

وزارة
التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي
جامعة ميسان
كلية التربية الاساسية



مجلة ميسان للدراسات الأكاديمية

لعلوم الانسانية والاجتماعية والتطبيقية

Misan Journal For Academic Studies
Humanits, Social and applied Sciences

ISSN (PRINT) 1994-697X

(Online)-2706-722X

اذار 2026

العدد 57

المجلد 24

2026 Mar

57 Issue

24 vol

Misan Journal

مجلة ميسان للدراسات الاكاديمية
العلوم الانسانية والاجتماعية والتطبيقية
كلية التربية الاساسية/ جامعة ميسان

اذا م 2026

العدد 57

المجلد 24

MAR,2026

SSUE57

VOLE 24

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مؤسسة الاستشهاد المرجعي وترصد
العلم والتكنولوجيا في العالم الإسلامي
ISC

IRAQI
Academic Scientific Journals

ISSN
INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
NUMBER
ISSN PORTAL
IN COORDINATION
WITH
INTERNATIONAL
BUREAU

doi
Crossref

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مرقم الايداع في المكتبة الوطنية العراقية 1326 لسنة 2009
journal.m.academy@uomisan.edu.iq
<https://www.misan-jas.com/index.php/ojs>
<https://iasj.rdd.edu.iq/journals/journal/view/298>

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ISSN (Print) 1994-697X
ISSN (Online) 2706-722X

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54633/2333-024-057-003>

Received: 6/Dec/2025
Accepted: 18/Jan/2026
Published online: 31/Mar/2026



MJAS: Humanities, Social and Applied Sciences
Publishers
The university of Misan.
College of Basic Education This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution

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The Metaphorical Conceptualization of Political Closure in Post-2021 Iraqi Elections: Newspaper Headlines and Cartoons as a Case Study

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Abstract:

The study investigates the concept of “Political Closure,” of post 2021 Iraqi elections. The study explores the verbal, pictorial, and multimodal metaphors of “Political Closure” representation in Iraqi newspaper headlines and cartoons. The data are collected from the Iraqi daily newspapers. The headlines and cartoons are analyzed based on Lakoff & Johnson’s (1980) Conceptual Metaphor theory (CMT). To elicit the pictorial or multimodal metaphors from the cartoons concerning “Political Closure” Forceville’s (1996, 2008) pictorial metaphor is adopted and to determine their kinds. The study revealed that the concept of “political closure” is conceptualized in different source domains; physical object, machine, economic activity, software, code container, building, and illness. The study also revealed that the more frequently kind used to conceive the concept of “Political Closure” is multimodal metaphor since if the textual part is eliminated from the cartoons will result in the disappearance

of the metaphorical meaning. Whereas the pictorial metaphor is less used to portray the concept of political closure.

Key words: conceptual metaphor theory, pictorial metaphor, political closure, headlines, cartoons

1. Introduction:

Metaphor is not limited to the verbal mode, it can be realized in imaginative products such as cartoons, literary works, dreams, visions and myths (Lakoff, 1993). A cartoon is an illustration, usually, in a single panel, published in the editorial or comments pages of a newspaper. Generally, the purpose of a political cartoon is to represent an aspect of social, cultural or political contexts in a way that condenses reality and transforms it in a striking, original and/or humorous way (El Refaie, 2009: 175 cited in Alousque, 2024).

According to Forceville (2002:148), the third variant of pictorial metaphor is verbo-pictorial metaphor; this variant consist of two terms, the first one rendered pictorially and the second one rendered verbally.

Moreover, Forceville (2024) points out that a political cartoon consists of a picture and, optionally, short written comments and/or utterances. According to Forceville (1996:148-161 cited in Forceville, 2024), the only possible kind of multimodal metaphor in political cartoons is the verbo-pictorial variety.

The interpretation of most metaphors, since the mappable features or actions are not explicitly verbalized in other modes, is a matter of inferring: the addressee needs to combine intra-textual information and extra-textual knowledge about the (sub) culture within which the metaphorical discourse at stake functions (Forceville, 2024). The facility of interpretation of what features are to be mapped is strongly steered by two factors: the first one is the genre; if a writing focuses on political cartoon, this genre typically urges us to search for negative features of the source domain that can be mapped onto the target, to which the discourse in which the metaphor occurs belongs; the second is that the attributes, attitudes, and emotions conventionally adhering to the source domain in the culture within which the metaphorical discourse appears (ibid).

