 Representation of Natural Catastrophes in Newspaper Discourse: Portrayal of Human-Nature Relationship

Ph.D. dissertation

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I hereby declare that I authored this dissertation independently and used only the sources listed in the bibliography attached.
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CHAPTER 1 – Outline of the Research

1.1 Introduction

“I can’t express how bad it was” commented a woman struggling to find words to describe the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans when interviewed by The Guardian\(^1\). Large-scale disasters are events where words tend to fail, and so does our ability to comprehend the reality. Yet, readers may expect that it is the responsibility of newspapers to supply the ‘missing’ words and provide us with a linguistic representation of these events.

Mass communication has brought a new dimension to natural catastrophes as it has enabled people from all over the world to learn about the experience of those affected by disasters. As for most people mass media are the only source of information about these events, the representation that newspapers provide plays a key role in the way people conceptualize and come to terms with natural disasters.

One of the reasons for the overwhelming effect of natural catastrophes, events that constitute an integral part of the life on the Earth, is that they stand in tension with Western Enlightenment ideology. The beliefs in progress through scientific and technological advances and human domination over nature are shattered. People cease to be in control of the situation, which results in feelings of anxiety, fear and depression. Parker (1980) points out that as a result, it would be advisable for mass media to avoid further dramatization and sensationalization of the events and rather focus on a rational account, providing calm, explanatory information and giving people perspective on the causes of the natural disaster. Whether this is accomplished by mass media is to be investigated in the present research.

The dissertation thesis is divided into seven chapters, with the first three being theoretical, the next three focusing on the analysis of data and the final one constituting a conclusion. In the following subchapter, the thesis introduces recent anthropological and sociological research into natural catastrophes, which forms a necessary

\(^1\) The Guardian, 5 September 2005
background for the present study and has motivated the research questions. Then, it states the main aims of the research and describes the body of data to be analyzed. Chapter two gives an outline of the methodology employed in the research and explains the main theoretical concepts. Chapter three then looks at newspaper discourse from critical discourse analysis point of view, focusing on the processes of production, transmission and consumption of newspaper articles. It discusses employment of photographs in newspapers, and, referring to news values, points out the newsworthiness of natural disasters. The next three chapters deal in turn with newspaper representation of three major natural catastrophes that happened in the last decade: the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, 2005 Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the 2010 Haiti earthquake. At the beginning of these chapters factual information about these catastrophes is provided, which is followed by the analysis of discursive patterns and tendencies. The chapters conclude with the discussion of the findings.

1.2 Unnatural Aspects of Natural Catastrophes

The recent anthropological and sociological research on natural catastrophes reveals that natural disasters are complex phenomena which result from an interaction between natural events and vulnerabilities of a society, determined by human contact with environment, social organization, infrastructure and economy (Pielke and Pielke 1997; Birkmann 2006; Gunewardena 2008a; Schuller 2008). Natural catastrophes can thus be considered natural only in respect of being triggered by natural phenomena; they become disasters as a result of a combination of a number of factors including human behavior. As Kates (1980, quoted in Pielke and Pielke 1997) puts it, “the impacts of natural events are joint outcomes of the state of nature and the nature of society”.

Vulnerability is an essential concept to be used to frame the problem of natural catastrophes. It can be defined as “the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards” (International Strategy for Disaster Reduction 2004, quoted in Birkmann 2006). This includes deforestation, concentration of toxic substances, number of exposed people living in disaster-prone areas, the quality of infrastructure and the level of adherence to building codes.
Importantly, since vulnerability is caused by humans, it can also be reduced through human agency. The key role in the reduction of vulnerability is played by preparedness, which subsumes a whole range of anticipatory and emergency management activities, such as mitigation, response and recovery (Pielke and Pielke 1997). For instance, to minimize the number of exposed people and the amount of threatened property, “preparedness efforts such as insurance, evacuation, and building fortification” should be taken (Pielke and Pielke 1997: 38). Preparedness has to involve both short-term actions, focusing on a particular approaching disaster, and long-term actions, focusing on a disaster threat more generally (Pielke and Pielke 1997).

What follows from the definition of vulnerability is that disasters do not have the equal impact on all people, but differentiate along the lines of class, race, age, gender and ethnicity (Gunewardena 2008a). Those who are politically, economically and socially marginalized, such as the poor, the old and ethnic minorities, are the worst-affected in natural catastrophes as they tend to have a limited access to education about these events and lack means, resources and capital to live somewhere else than in disaster-prone areas, to escape the catastrophe and to recover. As de Waal (2008: ix) summarizes, “power inequities are typically accentuated in all stages of disaster, from prevention and insurance, through protection and evacuation at the height of crisis, to relief and rehabilitation”. It is precisely because natural disasters are not just natural but are also the outcome of social, political and economic conditions that asymmetric power relations of a society get revealed in these events.

Sociological and anthropological research into natural catastrophes deconstructs the nature-culture dualism typical of Western Enlightenment thinking (Johns 1999). It reveals that nature cannot be viewed as isolated from society, and socio-economic processes and structures cannot be divorced from natural world; there is no sharp boundary between nature and culture, but rather an interplay and interconnectedness.
1.3 Aims of the Study

The present study aims to uncover general tendencies in discursive representation of natural catastrophes in newspapers published in Western English-speaking countries, with the ultimate goal to point out that newspaper discourse does not represent natural catastrophes neutrally, but socially constructs a portrayal of these events embedding a particular ideological perspective. This constructed portrayal of natural catastrophes then shapes the way we conceptualize the events and consequently has impact on our actions. Following critical linguistics, the study attempts to demonstrate that ideologies are not manifested only directly through the content of discourse but also through forms of expression, which encode social meanings (Fowler 1991).

Recent studies on newspaper discourse from critical discourse analysis point of view (van Dijk 1988a; 1991; Fowler 1991; Brookes 1995; Fairclough 1995b; Teo 2000; El Refaie 2001; Bishop and Jaworski 2003; Conboy 2007; Richardson 2007) have concentrated on the investigation of social construction of meaning through linguistic structures, pointing out the biased portrayal of national and international affairs given by newspapers. They have mainly focused on the examination of ideological underpinnings in representation of different groups of people, such as women, ethnic minorities, immigrants and nations, coming to the conclusion that newspaper discourse tends to serve to sustain unequal power relations and reproduce dominant ideology. While my dissertation draws upon this research, it can also be contrasted with it as it deals with issues in which the main agents are not human beings but natural phenomena. One would thus expect more readily than in the case of the coverage of political issues that newspapers represent natural catastrophes neutrally, without an ideological bias. This expectation is to be verified by my research.

To be more specific, this dissertation study aims to answer the following three research questions and examine the hypotheses stated after each question.

1. Representation
It investigates who the blame for natural catastrophes is discursively ascribed to in newspapers. Are natural disasters represented as a joint result of natural events and social factors? The analysis does not focus only on direct ascription of blame in
discourse, but also on subtle forms of conveying blame through lexico-grammatical choices. With respect to the allocation of blame, it aims to reveal what ideology is encoded in discursive patterns employed by newspapers.

**Hypothesis 1:**
Newspaper discourse puts the blame for natural disasters on natural phenomena rather than social factors. This expectation is based on the findings of studies on newspaper discourse revealing that newspapers tend to neglect the discussion of social, economic and political forces and focus instead on individuals (Singer and Endreny 1993; Devereux 1998; Murphy 2007).

**2. Ideology**
The goal of the study is to find out how newspapers deal with the tension between natural disasters and Western Enlightenment ideology of superiority of culture over nature. Do newspapers acknowledge this tension in their representation of the events and admit that Western nature-culture dualism does not apply in this case? In other words, do they recognize that “human nature is in no way separate from nature as a whole, that there are not fixed boundaries between the human and the [natural]” (Hawkes 2003)?

**Hypothesis 2:**
The binary opposition between humankind and nature is reproduced in newspaper articles on natural catastrophes. This expectation stems from the fact that nature-culture dualism is deeply rooted in Western thinking (Hawkes 2003; Goatly 2007).

**3. Dramatization**
The study purports to investigate the main discursive devices employed in newspapers that lead to dramatization and emotionalization of natural disasters.
Hypothesis 3:
Newspaper discourse does not restrain from dramatizing the account of natural
catastrophes; rather, it highlights the dramatic and emotional impact of the events.
This assumption is based on the observation that there has been a “general shift towards
entertainment across the media […], often attributed to commercial pressures in the
competitive marketplace of the media industries” (Talbot 2007: 26). Furthermore, the
topic of newspaper discourse under study itself evokes a strong emotional response.

The nature of this research is interpretative, rather than descriptive (for more
detailed account, see section 2.1). As Thompson (1990: 289) points out, interpretation
proceeds by “a creative construction of meaning, that is, an interpretative explication of
what is represented or what is said”. Concerning this research, it aims to explicate the
connection between meaning mobilized by discursive forms and social structures and
relations which that meaning serves to maintain, transform or subvert (cf. Thompson
1990). Interpretative analysis does not offer incontestable demonstration which can be
scientifically verified but rather should provide reasons, grounds and evidence, which
make the interpretation plausible (Thompson 1990).

A number of analyses of the coverage of natural catastrophes by mass media
have been carried out from sociological, communication studies and media studies
perspective (Singer and Endreny 1993; Anderson 1997; Harrison 1999a), yet there is a
lack of research on representation of natural catastrophes in newspaper discourse done
by linguistic scholars. When a linguistic approach is applied, it draws upon content
analysis of discourse (Kvakova 2009), which brings important insights into the way
newspapers represent natural disasters; however, such a research mainly employs a
quantitative analysis, which tends to disregard context and be rather descriptive than
interpretative. By drawing mainly upon qualitative research, combining a number of
disciplines, such as critical discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics and anthropology,
this study attempts to fill the void of an analytical and interpretative account of
representation of natural disasters in newspaper discourse, paying close attention to the
choice of linguistic forms and discursive devices in the process of social meaning
construction.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that the purpose of this dissertation is
not to study the intent of the discourse or the motives of journalists for choosing
particular linguistic devices in their representation of natural disasters. Rather, it is
concerned with the impact of the choice of these discursive means, focusing on “what
discourse does – on its results” (Russell and Kelly 2003: 4).

1.4 Corpus of Data for Analysis

As has already been stated, this research focuses on representation of natural
catastrophes in newspapers published in Western English-speaking countries. The
motivation for the choice of these countries lies in the prevalence of nature-culture
dualist thinking and Enlightenment ideology in the West. This allows for the
formulation of the research question which aims to investigate how newspapers deal
with the tension between natural catastrophes and Enlightenment ideology of
domination of mankind over the natural world.

The task then was to choose newspapers which would be representative of
Western English-speaking countries. This has been resolved by opting for one major
national newspaper published in the USA, one major national newspaper published in
Great Britain and one major national newspaper published in Canada. Another
important criterion for the selection of sources was that they should belong to
broadsheet newspapers, since they are perceived to be more objective and factual and
their language is viewed as a more neutral mediator of reality than in the case of tabloid
newspapers, which overtly purport to entertain and sensationalize. The final
requirement was to be able to get access to online archives of the newspaper’s articles.
As the following newspapers meet all the three criteria, they were selected as the
British national newspaper, and The Globe and Mail, a Canadian national newspaper.

Concerning the content of the newspaper articles, the following three disasters
have been selected for analysis: the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami (occurred on December
26, 2004), Hurricane Katrina (made a landfall in New Orleans on August 29, 2005) and
the 2010 Haiti earthquake (occurred on January 12, 2010). There are a number of
reasons for the choice of these particular catastrophes. Firstly, they represent the major
natural catastrophes that happened in the last decade. Secondly, as this research focuses
on the representation of natural catastrophes in general, a necessary requirement has
been to choose different kinds of natural disasters, which is fulfilled by the choice of a
tsunami, a hurricane and an earthquake. Thirdly, a motivation for their choice has been constituted by the locations of the disasters, with the variability principle being again the decisive factor. While Hurricane Katrina happened in one of the Western English-speaking countries and thus meets the criterion of cultural proximity, both the Indian Ocean tsunami and the Haiti earthquake occurred in culturally distant countries. Furthermore, the locations of the tsunami and the earthquake can also be contrasted. Since the tsunami, contrary to the earthquake, occurred in popular tourist resorts, among the visitors of which were tourists from Great Britain, Canada and the USA, it has a higher degree of cultural proximity than the earthquake. Whether the different degrees of cultural proximity of these three catastrophes are reflected in the representation given by newspapers is to be investigated in the analytical part. Last, but not least, the three catastrophes have been selected because they happened in different years.

When collecting the newspaper articles for the corpus, the key criterion for their selection was that they belonged to a hard news category. The focus is on hard news as it is believed to be the most objective and factual type of news. The second significant criterion for the selection of articles on all the three disasters published in The Globe and Mail and articles on Hurricane Katrina published in The New York Times was their front-page placement. This criterion could not be used for articles on the Indian Ocean tsunami and the Haiti earthquake published in The New York Times and articles on all the three disasters published in The Guardian since the placement of these news articles is not indicated in the online archives; instead, the criterion of belonging to a world news category was chosen.

The number of collected newspaper articles is 15 per newspaper for each catastrophe, which makes the total number of articles gathered in the corpus 135. The articles cover the time span of two weeks since the disaster occurred, i.e. December 26, 2004 – January 8, 2005 for the Indian Ocean tsunami, August 29, 2005 – September 11, 2005 for Hurricane Katrina, and January 12, 2010 – January 26, 2010 for the Haiti earthquake. The period of two weeks has been selected since it is to be expected that while the first days of a natural catastrophe arouse strong emotions, after a week or so the emotions start to recede slowly and a broader and more rational perspective on the disaster is gained. This research aims to investigate whether this is reflected in the way newspaper discourse allocates blame for the disaster and in the lowering degree of dramatization in the course of two weeks. As the articles on the disasters are more frequently placed on front pages during the first days of reporting, while sometimes
cease to occur on the front page towards the end of the fortnight period, the collected data do not cover the time span of two weeks evenly. Nevertheless, they provide sufficient material to trace changes in reporting on natural disasters over the first two weeks.

The present research employs a multimodal analysis (see section 2.3.3), combining the examination of verbal aspects of discourse with the analysis of the available photographs accompanying the articles in the online archives. It is to be acknowledged that, except for some of the photographs, the visual features of the articles in printed press or their online version, such as layout, are not transmitted to their online archive version. Therefore, the analysis in the present study will not be able to fully examine the interplay between all the semiotic modes in newspaper discourse and thus account for all the meanings expressed in the articles. Nevertheless, I believe that the verbal means employed in the newspaper articles and the available photographs play a significant role in the construction of the portrayal of natural catastrophes and our consequent conceptualization of these events, and thus their analysis will adequately answer the research questions.

The corpus consists of three subsets of photographs, which are compiled from The New York Times and The Guardian. The archive of The Globe and Mail used in the analysis does not provide any photographs.


Subset B – is constituted by all the photographs accompanying the articles on Hurricane Katrina. It includes 11 photographs published in The New York Times and 8 photographs published in The Guardian.


The limited number of photographs in the corpus results from the fact that the analysis uses online archives of newspapers, where not all photographs accompanying printed or online versions of articles are transmitted.

To summarize, the corpus of data used in the present research consists of hard news on the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, 2005 Hurricane Katrina and the 2010 Haiti earthquake covering the time period of two weeks since the disasters occurred. The
CHAPTER 2 – Methodological Framework and Concepts

This chapter starts with the outline of multi-disciplinary approach employed in this research, followed by the description of this study’s perspective on the link between language, thought and culture, which also forms the foundation for critical discourse analysis and the cognitive theory of metaphor, the major approaches used in this study. Then, a delineation of the two linguistic approaches is provided.

2.1 Multi-disciplinary Approach

Following Fairclough (1992; 1995a), this study views discourse as a social practice embedded in context. Context is here understood to consist of three levels: 1. the immediate context of the text including the immediate social situation within which the discourse is located; 2. the social institutional setting; 3. the context of the society as a whole (Fairclough 1992; 1995a). Adequate discourse analysis then has to account for all the three levels of context, which necessitates the employment of a multi-disciplinary approach. As Wodak (2001: 8) points out, “relationships between language and society are so complex and multifaceted that interdisciplinary research is required”.

To account for textual features of newspaper discourse, the present study employs a linguistic approach, where linguistic is understood in a structural-functional sense, i.e. it accounts for structures and strategies of text and functions they fulfill (van Dijk 2001). Apart from that, it is essential to draw upon media studies research, which can help to explicate conventions, rules and restrictions connected with the institutional setting of news production. Moreover, to be able to account for the context of the society, which subsumes beliefs, values, and social, political and economic conventions of the culture under study, anthropological and sociological research has to be called upon.

The multi-disciplinarity of the methodology employed in this study is also motivated by the interpretative nature of the research, which draws upon Thompson’s (1990) three-phase methodological framework of depth hermeneutics. The first phase of
his method involves “‘social-historical’ analysis, [which] is concerned with the social and historical conditions of the production, circulation and reception of symbolic forms” (Thompson 1990: 22). The second phase is constituted by discourse analysis, investigating structures, patterns and relations of discursive devices. The final phase represents the interpretation itself, i.e. it explicates what the symbolic form says, represents and what its possible meaning is. This phase “builds upon the results of social-historical analysis and formal or discursive analysis, but it moves beyond them in a process of synthetic construction” (Thompson 1990: 22). One more requirement should be added to Thompson’s framework, and that is the need to gather background information about the subject-matter of discourse under study. In this case, it is the need to provide an account of natural disasters from anthropological and sociological perspectives.

The cornerstone of the multi-disciplinary methodological framework employed in this research is constituted by critical discourse analysis and the cognitive theory of metaphor. The reason for the use of critical discourse analysis is that it meets the aim of the present study to investigate the dialogic relationship between discourse and social structures and relations, and it provides tools to do so. The cognitive theory of metaphor has been chosen since the pilot study on representation of natural catastrophes in newspaper discourse revealed prevalence of metaphor in the newspaper articles and thus it was necessary to employ an approach which would be able to account for it. As has already been pointed out, in addition to these two linguistic approaches, the research draws upon anthropology, media studies and sociology.

Further complexity of the present study is brought about by the combination of a synchronic and a diachronic approach. The dissertation analyzes newspaper articles on natural catastrophes published within a time span of 14 days, tracing changes in representation of these events, which entails a diachronic perspective. At the same time, it investigates depiction of the same catastrophe across three different newspapers, which in turn calls for a synchronic approach.
2.2 Interconnectedness between Language, Thought and Culture

The major study on the link between language, thought and culture, which has been of great influence on researchers since then, was carried out by anthropological linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, who postulated the so-called Sapir/Whorf hypothesis, known also as linguistic relativity principle. It claims that language shapes human perception of reality and human thought in a significant way, and since languages differ in their structure, each language does so differently:

Language is a guide to ‘social reality’. [...] Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. [...] the ‘real world’ is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. [...] We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation. [...] From this standpoint we may think of language as the symbolic guide to culture. (Sapir 1929)

At the basis of the link between language, thought and reality lies categorization. As Leech (2001) points out, we live in a discontinuous environment, upon which we learn to impose a discriminating grid that makes us perceive the world as consisting of separate things, labeled with a name. The strategy of sorting the reality into categories “allows infinite variation to be simplified, and irrelevant features to be ignored” (Fowler 1996: 25). The main function of categorization is thus the imposition of order on complex and overwhelming world in which human beings live (Hodge and Kress 1993; Fowler 1996). It enables us to take sense of reality and gain illusory control over it. Yet, categorization also has drawbacks as it constrains our thought and conceptual system, hindering alternative worldviews (Hodge and Kress 1993). As such, categorization has a great potential for encoding and naturalizing particular ideological perspectives (more on that in the following sections).

It is necessary to note that the classificatory system is not solely determined by language itself, but is shaped by culture (see also Fowler 1996). Combining the descriptive and the symbolic conception (see Thompson 1990), culture is here viewed
as patterns of meaning embodied in symbolic forms, by means of which beliefs, values and norms shared by members of a society are realized and constituted. The relation between language and culture is one of interplay, with the language patterns and the cultural norms constantly influencing each other (Whorf 1939). In other words, there is a dialogic relationship between language and thought, thought and culture, and culture and language (see Figure 2.1). Language influences the way we conceptualize the reality and shapes cultural norms, ideas and values. At the same time, cultural heritage, norms and value system have impact on our thought and language.

![Figure 2.1: Interconnectedness between language, thought and culture](image)

A significant role in the categorization of phenomena is played by binary oppositions. They are a key concept of structuralist school of thought, which views binary oppositions as a fundamental principle underlying the structure of language and ‘classificatory systems’ within cultures (Chandler 1994). Among the common binary oppositions that guide the way we perceive and conceptualize reality are nature/culture, good/bad, male/female, up/down and emotion/reason. Lévi-Strauss even “saw certain key binary oppositions as the invariants or universals of the human mind, cutting across cultural distinctions” (Chandler 1994).

The noteworthy feature of binary oppositions is that they tend to consist of an unmarked form and a marked form, which applies both at the level of a signifier and the level of a signified (Chandler 1994). There is an asymmetrical relationship between the marked and the unmarked form, with the unmarked form tending to represent the dominant form, which is perceived as neutral, while the marked form has an underprivileged status, being presented as different. Importantly, although the dichotomies and their markedness may seem natural, they are socially constructed and
“their historical origins or phases of dominance can often be traced” (Chandler 1994). It should then be the aim of the analyst to reveal the socio-cultural and historical origins of the markedness of one of the forms of paired signs. The aim of this study is to investigate whether newspaper discourse reproduces nature/culture dichotomy and whether it constructs the relationship between the two as asymmetrical.

2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

As one of the research aims is to investigate what ideologies are encoded in newspaper discourse on natural catastrophes, this section starts with the examination of the notion of ideology, the key concept of critical discourse analysis (CDA). This is followed by the outline of the origins of CDA and the introduction of the framework of this discipline, which is applied to newspaper discourse in next chapter. The aims, main concepts and major representatives of CDA are stated. The section concludes with the description of the tools to be employed in the analysis.

2.3.1 Concept of Ideology

Ideology represents a problematic concept as there have existed a number of conflicting definitions throughout the 20th and the 21st century. Thompson (1990) argues that there are two basic categories of conceptions of ideology: neutral conceptions and critical conceptions. In contrast to neutral conceptions, which see ideology as a system of thought and belief present in any political or social action, without implying that ideological phenomena are one-sided or deceptive, critical conceptions tend to view ideological phenomena as misleading, prone to criticism and representing interests of a particular group. Thompson (1990: 56) himself provides a definition of ideology belonging to the critical conceptions category; he argues that “to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination”. Such a definition has a serious drawback, as pointed out by Eagleton (1991), since it claims that only dominant forms of social and political thought are ideological. In other words, it implies that socialism and feminism, for instance, are
ideological only when in power while non-ideological when in political opposition.

Taking into account Eagleton’s critique of Thompson’s definition and drawing upon van Dijk’s conception (1995; 1996a; 1998), the present study understands **ideology** as standing for *socio-cognitive schemata which function to reproduce, challenge or resist asymmetric power relations*. The socio-cognitive approach encompasses the view of ideology both as a property of the mind, including ideas, beliefs, values and judgment, and as being shared by the members of a social group and linked to the social, economic and political interests of that group (van Dijk 1995; 1996a; 1998). Ideology organizes attitudes and knowledge of group members, and consequently has impact on their social practices. It is built into and realized through meaning/form of these practices, including discourse. The role of the mediator between social representations and their realization in the practices of group members is played by mental models, i.e. “mental representations of personal experiences of specific actions, events and situations” (van Dijk 1995: 251). Although mental models are mainly subjective and context-bound, they are also shaped by opinions of a social group.

Following Thompson (1990), this research focuses on the investigation of the following processes in newspaper discourse, since they can constitute ways in which ideology operates: **legitimation, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation and reification**. Legitimation stands for representation of asymmetrical power relations as just and worthy of support. The second mode of operation of ideology, dissimulation, works by concealing or denying rules of domination, drawing thus attention away from the existing asymmetries. It can be realized, for instance, in figurative language. Unification involves representation of individuals as being part of a united whole, ignoring any differences that may exist among them. Fragmentation includes the representation of the other as an enemy that constitutes threat. The processes of unification and fragmentation form the basis of van Dijk’s so-called **ideological square** (1996a), which involves emphasizing positive representation of **US** and backgrounding **OUR** negative characteristics and activities versus emphasizing negative representation of **THEM** and backgrounding **THEIR** positive characteristics and activities. The fifth mode of operation of ideology, reification, involves **naturalization** of discursive representations, portraying a particular state of affairs as natural and commonsensical, devoid of a social and historical character.
2.3.2 Origins of CDA

The roots of the discipline of critical discourse analysis lie in critical linguistics, an approach developed mainly by Roger Fowler, Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s (Fairclough 1992; Thornborrow 2002). The main features of critical linguistics are the emphasis on the study of language in the light of social and historical context, and the view that any linguistic structure can carry ideological significance (Fowler 1991). To investigate the link between linguistic structure and social values and beliefs, critical linguists employ textual analysis which is mainly based on Halliday’s Systemic functional grammar (1978). Next section provides the outline of this theory, which is followed a by more detailed account of critical linguistics.

