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ABSTRACT

World-views are long-term systems of conceptual frames and metaphors in the brain. People can only make sense of ideas that fit their fixed systems of frames and metaphors. Many people have access to more than one world-view. If one is activated more than another, the one most activated will become increasing strong and the others increasing weak. The use of language and cartoons in the media can have a strong effect on which world-view will be strengthened in the brains of members of the public.

I analyse a corpus of 1000 op-eds employing political cartoons pertaining to the ongoing Eurozone crisis, and finds that the US and UK discourses on the crisis are a panorama of metaphors and blendings. These are normal in discussions of any important topic, but here are one-sided. Such communicative devices serve to undermine trust in the euro.



Financial earthquake storm vicious spiral fire competitiveness snail slow motion unfitting pieces **Eurozone** bucket dominos bailouts economic quagmire exit strategy maze bowling ball broken lifeboat plane cart.

Messaging battles in the Eurozone crisis discourse

By
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We know from research in cognitive science that all thought is physical, with mostly unconscious mental structures characterized by neural circuitry in the brain.

Fillmore has shown that frames are the most commonplace mental structures, and Lakoff has shown that a huge number of mental structures are metaphorical, mapping from one frame to another. All forms of communication, whether language, images, cartoons, or gestures work via the activation of such frames. The more a mental structure is activated, the stronger the neural circuitry that comprises it will become.

World-views are long-term systems of conceptual frames and metaphors in the brain. People can only make sense of ideas that fit their fixed systems of frames and metaphors. Many people have access to more than one world-view. If one is activated more than another, the one most activated will become increasing strong and the others increasing weak.

Hypothesis

The main hypothesis motivating my research is that the use of language and cartoons in the media can have a strong effect on which world-view will be strengthened in the brains of members of the public.

Data

The data for this study consist of nearly 1000 op-eds employing political cartoons about the Eurozone crisis published in *The Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* between 1 January 2010, and 31 December 2011. This specific time period has been selected so as to include important events in the early development of the Eurozone debt crisis, such as the growth of the debts of Greece, Ireland, and Portugal.

Research Questions

I aim to provide some answers to three main questions: (i) *How is the Eurozone crisis represented in the British and American press;* (ii) *does the use of language and cartoons in the media have a strong effect on which worldview will be strengthened in the brains of members of the public;* and (iii) *what role has multimodal framing played during the crisis?*

Method

I draw on a wide range of seemingly unrelated strands of linguistic research: critical discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, and multimodality.

My discussion of the role of metaphorical reasoning about the crisis consists of two parts. The first part lays out the central metaphor systems used in reasoning about the crisis. The second part discusses how the system was applied to the crisis.

Findings

Table 1 Metaphor distribution/Conservative bias

Metaphor	Frequency	Moral value
Journey	43%	Competition;
Natural Disaster	30%	Individual
Bomb/fire	15%	responsibility;
Domino/games	10%	Independence
Other	2%	

The results from this study provide initial evidence for the notion that linguistic and pictorial moral framings can have a significant influence on people's political attitudes. In the context of the euro crisis, moral metaphors and frames have the effect of moving the understanding of the public in an anti-euro direction.

Finally, it is crucial to note that this paper is only one of two empirical studies I conduct to test the abovementioned hypothesis.

Most viewed

PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY IS SELF-PROPELLED MOVEMENT TOWARDS A DESTINATION



Comments

I am grateful to all members of the Organizing Committee for their crucial help in making this presentation possible.