



MARGINS MARGES MARGINI

*Rivista Multilingue
di Studi Letterari, Linguistici e Culturali*

Exploring Marginalization: Metaphors and User-Generated Language in Migration Discourse

Giulia Magazzù

(Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata, IT)

Abstract

This study examines usage of migration-related metaphors and scenarios in British tabloid and broadsheet comment sections. It demonstrates how the writers' arguments are supported by modified scenarios and aspects of the original domain. With an emphasis on mixed metaphors, the study also investigates the connection between conceptual metaphors and argumentation topoi. Additionally, the corpus data demonstrate that when language users use concrete metaphorical linguistic formulations, they often employ specific lexical words that are connected with a restricted area of the source domain. It is therefore not surprising that the discussion of migration might at times seem somewhat conventionalized, especially in sociopolitical echo chambers.

Keywords: migration discourse; critical discourse analysis; conceptual metaphor theory; user-generated language; online comment sections.

1. Introduction

The large influx of people crossing the Mediterranean to seek protection under the 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention has become a major political issue in many European countries, including Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy and the U.K. In the U.K., the immigration debate has been closely tied to the Brexit discussion, as both touch on national sovereignty, mobility rights, economic prosperity and national security (Cap 2019). Images of overcrowded boats and refugee camps have frequently appeared in national media, especially during the Brexit referendum period. The rise of anti-migrant sentiment in Europe has coincided with growing support for right-wing populist parties like UKIP in the U.K. and Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany (Sola 2018). Therefore, media coverage of the 'migration crisis' has attracted attention from human rights organizations and migration policy institutes (Threadgold 2009).

Research has noted that the media has played a key role in portraying the arrival of refugees in Europe as a 'crisis'. Critics have pointed out several problematic practices in this coverage: the use of discriminatory metaphors (e.g. 'tidal wave' or 'invasion'); confusion between terms like 'refugee', 'asylum seeker', and 'economic migrant'; an overrepresentation of conservative political voices compared to refugees themselves; the frequent depiction of refugees as threatening young men; the spread of fear through vague predictions about refugee numbers; and the use of 'us vs. them' language.

In linguistics, two main research approaches have emerged for studying migration discourses. The first, rooted in critical discourse analysis (CDA), focuses on power dynamics in language. The second, based on cognitive linguistics (CL), particularly conceptual metaphor and conceptual blending theory, aims to reveal ideological patterns in the way in which migration is represented. Over the past decade, there has been increasing integration of CL concepts into CDA, with many studies exploring the synergy between the two approaches (e.g. Cap 2019; Charteris-Black 2006; KhosraviNik 2009, 2014; Stockwell 2001).

This study examines the use of metaphorical language in readers' comments on migration-related articles from *The Guardian*, *BBC*, *Daily Mail* and *The Sun/Sunday Express*, focusing on how metaphors are adopted, continued, and used argumentatively. It aims to show that metaphors used in both news articles and readers' comments shape public discourse and perceptions of migration, especially when discriminatory metaphors are involved, potentially reinforcing negative attitudes. It also explores readers' engagement with metaphors, discussing their acceptability and intentionality, and scrutinizes how readers extend, mix, or re-contextualize metaphors, offering insights into the argumentative strategies in the migration debate and contributing to metaphor theory.

2. Data, research questions and methodology

News articles and comment sections published in British national newspapers during the so-called European migration crisis were chosen as the object of analysis. These articles, sampled from the newspapers' web pages during July 2018–December 2019, represented a relatively equal proportion of broadsheets having a more liberal, leftwing editorial position (e.g. *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *BBC News*) and a right-wing focus (e.g. *The Daily Mail*, *The Sun/The Sunday Express*).

Most of the comment sections were attached underneath the articles for public access (although, years later they were 'gated' – requiring registration to comment thereon). A few discussions were outsourced to Twitter¹, but political actors posted provocative quotes/statements on their own Twitter page and linked them to the news article itself. Readers did not require registration on Twitter to follow the discussion on the internet. The corpus in size included 20 articles and more than 7,000 reader comments of various lengths, from single words to lengthy arguments.