Forceville (2006) distinguished between two kinds of metaphors; the first is monomodal metaphors which are metaphors whose target and source are predominantly or exclusively rendered in one mode, the second metaphors are multimodal whose target and source are represented predominantly or exclusively in different modes. Forceville (2009 cited in Alousque: 2014) defined multimodal that metaphors whose target and source are rendered in two different modes. A verbo-pictorial metaphor, as pointed out by Forceville, is a metaphor whose source is visually represented and the target is verbally represented.

In order to express their standpoint, cartoonists use visual and verbal elements; there are verbal titles, labels, verbal signs, balloon texts, and verbal texts among verbal elements of the genre. These verbal cues, in their interplay, may contribute to the identification of target and source domains in a metaphoric scenario (Spooren, 2018: 3 cited in Virág, 2020).

The period that follows the 2021 elections was a controversy among the political coalitions and parties and the preparation of formation of the Iraqi government and electing the new Prime Minister. These controversies stalled the process of formation of the Iraqi government for approximately three months. Many politicians and writers termed this period a "Political Closure." This concept of "Political Closure" inspired writers and cartoonists to depict it through various expressions and cartoons, portraying the negative situations of that period and how yield results affect negatively on the Iraqi citizen.

The current study aims to investigate the term "Political Closure" in visual and verbal genre (Newspaper Headlines and Cartoons) and to explore the current term as a target domain and the verbal, pictorial, and multimodal metaphors of the "Political Closure" representation in newspaper headlines and cartoons.

Based on the aims of this study, the present study attempts to answer two questions:

What are the kinds of metaphors that are used in the headlines and cartoons?

What are the types of pictorial metaphors in cartoons?

2. Literature review:

2.1 Background knowledge:

Metaphor, in cognitive linguistic view, is understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain as with understanding life in terms of journeys. This view of metaphor is shorthand and is called a **Conceptual Metaphor** (Kövecses, 2010). Jabber & Al-Saedi pointed out that a speaker intends to use some expressions figuratively when the literal use of a language has not the intending effect.

Lakoff & Johnson pointed out that the essence of metaphor is understanding one kind of thing in terms of another kind of thing. According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980), a metaphor consists of two things: 'literal' primary subject and a 'figurative' secondary subject (Forceville, 1996). The target and the source, in verbal and visual metaphors, are represented either only verbally or only visually. While the target and the source, in multimodal metaphors, are exclusively and predominantly represented in two different modes: the visual and the verbal mode (Alsadi, 2016).

In cognitive metaphor theory (CMT), as pointed out by Forceville (2006), has over past 25 years richly argued that we do not only write and speak but actually think in metaphors. According to this view, metaphor should necessarily manifest itself not just in language but also in different modes of communication, such as pictures, sounds, music, and gestures.

Forceville (1996) distinguishes four subtypes of pictorial metaphor depending on the nature of the second domain (source domain): the first subtype is pictorial metaphors with one pictorially present term (MP1s), in it the second term is not depicted, but suggested unambiguously by the pictorial context. Removal of the pictorial context performs in the disappearance of the second domain, and thus in non-metaphor. The second subtype is pictorial metaphors with two pictorially present terms (MP2s), in this type, both terms are represented pictorially, perceived as a single gestalt resulting in a hybrid phenomenon. If pictorial context presents in the first place and be removed, both terms are still identified by the reader/viewer. In the third subtype, which is called pictorial simile, both terms are pictorially represented in their entirety. Removal of the pictorial context, still allows the reader/viewer to identify both terms if it present in the first place. In the fourth subtype is verbo-pictorial metaphors (VPMs), one of the terms is rendered textually, while the other is rendered pictorially. Removal of pictorial context does not affect the identification of the two metaphorical terms if it presents in the first place. The last subtype is normally called multimodal.

Pictorial metaphor, as a type of monomodal metaphor, was proposed firstly by Forceville (1996, 2002, 2008) specifically in the context of advertisement. Forceville claimed that "for the identification and interpretation of anything that purports to be a metaphor", three questions should be answered: 1. What are the two terms of the metaphor? 2. What is the primary subject (target domain) and what is the secondary subject (source domain)? 3. Which features of the secondary

subject must be projected upon the primary subject? These questions lead clearly to an analysis of the pictorial metaphor (Steen, 2018). Verbo-pictorial metaphors (multimodal), as pointed out by Forceville (1996), is that the one of the thing is rendered textually, while the other is rendered pictorially.

The political cartoons constitute a distinctive style, very specific genre, conventions and communicative purpose. The political cartoon is an illustration, published on the comments or editorial pages of a newspaper. Cartoons, most commonly, address a current political issue or event, a famous personality, or a social trend, in a way that takes a stand or presents a particular point of view (El Refaie, 2009).

Moreover, El Refaie (ibid), political cartoons operate generally on two distinct levels: the first level, political cartoons tell an imaginary story about a make-believe world, the second level, is more abstract level, they refer to real-life characters and levels. The relationship between the two levels of meaning is basically metaphorical.

A good opportunity is offered by political cartoons to explore multimodal metaphor because metaphor is a very common device used by cartoons and then combine visual and verbal codes (Edward 1997; Philippe, 1982; Morrison, 1992; Templin, 1999 cited in Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009). Gombrich (1971 cited in El Refaie, 2003) argues that metaphor is a common and expected device in political cartoons: it is one of the main weapons in their cartoon's armoury.

The present study focuses on the analysis of the newspaper's headlines and cartoons shedding light on the period of post-2021 Iraqi elections, as it was called by politicians, journalists, and writers "political closure," taking in consideration the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Forceville's (1996) pictorial metaphors as an approach of study.

2.2 Previous studies:

A number of studies have explored and studied visual and multimodal metaphor in political cartoons.

Dinić & Tasić (2025) analyze political cartoons in British and German daily newspaper. The study paid attention to the presence of verbal aggression in the predominantly multimodal (verbo-pictorial) medium of political cartoons.

Al-Saedi (2025 a, b, c) investigated the metaphors in cartoons to shed light on different socio-political cases, social media, and the representation of coronavirus in Iraqi newspaper cartoons.

Al-Dala'ien (2022) examined socio-political contexts which related to the Russia-Ukraine war

through a semiotic analysis of selected political cartoons accounts of two well-known Jordanian cartoonists and posted on the official Facebook.

Another study by Abdulwahid (2022) revealed the way, the political caricatures are produced and the main characteristics of political caricatures. The political caricatures announced through the election campaign 2018 in Iraq are analyzed from the semiotic perspective.

A study adopted by Abdel Raheem (2022) used the systematic analysis of multimodal metaphors in a corpus of political cartoons to find out answers to the question about what extent can a trending topic in news discourse become the source of metaphorical creativity, and which factors contribute to this fact?

Liepa et al. (2021) identified and analyzed the visual and multimodal metaphors happened in cartoons focusing on the European Union matters and to detect if political events are presented in cartoons in English and Latvian on the basis of the same conceptual metaphors.

Zhang & Forceville (2020) shed light on investigation 69 Chinese and 60 American political cartoons published in 2018 and 2019 that pertain the two nations' trade conflict. The researchers examined the cross-cultural similarities and differences between metaphors and metonymies. They charted how Chinese and American cartoons portray this trade conflict.

Another study explored the multimodal representations of Hungary in cartoons in the period between 1989 and 1990, during this period negative images of Hungary became prominent due to the weak financial situation of the country and the political system change (Virág, 2020).

Alghezzy (2017) analyzed a set of political cartoons which created by Iraqi cartoonists. The study shed light on the functions of these cartoons as mediators of meaning between the cartoonists and the readers.

Alousque (2014) explored monomodal visual and multimodal verbo-pictorial metaphors, and multimodal cases of metaphor-metonymy interaction in a corpus of Spanish print political cartoon strips drawn from the popular newspaper El País.

Popa (2013) investigated the internal cognitive mechanisms of multimodal metaphor construction in the television genre of animated political cartoons. The study analyzed the way zoomorphs constructed by the audience when they first appear.

Moreover, Kondowe et al. (2014) analyzed verbal and nonverbal features of Malawi newspaper political cartoons. The study aimed at how they employ linguistic features in their portrayal of political leaders.

The present study shed light on the analysis the newspaper headlines and cartoons, as a political genre, to show how journalists and cartoonists conceptualize the concept of "Political Closure" metaphorically depending on Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) metaphor theory (CMT) and Forceville's (1996, 2008) pictorial metaphors.

3. Methodology:

3.1 Data collection:

The data are gathered from the Iraqi daily newspapers that published (printed and online). It includes nine newspaper headlines and five cartoons. The headlines are translated into English language. The data are limited to the representation of the term "Political Closure" in newspaper headlines and cartoons that shed light on the political controversy among the political coalitions and

parties after the 2021 elections and the preparation of formation of the Iraqi government and electing the new Prime Minister.

3.2. Procedures:

The gathered data will be analyzed in two parts. The first part focuses on the analysis of newspaper headlines by investigating the metaphorical representation of “Political Closure” based on Lakoff & Johnson’s (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory. To decide whether it is metaphor, the literal and contextual meanings are investigated in the headlines to determine the metaphorical meaning and then, decide the kind of metaphor is used by the newspaper editors.

