



Tanja Gradečak¹

Réka Benczes²

¹University of Osijek

²Corvinus University of Budapest

Introduction to the special issue “(Re)framing the debate”

This special issue of *Jezikoslovlje* presents a selection of papers on framing read at *AELCO 2018: XIth International Conference of the Spanish Cognitive Linguistics Association*, held in Córdoba, Spain, 17–19 October 2018. The theme session titled *Framing the debate – cognitive linguistic tools in contemporary rhetorical methods of persuasion* was organised by the editors of this special issue, Tanja Gradečak (University of Osijek) and Réka Benczes (Corvinus University of Budapest). The idea was to bring together scholars who would examine more systematically the role of traditional rhetorical devices as persuasive tools in the process of *framing*.

Framing as a concept may be approached from various vantage points. For instance, within the broader scope of communication sciences, framing theory is seen as one of the most influential theories thanks to its broad applicability to the study of media content effects on the wider audience. In the contributions to this special issue, however, framing is strongly anchored in the Cognitive Linguistic (CL) view of frames going back to 1970s and Charles Fillmore’s cognitive lexical semantics. The Fillmorian concept of frames has served as a starting point for attempts to uncover the properties of the structured inventory of knowledge associated with words, and to consider what consequences properties of this knowledge system might have for a model of active language use in the process of framing. Key figurative language types (metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, blends and irony) work as framing devices (by serving as linguistic packaging cues) *and* as reasoning devices (by containing important conceptual content). Figurative language can thus be understood as a framing type, as figurative framing with specific schematisation mechanisms of encoding human experience in conceptual systems.

Setting a frame imposes specific, in this sense, abstract borderlines, but these borderlines may change under the pressures of new knowledge or speaker intentions. Thus the notion of *reframing* has entered CL, and it is a procedure borrowed from psychological techniques of identifying and changing one's views on issues and situations. The sense of being able to control the mechanisms of framing and redirect its effects in specific desired directions has proven to be a powerful weapon in the constant flux of human interactions.

In contemporary society knowledge is growing exponentially faster than in the past. Therefore, the sheer amount of information to which people are now exposed on a daily basis may be said to present a similar kind of obstruction to a structured and systematic acquisition and processing of new knowledge as was the lack of access to knowledge during e.g. the Middle Ages, when there were few centres of institutionalised education practiced mostly by privileged classes or organisations. Streamlining information has become a major challenge since there are now many different channels through which both facts and opinions are now communicated at a staggering rate. Highly evaluative multimodal elements are essential to the success of framing devices, because they import an emotional stance in the coding of events, very frequently putting factual content aside. Where stakes are high – and they are especially high in e.g. politics or health protection – playing with emotions is a fair game. Obviously, framing and reframing are the perfect tool for achieving specific goals in the game of persuasion as power management.

The theme session and this special issue build on the central notion that mental representations are created and subsequently triggered by linguistic structures in spoken or written interaction. But beyond that, they underscore the fact that various rhetorical figures play no small part in the construction of these representations. Following the trend of multimodal representation of information in mass and social media, CL has also embraced multimodality as a promising avenue of research designed to account for the cross-fertilisation of visual and verbal codes. It is not surprising then that some of the contributions to this issue look specifically at the impact of visual material on the presentation and processing of information. Framing and reframing strategies are discussed in their various realisations in political and medical discourse and cinematic art and we were lucky that their potential has been recognised by some of the most prominent scholars in CL. Therefore, besides the three contributions presented at the theme session in Cordoba, it is our great pleasure to welcome Elena Semino, Andreas Musolff, and Mario Brdar and Rita Brdar-Szabó as guest contributors to this special issue.



As good hosts, we give the honour of opening this special issue to Elena Semino of the University of Lancaster, who kindly agreed to give us an interview on some of the key points from her rich biography as researcher of Conceptual Metaphor (CM) and its role in cognitive poetics and contemporary CL theories. Semino explains that poetic and conceptual metaphor are two sides of the same coin and highlights the importance of raising awareness of their relevance among non-experts. She considers the issue of knowledge transfer, more specifically the necessity of teaching CM in schools, as a constant struggle between presenting the complex issue of linguistic research in chunks acceptable to a wider audience, while maintaining its relevance to the research goals themselves. The role of CM in framing political and health discourse is discussed and an innovative approach of communicating the difficult subject of cancer is presented in an attempt to reframe it by so called ‘metaphor menus’, used by cancer patients to talk about their disease. Semino talks about how she uses cognitive linguistic research to explore social issues and how such an agenda should not exclude researchers’ natural drive to engage with academic topics to satisfy intellectual curiosity and creativity.

