Maciej Bachryj*

Between contempt and paternalism — migrants in press coverage during the 2021 EU—Belarus border crisis: a comparative analysis of "Sieci" and "Polityka" weekly magazines[1]

Między pogardą i paternalizmem — obraz migrantów w relacjach prasowych podczas kryzysu granicznego UE—Białoruś w 2021 roku. Analiza porównawcza przekazu tygodników „Sieci" i „Polityka"

ABSTRACT:

The aim of this article is to examine how metaphors of migrants, present in Polish press discourse, shape their image in terms of warmth and competence, following the assumptions of the Stereotype Content Model (SCM). The study is based on metaphor analysis grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), drawing on Kövecses's extended framework and the hierarchy of the Extended Great Chain of Being (EGCB). A comparison of texts from the weeklies "Polityka" and "Sieci", which represent divergent ideological orientations, demonstrates that these magazines construct distinct repertoires of metaphors relating to migrants. In the left-liberal "Polityka", metaphors that diminish migrants' agency predominate, encouraging their categorisation as a group characterised by low competence but relatively high warmth. Conversely, in right-wing conservative "Sieci", metaphors depicting migrants as a threat occur more frequently, lowering their perceived warmth while yielding a more varied assessment of their competence. Thus, the repertoire of metaphors

*   Maciej Bachryj – Dr habil., University of Wrocław, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8072-9488, e-mail: maciej.bachryj-krzywaznia@uwr.edu.pl

is closely linked to the content of the resulting stereotype, giving rise to different forms – paternalistic in "Polityka" and contemptuous in "Sieci".

KEYWORDS:
migrants, migration crisis, border crisis, discourse, conceptual metaphor, stereotype content model

STRESZCZENIE:
Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zbadanie, w jaki sposób metafory migrantów, obecne w polskim dyskursie prasowym, kształtują ich wizerunek w kategoriach ciepła i kompetencji, zgodnie z założeniami modelu treści stereotypu (Stereotype Content Model – SCM). Badanie oparto na analizie metafor w ujęciu teorii metafor pojęciowych (Conceptual Metaphor Theory – CMT), odwołującej się do rozszerzonego modelu Kövecsesa oraz hierarchii rozszerzonego Wielkiego Łańcucha Bytu (Extended Great Chain of Being – EGCB). Porównanie publikacji z tygodników „Polityka" i „Sieci", reprezentujących odmienne orientacje światopoglądowe, pokazuje, że czasopisma te konstruują odmienne repertuary metafor migrantów. W lewicowo-liberalnej „Polityce" dominują metafory redukujące sprawczość migrantów, co sprzyja ich kategoryzowaniu jako grupy o niskim poziomie kompetencji przy relatywnie wysokim poziomie ciepła. Z kolei w prasie prawicowo-konserwatywnej częściej pojawiają się metafory konstruujące migrantów jako zagrożenie, co obniża przypisywany im poziom ciepła, przy zróżnicowanym poziomie kompetencji. Tym samym repertuar stosowanych metafor pozostaje ściśle powiązany z treścią stereotypu, prowadząc do wyłaniania się odmiennych jego typów – paternalistycznego w „Polityce" oraz pogardliwego w „*Sieci*".

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:
migranci, kryzys migracyjny, kryzys na granicy, dyskurs, metafory pojęciowe, model treści stereotypu

Introduction

Metaphorical representations of migrants in public discourse are predominantly grounded in the construction of negative associations[2], albeit certain nuances depend on the specific characteristics of a given country or nation[3]. Migrants are often portrayed as threats, and described as weapons, invasions,

---

[2]   E. Semino, *Metaphor in Discourse*, Cambridge 2008, p. 118.

[3]   A. Caruso, *Metaphorical Representations of Migrants in the Italian and British Press During a Time of Crisis*, "International Journal of English Linguistics" 2023, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 1–14; F. Baider, M. Kopytowska, *Conceptualising the Other: Online Discourses of the Current Refugee Crisis in Cyprus and Poland*, "Lodz Papers in Pragmatics" 2017, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 203–233.

wars, or floods[4]. A recurring motif is the use of dehumanising metaphors, likening migrants to animals, including parasites, or to inanimate objects[5]. The discourse surrounding migrants frequently frames the issue in terms of a crisis, fostering perceptions of migrants as an existential threat and heightening the urgency of proposed countermeasures[6]. Scholars consistently point out that such discursive strategies contribute to reinforcing negative stereotypes, legitimising exclusionary and violent practices, marginalising the humanitarian dimension of the migration discourse, and promoting more restrictive migration policies[7].

On the other hand, there is evidence suggesting that audiences may approach such messages critically, and in the face of extremely dehumanising metaphors, may even display more positive and empathetic attitudes[8]. Nevertheless, such instances remain decidedly rare. The current state of research

---

[4]   M. Dolores Porto, *Water Metaphors and Evaluation of Syrian Migration: The 'Flow of Refugees' in the Spanish* Press, "Metaphor and Symbol" 2022, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 252–267; F. Baider, M. Kopytowska, op. cit.; L. Marder, *Refugees Are Not Weapons: The 'Weapons of Mass Migration' Metaphor and Its Implications*, "International Studies Review" 2018, vol. 20, pp. 576–588; E. El Refaie, *Metaphors we Discriminate by: Naturalized Themes in Austrian Newspaper articles about asylum seekers*, "Journal of Sociolinguistics" 2001, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 352–371; J. Charteris-Black, *Britain as a container: Immigration metaphors in the 2005 election campaign*, "Discourse and Society" 2006, vol. 17, no. 5, pp. 563–581.

[5]   M. Mujagić, *The MIGRATION AS INVASION and THE COMMON EUROPEAN HOUSE metaphors in media discourse*, "Explorations in English Language and Linguistics" 2022, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 22–50; A. Musolff, *Dehumanizing Metaphors in UK Immigrant Debates in Press and Oline Media*, "Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict" 2015, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 41–56; G.V. O'Brien, *Indigestible Food, Conquering Hordes and Waste Materials: Metaphors of Immigrants and the Early Immigration Restriction Debate in the United States*, "Metaphor and Symbol" 2003, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 33–47; A. Caruso, op. cit.

[6]   N. Zawadzka-Paluektau, *Metaphors of Crisis Migration: Evidence from a Cross-National Corpus Study*, "Critical Discourse Analysis across Disciplines" 2024, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 124–146; A. Zibin, *A Corpus-based Study of Metaphors Used to Describe Syrian Refugees in Jordanian Politico-economic Discourse*, "Pragmatics and Society" 2020, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 640–663.

