

## **Metaphors on Migrants and Migration: Is Our Understanding of Society Language-Dependent?**

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**Abstract** : This paper aims to analyze how our languages understand and express present realities, such as the phenomenon of migration in today's society. The rationale of the present research is the belief that there are certain topics of today's society, migration being one of the most present, which could be better understood, and, consequently, dealt with, if we were aware of the linguistic and cognitive strategies employed by our conceptual system, both individually and on a larger, social, scale, when discussing the main aspects regarding these often strongly polarized topics. One of these strategies is clearly metaphor. My research is based on the Cognitivist assumption that metaphor should not be regarded as a mere rhetorical device, displaying only an aesthetic function, but rather as an instrument of thought, which allows our conceptual system to develop abstract concepts on the basis of the information collected from our interaction with the surrounding world. A metaphor should be understood, consequently, as a conceptual mapping between a source-domain, the one from which we borrow the conceptual image, and a target-domain, the one upon which we project it. The present research aims to apply the aforementioned theory of metaphor on a multilingual corpus of newspaper articles (English, Italian, Spanish and Romanian), all dealing with issues regarding migration throughout 2022, different views on migrants and whether these views are in any way culture- and language-dependent. The metaphorical occurrences are manually selected from the corpus, then categorized according to their target-domain and the conceptual metaphor they activate. All conceptual metaphors are outlined as equative metaphors, *i.e.* of the form X=Y (e.g. MIGRATION IS A HAZARD, MIGRANTS ARE A TREASURE, etc.), followed by the corpus examples and their English translation. The most relevant occurrences are then commented and interpreted in terms of inferences they might conceal or reveal, which will allow for a better understanding of the overall effects of metaphors in communication.

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The present paper<sup>1</sup> aims at analyzing the communicational impact of conceptual metaphors, as understood by the Cognitivist school, on the basis of a corpus of newspaper articles in four languages, dealing with migrants and migration throughout the world. The rationale of the present study is the fact that, during the past few years, different views on migrants and migration have turned this topic into a deeply polarized concept, an aspect that, as I feel, needs to be thoroughly explored in terms of linguistic and cognitive strategies, in order to allow us, both as researchers and as language users, to get a better understanding of the underlying inferences concealed by the very terms we either use ourselves or enter in contact with from the *media* or from other speakers. This article represents the result of the first stage of the research, as it only takes into account one source for each language of the corpus, *i.e.* one newspaper per language. My future objective is to pursue the investigation on a broader corpus, which will enable a contrastive analysis not only at an *interlinguistic* level, taking into account the four languages considered, but also at an *intralinguistic* level, identifying differences within each language and possible causes thereof (as could be the social and political philosophy shared by the newspaper or its target audience). However, this paper is strictly focused on summarizing the main results of the current stage of the inquiry, as presented also in a speech at the Dhaka University Linguistics Conference (DULC 2023) in February 2023.

### **Theoretical Framework. A Cognitivist Understanding of Metaphor**

This research follows the postulates of Cognitivism, a school of thought which affirms there is a tight connection between our conceptual system – our mind – and all the other elements surrounding us: our bodies, the world, the environment and so on (Casadei, 2007) Therefore, our cognitive system takes over the information obtained due to our sensory perceptions and starts to process it in order to develop abstract concepts. This could not be achieved in the absence of imaginative processes like metaphor or

metonymy. We assume, therefore, that metaphor is not merely a rhetorical device, as commonly held in literature or cultural studies, but rather that it is an instrument of thought which allows us to develop abstract concepts (Croft & Cruse, 2004).

A major work which marked a decisive turn in the study of metaphor is Lakoff and Johnson's 1980 *Metaphors We Live By*. Within certain limits (very clearly exposed, for instance, by Kövecses, 2008), the main claims of the two linguists are still valid to this day, despite several amendments and changes proposed by other voices, like the Pragglejaz Group (2007) or Rakova (2002), to name but two. Lakoff and Johnson basically held that metaphor can be described as a mapping between two main domains: a source domain, the one from which we take the metaphorical image, and a target domain, the one upon which we project it in order to conceptualize it in another perspective (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; as cited in Croft & Cruse, 2004). They also pointed out that, besides the so-called *image metaphors*, that is, new metaphors, clearly perceivable as examples of figurative speech, our languages contain lots of *lexicalized metaphors*, that is, common expressions, daily used by the speakers, but no longer perceived as such due to their extensive use throughout the centuries. For example, if we say "let's move on to the next point", we are actually using the metaphor SPEECH IS A SPATIAL MOVEMENT (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Many examples included in the present corpus are, of course, common, lexicalized expressions, no longer perceivable as metaphors in the literary sense of the term.