The first paper by Andreas Musolff (University of East Anglia) is a discourse-historical account of the development of the *have/eat cake* proverb formulation and its hyperbolic framing in the Brexit debate. Using a corpus of 197 press texts spanning the period 2016–2019, the author follows closely the rising and waning of this linguistic construct for its impact and for the social feedback it received both in the political arena where it was created, and in UK society at large. The inherently hyperbolic narrative of this proverb formulation fed itself on the sharp opposition between different approaches to Brexit by May and Johnson as British former and future prime ministers. A combination of metaphor and hyperbole was used extensively by proponents of particular policies, but the potent combination yielded some unexpected and dysfunctional end results. An initial sharp rise of its corpus presence, as the proverb formulation kicked off while there were still hopes of the EU giving in to the central UK’s demands, was “paid for” later when it lost its argumentative plausibility once the presupposition of a “super-victory” of the Brexit proponents had disappeared. Musolff’s analysis goes to show how once a linguistic structure enters a speech community, it may acquire a life of its own, very frequently unpredictable, especially if the concept it encodes is highly emotionally charged and persists over a longer period of time.

In the second paper, Mario Brdar (University of Osijek) and Rita Brdar-Szabó (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest) present their research on strategic uses of figurative language, chiefly conceptual metaphors and conceptual metonymies, in the campaigns and printed materials steering the public discourse of transplantolo-



gy and organ donation. After an elaborate introduction into the metaphorical basis of much of the transplantology jargon, the metacommunicative function of metaphor and metonymy in medical discourse is described, where the two are said to help forge closer links between health practitioners and patients, accelerate treatment and possibly recovery itself. Besides its terminological function, figurative language is also said to play a role in embellishing the harsh truth of grave medical conditions, so this euphemistic role of metaphors and metonymies is discussed as essential to their metacommunicative function. Using a qualitative approach to data analysis, the authors discuss the merits of the sampling versus the census method as techniques for retrieving metaphors from corpora and opt for the lexical approach, an updated version of the classic intuitive approach to metaphor identification. The authors use examples from various English sources as the basis for establishing metaphorical and metonymic patterns, and then recruit Hungarian, German, and Croatian examples to support the universality of GARDEN and GIFT CMs. This is supported with a number of visuals from organ donation promotional materials. Special attention is paid to the role of metonymic encoding in the multimodal context, where PART FOR WHOLE metonymies serve as focusing devices, drawing audience attention to the most relevant parts of the visual prompt. Examples from various languages and sources serve to support the idea that metonymy plays a crucial role in streamlining the metaphorical effect, because it involves a smaller conceptual distance between their source and target concepts. A significant contribution of this paper is in the authors' fine tuning of the notion of (re)framing. Framing is seen as taking effects on a cline from the private to the institutional pole and as being “global”, i.e. realized at the level of the choice of a metaphor (or a metaphor (sub)system), or “local”, i.e. as involving the extension or explication of metaphors through stating selected mappings (or submetaphors).

The third paper presents a study on the role of framing in political communication. Réka Benczes and Lilla Szabó (Corvinus University of Budapest) use a discourse dynamics approach to metaphor identification in order to investigate how the Government of Hungary framed its relationship with the European Union in the period of 2015–2017. Their dataset, consisting of articles published on the official website of the Hungarian government and the Prime Minister's Office in the said period, was searched for the keyword *Brüsszel* (“Brussels”), as *Brüsszel* has become a conventionalised expression for the European Union through the CAPITAL FOR GOVERNMENT metonymy in Hungarian political discourse. Using corpus data, the authors identified four distinct metaphorical scenarios, where Brussels is conceptualized as an AUTHORITY FIGURE, a PARTNER, a BULLY, and an OPPONENT in a battle. Also confirmed was the authors' initial assumption that CONFLICT is one of



