ISSN: 1812-0512 (Print) 2790-346X (online)

**Wasit Journal for Human Sciences**

Available online at: https://wjfh.uowasit.edu.iq

OPEN ACCESS

**Original article**

# Legitimising Privacy Breach: A Critical-Cognitive Analysis of the UK Government's Narrative on LFR Technology

**Mohammed Kareem Owaid[1], Omar A. W. Atatfa[2]**

*Dept. Of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, Wasit University*

***Correspondence author**:
std2024208.Mohammed.K@uowasit.edu.iq
oatatfa@uowasit.edu.iq

Received:14 **February** 2026
Accepted: 10 **March** 2026
Published: 01 **May** 2026

***DOI***:
https://doi.org/10.31185/wjfh.Vol22.Iss2.1651



***Cite***:
Owaid, M. K., & Atatfa, O. A. W. (2026). Legitimising Privacy Breach: A Critical-Cognitive Analysis of the UK Government's Narrative on LFR Technology. Wasit Journal for Human Sciences, 22(2). https://doi.org/10.31185/wjfh.Vol22.Iss2.1651

## ABSTRACT

This study presents an exploratory, critical-cognitive analysis of selected UK governmental texts on live facial recognition technology. It aims to fill a gap in the literature regarding the types of cognitive strategies used in the government's surveillance discourse to legitimise the mentioned technology and manipulate the public. To achieve its purpose, the study analyses three articles produced by official UK government institutions. It adopts van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998) for the macroanalysis and Lakoff's Idealised Cognitive Models (1987) for the microanalysis. It follows a qualitative analysis, with a limited quantitative analysis of the cognitive strategy frequency counts. The study finds that image schemas, metaphors, and metonymies are the most widely used cognitive strategies in the UK government's discourse in the selected corpus. The findings highlight the importance of reinforcing the critical awareness of how language is used to legitimise surveillance, enabling the public, the media, and decision-makers to deal more consciously with government discourse in this context.

**Keywords:** Critical-Cognitive Discourse Analysis, LFR Technology, Cognitive Strategies

# اضفاء الشرعية على انتهاك الخصوصية: تحليل نقدي-معرفي للسردية الحكومية البريطانية حول تقنية التعرف على الوجوه الحية

محمد كريم عويد[1]، م.د. عمر علي والي عطاطفة[2]
جامعة واسط، كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

**المُستخلص**

تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلا نقديا معرفيا استكشافيا لمجموعة من النصوص الحكومية البريطانية المختارة حول تقنية التعرف على الوجوه الحية. وتهدف الدراسة لتغطية فجوة في الأدبيات فيما يتعلق بأنواع الاستراتيجيات المعرفية المستخدمة في الخطاب الرسمي للحكومة لإضفاء الشرعية على تقنية الوجوه الحيّة والتلاعب بالرأي العام. ولتحقيق هذا الغرض، تقوم الدراسة بتحليل ثلاث مقالات من انتاج مؤسسات رسمية في الحكومة البريطانية. تتبنى الدراسة المربع الايديولوجي لفان دايك (1998) للتحليل على المستوى الكلي والنماذج المعرفية المثالية للاكوف (1987) للتحليل على المستوى الجزئي. تتبع الدراسة تحليلا نوعيا مع تحليل كمي محدود لحساب التكرار الحاصل في الاستراتيجيات المعرفية. وتشير النتائج الى أن مخططات التصور، والاستعارات، والمجازات المرسلة هي الاكثر استخداما في خطاب الحكومة البريطانية في المتن المدروس. تبرز النتائج اهمية تعزيز الوعي النقدي في كيفية استخدام اللغة لإضفاء الشرعية على المراقبة، بما يمكّن العامّة، والاعلام، وصناع القرار من التعامل بوعي اكبر مع الخطاب الحكومي في هذا السياق.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تحليل الخطاب النقدي المعرفي، تقنية التعرف على الوجوه الحيّة، الاستراتيجيات المعرفية

## 1. Introduction

The modern world is witnessing an increasing expansion in the use of AI-assisted surveillance technologies, most notably live facial recognition technology (henceforth, LFR), which is used by governments to enhance security and prevent crimes. However, the use of this technology has sparked widespread controversy due to the potential for violations of privacy and civil liberties. This has made it the focus of increasing debate about the balance between security requirements and the protection of individual rights.

Thus, Lyon (2007) argues that, in the modern world, surveillance has become omnipresent. It can be found in many areas of life, each with specific features, such as the application of technology and science, identification of people, rationalisation, and categorisation.

In recent years, surveillance cameras have been increasingly installed in the United Kingdom, and their numbers are growing. Despite the seemingly lawful establishment of surveillance systems by the UK government, people still have concerns about how they work, the extent to which they are widespread, and whether they infringe on their privacy and freedom (Sheldon, 2011).

### *Previous Studies*

A number of studies have been conducted on surveillance. For example, a study titled "CCTV Surveillance and the Poverty of Media Discourse: A Content Analysis of Canadian Newspaper Coverage" was conducted by Greenberg and Hier (2009). The study addressed the gap of how CCTV surveillance practices and technologies are framed in Canadian news media, and how public understanding and policy discussions are shaped by news discourse. To fill the gap addressed, the authors used theories of media framing, agenda-setting, and power/credibility hierarchies in discourse to guide their content analysis of 595 news items about CCTV surveillance from (11) Canadian newspapers between 1999 and 2005. The investigation looked at source access, ethical considerations, thematic framing, and problem significance. Eventually, the study found that CCTV

was widely portrayed as a crime-prevention tool, whereas discourse on privacy, ethics, and societal ramifications was minimal.