2.3.2.1 Halliday’s Systemic Functional Theory

Halliday (1978: 34) defines linguistic system as “a culturally specific and situationally sensitive range of meaning potential”. Meaning potential here stands for the view of semantic system as a network of options, of paradigmatic relations, which encode some extra-linguistic semiotic system (i.e. system of meanings constituting the culture). When the speaker uses language, he/she makes selections from this network of semantic choices.

Halliday’s key notion, which critical discourse analysts draw upon, is the distinction of three areas of meaning potential, the so-called functions of language, which constitute the inherent part of all uses of language - ideational, interpersonal and textual functions:

1. **Ideational function** is a content function through which language represents phenomena of both the outer world and the inner world of our own consciousness.
2. **Interpersonal function** is a participatory function through which the speaker expresses his attitudes and evaluations, and also the role relationships between the participants.
3. **Textual function** is a text-forming function through which language relates to the verbal and the situational context. It constitutes a pre-requisite for the realization of ideational and interpersonal meanings.
The three language functions are reflected in and realized through lexico-grammatical devices. The ideational function is reflected in the transitivity pattern of sentences, types of processes and lexis, such as naming of objects. The interpersonal function is mirrored in the patterns of mood and modality, and the intonation contour. The textual function is realized in cohesive devices, deixis and the patterns of theme. Consequently, the choice of lexico-grammatical configurations is not arbitrary, but is linked to and represents the meaning.

As follows from the situational sensitivity of meaning potential stated in Halliday’s definition of language (see above), the context of situation determines the selection of linguistic devices. Halliday distinguishes three components of the context – field, tenor and mode:

The field is the social action in which the text is embedded; it includes the subject-matter, as one special manifestation. The tenor is the set of role relationships among the relevant participants; it includes levels of formality as one particular instance. The mode is the channel or wavelength selected [...]; it includes the medium (spoken or written).
(1978: 110)

The field of discourse then shapes the ideational function, the tenor of discourse influences the interpersonal function, and the mode of discourse has impact on the textual function.

2.3.2.2 Critical Linguistics

Drawing upon Halliday, critical linguists conceive of linguistic structure from a functional point of view, i.e. as realizing ideational, interpersonal and textual function and thus encoding social meaning. They point out that lexico-grammatical devices employed in discourse are only selections from a network of possible forms (Thornborrow 2002).

Critical linguistics emphasizes the importance of context in the study of language and the link between ideology and linguistic structures. It points out that language does not merely reflect reality, but socially constructs it, embedding a particular worldview and value system. As Fowler (1991: 67) reveals, the aim of critical linguistics is to “display to consciousness the patterns of belief and value which are
encoded in the language – and which are below the threshold of notice for anyone who accepts the discourse as "natural". The discipline distances itself from other linguistic approaches which prevailed in the 1970s, i.e. formal descriptive approaches studying language as divorced from its context (Chomskyan tradition); pragmatics, which studied language in context, yet it placed too much emphasis on individual agency rather than seeing discourse as a social phenomenon; and sociolinguistics, which at that time focused on the study of language variation and change, not paying attention to social relations and structures (Wodak 2002).

Critical linguistics differs from other linguistic approaches also in the close attention that it pays to grammar and lexis in the analysis (Fairclough 1992). It focuses on the investigation of transitivity patterns of sentences; syntactic transformations of clauses, including passive transformation and nominalization, which bring about an agent deletion; lexical structure, pointing out the potential of categorization by vocabulary to reproduce ideology; modality; and speech acts (see Fowler 1991). The important argument that critical linguists make is that there is not a constant relationship between form and content. The meaning of discourse is not derived only from linguistic forms but also from the context.

One of the drawbacks of the early work of critical linguistics is, as pointed out by Fairclough (1992: 29), its main focus on the function of discourse in the reproduction of dominant ideology. This has, however, been overcome in more recent work of critical discourse analysts (see for instance Fairclough 1995a; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Thornborrow 2002; Wodak and Meyer 2009), which points out that discourse is often a site of conflicting ideologies, where existing power relations can be maintained, challenged or resisted.

2.3.3 Framework of CDA

Critical discourse analysis does not stand for a single theory, but rather subsumes a variety of approaches and methodologies, based on different theoretical backgrounds (Wodak 2002; Weiss and Wodak 2003). Apart from drawing upon critical linguistics, CDA is inspired by and employs concepts introduced in a number of theoretical and philosophical works: Foucault’s concepts of discourse and power;
Althusser’s and Gramsci’s work on ideology – mainly Althusser’s conception of the interpellation of individual subjects and Gramsci’s notion of hegemony; Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia; and so on. Although critical discourse analysis is rather a diverse discipline, its common goals and features can be established.

The main aim of CDA is to study the link between language and social structures and relations. It emphasizes that the relationship between language and society is dialectical:

On the one hand, discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure in the widest sense and at all levels: by class and other social relations at a societal level, by the relations specific to particular institutions […], by systems of classification, by various norms and conventions of both a discursive and a non-discursive nature, and so forth. […] On the other hand, discourse is socially constitutive. […] Discourse contributes to the constitution of all those dimensions of social structure which directly or indirectly shape and constrain it: its own norms and conventions, as well as the relations, identities and institutions which lie behind them. (Fairclough 1992: 64)

Critical discourse analysis thus combines macro-analysis of social structure and relations with micro-analysis of discourse as a social practice. Its interests lie in the investigation of the potential of discourse to socially construct reality, focusing on the construction of knowledge and beliefs, social identities and social relations (Fairclough 1992).

More specifically, the goal of CDA is to investigate the link between language, power and ideology. It focuses both on discourse as being shaped by existing power relations and on the effects of discourse – whether it serves to reproduce, undermine or transform the existing relations. Critical discourse analysts aim to “‘demystify’ discourses by deciphering ideologies” (Wodak 2006: 10); in other words, to bring into awareness ideological determinations and effects of discourse, which tend to become naturalized and viewed as commonsensical (Fairclough 1995a). As they view any aspect of meaning as having the potential to be ideologically invested, apart from lexis and grammar (see critical linguistics), critical discourse analysts examine presuppositions, implicatures, argumentation, coherence (Fairclough 1995a; van Dijk 1998; Reisigl and Wodak 2009) and nonverbal aspects of discourse (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; 1998).
Recently, **multimodal analysis** has been incorporated into CDA. As a part of social semiotics, it recognizes that “human societies use a variety of modes of representation” (such as verbal, visual, gestures, etc.), with each mode having a different potential for meaning making (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 39). All semiotic modes interact to convey systems of meaning that constitute our culture, yet they do so independently. Thus, to be able to account for all the meanings expressed in discourse, it is necessary to employ multimodal analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen 1998; 2006). Similarly to language, each semiotic mode simultaneously fulfills three functions: ideational, which represents the world around and inside us, interpersonal, which expresses relations among participants in the situation and their attitudes, and textual, which makes representations cohere into the meaningful whole (Halliday 1978).

Other characteristic features of the critical discourse analysis paradigm include **problem orientation** and **interdisciplinarity** (Wodak and Meyer 2009). CDA does not focus merely on the investigation of specific linguistic items per se but rather on the study of semiotic and linguistic aspects of social problems (Fairclough and Wodak 2010). The complexity of social problems necessitates the employment a multidisciplinary approach combining multiple perspectives (Weiss and Wodak 2003; Wodak and Meyer 2009). CDA is also characterized by the investigation of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, i.e. the examination of other genres and discourse types that the discourse under study draws upon, and the study of discursive change, i.e. change in discursive practices which reflects and contributes to social change (Wodak 2002).

Drawing upon the major representatives of CDA Norman Fairclough (1989; 1992; 1995a) and Teun A. Van Dijk (1993), the present research employs a three-dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis. The first dimension is constituted by close linguistic analysis of a text, seen as a product of social discursive practice. Attention is paid to the simultaneous analysis of form and content of both micro and macro levels of structure. The second dimension is the analysis of discursive practice, i.e. the processes of text production, distribution and consumption. The third dimension consists of the analysis of social practice, focusing on social and institutional conditions of the discursive event, and the constructive effects of discourse. Although Fairclough’s and van Dijk’s approach to the mediating dimension connecting text and social practice differ in focus, they share the same principle. Fairclough (1989: 24) points out that during the processes of text production and consumption, people draw upon the
members’ resources, involving people’s “knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social worlds they inhabit, values, beliefs, [and] assumptions”. In his view, the members’ resources are socially determined. Similarly, van Dijk (1993: 258) argues that “concrete text production and interpretation are based on so-called models, that is, mental representations of experiences, events, or situations”, which are shaped by socially shared knowledge, ideologies and attitudes. Thus, they both view the mediating dimension of discursive practice as involving socio-cognitive processes. This three-dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis is applied on newspaper discourse in next chapter.

Recently, an emphasis has been put on the incorporation of cognitive studies into CDA (Wodak 2002; Chilton 2004; Hart and Lukeš 2007). The aim of these studies is to investigate the conceptual structures behind language (Hart and Lukeš 2007). The present thesis follows this tendency as it applies the method of the cognitive theory of metaphor on the data.

### 2.3.4 Tools for Analysis

The analytical part of this research is data-driven, i.e. all the conclusions are arrived at empirically from the data themselves, with an attempt to avoid imposition of any preconceptions. The aim is to discern recurrent and systematic patterns and tendencies in newspaper discourse on natural catastrophes with relevance to the research questions of the present study. Following van Dijk (1988), the analysis focuses both on macro- and micro-structures of discourse. It starts with the expliciation of macro-structures to get a general picture of the articles and moves on to the investigation of micro-structures, through which macro-structures are realized. Based on the analysis of the data and previous work of critical discourse analysts, mainly Fairclough (1995a), van Dijk (1995), van Leeuwen (1995), Meyer (2001) and Reisigl and Wodak (2009), and cognitive theorists of metaphor, mainly Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Charteris-Black (2005) and Semino (2008), the following aspects of discourse are to be examined.
1. Semantic macrostructures – Topics/Themes

The analysis starts with the exploration of global meanings of entire discourses. It explicates the main topics or themes of the articles. In other words, it is basically concerned with the investigation of the subject matter or gist of the discourses and points out the most significant concepts (van Dijk 1988a). As van Dijk (1988b: 226) reveals, these semantic macrostructures “define the coherence of the text and ensure that local meanings of words and sentences at the micro-level have the necessary interconnections and unity”. The analysis of global meanings thus serves as the cornerstone for the analysis of microstructures in discourse.

With relevance to ideology, the examination of semantic macrostructures provides a general idea about the main focus of the articles, revealing what aspects of the situation get foregrounded and what aspects are backgrounded or omitted. Yet, such an analysis necessarily has to be complemented by a thorough investigation of linguistic forms themselves.

2. Vocabulary

The analysis investigates how participants in the natural catastrophe, i.e. the natural phenomenon and people or society as a whole, are named and referred to lexically. The focus is on wording, systems of categorization and metaphor. The study draws upon the cognitive theory of metaphor (see next sub-chapter) and van Leeuwen’s (1995) set of categories for investigating the representation of social actors in discourse. Although van Leeuwen intends the categories to classify people as participants in discourse, my analysis reveals that the categories can also be applied to natural phenomena.

One of the pairs of categories that van Leeuwen (1995) distinguishes between is the categories of inclusion and exclusion. Social actors can either be included in or excluded from representations, which can have ideological consequences. Van Leeuwen makes a further distinction concerning the exclusion and that is the distinction between suppression and backgrounding. While in the case of suppression, the social actor under investigation is not referred to in the discourse, in the case of backgrounding, the social actor is not directly mentioned in relation to an activity, but is included somewhere else in the text and thus the reader can infer who it is.

Further, van Leeuwen’s categorical system distinguishes between activation and passivation, as social actors can either be represented as active forces in an activity or
as passive participants that undergo the activity. Another distinction is made between **generic** reference, when social actors are represented as classes, and **specific** reference, when they are represented as specific individuals. If social actors are referred to as individuals, the term **individualization** is applied, if they are represented as groups, then we speak about **assimilation**. As van Leeuwen points out, since western cultures put an emphasis on individuality, the study of these two categories plays an important role in critical discourse analysis and the investigation of ideological underpinnings.

Another significant distinction exists between **nomination** and **categorization**. While in the first case, social actors are referred to “in terms of their unique identity by being nominated, [in the second case, they are referred to] in terms of identities and functions they share with others” (van Leeuwen 1995: 52). There are two sub-categories of categorization: **functionalization** and **identification**. If social actors are represented with reference to what they do, for instance their occupation or role, we speak about functionalization (e.g. teacher, interviewee). If they are represented in terms of what they are, we speak about identification.

Van Leeuwen also distinguishes between the categories of **personalization** and **impersonalization** (cf. dehumanization in Chovanec 2010). Social actors can either be represented as human beings, or by other means which do not include the semantic feature ‘human’, such as abstraction (e.g. when we refer to ‘immigrants’ as ‘problems’) and objectivation (e.g. when we refer to ‘Europeans’ in terms of the place they are in – ‘Europe’).

Finally, the notion of **overdetermination** is mentioned. It “occurs when social actors are represented as participating, at the same time, in more than one social practice” (van Leeuwen 1995: 61). One of the examples of overdetermination is symbolization, when fictional social actors represent social actors in non-fictional practices (e.g. the heroes of Westerns are employed to refer to doctors or politicians).

### 3. Grammar

Drawing upon Halliday (1985), the main interest lies in the investigation of the **system of transitivity**. Transitivity is a part of the ideational function of language and thus concerns representation of experience. More specifically, transitivity refers to the representation of processes as expressed through grammatical structures of a clause.

Processes consist of three components: participants, the process itself, and circumstances (Halliday 1985). Six main types of processes can be distinguished:
material (processes of doing), mental (processes of sensing), relational (processes of being), behavioral (processes of physiological and psychological behavior), verbal (processes of saying), and existential. The main participant roles include the Actor, i.e. the active participant, who is the doer of an action, and the Patient, i.e. the affected participant, who has something done to them.

By using a particular transitivity pattern, we represent our experience as being of a certain type. As Fowler (1991: 71) points out, transitivity thus offers choices to be made and makes it possible to analyze the same event in different ways. The particular choice made by the discourse then indicates a particular world view and may be ideologically significant.

Drawing upon Fowler (1991: 77), the analysis also deals with syntactic transformations of clauses, particularly with passive constructions and nominalizations. These two transformations are significant for the analysis since they allow some parts of the clause to be deleted. They both make it possible for the actor to be deleted (e.g. ‘The girl was shot in the Central Park’, ‘Shooting in the Central Park’), and thus leave responsibility for the action unspecified. Moreover, apart from the actor, nominalization deletes other participants, an indication of time and thus history, and modality. It turns processes into things, which can then be categorized, and thus tends to lead to simplification (Conboy 2007: 65).

4. Narrative structure of victim stories

The analysis investigates the way the narratives of personalized victim stories are constructed. It examines what character roles are ascribed to the participants and how the narratives are structured and developed, aiming to reveal any recurring patterns. The focus is on the investigation of the functions that the recurring component parts of victim stories fulfill. In addition, the analysis pays attention to the types of victim stories selected by the newspapers.

5. Photographs

The text in newspaper articles is not structured only by linguistic means but also “visually, through layout, through the spatial arrangement of blocks of text, of pictures and other graphic elements on the page” (Kress and van Leeuwen 1998: 187), which all convey social meaning. Since the layout of articles in their printed or online version is
not transmitted to the online archive, the analysis focuses only on the investigation of photographs, as one of the visual elements of newspaper discourse.

It is necessary to point out that the analysis of photographs in the present research cannot be considered as fully representative of the three newspapers since the online archives of The New York Times and The Guardian offer photographs only with some of the articles and the online archive of The Globe and Mail does not provide any photographs. It thus only supplements the analysis of the discursive devices mentioned above. The focus of the investigation is put on the content and connotations of the available photos (see more in section 3.4).

2.4 Cognitive Theory of Metaphor

My pilot study on representation of natural catastrophes in newspaper discourse has revealed that newspapers draw to a large extent on metaphor in their depiction of natural phenomena. To account for this, the present research employs the cognitive theory of metaphor, as it is considered to be a suitable approach to answer the research questions. This section first outlines the development of approaches towards metaphor throughout the history, then it delineates the cognitive theory of metaphor and at the end, it provides examples of recent research on metaphor which the present study follows.

2.4.1 Historical Overview of Approaches to Metaphor

The origins of the study of metaphor can be traced back to Ancient Greece, mainly Aristotle (4th century BC), who viewed metaphor as implicit comparison, which is based on analogy (Ortony 1979: 3). According to Aristotle, the primary function of metaphor is stylistic and ornamental (Katz 1996). It is used for aesthetic reasons, mainly in poetry, to express a concept in an eloquent way. At the same time, Aristotle pointed out the persuasive function of metaphor, seeing it as an effective rhetorical figure to be employed in political discourse (Semino 2008). Aristotle’s view of metaphor forms the basis of the so-called comparison theory of metaphor. This approach sees metaphor as
“a kind of comparison, a condensed simile” based on similarity (Martin and Harré 1982: 90). Thus, the metaphor:

You are the light in my life.

is viewed as a reduced version of:

You are like the light in my life.

The drawback of this perspective is that it ignores the important difference between a comparison and a categorization: while simile emphasizes potential similarities between the two concepts, metaphor establishes the two concepts as having “in common something more than mere resemblances in that they belong to the same category sharing relevant features” (Cacciari 1998: 135). Moreover, the comparison theory sees metaphor as comparing two concepts which have been seen as similar by the author prior to the use of metaphor, rather than constructing the similarities. It also implies that metaphor is confined to phenomena rooted in actual or possible experience, neglecting the use of metaphor in science when referring to the world beyond all possible experience (Martin and Harré 1982).

The second major theory that developed in the past is the substitution theory of metaphor. According to this approach, “metaphor is a way of saying what could be said literally” (Martin and Harré 1982: 90). In other words, it can be substituted by a synonymous literal expression. Thus, the metaphor:

He trumpeted out the news.

can be replaced by:

He told to anyone who wanted to listen. (Werner 1975)

It is rather a reductionist approach to metaphor, neglecting that metaphor is a unique expression of meaning, all aspects of which cannot be accounted for by a literal substitute. The substitution theory and the comparison theory share the view of metaphor as a matter of language; what is more, as a matter of deviant language, with literal language being perceived as natural and conventional.

The third widely held approach to metaphor, founded by Max Black in the second half of 20th century, is the interaction theory of metaphor. Contrary to the comparison and the substitution theory, it does not treat metaphor as merely stating figuratively something that might have been said literally, but rather as constructing new meanings. It draws upon I. A. Richards’s work (1936), in which two influential terms, still used today, were introduced: vehicle, which stands for the source-domain meaning of a metaphor, and tenor, referring to the target domain. According to the
interaction theory (see Black 1979), metaphor consists of the principal and subsidiary subjects, corresponding to the metaphorical focus and the surrounding literal frame respectively. Metaphorical process is based on the projection of a set of associated implications from the secondary subject upon the primary subject. As Black (1979: 29) points out,

The maker of a metaphorical statement selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes features of the primary subject by applying to it statements isomorphic with the members of the secondary subject’s implicative complex.

As the name of the approach suggests, the interaction theory does not assume that it is only the secondary subject that has impact on the primary subject but rather that the influence is reciprocal, i.e. the primary subject brings about parallel changes in the secondary subject. Thus, in the metaphor “man is a wolf”, our knowledge and connotations about man and wolves, e.g. they are wild and ruthless, interact to produce a new, irreplaceable vehicle of meaning (Martin and Harré 1982). Importantly, the interaction theory does not see metaphor only as a matter of language but also points out the cognitive dimension of it.

Neither of the three theories mentioned above has much currency in recent research on metaphor, which mainly draws upon the cognitive theory of metaphor. The main concepts of the cognitive theory, which follows some aspects of the interaction approach, mainly the recognition of the cognitive dimension of metaphor, are outlined in the next section.

2.4.2 Main Concepts of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor

The foundations of the cognitive theory of metaphor were laid down by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their influential work Metaphors We Live By (1980). The key argument which they made is that metaphor forms an inherent part of our conceptual system – in their words, “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (1980: 3). It is important to point out that, although the cognitive theory of metaphor tends to be described as radically new, the cognitive dimension of metaphor had been recognized
by previous scholars. The interaction theory viewed metaphor as a mental process, and even before that a number of philosophers, including John Locke, Giambattista Vico, and Immanuel Kant, had discussed the cognitive implications of metaphor (Semino 2008).

There are three main features that characterize the cognitive theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Gibbs 1994; Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Dobrovolskij and Piirainen 2005; Kövecses 2010):

1. As has already been stated, the cognitive approach views metaphor not just as a matter of language, but as a matter of thought as well. Cognitive theorists argue that metaphor is an important tool by means of which we conceptualize reality. This then has impact on the way we behave and act.

2. In contrast to the substitution and the comparison theories that view metaphor as extraordinary and ornamental, the cognitive theory emphasizes that metaphor is a matter of ordinary, everyday language. A set of conventional metaphorical concepts is realized in the language that we use every day to speak about our experience, including abstract concepts, such as love and time.

3. Metaphor is defined as a mapping of structure from one conceptual domain, the source domain, to another conceptual domain, the target domain. This mapping is not based on similarity between the two concepts, as believed by the comparison theory of metaphor, but rather on the correlation of our experience in these two domains and our ability to structure one concept in terms of the other.

Importantly, cognitive theorists (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2010) argue that language serves as an evidence for the existence of conceptual metaphors since it is through everyday linguistic expressions that conceptual metaphors are realized. Thus, by analyzing discourse, we can arrive at metaphors by which we conceptualize aspects of reality talked about.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) distinguish three main types of metaphors: structural, orientational and ontological. Structural metaphors are metaphors in which one concept is systematically structured in terms of another, as, for instance, in the classic example of conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, where “ARGUMENT
is partially structured, understood, performed, and talked about in terms of WAR” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 5). This conventional conceptual metaphor is realized in expressions such as he always wins an argument or she attacked my argument.

Orientational metaphors provide a spatial orientation to a concept (up-down, front-back, etc.) – e.g. HAPPY IS UP versus SAD IS DOWN, realized in she is in high spirits versus I feel low (this metaphor has a physical basis as we are in an erect posture when we feel happy and in a drooping posture when we feel sad). Ontological metaphors make us view aspects of our experience in terms of entities and substances. A typical example is constituted by personification, which allows us to comprehend physical objects in terms of human characteristics and actions.

Although Lakoff and Johnson point out that metaphors are grounded in both our physical and cultural experience, their model of the cognitive theory has rightly been criticized for not taking fully into account cross-cultural perspectives and the role of cultural models in shaping our thinking (see Fernandez 1991; Dorbovol’skij and Piirainen 2005). Quinn (1991) in her essay contradicts Lakoff and Johnson’s assertion that metaphors constitute our understanding by claiming that it is mainly cultural models which shape the way we conceptualize and understand reality, with metaphors being simply chosen to match these already existing models in our mind. The present study is critical of Quinn’s rather one-way view of the relationship between culture, mind and metaphor. It argues that the relationship is more complex, with cultural models and metaphors interacting in the constitution of our understanding. There is a dialectical link between metaphors and cultural models: metaphors are shaped by existing cultural models and at the same time, they serve to reproduce or transform these models.

Another drawback of Lakoff and Johnson’s approach is the neglect of context. Rather than viewing “metaphors as relatively fixed and universal patterns of thought”, research on metaphor should pay attention to social, historical and political circumstances, as they “can have an important influence on the choice and specification of metaphors” (El Refaie 2001: 368). As Paul Chilton (1996) points out in his analysis of political discourse, metaphors are not pre-given but are rather constituted interactively.

There is one more important aspect of metaphor to be pointed out and that is its multifunctionality. As stated by Gibbs (1994), traditionally three functions of metaphor have been recognized. It is the ability of metaphor to delineate ideas that
would be very difficult, even impossible to express using literal language – the **inexpressibility hypothesis**. Metaphor also provides a compact and condensed way of communication – the **compactness hypothesis**, and conveys information in a vivid way – the **vividness hypothesis**. Drawing upon the cognitive theory, another function of metaphor is that it enables us to comprehend complex and abstract aspects of reality in terms of more concrete, familiar and more easily imaginable ones (El Refaie 2001; Semino 2008). Metaphor also fulfills a number of social functions, mainly to persuade, entertain and establish intimacy between the speaker and the hearer (Semino 2008). Importantly, it works as an effective ideological weapon, which stems from the fact that by mapping structure from a source domain to a target domain, metaphor necessarily foregrounds some aspects of the concept while it hides other ones. This potential of metaphor is to be investigated in the analytical part.