The next part shed light on the metaphorical representation of “Political Closure” in cartoons. All the details in the cartoons will be explained and then, verbalize the metaphors that are extracted by focusing on Lakoff & Johnson’s (1980) theory. To elicit the pictorial or multimodal metaphors from the cartoons concerning “Political Closure” the Forceville (1996, 2008) multimodal metaphors is used and then, to determine their kinds.

4. Data analysis and results:

4.1 Part one:

In this section, the selected headlines would be analyzed based on Lakoff & Johnson’s (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

The following headlines are:

1. Does the “conciliation candidate” untie the knot of the political closure? (Almuraqeb AL Iraq Newspaper, 14/9/2022)
2. Does Al-Sadar’s “alienation” untie the knot of the political closure in Iraq? (Almuraqeb AL Iraq Newspaper, 14/6/2022)

A ‘knot’ refers to negative connotation and to untie a knot, someone needs to identify the ends or loops of the knot and pull them attempting to loosen the knot. Therefore, the “POLITICAL CLOSURE” is conceptualized as a knot that needs to be untied. The political coalitions and parties which caused the closure are mapped as the ends/loops of the knot. In the above two headlines, both COCILIATION CANDIDATE and ALSADARE’S ALIENATION are mapped as SOLVER/KNOT’S UNTIER. Consequently, uniting the political closure leads to government formation by political concord among the political coalition.

In these two headlines, it has conceptualized the metaphors POLITICAL CLOSURE IS A KNOT, POLITICAL COALITIONS ARE THE ENDS/LOOPS OF A KNOT, and COCILIATION CANDIDATE/ALSADAR’S ALIENATION IS A KNOT’S SOLVER.

3. Assuring initiatives push the “stone” of closure away from the stream of government formation. (Almuraqeb AL Iraq Newspaper, 17/5/2022)

The flow of water stream takes its route or path from one place to another. However, a stone may prevent or block its flowing freely. The third headline views the political closure of government formation in a flow of water stream blocked by a stone. The initiative to solve the political closure is conceptualized metaphorically in term of pushing a stone from the stream. This scenario shows numerous metaphorical conceptualizations: POLITICAL PROCESS IS WATER STREAM,

GOVERNMENT FORMATION IS WATER, POLITICAL CLOSURE IS A STONE and AN INITIATIVE IS STONE PUSHING FROM THE STREAM.

The literal meaning of the word ‘stone’ is “any naturally occurring solid mass...” and the word ‘stream’ is “a continuous flow of a liquid...” However, contextually, the meaning refers to the flow of the political process in forming the government cabinet and removing the impediments that prevent it.

Another newspaper headline that depicts water flow is:

4. Alatar takes the initiative to move the closure stagnation of the political kurd waters. (Almuraqeb AL Iraq Newspaper, 29/5/2022)

Instead of flowing, the headline depicts water stagnation in a pond or a stream. Stagnant or standing water is water remains for a long period lacking to a natural movement of flowing. Habitually, stagnant waters are always harmful due to the accumulation of bacteria. The absence of natural movement of water flowing enables humans to resort to physical movement to move or remove the stagnant water. This view is depicted in this headline as source domains to end up the political closure, which is the target domain by having a physical hand to conceptualize the initiative of Alatar to reach a solution/conciliation to end up the political closure. Conceptual domains focus on the political coalitions of Kurds to take place in the political closure. These conceptual metaphor is POLITICAL CLOSURE IS STAGNANT WATER.

Kovecses (2010) states that NON-PHYSICAL-PHYSICAL ENTITIES WATER are mapped/conceptualized as A PHYSICAL OBJECT. In this headline, it is observed that THE ENITIATIVE is conceptualized as A PHYSICAL OBJECT to be STGNANT WATER REMOVER (A TOOL) where it can be conceived of the personification of ALATAR to be conceptualized as STGNANAT MOVER (A PERSON). In this case, it had conceptualized the metaphors: A INITIATIVE IS STGNANT WATER REMOVER (A TOOL) where it could be by mapping the water a way in which metaphorically, it is considered as an end to the political closure. Also, it had conceptualized ALATAR IS STGNANT WATER MOVER (A PERSON).