[7]   M. Bachryj, *Militarised, destructive element: The image of migrants and migration in the Polish governments' statements around the 2021 events at the Polish-Belarussian border. Metaphor-led interpretive analysis*, "Studia Polityczne" 2024, vol. 52, no. 3, pp. 129–154; N. Moullagaliev, L. Khismatullina, *Metaphors in Media Discourse on Migration*, "Journal of History Culture and Art Research" 2017, vol. 6, no. 5, pp. 131–138; L. Marder, op. cit.; M. Mujagić, op. cit.; G.V. O'Brien, op. cit.

[8]   C. Hart, *Animals vs. Armies: Resistance to Extreme Metaphors in Anti-immigration Discourse*, "Journal of Language and Politics" 2021, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 226–253; A. Musolff, *Migrants' NATION-AS-BODY metaphors as transnational identities*, "Language and Intercultural Communication" 2023, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 229–240.

allows for two key observations: (1) public discourse reveals recurring patterns in the metaphorical conceptualisation of migrants which (2) may generate social consequences in the form of specific representations and attitudes towards migrants, as well as expectations concerning migration policy. In other words, researchers often infer potential consequences and effects of metaphors from the attributes ascribed to migrants which are, in turn, drawn from the source domain. Such connections are implicitly assumed in the works cited here, but also appear in more explicitly formulated claims, such as the assertion that as "components of our knowledge, metaphors indirectly affect our actions and the way we refer to other participants and objects of social life"[9]. Nevertheless, the mechanism underlying this relationship remains largely underexplored.

The primary ambition of this article, arising from the theoretical gap identified above, is to investigate that very relationship, which Fabiszak[10] refers to as the "performative function" of metaphor. I examine the links between the metaphorical framing of migrants and the accompanying cognitive-affective dispositions, which also have, among others, behavioural implications. To this end, I integrate the perspectives of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the Stereotype Content Model (SCM). The article begins by outlining the theoretical framework, culminating in the formulation of research questions and hypotheses. I then present the selection criteria for the research material, the analytical procedure, the results of the analysis, and the final conclusions.

1. Theoretical framework

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is grounded in the premise that language is an integral component of the human cognitive apparatus, mediating our understanding of reality[11]. This idea underpins Lakoff's[12] assertion

---

9   G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, *Metafory w naszym życiu*, Warsaw 2010, p. 29; J. Charteris-Black, *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor*, Basingstoke 2018, p. 202.

10   M. Fabiszak, *A Conceptual Metaphor Approach to War Discourse and its Implications*, Poznań 2007, p. 32.

11   D. Geeraerts, H. Cuyckens, *Introducing Cognitive Linguistics*, [in:] eidem (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, Oxford 2007, pp. 3–7.

12   G. Lakoff, *Kobiety, ogień i rzeczy niebezpieczne*, Cracow 2011, p. 65.

that linguistic categories are conceptually identical to other cognitive categories, and that language utilizes general cognitive mechanisms, including categorization. CMT enables insights into how humans organize and assign meanings to elements of cognition. Metaphors act as cognitive frames and structures of thought that shape how we experience and interpret reality. Since "the essence of metaphor lies in understanding one kind of thing in terms of another"[13], the metaphorization process involves conceptualizing abstract phenomena via more concrete, immediate experiences. For example, we often describe non-physical entities or processes using physical characteristics (such as outline, size, or temperature), or we treat social categories as if they exhibit features typical of humans or other living beings. The transfer of properties between domains follows the schema known as the Extended Great Chain of Being, or EGCB[14]. Within CMT, the EGCB constitutes a system of simplified ontologies that structure metaphorical worldviews. Each EGCB level is defined by characteristic attributes that form a cultural hierarchy of beings, ranging from the most complex to the simplest. This cognitive framework allows, for instance, for the personification of complex social systems (such as states), or their objectification – defining a range of metaphorically conditioned cultural practices.

Table 1. Extended Great Chain of Being

EGCB ontological level	Typical Attributes and Behaviours
God	Omniscience, omnipotence, universal agency
Abstract Complex Systems	Stability, development, state, functionality, emergent agency
Humans	Reason, morality, free will, consciousness, intentional agency
Animals	Instinct, automatic behaviour, lack of agency
Plants	Life, structure, growth, passive adaptation, lack of agency
Complex Physical Objects	Function, construction, condition, mechanical operation, lack of agency
Natural Physical Objects	Form, subject to physical forces, lack of agency
Substances	Amorphous physical and chemical properties, physical state, lack of agency

Source: author's elaboration[15].

---

[13] Ibid., p. 31.
[14] G. Lakoff, M. Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*, Chicago–London 1989, pp. 160–213; Z. Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, Oxford 2010, pp. 149–162.
[15] Based on: ibid.

In other words, constructing a metaphor involves the mapping of one experiential domain (source domain) onto another (target domain). This process results in the transfer of selected structural features from the source to the target domain, combining the knowledge of both. The word 'selected' is vital here, because the mapping is only partial – it highlights certain features while hiding others[16], and "does not itself determine or imply ideological bias"[17]. To trace these entailments more comprehensively, the present study employs the extended version of CMT as developed by Kövecses. This approach allows for a more detailed examination of a metaphor's implications by pointing to specific frames and mental spaces involved in metaphorisation[18].

According to the Stereotype Content Model (SCM)[19], the perception of out-groups is based on two core dimensions: warmth and competence. Warmth reflects the intentions attributed to an out-group in relation to the in-group – a low level of warmth indicates that the out-group is perceived as competitive and threatening in terms of access to resources (e.g. status, power, security). High warmth is ascribed to non-competitive groups. Meanwhile, competence refers to a group's capacity to pursue its own interests – a high level suggests agency and effectiveness, whereas a low level implies their absence. Research shows that status predicts perceived competence, while competitiveness predicts perceived warmth[20]. This two-dimensional

---

[16] G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, op. cit., p. 37.

[17] A. Musolff, *Ideological Function of Metaphor: The Conceptual Metaphor of Health and Illness in Public Discourse*, [in:] R. Dirven, R. Frank, M. Pütz (eds.), *Cognitive Models in Language and Thoughts: Ideology, Metaphors and Meaning*, Berlin–New York 2003, p. 348.

