



# Cross-linguistic Metaphorical Representation of the #MeToo Movement: Communicating Attitudes

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**Abstract.** The article focuses on the metaphorical conceptualisation of the #MeToo movement, which has spread virally as a hashtag used on social media in an attempt to demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment. The #MeToo movement as a social issue is looked at from the perspective of Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) (Charteris-Black 2005/2011, 2014, Musolff 2004, 2016, Koller 2014, De Landtsheer 2009, Hart 2010). CMA is a blend of Cognitive Metaphor Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis that aims at identifying how metaphors are used to describe socially contested issues and how they reveal speakers' hidden intentions and attitudes (Charteris-Black, 2014, p. 174). CMA is also concerned with the different functions metaphors may perform. A predicative function, being one of many, is most likely to explain how socially sensitive issues are communicated (Charteris-Black, 2014, pp. 204-207; Musolff, 2016, p. 4). In other words, it implies positive or negative attitudes expressed towards certain issues. Thus, the paper aims to study how the predicative function of metaphor manifests in the discourse of contemporary social concerns cross-linguistically and cross-culturally. In other words, the paper looks into how different attitudes towards the #MeToo movement are communicated via metaphors in Lithuanian and English media and how they shape prevailing public attitudes.

**Keywords:** metaphor; Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA); #MeToo movement; attitudinal perspective; Lithuanian vs English.

## Introduction

In recent years, the #MeToo movement has spread virally as a hashtag used on social media in an attempt to demonstrate the widespread concern about sexual assault and harassment. No wonder that scholars have adopted multiple perspectives to look into this socially sensitive issue. This study, adopting a cognitive approach, contributes to the existing pool of research on the #MeToo movement. The study therefore focuses on the metaphorical representation of the #MeToo movement in the media and its predicative

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function. In other words, it examines how different attitudes towards the #MeToo movement are communicated via metaphors and how these metaphors disclose prevailing public attitudes. Moreover, it adopts a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural approach as it explores metaphors related to the #MeToo movement in Lithuanian and British media.

## 1. Theoretical underpinnings

Gender studies have maintained an avid interest in metaphors used to think and talk about male and female relationships and sexuality (Ahrens & Lee, 2009; Charteris-Black, 2009; Gill, 2009; Koller & Semino, 2009; Meier & Lombardo, 2009; Semino & Koller, 2009; Stefanowitsch & Goschler, 2009; Tenorio, 2009; Koller, 2015; Bock & Burkley, 2018; Chon & Joh, 2019). Although the #MeToo movement has been quite extensively investigated from the perspective of social and communication sciences, a cognitive linguistic approach adopting metaphor as a cognitive and rhetorical tool has not been widely employed.

This study was conducted using Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), initially developed by Charteris-Black (2004, 2014) and later extended by such scholars as Musolff (2004, 2016), Koller (2014), De Landtsheer (2009), Hart (2010, 2011). It is one of the approaches that allows for investigating social issues of concern. In this case, the #MeToo movement as a social issue is looked at from the CMA perspective, which is a blend of Cognitive Metaphor Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis. From the cognitive perspective, metaphor is viewed as a cognitive mechanism providing a coherent system of structuring our experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003, 1999). From the rhetorical perspective, metaphor is considered as an argumentative tool aimed at communicating attitudes, arousing emotions and persuading the audience (Chilton, 2004; Charteris-Black, 2014; Hart, 2010; Musolff, 2016).

In addition, CMA is concerned with different rhetorical functions that metaphors may perform in discourse. As Charteris-Black (2014, p. 201) points out, metaphors are used for different persuasive purposes: (1) to gain attention and establish trust; (2) to simplify issues; (3) to show positive or negative evaluations; (4) to arouse feelings that are favourable to the speaker; (5) to create textual coherence and allude to respected orators or history; (6) to reflect or constitute a world view; (7) to frame participant roles so that they create a political myth. This study is primarily focused on the predicative function of metaphor, i.e. investigating how metaphors show positive or negative evaluations expressed in the discourse of contemporary social concerns. The predicative function implies that metaphor frames participants and issues “with reference to positive and negative scales for evaluation that draw on lexical semantics for good and bad embodied experience of life” (Charteris-Black, 2014, p. 206). For example, when political or social issues are metaphorically framed via health and life source domains, they entail positive, whereas disease and death refer to negative evaluation. Also, the mythic function of metaphor is in accord with Musolff’s scenario-oriented approach (2004, 2016). The scenario, as Musolff defines it, is “a set of standard assumptions made by competent members of discourse