Similarly, Barnard-Wills (2011) conducted a study titled "UK News Media Discourses of Surveillance". This study addressed the gap in the lack of studies that tackle the discursive and linguistic dimensions of surveillance representation. The researcher analysed 300 UK news media articles (1990-2008) fill the gap, utilising the works of Laclau and Mouffe (2001) and Glynos and Howarth (2007), which discuss contestation in discourse, the construction of subject positions, and the functions of ideology and political logics. The study looked at the representation and assessment of surveillance in UK media discourse. According to the study's results, surveillance was represented in two ways: on the one hand, it is sometimes presented as appropriate and justified because it is used to eliminate terrorists, prevent crime, enhance security, and protect society. On the other hand, it is considered inappropriate because it causes problems, such as restricting liberties and invading privacy. These conflicting perspectives present surveillance as both a threat and a moral requirement, demonstrating how media discourse shapes social perceptions and political legitimacy about surveillance in the UK.

Although the topic of surveillance has been tackled a number of times, it seems that the way surveillance discourse is cognitively manipulated – especially in the context of the LFR technology in the UK – is still understudied.

***Research Questions***

The current study fills a gap in the literature through analysing (3) articles produced by official UK government institutions about Live Facial Recognition technology (henceforth, LFR) in the UK. It attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What cognitive strategies does the UK government implement in its discourse in order to frame the LFR technology in a seemingly legitimate way?
2. What are the most commonly used cognitive strategies in the UK government's discourse on the LFR technology?
3. To what extent do cognitive structures contribute to explaining the success or failure of the discursive strategies in building legitimacy for the LFR technology?

***Research Objectives***

The study aims at:

1. Analysing how the legitimacy of the technology is reconstructed through cognitive strategies within the UK government's discourse.
2. Elucidating the dominant cognitive pattern that frames the representation of the technology and guides its perception within the studied discourse.
3. Interpreting the role of cognitive structures in enhancing or limiting the effectiveness of discursive strategies in establishing the legitimacy of the technology within the government's discourse.

**2. Critical Discourse Analysis**

Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk, and others are among the leading pioneers who have contributed to the development of critical discourse analysis (henceforth, CDA), which emerged in the late 1980s in studies of European discourse. Since that time, it has grown to be

among the most prominent and significant areas of discourse analysis (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000).

Critical linguistics (henceforth, CL) is where the antecedents of CDA lie (Bhatia et al., 2008). Despite the fact that CL and CDA have often been utilised alternatively, CDA is the term that has been preferred and under which the theory of CL is generally subsumed (Wodak, 2022).

For CDA, power cannot be found in language alone; instead, it is powerful people who give language power by using it in certain ways. Therefore, vulnerable people are the main focus of CDA, and the language of elite people is what CDA seeks to critically analyse to resist inequalities that those people are responsible for (Wodak, 2008).

With that said, the aim of CDA is to uncover how language is utilised to reproduce and legitimise power imbalances within a society. It does so by standing with the vulnerable and digging deep into the linguistic elements employed in the discourse of the dominant privileged groups to maintain or exacerbate social injustices (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

***Power and Ideology***

"Power and ideology have been discussed by the pioneers of the field in line with their designated theories" (Atatfa, 2025, p. 1206). For instance, van Dijk (2015) considers power a basic concept in critical discourse studies, particularly the social power practised by organisations or groups. It is what politicians struggle for. On the one hand, a group seeks to maintain and practice power over others, and, on the other hand, another seeks to withstand that power (Chilton, 2004).

The concept of ideology refers to "a specific basic framework of social cognition with specific social structures and specific cognitive and social functions". It exists in a different means of delivering information, such as discourse, communication, and non-verbal interaction, including semiotics, like images or movies (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 21).

**3. Cognitive Linguistics**

Evans (2012) states that cognitive linguistics (henceforth, CL) is unique because of its focus on the relation between language, the mind, and social and physical experience. Accordingly, CL adopts a well-defined and resolutely embodied viewpoint on human cognition. In this regard, some theories have been developed by cognitive linguists in collaboration with the interdisciplinary endeavour of cognitive science, ensuring that their ideas are psychologically acceptable and make sense in light of what is known about the brain.

Cognitive linguists argue that the human mind can be studied through language, as they believe language reflects how the mind understands the world. That is, it reflects embodied cognition. Therefore, against Chomsky's perspective, linguists believe that language is not modular. Accordingly, how people's thoughts are organised can be studied through analysing language (Evans, 2012).

Critical-cognitive discourse analysis is an integrated approach that combines two prominent approaches that have been given much attention lately. One of them is CL, which is primarily concerned with Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Mental Frames theories. The other is CDA, which analyses discourse and the contextual implications of the society and policy that shape its production, such as inequality, social stereotypes, unfairness, and political agendas (Khir Allah, 2022).

**4. Live Facial Recognition Technology**

LFR is a technology that identifies people in digital images, such as photos or videos, by using artificial intelligence (AI). To identify a face, this technology relies on an algorithm trained to do so. Then, it is trained to discriminate between faces by recognising them (Scottish Police Authority [SPA] et al., 2024). According to Morris (2019), the first release of the LFR technology in the UK occurred in June 2015, when it was used for the first time in public places by the Metropolitan Police, South Wales Police, and Leicestershire Police.