[18] Z. Kövecses, *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory*, Cambridge 2020. Kövecses introduces two additional concepts which together enable a more detailed understanding of cognitive consequences of selective mapping which reduces richness, complexity and polysemy of particular domain to few specific aspects. The first one is "frame" – less schematic than domain, and elaborates a particular aspect of the domain matrix. The second is "mental space", which further elaborates the generic structures borrowed from frames. They are the least schematic, highly specific conceptual structures occurring in particular communicative situations.

[19] S.T. Fiske et al., *A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow From Perceived Status and Competition*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" 2002, vol. 82, no. 6, pp. 878–902.

[20] A.J.C. Cuddy et al., *Stereotype Content Model Across Cultures: Towards Universal Similarities and Some Differences*, "British Journal of Social Psychology" 2009, vol. 48, pp. 1–33; S.T. Fiske, *Stereotype Content: Warmth and Competence Endure*, "Current Directions in Psychological Science" 2018, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 67–73.

framework allows for the identification of four types of stereotypes, each of which is associated with specific emotions and behavioural tendencies.

Table 2. Four types of out-group stereotypes based on perceived levels of warmth and competence

		COMPETENCE	
		Low	**High**
WARMTH	Low	**Contemptuous prejudice** Low status, competitive Contempt, disgust, anger, resentment (e.g. the homeless, the poor, immigrants) Behavioural reactions: active harm, passive neglect	**Envious prejudice** High status, competitive Envy, jealousy (e.g. wealthy, professionals, technical experts) Behavioural reactions: active harm, passive association
	High	**Paternalistic prejudice** Low status, not competitive Pity, sympathy (e.g. the elderly, children, people with disabilities) Behavioural reactions: active help, passive neglect	**Admiration** High status, not competitive Pride, admiration (own group, close allies) Behavioural reactions: help, association

Source: author's elaboration[21].

Groups perceived as high in both warmth and competence elicit admiration and respect. which tend to generate supportive behaviours. In contrast, groups rated low in both dimensions provoke contempt and aversion, potentially leading to their dehumanisation, marginalisation, and exclusion[22]. Ambivalent stereotypes are of particular importance. Groups viewed as warm but incompetent evoke feelings of pity and condescension, which may result in paternalistic treatment. Conversely, groups perceived as competent but cold become objects of envy and distrust[23]. Each of these configurations is associated with characteristic behavioural responses, thus enabling predictions about how the stereotyped group is likely to be treated[24].

---

[21]   Based on: S.T. Fiske et al., op. cit.; S.T. Fiske, *Intergroup Biases: A Focus on Stereotype Content*, "Current Opinion in Behavioral Science" 2015, vol. 3, pp. 45–50; eadem, *Stereotype…*

[22]   S.T. Fiske, *Stereotype…*

[23]   F. Durante, C. Bearns, S.T. Fiske, *Poor but Warm, Rich but Cold (and Competent): Social Classes in Stereotype Content Model*, "Journal of Social Issues" 2017, vol. 73, no. 1, pp. 138–157.

[24]   A.J.C. Cuddy, S.T. Fiske, P. Glick, *The BIAS map: Behaviors from intergroup affect and stereotypes*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" 2007, vol. 92, no. 4, pp. 631–638; eidem, *Warmth and competence as universal dimensions of social perception: The Stereo-*

2. Hypotheses

Empirical findings confirm that media discourse can shape not only attitudes toward migrants but also the behavioural dispositions of audiences. Atwell Seate and Mastro[25] demonstrate that exposure to media portrayals of immigration indirectly influences behaviour through the elicitation of contempt. In another study, the same authors argue that immigration coverage framed in terms of threat activates specific emotions, which in turn shape public perceptions and levels of support for immigration policy[26]. In other words, these studies reveal a causal chain linking media imagery, emotional response, and behavioural outcomes. Assuming that metaphor functions as a powerful framing device[27], "implying evaluation and arousing the audience's emotions"[28], the central question guiding this article becomes particularly relevant: does the image of migrants, constructed through a specific repertoire of metaphors, manifest in the emotional tone of press discourse and, by extension, potentially shape behavioural dispositions among its recipients?

In attempting to answer this question, the analysis focuses on a comparison of metaphorical representations of migrants in selected opinion pieces, with particular attention given to their affective-cognitive function. This requires the identification of two sets of metaphors referring to the same issues but differing in structure and connotation. To achieve this, the study compares the discourses in two Polish weekly opinion magazines that represent divergent ideological orientations, with the assumption that these differences translate into their treatment of a specific social issue and are also reflected in language, including in the repertoire of conceptual metaphors employed[29]. Accordingly, I posit a relationship between three variables: ide-

---

type Content Model and the BIAS Map, "Advances in Experimental Social Psychology" 2008, vol. 40, pp. 61–149, S.T. Fiske, *Intergroup Biases*, op. cit., pp. 45–50.

[25] A. Atwell Seate, D. Mastro, *Exposure to immigration in the news: The impact of group-level emotions in intergroup behaviour*, "Communication Research" 2017, vol. 44, no. 6, pp. 817–840.

[26] Eaedem, *Media's Influence on immigration attitudes: An intergroup theory approach*, "Communication Monographs" 2016, vol. 83, no. 2, pp. 194–213.

[27] A. Musolff, *Metaphorical framing in political discourse*, [in:] P. Cap (ed.), *Handbook of political discourse,* Cheltenham–Northampton 2023, pp. 145–163.

[28] J. Charteris-Black, *Analysing*, op. cit., pp. 251–255.

[29] In light of the existing literature, the matter or relations between metaphor, ideology, and politics is not controversial and does not require further elaboration here (see, e.g., J. Charteris-Black, *Analysing*, op. cit.; G. Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives*

ological orientation, metaphor, and the content of the stereotype. This leads to the formulation of the null hypothesis:

H0: Magazines with differing ideological orientations do not differ in the metaphorical repertoire they use to represent migrants.

Rejection of the null hypothesis will be indicated by the identification of two distinct sets of metaphorical representations of migrants for the two magazines. The characteristics of these sets will serve as an independent variable in the subsequent hypotheses.

