

Multimodal Practices of Empathy and Fear in Polish Refugee Discourse: Analysis of Magazine Covers

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ABSTRACT

The work is anchored in the paradigm of media linguistics and discourse linguistics, which draw inspiration from cognitive research on language use in the media, semiotic studies, and culture studies. This article is of an empirical nature, as it presents the results of an analysis of selected specific opinion magazine covers. Basing on the selected covers, it aims to characterize the multimodal practices of empathy and fear used in the migration discourse in Poland during the years 2015-2017. This will provide insight into the ways collective knowledge formations are activated by different actors in different media in order to evoke an empathetic attitude or an attitude of fear towards refugees. The analytical corpus consists of 36 covers from ten weekly magazines with high sales rates in Poland. We use the model of multimodal text analysis and the main focus of our analysis is to show the essence of multimodal practices, which, based on specific topoi, activated individually or in combination with others, intend to evoke an attitude of empathy or fear in the recipient. In the case of multimodal practices of empathy and fear, the process of multimodal integration should be considered important as it played the role of a keystone between the verbal and visual layers, and these were the carriers of specific topoi. Multimodal integration determines the process of topoi overlapping, and thus conditions the process of creating specific meanings, which, as previously mentioned, are of persuasive character. Both codes explain each other and specify and illustrate each other by implementing the elaboration pattern.

Keywords: multimodal practices; migration discourse; discourse analysis; Poland

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, on the basis of the collected material, we want to undertake a linguistic analysis of two multimodal practices that dominate the Polish refugee discourse: the practice of empathy and fear. We treat the concepts of *migration discourse* and *refugee discourse* synonymously as strategies of persuasive influencing of the attitude towards refugees. In this context, we will talk about the multimodal practices of empathy and fear. Basing on the assumptions of cognitively oriented text linguistics (Szwedek, 2003), discourse linguistics (Czachur, 2020; Tenbrink, 2020), as well as media linguistics (Luginbühl, 2015; Opilowski, 2015; Skowronek 2021) we argue that

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the multimodal practices used on the opinion-forming covers of weeklies aim at persuasive activities which, in the context of our research, means activating the attitude of empathy towards refugees or fear of refugees. We initially define multimodal practices as systematic, intentional, and deliberate coordination of various semiotic resources in order to achieve a specific meaning in the text and, as a result, the possibility of influencing the mental and active attitudes of the recipient (Pappert & Czachur, 2019). These meaning-creating procedures are, to a large extent, conditioned by cultural factors. In their form, they are determined by specific material resources, organized according to patterns that are clear to recipients and, above all, anchored in specific contexts. We assume, at the same time, that multimodal practices are flexible in their design and usability and can be adapted to many different situations. These practices are based on topoi, understood as a well-known argument with high persuasive power that can be used to prove any thesis.

Our work is then of linguistic character, anchored in the paradigm of media linguistics and discourse linguistics, which draw inspiration from cognitive research on language use in the media, semiotic studies, and culture studies. This article is of both empirical and reviewing character. Basing on the studied material, it aims to characterize the multimodal practices of empathy and fear and thus enable insight into collective knowledge formations activated by different actors in different media in order to evoke an empathetic attitude or an attitude of fear towards refugees. Thus, we offer an insight into the specifics of the media migration discourse in Poland, but without an in-depth analysis of the right-wing populist discourse strategy or racist discourse (more on this in Krzyżanowski, 2020; Żuk & Żuk, 2018).

REFUGEE DISCOURSE IN POLAND

The public debates in Europe in 2015 were dominated by the refugee crisis. In the first weeks of the refugee crisis, different countries of the European Union were affected in different ways, but they also reacted differently to the crisis. While Chancellor Merkel pursued an open-door policy, other countries were more reserved about the mass arriving refugees and immigrants. Poland was among these countries. The proposal to relocate refugees prepared by the European Commission and supported by Germany was not accepted by many members of the European Union, including Poland.

There are several factors which shaped the specificity of the refugee discourse in Poland. These include: the parliamentary elections scheduled for autumn 2015 and the strategy of several parties to use the fear of *the Other* for political purposes, the lack of experience with migrants and opposition to the EU policy obliging EU countries to accept refugees. The liberal-leftist circles and the political centre were moderately in favour of accepting refugees to Poland. Conservative and nationalistic circles firmly rejected such an attitude. During the political struggle for victory in the parliamentary elections between the then weakening liberal ruling party [Civic Platform] and the growing national-conservative opposition party, Law and Justice, which won the presidential elections in May 2015 and successfully prepared for the parliamentary elections in autumn 2015 in which it won the parliamentary majority and could form a government without any coalition partners, migrants became the proverbial scapegoat of polarized public discourse which was based on evoking strong emotional responses. Refugees were thus highly instrumentalized for political purposes and the two ways of perceiving them – liberal left-wing and national-conservative – clashed.

Poland, unlike, for example, Germany or Sweden, was not an attractive destination for those fleeing their countries. Nevertheless, there emerged a highly polarized discourse on refugees in Poland. This is another feature of the refugee discourse in Poland, that is, it was conducted on the basis of observations of other, mainly German experiences, and collective perceptions based on cultural scripts, that is, irrespective of facts (Krzyżanowski, 2020 p. 523; Kotras, 2016; Czachur & Smykała, 2020).

In our reflections on the refugee discourse, we reach for the discourse linguistics perspective, and we assume that in discourse different points of view and conceptualizations of reality clash. Such discourse is understood as a set of organized communication practices, linguistic and visual, of a specific community which, in the course of various interactions, prospectively constructs collective knowledge, stabilizes patterns of communication behaviour and the rules of their use (Czachur, 2011; 2020; Tenbrink, 2020). The inherent features of discourse are the following: interactivity, dynamism, and conflict. They result from the existence of multiple interest groups in a particular community, and these clash in the process of forcing their positions and views, and ultimately their value systems. Therefore, it is not elsewhere but in discourses that the polarization of points of view has a direct impact on the process of subjective construction of reality, and thus building the opposition between what is one's own and what is foreign.

