# Metaphors of Crisis Migration: Evidence from a Cross-National Corpus Study

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### Abstract

*The study explores the role of metaphors in European media representations of migrants and refugees du-ring the 'refugee crisis'. It is conducted on a corpus of over six million words, consisting of newspa-per articles published between 2015 and 2018 in Poland, Spain, and the UK. It employs a con-cordancer to retrieve all instantiations of metaphors: (1) identified via a manual search in a sample of the corpus using the Pragglejaz Group's Metaphor Identification Procedure (2007); and (2) discussed in previous studies concerning metaphorical representations of immigrants (e.g., El Refaie, 2001; Mu-solff, 2015; Taylor, 2021). Five main metaphors have been detected which liken migrants to commod-ities, liquids, animals, invaders, and (unwanted) guests, with some variation across the three subcor-pora. The identified metaphors' functions are examined and potential implications are discussed. The results help put some of the frequently discussed mappings into perspective by pointing to a possible disproportion between the amount of attention paid to some metaphors in previous contributions and their actual frequencies in migration-related media discourse.*

**Key words:** *Conceptual metaphor; Immigration; Refugee crisis; Corpus linguistics; Media discourse*

## 1. Introduction

The so-called 'European refugee crisis' has been widely problematised as the single most pressing immigration-related challenge for Europe (e.g., Corbu *et al.*, 2017). This has also been reflected in the construal of the displaced people, as investigations into media (e.g., Chouliaraki *et al.*, 2017), social media (e.g., Bennett, 2018), and political discourses (e.g., Cap, 2018) have demonstrated. The present study aims at contributing to this field of research by bringing into focus the role of metaphors in the representations of displaced people during the 'European refugee crisis', which has been largely overlooked in previous contributions, despite substantial evidence of the potency and ubiquity of metaphors, including in migration-related discourses (e.g., Taylor, 2021). Specifically, it explores the metaphorical representations of immigrants and refugees between 2015 and 2018 in British, Polish, and Spanish press using methods associated with corpus linguistics.

As Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011, p. 1) put it, following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are not 'just fancy ways of talking' but powerful

conceptual frameworks which shape how people think about social issues (Deignan, 2005; Marshall & Shapiro, 2018; Sopory & Dillard, 2002; Thibodeau, 2017), including immigration (Hart, 2021; Landau *et al.,* 2009; Utych, 2018). In fact, Sopory and Dillard's meta-analytic study (2002) has shown that metaphoric language is more persuasive than literal language because it facilitates text processing and comprehension. Another component of metaphors' power of persuasion lies in their capacity to evoke emotions (Deignan, 2005; Marshall & Shapiro, 2018). Metaphors are also particularly effective in conveying evaluation: by highlighting the similarities between the target and source domain phenomena, and backgrounding those features which are divergent or irrelevant for the comparison, metaphors bolster some inferences, while undermining others (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Semino *et al.*, 2017, p. 29). Or, as Charteris-Black asserts (2011, p. 32), they can entirely invalidate alternative interpretations and evaluations. Consequently, they can be exploited for ideological purposes. At the same time, the impact of metaphors is covert, and people often fail to realise that they were influenced by a metaphor (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011; but see Hart [2021] for evidence to the contrary). As a result, metaphor use may reinforce both conscious and subliminal emotions and attitudes towards a given issue.

It can be argued that the power of metaphor is enhanced by its ubiquity in everyday language as well as its cumulative nature: as previous contributions have shown, metaphors occur between 3 and 15 times per a hundred words, depending on the discourse type (Cameron & Stelma, 2004; Pragglejaz Group, 2007), and one conceptual mapping is often realised using a wide range of different lexical items (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Taylor, 2020). The use of metaphors thus contributes to the formation of a shared frame (Deignan, 2005, p. 24; Santa Ana, 1999, p. 195) which may be easily activated. As Thibodeau and Boroditsky's (2011) research has demonstrated, just one instantiation of a common metaphor is sufficient to activate the appropriate metaphorical framing. This also means that this shared cultural frame may encompass non-obvious meanings: 'those utterances which taken individually might be unmarked, become salient when they are seen as a group, all fulfilling the same underpinning idea' (Taylor, 2021, p. 3). This is particularly true of conventionalised metaphors. In the words of Philip (2010, p. 190), 'being conventional and unremarkable, these metaphors operate in silence, yet they help to shape the opinions of millions'.

## 2. *Metaphors of Immigration*

Research examining European (and Western in general) public (including media) discourses surrounding refugees and immigrants, especially from Africa and Asia, overwhelmingly points towards the threat theme as the dominant trend in their construal (e.g., Berry *et al.,* 2015; Chouliaraki *et al.,* 2017)[1]. Similar results have been reported within the field of metaphor studies. Specifically, many contributions have found that immigrants are particularly likely to be construed in terms of destructive natural disasters, above all relating to the behaviour of water (Charteris-Black, 2006; Nguyen & McCallum, 2016; Taylor, 2020; Taylor, 2022). Another metaphor which foregrounds the threat theme likens immigrants to invaders (Montagut & Moragas-Fernández, 2020; Taylor, 2020).

Another frequently observed aspect of metaphors of immigration, shared by many of the most frequent mappings, is their role in the discursive dehumanisation of displaced people. Again, DISASTER or, more specifically, WATER metaphors are a prominent example. Other examples include metaphors likening immigrants to parasites (Musolff, 2015; Spinzi, 2016) and animals (Mujagić & Berberović, 2019; Santa Ana, 1999). On the other hand, metaphors which do not dehumanise immigrants tend to present them as morally inferior by construing them, above all, as (unwanted) guests or enemies (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018; Taylor, 2020).

Thus, research shows that metaphors are predominantly used to contribute to a negative framing of immigrants. At the same time, they can help mask the underlying prejudicial intentions as the speaker may claim that they reproduced a given metaphor unconsciously and unaware of its discursive implications. As a result, they provide a plausible deniability against potential accusations of xenophobia or racism.

On the other hand, however, it is not unlikely that metaphors of immigration are, in fact, often used unconsciously and without a prejudicial intention, especially when they are highly conventionalised (as is the case with some of the most common mappings). For example, the frequency of use of water metaphors has been attributed to the fact that refugees in many cases actually come across the sea (El Refaie, 2001) or to the media's tendency to use drone footage where individuals are undistinguishable and therefore look 'like a dehumanised, steadily moving mass' (Törmä, 2017, p. 21).

Moreover, studies have identified WATER metaphors as well as some non-dehumanising metaphors (e.g., IMMIGRANTS ARE GUESTS or BUILDERS) in discourses which evaluate displaced people neutrally or positively (e.g., KhosraviNik, 2009; Nguyen & McCallum, 2016; Salahshour, 2016; Taylor, 2021; Taylor, 2022). Nevertheless, it should be stressed that similar tendencies have rarely been reported for other metaphors and, arguably, it is difficult to imagine how some of them could be used in positive contexts, especially if they also include a threat component (enemy metaphors are a case in point). Finally, despite the potentially positive intentions lying behind the use of some metaphors, they still reduce individual migrants to a homogenous part of a collective, dehumanise them, erase their agency, and present them as morally inferior. At best, their role may be described as victimisation (rather than positive construal (KhosraviNik, 2009, p. 19)). Scholars also stress that these types of representations often do not align with migrants' own framing of their movement (Catalano, 2016). Finally, the speaker's positive intent may fail to correspond to the readers' reception, which is dependent on how they were primed by previous discursive exposures (Taylor, 2021, p. 4). For example, if water metaphors tend to be used predominantly in discourses construing migrants as threat, they may trigger the same associations even when encountered in neutral or positive contexts.