### 2.4.3 Recent Research on Metaphor

This section provides an overview of recent research on metaphor in discourse employing a critical cognitive approach, which the analytical part of the present study draws upon. All this research shares the view of metaphor as **shaping the way we conceptualize reality**, as **being bound to a socio-historical context** and as **being partly a cultural product**. The present study has been motivated by the findings of such research.

The employment of metaphor has been extensively investigated in political discourse. George Lakoff (2004) claims that conservative and liberal political views are based on two different models of a family: a strict father family and a nurturing parent family, respectively. This stems from the existence of conceptual metaphors: NATION IS A FAMILY, GOVERNMENT IS A PARENT and CITIZENS ARE THE CHILDREN (Musolff 2004). Another significant linguist investigating metaphor in political discourse is Paul Chilton. He focused on the examination of the employment of metaphor in discourse during and after the Cold War, pointing out that the political transition discourse following the Cold War was marked by the metaphor of the COMMON EUROPEAN HOUSE (Chilton and Ilyin 1993, Chilton 1996). Elena Semino and Michela Masci (1996), when investigating metaphor in the political discourse of Silvio Berlusconi, revealed that Berlusconi employs mainly metaphors the source domains of which are FOOTBALL, WAR
and the BIBLE, in an attempt to create a positive image for himself and his party, and to justify his political actions. The football metaphor takes advantage of the positive connotations that football as a national sport has for Italians, aiming to establish national unity. The war metaphor is chosen to establish Berlusconi as a national leader that is capable of protecting his country, and the Bible metaphor is mainly drawn upon to appeal to the voters who are Catholic. Charteris-Black (2005) studies persuasion in political speeches (e.g. speeches of Churchill, Martin Luther King and George W. Bush) as performed by a choice of metaphors in combination with other rhetorical devices.

Another major domain in which research on metaphor has been carried out is newspaper discourse, dealing mainly with political issues. Lule (2004) studied metaphor in newspaper articles published in the six weeks before the war in Iraq, finding out that among the most common and recurring metaphor themes in the reports are: TIMETABLE, GAMES OF SADDAM, PATIENCE OF THE WHITE HOUSE and SELLING THE PLAN. Lule emphasizes that these metaphors, both consciously and unconsciously, structured people’s experience and determined their actions. El Refaie (2001) examines the use of conceptual metaphors in the portrayal of asylum seekers. She points out that the major metaphor themes – WATER, CRIMINALS and an INVADING ARMY – are repeatedly employed in newspaper discourse using conventional lexis and entrenched grammatical patterns. This then results in the naturalization of the metaphor themes. El Refaie emphasizes that it is the forms of language through which metaphors are realized that influence the degree to which the metaphor themes become to be viewed as a commonsensical representation of reality, with, for example, compounding playing an important role in the process of naturalization. Similarly, Santa Ana (1999) reveals that American public discourse dehumanizes immigrants by drawing upon the metaphor IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS, which becomes naturalized as it is routinely employed without drawing attention to itself. The metaphor thus serves to reproduce the racist world-view. The last study to be mentioned here is Koller’s (2004) analysis of metaphor describing women managers in business magazines. She reveals that the major metaphor theme employed is the WAR metaphor, which reproduces the dominant paradigm of hegemonic masculinity.

All the studies mentioned above reveal, on the analysis of concrete linguistic material, the power of metaphor to convey ideologies and shape the way we conceptualize certain aspects of reality. Metaphor is shown to construct a portrayal of reality which tends to be perceived as commonsensical and natural. The studies argue
that the way the reality is metaphorically conceptualized has then impact on our behavior and actions. All these conclusions have inspired the present research.
CHAPTER 3 – Newspaper Discourse

This chapter provides a theoretical account of newspaper discourse and its institutional setting in Western English speaking countries, focusing on the processes of production, transmission and consumption, and conventions connected with these processes. The concept of power in and behind newspaper discourse is discussed, which is followed by the outline of news values and their application to natural catastrophes. The chapter concludes with a commentary on photography in newspapers.

3.1 Newspaper Discourse as an Instance of Institutional Discourse

This section deals with the second and the third dimensions of a three-dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis as introduced by Fairclough (see section 2.3.3), with the focus on the discussion of newspaper discourse as an instance of institutional discourse.

The institutional setting of newspaper discourse has a number of repercussions. It puts constrains on the processes of production, transmission and consumption of newspapers by imposing a certain set of conventions and norms (discussed in more detail below). Apart from that, the institutional setting pre-inscribes participant roles, which in turn have impact on the discursive identities of the participants. In other words, discursive rights and obligations of the participants are to a certain degree predetermined (Thornborrow 2002). In comparison to other types of institutional discourse, the institutional setting of newspaper discourse restricts the discursive resources and identities of the recipients to the utmost degree. As Thompson (1990: 15) points out, “mass communication institutes a fundamental break between the producer and the receiver, in such a way that recipients have relatively little capacity to intervene in the communicative process and contribute to its course and content”. Although readers can write letters to the editor of the newspaper, the discursive identities between the producer and the receiver remain asymmetrical (Thompson 1990).

The process of news production is constrained by a number of institutional routines concerning collecting, selecting, editing and transforming material (Fairclough
It is a complex process, consisting of different steps, such as collecting press agency reports, transforming them into a draft, creating a headline and deciding where to place the article in the newspaper, and involving a team of people – journalists, producers, editorial staff and technical staff (Fairclough 1992, 1995b). As Bell (1991: 46) points out, up to eight newsworkers may be involved in the production of a news story, which may potentially undergo as many versions. Importantly, the processes of selection and transformation are determined by a set of criteria of newsworthiness, the so-called **news values** (see section 3.2), which tend to operate more or less unconsciously in journalistic practice (Fowler 1991). What follows is that events do not become the news because they are intrinsically significant but rather because they can be represented according to a culturally constructed set of criteria. In addition, other factors internal to journalists, such as ideologies and values held by them, shape news discourse (Lau 2004). Clearly, newspapers are not neutral mediators of reality, but provide a social construction of an event.

Apart from factors internal to journalistic practice, there are broader social, economic, political and technological conditions that shape news-making process. First of all, the Press is an industry and a business, the goal of which is to **make profit** (Bell 1991; Fowler 1991). Moreover, the increasing role of advertising sponsorship contributes to the establishment of the audience as consumers and newspapers as a commodity that aims to sell (Tumber 1993; Fairclough 1995b). The commercial pressures get reflected in the way events are reported with newspaper discourse purporting not only to inform but also to entertain (Fairclough 1995b). It results in the tendency of newspaper discourse to sensationalize, dramatize and provide easy-to-cover trivial stories (Birchall 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that although “competitive market pressures impose constraints on the content of mainstream media, [...] commercial considerations also determine that there is a market – a **counter-cultural marketplace** – for dissent” (McNair 2006: 90). The free market is also ensured by the trend towards **deregulation** as Western governments have attempted to remove legislation that restricts the media industries, which has resulted in the loosening of government control over the Press (Thompson 1990).

A significant characteristic of the media industries in Western societies is their increasing **concentration**, i.e. the fact that newspapers are owned by a small number of large corporations (Thompson 1990). This brings about drawbacks as, thanks to financial interests, newspapers often provide biased news on big businesses, portraying
them in a positive light. Lee and Soromon (1990: 61) point out: “Corporate sponsors are unlikely to underwrite programs that engage in serious criticism of environmental pollution, occupational hazards or other problems attributable to corporate malfeasance.” Yet, there is also a positive side of the corporate ownership of newspapers: because of their financial stability, corporate owned media promote autonomy, diversity, competition and expertise (Birchall 2007).

Another constraint imposed on the process of news production is constituted by the limited set of sources that are relied on by journalists. Journalists mostly draw upon legitimized and official sources, including government, the police, trade unions, courts, local authority departments, and scientific and technical experts from universities (Fowler 1991; Fairclough 1995b). In contrast, ordinary people and organizations, which are not perceived as legitimate, rarely constitute news sources (Fairclough 1995b). There are two main reasons why newspapers draw upon official sources. The first one is that it saves time and effort (Fowler 1991). As journalists are pressed by deadlines, they have to gather material for news reports quickly, which is ensured by the easy availability of official sources. The second reason is that “the relative authority and prestige of these sources helps to enhance credibility of the journalist’s account” (Allan 2010: 21). The lack of diversity in those who are cited in newspapers is heightened by the fact that newspapers tend to get the material for their stories from the same news agencies, such as the Associated Press (Bell 1991).

The heavy reliance on official sources creates a close link between newspapers and those in power. This brings forward the danger of the Press mainly reproducing the views, beliefs and values of the powerful, and thus speaking in a singular voice (see van Dijk 2008). Yet, newspaper discourse has the potential to report events independent of official sources. For instance, Benett, Lawrence, and Livingston (2007) point out that, in the case of Hurricane Katrina, the press critically examined and challenged government officials in the aftermath of the hurricane. Journalists based reports on their immediate experience, covering the events as they saw it, without being dependent on official sources. Benett, Lawrence and Livingston (2007: xi) explain: “Reporters entered a no-spin zone because the administration was caught off guard during the vacations of several key officials.” The authors point out that the independence of the press is also brought about by technological advances. Technological devices enable reporters to get fast to the scene of an event and cover almost instantly what they see. Thus, journalists
are often the first to provide a representation of events and influence public opinion, including opinions of those in power (see also van Dijk 1996b).

So far, the processes of news production and transmission have been focused on, yet, a full analysis should take into account the process of news consumption as well. It is important to point out that reading a newspaper is an active, creative process (Fowler 1991). Readers do not just passively absorb the text but actively interpret it, drawing upon their own experience, values and beliefs. As Thompson points out (1990: 153), “the ways in which symbolic forms are understood, and the ways in which they are valued and appraised, may differ from one individual to another, depending on the positions which they occupy in socially structured fields or institutions”. Since newspaper articles do not have the same effect on all readers, it cannot be assumed that all recipients accept the viewpoints embedded in news stories, but rather analysts should acknowledge the possibility of some readers being critical of them.

Although the text itself does not fully determine the interpretation process of readers, it constrains the range of potential interpretations (Fairclough 1995b; Richardson 1998). As Fairclough (1989) points out, to make sense of a text, readers have to arrive at a coherent interpretation, where coherence stands for both the connections between parts of a text and the connections between a text and the world. Interpretation thus involves a development of a sort of symbiosis between textual cues and our background assumptions and expectations.

A significant role in the construction of coherent meaning is played by the so-called frames, which are “structured packages of knowledge or expectations that shape the ways in which humans enact or interpret their experiences” (Fillmore 2008: 1; cf. Goffman 1986; Tannen 1993). Although frames are mainly constituted by ideas, they are carried by language (Lakoff 2004). It is thus through discursive contents and structures that newspaper discourse frames events and guides recipients in the process of meaning constitution.
3.2 Power In/Behind Newspaper Discourse

The capacity of newspapers to provide representations of reality which are transmitted to hundreds of thousands of people gives the press immense social power. Social power is here understood to stand for a symbolic and persuasive power to control to a certain degree the minds of recipients (van Dijk 1996b). By portraying social reality in a particular way and imposing world views, newspaper discourse has the power to shape the way readers understand and evaluate events and phenomena. Discursive structures and contents have impact on readers’ models, i.e. mental representations, of events, affecting also their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, norms, values and ideologies, which may in future indirectly influence their actions (van Dijk 2008). Apart from providing particular ways of representing the reality, newspaper discourse also has the power to construct social identities of the participants and social relations between them (Fairclough 1995b).

Although Fairclough (1989) points out that the media tend to reproduce perspectives of those in power and maintain thus dominant ideologies, it cannot be assumed a priori that this is the case for all newspaper discourse. As has already been stated, newspapers have the potential to challenge, criticize and subvert world views of the dominant bloc. Therefore, an analyst should avoid approaching newspaper discourse with preconceptions about its ideological work and rather should deduce the ideology/ideologies embedded in newspaper articles from the discursive devices employed.

The discussion above focused on power in newspaper discourse, but as Fairclough (1989) reveals there also exists power behind discourse. This mainly concerns the access to newspaper discourse, i.e. who is used as a news source, whose voices are heard and who gets quoted in the articles. As has already been discussed, it is elite groups and institutions that tend to get a preferential access to newspaper discourse, by means of which they can exercise social power (van Dijk 1996b).
3.3 Newsworthiness of Newspaper Discourse

As has been pointed out, the processes of news selection and transformation are carried out according to a socially constructed set of categories, the so-called news values; in other words, events are selected to become news not because they are intrinsically newsworthy, but because they fulfill criteria of newsworthiness (Fowler 1991). As Harcup and O’Neill (2001) emphasize, these criteria do not only determine the process of selection but influence the way events are covered.

According to a now traditional analysis of news values carried out by Johann Galtung and Mari Ruge, 12 factors of newsworthiness can be distinguished:

1. frequency – single events are more likely to be selected than long-term trends
2. threshold – the greater the intensity of an event, the more newsworthy it is
3. unambiguity – the less ambiguous and the more clearly to be understood and interpreted an event is, the more likely it is to be selected
4. meaningfulness – the higher degree of cultural proximity and relevance of an event, the more newsworthy it is; this is based on the principle of ethnocentrism, according to which countries and societies perceived to be like our own are considered more significant
5. consonance – refers to events which people expect or want to happen
6. unexpectedness – if an event is unusual or happens unexpectedly, without a warning, its newsworthiness is increased
7. continuity – the tendency of newspapers to continue reporting on an event for some time because readers are already familiar with it and thus can interpret it more easily
8. composition – an event is considered more newsworthy if it fits the balance or composition of a newspaper
9. reference to elite nations – newspapers are occupied more with nations that are considered to be elite in that particular culture (universally, the USA is perceived to stand for an elite nation)
10. reference to elite people – elite people, such as those who are famous, are seen as more newsworthy than ordinary people
11. **reference to persons** – the tendency of newspapers for personalization, which evokes feelings of identification but also hides social, political and economic factors

12. **reference to something negative** – negative events are considered more newsworthy than positive events

(Fowler 1991; Harcup and O’Neill 2001)

As the natural catastrophes analyzed in the present research satisfy most of the twelve criteria, they constitute significantly newsworthy issues. By representing single events of great intensity, they meet ‘frequency’ and ‘threshold’ factors. Furthermore, they fulfill criteria of ‘unexpectedness’, ‘reference to something negative’, and ‘continuity’ as they unfold over a period of time. Concerning the factor of ‘meaningfulness’, the three disasters analyzed in this research differ in their degree of cultural proximity to Western societies. The analytical part will attempt to answer whether this is reflected in the way the disasters are covered.

Harcup and O’Neill (2001) revised Galtung and Ruge’s criteria of newsworthiness by conducting a content analysis of both domestic and foreign news. The results of the analysis suggested that other factors have to be added to the twelve criteria. These include the factor of *entertainment*: many stories are selected not because their purpose is to inform recipients but rather because they serve to entertain; *reference to something positive; reference to elite organizations and institutions; and newspaper’s own agenda*. When conducting the analysis, the present thesis will take these criteria into account, paying attention to whether there is a tendency to entertain and refer to positive stories and elite organizations in the newspaper articles on the natural catastrophes.

### 3.4 Photography in Newspapers

A common myth that has evolved around photography is that a photographic image provides a mirror of the reality – a reflection of the world as it is (Choi 2002; Caple 2010). There are two main reasons for the perception of photography as an inherently realistic medium. Firstly, it is “the seemingly instantaneous and direct quality of visual perception […] [that] tends to leave the relation between the photograph and reality non-problematic for the viewer” (Davey 1992: 3). Secondly, it is our belief in
technology and objectivity of a product of technological nature – our view of photograph as “capturing an image without human intervention” (Choi 2002: 2). Such a view neglects the fact that the object photographed is transformed from the three dimensional world into a two dimensional image; the spatial relationships depend on the focal length and the lens used and the distance between the camera and the object photographed; the object which is to be in focus and the elements which are to be invisible for the viewer undergo a process of selection; and the range of colours and brightness is reduced (Davey 1992).

As pointed out by Roland Barthes (1977), photographs do not convey only what he calls a denoted message (the literal reality that the photograph portrays) but also a connoted message. Barthes (1977: 19) reveals about photographs in newspapers:

On the one hand, the press photograph is an object that has been worked on, chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms which are so many factors of connotation; while on the other, this same photograph is not only perceived, received, it is read, connected more or less consciously by the public that consumes it to a traditional stock of signs.

Barthes emphasizes that the connoted meanings of photography are culturally determined.

Following Barthes and social semioticians, such as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), this thesis views photographs not as reflections of reality but as social constructs which provide a particular representation, a version of reality, and the meaning of which is dependent on context. In the case of photojournalism, photographs undergo a complex meaning-making process, which involves actions of photographers, subeditors and editors, and which is constrained by institutional conventions (Caple 2010).

Like language and other semiotic modes, photographs fulfill three main functions: using Halliday’s terms – the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). The ideational function of photographs is to provide a representation of the world around and inside us, the interpersonal function of

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2 The contrast between a denotative and a connotative meaning is commonly established in semantics. Leech (1981) defines a denotative meaning as “an inextricable and essential part of what language is, such that one can scarcely define language without referring to it” (11), and a connotative meaning as “the communicative value an expression has by virtue of what it refers to, over and above its purely conceptual content” (12).
photographs is to enact social relations and the textual function of photographs is to establish a coherent ‘text’ where the elements of ‘the text’ cohere both internally and with its environment. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) provide a detailed description of the grammar of visual design, i.e. features of visual images, through which the three functions are enacted.

Because of the mythical assumption that a photograph is a mirror of the real world, because of the ability of photography to appeal directly to emotions (Caple 2010), and because of the wide-spread notion in the West that seeing is believing (Collins 1983), a photographic image has the potential to serve as a powerful ideological tool. Despite the fact that photographs socially construct a particular picture of reality, the portrayal they provide tends to become naturalized. As such, they are one of the features to be focused on in the analytical part of the present research.
CHAPTER FOUR – The Indian Ocean Tsunami

4.1 Introduction

This chapter first provides some background information about the natural catastrophe the Indian Ocean tsunami gathered from sociological and anthropological research. Then, it focuses on the actual analysis of the newspaper articles from the corpus. The main interest lies in the investigation of the way newspapers frame the event, where frames are understood in this context to stand for “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse” (Gitlin 1980: 7). The thesis examines discursive choices made in the articles to represent the natural catastrophe – for instance, what is included and excluded, what categorization is employed, what process types are drawn upon, and what is made explicit and what is left implicit (Fairclough 1995b), with the goal to reveal the point of view of the catastrophe thus constructed.

Firstly, the thesis deals with the diachronic analysis of newspaper reporting within the first two weeks after the natural catastrophe occurred, focusing on macro-structures of the newspaper articles – more specifically, on global meanings and main topics of the articles. Then, it shifts attention to the study of micro-structures of the reports, concentrating on the representation of the main participants in the event, i.e. the natural phenomenon and people. As has already been pointed out, sociological research reveals that natural catastrophes and their consequences are an outcome of the actions of both the natural phenomenon and people. The boundary between nature and culture is thus to a large extent erased during these events. Whether this is the way newspapers represent the participants is to be revealed in the analysis.
4.2 Background Information

The Indian Ocean tsunami formed as a result of a Sumatra earthquake of a magnitude 9.15 on December 26, 2004. It travelled 4500 km across the Indian Ocean and affected twelve countries within about seven hours. About 250,000 people were killed and around 1.7 million more were displaced in the disaster. Indonesia was the worst hit country, with more than 80,000 dead and 100,000 injured, followed by Sri Lanka with almost 30,000 deaths, India about 15,000, and then Thailand, East Africa, Malaysia, the Maldives, Burma, and Bangladesh. The tsunami also affected foreign tourists, killing more than 2,000 of them. It destroyed houses, marketplaces, commercial, public and municipal buildings, and transportation networks, with the economic impact estimated to be in the billions of dollars (Rodriguez et al. 2006; Gunewardena 2008b; Fuller 2010).

The damage was not caused by the natural phenomenon itself but was compounded by human-made aspects. As Niman (2010) reveals, one of them is a destruction of protective environmental features provided by nature. Historically, the low-lying areas across the Indian Ocean have been protected by coral reefs tempering waves, and mangrove swamps, which break tsunami forces. Yet, over the past years, these have been destroyed by irresponsible human actions connected with shoreline development, such as the use of pesticides, coral mining, dynamiting and mangrove logging.

Furthermore, social, political and economic conditions determined the vulnerability of people to the tsunami, with the poor, the marginalized and the disempowered being affected more than the rest of a population (Gamburd and McGilvray 2010). Drawing upon work of other researchers, Gamburd and McGilvray (2010: 6) reveal that in Somalia the situation was worsened by an existing humanitarian crisis, and in India many more women than men died and members of certain castes suffered more and received less than others.

In Sri Lanka, the majority of fatalities and the worst affected by the tsunami were among the low-income fishermen families living along the coastline. Their settlements lacked safe water, sanitation systems and proper local infrastructure (Gunewardena 2008b; Frerks 2010). Frerks (2010: 150) reveals that “80 percent of the affected households lived on less than one dollar per day/per person before the tsunami.
struck”. At the same time, women were hit harder by the catastrophe than men, especially because of embedded gendered cultural norms and behaviors. The vulnerability of people to the tsunami in Sri Lanka was also aggregated by an over 20-year-long civil war between the Tamil people and the Sinhalese government. The war had worsened economic and social conditions of the populations, thus making them particularly sensitive to the impact of the disaster (Frerks 2010; Soysa 2010; Keenan 2010). The catastrophe that occurred in Sri Lanka was therefore rather an intersection of a tsunami, a civil war and poor living conditions of people.

The initial response of Sri Lanka’s government was slow and often ineffective since it was overwhelmed by the situation, lacked resources, and was hindered by its accountability structures and rules. Moreover, the government tended to operate through patronage politics with individuals acting for their own benefit, which resulted in the distribution of resources being determined by ethnic, regional and caste differences (Frerks 2010).

Importantly, the consequences of the tsunami could have been mitigated if a warning system had existed in the Indian Ocean, as it does in the Pacific Ocean. While earthquakes cannot be predicted, it is possible to give an about three-hour notice of a tsunami set off by the earthquake, which would have saved many lives on December 26, 2004 (Gunewardena 2008b). It is not only the lack of a warning system but also the failure of science communication that contributed to the disaster. As Dickson (2010) points out, seismologists in many countries all over the world, such as Australia and California, detected the earthquake and were aware that it would result in a massive tsunami. Yet, without the existence of direct channels of communication, the information was not spread to the communities under threat. Apart from the lack of technology, there was also a lack of adequate disaster preparation and mitigation efforts across the Indian Ocean. As Rodriguez et al. (2006) reveal, public awareness and knowledge, and public alertness for a hazard were almost absent in the countries threatened by the tsunami.
4.3 Macro-structures of the Newspaper Articles – Diachronic View

The analysis of the articles on the Indian Ocean tsunami within the time period of 14 days after the disaster reveals a pattern in the employment of main topics and global meanings in all the three newspapers. Basically, the news reports fall into three main phases:

1. The immediate aftermath of the catastrophe
   During the first two days of the disaster, the main focus of the articles is on what happened, where and when it happened, and why and how it happened (cf. Harrison 1999b). The reports are seemingly factual, with a great preponderance of numbers, which provides the newspapers with the illusion of credibility. Yet, the underlying tone of the articles is to convey shock and horror (more is to be said on this in the subsequent analysis).

2. Eyewitness stories
   Then, the newspapers mainly focus on eyewitness accounts of the event and personalized victim stories. Apart from helping to establish the portrayal of the catastrophe as credible, eyewitness stories have a significant emotional appeal. By providing first-hand experience, eyewitness accounts bring the events closer to ordinary people’s lives, arouse sympathy and make readers feel more involved. To contrast this phase of reporting with the first one, if journalists “offer us a point of view which is essentially distanced, non-partisan and seemingly objective, witnesses do the opposite – providing a position for involvement, partisanship and emotional engagement” (Langer 1992: 120). More on victim stories is to be written in section 4.5.3.

3. Consequences/Aid
   In the third phase, newspapers describe the consequences of the disaster with the focus on the living conditions of the people affected by the catastrophe. The natural phenomenon is backgrounded in these accounts. Overall, the situation is portrayed as horrific, full of problems and obstacles, and possible threats, such as threats of
outbreaks of illnesses and an increasing number of dead people. The conveyance of feelings of fear and danger prevails in these reports.

Occasionally, the newspapers focus on the problematic political, economic and social conditions of the countries prior to the disaster. Yet, rather than establishing a direct link between these conditions and the catastrophe, the dire conditions are mentioned to emphasize the horror of the situation.

These accounts are juxtaposed with the reports of aid and international donations, which are full of motifs of solidarity, help and general appraisal of people’s actions. By alleviating negative emotions, they provide a balance to the negative stories.

This can be generalized as an overall tendency in the newspapers: mitigate the feelings of danger and threat by inserting news which conveys positive aspects, such as hope and unity.

**Example 1:** *Disaster's damage to economies may be minor* (headline, *The New York Times*, 3 Jan 2005)

**Example 2:** *The disaster has brought unprecedented political unity among the three large parties representing the majority Sinhalese.* (*The Guardian*, 29 Dec 2004)

Such accounts provide reassurance for readers, and, for a moment, establish equilibrium between the positive and the negative.

