

# The Journey Metaphor in Mediatized Political Discourse

## Cognitive and Critical Perspectives

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**Abstract.** The present paper will analyse manifestations of the journey metaphor from a critical discourse analytical perspective in order to observe how the journey metaphor is used as a discourse strategy in mediatized political speeches and interviews whereby political actors manipulate the second-frame interactional participants (the audience) into sharing a (spurious) sense of solidarity with them. There are three hypotheses that will be tested in the course of the analysis: the first is that a wide-variety of real-journey elements are exploited for the political metaphor of journey, and there is a concrete correspondence between journey vehicles and political scenarios. The second hypothesis is that journey metaphors that are used in political speeches, celebrity interviews and confrontational political interviews are of different types and complexity. The third hypothesis is that the manipulative intent behind the use of metaphors is exposed in the latter types of mediatized political discourse to varying degrees as a result of the different degrees of pragmatic accountability adhered to in the two subgenres. We argue that the first two hypotheses are confirmed on the basis of the qualitative analysis presented in the paper, whereas the third hypothesis is not borne out by the data.

**Keywords:** journey metaphor, image schemata, political speeches, political interviews

## 1. Introduction

Language is pervaded at all levels by metaphors which present a comprehensive approach to human thinking and the way thoughts are construed. Fez-Barrington (2012) remarks that metaphors “can be traced back to prehistory where they arose from the same small set of mythological images. Even hieroglyphics on cave walls are entirely metaphoric as language itself is essentially metaphoric expressing

one thing in terms of another in order to find an essence common to both” (2012: 2). The present paper aims to unfold this metaphorical potential through the analysis of the (manipulative) use of the journey metaphor in a corpus of political speeches and political interviews.

A corpus linguistic analysis can be *corpus-driven* or *corpus-based* as is pointed out by e.g. Deignan (2008: 282). The difference is that the former starts with the corpus and the latter with “pre-existing theories confirmed or illustrated with corpus data” (*ibid.*). Therefore, in the course of a corpus-driven analysis the corpus serves both as a resource for empirical research and as a basis for deriving and testing hypotheses and drawing theoretical conclusions about linguistic phenomena. Thus, all conclusions and claims are made exclusively on the basis of corpus observations without any prior assumptions and expectations (cf. Tognini-Bonelli 2001 quoted in Storjohann 2005).

The analysis of the manifestations of the journey metaphor presented in the paper is *corpus-driven*, since the set of conceptual metaphors, in fact, emerged from the corpus collected for analysis. However, the analysis of the different degrees of conceptual complexity and manipulative intent across subgenres is *corpus-based* inasmuch as the hypotheses that are tested in the course of the analysis are based on previous research into political discourse.

## 2. Data and hypotheses

The analysis presented is based on two types of data: a corpus of political speeches and a corpus of mediatized political interviews. The corpus of political speeches consists of about 200,000 words, collected from a wide range of journalistic and internet sources, such as the *Economist*, *Newsweek*, *abcnews.go.com*, etc. (for a detailed list see the references section). The second corpus consists of the transcripts of political interviews broadcast by the BBC and CNN between 2003 and 2011. The BBC subcorpus consists of 37 interviews of varying length, while the CNN subcorpus consists of the transcripts of 36 fifty-minute interviews. Both subcorpora contain approximately 80,000 words each, give or take 1000 words as a result of transcription conventions, site information notices and added file information resulting from conversion into txt format.

The majority of CDA-informed micro-analyses of political discourse tend to focus on the manipulative potential of lexical choices (Wodak 1989; van Dijk 1993) and morpho-syntactic choices such as activation/passivation (van Leeuwen 1996; Tranchese & Zollo 2013), nominalization (Fowler et al. 1979; Billig 2008), the use of pronouns (Bramley 2001; Irimiea 2010; Ho 2013), and the ergative (Stubbs 1996; Al-Faki 2014). At the same time, there has been an increasing interest in CDA in pragmalinguistic and socio-pragmatic phenomena

such as face management (Armasu 2013), the realisation of particular speech acts (e.g. Hill 1999; Fetzer 2007), as well as conversational strategies and topical organization (e.g. Greatbatch 1986; Becker 2007). Political metaphors have also been analyzed through a corpus-based approach, for example, by Gong (2003) based on Ahrens' CM model drawing conclusions of corpus data through native speakers' intuitions rather than linguistic data. He concludes that the target domain of politics selects the source domain of journey to emphasize the notion of travelling through roads/routes.