community about ‘prototypical’ content aspects (participants, roles, ‘dramatic’ story lines) and social/ethical evaluations concerning elements of conceptual domains” (2004, p. 17). For example, Musolff (2004) discusses the LOVE-MARRIAGE-FAMILY scenario in British and German media where the EU and Britain are viewed as participants being in a love-hate relationship that entails different turns and dramatic story lines such as marriage, disagreements, separation or divorce. Thus, metaphorical scenarios help us establish recurrent argumentative, narrative and stance-taking patterns (Musolff, 2016, p. 133).

## 2. Data and procedure

For this study, two corpora of media texts comprising 113,765 words (Lithuanian) and 100,530 words (English) were constructed. The Lithuanian corpus was compiled of media texts from mainstream online newspapers such as *15min* (35,890 words), *lytas* (20,251 words), *delfi* (20,455 words), *alfa* (19,159 words), *tv3* (17,603 words). The English corpus was compiled of media texts from the following online newspapers: *the Daily Mail* (21,527 words), *the Guardian* (20,252 words), *the Independent* (19,274 words), *the Sun* (19,951 words), *the Telegraph* (19,526 words). Both corpora consist of opinion articles and commentaries. The selection of opinion articles and commentaries was based on the keyword “metoo”. If an article contained this keyword, it was assumed that it discusses this social issue and it was included in the corpus.

To achieve the aim of the study, Charteris-Black’s three-step metaphor analysis procedure (2005/2011) was employed: metaphors were identified, then they were interpreted and, finally, they were explained. The first step – metaphor identification – was performed using the Antconc programme (Anthony, 2019) and the keyword “metoo” was analysed in terms of its metaphoricality applying MIPVU (Steen et al., 2010; Urbonaitė et al., 2019). In the second step – metaphor interpretation – metaphors were interpreted by relating them to possible conceptual metaphors or metaphors in thought. Both steps provide descriptive statistics. In the final stage – explanation – metaphors were analysed from a rhetorical perspective, which means that an attempt was made to determine how metaphors reflect and shape attitudes towards the issues raised in the #MeToo movement cross-linguistically and cross-culturally.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Metaphor identification and interpretation

The reason for choosing the word “metoo” as the keyword to analyse how metaphors express attitudes towards social issues was its relatively high frequency in the corpora. In both corpora, the keyword “metoo” ranked quite high in the Word List and it was the first notional word semantically related to the issue of the social concern. In the Lithuanian corpus, it was in 30<sup>th</sup> position, while in the English corpus it took up a similar 32<sup>nd</sup> position. All in all, there were 281 and 516 concordance hits in the Lithuanian and English corpora,

respectively. To analyse their metaphoricity, an adapted version of *Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit* (MIPVU) was employed in the English (Steen et al., 2010) and in the Lithuanian (Urbonaitė et al., 2019) corpora. The MIPVU entails a step-by-step protocol for identifying linguistic metaphors. Although the protocol envisages examining the text on a word-by-word basis, in this case, only the keyword “metoo” was considered by analysing whether its contextual meaning coincided with the basic meaning of the word. If both meanings coincided, the keyword was treated as non-metaphorical, and if the contextual meaning was sufficiently distinct from the basic one, it was marked as metaphorical. Consider the following examples:

- (1) *Dvi lietuvių galerijos [...] savo ekspozicijose palietė ir #metoo temą.*  
(Two Lithuanian galleries [...] touched on the topic of #metoo in their expositions.)
- (2) *[...] Lietuvoje #MeToo banga šiuo metu prislopusi.*  
(In Lithuania the #MeToo wave is currently subdued.)
- (3) *The #MeToo phrase was first coined in 2006 by Tarana Burke, an advocate for women [...].*
- (4) *[...] the remarkable work she did for a decade before the #MeToo exploded globally.*

Due to its recent origin, the word “metoo” is not included in dictionaries; however, relying on extralinguistic knowledge, it is evident that it refers to a social phenomenon related to sexual abuse and harassment. In examples (1) and (3), this word is considered as non-metaphorical because its basic meaning does not stand in the clash with the contextual meaning: “a phenomenon related to a particular topic” in example (1); “a linguistic manifestation of a particular phenomenon” in example (3). In examples (2) and (4), the word “metoo” is treated as metaphorical because its basic meaning stands in contrast with the contextual: a social phenomenon vs a natural phenomenon in example (2); a social phenomenon vs explosives in example (4).

The results showed that the keyword “metoo” was often used in collocation with the word “movement” in both corpora. In the Lithuanian corpus, the collocation *#MeToo judėjimas* reached 136 concordance hits and in the English corpus, the collocation *#MeToo movement* had 201 concordance hits. It has to be admitted that this collocation is metaphorical in itself. However, as this study aims at disclosing metaphorical conceptualisation not of the word “metoo” but of the #MeToo movement as a social phenomenon, the collocation *#MeToo movement* was also analysed as a variant of the keyword in terms of its metaphoricity in addition to the keyword “metoo”. Table 1 shows the results of metaphor identification in both corpora.

The results of metaphor identification (Table 1) show that although the English corpus has significantly more concordance hits for the keywords (516 hits) in comparison with the Lithuanian corpus (281 hits), the difference in the ratio of metaphoricity is not very striking, only 9%.

**Table 1.** Metaphoricity of concordance hits of the keywords “metoo”, “metoo judėjimas” and “metoo movement” in the Lithuanian and English corpora<sup>1</sup>

Concordance hits	Lithuanian corpus	English corpus
metaphorical	128	191
non metaphorical	153	325
<b>Total</b>	281	516

The second step in CMA involves metaphor interpretation, which is understood as relating the identified metaphors in the corpora to the underlying metaphors in thought, that is conceptual metaphors. This step was performed by grouping identified linguistic metaphors into systematic semantic fields. This approach has been adopted in one way or another by a number of scholars (Cameron et al., 2010; Potts, Semino, 2019). Cameron, Low and Maslen put forward the idea that “a linguistic metaphor is connected into a dense network of ideas, associations, conceptual and affective patterns which are interwoven with correlates from embodied experience” (2010, p. 116). Thus, having taken this into consideration, the linguistic metaphors were categorised into broad semantic categories which can be treated as manifestations of potential conceptual metaphors. As the paper adopts a rhetorical perspective, these potential conceptual metaphors are further called scenarios (Musolff, 2016) because they imply participants, plot twists and story lines in the narrative of the #MeToo movement. Table 2 illustrates the conceptual metaphors or scenarios that were adopted in Lithuanian and English discourses of the #MeToo movement.

**Table 2.** The scenarios of the #MeToo movement in Lithuanian and English discourses

Scenarios	Lithuanian corpus / discourse	English corpus / discourse
	Tokens of linguistic metaphors and their relative frequency (%)	
NATURAL PHENOMENA	35 (27%)	24 (12.6%)
PERSONIFICATION	32 (25%)	41 (21.5%)
MOVEMENT	18 (14.1%)	23 (12.1%)
ILLNESS	13 (10.1%)	10 (5.23%)
FORCE	12 (9.4%)	70 (36.6%)
LEGAL ISSUES	11 (8.6%)	13 (6.8%)
OBJECT	7 (5.5%)	9 (4.7%)
SPORT	0	1 (0.5%)
<b>Total</b>	128 (100%)	191 (100%)

The findings show that the scenarios adopted in the Lithuanian and English discourses are almost the same. The #MeToo movement is conceptualised as a NATURAL PHENOMENON, PERSON, MOVEMENT, ILLNESS, FORCE, LEGAL ISSUES, OBJECT and SPORT. However, differences arise when we analyse the productivity of the scenarios in terms of the frequency of

<sup>1</sup> All tables in this paper have been produced by the author.

linguistic metaphors. The uneven distribution of metaphors across the scenarios in the Lithuanian and English discourses show prevalent patterns of conceptualisation of the #MeToo movement and, consequently, the attitudinal stance implied in the prevailing scenarios. In the Lithuanian discourse, the scenario of NATURAL PHENOMENA (27%) ranks first, whereas in the English discourse, the scenario of FORCE (36.6%) is the most salient. The scenario of PERSONIFICATION ranks second in the Lithuanian and English discourses – 25% and 21.5%, respectively.

Due to limited space, this paper focuses only on the prevailing metaphorical scenarios of NATURAL PHENOMENON and FORCE, leaving other scenarios for further investigation. The next section discusses the third step of CMA, namely the rhetorical peculiarities of communicating evaluative perspective.

### 3.2 Metaphor explanation: the scenario of NATURAL PHENOMENA

The NATURAL PHENOMENA scenario predominates in the Lithuanian discourse with its relative frequency of 27% (35 tokens), whereas in the English discourse it makes up only 12.6% (24 tokens) of all other scenarios (see Table 2). The findings indicate that this metaphorical scenario is developed through the conceptual elements of WATER, SOUND, STORM, PLANT, FIRE and LIGHT (Table 3). Their general distribution across Lithuanian and English discourses is uneven, although the prevalent conceptual element of WATER remains the same.

**Table 3.** The conceptual elements of the NATURAL PHENOMENA scenario

Conceptual elements	Tokens of metaphors	
	Lithuanian discourse	English discourse
WATER	21	11
SOUND	7	0
STORM	3	1
PLANT	2	0
FIRE	1	6
LIGHT	1	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>24</b>

Most frequently, the conceptual element of WATER acquires its linguistic manifestation through the word *banga* / *wave* in both discourses. The usage pattern is *adjective* / *noun* / *numeral* + *banga* / *wave*. This way, in the Lithuanian and English discourses, there are similar collocations describing the #MeToo movement:

- (5) Lithuanian: *cunamio banga* (tsunami wave), *antroji banga* (the second wave), *ispaniškoji banga* (Spanish wave).
- (6) English: *tidal wave*, *first wave*, *shockwave*.

Another quite productive pattern is *wave + verb*, in which the wave is typically presented as a dangerous force. In the Lithuanian discourse, the #MeToo wave is used with the following verbs: *prasadėjo* (started), *(nu)vilnija* (ripples), *(besi)ritasi* (rolls), *kelia* (raises sth.), *iškilo* (has risen), *užkabino* (has hooked), *drebina* (shakes), *užlieja* (floods), *siaučia* (storms). The verbs of this pattern are presented here in a relatively increasing order of strength, showing the level of danger and importance ascribed to the #MeToo movement. Also, the word *srovė* (current) is used as a synonym for the word *banga* (wave). In the English discourse, however, this pattern seems to be less developed and threatening as only one verb having a pejorative meaning is used: “*the wave is sweeping socially conservative South Korea*”. The other two verbs *has made* and *has brought* are used in the pattern *verb + wave*, in which the agent is the #MeToo movement. Similarly, the pattern #MeToo + *verb* (*splash, dampen, gather steam*) becomes fairly productive in the English discourse.

(7) *The #MeToo movement is splashing cold water on whatever embers of romance.*

(8) *#MeToo has dampened one traditional route to dating: Office romances.*

The conceptual element of STORM has an indirect link to the conceptual element of WATER because the natural phenomenon of storm is often associated with strong winds and rain, the latter being a type of water. In the Lithuanian discourse, the STORM is realised through the pattern #MeToo + *verb*: *nerimsta* (is not calming down), *aprimo* (has calmed down), *įsisiautėjo* (has stormed out). In the English discourse, it follows the pattern #MeToo *is a storm*. Examples (5) and (6) illustrate these patterns.

(9) *[...] lietuviškasis #metoo įsisiautėjo, tačiau ji jau nebežino, kas yra tiesa, o kas – ne.*

([...] Lithuanian #metoo has stormed out, and she does not know what is true and what is not.)

(10) *#MeToo ... It was the perfect storm to happen and I feel really blessed I was the vessel, the messenger.*

Another natural phenomenon through which the #MeToo movement is conceptualised is SOUND. However, this conceptualisation is typical only of the Lithuanian discourse, being absent from the English. The noun *atgarsis* (echo), the verbs *skamba* (sound / ring), *netyla* (does not grow quiet) are used to emphasise increasing volume of the sound. The pattern #MeToo + *verb* is followed:

(11) *#Metoo skamba vis garsiau: dar viena moteris prabilo apie seksualinį išnaudojimą meno mokykloje.*

(#Metoo sounds louder and louder: one more woman spoke about sexual harassment in art school).

(12) *#MeToo Lietuvoje netyla, paviešintas atviras laiškas: ar tylą išteisins vagį ar kitą nusikaltėlį?*

(#MeToo does not grow quiet in Lithuania, an open letter is made public: Will the silence vindicate a thief or another criminal?)

The conceptual elements of LIGHT and FIRE stand out in the English discourse in comparison to the Lithuanian discourse. The conceptual element of LIGHT makes the



#MeToo movement visible to the public. Typically, the pattern #MeToo + verb is followed: #MeToo helps shine light on, highlights, spotlights, bursts into the spotlight. The metaphor in the light of the #MeToo movement is exactly equivalent to the only metaphor of the conceptual element of LIGHT in the Lithuanian discourse – #metoo šviesoje. If LIGHT produces visibility, another conceptual element of FIRE, in addition to its physical properties of being hot and ability to burn things, also has the physical property of making things visible. The equivalent verbs *spark* and *įžiebt* (*spark*) imply two aspects of the meaning: becoming visible, meaning to become public, and start fire, meaning to cause something to start or develop:

(13) *Zoe Chance, a marketing professor at Yale School of Management, believes #MeToo will spark lasting change.*

(14) *Žurnalistiniai tyrimai taip pat įžiebė judėjimą #MeToo visame pasaulyje. (Investigative journalism has sparked the #MeToo movement throughout the world.)*

In addition, the verb *fuel* is often used in the English discourse and although it has only an indirect relation to FIRE (to supply something with material that can be burnt to produce heat or power (OALD 2015)), it expresses intensification of emotions as in the following example:

(15) *In the letter they say the #Metoo movement against sexual harassment amounted to “puritanism” and was fuelled by a “hatred of men”.*

In addition, the #MeToo movement is also conceptualised as a growing plant but only in the Lithuanian discourse:

(16) *Tad lietuviškas # MeToo judėjimas skleidžiasi jam absoliučiai „nežinomoje žemėje“.*

(The Lithuanian #MeToo movement is coming into flower in absolutely “unfamiliar soil”).

The presented results of the metaphorical conceptualisation of the #MeToo movement via the NATURAL PHENOMENON scenario primarily serve a predicative function entailing a certain attitude to this phenomenon of social concern. The analysis of the metaphorical scenario where the #MeToo movement is presented as uncontrollable water or storm shows that it is comprehended as a force affecting the society, which implies the unpredictability and inevitability of the #MeToo movement. It has spread far and wide; it has reached geographically, culturally and politically distant countries, it has acquired the power to change people’s lives, and escape from the overwhelming influence of this movement seems impossible. Similarly, fire as a natural phenomenon can also be seen as a tremendous force acting on society’s attitude towards the #MeToo movement. Neither of the discourses analysed mentions huge fires; on the contrary, only a spark is mentioned, which logically implies that the problem is only beginning and if measures are not taken against it, major complications could arise. Thus, the usage of the word *įžiebt* / *spark* entails danger as a tiny spark that might ignite a devastating fire. If WATER, STORM and FIRE signify an uncontrollable force affecting society, then SOUND, LIGHT and PLANT highlight another aspect of the #MeToo movement. Sound and light are natural phenomena that have to do



with perceptions of hearing and seeing. Therefore, when the *MeToo* movement is presented via the SOUND metaphor, the implication arises that the higher the volume, the better informed society is. Similarly, the LIGHT metaphor indicates that the *MeToo* movement is becoming manifest as the public learns more and more about new cases of it. The PLANT metaphor also contributes to raising people's awareness, as the *#MeToo* movement is seen as a bud and this implies that the movement did not manifest in an open form, but the metaphor of a plant coming into flower, despite being delicate and frail, entails visibility and awareness. The findings of other studies (Hart, 2010, Cibulskienė, 2018) show that when social problems, for example, immigration, are presented via metaphors of natural phenomena such as waves, storm, or fire, they typically acquire pejorative connotations implying threat. Interestingly, when the *#MeToo* movement is presented via the same metaphors of natural phenomena, it is viewed positively and entails awareness and tackling the vexing problem.

### 3.3 Metaphor explanation: the scenario of FORCE

The FORCE scenario prevails in the English discourse with a relative frequency of 37% (70 tokens), whereas in the Lithuanian discourse it makes up only 9% (12 tokens) of all other scenarios (see Table 2). It has to be admitted that the previously analysed NATURAL PHENOMENA scenario is also related to the FORCE scenario because such natural phenomena as water, storm and fire may be treated as a type of force. Admittedly, they do share a number of common features, but in this study, they were analysed separately because the FORCE scenario metaphors are more general in comparison to the NATURAL PHENOMENA metaphors, which are more specific in terms of the semantic field they belong to. Due to the FORCE's general and skeletal nature, its conceptual elements have not been differentiated.

The findings indicate that the FORCE scenario is fairly frequent in the English discourse in comparison to the Lithuanian discourse. In most cases, it adopts the pattern *#MeToo* + verb (37 cases) and sometimes the pattern verb + *#MeToo* (7 cases). It seems that both patterns contain verbs of a fairly aggressive character: *pierced*, *toppled*, *slams*, *smacks*, *unleash*, *kill off*, *is sweeping*, *blow the door open*, *has shaken*, *forced*, *threatens*, *has attacked*. Some verbs can be considered as more neutral: *struggles*, *brings changes*, *has impact*, *enabled*, *made / forced me to think*. Consider these patterns in the following examples:

- (17) *Prosecutors and the defence began the difficult task of picking a jury for Bill Cosby's sexual assault retrial Monday amid a powerful #MeToo movement that has pierced the consciousness of the men and women who will sit in judgment on the 80-year-old comedian.*
- (18) *I think we're trying to do that now, as the opening volleys of #MeToo smack us with backlash against backlash.*
- (19) *The amazing thing about the #MeToo movement is that it has lifted a lid on a dark and shameful secret that the world conspired to keep for years.*

(20) *Last week in Le Monde, Catherine Deneuve signed an open letter denouncing the #MeToo movement as totalitarian, and a similar piece ran in the New York Times grumbling that it reduced women to the level of “Victorian housewives”.*

(21) *Brigitte Bardot slams ‘ridiculous’ #MeToo movement and says she found it ‘charming’ when men said she had a ‘nice little backside’.*

Evidently, examples (13)–(17) show tendencies present in the discussed patterns. The pattern #MeToo + verb manifests in examples (13)–(16), which show that the #MeToo movement exerts a force on people’s minds in either a fairly aggressive or neutral way. It seems that the actions in which the #MeToo movement is involved are related to positive outcomes, i.e. making sexual harassment known to the public. However, example (16) openly advocates viewing the opponents of the #MeToo movement as forcing women back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when they were sexually disadvantaged. Example (17) follows the pattern verb + #MeToo, which also illustrates the opinion of the #MeToo movement adversaries.

Although the FORCE scenario is not prevalent in the Lithuanian discourse, similarly to the English discourse it adopts the pattern #MeToo + verb but, conversely, it does not follow the pattern verb + #MeToo. The verbs used in this pattern tend to be of the same more or less aggressive character: (*su*)*drebinu* (shake), *purto* (shake), *išklibinu* (shake loose), *išvertė* (knock down), *sukėlė* (raise in a sense ‘arouse’), *įgalina* (empower). Consider the following example:

(22) *Lietuvoje, ko gero niekas net nepagalvojo, kad #MeToo per tokį trumpą laiką pradės purtyti ir Lietuvos politikos, meno bei akademinį elitą.*

(In Lithuania perhaps nobody thought that #MeToo would start shaking the elite of Lithuanian politicians and university teachers.)

Although in the FORCE scenario, the #MeToo movement is most frequently presented as an active agent or an agent undergoing some action, there are nouns and adjectives denoting specific features of the movement in both discourses. Apparently, in the English and Lithuanian discourses, words of equivalent or similar meaning are used:

English: *powerful, totalitarian, empowerment, backlash, witch-hunt, mob rule.*

Lithuanian: *galinga* (powerful), *nevaldoma minios valdžia* (uncontrollable mob rule), *raganų medžioklė* (witch-hunt).

In addition, the English discourse contains WEAPON metaphors that can be treated as a conceptual element of the FORCE scenario. The #MeToo movement is seen either as a weapon, i.e. a general term (example (19)) or as an exploded bomb, i.e. a specific term for a weapon, (example (20)). When the media expresses the opinion of people who do not support the movement, the #MeToo movement is presented as being under fire (example (21)).

(23) *The #MeToo movement is a weapon for people who are marginalised.*

[...] the organization’s work is really in tribute to Burke and the remarkable work she did for a decade before #MeToo exploded globally.

(24) *Donald Trump and the #MeToo movement come under fire in a new satirical novel by Sean Penn.*

In the *FORCE* scenario, a predicative function serves to show the public's attitude towards the *#MeToo* movement expressed in English and Lithuanian media. The prevalence of the pattern *#MeToo + verb* and its fairly aggressive character in both discourses shows that the topic of sexual harassment has significantly affected the society, and it has become important to talk about it in order to prevent it in the future. Aggressive metaphorical language exemplifies that disclosing the taboo topic of sexual harassment is a necessary measure to stop it. Interestingly, and similarly to the analysed *NATURAL PHENOMENA* scenario, aggressive and inevitable force points to positive outcomes. At first, it might seem that the *#MeToo* movement is related to an aggressive, uncontrollable and strong force applied to the society. Paradoxically, this metaphorical *FORCE* has a positive impact on society. First, it points to the importance and relevance of the issue raised. Next, it contributes to awareness of the existing problem. The issue of sexual harassment was like a stigma as people knew that such things happened, but the victims often refused to speak about it for different psychological and/or legal reasons. The *#MeToo* movement has liberated the consciousness of the victims by enabling them to speak about it. Thus, the *FORCE* scenario communicates a positive evaluation of the *#MeToo* movement, and it is related to surfacing the deep-hidden social problem of sexual harassment.

## Concluding remarks

Although the findings of this evidence-based application grounded in contemporary social concerns demonstrate that the conceptual metaphors of *NATURAL PHENOMENA*, *FORCE*, *PERSONIFICATION*, *MOVEMENT*, *ILLNESS*, *LEGAL ISSUES*, *OBJECT* and *SPORT* are being realised linguistically in the Lithuanian and English discourses about the *#MeToo* movement, the article focused only on the prevailing conceptual metaphors of *NATURAL PHENOMENA* and *FORCE* by adopting a scenario-oriented approach. Contrastive analysis across the Lithuanian and English discourses revealed cross-cultural differences in the choice of metaphorical scenarios. The Lithuanian discourse is largely dominated by the *NATURAL PHENOMENA* scenario, whereas in the English discourse, the *FORCE* scenario comes to the fore. However, the *NATURAL PHENOMENA* scenario stands in hyponymic relation to the *FORCE* scenario and might be regarded as a subtype of the *FORCE* scenario. In this case, if we treat both scenarios as one, then this is the number one scenario in terms of the raw frequency of metaphorical tokens in both discourses. Specifically, the relative frequency is 36.4% in the Lithuanian discourse and 49.2% in the English discourse.

Although in terms of frequency of metaphorical tokens similar scenarios prevail in both discourses, their development shows some differences. Within the *NATURAL PHENOMENA* scenario the conceptual element of *WATER* stands out in both discourses, but the conceptual element of *SOUND* is characteristic only of the Lithuanian discourse, while the conceptual elements of *FIRE* and *LIGHT* are more typical of the English discourse. The *FORCE* scenario is extremely salient in the English discourse in comparison to the Lithuanian. Moreover, it is mostly displayed in two patterns: the *#MeToo* movement exerts a force on something

or somebody, or force is exerted on the #MeToo movement. In the Lithuanian discourse, only the first pattern was identified.

When analysing the prevailing scenarios of NATURAL PHENOMENA and FORCE from an evaluative perspective, i.e. the predicative function of metaphor, it can be seen that the #MeToo movement as an issue of social concern is presented as an active agent creating a profound impact on society. The usage of metaphors implying fairly strong or even violent physical actions related to forces such as uncontrollable water, storm, fire, attack indicates that the public has faced a social problem which is highly important as it threatens morality and the psychological well-being of the society. Although NATURAL PHENOMENA and FORCE scenario-related metaphors express the unpredictable or inevitable outcome of battling elemental forces, they carry positive implications: constructive changes in the mindset of society. In terms of the predicative function of metaphor, both the Lithuanian and British discourses analysed are more likely to exhibit more similarities than differences when attitudes towards the controversial issue of the #MeToo movement are communicated. The reasons for so many cross-cultural similarities might be different, but perhaps one of the major factors bleaching the differences is the chain reaction on the global scale when Lithuanian journalists render the events related to the #MeToo movement from English, the source language, into Lithuanian, the target language. Using verbatim translations of metaphorical language has a significant impact on lessening cross-cultural differences.

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