Of course, as stated by Kövecses (2008) this theoretical approach is not exempt from criticism, nor is it to be held as axiomatically true. It would certainly benefit from further, more thorough, analyses, or from being integrated with other, more recent, theories, such as the 'cultural variation' theory (Rakova, 2002) or the 'ecological cognition' theory (Jensen & Greeve, 2019; Gibbs Jr, R. W., 2019 etc.), which, rather than considering the conceptual metaphors as universal, as examples of the embodiment postulate, tend, on the contrary, to underline the importance of context, culture and environment in the cognitive production of metaphors. While this

paper stands basically within the traditional Cognitive theory, *i.e.* does not specifically engage in applying the ecological cognition theory in the corpus analysis, I intend to pursue and extend the inquiry also by absorbing and using these other perspectives which will certainly bring more clarity to the issues discussed.

### **Corpus Description**

The corpus consists of 243 newspaper articles dealing with migrants and migration and published between June and September 2022 in four languages: English, Spanish, Italian and Romanian. The latter three languages were selected due to the fact that these are the main idioms which I can claim to have a good command of, and, consequently, the languages I normally use for scientific activity. Moreover, as a native Romanian, a teacher of Italian and a user of Spanish on a daily basis, I naturally developed both a personal and a scientific curiosity regarding the linguistic strategies employed in the *media* in order to convey a specific viewpoint on daily topics of certain interest, *i.e.*, on migration. The English language, on the other hand, was chosen more as a “control” language – that is, which will enable us to verify whether the same metaphors activated by the Spanish, Italian and Romanian users are also present in a language that has become an international vehicle of communication. Although it might be interesting to see whether the possible differences or similarities in conceptualization can be traced back to the common Latin heritage of the three Romance languages as opposed to the English idiom – or to other, more specific, ‘environmental’ and contextual differences between the cultures involved – this paper will not explore this path here, and will limit itself to a review of the main conceptual metaphors identified in this stage and a comment of the most interesting occurrences. The newspapers consulted for this phase of the corpus were respectively *Washington Post*, *El Sol de México*, *La Repubblica* and *Jurnalul Național*, all of them accessed online, and selected both for their overall popularity in terms of viewers and for the fact that they all grant free online access to their contents. In a future stage of the inquiry, I would like to explore other sources as well, especially by including more sources for each of the four languages

selected and checking for possible changes in terms of results which can be traced back to the origin of the source.

Key terms like 'migrants' and 'migration', and their respective equivalents in the other languages (*migrantes*, *migración* for Spanish; *migranti*, *migrazione* for Italian; *migranți*, *migrație* for Romanian) were used in order to navigate through the content of the four newspapers. Nevertheless, not all the results prompted by the search engine were considered for the analysis: in some cases, the machine included articles on 'migration' understood not as 'the movement of people to another country or place of residence', but rather as 'the process of travelling of groups of animals to a different place when the season changes', as was the case, for example, of the monarch butterfly migration which takes place every year about mid-August in Mexico and the United States. These articles, though containing the aforementioned key terms, were discarded from the corpus. Other articles, though referring to human migration, were also expelled from the corpus because they did not contain metaphorical occurrences related to the topic (usually because of the brevity of the article).

The analysis of the entire corpus produced 1143 metaphorical occurrences, which were manually selected from the articles and categorized according to the conceptual metaphor they illustrate. Although this particular method is known for raising certain observations in terms of objectivity (see, for example, Kövecses, 2008), due to the fact that in a certain way the intuition of the researchers is the one that prompts them to select or discard a specific metaphorical occurrence, I feel that the results obtained following this path, rather than other strategies (e.g. computational ones), are not only consistent with the general findings in the field but also, in a certain measure, more 'trustworthy' than a mechanical selection procedure. This can be, of course, seen as my personal limitation, as I do not normally conduct computational research, which is why I choose, in this paper, to follow a bottom-top procedure in order to build the corpus, following a four-step process: a. Selection of the articles eligible for the corpus (*vide*

*supra*) b. Identification of the phrases or sentences connected to human migration c. Deciding whether the selected phrase is to be understood literally or whether it can be deconstructed into a conceptual schema following the Lakoffian model d. Ascribing the occurrence to a corresponding metaphorical schemata (which does not precede the occurrences, that is, it only begins to exist with the first occurrence, and is not selected from a pre-available list of conceptual metaphors, like those mentioned by Lakoff and Johnson). These conceptual metaphors have an 'equative' form, i.e.  $X = Y$ , where X represents the target domain and Y the source domain (e.g. MIGRATION IS A WAR).