Accordingly, the first hypothesis of the present paper is that a wide variety of real-journey elements are exploited for the political metaphor of journey, whereby there is concrete correspondence between journey vehicles and political scenarios. Agents of political scenes are conceived of as if they were participants (either crew or passengers) of journeys linking sources with goals covering paths, passing landmarks, with all concomitant vehicles of a journey scenario from costs, through the quality of the trip completed to its outcome. Moreover, we presume that the two types of political journey domains (pro and contra-establishment) manifest construals that are profiled systematically against the journey metaphor.

The second and third hypotheses of our study are related to the types of discourse strategies and degree of manipulative intent across different subgenres of mediatized political discourse (MPD). Furkó (2013) argued that different degrees of pragmatic accountability across subgenres of MPD result in different types and patterns of discourse strategies. The three subcorpora in the present analysis represent three subtypes of MPD. The first corpus is based on political speeches, where a great degree of planning is involved, thematic organization rather than interactional organization occurs, which results in a series of primarily pre-packaged messages and pre-planned/calculated, rather than spontaneously selected rhetorical and discourse strategies. The texts in the CNN corpus (based on transcripts of *Larry King Live*) belong to the "soft and feel-good genre" of "celebrity interviews" (Lauerbach 2007: 1388), which are of a less confrontational nature than the political interviews contained in the BBC subcorpus (based on *Newsnight*, *Hard Talk* and *Question Time*), in which interviewers (as well as interviewees) take a more adversarial stance. In the case of American political interviews the interviewer and the interviewee "collaboratively produce a consensual point of view" (Lauerbach 2007: 1388), while in the British political interviews the interviewer "in asking the questions, takes into account what a sceptical audience would like to know" (Lauerbach 2007: 1394), exposing vagueness, evasiveness, and argumentative fallacies. Accordingly, the second hypothesis of the present analysis is that journey metaphors that are used in political speeches, celebrity interviews and confrontational political interviews are of different types and complexity, while

the third hypothesis is that the manipulative intent behind the use of metaphors is exposed in the latter types of MPD to varying degrees as a result of the different degrees of pragmatic accountability adhered to in the two subgenres.

### **3. The journey metaphor: cognition, image schemata and the journey scenario**

As is pointed out by Fez-Barrington above, metaphors are “expressing one thing in terms of another in order to find an essence common to both” (2012: 2). To put it another way, as Hurford et al. (2008: 331) suggest, metaphors are “conceptual operations reflected in human language that enable speakers to structure and construe abstract ideas of knowledge and experience in more concrete experiential terms”. Metaphorical mapping facilitates extending the source domain to the target domain by projecting features of the former onto the latter, which, then, is grounded in a predominantly physical domain. Metaphor appears in cognitive processes which are complex human mental operations. Far from being a sporadic linguistic phenomenon, metaphor is ubiquitous in nature and as is corroborated by Gibbs (1998: 601) in discourse, too. To be able to unfold the workings of metaphorical processing, however, it is indispensable to outline the role played by human cognition in adapting patterns available to novel scenarios.

In a word, apart from emerging from the very roots of language formation, metaphor is a reminiscent of human evolution vis-à-vis a/ bodily interaction b/ creating compact language c/ forging highly challenging and associative thoughts while preserving d/ vehicle-focus and contributing to e/ elevated style. On the whole, metaphor offers shift from greyness, abbreviates lengthy literal language and by creating compactness it requires both speakers and listeners to be engaged in a kind of mental gymnastics.

A prerequisite of linguistic processing, cognition is a conscious mental activity allowing us to think, speak, understand, learn, remember, recognize relationships between concepts, argue about cause and effect and so on. This capability allows reasoning in terms of currently existing patterns available whenever we want them to link physical-source to figurative goal. In a word, cognition allows for mental operations to be involved in mappings of different domains. This way of processing facilitates the extension of schemata (highly-abstract carriers of structural information) to different domains.

