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VERBAL AGGRESSION IN A MULTIMODAL MEDIUM? THE CASE OF POLITICAL CARTOONS IN BRITISH AND GERMAN NEWSPAPERS[***]

The paper examines the presence of verbal aggression in editorial cartoons of British (*The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*) and German (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *die taz*) daily newspapers, selected particularly with their opposing political stances in mind. The analysed examples from 2023 and 2024 cover the period leading into the new general electoral cycle in these two countries. The research aim was threefold: (1) to examine the use of the verbal mode in the selected multimodal examples, specifically with regard to aggressive and discriminatory language, (2) to observe in what fashion and to what extent the verbal mode complemented the pictorial mode in conveying the intended message, and (3) to check for the underlying FORCE image schemas (e.g., BLOCKAGE, COMPULSION, COUNTERFORCE) related to this specific topic. The method involved first scanning the cartoons for any form of aggressive language, then scrutinising the interplay between the pictorial and the verbal mode, and finally determining the exact types of the FORCE schemas. The results of the analysis showed that the language used in the examined newspaper cartoons was not predominantly aggressive, regardless of the country of origin or political orientation, with the pictorial mode containing more instances of overt aggression or discrimination. The present study should shed light on the role of editorial cartoons as a medium for political commentary, illustrating their potential impact on public discourse during critical electoral periods.

Keywords: political cartoons, verbal and pictorial mode, critical discourse analysis, multimodal communication, image schemas

1. Introduction

This study analyses political discourse found in editorial cartoons of British and German daily newspapers, with particular attention paid to the presence of verbal aggression in the predominantly multimodal (verbo-pictorial) medium of political cartoons. The main focus of the analysis is on the current internal political situation in the United Kingdom and Germany, in the year in which general elections are expected to be held. The electronic archives of two British (*The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*) and two German (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *die taz*) newspapers, which generally maintain opposing political stances, were selected as primary sources of material for analysis. These four daily publications were chosen purposely so as to exclude the more politically extreme options. The results should allow for a comparison of the ways in which British and German newspapers use combinations of imagery and language to reflect, challenge, or reinforce political narratives and ideologies.

The following three research questions will be addressed in this study:

1) How is the verbal mode used in the selected multimodal examples, specifically with regard to the possible presence of aggressive and discriminatory language?
2) In what fashion and to what extent does the verbal mode complement the pictorial mode in conveying the intended message?
3) What underlying FORCE schemas (e.g., BLOCKAGE, COMPULSION, COUNTER-FORCE) are present in the analysed cartoons?

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents a distinctive amalgam of theoretical tenets intended to support the study. Section 3 provides an insight into the materials and methods used, while Section 4 discusses the most important results. The paper ends with concluding remarks and directions for further research in section 5.

2. Theoretical background

The political cartoon is a specific genre that differentiates itself from other types of cartoons or comics by "its own historical provenance and communicative purposes [...], [while] typically us[ing] a fantasy scenario to comment upon an aspect of topical social, political, or cultural reality" (EL REFAIE 2009: 182). Political cartoons have a satirical nature, "characterized by caricature, which parodies the individual, [and they] exemplify critical perspectives on recent events" (NEGRO ALOSQUE 2013: 370). Such cartoons can be monomodal, in that they contain only the pictorial mode, i.e., visually representing real-life referents, however, they are very often multimodal, meaning that they also include some text as an accompanying message-conveying vehicle. Thus, to interpret a political cartoon as intended by its creator, one needs to possess "a broad knowledge of past and current events, a familiarity with the cartoon genre, a vast repertoire of cultural symbols, and experience of thinking analytically about real-world events and circumstances" (EL REFAIE 2009: 181). A number of studies involving political cartoons and drawing on similar theoretical background as this paper have already been published both in English and German (see, among others, GONDWE & WALCOTT 2023; KNIEPER & TINNEFELD 2020; NEGRO ALOSQUE 2020; PRENDERGAST 2017; SCHOLZ 1993; SILAŠKI & ĐUROVIĆ 2019, 2021).