5. Political closure stopped the economic activity. (Al-Sabah Newspaper, 12/4/2022)

6. The government criticizes “the political closure”: It disrupted our work. (Al-Mustakbal Al-Iraqi, 8/6/2022)

In headlines 5 and 6, Political closure is described in “A machine malfunction” scenario. Headline 5 views the “economic activity” as a machine that performs work or function. A malfunction or breakdown happened to the machine in which led to cease its performance. Political closure ceased the function of the economic activity in Iraq. In this case, THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY and THE POLITICAL CLOSURE are the target domains to A MACHINE and A MACHINE MALFUNCTION/BREAKDOWN which are considered as the source domains.

In the same vein, POLITICAL CLOSURE, in headline 6 is conceptualized A MACHINE MALFUNTION/BREAKDOWN. The focus of this headline is on the role of the political closure on the work performance of the Iraqi government which is conceptualized as a machine. In this case, it

had conceptualized the metaphor WORK/PERFORMANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT IS A MACHINE where it is disrupted by POLITICAL CLOSURE.

7. A new initiative from Kurdistan Region to decode the political closure. (Al-Sabah Newspaper, 24/5/2022)

In headline 7, the editor used encoding and decoding processes to shed light on finding new solutions to the political closure. New initiatives were propped by the political representatives trying to solve the political closure that happened in post-2021 elections. Figuratively, the editor shed light on “encoding and decoding” to tell his readers that the political process entered in a complicated process and needed to be solved.

Literally, the word ‘decode’ means transforming information in a secretly coded form into understandable or readable information. In other words, it means reversing the process of putting information in a code. In this case, this headline shows numerous conceptual metaphors in ‘Decoding’ scenario. They are POLITICAL PROCESS IS SOFTWARE, KURDISTAN REPRESENTATION ARE PERSONS (PROGRAMERES), NEW INITIATIVE IS DECODER, and POLITICAL CLOSURE IS CODE.

8. Does coalition of state administration take Iraq out the closure? (Al-Mustakbal Al-Iraqi, 26/9/2022)

9. Political coalitions seek for exists from the closure. (Al-Sabah Newspaper, 12/6/2022)

In headlines 8 and 9, literally, the words ‘go out يخرج’ and ‘exits مخارج’ mean to remove something from a container or enclosed space and a way out of an enclosed space or space ‘respectively.’ Iraq objectified or personified in headline 8. Therefore, contextually, the personification of “COALITION OF STATE ADMINISTRATION” to take out Iraq from the closure which is conceptualized as a container. In this case, it had conceptualized COALITION OF STATE ADMINISTRATION IS A PERSON, NATION (IRAQ) IS AN OBJECT/PERSON, and THE POLITICAL CLOSURE IS A CONTAINER.

Based on the literal meaning of the word ‘exits مخارج’, the headline 9 is viewed in a BUILDING metaphorical scenario. However, the word ‘CLOSURE’ is conceptualized as A STATE which is in need to be ended up. In this case, it can conceive of the personification of THE POLITICAL COALITION where they were locked inside a building. They were in need of exits as solutions to finish THE STATE OF CLOSURE or it can be conceptualized as A LOCKED BUILDING. In short, it had constructed the metaphorical conceptualizations: POLITICAL COALITIONS ARE PERSONS, SOLUTIONS ARE EXITS, and POLITICAL CLOSURE IS A BUILDING OR STATE.

4.2 Part two:

In this part, the researcher analyzed the cartoons that focused on the “POLITICAL CLOSURE”: The first cartoon (Figure 1) shows the graphic design of the word ‘Process’ in a typo-pictorial shape pipes. It is connected to an election box. Under this design the word ‘political’ is written. A man, who holds a pipe wrench, looks in the pipe. The Arabic letter ‘eye’ is replaced with a pipe stop cock to represent the closure. The political process should go on after 2021 elections by forming the ministry cabinet and electing a new Prime Minister. However, there was no concord among the

winning coalitions and parties. It made the cartoonist, Khudhiar Alhimyari, to depict flowing water in pipes to portray the continuity of the political process. However, a clogging, which represents ‘closure’, prevents water flowing in pipes. In this case, the political closure is conceived of clogging/blocking out the political process. It had conceptualized the metaphors THE POLITICAL PROCESS IS WATER PIPES, POLITICAL CLOSURE IS CLOGGED PIPES BY WATER STOP COCK.

