

Article

Embodiment and Image Schemas: Interpreting the Figurative Meanings of English Phrasal Verbs

Efthymia Tsaroucha

School of Economics and Administrative Sciences, University of Thessaly, 38221 Volos, Greece;
efiaeris@yahoo.gr

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Abstract: The present article suggests that the figurative meanings of English phrasal verbs can be interpreted by means of image schemas. It is argued that image schemas reflect bodily experiences which constitute configurations of spatial perception. The article classifies image schemas and draws examples from English phrasal verbs. The article discusses how the semantics of the particle (which prototypically denotes space and motion) encourages various types of image schemas which can be extended into more abstract and metaphoric readings. The article investigates how English phrasal verbs of the form *take plus particles* encourage the image schemas of CONTAINMENT, THE JOURNEY AND ITS COMPONENT PARTS, GOAL, PATH, PROXIMITY-DISTANCE, LINKAGE-SEPARATION, FRONT-BACK ORIENTATION, PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIP and LINEAR ORDER. The article also argues for image schematic transformations.

Keywords: embodiment; image schemas; image schematic transformations; literal; non-literal; extension; English phrasal verbs

1. Introduction

English phrasal verbs constitute one of the most difficult areas of English grammar as far as their teaching and learning is concerned (cf. Rudzka-Ostyn 2003). Foreign learners of English and even native speakers of English often find it challenging to use and/or interpret the correct phrasal verb within the appropriate context (cf. X 2018). Such difficulties are due to the special grammatical status of English phrasal verbs which derives from the verb plus particle composition (cf. Bolinger 1971, Jackendoff 2002). It is suggested that English phrasal verbs are idiomatic due to the unpredictability of their meanings, since their meanings are not the sum of their component parts (for example, blow over means ‘to pass’ or ‘to finish’) (cf. X 2018, Kohl-Dietrich et al. 2016).

The present paper suggests that the figurative meanings of English phrasal verbs can be interpreted by means of image schemas. It is argued that English phrasal verbs should be studied as composite wholes due to the *verb plus particle* combination. The paper follows Tsaroucha’s (2018) approach to English phrasal verbs, stating that the grammatical category of English phrasal verbs is a special instance of composite structure since English phrasal verbs should be studied as unified constructions. This theory also suggests that within the composite whole of an English phrasal verb, the component particle fills and elaborates the component verb to a greater extent than the reverse could do. Moreover, the present paper suggests that the semantics of the particle encourage image schemas which have a referential basis, since they designate space and motion. It is stated that the figurative meanings of English phrasal verbs emerge due to the extension of the semantics of the particle from literal to more abstract senses.

As far as the methodology is concerned, this paper investigates how the figurative meanings of the English phrasal verbs of the form component verb *take* plus component particle *up, down, in/into,*

out, back, apart can be interpreted by means of different types of image schemas, namely CONTAINMENT, THE JOURNEY AND ITS COMPONENT PARTS, GOAL, PATH, PROXIMITY-DISTANCE, LINKAGE-SEPARATION, FRONT-BACK ORIENTATION, PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIP and LINEAR ORDER. The aforementioned instances of English phrasal verbs were chosen because: (i) *take* is a highly polysemous verb, (ii) *take* denotes physical space, (iii) the particles *up, down, in/into, out, back, apart* prototypically designate space and motion (and later extend into more abstract and figurative senses), (iv) these phrasal verbs exhibit a high degree of frequency of use in everyday speech. The examples were retrieved from the following sources: *Macmillan Dictionary* (online source), *Collins English Dictionary* (online source), *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (online source), *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (online source), *The Free Dictionary* (online source) and COCA (online source).

The analysis shows that the figurative meanings of the English phrasal verbs of the form ‘take’ + particles can be interpreted by means of image schemas. It is suggested that the component particles *up, down, in/into, out, back* and *apart* designate spatial configurations arising from everyday bodily experiences. By means of embodiment, the semantics of the particle shift and are systematically extended to denote more abstract concepts.

2. Theoretical Framework on Image Schemas

2.1. Image Schemas as Gestalts

According to Hampe (2005, pp. 1–2), image schemas are defined as follows:

- Image schemas are directly meaningful (‘experiential’/‘embodied’), pre-conceptual structures, which arise from, or are grounded in, human recurrent bodily movements through space, perceptual interactions, and ways of manipulating objects.
- Image schemas are highly schematic gestalts, which capture the structural contours of sensory-motor experience, integrating information from multiple modalities.
- Image schemas exist as continuous and analogue patterns beneath conscious awareness, prior to and independently of other concepts.
- As gestalts, image schemas are both internally structured, i.e., made up of very few related parts, and highly *flexible*. This flexibility becomes manifest in the numerous transformations they undergo in various experiential contexts, all of which are closely related to perceptual (gestalt) principles.

