

Terrorism in German and Italian Press Headlines: A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of Conceptual Metaphors

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Abstract : Islamic terrorism has gained a lot of media attention in the last years also because of the striking increase of terror attacks since 2014. The main aim of this paper is to illustrate the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism by applying frame semantics and metaphor analysis to German and Italian press headlines of the two online weekly publications Der Spiegel and L'Espresso between 2014 and 2019. This study focuses on how media discourse – through the use of conceptual metaphors – let arise in people a particular reception of the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism and accept governmental strategies and policies, perceiving terrorists as evildoers, as the members of an uncivilised group 'other' opposed to the civilised group 'we': two groups that are perceived as opposed. The press headlines are analyzed on the basis of the cognitive linguistics, namely Lakoff and Johnson's conceptualization of metaphor to distinguish between abstract conceptual metaphors and specific metaphorical expressions. The study focuses on the contexts, frames, and metaphors. The method adopted in this study is Konecny's frame semantics (1993). Konecny carried out on the basis of dictionaries – in particular of the Duden Deutsches Universalwörterbuch (Duden Universal German Dictionary) – in a pilot study of a lexicological work hyperonym reduction of substantives, working exclusively with nouns because hyperonyms usually occur in the dictionary meaning explanations as for the main elements of nominal phrases. The results of Konecny's hyperonym type reduction is a small set of German nouns and they correspond to the highest hyperonyms, the so-called categories, matrix frames: 'object', 'organism', 'person/actant', 'event', 'action/interaction/communication', 'institution/social group', 'surroundings', 'part/piece', 'totality/whole', 'state/property'. The second step of Konecny's pilot study consists in determining the potential reference points of each category so that conventionally expectable routinized predications arise as predictors. Konecny found out which predictors the ascertained noun types can be linked to. For the purpose of this study, metaphorical expressions will be listed and categorized in conceptual metaphors and under the matrix frames that correspond to the particular conceptual metaphor. All of the corpus analyses are carried out using Ant Conc corpus software. The research will verify some previously analyzed metaphors such as TERRORISM AS WAR, A CRIME, A NATURAL EVENT, A DISEASE and will identify new conceptualizations and metaphors about Islamic terrorism, especially in the Italian language like TERRORISM AS A GAME, WARES, A DRAMATIC PLAY. Through the identification of particular frames and their construction, the research seeks to understand the public reception and the way to handle the discourse about Islamic terrorism in the above mentioned online weekly publications under a contrastive analysis in the German and in the Italian language.

Keywords : cognitive linguistics, frame semantics, Islamic terrorism, media

Conference Title : ICCL 2019 : International Conference on Cognitive Linguistics

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : September 19-20, 2019