The following diagram shows how the ‘POLITICAL CLOSURE’ IS conceptualized:

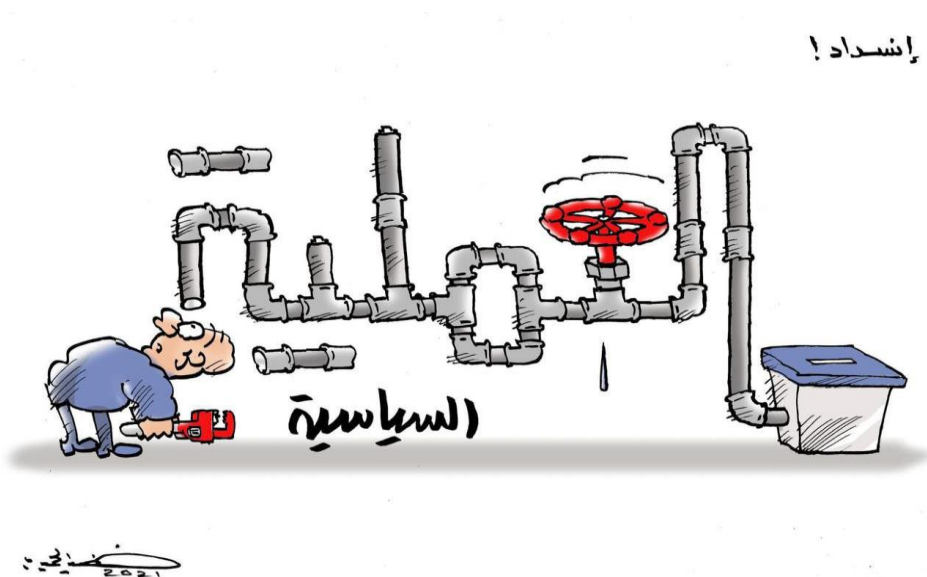


Figure 1: Cartoon by Khudhiar Alhimyari (Alsabah Newspaper 2021)

The water stop cock represents the political controversy among the winning political coalitions and parties. In this case, it is conceptualized THE POLITICAL CONTRAVARSY IS WATER STOP COCK, which is the causation of ‘CLOSURE.’

The visual context plays a role to show the ‘CLOGGED PIPES’ to represents the ‘POLITICAL CLOSURE,’ which is represented by the verbal text of the cartoon’s title ‘Closure انسداد.’ Removing the verbal text from the cartoon would result in the disappearance of the metaphorical meaning of the cartoon. Therefore, the metaphorical conceptualization of THE POLITICAL CLOSURE IS CLOGGED PIPES BY WATER STOP COCK is marked as verbo-pictorial/ multimodal metaphor.

The cartoon (Figure 2) shows the representation ‘POLITICAL CLOSURE’ in a BUILDING metaphor. The cartoon views a building and its door is closed. The door holds a signboard with ‘Political Closure’ written on it. There are numerous of key on the ground. Inside the bow of each key an Arabic letter to form the word ‘initiatives.’

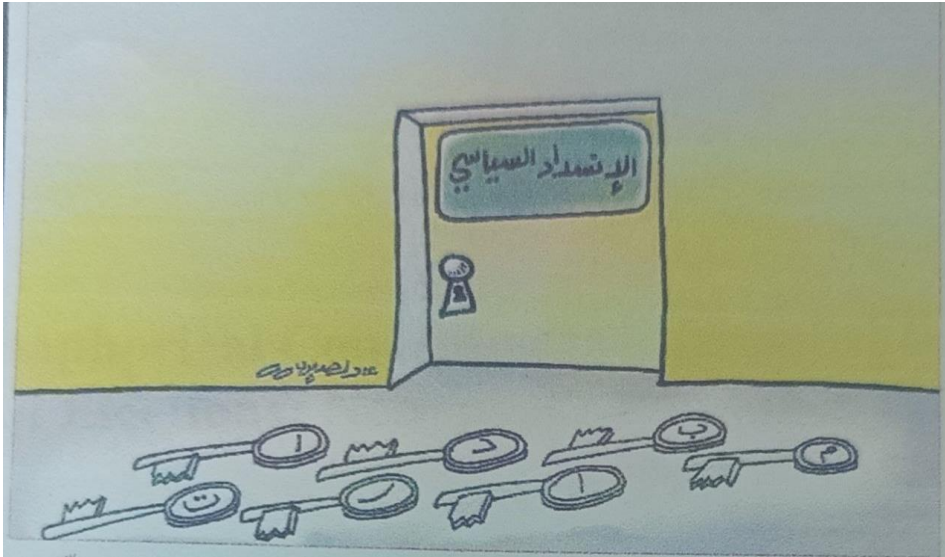


Figure 2: (Al-Bayyna Al-Jadid 2022)

The cartoon focuses on the initiatives to end up the political closure. In this case, it had conceptualized the metaphors THE POLITICAL CLOSURE IS A BUILDING and INITIATIVES ARE KEYS. Eliminating the textual part from this cartoon results in the disappearance of the metaphorical meaning. Therefore, the target domains are present as verbal texts to the source domains a BUILDING and KEYS. Consequently, both are marked as verbo-pictorial/ multimodal metaphor.