In spite of the vast literature on metaphors of immigration, there has been relatively little engagement with the ways in which metaphors contribute to the construal of immigrants and refugees during migration crises. The recent 'European refugee crisis', in particular, merits special consideration in recognition of its scale and the unprecedented public attention it attracted during an extended period of time (Kotišová, 2017). This study aims to fill this gap and, at the same time, to answer calls for more cross-linguistic metaphor research (e.g., Gibbs, 2010, p. 4) which might help to account for the differing

uses of migration metaphors depending on the sociopolitical and cultural context of discourse production and reception (e.g., Abid *et al.,* 2017). To this end, it explores metaphorical representations of migrants and refugees between 2015 and 2018 in newspapers published in three different European countries: Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

The countries selected for this investigation differ regarding the extent to which they have been impacted by the 'refugee crisis', as well as a number of other factors likely to shape their responses towards immigration, thus offering compelling locations for a comparative analysis. Specifically, Poland is an Eastern-European country of emigration rather than immigration, with very little contact with people from outside Europe and the sphere of influence of Christianity (Krzyżanowski, 2018, p. 79). During the 'refugee crisis', too, any migratory movements across or towards Polish territory were almost non-existent; and yet, it quickly became the topic of a heated public debate dominated by anti-immigrant voices (Krzyżanowski, 2018). Despite general support for immigration, which had been stable for some time prior to the 'refugee crisis', anti-immigrant sentiments rose drastically, even surpassing nations with long-established hostility towards immigration (Ipsos Mori, 2018).

The other two countries of this analysis, in turn, have much more significant recent experiences of contact with the Other, in part as a result of colonialism and its repercussions, but also, in the case of Spain, due to its status as a former Arab territory, and its geographical proximity to Africa. As the only European state sharing a land border with Africa, Spain has for a long time — including the period encompassing the 'refugee crisis' — been a key entry point for migrants and refugees trying to reach Europe (Cosgrave *et al.*, 2016, p. 21). Another aspect which makes Spain unique among other European countries — and, therefore, a particularly interesting case study — is the absence of outright discriminatory and racist rhetoric in its public debate surrounding the displaced people (Berry *et al.*, 2015), and its general receptiveness of the needs of minorities (Hirschkind, 2014). The UK, on the other hand, has been widely condemned for its harsh treatment of immigrants and refugees, and its refusal to host any during the 'refugee crisis' (Favell & Barbulescu, 2018, p. 5). In short, the countries selected for this analysis are located in different parts of Europe (Western, Eastern, and Southern Europe have traditionally been considered to be distinct in many ways), and have divergent historical and present-day experiences of immigration (their positions and responses *vis-à-vis* the displacement of people during the 'European refugee crisis' being of particular note).

## 3.  *Materials and Methods*

While computer-assisted methods for linguistic research have increasingly been gaining ground in recent years, Stefanowitsch (2006, p. 1) notes that this methodological switch towards quantitative approaches based on authentic data has been somewhat slower for the study of metaphor. This may, principally, be due to the fact that conceptual mappings are not attached to specified linguistic forms: as a result, retrieving them from an unannotated corpus seems, at first glance, nearly impossible (Stefanowitsch, 2006, p. 2; Taylor, 2021, p. 5). Nevertheless, as discussed in Stefanowitsch (2006), some strategies have been developed, including (i) manual extraction (time-consuming and, consequently,

limiting the corpus size); (ii) searching for source domain vocabulary (which requires *a priori* assumptions about vocabulary that is likely to be used to represent the given target phenomenon); and (iii) searching for target domain vocabulary and, as a second step, identifying cases when it is embedded in metaphorical expressions (which limits the identified subset of metaphors to those that contain target domain vocabulary). Furthermore, the latter two may be combined by searching for strings which contain both source and target domain vocabulary. Finally, Goatly (1997) proposes to retrieve metaphors based on markers of metaphoricity including metalinguistic expressions such as *metaphorically/ figuratively speaking* and quotation marks. Another set of methods can be applied to annotated corpora (see Stefanowitsch, 2006, pp. 5-6). While each method has its caveat(s), they all facilitate the examination of metaphors in a large corpus of naturally-occurring language in a more systematic and exhaustive way, compared to opportunistic and introspective methods (e.g., Salahshour, 2016). They are also better suited to examinations of diachronic (e.g., Taylor, 2021) and cross-linguistic trends (e.g., Abid *et al.,* 2017).

The present analysis of metaphorical representations of migrants was conducted on a large corpus of news articles published in British, Polish, and Spanish market-leading newspapers2 — which are listed in Table 1 — during the 2015-2018 'refugee crisis'. The monthly circulation was the sole criterion of choice of news outlets, with the oft-applied criteria of reporting style or political inclinations (e.g., Chouliaraki *et al.,* 2015) left out of the account as they could not have been applied consistently to newspapers published in different national contexts. For example, while no tabloids are published in Spain, they dominate both the Polish and the UK markets; whereas a newspaper's ideological stance may be highly dependent on the country-specific sociopolitical realities. In turn, studying market-leading newspapers is expected to allow for drawing as generalisable results as possible with regards to how the press may influence public perceptions of a specific event or a (group of) actor(s), in this case the "European refugee crisis" and the displaced people.

| Subcorpus | Newspaper | Texts | Tokens |
|---|---|---|---|
| Spain | | 3,086 | 2,478,336 |
| | *El País* | 1,010 | 661,311 |
| | *El Mundo* | 953 | 590,051 |
| | *ABC* | 898 | 719,449 |
| | *La Vanguardia* | 746 | 507,525 |
| Poland | | 2,089 | 1,276,991 |
| | *Gazeta Wyborcza* | 898 | 705,327 |
| | *Fakt* | 741 | 297,486 |
| | *Rzeczpospolita & Plus Minus* | 259 | 194,668 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Super Express* | 191 | 79,510 |
| UK | 2,138 | 2,624,594 |
| *The Guardian & The Observer* | 724 | 990,646 |
| *The Sun & The Sun on Sunday* | 590 | 640,995 |
| *Daily Mail & Mail on Sunday* | 576 | 649,240 |
| *Daily Mirror & Sunday Mirror* | 248 | 343,713 |
| Total | 7.313 | 6,379,921 |

**Table 1.** Text and Token Distribution in the Corpus

The texts comprising the corpus were downloaded from relevant databases (EBSCO, My News) or the newspapers' digital archives using the following search terms: *refugee*, immigrant*,* and *migrant** for the UK subset; *refugiad*, inmigrante*,* and *migrante** for the Spanish subset; and *uchodźc*, imigran*,* and *migran** for the Polish subset (where * is a wildcard, which stands for zero or more characters). Only news reports entirely or mainly related to the 'refugee crisis' were included (which was verified manually). This resulted in the collection of 7,313 newspaper articles, comprising more than 6 million tokens, distributed across the three language subcorpora in the manner detailed in Table 1. Once collected, the corpus was uploaded, lemmatised, and POS-tagged in Sketch Engine (Kilgariff *et al.*, 2014).