As is pointed out above, schemata are obviously vital information-carriers. They play a crucial role in the architecture of figurative ideas as refined means of thought-extension from simpler to more complex and compact. It is reasonable to believe that a leap from physical and literal upgraded to an abstract domain involves and requires highly-sophisticated associative skills.

Thus, image schemata are word clusters of “knowledge representing a particular generic procedure, object, percept, event, sequence of events, or social situation” (Johnson 1987: 19). Such clusters provide “a *skeleton structure* for a concept that can be ‘instantiated’, or filled out with the detailed properties of the particular instance being represented” (*ibid.*).

Image schemata are crucial in terms of mapping instances of the physical world onto the figurative world, while only preserving the common thread that links them and providing a certain degree of structural similarity. Image schemata are vital for human thought in order to reach the goal domain from the source domain.

This is in line with the standard view that metaphoric extension relies on two major pillars; Source and Goal, linked by Path.

Main elements of the journey scenario:

**Source** is the starting or core domain whose basic traits are adapted by human cognition to create abstract notions. Johnson (2008: 42) demonstrates the transition between the two domains in the following way:

#### THE OBJECT EVENT- STRUCTURE METAPHOR

<i>Source domain</i>		<i>Target domain</i>
<u>[Transfer of possessions]</u>		<u>[Change of state]</u>
Possession	>>>>>	Attribute
Movement of possession	>>>>>	Change of state
Transfer of possession	>>>>>	Causation
Desired objects	>>>>>	Purposes

**Path** encompasses a trajectory with a moving object, which may, undoubtedly, be development, evolution of events and so on. In fact, this component of metaphorization manifests the transition of physicality into figurativeness, while rearranging a literal scenario into a compact, challenging metaphor.

**Goal** is the final, key component in instantiating metaphorization. By relying on their cognitive faculties, actors of speech acts conceptualize the experiential information offered by the Source domain to construe an abstract domain with its underpinnings rooted in physicality. This template (S-P-G) is available for a high number of other scenarios and it serves the proliferation of metaphorical thoughts during language production. From another perspective, Goal is the outcome, the ultimate result, seen as reaching destination within a journey scenario, but envisaged as lost or won elections, lower or higher standard of living and so on in the political journey metaphor. Insights obtained from the overview of basic facets of metaphorical extension may have provided a broad enough picture for us to get a better grasp of the nature of metaphor variability.

## 4. Findings and analysis

### 4.1. The political journey metaphor

The role of the JOURNEY METAPHOR in establishing relationship between journeys and political scenarios is very important. Based on sources pursuing in great depth the two domains, it seems plausible that the political elite draws on the established patterns available for journey descriptions. It is worth noting that almost all vehicles of journey scenarios have their relevant ‘political journey’ vehicles and are paralleled with those of a novel scenery below to illustrate how a political scenario can be envisaged in terms of a real journey:

a/ Constituents of the political journey metaphor based on the corpus:

*Source:* *departure:* preliminary economic stage

*Path:* *journey / Length of path:* terms of ruling parties

*Goal:* *Destination:* unpredictable

*Other elements:*

1/ *Vehicle:* country

2/ *Crew/Driver and crew:* government and politicians

3/ *Insurance policy:* not enough, often irrelevant

4/ *Fare:* tax, VAT, budgetary miscalculations, corruption, squandering state property, enforced lobby costs, illegal judiciary measures, deficit

5/ *Passengers:* citizens, rural population, immigrants, emigrants, working class, upper-class, the unemployed; all layers of society

6/ *Potential risks involved:* failure or success, amassing debts, inability to cover pension scheme expenditure, budgetary balance, losing control

7/ *Consequences:* global for vehicle and passengers; partial for driver and crew; uneven burden for social layers

8/ *Fatalities and damage:* incalculable, unpredictable

### 4.2. The journey metaphor in political speeches: pro and contra political establishment image schemata

A simple assumption that is guiding us in accounting for image schemata employed in describing both pro and con establishment scenarios is that the dynamic nature of a journey frame, as well as the numerous potential vehicles involved in the construal of both travel- and political sceneries allow for a principled way of producing novel scenarios of political relevance rooted in acts of traveling.