2.2. Image Schemas as Embodied Experiences

Johnson (1987) suggested that image schemas constitute spatial pre-conceptual configurations arising from everyday bodily experiences. According to him, image schemas reflect the way humans perceive space; spatial perception constitutes a core tenet of humans’ interaction with the environment that further holds for the embodiment of meaning. Johnson (ibid: xiv) stated that an image schema could be defined as a “recurring, dynamic pattern [...] that gives coherence and structure to our experience”. Therefore, image schemas are embodied as they emerge through our continuous interaction with the physical environment and, as a consequence, they are “constantly operating in our perception, bodily movement through space, and physical manipulation of objects” (ibid: 23).

Moreover, Johnson (1987: xv) stated that embodied experience manifests itself at the cognitive level in terms of image schemas; hence, concepts like CONTACT, BALANCE, and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL are meaningful because they derive from and are linked to our interaction with other people and our environment. These embodied concepts are systematically extended to provide more abstract concepts and conceptual domains with structure (ibid: xv). The metaphorical projection from the concrete to the abstract enables the language user to understand physical experience in two ways: i) our bodily movements and interactions in various physical domains of experience are structured (with image schemas) and ii) that structure can be projected by metaphor onto abstract domains (ibid: xv). Lakoff and Johnson (1987) stated that many areas of experience are metaphorically structured by means of a rather small number of image schemas.

2.3. Image Schemas as Spatial Configurations

Tyler and Evans (2005, p. 30) highlighted that image schemas constitute an attempt to understand conceptual structure or concepts, not only as propositional information but also as “[...] redescription of spatio-physical external experience”. Even if a significant portion of the conceptual structure is external in origin, there is further evidence suggesting that “a portion of conceptual structure represents a redescription not of external preparatory experience, but rather of internal perceptory experience” (Grady 1997, Evans 2000 cited in Tyler and Evans 2005, p. 30).

According to de Mendoza Ibáñez and Velasco (2002, p. 508), an image schema functions as “a source input space cued by the metaphorical expression whose basic structure and logic agrees with the structure and logic of generic space”. In their approach, image schemas are grouped into four types, namely (i) abandoned space (or CONTAINER), (ii) PATH, (iii) CONTACT and (iv) bodily orientations (UP-DOWN, FRONT-BACK, CENTER-PERIPHERY) (ibid: 507). Whenever an image schema is involved in an expression, “it provides the basic blueprint for the projection and combination of information from other Idealized Cognitive Models” (ibid: 508). Moreover, according to Taylor (2002, pp. 337–38), the most basic image schemas are: CONTAINMENT, A JOURNEY AND ITS COMPONENT PARTS, PROXIMITY-DISTANCE, LINKAGE-SEPARATION, FRONT-BACK ORIENTATION, PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIP, LINEAR ORDER, UP-DOWN ORIENTATION, MASS vs. MULTIPLEX CONCEPTUALIZATIONS. It should be noted that the present article adopts Taylor’s (ibid) classification of image schemas in order to argue for the cognitive grounding of English phrasal verbs.

Finally, according to Ekberg (2003, p. 25), the structure of image schemas can be seen as a configuration of lexical meaning in the sense that the image-schematic structure constitutes the most abstract basis of the lexical meaning connected to a specific linguistic form. Due to their flexible but at the same time simple structure, image schemas serve as the basis for the meaning of whole categories of words (ibid: 25).

3. Interpreting English Phrasal Verbs by Means of Image Schemas

An image schematic approach to English phrasal verbs suggests that the verb–particle combination reflects bodily experiences. Applying the aforementioned theoretical framework to the grammatical category of English phrasal verbs, it is argued that within the construct of an English phrasal verb, the particle denotes, at a primary level, physical concepts, namely space and motion. However, by means of cognitive processes such as metaphor and metonymy, the prototypical senses of the particle shift and extend into abstract senses. It should be noted that the present paper discusses the interpretation of the figurative meanings of English phrasal verbs which have a metaphoric basis (and not a metonymic one).

For example, in (1) the component particle *apart* in the phrasal verb construct of *take apart* encourages the CONTACT image schema.

1. One evening, some weeks later, I took the cube apart and could not get it back together again (online source: *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*).

