

The paragraph seems to be replete with construal operations of all kinds, although I'm having difficulty identifying distinct construal operations in terms of the Cruse & Croft (2004) reading. However, some of the construal operations, such as metaphor, seem more obvious than others, so I'll start with that.

Metaphor

"While the bill could gain traction in the Democratic-controlled Senate, it faces a rough road in the GOP-run House, where many Republicans favor scaling back the government's role in the housing market as a way of aiding the economy. Similar versions of the measure died in the House and Senate's lame duck sessions last year."

The language in the paragraph construes '*the bill*' as a single living entity that will possibly move forward (*gain traction*) in a positive way (be approved) in the Senate but will be met by obstacles in the House (*faces a rough road*).

The present tense verb "faces" supports the "living entity" notion of the metaphor, as does the use of "died," but the "gain traction" and "faces a rough road" language involves metaphor for "vehicle," as in driving from point A to point B. Perhaps this is a metonymic device used within the metaphor? Although I thought the 'metaphor' construal would be 'obvious,' I see that it's really not all that transparent.

LIVING ENTITY	VEHICLE ON A PATH
"faces" [verb, transitive] ACTOR = <i>the bill</i>	gain traction [verb, transitive, traction = NP complement]
"died" [verb, intransitive] UNDERGOER = <i>similar versions of the measure</i>	rough road [NP, object of 'faces'] ACTOR = "it" [the bill]

In addition to the use of metaphor (or perhaps supporting these metaphors?), the paragraph relies on the PATH and MOMENTUM image schemas, but I'm not sure where in the context of the metaphor the image schema ends and metaphor begins, or if these are two separate concepts?

Cruse points out that "the choice of metaphor to describe a situation in a particular domain construes the structure of that domain in a particular way that differs depending on the metaphor chosen." In this example, the choice of metaphor as a "vehicle attempting to get its wheel unstuck as if from a ditch" construes "the bill" as that vehicle, and so construes the bill as being less than roadworthy. So perhaps this is the most important aspect of this particular metaphor, in terms of construal operations?

Figure/Ground Asymmetry

The initial sentence is presented as a fronted subordinate clause ("while the bill...") followed by the main clause. This sentence structure creates a dichotomy between two opposing possible events, and sets up what Cruse and Croft (p 57) describe as an "asymmetric figure-ground alignment" in which "the main (figure)-subordinate (ground) event relation is construed asymmetrically." The two clauses paraphrased in more comparable language might be as follows:

Subordinate clause [Ground]	Main clause [Figure]
While the bill could gain traction in the ... Senate	it faces a rough road in the ...House
The bill might gain momentum	The bill will likely lose momentum
The bill will succeed	The bill will fail

According to Cruse and Croft (p.57), “the event in the ground/subordinate clause is conceptualized as the basis or ground—ie., a cause or precondition—for the event in the figure/main clause.” I don’t think in this case that the ‘ground’ is a cause or precondition, because the use of “*while*” seems to setup a temporal figure/ground relation between events, the second of which [facing a rough road] is synchronous with the first [gaining traction in the Senate].

Nonetheless, the two clauses are set against each other, with the second (main) clause providing the dominant idea—that the bill has slim chance of success—and the syntactic construction chosen directly supports this construal.

In the subordinate clause we also see the modal verb “could” providing epistemic modality—it’s a possibility that the bill will ‘gain traction’—get its metaphorical wheels on the road so that it can actually move forward.

Fictive motion? Force dynamics?

With the “BILL IS A VEHICLE IN MOTION” metaphor underlying this short paragraph, it’s hard not to think of “fictive motion,” although I’m not sure this matches the concept as presented in Cruse (p 55), who credits Talmy with defining the concept as “a construal of a static scene in dynamic terms.”