The specificity of the briefly outlined refugee discourse had a direct impact on the applied multimodal practices and, consequently, on the creation of an attitude of empathy or fear towards refugees. In the following section, we write about the way these practices developed.

THE COVER AS A MULTIMODAL TEXT

Covers are among the most important elements of contemporary magazines, they are an important element in shaping attitudes and, as a media or multimedia text, it is believed to be an important carrier of content in discourse. Every contact of the reader with a press title begins with the reception of its cover page. In the case of newspapers and magazines, from the perspective of media linguistics *the cover* is defined as a type of a *multimodal text*. Multimodal text, derived from the theory of *multimodal discourse* of Kress and van Leeuwen (2010 p. 24-44), is therefore a coherent and dynamic whole, in which the verbal code interacts with other codes (visual, auditory, and gestural). It is assumed that it offers a substantially greater concentration of meaning, a clear formulation of the sender's intentions and, finally, it is more effective on the part of the recipient.² In multimodal communication, several factors must occur for a multimodal text as its element to acquire a specific meaning, social usefulness, and communicative effectiveness. Key elements in this process include: the mode, the medium, production, distribution, and design (see Kress & van Leeuwen, 2010 p. 20-21). The written or spoken word combined with a static or moving image and enriched with auditory elements is an essential part of contemporary text genres. Such *modes* constitute an indispensable element of a text. They have different sign representations and different perceptual, cognitive, semantic, and functional potential. This is also their advantage as, by being combined through multimodal practices into higher-order structures, i.e. texts, they use their meaning-making potential. Multimodality reveals, therefore, a higher and more comprehensive dimension of communication. The modal characters, *modes*, need a *medium* as the carrier for all text. In this constellation, medium means sound waves as a medium for face-to-face conversation, but also paper for written text, or a smartphone for digital text. The articulation of such texts in the public space becomes a condition of *production*, which, in turn, is reproduced using the media and reaches the degree of *distribution*. Repeated and distributed texts perpetuate the form, internal

structure, and external visuality, that is a specific *design*. It is needed for the effective creation and reception of text genres in social communication. Moreover, multimodal texts combine the meanings, functions, and arguments of other multimodal texts and conceptualize, as mentioned above, socially shared images of reality (Fabiszak & Olszewska, 2018; Perumal, Pillai & Perry 2021).

Magazine covers are created as a result of the use of numerous modes in the carrier, which is, in this case, paper (harder, coloured), and in the process of production they are subordinated to specific multimodal practices (specific composition, function, the use of specific topoi, and intertextual and inter pictural strategies) so as to, in the process of distribution, activate and stabilize the elements of collective knowledge.

Covers can affect the recipient in many ways. They attract attention, seduce, stimulate, shock and cause scandals, and also announce what the reader will find within the pages of the magazine.-The main pragmatic goal of covers, however, is to attract the attention of the recipient and, only from within the information bubble, to direct their opinion and provide information. Profiled readers, choosing a specific medium usually look for the confirmation of their views. Thus, the cognitive or expressive function of the covers becomes subordinated to the persuasive function (Held, 2005).

To sum up: covers are a persuasive and opinion-forming instrument and may, thus, contribute to the polarization of political discourse. This is because publishers of weekly magazines having different worldview profiles use the cover as an intentionally created message in order to generate a specific reaction in the recipient, the potential reader, and editorial teams are a part of the symbolic elites, the entities co-shaping the public discourse. As has already been mentioned, a strong polarization took place in the migration discourse in Poland. We will demonstrate it on the example of multimodal practices of empathy and fear.

MULTIMODAL PRACTICES AND THE METHODS OF THEIR ANALYSIS

The multimodal practices that are of special interest to us, which will be shown in our analysis, are primarily the interplay of verbal and visual resources. We assume that not only do images, as visual constructions, present, or represent the phenomenon they refer to, but they also, perhaps more importantly, become expressive units of meaning and the basis for further linguistic and visual references (Pappert & Czachur, 2019). Images understood in this way – we will quote after Bonacchi (2018) – tell stories, form narratives, because they are linked into a network of dense symbolic references (intertextual and inter pictural relations) that refer to the collective memory of a specific society. Their significance is contextually variable, and each time (re)activated as a derivative of interactions between individual modes.

In order to capture the essence of the multimodal practices used on a given cover, an adequate model of analysis should be used. For this purpose, we want to use the model developed by the Stöckl (2016 p. 23-25), *multi-level model for the analysis of multimodality*, which we will adapt to the analysis of multimodal practices on the magazine covers. These are the following description levels:

- a) *Composition* – it includes the analysis of the text structure. On the one hand, it is a macro-level analysis that takes into account all visual and verbal elements used, as well as a micro-level analysis, including elements such as lines, frames, font size and colour, gaps, and other

- distinguishing features. They signal individual activities that perform a specific function in a comprehensive multimodal text.
- b) *Communication activity* – it concerns various actions realized with the help of verbal and visual code which make up the functions of the text. These activities, we assume, are aimed at activating the recipient's attitude of empathy or fear of refugees. They can also vary in intensity depending on the visual and verbal content.
 - c) *Thematic / content structure* – it primarily covers the main topic and side topics that activate collective knowledge through the use of specific topoi (understood as premises in the process of inference). Therefore, the thematic co-reference and the location of the topic within the specific knowledge frame of the text users are essential elements that determine the thematic coherence of the analyzed texts.
 - d) *Multimodal integration* shows the essence of interaction of the visual and verbal layers at the level of formal and pragmatic connections, that is communication and functional connections occurring between various semiotic codes.
 - e) *Intertextuality and interpictureality* concern the relationship between the verbal and visual codes used on the cover, and other texts or images that may be implicitly recalled in the process of reception. It is therefore about the overlapping of different orders of knowledge, which is particularly important in the case of meaning-making multimodal practices. While the plane of multimodal integration is concerned with intra-textual relations, intertextual and interpictureal relations refer to external texts and images. It is therefore about capturing the intentional and strategic links between the analyzed text and other, external texts, and images.

