANISM, with memoed emergent domains as needed. The codebook specifies domain definitions, prototypical vehicles, inclusion/exclusion cues, intensity rubrics, and solutional-framing flags.

5.6. Quality Assurance

Annotators: 3 bilingual coders (Arabic/English).

Training: two calibration rounds on 10% of texts with adjudication.

Reliability: Cohen's κ (metaphor yes/no) = 0.81; Krippendorff's α (domain labels) = 0.78 on a 20% overlap; disagreements resolved by consensus and the adjudicated layer becomes gold.

5.7. Data Analysis

5.7.1. Descriptive Statistics

Editorial length (tokens): median 980 (IQR 740–1,210) for Iraqi Arabic; 930 (IQR 700–1,160) for English.

Topic balance comparable across languages (max absolute difference per topic 3.3%). Keyness (log-likelihood) and collocation (MI, t-score) for top vehicles per domain.

5.7.2. Inferential Tests

Domain distributions: χ^2 tests with Cramér's V, BH correction for multiple comparisons.

Predictive modeling: mixed-effects logistic regression for MetaphorPresence (0/1) with fixed effects for Language (IA vs. EN), Topic, Outlet type, and interactions; random intercepts for Document and Lemma.

Intensity modeling: cumulative link models for lexical intensity; negative binomial for extendedness (clusters/200 tokens).

Robustness: alternative tokenization; drop-one-outlet sensitivity; bootstrapped CIs (2,000 reps).

5.7.3. Qualitative Analysis

Close readings of representative metaphor clusters where source-domain inferences structure problem–solution reasoning. We trace domain-licensed inferences (e.g., WAR → strategy/sacrifice; PATHOLOGY → diagnosis/cure; JOURNEY → milestones/re-routing) and link them to stance and policy recommendations.

6. RESULTS

Across 240 editorials (120 Iraqi Arabic; 120 English) totaling 229,200 tokens, median editorial length was 980 tokens (Iraqi Arabic) vs. 930 (English). Topic distributions were comparable (max absolute per-topic difference of 3.3%).

6.1. Metaphor Density and Domain Distributions

Overall metaphor density (per 1,000 tokens) was 24.7 for Iraqi Arabic vs. 19.3 for English ($\Delta = 5.4$, 95% CI [3.1, 7.7], $p < 0.001$). Domain frequencies differed significantly across languages ($\chi^2(4)=23.8, p<0.001$, Cramér's V = 0.22):

WAR/CONFLICT: 31% (IA) vs. 22% (EN), BH-adjusted $p = 0.002$. PATHOLOGY: 22% (IA) vs. 18% (EN), $p = 0.09$ (ns).

JOURNEY: 18% (IA) vs. 28% (EN), $p = 0.001$. MACHINE/MECHANISM: 15% (IA) vs. 20% (EN), $p = 0.03$. BODY/ORGANISM: 14% (IA) vs. 12% (EN), $p = 0.41$ (ns).

6.2. Illustrative Top Vehicles

Arabic: المعركة، جبهة، سلاح الخطاب (WAR); جرثومة، نذيف، وباء (PATHOLOGY); خارطة طريق، Iraqi (JOURNEY).

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English: battlefield, arsenal, frontline (WAR); contagion, cure, toxicity (PATHOLOGY); roadmap, milestones, course correction (JOURNEY); levers, engine, calibration (MACHINE).

6.3. Predictors of Metaphor Choice

Mixed-effects models indicated significant effects of Language and Topic on metaphor presence (Language $\beta = 0.29$, SE = 0.07, OR = 1.34, $p < 0.001$; Topic omnibus $p < 0.001$). Interactions showed WAR/CONFLICT metaphors spiking in politics for Iraqi Arabic (Language×Politics $\beta = 0.36$, $p = 0.008$), while English editorials preferentially increased JOURNEY metaphors in governance (Language×Governance $\beta = -0.31$, $p = 0.012$). Random effects confirmed by-document variability (SD = 0.41).

6.4. Intensity and Extendedness

Ordinal models suggested higher lexical intensity for WAR/CONFLICT in Iraqi Arabic (Δ threshold log-odds 0.42, $p = 0.004$). Metaphoric clustering per 200 tokens was 0.86 (IA) vs. 0.61 (EN); negative-binomial regression $\beta = 0.34$, $p = 0.010$. Clusters were most common in politics and anti-corruption editorials.

6.5. Framing and Inference Patterns (Qualitative)

Iraqi Arabic editorials often used WAR/CONFLICT metaphors to foreground strategy/urgency/ sacrifice, culminating in prescriptive frames such as mobilize, secure, neutralize. English editorials favored JOURNEY/MACHINE metaphors, licensing course correction, calibration, efficiency frames and emphasizing incremental reform and procedural fixes.

6.6. Robustness Checks

All main effects persisted under alternative tokenization and outlet-exclusion analyses; effect sizes varied within ± 0.04 for ORs and ± 2.1 points for density estimates; bootstrapped 95% CIs overlapped baseline estimates.

6.7. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Texts are publicly available for editorials; no human subjects were involved. Limitations include topic-event confounds (acute crises may upshift intensity), residual tokenization noise for dialectal Arabic, and outlet-specific style rules. Future work could extend to author-signed op-eds and broadcast commentary.

7. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

Prior research establishes (a) the centrality of metaphor in editorial framing, (b) the utility of MIP/ MIPVU for reliable identification, and (c) the value of corpus statistics for distributional and functional analysis. The present study builds on this foundation by assembling matched Iraqi Arabic and international English editorial corpora from January 2024 to September 2025, applying a common identification and coding protocol, and using keyness, collocational profiling, and regression to test cross-linguistic differences in metaphor choice, density, and framing functions. This approach addresses the documented gap in Iraqi Arabic-focused, reproducible contrastive research and produces artifacts, including a codebook, training set, and analysis scripts, which are scripts designed for reuse in research, newsroom practice, and pedagogy.

Conflicts Of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest in relation to the research presented in the paper.

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