Since the Stereotype Content Model posits that perceptions of group competence and warmth determine attitudes toward that group, it is reasonable to expect that metaphorical conceptualisations implying a given level of agency (corresponding to a specific level in the source domain's Extended Great Chain of Being) will be associated with perceived competence. If metaphorical framing strips the group of agency, it means it is perceived as low in competence. Hence, the first hypothesis reads as follows:

H1: Metaphorisation that results in a lowered ontological position of migrants within the Extended Great Chain of Being (EGCB) will correlate with the attribution of low competence.

Analogously, it can be expected that the entailments of a metaphor regarding the out-group's perceived impact on the in-group (whether positive or negative) will be associated with the level of warmth ascribed to that group. A group perceived as having a positive impact is likely to be viewed as warm, whereas one perceived as having a negative impact will be seen as cold. This relationship will be tested through the second hypothesis:

H2: Metaphorisation that implies a negative impact of migrants on the in-group will correlate with the attribution of low warmth.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 suggest a relationship between conceptual categories derived from two distinct theoretical frameworks originating in different academic disciplines, namely cognitive linguistics and social psychology. The direction and dynamics of this relationship are illustrated in Figure 1.

Think, Chicago 2002; A. Musolff, *Metaphor and Political Discourse: Analogical Reasoning in Debates about Europe*, Basingstoke–New York 2016).

Figure 1. The impact of metaphorisation on stereotype content
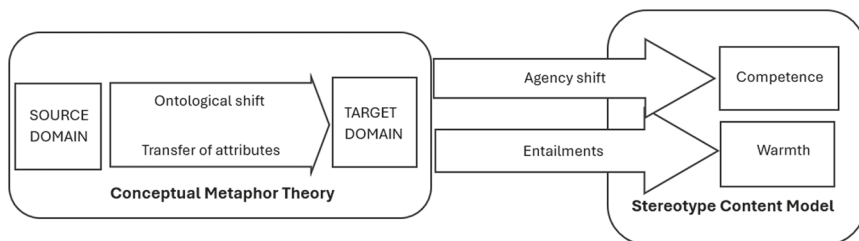
Source: author's elaboration.

3. Methodology and research procedure

Two weekly opinion magazines, "Polityka" and "Sieci", were selected for analysis. Representing different ideological profiles – "Polityka" being "left--liberal" and "Sieci" seen as "right-wing"[30] – the two magazines reported on the events at the border[31] in markedly different ways. Their divergent world-views are reflected in their media output, which tends to favour specific political concepts, actors, or parties. This may be manifested in varied visibility, tonal bias, thematic selection, or contextual framing[32].

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to clarify the use of the term *migrants* in the article's title, especially given that the analysed content also includes references to *refugees*. Here, a distinction must be drawn between the scientific meaning of these terms and their colloquial usage as established in discursive practices. Scientifically, the terms *migrant* and *refugee* are neither identical nor mutually exclusive, as refugeehood constitutes a specific

---

30   R. Sojak et al., *Kto ma przewagę w polskim dyskursie medialnym*, Toruń 2023, p. 29, https://www.umk.pl/wiadomosci/dokumenty/Kto_ma_przewage_w_polskim_dyskursie_medialnym_1691066362.pdf [18.06.2025].

31   In the second half of 2021, Poland faced intensified migration pressure on its border with Belarus. With support from Belarusian authorities, groups of migrants – mainly from Asia and Africa – were transported to the border zone and left without access to basic necessities such as food, water, shelter, or medical care. Polish authorities responded with increased military and law enforcement presence while withholding humanitarian aid. These events deeply polarised Polish public opinion and the political scene.

32   R. Klepka, *Polityka w krzywym zwierciadle mediów. Stronniczość polityczna mediów w relacjonowaniu parlamentarnych kampanii wyborczych w 2015 i 2019 roku*, Cracow 2021, p. 79.

form of migration, a broader semantic category[33]. In the everyday language of Polish public debate, particularly in the context of the events forming the backdrop to this article, the two terms often appear as distinct, and perhaps even opposite. A striking illustration of this distinction can be found in a rhetorical figure used by Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki: *"These are not refugees; these are migrants"*[34]. More importantly, the analysed magazines demonstrate a clear preference in their use of terminology. This tendency is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Occurrence of the "refugee" and "im/e/migrant" lemmas in the period 15 August – 26 December 2021 in the analysed articles from "Polityka" and "Sieci"

	Lemma: "refugee"	Lemmas: "im/e/migrant"	IN TOTAL
	[lemma="(uchodźca)"]	[lemma="(.*migrant)"]	
POLITYKA	121	44	165
SIECI	34	150	184

Source: author's elaboration.

While both terms appear in each magazine, the two publications seem to exhibit clear, opposite biases towards one lemma. Nevertheless, within the context of academic discourse, the term *migrant* is more appropriate, as it encompasses both refugees and individuals who relocate for reasons and purposes other than those typically associated with refugeehood. Thus, I deliberately avoid engaging in debates concerning the formal-legal status of these individuals, as such considerations fall outside the scope of this article and are peripheral to its research objectives.

In the case of the magazines analysed here, articles selected for analysis were devoted to the situation at the border and published during the period when public interest in the issue intensified. The graph below indicates that for the better part of 2021, attention fluctuated between 20 and 40, before increasing sharply from 15 August onwards. This heightened interest persisted

---

[33] M. Anacka, M. Okólski, *Migracje: pojęcia i metody*, [in:]. M. Lesińska, M. Okólski (eds.), *25 wykładów o migracjach*, Warsaw 2018, pp. 15–32; K. Łukasiewicz, W. Klaus, *Migracje uchodźcze*, [in:] M. Lesińska, M. Okólski (eds.), op. cit., pp. 377–397.

[34] Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z 41. posiedzenia Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniu 9 listopada 2021, Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Kadencja IX, https://orka2.sejm.gov.pl /StenoInter9.nsf/0/E759260C92FA55C5C125878900001D34/%24File/41_a_ksiazka_bis .pdf [26.06.2025].

until 26 December, at which point it returned to the levels observed earlier in the year. Accordingly, 15 August and 26 December 2021 serve as the chronological boundaries of the analysis.

Figure 2. Interest in searches for the terms *refugees* (*uchodźcy*) and *migrants* (*migranci*) in Poland in 2021
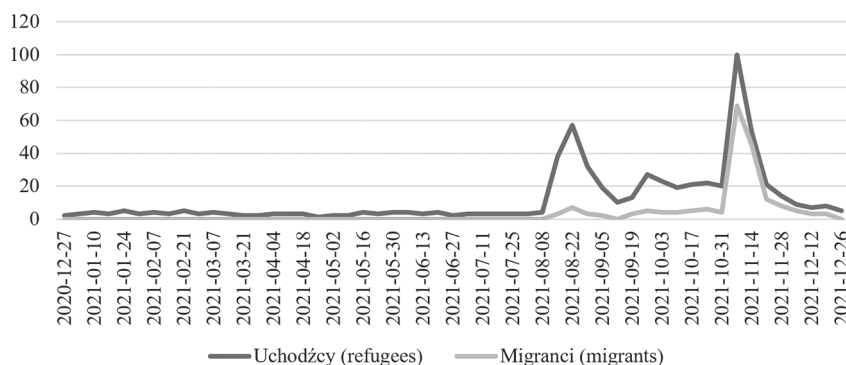
Source: author's elaboration based on Google Trends data, 24 April 2025.

Subsequently, from all issues of "Polityka" and "Sieci" published within the defined time frame, articles directly referring to the situation at the border were selected for analysis. The resulting corpus (71,886 tokens, including 30,647 from "Polityka" and 41,239 from "Sieci") was then searched for sentences containing the following lemmas: *refugee*, *migrant*, *immigrant*, or *emigrant*[35]. From this dataset, I excluded statements – whether straightforward reports or quotations from external narratives – that were challenged or discredited as falsehoods by the authors of the examined articles. The remaining sentences were then subjected to a two-pronged analysis: (1) the identification of conceptual metaphors referring to the categories of *refugee*, *migrant*, *immigrant*, or *emigrant*, and (2) the assessment of the levels of warmth and competence attributed to these groups.

---

[35] The corpus was created and analysed using: https://korpusomat.eu/.

3.1. CMT–based procedure

The research procedure derived from CMT comprises the following steps: (1) identifying metaphors using a slightly modified[36] Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP)[37] procedure, with the online version of the Polish Language Dictionary (*Słownik Języka Polskiego*, SJP PWN: https://sjp.pwn.pl/) as a reference; (2) interpreting the metaphors in terms of extended CMT; (3) determining the ontological nature of the metaphorical mapping by identifying its alignment with the EGCB.

3.2. SCM–based procedure

For the purposes of the analysis, each of the selected sentences was assigned a value on the warmth and competence scales according to the scheme shown below (Table 4). Subsequently, the individual categories were counted and analysed in terms of their frequency and proportional distribution.

Table 4. Indicators of levels of warmth and competence

	Warmth	Competence

High	Migrants as:
	• eliciting positive emotions such as sympathy, empathy, or compassion
	• individuals who have been wronged or are in a difficult situation, and/or
	• possessing positively assessed moral, psychological, emotional, intellectual, or physical attributes, and/or
	• demonstrating positively assessed behaviours and/or
	• harmless and non–competitive in terms of access to resources
		Migrant as:
		• resourceful and agentic individuals, and/or
		• capable of strategic planning, and/or
		• able to effectively achieve autonomously defined goals, whose
		  • actions lead to success, and/or
		  • life circumstances are shaped through their own initiative

---

[36] J. Charteris-Black, *Analysing*, op. cit., pp. 217–220; M. Bachryj, *Militarised*, op. cit., pp. 138–140. The applied approach draws on Critical Metaphor Analysis and pertain to two principal issues. First, I have opted, as suggested by CMA, for phrase, rather than the word, as the basic unit of analysis. Second, the selection of metaphors for analysis was made on the basis of what they refer to (target domain), namely – refugees/migrants.

[37] Pragglejaz Group, *MIP: A Method for Identifying Metaphorically Used Words in Discourse*, "Metaphor and Symbol" 2007, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 1–39; G.J. Steen, A.G. Dorst, J.B. Herrmann, A.A. Kaal, T. Krennmayr, T. Pasma, *MIPVU: A manual for identifying metaphor--related words*, [in:] S. Nacey et al. (eds.), *Metaphor Identification in Multiple Languages. MIPVU around the world*, Amsterdam 2019, pp. 23–40; K. Juszczyk, V. Komasa, *Ku metodzie identyfikacji wyrażeń metaforycznych dla polszczyzny na przykładzie rozmów o karierze zawodowej*, [in:] W. Chłopicki et al. (eds.), *Niedosłowność w języku*, Cracow 2016, pp. 177–186.

Low	Migrants as:
	 • eliciting negative emotions such as fear, hostility, or disgust, and/or
	 • posing a threat, and/or
	 • possessing negatively assessed moral, psychological, emotional, intellectual, or physical attributes, and/or
	 • exhibiting negatively assessed behaviours, and/or
	 • harmful and competitive in terms of access to resources
		Migrants as:
		 • passive, dependent, and lacking agency, and/or
		 • objects of others' actions or instruments in the execution of others' plans, and/or
		 • incapable of effectively pursuing their own plans and interests or defining their own goals, whose
		   • actions result in failure, and/or
		   • situation and fate are determined by others or by external circumstances

Neutral	Factual statements, devoid of emotional tone or moral judgments	Informative statements that do not allow for inferences about agency

Source: author's elaboration.

4. Analysis

In the selected material, a total of 73 metaphorical linguistic expressions referring to the category of migrant were identified (47 in "Sieci", 26 in "Polityka"). The structure and properties of these metaphors are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

As the above comparison demonstrates, the metaphorical repertoires of both magazines share certain common elements – notably the metaphors MIGRATION is the FLOW OF LIQUID/WATER (much more frequent in "Sieci") and PEOPLE are PHYSICAL OBJECTS.

The differences, however, concern the following aspects:

- the shared domain WAR, which, however, (1) is linked to a different target domain in each magazine, and (2) activates distinct frames with regard to migrants;
- the metaphorical repertoires are constructed on the basis of source domains unique to each magazine. In the case of "Polityka", these are TRADE and HUNT, whereas in "Sieci" they are THEATRE, GAME, and TRIP.