The analysis of the covers of weeklies aims to showcase the multimodal practices they use. As we have stated in the introductory part, we define multimodal practices as systematic, intentional, and deliberate coordination of various semiotic resources. This helps to achieve a specific meaning in the text and, as a result, produces the possibility of influencing the recipient's attitude, in this case the attitude of empathy or fear. Given that comprehensive, meaning-making communication procedures are, to a large extent, conditioned by cultural factors, those implemented on the magazine covers are determined by specific material resources organized according to patterns that are clear to recipients and, above all, anchored in specific contexts.

The selected practices are always based on the use of specific topoi and they thus influence the recipients' way of perceiving the world. Therefore, we can say that multimodal practices, understood as all linguistic and visual activities conditioned by the social order of values and shared knowledge, are used in the process of social communication for broadly understood persuasive purposes, as we have also signaled earlier in the context of our preliminary reflections on covers.

We understand topoi as thematic motifs shared in a specific culture which, in the process of the production of meanings, assume the function of an argument. A topos has thus a strong persuasive power in a particular community which can be applied to prove an argument or an implied attitude. This is why, following Kienpointner, we assume that topoi “can be described as parts of argumentation which belong to the obligatory, either explicit or inferable premises. They are the content-related warrants or ‘conclusion rules’ which connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion, the claim. As such, they justify the transition from the argument or arguments to the conclusion” (Kienpointner 1992 p. 194, also in Kienpointner 2017).

The recognition of topoi as components of multimodal practices will enable the specificity of the interdependencies between the premises present in topoi and the entire composition,

function and type of verbal, and visual relations revealed in the multimodal text on the cover. Topoi, being very general premises, help us build a set of values and hierarchies, this is why we assume that the multimodal practices used on the covers reveal attitudes towards refugees and, ultimately, generate attitudes of discrimination and exclusion or tolerance and openness.

THE CORPUS

According to information portals devoted to the media and readership research, such as wirtualnemedial.pl, pbc.pl, and press.pl, the best-selling opinion weeklies in Poland in the years 2015-2017 were *Newsweek Polska*, *Polityka*, *Gość Niedzielny*, *Tygodnik Angora*, *Sieci*, *Tygodnik do Rzeczy*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Gazeta Polska*, and *Wprost*. The research corpus includes the covers of all the above-mentioned magazines from the years 2015-2017 and, additionally, the covers of the weekly *Niedziela*. In the first stage of the selection, covers devoted to topics related to refugees and the refugee crisis were selected. At this stage, the covers of the *Newsweek Polska* weekly were excluded from the corpus, as the topic of interest to us did not appear on the cover even once in the analysed period. In the next stage we decided to thoroughly analyse these covers which, in our opinion, would serve in an optimal way to exemplify the ways of conceptualizing refugees within the framework of multimodal practices of empathy and fear. These are covers that explicitly address the topic of the crisis in both verbal and visual codes, e.g., refugees are visible (as a group, a crowd, as individual persons) and are also denoted verbally. There are also covers that clearly make the crisis the leading theme even if they do not show refugees themselves. Since we are interested in the multimodal practices of empathy and fear, the covers presented below exemplify these practices. In total, in the surveyed corpus we managed to include 36 covers the main theme of which was refugees and / or the refugee crisis. For the individual titles and years, the relevant statistics are as follows:

TABLE 1. Migration discourse present on the covers of Polish magazines during the years 2015-2017 (in order according to the results of the average total sales in 2017)

The title	2015	2016	2017	Total
Angora	2	2	0	4
Gość Niedzielny	1	1	1	3
Polityka	2	0	3	5
Newsweek Polska	0	0	0	0
wSieci	2	1	0	3
Do Rzeczy	0	0	2	2
Gazeta Polska	2	0	3	5
Tygodnik Powszechny	3	0	1	4
Wprost	2	2	0	4
Niedziela	1	3	2	6
Total	15	9	12	36

Among the analysed titles, the right-wing profile is represented by: *wSieci*, *Tygodnik do Rzeczy*, *Gazeta Polska*, and also the weekly *Wprost* (even though the weekly describes itself as centrist, people identified with the political left also publish their articles in it). The following titles: *Newsweek Polska*, *Polityka*, and the weekly *Angora* represent the liberal worldview, then, *Gość Niedzielny*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, and *Niedziela* are Catholic weeklies where *Gość Niedzielny* and *Niedziela* are conservative Catholic weeklies and *Tygodnik Powszechny* is considered to represent the so-called open Catholicism.

We assume that, since it coincided with the parliamentary elections, the political polarization directly translated into the polarization of the ways of conceptualizing refugees in the migration discourse in Poland. Liberal circles tried to present refugees from a humanitarian, empathetic perspective, using the topoi of a child, family, the elderly, or Christian values (the topoi of the neighbour or of the victim), avoiding generalizing characteristics and focusing, instead, on exemplification (e.g. numerous portraits of refugee children on the covers). Conservative circles, it turned out, were more likely to use generalizations with a negative connotation, highlighting the negative features and behaviours of people arriving in Europe, such as terrorism, religious fundamentalism, and self-righteousness, which pose a threat to the European Christian culture.