The analysis employed a combination of two semi-automatic methods of metaphor extraction discussed above. First of all, I compiled three lists (one per each language of the analysis) of potential source domain vocabulary (e.g., *influx, invasion, hunt,* etc.) based on previous contributions concerning metaphorical representations of immigrants (e.g., Abid *et al.,* 2017; Charteris-Black, 2006; El Refaie, 2001; Montagut & Moragas-Fernández, 2020; Mujagić & Berberović, 2019; Musolff, 2015; Nguyen & McCallum, 2016; Salahshour, 2016; Santa Ana, 1999; Taylor, 2020; Taylor, 2021; Törmä, 2017). This step corresponds to the second (ii) method as listed by Stefanowitsch (2006, p. 2) and discussed above. Second of all, I extracted metaphors used to represent refugees and migrants manually from a sample of the corpus. This corresponds roughly to Stefanowitsch's (2006, p. 2) first (i) method of metaphor extraction. The sample included 288 texts (96 texts per language corpus: six texts per four newspapers per four years) published following 'critical discourse moments' (Lams, 2018) of the 'refugee crisis', i.e. some of the most significant events with the potential to influence how the movement of the displaced people was perceived. An expression was considered to be metaphorical when its contextual meaning contrasted with its basic dictionary meaning, and when the contextual meaning could be understood through a comparison with the basic meaning (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). Thus identified metaphorical expressions were then added to the previously compiled lists (unless they had already been included). Third of all, items from any given list, which were not on (one of) the other two list(s) were translated and included too, in order to avoid imbalances between them. For instance, if prior research showed that immigrants are sometimes likened to locusts in English texts, but there was no such evidence for Polish and Spanish, I nevertheless included the word *szarańcza* in the

Polish-language list, and *langosta* in the Spanish-language list (both are literal equivalents of the word *locust*). This resulted in three lists (one per each language of the analysis) of roughly equal length of expressions with the potential of being employed metaphorically to represent migrants and migrations. Finally, I searched for each of the identified metaphorical expressions (e.g., *locust/ szarańcza/ langosta*) using Sketch Engine's concordancer with the aim of revealing their frequencies and examining their discursive functions. In presenting the results (see Section 4 below), the absolute frequencies of occurrences (AF) have been normalised per million words to facilitate comparison across the three subcorpora (which differ in size) and with other studies. The resulting relative frequencies (RF) have been rounded to the nearest integer.

## 4.  Results

The procedure described above has resulted in the detection of five dominant metaphors of immigration. Each of them can be categorised based on whether it includes human as a semantic feature or not, and whether it construes displaced people as imminent danger or not. With respect to the former categorisation, the following dehumanising metaphors — which position immigrants lower than other human beings on the Great Chain of Being (Krzeszowski, 1997) — have been detected: MIGRANTS ARE COMMODITIES, MIGRANTS ARE WATER, and MIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS. Metaphors which do not dehumanise displaced people, but instead present them as morally inferior, include: MIGRANTS ARE INVADERS and MIGRANTS ARE (UNWANTED) GUESTS. As can be observed in Table 2, the former group prevails significantly with a total of 11,616 occurrences in the entire corpus (compared to the 1,616 occurrences of metaphors of the latter type). In other words, almost nine in ten metaphors employed with respect to the displaced people dehumanise them, especially by likening them to objects of business dealings (44%) and natural water phenomena (31%).

| Metaphor | Spain | Poland | UK | Total (AF) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| COMMODITY | AF= 3,678 (RF=1,484) | AF=300 (RF=235) | AF=1,878 (RF=716) | 5,856 |
| WATER | AF=1,917 (RF=774) | AF=1,158 (RF=907) | AF=1,003 (RF=382) | 4,078 |
| ANIMAL | AF=294 (RF=119) | AF=106 (RF=88) | AF=1,278 (RF=487) | 1,678 |
| (UNWANTED) GUESTS | AF=94 (RF=38) | AF=162 (RF=127) | AF=972 (RF=370) | 1,228 |
| INVADERS | AF=151 (RF=61) | AF=151 (RF=118) | AF=86 (RF=33) | 388 |
| Total | AF=6,134 (RF=2,475) | AF=1,877 (RF=1,469) | AF=5,221 (RF=1,989) | 13,232 |

**Table 2.** Immigration Metaphors in Spanish, Polish, and the UK Press

The threat component, on the other hand, rather than forming a basis for a clear-cut categorisation, positions the identified metaphors on a cline (see Figure 1). At one end, there are INVADER metaphors: their main function is to construe refugees and immigrants as threatening. However, it is important to note that this metaphor has the lowest number of lexicalisations in the analysed corpus, and accounts for just 3% of all the identified metaphors. WATER and ANIMAL metaphors, in turn, lie slightly farther away from the extreme end of

the cline to reflect the fact that while their discursive roles are more diverse, the threat theme features prominently among them. While feeling threatened is probably not the most salient aspect of the act of receiving guests, this analysis has nonetheless shown that GUEST metaphors are, in fact, often used in this context (see Section 4.4), albeit to a lower degree than ANIMAL and WATER metaphors. Finally, COMMODITY metaphors do not tend to represent displaced people as threatening in the corpus under the investigation — in other words, immigrants construed as objects seem to be devoid of the capacity to harm members of the in-group.

**COMMODITY     GUEST     ANIMAL     WATER     INVADER**

**Figure 1.** Immigration and Threat in the Analysed Metaphors: From no Association to Strong Association

With respect to the cross-linguistic comparison, Table 2 shows that the metaphor with the biggest total number of lexicalisations, which represents refugees and immigrants as commodities, is dominant in the UK and, particularly, the Spanish subset, where it accounts for 60% of all the detected metaphors. The Polish press employed COMMODITY metaphors much less frequently (they were also less varied); instead, it had a clear preference for WATER metaphors, which account for 60% of all the metaphorical expressions identified in this subset (although, again, with a limited number of lexicalisations). The UK press was, in turn, unique in its preference for ANIMAL and GUEST metaphors. The least common mapping, representing refugees and immigrants as invaders, was found to be slightly more frequent in the Polish sample, compared to the other two subcorpora.

Finally, it can be observed that the Spanish press was most likely to employ metaphors in general in the representation of refugees and immigrants, followed by the UK and Polish newspapers (the latter employed over 1.5 times less metaphors than their Spanish counterparts). The total sum of different realisations of the identified conceptual mappings was also highest in the Spanish subcorpus (61), followed by the UK (59), and Polish (45) subsets. The remainder of this Section examines in more detail each of the identified conceptual mappings and their instantiations in the discourses under the investigation.