The actual ‘working on the bill’ by the members of Congress is likely not a static scene, but the “gaining traction” in one house and facing a rough road in the other imbues the scene with a type of motion that is not real. Perhaps this is more an example of force dynamics applying to the bill and its metaphorical journey through the houses of Congress, in which case, the GOP-run House” would be the antagonist, impeding the forward motion of the bill?

Interestingly, the bill itself is the subject of the sentence, both main clause and subordinate clause, with the houses of Congress somewhat “buried” as the NPs inside prepositional phrases, making them grammatically adjuncts in their clauses and providing metaphorical ‘locations’ in which the bill is either pushed forward (force positive) or stymied (antagonist).

Gestalt: Structural schematization

In the paragraph, several ‘mass’ entities—the Senate, the House, the bill—are construed as singular, countable nouns. Using the prepositional phrases (“in the GOP-run House” and “in the Democratic-controlled Senate”) construes these congressional bodies as physical location alone. “The bill” is construed as a singular count noun, but in fact, each branch of the legislature has its own instance of the bill (the “Responsible Homeowner Refinancing Act of 2013”) that its members are currently (during the 1st session of the 113th Congress now in session) discussing and will ultimately put to a vote—the names of the legislators and the identifying labels of the bills (HR 736 IH vs. S 249) are the only differences between the two bills, so the use of singular noun phrase “the bill” seems to be another construal which I think may be another type of adjustment to figure and ground or gestalt?

The relative clause “*where many Republicans favor scaling back the government’s role....*” is a reference to a place, making this a metonymic reference to “the GOP-run House,” although I think I’m confused about metonymy at this point.

Relationality (entity/interconnection)

Does the designation “Democratic” mean anything without the designation “Republican”? I think the use of *GOP-run House* in contrast to *Democratic-controlled Senate* sets up a relational construal between these two political parties. Saying either Democratic or Republican “inherently implies the existence of another entity,” in this case, the opposing party.

Temporal scalar adjustment? categorization?

The sentence “*similar versions of the measure died in the House and Senate’s lame duck sessions last year versions of the bill*” seems to be a fine-grained (temporal scalar) distinction. It lets readers know the timeframe in the context of the political election cycle and also seems to impart the idea that the bill’s previous iterations were (possibly) perfunctory.

Initially, I thought “lame duck” had some strong negative connotations and that this choice of language had been the author’s indirect way of calling Congress “ineffectual,” since that was my superficial understanding of “lame duck.”

However, brief research suggests that this idiom may no longer have such connotations. The expression ‘*lame duck*’ has become conventionalized in the sense that it no longer has any connection to its original meaning, which, Wikipedia tells us, goes back to the 18th century “at the London Stock Exchange, to refer to a stockbroker who defaulted on his debt.” For the US Congress, “‘*lame duck*’ sessions occur after the November elections and before the January inauguration, when some representatives are set to leave office, whether by choice or after failing to win re-election.”¹

Furthermore, I see that the US Congress refers to these sessions using that same terminology (as shown in this screenshot from the US Senate’s website), which I take to mean that the term is not only conventionalized but it has become so entrenched, it no longer carries any negative connotations.

The screenshot shows the US Senate website's 'Reference' section. It features a navigation menu with options like 'Senators', 'Committees', and 'Legislation & Records'. The main content area is titled 'Lame Duck Sessions Since 1933' and contains a table with the following data:

Congress (Year)	Senate Dates	House Dates	Major Topics
112th (2012)	Nov 6, 9 Nov 13-16 Nov 26-Jan 2	Nov 6, 9 Nov 13-16 Nov 27-Jan 3	Pro forma session Defense authorization, FISA extension, disaster appropriations, extension of tax cuts, delay of budget sequestration
111th (2010)	Nov 4, 8, 10, 12 Nov 15-19 Nov 29-Dec 22	-- Nov 15-18 Nov 29-Dec 22	Pro forma session Judge Porteous impeachment, New START treaty, appropriations, 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' extension of tax cuts

¹ <http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/uscongress/a/congressions.htm>
http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/reference/four_column_table/Lame_Duck.htm