ANALYSIS OF MULTIMODAL PRACTICES OF EMPATHY

In this section we want to analyse four sample covers from our corpus in terms of their use of multimodal practices of empathy. The examples in the analysis are selected based on the qualitative method of filling the sample. In other words, we present in this section – as well as in the next section concerned with the practice of fear – the diverse and prototypical examples that we were able to find on the basis of the corpus of covers. We talk about multimodal practices of empathy, when the sender manages to activate on the side of the recipient compassion towards the phenomenon or people presented on the cover (Smith Watt 2016). Here are some examples:



PHOTO 1. The topoi of the child and death in the multimodal practice of empathy (Wprost 37/2015, 13.09.2015)

The composition of the cover in photo 1 includes the headline “Wysoka cena hipokryzji” [The high price of hypocrisy] and it displays a realistic photograph of a dead boy, Alan Kurdi, lying on the beach. He was a three-year-old Syrian refugee of Kurdish origin who drowned,

together with his mother and brother, while trying to cross the Mediterranean in September 2015. The geometric frame of the cover is an optimal place to present photographs. The image is graphically integrated into the header which, in this case, also serves as a visual censorship of the image. It obscures the depressing image of the deceased child.

The illustration performs representative and expressive *activities*, while the headline carries out an action, specifies and comments on the photograph. It channels the open meaning of the image towards an accusation against European countries that seem to be overlooking or downplaying the problem of refugees and their deaths at sea. It can also be assumed that an additional communicative activity taking place here is the demonstration of humanistic values and, at the same time, arousing remorse.

The main *theme* of the picture is the innocent death of a child that should have never taken place. Thus, the general *topos* of death is activated. Death affects migrants. The headline: “The high price of hypocrisy” takes up the main theme while the use of the lexeme “hypocrisy” can also be understood as an appeal to the rich countries of Western Europe, including Poland, not to turn away from the problem of migration issues and to encourage them to help humanely those in great need. What is more, it might be read as an accusation that societies from these countries are guilty of great negligence in this matter. It is in this context that the *topos of the child* and the *topos of death* are activated, and significantly affect the development of the main theme in the text. In the altruistic dimension, this *topos* in the analysed discourse invokes, moreover, the argument in favour of helping immigrants.

Multimodal integration begins already in the thematic structure and reaches its apogee in the semantic message of the entire cover. The headline and the image form a unity in the form of visual integration. They accumulate semantically in the phrase: “High price...” and critically evaluate the migration discourse in the lexeme ...hypocrisy.

In the area of linguistic *intertextuality* we do not observe any explicit intertextual references. *Interpictoriality* is, however, visible. The image implements interpictorial reference, i.e. the image on the cover, in terms of visual framing (close-up, perspective), quotes a collective secondary image. It is the original photo of the dead child taken by a photojournalist, duplicated in numerous pieces of media information and present in the visual memory.



PHOTO 2. The topos of an elderly person and the topos of a woman in the multimodal practice of empathy
(Niedziela 40/2016, 2.10.2016)

From the perspective of *composition*, the cover of the *Niedziela* magazine shows an elderly woman hiding a weeping face. The woman is covered with a large, patterned blanket, which may be associated (for example, in countries without in-depth knowledge of Muslim religion and culture) with the traditional headscarf worn by Muslims. The photograph takes up most of the cover area and it thus dominates visually. There are, in addition, two headlines related to migration: “Umierają w drodze do Europy” [They die on their way to Europe] and the typographically smaller “Tydzień modlitw za uchodźców” [Week of Prayer for Refugees]. Both the picture and the written text realize a graphically integrated formal pattern.

The illustration performs a representative and expressive *action*, while the headlines perform an action that specifies and comments on the photograph. The headlines determine the open meaning of the image as an appeal to European countries for help and compassion. Rich European countries do not see or simply downplay the difficult fate of older people among refugees who deserve help and care at the end of their lives.

The main *theme* of the cover in the visual layer is an elderly woman. At the level of language, there appear the themes of death, Europe, and prayers for refugees. The headlines communicate the need for empathy towards refugees, in particular towards the elderly and women who find it more difficult to cope in the migration situation. At the same time, there is the appellative function of the headline calling for prayers for refugees. The *topos of the elderly person* and the *topos of the woman* overlap which, combined with the emotional act of crying, death during a migratory wandering, and the declared prayer, fulfill the combined function of an argumentative topos. This, in turn, is at the core of the *multimodal practice of empathy*.

On the level of *multimodal integration*, the headline and the image work together in the formal and semantic structure, that is headers function as picture titles and they not only comment on them, but also clearly reinforce their message at the level of activated emotions. This moment

can be seen in the words: "They die... and "Week of prayer..." which deepen the semantic topos of an elderly person and a woman.

On the verbal level, we do not notice any explicit *intertextual* references, while the image realizes the *interpictorial* reference, that is the image on the cover refers to the collective image of a poor refugee in need of help by emphasizing clothing and appearance. Such visual framing supports the process of comprehensive reception and the process of combining the visual layer with the content expressed in the headlines.



PHOTO 3. The topos of the child, the family, the victim, and the neighbour in multimodal practice of empathy (Tygodnik Powszechny 37/2015, 13.09.2015)

In terms of *composition*, a man with a child in his arms is in the foreground of the cover in photo 3. They both look sad, concerned, and probably tired. They are looking to the side. Their faces are clearly visible, illuminated as if by the flame of a fire. In the background there is a man with his head bowed, he gives the impression of resignation, of having lost. All of them are of a quite dark complexion, but their ethnic identity is not entirely clear. The man in the foreground can as well be someone who brings help and is holding a rescued child in his arms (undamaged watch on his wrist, neat appearance); he could also be the father, a relative, or a guardian of the child. The dark background suggests nighttime. It may be assumed that the presented scene may be taking place where hostilities are still in progress and the people presented have gathered at night around the fire because they do not have a roof over their heads. The white headline stands out clearly from the dark background of the cover as the main verbal element in the cover composition. The heading: "Byłem przybyszem, a przyjęliście mnie" [I was a stranger and you welcomed me] is a literal quotation from the Gospel of St. Matthew (Mt 25:35).

The visual layer performs the *representative action*, which means it shows a fragment of the migration discourse, in this case constituted by a man with a child in his arms. The image has also an *expressive* function. It illustrates the feelings of the presented persons. Their facial expressions, posture, gaze, and stillness together build a sense of failure. The aim of the cover is to portray refugees as lost, homeless people – victims of conflicts, among them children and

family. Symbolically, the lack of hope is expressed by the body posture of the man in the background. This man appears here as *pars pro toto*, symbolizing the fate of all refugees.