**5. Framing and Its Manipulative Potential**

Lakoff (2004) argues that framing refers to the way of using language from the writer's or speaker's perspective. It is a concrete product of hidden ideas or ideologies that exceeds the level of mere lexical selection. Thus, framing is achieved through the language that works as a mediator between intended ideas and people's minds.

Manipulation, on the other hand, is defined as a way in which people are influenced and deceived by the producers of manipulative discourse deliberately and purposefully (Buss, 1987).

Framing can be manipulative, as Lakoff (2004) states:

Frames can also be used manipulatively. The use, for example, of 'Clear Skies Act' to name an act that increases air pollution is a manipulative frame. And it's used to cover up a weakness that conservatives have, namely that the public doesn't like legislation that increases air pollution, and so they give it a name that conveys the opposite frame. That's pure manipulation. Spin is the manipulative use of a frame. Spin is used when something embarrassing has happened or has been said, and it's an attempt to put an innocent frame on it— that is, to make the embarrassing occurrence sound normal or good. Propaganda is another manipulative use of framing. Propaganda is an attempt to get the public to adopt a frame that is not true and is known not to be true, for the purpose of gaining or maintaining political control. (p. 100)

**6. Methodology**

The study adopts a qualitative critical-cognitive analysis with a limited quantitative analysis of cognitive strategy frequency counts. The data for the study consists of (3) selected articles from three official UK government institutions, namely the UK Home Office, the Greater Manchester Police, and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley. The criteria of data selection rely on their reliable and official producers, their direct relation to the LFR technology, the recency of their publication, as well as their suitability for the critical-cognitive analysis. The selected articles are analysed according to van Dijk's Ideological Square and Lakoff's Idealised Cognitive Models (henceforth, ICMs).

**Table 1**

*Data of the Study*

| No. | Title | Publisher | Date of Publication | Link |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Live Facial Recognition Technology | The UK Home Office | 13 August 2025 | Live Facial Recognition technology to catch high-harm offenders - GOV.UK |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | to Catch High-Harm Offenders | | | |
| **2** | Greater Manchester Police to Deploy Live Facial Recognition Technology to Keep Communities Safe | Greater Manchester Police | 17 October 2025 | Greater Manchester Police to deploy Live Facial recognition technology to keep communities safe \| Greater Manchester Police |
| **3** | Thames Valley Police launches Live Facial Recognition technology | Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley | 29 December 2025 | Thames Valley Police launches Live Facial Recognition technology - Thames Valley PCC |

***Van Dijk's Ideological Square***

Van Dijk (1998) explains that there are two fundamental strategies through which ideology is instilled in discourse. When talking about events, speakers/writers intentionally include some information and exclude others. This strategy of including or excluding information depends on the speaker's or writer's interest. Accordingly, van Dijk summarises his ideological square into four basic moves:

1. Expressing/emphasising information that is good about *Us*.
2. Expressing/emphasising information that is bad about *Them*.
3. Hiding/de-emphasising information that is good about *Them*.
4. Hiding/de-emphasising information that is bad about *Us*.

***Lakoff's ICMs***

The theory of ICMs was first developed by Lakoff in his book "*Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*" in 1987. It is a major theory in CL, specifically in cognitive semantics. He proposed that lexical items are understood or realised through the background knowledge people have about them. Nevertheless, Lakoff's endeavour was unique in that he was not interested in making a dictionary for all meanings of words; rather, he was more interested in how people think and categorise things in their minds (Evans et al., 2007; see also Cienki, 2007; Evans and Green, 2006).

Lakoff (1987) contends that ICMs are structures through which people's knowledge is organised. In this sense, the way human beings categorise things is not rigid, which is why some words are more typical than others in a certain category. Basically, ICMs are built through five main types:

**1. Image schematic ICMs:** Mental structures created in the human mind through repeated similar experiences. They enable people to make sense of abstract and complex concepts (Langacker, 2008).

**2. Propositional ICMs:** refer to the ICMs in which no imaginative elements are used, such as metonymy, metaphor, or mental imagery. Every ICM has a set of elements called ontology, as well as a structure that contains the properties of the elements and the relations between them. The ontology's elements are twofold: They may be simple concepts at a basic level, such as actions, states, entities, properties, or they may be more complicated to the extent that they cannot be easily understood without other types of ICMs. They consist of four basic types: simple propositions, the scenario, feature-bundle structures, taxonomic propositional ICMs, and radially structured ICMs (Lakoff, 1987).