The verbal and visual cues, in cartoon (Figure 3) views two metaphorical scenarios, they are Illness and Santa Claus in Christmas celebration. The cartoon views the line borders and a signboard where the word 'IRAQ' written on it. A man, who represents the Iraqi people, addresses SANTA CLAUS on the right side through a speech bubble in Iraqi Arabic 'Do you have something can treat this closure which made me /imdokhni/. The word /imdokhni/ has two meaning. One is used physically to mean 'dizzy' and the other is used mentally to mean 'confused.' Santa Claus represents a solution from abroad to get rid of the closure.



Figure 3: Cartoon by Khudhiar Alhimyari (2021)

The visual context depicts ‘SANTA CLAUS’ as a problem solver to bring A SOLUTION to the ‘CLOSURE’, which is cued from the verbal text as AN ILLNESS which needs MEDICINE by A DOCTOR who is represented by SANTA CLAUS. The word ‘...treat...’ is cued to portray the ‘POLITICAL CLOSURE’ is an ILLNESS which needs MEDICINE from abroad, both visual and verbal contexts generate a number of metaphorical conceptualizations: POLITICAL CLOSURE IS AN ILLNESS, A PROBLEM SOLOVER IS SANTA CLAUS, SANTA CLAUS IS A DOCTOR/PHYSICIAN, SOLUTION IS TREATMENT/MEDICINE.

Since the focus of this cartoon is ‘Political Closure’ that came out after 2021 elections in Iraq, the conceptual target domain which is ‘POLITICAL CLOSURE’ is cued verbally and the metaphor is marked as verbo-pictorial (VPM)/multimodal metaphor.

The cartoon (Figure 4), by the cartoonist Khudhiar Alhimyari, views blocked door with the typographical design of the word ‘closure’ as a nailed wooden planks. A lady, with a nail puller, captioned with the Arabic word ‘Plasschaert بلاسختارت.’ She represents the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Jeanine Plasschaert. In other words, there were attempts to unlock the political closure from abroad political representatives to reach to concord among the political coalitions in Iraq post-2021 elections.

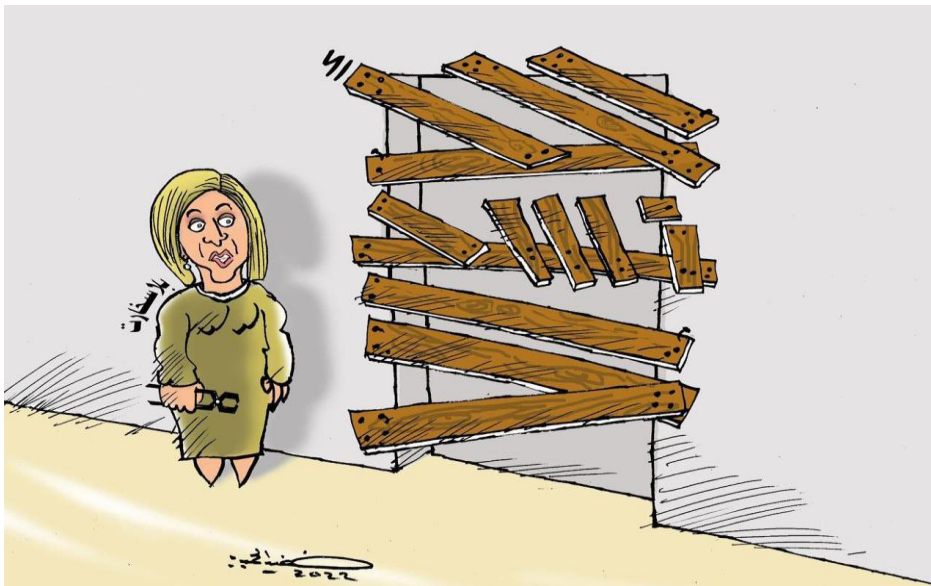


Figure 4: Cartoon by Khudhiar Alhimyari (2022)

This cartoon holds numerous metaphorical meanings. The typo-pictorial shape of ‘closure’ represents the controversies among the winning coalitions in the elections which caused political gap in the formation of the government cabinet. All the solutions to unlock this closure were worthless and it needs other solutions from abroad which is represented by ‘Plasschaert.’ The nail puller is considered as the initiative that solve or unlock the political closure.

