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Review on the habilitation thesis “Metaphors and Image Schemas in Barack Obama’s Discourse on the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” by Marek Hampl.

Reviewer: María Losada Friend (University Pablo de Olavide, Seville, Spain)

As reviewer in the appointment procedure of Mgr. Marek Hampl, Ph.D., (Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities at the University of Žilina) for a position of associate professor in the field of study Non-Slavic Languages and Literature, I am presenting this report on his habilitation thesis.

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to the Department of British and American Studies at the Pavol Jozef Safarik University in Kosice for the invitation to be part of the evaluating committee for this habilitation thesis. As professor in the area of English Philology in the Department of Philology and Translation at the University of Pablo de Olavide (Seville, Spain), I have taught for some years the course entitled “End-of-degree Project” in the Double Degree on Translation and Interpreting and International Relations. Updates on international issues are essential to guide students for that course and the opportunity to read this complete research work on the linguistic link between metaphors and image schemas in Barack Obama’s political discourses has been a very pleasant and insightful experience. In my opinion, this work is a thought-provoking exercise with all proper elements of a well structured piece of research. The study of strategies of language in a very specific type of international political discourse such as Obama’s speeches related to ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) is a clever and needful choice as research topic. The work is sustained by a clear objective, shows an appropriate selection of corpus, follows adequately well-known methods to approach the analysis, and offers clear conclusions that summarize evident results of an honest process of research.

The habilitation candidate has submitted a thesis that I consider a well written dissertation on an updated, burning issue on international matters. It deals with a cotemporary topic, related to our global worries and offers a clear tool to analyse future speeches or discourses of similar nature. It shows the author’s interest in the dynamics of international relations, especially in matters related to the rise of terrorist organizations and governmental worries on international security.

There is a good use of former bibliography on the matter. The candidate reveals good knowledge of previous studies upon American presidential discourse related to metaphorical language and image schemas from Cap (2017), Chilton (1996, 2003), Charteris-Black (2014), Ferrari (2007, 2018) to his own research (Hampl 2019, 2021, 2022a,

2022b), next to other well known sources such as Neagu (2013), Lakoff (2012) or Berberović and Džanić Belibegović (2022). His review of different critical voices proves the use of image schemas and metaphors in American presidential discourse historically, from the time of the Truman Administration to other presidential speeches by Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton, or George W. Bush. The author aligns his work with those authors in the early years of the 21st century who became interested on the use of metaphor in Obama's political discourse (Ferrari and O'Loughlin (2018), Lakoff (2013), Ritchie and Thomas (2015), Degani (2015) and Charteris-Black (2011, 2014). But specifically, on Barack Obama's discourse on ISIL, studied by Fermor (2021) and by the author himself, Hampl (2021, 2022a). His publications in the matter ("The container and force schemas in political discourse", *Metaphor and the Social World*, 2021, and "The use of the PATH and FORCE image schemas in Barack Obama's counterterrorism discourse against ISIL", *Critical Discourse Studies*, 2020), have undoubtedly helped him to establish a good basis for the solid reflections in this work. Clearly, this habilitation thesis is a turn on a topic that the author already knows, and brings to light new issues as his new close analysis unifies now the study of the metaphor and images schemas as linguistic strategies in Obama's response to the ISIL menace.

The work brings a clear access to the context of the political atmosphere to understand the selected examples. It traces carefully a search for metaphors and images schemas in Obama's political discourse on the ISIL in the period 2014-2016, and makes the reader understand the US led Global Coalition against the ISIL's activities. The study proves Obama's discursive strategies that justify the direct military confrontation between Coalition and ISIL control. The tools for methodology are based on classical approaches to metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and to images schemas by Johnson (1987 and 2018), but they are updated with new voices. Solid studies, such as Sandra Peña Cervel's work in *Journal of Pragmatics* (2008), "Dependency systems for image-schematic patterns in a usage-based approach to language" are taken into account, as much as Ignasi Miró-Sastre's 2017 paper, "Combining Metaphors: From Metaphoric Amalgams to Binary Systems" (*Australian Journal of Linguistics*), among others.