## 4.1 Migrants are Commodities

The most frequent metaphorical frame in the corpus under this investigation has received relatively little attention in previous research. It construes refugees as objects of business dealings, usually conducted between governments (which stand in metonymically for countries). The main assumption underlying it is that the displaced people have no volition and no agency, therefore their 'return' or 'distribution' across Europe should be dictated by governments following market-like concerns of supply and demand. For example, as can be observed in Table 3, one of its most frequent realisations uses the word *quota/ kwota/ cuota,* which applies the basic meaning of quantities of goods for import or export to people allowed to enter a country. Other expressions which, according

to their dictionary definitions, denote large collections of items for sale being stored and transported, but which in the corpus are used to refer to groups of people, include *lote* [batch] and *carga* [cargo, load] in the Spanish subset, *ładunek* [load] in the Polish subset, and *load, cargo,* and *batch* in the UK subset. This conceptualises refugees as very numerous, indistinguishable from one another, lacking volition, and incapable of deciding about their fate, which thus becomes the governments' responsibility. The governments' decision-making is, in turn, driven by the imperative to maximise profit or, at least, to minimise loss, as this conceptual mapping implies. This transactional view of migrations (notice, for example, that the word *deal* is the most frequent lexicalisation of this metaphor in the UK subcorpus) backgrounds any humanitarian concerns, and is likely to desensitise the audiences to the plight of the displaced people.

| Poland | Spain | UK |
|---|---|---|
| *kwota* [quota] (AF=233; RF=182) | *traficante* [trafficker] (AF=737; RF=297) | *deal* (AF=578; RF=220) |
| *dystrybucja* [distribution] (AF=21; RF=16) | *cuota* [quota] (AF=691; RF=279) | *trafficker* (AF=336; RF=128) |
| *przeładować* [reload, overload] (AF=13; RF=10) | *devolver* [return] (AF=503; RF=203) | *trafficking* (AF=269; RF=102) |
| *handel* [trade] (AF=12; RF=9) | *reparto* [distribution] (AF=457; RF=184) | *quota* (AF=225; RF=86) |
| *handlarz* [trafficker] (AF=6; RF=5) | *devolución* [return] (AF=425; RF=171) | *net (migration)* (AF=115; RF=44) |
| *eksport* [export] (AF=6; RF=5) | *repartir* [distribute] (AF=281; RF=113) | *share* (AF= 113; RF=43) |
| *(migracja) netto* [net (migration)] (AF=3; RF=2) | *cargar* [load] (AF=137; RF=55) | *traffic* (AF=57; RF=22) |
| *importować* [import] (AF=2; RF=2) | *distribuir* [distribute] (AF=123; RF=50) | *distribution* (AF=46; RF=18) |
| *załadować* [load] (AF=2; RF=2) | *distribución* [distribution] (AF=90; RF=36) | *distribute* (AF=41; RF=17) |
| *eksportować* [export] (AF=1; RF=1) | *traficar* [traffic] (AF=89; RF=36) | *load* (AF=24; RF=9) |
| *ładunek* [load] (AF=1; RF=1) | *carga* [cargo, load] )AF=86; RF=35) | *cargo* (AF=23; RF=9) |
| | *sobrecargar* [overload] (AF=34; RF=14) | *trade* (AF=23; RF=9) |
| | *neto* [net] (AF=11; RF=4) | *batch* (AF=12; RF=5) |
| | *exportar* [export] (AF=4; RF=2) | *import* (AF=9; RF=3) |
| | *lote* [batch] (AF=2; RF=1) | *exchange* (AF=6; RF=2) |
| | *comercio* [trade] (AF=2; RF=1) | *date stamped* (AF=1; RF=0) |
| | *importar* [import] (AF=1; RF=0) | |

**Table 3.** COMMODITY Metaphors

Note that the items in this and the subsequent Tables are arranged according to their frequencies (descending). In this and the subsequent Tables the analysis does not differentiate between nouns and verbs which have identical lemmas in cases where they express the same metaphor (e.g., *load*).

The actions of which migrants-as-commodities are typically objects are related mostly to their movement. Specifically, the 'batches' or 'loads' of refugees are construed as being returned to a country they came from, often without having recourse to legal advice or being able to petition for asylum, as the frequent use of *devolución al caliente* [pushback] suggests. Furthermore,

refugees are represented as being distributed over a certain territory using words such as *distribute* and its cognates (and their equivalents in Polish and Spanish), but also exchanged, imported, and exported.

The displaced people are also construed frequently as objects of illegal business dealings using words such as *trafficker* and *trafficking* (and their Polish and Spanish equivalents). This problematises migrations but in a way that seems to represent refugees and migrants favourably or neutrally as victims; instead, those who profit from their movement are castigated, for example:

(1) *Terminaremos con las mafias que* **trafican** *con seres humanos. Esos* **traficantes** *con la miseria humana son los principales culpables.* [We will end the mafias which **traffic** with humans. The **traffickers** of human misery are to blame.] (*ABC*, February 3, 2018)

Nevertheless, this type of discourse fails to address the root causes of the demand for human traffickers, namely the fact that legal pathways of entering Europe are often unavailable to migrants from Asia and Africa.

Finally, one text in the UK subset describes refugee children as (not) 'date-stamped' in the same manner that a commodity's shelf life may be determined by the manufacturer:

(2) Practical as well as ethical considerations show that the idea cannot work; children are not **"date stamped"**. (*The Guardian,* October 19, 2016)

Despite the use of hedging devices, this metaphorical expression might be particularly effective in contributing to the construal of refugees as dehumanised and homogenous items for trade because it appears to be less conventionalised than other COMMODITY metaphors, and is, therefore, more likely to attract the reader's attention, and invoke its literal meaning (Deignan, 2005, p. 30; but see Hart [2021] for evidence that the contrary may be likely). The presence of this and other innovative or non-conventional metaphorical expressions also points to the underlying conceptual metaphor's productivity.

## 4.2 Migrants are Water

The second top metaphor in the corpus takes water as its source domain, which is in line with previous contributions emphasising its significance in discourses of migrations (e.g., Hart, 2008; Nguyen & McCallum, 2016; Petersson & Kainz, 2017; Taylor, 2021; Taylor, 2022). It is lexicalised using a wide range of items (see Table 4), including some of the less entrenched metaphorical expressions, which points to its productivity and impact on immigration discourses.

