



ARABIC POLITICAL PHRASEOLOGY AND ITS LINGUO-COGNITIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract. *This paper examines phraseological units in Arabic political discourse from a linguo-cognitive perspective. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), cognitive grammar (Langacker, 1987), critical discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1997, 1998; Fairclough, 1995, 2001), and Russian phraseological scholarship (Vinogradov, 1977; Kunin, 1984; Telia, 1996; Maslova, 2001), the study analyzes the nature, classification, semantic structure, and pragmatic functions of Arabic political phraseologisms. Special attention is given to both terminological and non-terminological phraseological units, with an emphasis on their imagery and connotative features. The research further explores the principal conceptual metaphors underlying Arabic political discourse including the domains of “war,” “theatre,” and “medicine” and identifies their role in representing political reality. The findings demonstrate that phraseological units in Arabic political discourse function not only as linguistic elements but also as instruments for shaping public opinion and exerting political influence.*

Keywords: *political phraseology; Arabic discourse; linguo-cognitive analysis; conceptual metaphor; connotation; political communication; critical discourse analysis; ideological framing.*

INTRODUCTION

The study of political discourse has become one of the most significant areas in modern linguistics, particularly within the frameworks of cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis (Chilton, 2004:3; van Dijk, 1997:1–5). Arabic political discourse is distinguished by its high degree of expressiveness, emotional intensity, and rich phraseological inventory. These characteristics necessitate a comprehensive analysis of political phraseological units not only from a lexical and stylistic perspective but also from linguo-cognitive and pragmatic viewpoints (Fairclough, 1995:14–16).

Political phraseologisms serve as an essential means of representing socio-political processes. Through them, political reality, ideological positions, public attitudes, and social evaluations are expressed. In Arabic discourse, phraseological units perform not only informative but also persuasive and manipulative communicative functions (Charteris-Black, 2011:17–19; Wodak, 2009:22). The study of these functions requires integrating insights from phraseological theory, cognitive linguistics, and critical discourse analysis.

The aim of this study is to analyze Arabic political phraseological units from a linguo-cognitive perspective, to classify them, and to identify their semantic and metaphorical structures. Additionally, the study explores their role in shaping public opinion and their significance in contemporary political communication.

METHODS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs a qualitative analytical approach, combining linguo-cognitive analysis, conceptual metaphor analysis, and critical discourse analysis. The corpus of examples is drawn from Arabic political discourse, including political speeches, media texts, and institutional documents. Phraseological units are analyzed at the levels of semantic structure, connotative meaning, conceptual metaphor, and pragmatic function.

Phraseology has been extensively studied in linguistics, particularly in relation to semantic stability, idiomaticity, and cultural specificity (Vinogradov, 1977; Kunin, 1984:23). From a cognitive perspective, phraseological units are viewed as conceptual structures that encode collective knowledge and cultural models (Maslova, 2001:41; Wierzbicka, 1992:19). In political discourse, phraseological expressions function as cognitive tools that simplify complex realities and enable efficient communication (Langacker, 1987:57–60). According to conceptual metaphor theory, abstract political concepts are often understood through more concrete source domains such as war, theatre, or medicine (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:4–6). From a pragmalinguistic perspective, political phraseologisms play a crucial role in discourse strategies, including persuasion, evaluation, and ideological framing; their connotative and expressive nature allows them to shape audience perception and emotional response (Telia, 1996:84; Fairclough, 2001:18).

RESULTS

Nature and classification of Arabic political phraseological units. Arabic political discourse is characterized by a high degree of phraseological richness and expressiveness. Political phraseological units are stable, indivisible lexical combinations with a unified semantic structure, closely connected with social and political life; they reflect political realities, leaders' speeches, and media discourse (Telia, 1996:112). Arabic political phraseology can be divided into two main categories: terminological and non-terminological phraseological units.

Terminological phraseological units. Terminological phraseological units denote specific political, legal, or socio-economic realities and are characterized by semantic precision, stability, and institutional usage (Kunin, 1984:45). The following examples illustrate the principal subcategories.

Political system terminology: جمهورية رئاسية (Presidential republic); الحكم الذاتي (Autonomy / self-governance); تقرير المصير (Self-determination). International relations and legal terminology: بحر إقليمي (Territorial waters); تجميد الأرصدة (Freezing of assets); التطهير العرقي (Ethnic cleansing). Military and security terminology: حرب باردة (Cold war); ساعة الصفر (Zero hour); الخط الساخن (Hotline). Economic and social terminology: اقتصاد السوق الحر (Free market economy); نزيف العقول (Brain drain). These units function as standardized expressions that ensure clarity and precision in political communication (van Dijk, 1998:31).