In (1), *take apart* means ‘to separate something into all its different parts’. The emergence of the CONTACT image schema indicates that an entity (*the cube*) was taken apart by someone.

In (2), the component particle *apart* in the phrasal verb construct of *take apart* prompts for the BALANCE image schema.

2. He was not ill, he was not well. He had been taken apart, but not quite put back together again (online source: *Corpus of Contemporary American English*).

In (2), *take apart* means ‘not to be in a good mood’. The emergence of the BALANCE image schema indicates that a person is no longer emotionally or mentally well. Therefore, the loss of mental or emotional balance leads to the situation of ‘taking somebody apart’. Hence, the semantics of the particle *apart* shifts from the spatial denotation of ‘breaking contact’ and extend into the non-literal denotation of ‘losing mental balance’.

The following parts discuss how the English phrasal verbs of the form component verb *take* plus component particles *down*, *in*, *on*, *out*, *back* and *apart* encourage various types of image schema. The types of image schema to be discussed are: CONTAINMENT, THE JOURNEY AND ITS COMPONENT PARTS,

GOAL, PATH, PROXIMITY-DISTANCE, LINKAGE-SEPARATION, FRONT-BACK ORIENTATION, PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIP and LINEAR ORDER.

3.1. The CONTAINMENT Image Schema

As far as the CONTAINMENT image schema is concerned, Taylor (2002, p. 337) stated that this image schema evokes, by definition, a container with its inside and outside parts in the domain of a three-dimensional space (see Figure 1). Caballero (2009, pp. 277–78) noted that in contemporary architecture a three-dimensional space can be achieved only through motion, since by moving in space we understand and create space; at the same time, spatial entities create the illusion of moving. According to Caballero (ibid, pp. 278–79), a three-dimensional space indicates that: (i) images of people or vehicles are running along spatial entities, (ii) entity constitutes itself a highly dynamic term, (iii) fictive motion describes spatial scenes involving linear trajectories, such as roads, rivers, streets etc., (iv) metaphors portray the concepts of visual perception and motion.

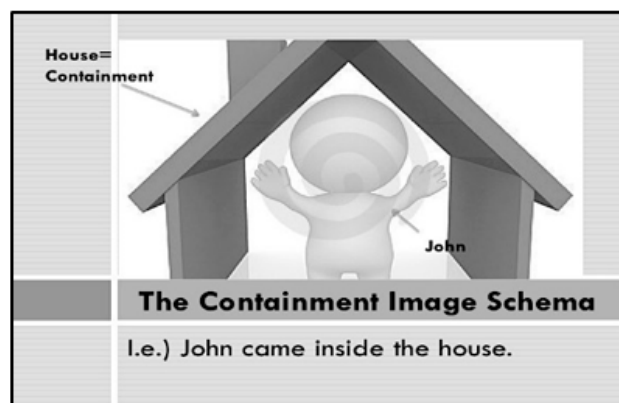


Figure 1. The CONTAINMENT Image Schema.

Taylor (2002, p. 337) observed that the CONTAINMENT image schema is applied metaphorically to a large number of non-spatial domains since linguistic forms and emotions are conceptualized as containers (e.g., *put ideas into words, the contents of an essay, empty words, be in love, fall in love*).

As far as English phrasal verbs are concerned, it is suggested that the CONTAINMENT image schema conveys metaphoric meanings when it is used in sentences like (3) and (4) (see Figures 2 and 3).

3. She took him down during the trial. (= ‘She criticized and humiliated him with her arguments during the trial’, ‘take down= to defeat someone’) (online source: *Cambridge English Dictionary*).

4. Don’t be taken in by their promises. (= to trick someone into believing something that is not true, ‘take in= to be deceived by sb’) (online source: *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*).

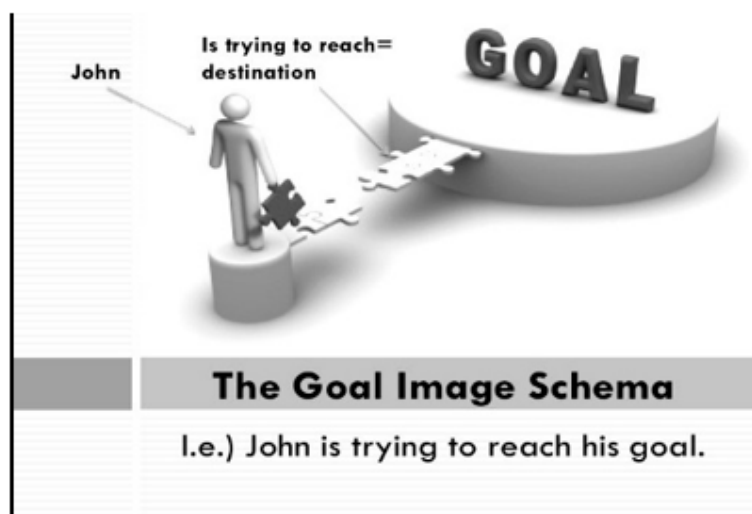


Figure 4. The GOAL Image Schema.