The header allows to identify the characters presented in the picture and to assign them specific roles. The use of the Polish lexeme *przybysz* [which literally means a *newcomer*, translated in the English version of the Bible by the word *stranger*] and the general knowledge of the recipient about the world make it possible to place the presented scene in the context of the migration crisis, and identify some of the presented people as refugees and newcomers. The headline cites the Gospel and thus emphasizes Christian values, *appeals* to conscience and its function is to shame those who refuse to help others, and thus sin (in this way interfering with their own salvation).

Communication activities activate the appropriate topoi in the *thematic structure*, namely the *topos of a child, a family, and a victim* in the visual code. On the other hand, on the verbal level the cover denotes the portrayed persons, especially the child, as strangers and obliges the recipients, using the words of the evangelist Matthew, to help them. With the use of the verbal code, there happens thus a revision of the *topos of the neighbour*, referred to here as the newcomer. A neighbour in the biblical sense is any human being. According to the Christian commandment to love our neighbour, we should love our neighbour as ourselves. The topos of the child as a defenseless person who is subject to protection in every culture, the topos of the family and the duty to protect it, as well as the topos of the victim and of the neighbour, all realize expressive actions and strengthen the persuasive potential of the overall message.

At the level of *multimodal integration*, the linguistic and pictorial elements formally remain in a simultaneous relation to each other. In terms of content, they elaborate, specify and illustrate each other. In terms of semantic relationships, one can speak of a coordination relationship: the realized by the visual code concept of a refugee-victim is verbally defined as a newcomer. But the verbal message is, as mentioned, a quotation from the Bible, more specifically a passage from the description of the Final Judgment. On that day, people will be judged on their works of mercy. Helping strangers, neighbours in need (and therefore refugees) is a condition of salvation. Furthermore, Jesus says “As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). He therefore identifies himself with those in need. In this sense, every refugee is not only a neighbour in need, but also God himself. Hence there is highlighted the obligation to provide shelter to newcomers and to rescue them. *The Other* is thus conceptualized here as a victim, but above all as a neighbour in need and God himself. The above quotations are well known, not only to people of faith.

The headline of the cover refers in an *intertextual* form to a fragment of the Gospel of St. Matthew. The dimension of this reference is discussed above. There are no clear inter pictorial relations here. As a result of the integration of the visual and verbal layers, the entire message is an argument in favour of helping refugees, and even an obligatory act of communication activity.



PHOTO 4. The tops of brotherhood and the neighbour in the multimodal practice of empathy (Angora 14/2016, 3.04.2016)

The cover of the *Angora* weekly in photo 4 also refers to the tops of the neighbour and Christian values. In terms of *composition*, almost the entire surface of the cover fills a realistic photograph taken in a refugee camp near Rome. In the picture, Pope Francis is kneeling and kissing the foot of a dark-skinned young man sitting on a bench. Next to him there sit other people who are looking at the Pope washing the man's feet in accordance with the Holy Thursday rite. Next to the man there sits a young, dark-skinned woman in a characteristic outfit, holding a baby in her arms. In a moment, her feet will also be washed by the Pope. The big headline at the top of the cover, which reads “Papież obmył nogi uchodźcom” [The Pope has washed the feet of refugees], clearly identifies the persons depicted in the photo, while the caption under the photo contains information specifying the place and time of the event, and verbalizes the message expressed by the Pope that we are all brothers and we want to live in peace and those who buy weapons to destroy Brotherhood are to be pitied.

The illustration performs mainly a representative *activity*, while the headlines additionally perform an activity that further specifies and comments on the photograph. Together, these activities indicate the persuasive function of the multimodal text: the Pope – as the head of the Catholic Church – gives an example of an attitude of humility towards refugees (who are often of different faith) to be emulated. It is vital to, following Christ's example, serve others. The Pope testifies to this by his behaviour. The cover is an appeal to all people to adopt the appropriate attitude of serving others who, regardless of their religion, will always be our neighbours.

The aim of composing a cover in this way is undoubtedly to build a positive image of refugees who are conceptualized as neighbours (the verbal layer) despite their different appearance and clothing (the visual layer), and to evoke the attitude of empathy. Actualizing in the *thematic structure the topoi of brotherhood and of the neighbour*, the cover refers to basic Christian values.

The illustration is a narrative about what happened in a refugee camp on Good Thursday in 2016. The Pope performed a symbolic rite and spoke the words about the Brotherhood uniting all people. The Pope's gesture, which was shown in the visual layer, was named and clarified in the verbal layer. The headline, the caption under the image and the image itself all work together in the formal and semantic structures, repeating the same message within the framework of *multimodal integration*.

The photograph on the cover constitutes primarily a *trans-semiotic* reference. In a sense, it can also be assumed that the photograph quotes a collective secondary image by referring to the main motif of the Good Thursday rite in the Catholic Church. In this understanding, we can also speak of interpictureality.

ANALYSIS OF MULTIMODAL PRACTICES OF FEAR

In this part, we want to analyze subsequent four sample covers from our corpus in terms of their use of multimodal fear practices (see p. 7). We understand the term multimodal fear practices as such linguistic and pictorial activities which are aimed at evoking a mental state in the recipient which may be considered unpleasant and threatening (Smith Watt, 2016). Below there are examples of the use of fear practices:



PHOTO 5. The tops of Islamic terror, young and resourceful men, German aggression in multimodal practice of fear (wSieci 37/2015, 14.09.2015)

The *composition* of the cover (wSieci 37/2015) in photo 5 consists of a photomontage showing three young men, two of them bearded, all dressed in outfits – according to stereotypical perceptions in Polish culture – typical of Muslim culture. One of them is holding a weapon. Dressed in this way, the men corresponded to the common image of the Taliban (seen as a threat)

that was prevalent in Polish discourse at the time. The men are standing by the white and red Polish border barrier. One of them is holding the Polish national emblem that has been torn off. This photomontage alludes to a photo well known to Poles, taken by the propaganda services of the Third Reich to visualize the capture of Poland in September 1939. This photo is included in every history textbook in Poland. In the Polish collective memory, this image symbolizes German aggression against Poland and the outbreak of World War II. Under the photomontage there is an inscription in large yellow letters: “Nadchodzą” [They are coming] and two smaller inscriptions: “Wrzesień 2015” [September 2015] and “Niemcy forsują samobójczy plan – Tusk i Kopacz ulegają” [Germany is pushing through a suicide plan – Tusk and Kopacz are succumbing].

