**Human Trafficking Media Representation: An Iconic Perspective** <https://sites.google.com/a/case.edu/icmc2017/abstracts>

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The paper focuses on semiotic peculiarities of social agenda mental pictures constructed in discourses. The research of the *human trafficking* situation in mass media shows an iconic structure shaping audiences’ worldview in a specific way. Refraction of the social agenda through the *cobweb* picture gives rise to further study in terms of iconic framing. In particular, the interest lies in relevant semiotic representations across multimodal discourses and with regard to other social events. The value of such approach is predetermined by the possibility of providing linguistic and extra-linguistic signs in visuals for raising effectiveness of social awareness and prevention campaigns through iconic structuring of societal realities.

**Key words:** semiotics, media, mental picture, iconism, social agenda.

The contemporary world is increasingly living in mediated realities by consuming pre-constructed messages about the hottest issues: national identity, multiculturalism, tolerance, migration, human trafficking, threats to national security, religion, ecology, information technologies or other agenda. The question of how these ready-made media messages shape societies’ world-images have become the latest concern of not only a linguistic thought but a subject matter of a transdisciplinary research as well (see Blanpain 2005; Bochel and Daly 2014 and others).

To this end there have been previously investigated the *human trafficking* situation highlighted in contemporary media discourse, with a *cobweb-like* conceptual model having been revealed. Representing the social agenda through the lenses of a natural phenomenon is nothing short of a metaphorical structuring of the objective realities via contemporary media.

However, not only imagery but also logic is activated via iconic shapes of a thought related to trade in human beings. With an eye to reconstructing the *human trafficking* mental picture, the frame-modelling techniques (Fillmore 1985; Langacker 1987; Zhabotynska 2010) have been employed to the corpus of linguistic evidences. In particular, there have been distinguished the basic actants: *victim, family, traffickers, clients, police, governments*, and *international organizations*. Each has been analyzed conceptually through a combination of frames for their static and dynamic predicates and semantic roles. All the frames put together have shown *victim* being focalized at the expense of other actants’ direct relations thereto, thus shaping centripetal visual lines. At the same time, the intertwining networks show the actants’ dealing with each other *on how to benefit from the trafficking activity*, which is represented by circular lines within the mental structure (Paliichuk 2011).

Framed as a *cobweb* mental picture, *human trafficking* is represented both metaphorically and iconically with the help of verbal units seen as *linguistic pencils* for drawing ideas. This way of thinking arouses interest in further semiotic research related to other social agenda both from linguistic and multimodal perspectives.

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