3.2. The Journey and Its Component Parts Image Schema

As far as the JOURNEY AND ITS COMPONENT PARTS image schema is concerned, Taylor (2002, p. 337) suggested that it can be seen as a combination of other sub-schemas, such as PATH, ORIGIN and DESTINATIONS. The JOURNEY AND ITS COMPONENT PARTS image schema denotes possible obstacles and detours on the way. The most representative example of this schema concerns the concept of life, which is frequently conceptualized as a journey (ibid, p. 337).

According to de Mendoza and Velasco (2002), the most important sub-schema of the JOURNEY AND ITS COMPONENT PARTS image schema is PATH. According to them, the structure of the PATH sub-schema involves a source, a destination and a sequence of contiguous locations connecting the source with the destination, and a direction toward the destination (ibid, pp. 510–11). The PATH sub-schema tells us that (i) in order to reach the destination along a path, we must pass through each intermediate point, and (ii) the further along the path one is, the more time has passed since starting (ibid, pp. 510–11). The present paper suggests that the PATH sub-schema can be studied as the GOAL image schema (see Figure 4), since in many cases the reaching of a path simultaneously means the reaching of a goal. The reaching of a goal presupposes the passing of different intermediate points.

As far as English phrasal verbs are concerned, it is suggested that the JOURNEY AND ITS COMPONENT PARTS image schema along with its sub-schemas are triggered by the semantics of the particle, which designate motion and space. Taking into consideration that the journey and its component parts image schema presupposes the reaching of a goal or destination, it is argued that the semantics of the component particle are more dominant than the semantics of the component verb within the composite whole of an English phrasal verb. For example, the particle out means the leaving out of a container (Rudzka-Ostyn 2003). When the particle out is combined with a verb like take, physical motion is designated, because out prototypically denotes processes of removing. In (5), take out means ‘to make a financial or legal arrangement with a bank or company,’ and in (6), take out means ‘to arrange to get something officially’.

5. Before taking a loan out, calculate your monthly outgoings (online source: *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*).

6. I’m thinking of taking out a life insurance policy (online source: *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*).

Despite the fact that *out* has different meanings in (5) and (6), in both examples *out* indicates the reaching of a goal. In (5) *out* indicates (i) the reaching of a goal by means of making a financial arrangement with a bank or company, (ii) the path (or process) of getting money and (iii) the path (or process) of calculating monthly outgoings. In (6) *out* indicates (i) a decision to have a life insurance

policy (=source), (ii) the path (or process) of visiting a service (=insurance company) in order to arrange a particular policy and (iii) the goal of arranging to get something officially (=life insurance policy).

3.3. The Proximity-Distance and the Linkage-Separation Image Schemas

Taylor (2002: 337) stated that the PROXIMITY-DISTANCE image schema shares common characteristics with the CONTAINMENT image schema in the sense that its structure is based on spatial relations and is further projected onto non-spatial domains. According to him (ibid, p. 337), the most distinctive feature of the PROXIMITY-DISTANCE image schema is the degree of emotional involvement which, together with the possibility of mutual influence, can be understood in terms of proximity (e.g., *a close friend*, *a close advisor* etc.). He also noted that the LINKAGE-SEPARATION image schema shares common characteristics with the PROXIMITY-DISTANCE image schema because of the degree of emotional involvement which reflects either the concept of proximity (e.g., *keep in touch*) or distance (e.g., *break social/family ties* etc.) (ibid, p. 337).

As far as English phrasal verbs are concerned, it is suggested that both the PROXIMITY-DISTANCE image schema and the LINKAGE-SEPARATION image schema embody the spatial properties of the component particles which extend into more abstract senses. The concept of emotional involvement licenses this type of extension from spatial to abstract senses. Despite their spatial senses, the concepts of linkage, separation, proximity and distance communicate emotional denotations because they indicate a subject's involvement into an idea, relation, event, activity, situation etc. In (7), the English phrasal verb *take on* means 'to accept or undertake some task, burden, or responsibility'.

