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Postcolonial Symbolic Representation in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness:* A Cognitive-Semantic Study

Athraa AL-Fatlawi
Department of English, Faculty of Arty of Kufa, Najaf, Iraqts, Universi
Corresponding Author: athraah.alfatlawi@student.uokufa.edu.iq

Hasan Abu-Krooz
Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Kufa, Najaf, Iraq
Email: hassan.mahdi@uokufa.edu.iq

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Abstract
This study investigates the postcolonial metaphoric symbolism that appears in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* by employing cognitive-semantic theoretical analysis. Through symbolic acts, the book shows how colonial power systems and resistance provide their encoding by using conceptual metaphors together with image schemas. The first research questions focus on how cognitive-semantic models describe postcolonial symbolic actions and how those methods work when analyzing *Heart of Darkness*. The research adapts cognitive semantics and postcolonial theory as its methodological base to evaluate political, cultural and social symbolic acts through Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Image Schema Theory. Social symbolic acts prevail throughout the text as the novel focuses on the dehumanization experienced by colonized subjects and imperial oppression alongside political and cultural symbolic acts that use structured and ontological metaphors to maintain imperial narratives. The research enhances postcolonial literary analysis through cognitive-semantic methods, which explain colonial discourse symbols better. Studies should investigate how cognitive semantics applies to multiple postcolonial literary works to better investigate the relations between language and power structures and ideological forces.
Keywords: Cognitive semantics, postcolonialism, symbolic acts, conceptual metaphor, image schema, *Heart of Darkness*

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Introduction

Evans and Green (2006) explain that cognitive semantics pursues meaning through cognitive processes, which study how language interacts with thinking. The cognitive prefix in cognitive semantics remains under debate. Semantics is cognitive according to Talmy (2000a) making the description of semantics as cognitive superfluous. Saeed (2009), among others, does not find the distinction helpful because language knowledge functions as an element of basic cognition. The interaction of language, cognition, and postcolonial themes can be better understood by taking a cognitive-semantic approach to *Heart of Darkness* (HOD). It enhances the study of symbolic acts by highlighting how characters' meanings are shaped by their lived experiences and contextual knowledge of colonialism.

Symbolic act plays an essential role in literary interpretation. According to Conrad (1983), the essence of all great art is a symbolic act. He stated that “a work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion” (p.2). *Heart of Darkness* is a work rich with metaphors. In the 1980s, cognitive semantics first appeared as a component of the loosely organized theoretical field known as cognitive linguistics, which challenged the primacy of grammar and semantics' subordinate role in the generativist theory of language. Rather than being a singular theory of language, cognitive linguistics is a flexible framework. Rather than a single well-defined theory that categorises everything as either belonging to cognitive linguistics or not, it is a cluster of numerous partially overlapping methods (Geeraerts, 2006, p. 2).

Postcolonialism, introduced with Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978), is a new approach to cultural analysis known as postcolonialism, which aims to examine conflicts between various cultures typically those between a colonial power and its corresponding colonized one (Huang, 2017; Said, 1993). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2013) state that postcolonialism "is a way of reading and rereading the history, culture, and politics of colonized societies to understand the processes and effects of colonization" (pp.7-8). The usage of "post" in the term indicates that colonial legacies together with their effects have vanished into the distant past. The practice of neocolonial histories creates ongoing colonial perspectives across the world and non-Western societies continue to face exclusion from Western-knowledge-based power systems. The field of postcolonial philosophy works to grasp both present reality and future possibilities of the world. Global wealth distribution together with power dominance and control over others form the main focus of the subject. Postcolonialism challenges earlier strategies and offers fresh perspectives on historical and contemporary events since it poses issues like these (Rao, 2013). Using postcolonial analysis and cognitive-semantic theory this research examines how *Heart of Darkness* represents colonial symbolism and acts of colonial resistance through symbolism. Compared to earlier perspectives, postcolonialism offers a more nuanced understanding of significant concepts like power, authority, and security. For instance, the colonial world was forced to accept the idea of sovereignty and the modern state by European powers (Alhmdni & Sabeeh, 2022).

The concept of symbolic act was first articulated by Kenneth Burke in 1957. Geertz (1973a) popularized it. The theorists highlighted the cultural essence of human actions through their emphasis on irrational over logical behavior and expressive rather than instrumental qualities and performance-like rather than commercial trade characteristics (Alexander & Mast, 2006). Any action or activity which exceeds its physical manifestation through symbolism qualifies as a cognitive definition of a symbolic act. People consciously perform this behavior for meaningful purposes which go beyond its base objective. Symbolic acts make up a particular kind of symbolic

representation known as symbolism. Symbolism serves as an inclusive concept for using symbols by definition. For example, burning the national flag could be considered a symbolic act of protest or rejection, whereas the flag itself symbolizes a nation and its values. The act of burning the flag is a symbolic representation of rejecting or opposing those values (Bjerke, 2018).

Generally, specific literary classics have drawn much attention and appreciation from those who value innovation and outstanding works that capture the elegance and inventiveness of the imaginative and creative minds who created them. A prominent example of such esteemed literature is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Güven (2013) claims that Conrad's ambivalent treatment of the work, which incorporates applicable postcolonial symbolic uses of cognitive-semantic strategies that touch upon various aspects of life and humanity, is one of its most outstanding examples. The HOD is filled with unique language features, or more specifically, cognitive-semantic elements that demand careful analysis and examination (Black, 2006)

One of the most well-known modern English novelists, Joseph Conrad, employed some cognitive-sematic strategies in his work "*Heart of Darkness*" to indicate postcolonial symbolic acts. It has become extremely well-known. (Conrad, 1902/1983). Literary scholars have examined *Heart of Darkness*; nonetheless, they have inadequately addressed the cognitive-semantic frameworks underpinning its symbolic acts (Black, 2006).

A systematic examination of the conceptual frameworks and symbolic language supporting the postcolonial project is carried out. Employing cognitive semantics and postcolonial theory as analytical tools, the analysis elucidated how the symbolic actions and conceptual metaphors within the text encode and validate the colonizers' possessive connection with the African environment and its inhabitants (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This has prompted the study to concern itself with establishing a pure cognitive-semantic approach to symbolic acts. The absent analysis between cognitive semantics and postcolonial critique requires integration. This study investigates the following matter.

1. How do the cognitive-semantic conceptualizations of postcolonial symbolic acts manifest in Joseph Conrad's "*Heart of Darkness*"?
2. What is the most effective eclectic model integrating various cognitive-semantic analytical approaches to comprehensively examine the postcolonial symbolic act in "*Heart of Darkness*"?
3. How did Conrad’s strategies influence postcolonial critique?

The study adopts cognitive semantics and postcolonial theory to reveal how *Heart of Darkness* communicates its symbolism, which enables colonialist beliefs and oppositional discourses to establish themselves.

Literature Review

The study of cognitive semantics argues that meaning is intrinsically linked to cognitive processes and examines the complex interrelationship between language and thought (Evans & Green, 2006).

The term "cognitive" in "cognitive semantics" has been controversial. Scholars like Talmy (2000a) assert that semantics is fundamentally cognitive, making the modifier superfluous. For individuals like Saeed (2009), the differentiation may lack significance as linguistic proficiency is an element of overall cognitive ability. Gärdenfors (1999) distinguishes between cognitive semantics, which describes meaning to mental representations, and realistic semantics, which

describes meaning to things in the outside world. According to Kertész (2004), cognitive semantics is the empirical study of language meaning as a component of cognition.

The literature review examines the intersection of postcolonial theory, cognitive semantics, and literary symbolism in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. While numerous studies investigate its colonial critique, linguistic style, and narrative structure, there is a notable gap in integrating cognitive-semantic frameworks with postcolonial symbolic acts. This knowledge becomes essential because it demonstrates how conceptual frameworks determine interpretations of colonial discourse and reader comprehension.