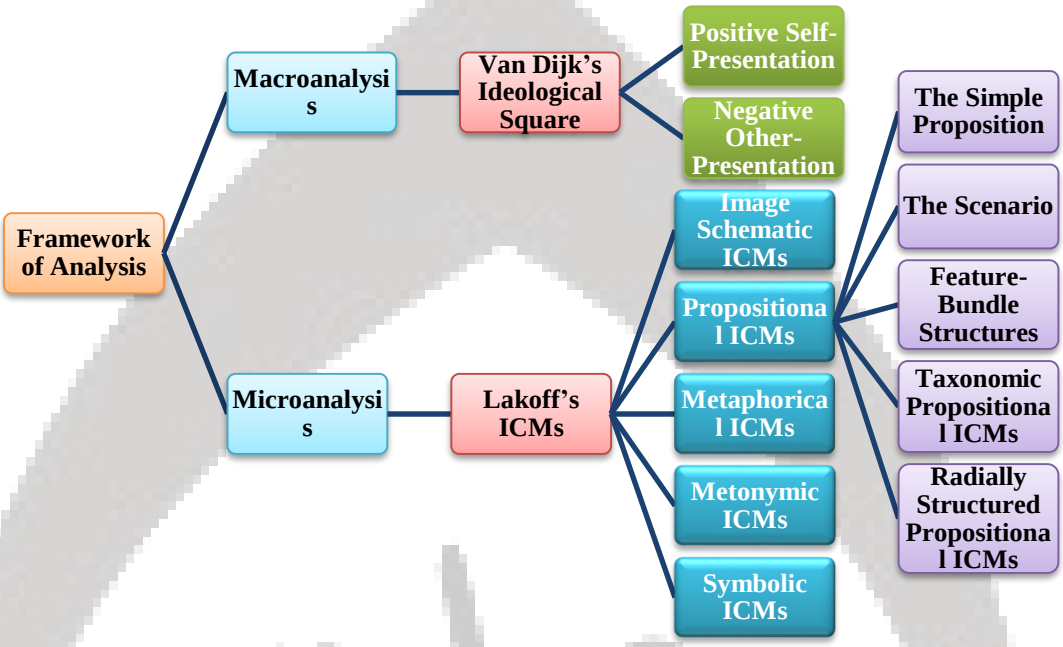
**3. Metaphorical ICMs:** Metaphor is often seen by many people as a device used in language to serve a poetic or an aesthetic purpose, and it is considered useless in everyday communication. It is regarded as apart from human thinking and cognition, and that it is merely written or spoken words. Nonetheless, Lakoff and Johnson found that metaphor is a common device in life and that it shapes both language and people's thinking and behaviour. In other words, the way the world is understood and the way people act in it are, for the most part, built on metaphorical thinking (Lakoff & Johnson, 2020).

**4. Metonymic ICMs:** Yule (2010) defines metonymy as something that stands for something else with which it is closely connected in everyday experience. He adds that the three most common metonymic relationships are: a container-contents relationship, a whole-part relationship, and a representative-symbol relationship. These relationships can be exemplified respectively by a bottle and water, a car and wheels, and a king and the crown. Cienki (2007) points out that people understand metonymy in terms of the mental structure made by the ICM. The ICM minimises vagueness by offering limited options, thus helping recipients easily understand the figurative meaning.

**5. Symbolic ICMs:** refer to words and grammatical structures in text, which cannot be understood without human cognition. That is to say, grammatical categories, words, and structures of sentences are the symbolic elements that are understood through the four conceptual ICMs mentioned above (Lakoff, 1987).

**Figure 1**

*Framework of Analysis*




## 7. Analysis and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of the three selected articles from the UK government according to the adopted eclectic model.

***Macroanalysis of the UK government's Articles***

At the macroanalysis level, the UK government's discourse on the LFR technology shows an ideological position clearly consistent with van Dijk's ideological square. However, it is not limited to a binary of presenting the positive self versus the negative self to others in a direct and explicit way. In addition to intensifying the emphasis on strategies for highlighting positive self-presentation (*enhancing security, protecting vulnerable groups, accuracy, legitimacy, transparency, independent surveillance*), the discourse depends on a more implicit strategy of minimising or marginalising the negative other by redefining them as '*high-harm criminals*', '*breachers of judicial conditions*', and '*wanted individuals*' without specifying a particular social group. Thereby, the conflict is being reconstructed not as one between the government and its citizens, but rather as one between the protecting government and serious crimes, transforming the technology from a potential surveillance tool into a tool of rescue and protection.

***Microanalysis: Lakoff's ICMs***

This section presents the microanalysis of the articles according to Lakoff's ICMs. Among propositional ICMs, only feature bundle structures and taxonomic ICMs will be analysed. This is because other elements are either discussed in image schematic ICMs or do not exist.

**Analysis of the First Article: Live Facial Recognition Technology to Catch High-Harm Offenders**

***Image Schematic ICMs***

Regarding image schematic ICMs, a contact image schema is present in the lead of the article "*named and contactable neighbourhood police officers will also be in place in every community*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 1). This image schema activates an ICM of contact in the human mind,

which, according to people's experience, suggests the possibility of contact between humans, whether abstract or physical. Thereby, the technology is perceived as cooperative and far from control or secret usage. Thus, police officers are placed in charge of solving problems, which, in turn, might be seen as a positive step by the public, encouraging them look at it as legitimate and lawful.

A source-path-goal image schema is also present in the article, conveyed in the paragraph: "*Every neighbourhood across England and Wales now has named, contactable officers in place to tackle issues blighting their communities, marking a major milestone in the government's Plan for Change*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 2). Through these lines, people recall an image schema of source-path-goal, where the surveillance process represents the source, the path is the progression and enactment of the technology, while the goal is the change for the better in society via surveillance. In this way, surveillance becomes normal and axiomatic because people know change for the better is worth it, and this cannot be achieved without such a source and path.

Another prominent schema is the dark-bright schema. The government presents the technology as *"targeted, cutting-edge technology"*, whereas the criminals are presented as "*high-harm criminals*" (Home Office, 2025, para.4). The dark-bright schema activates an ICM of the contradiction between good and evil. This schema aims to create a sense of binarity in people's minds, in which one side should logically be advocated. Moreover, the discourse includes a schema of balance, as in "*the new vans will operate according to strict rules*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 5). The technology may be perceived as balanced, due to the public knowledge that sees the existence of rules as a high degree of protection to their rights and privacy.