7. I've taken on a new project at work in addition to my normal responsibilities (online source: *The Free Dictionary*).

According to Rudzka-Ostyn (2003), the particle *on* prototypically denotes contact. In (7), however, the particle *on* indicates that somebody is linked, involved or engaged with a particular task or project. Figure 5 illustrates the co-instantiation of the PROXIMITY-DISTANCE and LINKAGE-SEPARATION image schemas.

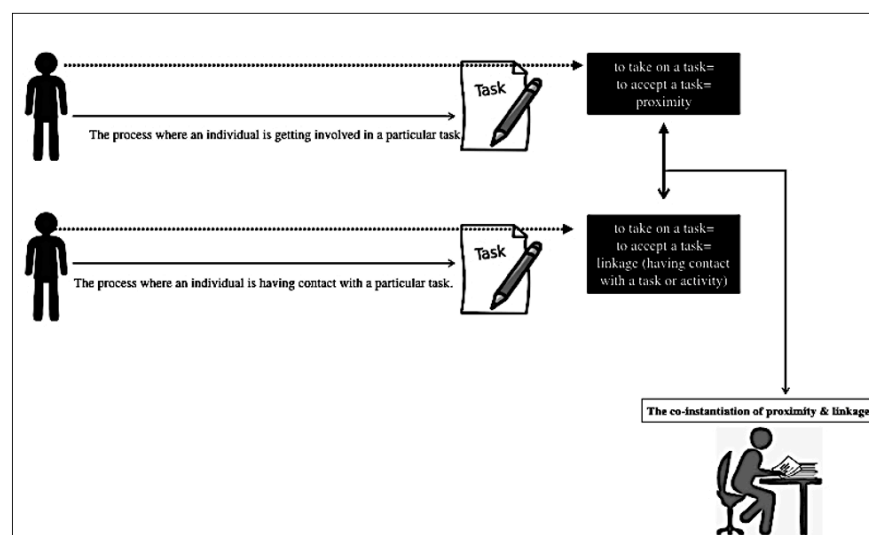


Figure 5. *Take on*; the co-instantiation of the PROXIMITY-DISTANCE and the LINKAGE-SEPARATION image schemas.

Figure 5 illustrates the co-instantiation of the PROXIMITY-DISTANCE and the LINKAGE-SEPARATION image schemas in the sentence *I've taken on a new project at work in addition to my normal responsibilities*. These image schemas are encouraged by the English phrasal verb *take on*. The concept of proximity is encouraged because the English phrasal verb *take on* designates the process where an individual is getting involved in a particular activity; in the context *I've taken on a new project at work in addition to*

my normal responsibilities., ‘to take on a project’ means ‘to accept a project’. In the same context the concept of linkage is encouraged because *take on* denotes the process where an individual is having contact with a particular task (‘to take on a project’ means ‘to accept a project’).

3.4. The FRONT-BACK ORIENTATION Image Schema

The FRONT-BACK ORIENTATION image schema constitutes the most representative schema of embodied meaning because it reflects—in terms of orientation—the structure of the human body. As Taylor (2002, p. 337) pointed out, the front of the human body is that side on which major sensory organs, especially the eyes and the heart are located. The concept of time is also dominant in this image schema. What is normally positioned in front of an event is what happens before the event, and what is behind of an event is what happens after the event (ibid, pp. 337–38). Taylor also claimed the UP-DOWN ORIENTATION image schema is similar with the FRONT-BACK ORIENTATION image schema due to the concept of spatial orientation which occurs in a gravitational field (ibid, p. 338).

In (8), the FRONT-BACK ORIENTATION image schema is triggered by the semantics of the component particle *back* within the construct of *take back*.

8. I took the book back to the library (online source: *The Free Dictionary*).

In (8), the semantics of the particle *back* has a literal meaning, because *take back* means ‘to move something back in its previous location. In (9), *take back* has a non-literal meaning since it means ‘the change of an attitude, to retract something stated, written, or done’. Therefore, in (9), the FRONT-BACK ORIENTATION image schema extends from the literal structure of the human body into more abstract senses.

9. What a terrible thing to say—I demand that you take it back (online source: *The Free Dictionary*).

3.5. The part-whole relationship Image Schema

According to Taylor (2002, p. 338), the PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIP image schema (see Figure 6) indicates that the whole consists of parts arranged in a specific configuration. Therefore, the separation or rearrangement of the parts results in the destruction of the whole (e.g., *split up*, *break up*, *come together*) (ibid, p. 338).

