

# Constructing attitudinal stance via metaphors: a multi-perspective cognitive approach toward politically contested events

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The philosophical viewpoint of anthropocentrism is manifested in the idea of Croft's *Extended Animacy Hierarchy* (2002). One of its implications is that animate entities tend to be perceived as being higher or having a more positive evaluation than inanimate. Personification can be looked at as a cognitive mechanism, performing a number of rhetorical functions in political discourse. From a cognitive perspective, the personification metaphor provides a coherent system of structuring our experience (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003, 1999), whereas from a rhetorical perspective, metaphor is viewed as an argumentative tool aimed at communicating attitudes, arousing emotions and persuading the audience (Chilton 2004; Charteris-Black 2014; Hart 2014; Musolff 2016, etc.).

Based on the data from Lithuanian media dealing with the Ukrainian crisis, the paper argues that animation, or personification, of countries makes them stand out as having more power and taking an active stance in political events. It also explores how systematic usage of metaphors contributes to performing predicative, i.e. conveying positive and negative attitudes, and empathetic, i.e. triggering emotions, functions via the animation of the countries.

A corpus of Lithuanian media texts on Ukraine comprising 102 046 words was constructed. The choice of texts was limited to opinion articles and commentaries because they present not only factual information but also offer an attitudinal perspective. The study was carried out within the framework of Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) (Charteris-Black 2004). In our case it means that the Ukrainian crisis was investigated from three different perspectives: Ukraine, the European Union and Russia. CMA suggests a three-step metaphor analysis procedure: first, cases of personification of Ukraine, European Union and Russia were identified by employing an adapted MIPVU (a metaphor identification procedure suggested by Steen et al. 2010) (linguistic level); second, the personifications were related to cognitive metaphorical scenarios they follow (cognitive level); finally and most importantly, the metaphors were analysed from a rhetorical perspective, i.e. investigated how they communicated attitudes and emotions towards events in Ukraine (rhetorical level). The findings indicate that the Lithuanian media metaphorically constructs Ukraine, the EU and Russia as HUMAN BEINGS quite frequently by putting emphasis on contrasting scenarios with different entailments. For example, Ukraine is mostly presented positively as a human being who embarked on a journey to the EU and needs support, though some scepticism whether it is capable to change is voiced. The EU is presented as a supporter and Ukraine is seen as a friend, companion and partner. However, personified Russia is viewed as the antagonist, thus acquiring mostly negative evaluation (aggression, irony, etc.). Thus, the paper analyses how personification perform the functions of communicating diverse attitudes and attempting to trigger the reader's emotions and attitudes towards the crisis in Ukraine.

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