Cognitive Semantics and Symbolic Acts serve through Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) to analyze the metaphorical shape determining the reader's interpretation of meaning in *Heart of Darkness*. Despite existing studies that focus on colonial domination and identity formation by Said (1993) and Oomba (2015), and Hegelian master-slave relations by Eriş (2023). Eriş (2023) describes Marlow's fragmented view in the novella, which reveals both the wider unstable colonial ideology and the deep fears about identity and moral power. This aligns with Fluck's (1983) perception that literature operates as a symbolic act through which Conrad states the conflicts running profound within imperial structures. These studies do not analyze how the cognitive processes underlying the symbolic aspects of meaning.

Previous analyses of *Heart of Darkness* by Nofal (2013) and Benabdallah (2018) address lexical ambiguity and modernist techniques, yet they lack discussion of cognitive semantic connections to these linguistic elements. The advantages of cognitive semantics for literary analysis mentioned by Albayati (2015) and Farhud (2024) have received limited application to the study of *Heart of Darkness*. Available studies are insufficient at combining cognitive-linguistic methods with those of postcolonial theory, so it requires further development toward a combined approach. Yasmin (2024) researched power structures that influence character enlightenment in the novella and showed how colonialism caused destructive impacts on human nature by creating separated beings and existential crises. The study by Almhab & Deshmukh (2020) analyzes both oppressive and resistant themes in the novella since it utilizes symbolic elements to explain narrative power dynamics.

The literature review confirms that researchers analyze *Heart of Darkness* characters and significant themes using only qualitative descriptive designs. The current research project introduces a fresh direction to the academic investigation because it implements mixed methods with a descriptive methodology for data collection. The research demonstrates linguistic features that validate the gathered data. Researchers processed the novella text until it became plain text while tagging it with cognitive semantic strategies CMS and ISS before running the software operations to determine the most frequent cognitive semantic strategies among symbolic words in the software. Again and again, it is seen that *Heart of Darkness* stands as a novella filled with multiple symbolic elements. The majority of elements inside *Heart of Darkness* combine varying depths of semantic meaning along with each character and object, and its title. The research focused on three symbolic acts from the collection because they display the thematic elements of culture and imperialism together with human soul corruption.

To the best knowledge of the researcher, studies are needed to develop an extensive research strategy that combines cognitive semantic theories with postcolonial literary criticism. The existing studies about Joseph Conrad’s work have separately examined his linguistic choices and postcolonial commentary at the same time, failing to provide an explanation framework about reader interactions with symbolic elements. The current research connects two strategic fields to

address fundamental gaps in knowledge that employ new analytical methods to examine *Heart of Darkness* with an integrative approach. So, this study combines these theoretical frameworks to form a better analysis of the colonial symbolic meanings of *Heart of Darkness*, which advances both cognitive literary scholarship and postcolonial knowledge.

A symbolic act is a broader topic defined by Moscovici (1984), as a "representation of an object, person, or idea that represents something other than itself" (p.12). These behaviors are thought to have their roots in the cognitive processes that enable people to create and modify mental images, affecting their perceptions, choices, and actions. The cognitive definition of a symbolic act is any behavior or activity that has symbolic significance and represents something more than its literal or physical expression. Humans perform this action to convey significant meanings. The symbolic act belongs to symbolic representation but remains separate from general symbolism, which extends beyond symbolic representation. Burning the national flag qualifies as an expressive protest gesture; however, the flag represents national principles and values.. The act of burning the flag is a symbolic representation of rejecting or opposing those values (Hallsby, 2020).

Symbolic act in literature is the art of representing an abstract idea with an object or a word. A symbolic meaning can be attributed to any action, person, location, word, or item. Rather than stating anything outright, an author can utilize symbolism to allude to a particular mood or attitude. Symbolism in literature can take many different forms, such as figurative language, in which a character, thing, or circumstance has a more profound meaning when considered in the context of the entire narrative, or acts of a character with a more profound meaning (Purwarno, 2012).

Dhain (2015) explores symbolic acts in *Heart of Darkness* to demonstrate that “the perpetual clash of light and darkness demonstrates Marlow's mental conflict while questioning the European binary of culture over brutality.” Through this interpretation, the text obtains more depth to its analysis of imperialism while dismantling standard colonial storytelling methods. According to (Güven, 2013), Conrad's ambivalent treatment touches on many aspects of life and humanity, making invaluable symbolic use of cognitive-semantic strategies. One of the most notable examples of symbolic acts may be found in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which is listed as one of the most remarkable pieces of English literature. Similarly, Güven (2013) contends that Conrad's ambivalent treatment incorporates invaluable symbolic uses of cognitive-semantic devices that touch upon numerous elements of life and humanity. The novella’s language and structure merit further analysis through cognitive-semantic theories. According to Parry (2005), symbolic actions in *Heart of Darkness* fall under political, personal and cultural classifications to expose their significance in postcolonial analysis.

The main theme of Joseph Conrad's "*Heart of Darkness*" is colonialism, which is shown as a devastating force in Africa during the time of European imperialism. The Congo River basin is a prime example of the destruction caused by European nations vying for control and exploitation of the area's resources, including Belgium, France, and Britain (Zeidanin, 2020). Conrad challenges the brutal realities of colonialism through the narrator Marlow, contrasting the idealistic rhetoric of colonizers with their acts of enslavement, forced labor, and genocide (Kademani, 2016; Montalvo & Untermacher, 2007).

Heart of Darkness is still considered a classic work of literature on colonialism and postcolonialism (O'Reilly, 2001). Said (1994) claims that "The whole point of what Kurtz and Marlow talk about is imperial mastery, white European over black Africans and their ivory, civilization over the primitive dark continent" (p.29).

A study known as the "post-colonial literary movement" was started following World War II. Fiction published during colonialism or after a nation achieves independence is known as post-colonial literature in Africa (Muhammad, 2018). The 1978 book Orientalism was written by post-colonial literary scholar Edward Said. "A Western conception about the eastern part of the world: a radical idea of realism whose assembly endorsed the variance between the accustomed (Europe, West, US) and the odd", is how he describes Orientalism (Muhammad, 2018, p. 62). Because of this, colonization is a powerful tool for illustrating the differences between Europeans and non-Europeans.

The study expands research findings through the integration of cognitive-semantic evaluation with postcolonial symbolism to present a fresh *Hearts of Darkness* interpretation method. The research uses Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Image Schema Theory (IST) to examine how symbolic acts generate meaning through a postcolonial interpretation. This research bridges the gap between cognitive semantics and postcolonial critique to establish a new approach to analyzing Conrad's novella. The method integrates cognitive literary studies with postcolonial discourse while establishing improved theories about symbolic acts used in *Heart of Darkness*.

Conceptual metaphor

According to Lakoff and Turner (1989), conceptual metaphors enable a mapping from a more concrete source domain to an abstract target domain; according to CMT, aspects of journeys, such as routes and destinations, help us grasp life stages and experiences, like in the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. CMT distinguishes between the language realizations of the underlying conceptual metaphors. The literal words found in expressions function as metaphorical expressions to convey concepts that match the conceptual metaphors' mental representations (Lakoff, 1993, p. 203).

Conceptual Metaphors Taxonomies

Conceptual metaphors can be classified in a few different ways. Three main categories of conceptual metaphors exist based on their functions: *structural*, *ontological*, and *orientational*. Metaphors can be classified as either *traditional* or *unconventional* based on how conventional they are. We rely on *propositional knowledge* and *image knowledge*, depending on the type of knowledge that forms the foundation of the mapping between the source domain and the destination domain. Additionally, *generic-level* and *specific-level* conceptual metaphors can be distinguished from one another (Abdulla, 2019). Figure One is a summary of all the conceptual metaphor taxonomies.