| Poland | Spain | UK |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *napływ* [influx] (AF=462; RF=362) | *flujo* [flow] (AF=826; RF=333) | *influx* (AF=330; RF=126) |
| *fala* [wave] (AF=428; RF=335) | *oleada* [wave] (AF=228; RF=92) | *surge* (AF=131; RF=50) |
| *napływać, napłynąć* [flow](AF=117; RF=91) | *desbordar* [overflow] (AF=218; RF=88) | *wave* (AF=119; RF=45) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *zalewać, zalać* [flood] (AF=76; RF=59) | *avalancha* [avalanche] (AF=177; RF=71) | *flood* (AF=76; RF=29) |
| *zalew* [flood] (AF=33; RF=25) | *ola* [wave] (AF=86; RF=35) | *overwhelm* (AF=60; RF=23) |
| *strumień* [stream] (AF=13; RF=10) | *afluencia* [influx] (AF=72; RF=29) | *full* (AF=57; RF=22) |
| *potok* [stream] (AF=9; RF=7) | *colar(se)* [slip through, leak in] (AF=70; RF=28) | *pour* (AF=46; RF=18) |
| *wchłonąć, wchłaniać* [absorb] (AF=8; RF=6) | *marea* [tide] (AF=65; RF=26) | *tide* (AF=38; RF=14) |
| *rozlać* [spill over] (AF=3; RF=2) | *absorber* [absorb] (AF=45; RF=18) | *absorb* (AF=33; RF=13) |
| *absorbować* [absorb] (AF=2; RF=2) | *lleno* [full] (AF=27; RF=11) | *stream* (AF=28; RF=11) |
| *potop* [deluge] (AF=2; RF=2) | *goteo* [trickle] (AF=26; RF=10) | *swell* (AF=27; RF=10) |
| *lawina* [avalanche] (AF=2; RF=2) | *llenar* [fill up] (AF=25; RF=10) | *overflow* (AF=13; RF=5) |
| *tsunami* (AF=1; RF=1) | *taponar* [plug] (AF=25; RF=10) | *drain* (AF=13; RF=5) |
| *wzbierać* [well up] (AF=1; RF=1) | *inundar* [flood] (AF=11; RF=4) | *trickle* (AF=12; RF=5) |
| *przelewać* [slop over] (AF=1; RF=1) | *tsunami* (AF=7; RF=3) | *pull up the drawbridge* (AF=6; RF=2) |
| | *corriente* [current] (AF=5, RF=2) | *burst* (AF=4; RF=2) |
| | *filtrar* [filter (out)] (AF=3; RF=1) | *deluge* (AF=4, RF=2) |
| | *caudal* [flow] (AF=2, RF=1) | *spillover* (AF=3; RF=1) |
| | *rebosar* [overflow] (AF=2; RF=1) | *spill* (AF=2; RF=1) |
| | *río* [river] (AF=2; RF=1) | *outflow* (AF=1; RF=0) |
| | *fluir* [flow] (AF=1; RF=0) | |

**Table 4.** WATER  Metaphors

The main function of WATER metaphors identified in the analysed press was to refer to the purportedly excessive numbers of people migrating to Europe. In fact, the use of such metaphors seems to suggest that migrants are so numerous as to become practically impossible to count (in the same manner that drops of water forming a water reservoir are uncountable), while also being indistinguishable from one another. This can be observed, for example, in excerpt 3, where the displaced people are explicitly described as too numerous; or excerpt 4, where the 'trickle' of refugees coming to Europe risks getting bigger and stronger by turning into an avalanche:

(3) *Niektórzy mówią, że **fala migrantów** jest zbyt duża, by ją zatrzymać. Ale ona jest zbyt duża, żeby jej nie zatrzymywać.* [Some say the **wave of migrants** is too big to be stopped. But it is too big not to be stopped.] (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 11, 2015)

(4) *Pero el **goteo** de nuevas llegadas es constante, y se teme una **avalancha**.* [There is a constant **trickle** of new arrivals, and there are fears it may become an **avalanche**.] (*El Mundo*, September 1, 2015)

Accordingly, words or expressions realising this metaphor are often modified by items referring to large size or quantity. For example, *influx* — the most frequent instantiation of this metaphor in the UK subcorpus — collocates saliently3 with *record, massive, huge, ever-growing, mass, enormous, big, vast,* and *large*. Its Polish equivalent, *napływ* (which has the highest frequency

in this subcorpus) collocates saliently with *masowy* [mass] (this adjective is, in fact, its top collocate), *znaczny* [significant], *ogromny* [huge], and *duży* [big]. Similarly, the most frequent realisation of the WATER metaphor in the Spanish corpus — *flujo* [flow] — is saliently modified by adjectives such as *creciente* [growing], *masivo* [massive], *mayor* [biggest], *enorme* [enormous], and *grande* [big].

As both of the examples above demonstrate (3 and 4), the association of migrants with threat is also a crucial component of WATER metaphors. In fact, many of them — and the majority of those with the highest frequencies — could be reframed as NATURAL DISASTER metaphors likening migrants to dangerous, unpredictable, and potentially destructive forces of nature (excerpt 4, which construes migrants as an imminent avalanche, is a clear-cut example). Others, in turn, are related to the conceptual mapping COUNTRY IS A CONTAINER, and construe migrants as liquids posing a risk of exceeding the capacities of the host countries, using words such as *rozlać* [spill over], *absorbować* [absorb], *wzbierać* [well up], and *przelewać* [slop over]; *desbordar* [overflow], *absorber* [absorb], *llenar* [fill up], and *rebosar* [overflow]; and *overwhelm, full, absorb, swell, overflow, burst, spillover, spill,* and *outflow*. Consequently, some realisations express the urgency to stop the 'flows' by insulating the container, using verbs such as *taponar* [plug] and *filtrar* [filter out]; as well as the expression *pull up the drawbridge* (observed only in the UK subcorpus, which may be related to the UK's geographical status as an island).

The association of water with threat has also been observed to extend to its use as a means of transportation: specifically, WATER metaphors sometimes argue that refugees transport some sort of danger to Europe, most notably terrorism:

> (5) *(Europa) ni siquiera ha intentado **filtrar** a los tan peligrosos yihadistas camuflados dentro de la **avalancha**.* [Europe hasn't even tried to **filter out** the dangerous jihadists camouflaged as part of the **avalanche**.] (*ABC*, December 22, 2016)

What all these uses have in common is the emphasis on the urgency — as well as difficulty — to control (and, preferably, stop) the movement of water. This might have particularly significant implications for the attitudes of the readers towards displaced people: as Partington and colleagues (2013, p. 67) suggest, 'being or not being in control of events and of one's environment' is the most important predictor of positive or negative evaluation. Similarly, Charteris-Black (2006, p. 572) relates WATER metaphors to the conceptual mapping CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS, which entails that lack of control over movement is lack of control over (social) change, which might resonate in particular with audiences inclined towards the right-wing end of the political spectrum (Jost *et al.*, 2003).

Nevertheless, in line with previous contributions (KhosraviNik, 2009; Nguyen & McCallum, 2016; Salahshour, 2016; Taylor, 2021), the analysis has also revealed instances of the WATER metaphor in apparently neutral or even positive contexts. For instance, the following excerpt presents accommodating refugees (metaphorically expressed as 'absorbing the avalanche') as an action deserving praise:

> (6) *Francisco (...) agradeció ayer el esfuerzo que está realizando Italia para **absorber la avalancha** de inmigrantes y solicitantes de asilo político que*

*llegan casi a diario a sus costas*. [Yesterday Francis (…) thanked Italy for the effort it is making to **absorb the avalanche** of immigrants and political asylum seekers reaching its shores almost daily.] (*La Vanguardia*, April 19, 2015)

This, however, as previously argued, construes refugees as homogenous and passive victims rather than unique and engaged human beings. It also does not make the metaphors any less dehumanising; nor does it eliminate the association of migrations with threat and lack of control. Consequently, it is likely to lead to less favourable interpretations than the positive context of the utterance may suggest.