The use of "*legal framework*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 11) refers to the presence of a container-content schema, which comprises a set of bundled rules that govern the LFR technology. This leads people to recall an ICM of law protection and a rule-governed and regular system. Further, the line "*every van is manned by trained officers*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 15) indicates a centre-periphery schema, in which the vans are peripheral, while the trained officers are centred. For when centrality is given to human beings, the doubtfulness of the new technology can be reduced.

Furthermore, the line "*the algorithm being used in the vans has been independently tested and will only be operated in specific circumstances and with robust oversight*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 15) includes a force schema, wherein *robust oversight* can be interpreted as an institutional oversight that acts as a counterforce aiming to control the potential risks of the technology. This is because the oversight here is not presented simply through regulatory procedures, but as an effective control mechanism that practices a restrictive authority on the use of the technology. Thus, an implicit dynamic construal is built based on the existence of a technological force that may produce negative effects, contrasted by a regulatory force that works to control it.

One more schema is the container-content schema again, which is found in "*the facial recognition algorithm used in the new vans*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 16), portraying the LFR as content inside the vans. The ideology of the vans lies in their mobility, conveying a sense of relief that the surveillance is temporary, not lasting. As the discourse unfolds, a schema of collection or linkage is ideologically enacted in the form of cooperation ("*working with communities as partners rather*

*than passive recipients should deliver the visible, community-based policing*") (Home Office, 2025, para. 30). Hence, the government calls for an ICM of working collaboratively to achieve success.

***Propositional ICMs***

As pertains to propositional ICMs, the government describes the technology's features as a bundle in "*our use of facial recognition technology is fair, legitimate, ethical and proportionate*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 27), which presents the technology as prototypical from the view of people's ICM. Since it is claimed to have highly weighted features of a surveillance system, it is perceived as a prototype. Similarly, the most effective neighbourhood policing also has certain features that make it prototypical ("*the most effective neighbourhood policing models combine targeted approaches with genuine community engagement*") (Home Office, 2025, para. 29). This framing legitimises the surveillance process by showing that it has the essential features of neutral and lawful surveillance.

In relation to taxonomic ICMs, the lines "*these vehicles enable law enforcement to target and locate wanted criminals and suspects for the most serious crimes, including sex offences, violent assaults, homicide and serious and organised crime*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 6) include crimes of different types dominated by the same category. In this manner, the technology targets the crimes that fall under the category of the most serious ones, ignoring the fact that people's data will be stored and their privacy violated.

***Metaphorical ICMs***

In terms of Metaphorical ICMs, the use of the verb *blight* in the sentence "*to tackle issues blighting their communities*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 2) indicates a conceptual metaphor. Based on Cambridge Dictionary, the verb refers to "a disease that damages and kills plants", rendering crimes as a disease that spoils societies. Also, the technology is metaphorically described as a hunter, and criminals as prey by virtue of the phrasal verb *go after* in "*we can use the technology to go after the most dangerous criminals*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 11), since the phrasal verb here is often connected with physical pursuit. These analogies are used in a way that reflects how people perceive the threat of blighting and how hunters kill their prey. According to this viewpoint, the government attempts to legitimise the technology by using the simplest route in the recipient's mind, increasing the effectiveness and persuasiveness of what is conveyed.

***Metonymic ICMs***

Concerning metonymic ICMs, the sentence "*alongside the rollout of the 10 vans, the government will simultaneously consult on how the technology should be used*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 13) involves a whole-part metonymy. *The government* is metonymically employed in the discourse, referring to the government as a whole, which supports the application of the technology. Although other parts of the government may oppose the technology, the metonymy of government hides this fact, leading to the belief that it is agreed upon by all the government's members.

*The Home Office* is also used metonymically in a representative-symbol relationship ("*the Home Office is announcing the rollout of 10 new Live Facial Recognition (LFR) vans*") (Home Office, 2025, para. 4). Instead of mentioning the name(s) of the member(s) in the Home Office who are responsible for the announcement, the government utilises this metonymy to make the announcement seem more lawful and effective. Likewise, another metonymic relation of the same

kind is also included ("*the College of Policing has clear guidance on how the technology should be used*") (Home Office, 2025, para. 5). It is not the physical building that is meant by *the College of Policing*, but the members in it. The reason is that institutions seem more rule-governed and law-abiding in the human mind than individuals.

More apparent are the metonymies of the *NPL* alongside *the testing*, in *"the facial recognition algorithm used in the new vans has been independently tested for bias by the National Physical Laboratory (NPL). The testing found that the algorithm is accurate and there is no bias for ethnicity*" (Home Office, 2025, para. 16), making the results appear more accurate. Thus, the government excludes 'the testers' from mentioning, since they might be judged as biased.

**Analysis of the Second Article: Greater Manchester Police to Deploy Live Facial Recognition Technology to Keep Communities Safe**

***Image Schematic ICMs***

As for image schematic ICMs, a container-content schema is evident in the following phrases: "*to keep communities safe*", "*walk past one of our cameras*", "*areas with crime issues and large footfall*", "*deployed in the community*" (Greater Manchester Police [GMP], 2025, paras. 19, 12, 18). The community is seen as a container of threats that can be added or removed. Accordingly, the community is the container, while crimes and suspects are the content that can be inside or outside that container. Consequently, the intervention ceases to be a violation of the container and becomes a lawful and normal saver.