Some of the main topics covered by the articles between June and September 2022 are of general interest and can consequently be found in all four languages, while others are mostly limited to one or two:

- a. The tragedy in San Antonio, Texas (June 27, 2022), maybe the most tragic incident regarding migrants throughout 2022, which resulted in the death of 53 people loaded in trucks in an attempt to reach the United States;
- b. South American migrants crossing Mexico in order to get to the United States, by far the most frequent topic in the English and Spanish language corpus;
- c. The bilateral meeting between U.S. President Joe Biden and Mexico president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (July 12, 2022);
- d. The incidents regarding the Arizona and Texas governors bussing migrants to Washington D.C. after the latter was proclaimed 'sanctuary' city by its mayor
- e. The Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's approach to the migration topic in her country and on European soil in general;
- f. The Syrian migrants trying to get to Italy by sea;
- g. The Ukrainian refugees fleeing from the war.

## Qualitative Analysis

This section will analyze some of the most representative conceptual metaphors identified within the corpus, along with the examples extracted from the articles and accompanied, where necessary, by my English translation. The date when the article was published is mentioned in brackets.

### ***MIGRATION IS A WAR***

One of the most common ways of talking about the migratory phenomenon uses military terms, regardless of the positive or negative viewpoint of the speaker on the topic of migration. This mapping between the source domain of the war and the target domain of migration can be activated by several expressions: migrants can be depicted as agents, as warriors in a battle; the entire phenomenon can be seen as a military occupation; the phenomenon must be fought against etc. The following examples illustrate these situations:

- (1) para que nuestras **ciudades fronterizas invadidas y abrumadas** puedan encontrar alivio (05.08.2022)  
= so that **our border cities, invaded and overwhelmed**, can finally find some relief
- (2) il paese del Messinese (...) si è trovato a **fronteggiare**, per la prima volta, **uno sbarco di migranti** (10.09.2022)  
=the village close to Messina found itself **facing for the first time a sea arrival of migrants**
- (3) Ankara ia o decizie majoră în **lupta împotriva imigrației ilegale** (24.08.2022)  
= Ankara (*i.e.* Turkey's government) adopts a major decision **in the fight against illegal immigration**

In these phrases, we can notice that the migratory phenomenon is seen as a true military invasion, overwhelming the border communities (1), the small Sicilian village (2) or an entire country (3). The groups of migrants advancing into the foreign territory are seen as enemy troops one must 'face', 'fight', 'combat against'.

Sometimes, the phenomenon is seen as a threat or a pressure, as in the following phrases:

- (4) **la aglomeración de las personas es una bomba de tiempo** (20.07.2022)  
= **the population agglomeration is a time bomb**
- (5) in un contesto **impreparato a sostenere pressioni migratorie** e già povero di suo. (12.08.2022)  
= in a social context which is **not ready to face migrant pressures** and is already poor

In sentence (4) the metaphor refers to the huge and constantly growing number of South American migrants arriving to Mexico and heading for the United States, who, unable to get the necessary documents, are forced to remain on Mexican soil, which leads to massive crowds lacking resources to survive. A similar situation can be noticed in sentence (5), where Italy's fragile economy is seen as a military theater of operations overwhelmed by the war effort.

- (6) modul cum sunt tratați variază de la **interogatorii și percheziții corporale, până la smulgerea de lângă cei dragi și dispariția pentru totdeauna** (21.07.2022)  
= the way these people are treated varies from **interrogations and body searches, to being torn apart from their loved ones and disappearing forever**
- (7) Five people are dead **after a clash between border guards and migrants** in a Spanish enclave in northern Africa. **Scores more on both sides were injured** (24.06.2022; one of the few articles not dealing with the common topics mentioned in the corpus description section, but regarding a different community of migrants)
- (8) The plan launched this week, which the Home Office described as a one-year pilot, may (...) **impose a curfew on some [migrants]** (18.06.2022)

In the sixth phrase, Ukrainian immigrants seeking refuge in Russia are treated as if they were real enemies or war prisoners: interrogations, body searches, displacement far away from their



families are but a few of the measures some of them are exposed to. This is by no means restricted to Ukrainian immigrants: in phrase (7) conflicts between migrants and the authorities are also reported in military terms ('clash', victims 'on both sides'), while in phrase (8) measures like home confinement for certain categories of migrants are described by the military term 'curfew'.

(9) no vemos bien que haya **campañas antimigrantes** con propósitos electorales (08.07.2022)

= we do not approve of the fact that there are currently **anti-immigrants campaigns** with electoral purposes

(10) The solution is easy: **secure the border** (12.08.2022)

Programs trying to restrict or put an end to the migratory phenomenon are described as 'anti-immigrants campaigns', another term borrowed from the military lexicon, as is the case of the solution proposed in phrase (10): governments are urged to 'secure the border', as they would do in case of real military threat.

### ***MIGRATION IS A REDEEMING EXPERIENCE***

But war is not the only source domain for metaphors related to migration. In many cases, the migratory phenomenon is conceptualized as a redeeming experience, as a passage from hell to heaven, as we can see in these phrases, extracted both from the Spanish-language articles and the English-language ones:

(11) **es un infierno el que estamos viviendo** (11.09.2022)

= **what we are living is an actual hell**

(12) from that point on I was **in heaven**. (16.08.2022)

Migrants' previous experience is seen as an actual 'hell', with all the semantic elements such a term activates: a place of torture and pain, very hard to depart from, with little or almost no hope of change for the future and so on. Similarly, although the migrants' condition does not immediately improve after they reach their intended destination, in many cases they conceptualize their new life as 'being in heaven': safe, surrounded by pleasant realities, in a position which allows them to contemplate their previous situation and be happy to have left it behind.

Another type of redeeming experience that can be noticed in several examples from the corpus conceptualizes migration as a passage from persecution to the Promised Land. It is not a mere coincidence that a massive migratory flow is often called an 'exodus': migrants are thus compared to the Jewish people fleeing Egypt in the Bible and heading for the Promised Land through a long and dangerous journey through the desert (examples 13-15).

- (13) en sólo un mes **el éxodo venezolano** se disparó en un 10.73 por ciento. (05.09.2022)  
= in only a month's time, **the Venezuelan exodus** increased of 10,73%
- (14) Many who protested are now defecting, joining **one of the largest exoduses** from the island since Fidel Castro launched the revolution in 1959. (11.07.2022)
- (15) **caminaron bajo las inclemencias del tiempo** por más de 40 kilómetros (26.07.2022)  
= **they walked under the inclement weather** for more than 40 kilometers

Even terms like 'asylum' or 'sanctuary' remind us of a different kind of religious experience. In Ancient Greek culture, a *ἱερόν ἄσυλον* was a sacred place, like a temple or a sanctuary, where people accused of any type of crime could find refuge against persecution by appealing to the protection of the gods. This is why even today we make use of the same terms to describe the inviolable human right to seek protection from persecution:

- (16) Governments and **asylum systems** offer women few protections (19.07.2022)
- (17) All the governor is doing is taking the mayors of New York and Washington up on their offer to **provide sanctuary**. (17.08.2022)

But even in common speech, as we can see in phrase (18), volunteers or organizations trying to help refugees are referred to as 'angels', that is, as a divine help sent from heaven to reinforce the promise of salvation:

- (18) One of the dozens of **night angels** swooping in with food, shoes, blankets and beds, materializing **the promise of America's open shores** (14.07.2022)

### ***MIGRATION IS A GAME***

Another interesting metaphor is MIGRATION IS A GAME. The examples within the corpus can be ascribed to different types of game, but what all these phrases have in common is the idea that chances, fate and fortune play a great role in deciding the migrants' success or failure in their attempt. As in any game, there are risks which should be taken into consideration, there is usually a winner or a loser and there is a sense of victory and satisfaction upon completion of the game procedures.

Let us take a look at phrase (19):

- (19) "The overall approach to immigration as a more must come or fewer must be allowed in, is a reflection of a **zero-sum** versus **pies-getting-larger** mentality (16.08.2022)

where Pay-Pal cofounder Max Levchin recalls his migrant background experience and confronts two alternative views on migration. The first one, which he calls a "zero-sum game", considers the advantages of a side as threats for the other side; in other words there's always someone to lose so that someone else can win. In our case, the advantages of the migrant communities are seen as harmful for the rest of the society. The second view on migration, the so-called "pies-getting-larger" mentality states instead that there is enough room for everybody, provided that the society, that is, the pie, expands itself in order to cover everybody. What these two opposite views on migration have in common is the fact that both perceive the phenomenon as a mathematical game of chances and probabilities, as a phenomenon that can be theoretically analyzed and modeled with pen and paper – a view which might be advocated against by other people who, on the contrary, might feel that this reality is too complex and too painful to be addressed in terms of a mathematical compute.

But this is not the only instance of the metaphor of MIGRATION SEEN AS A GAME. If we take a look at phrases (20)-(21):

- (20) Since April, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, both Republicans, have bused more than 5.000 undocumented immigrants to the nation's capital **to score political points** against the Biden administration's immigration policies (26.07.2022)
- (21) In Texas, **Abbott is playing hardball** on illegal border crossings. Good. (17.08.2022)

we can see that the measures taken by some US governors were perceived by certain authors as an attempt at scoring points, political points in this case, against an adversary, just as in a sports competition. In the same context of the Texas and Arizona governors sending migrants to Washington D.C., phrase (21) uses the term 'playing hardball', a metaphor borrowed from the baseball slang, where it refers literally to the use of a hard ball instead of the softer and a bit larger ball commonly used in softball. This term, now a lexicalized metaphor, has arrived to describe aggressive behaviors and attitudes, along with being unwilling to negotiate.

### ***MIGRATION IS A STORY OR A SHOW***

Another metaphor, well represented in most articles, is **MIGRATION IS A STORY OR A SHOW**. The migratory process is seen as a narrative, literally as a story, as in these Romanian-language phrases:

- (22) **narațiunea Moscovei**, potrivit căreia ucrainenii sunt salvați de naziști. (21.07.2022)  
 = **Moscow's** account of the facts (lit. **narration**) according to which Ukrainians are being saved from the (Neo)Nazis
- (23) **Povestea** lui Dmitri Zadoianov, în vârstă de 32 de ani, **este una tipică** (21.07.2022)  
 = **the story** of 32-year-old Dmitri Zadoianov **is a typical one**

In both phrases, the migratory process is seen as a narrative evolving from an initial situation (an exposition) through a rising action that leads to different unfolding events, until the characters reach a denouement (or resolution of the conflict). Some stories are typical (23), some others present the viewpoint of a particular

instance, which can be compared to the marks of the narrator's presence in literature (22).

Some stories present a happy-end, while some others are tragic – it is not a mere coincidence that the common way to describe a negative event is, in most languages, 'tragedy' or 'tragic':

(24) What **the tragedy** in San Antonio reveals about migration from Mexico (29.06.2022)

(25) Un paese coraggioso, che non si è tirato indietro di fronte a **uno scenario di per sè tragico** (11.09.2022)

= a brave village, which did not back out before a **scene (lit. script) that was tragic in itself**

A particularly long story, full of adventures, can be described as an odyssey:

(26) **la odisea** comenzó desde el parto (18.07.2022)

= **the odyssey** began since the delivery [of the baby]

In some other cases, the migratory phenomenon is described as a theatrical performance or as a movie, where there are different leading figures, who play a significant role in the unfolding of the events, where there are also heartbreaking scenes and even dangerous and risky moments, as the stunts in an action movie, for example:

(27) migrantes venezolanos **protagonizaron** riñas y un intento de motín (31.07.2022)

= Venezuelan migrants **played the lead in** several brawls and a riot attempt

(28) Two men were indicted Wednesday **for their roles** in the deaths of 53 migrants (21.07.2022)

(29) **Scene che spezzano il cuore** — ha detto

= **scenes that break one's heart**, he said

(30) **The migrant buses** sent to D.C. are a cruel, political **stunt** (15.07.2022)

### ***MIGRANTS ARE NEIGHBORS VISITING***

Another metaphor worthy of a brief analysis is the one that sees MIGRATION AS A VISIT TO ONE'S NEIGHBOR. We often speak of 'welcoming' refugees, as in examples (31)-(32), as if they were guests paying us a visit or even staying with us for a certain time:

(31) Countries that had limited numbers of refugees from Syria and other countries in 2015 and 2016 have been far **more welcoming to Ukrainians** in the last four months. (02.07.2022)

(32) Turcia **găzduiește** populații mari de migranți (24.08.2022)  
= Turkey **is hosting** a large immigrant population

It would not have been the same to say, for instance, that Turkey "accepts" or "receives" lots of migrants – the very term "hosts" implies more than a mere approval of their entrance into the country, it infers that they are treated as guests paying a visit, that they are temporarily going to share the same accommodation and facilities as the rest of the family and also that at some point they might be returning to their own homeland.