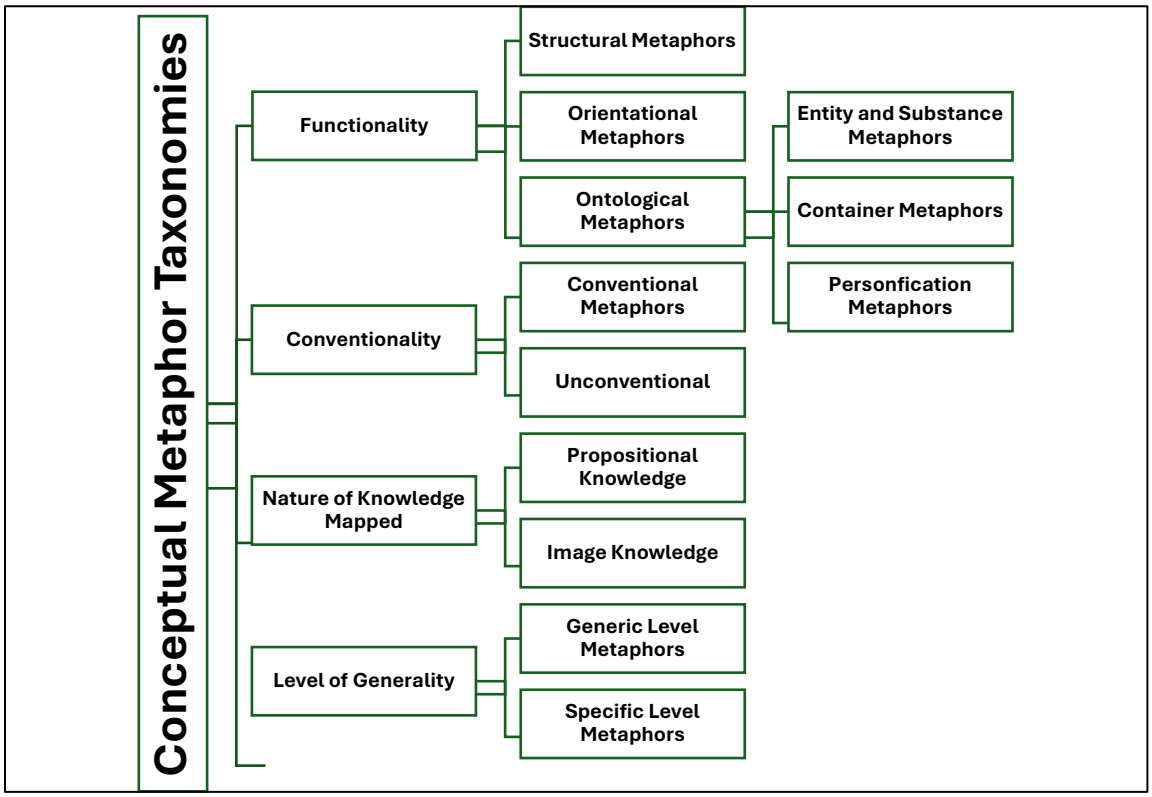


Figure 1. Conceptual metaphor taxonomy (adapted from Lakoff & Johnson 1980a, p.296)

Conceptual metaphor, according to its function, has three classifications: Structural, Orientational, and Ontological. Structural metaphors are ones in which "one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another," according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 14). Other kinds of metaphors, in contrast to structural metaphors, consist of organising an entire system of concepts about one another, rather than only structuring one notion in terms of another. These metaphors, which are primarily associated with spatial orientations like in-out, up-down, on-off, deep-shallow, etc., are referred to as orientational metaphors by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 14).

How people interact with tangible objects is another excellent way to learn concepts. Ontological metaphors aid in organising how people interpret abstract ideas, feelings, moments, deeds, situations, etc., in terms of concrete things. According to Abdulla and Lutfi (2019), ontological metaphors personify abstract notions as humans or reify them (i.e., objectify them as physical entities, substances, and containers) (p.84).

Image Schema

One of the most well-known and ancient theories in CS is the theory of image schemas. Johnson (1987) and Lakoff (1987a) are the sources of this hypothesis (Johnson, 2005, p. 15). An image schema is closely associated with the development of the embodied cognition thesis proposed by Johnson's (1987) "*The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason,*" and Lakoff's (1987) '*Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about Mind.*' Johnson (1987) introduced image schema as: The pattern of bodily encounters and physical movements shapes our perceptual activities into an active, organized pattern which organizes our awareness. So, image schemas are dynamic analog representations of spatial relations and movements in space. Even though image schemas are derived from perceptual and motor processes, they are not themselves sensorimotor processes. Instead, image schemas are the primary means by which people construct or constitute an order and are not merely passive receptacles into which experience is poured. In this way, image schemas are different from the notion of schemata traditionally used in cognitive science, which are abstract conceptual and propositional event structures (Evans & Green, 2006).

The term "image" in "image schema" is equivalent to the use of this term in psychology, where imagistic experience relates to, and derives from, our experience of the *external* world. Another term for this type of experience is sensory experience because it comes from sensory-perceptual mechanisms that include but are not limited to the visual system. It is therefore essential to emphasise that although the term 'image' is limited to visual perception in everyday language, it has a broader application in psychology and in cognitive linguistics, where it encompasses all kinds of sensory-perceptual experience.

The Taxonomy of Image Schemas

The classification of image schemas, which are recurring cognitive frameworks arising from our embodied experiences that facilitate our understanding of the environment. Image schemas are essential to cognitive linguistics, philosophy, and psychology, underpinning abstract thought and language simultaneously. Figure Two below shows a partial list of image schema strategies.

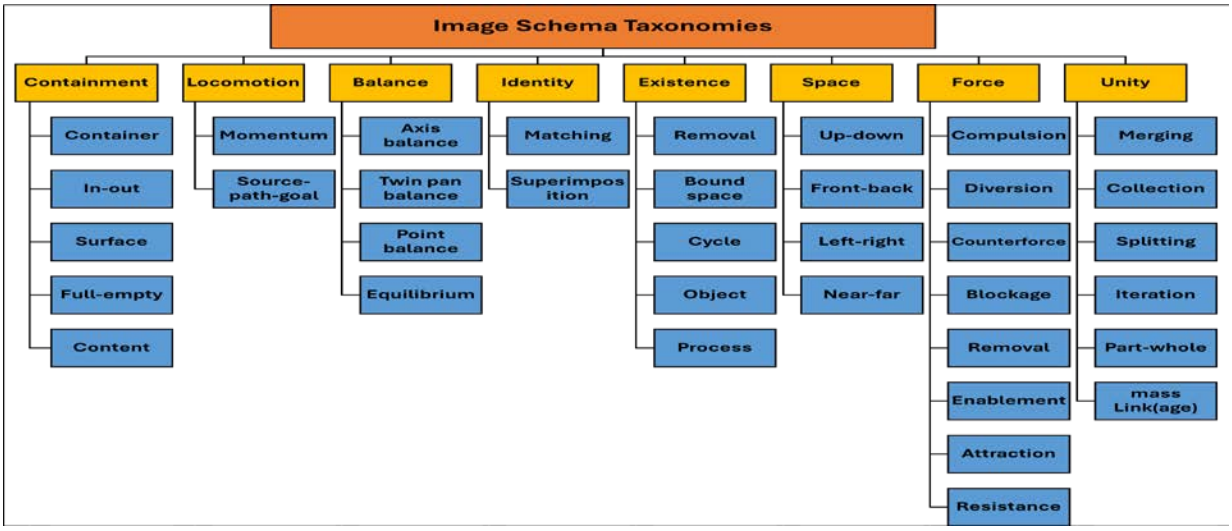


Figure 2. A partial list of image schemas (adapted from Evans & Green,2006, p.190)

Method

The methodology presented in this article is eclectic. It is based on the following models: Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor framework (1980), as well as Lakoff's and Johnson's framework of Image Schema (1987), with some additions by the researcher based on what has been reviewed previously. The study classifies textual extracts into the Political Symbolic Act, Cultural Symbolic Act, and Social Symbolic Act based on the dominant themes in the selected literary work, focusing on the Cognitive Metaphor Strategies (CMS) and Image Schema Strategies (ISS) that are prevalent in *Heart of Darkness* (HOD). After that, the cognitive-semantic strategies used to realize these kinds are discussed, focusing on the overwhelming ones representing the distinguishing features that specify the postcolonial symbolic acts from a cognitive-semantic perspective.