¹ Twitter officially changed its name to X in July 2023.

Inclusion criteria for the corpus were: 1) The article and comment section must have had at least one metaphorical expression concerning migration. 2) Since metaphors are often used in arguing the migration debate and since the interrelation between conceptual metaphors and argumentative topoi is of great interest, the news texts needed to contain various issues associated with migration (refugee camps, human trafficking, migration statistics, economic effects of migration, national security, integrative measures) to ensure that a range of topoi was encountered. 3) To comprehensively understand metaphors' role in the migration debate, topic-related and meta-discussions that focused on language were considered.

The research study was informed by the following research questions: 1) Which migration-related metaphors (conceptual metaphors and metaphorical linguistic expressions) embodied in the news articles were adopted in the comments sections, and to what end? 2) What role do metaphors play in argumentative topoi, particularly in anti-migration discourse, and what exactly is the discourse purpose behind mixed metaphors?

To identify metaphorical expressions in the corpus, the metaphor identification procedure (MIP) initially proposed by the Pragglejazz Group (2007) and modified by related research groups such as metaphor identification procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) (Steen et al. 2010) and deliberate metaphor identification procedure (DMIP) (Reijnierse et al. 2017) was used. When a word was found to have been used indirectly and its use could possibly be justifiable by a cross-domain mapping of a more fundamental meaning of the same word, it was classified as having been metaphorically used (Steen et al. 2010, 25). The metaphors were grouped according to the conceptual ideas they were based on and examined in respect of linguistic forms. Another related question was whether they pertained to certain argumentative themes, including economic burden, national security threats and cultural differences. Particularly interesting metaphorical usages, such as new creations, mixed metaphors and invited metaphors were considered in further qualitative analysing.

3. Results

3.1 *Conventionalised metaphors*

Considering that human migration is a recurrent issue and that the logic behind it, the responses of the in-groups towards it and the discourses with which it is associated, have been strikingly similar over the years, most of the metaphors in my data on the topic of migration are conventionalised metaphors (Figure 1).

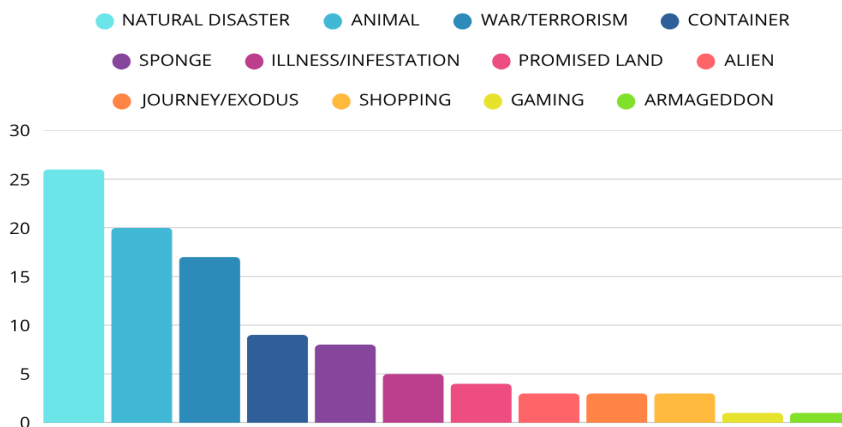


Figure 1. Common source domains in the British migration discourse

The domains of natural disaster and war are the most used in the corpus to discuss the process and possible effects of migration. Notably, metaphors of natural disasters rely on water-related risks, as well as the forces and effects of various magnitude, including tsunami references that convey the image of a slow but steady in-flowing presence (e.g. flow, pour in; turn off the tap). Limitations in the scope of mapping a specific type of natural disaster have been observed, and across the language representations, there is a pool of individual concrete lexical items that act like a resource that users of the language replicate, namely

influx (N), *flow/inflow* (N), *wave/tidal wave* (N), *flood/flooding* (N), *pouring* (V), *floodgates* (N), *flooding* (V), *tide* (N), *stream* (V) and *sweeping* (V).