Given the general framework of a real journey versus the political setting of the journey metaphor, a similarity can be observed between the Pro-establishment and Con-establishment metaphors below. This is actually owing to the fact that both can heavily rely on vehicles embedded in the journey metaphor.

### Journey metaphors used in Obama's political speeches

#### Pro-establishment

Goals:

- Publicity (starting a new journey)
- Communion (crew and passengers)
- Defy would-be obstacles
- Form an alliance
- Challenge opposition
- Calm down the public
- Prepare for next elections
- Safeguard power structure

#### Con-establishment

- Abnormal behaviour
- Cheating
- Deception
- Deterioration
- Difficulty
- Failure
- Honesty-dishonesty
- Risking

#### EXAMPLES:

Pro-establishment JOURNEY METAPHORS are taken from Obama's Inauguration Speech (2008) ([abcnews.go.com](http://abcnews.go.com)) and State of the Union Address (2010), ([www.politico.com/news/stories](http://www.politico.com/news/stories))

– ALLIANCE IS STARTING A JOURNEY TOGETHER: "Let's seize the moment **to start anew**, to carry the dream forward and to strengthen our union once more." (Obama, 2010) Drawing from his mental imagery the speaker (i.e. the President) maps a journey scenario comprising the passengers, driver and the crew onto a socio-cultural scenario. This is in line with what Uhlman (2012: 372) points out in saying that "Americans imagined travel as a parallel to the trials of life within the United States." The journey and its mapping comprise the crew and driver versus passengers, as opposed to politicians and the president versus the population. Unlike the driver and crew, however, a president and politicians may only partly share the same interests as the population due to exposure to being lobbied. However, the overall union of participants of both the journey and the political scenarios may fail due to a crash during the journey or economic and other disasters in political life.

– SUCCESS IS DEFYING OBSTACLES/REACHING DESTINATION: "We have **come through a difficult decade**." (Obama 2010) Just as journeys end in reaching the destination safely, so do successful political scenarios involve coping with social, economic and other problems. Roads can be bumpy, whereas 'political scenes' can be full of obstacles. Here, bumpy roads of the source domain are mapped onto socio-political events. However, in a journey passengers do not

normally pose a threat to their fellow-passengers, while opposition parties do challenge the position of the ruling party permanently.

– CHALLENGE IS A JOURNEY: “**Our journey** has never been one of **short-cuts** or settling for less. It has not been **the path for** the faint-hearted - for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame.” (Obama 2010) The constant challenge connected with the previous metaphor is confirmed by the president too. He points out that journey constituents are not applicable to political events, since journeys can have shortcuts, but governments rule for a definite number of years through a number of unpredictable and inevitable obstacles. The vehicle ‘short-cuts’ of a journey is mapped onto ‘easy solutions’ in politics.

– IMPLEMENTATION IS A PATH: “Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things - some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labour, who have carried us **up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom.**” (Obama 2008) Paths can be different surfaces such as smooth or rough. The former is metaphorically manifested as a problem-free social or political script in the political-journey metaphor, whereas the latter involves difficulties experienced in a socio-political setting. This is relevant in other cultures too where the evolvement of political events is seen in terms of a rugged road-surface (see Romanian ‘plin de hopuri’, which can describe a road and a journey, as well as a political scene and also Hungarian ‘döcögős út / döcögösen megy’, which means ‘a bumpy road/something going with difficulty along a bumpy road’.

– DEVELOPMENT IS A JOURNEY IN RETROSPECT: “For us, they **packed up their few worldly possessions and travelled across oceans** in search of a new life.” (Obama 2008) Here, the ancestors of the population are viewed as travellers who managed to cover huge distances to arrive successfully at their destination, in order to lay down the foundations of future life. Source-domain components are manifested in potential goal-domain success.

– SUCCESS IS A SAFE JOURNEY: “**This is the journey we continue today.** We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth.” (Obama 2008)

“after nearly a century of trying... **we are closer than ever** to bringing more security to the lives of so many Americans” (Obama 2010)

“...**all followers arrive at the proper destination**” (Obama 2010).

Following suit of the previous metaphor, this journey metaphor embedded in a political discourse suggests success achieved through generations, linking future promises with the current state of affairs.