## 4.3 Migrants are Animals

The analysis has also revealed the presence of conceptual mappings which draw on the animal world. ANIMAL metaphors used with respect to migrants have been discussed extensively in previous research (e.g., Mujagić & Berberović, 2019; Santa Ana, 1999; Spinzi, 2016), also in the context of their effects on the audiences: for instance, Marshall and Shapiro (2018) have found that they are particularly effective in eliciting disgust reactions. This study, however, shows that they are significantly less common than the top two types of metaphorical representations of migrants, albeit with the regrettable exception of the UK press. In fact, British newspapers employed them over four and five times more often than their Spanish and Polish counterparts, respectively (even though the number of their lexicalisations in the Spanish subcorpus is almost as high as in the UK subset).

As shown in Table 5, by far the most frequent ANIMAL metaphor employed with respect to the displaced people uses the word *jungle/ jungla/ dżungla* to denote refugee settlements, most prominently Camp de la Lande near Calais, France. This tendency is particularly salient in the UK subcorpus, which can be attributed to external factors: the Camp de la Lande was created to accommodate refugees trying to get to the UK from the continent via the Eurotunnel, therefore its management was of primordial importance for the security of the UK border. In all three subcorpora the word *jungle/ jungla/ dżungla* emphasises the foreignness and out-of-placeness of the refugee camp (there are no jungles in Europe), but most importantly, the jungle stands for a place that is uncivilised, unorderly, and menacing (Törmä, 2017, p. 26). Therefore, as the relationship between refugees and the camp where they live is metonymical in nature, the use of the word *jungle* implicates that its inhabitants are equally unfamiliar, foreign, savage, and dangerous as the physical space they occupy (Törmä, 2017, p. 26).

| Poland | Spain | UK |
|---|---|---|
| *dżungla (w Calais)* [(Calais) jungle] (AF=106; RF=83) | *jungla (de Calais)* [(Calais) jungle] (AF=250; RF=100) | *(Calais) jungle* (AF=1,168; RF= 445) |
| *chmara* [swarm] (AF=3; RF=2) | *enjambre* [swarm] (AF=23; RF=9) | *swarm* (AF= 54; RF=20) |
| *szarańcza* [locust] (AF=3; RF=2) | *caza* [hunt] (AF=12; RF=5) | *flock* (AF=20; RF=8) |
| | *manada* [pack] (AF=4; RF=2) | *hunt* (AF=19; RF=7) |
| | *estampida* [stampede] | *cockroach* (AF=11; RF=4) |

(AF=3; RF=1)

*cazar* [hunt] (AF=2; RF=1)        *stampede* (AF=6; RF=2)

**Table 5.** ANIMAL Metaphors

As Table 5 demonstrates, refugees are also — albeit to a much smaller extent — likened to animals by means of container words designating groups of animals (vermin, above all), such as *swarm/ chmara/ enjambre, szarańcza* [locusts], *manada* [pack], *stampede/ estampida,* and *flock.* This emphasises how numerous refugees are perceived to be and collectivises them up to the point that individual parts of the collective become indistinguishable: for example, when literal locusts 'spread their wings they fly so closely that only a compact moving mass can be seen' (Spinzi, 2016, p. 296). Moreover, these metaphors entail a strong association of threat: for instance, swarms of insects are often responsible for the destruction of crops, thus threatening the survival of the group at the most basic level. This is in line with the fact that the only action expressed by means of ANIMAL metaphors is that of hunting, which likens refugees to prey or dangerous predators: either way, their violent elimination appears to be necessary for the survival of the group.

It should, nevertheless, be noted that different distancing strategies are often employed with respect to the ANIMAL metaphors, especially in the Polish and the UK subcorpora. In the latter, for example, the word *swarm* is placed inside commas as many as 31 times out of its 54 concordances. Among the remaining 23 concordances, 11 include quotes, and two — a negation, as in: *they are not a swarm,* thus contesting the image of refugees as a swarm of insects. Similarly, *cockroach* is mostly used in reported speech, for example:

(7) *While media and politicians perceive them as **cockroaches** or statistics, the crisis will only escalate. (The Guardian,* January 1, 2015)

In the Spanish subcorpus, on the other hand, ANIMAL metaphors are rarely accompanied by distancing strategies or approached critically. The only exception is the word *enjambre* [swarm] which was used chiefly to quote a British politician's speech (similarly as in the other two subcorpora).

(8) *Cameron se ganó la condena unánime al referirse a los inmigrantes como una «**plaga**» o un «**enjambre**».* [Cameron was unanimously condemned for referring to the immigrants as **"plague"** or **"swarm"**.] (*El Mundo,* September 4, 2015)

The MIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS metaphors dehumanise and pseudospeciate the displaced people, and present them as potentially harmful, which, arguably, emotionalises and desensitises the audiences to their plight. Even though the analysed newspapers sometimes (partially) reject this mapping, its presence in the corpus does attest to the existence of this trend within the wider discursive community, and legitimises it by reproducing explicitly racist language which might lead to confirming and strengthening some of the already existing prejudicial attitudes and beliefs (Martin & Fozdar, 2021; van Dijk, 1991). In other words, giving voice to racist opinions (often pronounced by elite actors), even if just to condemn them, still plays into the anti-immigration narrative and reinforces it.

## 4.4  Migrants are (Unwanted) Guests

The MIGRANTS ARE (UNWANTED) GUESTS metaphor has rarely been discussed in previous research, which may be due to the fact that it is seen as less problematic than other common metaphors of migration (Taylor, 2021, p. 12). It builds on the metaphor COUNTRY IS HOME (which is, in turn, related to the underlying COUNTRY IS A CONTAINER mapping), and its underlying basis are expectations about who rightly belongs in particular geographical spaces. It therefore conveys assumptions about group membership and strengthens the us versus them division by comparing the 'insiders' to family members sharing a history, culture, language, needs, aspirations, etc., whereas the 'outsiders' are, by default, foreign and distant. The former are also the ones who get to decide who should be allowed 'in' and who should stay 'outside', especially considering the limited capacity of the 'home'. As a consequence, the metaphor also implies that the 'home' should be protected against external threats, which, as Nguyen and McCallum stress (2016, p. 169), 'has profound implications because security is a basic human need that significantly drives people's decision-making in response to a perceived "security problem"'. In other words, this metaphor may be particularly effective in strengthening support for anti-immigration securitisation measures.