The prevalence of this metaphorical language increased and was eventually established in the migration discourse. Likewise, most war-related metaphors convey images of an invasion by a foreign force, such as *invasion* (N), *be invaded* (V), *invaders* (N), *army (of refugees)* (N), *country under siege* (PP), *besiege* (V) and *intrusion* (N). In this case, the semantic role played by the host country is that of a patient or an affected entity, indicated by the prevalence of the passive voice constructions with the verb *invade*. The host country is far more active in the self-destruction scenario (with only a few instances in the corpus); in this case, the noun self-destruction attributes the crisis at hand to political actors such as British left-wingers or E.U. representatives.

The invasion metaphor emphasizes that migrants are becoming a source of conflict and perhaps includes a perception of the out-group's moral inferiority (Taylor 2021, 465). In a diachronic study on the rhetoric of migration, Taylor (2021, 463) observed that the metaphor of liquid/natural disaster has a longer history than the invasion metaphor, which was only conventionalised in the 1940s. Natural disaster and war metaphors are used in arguments in favour of restrictive immigration policies and have positive correlations with the topoi of physical danger, cultural threat and economic burden. They are employed to justify political activism and even violence towards migrants. Various measures (and projections regarding the future of Britain/Europe in case no measures are undertaken) are implied depending on the level of intensity the scenario of the respective source domain concealed. For example, comments concerning tsunamis and floods are more likely to be accompanied by Armageddon-type water predictions, as observed in Examples (1a,b), whereas the invasion allusions are more likely to be found in conjunction with the prophecy of the devastating destruction of Britain/Europe and its ideals, whereby the political entities of Britain/Europe are being objectified or personified, as in Examples (1c,d).

(1a). “It’s started a few years ago and *the tsunami* that is going to hit billions of people is already beginning. [...] Somehow Ms. Merkel does not see the handwriting on the wall and seems very interested in foolishly taking care of German problem of short duration that *will sink all in the EU*” (*Guardian*, comment section, 20 Sept 2019; emphasis added).

(1b). “[...] accepting this reality is happening will eventually see *our vessel sink with all lost, fix the leak, fix the Middle East before it all spills over into Europe*” (*Guardian*, comment section, 4 Sept 2019; emphasis added).

(1c). “A *Muslim Invasion* that *will change the face of Europe* forever. *Destroyed*, the freedoms hard fought for millennia, gone” (*Guardian*, comment section, 20 Sept 2019; emphasis added).

(1d). “I do not understand why politicians try to *destroy Europe, European culture and our values, this is invasion*” (*Daily Mail*, comment section, 5 Sept 2019; emphasis added).

Although the above-mentioned natural disaster and war metaphors are found in both the sub-corpora i.e. the sub-corpus derived out of more liberal, left-inclined news outlets and the sub-corpus derived out of more conservative, right-inclined papers, animal comparisons are quite prevalent in the *Daily Mail* and *Sun* sub-corpora, purely based on racist ideologies. Regarding the argumentative topoi, animal metaphors show a positive correlation with arguments of migrants as a financial threat to the social welfare system of the host state (argument of economic burden) and a strategy of direct dissimulation of the in-group and out-group cultural values (cultural threat) (Charteris-Black 2014, 135; Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 48).

Historically, animal comparisons and imagery supported the morality of social exclusion and were intentionally juxtaposed to encourage the perpetration of aggressive

deviations towards unknown persons (Andrighetto et al. 2016, 630). The same applies in the corpus under analysis as shown in Examples (2a, c). Exclusion and aggression towards a particular social group can be achieved easily with less moral limits provided that this group is described as non-human, inferior and harmful. Complete dissimulation is also expressed via xenonyms like illegal aliens, alien culture and alien holding centres (referring to refugee camps). Even in the value system found in the 'Great Chain in Being', aliens are actually found to fall outside the life we know (cfr. Hawkins 2001, 44). As indicated by Comment (2d) below, migrants are in the category of 'aliens', whose exact meaning includes an underlying racist ideology.

(2a) "build it [...] and they will come [...] are the French that thick? [...] flatten it [...] and remove *the vermin*" (*The Sun*, comment section, 11 Nov 2018; emphasis added).

