Constructing a Preventive Thinking Trajectory in Raising Human Trafficking Awareness Among Youth

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Topic: Research, International | Knowledge Level: Intermediate

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This research focuses on the cognitive prerequisites for modeling a roadmap for early prevention thinking against human trafficking among young people in Ukraine who have been in a situation of forced migration or have been thinking of moving abroad after graduation for further education or employment opportunities. Experiencing the dangers of the Russia-Ukraine war increased vulnerability to human trafficking risks, which requires alternative awareness techniques alongside the traditional informative ones. This study is part of a larger project supported by the French Research Center in Humanities and Social Sciences in Prague (CEFRES), Changing Young Minds: Student Awareness of Human Trafficking under War Conditions. Its four-pillar concept explores how the use of metaphors, image schemas, cognitive scenarios, and sensory-rich language in the media contributes to co-experiencing the dangers of human trafficking and creates cognitive constraints against risky behaviors in response to traffickers' lures or proposals. The methods include the conceptual analysis done within the theories of cognitive linguistics and narratology, corpus linguistics, and empirical sleuthing, including surveying while teaching. The results show students' responsiveness to the "spiderweb" metaphor, "containment" image schema, monomyth as a cognitive scenario employed in survival media storytelling, and co-experiencing victims' sensations through visual, acoustic, and tactile linguistic representations. The presentation concludes with recommendations for further research and creating a strategic model to foster preventive thinking among students, using specific metaphors, schemata, stories, and sensory language to be used by educators and social workers in Ukraine and worldwide.

Presentation Objectives

- Present the conceptual framework of the study, explaining how cognitive linguistics informs early prevention thinking against human trafficking
- Analyze key linguistic and narrative patterns identified in media discourse and their impact on student perception
- Demonstrate the results of empirical research on student responsiveness to sensory and narrative representations of trafficking risks
- Propose a strategic, education-based model for fostering preventive thinking among young people in wartime and migration contexts

About the Presenter

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Dr. Elina Paliichuk is an Associate Professor at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University and Adviser to the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. A CEFRES researcher and GAHTS Senior Research Scholar, she studies human trafficking awareness in wartime, focusing on media language, and contributes to EU-aligned translation policy and legislation.

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