While the metaphor does entail some expectation of support, which is reflected in a range of its realisations in the corpus, it has a much stronger tendency to present refugees as unwanted guests (this idea is sometimes lexicalised explicitly using items such as *unwanted/ nieproszony,* as can be observed in Table 6) who, furthermore, abuse of the *hospitality* by *overstaying* their *welcome* and causing various troubles, for example:

(9) *Al principio éramos más tolerantes, pero ahora sabemos que nuestros **invitados** van a quedarse para siempre y nuestra **hospitalidad** no da más de sí.* [At first we were more tolerant but now we know that our **guests** are going to stay forever and our **hospitality** is limited.] *(La Vanguardia,* June 4, 2017)

(10) *It is sickening to see how our country's **hospitality** has been abused. (Daily Mail,* January 3, 2018)

(11) *Czy zatem **zaproszenie** imigrantów nie może wywołać w przyszłości takich kłopotów jak we Francji czy Niemczech?* [Isn't it possible, then, that **inviting** immigrants might cause the same problems it has in France and Germany?] *(Rzeczpospolita,* June 1, 2016)

When the exact nature of the problems purportedly caused by immigration is discussed, the displaced people are often linked with violence (usually terrorist), and construed as a financial burden, for example:

(12) *W ciągu ostatnich siedmiu lat koszt **goszczenia** Syryjczyków przekroczył 2 mld dol. rocznie.* [In the last seven years the cost of **hosting** Syrians reached more than two billion dollars yearly.] *(Gazeta Wyborcza,* January 31, 2018)

| Poland | Spain | UK |
|---|---|---|
| *zaprosić, zapraszać* [invite] (AF=62; RF=49) | *hospitalidad* [hospitality] (AF=28; RF=11) | *welcome* (AF=700; RF=267) |
| *gość* [guest] (AF=30; RF=23) | *huésped* [guest] (AF=24; RF=10) | *host* (AF=179; RF=68) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *gościć* [host] (AF=29; RF=22) | *invitación* [invitation] (AF=16; RF=6) | *hospitality* (AF=28; RF=11) |
| *gospodarz* [host] (AF=19; RF=15) | *anfitrión* [host] (AF=9; RF=4) | *invite* (AF=23; RF=9) |
| *zaproszenie* [invitation] (AF=18; RF=14) | *invitar* [invite] (AF=7; RF=3) | *overstay* (AF=23; RF=9) |
| *nieproszony* [uninvited] (AF=4; RF=3) | *invitado* [guest] (AF=5; RF=2) | *guest* (AF=12; RF=5) |
| | *hospedar* [host] (AF=5; RF=2) | *invitation* (AF=4; RF=2) |
| | | *uninvited* (AF=3; RF=1) |

**Table 6.** (UNWANTED) GUEST Metaphors

In sum, while the GUEST metaphor certainly has the potential to contribute to a more positive construal of refugees and immigrants, which might, in turn, lead to an increased receptiveness of the audiences towards accommodating them, in the corpus it tends to take the form MIGRANTS ARE UNWANTED GUESTS, which stresses the urgency to protect the sanctity of the home against those who do not belong there, and who may, in fact, pose a threat.

## 4.5  Migrants are Invaders

This highly pejorative metaphor takes war as its source domain. Specifically, it likens refugees to invaders *(najeźdźcy/ invasores; hordes/ hordas/ hordy)*, whereas their movement is represented as an attack against Europe using the words *inwazja/ invasión/ invasion* as well as their cognates and synonyms (e.g., *najazd* [invasion], *szturm* [charge], and *podbój* [conquest] in Polish). Consequently, there are also references to defensive measures, as can be observed in Table 7.

| Poland | Spain | UK |
|---|---|---|
| *bronić* [defend] (AF=55; RF=43) | *invasión* [invasion] (AF=66; RF=27) | *invasion* (AF= 24; RF=9) |
| *inwazja* [invasion] (AF=48; RF=37) | *lucha* [fight] (AF=26; RF=10) | *horde* (AF=19; RF=7) |
| *horda* [horde] (AF=21; RF=16) | *invadir* [invade] (AF=20; RF=8) | *Trojan horse* (AF=11; RF=4) |
| *najazd* [invasion] (AF=10; RF=7) | *combatir* [combat] (AF=13; RF=5) | *invade* (AF=8; RF=3) |
| *najeźdźca* [invader] (AF=9; RF=7) | *horda* [horde] (AF=8; RF=3) | *combat* (AF=8; RF=3) |
| *szturm* [charge] (AF=7; RF=5) | *invasor* [invader] (AF=6; RF=2) | *battle* (AF=8; RF=3) |
| *obrońca* [defender] (AF=6; RF=5) | *defensa* [defense] (AF=5; RF=2) | *fight* (AF=5; RF=2) |
| *podbój* [conquest] (AF=3; RF=2) | *defender* [defend] (AF=3; RF=1) | *defender* (AF=3; RF=1) |
| *koń trojański* [Trojan horse] (AF=3; RF=2) | *defensor* [defender] (AF=3; RF=1) | |
| *najeżdżać* [invade] (AF=1; RF=0) | *caballo de Troya* [Trojan horse] (AF=1; RF=0) | |

**Table 7.** INVADERS Metaphors

WAR metaphors tend to construe a black-and-white world, where only one side has the moral high ground, whereas the other is demonised. Furthermore, as Pickering (2001, p. 174) notes, 'in constructing a war, identities and individualities are irrelevant and excluded; there are simply sides — "ours" and "theirs"'. The boundaries between them are drawn clearly: in the case of migrations, they correspond to the actual national and geographical borders (Pickering, 2001, p. 174). This is, therefore, another mapping which draws on the CONTAINER image schema (Hart, 2011). In contrast to natural disaster metaphors, which construe people as powerless against forces of nature, war metaphors imply that a victory is possible, even if it requires significant effort and, potentially, human and material losses (Petersson & Kainz, 2017). WAR metaphors are, therefore, particularly effective in evoking the need to securitise the borders of Europe, and in justifying violence against those who attempt at transgressing them. As Petersson and Kainz (2017, p. 57) note, they tend to 'leave scant room for compromise, benevolence or mercy'.

In fact, discourses of invasion may sometimes be interpreted literally or, at least, suggest literal solutions to problems construed in metaphorical terms (especially considering the human mind's difficulty in separating the real from the metaphorical [Sapolsky, 2017, pp. 631-634]). For instance, literal interpretations may be enhanced when invasion metaphors are used to liken migrations to real-life past violent events (rather than some abstract and undefined war-related concepts), based on the topos that history repeats itself (Zawadzka-Paluektau, forthcoming). Examples from the corpus include the Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula:

> (13) *El miedo al **invasor**, en especial al que viene del sur, está grabado en nuestro subconsciente.* [The fear of the **invader**, especially from the South, is engraved in our subconscious.] (*El País,* January 11, 2016)

And the Trojan war:

> (14) (...) *Który uważa, że w Europie stoi już **koń trojański** z islamistami w środku i **widmo Troi wisi nad nami**. I dlatego musimy być gotowi na wszystko, jeśli przyszłe pokolenia mają przeżyć.* [(...) Who thinks that **a Trojan horse** with islamists inside is already in Europe and **the shadow of Troy is hanging over us**. This is why we have to be ready for everything if future generations are to survive.] (*Super Express,* April 4, 2017)

In fact, the above-quoted fragment 14, which likens migrations to a military stratagem (the Trojan horse) that led to a particularly violent historical attack, actually includes a call to action, potentially in the form of defensive military measures. The alternative, as it claims, is the annihilation of the European civilisation.

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis has identified five conceptual metaphors that were dominant in the Polish, Spanish, and British media construal of refugees and immigrants during the so-called 'European refugee crisis'. They include — in the order of the total frequencies of their lexicalisations in the entire corpus — COMMODITY, WATER, ANIMAL, (UNWANTED) GUESTS, and INVASION metaphors. These results put some of the frequently discussed mappings into perspective by pointing to a possible disproportion between the amount of

attention paid to some metaphors in prior research and their actual frequencies in migration-related media discourse (e.g., previous contributions have tended to overlook COMMODITY metaphors; at the same time, there is extensive research on the much less common ANIMAL metaphors).

For their categorisation, two sets of criteria were proposed, which reflect their functions in the discourse under the investigation. On the one hand, the metaphors were grouped into those that dehumanise people trying to migrate to Europe, and those that utilise the myth of moral authority (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018), such as (UNWANTED) GUEST and ENEMY metaphors. With respect to the former, in turn, migrants were represented as objects of inter-governmental trade, natural phenomena related to the behaviour of water, and animals. This type of metaphorical representation of immigrants tends to collectivise and homogenise them, but above all, it divests them of human characteristics, thus construing them as different, unfamiliar, and, especially in the case of ANIMAL metaphors, repulsive. As a consequence, dehumanised groups are 'excluded from the typical moral consideration given to other human beings' — for example, they are not seen as being capable of perceiving their treatment as unjust or cruel (Utych, 2018, p. 3). This may release the recipients of such messages from self-prohibitive reactions to behaviours their moral code of conduct normally forbids, and increase their willingness to punish the dehumanised group (Utych, 2018, p. 3). Individuals primed to perceive immigrants as dehumanised have, in fact, been found to exhibit more negative attitudes towards them, and to support punitive containment measures, which is mediated by the emotional responses of disgust and anger (Utych, 2018). Dehumanising metaphors have also been observed in discourses produced by groups committing atrocities such as genocide (Baisley, 2014; Musolff, 2008; Spinzi, 2016) and prisoner abuse (Hickey *et al.,* 2017), and may thus be considered to be particularly harmful to the out-group and the society in general. Hart (2021), however, provides evidence that extreme dehumanising (e.g., ANIMAL) metaphors and their implications are often approached critically by their recipients and, ultimately, rejected, which leads to overall more positive attitudes towards immigrants. This would suggest that, in future research, more careful scrutiny should be directed at the much more pervasive, conventionalised, and seemingly benign source domains which often go unnoticed, such as COMMODITY and WATER.

On the other hand, the identified metaphors can be categorised based on whether — and to what extent — they construe refugees and immigrants as a threat. The MIGRANTS ARE INVADERS metaphor is probably the most clear-cut case of a metaphor which presents the displaced people as imminent danger. WATER metaphors are also associated with threat: in fact, the majority of them could be reframed as NATURAL DISASTERS metaphors. At the same time, however, unlike metaphors of invasion, they have also been observed in apparently positive or neutral contexts, which indicates that the threat component is not a necessary condition. ANIMAL metaphors also construe refugees and immigrants as threatening for the physical safety and economic well-being of Europeans, as well as for the general order: for instance, the most frequent realisation of this metaphor, which uses the word *jungle/ jungla/ dżungla*, construes refugee settlements in Europe as chaotic, menacing, and treacherous; as places where atavism takes precedence over civilisation and human laws. Accordingly, Spinzi (2016), who studied ANIMAL metaphors in British and Italian fascist discourses, notes their close affinity to the INVASION

metaphor. Finally, GUEST metaphors, albeit more subtle, also sometimes imply that 'inviting' immigrants — or, more accurately, not preventing 'uninvited guests' from entering — is risky and potentially threatening. COMMODITY metaphors are, in turn, least likely to include a threat component, based on the findings from this investigation. To sum up, the metaphors employed with respect to the displaced people in the press of Poland, Spain, and the UK between 2015 and 2018 contribute strongly to their construal as dangerous, which may motivate increased support for securitisation measures. This is in line with prior research investigating media coverage of the 'European refugee crisis' (Berry *et al.,* 2015; Chouliaraki *et al.,* 2017).

With respect to the cross-linguistic comparison, above all, it is important to note that all identified metaphors are present in the three language subcorpora. This attests to the validity of cross-linguistic metaphor studies: because conceptual metaphors describe processes of human thought, they allow for outflanking lexical differences and therefore are well suited to making comparisons across discourses produced in different languages. This (and the fact that the results of this study are largely consistent with prior research on metaphors of immigration) also provides evidence to the universality of metaphorical mappings (at least within the European context), and shows that the newspapers in the three countries of the analysis largely converged in their use of metaphors of immigration to construe the displaced people as alien and threatening, despite their differing historical and present-day experiences with the Other as well as other contextual factors.

Nevertheless, the study has noted some differences in the frequencies of use of specific metaphors, which implies the importance of the impact of non-linguistic factors on the choice of conceptual mappings employed with respect to immigrants. For instance, the prevalence of COMMODITY metaphors in the UK and Spanish subcorpora may be attributed to their long-standing status as host countries: as a result of the institutionalisation of immigration, migrants may have become conceptualised as any other object of trade that crosses the border and must be subjected to a strict border control. Whereas in Poland, any migratory movement that appears to be threatening the established *status quo* is more likely to be conceptualised as a sudden, unexpected, and disturbing natural disaster or invasion.

Naturally, the choice of metaphors may also be related to the sociopolitical climate of each country. As the analysis has shown, the most extreme, blatantly discriminatory metaphors have been observed above all in the newspapers published in Poland and the UK: whereas the former has recently seen a significant increase in anti-immigrant sentiment (which is in line with the growing support for right-wing political movements), the latter has long been known for its unrelentingly harsh rhetoric and treatment of immigrants (Brexit, where the issue of immigration featured prominently, being the most conspicuous manifestation of this tendency). In turn, the press in Spain, as suggested by prior research, seems to favour more conventionalised mappings which may appear benign and unmotivated by prejudicial intentions (nevertheless, their potentially negative impact on the audiences should not be underestimated).

Ultimately, however, it should be borne in mind that the dynamics of metaphor use (and influence) are more nuanced than might appear at first sight, mainly as a result of the numerous and complex contextual factors which come into play at the levels of both production and reception, and the cognitive

operations involved in the formation and processing of metaphors. Further (comparative) research is therefore necessary to shed more light on the intersection between metaphor, ideology, and key issues in society, such as immigration, across different contexts and discourse types.

## Notes

1. This is in contrast to representations of refugees who are perceived as culturally and racially similar, such as Ukrainians (e.g., Zawadzka-Paluektau, 2023).
   Their circulation was established based on the data from Statista Research Department for the year 2018 for the UK and the Spanish samples and Związek Kontroli Dystrybucji Prasy [National Circulation Audit Office] (2019) for the Polish sample.
   Within the span of five words either side of the search term. Only collocates with frequencies over 3 and logDice ≥ 7 were considered.

## Acknowledgements

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