To tackle the posed research questions with all of the above in mind, our analysis was grounded in an interdisciplinary framework comprising certain pertinent aspects of critical discourse analysis (CDA), multimodality theory and image schema theory. With regard to CDA, it is a vastly diverse field, in which four main methodological approaches can be identified (according to HART 2010: 14): critical linguistics, the socio-semiotic approach, the discourse-historical approach, and the socio-cognitive approach. Here, we will be concerned with the discourse-historical approach (DHA), developed primarily by Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl (REISIGL & WODAK 2001, 2016; WODAK 1996). The DHA observes the ways in which ideology is mediated and reproduced by distinguishing between discourse, text, and context. Reisigl and Wodak (2016: 27) define "discourse" as:

- a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action;
- socially constituted and socially constitutive;
- related to a macro-topic;
- linked to argumentation about validity claims, such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors with different points of view.

In turn, texts are parts of discourses, which can be assigned to different genres, where "a 'genre' can be characterized as a socially conventionalized type and pattern of communication that fulfils a specific social purpose in a specific social context" (REISIGL & WODAK 2016: 27). Finally, to these authors, the concept of "context" involves the following four dimensions (REISIGL & WODAK 2016: 27):

1) the immediate, language or text-internal co-text and co-discourse;
2) the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses;
3) the social variables and institutional frames of a specific 'context of situation';
4) the broader sociopolitical and historical context, which discursive practices are embedded in and related to.

From here, the DHA takes on a three-dimensional character in analysing discourse, something that was also implemented in this study. Firstly, a specific content or topic is established, followed by an examination of the discursive strategies employed, understood as "more or less accurate and more or less intentional plan[s] of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic aim" (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 44). Lastly, the linguistic means and the context-dependent linguistic realisations are examined (in our case, of verbal aggression both separately and in correlation with the pictorial mode). By employing such a tool of analysis, the DHA frequently attempts to elaborate the following five types of discursive strategies: nomination (discursive construction of social actors/objects/events/etc.), predication (discursive qualification of social actors/objects/events/etc.), argumentation (justification and questioning of claims of truth), perspectivization (positioning the speaker's/writer's point of view), and intensification or mitigation (modifying the illocutionary force of utterances) (REISIGL & WODAK 2016: 33).

The second mainstay of our theoretical framework is the comprehensive field of research into multimodality in communication and discourse (e.g., BATEMAN, WILD-

FEUER et al. 2017; JEWITT, BEZEMER et al. 2016; KRESS 2010; O'HALLORAN 2004; PAGE 2010). Bateman, Wildfeuer et al. (2017: 7) view multimodality as characterised by communicative situations in which a combination of different modes of communication is predominantly responsible for their effectiveness. Examples of such situations are conversations between two people that involve speech, facial expressions and gestures, films that combine image and sound, or comics and cartoons in which text and drawings interact in different ways. Kress (2010: 79) attempts to define "mode" as a "socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning", which, as he and van Leeuwen put it, "allow[s] the simultaneous realisation of discourses and types of (inter)action" (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN 2001: 21). On the other hand, Jewitt, Bezemer et al. (2016: 12) show that it is not simple to define modes since numerous variations in meaning can be assigned to some of them. For example, it is possible to say that image and text represent separate modes, but there is no such straightforward distinction between colour and layout. Regardless of the apparent difficulties in defining modes, multimodal discourse analysis is crucial for understanding the fundamental laws and principles of human communication, which is multimodal in its nature.

What researchers studying multimodality are actually trying to do, according to Bateman, Wildfeuer et al. (2017: 7–8), is to observe discourse as a whole – a combination of different interacting modes. This is quite the opposite to what a number of other academic disciplines are doing, which is breaking down multimodal communication and analysing its components (e.g., linguistics, art history, graphic design, etc.). The above authors claim that one can no longer merely focus on separate forms of expression in a communicative situation, because these forms do not occur independently of each other and their natural environment. Moreover, El Refaie (2015: 238) suggests that the meaning potentials of different modes increase when they are used together. Thus, multimodality studies seek to delve into what happens when different forms of communication are combined to create meaning, without attempting "to replace existing disciplinary orientations, but add ways of dealing with particular challenges and questions that combining diverse forms of meaning-making raises" (BATEMAN, WILDFEUER et al. 2017: 9).

In the present paper, the interplay between the verbal and the pictorial mode in the meaning-making process was analysed in light of the mode-dominance model, based on the core tenets of multimodality theory. This model has previously been applied to multimodal metaphor (TASIĆ & STAMENKOVIĆ 2015) and metonymy (TASIĆ & STAMENKOVIĆ 2022), and it comprises three categories:

1) Image-dominant – the pictorial mode has a more decisive influence on the appropriate understanding of the intended message;
2) Text-dominant – the verbal mode assumes the above responsibility;
3) Complementary – the two modes complement each other in conveying the intended message, without any of them being the clearly dominant one.

