
Reference Point Phenomena in English and Kurdish: A comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

An analysis of reference point phenomena in Kurdish and English is presented in this article. In order to find out differences and similarities between Kurdish and English, the study compares both languages' reference points. A variety of grammatical phenomena, including prototype, figure/ ground, definite article, metonymy, pronominal anaphora, possessive constructions, topic and topic-like constructions, are explored and described according to Langacker's reference-point model. All of these structures have the feature that one salient thing acts as a cognitive reference point, allowing the mind access to a less salient, connected entity. The definite article in Kurdish is expressed by an added clitic. It seems that in Kurdish, *ezafe* and possessive pronoun clitics serve as relational identifiers between the target and reference point.

1. Introduction

The process of conceptualizing is inherently dynamic. It is made up of brain processing activities and develops through time. A conceptualizer can use one conceptualized entity as a reference point for making mental contact with

another, which is referred to as the target. As a result, the concept of a reference point connection entails a mental access sequence. One entity is accessed or cognitively interacted with by way of another, or thinking about one entity helps imagine another. It is a source-path-goal image schema that helps to scan mentally from one point to another. The reference point has some cognitive salience that is either innate or determined by the context. Thus, the semantic and grammatical structure of an utterance may depend heavily on the reference-point function (Langacker, 2017, p. 177).

Reference point phenomena is elaborated by numerous English scholars and Linguists. In Kurdish Language little interest is generated to it. Fatah and Aghal, 2022, have addressed “Possessive Constructions” in central Kurdish. This study will present a contrastive examination of phenomena in English and Kurdish, with the goal of identifying parallels and contradicts between the two languages. Daily expressions and "rudaw.net" is used for data analysis. Several different grammatical phenomena are explored and described using Langacker's reference-point model. The grammatical phenomena of prototype, figure/ground, the definite article, metonymy, pronominal anaphora, possessive constructions, and topic will constitute the main scope of this paper. The investigation starts with the prototype as a point of reference.

2. Prototype

Cognitive psychologists have demonstrated that belonging to a category is not a binary decision; rather, categories have ambiguous boundaries and prototypical structure. More prototypical category members serve as Cognitive Reference Points that non-prototypical category members are compared against. For example, in describing non-prototypical members of color category it can be referred to something as a good red, reddish, red-like, an off-red, the best example of red, sort of red, slightly red, yellowish-red, and so on. All of these constructions indicate the degree to which the color in question resembles an ideal prototype example of the root color red term. A good red has a high degree

of similarity to some red standard. Something that is sort of red or slightly red is, to a lesser extent, an approximation to this norm (Tribushinina,2008, p. 1).

• بۆیه پېشنيارى ئهوه دهكرت كه ژوورى نووستن و گهراوى خوشووشتن، به رهنكى شين، به تايبه تيش به رهنكى شينى كال (ئاسمانى) بۆيه بكرين .

- Boye pêşiniyarî ewe dekirêt ke jûrî nûstin û germawî xoşowşitin, be rengî şîn, be taybetîş be rengî şînê kal (asimanî) boye bikrên.
- Therefore, it is recommended that bedroom and bathroom be painted blue, especially light blue (sky blue).

In such expressions if someone asks what color is sky blue, it can be said it's a sort of blue. Blue is used as a reference point for explaining the sky blue or light blue.

3. The Ground as Reference Point

Talmy found the figure/ground difference in Gestalt psychology and applied it to cognitive linguistics (1972, 2000)., A figure is viewed or conceptualized in relation to the ground. In contrast to the figure, the ground is often bigger, more recognizable, permanently placed, readily perceptible, and of less importance. These entities allow us to say that the ground serves as a reference "point," giving us mental access to a figure that is more important but harder to identify. Consider this example from Langacker; when someone says; "Do you see that boat out there in the lake? There's a bird in the water right next to it", it is attempted to draw the listener's attention to the bird, yet the listener may be unable to see the bird. They might not be able to find it if it is merely said, "Look at that bird!" However, because the boat is considerably larger, it is simple to notice it. The boat which is the ground serves as a visual reference point for locating the bird, the figure. Another example is; "Do you remember the surgeon we met at your sister's party? His wife just had twins". In this instance, too, the surgeon serves as a conceptual reference point, while the wife serves as

the target, or the person to whom the speaker wishes the listener to pay attention (Langacker, 2017, p. 177, 1993, p. 6).

Consider the following example;

Mike is taller than Jim.