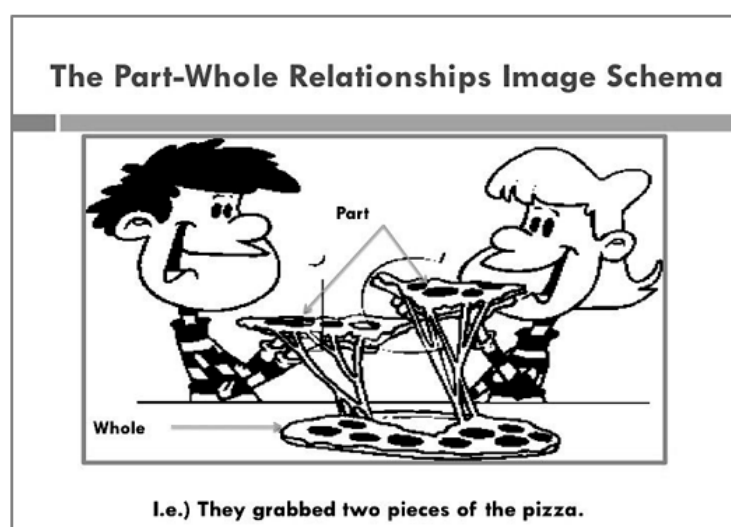


Figure 6. The PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIP Image Schema.

Applying this image schema to the interpretation of English phrasal verbs, it is suggested that in (10) the component particle *apart* encourages the PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIP image schema in the phrasal verb construct of *take apart* because *apart* reflects the separation of a whole. In (10), *take apart*

means ‘to separate something into the different parts that it is made of’. In (11), the component particle *up* encourages the PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIP image schema in the phrasal verb construct of *take up* because *up* communicates the activity of rearrangement. In (11), *take up* means ‘to continue to discuss or deal with an idea, problem, or suggestion’.

10. When the clock stopped, he took it apart and found what was wrong (online source: *Collins Dictionary*).

11. She fell silent, and her brother took up the story (online source: *Macmillan Dictionary*).

3.6. The LINEAR ORDER Image Schema

According to Taylor (2002: 338), in the LINEAR ORDER image schema, objects are positioned in a one-dimensional line in terms of their increasing distance from an observer. Applying this image schema to the interpretation of English phrasal verbs, it is suggested that the LINEAR ORDER image schema shares similar characteristics with the PROXIMITY-DISTANCE and the FRONT-BACK ORIENTATION image schema. Linearity expresses proximity and distance because it shows how an observer views a figure.

12. This song always takes me back to my childhood (online source: *Macmillan Dictionary*).

In (12), the English phrasal verb *take back* means ‘to remember’. The LINEAR ORDER image schema (see Figure 7) is encouraged by the particle *back*. On the grounds of linearity, speakers connect *take back* with the subject *this song* and *childhood*. In (12), the observer views the figure from a short distance because he/she is in a position to associate the figure with something else (probably with a particular situation) that happened in the past. Figure 7 shows that the concept of linearity is linked to proximity because the observer makes an association between a *song* and his/her *childhood*. Moreover, the image schema of LINEAR ORDER has a metaphoric reading in the context *this song always takes me back to my childhood* because the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MOTION is encouraged. The English phrasal verb *take back* indicates MOTION in the source domain and *childhood* indicates TIME in the target domain of the evoked conceptual metaphor.