This model can also be related to Barthes's (as presented in BATEMAN 2014: 34–36) classification of text-image relations, with the image- and text-dominant categories characterised as unequal, and the complementary category as equal. Furthermore, when presented against Kloepfer's classification (also presented within the systemic network proposed in BATEMAN 2014: 40), the first and the second category would belong to

the additive subtype, while the third category would represent the parallel subtype of convergent relations.

Finally, since our third research question deals with the potential presence of the underlying FORCE image schema in the analysed examples, we will provide a very brief outline of the theory of image schemas, as first introduced by Mark Johnson (1987) and George Lakoff (1987). In Johnson's words (1987: 29), an image schema is a "structure for organizing our experience and comprehension", which is defined as "a recurrent pattern, shape, and regularity in, or of, [the] ongoing ordering activities". Johnson suggests that these schemas "operate at a level of mental organization that falls between abstract propositional structures, on the one side, and particular concrete images, on the other" (JOHNSON 1987: 29). Lakoff (1987: 268) further elaborates that "there are two ways in which abstract conceptual structure arises from basic-level and image-schematic structure:

A. By metaphorical projection from the domain of the physical to abstract domains.
B. By the projection from basic-level categories to superordinate and subordinate categories."

In her own terms, Hampe (2005: 1–2) provides a condensed characterization of image schemas, based on Johnson's and Lakoff's observations:

- Image schemas are *directly meaningful*, *preconceptual* structures, which arise from, or are grounded in, human recurrent bodily movements through space, perceptual interactions, and ways of manipulating objects.
- Image schemas are highly *schematic* gestalts which capture the structural *contours* of sensory-motor experience, integrating information from multiple modalities.
- Image schemas exist as *continuous* and *analogue* patterns *beneath* conscious awareness, prior to and independently of other concepts.
- As gestalts, image schemas are both *internally structured*, i.e., made up of very few related parts, and highly *flexible*.

One should bear in mind that "image" schemas are not necessarily "visual" constructs but "dynamic analog representations of spatial relations and movements in space [...], [which] operate as organizing structures of experience at the level of bodily perception and movement" (GIBBS & COLSTON 1995: 349). This means that image schemas are present in all perceptual modalities and that they are "at once visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile" (GIBBS & COLSTON 1995: 349). There are different, yet related, image schema inventories, such as Johnson's (1987: 126), Clausner & Croft's (1999: 15), or Evans & Green's (2006: 190). For example, Johnson lists the following image schemas, among others: CONTAINER, BLOCKAGE, ENABLEMENT, PATH, CYCLE, PART-WHOLE, FULL-EMPTY, ITERATION, SURFACE, BALANCE, ATTRACTION, LINK, and SCALE. Hampe (2005: 2) provides a list of the FORCE schemas that today constitute the core of the standard inventory: ENABLEMENT, BLOCKAGE, COUNTERFORCE, ATTRACTION, COMPULSION, RESTRAINT, REMOVAL, and DIVERSION. These will be the image schemas investigated in the present study. In the end, it should be mentioned that a number of authors, e.g., Cienki (1997), Clausner and Croft (1999), and Hedblom et al. (2016), have argued that image schemas can also appear in clusters, i.e., groups of topically related elements in discourse, and that

they can enter specific complex relations with other schemas, as shown by Cienki (1997) and Antović, Jovanović et al. (2023), for instance. We will observe, whenever possible, the ways in which the identified FORCE schemas interact with each other in the analysed political cartoons. Some pioneering work on examining the role of image schemas in comics and cartoons has already been reported, most notably, by Dancygier & Vandelanotte (2017), Górska (2017), and Potsch & Williams (2012).