(2b) "@Bella I agree 100%! Why are these illegal immigrants allowed to just walk into Europe and demand that we look after them? They should either be denied entry or *rounded up* and deported ASAP. ...WE DON'T WANT THEM FFS!" (*The Sun*, comment section, 11 Nov 2018; emphasis in italics added).

(2c) "If you don't want them, protect your borders. we don't want your criminal *parasite* refugees" (*The Sun*, comment section, 11 Nov 2019, Trev Stans; emphasis added).

(2d) "Actually we can stop calling them migrants now because this lot are actually illegal *aliens* either by choice or design" (*The Sun*, comment section, 11 Nov 2019, David Willey; emphasis added).

3.2 Novel creations and less established metaphors

Regarding the topic of the push- and pull-factors and terms like refugee, asylum seeker and economic migrant, religious metaphors (e.g. the land of milk and honey, the Promised Land), mythological metaphors (e.g. the Irish myth of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow), and more secular, consumerist-driven metaphors (the country shopping, the asylum shoppers) are very popular in the text corpus examined. Particularly, the shopping context appears to have had another lease of life within the discursive arena of Brexit. According to Moore, (2013), the peak usage of the term asylum shopping occurred in the U.K. newspapers between 2001 and 2003; a time when further expansion of the Schengen zone, inception of the E.U.-wide fingerprint database EURODAC and the Dublin Regulation dominated the news; since then the term has continually declined until 2011.

The subject of the migration drove the Brexit referendum, and the two discourses that became intertwined explained why the shopping metaphors reappeared. In the shopping context, Europe is perceived as a shop with several items (countries) on sale from which the costumers (the migrants) can freely choose. German Chancellor Merkel is said to have advertised some of the E.U. countries' benefits to entice migrants to journey to Western European countries such as Germany and the U.K. Merkel's famous positive adage, 'We will manage (*Wir schaffen das*)', is said to have been a catastrophic mistake in antimigration speeches either as general statements or in interviews with leaders like Nigel Farage and Donald Trump.

(3a) "These people are not fleeing. They are country shopping for the best welfare they can find. Sympathy is becoming non-existent for these chancers and violent, demanding thugs" (*Guardian*, comment section, 20 Sep 2018).

(3b) "And Italy, Germany, Spain, France and all the other countries that were not good enough for them on their journey to the promised land of milk, honey" (*Daily Mail*, comment section, 30 July 2017).

(3c) “Congratulations to Frau Merkel for her absolutely absurd statement welcoming all migrants to the EU. People smugglers throughout Africa, the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East now have the perfect sales aid in persuading people to engage their services to get to the promised land” (*Guardian*, comment section, 20 Sep 2019).

(3d) “If we left the EU and stopped handing out free houses and benefits then they’d have nothing to come here for. As long as there is that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow then they will continue to come. We’ve not got the money or resources to help everyone, we’ve got our own problems here in the UK with work-shy scroungers” (*Daily Mail*, comment section, 30 July 2019).

3.3 Mixed metaphors and their argumentative function

The fact that mixed metaphors are used comparatively often is striking. However, it should be mentioned that this paper is rather liberal in its definition of metaphors that can be categorised as ‘mixed’. Barnden (2016) explains parallel and serial mixing as follows. Whereas parallel mixing implies that the same Target A is conceived both as B and as C more or less simultaneously in a stretch of discourse, with B and C being sharply divergent source subject matters, the serial mixing involves ‘metaphor chaining’, i.e. A is viewed as B whereby B is seen as C (Barnden 2016, 76). This study does follow Barnden thoroughly, but is nevertheless aligned with it, namely in the analysis that a single source can be used to conceptualise multiple targets (more or less) simultaneously. In most of the examples of mixing recorded in this corpus, the source domains that are the exponents of a mix are well-established domains in the discourse history of migration metaphors. We encountered combinations of container/natural disasters, natural disasters/invasions, invasions/animals, animals/national body, etc.