The analysis of the main topics and global meanings of the articles, mainly the focus on victim stories, living conditions of the people affected by the disaster, work of rescuers and donations of people from all over the world, reveals that it is human-interest perspective that prevails in the newspaper reports. The newspapers make readers comprehend the events in relation to themselves, to human beings, not to nature, which is a result of natural human self-centredness (Kvakova 2009). The articles concentrate on reporting the event, rather than analyzing or explaining it. The focus on causes and a broader historical and social context of the events is missing in the newspapers.
4.4 Representation of the Natural Phenomenon

Drawing upon Meyer’s work (2001), this chapter analyses the referential strategies and strategies of nomination employed by the newspapers to represent the natural phenomenon. The main interest lies in the way the tsunami is categorized and in the use of metaphor with reference to the natural phenomenon. Apart from that, strategies of predication are studied, with the aim to reveal what traits, characteristics and qualities are attributed to the tsunami.

The analysis investigates both lexical and grammatical devices. To examine lexical categorization of the tsunami, including metaphor, it mainly draws upon the cognitive theory of metaphor and van Leeuwen’s (1995) categorical system for the investigation of social actors in discourse (see subchapter 2.3.4). Concerning grammatical means, it focuses on the transitivity pattern of sentences, paying attention to what type of processes tend to be ascribed to the natural phenomenon and what participant roles are occupied by it (see subchapter 2.3.4). It also examines the voice of sentences – whether it is active or passive.

4.4.1 Metaphorical Representation of the Tsunami

The analysis of the newspaper articles reveals that all the three newspapers heavily employ metaphorical expressions with reference to the natural phenomenon. Drawing upon the cognitive theory of metaphor and its claim that metaphorical expressions in discourse are realizations of underlying conceptual metaphor themes, the aim of this subchapter is to “look behind explicit utterances to find conceptual structures that the users themselves may not be aware of” (Musolff 2004: 3). In other words, through the analysis of concrete metaphoric linguistic expressions, it attempts to trace back the metaphor concepts which are thus materialized in discourse and through which the newspapers make sense of the tsunami.

The significance of such an analysis lies in the belief that the conceptual metaphor themes drawn upon in the articles form the basis of a framework through which readers are made to comprehend the tsunami. They help to construct readers’ mental models or representations of the natural phenomenon and thus influence the way readers think and feel about the event, and consequently behave.
Although the empirical results of this study show that the articles are abundant with metaphoric expressions, the metaphors come out from rather a small number of underlying themes. Basically, three major metaphor themes can be discerned in all the three newspapers: the representation of the tsunami as an ANIMATE BEING, the depiction of the natural phenomenon as a MONSTER, and the portrayal of the tsunami in terms of WAR. These themes are systematically realized by both lexical and syntactic devices, and occur over the whole spectrum of a 14-day time period under study.

The metaphoric expressions can be found not only in the representations of the events provided by journalists themselves but also in the quotations conveying eyewitness accounts of the disaster. As it is the newspapers’ choice who and what to quote, I argue that the metaphoric representations of eyewitnesses selected to be quoted also play a significant role in the construction of the conceptual framework of the tsunami offered by the newspapers.

4.4.1.1 Tsunami as an ANIMATE BEING

The portrayal of the natural phenomenon as an ANIMATE BEING is realized by a number of lexical and syntactical means. First of all, the tsunami is represented as having a life of its own. The formation of the tsunami is described in analogy with the production of eggs by aquatic animals:

**Example 3:** Huge quake spawns tremors and tsunamis in Southeast Asia

The independent existence of the tsunami is also conveyed by the syntactic structure of a number of sentences referring to the phenomenon.

**Example 4:** The whole sea just lifted up. It swelled up. There was no sound. The sea just poured on to the island. (*The Guardian*, 27 Dec 2004)

These sentences represent the processes as self-engendering, i.e. as being brought about from within. Halliday (1985) refers to such a syntactical structure as the middle ergative option. He uses the term ergativity to distinguish between sentence structures that represent a process as brought about from outside and those that represent a process as brought about from inside. He illustrates it with the following example: *Mary sailed*
the boat/the boat sailed. In the first case, there is a participant that functions as an external cause of the process of sailing, which is referred to as ‘the agent’, while in the second case, the process is represented as being brought about from within, with no separate agent. Ergativity thus concerns the representation of causation, of the source of a process. Going back to the example from the data, the processes are depicted as being instigated by the natural phenomenon itself, with no external agent. It results in the portrayal of the tsunami as having its own energy and thus having the ability to initiate change.

Another animate characteristic that is ascribed to the tsunami is an animal body. When describing actions of the tsunami, the articles often use verbs the denotative meaning of which implies performance by parts of an animal body.

**Example 5:** But even if he had a boat, he said, “nobody wants fish now” – not from a sea that swallowed so many dead bodies. *(The New York Times, 3 Jan 2005)*

**Example 6:** It pushed them forward, into the town, and then sucked them back toward the beach with even greater force. *(The Globe and Mail, 1 Jan 2005)*

The verb in Example 5 evokes an image of the tsunami passing dead bodies through its mouth and throat into the stomach. In Example 6, the verb portrays the tsunami as drawing people into the mouth by the movements of a tongue and lips. Thus, an image of the tsunami as possessing a body and using it to perform actions is conveyed.

Another feature that the tsunami shares with animate beings is the sound that it makes: commonly, the newspapers refer to the natural phenomenon as roaring, which is a sound made by people when in rage or distress. What is more, emotions are ascribed to the tsunami. Apart from the sound roar indirectly implying that the natural phenomenon is in a strong emotional state, there are a number of explicit references to negative feelings of the tsunami in the articles.

**Example 7:** The waterline was dipping off to the sides and rising furiously in the middle. *(The New York Times, 31 Dec 2004)*

**Example 8:** “I want to send pictures back home to the United States so that my family and friends can see the wrath of Mother Nature,” he said. *(The Globe and Mail, 4 Jan 2005)*

The nature is thus characterized as being extremely angry. The reason for such an emotional state is left unspecified; yet, the employment of the word wrath implies that the motive of the actions of nature is one of vengeance and punishment.
The punishment theme occurs in the accounts provided by victims, fulfilling the function of the elucidation of the events.

**Example 9:** *Our mother has punished us.* (eyewitness account in *The New York Times*, 5 Jan 2005)

Such accounts portray the event as a result of retribution by nature, which is personalized by being portrayed as ‘our mother’. The view of nature as our mother, capable of inflicting punishment on people for their wrongdoings, is a common mythological motif (Larue 1975). What wrong deeds people have committed though ceases to be specified. Thus, the punishment theme seems to be employed for the sake of an illusion of providing an explanation of the disaster, in this case rather a simplistic one, so that human desire to make sense of the world is fulfilled (more on this is to be said in subchapter 4.4.1.5 – “Origins of the metaphoric representation”). Consequently, a search for the real causes of the catastrophe is suppressed.

Apart from lexical means, the metaphor theme of ANIMATION is also realized syntactically. One of the syntactic devices that imply animation is the use of a possessive genitive ’s, generally employed with animate beings, instead of an ‘of-phrase’, generally employed with inanimate objects, when referring to the natural phenomenon, as in *the tsunami’s power* (*The New York Times*, 31 Dec 2004) or *the tsunamis’ path* (*The Globe and Mail*, 27 Dec 2004).

Furthermore, animation is established in the transitivity pattern of sentences referring to the tsunami. The natural phenomenon occurs as a participant in sentences mainly in the first and the second phase of reporting under study, i.e. in the portrayal of the immediate aftermath of the disaster and in eyewitness accounts of the event. The majority of these sentences are in an active voice of the following type:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The natural phenomenon</th>
<th>verbal group</th>
<th>(nominal group)</th>
<th>(adverbial group or prepositional phrase)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Material process</td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>Circumstances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 11: *Raging waters swept villagers out to sea and tore children from their parents' arms. (The Globe and Mail, 27 Dec 2004)*

The natural phenomenon occupies the role of an actor in the articles, to which material processes are ascribed. The function of the patient in such clauses is performed by people, objects and places. This recurring transitivity pattern ascribes the responsibility for the destructive actions to the natural phenomenon and suggests that the tsunami acts with force and volition. It portrays the tsunami as being in control of the actions and implies that it acts on purpose, which consequently helps to establish the natural phenomenon as animate.

As can be seen, the newspapers heavily draw upon personification, i.e. depiction of nonhuman entities in terms of human goals, actions and characteristics (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Since the portrayal of the events is given from a human perspective and because of the Western belief in the unique status of man, it is not surprising that the newspapers incorporate human characteristics and motivations in the representation of the tsunami (cf. Pavelka 1982). What is significant is whether positive or negative human features are associated with the natural phenomenon. As the newspapers depict the tsunami as full of negative emotions, i.e. anger and vengeance, they portray it in a negative light.

By conveying a negative portrayal of the natural phenomenon, newspapers demonize it. This consequently has impact on people’s attitude towards nature and the complex event of a natural catastrophe, influencing people’s behavior and actions. Demonization of the tsunami is further intensified by the employment of the metaphor themes of a MONSTER and WAR, which are discussed below.

The main function of the metaphoric theme of an ANIMATE BEING is to help people make sense of the catastrophe. By mapping features from the source domain of an animate being to the target domain of the tsunami, it enables us to understand a complex and unfamiliar aspect of reality in terms of a more concrete, clear and familiar phenomenon. As Santa Ana (1999: 195) points out, “metaphors are conceptual instruments that embody otherwise amorphous or remote concepts in ways that the public can readily understand”. Thus, instead of an abstract picture of a mass of water, the metaphor employed in the newspapers evokes a concrete and vivid image of an entity, more specifically an animate being.
Another implication of the metaphor theme of an ANIMATE BEING is ascription of extraordinary power to nature. As a result of Enlightenment ideology and a long tradition in Western philosophy and cosmology concerning the relationship between humans and nature, mankind is viewed as dominating nature (Hawkes 2003; Goatly 2007). Humans are considered to be at the pinnacle of creation, with animals occupying the position below them and inanimate objects standing at the bottom of the hierarchy (Goatly 2007). Yet, by providing the tsunami with human characteristics, the hierarchy is disturbed. The natural phenomenon is portrayed as being at the top of the imaginary ladder, which gives it an enormous power.

Significantly, the employment of the metaphoric theme of animation mystifies the real causes of the catastrophe. It portrays the disaster as stemming from the extreme anger of nature and the will of the natural phenomenon to punish people. This obscures the fact that human actions and social conditions also contributed to the impact of the disaster.

4.4.1.2 Tsunami as a MONSTER

Another major conceptual metaphor theme that is systematically employed by all the three newspapers is representation of the tsunami as a MONSTER. In other words, the articles portray the natural phenomenon as a large, powerful, frightening, violent and cruel creature. This metaphoric theme is materialized mainly by the use of emotionally colored lexis and hyperbole, which is “a figure of amplification or attenuation by which the speaker signals emotional involvement through an exaggerated formulation” (Norrick 2004: 1730).

There can be found a number of references in the articles which directly and explicitly portray the tsunami as a monster. These include the employment of a simile, as in Example 12, or the adoption of the word monster to characterize the natural phenomenon, as in Example 13.

**Example 12:** The deadly wave was unimaginably big, stretching to the horizons, and it struck suddenly, looming up with a roar like a monster from the deep. *(The New York Times, 27 Dec 2004)*

**Example 13:** Now they understood why such a monster tsunami had been unleashed. *(The New York Times, 31 Dec 2004)*
Apart from explicit expressions, the newspapers draw upon a number of other discursive devices to convey the MONSTER metaphor. Referring to the size of the tsunami, the articles are replete with hyperbolic adjectives, such as massive, colossal, huge, giant, mammoth and gargantuan. These adjectives tend to fulfill the function of identification of the tsunami as they form a part of naming strategies for the natural phenomenon, as can be illustrated on Example 14.

**Example 14:** Teams of elephants are helping recover the bodies of tsunami victims swept three or four kilometres inland by the massive wave. (The Globe and Mail, 6 Jan 2005)

The portrayal of the natural phenomenon as having abnormal physical power is realized through the verbs denoting material processes the actor of which is the tsunami. These include verbs demanding a great force, such as batter, smash and ravage, which also imply violence of nature. Apart from these, the extraordinary power of the tsunami is conveyed through the connotations of the verbs used in the sentences of the following type:

**Example 15:** It picked up cars and swept them hundreds of yards inland. (The New York Times, 31 Dec 2004)

**Example 16:** The rising flow pushed them upward and pinned them against the ceiling and the top of the door frame. (The Globe and Mail, 27 Dec 2004)

Our common associations with the material processes pick up, sweep and pin are: the actor is a human being and the object of the action is something relatively small. The employment of the verbs in Examples 15 and 16, on one hand, implies animation of the natural phenomenon, and, on the other hand, initiates a comparison of a small object with cars, in the first case, and people, in the second case. Such a comparison leads to the conclusion that something which picks up and sweeps cars, and pins people against the ceiling must be extraordinarily powerful. The effect of these sentences is based on the contrast between what commonly stands for the object of the actions – something small – and what stands for the object when referring to the action of the tsunami – something heavy and big. This contrast and the resulting constitution of an analogy between the two objects are explicitly expressed in Example 17.

**Example 17:** Concrete pillars are snapped like twigs. Cars and buses have been tossed about like toys. (The Globe and Mail, 30 Dec 2004)
These representations imply that the natural phenomenon is more powerful than people. The Western Enlightenment ideology of domination of people over nature is thus disrupted.

The frightening aspect of the tsunami is revealed in eyewitness accounts of the events. They describe the noise that the natural phenomenon makes by a hyperbolic adjective *horrendous*, use a repetition to intensify fear in the representation of their experience as *very, very frightening*, and portray the events as *something out of a horror film*. Fear is also evoked in Example 18.

**Example 18:** *There was this black thing above us, high in the air.* (eyewitness account in *The Globe and Mail*, 1 Jan 2005)

By resorting to the use of a vague expression to refer to the tsunami, the eyewitness implies that there does not exist a word to name the phenomenon and thus presents it as something mysterious and unknown. Moreover, the color *black* carries negative connotations and tends to be associated with fear. Hawkins (2001) explains that *black*, as opposed to *white*, takes on a negative value because it is conceptually associated with the experience of death. The roots for this are in our physical experience of sunlight and darkness: sunlight is a necessary element for life and if there is not enough of it, i.e. if there is darkness, life forms tend to die (Hawkins 2001). Therefore, “light and the corresponding colour experience of *white* take on the positive value of life, while darkness and the corresponding colour of *black* take on the negative value of death” (Hawkins 2001: 41). *Black* is used to characterize the tsunami in a number of other references in the articles, helping establish the natural phenomenon as frightening. Such a portrayal is even intensified when the word *black* is modified by the adjective *menacing*, as in *the ocean's abruptly changing colors from green to a dark, menacing black* (*The New York Times*, 31 Dec 2004), which conveys the picture of the ocean as hostile and threatening.

Another characteristic that is attributed to the tsunami by the newspapers is cruelty. The articles explicitly refer to the natural phenomenon as *merciless*, portraying it thus as having no sympathy with people. Cruelty is also implied in a numerous representation of the tsunami as striking suddenly, giving no warning to people to prepare for the disaster.

**Example 19:** *Then, without warning, the sea turned ferocious.* (*The New York Times*, 27 Dec 2004)
**Example 20:** *It sent tsunamis across the Indian Ocean without warning on Boxing Day.* *(The Guardian, 28 Dec 2004)*

**Example 21:** *Out of the blue, a deadly wall of water* (headline, The Guardian, 27 Dec 2004)

Apart from suggesting heartlessness of the tsunami, such depictions conceal the fact that it was the government, officials and the media that did not warn the people, mainly because of the lack of a warning system in the Indian Ocean and the failure of technological communication (see subchapter 4.2). Thus, rather than allowing people to accept the responsibility, the representations above divert the blame to nature.

To sum up, discursive devices employed by the newspapers describe the natural phenomenon as a giant, extraordinarily powerful, violent, frightening and cruel creature. If we trace back a conceptual metaphor theme that underlies such a representation, we arrive at the metaphor ‘tsunami as a MONSTER’. Such a metaphor draws upon themes from mythology and has the main effect of demonizing the natural phenomenon.

As the metaphor of ANIMATION, the MONSTER metaphor renders the natural catastrophe comprehensible to people by applying a framework of thinking about something more concrete and easily imaginable, i.e. a monster, to the tsunami. It thus helps readers to grasp the reality.

Yet, it pictures the natural phenomenon in a strongly negative light. By demonizing it, the metaphor evokes intense negative emotions, mainly fear. This has impact on the formation of people’s attitudes towards nature, most probably resulting in dislike and hostility. Such attitudes do not allow people to cope with the natural disaster in a rational way and hinder constructive action.

**4.4.1.3 Tsunami as a WARRIOR**

The third major metaphoric theme by which the newspapers conceptualize the natural catastrophe is representation of the tsunami as a WARRIOR. The articles compare the situation to a war, often employing a simile.

**Example 22:** *Almost every building has been leveled or gutted, as if a bomb had exploded.* *(The Globe and Mail, 30 Dec 2004)*

**Example 23:** *When that finished, there was a noise like a bomb.* *(eyewitness account in The Guardian, 31 Dec 2004)*
Example 24: She heard what she thought was an explosion. (The New York Times, 7 Jan 2005)

Example 25: It brought back images of the war, which I lived through as a boy. It looked like after a heavy bombardment. (eyewitness account in The Guardian, 31 Dec 2004)

As Examples 23 and 25 show, comparisons to a war also occur in eyewitness accounts of the situation. The function of such representations is to compare the tsunami to something that people are more familiar with and thus bring the event closer to people’s experience and help readers to comprehend it.

Apart from drawing upon comparisons, the newspapers also categorize the natural phenomenon as a warrior. While comparison points out resemblances between two phenomena, categorization implies that the two phenomena are not just similar but rather belong to the same category and thus share relevant features (Cacciari 1998). One of the features that the tsunami shares with a warrior in the articles is that it attacks people, as in: “The water separated, then it attacked.” (The New York Times, 31 Dec 2004) The natural phenomenon is seen as acting with volition, aiming to physically set upon people. Such a view is also conveyed in Examples 26 and 27:

Example 26: “We all immediately turned and ran towards the main road with the water following us.” (The Guardian, 27 Dec 2004)

Example 27: “It took several hours in some cases on Sunday for the waves to build and reach their targets.” (The New York Times, 27 Dec 2004)

Instead of revealing that the waves move because of geophysical forces, the newspapers portray the natural phenomenon as having a desired goal, a target – to hurt and kill people, and cause damage to their property. The tsunami is thus represented as hostile and aggressive, implying that it constitutes people’s enemy, which is expressed in: the sea suddenly turned enemy (The New York Times, 27 Dec 2004).

Overall, the WAR metaphoric theme creates animosity against nature. It draws a sharp division between people and nature by portraying the natural phenomenon as a people’s foe. It thus prevents people from establishing a harmonic relation to nature.
Apart from the three major metaphoric themes, the natural phenomenon is occasionally presented as a CRIMINAL. The articles view the tsunami as a thief that stole tens of thousands of lives (The New York Times, 31 Dec 2004). Moreover, as a part of naming strategies, the articles identify the natural phenomenon as a ‘murderer’, which can be seen in:

**Example 28:** It seemed to reflect the way the murderous surge also rewrote, perhaps permanently, the covenant between the people of this island nation and the sea that surrounds it. (The New York Times, 5 Jan 2005)

**Example 29:** Honeymooners Nathan and Suzanna Lee-Walsh, from Bexley, Kent, were watching television in their villa in Male in the Maldives Island, when the killer wave struck. (The Guardian, 28 Dec 2004)

The conceptualization of the natural phenomenon as a criminal intensifies the evil aspects already ascribed to the tsunami by the previous three metaphor themes. In several cases, the newspapers draw upon a biblical motif. Landscape is depicted as apocalyptic and an eyewitness reveals: “The speed with which it all happened seemed like a scene from the Bible.” (The Globe and Mail, 27 Dec 2004) By applying a biblical flood to the representation of the tsunami, the reports aim to make the event more familiar for people and also convey the intensity of the disaster. Apart from that, the biblical motif lends an aura of mystique to the natural phenomenon and contributes to the newspaper’s role as a myth-maker (see next subchapter).

All the metaphor themes employed in the newspapers have rather negative connotations. The only attribute which might be considered as positive and which is ascribed to the tsunami is indiscrimination: The waves were gargantuan [...] , the killing and destruction were brutal and indiscriminate (The New York Times, 27 Dec 2004). The natural phenomenon is thus portrayed as affecting all the people equally. The danger of such a portrayal inheres in the creation of misconception. As sociological research reveals, natural catastrophes do not affect all people equally, but has the worst impact on those who are marginalized in the society since they are the most vulnerable (see section 1.2). In the case of the tsunami, the research that followed the catastrophe revealed that the poor, the marginalized and the disempowered were the worst affected...
Therefore, by depicting the tsunami as indiscriminate, the newspapers conceal the real facts.

4.4.1.5 Origins of the Metaphors

The origins of the metaphoric representations of the tsunami as an ANIMATE BEING and a MONSTER can be traced back to the mythology of Western culture. In ancient and aboriginal societies, myths portrayed the whole nature, including a sea, as animate (Larue 1975; Taylor 1994). Natural phenomena were bestowed with life and energy; they were depicted as primal beings that are granted with volition and mind (Taylor 1994).

Ancient myths depict the earth as a Mother, which can be either beneficent or hostile, evil and punishing (Larue 1975). The world is portrayed as full of demonic powers and forces that can take people’s lives and bring destruction (Larue 1975; Taylor 1994). As Frye and Macpherson (2004) reveal, one of the oldest stories in the world is the story about a kingdom which is ravaged by a sea monster. The monster asks for a human victim for dinner every day and thus gradually kills many people. The story has a happy ending as a young hero kills the monster and thus saves the kingdom. Interestingly, the ending implies that it is a human being who finally gets domination over nature.

The main function of the ancient mythology was, by introducing a human element into the world full of uncertainties and puzzles, to provide an explanation and made the phenomena intelligible to people (Grimal 1965). Grimal (1965: 9) points out that myth is “an attempt to escape from the powerlessness that is our fate”. Myths thus gave people an illusion of being in control of the universe.

What follows is that the way people explained the unknown, such as natural disasters, thousands years ago is adopted even in a modern era of scientific and technological progress. The images of the myths employed in the representation of the natural catastrophe reveal the deepest fears of human beings (Campbell 1986). As Cassier (1946: 280) points out:

In all critical moments of man’s social life, the rational forces that resist the rise of old mythical conceptions are no longer sure of themselves. In these moments the time for myth has come again. […] [Myth] is always there,
lurking in the dark and waiting for its hour and opportunity. This hour comes as soon as the other binding forces of man’s social life, for one reason or another, lose their strength and are no longer able to combat the demonic mythical powers.

Natural disasters are an example of a critical moment of man’s social life when people are overwhelmed by the events and resort to mythical thinking.

When asking about the reasons for the employment of a conceptual domain of WARRIOR to be mapped to the domain of the natural phenomenon, a plausible answer is that it stands for a concept that people all over the world are more familiar with and understand more easily than natural catastrophes. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 61) point out, “fighting is found everywhere in the animal kingdom and nowhere so much as among human animals”. WAR often functions in English as a source domain to conceptualize aspects of our experience that involve danger and difficulties (Semino 2008). Possibly, many of such metaphors were created when wars were more common than now and people had a direct experience with them (Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen 2005).

4.4.1.6 Discussion of the Functions of the Metaphoric Themes

As can be seen, the three major metaphoric themes – tsunami as an ANIMATE BEING, as a MONSTER and as a WARRIOR – do not offer conflicting conceptualizations of the tsunami but rather build upon each other to provide a coherent world view of the natural phenomenon. They portray it as a very angry, large, powerful, violent and cruel creature that chooses people as a target to attack. Such a coherent metaphoric depiction serves a number of functions.

As has been pointed out, one of the primary functions of such a metaphoric representation is, by mapping the structure of our experience from a concrete and more familiar conceptual domain to an unknown concept of the tsunami, to make the natural phenomenon more comprehensible, intelligible and tangible for readers. As Radman (1997: 167) points out, metaphor “represents a cognitive shift from initial puzzlement to an articulated pattern”. This fulfills the basic need of people to make sense of events in the world, which gives them an illusion of being able to influence the world (Grimal 1965; Larue 1975). By categorizing the natural phenomenon, the
metaphors bring order to the universe, without which people feel frustrated. Therefore, in a certain way, the metaphoric conceptualization helps to overcome people’s anxiety resulting from the natural catastrophe.