## CONTRA ESTABLISHMENT JOURNEY METAPHORS

### – ABNORMAL BEHAVIOUR IS LOSING YOUR WAY

**go off the tracks** “‘biggest policy challenge’ for the United States is countries that could ‘go completely off track,’ says Miguel Diaz of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.” (*The Economist*, Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2000, p.



64): Elements of a political scenario emerge in terms of a failed journey. The vehicle ‘derailment’ of the source domain is mapped onto the ‘fiasco’ of political life in the goal domain.

– **CHEATING IS A JOURNEY**

**take someone for a ride** “Why not ask the man who took America for a ride and freed his country?” (*Newsweek*, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004, p. 31) Political events can be viewed as journeys where passengers are not taken to the promised land. The goal domain involving a corrupt president draws on the source domain where the vehicle is cheating travel agencies.

– **DECEPTION IS (TAKING THE VICTIM FOR) A JOURNEY/A WALK**

**lead someone up the garden path/ a blind alley** “Mr Schröder had led Germany up a blind alley, falling out with the Americans over Iraq, unthinkingly supporting the French in the European Union, and cosying up to Russia’s Vladimir Putin despite protests from Germany’s eastern neighbours.” (*The Economist*, Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>, 2006, p. 12) Similarly to the previous metaphor, the leader, here the Prime minister, leading his country astray emerges from the source domain figure of a guide.

– **DIFFICULTY IS CIRCULAR MOTION**

**a revolving door** “The care system is also something of a revolving door: half of the 55,300 looked-after children will end up back with their parents within three months.”

(*The Economist*, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2000, p. 38) Based on bodily experience observable in the source domain, circular motion ends in itself, which implies this trajectory being applied for socio-political settings is manifested in failure in the goal domain.

– **HONESTY IS STRAIGHTNESS (DISHONESTY IS CROOKEDNESS (He is a crook))**

**the straight and narrow** “The Palestinians may have re-offended during the recent intifada but, according to Mahmoud Abbas, their new president, they are back on the straight and narrow.” (*The Economist*, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005, p. 12) In various cultures the idea of ‘straight’ is identified with ‘honesty’, while ‘bends’ are manifestations of diversion from ‘law-abiding’ attitude (just like in Hungarian, where ‘egyenes, i.e. straight’ means ‘honest’, also Rumanian ‘escroc’, or ‘crook’ in English, referring to a ‘cheater’, which also imply curved, i.e. not straight motion or ways of behaviour).

– **RISKING IS A JOURNEY ON THE SEA**

**throw caution to the winds** “The crude retort from some no less excitable Europeans is that an America unchecked by the Soviet Union and unhinged by September 11<sup>th</sup> has lost its bearings, thrown caution and international law to the winds, and is fuelling terrorism by seeming to pursue a crusade against Islam.” (*The Economist*, Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2004, p. 9) Sea-faring, part of the source-domain involves risks, which is mapped onto political scenes of the goal domain. Vast

distances and unpredictable weather conditions of source-domain scenarios are paralleled with long parliamentary terms and unforeseen political events home and abroad in the goal-domain. For instance, CHOICE in the political field as well involves a ‘one-way street’, or ‘reaching a fork in the road’, or ‘standing at a crossroads’, each specifying decision-making scenarios of political figures.

The above examples illustrate that our first hypothesis was borne out by the data: we found that different scenarios (such as pro and contra-establishment) available in the journey domain can prove constitutive of a complex set of correspondences that can be identified in the political arena.

### 4.3. The journey metaphor in political interviews

If we compare the complexity of the image schemata that is characteristic of political speeches in our data with the complexity of the journey metaphors we found in political interviews, we find that in the latter many of the above mentioned constituents, such as fare, potential risks, fatalities, etc. are not construed. In the data based on mediatized political interviews, we mostly found references to the source, direction and goal of the journey, irrespective of whether it was the interviewee (IE) or the interviewer (IR) who made use of the journey metaphor:

IR: Not only is it not happening, it seems to be **going backwards**. Steven Byers, your colleague, former Cabinet Minister said, to a greater extent than ever before people born in to poverty are condemned to it for the rest of their lives.