A strictly linguistic approach is adopted and developed, hence bringing to the fore a fact that literary scholars missed out on. Cognitive semantic tools were used to make a precise and more well-grounded description of the text. Although the focus is on the HOD, the study aims to contribute to broader discussions on how cognitive and semantic theories can illuminate the symbolic structure of postcolonial descriptions. Thus, the research is not intended to be an exhaustive postcolonial reading of Conrad's work but instead uses specific texts to illustrate how cognitive-semantic theories can inform our understanding of symbolic acts within a postcolonial framework. The analysis of these frameworks on HOD shapes the interdisciplinary strength of the research by bringing cognitive semantic insights to colonial and postcolonial writings.

Participants

This article examines three symbolic acts from *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, which were chosen based on their representation of key postcolonial issues: political, cultural, and social symbolic acts. The analysts evaluate symbolic acts by applying CM and IS theories from a cognitive-semantic perspective. The study focuses on three significant postcolonial issues embodied in its symbolic acts, which consist of political symbolic acts alongside cultural and social symbolic acts. The novel demonstrates the analysis of colonial events through three main themes,

which integrate psychology with the European-African conflict while delving into psychological studies.

Research Instruments

The evaluation of Conceptual Metaphor Strategies (CMS) and Image Schema Strategies (ISS) in *Heart of Darkness* (HOD) relies upon cognitive-semantic analysis. Researchers who adopt this method gain advanced insight into the postcolonial themes through a more profound comprehension of text-developed cognitive constructs. The systematic research investigates visual aspects of CM and IS throughout the novella. The research evaluates how conceptual metaphors create narrative meanings and how image schemas affect symbolic elements within the written content.

The evaluation locates multiple motifs together with symbolic elements along with metaphorical structures, which demonstrate both colonial and postcolonial aspects. The study integrates various analytical methods to specific portions of the text where researchers evaluate the association of linguistic elements with mental processes alongside the cultural environment. Both textual composition and symbolic process representation are affected by cognitive entities within the theoretical framework. Consequently, the model can be diagrammed as in Appendix A, which offers a systematic way to display connective relationships between various elements.

Primary data include specific texts from the HOD, and the investigation demonstrates the connection between CM and IS. Through the textual analysis of the selected texts, the researcher identifies structural and cognitive, along with symbolic relationships that demonstrate colonial and postcolonial perspectives.

Methods of Analysis

The research project integrates quantitative and qualitative investigation using an integrated mixed research design. The cognitive rules for symbolic acts in the text content are examined through CM and IS analyses as the primary analytical tools. The study calculates the frequency of identified metaphor or image schema by using the percentage equation, which appears as the following mathematical formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{occurrence of each strategy}}{\text{total number of symbolic acts}} x\ 100$$

The formula enables researchers to measure the number of cognitive strategies in the novella, thus revealing their role in postcolonial narrative. The symbolic acts go through categorization as part of an analysis, which interprets their meanings through colonial discourse. The research combines quantitative information with qualitative observations to create a detailed study of cognitive semantics in Conrad's writing.

The Cognitive-Semantic Analysis of Political, Cultural and Social Symbolic Acts

The analysis divides excerpts into Political Symbolic Acts, Cultural Symbolic Acts, and Social Symbolic Acts according to their dominant themes.

A combined analysis of Symbolic Act (SA) Image Schemas Strategies (ISS) and Conceptual Metaphor Strategies (CMS) offers a comprehensive evaluation of Joseph Conrad's political symbolic act in "*Heart of Darkness*". Through its integrated analysis model, the model offers an elaborate explanation of colonial criticism regarding moral values and identity formation (Jameson, 2013).

Political Symbolic Acts (PSA) related to power, colonialism, empire-building, and governance. PSA concentrates on administrative leadership and power relations along with political agent representation. The HOD performs political symbolic acts which reveal both colonial structural frameworks and colonial mental tendencies. Various colonial practices combine exploitation with colonial rule together with martial victory brutality and forced imposition of dominant power along with violent behavior and unlawful actions. For example:

Text 1:

> "The conquest of the earth, which primarily means taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. …" (Conrad, 1902/1983, p.8)

This quote presents an organized cognitive-semantic integration of symbolic postcolonial actions that illustrate a group of PSA (political, cultural, and social) elements, achieved through two primary cognitive-semantic strategies: Image Schema Strategies (ISS) and Conceptual Metaphor Strategies (CMS). Symbolic acts work within political contexts and expand the discussion to encompass cultural and social dimensions.

The two strategies outlined above are further defined by the subsequent sub-strategies: The IS sub-strategies encompassing *identity*, *force*, *space*, and *unity* are integrated with the CMS's sub-strategies of functionality. The concept of "**conquest**" serves as a *structural metaphor*, positioning colonialism as a political symbolic act that is expressed by Muhammad (2018), asserting that colonization is a powerful political tool for illustrating the differences between Europeans and non-Europeans through the lens of war. The HOD presents colonialism as its core political element. Through metaphor we understand colonial activities as harmful activities which reveal the violent nature of imperial projects. The dichotomy between "**civilization**" and "**savagery**" develops a second structural metaphor for cultural evaluation that defines groups through dominance rankings. The colonizers believe they must establish control because they believe they will regulate conflicts between chaos and order.

The metaphorical understanding of reality uses "**Colonialism as a Disease**" to explain its concepts. The cognitive theory demonstrates that imperialism serves beyond actions because it represents an impairing force that impacts both imperialists and subjects of colonization

The colonized frequently appear as the *Other*, resulting in a perception that reduces them to objects instead of recognizing their humanity. Because of this ontological framing, they are dehumanized and their oppression is justified.

"**Taking away**" indicates a *containment* sub-strategy of IS, in which the colonizers force their presence on the land and its inhabitants. This sub-strategy is symbolized by the concepts of journey and movement. The process of conquest entails a physical entry into countries that are not one's own. *The locomotion* sub-strategy is an image of the forceful characteristics inherent in imperialism, wherein colonizers encroach upon territories that do not belong to them, forming a source-path-goal schema to create a political symbolic act of dominance over these spaces.

The notion of *identity* sub-strategy suggests a profound conflict regarding self-definition, wherein the colonizers establish their identity in contrast to those they subjugate. In addition to producing a political symbolic act, this also makes a binary identity that supports ideas of social and cultural symbolic acts.

The *Space* sub-strategy is expressed via Geopolitical Boundaries. The concept of conquering generates novella geopolitical settings characterised by power relations. The colonized regions transform into places of exploitation. The quote illustrates the ethical vacuity of these newly established borders.

The *force* schema is portrayed by the counterforce of dominance through conquering acts, highlighting the violent application of power over others. This emphasises how the CS interpreted the violence of imperial acts and their consequences after colonization.

In the logical understanding of Colonial Justification, there is a *unity* schema. The broken realities of conquest can be hidden by the idea of a single goal to bring civilization to a people. In their search for power, colonizers have a false sense of unity, which is very different from the disunity and suffering of the colonized. Cognitively, the image of "**Civilization is part of power**" forms a whole schema.

By applying cognitive-semantic theories of conceptual metaphor and image schema, the quote reveals more profound meanings in Conrad's criticism of colonialism, which is a critical political symbolic act. The metaphors and schemas not only shape our understanding of imperialism but also reflect the complex cultural and social symbolic acts inherent in the act of conquest. This connection enriches the interpretation of the HOD and highlights the cognitive processes underlying colonial discourse.

Table One and Figure Three below offer the frequencies and percentages of each strategy based on an interpretive analysis of the extract, identifying metaphoric and semantic elements per CSS categories.