Another function that the metaphors fulfill is that they provide an evaluation of the natural phenomenon. Overall, they portray the tsunami in a negative light. It is especially the connotations held by the source conceptual domain of the metaphor and the associations which we have built up with it that are transferred to the target conceptual domain. As pointed out by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor focuses only on certain aspects of the concept while it hides other aspects that are inconsistent with that metaphor. In the case of the tsunami, the adoption of the metaphor themes of a furious ANIMATE BEING, a MONSTER and a WARRIOR highlights just negative aspects of the natural phenomenon. The negative evaluations are materialized by the employment of emotionally colored and hyperbolic lexis, and are therefore highly charged. The force of the evaluations is mostly amplified by two means (Martin and Rose 2007): the use of intensifiers, as in an absolutely massive wave and it was very, very frightening, and the employment of adjectives involving high degrees of intensity, for instance the tsunami is not just angry but furious, it is not just big, but colossal, and the noise that it makes is not just frightening, but horrendous. By ascribing mainly negative attributes to the tsunami and adopting the mythical theme of the personification of evil, the metaphors transform the natural phenomenon into a demon.

Since the metaphors carry over connotations and associations from a source conceptual domain to a target one, they call forth emotion rather than reason. The demonization of the tsunami mainly evokes fear in people. More specifically, what the three metaphoric themes do is transfer the anxiety resulting from something unknown and ungraspable to the fear of something concrete – a constructed villain, a cruel monster. The employment of the metaphors thus leads to the simplification of a complex issue of the natural catastrophe. As Radford (2003: 313) reveals, extreme emotions “blind people to important shades of gray in situations and problem-solving discussions”. Furthermore, the direct appeal to people’s emotions by the metaphors bypasses rational reasoning and therefore functions as an important persuasive device (Conboy 2007). Without rational questioning, readers automatically accept the constructed picture of the tsunami provided by the metaphors.

In connection with the function of the arousal of emotions, other functions of the metaphors have to be mentioned: the metaphoric themes dramatize and sensationalize
the event, provide an element of **entertainment**, and contribute to **the vividness** of the representation.

Significantly, metaphors work as **an effective ideological weapon**. As Kress (1985: 70) points out, “metaphor is a potent factor in ideological contention, a means to bring an area into one rather than another ideological domain”. In spite of the fact that the tsunami is a normal naturally occurring phenomenon, the three major metaphoric themes provide a conceptual framework that portrays the tsunami as an abnormal, angry, monstrous creature, the aim of which is to attack and harm people. Such a portrayal puts all the blame for the damage and destruction on the natural phenomenon. It hinders analytical coverage of the event and hides the fact that it was also social, political and economic factors that contributed to the catastrophe. The natural disaster is wrongly depicted as something uncontrollable that could not have been avoided. As a result, the government, officials and the society in general are void of any blame for the event.

As the major metaphoric themes do not provide alternative viewpoints but rather all draw upon the mythological theme of the demonization of the tsunami, the constructed picture of the events becomes **naturalized** and viewed as commonsensical. Moreover, the metaphors call forth unconscious associations and emotions, which often remain unquestioned. The effectiveness of the metaphors thus stems from the fact that the portrayal that they provide tends to be taken for granted; as Fairclough (1989: 85) points out, “ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible”.

In their effect, the metaphors draw a sharp boundary between people and nature. Instead of pointing out that nature cannot be viewed as isolated from society, and socio-economic processes and structures cannot be divorced from a natural world (see subchapter 1.2), the metaphoric themes portray nature as deviant and as people’s enemy. Such a representation renders harmonious co-existence between people and nature rather difficult.

To summarize, in Halliday’s terms, the major metaphor themes employed by the newspapers fulfill all the three functions of language: ideational, interpersonal and textual. Concerning the ideational function, the metaphors provide a biased portrayal of the natural phenomenon as a furious, cruel monster. This in effect ascribes all the responsibility for the catastrophe to the natural phenomenon and exculpates people. The metaphors also fulfill the interpersonal function since they appeal to people’s emotions, mainly evoking their fear, which results in antipathy towards nature. Finally, the
metaphors serve the textual function since their systematic realizations by discursive devices provides the text with coherence.

4.4.2 Representation of the Tsunami in terms of van Leeuwen’s Categorization

This subchapter applies the set of categories for exploring the representation of social actors introduced by van Leeuwen (1995) to the representation of the tsunami in the newspapers. Although the categories are meant to be employed to investigate how people are depicted in discourse, my analysis reveals that they can be extended to the portrayal of the natural phenomenon as well.

A key category to be considered for the purposes of the present thesis is inclusion/exclusion. Within the first three paragraphs of the articles, the natural phenomenon is included in reference to destructive processes in 14 out of 15 articles in The New York Times and The Guardian, and 13 out 15 articles in The Globe and Mail. For instance, the lead of an article from 3 January 2005 in The Globe and Mail contains the following sentence:

Aid trickled in to desperate survivors on devastated coasts around the Indian Ocean yesterday as a massive international effort finally gathered momentum, a full week after an earthquake and tsunamis brought death and destruction to Asia.

In other words, the reference to the natural phenomenon is included at the beginning of news articles, which is a place containing the most important information; Bell (1998: 97) points out: “Stories are routinely cut bottom up to fit into available space. The important information therefore comes as early as possible, and the story should be capable of ending at any sentence.”

By foregrounding the natural phenomenon in reference to the destruction, the newspapers assign the responsibility to it. This is basically achieved through three syntactic means: 1. the natural phenomenon occupies the role of an actor of destructive processes in active sentences, 2. the natural phenomenon occupies the role of an actor of destructive processes in passive sentences by means of a by-agent, and 3. the destructive process is mentioned in the main clause with the natural phenomenon occupying the
role of an agent in a subordinate time clause. Examples 30, 31 and 32 illustrate the three means.

**Example 30:** Massive ocean waves launched by an earthquake of historic size devastated coastal areas of Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia and Thailand yesterday, killing more than 13,300 people. (The Globe and Mail, 27 Dec 2004)

**Example 31:** More than 12,600 people were killed and millions more displaced in eight countries by a wall of water unleashed by the biggest earthquake for 40 years. (The Guardian, 27 Dec 2004)

**Example 32:** Thousands Die as Quake-Spawned Waves Crash Onto Coastlines Across Southern Asia (headline in The New York Times, 27 Dec 2004)

Who to blame for the disaster is clearly specified in the first two types of sentences and implied in the third one – the natural phenomenon.

There are instances in the articles where the natural phenomenon is excluded with reference to destructive processes. This happens in passive sentences with agent deletion:

**Example 33:** Whole towns were inundated. Dozens of buildings were destroyed. Trees and power lines were toppled, bridges collapsed, communications were severed. (The New York Times, 27 Dec 2004)

Such a set of passive sentences is employed in the newspapers after one of the three types of the sentences with the tsunami foregrounded (see above) has been used. Thus, although the natural phenomenon is not mentioned in relation to the activities, it is mentioned earlier in the text and the responsibility is therefore already established. The natural phenomenon is thus not suppressed but rather backgounded.

Another of van Leeuwen’s categories worth being investigated is **activation/passivation.** When referring to the natural phenomenon, the newspapers employ activation, i.e. they represent the natural phenomenon as the active, dynamic force in activities. This has been shown in the three types of sentences mentioned above. Apart from that, activation can also be realized through ‘possessivation’ (van Leeuwen 1995), as in hundreds of victims of last Sunday's huge waves (The New York Times, 2 Jan 2005). Instead of pointing out that the people are victims of a disaster which is a result of both the natural phenomenon and social, political and economic factors, the newspapers again resort to blaming just the natural phenomenon.
The last, but not least relevant category is **overdetermination**. As the analysis of metaphors revealed, the articles employ ‘symbolisation’ to overdetermine the natural phenomenon, i.e. they portray it as a fictional creature – a monster.

The analysis of the representation of the natural phenomenon in terms of van Leeuwen’s categorization confirms what has been shown before – that the discourse one-sidedly ascribes responsibility for the disaster to the tsunami. While the natural phenomenon tends to be discursively foregrounded as responsible for the catastrophe, social, political and economic factors cease to be mentioned to play a role in the disaster. The discourse simplistically puts all the blame for the casualties, displacement and devastation on the natural phenomenon.

### 4.5 Representation of People

This subchapter looks at the way people and society in general are represented in the articles, attempting to compare it with the portrayal of the natural phenomenon. First of all, it applies van Leeuwen’s categorization system to investigate naming and categorization strategies employed by the newspapers to depict people. Then, it focuses on the examination of attributes and features ascribed to people and attempts to compare them with those ascribed to the natural phenomenon. Finally, it analyzes victim accounts of the events, paying attention to the narrative structure and protagonists of the stories.

#### 4.5.1 Representation of People in terms of van Leeuwen’s Categorization

The lack of volition of the people affected by the disaster is discursively conveyed by **passivation**. The transitivity pattern of the sentences in Examples 34 and 35 reveals that people are portrayed as undergoing the activity, as being passive recipients:

**Example 34:** Snorkellers were dragged across coral, sunbathers were swept off their beaches, divers trapped in caves, fishermen swept out to sea. (*The Guardian*, 27 Dec 2004)
**Example 35:** Raging waters swept villagers out to sea and tore children from their parents’ arms. (The Globe and Mail, 27 Dec 2004)

In both cases, people fulfill the function of Patient of material processes. There are examples where people serve the function of Actor of material processes in discourse; yet, in contrast to the material processes carried out by the natural phenomenon, the processes demand no force – *float*, or involve dependence on something – *cling to the body of a dead fisherman, hold on to a coconut tree, grab onto catamarans for life support*, or it is implied/explicitly said that the processes are brought about by another participant – *flee, run away/tsunami tidal waves send residents rushing to high ground*. Such a representation contributes to the portrayal of people as powerless and helpless.

Another category that depicts victims as powerless is **impersonalization**. It is realized when the newspapers employ the nominal group *death toll* or numbers to refer to people:

**Example 36:** Residents said waves as high as 15 feet struck the northern coast, killing at least nine, causing widespread damage and sending thousands fleeing in panic. (The New York Times, 26 Dec 2004)

Such a portrayal dehumanizes people. Conversely to the natural phenomenon, which is metaphorically ascribed human features and thus given more power, victims are portrayed as lacking human features and thus are discursively deprived of power.

Concerning the category of **inclusion/exclusion**, the analysis reveals that a group of people that is to a large extent foregrounded in *The Guardian* and *The Globe and Mail* is tourists from Western countries. The main topic of three out of fifteen articles under study in each of the two newspapers concerns tourists’ experience: *Holiday dream turns to scenes of horror* (headline in *The Guardian*, 27 Dec 2004), *Tourists return after holiday nightmare* (headline in *The Guardian*, 28 Dec 2004) and *Tourists tell of luck, bravery and despair* (headline in *The Guardian*, 29 Dec 2004), and *Swept out to sea on giant wave, Canadian survives* (headline in *The Globe and Mail*, 27 Dec 2004), *3 Canadians dead, 18 listed as missing* (headline in *The Globe and Mail*, 28 Dec 2004) and *Just a terminal for the dead, the injured and the exhausted* (headline referring to tourists at the Phuket airport in *The Globe and Mail*, 29 Dec 2004). Furthermore, out of 27 victims that are directly quoted in *The Guardian*, 14 are represented by tourists and 13 by native people. Similarly, out of 15 victims that are directly quoted in *The Globe and Mail*, 8 comprise tourists and 7 comprise native people. Concerning the fact that tourists represented barely 1 per cent of the killed
people in the tsunami (see section 4.2), the analysis reveals that the newspapers disproportionately emphasize the tourist’s experience, which points to ethnocentrism. Such an emphasis increases the degree of cultural proximity and relevance of the events, and thus makes the articles more newsworthy. This can be contrasted with the representation in *The New York Times*, where out of 24 victims whose words are directly reported, only 2 are tourists (see Table 4.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of directly quoted tourists</th>
<th>Number of directly quoted native people</th>
<th>Number of all directly quoted victims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Guardian</em></td>
<td>14 (52%)</td>
<td>13 (48%)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Globe and Mail</em></td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The New York Times</em></td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>22 (92%)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.1:** *The proportion of voices of tourists and voices of native people*

The cruelty of the effect of the disaster on tourists is intensified in all the three newspapers by contrasting tourists’ expectations – they have come there on a vacation, to relax in a place considered by them as a paradise and to escape winter – and their actual plight.

**Example 37:** *Holiday dream turns to scenes of horror* (headline in *The Guardian*, 27 Dec 2004)

**Example 38:** *Vancouver schoolteacher Michael Lang refused yesterday to leave what was once a Thai tourist paradise and is now a scene of horror and devastation.* (*The Globe and Mail*, 28 Dec 2004)

**Example 39:** *It was just after breakfast time on Ngai Island, one of the many resorts on Thailand's west coast that welcome Asians and Europeans seeking to escape winter's cold.* (*The New York Times*, 27 Dec 2004)

The emotive appeal of Examples 37, 38 and 39 is based on the contrast of polar counterparts, which are incompatible.

Concerning the category of **exclusion**, importantly, people are excluded from the representation of the causes of the disaster. The articles are silent on the issue of people having been destroying protective environmental features provided by nature (see section 4.2). Apart from mentioning the civil war in Sri Lanka, the newspapers avoid the discussion of social, political and economic conditions that determined the
vulnerability of people affected by the disaster. The society is thus void of responsibility for the catastrophe.

Although the fact that the consequences of the disaster could have been mitigated if a warning system had existed in the Indian Ocean is revealed in all the three newspapers, it is not given prominence. *The Globe and Mail* provides rather isolated references to the non-existent warning system, which are placed at the end of the articles – a place of the least important information according to the ‘newspaper triangle’ where the most important information is put at the beginning “followed by information in a descending hierarchy of importance to the background material” (Conboy 2007: 18). The issue of the non-existence of a warning system is mentioned only in one article in *The Guardian* and two articles in *The New York Times*. Yet, even though these articles explicitly state that many lives could have been saved if there had been a warning system, the following sentences, which discursively represent the natural phenomenon as the one that is responsible for not giving a warning, are included in the newspapers:

**Example 40:** It [The earthquake] sent tsunamis across the Indian Ocean without warning on Boxing Day. *(The Guardian, 28 Dec 2004)*

**Example 41:** Then, without warning, the sea turned ferocious. *(The New York Times, 27 Dec 2004)*

Another van Leeuwen’s category worth mentioning is individualization, which is applied to eyewitnesses and victims whose personal stories are told in the newspapers. They are named and tend to be functionalized by their occupation and identified by their age and place of living.

**Example 42:** Mohammed Firdus, 36, a telephone operator from Bireuen, Aceh province, was sitting on the porch of his house, about 200 metres from the sea, when the earthquake struck. *(The Guardian, 27 Dec 2004)*

By individualizing witnesses and victims, the newspapers bring human interest and personal aspects into the reports, which heightens readers’ involvement and, as pointed out by Fairclough (1995b), appeals to audience. Other social actors that are named in the newspapers and that are worth mentioning are stated in Example 43.

**Example 43:** World leaders, from President Bush to Pope John Paul II, expressed grief and called for aid for the victims. *(The New York Times, 27 Dec 2004)*
By particularly naming and thus foregrounding these two men, the newspaper reflects who is considered to be the most powerful in the West and at the same time, it discursively reinforces the power of the two men.

### 4.5.2 US versus THEM/IT

A significant ideological strategy employed in the articles on the Indian Ocean tsunami is the so-called ‘Ideological Square’ of US versus THEM introduced by van Dijk (1996a). It is a strategy based on the construction of two different groups: insiders and outsiders, involving 4 maxims:

1. emphasize OUR good things
2. emphasize THEIR bad things
3. de-emphasize OUR bad things
4. de-emphasize THEIR good things

(van Dijk 1996a: 37).

In other words, OUR positive characteristics and actions get foregrounded while the negative ones are backgrounded, and THEIR negative characteristics and actions get foregrounded while the positive ones are backgrounded (Richardson 2007). Thus, WE are represented positively, while THEY are portrayed negatively. This discursive strategy has been investigated in a number of studies drawing upon discursive analysis, including studies on racism (van Dijk 1996a; Richardson 2004), immigration (Santa Ana 1999; El Refaie 2001), the Iraq war (Becker 2007, Chovanec 2010), etc.

In the newspaper articles on the Indian Ocean tsunami, US stands for all people/society and THEM, or rather IT, stands for the natural phenomenon/nature. It has already been pointed out while analyzing the representation of the natural phenomenon that predominantly negative characteristics and actions are attributed to it. The analysis reveals that in contrast to the natural phenomenon, people are portrayed generally in a positive light in the articles, with good characteristics and actions ascribed to them.

Positive representations are often incorporated into the descriptions of victims and eyewitnesses.

**Example 44:** *His father said Mr. Lewis is tough-minded and has a strong spirit.*

(*The Globe and Mail, 27 Dec 2004*)
Example 45: He was so excited to see the ocean and to swim in it. He was so happy. Then he was gone. (eyewitness account in The New York Times, 31 Dec 2004)

Example 46: Luck and the courage of local people and fellow tourists was credited with preventing hundreds of other fatalities among the throngs of holidaymakers. (The Guardian, 29 Dec 2004)

The emphasis is put on people helping each other, both directly and indirectly by donating money. As can be seen in Examples 47 and 48, people are highly praised and often occupy the role of a hero (to be discussed in detail in the next subchapter).

Example 47: The Sri Lankan people did absolutely everything they could do. It was amazing what they did - they carried people from the beaches, they worked all night taking people to the airport to make sure they got away. (eyewitness account in The Guardian, 29 Dec 2004)

Example 48: Global aid push 'incredible' (headline in The Globe and Mail, 6 Jan 2005)

Moreover, unity and peacefulness are attributed to people: the world is depicted as coming together and the Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tigers rebels are portrayed as uniting, cooperating and being on peaceful terms after the tsunami struck. The positive characteristics of helpfulness, peacefulness and constructiveness are often discursively contrasted with the destructiveness of the natural phenomenon, as in Examples 49 and 50.

Example 49: For many residents, whose happy families had helped them recover from the trauma of the war, the giant black waves represented a return to desolation and loss. (The Globe and Mail, 1 Jan 2005)

Example 50: It was turning into a peaceful and successful town, though the people are very poor. The tidal wave destroyed all of it. (eyewitness account in The Globe and Mail, 1 Jan 2005)

Apart from portraying the two groups of US (people) and THEM/IT (nature) as different, the newspapers employ other two concepts that, as pointed out by van Dijk (1996a), allow the distinction between in-groups and out-groups: deviance and threat. The portrayal of the tsunami as threatening and attacking people has already been discussed. If we look at the attribute of deviance, the analysis reveals that it is discursively ascribed to the natural phenomenon, as in Example 51.
Example 51: *The tide was crazy. The water wasn't following the rules.*
The question is what rules are being spoken about; they seem to be the rules imposed on nature by the mankind since, according to the rules of nature, tsunami is a normally occurring phenomenon. Moreover, the emphasis is discursively put on the tsunami turning the world upside down:

Nothing thus seems to follow rules, with the natural phenomenon bringing chaos into the order created by people.

On the whole, the framing of the natural catastrophe in the newspapers is based on the bipolarization of the world into nature and people. To make such a categorization, the articles employ a set of binary oppositions, such as powerful versus powerless, cruel versus innocent, violent/hostile versus peaceful, and destructive versus constructive/helpful. By creating an outsider, the bipolarization constructs a sense of community among people (Conboy 2007). It knits people together and helps them to establish their identity. Yet, it simplifies the complexity of the natural catastrophe. Instead of revealing that natural disasters deconstruct nature-culture dualism typical of Western Enlightenment thinking (see subchapter 1.2), the newspapers reinforce the dichotomy.

### 4.5.3 Victim Stories

All the three newspapers abound in individualized, personal stories of people affected by the natural catastrophe. The great number of these stories proves the tendency towards the personal in the media, which increases audience appeal, as pointed out by Fairclough (1995b). As one of the news values exposed by Galtung and Ruge is *reference to persons*, which evokes feelings of identification (see subchapter 3.3), victim stories render the articles newsworthy. This subchapter investigates narrative elements of these stories as told by the three newspapers.

The analysis reveals that the personal stories of the people affected by the natural disaster are presented as involving two fairy-tale like characters: a VICTIM – performed by people, and a VILLAIN – performed by the natural phenomenon.
Example 53: We are still trying to understand how this storm could have taken him. He was so excited to see the ocean and to swim in it. He was so happy. Then he was gone. (eyewitness account in The New York Times, 31 Dec 2004)

On top of that, a third character sometimes comes to play – a HERO, which is performed by ordinary people, either locals or other tourists.

Example 54: Dozens of returning survivors spoke of local heroism when they arrived at British airports yesterday, including the resolute attitude of "guests first, staff second" shown at the Maldives resort of Meeru. There were also many acts of bravery by tourists, including a Birmingham firefighter, Roy Phillips, who repeatedly ran into the sea at Phuket to drag others out. (The Guardian, 29 Dec 2004)

The images of a victim, a villain, and a hero are part of the so-called WARRIOR iconography spoken about by Hawkins (2001). According to Hawkins (2001: 32), iconographic reference is a type of textual representation which functions to “establish a powerful conceptual link between the referent and a particular value judgement”. The referent is metaphorically represented by an iconographic image, i.e. a schematic conventionalized semantic unit, in the case of the WARRIOR iconography, a VICTIM, a VILLAIN, and a HERO, which we conceptually relate to a strong positive or negative value (Hawkins 2001). Importantly, iconographic reference is connected with investment of power – if a positive value is associated with the iconographic image, power is invested in the referent, if a negative value is associated with the iconographic image, power is invested over the referent (Hawkins 2001). Concerning the WARRIOR iconography, Hawkins (2001: 36) points out:

The highest value within the WARRIOR iconography is associated with the HERO, who is an agent of life because s/he protects us from harm at the hands of the VILLAIN. The VILLAIN bears the lowest value within the WARRIOR iconography because s/he is seen by us as an agent of death and destruction. The VICTIM is one of us whose life we honour precisely because s/he carries scars which provide evidence of the wrongful ways of the VILLAIN.

As a result, the employment of the WARRIOR iconography in the articles on the natural catastrophe establishes a hierarchy between people and nature, with people standing at the top and nature at the bottom.
Another recurring characteristic of the personalized stories is that they begin with providing background information about the victim. The articles identify the victim by his/her name, age, occupation and the place where he/she comes from, and give details about the activity that he/she was engaged in just before the tsunami came.

**Example 55:** *As a separate set of mammoth waves hurtled across the Indian Ocean in the opposite direction, due west, Amir Khan, a strapping 30-year-old off-duty police officer, relaxed in his home in the town of Kalmunai on the east coast of Sri Lanka.*

Mr. Khan, like every other local government official, was enjoying a day off and completely oblivious to the walls of water surging toward Sri Lanka when he heard what sounded like a low-flying helicopter. (*The New York Times*, 31 Dec 2004)

**Example 56:** *Mohammed Firdus, 36, a telephone operator from Bireuen, Aceh province, was sitting on the porch of his house, about 200 metres from the sea, when the earthquake struck.* (*The Guardian*, 27 Dec 2004)

The function of the background information is to establish ordinariness of victims’ lives, i.e. convey a message that victims are ordinary people engaged in ordinary activities. Fairclough (1995b: 164) points out: “The potential relevance of stories to everyday life is a vital factor in their appeal to audience – the sense of ‘it could happen to me’ which is accentuated by rooting the stories in ordinary life and experience”.

Some accounts, in their attempt to establish normalcy of people’s lives, go to extremes in providing readers with unimportant details, as can be seen in Example 57.

**Example 57:** *It was 3:45 and time to call the boss: Dr. Charles McCreery stood in a friend's living room a few miles away, delivering a gift after a brunch at his sister-in-law's. His 4-year-old twin daughters were hoping that he would soon assemble their new bicycles.* (*The New York Times*, 31 Dec 2004)

The main effect of such accounts is to establish the so-called ‘good victim’ (Langer 1992), with whom readers can identify and sympathize. As Langer (1992) points out, readers should not just occupy a position of spectators but should also feel involved in the events.

The background information fulfills another significant function – it establishes a contrast between ‘the before’ and ‘the after’ and thus dramatizes the impact of the disaster. The newspapers portray people as being engaged only in peaceful and relaxing activities before the catastrophe, such as watching television, sitting down to a wedding
party, holidaying and sunbathing. Generally, people are depicted as enjoying themselves and being happy until, suddenly and unexpectedly, a misfortune emerges – the tsunami comes. This corresponds to a common myth which Radford (2003) calls 'the Ruined Fairy Tale'. First, an idyllic people’s lives are set up, then the horrors that followed are described. To use Radford’s words (2003: 79), the newspapers use the strategy: “build it up, then tear it down”.

The employment of the Ruined Fairy Tale in the portrayal of the natural catastrophe obscures that the cause for the disaster is also located in social and historical conditions, such as poverty and a lack of technology to warn people. People’s experience is established in terms of the drama and folklore of fatalism (Langer 1992). The roles are clearly divided: the natural phenomenon occupies the role of a villain and people have the role of a victim. No human failure is admitted in such a depiction.