Jim is shorter than Mike.

In the first example Mike is the figure and Jim is the ground. The height of Jim, namely the ground is used as the reference point to describe the height of Mike but in the second example Mike is the ground and is used as the reference point for the height of Jim. They construe the same situation differently though they are truth conditionally identical. They differ in terms of the figure/ground alignment.

- بَلْدِگۆکانی بهرامبهر مزگهوتی گهورهی سلیمانی لابران.
- Billindgokanî beramber mazgoewtî gewreyi slêmanî labran.
- Loud speakers in front of the Great Mosque of Suleimani were removed.

In this Kurdish example, the ground "mazgoewtî gewreyi slêmanî" serves as a reference point for loud speakers (Billindgokan).

Ground is commonly used in Kurdish to indicate an address. For example;

- ههولێر - لهنگه‌ی نوێ - تهنیشت ماجدی مۆل - نزیک شوقةکانی هانا ستی.
- Hewlêr - lengeyi nwê - tenîşit macdî moll - nzîk şuqekanî hana stî.
- Erbil – New secondhand-market - Next to Majidi Mall - Near Hana City Apartments.

In this illustration, the phrases "near Hana city" and "next to Majidi Mall" serve as the Ground and do not constitute a part of the address, but are provided as a point of reference to make it simpler to locate the address.

In English as in Kurdish plainly recognizable tangible objects are frequently employed as markers to pinpoint where something else is. So, for example, if someone were to give directions to a specific restaurant, they might say, "Go downtown, look for the big bank tower, and the restaurant is in the next block." It is therefore simple to locate the large bank tower, and once they do, it will be simple to locate the restaurant.

4. Definite Article as Reference Point

The use of definite article in English is also a type of reference point phenomena. A definite article is frequently used to introduce the discourse referent: "He picked up a pencil. The pencil was broken." So, the definite article may be used by saying "the pencil" since there is only one instance of pencil that has been presented in the discourse, and it is the only occurrence that is truly within the scope of attention. However, there are times when the definite article is used when the referent has not been mentioned previously. For example, in: "I would never buy this house. The roof leaks badly". There is a mental image of what a house looks like and it will be understood that a house has a roof and that a normal house has only one roof. As a result of human's cognitive model of houses and the fact that a house is brought into the conversation, there's just one instance of roof that stands out and is immediately accessible. The house is the reference point and the roof is the target (Langacker, 2017, p. 179).

• وا بڕیاره له چهند مانگی داهاتوودا، وهزارهتی گواستنهوه وگه یاندنی هه ریمی کوردستان،

پڕۆژهی تاکسیمیتەر جیبه جیبکات، پڕۆژه که دانانی ئامییری بیوانی کیلۆمه تره.

- Wa birriyare le çend mangî dahatûda, wezaretî gwastinewe û geyandinî herêmi kurdistan, prrojeyi taksîmîter cêbecêbikat, prrojeke dananî amêrî pêwanî kîlometire.

- It has been decided that the Ministry of Transport and Communication of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is going to implement the taximeter project in the coming months. The project is the installation of odometers.

In this example the definite article (ke) which is bound to the word "prroje" functions as the reference point for taximeter project. The listeners and speakers already have mental contact with the target in the first sentence but in the second sentence through the reference point (Ke) they will be directed for the second time to have access to the profile determinant. The use of definite article is for the sake of avoiding repetition.

5. Metonymy as reference point

In a paradigmatic relationship among elements of structures, metonymy has reference point manifestations. In metonymy we use one thing to refer to another thing that is linked to it or may be reached mentally through it. For example, when we say "Chicago has just won another championship", the team is referred to as "Chicago". A well-chosen metonymic term enables us to mention one prominent and simply coded thing and so recall virtually automatically a target that is either of lower interest or difficult to describe. This is possible because of our capacity to use reference points. In "I am Reading Homer", Homer is used as a point of reference for his own work, which is subsequently given the spotlight while the poet is relegated to the background as a result (Ibáñez, 2021, p. 208).

Consider the following example;

Give me a red pencil. In this expression a red pencil does not necessarily have to be red; it might just leave red writing traces on paper. Thus, the red pencil is a point of reference for the red marks on a paper. In fact, red mark is an active zone which is associated with the red pencil and is not necessarily a subpart of it but falls within its domain. Or in the following example:

- Vietnam marked a turning point in American history.