Table 1. *The frequencies and percentages of semantic and cognitive devices in text (1)*

Cognitive-Semantic Strategy (CSS)	Frequency	Percentage
Structural Metaphor	2	9%
Ontological Metaphor	3	14%
Orientational Metaphor	1	5%
Conventional Metaphor	2	9%
Unconventional Metaphor	1	5%
Generic level	1	5%
Specific level	1	5%
Containment	2	9%
Locomotion	2	9%
Identity	2	9%
Space	1	5%
Force	2	9%
Unity	1	5%
Total CSS	21	100%

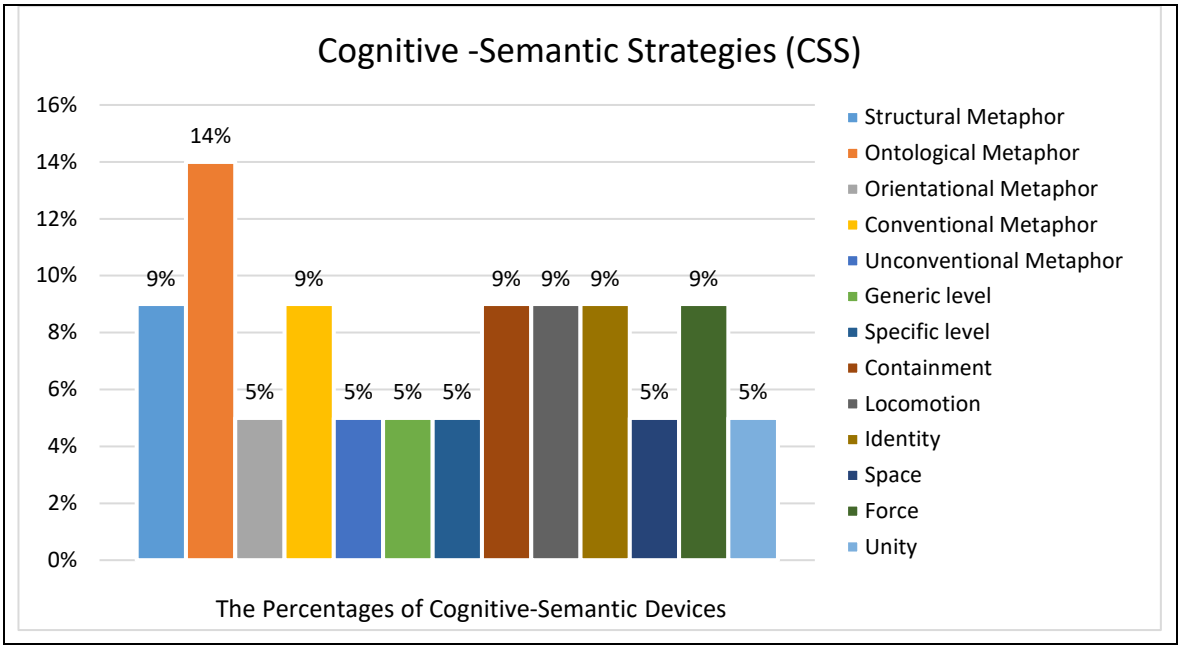


Figure 3. Rates of the cognitive-semantic strategies in text (1)

Cultural Symbolic Acts (CSA) consist of identifying racial meanings apart from ritual beliefs and societal customs which dominate a society. Art, along with religion and language structure, together with music and rituals, represent community lifestyle (Fluck, 1983).

These symbolic acts reflect race, traditions, customs, beliefs, and the clash of civilizations. Indicators of the CSA could be mentioning race (black/white imagery), rituals, ivory, color symbolic acts, as well as references to cultural identity and religious metaphors.

Text 2:

> "The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse……" (Conrad, 1902/1983,p.35)

This extract contains rich imagery and layered meanings that can be analyzed through cognitive semantics, postcolonialism, conceptual metaphors, and image schemas. In the HOD, ivory represents human greed and expoitation. It exposes Europeans' greedy need for money, which can drive them to commit awful crimes. The never-ending search for ivory exemplifies colonial insanity, destroying the humanity of both colonizers and colonized people (Zeidanin, 2020).

According to the functionality classification, the sub-strategy of the CM structural metaphor, the word "**ivory**" serves as a *structural metaphor* for wealth and status, often linked to colonial exploitation. In "**You would think they were praying to it**" the writer demonstrates religious reverence toward ivory pieces and their material worth. In his description of a "**taint of imbecile rapacity**" the author uses ontological metaphor to depict greed as an active agent which spreads as an actual contamination. The excessive interest in ivory surpasses basic material cravings since it demonstrates an actual moral decline. Ul Islam (2023, p. Ul Islam (2023, p. 4) points out that European ivory obsession represents how colonial powers reduced African people into instruments for economic exploitation during their colonial rule.

The extract contains an *Orientational Metaphor* that portrays the act of praying to ivory by positioning the desire for ivory as if it were religious worship, indicating a vertical relationship where ivory is exalted. Throughout the novella and extract readers recognize the symbolic role of ivory which indicates both luxuries and colonial exploitation through *conventional metaphor*. Throughout the novella greed is personified as a "**taint**", which provides an original perspective on this destructive force that exists beyond individual characteristics.

The level of the Generality sub-strategy of the CM can be interpreted as both specific and *generic levels*: The extract speaks to *specific* instances of colonial exploitation and the moral implications of valuing ivory. And *Generic* in the sense that it taps into broader themes of greed, corruption, and the ethical dilemmas associated with material wealth, reflecting a universal critique of consumerism. According to this analysis, it shows that the cognitive domain of the text allows us to explore more profound cultural symbolic acts, positioning greed as a human condition that affects not just individuals but entire cultures.

The containment sub-strategy of IS was founded in the phrase "**a whiff from some corpse**" evokes an image of something decaying and contained, suggesting that the pursuit of ivory is linked to death and moral decay. *Locomotion* sub-strategy represented by the idea of "**rang in the air**" suggests movement and spread, indicating how the obsession with ivory permeates society. *The space* sub-strategy portrayed in **"The Air Filled with the Word Ivory"** creates a cultural SA of a spatial metaphor where this concept occupies a prominent place in the cultural landscape. Force sub-strategy symbolized by the "**taint**" of greediness introduces a force that impacts the characters and society, suggesting that greed has a powerful, negative influence. The unity sub-strategy represented by the imagery creates a sense of unity between the material (**ivory**) and the moral decay it represents, linking societal values with the consequences of colonial exploitation.

Table Two and Figure Four below specify the occurrences and percentages of each strategy based on an interpretive analysis of the extract, recognizing metaphoric and semantic elements per CSS categories.

The extract reveals how cognitive semantics and postcolonialism intersect through metaphorical structures to demonstrate the moral problems arising from colonial wealth, admiration and exploitation. Through vivid images, the material embodies corruption and decay to prompt readers about the societal consequences of greed while showing how ivory served as a commodity during historical times.