3. Materials and methods

The conducted analysis was exclusively qualitative in nature, and it was performed using four separate corpora of editorial cartoons collected from the electronic archives of two British and two German daily newspapers. Editorial cartoons are political cartoons that principally express the ideas and opinions of their creators, but usually, though not always, reflect the viewpoint of the editorial board of a publication as well (OHIO STATE 2024). The analysed cartoons were excerpted from the newspapers that were selected primarily with two criteria in mind: 1) they had to be on the opposite sides of the political spectrum, and 2) they had to be highly regarded, quality newspapers, which meant that more politically extreme sources, such as certain tabloid newspapers, were left out of the analysis. The first criterion was established so that the analysed examples could be compared both across the two countries and the different political orientations, while the second criterion was meant to offer an insight into whether verbal aggression appears in renowned newspapers, as opposed to those in which such language is commonly expected to be found. The latter criterion thus meant that only what are known as *newspapers of record by reputation* (MARTIN & HANSEN 1998), i.e., printed media considered by general consensus to meet high standards of journalism, would be eligible for selection, regardless of the actual circulation of such publications. With all this in mind, *The Guardian* and *die taz* were selected as more left-leaning, liberal media, while *The Telegraph* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*FAZ*) were selected as their more conservative counterparts.

As far as the subject matter of the analysed cartoons was concerned, the main focus in this study was on the current internal political situation leading into the new general electoral cycle, with the selected examples from 2023 and 2024 covering a variety of subtopics (e.g., immigration, identity politics, long-term impact of COVID-19, war in Ukraine, etc.). Around 200 illustrations from each of the four newspapers (for a total of 800 cartoons) were examined by the two authors of this paper who served as raters. As this study had no quantitative aspect, and due to the spatial constraints of the article template, a small set of six most representative examples from those analysed (two for each model category) will be discussed here. The set of cartoons was compiled to best depict the use of the verbal mode in this multimodal medium, and to show the extent to which text complemented the pictorial mode in conveying the intended message. Also, all of the presented examples contain clear instances of the FORCE schemas related to this specific topic.

The contents of these examples were analysed in the order defined by the research questions. First, the cartoons were scanned for any form of aggressive or discriminatory (verbal or visual) language. Then, they were examined to determine the manner in which the pictorial and the verbal mode interacted in the meaning-making process, based on

the categories from the mode-dominance model. Last, as it was expected that this aggressive or discriminatory language would contain some kind of a dynamic image-schematic structure, the analysed examples were further scrutinised to determine the exact types of the underlying FORCE schemas. This was done only for instances of verbal or pictorial aggression, meaning that the non-aggressive language otherwise present in the examined cartoons was not investigated for these schemas. Having reached satisfactory interrater agreement, the results were then compared both on the basis of each newspaper's political orientation and with regard to their country of origin. The next section will present the most significant results.

4. Results and discussion

Before we delve deeper into the analysis of individual examples categorised in line with the mode-dominance model, we would like to offer a few general observations. On the whole, the level of verbal aggression present in the analysed cartoon corpora is rather low, and practically without any overt malicious intent, which is particularly evident in the chosen German newspapers. This might be for a number of reasons. First of all, as already mentioned above, we opted for a selection of high-quality newspapers, generally recognised for their journalistic ethics and standards. However, even if the tabloid levels of aggression and various forms of discrimination were not expected to be found in these cartoons, the apparent absence of such language and depictions in the majority of the analysed examples speaks volumes about the editorial policies of these newspapers.[2] Second, this might be due to the very stringent civil defamation laws, especially in Germany (see the following guide for journalists: THOMSON REUTERS 2023). It is perhaps because of this that German cartoons tend to contain generic characters that represent specific in- or out-groups, while British cartoons mainly depict actual politicians. The fact that this does not apply to foreign political figures, who are openly ridiculed in German cartoons, only further strengthens our assumption. Finally, there is certainly the added pressure of publishing anything in the digital age. Today, audiences react much more swiftly and emphatically to all kinds of content, and both cartoonists and the media are extremely aware of the serious repercussions that their works might have.

Nevertheless, if there is any aggressive content to be found in the analysed examples, it is primarily contained within the pictorial mode, except for *die taz* cartoons that are almost completely free of any form of pictorial aggression. It is also important to note that verbal aggression is almost always complemented with pictorial aggression, but not vice versa. The vast majority of text-dominant examples contain at least some aggressive imagery, whereas in image-dominant examples language frequently takes on different roles. In such examples the verbal mode is more often used as a vehicle for irony or comic relief, with irony in particular being very prominent in German cartoons, where even overtly aggressive language serves to amplify the ironic character of the entire multimodal composition. On the other hand, British cartoons possess a wider variety of the underlying FORCE schemas in both modes. If present, these schemas are most often of the COMPULSION or BLOCKAGE type, followed by COUNTERFORCE, which can easily

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2 See, for example, the case of *The Guardian* sacking its long-time cartoonist Steve Bell over a cartoon depicting the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu: https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-67122609

be attributed to the analysed subject matter, and the prescriptive duty of politicians and political parties to urge people to do something or prevent them from acting all together. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that regardless of their political orientation, the selected newspapers, with the notable exception of *The Guardian*, criticise all parties across the political spectrum in their cartoons, at least in the observed period. This again shows that the journalistic integrity of the chosen publications is at a remarkable level. Now, we will present an in-depth analysis of some of the most representative examples from our corpus.