At the level of global *communication activity* a cover composed in this way at has the expressive and appellative function, because its aim is to cause disapproval of admitting refugees to Poland, or even disapproval of refugees in general. By contextualizing migration as a source of threat, the upcoming aggression of strangers, the allegedly real intentions of refugees are exposed and, at the same time, what is happening on the verbal and visual levels is conceptualized as a real threat to Poland's security, a threat that is already at its gates.

On the level of the *themes* mentioned, three argumentative topoi were used: the topos of Islam as fanatical terrorists, young and resourceful men, and the topos of German aggression. The above-mentioned topoi overlap in the process of multimodal integration. The threat is thus realized as follows: the image of three Islamic terrorists activates the 1939 topos of the German threat to Poland. The inscription “Wrzesień 1939” [September 1939], similarly to the cited image is, in Polish memory, a symbol, on the one hand, of aggression from outside and the fall of Poland, and on the other hand, of the fight against the German and Soviet occupiers. Thus, the slogan “Wrzesień 2015” [September 2015] in the expressive [Warning, danger!] and appellative [We must act! We must fight! We must face the threat!] function complements the content on the visual level (Czachur & Loew, 2022).

What is most visible on the cover is, above all else, the *intepictorial* reference: the collage with three Islamists destroying the border barrier alludes to the well-known in Polish history photograph of Wehrmacht soldiers (see photo 6). Thus, the contemporary migration discourse becomes equated, in terms of consequences and threats, with the outbreak of World War II.



PHOTO 6. Wehrmacht soldiers breaking the barrier, Gdańsk - Kolibki, 14.09.1939 (an unknown photographer, source: National Digital Archives, 20.04.2021)



PHOTO 7. The topos of Islamic terror, hell and Poles' submission to Germany's hegemony in the multimodal practice of fear (wSieci 38/2015, 21.09.2015)

The *composition* of the next cover in photo 7 is as follows: in the centre, filling up the space of the cover, there is a woman wearing a Muslim headdress. With one hand she is revealing her face, and with the other she is holding an explosive with a timer, indicating there is only one second left before it explodes. There are flames in the background. Red is the dominant colour. The woman has the face of Ewa Kopacz, the then Prime Minister of Poland belonging to the Civic Platform party. In the very centre of the cover, on top of the image of the woman, there is the inscription: “Ewa Kopacz urządzi nam piekło na rozkaz Berlina” [Ewa Kopacz will arrange hell for us at the behest of Berlin], which confirms the identity of the presented woman. The purpose of the *communication activities* of a cover composed this way is to activate a sense of threat for Poland by, on the one hand, designing a doom scenario for Poland and, on the other hand, accusing the then political elite of bringing about this state of affairs.

At the thematic level, the sense of threat is evoked both visually and verbally by recalling the topos of *Islamic terrorists*, the topos of *Poles' submission to Germany's hegemony*, and the topos of *hell* as a consequence of the actions of migrants and of the rule of the Civic Platform. Ewa Kopacz is presented as the one who succumbs to the migration policy of Berlin, making Poland a space of foreign influence. In this way she weakens the country's readiness to defend itself against the threat of “potential attackers”.

At the level of *multimodal integration*, the images of the Polish Prime Minister and the attacker are combined, which means that the head of the Polish government herself becomes an attacker of Polishness, in the image of Islamic terrorists. The topos of Poles' submission to Germany is expressed only on the verbal level– “Piekło na rozkaz Berlina” [Hell at the behest of Berlin] – and it is integrated into the governance style of the Civic Platform. However, at the level of hell, there occurs multimodal synchronization. There is a large red inscription “Piekło” [Hell],

which corresponds with the cover's background: flames from previous terrorist outbreaks, which may soon become reality in Poland.

Interpictorial relations are implemented in such a way that the image of the then Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland is anchored in the topos of Islamic terrorism. Intertextual relations do not occur.

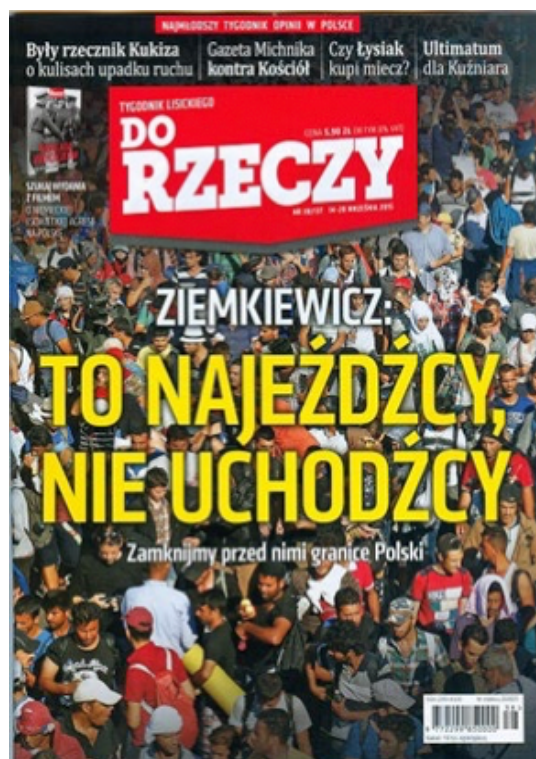


PHOTO 8. The topos of the threat of invaders and mass migrations to Europe in the multimodal practice of fear (DoRzeczy 38/2015, 14.09.2015)