Both metaphors common to the analysed magazines imply an ontology that excludes agency and autonomy. In "Sieci", however, the "object" is often

Table 5. Metaphors of migrants in "Sieci"

Domain	SIECI Frame		Mental space		EGCB ontological shift	Metaphorical attributes
MIGRATION is WAR 14	MIGRANTS are SOLDIERS	7	moving migrants are marching armies	2	none – specification of the category *humans* (soldiers)	following orders, limited autonomy, organised action
			migrants' actions are soldiers' actions in battle	5		
	MIGRANTS are WEAPONS	7	triggering migration flow constitutes the use of weapons	7	humans – complex physical objects	lack of agency, potential to cause harm, purposefulness, function
MIGRATION is the FLOW OF LIQUID/WATER 11	MIGRANTS are LIQUID/ WATER	11	controlling the movement of migrants is like controlling the flow of liquid/ water	3	humans – substance	lack of agency and autonomy, homogeneity, amorphism
			the movement of migrants is the flow of liquid/water	8		
MIGRATION is THEATRE 1	MIGRANTS are ACTORS/ EXTRAS	1	migrants' behaviour is a performance, the playing of a role	1	none – specification of the category *humans* (actors/extras)	performing assigned (secondary) roles – limited autonomy (scripted behaviour)
MIGRATION is a GAME (cynical) 1	MIGRANTS are PLAYERS (cynical)	1	migrants' behaviours are game strategies	1	none – specification of the category *humans* (cynical players)	rule–bound, action–limited agency
MIGRATION is a TRIP 1	MIGRANTS are TOURISTS	1	the movement of migrants is travel / tourism	1	none – specification of the category *humans* (tourists–consumers)	agency, autonomy, voluntary action
PEOPLE are PHYSICAL OBJECTS 19	MIGRANTS are OBJECTS (unspecified)	19	manipulating the placement of migrants is like changing the position of objects in space	15	humans – physical objects	lack of agency and autonomy
			inducing certain behaviours in migrants constitutes the use of tools	4		

Source: author's elaboration.

Table 6. Metaphors of migrants in "Polityka"

POLITYKA				
Domain	Frame	Mental space	EGCB ontological shift	Metaphorical attributes
MIGRATION is the FLOW OF LIQUID/WATER — 4	MIGRANTS are LIQUID/WATER — 4	controlling the movement of migrants is like controlling the flow of liquid/water — 2	humans – substance	lack of agency and autonomy, homogeneity, amorphism
		the movement of migrants is the flow of liquid/water — 2		
POLITICAL DISPUTE is WAR — 1	MIGRANTS are OBJECTS OF WAR — 1	political dispute over migrants is an armed struggle — 1	humans – physical objects	lack of agency and autonomy
MIGRATION is TRADE — 1	MIGRANTS are COMMODITIES — 1	the movement of migrants is the transfer of goods — 1	humans – physical objects	lack of agency and autonomy
MIGRATION is a HUNT — 2	MIGRANTS are ANIMALS — 2	a migrant in a difficult situation is an animal in a trap — 1	humans – animals	lack of agency – automaticity of action
		chasing migrants is the tracking of animals — 1		lack of agency – automaticity of action
PEOPLE are PHYSICAL OBJECTS — 18	MIGRANTS are OBJECTS (unspecified) — 18	manipulating the placement of migrants is like changing the position of objects in space — 18	humans – physical objects	lack of agency and autonomy

Source: author's elaboration.

specified more concretely as a weapon, an entity with strong affective connotations, particularly within the WAR domain. In the second metaphor, the amorphous nature of the substance may suggest de-individualisation and a portrayal of the people in question as an impersonal collective. In the case of WAR, "Sieci" employs it to frame the protagonists of their articles as "soldiers" and "weapons" (it is, in fact, the second most frequently used metaphor in that publication). In "Polityka", that metaphor appears only once, with migrants presented as the object of a dispute – a perspective that carries affective connotations quite distinct from those of "soldiers" or "weapons".

A notable difference between the two magazines lies in the way metaphorical framing influences perceptions of migrant agency. In "Polityka", all metaphors lower the migrants' ontological status and strip them of agency, although they do not imply a threat. Even the animal metaphor evokes compassion rather than fear. In "Sieci", the situation is more complex. Some metaphors do not reduce ontological status (e.g. *soldiers*, *extras*, *players*), thereby preserving the attribute of agency consistent with that level of the ontological hierarchy, albeit in a limited form. Soldiers act on orders; actors, especially extras, merely perform assigned roles; players' autonomy is constrained by the rules and instructions of a game. One exception is the unique metaphor found only in "Sieci": *MIGRANTS ARE TOURISTS*, which suggests individuals making autonomous, consumer-like decisions.

In summary, both magazines objectify migrants and reduce their agency; however, "Sieci" also includes metaphors that partially preserve agency and autonomy. Moreover, this magazine makes use of metaphors with negative affective entailments (*weapons*, *soldiers*). In line with the proposed framework, this should be reflected in the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) – from the narratives of both magazines, distinct stereotypes should emerge, albeit sharing a certain common core. The data in Table 7 confirm this expectation. As in the analysis of conceptual metaphors, the stereotype content attributed to migrants reveals both similarities and differences between the two publications.

Table 7. Warmth and competence attributed to migrants in "Polityka" and "Sieci"
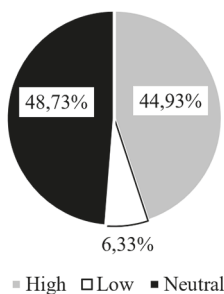
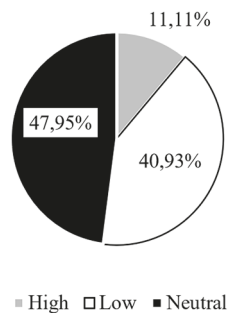| Dimension	Warmth			Competence		
	High	Low	Neutral	High	Low	Neutral
POLITYKA						
Number of statements	71	10	77	3	70	85
% of statements	44.93%	6.33%	48.73%	1.90%	44.30%	53.80%
% of emotionally charged sta-tements	87.65%	12.34%		4.11%	95.89%	
SIECI						
Number of statements	19	70	82	18	64	89
% of statements	11.11%	40.93%	47.95%	10.53%	37.43%	52.05%
% of emotionally charged sta-tements	21.35%	78.65%		21.95%	78.05%	

Source: author's elaboration.