4.1. Image-dominant category

We start with the image-dominant examples in which, as stated above, the pictorial mode is the one that exerts a more decisive influence on the appropriate understanding of the intended message. The first two cartoons are from *The Telegraph* and *FAZ*, respectively.

Figure 1. *The Telegraph* (DAVEY 2024)

Figure 2. *FAZ* (GRESER & LENZ 2024)[3]

In the image on the left (Figure 1), we see the (now former) prime minister of the United Kingdom, Rishi Sunak, holding a press conference and stating that there is nothing wrong with the Conservative Party. The text in the speech balloon contains no aggressive language whatsoever, and it is there only to emphasise the ironic character of the cartoon, with party members going at each other violently in the background, which obviously signals to the reader that the party is anything but "united". The pictorial mode is full of conventional tools used by cartoonists and comic artists to represent aggressive states and movement, such as specific facial expressions (see MCCLOUD 2006; STAMENKOVIĆ, TASIĆ et al. 2018), body postures (see EISNER 2008), or motion lines (see COHN 2013; TASIĆ & STAMENKOVIĆ 2017). The depicted aggressive behaviour is not directed only towards other party members but to the whole nation as well, which can be deduced from the trampled Union Flag in the right foreground. There are several underlying schemas present in the pictorial mode. The most prominent are those of COMPULSION and COUNTERFORCE that can be seen, for example, in the man hurling a chair at someone on the right-hand side of the illustration, or in the two clashing persons in front of him that provide an almost textbook example of Johnson's (1987: 46) definition of a counterforce gestalt as "two equally strong, nasty, and determined force centers [that]

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3 Speech balloon: "Master Sergeant, sir, dutifully reporting, I've lost the ignition key to my Leo during the maneuver. Requesting permission to call the Russians." Caption: "What does Putin know about us?" [authors' translation]

collide face-to-face, with the result that neither can go anywhere". We can even postulate that the ATTRACTION schema is also present as the brawling party members seem to be attracted to each other, even though not for noble reasons. Finally, there is yet another FORCE schema in the cartoon, which is found only in the verbal mode. Namely, the text on the prime minister's lectern reads "stop the boats", which is an instantiation of the BLOCKAGE schema. This is, of course, aimed at boats carrying immigrants over the English Channel into the UK, still one of the burning issues in British contemporary politics.

Figure 2 is taken from *FAZ* and it depicts a private reporting to his sergeant that he lost the ignition key to the tank during the manoeuvre and is now requesting permission to contact the Russians, who at that point in real life had already seized a number of Leopard tanks given to the Ukrainian army by Germany. The image is captioned with the question "What does Putin know about us?" Again, the aggression present in the cartoon is exclusively contained within the pictorial mode, and it can be observed in the facial expression of the sergeant and the intense red colouring of his head as a sign of anger, accompanied by spiralling lines above that serve to emphasise said emotion (see TASIĆ & STAMENKOVIĆ 2017: 132–133). The BLOCKAGE schema structures the relation between the private and the sergeant, as it is obvious that the private will be prevented from even attempting to do what he has in mind. The verbal mode does not contain any aggressive language, yet it is used to comment on the perceived incompetence of the German military.

4.2. Text-dominant category

The next two examples belong to the text-dominant category where the verbal mode occupies a more prominent position in the overall aggressive character of the multimodal compositions. The cartoons come from *The Guardian* and *die taz*.

