

# FRAMES, METAPHORS AND MORALITY: MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE WHALING CONFLICT

Xiaoben Yuan  
Tohoku University  
[yxben2011@gmail.com](mailto:yxben2011@gmail.com)

Aleksandra Sopina  
St. Petersburg Electrotechnical University  
[alsopina@gmail.com](mailto:alsopina@gmail.com)

Keywords: Frame, Conceptual Metaphor, Morality, Whaling Conflict, Multimodal metaphors

Although there have been numerous attempts across a wide range of fields to explore the nature of social conflicts, it is only relatively recent that cognitive linguistics models have been adopted to make further contributions in this area (David & Daniel 2016). This paper attempts to advance this line of study by introducing a possible cognitive linguistics framework for analyzing multimodal discourse in the whaling conflict. It analyzes pro-whaling and anti-whaling discourse found in online source after 2015 and official statements published in English, Japanese, and Faroese.

The present research draws upon Fillmore's (1982) notions of frame semantics, Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of conceptual metaphors, Lakoff's (2002) theory on conceptual models of morality and Forceville's (2006, 2008) view of visual and multimodal metaphor.

The authors argue that the pro-whaling party primarily sees whaling through the frames of Hunting and Gathering. Aspects of this view are manifested through conceptual metaphor use, such as OCEAN IS FIELD, WHALERS ARE FARMERS, and WHALES ARE CROPS. The underpinning morality in this view is based on notions of food provision, family support, and intimate contact with nature. Under this view, any attacks on whalers by anti-whaling activists are considered unreasonable and unfair. Images that accompany the texts in this light correspond to the conceptual metaphors GOOD IS BRIGHT, MORALITY IS PURITY.

In contrast, the anti-whaling party primarily views whaling through the frame of Killing or Murdering. Aspects of this view are revealed in terms of such conceptual metaphors as WHALERS ARE MURDERERS, WHALES ARE HUMANS, and WHALING IS CRIME. Under this view, whaling is unjustified and thus, immoral. Here pro-whaling actions are viewed as evil that has to be confronted. Therefore, this side of the conflict calls for actions against the evil and sometimes performs hostile acts against the fishermen. Images that appear in the discourse correspond to the following conceptual metaphors: EVIL IS DARK, IMPORTANT IS BIG, IMMORALITY IS IMPURITY.

Despite profound differences in the conceptualizations of whaling, both parties act based on a certain mental framework and perceive their behaviors as morally justified. This paper demonstrates that a cognitive linguistics approach to analyzing a social conflict can be useful in providing a clear picture of how a particular party views their reality, their position within it, and their morality. Furthermore, the paper attempts to view a complex social issue from a holistic perspective through the analysis of four interrelated and interdependent domains, frames, conceptual metaphors, visual and multimodal metaphors, and morality, that manifested in the discourses of each party.

## References

- David, B., & Daniel, J. B. (2016). Frame or Get Framed: The Critical Role of Issue Framing in Nonmarket Management. *California Management Review* 58, p.66-87.
- Fillmore, C. J. (1982). Frame semantics. *Linguistics in the morning calm*. The Linguistic Society of Korea. p.111-37. Seoul: Hanshin.
- Forceville, C. (2006). Non-verbal and multimodal metaphor in a cognitivist framework: agendas for research. In: Kristiansen, Gitte, Achard, Michel, Dirven, René, Ruiz de Mendoza Ibañez, Francisco (Eds.), *Cognitive Linguistics: Current Applications and Future Perspectives*. Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 379–402. Berlin/New York.
- Forceville, C. (2008). Metaphor in Pictures and Multimodal Representations. In: Gibbs, Jr., Raymond W. (Ed.). *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 462–482. New York.
- Lakoff, G. (2002). *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.