A force schema is also obvious in the article, where surveillance is presented as an effective force positively ("*prevent and detect crime*", "*protect people from harm*", "*identify individuals wanted for serious offences*") (GMP, 2025, paras. 10, 24). As such, the technology is a force of a protective tone. That is, a force for protecting society, rather than a force of human rights violations.

Certain lines in the article indicate the existence of a balance schema. For instance, "*necessity and proportionality of the use of facial recognition*", "*we are committed to using it responsibly, transparently*", "*it is not a mass surveillance tool*", "*enhancing public safety while protecting civil liberties*" (GMP, 2025, paras. 18, 14, 13, 27). These sentences are framed in a way that anticipates potential cognitive reactions, which contributes to legitimising the technology and makes it less questionable.

The discourse continues to reveal a centre-periphery schema in "*only identifying specific individuals who have been added to a bespoke watchlist*", "*law-abiding members of the public have nothing to fear*" (GMP, 2025, paras. 12, 13). This makes a clear contrast between the perpetrators (offenders) and the public audience. The former is presented as the centre, while the latter is the periphery. Consequently, an ICM of inclusion and exclusion is activated in people's minds.

***Propositional ICMs***

With respect to feature-bundle structures, there is an obvious employment of this kind of ICM ("*LFR is a real-time deployment*", "*precise and targeted tool*", "*it is not a mass surveillance tool*", "*lawful*", "*transparent*", "*biometric*", "*data is immediately deleted*") (GMP, 2025, paras. 29, 24, 13, 6, 21). Since the LFR technology is said to have these essential features of a surveillance system, it is cognitively conceptualised by the audience as a prototype. Hence, it is legitimised, and an objection to it is considered unlawful.

***Metaphorical ICMs***

With regard to metaphorical ICMs, the verb *embrace* indicates a conceptual metaphor in "*we use traditional policing tools but also embrace new and developing technology*" (GMP, 2025, para. 8). Due to the use of this verb, the technology is conceptually understood as a safe and warm body. It is so because the verb "*embrace*" refers to physical embracing. As the ICM of embrace is well-felt and known by people, they may feel that the technology is a source of security and tranquillity.

In a similar vein, the verb *build*, in "*using LFR in a way that builds trust and confidence across Greater Manchester*" (GMP, 2025, para. 28), connotes a conceptual metaphor. According to Cambridge Dictionary, the meaning of *build* is "to make something by putting materials and parts together". From this perspective, it can be said that trust and confidence are treated metaphorically as structures, recalling people's experience of building, which requires cooperation.

***Metonymic ICMs***

The line "*I am confident protective measures are in place*" (GMP, 2025, para. 26) includes a metonymy of a part-whole relation. *Protective measures* is metonymically structured to refer to the surveillance process as a whole. Even though it actually refers to just one sample and one place, it may be cognitively conceptualised as a characteristic of the technology as a whole in every place. Therefore, it results in generalised beliefs about the technology.

On the contrary, a whole-part metonymic relation also appears in the sentence "*an alert is generated and sent to an engagement team*" (GMP, 2025, para. 35). To make the results of taking images of people seem simple, the word *alert* is used metonymically to hide the details it conveys. The technology may collect personal data and store it for a long time. If these details are mentioned, the technology will likely be questioned and objected to. Therefore, enclosing such details under the word *alert* makes the technology less subject to question.

**Analysis of the Third Article: Thames Valley Police launches Live Facial Recognition Technology in Oxford**

***Image Schematic ICMs***

When considering image schemas in this article, a schema of source-path-goal can be noticed. In the lines "*the launch of live facial recognition technology in Thames Valley provides officers with an additional tool to cut crime and catch criminals*", "*the technology helps us to locate and arrest people of interest*" (Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner [TVPCC], 2025, paras. 10, 8), the technology is understood as a source alongside a path represented by its application and the finding of suspects. It follows that the goal is to arrest the main suspects and keep society safe. As such, the technology appears logical, lawful, and legitimised, since the steps are organised and the goal is worthwhile.

Furthermore, a centre-periphery schema is recognisable in the lines "*this process ensures that there will always be a human making the decision around what intervention, if any, will be taken*", "*the use of any technology just provides a tool to the police. It is still the men and women of Thames Valley Police who will use their professional judgment and put themselves in harm's way to protect the public*" (TVPCC, 2025, paras, 6, 13). These lines portray the technology as peripheral, while human beings are given centrality, where decision-making is taken by officers. In doing so, the

government attempts to remove the possibility of bias and violation that may be thought of as features of a technology working without human intervention.

A third conspicuous schema is a path schema. Instead of framing it as a policy that can be disapproved or refused, the technology is presented as a journey that is inevitable for progress ("*following this first deployment, the technology will be used across the Thames Valley frequently to support policing*") (TVPCC, 2025, para. 3). Put differently, the deployment of the technology is cognitively understood as if approved by the audience, rendering continuity irreversible.

Eventually, a contact schema is noticeable in the paragraph "*the vans will be clearly marked and officers will be on hand to answer any questions*" (TVPCC, 2025, para. 8). Asking and talking with officers are well-experienced by people as a contact. Since contact conveys a sense of cooperation and friendly touch, the surveillance system is likely to be perceived as secure and non-controlling.