There is a short 7 page introduction, an useful opener for basic ideas and for the goal of the dissertation (which is very well summarized in the abstract and with correct keywords). Clarity of exposition is evident in all chapters which successfully complement the initial ideas. The first theoretical chapter ("Theoretical framework: the theory of metaphor") is a good revision of the state of the question on the metaphor and its use in the political discourse, attending to its pragmatic function and its relevance for ideological purposes. A parallel attempt is provided in chapter 2 devoted to image schemas, where the

author also reveals their use as ideological power tools. Both chapters usefully round up the content with adequate sections of conclusions and prepare the reader for an essential third chapter that frames and clarifies the context of Obama's speeches, with special attention to the register and tone of his discourse. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 offer the core of the research work. They present the practical and careful side of the analysis with a close reading of examples. Chapter 4 selects metaphors thematically (Plant, Cancer, Hunt, War). Chapter 5 focus on the motif of radicalization (how it is represented and how does Obama display the measures against it). The images are well explained as they are grouped in different categories: a) with the schema "source-path-goal", b) with the image of "container" (either "poisoned container", "liquid container", "protection", or the combination of a) and b). Chapter 6 focuses on metaphors and images that Obama uses to refer to territories (either those referred to the ISIL or to those that are/will be lost by their action).

The study is easily read and I have to congratulate the author for the clear and precise use of English that helps to go through the 162 pages (appendix included) without problems. The work keeps a wonderful regular internal coherence as it builds step by step the entrance into the analysis of the examined examples in a well planned structure of the whole dissertation. The requisites for an adequate habilitation thesis are well completed: abstract, introduction, goal and methodology, convincing analysis and complete bibliography. A big amount of materials is offered and organized nicely.

In general, and to sum up, I see this work as a well thought exercise of reflection. Departing from a clear objective, the author describes well the state of the question, applies logically a good set of points of analysis and gets easily to an interesting analysis of a complex discourse based on his focus on metaphor and image schemas. A big amount of critical and theoretical material has been well presented: knowledge of tropes, linguistic terms and international issues are smoothly handled. A thorough revision of critical approaches is offered, the understanding of the rhetorical power of Obama's speeches is clearly proved and the examples offered are enlightening.

I also value the personal, creative touch of this piece of research. From page 1 the author is aware of the power of language: "Language plays a significant role in the process of specifications of actions in the political realm and therefore, it is a part of political activity." Progressively he argues convincingly with a good analytical sense on the value of the linguistic activity and the persuasive use of metaphors and images throughout the work, proving that "Metaphors and image schemas are frameworks that have been applied in discourse studies". His arguments are examples of intelligent reflections, as he is aware

that “these threats and dangers posed a significant challenge to the stability in the area of the Middle East and they could be observed in other parts of the world and in the USA as well” (page 5). His analysis is well supported by a solid knowledge of the theory of conceptual metaphors and image schemas that are introduced and discussed with a coherent set of categories and practical examples of words, expressions and phrases used by Obama.

His use of the appendix at the end is quite useful, as he provides with a long list of all Obama’s political speeches on ISIL. It might be a good idea to include the web links to those speeches, so the reader can have an easy access to them.

The work leaves interesting questions in the air. I miss some more reflections on the reader’s response aspects of the analysis: Have these strategies influence other political speakers? How and when? Can Obama’s discourse be considered model for other leaders? Do other European political leaders use these linguistic strategies similarly? Are they successful? I would like to know if the author has further lines of research in mind related to these questions to explore them in the near future.

All in all, the study offers an excellent view of strategies of the contemporary political world, proving the necessary research that combines the study of Language and Politics, which has also proven an updated topic with Paul Chilton’s book (*Analysing Political Discourse-Theory and Practice*, Routledge, 2025). The habilitation candidate’s contribution is a clever dissertation on how political discourse can lead to persuasion. The relevant study of the perspective of the speaker proves Obama’s emphasis and desire to avoid radicalization. Ultimately, the author proves that the knowledge of linguistic strategies permeates political discourses on military actions and that metaphors and metaphors sustained in image schemas are effective tropes in leaders’ discourses.

I congratulate the author for this work, and I hope that my comments and observations can be useful. My review concludes with a final recommendation to award the title of associate professor to the author of this habilitation thesis, Marek Hampl.

I am submitting my review to the Department of Scientific and Research Activity and Doctoral Study of the Faculty of Arts of Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Šrobárova 2, 040 59 Košice by electronic and snail mail (2 copies), and I am at the disposal of the Department should I need to send further documents.

Signed: María Losada Friend