Non-terminological phraseological units. Non-terminological phraseological units include political slogans, quotations, and culturally embedded expressions. They are often associated with specific events or political figures and may change meaning over time (Charteris-Black, 2011:45; Fowler, 1991:67). Examples include political slogans: الشعب يريد إسقاط النظام ("The people want the fall of the regime"); metaphorical expressions: المطبخ السياسي ("Political kitchen" behind-the-scenes decision-making); الطابور الخامس ("Fifth column"); القطط السمان ("Fat cats" corrupt elites). These expressions demonstrate strong cultural and emotional connotations and are widely used in political rhetoric (Wodak, 2009:47; Halliday, 1994:112).

Origins and domains of political phraseologisms. Arabic political phraseological units originate from various source domains. Borrowings from foreign languages include:

الخطوط الحمراء (red lines) and البيت الأبيض (White House). The military domain contributes: ساعة الصفر (zero hour) and ضربة عسكرية (military strike). The scientific and medical domains contribute: غسل المخ (brainwashing) and الذكاء الاصطناعي (artificial intelligence). This diversity reflects the interdisciplinary nature of political discourse and its dependence on multiple conceptual sources (Fillmore, 1982:111; Brown & Yule, 1983:26).

Conceptual metaphors in Arabic political discourse. Metaphor is a central component of political communication (Lakoff, 1996:17–19). Arabic political discourse frequently employs three principal conceptual domains. The War Metaphor conceptualizes political competition as warfare: حرب باردة (cold war) exemplifies this pattern. The Theatre and Performance Metaphor interprets politics as a staged performance: المشهد السياسي (political scene). The Medical Metaphor frames social problems as diseases requiring treatment: مصدر المشكلة (root of the problem). From a cognitive perspective, these metaphors structure political thinking and influence how audiences interpret political events (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:156–158; Langacker, 1987:65). The analysis shows that phraseological units act as cognitive and cultural constructs that encode collective knowledge and ideological frameworks (Wierzbicka, 1992:143), condensing complex meanings into concise expressions while evoking emotional responses making them highly effective instruments of political discourse (Lakoff, 1996:25; Chilton, 2004:47).

DISCUSSION

The analysis presented above confirms that Arabic political phraseological units constitute a multilayered linguistic and cognitive phenomenon that cannot be adequately understood through lexical or grammatical analysis alone. Three principal theoretical implications emerge from the findings.

First, the classification of Arabic political phraseologisms into terminological and non-terminological types reveals a fundamental structural tension within the category. Terminological units prioritize semantic precision and institutional stability (Kunin, 1984:45; van Dijk, 1998:31), while non-terminological units prioritize connotative richness, emotional resonance, and ideological flexibility (Charteris-Black, 2011:45; Fowler, 1991:67). This tension is productive rather than problematic: it reflects the dual function of language in political communication, which must simultaneously inform and persuade (Fairclough, 2001:18; Chilton, 2004:47).

Second, the three conceptual metaphor domains identified in Arabic political discourse war, theatre, and medicine are consistent with the cross-linguistic patterns documented in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980:156) foundational work, confirming that the cognitive mechanism of conceptual metaphor operates across linguistic and cultural boundaries. At the same time, the specific Arabic instantiations of these metaphors carry culture-specific connotations rooted in Islamic cosmology, Arab historical memory, and the particular political experiences of the Arab world (Wierzbicka, 1992:143; Maslova, 2001:41). This confirms that while conceptual metaphors are universal in type, they are culturally specific in content (Lakoff, 1996:25).

Third, the pragmatic dimension of Arabic political phraseologisms their role in persuasion, ideological framing, and the manipulation of public opinion demonstrates that political discourse extends well beyond information transmission and includes evaluative, affective, and power-related dimensions (van Dijk, 1997:3; Wodak, 2009:22; Fairclough, 1995:14). The associative-figurative connection underlying phraseological nomination both facilitates meaning-making and stimulates corresponding evaluative and emotional responses in recipients, making these units particularly powerful instruments of political communication (Telia, 1996:84; Halliday, 1994:112).

CONCLUSION

Arabic political phraseological units represent a significant linguistic and cognitive phenomenon. The findings indicate that these units function not only as stable linguistic expressions but also as powerful instruments for representing socio-political reality, shaping public consciousness, and constructing ideological narratives. The classification of phraseological units into terminological and non-terminological types has revealed their structural diversity and semantic complexity (Kunin, 1984; Telia, 1996). The study has also demonstrated that conceptual metaphors serve as essential cognitive mechanisms for interpreting political reality (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1996).

The connotative and expressive features of phraseological units significantly enhance their communicative effectiveness, enabling them to influence public opinion and perform persuasive and manipulative functions. This confirms that political discourse extends beyond information transmission and includes evaluative and affective dimensions

(Fairclough, 1995, 2001; van Dijk, 1997, 1998; Wodak, 2009). The results highlight the interdisciplinary importance of studying phraseology within linguistics, cognitive science, and political communication. Future research should focus on comparative analyses of Arabic political phraseology across different regional varieties of Arabic, investigate the role of phraseological units in digital and social media discourse (Crystal, 2003), and examine the implications of these findings for translation and interpretation practice (Hatim & Mason, 1997; Nida, 1964).

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