In this case, it had been observed a number of conceptual metaphors: POLITICAL CLOSURE IS NAILED WOOD PLANKS, PLASSCHAERT IS CLOSURE SOLVER, and THE INITIATIVE OF CLOSURE SOLUTION IS A NAIL PULLER.

The first two metaphors are marked as verbo-pictorial (VPM)/multimodal metaphor since the text played a role in recognizing the target domain. The last metaphor is pictorial/visual metaphor since the visual context suggests it as a solution to unlock the political closure.

In the cartoon (Figure 5) which is entitled ‘closure’, by the cartoonist, Khudhiar Alhimyari, views the political closure in plumbing scenario. He depicts a long pipe with a giant water stop cock in the middle. Men with suits hold different tools such as a screwdriver, oil drop, hammar, water wrench, etc. However, an angry man holds a saw running towards them where a saw is irrational tool to fix the closure.

This visual cues view numerous source domains to conceptualize the ‘POLITICAL CLOSURE’ in the cartoon. It had conceptualized the metaphors POLITICAL PROCESS IS PLUMBING, POLITICAL SOLUTIONS ARE TOOLS, POLITICIANS ARE PLUMBERS, and POLITICAL CLOSURE IS WATER STOP COCK.

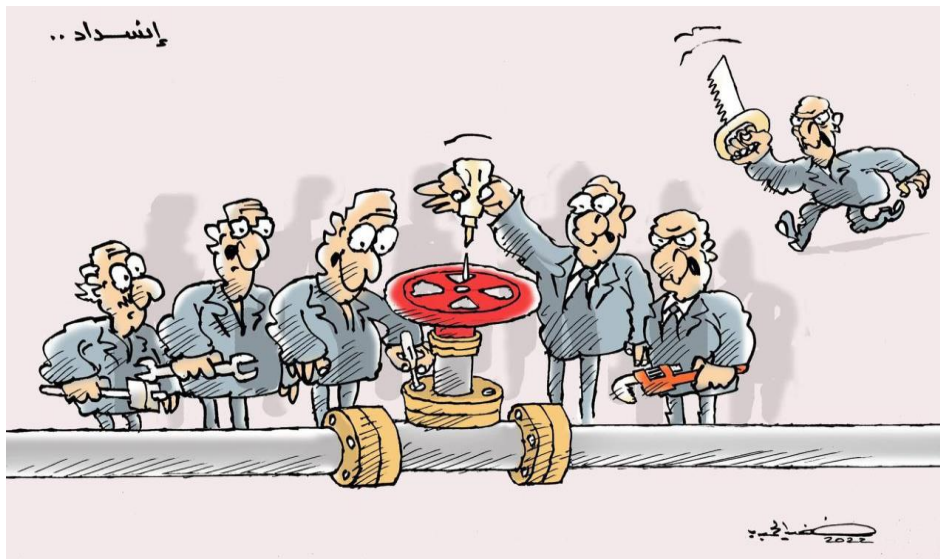


Figure 5: Cartoon by Khudhiar Alhimyari (2022)

Since plumbers should wear work uniforms, it is unreasonable to see a plumber wearing a suit during his work. For this reason, it was conceptualized that men with suits represent POLITICIANS from the visual context of this cartoon. Although the word ‘CLOSURE’ is imposed in the left corner, it does not affect the metaphorical meaning in this cartoon even it is eliminated from the context. In this case, the metaphorical conceptualization POLITICAL CLOSURE IS WATER STOP COCK is marked as pictorial metaphor (MP1) since the content plays a role to recognize the target domain and absence of plumbers which are replaced with men wearing suits who represent the political class.

5. Conclusion:

The study was an attempt to investigate the concept of “Political Closure”, in post 2021 Iraqi elections. The study explored the verbal, pictorial/visual, and multimodal metaphors of “Political Closure” representation in Iraqi newspapers headlines and cartoons. The study concluded that the concept of “Political Closure”, as target domain, was conceptualized in different source domains; for example: physical object; stone, stagnant water, water pipes, water stop cock, nailed wood planks, knot, and plumbings; machine, economic activity, software, code container, building, illness. Visually, the study also concluded that the more frequently kind of metaphor used to conceive the concept of “Political Closure” is multimodal metaphor since if the textual part is eliminated from the cartoons will result in the disappearance of the metaphorical meaning.

Acknowledgement:

I would like to express my great attitude and thanks to Prof. Hayder Tuama Jasim Al-Saedi (M.A.) for his advice and suggestions to enrich my knowledge in the subject of pictorial metaphor.

Conflicts of interest:

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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