The term "Vietnam" doesn't actually refer to the country itself, but rather to a conflict that took place there. Coherence requires that the subject names an event, and current historical knowledge makes it clear which event is intended. The country's name immediately brings up the battle to the mind due to its strong connection.

In the same way just like English we have in Kurdish Language metonymy as reference point to recall virtually the targets which in this example are the teams. In the second example human rights watch functions as access point for the organization.

- بايرن وبارسلۆنا رووبه‌رووی یه‌کده‌بنه‌وه.
- Bayrin û Barsêlona rûberruwî yekdebinewe.
- Bayern and Barcelona will face each other.
- هیومن رایتس ووچ ره‌خه‌ له‌ که‌نه‌دا ده‌گریت.
- Hiyyumin rayts woç rexine le keneda degrêt.
- Human Rights Watch criticizes Canada.

6. Pronominal anaphora as reference point

In; "Zelda's quilt is beautiful. Everyone likes it" the antecedent "Zelda's quilt" functions as a reference point for the pronoun "it" and "it" is the target. In the sense that we utilize the reference point to figure out what the pronoun refers to, we mentally grasp the pronoun via reference point.

Sometimes the anaphor comes before the antecedent like "In his pocket, Sam keeps a frog". In such cases it is called cataphor and the antecedent called postcedent. In this example the prominence is shifted from Sam to his pocket. Although the target is mentioned first, we gain mental access to it when we reach the reference point Sam.

- شارهوانیی ئیستهنبوول کاروانی یه که می هاوکارییه کانی ناردووته شاری هاتای وده لیت،
به رده وام دهبن له وه رگرتنی هاوکارییه کان.

- Şarewanîyi îstenbûll karwanî yekemî hawkarîyekanî narduwete şarî hatayi û dellêt, berdewam debin le wergirtinî hawkarîyekan.
- The Istanbul Municipality has sent the first convoy of aid to Hatay and says they will continue to receive the aids.

In this example the clitic (in) is attached to the verb (berdewam debin) is used as a double subject but the first subject is omitted (ewan).

7. The topic as reference point

A topic serves as a reference point in conversation, pointing the listener in the direction of the relevant reference of knowledge to comprehend the intended statement. The target of topics is a proposition as opposed to possessives and pronominal anaphora, where the target is a thing.

- That mural, I really hate it.

That mural which is the topic functions as reference point and the finite clause “I really hate it” is the target. This composite structure has two profiles; one is the reference point and the other is the target process. This is due to the fact that the expression consists of two attentional frames, each of which is a window of attention with a distinct attentional focus. Such expressions in Kurdish are very rare.

8. Possessives as reference point

Possessive constructions are relational structures created by a person's capacity to use one thing as a reference point (the possessor) and connect it to another thing (the possessed) that is referred to as a profile determinant. Therefore, the reference point creates a connection between the things. This relationship serves as an abstract scanning that enables us to reach one point conceptually in terms of another.



In the examples “the boy’s shoes” or “the cat’s paw” the possessor is the reference point and the possessed is the target. Thus, paw is the target and the cat is the reference point. The possessor of the boy's shoe is a noun phrase, which is followed by a word that denotes the possessed. The whole thing is a noun phrase, with the same profile as the possessed noun. As a result, the focus is the complete expression's profile, much as the boy's shoe refers to the shoe. At the level of the overall expression, the possessor is unprofiled. We can conclude that, the profiled target is a possessive construction property.

Possessive constructions include ownership, kinship, and part- whole relations. A kinship term's basic task is to place persons in relation to a reference person both socially and genetically ("ego"). For example, in “my uncle”, the uncle is under a specific relation to ego, the uncle. In the same way only in relation to the whole can a part be understood, and this serves as a natural reference point for its identification. In “the door’s key” for instance the door indicates the reference point and the key our profile determinant. In ownership examples, the owner is invoked as a natural mental address for the items he/she owns.

One of the uses of analyzing possessives as reference point is that in some periphrastic uses of possessives such as Lincoln’s assassination, Lincoln is concrete and we can easily refer to him but the event of assassination is abstract and also, we cannot refer to the event without its participants. Thus, the participants act as a point of reference for establishing mental contact with a process and stabilize its notion.

Typically, access direction is associated with certain natural paths, going from the reference to the target rather than the other way around. We refer to the rat's tail rather than the tail’s rat. But occasionally both directions are possible, although they create different meanings, when the two entities are equal like in the doctor’s lawyer and the lawyer’s doctor. The doctor’s lawyer is a lawyer who defends the doctor but the lawyer’s doctor is a doctor who treats the lawyer.