The role of heroes in the narratives about the catastrophe is significant since they bring resolution and order into a chaotic situation. As has already been pointed out, it is ordinary people, ones of us, who are depicted as heroes in the articles - dozens of returning survivors spoke of local heroism (The Guardian, 29 Dec 2004). Pearse (2010: 171) argues: “Only the human interest stories, of triumph over disaster, for example, provide some “closure,” which reassures audiences that “happy endings” are possible.” The hero stories can be viewed as portraying triumph of people over the disaster.

The newspaper articles are characterized by alternating between victim stories with a sad and a happy ending. After enumerating tragic losses of lives in the catastrophe, newspapers always present a story of a lucky escape and a survival. Such stories fulfill the same function as the hero stories – in the middle of the tragedy and grief, they bring hope and reassurance that happy endings exist. By selecting which victim stories to present and where to place them, the newspapers have a great power to control people’s emotions, as can be seen in Example 58.

**Example 58:** At least three other Canadians have been confirmed dead, although their names have not been released; another 60 are missing. Amidst the tragedy yesterday were some incredible stories of random survival. In Malaysia, a 20-day-old baby was found alive floating on a mattress. She was later reunited with her family. In Phuket, Thailand, a two-year-old boy, Hannes Bergstroem, was reunited with his uncle, who found him at a hospital after seeing his picture on a website.
Reports said the boy's mother was still missing and his father was at a different hospital.

But for every glimmer of hope there were a thousand tales of loss.

"Why did you do this to us, God? What did we do to upset you? This is worse than death," one old woman said in a devastated fishing village in India's Tamil Nadu state.

In Banda Aceh, Indonesia, a 41-year-old woman named Absah was searching desperately for her 11 children. All had vanished in the flood waters. (The Globe and Mail, 29 Dec 2004)

The account in Example 58 first offers hope by pointing out that not all stories are tragic, only to contradict it a few lines later by revealing that the number of ‘happy’ stories is quite insignificant in comparison with negative stories. This clearly plays on people’s emotions, arising alternate feelings of hope and despair.

The selection of victim stories presented in all the three newspapers points to the tendency to dramatize and sensationalize the catastrophe. The articles tend to choose personal stories which are highly emotionally charged and emphasize the cruelty of the disaster. One of the most common stories is a story about parents trying to save themselves and their children; however, the attempt fails as the children are torn from their parents’ arms by the natural phenomenon. The drama and emotional appeal is even more heightened in stories of the parents who have to make a choice about which child to save, the so-called Sophie’s choice: One mother's choice...which child to save (headline in The Guardian, 31 Dec 2004). The focus is often put on ‘highly undeserved victims’, such as people who have had to cope with a hard fate (Example 59) or a child who has been swimming for the first time (Example 60).

**Example 59:** Last night, it emerged that one of the families hit by the tsunami included a survivor of the Paddington rail disaster five years ago. Janette Orr, from Swindon, was in the Patong resort in Phuket, Thailand, for a break following the stress of five years of legal wrangling over the train crash. (The Guardian, 27 Dec 2004)

**Example 60:** One of them was Samuel Njoroge, 20, a mechanic from Nairobi who was in the water with his uncle and was swimming for the first time. […] "We are still trying to understand how this storm could have taken him [Samuel]. He was so excited to see the ocean and to swim in it. He was so happy. Then he was gone." (The New York Times, 31 Dec 2004)
The choice of such victims intensifies the reader’s feelings of sorrow and arouses their interest, which is generally one of the aims of newspapers.

To summarize, the main function of the victim stories as selected and presented by the three newspapers is to appeal to readers’ emotions. By drawing upon mythical and fairy-tale like characters and narrative structures, the personal stories do not provide an analysis of the events but rather dramatize and sensationalize them. The application of rudimentary concepts of good and evil to the disaster and the stereotypical representation of these two bipolar notions result in a black-and-white portrayal of the natural disaster and thus a simplification of a complex issue.

4.6 Discursive Strategies of Dramatization

So far, the discussion of the findings has shown that the newspapers appeal rather to readers’ emotion than reason, which in effect dramatizes the events. The demonizing metaphoric representation of the natural phenomenon, the adoption of mythical themes, and the selection of emotive victim stories all contribute to the dramatic force and quality of the newspaper discourse on the natural catastrophe. This subchapter investigates other discursive devices with a dramatizing effect employed in the newspapers.

A significant and a very common dramatizing discursive strategy is a contrast. Most of the news reports on the Indian Ocean tsunami are built on the contrast between the positive ‘before’ and the negative ‘after’ the waves came.

**Example 61:** *For years, it had been the gateway to paradise. But last night, the Phuket airport was inhabited only by the dead, the injured, the terrified and the exhausted.* *(The Globe and Mail, 29 Dec 2004)*

This characteristic has already been mentioned in relation to personalized victim stories, which first present a harmonic state of life of people and then proceed to describe how the harmony is suddenly disrupted. The same pattern occurs in non-individualized news accounts of the disaster. The newspapers put emphasis on depicting the situation immediately before the catastrophe as idyllic and trouble-free: *it was a tranquil Sunday morning* *(The Globe and Mail, 1 Jan 2005)*, *it had been a pleasant, sunny Sunday morning* *(The New York Times, 27 Dec 2004)*, and *it was a languorous Christmas*

There is a general tendency of the newspapers to employ a contrast and a contradiction, and alternate between positive and negative accounts. The most common conjunction placed at the beginning of sentences (and usually a paragraph) is but, which semantically implies that a contradiction of what has just been said follows.

Example 62: "Things are improving. The backlog is starting to clear," said Michael Elmquist, chief of the United Nation's Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Indonesia.

But international aid workers still have before them a set of staggering tasks. (The Globe and Mail, 3 Jan 2005)

The suggestion of improvement is immediately contradicted by pointing out the existence of problems to be faced. This makes readers experience alternate feelings of reassurance and fear or uncertainty. As pointed out by Kvakova (2009), such a strategy increases readers’ dependence on the newspaper reports since, after having their feelings of anxiety and uncertainty evoked, the readers seek to be reassured.

Another dramatizing strategy is the use of a hyperbole. Apart from employing hyperbolic expressions when characterizing the natural phenomenon (see section 4.4), the articles exaggerate the impact of the tsunami by portraying it as all-destructive.


Example 65: Everything was destroyed. (eyewitness account in The Guardian, 31 Dec 2004)

The accounts simply state that everything was destroyed and everybody was buried without using any hedges. This does not provide a real portrayal of the impact of the disaster but rather intensifies the horror and shock of the event and dramatizes it.

Dramatization is also achieved by an abundant use of numbers. It is especially the sentences during the first phase of reporting, i.e. the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe, that are replete with numbers, such as Example 66.

Example 66: Indonesia's geophysics and meteorology office put the epicenter of the earthquake at 90 miles off the southern coast of the island and said the
An earthquake measured 6.8 on the open-ended Richter scale. Residents said waves as high as 15 feet struck the northern coast, killing at least nine, causing widespread damage and sending thousands fleeing in panic. (The New York Times, 26 Dec 2004)

Attia (2007: 61) points out: “Number game is one of the moves that aims at emphasizing objectivity, hence enhancing credibility. Numbers are a means of representing facts against opinions and impressions.” Apart from these functions, a high occurrence of numbers can also contribute to the dramatization of the events. The newspapers mainly employ numbers in reference to the number of people missing, killed and injured in different parts of the countries affected by the disaster. These numbers change from one article to another with a rising tendency, which has a dramatic effect: Tsunami Death Toll Rises to 23,700 (headline in The Guardian, 27 Dec 2004) versus Tsunami Death Toll Could Reach 100,000 (headline in The Guardian, 30 Dec 2004). As Bell (1991: 203) reveals: “Figures undergird the objective, empirical claims of news. But they simultaneously undermine that principle, since they are chosen to express and enhance the news value of the story.”

Significantly, the articles mainly employ round numbers. These are often modified by expressions such as more than, at least and about; yet, there are many cases when the newspapers provide round numbers without any modification: there was no communication with 45,000 residents of the Nicobar Islands (The New York Times, 27 Dec 2004): 4,400 dead in Aceh and North Sumatra (The Guardian, 27 Dec 2004); ended 3,000 miles away on the East African shore (The New York Times, 31 Dec 2004); the quake struck 250 kilometres southeast of Banda Aceh in Sumatra (The Globe and Mail, 27 Dec 2004); the reported 10,000 dead (The Globe and Mail, 28 Dec 2004). These numbers tend to be taken for granted and accepted by readers without questioning, although, clearly, they do not represent precise facts. Rather than conveying precise information, round numbers are employed because they are vivid and easily remembered. Thus, the adoption of numbers by the newspapers often serves to create only an illusion of credibility and objectivity, and adds a dramatizing force to the reports.

Another means of dramatization is the employment of a ‘telegraphic style’. The newspaper reports often adopt ‘the grammar of little texts’ (Halliday 1985), the main characteristic of which is to retain lexical words and leave out grammatical ones. It is
mainly when describing the impact of the tsunami that the articles resort to elliptic sentences:


This adds an emphatic and dramatic effect to the reports. A similar effect is achieved when the newspapers employ a sequence of short simple sentences:

**Example 68:** Whole towns were inundated. Dozens of buildings were destroyed. (*The New York Times*, 27 Dec 2004)

Apart from that, the articles tend to use a colon to put an emphasis on the information conveyed by the word following the colon, which is often employed when stating the number of dead people.

**Example 69:** He remembers the number of dead bodies found in the area near his own home on the day the waves struck: 374. On Thursday morning, he awoke in the same spot he has for the past five days: a local mosque where he and 500 other men with destroyed or damaged homes are sheltering. His first thoughts focused on the task that has consumed him since the tidal waves struck Sri Lanka last Sunday: bodies. (*The New York Times*, 31 Dec 2004)

In contrast to a telegraphic style, which leaves out ‘unnecessary’ words, another dramatic strategy drawn upon by the newspapers multiplies words – repetition. Repetition is mainly employed in reference to the extent and the intensity of the disaster: there were many, many people in the sea at this time (*The Guardian*, 27 Dec 2004); it was incredible and very, very frightening (*The Globe and Mail*, 28 Dec 2004).

A dramatizing effect is also added by the use of superlatives in comparisons made to other disasters. The articles are replete with comparisons of the following pattern:

the natural disaster adjective in a superlative form time period

The newspapers refer to the earthquake as the fourth most powerful in 100 years (*The New York Times*, 27 Dec 2004) and the biggest earthquake in 40 years (*The Guardian*, 27 Dec 2004) and to the tsunami as the deadliest known tsunami for more than 200
years (The Guardian, 29 Dec 2004), one of the worst natural disasters in recorded history (The Globe and Mail, 29 Dec 2004) and one of the worst natural disasters in recent decades (The New York Times, 31 Dec 2004). Since the time period tends to change from one reference to another, it seems that the newspapers do not employ the comparisons just to convey factual information but also for the sake of using superlatives themselves to construct the tsunami as ‘the worst’ (in a certain period of time), which adds a shocking and dramatizing element to the reports.

4.7 Photography

The text in newspaper articles does not consist only of verbal elements but also visual ones, with both types of components interacting to convey social meaning. This necessitates the employment of multimodal analysis. As the only visual elements transmitted to the online archives of newspapers are photographs, the present study focuses on their examination.

The analysis looks at the verbal and visual as an integrated text. Since images are “within the realm of ideology, […] [constituting] means for the emergence of ideological positions” (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 12), their investigation helps to provide answers to the research questions.

All the photographs from Subset A (i.e. all the photographs accompanying the articles on the tsunami, see section 1.4) depict people as their main objects. This personification of events in photography corresponds to the human-interest aspect of the stories on the catastrophe and points to human-centredness typical of Western culture. Although there are individuals portrayed in the photographs, they are depicted, with one exception, anonymously and thus rather represent a social group of people, such as tourists, Indians and Sri-Lankans (see Figure 4.1). Hall (1973: 183) points out that the danger of personalization lies in divorcing the person from his/her relevant social and institutional context and constructing him/her “as exclusively the motor force of history”.

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Figure 4.1: In a public school

Apart from providing an eyewitness account of the events and thus increasing credibility of the reports and legitimizing the stories (Jaworski and Galasiński 2002), the photographs heighten readers’ involvement in the events. They deliver the immediacy of the event, making the reader feel as if he/she was there. Concerning their interpersonal function, they put the reader into a relation with strangers portrayed in the photograph through visibility (Gürsel 2007: 31). As Hariman and Lucaites (2007: 142) reveal, “one source of a photograph’s power is that its lines of interpellation can be a direct imitation of face-to-face interaction”.

The photographs from the corpus have a strong emotional appeal, inviting readers to share emotions with those portrayed. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 explicitly depict feelings of sadness and despair resulting from a tragic loss, which possibly activates a whole range of emotional responses from readers, including empathy, compassion and pity. These photographs thus function as “means for binding people together as strangers, citizens, and human beings sharing a common vulnerability” (Hariman and Lucaites 2007: 281). It is not only negative emotions but also positive ones that are portrayed in the photographs, such as a depiction of joy and relief (see Figure 4.4). This corresponds to the alternation between victim stories evoking negative and positive feelings, pointing to the necessity to include aspects of hope and positiveness in the  

3 The titles of the photographs are not authentic but made by the author of this thesis. The text which follows the title constitutes the caption of the photograph published in the relevant newspaper.
representation of the tragedy. In contrast to the other photographs, those with a direct emotional appeal employ a ‘head-and-shoulders-only’ exposition. Such a composition “highlights […] the most expressive parts of the body […] and thus enhances] the power of the expressive dimension” (Hall 1973: 178). Furthermore, the people are shown in a ‘close-up’, which portrays them as if they were one of us and thus enhances our involvement, in contrast to a ‘long shot’ which portrays people as if they were strangers (van Leeuwen 2008).

**Figure 4.2: Sadness**
Thanaranjani, 28, swears she never let go of her 4-year-old daughter, who nevertheless perished in the tsunami in Soranpattu, Sri Lanka. (*The New York Times*, 7 Jan 2005)

**Figure 4.3: Mourning**
Parents mourn their son, washed ashore on Silver Beach, Cuddalore, southern India. (*The Guardian*, 27 Dec 2004)
From a critical point of view, the photographs accompanying the articles function to reinforce gender stereotypes. Concerning the images depicting emotional states of the victims, it is only women that stand as objects in them. Although the caption in Figure 4.3 says “parents mourn their son”, the father’s face is made invisible in the photograph, avoiding thus a portrayal of a man expressing his emotions. This confirms that, similarly to the factors of absence and presence in discourse, both visibility and invisibility play a significant role in ideological underpinnings of photographs. Furthermore, the photographs portray women as caring and nurturing, including the images of women holding their children in their arms. The words accompanying the photograph in Figure 4.5 read “survivors […] came […] to remember those lost”, yet, it is only women who are depicted in the image. Significantly, the reader can see only the women’s backs and therefore rather than establishing a contact with them, he/she is invited to follow their gaze towards the sea, being thus made to identify with them and share their remembering. In other words, it is “left to the viewer to imagine what they are thinking about or looking at, and this can create a powerful sense of empathy or identification with the represented participant” (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 66).

Men in the photographs from the corpus are depicted as being in the middle of some action, such as cleaning up mud, carrying boxes of aid (see Figure 4.6) and wading through water (see Figure 4.7). The contrast between the representation of men and women is exemplified in Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.7; although the captions of both images read “survivors”, in Figure 4.5 survivors are represented only by women, depicted in a static position, while in Figure 4.7 survivors are represented only by men,
depicted in the middle of an action. The photographs thus reinforce stereotypical characterizations of women as emotional and caring, and men as active/engaged in a physical activity and not openly revealing emotions of sadness.

![Image of people on a beach](image1)

**Figure 4.5: Remembering**
Survivors in Hambantota, Sri Lanka, came to the former site of a fish market to remember those lost. *(The New York Times, 4 Jan 2005)*

![Image of people receiving aid](image2)

**Figure 4.6: Arrival of aid**
In Indonesia, aid arrived in Banda Aceh, where thousands of bloated bodies in fields, morgues and mosques awaited identification and burial. *(The New York Times, 29 Dec 2004)*
Figure 4.7: Wading through water

Heavy rains flooded a bridge in Kalmunai, Sri Lanka, forcing hundreds of survivors of the tsunami to move farther inland on foot and on bicycle. (The New York Times, 2 Jan 2005)

4.8 Discussion of the Findings

The analysis of the representation of the 2005 Indian Ocean Tsunami in The New York Times, The Guardian and The Globe and Mail reveals that the discursive devices adopted in the three newspapers bipolarize the world into innocent people and a guilty natural phenomenon. This bipolarization is achieved by depicting nature as the agent of all destructive processes, and people as passive recipients, omitting and backgrounding reference to social, historical, political and economic factors contributing to the catastrophe, such as destruction of protective natural environmental features, poverty, lack of technology and communication, and inadequate disaster preparation and mitigation efforts.

Such a representation has some positive effects, such as creating community and solidarity among people. By adopting the ideological strategy of US (people) versus THEM/IT (nature), the discourse knits people all over the world together. Moreover, the emotional appeal conveyed through the demonizing metaphor themes and personalized victim stories helps readers sympathize with the victims. The unification of people and evocation of sympathy with victims have a positive
humanitarian effect, with readers most probably feeling more willing to donate money and help those affected by the disaster.

Yet, when looked at critically, it is necessary to point out that, in their representation of the Indian Ocean tsunami, the newspapers create a myth. It is a myth of the natural phenomenon being a cruel, angry monster, a villain, which aims to attack people and which is responsible for all the damage, and people being innocent and void of any blame. As Barthes (1993: 117) points out, myth has a double function: “it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us”. The myth about the tsunami created by the newspapers becomes naturalized and taken for granted. As Barthes (1993: 143) explains:

Myth gives them [things] a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact. […] it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, […], it organizes the world which is without contradictions because it is without depth.

The newspapers provide us with a black-and-white portrayal of the natural disaster, where the good and the bad are clearly delineated. They offer us simplistic answers to complex issues.

Importantly, the myth created by the newspapers is imbued with ideology. Clearly, it reinforces Western ideological dualism of nature and culture. This is achieved through a number of modes of operation of ideology present in the newspapers (see section 2.3.1.): legitimation – by portraying nature as a villain and people as victims, the dichotomy between the two is represented as just; dissimulation – by using figurative language, the newspapers draw attention away from the established asymmetry between nature and people; unification – all people are represented as being part of a whole, yet, they are not united by social ties and relationships to each other but rather by being subjected, either actually or virtually (via the newspaper representation), to the threat of nature (Frosh and Wolfsfeld 2007); fragmentation – includes the depiction of the natural phenomenon as an enemy; and reification – the representation is not questioned in the newspapers but is rather presented as natural and commonsensical.

As ideology functions to reproduce, challenge or resist power asymmetries between two groups, the question is whether the representation of the tsunami by the newspapers sustains or challenges the established power domination of mankind over nature in Western thinking. The analysis provides a rather contradictory answer. On one
hand, by demonizing nature and providing it with human characteristics, the newspapers position it at the pinnacle of creation (see 4.4.1.1). They portray it as having all the power over people and thus subvert the asymmetric power relations between nature and humankind. On the other hand, by representing people positively as victims and heroes, and the natural phenomenon negatively as a villain, the newspapers discursively invest power in people and over nature. Such a seemingly contradictory ascription of power serves a single function: it hides human failure, diverts attention from negative human actions and social factors, and puts all the blame for the damage and destruction on nature.

The analysis reveals that the newspaper discourse rather appeals to readers’ emotions than provides a rational account and a contextual analysis of the natural catastrophe. Discursive devices employed by the newspapers evoke a wide range of emotions, from fear and hostility towards nature to sympathy with and sorrow for the people affected by the disaster. From time to time, the newspapers also offer hope, reassurance and the possibility of happy endings. The emphasis on the evocation of emotions and the lack of a rational analysis and explanatory information have necessarily an impact on people’s attitudes and actions. They hinder readers from getting a perspective on the catastrophe and its causes, do not let people learn from their mistakes by improving disaster preparation and mitigation efforts and generally make it difficult for people to respond to the catastrophe in a rational and calm way.

Moreover, the analysis shows that the newspapers employ a number of rhetorical devices that further dramatize the catastrophe. This reflects the fact that the newspapers are a commodity that aims to sell, with the commercial pressures forcing the newspapers not only to inform but also to entertain (see section 3.1). The dramatizing and sensationalizing elements in the newspaper reports on the tsunami are of an appeal to readers, yet, at the same time, they further prevent rational decisions and actions.

The photographs accompanying the articles in the online archives heighten readers’ involvement in the catastrophe, increase their identification with the victims and directly appeal to emotions. At the same time, the analysis reveals that the images reproduce gender stereotypes by portraying women as emotional and caring and men as active and not openly showing their emotions.
CHAPTER FIVE – Hurricane Katrina

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is structured as the previous one; first, it provides some background information about the natural catastrophe Hurricane Katrina gathered from sociological and anthropological research. Then, it focuses on the actual analysis of the newspaper articles from the corpus, employing the same framework of analysis as the one used for the investigation of the Indian Ocean Tsunami. It starts with the examination of the macrostructures of the news reports. Then, it proceeds to the analysis of the representation of the natural phenomenon, which is followed by the focus on the depiction of people. Finally, it pays attention to the strategies of dramatization.

5.2 Background Information

Hurricane Katrina made a landfall in New Orleans on August 29, 2005; yet, the landfall itself did not cause much damage. It was the following breaches to New Orleans’ levees that led to the catastrophe. Throughout August 29 and 30, levee breaches resulted in the flooding of 80 percent of the city, the loss of more than 1,500 lives, damage to 183,000 housing units, and an around $200 billion in economic damage. Although most New Orleans inhabitants obeyed the mandatory evacuation order issued by Mayor Nagin and left New Orleans ahead of the storm, tens of thousands of residents stayed stranded in the city, with around 20,000 in the Superdome sports centre, 20,000 in the city’s convention centre, and others in their homes (Fitzpatrick 2006; Sanyika 2009).

Investigation following Hurricane Katrina revealed that it was not only the failure of the levee system that led to the damage and destruction but also the failure of local, state and federal government (Cooper and Block 2006; Greene 2009; Waterhouse 2009). Greene (2009: 208) reveals:
The Committee on Homeland Security observed that government officials failed to heed disaster warnings, made poor decisions before and after the hurricane hit, failed to provide effective leadership, and failed to develop the capacity to respond to catastrophic events.

Government and bureaucracy failed both in the preparation for and response to the natural catastrophe.

Scientists, meteorologists and government officials had been aware for years that a devastating hurricane of Category 5 might strike New Orleans. The city had even carried out a simulation of such a hurricane, named PAM, in which it was estimated that around 130,000 Orleanians might be unable to evacuate the city. Multiple investigations had also revealed that if such a hurricane occurred, the levee system might be overwhelmed. Yet, in spite of all the predictions, the government was not prepared for Hurricane Katrina and the mass evacuation and starvation connected with it (Sanyika 2009; Greene 2009; Nunn 2009).

The response of the government to the disaster was immensely slow (Cooper and Block 2006; Sanyika 2009). For four days, thousands of people were trapped in the Superdome, the convention centre, or their homes, without food, water, sanitation and medical care. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and Homeland Security responsible for the help had not delivered the basic needs to the survivals, who were thus left to struggle on their own. As Sanyika (2009: 93) points out, “the federal government abandoned and neglected its own citizens during the worst (human-made) natural disaster in U.S. history”.

What exactly stood behind the slow response of the government has been debated ever since; it is rather a combination of factors that led to the failure. One of the factors was the lack of cooperation between the local, state and federal government, with each of them conducting an independent operation. Another factor is that FEMA constituted a part of the Department of Homeland Security with a “a top-down, command-and-control model of an agency” (Perrow 2007: 18), which made it difficult for FEMA to “call the shots from the ground of a disaster, and […] tell whether the supplies it had ordered were in fact on the way” (Cooper and Black 2006: 187). Many government officials were on vacation at the time of Katrina’s landfall, which did not help a smooth response either. On the whole, it was the organizational failure and incompetence of the government, and bumbling bureaucratic handling of the situation that led to much of the devastation (Cooper and Black 2006; Sanyika 2009).
As happens in most natural catastrophes, Hurricane Katrina revealed the problematic social, economic and political conditions existing in New Orleans. The image of New Orleans as the Big Easy, a place where to relax and enjoy good food and cultural life, widely held by people all over the world has been disrupted by the disaster. Katrina exposed racial, class and gender inequalities that had troubled New Orleans for years. At the time of the disaster, the city “claimed the second highest percentage of its residents (38 percent) living in high-poverty census tracts” and belonged to the most racially segregated U.S. cities, with the black poverty rate (35 percent) three times higher than the rate for whites (11 percent) (Levitt and Whitaker 2009: 6). This was a result not only of individual choices but also of a long history of social and institutional structures existing in New Orleans (Jones-Deweever and Hartmann 2006; Reed Jr. 2008; Levitt and Whitaker 2009; Sanyika 2009).