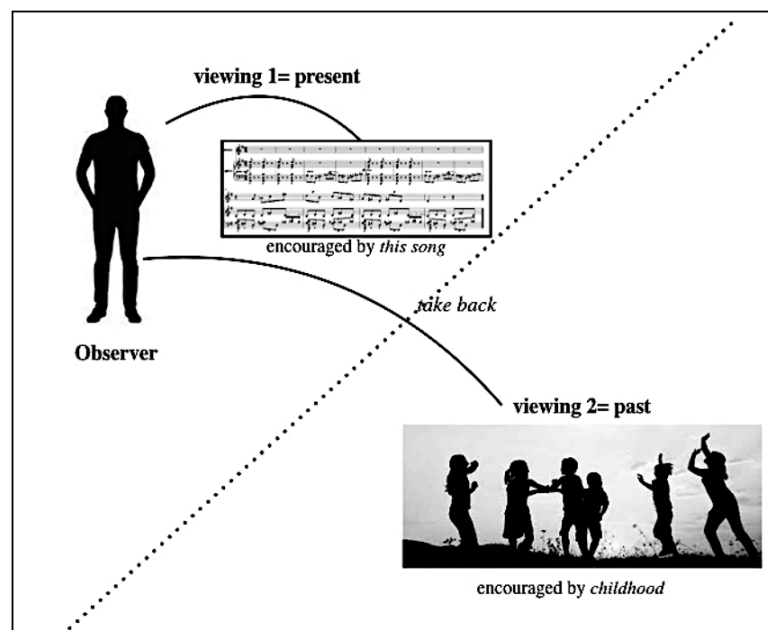


Figure 7. *Take back*; The metaphoric reading of the LINEAR ORDER image schema.

4. Image Schematic Transformations

The present section argues for image schematic transformations and attempts to explain how the image schematic structure is altered by means of metaphor and metonymy. A review of the literature states that meaning variants of the same lexeme are (implicitly or explicitly) regarded as separate senses (cf. Lakoff 1987; Dewell 1994, 1997; Ekberg 1995). Image schematic transformations were studied by means of polysemy. For instance, Lakoff (1987) explained how the senses of the particle *over* prompt two different types of image schema. According to him, *over* prompts the PATH image schema in the context *Sam walks over the bridge*, as well as the END-POINT FOCUS image schema in the context *Sam lives over the bridge*.

According to Ekberg (2003, p. 29), image schemas can undergo transformations due to cognitively founded operations which change the structure of the schema in a non-arbitrary way. The following list of image schematic transformations is based on Ekberg's (2003) approach. Ekberg's (ibid) theory adopts ideas from various approaches concerning embodiment and image schematic transformations (cf. Lakoff 1987; Dewell 1994; Ekberg 1995, 1997, 2001).

- **Multiplex/mass:** A multiplex collection of objects can be construed as a continuous mass or as a one-dimensional entity. For example, *He poured the peas or the juice out on the table*. The multiplex-mass transformation is based on visual perception since a collection of objects (*peas, juice*) is perceived as a mass at a specific distance.
- **Multiplex TR/multiplex paths:** A single REFLEXIVE TRAJECTOR (TR) which moves in various directions can be construed as tracing a multiplex of paths covering the LANDMARK (LM). This schema is linked to a schema with a multiplex TR covering the LM. For example, *the guards were posted all over the hill, I walked all over the hill*.
- **Segment profiling:** An expression which designates a path refers to a profiled segment of a path (Dewell 1994). For example, *he walked around the corner* (*around* profiles a semicircular segment), *the sun came up over the mountains* (*over* profiles an upward trajectory) and *Sam fell over the cliff* (*over* profiles a downward trajectory). This transformation is an instance of a whole-for-part relationship and is based on humans' ability to focus on something both visually and mentally.
- **Reflexive trajectory:** The relationship that holds between two separate entities, TR and LM, may be transformed into a relationship holding between different parts of the same entity, such as the TR. For example, *he walked around the block, or he turned around*.
- **Mental rotating:** The mental rotating of an oriented path or axis has a direct counterpart in the physical manipulation of objects. An instance of this general operation is the transformation of a vertical axis into a horizontal axis, which is lexically manifested by the use of vertical expressions that refer to horizontal movements (eg, *He walked up and down the corridor*) (Ekberg 1997).

Applying Ekberg's (2003) theory to English phrasal verbs, it is suggested that in (13), *take down* triggers the MULTIPLEX/MASS image schematic transformation.

13. They took down the points. (=they kept notes)

In (13), the MULTIPLEX/MASS image schematic transformation is based on visual perception, since a collection of objects (*the points*) is perceived as a mass at a specific distance (probably a board).

In (14), *take in* prompts for the MULTIPLEX TR/MULTIPLEX PATHS image schematic transformation.

14. I'm not sure how much of his explanation she took in. (=to understand and remember something that you hear or read)

In (14), a single TR (the speaker=*she*) is (mentally) moving in various directions (she is trying to process ideas). The TR can be construed as tracing a multiplex of paths such as different ideas, beliefs and arguments. The TR moves in multiple locations (abstract) within the LM.

In (15), *take in* encourages the SEGMENT PROFILING image schematic transformation.

15. My dad took in the three homeless kittens. (=to adopt an animal)

In (15), *take in* designates a the process of adopting animals (=PATH). *Take in* refers to a profiled segment of a PATH, since it profiles an inwards trajectory (=in).

In (16), *take apart* encourages the REFLEXIVE TRAJECTOR (TR) image schematic transformation.