In most cases, these mixed metaphors are initially imagistically incongruent, as Kövecses (2016, 5) puts it, and a variety of questions are asked: Why is such seemingly incompatible pairs chosen at a specific stage of the discourse? Are the disjunctions unique to the reader so that they can find meaning in the intended message? Just how far can the formation of such mixed metaphors (and discourse participants' responses thereto) be capable of contributing to the raging debate over the mental activity of metaphors? The two theories of linguistic and cognitive metaphor have encountered the challenges of accounting with the reasons why metaphors are mixed in the discourse, and even more so, why the mixing seldom leads to disruption of communication, or even lack of comprehension. It has been suggested that in cases in which verbal metaphoric expressions actually activate the underlying conceptual system about which they converse, participants should be barred from blending metaphors with incompatible elements of semantic and pragmatic meaning – corresponding linguistic terms concerning the same conceptual metaphor should rather be used (cfr. Kövecses 2016, 3; Muller 2016, 38).

Several reasons have been postulated to explain the incidence of mixed metaphors, each reason focusing on varying meaning of levels (e.g. clause level, distribution of metaphoric expressions across conversation turns), context (e.g. immediate co-text, wider discursive context) and cognition (e.g. imagistic (in)congruence, (non-)deliberateness of metaphor use). Kimmel (2010, 110) adds that, most mixed metaphors have been processed without trouble since the grammar of the text imposes minor effort to conceptualize mixed metaphors. Kimmel asserts that the more remote and peripheral the clauses are in which the conflicting metaphors transgress, the less need there will be to organise them. Similar arguments were presented by Cameron (2016), who, having analyzed the use of mixed metaphors in the flow of situated talk, claims that they aid in speech segmentation. She contends that metaphor clusters do not appear to present an impediment to meaning but must instead be regarded as discursive resources that can help advance discourse dynamics of migration metaphors in the flow of singly-constructed meaning or, alternatively, can be

successfully mixed to form more elaborate and more/less coherent metaphorical scenarios, or that they can be accompanied by a shift in a discursive topic.

According to Cameron, as a discourse-dynamics scholar, it is a kind of illusion seen out of discourse when it is opined that our multiple metaphors sometimes collide (Cameron 2016, 29). A similar conclusion is made by Müller (2016), who also pays attention to the meaning and purpose of metaphors in specific discourse situations. Müller deduces that mixing metaphors is the result of paying closer attention to less familiar attributes of the metaphoric meaning as informed by the study of dynamic and flexible attention people give to meaning as it follows the contingencies of the communicative experience they live in (Müller 2016, 31) – the metaphor mixing shall be used to alter the pattern of semantic salience to produce alternate forms and levels of activated metaphoric meaning (Müller 2016, 32).

Although it is not always clear how to make a decision in favour of the available corpus examples regarding 1) whether such metaphors are metaphors in the first place (a situation in which the definition of a mixed metaphor [as suggested by Steen 2011, 2017] comes in handy), and 2) whether the reader is expected to conceptually unify both pieces of information in the mixed metaphor (i.e. whether the involvement of information is generally conceptualised as such by discourse participants). To begin with, we can consider those cases whereby mixing involves the syntactical integration (e.g. NP postmodified by PP) or that which is directly linked to one another (e.g. subject [agent] + verb [action performed by the agent]).

(4a) Describing them as warm was correct – unpalatable to the hand wringers and do-gooders but there is no stopping them – like *an army of locusts*” (*Daily Mail*, comment section, 30 July 2018; emphasis added).

(4b) “This is an invasion and not a crisis. It’s like *a swarm of crickets invading* Europe, causing mayhem and upset in our western societies” (*Guardian*, comment section, 20 Sep 2019; emphasis added).

(4c) “How else can you describe *the hordes of pests that are mustering* with intent to invade the UK” (*Daily Mail*, comment section, 30 July 2018; emphasis added).