the most important metaphorical frames in the Hungarian government's political rhetoric framing the Hungary – EU relationship. This metaphorical frame allows the Hungarian Government to portray this relationship in a light that is both favorable to the government and aligns well with its populist policies. All four identified metaphorical scenarios showed a relatively even trend in the period studied, with AUTHORITY FIGURE as the most frequent scenario accounting for more than half the data in each consecutive year. What might set this political communication apart from others is that the CONFLICT frame in the form of violent military operation (i.e., war) – where the EU is conceptualized as an opponent in a battle – was overridden by the AUTHORITY frame. Moreover, conflict manifested itself in the scenarios to varying degrees. The data also indicate that the typical parent-child or marital relationship models of the NATION AS A PERSON metaphor are backgrounded, since the term *Brüsszel* became emblematic in conceptualizing the EU as a somewhat difficult and authoritative individual with whom conflict is inherent. This frame proved to be quite convenient for the Hungarian government and the Prime Minister and has been resilient to the tribulations of everyday national and international politics.

Another contribution analysing the role of framing in contemporary political debate is the paper by Sanja Berberović and Nihada Delibegović Džanić (University of Tuzla). The authors applied conceptual blending theory in examining how (satirical) meaning emerged from opposing, on the one hand, the language used by the U.S. president Donald Trump in explaining his anti-immigration stances through the poem based on the fable about a farmer and a viper, and on the other, Maureen Dowd's satirical text entitled *This Snake Can't Shed His Skin*. Dowd's textual reinterpretation of the poem, designed to criticize Trump's immigration policy, relies on humor arising in the blended space due to incongruity produced by an unusual matching of input structures. The authors propose a string of novel inferences and conceptualizations that arise in this ingenious blend to ridicule the President's stance on immigration, gun control, and citizen rights, as well as his physical appearance. The blend was not only shown to have achieved important rhetorical goals but was also argued to provide discourse coherence at intertextual and intratextual levels.

This collection of articles is rounded off by a discussion of the relationship between politics and the horror genre by Ilhana Škrgić (an independent author). Viewing this genre as a fertile ground for the representation of various often politicized ideas, the author discusses the dominant political rhetoric and specific framing devices typical of the conservative-liberal political division in the United States as they are mirrored in horror cinema. The analysis relies on the recontextualisation



of two films by John Carpenter: *The Thing* (1982) and *They Live* (1988), once considered to be subversive commentaries on the carefully intertwined American and global culture of fear and consumerism. They now seem to reflect the bipolar political reality in the United States and the core dualism of human behavior in the sense of Lakoff's models of morality. The binary relationship pertaining to the political and psychological realm has been more or less systematically transferred in the artistic expression of the two basic paradigms in the horror genre, the fear of Otherness (physical and mental invasion), and the fear from oneself (betrayal from one's own psyche or body), which serve as a basis upon which characteristic plots are built. In her analysis of the two Carpenter's films, Škrgić elaborates on the elements of horror paradigms which have strong parallels in the dual political reality of the USA, exploring both verbal and non-verbal rhetorical mechanisms, in line with the multimodal possibilities of the medium of cinema. Frames such as the division of citizens based on race and other characteristics, the “us vs. them” mentality, negation of national unity and coexistence, and the symbolism of the color red as the defining mark in the interplay of human against the perceived Other have shown that powerful, fear-based framing and rhetoric based on primal fears have been (re)introduced as the central battleground for political supremacy in contemporary U.S. political communication.

To conclude, this collection of articles and the introductory interview show how the universal cognitive mechanisms of metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, and conceptual integration manifest in various discourses operative in different aspects of human lives. The papers illustrate how socially relevant topics tend to be framed in various discourses through the lens of particular actors. In the process of framing, some rather abstract concepts and their figurative elaborations set off their own networks of (inter)connected meanings, which allows for novel readings of both their contexts and their effects.

We are grateful to all the contributors for their patience and dedication in making these articles the best possible, state-of-the-art overviews of linguistic framing. We are also grateful to our reviewers for their insightful comments, which helped improve the quality of the papers and, above all, to the Editor-in-Chief Gabrijela Buljan for her patient and thorough guidelines in editing this special issue.