The worst affected by the natural disaster were the marginalized ones: the poor, the black, the old and women. They represented the most vulnerable residents, the have-nots, who were fully exposed to the catastrophe as they did not have the means to escape or live anywhere else than in the inner city where the worst flooding occurred. Thus, the inequalities and disparities of New Orleanian society got reflected in the unequal impact of the disaster, which, although named Hurricane Katrina, was to a large extent human-made (Jones-Deweever and Hartmann 2006; Levitt and Whitaker 2009).

5.3 Macro-structures of the Newspaper Articles – Diachronic View

Investigating the main topics and global meanings of the articles under study, the analysis reveals that four phases of reporting can be discerned:

1. **Anticipation of the disaster**

In contrast to the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the people affected by Hurricane Katrina had been warned beforehand about the approaching hurricane. The first phase of reporting focuses on conveying the threat posed by an approaching storm, described as *a storm that most of us have long feared* (*The New York Times*, 29 Aug 2005). The feelings of anxiety are increased in the reports by the selection of the words *unnervingly quiet* (*The New York Times*, 29 Aug 2005) to depict the atmosphere in New Orleans,
which constructs a contrast between ‘now’ and ‘what is to come’. The newspapers inform readers about a mandatory evacuation issued by the mayor of New Orleans and on the whole perform an important function of warning disseminators.

2. The immediate aftermath of the catastrophe

As in the case of the Indian Ocean tsunami, this phase of reporting focuses on the depiction of what happened, where, when, why and how it happened. This phase involves a depiction of a double catastrophe since the representation of the aftermath of the landfall of the hurricane is followed by the portrayal of the aftermath of the levee breaches and subsequent flooding. During this phase of reporting, the natural phenomenon gets foregrounded, with attention being paid to the immediate impact of the disaster. The reports are full of numbers, which provides the newspapers with seeming factuality (see section 5.6) and has a persuasive effect.

3. Living conditions of people affected by the disaster

The third phase of reporting is concerned with the portrayal of the conditions of people affected by the disaster, with the main focus on the displaced and those taking shelter in the Superdome. The conditions are described as desperate, chaotic and are compared to those of the Third World: Looks like a Third World country (eyewitness account in The Globe and Mail, 3 Sep 2005). The danger of such a portrayal inheres in the employment of ‘the Third World’ as a deteriorating term, which draws upon a stereotype of the Third World as a homogenous entity characteristic for poor, underdeveloped and miserable living conditions, implicitly contrasted with the developed and ‘superior’ ones of the First World (cf. Fuller 2010).

4. Discussion of the causes of the disaster

The final phase of the reports under study investigates causes of the disaster. It examines social, political and economic conditions contributing to the catastrophe, paying attention to long-term factors as well. This stands in a sharp contrast with the reports on the Indian Ocean tsunami, which to a large extent omit such a discussion. All the three newspapers point out that the catastrophe in New Orleans was to a great degree man-made, revealing the failure of local, state and federal government and discussing racial and class inequalities having existed in New Orleans for years.
During this phase the articles provide a rational account, offering an analytical approach to the catastrophe. The natural phenomenon gets suppressed while people are foregrounded, with the newspapers employing a critical stance mainly towards the government. This confirms the results of the investigation of the press coverage of Hurricane Katrina by Bennett, Lawrence and Livingston (2007), which point out that the coverage was independent of the government and its tendency to filter and accent the news. The newspapers thus make a use of their potential to challenge, criticize and subvert world views of the dominant bloc.

5.4 Representation of the Natural Phenomenon

The interest of this section lies in the investigation of the way the newspapers categorize the hurricane. It examines both lexical and syntactic devices employed as referential means to represent the natural phenomenon. It draws upon the cognitive theory of metaphor, van Leeuwen’s categorical system and Halliday’s theory of transitivity.

5.4.1 Metaphorical representation of Hurricane Katrina

The analysis of the three newspapers reveals that, as in the case of the Indian Ocean tsunami, the newspaper discourse to a large extent conceptualizes Hurricane Katrina metaphorically. This metaphorical conceptualization is repeatedly realized by numerous lexical and syntactic devices, which are analyzed below.

Interestingly, the newspapers employ the same conceptual metaphor themes as when representing the tsunami, i.e. they portray Hurricane Katrina as an ANIMATE BEING, as a MONSTER, and as a WARRIOR. These themes form the basis of the conceptualization framework in terms of which readers are made to grasp the reality. In other words, the discursive devices which materialize the metaphoric concepts serve as cues for the reader’s interpretation of the natural disaster.
5.4.1.1 Hurricane Katrina as an ANIMATE BEING

Many of the discursive devices that depict the hurricane as an animate being correspond to those employed to portray the Indian Ocean tsunami. One of them is an ascription of a life of its own to the hurricane. Example 70 reveals that the formation of the hurricane is described as if an animal came into existence:

**Example 70:** Tropical Depression 12 was born, giving few hints that it was an embryonic monster that would grow into Hurricane Katrina. (The New York Times, 29 Aug 2005)

The use of the expressions such as be born and embryo with reference to the hurricane result in the portrayal of the natural phenomenon as an organism. The supporting syntactic means portraying the hurricane as having its own energy and being capable of volition comprises the adoption of the middle ergative option (see representation of the tsunami - 4.4.1.1):

**Example 71:** It [Hurricane Katrina] churned directly over an oceanic feature...

**Example 72:** Hurricane Katrina roared in from the Gulf of Mexico. (The Guardian, 29 Aug 2005)

Such a syntactic pattern represents the processes as being brought about from within, with no external agent.

As the tsunami, Hurricane Katrina is ascribed an animal body. Apart from the centre of a hurricane being referred to as an eye, the natural phenomenon is portrayed as having teeth:

**Example 73:** The hurricane […] continued to putter along into adjoining states, though its teeth were gone. (The New York Times, 31 Aug 2005)

The newspapers also employ a number of verbs denoting actions performed by parts of a human body: the hurricane pummels (hits with fists) and the storm sucks up cool water (draws into the mouth by movements of the tongue and lips).

The natural phenomenon is further personified by being given a human name. Such a characteristic, which is missing in reference to the tsunami, provides the hurricane with a unique identity and portrays it as though it is a being of a sort. Many times, the newspapers refer to the natural phenomenon just by its name, omitting the word ‘hurricane’.
**Example 74:** *Katrina's fearsome lash* (headline in *The Globe and Mail*, 30 Aug 2005)

The reference to hurricanes in human terms is exemplified also in the following sentence.

**Example 75:** *Camille was a girl compared to this hurricane.* (eyewitness account in *The Globe and Mail*, 30 Aug 2005)

Apart from referring to the hurricane by a human name, the eyewitness uses the word ‘girl’, which includes the semantic feature ‘human’.

Concerning the origins of the naming practice of hurricanes, Simpson and Riehl (1981) and Fitzpatrick (2006) reveal that it originated during World War II when the United States Armed forces named storms in the Pacific after their girlfriends and wives. This custom was partly inspired by the novel *Storm* by George R. Stewart, published in 1941, in which a junior meteorologist invents the naming practice. The United States Weather Bureau started assigning girls’ names to Atlantic hurricanes in alphabetical order in 1953. As Simpson and Riehl (1981: 16) point out, “in 1979 a new system was introduced for the United States, alternating girls’ and boys’ names for successive hurricanes”, still using an alphabetical sequence. If a storm has a great destructive impact, its name is retired.

Similarly to the tsunami, the hurricane is portrayed in newspaper discourse as making **animal sounds**: it *roars* and *howls*. Such sounds are connotated with emotional states, mainly with sorrow and rage. **Emotions** are also directly ascribed to the hurricane, as can be seen in Examples 76 and 77.

**Example 76:** *This hurricane killed dozens and cut a swath of fury across the U.S. South.* (*The Globe and Mail*, 30 Aug 2005)

**Example 77:** *A day after New Orleans thought it had narrowly escaped the worst of Hurricane Katrina’s wrath, water broke through two levees on Tuesday.* (*The New York Times*, 31 Aug 2005)

As in the case of the tsunami, the newspapers create a myth of the natural phenomenon as an extremely angry creature, implying thus that nature is vindictive.

The punishment motive of destruction pointed out when analyzing the representation of the tsunami occurs in the articles on Hurricane Katrina as well.

**Example 78:** *The storm was potent enough to rank as one of the most punishing hurricanes ever to hit the United States.* (*The New York Times*, 30 Aug 2005)
The newspapers thus again resort to a mythical explanation of a natural disaster as a retribution of nature.

The syntactic means that materialize the conceptual metaphor of an ANIMATE BEING include the use of a possessive genitive ‘s when indicating a relation to Hurricane Katrina, such as Katrina’s wake, Katrina’s landfall and Katrina’s winds, and the transitivity pattern of sentences referring to the natural phenomenon. The pattern of the sentences is the same as in the case of the tsunami, with the hurricane occupying a role of an actor that carries out material processes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The natural phenomenon</th>
<th>verbal group</th>
<th>(nominal group)</th>
<th>(adverbial group or prepositional phrase)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Material process</td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>Circumstances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 79: Winds of more than 100mph punched holes in the metal roof of the Superdome Arena. (The Guardian, 30 Aug 2005)

Example 80: Hurricane Katrina pounded the Gulf Coast with devastating force at daybreak on Monday. (The New York Times, 30 Aug 2005)

Such a transitivity pattern portrays the natural phenomenon as capable of volition and as being in control of the actions, which contributes to the establishment of the hurricane as animate.

As has already been pointed out, this metaphor fulfills a number of functions. Apart from serving as a tool of comprehension, it assigns a great power to the natural phenomenon by positioning it at the top of the hierarchy between animate beings and inanimate objects deeply rooted in Western thinking. Moreover, ascription of fury and malice to nature results in its demonization and dramatization of the real causes of the catastrophe.
Another portrayal of Hurricane Katrina provided by the newspapers is the depiction of the natural phenomenon as a large, powerful, frightening, violent and cruel creature, i.e. as a MONSTER. There are a number of explicit references to the hurricane as a monster in the newspaper discourse.

Example 81: Officials in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama said it was too early to calculate the number of lives lost in the monster storm. (The Globe and Mail, 31 Aug 2005)

Example 82: Tropical Depression 12 was born, giving few hints that it was an embryonic monster that would grow into Hurricane Katrina. (The New York Times, 29 Aug 2005)

The MONSTER conceptual metaphor theme is also realized in the use of hyperbolic lexis and superlatives. To depict the size and power of the hurricane, the articles identify the natural phenomenon as a behemoth and characterize it as huge, unusually large and one of the most powerful storms ever to threaten the United States. The frightening aspect of the hurricane is for instance revealed in the expression Katrina’s fearsome lash.

The extraordinary power of the hurricane is conveyed through the verbs demanding a great force, such as lash, batter and pound, and through the analogy constructed between the objects of the hurricane’s actions, which are big and heavy, and the objects that are commonly associated with such actions, which are small and light. The same strategy is adopted when portraying the power of the tsunami (see section 4.4.1.2). It can be illustrated on Examples 83, 84 and 85.

Example 83: Winds of more than 100mph punched holes in the metal roof of the Superdome Arena, peeling away aluminium sheets. (The Guardian, 30 Aug 2005)


Example 85: Modest bungalows and working-class apartment buildings were thrashed, torn open like cellophane bags. (The New York Times, 31 Aug 2005)

Concerning Example 83, commonly associated objects of the material process of ‘peeling’ are a potato or an orange skin and wallpaper. After subconsciously comparing aluminium sheets with these small and light objects, we arrive at the conclusion that
something peeling aluminium sheets must be extraordinarily powerful. In Examples 84 and 85 the analogy and implied contrast between the two objects – a roof of a house and a deck of cards, and buildings and cellophane bags, are established by the use of a simile.

When analyzing the tsunami, it was pointed out that the cruelty of the natural phenomenon is intensified by portraying it as not giving a warning to people. In spite of the fact that Hurricane Katrina was predicted to make a landfall in New Orleans, the newspapers again employ the motif of unexpectedness, which is revealed in the headline *With Few Warning Signs, an Unpredictable Behemoth Grew* (*The Guardian*, 29 Aug 2005). This tendency to put blame on the natural phenomenon for not providing a warning to people serves to dramatize the events and heightens the cruelty of nature.

The analysis reveals that not only do the newspapers adopt the same conceptual metaphor of a MONSTER to portray the Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, but they also employ the same discursive devices to materialize the metaphor.

### 5.4.1.3 Hurricane Katrina as a WARRIOR

The representation of the hurricane in terms of a warrior is not as widespread as in the depiction of the tsunami; yet, a number of references can be found in the newspaper discourse. The landfall of the hurricane is depicted as *the onslaught from Katrina* and the natural phenomenon is portrayed as having targets to attack, as in *the hurricane targeted the heart of U.S. oil* (*The Globe and Mail*, 29 Aug 2005). Nature is thus clearly represented as acting with volition, aiming to cause damage and destruction to humankind. The theme of the natural phenomenon being in pursuit of people is also discursively revealed in the following sentences: *The hurricane could chase evacuees on a northeasterly route* (*The New York Times*, 29 Aug 2005).

Underlying such a portrayal is the construction of nature as people’s enemy. This hinders rational understanding of the natural catastrophe. Moreover, instead of portraying people as part of nature, it creates animosity against nature and draws a sharp divide between the two, reinforcing thus the Western dichotomy.
5.4.1.4 Other Metaphoric Themes

The only other metaphoric theme discerned in the newspaper discourse on Hurricane Katrina is a biblical one. Since also employed in the representation of the tsunami, the analogy to biblical disasters seems to be a popular theme to be adopted when talking about major natural catastrophes.

Example 86: Hurricane Katrina was billed as a biblical storm as it roared towards New Orleans from the Gulf of Mexico, and it prompted an exodus of biblical proportions. (The Guardian, 30 Aug 2005)

Such a portrayal has a dramatizing effect, providing an aura of mystique to the natural phenomenon.

When analyzing the portrayal of the tsunami, it was pointed out that the newspapers characterize the natural phenomenon as indiscriminating. The same characteristic is ascribed to Hurricane Katrina by The New York Times: the headline of the article published on 31 August 2005 reads The Misery is Spread Equally, followed by the lead The storm was nothing if not equal opportunity in its misery. Such a representation creates a misconception. As revealed in subchapter 5.2, those who were worst affected by the natural disaster were the marginalized ones: the poor, the black, the old and women. Neither did they have the means to evacuate the city ahead of the storm, nor could they afford to live anywhere else than in the Lower Ninth Ward where the worst flooding occurred. In contrast to The New York Times, both The Guardian and The Globe and Mail point out the inequalities:

Example 87: The poorest and most vulnerable members of the community, such as the elderly and the sick, were worst hit. (The Guardian, 31 Aug 2005)

Example 88: Tens of thousands of the city’s poor and elderly residents remained behind and began heading to public shelters. (The Globe and Mail, 29 Aug 2005)

The fallacy that The New York Times creates by portraying the hurricane as indiscriminate hides social and historical factors contributing to the disaster.
5.4.1.5 Origins of the Metaphors

Like the origins of the metaphoric representations of the tsunami, the origins of metaphors referring to Hurricane Katrina go back to the mythology of Western culture. The word “hurricane” itself originally came from Native Americans, having the form “aracan,” “hurianvucan,” “urican,” “huracan,” etc. (Tannehill 1969). The original meaning of the word was “evil spirit and big wind” (Fitzpatrick 2006). The metaphors of an ANIMATE BEING and a MONSTER are involved in the portrayal of hurricanes in Native American myths, according to which hurricanes were caused by a bird of a monumental size and power, called Thunderbird (Sheehan 1994). When the bird blinked, lightning appeared, and when it flapped its great wings, a thunder sounded.

The reason for the employment of the metaphor of a WARRIOR is discussed in sub-chapter 4.4.1.5, where it is revealed that fighting stands for a very familiar concept to human beings and thus allows us to understand natural catastrophes in a more comprehensible way.

5.4.1.6 Discussion of the Functions of the Metaphoric Themes

The fact that the newspapers employ the same metaphoric themes when representing the tsunami and the hurricane points to the possible tendency of newspaper discourse, in its depiction of major natural catastrophes, to resort to a mythical portrayal of the natural phenomenon as a furious monster attacking people. The functions and a critical analysis of such a metaphoric view are discussed in section 4.4.1.5 and thus they are just summarized here.

To begin with, the metaphors categorize the natural phenomenon in familiar and comprehensible terms, and provide an explanation of the events. When looked at critically, such an explanation though conceals the real causes of the disaster.

The metaphors negatively evaluate the natural phenomenon and dramatize the disaster by adopting the mythical theme of the personification of evil. As pointed out by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor focuses on certain aspects of the concept while hiding other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with the figure of speech. In the case of the hurricane, the metaphors highlight only negative characteristics of the
natural phenomenon while hide positive contributions. The fact that hurricanes play an important role in the regional ecology of coastal areas by influencing water resources, agriculture, and some aspects of the bioecological chain (Simpson and Riehl 1981) is made invisible. Simpson and Riehl (1981: 17) mention another benefit of the hurricane, which is also omitted in the newspaper discourse: “Globally, a hurricane, or tropical cyclone, is one means of maintaining the orderliness of circulations in lower latitudes, serving as a kind of escape valve for the transport of accumulated heat and momentum from the warm tropics to the colder middle and higher latitudes”.

Another important function of the metaphors is that they appeal to people’s emotions and thus function as a powerful persuasive device. Last but not least, they are an effective ideological weapon as they provide a naturalized portrayal of the events. By demonizing the natural phenomenon, they put all the blame for the damage and destruction on it, and reinforce the Western dichotomy between nature and mankind.

5.4.2 Representation of the Hurricane in terms of van Leeuwen’s Categorization

Concerning the category inclusion/exclusion, there is a significant difference between the representation of the tsunami and the hurricane. While in the case of the tsunami, the newspapers include the natural phenomenon in reference to the destruction throughout the whole 14-day period under study, in the case of the hurricane, the natural phenomenon gets foregrounded with reference to the destructive processes only in the first two phases of reporting, i.e. the anticipation and the immediate aftermath of the disaster. In the third phase, when focusing on the living conditions of people, the hurricane gets backgrounded, while in the last phase, when discussing causes of the disaster, it gets suppressed, with the newspapers rather focusing on the discussion of social, political and economic factors that contributed to the disaster. Thus, while in the first half of reporting, the blame for the destruction is discursively ascribed to the natural phenomenon, in the second half it is shifted to human beings.

As with the tsunami, the foregrounding of the hurricane is achieved by three syntactic means: 1. the natural phenomenon has a role of an actor of destructive processes in active sentences, 2. the natural phenomenon has a role of an actor of destructive processes in passive sentences by means of a by-agent, and 3. it is implied
that the natural phenomenon is an actor of destructive processes by placing it in a subordinate time clause. This can be illustrated on Examples 89, 90 and 91.

**Example 89:** *This hurricane killed dozens and cut a swath of fury across the U.S. South.* *(The Globe and Mail, 30 Aug 2005)*

**Example 90:** * [...] the centre of Gulfport, an area that was slammed at dawn by hurricane Katrina.* *(The Globe and Mail, 30 Aug 2005)*

**Example 91:** *Thousands of people may be dead beneath the rubble and flood waters after hurricane Katrina pounded the low-lying Gulf Coast city.* *(The Globe and Mail, 1 Sep 2005)*

Similarly to the tsunami, the newspapers employ activation when representing the hurricane. The natural phenomenon is portrayed as the active and dynamic force in activities, as can be seen in the three examples above. Moreover, the articles adopt overdetermination as they symbolically depict the natural phenomenon as a fictional creature, a monster.

### 5.5 Representation of people

This subchapter examines how the newspapers represent people, with the focus on both those affected by the disaster and those to be blamed for the catastrophe. First, it investigates the depiction of people in terms of van Leeuwen’s categorization system; then, it looks at personalized stories of eyewitnesses.

#### 5.5.1 Representation of People in terms of van Leeuwen’s Categorization

Applying van Leeuwen’s categories, this section first looks at how the newspapers portray those affected by the disaster. Powerlessness of victims is discursively conveyed by passivation and impersonalization. In Examples 92 and 93, people fulfill the role of a Patient of material processes, and thus are assigned a passive role, being depicted as undergoing activities and passively receiving them, rather than being active forces.
**Example 92:** Strong gusts still whipped the residents gazing towards the New Orleans skyline. *(The Guardian, 30 Aug 2005)*

**Example 93:** Many had been driven to return home because of the impossibility of finding accommodation elsewhere. *(The Guardian, 30 Aug 2005)*

Such a representation implies a lack of volition, which is also conveyed in the portrayal of people walking around *like zombies*. Impersonalization is realized by reference to people by numbers, as in Example 94.

**Example 94:** New Orleans orders 3m to flee as hurricane nears. *(The Guardian, 29 Aug 2005)*

As has already been pointed out in the representation of the tsunami, this dehumanizing portrayal involves a degradation of people within the Western hierarchy of power where human beings stand at the top and inanimate objects at the bottom.

Impersonalization is also employed in reference to the people displaced by the storm as they are metaphorically portrayed as WATER, more specifically FLOOD. This metaphor is commonly adopted in discourses on immigration (El Refaie 2001). In the newspapers, it is realized for instance in the sentences in Examples 95 and 96.

**Example 95:** Louisiana’s state capital [...] is being inundated by the human wave coming from the submerged city of New Orleans. *(The Guardian, 2 Sep 2005)*

**Example 96:** Instead of water flooding in, we’ve got people flooding in. The people levee has broken. *(eyewitness account in The Guardian, 2 Sep 2005)*

Thus, the flood that occurred in New Orleans paradoxically inspires the portrayal of those affected by it. Instead of depicting the internally displaced people as victims of a disaster, the articles discursively represent them as causing a disaster. The displaced people are thus established as a problem. Moreover, they are labeled in the articles as *refugees*, which portrays them “as something less than full-fledged citizens” (Jones 2009: 262).

Concerning the category of inclusion/exclusion, there is a sharp contrast between the representation of the Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina: while in the depiction of the tsunami, social and historical factors tend to be excluded in the articles, in the depiction of the hurricane they are foregrounded in the second half of reporting. In the last phases of reporting, the newspapers reveal the complexity of human failure contributing to the consequences of the catastrophe, pointing out that the disaster was to a large extent human-made.
The articles focus on the discussion of the failure of the government and bureaucracy, and point out historical factors, mainly racial and class inequalities existing in New Orleans, that were at the root of the disaster. This shows that newspapers are capable of providing an analytical and rational account of natural disasters.

It is worth mentioning that Canadian help to the USA gets foregrounded in The Globe and Mail. The newspaper devotes 2 out of the 15 articles under study to the discussion of Canadians providing help to those affected by the disaster: Basic medical supplies top U.S. wish list from Canada (headline, 5 Sep 2005) and Canadian ships sail to rescue (headline, 7 Sep 2005). Example 100 is from one such an article.

Example 100: Nearly 1,000 Canadian military personnel set out of this port yesterday on a mission to bring aid to those people caught in the worst natural disaster ever to befall the United States. […] politicians from both sides of the border praised the expedition as a clear demonstration of the deep bond between Canada and its large southern neighbour. (The Globe and Mail, 7 Sep 2005)

These accounts function to provide a positive self-representation for Canadians. Apart from that, they convey and reinforce the political ideology of Canada and the USA being strong allies.
5.5.2 Victim Stories

To solicit readers’ involvement, the personalized stories of people affected by the hurricane include background information about the victim. As in the case of the tsunami, the victims are identified by their age and functionalized by their occupation (e.g. Darcel Monroe, 21, a bakery cashier in The New York Times, 1 Sep 2005). This implies that age and occupation stand for the categories that function to establish an identity, most probably a stereotypical one, of a person in the Western culture. The stories also mention some ordinary aspects of the victims’ lives, as can be seen in Example 101.

**Example 101:** “I just didn't want to take a chance,” said Mr. Paulin, who like many arrived [at the Superdome] with hastily packed possessions. He was carrying a small plastic bag containing his eyeglasses, medication and a paperback book, the Tony Hillerman novel “First Eagle.” (The New York Times, 29 Aug 2005)

The seemingly unimportant details about the things that the victim carried in his bag root the story in ordinary experience and thus establish its relevance to everyday lives of readers.

In contrast to the tsunami, the motif of a ‘ruined fairy tale’, i.e. to establish an idyllic state of people’s lives immediately before the catastrophe only to reverse it by the horror of what comes after the disaster, is missing in the articles on the hurricane. One of the possible reasons is that people had been aware of the approaching storm and thus the notion of suddenness embedded in the ‘ruined fairy tale’ is not a significant aspect to be conveyed in the articles. There is one exception in The New York Times, which mention a couple coming to celebrate their wedding anniversary to New Orleans:

**Example 102:** Cara Every Calderon and her husband, Axel Calderon, flew to New Orleans from their home in Smithtown, N.Y., on Saturday to celebrate their first wedding anniversary. […] The couple ended up at the Superdome, roller suitcases in tow, after finding themselves trapped. (The New York Times, 29 Aug 2005)

The cruelty of the fate of the couple is intensified by the contrast between their expectations/the purpose of their stay in New Orleans and the actual reality.
The selection of the individualized stories placed in the newspapers seems to be ruled by the criterion of an appeal to audience since the articles mainly include emotionally charged or unusual and extraordinary stories. In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, the focus is put on those trapped in their houses, asking for help:

**Example 103:** Across the street, a woman leaned from the second-storey window of a brick home. "There are three kids in here," she said. "Can you help us?" (The Guardian, 30 Aug 2005)

By reporting it as a direct speech, the newspaper makes its readers the addressees of the question, and thus solicits emotions, such as sympathy and sorrow and anxiety resulting from the inability to provide help. Feelings of anxiety and helplessness are intensified in Example 104.