The data above depict migrants as actors with low competence; that is, as individuals unable to effectively pursue their own goals and, in this sense, lacking agency. This applies to both magazines. Such portrayals account for nearly 80% of emotionally charged statements in "Sieci" and approximately 96% in "Polityka". The warmth dimension, however, presents a different picture. The texts in "Polityka" portray migrants as predominantly "warm" (nearly 88% of emotional statements), whereas "Sieci" present them as decidedly "cold" (over 78% of such statements). These proportions are illustrated in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3. Migrants in the warmth dimension
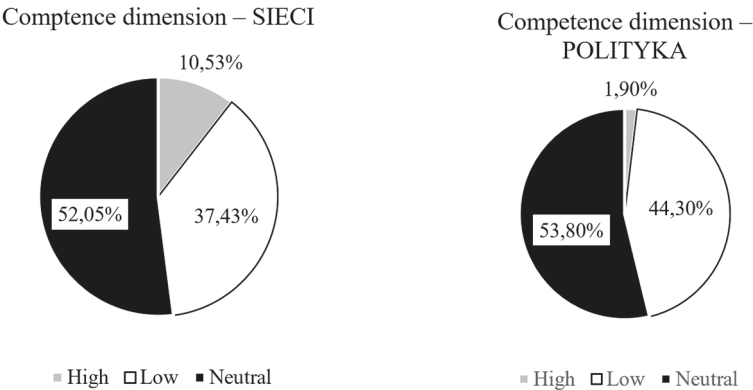

Warmth dimension – POLITYKA

Warmth dimension – SIECI

Source: author's elaboration.

Figure 4. Migrants in the competence dimension

Comptence dimension – SIECI

High Low Neutral

Competence dimension – POLITYKA

High Low Neutral

Source: author's elaboration.

The combination of low warmth and low competence in the discourse of "Sieci" results in a prejudice that, within the SCM terminology, is classified as contemptuous. In contrast, the portrayal of migrants in "Polityka", characterised by low competence but high warmth, corresponds to the paternalistic stereotype. These relationships are illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8. The stereotype of migrants in "Polityka" and "Sieci"

	POLITYKA	SIECI
Warmth	High	Low
Competence	Low	Low
Stereotype	Paternalistic	Contemptuous

Source: author's elaboration.

Conclusions

The analysis indicates that the two magazines under study employ different, although not entirely different, repertoires of conceptual metaphors. More importantly, the similarities and differences are also reflected in the content of the stereotypes, in a manner consistent with the theoretical model outlined earlier.

The overlap in metaphorical repertoires between "Sieci" and "Polityka" is linked to entailments that objectify migrants and reduce their agency – an element that correlates with the attribution of low competence to migrants in both media outlets, thereby confirming the first hypothesis. While the overall trend is similar, "Sieci" contains a significantly higher proportion of "high competence" statements (10.53%) compared to "Polityka" (1.9%). It is worth noting that a substantial number of metaphors found in "Sieci" preserve the attribute of agency, albeit within a limited scope of action. Moreover, "Sieci" is the only publication to include a metaphor that attributes agency to migrants without relegating them to a lower ontological level on the EGCB scale.

The entailments of the metaphors *MIGRANTS ARE WEAPONS* and *MIGRANTS ARE SOLDIERS*, which appear in "Sieci", evoke a sense of danger, suggesting hostile, coordinated, and deliberate actions (source domain: WAR) that constitute an existential threat. These are accompanied by the attribution of low warmth. In contrast, such constructs are absent from "Polityka", which instead includes metaphors that elicit pity and empathy toward beings that are hunted, threatened with death, stripped of agency, and dependent on others (source domain: HUNTING). This corresponds to a significantly higher proportion of statements indicative of high warmth. These observations confirm the second hypothesis.

The collected data and subsequent analysis demonstrate that magazines with differing ideological profiles construct divergent portrayals of migrants through distinct metaphorical repertoires. The hypotheses concerning the relationship between metaphorical framing and attitudes toward the object of metaphorisation, as expressed in the levels of warmth and competence attributed to migrants, have been confirmed. In this sense, the paper contributes to understanding how metaphors used in discourse on an out-group – in this case, migrants – shape the construction of their image, marked by distinct cognitive and emotional connotations.

The proposed model establishes links between language, cognition and affect, highlighting the social implications of linguistic choices and their impact on attitudes toward minority groups within a given discursive community[38]. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) explains how metaphors structure experience, while the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) accounts for how this experience is affectively evaluated and potentially translated into action.

---

[38] A. Musolff, *Metaphor and Political Discourse*, op. cit., p. 28.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge a limitation of the analysis: its subject is discourse – a socio-mental space in which attitudes find linguistic expression. While discourse may be viewed as a domain where the attitudes of its participants (authors and readers) crystallise, it should not be conflated with individual-level attitudes. That would require study on an individual-personal, not discursive, level.

References

Anacka M., Okólski M., *Migracje: pojęcia i metody*, [in:] M. Lesińska, M. Okólski (eds.), *25 wykładów o migracjach*, Warsaw 2018, pp. 15–32.

Atwell Seate A., Mastro D., *Exposure to immigration in the news: The impact of group-level emotions on intergroup behaviour*, "Communication Research" 2017, vol. 44, no. 6, pp. 817–840.

Atwell Seate A., Mastro D., *Media's influence on immigration attitudes: An intergroup theory approach*, "Communication Monographs" 2016, vol. 83, no. 2, pp. 194–213.

Bachryj M., *Militarised, destructive element: The image of migrants and migration in the Polish governments' statements around the 2021 events at the Polish-Belarussian border. Metaphor-led interpretive analysis*, "Studia Polityczne" 2024, vol. 52, no. 3, pp. 129–154.

Baider F., Kopytowska M., *Conceptualising the Other: Online Discourses of the Current Refugee Crisis in Cyprus and Poland*, "Lodz Papers in Pragmatics" 2017, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 203–233.

Caruso A., *Metaphorical Representations if Migrants in the Italian and British Press During a Time of Crisis*, "International Journal of English Linguistics" 2023, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 1–14.

Charteris-Black J., *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor*, Basingstoke 2018.

Charteris-Black J., *Britain as a container: Immigration metaphors in the 2005 election campaign*, "Discourse and Society" 2006, vol. 17, no. 5, pp. 563–581.

Charteris-Black J., *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*, Basingstoke 2011.

Cuddy A.J.C., Fiske S.T., Glick P., *The BIAS map: Behaviors from intergroup affect and stereotypes*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" 2007, vol. 92, pp. 631–638.

Cuddy A.J.C., Fiske S.T., Glick P., *Warmth and competence as universal dimensions of social perception: The Stereotype Content Model and the BIAS Map*, "Advances in Experimental Social Psychology" 2008, vol. 40, pp. 61–149.

Cuddy A.J.C., Fiske S.T., Kwan V.S.Y. et al., *Stereotype Content Model Across Cultures: Towards Universal Similarities and Some Differences*, "British Journal of Social Psychology" 2009, vol. 48, pp. 1–33.

Dolores Porto M., *Water Metaphors and Evaluation of Syrian Migration: The Flow of Refugees in the Spanish Press*, "Metaphor and Symbol" 2022, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 252–267.

Durante F., Bearns C., Fiske S.T., *Poor but Warm, Rich but Cold (and Competent): Social Classes in Stereotype Content Model*, "Journal of Social Issues" 2017, vol. 73, no. 1, pp. 138–157.

El Refaie E., *Metaphors we Discriminate by: Naturalized Themes in Austrian Newspaper articles about asylum seekers*, "Journal of Sociolinguistics" 2001, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 352–371.

Fabiszak M., *A Conceptual Metaphor Approach to War Discourse and its Implications*, Poznań 2007.

Fiske S.T., Cuddy A.J.C., Glick P., Xu J., *A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow From Perceived Status and Competition*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" 2002, vol. 82, no. 6, pp. 878–902.

Fiske S.T., *Intergroup Biases: A Focus on Stereotype Content*, "Current Opinion in Behavioral Science" 2015, vol. 3, pp. 45–50.

Fiske S.T., *Stereotype Content: Warmth and Competence Endure*, "Current Directions in Psychological Science" 2018, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 67–73.

Fiske S.T., *Warmth and Competence: Stereotype Content Issues for Clinicians and Researchers*, "Canadian Psychology" 2012, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 14–20.

Geeraerts D., Cuyckens H., *Introducing Cognitive Linguistics*, [in:] D. Geeraerts, H. Cuyckens (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, Oxford 2007, pp. 3–21.

Hart C., *Animals vs. Armies: Resistance to Extreme Metaphors in Anti-immigration Discourse*, "Journal of Language and Politics" 2021, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 226–253.

Juszczyk K., Komasa V., *Ku metodzie identyfikacji wyrażeń metaforycznych dla polszczyzny na przykładzie rozmów o karierze zawodowej*, [in:] W. Chłopicki, P.P. Chruszczewski, A.R. Knapik, M.R. Odelski (eds.), *Niedosłowność w języku*, Cracow 2016, pp. 177–186.

Klepka R., *Polityka w krzywym zwierciadle mediów. Stronniczość polityczna mediów w relacjonowaniu parlamentarnych kampanii wyborczych w 2015 i 2019 roku*, Cracow 2021.

Kövecses Z., *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory*, Cambridge 2020.

Kövecses Z., *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, Oxford 2010.

Lakoff G., *Kobiety, ogień i rzeczy niebezpieczne*, Cracow 2011.

Lakoff G., *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, Chicago 2002.

Lakoff G., Johnson M., *Metafory w naszym życiu*, Warsaw 2010.

Lakoff G., Turner M., *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*, Chicago–London 1989.

Łukasiewicz K., Klaus W., *Migracje uchodźcze*, [in:] M. Lesińska, M. Okólski (eds.), *25 wykładów o migracjach*, Warsaw 2018, pp. 377–397.

Marder L., *Refugees Are Not Weapons: The "Weapons of Mass Migration" Metaphor and Its Implications*, "International Studies Review" 2018, vol. 20, pp. 576–588.

Moullagaliev N., Khismatullina L., *Metaphors in Media Discourse on Migration*, "Journal of History Culture and Art Research" 2017, vol. 6, no. 5, pp. 131–138.

Mujagić M., *The MIGRATION AS INVASION and THE COMMON EUROPEAN HOUSE metaphors in media discourse*, "Explorations in English Language and Linguistics" 2022, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 22–50.

Musolff A., *Dehumanizing Metaphors in UK Immigrant Debates in Press and Oline Media*, "Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict" 2015, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 41–56.

Musolff A., *Ideological Function of Metaphor: The Conceptual Metaphor of Health and Illness in Public Discourse*, [in:] R. Dirven, R. Frank, M. Pütz (eds.), *Cognitive Models in Language and Thoughts: Ideology, Metaphors and Meaning*, Berlin–New York 2003, pp. 327–352.

Musolff A., *Metaphor and Political Discourse: Analogical Reasoning in Debates about Europe*, Basingstoke–New York 2016.

Musolff A., *Metaphorical framing in political discourse*, [in:] P. Cap (ed.), *Handbook of political discourse*, Cheltenham–Northampton 2023, pp. 145–163.

Musolff A., *Migrants' NATION-AS-BODY metaphors as transnational identities*, "Language and Intercultural Communication" 2023, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 229–240.

O'Brien G.V., *Indigestible Food, Conquering Hordes and Waste Materials: Metaphors of Immigrants and the Early Immigration Restriction Debate in the United States*, "Metaphor and Symbol" 2003, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 33–47.

Pragglejaz Group, *MIP: A Method for Identifying Metaphorically Used Words in Discourse*, "Metaphor and Symbol" 2007, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 1–39.

Semino E., *Metaphor in Discourse*, Cambridge 2008.

Sojak R., Meller A., Królicka B., Balcerzak B., *Kto ma przewagę w polskim dyskursie medialnym*, Toruń 2023, https://www.umk.pl/wiadomosci/dokumenty/Kto_ma_przewage_w_polskim_dyskursie_medialnym_1691066362.pdf.

Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z 41. posiedzenia Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniu 9 listopada 2021, Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Kadencja IX, [Stenographic Report from the 41st session of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland on 9 November 2021, Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 9th term], https://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/StenoInter9.nsf/0/E759260C92FA55C5C125878900001D34/%24File/41_a_ksiazka_bis.pdf.

Steen G.J., Dorst A.G., Hermann J.B., Kaal A.A., Krennmayr T., Pasma T., *MIPVU: A manual for identifying metaphor-related words*, [in:] S. Nacey, A.G. Dorst, T. Krennmayr, W.G. Reijnierse (eds.), *Metaphor Identification in Multiple Languages. MIPVU around the world*, Amsterdam 2019, pp. 23–40.

Zawadzka-Paluektau N., *Metaphors of Crisis Migration: Evidence from a Cross-National Corpus Study*, "Critical Discourse Analysis across Disciplines" 2024, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 124–146.

Zibin A., *A Corpus-based Study of Metaphors Used to Describe Syrian Refugees in Jordanian Politico-economic Discourse,* "Pragmatics and Society" 2020, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 640–663.