Figure 3. *The Guardian* (BARON 2024) **Figure 4.** *die taz* (ANONYMOUS 2024)[4]

The *Guardian* cartoon (Figure 3) shows how words can incite violence, and how the question mark at the end of the statement above the three panels disputes the made claim. The cartoonist uses an ingenious technique to turn the aggressive words uttered by members of the Conservative Party, including the shortest-serving prime minister in British history, Liz Truss (depicted rightmost in panel 1), and the then home secretary Suella Braverman (on the opposite end), into actual sticks and stones that cause real

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4 Thought balloon: "If she says 'look how green it is' one more time, I'm going to slap her…" Caption: "Going for a walk with a Green-basher." [authors' translation]

havoc by the third panel. The verbal mode abounds in aggressive and discriminatory language, with Liz Truss even calling for "a bigger bazooka" to stop the clandestine operation of the alleged deep state. The reader can see how such verbal aggression can be instrumentalised by supporters of political parties, and it is primarily the verbal mode that allows this message to be conveyed adequately – without it the intended meaning might not have been as transparent. This cartoon also contains a number of FORCE image schemas, both in the verbal and the pictorial mode. There is BLOCKAGE in stopping the deep state, COMPULSION in throwing rocks, ENABLEMENT in Israel allowing the massacre, RESTRAINT in having control of London, but one could also argue ATTRACTION implicitly in that the supporters of the depicted politicians in the end gravitate towards uttered ideas and act in accordance with them.

The next cartoon from *die taz* (Figure 4), on the contrary, contains "only" two image schemas, and they interact in a way that the BLOCKAGE schema comes as a consequence of the COMPULSION schema, both of which are present only in the verbal mode. For context, the cartoon depicts a couple walking in the park, with the green colour purposely overemphasised, and the man threatening to slap the woman if she comments on the greenery one more time because he is a "Green-basher", i.e., someone who cannot stand the German Green Party (formally Alliance 90/The Greens). Judging by the pictorial mode alone, apart from the frown on the man's face that hints at something being not quite right, it is fairly difficult to comprehend the cartoonist's intention. It is, indeed, by way of the written text, which is not even uttered in the cartoon itself, that the reader can follow the gist of the illustration. The act of the potential slap that the man is thinking about is structured by the underlying COMPULSION schema, which would in turn result in the BLOCKAGE schema, meaning that the intended action would prevent the woman from further talking about how green the surrounding area is. Both Figures 3 and 4, thus, show how the aggressive content of the verbal mode plays the more crucial role in the meaning-making process, as opposed to Figures 1 and 2 in which this dominance was assumed by the pictorial mode.

4.3. Complementary category

In the final two examples, we will see how both the verbal and the pictorial mode contain certain aggressive elements, and how they complement each other in conveying the intended message, even if the message itself is not meant to be ultimately aggressive. In addition, both examples incorporate some rather uncommon occurrences, such as the idiosyncratic combination of letters and pictograms in Figure 5 and the very rare representation of an actual German politician in Figure 6.

Figure 5. *The Telegraph* (BLOWER 2023)

Figure 6. *die taz* (FRITSCHE 2023)[5]

The first cartoon (Figure 5) is from *The Telegraph* and it deals with the controversial plan by London's Labour mayor Sadiq Khan to expand the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), an area in which an emissions standard based charge is applied to non-compliant road vehicles. The plan was met with some opposition from the then Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer (now the new British prime minister), and the cartoonist used the occasion as inspiration for the presented work. Starmer's aggressive stance towards the proposed plan is illustrated by his hand gesture and the red colouring of his face, but also by the peculiar speech balloon that contains a combination of white letters, pictograms, and exclamation marks on a black background, where the very choice of colours is indicative of the aggressiveness in his tone. It might be debatable if this can be perceived as part of the verbal mode at all, however, the well-established cartooning convention of expressing profanity in such a way (known as *grawlix* or *obscenicon*), where certain characters may even resemble the letters they are replacing, points us in the direction of eventually subsuming the content of the speech balloon under the verbal mode. Both Starmer's body language and the expletives uttered are manifestations of the BLOCKAGE schema, hindering Khan from going through with his plan, which can also be seen in the protest signs carried by the people in the cartoon's background.