Thus, possessives provide the semantic characterization of grammatical notions, for instance, we recognize a kinship relationship, such as a cousin, by mentally following a path from the reference person via the linked relatives to the profiled target.

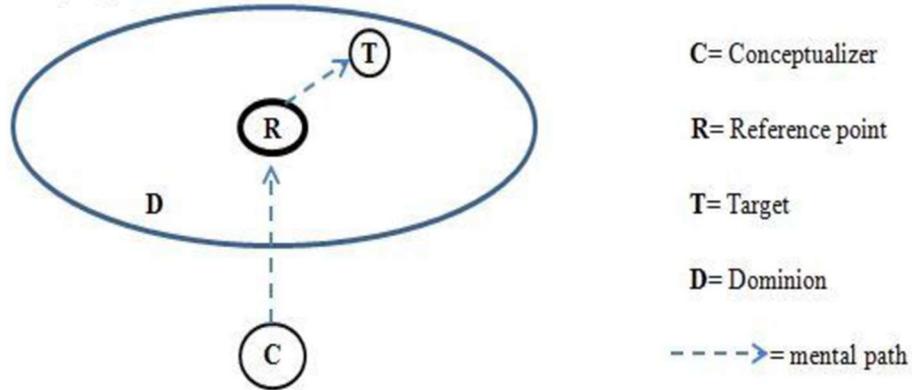


Figure (1): Description of Reference Point Model (Langacker, 1993, 6)

- بابایی ده شلێت، نرخێ کتێبه‌که‌ی نزیکه‌ی 12 یۆرۆیه.
- Babayî deşllêt, nrxî ktêbekeyi nzikeyi 12 yoroye.
- Babayi also says that his book's price is about 12 euros.

In this expression the Ezafe (i) functions as the possessive. It covers the domain of ownership. Sometimes other domains could be covered by ezafe (i) like: part-whole

- (دکتۆر) باسی ژانی پاژنه‌ی پێیه‌کان ده‌کات.
- (dktor)basî janî pajneyi pêyekan dekat.
- The doctor talks about ankle pain.

8.1 Kinship

• ئېرلېنگ ھالاند، ئەستېرەي نەروىجى ويانەي مانچېستەر سىتى ھۆكارى پەيوەندىنە كوردنى كۆرەكەي بە يانەي رىيال مەدرىدى ئېسپانى ئاشكرا دەكات.

- Erling Haland, estêreyi nerwîcî û yaneyi mançêster sîtî hokarî peywendînekrdinî kurrekey be yaneyi riyal medrîdî îspanî aşkra dekat.
- Erling Haaland, the star of Norway and the club of Manchester City, has revealed the reason of his son's unconnected to the Spain's Real Madrid.

The izafe is attached to the possessee and as we can notice izafe is highly schematic and is used for different semantic and grammatical constructions.

	First Person	Second Person	Third Person
Singular	M → My	T → Your	y → His/her
Plural	Man → Our	Tan → Your	yan → Their

Figure (2): The Possessive Pronouns Clitics in Kurdish (Fatah & Aghal 2022, p. 159)

• ئېمە بە رېژەي 30% پىشتمان بە ئەوروپا بەستووہ. دابىنكارىيى سەرەكىمان ئەلمانىا وفەرەنسايە

- Ême be rêjeyi 30% piştman be ewrupa bestuwe. dabînkariyi serekîman ellmaniya û ferensaye.
- In our imports we depend on Europe 30% ratio; Our main suppliers are Germany and France.

The clitic (Man) is directly attached to the noun and adjective and sometimes it is attached to the definite article; “man” functions as reference point and “pişt” (back) and “dabînkarîyi”(suppliers) are the profile determinant. “Serekî “(the main) is the elaboration site which makes the target more specific. If there is more than one adjective in the sentence then the clitic is attached to the last adjective.

- دابینکاری سه ره کی متمانه پیکراومان ئەلمانیا و فەرەنسایه .
- dabînikarî serekî mtmanepêkrawman ellmaniya û ferenisaye.
- Our main trusted suppliers are Germany and France.
- کۆلێرا نه خۆشییەکی به کتیراییه، له پێی ئاو یان ماددهی خۆراکیی خاوه وه دهگوازیته وه. 80% ی ئهوانه ی دهیگرن نیشانه ی نه خۆشییه که یان نییه.
- kolêra nexošîyekî bektiryayiye, lerrêyi aw yan madideyi xorakîyi xawewe degwazirêtewe. 80%-î ewaneyi deygirin nîşaneyi nexošîyekeyan nîye.
- Cholera is a bacterial disease, transmitted through water or raw food. 80% of those who get it have no symptoms of the disease.