IE: But now we’ve got to make it possible for people, once they’ve been to school, to get the skills they need, to get the qualifications they need and to get the support they need in other aspects as well, right across life. Really to achieve their full potential. And **we have started that journey**, but we are **no where near seeing it through** to its full conclusion (*BBC Politics Show*, Nov. 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004).

Moreover, the journey metaphor is incorporated into set expressions (dead metaphors) such as “there’s a long way to go”, “to make progress”, “down the road”, “along the way”, etc., illustrated by the following extract:

IE: And what I’m saying to you is that I believe, even though there’s a lot of negative publicity often about the Health Service, actually the Health Service is getting better and there is real money being spent on it that is producing better outcomes for people but...No one disputes **there’s still a long way to go** (*Newsnight*, Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2003).

IE: Well, not yet Evan, because the French/German agreement is only one step **along the way** to reform; the other eurozone members have to sign up for it (*BBC Today Programme*, Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

IE: Of course Iraq has had an effect on these elections, but you know, I think most people, where ever they start from, will accept the thing to do now is to do everything we possibly can to make sure **we make progress** in Iraq (*BBC Politics Show*, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2004).

Our second hypothesis, i.e. the assumption that journey metaphors that are used in political speeches, celebrity interviews and confrontational political interviews are of different types and complexity, also appears to be borne out by the data: the complexity of image schemata and the number of constituents that are construed appear to increase in proportion with the degree of planning, and parallel to the number of pre-packaged messages and appear to decrease in proportion with the degree of spontaneity and interactional organization. Our results are, at present, qualitative and are not amenable to description and quantification by inferential statistical methods, thus, further research is needed to ascertain whether or not the correspondences we have found are statistically significant.

Our third hypothesis, i.e. the expectation that there is a greater degree of pragmatic accountability and greater exposure of manipulative intent behind the use of journey metaphors, however, is clearly refuted by the data: we did not find a single instance where the interviewer used a metacommunicative utterance with reference to political journey metaphors, similar to utterances referring to the use of general extenders, as in the following extract (cf. Furkó 2008):

IE: Apparently, she asked, you know, how he was doing **and stuff**. So I'm not quite sure what that meant.

IR: **And stuff**. I think if someone appeared from the dead to me and I had a conversation in the mirror, I would remember what they said (*The Nancy Grace Show*, Dec. 29<sup>th</sup>, 2006).

## 5. Conclusions

Critical approaches to political discourse have, traditionally, been qualitative rather than quantitative because of the interpretive nature of the analyses and the difficulty in distinguishing between types of intent, and, consequently, in revealing manipulative intent. In cognitive pragmatics, the distinction between informative and manipulative communication is made on the basis of the intentions assigned to the speaker and the ability of the hearer to recognize such intentions (cf. Németh T. 2014: 475). Manipulative communication is successful

if the hearer recognizes the speaker's informative and communicative intentions, but fails to recognize the speaker's influencing intention. Manipulative intentions are very hard to identify for researchers, even if all the linguistic (conceptual and textual) and non-linguistic (contextual) clues, whether explicitly or implicitly conveyed, are taken into consideration (cf. Németh T. 2014: 472). Even though we can safely assume a global manipulative intention on the part of public speakers as well as interviewees (and interviewers) in political interviews, it is difficult to pinpoint particular instances of (local) manipulative intent.

Following in the CDA tradition, our qualitative analysis has revealed that tenets of shared features can be observed in describing the political setting of an existing regime and features of travel scripts. Inevitably, such correspondences offer us invaluable options to view one thing in terms of another, or, rather, to extend existing patterns of human cognition to develop a new way of mental processing in the perception of a political scenery.

The political journey metaphor has complex facets that draw on the journey metaphor involving vehicles of various political scenarios, phenomena closely related to the political scenery, and they can be observed in an abundance of sources and discourses parallel to the degree of spontaneity / pre-planning and interactional vs. thematic organization, which is involved in the communicative process. Since contextual features as well as the number of occurrences and complexity of construals is quantifiable, we hope to extend our analysis in the course of future research and find statistical correspondence between these parameters and construal patterns of metaphors used in mediatized political discourse.

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