The above paradigms of animal + invasion mixing exemplified are not cognitively demanding – we cannot see indications of perceived incongruity under the subsequent comments. This could be due to several reasons: First, verbs such as invade and muster can be used with both humans and animals. An ACOCA collocates search confirms that human and (army, troop, soldier, enemy, neighbour) and animal agents (insect, ant, bee, coyote, snail, worm) can occupy the noun slot in front of invade. We likewise find the verb muster (to gather in a place) in both military (muster the army, militia, squad, infantry) and farming (mustering horses, sheep, cattle, storks) contexts. Thus, it is immaterial to suggest that the source or target concept of animal metaphors pertaining to immigrants is more salient when processing the mixed metaphor as both can be easily integrated with lexical items of the invasion domain. Second, they may be conversant with the Biblical phrase an ‘army of locusts’ (Joel 2, NIV), and it is easy to create an image of a locust army dressed for battle.

5) “This is all caused by Merkel [...] she *threw the doors wide open*, so they all started to flood there, now she *slams them shut* and leaves all the countries en route to Germany to face the consequences” (*Guardian*, comment section, 20 Sep 2018; emphasis added).

This mixture of confinement and natural calamity is likewise quite unobjectionable and stretches over a half dozen clauses, reminding us of a rather workmanlike script. While the German government broadcasts such a policy as open house, throwing the doors to their

country wide open (permitting refugees to enter Germany without due bureaucratic process), it shuts the doors in the face of migrants, providing them with an incentive to wade into the country in large numbers). Mixing container and water metaphors is rather effective as only a certain volume of water can fit into a container without breaking it; likewise, anybody on board (the in-group in our case scenario) could drown when too much water occupies a limited space. This mixed metaphor does not appear to interfere online processing imagistically since the compatibility of the two conceptual metaphors enables the possibility of having both simultaneously activated and suited to one situational scenario. The same cannot be said the same about the following mixing example:

(6) “European civilization is being killed off now by these useful idiots of the West who support and demand permissiveness and openness towards the mass immigration influx which is engulfing Europe. The idea of making it carbon-emission free is remarkable, but it is just that, an idea, and an idea that lacks a practical step and a clear direction” (Guardian, comment section, 20 Sep 2018).

Though the metaphors of a natural disaster (wave) and invasion (is invading) are normal in the migration discourse, a combination of both is likely to cause cognitive dissonance. The verb ‘invade’ and noun ‘wave’ are not often jointly used, thus impeding easy visualization. Why then, does a noticeable number of incidences of metaphors in the corpus appear as such mixed metaphors? Considering the co-text of the metaphor in the turns ‘these useful idiots of the West’ ‘who are [...] destroying European civilization’ along with the contents of further turns by the same author, the probable interpretation of the mixed metaphor appears to be the reinforcement of the threat scenario. In other words, the aim of dramatic effect permits the merging of two apparently incompatible metaphors, which can traditionally be observed concomitant with the topoi of threat/danger and quantity/ numbers. This makes

the argumentative purpose seem to matter more than the internal logic of the mixed metaphor per se.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

The study of the current corpus revealed that most of the metaphors in recurring cultural discourses such as the migration debate can be classified as discourse metaphors – readers' comments are laced with metaphorical phrases that have become standardised in this discourse and refer to broadly stable metaphorical mappings as major framing strategies (Zinken et al. 2008). In the actual news reports and feature articles, writers repeatedly used a limited range of tokens associated with natural disaster and invasion scenarios. One may enquire about the degree to which aspects of the source domain which may have historically provided incentives to the metaphor remain sensitive to discourse participants. An answer to this question would necessitate empirical psycholinguistic enquiry and it would be fascinating to ascertain whether different cohorts of the discourse participants (i.e. the participants with a democratic or a migrant background and those belonging to the ingroup) offer divergent ratings on such metaphors, e.g. in terms of their perceived discriminatory impact.

Considering the British migration discourse from a diachronic perspective, one might notice that the prevalence of the definite conceptual metaphor changes over time. Moore (2013) demonstrated that the term of asylum shopping emerged in the political and media discourse on migration at the end of the 80s, frequency of use peaking in the early 2000s following which it became background again. Moore found that the fluctuating popularity of this metaphor can be explained by the need to work with the prevailing discourses of the time (EURODAC, E.U. asylum policy) and by hidden culture-specific logics linked to both Britain's postcoloniality and neoliberal modernity (Moore 351, 354–60). The shopping metaphor seemingly making a comeback in migration debates since 2014/2015 leaves one

to ponder the circumstances of its reappearance. I suggest that the tight interfusion of the latest immigration rhetoric with the Brexit discussion led to the reappearance of the shopping situation. The new or at least less popular metaphors would largely be observed in the comment sections below the line.