The clitic “yan” is attached to the definite article “ke” in this example.

Both ezafe (i) and possessive pronoun clitics are regarded as relational markers between the target and the reference point.

Sometimes we encounter double ezafe constructions for example:

- په نجه ره ی مالی دراوسیمان
- Pencereyi mali drawsêman
- The window of our neighbour’s house

The conceptualizer begins with the first target entity, “pencere” (window), and establishes a mental connection through the reference point. “Pencere” is a component of “mal” (home), and this is an example of part-whole relationship.

The conceptualizer then makes a second mental connection with the reference point “drawsêman” (our neighbour). As the conceptualizer approaches the neighbouring reference point, ownership of both “pencere” and “mal” is established. The listener comes to the conclusion that only the neighbour has access to this privilege. This design emphasizes how important reference point organization is in possessive construction by showing how each entity in this construction depends on the reference point to form the connection (Fatah& Aghal, 2022, p. 161).

In English too we have similar constructions;

- Sue’s father’s friend’s son’s summerhouse (Radden & Dirven, 2007, p. 103)

According to Langacker, we might refer to this situation as having a chain of possessive reference points (Langacker, 2013, p. 85).

As the reference point for the target, her father, we first mentally access Sue. After taking control, Sue's father entirely changes course to serve as the point of access for a new target, his friend in Sue's father's friend. Up until we reach the last target, the summerhouse, the chain of reference points continues (Abdulla, 2019, p. 100).

9. Conclusion:

It is clear from comparing the two languages that the reference point phenomena in both languages are very similar, with the only difference being in the structure of the constructions. The color prototype, which was described in the section on prototypes, was used as a reference in both languages. Both languages have used the ground as a reference point, but in Kurdish it is more common than in English, especially when giving addresses. In Kurdish, the definitive article is represented by an attached clitic. There was no difference when metonymy was used. In Kurdish, pronouns are used as clitics. Both ezafe



and possessive pronoun clitics are thought to be relational markers between the target and reference point in Kurdish.

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ديارده كاني خالي ئامازه به زماني ئينگليزي و كوردى: ليكۆلينه وهيه كى به راوردكارى

پوخته:

شيكاربييهك بو ديارده كاني خالي ئامازه به زماني كوردى و ئينگليزي له م تويزينه وهيه هدا ده خريته پروو. به مه به ستي دوزينه وهى جياوازي وليكچوون له زماني كوردى و ئينگليزيدا، تويزينه وه كه خاله ئامازه پيكر اوه كاني ههردوو زمانه كه به راورد ده كات. جوړه ها دياردهى ريزماني، له وانه ئامرازي ناسيني دياريكراو، ميتونيمى، ئانافوراي ناوى، بنياتتاني خاوه نداري تي، بنياتتاني هاوشيوه ي بابته و بابته، به به كار هيناني موديلي خالي ئامازه ي لانگا كه رده كو لرينه وه و وه سف ده كرين. هه موو نه م بيكه اتانه نه و تاييه تمه ندييه يان هه يه كه شتيكي ديار وه ك خاليكي ئامازه ي دركي كارده كات، كه ريگه به هزرو بيرمان ديدات بگاته بوونيكي كه متر ديار و به ستراو.

الظواهر المرجعية في اللغة الإنجليزية والكردية: دراسة مقارنة

الملخص:

يقدم هذا المقال تحليلاً لظاهرة النقطة المرجعية باللغتين الكردية والإنجليزية. من أجل إيجاد الاختلافات والتشابهات في اللغتين الكردية والإنجليزية، تقارن الدراسة النقاط المرجعية لكلا اللغتين. يتم استكشاف ووصف مجموعة متنوعة من الظواهر النحوية، بما في ذلك المادة التعريفية، والكناية، والجاذبية الضمنية، والتركيبات الملكية، والموضوع والتركيبات الشبيهة بالموضوع، باستخدام نموذج نقطة لانغاكز المرجعية. تتمتع كل هذه الهياكل بميزة أن هناك شيئاً بارزاً يعمل كنقطة مرجعية معرفية، مما يسمح للعقل بالوصول إلى كيان أقل بروزاً واتصالاً.