(33) I think the idea of '**What if too many people come in?**' is a silly attitude (16.08.2022)

But, just as in a party attended by too many people at once, there might be voices expressing concerns like "what if too many people come in?" (33). On the contrary, there might also be voices which, no matter what, whether the society is prepared or not to cope with the challenge, will choose to declare "you're always welcome here", as is the case in phrase (34):

(34) The ultimate city of immigrants wants you to remember: **you're always welcome here** (17.08.2022)

Also, if we take a look at phrase (35), we see that the same idea applies to international relations:

(35) Grecia susține că **vecinul său** este o destinație sigură pentru solicitanții de azil (24.08.2022)  
= Greece claims **its neighbour** [Turkey] is a safe destination for asylum-seekers

Greece and Turkey are not only geographically close, they are also “neighbors”, with all the good and bad sides this status implies: as there are neighbors who provide help and support to the others, so there are neighbors whose behavior may become intrusive or even harmful to the other members of the block.

### Same Metaphor, Different Inferences

Before reaching the conclusions, it is important to mention that the same conceptual metaphor is often employed in phrases or occurrences which convey different views on the same matter. This suggests that the implications of a metaphor often go beyond the declared viewpoint of the speaker and reveal underlying conjectures that may be unknown even to the speakers themselves. For example, let us take a look at this Spanish phrase:

(36) Se presume que los migrantes fueron llevados por grupos de **polleros**

= the migrants were supposedly guided by groups of *polleros*,

a Mexican term actually meaning “chicken herders” but referring to people transporting migrants, usually in trucks, in awful conditions, across the border to the United States, just as if they were chicken loaded in trucks. Here the view is clearly negative – like chicken, fragile and unable to defend themselves or to tell good and bad apart, migrants blindly follow their “guides” who, more often than not, only “pluck their feathers out”, to use a colloquial phrase perfectly consistent with the conceptual metaphor analyzed, that is, rob them and abandon them to death.

Now, let us take a look at phrase (37), extracted this time from the Italian articles:

(37) **le rondini erano i nostri migranti** che tornavano nel mese delle ferie di agosto nel paese d’origine (12.09.2022)

= **the swallows were our migrants** coming back to their home towns and villages for the August vacation

where migrants are seen as swallows coming back to their original homelands for the August vacation. While the conceptual metaphor is basically the same, **MIGRANTS ARE BIRDS**, the perspective is completely different: like swallows, migrants also fly far and high to achieve their dreams, but remember to come back, victorious and nostalgic at the same time, to visit their old nests.

Another case in point is the **WAR** metaphor we have seen before:

(38) Little wonder more than half of Americans now say **an “invasion” is underway** at the southern border (06.09.2022)

(39) Quando sono stato eletto, mai e poi mai avrei immaginato di **trovarmi ad affrontare uno sbarco di migranti** (11.09.2022)

= When I was elected, I had never imagined that I would find myself **facing a sea arrival of migrants**

In phrase (38), migration is seen as a military invasion overwhelming the border communities, a dangerous phenomenon, difficult to stop, which presents serious challenges to the respective governments. Phrase (39), on the other hand, belongs to the mayor of a Sicilian village who rescued and welcomed Syrian migrants arriving by sea. Although his view on migrants is clearly positive, it is significant that the phrase he uses in order to refer to the event is “**affrontare uno sbarco di migranti**”, that is “face, confront with a boat unloading of migrants”, thus activating the same war metaphor we have seen before.

## Conclusions

At the end of this brief outline of the most representative metaphors on migrants and migration, it is fair to conclude that metaphor has a huge communicational role and a psychological impact on the receiver, which is why it is often chosen, even involuntarily, for the underlying aspects it reveals on our view on society. As the examples provided have shown, the selection of a given metaphor may reveal inferences or implications which might be unknown even to the speakers themselves, but which become manifest if we identify the original source domain and other possible instances of the same conceptual metaphor.



Most of the conceptual metaphors analyzed are well represented in all four languages, which can only confirm Lakoff and Johnson's assumption that our cognitive system tends to lexicalize similar metaphors regardless of the language (1980; as cited in Croft & Cruse, 2004). This reinforces the idea that metaphor is actually an instrument of thought, a tool which allows us to develop abstract concepts by processing the information obtained from our interaction with the surrounding environment.

## Note

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