The key element of the *composition* in photo 8 is a photograph depicting a crowd of people whose outfit, unlike on the cover 5, does not clearly evoke associations with a specific cultural circle. However, the vast majority of people present in the crowd have a dark complexion. The photograph of the crowd constitutes the background to the inscription made in large yellow letters: “To najeżdźcy, nie uchodźcy” [They are invaders, not refugees] preceded by the name of the author of this statement - (Rafał) Ziemkiewicz, a right-wing journalist. Underneath the main inscription, there is another inscription in white letters: “Zamknijmy przed nimi granice Polski” [Let's close the borders of Poland to them]. Thus, the headlines define the meanings of the photograph of the crowd.

The main *communication activity* is to define people coming to Europe as invaders, that is, people who do not deserve sympathy and help, and an appeal not to accept refugees to Poland, which is carried out in the verbal layer and reinforced with the visual layer, i.e. the photograph of the crowd.

The goal of a cover designed in this way is to evoke, at the *thematic* level, the feeling of fear by engineering the threat, by means of the topos of the *invader*, but also the topoi of a *multitude*, a *wave*, and *chaos*. Migrants are to be perceived as invaders and, by reinforcing this message with the topos of a multitude, wave, and chaos, the appeal to readers to close Poland's

borders to migrants is legitimized and, at the same time, the fear of refugees intensified. There takes place also a transposition and transcoding onto the visual level of the wave metaphor which is frequently used in the migration discourse.

At the level of *multimodal integration*, the interplay of the noun “invader”, the personal pronoun “them” and the photograph of the crowd as a reference point is crucial.

In the analysed cover, *intertextual* and *interpicturel* relations take place insofar as the topos of the multitude is invoked, which is reminiscent of the above-mentioned dehumanizing metaphors, and intended to increase the scale of fear. It should be noted that the vast majority of the text is yellow in order to draw the readers' attention to the impending threat.



PHOTO 9. The topos of disease, death and the *Other* and the topos of the storm in multimodal practice of fear (Gazeta Polska nr 30, 26.07.2017)

In the cover *composition* in photo 9, the visually exposed title of the newspaper “Gazeta Polska” comes to the fore. It is only the heading “Uchodźcy przynieśli śmiertelne choroby” [Refugees bring deadly diseases] that directly concerns the refugees. Both titles are integrated into the image which is a photomontage of a group of people of Muslim origin gathered around a deceased man. Additionally, the EU flag appears.

The dominant linguistic *activity* is informing, which is accompanied by subsequent activities – accusing and humiliating refugees as people spreading diseases. In the visual layer, we perceive representative and expressive acts. A group of people is represented by means of a graphic juxtaposition of several photos. The cover designer's interference is therefore clear. The purpose of such an endeavour is expressive activity. The Polish recipient of the cover sees people of foreign origin, tightly clothed in flowing outfits, with frightened faces, and a woman crying over the body of a man against the background of a stormy sky.

Composition and communication activities activate the *main theme* and *additional themes* with the use of topoi. The main theme is realized through the topos of a *disease* and is supplemented by additional themes dealing with the topos of death, the topos of the *Other*, and the topos of the storm visible in the dark sky pierced with lightning. In this way, the recipient of the cover receives a comprehensive message that is intended to evoke an atavistic fear of refugees as people carrying an inevitable threat to life. Here, the *multimodal practice of fear* is based on several topoi, the main topos being that of a disease.

Formal and semantic *multimodal integration* includes visual and content coherence. The former, however, is at a low level: one cannot help but feel that the title of “Gazeta Polska” is uncompromisingly embedded at the top of the cover. While you can have reservations about visual consistency, as the title of the newspaper strongly interferes and breaks the visual structure, the content structure is multi-level (disease, death, the *Other*, storm) and implemented jointly in linguistic and pictorial elements of the text.

The cover does not offer unambiguous *intertextual* references, and the *interpicturality* is realized in the way the photomontage on the cover refers to the visual pattern of the *Other* of Muslim origin. The reference point will therefore be the collective secondary image.

CONCLUSION

MULTIMODAL PRACTICES OF EMPATHY AND FEAR

The subject of our reflection is but a small fragment of the refugee discourse in Poland carried out by various media and various actors with different worldview profiles. It should be remembered, however, that this discourse referred to events that did not take place in Poland; it was therefore of a “phantom” nature, i.e. without the presence of refugees. Thus, the refugee discourse in Poland *generated* knowledge, emotions, and attitudes towards refugees by constructing a *specific* media vision of reality.

In this context, the practices we studied served specific weeklies to strengthen and justify a specific vision of the world among “their recipients” rather than to convince others to their vision of the world. That is, the intention of the sender was to generate or strengthen the readers' attitude of empathy or fear towards refugees which, in the surveyed weekly covers as multimodal texts was manifested by an appropriate choice of representation of the portrayed reality.

We have assumed that multimodal practices of empathy are verbal-visual activities aimed at arousing the need for compassion towards the phenomena or people presented on the cover, and multimodal practices of fear are aimed at inducing a mental state that can be considered unpleasant and arousing a sense of danger. We have also assumed that an optimal description of the multimodal practices of empathy and fear would enable their analysis at the level of composition, communication activity, theme, multimodal integration, and intertextual and interpicture relations.

At the level of *composition*, the type of visual elements used played an important role, e.g. realistic photos (photo 1 – the death of a child, photo 4 – the Pope washing the feet of refugees, photo 8 – a crowd of people) give credibility to the message, photomontage (photos 3, 5, 7, 9) allows to intensify some semantic aspects to the detriment of other aspects. The size of the header and its location (usually in the image) were used to control the attention of the recipient. In the researched covers, in most cases we deal with a pattern of simultaneous linking of both codes (text within the image).