Table 2. *The frequencies and percentages of semantic and cognitive devices in text (2)*

Cognitive-Semantic Strategy (CSS)	Frequency	Percentage
Structural Metaphor	1	6%
Ontological Metaphor	2	11%
Conventional Metaphor	2	11%
Unconventional Metaphor	2	11%
Generic Level	2	11%
Specific Level	2	11%
Orientational Metaphor	1	6%
Containment	2	11%
Locomotion	1	6%
Identity	0	0%
Space	1	6%
Force	1	6%
Unity	1	6%
Total CSS	18	100%

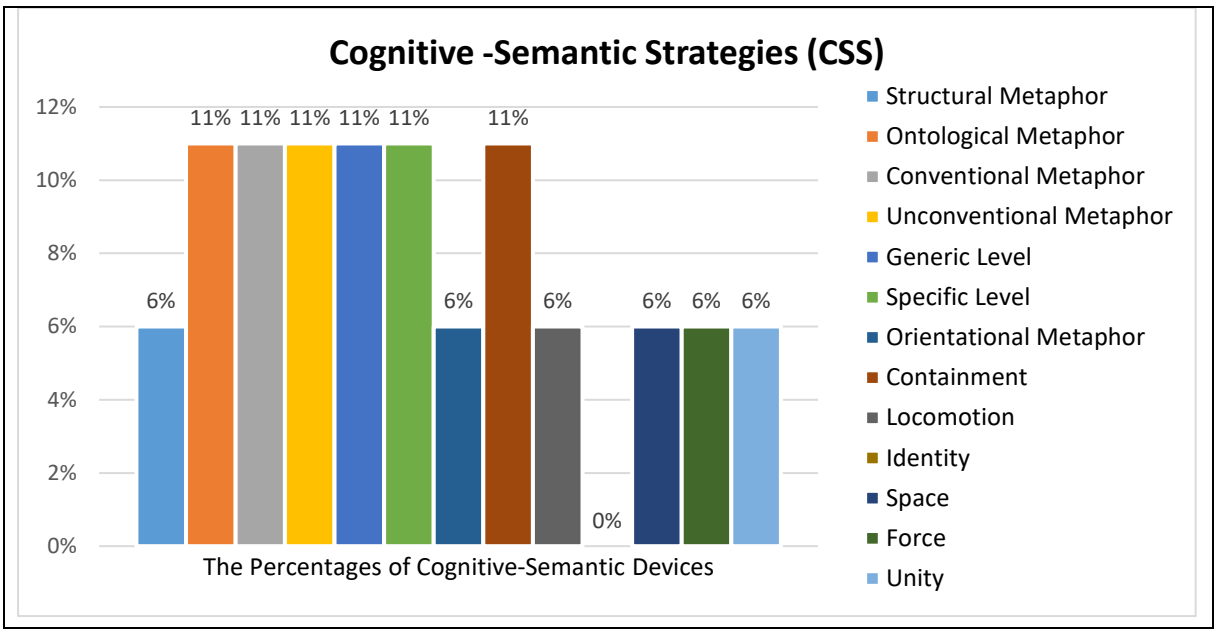


Figure 4. Rates of the cognitive-semantic strategies in text (2)

Social Symbolic Acts (SSA) concern human suffering, morality, and injustice. The SSA focuses on human suffering, morality, racism, and social hierarchy. Postcolonial symbolic acts are recognizable through references to human pain together with lies, deception, greed and hypocrisy. The work addresses social injustice alongside racial inequality and ethical quandaries (For further information, refer to Arendt (1951) and Achebe (2016), and Said (1994))

Text 3:

> "He blew the candle out suddenly, and we went outside. The moon had risen. Black figures strolled about listlessly, pouring water on the glow, whence proceeded a sound of hissing; steam ascended in the moonlight, the beaten nigger groaned somewhere. 'What a row the brute makes!' said the indefatigable man with the mustaches, appearing near us. 'Serve him right. Transgression punishment bang!" (Conrad, 1902/1983, p.40)

The text presents abundant metaphors and images that strengthen its analysis through the eclectic cognitive semantic framework. The text uses dark and light elements to create a structural metaphor which evokes awareness against knowledge gaps. Thus blowing out the candle symbolizes moving away from clear sight toward darkness just like the wider community loses sight of ethical values.

When mentioning "**the beaten nigger**" the author creates an ontological metaphor. The poem describes suffering as a physical experience of events (beating) manifested in a "**beaten**" body metaphor. In this environment, the colonized individual transforms into a mere physical entity, reflecting colonial beliefs that dehumanize those who are oppressed.

"**Moonlight**," "**steam ascending**," and "**pouring water on the glow**" are metaphors for direction and movement. These *orientational metaphors* provide a sensation of something ascending, rising, or flowing. The action of "steam ascending" implies a physical and metaphorical movement towards a higher, untouchable area (perhaps referring to the "purity" of the moonlight, as opposed to the violence occurring beneath).

Using the "**beaten nigger**" as a metaphor is highly unconventional because it makes the person seem less human and more like an object instead of focusing on their humanity. In postcolonial terms, this reflects colonial powers' conventional conception of colonized peoples as objects or lesser persons to be governed socially and culturally.

The extract's generality is in contrast to its precise features. The terms "**transgression**" and "**punishment**" evoke broad ideas about morality, law, and consequences. However, the specificity emerges in features such as "**the beaten nigger**" and "**the indefatigable man with the mustaches**," which indicate a distinct social context, most likely a postcolonial one.

Because the "**beaten nigger**" is physically and socially confined, the term indicates a schema of confinement in imagery. Another possible meaning of the "**candle**" being blown out is the containment of life or hope.

As a sub-strategy of IS, locomotion implies mobility in this context. As a reflection of the unpleasant conditions they face, the "**figures strolled about listlessly**" may suggest a feeling of purposelessness or confusion among the individuals involved. However, the aimlessness of this movement reflects the people's lack of power.

The portrayal of the "**indefatigable man with the mustaches**" communicates a specific identity connected with colonial authority and entitlement, perpetuating power dynamics tropes.

A *spatial image schema* for the colonial society's ethical difficulties is the tension between the moonlight and the darkness. The culturally significant act of purity is symbolized by the moonlight, while Darkness denotes pain and bloodshed. In this dualism, one conceptualizes the moon as representing power and the figures in the dark as representing oppression."**Serve him right**" is an example of a *force schema*, which represents a severe and punishing mindset that justifies punishment by emphasizing the power disparity between the oppressor and the oppressed. *Unity* sub-strategy is represented by the elements of "**punishment"** and "**transgression"**. These elements are unified in the extract, suggesting a complex link between colonial authority and violence.

Table Three and Figure Five present analytic findings on strategies using interpretive analysis from this extract, which breaks down frequencies and percentages for each method while including metaphoric and semantic elements according to CSS categories.

Table 3. *The frequencies and percentages of semantic and cognitive devices in text (3)*

Cognitive-Semantic Strategy (CSS)	Frequency	Percentage
Structural Metaphor	3	12%
Ontological Metaphor	3	12%
Conventional Metaphor	2	8%
Unconventional Metaphor	3	12%
Generic Level	2	8%
Specific Level	2	8%
Orientational Metaphor	2	8%
Containment	2	8%
Locomotion	1	4%
Identity	1	4%
Space	1	4%
Force	2	8%
Unity	1	4%
Total CSS	**25**	**100%**

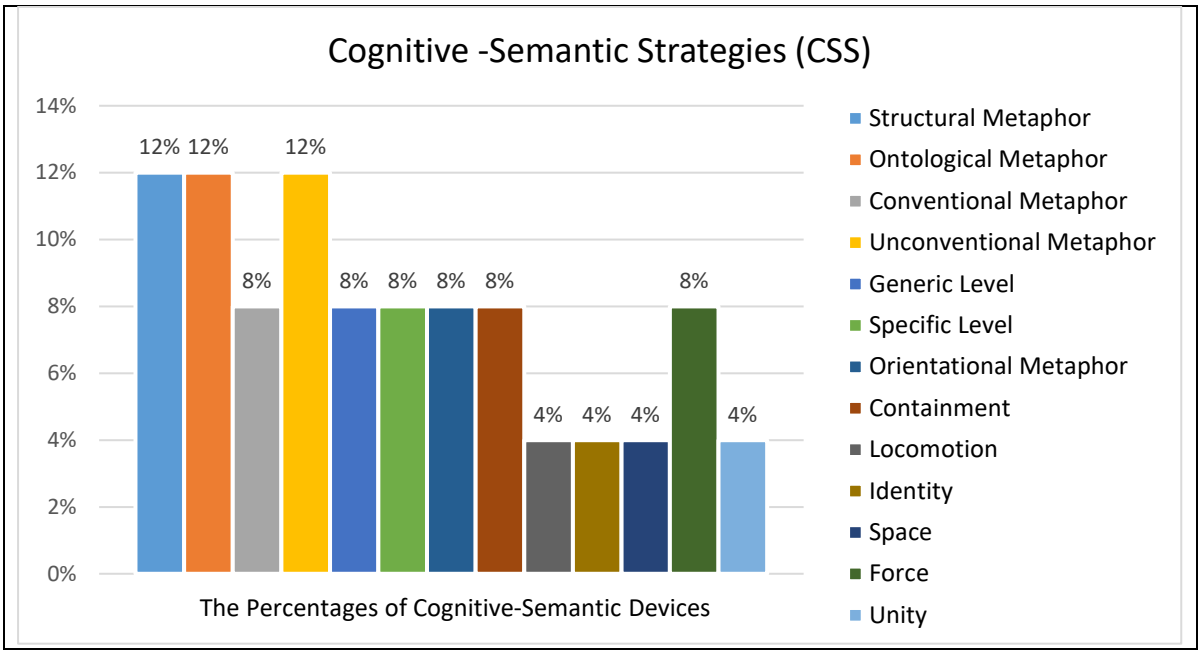


Figure 5. Rates of the cognitive-semantic strategies in text (3)