Mixing of metaphors was also prevalent in these sections. Mixed metaphors in the corpus under study appeared to be rather argumentative in nature. In most cases, the most common reason behind combining two conventionalised conceptual metaphors was the metaphor of exaggerated enlargement. The arguers used hyperbole to emphasise their point and express their attitude towards migration and pro-migrant policies. This could be argued in support of discourse-dynamics accounts of metaphor (mixing), according to which metaphoric meaning is not a fixed product but develops during discursive processes, and according to which the importance and activation of specific aspects of the source and target domains largely depends on the co-text and context of the metaphor under consideration (cfr. e.g. Cameron 2016; Müller 2016).

In other words, the source domain does not appear to be previously endowed with a meaning focus that can subsequently be projected onto the target domain, but the foci that end up being used in the projection process do so in the discourse co-text and context, in the interplay of source and target, and through the dynamic manifestation of salience structures and shifts (cfr. also Kövecses 2013, 16–7).

Mentioning some (positive or negative) aspects of the source idea, the topos-related argumentation scripts were activated and later taken up in further roles of the discussion. In particular, the topoi of desirability and menace, to an extent very frequent in the discourse on migration (e.g. Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Baker et al. 2008; Charteris-Black 2014), became active by focusing the attention of the discourse participants on certain elements of meaning. One of the unexpected results deals with an uptake of metaphors in readers' comments. The data could not confirm the hypothesis that the metaphors of migration that have been used in the news articles can directly influence the rhetoric of the below-the-line debates that

would follow. Although it is undoubtedly true that the idea about equivalence of some of the conceptual metaphors and metaphorical expressions happened to be shared between the two sub-corpora, the concrete trigger effects between articles and related comment sections could not be registered. Both the said metaphors used in comments written by the readers appeared to be mostly shaped by the topoi of the argumentation on migration.

Nevertheless, the fact that mass media texts target a large part of the population, and to a certain extent also prescribe private discourse on migration makes it onerous to answer the question of what exactly stimulated the use of metaphor X at a given phase of the discourse. The literature on modern migration rhetoric – including migration metaphors – is extensive, and judging by the findings of other authors, there seems to be a tendency to delineate migrants through negative metaphors in public discourse. A few exceptions in which metaphors construe migrants more favourably, e.g. as guests, as valuable commodities or as victims in need of assistance, are referenced in Taylor's (2021) diachronic study on migration metaphors in the *Times Online* corpus and in Boeva's (2016) analysis of British and American news sources.

Such representations were absent from the present corpus, though, which ties in with Taylor's observation that the guest metaphor is mainly used to refer to past migration movements rather than recent or current ones, and with Bennett's (2016) hypothesis that the nature of the migration discourse always shifts in reaction to specific events. There is preliminary evidence on the existence of disparities between the self-representation metaphors migrants employ and those of migration metaphors embraced by the mainstream media (cfr., e.g. Catalano 2016). Consequently, it would be useful to have more direct migrant voices represented in news agendas and the mainstream discourse on the issue, including perspectives on how to metaphorically discuss and frame the concept.

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MARGINS MARGES MARGINI

*Rivista Multilingue
di Studi Letterari, Linguistici e Culturali*

Bio-bibliographical note

Giulia Magazzù obtained a PhD in English Studies at the University of Rome Tor Vergata where she now works as tenure-track researcher after having worked as post-doc research fellow in English linguistics and translation at “Gabriele d’Annunzio” University of Chieti-Pescara. Her areas of research are translation studies, audiovisual translation and critical discourse analysis. In 2020 she published a book on the multimodal translation of musicals and in 2022 she published her second monograph about the translation of multilingual television series.

Email address: giulia.magazzu@uniroma2.it