16. The fire took the house apart. (=to destroy)

In (16), TR and LM are transformed into a relationship of holding between different parts of the same entity (ie, the TR). The TR (*the fire*) is interrelated with the LM (*the house*).

In (17), *take off* licenses the MENTAL ROTATING image schematic transformation because the figure (*the plane*) moves both upwards and horizontally.

17. The airplane took off. (=to depart for a plane)

The aforementioned image schematic transformations highlight the dominance of spatial associations. According to Langacker (1987, p. 225), spatial associations instantiate the basic conceptual relation of association. Johnson (1987) hypothesized that if transformations of image schemas are analogs of spatial operations, such as manipulations of physical objects, it should be possible to predict which transformations a specific schema may undergo. Hence, we could assume that the image schema of SPATIAL ASSOCIATION might apply to a range of image schematic transformations. As Ekberg (2003, p. 33) pointed out, the image schema of SPATIAL ASSOCIATION can be seen as a superordinate schema “embracing a variety of relational predicates encoded as prepositions, adverbs, and verbs, in turn based on various subordinate schemas”. We should note that the image schema of SPATIAL ASSOCIATION is similar with Hawkins’s (1993, p. 339) ‘profilable structure’ which is a primitive cognitive structure that exists “innately in the human mind before the process begins of acquiring substantive information in particular cognitive domains”.

Finally, the image schema of SPATIAL ASSOCIATION does not underlie any specific lexical concept, but rather generates the image schemas which structure lexical concepts (Ekberg 2003, p. 33). According to Langacker (1987, p. 230), particles (such as *at*, *with*, *together*, *between*, *near*) constitute lexemes which prototypically denote spatial association; at an abstract level, these lexemes are connected to each other due to the image schema of SPATIAL ASSOCIATION (Figure 8).

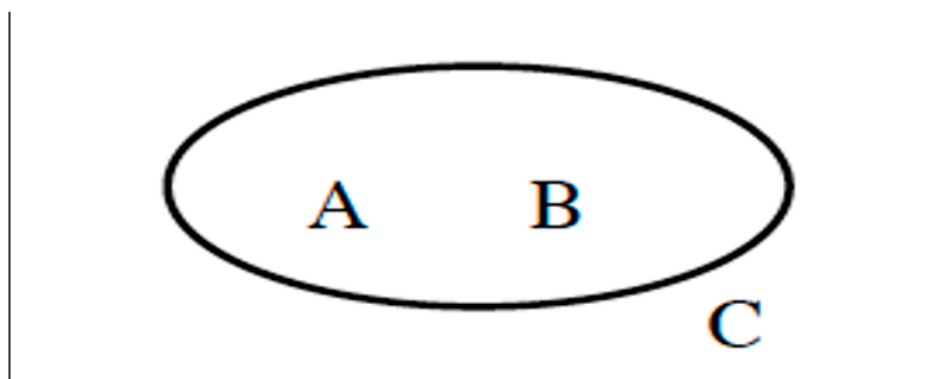


Figure 8. The image schema of SPATIAL ASSOCIATION (reprinted from Langacker 1987).

As Figure 8 illustrates, A and B are equal to Langacker’s (1987) TR and LM, whereas C is a construed—primarily spatial—region which includes both A and B (Ekberg 2003, p. 33). For example, in (18), C is a region which includes a TR (*he*) and a LM (*bridge*).

18. He stood near the bridge.

We could also assume that in (19), C (*the cinema*) is a region within the visual that includes A (*he*) and B (*Jane*).

19. He took Jane out to the cinema.

5. Conclusions

This article suggested that the meanings of English phrasal verbs could be interpreted by means of image schemas. It was discussed that image schemas embody bodily experiences since they serve as configurations of spatial and motional concepts. It was argued that, within the construct of an English phrasal verb, the semantics of the component particle encourage the emergence of image

schemas. The article followed Taylor's (2002) theory and attempted to explain how the figurative meanings of the English phrasal verbs of the form *take plus particles* could be interpreted by means of the image schemas of CONTAINMENT, THE JOURNEY AND ITS COMPONENT PARTS, GOAL, PATH, PROXIMITY-DISTANCE, LINKAGE-SEPARATION, FRONT-BACK ORIENTATION, PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIP and LINEAR ORDER. The article has also attempted to apply Ekberg's (2003) theory concerning image schematic transformations to English phrasal verbs and discussed the transformations of the PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIP, PATH and MULTIPLEX-MASS image schemas.

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