The final example (Figure 6) in our analysis comes from *die taz*, where the current German defence minister Boris Pistorius is seen shouting "5000 volunteers for Lithuania – no objections, no excuses!!!" at his own reflection in the mirror. The caption reads "Pistorius is the boss in his home office." The cartoon contains the elements of both verbal and pictorial aggression, displayed in the emphasised imperative mood of the utterance and, once again, in the facial expression of the cartoon's protagonist and the added graphical flourishes in front of his mouth to accentuate the amplified volume of speech. This cartoon is specific in that it portrays an actual political figure, something that turned out to be extremely unusual for the analysed German newspapers. The intention here is clearly to question and ridicule the authority of the minister, who appears to be in charge only when there is no one else around. This is, in fact, related to his inability to put some of his plans into action, particularly when it came to providing aid to Ukraine and revitalising Germany's own defences. The COMPULSION schema underlies the depicted multimodal construct, even though it looks as if Boris Pistorius is compelling an imaginary person

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5 Speech balloon: "5000 volunteers for Lithuania – no objections, no excuses!!!" Caption: "Pistorius is the boss in his home office." [authors' translation]

(or himself) to do something.

5. Conclusions

The main aim of this study was to analyse the presence of verbal aggression in editorial cartoons of two British and two German daily newspapers. The answers to the posed research questions yielded the following conclusions:

1) Verbal aggression was, indeed, present in the analysed cartoon corpora, however, its intensity and frequency were quite low, particularly in the German newspapers, regardless of the political orientation of the selected publications. Thus, it can be stated with certainty that the language used in the examined editorial cartoons was not predominantly aggressive.
2) Verbal aggression was almost always complemented with pictorial aggression, but not the other way around. The vast majority of text-dominant examples also contained some aggressive imagery, whereas in image-dominant examples language frequently took on different roles, for example, those of irony or comic relief. Irony was especially prominent in German cartoons, where aggressive language often served to amplify the ironic character of the entire multimodal composition. Moreover, such aggressive language was seldom directed at actual political figures, which was not the case with foreign politicians. On the other hand, this distinction was not present in British cartoons.
3) All types of the FORCE image schemas were identified in the analysed cartoons, with COMPULSION and BLOCKAGE, followed by COUNTERFORCE, being the most frequent ones. The predominance of these three schemas can be attributed to the subject matter in question.

As for the directions for further research, the first step would be to perform a detailed quantitative analysis so as to get a clearer picture of the frequency of use of aggressive language. Both the present and the results obtained from such quantitative analysis could then be compared with those produced by analysing different cartoon corpora from more politically extreme sources or other languages. Yet another direction might be to differentiate between literal and metaphorical uses of image schemas in political cartoons. All of this would be highly beneficial in gaining a better insight into the ways in which this medium's meaning-making process functions.

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VERBALNA AGRESIJA U MULTIMODALNOM MEDIJU: SLUČAJ POLITIČKIH KARIKATURA U BRITANSKIM I NEMAČKIM NOVINAMA

Rezime

U radu se istražuje prisustvo verbalne agresije u političkim karikaturama britanskih (*Gardijan*, *Telegraf*) i nemačkih (*Frankfurter Algemajne Cajtung*, *di tac*) dnevnih listova, odabranih naročito zbog njihovih suprostavljenih političkih orijentacija. Analizirani primeri iz 2023. i 2024. godine obuhvataju predizborni period u ovim zemljama. Istraživački zadatak je bio trostruk: (1) ispitati upotrebu verbalnog modaliteta u odabranim primerima, sa posebnim osvrtom na agresivni ili diskriminišući jezik, (2) sagledati u kojoj meri i na koji način verbalni modalitet upotpunjuje slikovni u prenošenju željene poruke, i (3) proveriti da li se u osnovi prikaza vezanih za ovu temu nalaze slikovne sheme SILE (npr. BLOKADA, KOMPULZIJA, KONTRASILA). Primeri su analizirani tako što je prvo beležen svaki oblik agresivnog jezika, zatim je sagledavan odnos između verbalnog i slikovnog modaliteta u prenošenju takve poruke, da bi na kraju bili utvrđivani konkretni tipovi slikovnih shema SILE. Rezultati analize su pokazali da jezik korišćen u ovim karikaturama nije dominantno agresivan, bez obzira na zemlju porekla ili političku orijentaciju novina, te da slikovni modalitet sadrži više primera otvorene agresije ili diskriminacije. Ova studija bi trebalo da pruži dodatni uvid u ulogu koju političke karikature imaju u široj političkoj raspravi, ukazujući na njihov potencijalni uticaj na javni diskurs tokom ključnih predizbornih perioda.

Ključne reči: političke karikature, verbalni i slikovni modalitet, kritička analiza diskursa, multimodalna komunikacija, slikovne sheme