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Metaphors used in the media in relation to migration issues

Abstract:

The political polarization that has taken place around the world in recent years is reflected in the politically sensitive discussions in both public and social media, and one of the hotly debated issues in this respect is migration. The language related to migration is often heavily metaphorical, and it appears to be used, at least to some extent, consciously in order to influence the imagery related to the topic of discussion and to promote the agenda of a certain advocacy group (see e.g. Steen 2014). One further aspect of this phenomenon is that many of these metaphors are used internationally and translated from one language to another thus spreading more or less similar imagery from one culture to another. One example of such a metaphorical expression is anchor baby, a term used to refer to undocumented immigrant children in the United States. The term has been translated word-for-word into Swedish (ankarbarn) and Finnish (ankkurilapsi) but with a slightly different meaning referring to an underage who is sent abroad as an asylum seeker to make it easier for the rest of the family to follow later. Despite these meaning differences, the expression is clearly used pejoratively in all three languages (see e.g. Hirvonen 2013, Lederer 2013).

In this paper, we aim to discuss the metaphorical language used in migration discussion in the media in English, Finnish and Swedish. We will look into the similarities and differences in the imageries behind these metaphors in the three languages. Our discussion will combine the approaches of conceptual metaphor theory and critical discourse analysis, which has been found fruitful for this type of analysis in recent years (see e.g. Baker et al 2008).

References:

