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Influx of Migrants versus People in Need – A Combined Analysis of Framing and Connotation in the Lampedusa News Coverage

Vivien Benert & Anne Beier

Abstract: When the first boats sank off the coast of Lampedusa, Italy, the debate about refugees and migration started to become one of the most widely discussed issues in mass media and therefore in communication studies again. The concept of framing becomes relevant when investigating the depiction of certain events and issues in news coverage. However, it still lacks a coherent definition. Most recently, it has been argued that a consideration of further elements is necessary in order to restructure the concept. Thus, the present case-study focuses on a combination of linguistic elements used in recent migration discourse and a potential impact of language on news frames. The results of a combined frame and corpus-based analysis of the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the English *Guardian* show that connotation of key words used in news frames about the Lampedusa incident between October 2013 and October 2014 diverge from the orientation of news frames. Although approximately two thirds of the examined articles use protection frames, the majority of the identified key words describing refugees is connoted negatively. The fact that these contrary orientations of news frames and connotation do exist serves as a first indication for linguistic elements as influencing factors in framing research.

Keywords: Framing, Connotation, Lampedusa, Migration, Corpus-Based Analysis, Content Analysis, Germany, United Kingdom

Introduction

In retrospect as well as especially in light of the current situation in Europe, migration and refugees are subject of constant depiction in mass media. When it comes to the presentation of certain events and topics in mediated communication, framing research in particular has been discussed considerably. Further important elements in presenting a certain issue are, unsurprisingly, language and linguistic elements. Even though many studies about the representation of refugees in mass media do already exist, for instance with regard to pictorial representation (Haußecker, 2013), framing (D'Haenens & de Lange, 2001; Sommer & Ruhrmann, 2010) or purely verbal representation, mostly focusing on the use of metaphors (Hentges, 2006; Huhnke, 1997), an integration of language elements into framing research has so far been excluded by most scholars

(cf. Carlan & Ciocea, 2014; Simon & Jerit, 2007 as exceptions). Thus, the present case-study focuses on a combination of linguistic elements used in recent migration discourse and their interdependence with the orientation of news frames.

When it comes to the investigation of potential effects of media content, framing is one of the most discussed and used concepts in communication studies, especially in more recent research tradition. Apart from Entman's famous definition of framing (1993), it is at the same time a concept with largely varying definitions and elements. Because of this divergence in framing research with constantly changing definitions and interpretations, scholars have called for a more structured discussion about and investigation of the concept (Matthes, 2012; de Vreese, 2012). Cacciatore et al. (2016), for example, not only demand a narrower definition, but also the inclusion of visual and other (non-)verbal cues, which have so far been ignored by most scholars.

In order to follow Cacciatore et al. (2016) and other scholars' call for a more structured discussion and investigation of framing, we want to propose a narrow conception of framing itself that is extended by another level; namely, the factor of language. In particular, this means that the concept of connotation is taken into consideration as a factor that affects the orientation of news articles. The importance of a restructured view on the research area becomes especially apparent when considering that many scholars differ with regard to the elements that they consider in their studies and the ones they decide to exclude. This not only leads to various research concepts that are difficult to compare, but it also complicates comprehension, comparison, and validation of research results. One aspect of contrary practices is, for instance, the consideration of certain words in news articles. While some scholars find that choice of words can be neglected as an influencing factor in framing research (van Gorp, 2005), one could also argue that connotation of words and the presence or absence of certain figures of speech may still influence interpretations and thus effects of media content (cf. the experimental study of Simon and Jerit (2007), who investigated the impact of the use of 'fetus' vs. 'baby' in news articles about partial-birth abortion). Therefore, our assumption is, that the tendency of a news article can change according to the tonality of key words. It is quite unlikely that news articles are interpreted positively only due to their extra-linguistic content if the language and connotation of words used within are mostly negative, or vice versa, since interdependence between language and news frames needs to be assumed.

Therefore, we suggest a restructured conception of framing with regard to the language factor connotation. Afterwards, we combine an applied framing analysis of news articles in recent migration discourse with a corpus-based analysis of key words in order to investigate language use and the orientation of frames present in this discourse. In order to focus on the importance of language in general and connotation in particular, an investigation of connotation in current migration

discourse with regard to its interaction with news frames will be applied. Potential effects of the recipients' cognitive interpretation are, however, not the subject of this study and should thus be investigated in further research. The case-study focuses on national print articles in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany) and *The Guardian* (UK) between October 2013 and October 2014 that cover the beginning of the current discourse on refugees, namely the incidents of sinking boats close to Lampedusa, Italy. These newspapers are two of Europe's biggest selling quality daily newspapers. Additionally, a multi-language sample helps to test the results against possible language biases that might appear. Furthermore, Germany and the UK have a long migration history as receiving countries (Brücker, 2005; Bade & Oltmer, 2004).¹

Theoretical Background

The concept of framing described by Scheufele (2003), Entman (1993), and others (Matthes, 2014; de Vreese, 2012; van Gorp, 2005) does not take into consideration how the orientation that frames place on news articles can be affected by the connotation of key words that are used within these specific news frames. Nevertheless, considering that both concepts are at least partially based on the recipient's cognitive processes, a combined discussion seems promising. This chapter briefly examines both concepts in their own right in order to subsequently construct a combined model.

Framing

As one of the most discussed concepts in communication studies, framing refers to patterns of interpretation of reality during the production and reception of news media. The first definition of a framing concept in communication studies goes back to Robert Entman (1993, p. 52): "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." He was also the first one to clearly define the elements of a frame as: "Frames then, define problems [...], diagnose causes [...], make moral judgements [...] and suggest remedies" (ibid.). Based on Entman's first definition, the communication literature has developed varied definitions that mirror the wide range of different conceptualizations when it comes to framing.²

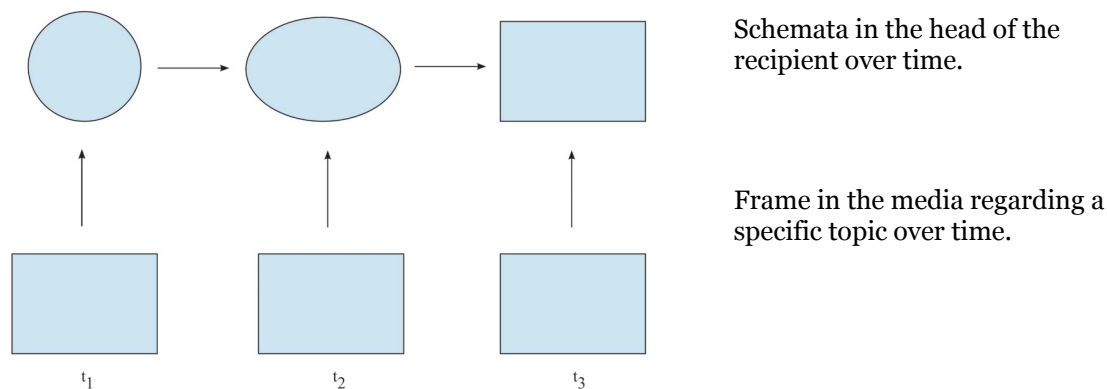
Nevertheless, it becomes clear that frames can be seen as a guide for understanding and interpreting new mediated information and for arranging this

¹ The following case-study was part of Vivien Benert's bachelor thesis submitted to the Institute for English Language and Literature, Freie Universität Berlin, in 2015. Although text and data have been revised for this article, parts of both texts might be similar.

² For an in-depth examination of framing and its different conceptualisations refer to Cacciatore et al. (2016).

information with already existing knowledge (Scheufele, 2003, p. 46). Therefore, frames play an equally important role in news production and news reception and may include changes in knowledge, thought, and behavior. Following Price et al. (1997), who suggest that the salient attributes of the message activate certain parts of stored knowledge in order to interpret and evaluate the news article, it becomes clear that the choices of those who produce media content do affect the cognitive schema a reader will apply (Cacciatore et al., 2016). With regard to the offered interpretation frame and associated construction of reality, two types of frames can be differentiated: communicator-based and effects-based (Scheufele, 2003, p. 59). Whereas communicator-based frames refer to journalistic work routines and describe *how* the content is presented due to journalistic choices, effects-based frames describe *what* is presented. It focuses on how certain selection processes (meaning the mentioning or disregarding of certain information) together with the resulting frames may affect the schemata in the heads of recipients. Assuming that effect, the aspect of *what* is presented in news articles, namely the elements that contribute to a certain orientation, becomes vital.

Figure 1: The effect of media frames on the cognitive schema in the heads of recipients



(Scheufele, 2003, p. 65)

In the latest discussion Cacciatore et al. (2016) criticize the broad understanding and various definitions of framing. They argue that “a much narrower conceptual understanding of framing is the only way for our discipline to move forward” (p. 20). This may include a development away from text-only frame manipulations and towards a discussion of visual or other non-verbal cues (ibid., p. 15). In order to follow Cacciatore et al. (2016) and their demand for a more structured and narrower conception of framing, the present article suggests an inclusion of language factors (i.e. connotation) as important elements of a news article’s tonality and thus restructures Scheufele’s framing approach (Figure 1) by including connotation as a relevant factor on another level (Figures 2 and 3). Thus, the conceptual understanding of framing itself stays narrow and therefore clearly structured, whereas at the same time the spin that the connotation of key words adds to the tendency of the news article itself is also taken into consideration.

Connotation

In lack of an overarching and general definition, the concept of connotation is rather influenced by various fields of research such as psychology, mathematics, literary theory, and linguistics, thus leading to many differing and often contradictory definitions. In her seminal work *Connotation and Meaning* (1991), Beatriz Garza-Cuarón gives a comprehensive and chronological overview of the discussion of the concept of connotation, including the different research areas as well as the contrasting schools of thought. With regard to the definition of connotation used in the present study, only selected aspects of Garza-Cuarón's discussion will be the subject of this chapter.³

In a colloquial context, connotation is usually defined in contrast to denotation, which is often seen as the dictionary meaning (Allan, 2007; Garza-Cuarón, 1991). In this regard, connotation would be anything that is associated with a specific term that goes beyond this dictionary meaning. From a linguistic point of view, however, this definition is somewhat problematic since dictionaries usually also provide definitions of terms, thereby drawing on associations and synonyms to explain the term in question, thus leading to circular reasoning (ibid.). Allan rather defines connotation as “pragmatic effects” (2007, p. 1052) that arise from knowledge about the denotation of specific terms, but also include cultural factors such as (religious) beliefs, prejudices and individual experiences, and that, to a large extent, also arise from forms used for naming and addressing. Garza-Cuarón supports this viewpoint by stating that

[t]he term ‘meaning’, which is used by all linguists, is necessarily inclusive since it must embrace all aspects of semiosis that may be distinguished by a philosophical or logical analysis: 1) relations on various levels of speech forms to other speech forms, 2) relations of speech forms to non-verbal situations, and 3) relations again on various levels, to the persons who are participating in the act of communication (Garza-Cuarón, 1991, p. 155).

In accordance with these definitions by Allan (2007) and Garza-Cuarón (1991) is an early definition of connotation by Bloomfield, who distinguishes the following three kinds of connotation: 1) differences according to the speaker's social standing and his or her place of origin, 2) values of terms acquired through their social use, e.g. improper forms, and 3) intensive forms, e.g. exclamations (Bloomfield, 1961, pp. 152-154). The first definition corresponds to Allan's aspect of cultural influences on the connotation of words, while Bloomfield's second definition corresponds to the aspect of context and situation.

With regard to migration discourse the use of the German terms *Asylant* – ‘bogus migrant’ – and *Migrant* – ‘refugee’⁴ – serve as an example, since *Asylant* used to

³ For a complete discussion of the concept of connotation and the problems that arise when trying to define it, please directly refer to Beatriz Garza-Cuarón's *Connotation and Meaning* (1991).

⁴ Note that the meaning of the German word *Migrant* and the English word *refugee* is not completely identical. Based on the established criteria for the evaluation of connotation of words (compare p. 6), the two words can however be considered to be equivalent with regard to their connotation.

be considered an unbiased reference term for refugees until approximately the late 1980s. Then, a constant use of this term in mostly negative contexts in media and politics caused the term to carry a highly negative connotation, making its use unaccepted in the German speech community (cf. Butterwegge, 2006 for a discussion of the impacts of negatively connoted key words in migration discourse). In this case, the given form (*Asylant*) and its euphemism (*Migrant*) have the same denotation but the form also has an improper connotation (cf. Garza-Cuarón, 1991). Therefore, words can obtain their connotation through their use in certain contexts and speech act situations, as for example terms in migration discourse are often used in combination with water metaphors (e.g. *flow of migrants*) (Böke, 1997; Butterwegge, 2006).

Furthermore, the structure of words plays an important role in establishing connotation, especially if this structure leads to similarities of a term with other positively or negatively connoted terms (Stefanowitsch, 2012; Birk, 2012). In this respect, the underlying definitions of connotation and denotation for the present study are as follows: Denotation is

“a fixed meaning, shared by a linguistic community; a normal, dictionary meaning with a high degree of acceptability, carrying essential information. Connotation is the variable meaning that is fixed by culture; a meaning that is contextual and dependent on the speech act situation and that may include deviations from the norm with low degrees of acceptability” (Garza-Cuarón, 1991, pp. 213-215).

Additionally, the structural attributes of the word in question are an important influence on the connotation of a word, while connotation is also intricately connected to the appropriateness of a term (Birk, 2012). To sum up, three main indicators can be identified that influence the connotation of words:

1. *Affixes* of words and their general syntactic and morphological components, as for example in the German term *Flücht-ling*, where the diminutive suffix *-ling* adds to an interpretation of refugees as small and dependent on others.
2. *Context of use*, including values acquired through social use (Bloomfield, 1961) and for naming and addressing (Allan, 2007), figures of speech such as metaphors, relations to other speech forms (Garza-Cuarón, 1991) and collocates. With regard to migration discourse, the use of (water) metaphors is especially of interest, but also the combination of adjectives used to characterize nouns (i.e. collocates).
3. *Cultural factors*, including a person's social standing (Bloomfield, 1961) as well as prior knowledge and beliefs (Allan, 2007). This aspect can best be described as the general assumption of a certain culture about the connotation and appropriateness of the word in question. It can be argued that dictionary entries actually capture the cultural beliefs and interpretations of a word, since they provide background knowledge, associations and synonyms (as explained above).

Framing and Connotation: An Extended Model

As both concepts carry meaning – at least partially – it is surprising that framing and connotation are hardly ever combined. An exception is provided by Simon and Jerit (2007), who investigated the impact of differently connoted words on the cognitive interpretation of news articles by recipients. In a combination of content analysis and experimental research design, they first evaluated the presence of the words ‘fetus’ and ‘baby’ in congressional and media discourse about the so-called partial-birth abortion (PBA) debate before conducting an experiment in which participants read news articles either using the word ‘fetus’ or ‘baby’ or a combination of both in a discussion about PBA. Findings showed significant differences between the opponents and the supporters of PBA in their respective word choice, with opponents referring to ‘baby’ more often while supporters of PBA preferred the word ‘fetus’ in their argument structure (ibid., p. 260). Secondly, results of the experiment showed that participants who read a prepared article exclusively using the word ‘fetus’ were more likely to vote in favor of PBA than those who read an article that used the term ‘baby’. Furthermore, participants who read the ‘fetus’-only article referred to the word ‘fetus’ more often when asked to summarize the article in their own words, while the ‘baby’-only group increasingly used the word ‘baby’ in their own summaries and were also more likely to vote against PBA (ibid., p. 264f.).

In contrast, other scholars even explicitly disregard the aspect of connotation in their frame analyses, arguing that journalists choose specific wordings as well as certain rhetoric tools, such as metaphors and similes, rather with the aim of producing a coherent and nicely readable story than with the purpose of trying to achieve certain media effects on the recipients’ end (van Gorp, 2005). This may be true concerning what Scheufele (2003) calls the communicator-based approach of framing, namely the choices of journalists in news production processes. Nevertheless, we argue that – although produced (unintentionally) by journalists – the connotation of key words can still affect the overall orientation of news articles and shift the emphasis of their content. This can potentially happen in two possible scenarios:

1. The connotation of key words in a news frame can be **contrary to** its direction and therefore oppose the news frame and weaken its impact.
2. The direction of news frames and the connotation of key words can be **in accordance with** each other, therefore resulting in an emphasis of the news frame due to connotation.

As an example, it may occur that a frame in news articles has a negative orientation with regard to its presentation of refugees because it presents them as an economic burden for a community, while the terms that are used in this article to refer to refugees are nevertheless connoted positively, for example using terms such as *people in need*. These positive terms can lead to positive associations on the side of the recipients and generate empathy, therefore reducing the impact of the negative frame.

Thus, an empirical investigation of the orientation of news frames and the orientation of the connotation of certain key words seems promising, since potential contradiction on both levels would be able to influence the overall orientation of a news article. While Simon and Jerit found that choice of certain words with differing connotation does indeed affect recipients' interpretation and reception of news articles (2007), and Fausey and Boroditsky even explicitly talk about "linguistic framing" (2010, p. 644) in their study about the influence of linguistic cues on recipients' evaluation processes and their attribution of responsibility, Scheufele's model of an effects-based approach of framing (2003, p. 64) disregards possible connotative influences of language in news frames.

In accordance with Cacciatore et al. we argue that a combined investigation of both levels – news frames and connotation – fulfils the requirement for a narrower conceptual understanding of framing as well as a development towards the examination of further (non-verbal) elements that carry meaning. An extension of Scheufele's original model (see Figure 1) takes the two possible cognitive effects of connotation into account.

Figure 2: Restructuring the effects-based framing approach: the case of contrary orientation of news frames and connotation

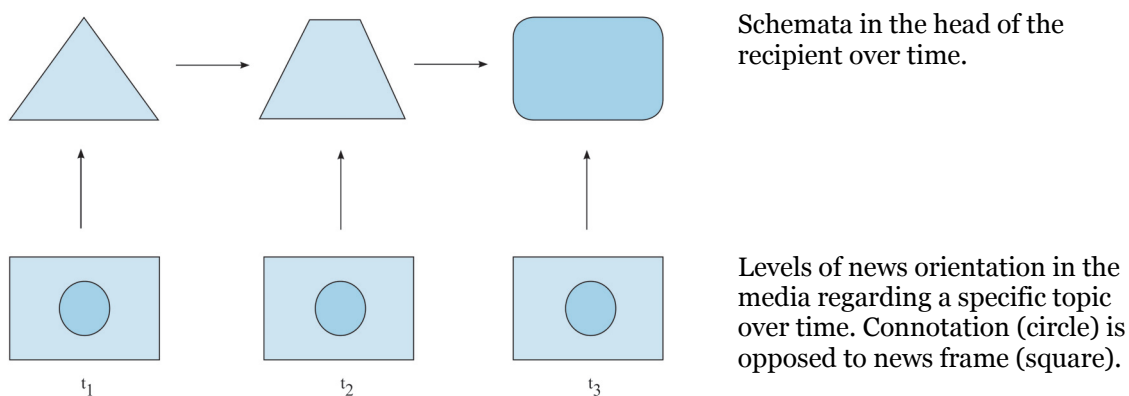
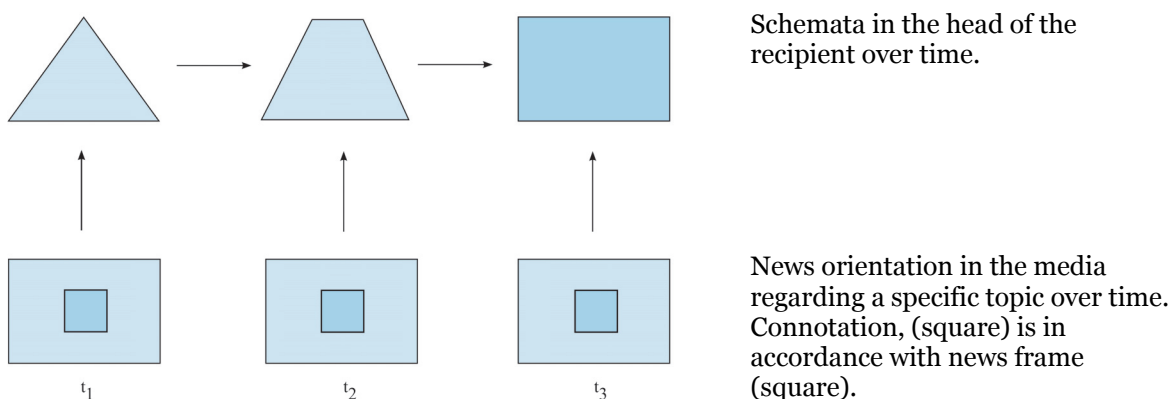


Figure 3: Restructuring the effects-based framing approach: the case of consistent orientation of news frames and connotation



Under the influence of connotation, one would have to expect that the impact of the news frame on recipients' schemata is weakened when the orientation of the connotation is contrary, therefore resulting in an incomplete adjustment of the schema to the news frame (Figure 2). Only in the case of a consistent direction of connotation and news frame a complete adjustment of the recipients' schema to the news frame seems logical (Figure 3). In other words, if the orientation of connotation and news frame point in contrary directions (one positive and the other negative), the news frame is either weakened by connotation or a shift of the news frame's orientation might occur (Figure 2). If, however, the orientation of connotation and news frames point in the same direction (either negative or positive), the news frame is strengthened by connotation (Figure 3).

Kepplinger et al. argue that cognitive and emotional reactions both play a role in the evaluation of frames and reinforce each other so that "recipients reach a conclusion, partially drawing on their emotional responses" (2012, p. 661). Conducting a content analysis of German newspaper articles, they found that even though culprits for the scandals in question were very rarely identified by names and the news coverage rarely denounced public figures, recipients still evaluated the news coverage to be highly denunciatory (ibid.). This speaks in favor of interdependence between emotional and cognitive effects. With regard to connotation, similar effects can be expected since positive and negative connotations may cause either empathy or antipathy, respectively, on the side of the recipients, therefore also influencing the cognitive evaluation of the issue in question.

State of Research: Media and Migration

In communication research, various aspects of the media coverage of migration issues have been of interest for scholars around the world, resulting in extensive investigations of how refugees are presented in mass media. Studies in the field of media research vary from pictorial (Haußecker, 2013) and verbal representation, for example focusing on metaphors (Hentges, 2006; Huhnke, 1997) or topoi (Wengeler, 2006), to framing research (van Gorp, 2005; D'Haenens & de Lange, 2001).

Some framing studies identify general frames meant to describe the predominant attitude in a discourse, while others focus on specific frames linked more explicitly to certain events. An example for a general frame analysis has been conducted by Balabanova & Balch (2010), who examined the attitude of the United Kingdom as a receiving country of migrant workers within the EU in contrast to the attitude of Bulgaria as a sending country. They discovered two contrary general frames in the news coverage of each country concerning the 2007 European enlargement: a (positive) universalist cosmopolitan frame, which argues in favor of an enlargement and emphasizes its advantages, and a (negative) communitarian frame that

focuses on risks and problems. The use of frames in British newspapers was mixed, depending on the political orientation of the specific newspaper,⁵ but the overall tendency in news reporting in the United Kingdom was rather skeptical towards intra-EU migration of working migrants.

Similarly, van Gorp (2005) distinguishes two contrary main frames in his research about the coverage of asylum issues in Belgian media, one of which also has a positive orientation with regard to the presentation of refugees, while the other frame focuses on a negative representation of refugees in news articles. The positive frame depicts “migrants as innocent victims” (p. 489), whereas the negative one depicts refugees as intruders and a potential cause of criminality and trouble. This basic distinction between refugees as victims and refugees as a source of trouble, which is the underlying assumption in both of the mentioned studies, can also be found in further framing studies about the presentation of refugees in mass media. Semetko & Valkenburg, for example, also establish this distinction in their study *Framing European Politics: A content analysis of press and television news* (2000), even though they do identify more than one positive and one negative frame. Altogether, they distinguish between five generic frames: a positive *morality frame* and a negative *conflict frame*, an *economic frame* that emphasizes the economic consequences of migration, a *human interest frame*, and an *attribution of responsibility frame* (pp. 95-97).

Furthermore, Heinz Bonfadelli (2007), who conducted a meta-analysis of existing migration research in order to create an overview of the presentation of refugees in the German press and television news, argues that refugees are generally underrepresented in positive contexts and at the same time overrepresented in negative contexts, as for example crime news, which supports the stereotype of refugees as criminals. Furthermore, refugees are usually presented as a collective group without acknowledgment of single individuals (ibid.; see also Ruhrmann, 1997), which may lead to a decrease in the perception of refugees’ individuality and to less empathy on the recipients’ end.

With regard to linguistic representation, much research has been conducted about the use of language in migration discourse in German mass media, including research about the presence, frequency and effects of certain terms and metaphors (Wengeler, 2006; Hentges, 2006; Böke, 1997). Additionally, general linguistic concepts such as antonymous basic pairs, for example *good/bad*, *light/dark* or *up/down*, are discussed with regard to their uses in migration discourse. Especially the distinction of *the Self/the Other* is important in migration discourse, since, as Dietrich Busse (1997) as well as Siegfried Jäger (1997) argue, it is not possible to refer to the Self without the Other in opposition. With regard to present research interests, the distinction between *friend/foe* and the concept of the own country and refugees as intruders – and thus ‘others’ – is important, since it is an

⁵ The following six national UK newspapers were used in their analysis: *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *The Mirror* and *The Sun*.

often used argument in negatively oriented news frames about migration (van Gorp, 2005; Bell, 2007).

Concerning specific terms that are used to refer to refugees, Ruhrmann and Demren (2000) state:

“Immer wieder ist die Bezeichnung *Asylant* in Verbindung mit Begriffen wie Überfremdung und durchrasste Gesellschaft oder mit Metaphern wie Flut, Lawine oder Schwemme zu lesen. Schon die Bezeichnung *Asylant* weckt Assoziationen zu stark negativ besetzten Begriffen wie Bummelanten, Querulanten und Simulanten. Die genannten Metaphern signalisieren im Zusammenhang mit den Begriffen Ausländer und *Asylant* mögliche Gefahren für unsere Gesellschaft und ihre Identität” (ibid., p.70).⁶

The term *Asylant*, which is considered derogatory and inappropriate language (Huhnke, 1997; Hudabiunigg, 1997) has been the subject of many earlier studies. The constant use of this term in highly negative contexts, for example water metaphors, and in crime news involving refugees caused this term to receive low acceptability (ibid.). When it comes to the use of water metaphors in migration discourse, researchers generally agree that terms, such as *Flüchtlingswelle* – ‘wave of migrants’ – and *Flüchtlingsfluten* – ‘flow/flood of migrants’ – have a strong negative connotation due to their reference to water as a powerful natural force, and thus carry a connotation of threat and danger (Hentges, 2006; Meyer, 1997).⁷ Similar results are reported by Martin Wengeler (2006). He examined argument structures used in German migration discourse and found that the use of water metaphors belongs to the most common strategies. In German, water metaphors are built with the noun *Flüchtling* (migrant) in most cases, therefore causing the term to mostly appear in highly negative contexts. In addition to the negative context of its usage, the suffix *-ling* is also known to carry a connotation of dependence and passiveness, which adds yet more negative connotation to the term (Birk, 2012; GfdS, 2015).⁸

With regard to migration discourse and language use in press and television news in the UK, most of the German findings are in accordance with what Ronald Kaye (2001) found in his study about how refugees are referred to in English news articles. *Refugee* can be considered the most neutral term (ibid.; Stefanowitsch 2015) since it acknowledges that people are in an unfortunate situation, usually war, while *migrant* is often used in negative contexts with the usage of water

⁶ “The word *Asylant* – ‘bogus migrant’ – is repeatedly used in combination with terms such as foreign infiltration or with metaphors such as flood or glut. Even the word *Asylant* alone arouses associations of strongly negatively connoted terms, such as dawdler, grievance-monger or malingerer. In combination with the terms bogus migrant and foreigner, these metaphors establish the notion of danger for our society and its identity” (ibid. own translation).

⁷ For a discussion of cognitive functions of metaphors see also Stefanowitsch (2005).

⁸ In recent linguistic discussion, some authors argue that the term *Flüchtling* cannot be considered negatively connoted only due to its suffix and that the original meaning of the word is rather neutral, which is considered to be represented by its usage in the latest debate about the refugee situation in Europe (Stefanowitsch, 2015). The present study, however, still considers the term to be negatively connoted, since it is often clearly used in negative contexts (e.g. water metaphors) and the majority of research speaks in favor of a negative connotation.

metaphors or with the additional presentation as “economic migrant” (Kaye, 2001, p.56), which implies that “the individuals referred to are not really refugees” (ibid.), but rather that the act of migration follows the goal of improving their economic circumstance. Furthermore, Kaye states that the English terms *bogus migrant* and *phoney migrant* are highly insulting (ibid, p.59) and can thus be considered to correspond to the German term *Asylant*, which by now has acquired an equally negative and derogatory connotation (Hudabiunigg, 1997). Nevertheless, Kaye’s content analysis shows that *bogus* and *phoney migrant* were the most widely used expressions. The usage varied between 90 per cent (*The Mail*) and 56 per cent (*The Independent*) (Kaye, 2001, p.58). In addition, water metaphors are frequently used to refer to refugees in the English news coverage. Expressions such as *flood of bogus asylum-seekers*, or phrases including the terms *exodus* or *invasion* of migrants/asylum-seekers are especially common in combination with what Kaye called the “numbers game” (ibid, p. 63), meaning the increased use of (often inaccurate) numbers, data and statistics meant to emphasize the large number of refugees in the UK.

Research Interests and Hypotheses

Taking into consideration previous research that discussed the negative connotation of certain terms in migration discourse as well as potential effects of framing on recipients’ knowledge, evaluation of situations, and behavior (Scheufele, 2003), the assumption is that the connotation of key words can lessen the effect of news frames if their orientations are contradictory, and strengthen the impact of news frames if their orientations coincide. An effect of connotation on news frames can, however, be assumed only if a general contradictory orientation can be observed in the German and English articles. Since causal statements about media effects can only be made with experimental research designs, the present study only focuses on content analysis. Consequently, our general research interest can be stated as the relation between the orientation between news frames and connotation in the media coverage of the Lampedusa incidents.

The frame and corpus analysis were first conducted to find indications for or against the theoretical assumption that words used in news frames may affect the orientation of news articles if contradictory orientations occur. This very general inquiry is then broadened with regard to language and context as possible intervening factors, leading to the following research hypotheses.

H1: Framing and connotation differ in their orientation with regard to the depiction of refugees.

Hypothesis 1 refers to the general research interest to investigate whether news frames and the connotation of key words have contradicting orientations. In order to be able to make further statements about whether and to what extent connotation can affect news frames, further hypotheses were investigated.

H2: If a difference in the orientation of framing and connotation is found in news articles about the Lampedusa incidents, this difference will exist in German and English news articles alike, regardless of language.

Hypothesis 2 uses language as an intervening variable in order to investigate whether the research assumption can be observed in more than one language. If one presupposes a general difference in the orientation of connotation and frames in the news coverage, one would not expect language to function as an intervening variable and would thus expect to find the same orientational differences in both languages.

Methodology

The Lampedusa news coverage was investigated in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) for the German market and *The Guardian* for the English market. The articles were taken from *LexisNexis* (*Guardian*) and the German *SZ-Archiv* (SZ) in an assessment period of one year between October 3, 2013 and October 2, 2014. The news coverage of this issue can be considered to have started on October 3, 2013, when the first of many boats carrying refugees sank close to the shores of the Italian island Lampedusa. The assessment period ends on October 2, 2014, since the coverage of the issue seemed to have ended and the issue was no longer dominantly present in the news after this one-year period.⁹

All articles that contain the catchword *Lampedusa* were generated from the archives, leading to a provisional total of 176 articles for *SZ* and 75 articles for *The Guardian*. During review, many articles were excluded, since they were either duplicates, or did not address the debate about sinking boats close to Lampedusa and refugee policy. Furthermore, articles were excluded from investigation if they were book, film, theatre reviews, or opinion based articles of any kind, including commentaries, letters to the editor and leading articles. After that, 78 articles from the *SZ* remained, as well as 44 from *The Guardian*.¹⁰

In the first step, a qualitative analysis of all articles (N=122) was conducted in order to define specific frames present in the migration discourse during the research period. For this purpose, the five generic frames *morality*, *economic consequences*, *responsibility*, *human interest*, and *conflict* as defined by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) were first used as a basis, and then specified with regard to the Lampedusa coverage by using a qualitative analysis of the material and

⁹ Approximately three months after the end of the assessment period for the articles, further incidents of sinking boats occurred, bringing the issue back to the media agenda. This later coverage is however not taken into account in this study because the original news coverage that was triggered by the events of October 3, 2013, can be considered to have ended a year after the incident.

¹⁰ All articles that met the above stated criteria were included in the analysis. Therefore, the data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics rather than inference statistics.

Entman's definition of the frame elements *problem*, *cause*, and *solution*. Additionally, the frame element *role of refugees* was added in order to evaluate the depiction of refugees in the respective frame more precisely. The specification of this frame element is based on the aspect of moral judgement as described in Entman's definition of framing (1993, p.52). In this regard, the evaluation and attribution of (positive as well as negative) impacts of the refugees' situation with regard to moral and ethical recommendations for actions on the side of (individual or collective) actors in specific countries or in Europe in general were defined based on the focus of the specific article. The articles were coded with the help of the above-described system of categories. Thereby, the different elements were first coded and later condensed and interpreted in order to define the existing frames. Every article was assigned one of the newly found frames.

After the qualitative frame analysis, a corpus analysis was conducted with Corpus Query Processor (CQP) to investigate whether negatively connoted terms for refugees could be found in positively oriented frames. Since connotation as a concept is influenced by various factors, a transparent methodology to measure connotation had to be developed in order to investigate whether connotation might affect frames. For research purposes, a three-stage scale was used to measure connotation, including the values *positive* – *neutral* – *negative*. Considering the various important elements of connotation discussed in the theory chapter, three main indicators were identified to distinguish the connotation of key words: 1) *affixes* of words, 2) *context of use*, and 3) *cultural factors*. For the subsequent analysis of connotation, the three most frequently used key words were selected. *Mensch*, *Migrant*, and *Flüchtling* dominated the German articles, whereas *people*, *refugee*, and *migrant* were found most often in the English articles. Tables 1 and 2 decipher the evaluation of connotation for each key word based on the established criteria.

Table 1: Connotation² of most frequent key words used to discuss refugees in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*¹

| Elements of connotation | key word | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| | Mensch n=180 | Migrant n=41 | Flüchtling n=383 |
| affixes | o | o | - |
| context of use | + | o | - |
| cultural factors | + | o/- | o/- |
| Resulting connotation | + | o | - |

¹ German articles: 78 articles published in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* between October 3, 2013 and October 2, 2014.

² Connotation is depicted as follows: o) neutral, does not lead to changes in the resulting connotation of the word in question, +) positive impact of specific element on resulting (i.e. overall) connotation of the word, -) negative impact of specific element on resulting connotation of the word. Combinations of symbols show that an element cannot be classified as distinctively positive, negative or neutral.

Table 2: Connotation² of most frequent key words used to discuss refugees in *The Guardian*¹

| Elements of connotation | key word | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | people n=173 | refugee n=54 | migrant n=256 |
| affixes | o | o | o |
| context of use | + | o | - |
| cultural factors | o/+ | o | o/- |
| Resulting connotation | + | o | - |

¹ English articles: 44 articles published in *The Guardian* between October 3, 2013 and October 2, 2014.

² Connotation is depicted as follows: o) neutral, does not lead to changes in the resulting connotation of the word in question, +) positive impact of specific element on resulting (i.e. overall) connotation of the word, -) negative impact of specific element on resulting connotation of the word. Combinations of symbols show that an element cannot be classified as distinctively positive, negative or neutral.

Results and Discussion

Based on the five generic frames described by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), the qualitative analysis resulted in the following five frames: *open borders*, *economic*, *limits of capacity*, *victim*, and *crime frame*.

Table 3: Specific news frames in the Lampedusa discourse between Oct. 3, 2013 and Oct. 2, 2014

| RESULTING FRAME | FRAME ELEMENTS | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| | Problem | Cause | Solution | Role of refugees (moral judgement) |
| Open Borders | Refugees die at borders and/or on the way to EU | Migration laws too restrictive “Fortress Europe” | Less restrictive and common migration law in all countries needed | Refugees as victims who are acted against with laws and military forces |
| Victim | Refugees on way to Europe, victims of smugglers, war, poverty, etc. | Refugees want to leave their homes due to war, poverty, etc. | Help them to get to Europe, let them stay in Europe. | Refugees are innocent and poor victims . |
| Crime | Crime rates and violence increase due to migration. | Migration as cause for increasing crime rates and hygiene problems | Decrease in migration rate | Refugees are cause of increase in criminality and other problems |
| Limits of Capacity | Space and money to help refugees are limited | Too many refugees to take care of | Send refugees back to their home countries, improve conditions there instead of helping them in the EU | Poor people , but due to too many refugees and a lack of space and money also a burden for the EU |
| Economic | Italy cannot afford refugee rescue operations (e.g. Mare Nostrum) | Other EU-member states should share costs and responsibility | EU has to support Italy with rescue operations and share responsibility. | Migrants as economic burden : rescue operations too expensive for Italy and the EU. |

Based on the roles refugees play in the respective frames, the open borders frame and the victim frame can be described as *protection frames*, since refugees are depicted as in need of protection. Likewise, the crime frame, limits of capacity frame and the economic frame can be subsumed under *burden frames*, because here refugees are presented as the cause of various problems and thus as burdens for the receiving countries and the EU.

All in all, the distribution of frames and key words between *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *The Guardian* is the following:

Table 4: Numbers of frames and key words in the German and English news coverage of the Lampedusa incidents between Oct. 3, 2013 and Oct. 2, 2014 (in absolute numbers)

| | SZ N=78 | Guardian N=44 | TOTAL N=122 |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Protection Frames | 49 | 30 | 79 |
| Open Borders | 27 | 12 | 39 |
| Victim | 22 | 18 | 40 |
| Burden Frames | 29 | 14 | 43 |
| Crime | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| Limits of Capacity | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| Economic | 12 | 8 | 20 |
| Key Words | 869 | 712 | 1581 |
| positive connotation | 315 | 359 | 674 |
| neutral connotation | 101 | 74 | 175 |
| negative connotation | 453 | 279 | 732 |

The frame analysis suggests that the nature of a situation influences how an issue is framed, especially considering that only two out of five identified news frame types belong to the category of protection frames. Overall, 65% of all articles contain protection frames, which frame refugees as in need of protection and as victims of war and crime. This finding is identical for both newspapers, regardless of language and country. Conversely, positive and negative key words are not distributed as equally between the languages: while only 36% of all words used to refer to refugees in the German articles carry a positive connotation, more than 50% of the key words in the English articles are connoted positively. In contrast, more than half of all words in the German articles show negative connotation, while only 39% of the English words do so (compare Table 4 for absolute frequencies). As a consequence, contrary orientation of frames and connotation must occur in all articles, considering that the distribution of frames is equal for both languages, while the distribution of connotation differs between the two languages. With regard to the research hypotheses, we would then expect the orientation of the connotation of key words used in the articles to differ from news frames in so far that mostly negative words should be used in protection and positive words in burden frames. The distribution of connotation between the burden and protection frames is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Most present key words in protection and burden frames divided by connotation and language (n=1087¹, in %)

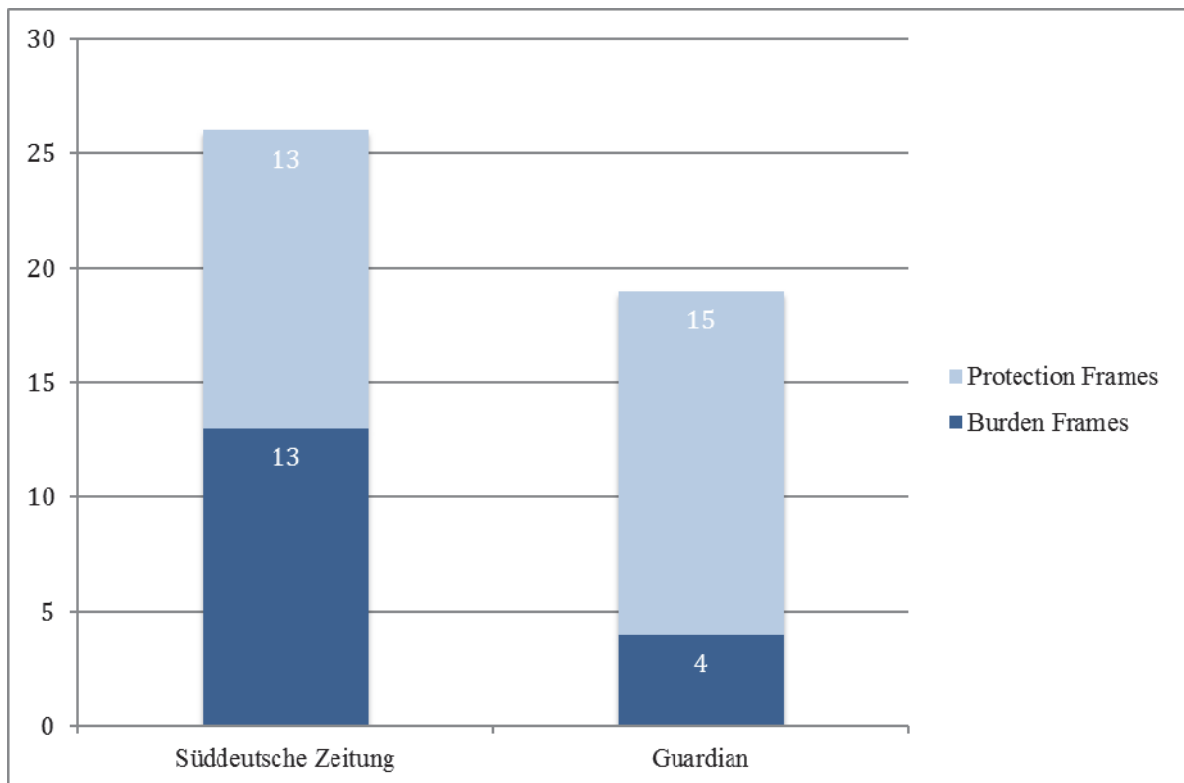
| Frame Orientation Orientation of key words | Protection | | | Burden | | |
|--|------------------------|----------|------|------------------------|----------|------|
| | Süddeutsche Zeitung | Guardian | Σ | Süddeutsche Zeitung | Guardian | Σ |
| Positive Connotation | 29.4 | 31.8 | 30.5 | 30.6 | 45.7 | 36.7 |
| Neutral Connotation | 8.3 | 11.9 | 10.0 | 3.8 | 9.3 | 6.0 |
| Negative Connotation | 62.3 | 56.7 | 59.5 | 65.6 | 45.0 | 57.3 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

¹ 78 articles published in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and 44 articles published in *The Guardian* between October 3, 2013 and October 2, 2014.

Considering that almost 60% of the analyzed key words used in protection frames in the German as well as the English articles carry negative connotation, compared to only 30% with positive and 10% with neutral connotation, a contrary direction of both levels of text orientation does apparently occur in protection frames. With regard to burden frames, this contrast is not as pronounced as for protection frames, since 57% of negative key words occur in this category. Nevertheless, overall 37% of positively connoted terms occur in burden frames, and with 46% the percentage is even higher for English articles. Therefore, even though more pronounced for protection frames, contrary orientation of connotation and news frames occurs in both frame categories and across both languages. Thus, research hypotheses 1 and 2 can both be confirmed with regard to the present case study: contrary orientation of connotation and news frames does exist in the news coverage of the Lampedusa incidents, especially in the case of negative key words used in protection frames (hypothesis 1). Additionally, although *Süddeutsche Zeitung* overall uses more negative words while *The Guardian* uses more positive ones, differences in orientations occur in German as well as English articles (hypothesis 2). However, it is important to note that these differences point in opposite directions: negative words in positive frames (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*) versus positive words in negative frames (*Guardian*).

The contrary orientation of language and framing is even more explicit for water metaphors. Due to their relation to water as a violent force of nature and catastrophe, water metaphors entail a strong negative connotation (e.g. Hentges, 2006). Therefore, we argue that the use of water metaphors in protection frames can also be considered a contrary orientation on the content and on the language level.

Figure 4: Water metaphors in protection and burden frames divided by language (n=45, absolute frequencies)¹



¹ 78 articles published in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and 44 articles published in *The Guardian* between October 3, 2013 and October 2, 2014.

As Figure 4 shows, the dispersal of water metaphors between burden and protection frames is equal for the German articles with 13 occurrences in both frame categories. This supports hypothesis 1 in so far that only few to no occurrences of water metaphors would have been expected to appear in protection frames. The contrary direction of the orientation of connotation and framing that was discovered for the key words can therefore also be observed with regard to water metaphors. Comparing the results for *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *The Guardian*, it becomes apparent that the differences in direction are even stronger for the *The Guardian*. Here, only 4 water metaphors occur in the burden frames and a total of 15 water metaphors can be observed in protection frames, thus widening the gap between the two observed levels of orientation even further. Although the relative distribution of water metaphors in the frame categories differs between the two newspapers, it is striking that, contrary to prior theoretical considerations, water metaphors do occur in protection frames in both languages. Although our findings support hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2, the differences between both languages are unexpected and cannot be explained within this study. In order to investigate and interpret the differences, further research is necessary.

As the nature and the context of the situation might also play a role in the distribution of frames and connotation, respectively, the description of the situation was also examined. The context of the news coverage, namely sinking boats close to Lampedusa resulting in many refugees losing their lives, was mostly

described as *tragedy*, *crisis*, or *catastrophe*. Together, these negatively connoted words accounted for more than four fifths (88%) of all descriptions of the situation of refugees, compared to the neutral term *situation*. This shows that the context of the situation is clearly not presented as neutral, but rather as unfortunate and distressing. Thus, we suspected a positive (i.e. empathy-causing) orientation of the connotation to occur with negatively oriented news frames more often than the reverse direction. However, the reverse situation was the case: protection frames occurred by far more often with negatively connoted words than the other way around (see Table 5).

It has to be noted that the analysis focuses on a relatively early point in the current migration discourse in Europe. Therefore, it can be assumed that the presence and distribution of both connotation and news frames might have changed since the research was conducted, which again only emphasizes the importance of language use in mass communication. Nevertheless, the analysis has shown that different orientations of news frames and connotation did occur in the news coverage of the Lampedusa incidents, regardless of the direction in which the two might differ. These differences are present in both languages with slight differences between the distribution of water metaphors. Thus, first indications that speak in favor of an extension of framing research with regard to linguistic elements could be derived from the corpus analysis.

Conclusion

This paper presents connotation as one possible element of language that might influence the evaluation and potential interpretation of news frames in the Lampedusa news coverage. Following Cacciatore et al.'s (2016) demand for a more structured analysis of framing research, we suggest a narrower definition of framing, which does not only take into consideration elements on a purely content-based level, as suggested by Entman (1993) and Scheufele (2003). Rather, we argue that further elements of communicative texts might affect the orientation of news articles, so that a distinction between the different elements of news frames becomes necessary in order to achieve a structured and consistent evaluation of framing.

In order to test the assumption that language in general and connotation in particular might affect the orientation of news articles, a frame analysis based on Entman's definition was combined with a corpus-based analysis with a focus on the connotation of key words used in current migration discourse. Results of the combined analysis showed that the connotation of key words used in news frames about the Lampedusa incidents between October 2013 and October 2014 did indeed differ from the orientation of the content-based level of news frames. In both languages negatively connoted key words, such as *Flüchtling* and *migrant*, as well as water metaphors were used regardless of the purely content-based

orientation of the news frame. At the same time, positively connoted words (*Menschen* and *people*) were identified in both burden and protection frames. Formulated as a mathematical equation, one might state that if the orientations of connotation and news frames point in the same direction (either negative or positive), the news frame is strengthened by connotation. If, however, the orientation of connotation and news frame point in contrary (one in the positive and the other in the negative) directions, the news frame is either weakened by connotation, or a shift of the news frame's orientation might occur.

Based on these results, we argue that a narrowing down of the concept of framing is necessary in order to enable a consistent distinction and evaluation of the different elements of communicative texts that can all add to the orientation of news articles. In this regard, the definition of Entman and his distinction of problem, cause, solution and moral judgement (1993, p. 52) can be considered to be content elements of a news frame. Even though no statements about the strength of an impact on evaluation and interpretation of news frames can be made without an experimental research design, the fact that these contrary orientations of the connotation of key words and news frames do exist serves as a first indication for language elements as an influencing factor in framing research.

Thus, we suggest that further research in the field of framing should no longer completely neglect linguistic elements and should potentially go on to investigate the necessity of adding further elements (e.g. visual elements) to the narrow definition of framing as proposed in this article. Additionally, a study using an experimental research design should be conducted in order to test to what extent this addition of linguistic elements influences the evaluation of news frames in recipients' cognition.

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Vivien Benert is a research assistant and statistics tutor at the Institute for Media and Communications Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. Having acquired a Bachelor's degree in English Philology and Media and Communication Studies, she is currently studying for a Master's degree in Media and Political Communication at the Institute for Media and Communication Studies at Freie Universität. Email: v.benert@fu-berlin.de

Anne Beier is a researcher at the Institute for Media and Communication Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research focus lies on media analysis and television program research in particular. Since 2013 she has been directing the long-term study on television program research of state media authorities at GöfaK Medienforschung GmbH. Email: anne.beier@fu-berlin.de