The analysis of this quote depends on cognitive-semantic conceptual metaphors and image schema theories. Through metaphors and imagery the text shows how cultural and social symbolic acts both exhibit moral complications and brutal nature when it criticizes powerful individuals' attitudes. The investigation yields detailed aspects of the Social Symbolic Act. Darkness together with light creates a model, which demonstrates psychological aspects behind denying humanity to marginalized communities.

Comparison among the three classifications of SAs (PSA, CSA, and SSA)

The subsequent section quantitively examines PSA as well as CSA and SSA and their unique characteristics. The assessments of conceptual metaphors and image schemas identify distinct characteristics that consistently define each category evident in the examined data. These actions have essential symbolic functions in their respective environments because the discussion shows how they actively create meaning to mold political, cultural, and social symbolic acts.

Cognitive-Semantic Strategies *and Symbolic Acts in The Selected Data*

Table Four examines the frequency patterns and percentage distribution of three symbolic act kinds (political, cultural, and social), which use **cognitive-semantic strategies** of **conceptual metaphors** and **image schemas** to display how postcolonial connotation forms within the HOD through different conceptual processes. Figure Six compares the frequencies and percentages of **conceptual metaphor** and **image schemas** strategies across three different postcolonial symbolic acts.

Table 4. *Comparison of the frequencies and percentages of CMS in the PSA, CSA, and SSA in the HOD*

Conceptual Metaphor Strategies	Total Frequency	Political Symbolic Act	Percentage	Cultural Symbolic Act	Percentage	Social Symbolic Act	Percentage
Structural Metaphor	6	2	9%	1	6%	3	12%
Ontological Metaphor	8	3	14%	2	11%	3	12%
Conventional Metaphor	5	1	5%	2	11%	2	8%
Unconventional Metaphor	7	2	9%	2	11%	3	12%
Generic Level	5	1	5%	2	11%	2	8%
Specific Level	5	1	5%	2	11%	2	8%
Orientational Metaphor	4	1	5%	1	6%	2	8%
Containment	6	2	9%	2	11%	2	8%
Locomotion	4	2	9%	1	6%	1	4%
Identity	3	2	9%	0	0%	1	4%
Space	3	1	5%	1	6%	1	4%
Force	5	2	9%	1	6%	2	8%
Unity	3	1	5%	1	6%	1	4%
Total	64	21	33%	18	28%	25	39%

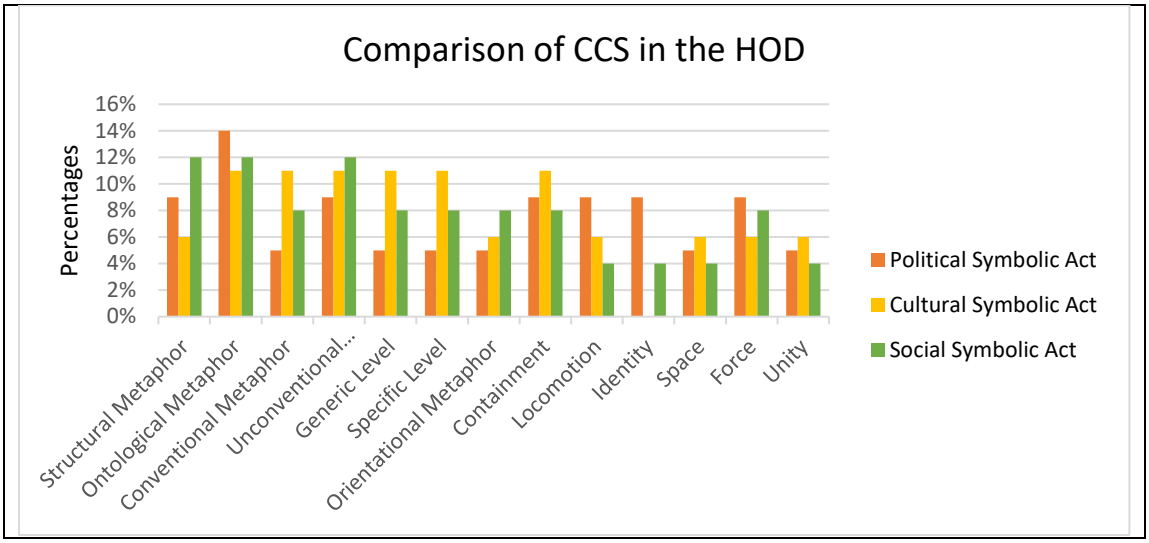


Figure 6. Comparison of the cognitive semantic strategies across political, cultural, and social symbolic acts in the HOD

Analysis of Cognitive Semantic Strategies Across Political, Cultural, and Social Symbolic Acts

This paper examines the distribution of **Cognitive Semantic Strategies (CMS)** across **Political Symbolic Acts (PSA), Cultural Symbolic Acts (CSA), and Social Symbolic Acts (SSA)** in the selected dataset. The primary aim is to identify patterns of Conceptual Metaphor and

Image Schema usage that reinforce **postcolonial themes** in *Heart of Darkness (HOD)* through cognitive-semantic strategies.

Table Four and Figure Six present **64 instances** of CCS distributed across **PSA (33%), CSA (28%), and SSA (39%)**. This indicates that **Social Symbolic Acts (SSA)** exhibit the highest concentration of CSS, reinforcing *HOD*'s **emphasis on human suffering, moral dilemmas, and social injustices**.

Meanwhile, **Political Symbolic Acts (PSA) represent 33%** of the strategy's occurrences, aligning with *HOD*'s critique of **colonialism, power dynamics, and governance**. **Cultural Symbolic Acts (CSA) account for 28%**, reflecting the novella's engagement with **rituals, race, and identity**.

Distribution of Conceptual Metaphor and Image Schema Strategies by Symbolic Acts

Heart of Darkness displays unique patterns of Conceptual Metaphor and Image Schema Strategies through Symbolic Acts among Political (PSA), Cultural (CSA), and Social Symbolic Acts (SSA). The main strategies in SSA reach 39%, whereas PSA maintains 33% and CSA maintains 28%.

The PSA and SSA rely primarily on **structural** then **ontological metaphors** to show imperial control and repression. In contrast, CSA mainly uses **containment metaphors** and **conventional metaphors** to depict rigid colonial stories. The two most prevalent metaphoric conventions in SSA are **force schema** alongside **unconventional metaphors,** which expose HOD's analysis of colonial evil and institutional violence. When translating the meaning of imperial control, PSAs rely heavily on **locomotion** (9%) and **force** (9%) **schema**s. The cultural symbolic act lacks an identity schema entirely, which indicates the HOD devotes fewer analytic resources towards personhood than its political and social postcolonial symbolic act.

The metaphoric distribution in HOD aligns with the postcolonial critique by placing SSA at the forefront because this shows that Conrad devotes his attention to social and ethical imperial consequences beyond cultural or political considerations.