***Propositional ICMs***

As far as feature bundle structures are concerned, the LFR technology is claimed to have the following features "*there will always be a human making the decision*", "*no personal data is stored*", "*locate people of interest in ongoing investigations quickly and efficiently*", "*assist officers in tackling crime and keeping communities safe*", "*a speed and level of accuracy that cannot be achieved by a person*" (TVPCC, 2025, paras, 6, 7, 3, 2, 5). Because of this, it is seemingly considered prototypical, since such features are the highly weighted features of a neutral and normal surveillance system. As such, this brings to mind the ICM of the prototypical surveillance.

When it comes to taxonomic ICMs, crime and offences are placed in the superordinate category, with other parts dominated by them ("*rape, domestic abuse, knife crime, robbery and sex offenders for breaching their conditions*") (TVPCC, 2025, para. 9). Putting these categories under higher categories, such as crime and offence, intensifies their danger and limits the technology's focus, which cognitively excludes possible unwanted intervention.

***Metaphorical ICMs***

A number of conceptual metaphors are planted in the text. For instance, the word *tactic* is used in "*it is important that the police explain the use of this tactic*" (TVPCC, 2025, para. 13) to refer to the LFR technology. Conventionally, the word *tactic* is connected with war planning, which led crime to be seen as an enemy that should be fought.

Also, the linguistic metaphor in "*an additional tool to cut crime*" (TVPCC, 2025, para. 10) suggests a conceptual metaphor in which crime is viewed as a redundant entity that should be cut. The redundant entity is unnecessary and may be harmful; therefore, cutting it should be an inevitable and normal action. Moreover, the technology is comprehended as a pair of sharp, useful scissors.

***Metonymic ICMs***

Concerning metonymy, *the force* in "*the force is adding two fully-equipped LFR vans to its capabilities*" (TVPCC, 2025, para. 2) designates the organised police body and its acting personnel. The police (organisation or people) are referred to as the force in this context, not an abstract force. Because of this, it is employed metonymically with a property-for-institution relationship. In doing so, the government conveys the impression that it is in charge and not vulnerable to legal infractions by introducing the technology with a sense of authority and discipline.

Furthermore, the text includes the metonymy of *an alert* in the phrase "*will trigger an alert*" (TVPCC, 2025, para. 6) in an ideological manner. As mentioned earlier, this metonymic word serves to mask the precise information that the alert is likely to convey. Alerts may encourage audience examination if their nature and types are clearly stated. Therefore, hiding such information under the broad term *alert* makes it easier for the technology to be accepted at the cognitive level, promoting the idea that surveillance is simple, hence reducing concerns about storing personal data or bias.

The following table presents the frequency count of the cognitive strategies in each of the three articles, along with their percentages.

**Table 2**

*Raw and Normalised Frequency Counts of Cognitive Strategies in the UK Government's Articles*

| Article | Image Schematic ICMs | Feature Bundle Propositional ICMs | Taxonomic ICMs | Metaphorical ICMs | Metonymic ICMs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | 8 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| **2** | 4 | 1 | _ | 2 | 2 |
| **3** | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| **Total** | 16 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 9 |
| **Normalised Frequency** | 5.79 | 1.45 | 0.72 | 2.17 | 3.26 |

**Table 3**

*Normalised Frequency Counts of Cognitive Strategies in each of the UK Government's Articles*

| Strategy | Article 1 (1243) | Article 2 (965) | Article 3 (554) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Image Schematic ICMs** | 6.43 | 4.14 | 7.22 |
| **Feature Bundle Propositional ICMs** | 1.60 | 1.03 | 1.80 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Taxonomic ICMs** | 0.80 | 0 | 1.80 |
| **Metaphorical ICMs** | 1.60 | 2.07 | 3.61 |
| **Metonymic ICMs** | 4.02 | 2.07 | 3.61 |

As the tables above show, the image schema strategy is predominant among all three articles, accounting for (5.79) in the three articles. Ranked second was the metonymic ICMs strategy, constituting (3.26). Next comes the metaphorical ICMs strategy with (2.17), indicating a relative balance between it and metaphor. Finally, less focus is given to the remaining propositional strategies, namely feature bundles and taxonomic ICMs, with (1.45) for the former and (0.72) for the latter, indicating almost no use.

**8. Findings**

Based on the results shown in the tables, the findings reveal a clear hierarchical distribution in the deployment of cognitive strategies. Image schema strategy tops the list of the most frequently recurring cognitive strategies in all texts, ranging between (4.14) and (7.22) per thousand words, demonstrating the consistency of this approach in the studied texts. Coming next are the metonymic and metaphorical strategies at relatively average rates, while the non-imaginative strategies, namely feature bundles and taxonomic ICMs, remain limited or almost absent in the texts. This relatively stable quantitative distribution refers to the existence of a recurring cognitive pattern with a clear focus on certain strategies and not others.

**9. Limitations**

This study is limited to the studied corpus of the selected official data. It does not claim to represent all forms of the UK government's discourse comprehensively. Nevertheless, a preliminary review of the remaining texts published within the same time period revealed recurring and similar framing patterns, which strengthen the reliability of the findings derived from the studied corpus. However, expanding the sample range in future studies remains significant to verify the stability of these patterns across broader temporal and textual contexts.