The global goal of *communication activities* of persuasive character was an attempt to create or strengthen the attitude of empathy or fear in the recipient, and this activity was carried out by means of:

- representative activities: for the practices of empathy, it was characteristic to portray refugees in a way that aroused compassion and sympathy. The aim of such a procedure is to “domesticate” the *Other*. The *Other* was to be like one of Ours. For the practices of fear, it was typical to portray refugees in such a way that they evoke a sense of threat and aversion (with their appearance, countenance, behavior, or number). The *Other* was to be an *Other* who should be excluded, who is incompatible with Polish culture. These two perspectives significantly influenced the way of the multimodal conceptualization of the *Other*:

TABLE 2. The way of conceptualizing of the Other in the practices of empathy and fear

The way of conceptualizing	The activated features of the Other in the practices of empathy	The activated features of the Other in the practices of fear
external appearance (including clothing)	dark-skinned, bearded, dark-haired, different (characteristic outfit)	dark-skinned, bearded, dark-haired, dirty and sloppy, young and resourceful, different (characteristic) outfit (e.g. burqa),
social status and social role	fugitive/ stranger/ refugee; head of the family, single mother, elderly, poor, homeless, wanderer	fighters, illegal immigrants, invaders (aggressors), (social)
behaviour	thoughtful, smiling, calm, defeated, resigned, despairing	brutal, aggressive, unpredictable, they break European standards of behavior
quantity	occurring singly or in small groups	occurring in groups, a crowd

- expressive activities: they consisted in attempts to evoke a given emotional reaction by presenting, for example, a specific situation. On the one hand, showing the suffering and misery of specific individuals is aimed at evoking (photos 1, 2 and 3), and on the other hand, showing a crowd of immigrants or their unacceptable behaviour serves to arouse aggression and a sense of threat (photos 5, 8, 9). Emotionalisation of the message is also to be achieved by showing facial expressions, appearance and posture in the photographs, reflecting the emotional states of the refugees (photos 2, 3).
- appellative activities: evoking, on the one hand, certain moral and religious principles and standards of humanism, and on the other, pinpointing the direct threat of Islamic terrorism and diseases carried by newcomers.

At the level of the topic's implementation, topoi played a key role, especially the process of their overlapping and compaction, activated verbal and visual dimensions. Below, we present a synthetic approach to topoi in the practices of empathy and fear and their combinability

TABLE 3. The combinability of topoi in the multimodal practices of empathy and fear in the migration discourse on the Polish covers

Topoi in the practice of empathy	Topoi in the practice of fear
The topos of the child and death (cover 1)	The topos of Islamic terror, young and resourceful men, german aggression (cover 5)
The topos of an elderly person and the topos of a woman (cover 2)	The topos of Islamic terror, hell and Poles' submission to the german hegemony (cover 7)
The topos of the child, the family, the victim and the neighbour (cover 3)	The topos of the threat of invaders and mass migrations to Europe (cover 8)
The topos of brotherhood and the neighbour (cover 4)	The topos of disease, death and the <i>Other</i> , and the topos of the storm (cover 9)

As the analysis has shown, the phenomenon of overlapping different topoi should be considered to be a particularly meaning-making component of multimodal practices of empathy and fear. As a result of this combination of verbally and visually encoded topoi, which Kjeldsen (2018 p. 85) describes a “symbolic condensation”, argumentative processes were activated, which led to the production of specific sense.

In the case of multimodal practices of empathy and fear, the process of *multimodal integration* should be considered important as it played the role of a keystone between the verbal and visual layers, and these were the carriers of specific topoi. If it was previously assumed that the phenomenon of overlapping different topoi is an important element of practices of empathy and fear, then *multimodal integration* plays key role in this process. We can, therefore, say that multimodal integration determines the process of topoi overlapping, and thus conditions the process of creating specific meanings, which, as previously mentioned, are of persuasive character. Both codes explain each other and specify and illustrate each other by implementing the elaboration pattern.

As our reflections show, we consider the multimodal practice in the migration discourse implemented on the covers of weekly magazines to be a strategic activity at the verbal and visual levels, and at the level of their integration based on the overlapping of various topoi. If, as we have assumed, the goal of the multimodal practice of empathy or fear is to evoke a specific attitude in the recipients, i.e. empathy for the fate of refugees and migrants or fear of refugees, then it should be stated that, in their logic, according to Toulmin's argumentation, they implement the following warrant rules. For the practice of empathy, the warrant rule on the level of articulated cause is as follows: because refugees are our neighbours in need, they must be helped, and on the level of the articulated condition, it is as follows: if we do not surround them with empathy, we will then negate our humanistic values. For the practice of fear, both rules can be described as follows: because refugees pose a threat to us, we should be afraid of them, and if we accept immigrants to Poland, they will destabilize the state. As a result of recalling different facts, the process of justification, carried out in a multimodal way, proceeded with the use of different topoi.

The comments made by Bonacchi (2018) on images provoking scare and pleasant images complement our observations. Multimodal practices of empathy and fear are used in a manipulative manner. By wrapping the discussed phenomenon in ideological perspective, they eliminate factual discussion on a given topic. Argumentative constructs for the practices of fear

used in this context can be considered as multimodal *argumentum ad baculum* or *argumentum ad metum*, and, for the practice of empathy, *argumentum ad misericordiam*. These constructions take the structure of a conditional sentence (if p, then x), conditional sentence (because p, then x), of a propositional sentence (predicates and assertions: agent is x), and an affirmative or restrictive imperative sentence (p! P not! or p! P yes!) (Bonacchi, 2018 p. 231). Practices of empathy and fear refer directly to emotions. Therefore, within the framework of each of these two practices, a one-sided emotional message is created, in line with the worldview profile of the given editorial office.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Publication partly supported by program “Excellence initiative – research university” for years 2020-2026 for University of Warsaw and University of Wrocław.

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