Conceptual metaphor Strategies

1. Structural and Ontological Metaphors

- Structural Metaphor (9% in PSA, 6% in CSA, 12% in SSA)

The social and ethical contradictions in colonial rule are the main focus of structural metaphors in SSA (12%). PSA (9%) adopts structural metaphors to depict colonial control as warfare, whereas CSA (6%) employs them to depict cultural rankings throughout its lines.

- Ontological Metaphor (14% in PSA, 11% in CSA, 12% in SSA)

Ontological metaphors such as "colonialism as a disease" appear across all three symbolic acts. The literary devices apply differently across the three acts in terms of their representation; PSA (14%) employs them to define imperialism, CSA (11%) makes use of them for cultural objects, and SSA (12%) portrays social oppression and dehumanization.

2. Conventional and Unconventional Metaphors

- Conventional Metaphor (5% in PSA, 11% in CSA, 8% in SSA)

Conventional metaphors in CSA feature ivory as wealth because it holds the highest frequency of (11%). PSA (5%) uses fewer established metaphors than other texts, which means political criticism in HOD frequently utilizes alternative metaphorical approaches.

- Unconventional Metaphor (9% in PSA, 11% in CSA, 12% in SSA)

Unconventional metaphors achieve their highest level of occurrence in SSA at 12%, thereby supporting HOD's accusations against corruption and wickedness. Using unconventional metaphors in PSA reached 9% while CSA utilized them to an extent of 11%.

3. Generic vs. Specific Level of Generality

- Generic Level (5% in PSA, 11% in CSA, 8% in SSA)

The majority (11%) of cultural symbolism appears in the CSA, indicating that broad and generalized meanings represent the standard practice in the HOD. General suffering serves as the foundation for statements from SSA (8%), while PSA (5%) builds its arguments using details of colonial governance..

- Specific Level (5% in PSA, 11% in CSA, 8% in SSA)

Among the three symbolic representations, the specific level of suffering occurs at the same rate as the generic level, which confirms that CSA emphasizes concrete cultural meanings and SSA represents generalized and detailed experiences of suffering.

Image Schema Strategies

- Containment (9% in PSA, 11% in CSA, 8% in SSA)

There are numerous containment image schemas that appear most frequently (11%) in CSA, as cultural identity gets represented as captive within colonial discourse.

- Locomotion (9% in PSA, 6% in CSA, 4% in SSA)

The PSA includes the most locomotion schemas (9%) that depict imperial expansion, yet CSA include (6%) and SSA creates (4%) of these ISs to demonstrate cultural displacement and social movement.

- Identity (9% in PSA, 0% in CSA, 4% in SSA)

CSA (0%) contains no identity metaphors, highlighting that the HOD perspective focuses on cultural elements as opposed to personal identity. The concepts of identity take different forms through PSA (9%) and SSA (4%), as they show imperial authority and social alienation, respectively.

- Space (5% in PSA, 6% in CSA, 4% in SSA)

Spatial schematic representation appears more frequently in CPSA (6%) than in the other symbolic acts (SSA and PSA).

The metaphorical usage of force occurs at a rate of 9% in PSA, while CSA exhibits 6% and SSA shows 8%.

The analytic categories in force metaphors show colonial authority in PSA (9%) as well as cultural enforcement in CSA (6%) and social suppression in SSA (8%).

- Unity (5% in PSA, 6% in CSA, 4% in SSA)

Unity schemas describe imperial control in PSA (5%), and cultural symbolic acts also exist in CSA (6%), yet social struggles are shown in SSA (4%).

Discussion

The study investigated how *Heart of Darkness* represents postcolonial topics through both Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Image Schema Theory (IST). The researchers grouped symbolic actions under three categories, which included Political Symbolic Acts (PSA), Cultural Symbolic Acts (CSA), and Social Symbolic Acts (SSA), to investigate their impact on colonial discourse.

The research showed SSA was the strongest category because it comprised 39% of all cognitive-semantic strategies (CSS). The novella dedicates its focus to both the suffering of people

and unjust social programs alongside moral conundrums. Through structural, ontological and unconventional metaphors, SSA demonstrated how imperialism both contradicted itself and dehumanized people during its operations.

PSA occupied one-third of the cognitive-semantic strategies (CSS) to evince colonial governance and expansion paradigms. His publication utilized structural along with ontological metaphors as well as locomotion and force schemas as its primary semantic cognitive strategies. The metaphors combine to showcase that colonial power features embedded structural elements demonstrating imperial domination over the colony.

The (28%) portion of the CSS that fell under the CSA category represented both cultural identity symbolism and imaginary colonial myths. The depiction of imperial ideologies in this category depended mainly on containment and conventional metaphors, which concentrated on cultural entrapment and maintaining colonial narratives. CSA avoided demonstrating identity metaphors throughout its entire content (0%), while emphasizing objects and rituals that surpassed personal identities.

Metaphorical structures appeared predominantly in SSA with (12%) compared to (9%) and (6%) in PSA and CSA, respectively, for showing colonial power hierarchies. The pervasive, destructive nature of imperial rule became reinforced through ontological metaphors using comparisons like “colonialism as a disease” throughout all symbolic act categories.

Two significant groups of metaphors are divided into conventional and unconventional categories. Throughout CSA, conventional metaphors made up (11%) of the content, yet SSA employed (12%) unconventional metaphors as a method to both critique and challenge colonial contradictions. The PSA metaphorical dimension brought themes of authority and alienation through its usage of (9%).

The research analyzed particular image schema approaches which significantly impacted colonial theme representation. In CSA (11%) of schemas depicted cultural entrapment by using containment schemas, whereas locomotion schemas (9% in PSA) presented colonial expansion to viewers. Some images in PSA and SSA (9%, 8%) depicted both dominance and defiance against imperial power simultaneously; other images (PSA=6%, CSA=6%) showed total ideological control and resistance to imperialism.

The cognitive-semantic analysis of *Heart of Darkness* shows how complicated colonial discourse operates and gets challenged throughout the text. This analysis applies the methods of metaphorical and schematic analysis, while showing how Conrad writes about postcolonialism through *Heart of Darkness* and describing key symbolic moments throughout the story.

Conclusion

This investigation shows that *Heart of Darkness* uses cognitive-semantic strategies to transmit colonial ideologies and their associated forms of resistance. SSA carried the most remarkable frequency of usage because it brought attention to imperialism's social as well as moral implications. Structural and ontological metaphors appear persistently throughout the play to demonstrate that colonialism exists deeply within linguistic systems and cognitive functions, hence shaping how people perceive dominance relations.

The author uses CSA to maintain colonial views, yet PSA uncovers imperial control frameworks before SSA unveils imperial violence and ethical flaws. Subsequently, dehumanization becomes a central theme in colonial discourse because CSA avoids using identity metaphors.

Combining these two frameworks enables this research to forge a connection between cognitive literary studies and postcolonial criticism, resulting in new insights into colonial literary symbolism. The investigation affirms that Heart of Darkness makes a dual statement against colonial oppression while examining how language constructs imperial imagery. Conducting cognitive-semantic model analyses across various postcolonial texts would yield a deeper understanding of the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of power dynamics within literary discourse.

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About the Authors:

Dr. Hasan Abu-Krooz is an Assistant Professor of Pragmatics at the University of Kufa, College of Basic Education, Department of English. He earned an MA in English language and linguistics with a focus on Pragmatics in 2013 and received his Ph.D. in Pragmatics in 2018 with excellent grades from Babylon University. He has published 25 papers and has authored or co-authored 7 books in various fields of linguistics, including Pragmatics, Phonology, Sociolinguistics, Translation, and Rhetorical Pragmatics. Additionally, he has participated in 10 local and international conferences .ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8357-4461

Athraa Al-Fatlawi is a postgraduate student in the research phase at the Department of English Language, Faculty of Arts, University of Kufa. Her research focuses on linguistic studies, with particular emphasis on cognitive semantics. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8543-9190

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