**10. Conclusions**

It can be safely concluded that the analysed articles from UK official institutions invested more in the imaginative cognitive strategies (Image Schema, Metaphor, Metonymy). The three articles followed a similar structure in presenting the LFR technology, reflecting a non-neutral position in favour of the technology and a self-ideological stance. Thus, the government's ideological framing of the technology aligns with van Dijk's perspective on positive self-presentation.

The governmental institutions' reliance on cognitive strategies demonstrates that complex security issues are simplified through cognitive modelling that makes surveillance appear normal and necessary. At the societal level, the results highlight how language is used to naturalise surveillance technologies, calling for greater public and media critical awareness.

The effectiveness of discursive strategies in constructing the legitimacy of the LFR technology stems from their reliance on well-established cognitive structures that represent the technology within the framework of security necessity and preventive effectiveness. These cognitive structures or strategies contribute to shifting the technology from a legal debate to a natural organising tool. Thus, they enhance the discourse's manipulative power within the context of the studied texts. Although the discourse seems effective in legitimising the technology, it remains fragile and susceptible to being shaken if strong critical frameworks emerge.

Although only the positive self-presentation is explicitly noted in the government's discourse, the negative other-presentation may serve the interests of the independent media or civil society organisations. Therefore, further studies could compare the government's discourse with that of the media or civil society organisations to identify differences in the use of cognitive strategies.

**References**

Atatfa, O. A. W. (1 November 2025). A Critical Discourse Analysis of the U.S.- Canada Tariffs' News Narrative: Affiliation or Patriotism? *Wasit Journal for Human Sciences, 21*(4). https://doi.org/10.31185/wjfh.Vol21.Iss4.1204

Barnard-Wills, D. (2011). UK news media discourses of surveillance. *The Sociological Quarterly*, *52*(4), 548-567.

Bhatia, V. K.; Flowerdew, J.; & Jones, R. H. (2008). *Advances in discourse studies*. Routledge.

Blommaert, J., & Bulcaen, C. (2000). Critical discourse analysis. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *29*(1), 447-466.

Buss, D. M. (1987). Selection, evocation, and manipulation. Journal of personality and social psychology, 53(6), 1214.

Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice*. Routledge.

Cienki, A. (2007). Frames, idealised cognitive models, and domains. In D. Geeraerts & H. Cuyckens (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of cognitive linguistics* (pp. 170-184). Oxford University Press.

Evans, V. & Green, M. (2006). *Cognitive linguistics: An introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.

Evans, V. (2012). Cognitive linguistics. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, *3*(2), 129-141. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.1163

Evans, V., Bergen, B. K., & Zinken, J. (2007). The cognitive linguistics enterprise: An overview. In V. Evans, B. K. Bergen & J. Zinken *(Eds.), The cognitive linguistics reader* (pp. 2-36). Equinox Publishing.

Greenberg, J., & Hier, S. (2009). CCTV surveillance and the poverty of media discourse: A content analysis of Canadian newspaper coverage. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, *34*(3), 461-486.

Khir Allah, G. (2022). Towards cognitive critical discourse analysis CCDA methodology: A multidisciplinary approach to social science. *Research Square*. https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-1540970/v2

Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire and dangerous things*. The University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G. (2004). Don't think of an elephant: Know your values and frame the debate. Chelsea Green Publishing.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2020). Conceptual metaphor in everyday language. In S. Sarasvathy, N. Dew, & S. Venkataraman (Eds.), *Shaping entrepreneurship research* (pp. 475-504). Routledge.

Langacker, R. W. (2008). *Cognitive grammar: A basic introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Lyon, D. (2007). *Surveillance studies: An overview*. Polity Press.

Morris, S. (2019, May 21). *Office worker launches UK's first police facial recognition legal action*. The Guardian. https://offf.to/KBcZ

Scottish Police Authority, Police Scotland, & Scottish Biometrics Commissioner**.** (2024, June). *Discussion paper on the potential adoption of live facial recognition by Police Scotland.* https://offf.to/m8hK

Sheldon, B. (2011). Camera surveillance within the UK: Enhancing public safety or a social threat? *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology*, *25*(3), 193–203. https://doi.org/10.1080/13600869.2011.617494

Van Dijk, T. A. (1995). Discourse analysis as ideology analysis. In A. Wenden & C. Schaffner (Eds.), *Language and Peace* (pp. 17-33). Dartmouth Publishing.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. Sage Publishing.

Van Dijk, T. A. (2015). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 466–485). John Wiley & Sons.

Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (2001). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. Sage Publishing.

Wodak, R. (2008). The contribution of critical linguistics to the analysis of discriminatory prejudices and stereotypes in the language of politics. In R. Wodak & V. Koller (Eds.), *Handbook of communication in the public sphere* (pp. 291–316). Mouton de Gruyter.

Wodak, R. (2022). Critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis. In J. Verschueren & J. Östman (Eds.), *Handbook of pragmatics* (pp. 426-443). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Yule, G. (2010). *The study of language*. Cambridge University Press.

**Websites of Analysed Articles**

Greater Manchester Police. (2025, October 17). Greater Manchester Police to deploy live facial recognition technology to keep communities safe. Greater Manchester Police to deploy Live Facial recognition technology to keep communities safe | Greater Manchester Police

Home Office. (2025, August 13). Live facial recognition technology to catch high-harm offenders. GOV.UK. Live Facial Recognition technology to catch high-harm offenders - GOV.UK

Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner. (2025, December 29). Thames Valley Police launches live facial recognition technology. Thames Valley Police launches Live Facial Recognition technology - Thames Valley PCC