**Example 104:** “Every day she called him and said, ‘Are you coming, son? Is somebody coming?’ Mr. Broussard said.” And he said, ‘Yeah, Mama, somebody's coming to get you.' Somebody's coming to get you on Tuesday. Somebody's coming to get you on Wednesday. Somebody's coming to get you on Thursday. Somebody's coming to get you on Friday. And she drowned Friday night. She drowned Friday night.” (The New York Times, 5 Sep 2005)

The way the story is framed, especially the use of a repetition and the provision of hope and reassurance followed by a tragic ending, has a strong emotional appeal and dramatic effect.

When representing the situation in the Superdome, the newspapers choose to quote mainly those who were, because of their conditions, the most vulnerable, such as a mother and her handicapped child, a wife and her husband who has cancer, an old woman, and a man with asthma.

**Example 105:** Danielle Shelby tugged at a reporter's arm. "I have a handicapped daughter," she said. "She's over there with her wheelchair. She's hot. We don't have any water. I'm afraid she's going to have a seizure.” Others crowded around. "I've been in the food line twice, and every time I get to the front they tell me they don't have any left," said Juanita McFerrin, 80. "My husband has cancer," another woman said. "He's not getting his regular treatment."

Frank L. Jones, 54, said he had gone four days without his asthma medicine. Lionel Valentine, 53, who breathes with the help of an oxygen machine,
wanted to know if his family would be split up again as they were moved from the dome. (The New York Times, 1 Sep 2005)

The emphasis put on such stories by the newspapers to a certain degree exploits emotions and dramatizes the situation in the Superdome. Apart from emotive stories, the newspapers choose stories that are somehow unusual or extraordinary and thus ignite interest, such as a story of an ordinary man who stayed in his house during the disaster with his land line functional and one day was interviewed by a radio station in Germany (The Globe and Mail, 5 Sep 2005).

Similarly to the articles on the tsunami, the articles on the hurricane alternate between positive and negative victim stories. The following extract exemplifies the alternation between the evocation of feelings of anxiety and reassurance:

Example 106: "She said, 'I love you,'" said Mrs Medley, struggling to hold back the tears. "And then she said, 'We're going to die.'"

At 6pm, the sisters managed to contact the National Guard who agreed to send a boat. They were going to be saved.

Many others were not so lucky. (The Guardian, 31 Aug 2005)

The account first anticipates a tragic ending, then, it offers a happy resolution of the story, which is followed by an assertion contradicting the happy ending by pointing out that many other personal stories were unfortunate. As has already been pointed out in the analysis of the tsunami, the oscillation between stories with a happy and tragic ending has an addictive potential (Kvakova 2009), making readers want to read more to be reassured again.

The so-called WARRIOR iconography, present in the representation of the tsunami (see 4.5.3), is employed in individualized accounts of Hurricane Katrina and the overall newspapers’ representations of the catastrophe as well; yet, the ascription of the roles of a VICTIM, a VILAIN, and a HERO is not as straightforward as in the case of the tsunami. While in the immediate aftermath of the hurricane, the role of a VILLAIN is assigned to the natural phenomenon, later on, it is shifted to some people, more specifically government and bureaucracy, and some of the people affected by the disaster, who are constructed by the newspapers as looters, rapists and murderers. Thus, not all the victims of the catastrophe are portrayed as VICTIMS.

Although generally the newspapers provide a rational analysis of the failure of the government and bureaucracy, which contributed to the disaster, some accounts resort to a more emotive ascription of blame:
**Example 107:** Bureaucracy has committed murder here in the greater New Orleans area. (eyewitness account in *The New York Times*, 5 Sep 2005)

The eyewitness bluntly represents the government as ‘a murderer’; in other words, as a criminal, a villain.

The emphasis on looting is put both in eyewitness and journalist accounts of the events:

**Example 108:** There is no ice and no water, nothing. All the stores have been looted. (eyewitness account in *The Globe and Mail*, 1 Sep 2005)

**Example 109:** "We're in a part of New Orleans that's dry," Mr. Donald said. "We want to look after our stuff. They say they've been looting there." (The *Globe and Mail*, 1 Sep 2005)

**Example 110:** The chaotic scenes in New Orleans were exacerbated by outbreaks of looting. (The *Guardian*, 1 Sep 2005)

Taking goods from stores is rather a complex issue in natural disasters, especially one like Hurricane Katrina when people were not rescued and given food and water for several days. Yet, those who took goods from stores do not get much sympathy in the press but are generally labeled as looters and thus portrayed as criminals. As the local mayor of Baton Rouge reveals: We do not want to inherit the looting and all the other foolishness that went on in New Orleans (The *Guardian*, 1 Sep 2005). Rather than searching for and analyzing the causes of such a behavior, it is simplistically condemned as foolish and a crime.

Other stories with a VILLAIN as the main protagonist include accounts of murder and rape committed by people.

**Example 111:** Cary Andrews, a 31-year-old hotel employee, said that a five-year-old girl was raped and killed at the convention centre bathroom. But the story could not be confirmed. (The *Globe and Mail*, 2 Sep 2005)

Although *The Globe and Mail* points out that the story could not be confirmed, it still chooses to report it, and thus spreads the rumour. *The Guardian* portrays New Orleans as run by thugs and reports that rapes and assaults were occurring unimpeded (2 Sep 2005). On the whole, in the third phase of reporting, the articles focus on the depiction of New Orleans as utterly chaotic, wild and violent, as in Example 112.

**Example 112:** A six-hour visit to New Orleans yesterday, four days after Katrina hit, resembled an urban bad dream, where gun shots pierced the humid afternoon air; large fires burned uncontrolled and thousands of dispossessed
and increasingly angry people wandered aimlessly through a city where peace and order had dissipated. (The Globe and Mail, 2 Sep 2005)

The newspapers thus adopt a view of a catastrophe based on “nonsocial” principles; a view which “holds that during periods of disaster, the traditional social structure is destroyed and the basically irrational, impulsive, competitive, weak, and somewhat animalistic nature of human beings is revealed” (Wenger 1980: 249). Yet, most of the atrocity stories disseminated by the newspapers in their representation of Hurricane Katrina turned out to be false in the end (McNair 2006).

The newspapers also include an appearance of a hero on the scene, who does something admirable and generally functions to represent triumph. He/she thus plays a counterpart to the discursively constructed villains. The role of a hero is usually occupied by ordinary people (“the ones of us”), as when a mechanic and a fisherman use their boats for several days to save 300 friends and neighbors, plucking them from floodwaters and the roofs of homes and cars (The New York Times, 5 Sep 2005). Since several cases of the positive self-portrayal of Canada in The Globe and Mail have already been revealed, it does not come as a surprise that the role of a hero is performed in this newspaper by a Canadian man – Frank Stronach, who has committed $3-million to rescue evacuees from New Orleans by airlifting them to Palm Beach and building mobile homes for them in Louisiana (6 Sep 2005). On the whole, the stories about heroes bring an aspect of reassurance and the necessary positive element into the negative accounts of the catastrophe.

5.6 Discursive Strategies of Dramatization

Several discursive strategies with a dramatic effect have already been discussed, including demonization of the natural phenomenon in the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe, demonization of some of the victims of the disaster, emphasis on the breakdown of social structure and dissemination of rumours during the third phase of reporting, and a focus on highly emotionally charged personal stories. Apart from that, there are several other discursive means of dramatization employed by the newspapers. Significantly, they correspond to those used in the depiction of the tsunami.

A commonly adopted strategy is a contrast, usually applied to the state before and after the disaster. The situation before the levees broke is described in a positive
light – the skies had cleared and as dawn broke yesterday the sun was shining for the first time in days, which is immediately followed by – but for some the nightmare was just beginning (The Guardian, 31 Aug 2005). Such a contrastive depiction intensifies the ‘horror’ of the catastrophe. Other contrastive references include the headline Superdome: Haven Quickly Becomes an Ordeal (The New York Times, 1 Sep 2005) and the juxtaposition of positive and negative responses of victims to Mr. Bush’s visit:

Example 113: Some residents said Mr. Bush's visit to Poplarville had lifted their spirits. […] Other residents viewed the president's visit with anger. (The New York Times, 6 Sep 2005)

Since the discursive contrast tends to draw upon binary oppositions, it results in a black-and-white portrayal of events.

Other discursive devices with a dramatizing effect include a hyperbole, a repetition, and an abundance of numbers. A hyperbole tends to be realized by the employment of words like ‘all’, ‘everywhere’ and ‘everybody’, which results in the exaggeration of the impact of the disaster, as in Examples 114 and 115.

Example 114: There were dead people floating everywhere you looked. (eyewitness account in The Guardian, 1 Sep 2005)

Example 115: All the stores have been looted. (eyewitness account in The Globe and Mail, 1 Sep 2005)

A repetition is for instance employed in the warning issued towards those affected by the hurricane, which says: Be very, very careful (The New York Times, 30 Aug 2005). As in the case of the tsunami, the newspapers often employ round numbers without any modification: the approach of its 160-mile-an-hour winds (The New York Times, 29 Aug 2005), knocked out power to 28,000 people (The Guardian, 30 Aug 2005) and seriously ill patients, including 100 infants (The Globe and Mail, 1 Sep 2005). This reveals that the numbers do not function to convey precise information, but rather create an illusion of objectivity and fulfill the criterion of vividness.

The newspapers establish the disaster of Hurricane Katrina as exceptional by a frequent use of superlatives. The hurricane is depicted as the most expensive hurricane ever to hit the United States (The Globe and Mail, 30 Aug 2005), one of the most powerful hurricanes to hit the US in living memory (The Guardian, 29 Aug 2005), one of the strongest to strike the United States (The New York Times, 31 Aug 2005), and one of the most punishing hurricanes ever to hit the United States (The New York Times, 30 Aug 2005). As the expression ‘one of’ is rather vague, it is the employment of a
superlative itself that matters since it adds a dramatic force to the accounts. Moreover, as pointed out by Bell (1991: 157), superlativeness makes stories newsworthy.

The last discursive strategy of dramatization worth mentioning is the adoption of images from horror movies when depicting New Orleans after the catastrophe. The newspapers portray New Orleans as a ghost city, characterized by a haunting calm, an eerie emptiness and a ghastly landscape. Such accounts serve to appeal to emotions, calling forth fear and shock.

5.7 Photography

As in the case of the tsunami, the photographs from Subset B (i.e. the photographs accompanying the articles on the hurricane, see subsection 1.4) predominantly portray people. The images belong mainly to two categories: those portraying people taking a shelter in the Superdome (Figure 5.1) and those depicting rescue workers or ordinary people wading through high waters (Figure 5.2). The photographs of the first type adopt an aerial perspective in two cases, with a caption reading “thousands of people” in both cases. The aerial images allow the depiction of great masses of people, and, at the same time, offer a detached, disembodied and objectifying portrayal (Deriu 2007). The photographs belonging to the second category depict flooded streets and thus convey the power of the natural phenomenon itself. Some of the photographs depict peculiar images (Figure 5.3), offering an entertaining and shocking element and thus appealing to audience.
Figure 5.1: Superdome

Thousands of people sought refuge in the New Orleans Superdome arena, which the city designated as a shelter of last resort. *(The New York Times, 29 Aug 2005)*

Figure 5.2: Flooded street

New Orleans residents wade and paddle through a flooded street. *(The Guardian, 31 Aug 2005)*
Figure 5.3: Stranded boat
Deputy Sheriff Timmy Arceneaux and his son Ryan with fishing boats stranded on the median of Route 23 southeast of New Orleans. (The New York Times, 6 Sep 2005)

Concerning the representation of women, they are portrayed as mothers looking for their missing children or are depicted as being in distress, crying for help (Figure 5.4). Therefore, as in the case of the tsunami, the characteristics of vulnerability, emotiveness and caring are attributed to them.

Figure 5.4: Crying for help
A woman outside New Orleans Convention Centre cries for help for a patient in her care. (The Guardian, 3 Sep 2005)
5.8 Discussion of the Findings

As in the case of the Indian Ocean tsunami, the analysis of the articles on Hurricane Katrina in the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe reveals that the newspapers create a myth of the natural phenomenon being a vicious monster, which directs its aggression against people. All the three newspapers conceptualize the hurricane by the same metaphoric themes – an ANIMATE BEING, a MONSTER and a WARRIOR – as when they depict the tsunami; moreover, they realize the metaphors by the same linguistic means. Such a portrayal ascribes the responsibility for the damage and death to the natural phenomenon, diverting attention from social and historical factors. At the same time, it hides positive ecological aspects of the hurricane and dramatizes the situation by appealing to emotions and evoking shock.

After the first wave of shock passes, the newspapers resort to a much more rational and analytical approach in their reports. In contrast to the newspaper discourse on the tsunami, the articles on the hurricane foreground the human failure contributing to the catastrophe and background the natural phenomenon in the later phases of reporting. Thus, while first the newspapers discursively put the blame for the destruction on the natural phenomenon, later on they shift it to human beings.

The ideology of US (people) versus IT (nature) present in the newspaper discourse on the tsunami is missing in the depiction of Hurricane Katrina. Although the natural phenomenon is demonized in the first phases of reporting, the articles lack a focus on a positive representation of people. The bipolarization of the world based on the binary characteristics ascribed to people and nature is absent. Furthermore, the ascription of the roles of a VILLAIN and a VICTIM is more complex than in the case of the tsunami. It is not only the natural phenomenon but also some of the victims of the disaster that are constructed as villains. Apart from the displaced people being established as a problem by being metaphorically portrayed as a FLOOD, the newspapers put an emphasis on antisocial behavior of those affected by the hurricane, especially looting, and spread rumours of murder and rape. Such a portrayal hinders evocation of empathy and sympathy with victims among the audience.

The analysis also shows that drama, as an aspect of entertainment, is one of the elements that determine the representation of the disaster. The newspapers employ a number of discursive strategies that lead to the dramatization of the natural catastrophe,
including an emphasis put on highly emotive personalized stories of victims, and the use of a contrast, a hyperbole and superlative.
CHAPTER SIX – Haiti Earthquake

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the third major catastrophe from the corpus – 2010 Haiti earthquake, attempting to compare the way it is discursively represented in the newspapers with the portrayals of the Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina. Similarly to the previous chapters, it first provides background information about the natural catastrophe gathered from sociological and anthropological research. Then, it proceeds to the analysis of recurrent discursive patterns in the newspaper articles from the corpus, adopting the same framework of analysis as in the preceding two chapters.

6.2 Background Information

The earthquake struck Haiti on 12 January 2010. It measured 7.0 on the Richter scale and its epicenter was about 17km south-west of Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince. Approximately 230,000 people were killed, more than 300,000 injured and more than 1.3 million were rendered homeless in the disaster. More than 250,000 homes, 35,000 commercial, industrial, and administrative buildings were destroyed. The value of damage is estimated between 7 and 14 billion dollars (Arbon 2010; Dupuy 2010).

The impact of the disaster was exacerbated by man-made factors. These include poor infrastructure, inferior building constructions and an abandonment of citizens by the city and national governments, which for years had not provided any meaningful services, such as schools, health care, electricity, potable water and sanitation, and what they had provided was aimed at the wealthy. Only about 30 percent of Haitians had access to health care, the same percentage to sanitation and 54 percent to potable water. The low socio-economic resources in Haiti and a massive institutional failure (which predated the earthquake) to a large extent contributed to the catastrophe (Dupuy 2010; Gros 2011).
It is not only the state itself that was responsible for the unfortunate living conditions in Haiti, but also foreign governments and economic actors. The policies of international financial institutions of advanced countries, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, led to the transformation of Haiti into “a supplier of the cheapest labor in this hemisphere for foreign and domestic investors in the export assembly industry and one of the largest importers of U.S. food in the hemisphere” (Dupuy 2010: 196). The location of the assembly lines mainly in Port-au-Prince prompted residents from the rural areas to migrate to the capital city, which contributed to its highly dense population. Trade liberalization, one of the main policies that Haitians were made to implement, resulted in the destruction of local industries and a neglect of agriculture, further propelling rural-to-urban migration (Dupuy 2010; Gros 2011).

Although earthquakes cannot be predicted, they can be prepared for. The Haitian government had been warned of the possibility of an earthquake for years; yet, no mitigation and preparedness efforts had been implemented (Dupuy 2010).

6.3 Macro-structures of the Newspaper Articles – Diachronic View

Concerning the main topics and global meanings of the articles on the earthquake in Haiti, there are no clearly delineated phases in reporting. On the whole, the articles can be divided into two main groups:

1. The immediate aftermath of the catastrophe

During the first two days of the disaster, the articles focus on conveying what happened, and where, when, why and how it happened. Significantly, the social and historical conditions of Haiti prior the disaster are foregrounded in this phase of reporting (more on this is to be said in subchapter 6.4.2).

2. Consequences/Aid

During this phase, the newspapers depict the consequences of the disaster, pointing out desperate conditions of life in the capital after the catastrophe. The articles establish a link between these conditions and problematic political, economic and social
conditions of the country before the catastrophe, revealing that the disaster is to a large extent man-made.

The reports focus on the aid provided to Haitians by Western English-speaking countries and the UN. Although the articles point out inadequacy of the help given to the victims, they also represent Haitians as dependent on the aid from the West and the Westerners as heroes, worthy of praise for their actions.

6.4 Representation of the Natural Phenomenon

This subchapter investigates referential discursive strategies employed in the depiction of the earthquake. As the analyses of the tsunami and the hurricane reveal that the newspapers employ three main conceptual metaphor themes to portray the natural phenomenon, this section first asks whether these metaphors are adopted in the newspaper discourse on the earthquake as well. Then, it applies van Leeuwen’s categorical system to the analysis.

6.4.1 Absence of Metaphorical Representation of Haiti Earthquake

The examination of the three newspapers reveals that no metaphorical conceptualization is employed with reference to the earthquake. In sharp contrast to the discourse on the tsunami and the hurricane, none of the three metaphor themes of an ANIMATE BEING, a MONSTER or a WARRIOR is materialized in the discourse on the earthquake. The natural phenomenon is not ascribed animate features, such as parts of a human body, animal sounds or emotions. Nor do the articles include a punishment motive. Although the earthquake is portrayed as large and powerful, e.g. two days after the huge earthquake struck (The New York Times, 15 Jan 2010) and one of the most powerful earthquakes to ever hit the region (The Globe and Mail, 13 Jan 2010), reference to cruelty or monstrosity is absent in the articles. The discourse also lacks the portrayal of the earthquake as attacking people and acting with the aim to hurt people and cause damage.

The newspaper discourse still depicts the natural phenomenon as having a great destructive force and its own energy, which implies that it acts with no external agent;
yet it does not demonize it and personify it as evil. The portrayal of the earthquake as having its own energy is conveyed through transitivity pattern of sentences where the natural phenomenon occupies a role of Agent of material processes:

**Example 116:** A powerful earthquake hit Haiti, toppling buildings in the capital Port-au-Prince, burying residents in rubble and sparking tsunami alerts in what is feared to be a major catastrophe. (The Guardian, 13 Jan 2010)

The destructive force of the earthquake is revealed in the commonly employed characterization of the natural phenomenon as devastating and the predicates modifying the natural phenomenon: the earthquake hits, strikes and ravages.

Although the myth of a natural phenomenon as an attacking monster is avoided, the myth of the disaster as indiscriminating is spread by The Globe and Mail.

**Example 117:** [The earthquake offered] an egalitarian disaster that struck rich and poor, politician and pauper, with equal ferocity. (The Globe and Mail, 19 Jan 2010)

This contradicts the real facts (see subchapter 6.2), which are correctly pointed out by The Guardian:

**Example 118:** The poor, as ever with natural disasters, were the worst hit, especially Belair and the area known as Carrefour, near the sea. (13 Jan 2010)

### 6.4.2 Representation of the Earthquake in terms of van Leeuwen’s Categorization

As in the cases of the hurricane and the tsunami, the newspaper discourse on the earthquake foregrounds the natural phenomenon and represents it as an active force with reference to destructive processes in the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe.

The foregrounding and activation of the earthquake is achieved by the same three syntactic means as in the representations of the other two disasters (see 4.4.2 and 5.4.2). They are exemplified by the following three sentences:

**Example 119:** One of the most powerful earthquakes to ever hit the region slammed impoverished Haiti. (The Globe and Mail, 13 Jan 2010)

**Example 120:** [...] like people everywhere in Haiti left homeless by the earthquake (The New York Times, 22 Jan 2010)
Example 121: Many feared dead as huge earthquake hits Haiti (The Guardian, 13 Jan 2010)

Apart from that, activation is also realized by an active type of possessivation, as in the earthquake's debilitating blow (The Globe and Mail, 16 Jan 2010).

Yet, in contrast to the articles on the hurricane and the tsunami where it is only the natural phenomenon that gets foregrounded in reference to the destruction, with man-made factors being suppressed in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, the discourse on the earthquake foregrounds not only the natural phenomenon but also social and historical conditions of Haitians from the very beginning of reporting. Examples 122, 123 and 124 are taken from the leads of the articles of the three newspapers published on the first day of reporting:

Example 122: A fierce earthquake struck Haiti late Tuesday afternoon, causing a crowded hospital to collapse, leveling countless shantytown dwellings and bringing even more suffering to a nation that was already the hemisphere’s poorest and most disaster-prone. (The New York Times, 13 Jan 2010)

Example 123: Haiti was a humanitarian disaster even before the earthquake hit. It is the poorest country in the western hemisphere; most of its buildings are badly constructed out of tin and cheap concrete with many slums perched on steep, bare hillsides which are particularly prone to landslides. (The Guardian, 13 Jan 2010)

Example 124: Impoverished nation thrown into chaos as 7.0 quake hits densely populated capital, crushing presidential palace and a hospital. (The Globe and Mail, 13 Jan 2010)

As can be seen, Examples 122 and 123 employ superlatives, which make the reports newsworthy (Bell 1991). The emphasis is put on high poverty in Haiti, poor infrastructure and building standards, and the malfunctioning of the government and its abandonment of citizens throughout the whole 14-day period under study in all the three newspapers. Moreover, the link between these conditions and the impact of the catastrophe is explicitly established in the discourse:

Example 125: The earthquake's devastating effect is magnified by the notoriously abysmal infrastructure in much of the country. (The Globe and Mail, 13 Jan 2010)

Example 126: With many poor residents living in tin-roof shacks that sit precariously on steep ravines and with much of the construction in Port-au-
Prince and elsewhere in the country of questionable quality, the expectation was that the quake caused major damage to buildings and significant loss of life.
(The New York Times, 13 Jan 2010)

As a result, the consequences of the disaster are constructed as a joint effect of the natural phenomenon and man-made factors, which is revealed in the headline *Grinding poverty and tectonic volatility make a devastating combination* (The Guardian, 13 Jan 2010).

### 6.5 Representation of People

This subchapter examines how the newspapers represent people, with the focus on both those affected by the disaster and those to be blamed for the catastrophe. First, it investigates the depiction of people in terms of van Leeuwen’s categorization system; then, it looks at personalized stories of eyewitnesses.

#### 6.5.1 Representation of People in terms of van Leeuwen’s Categorization

The group of social actors that is *foregrounded* in the newspapers, mainly in The New York Times and The Globe and Mail, is Americans, the United Nations and Canadians providing aid to Haiti. In The New York Times, the number of the articles the main topic of which concerns international aid is 7 (out of the total of 15 articles; i.e. 47%), e.g. *U.S. troops patrol Haiti, filling a void* (20 Jan 2010), *Aid groups focus on Haiti’s homeless* (22 Jan 2010) and *Agreement on effort to help Haiti rebuild* (26 Jan 2010), and the number of the articles that mention American aid is 14 (i.e. 93%). In The Globe and Mail, the number of the articles the global meaning of which concerns Canadian aid or Canadian victims whose help to Haiti prior to the disaster is emphasized is 8 (i.e. 53%), e.g. *Once slammed for sluggish response, Canada swiftly sends in the troops* (14 Jan 2010), *She came to help the people she loved - then disaster struck* (14 Jan 2010) and *Canada to hold Haiti summit amid historic relief effort* (18 Jan 2010), and the number of the articles that mention Canadian aid is 13 (i.e. 87%). Although The Guardian also focuses on international aid including British help, the
foregrounding is not as prominent as in the other two newspapers: the international aid constitutes the main topic of a report in 5 cases (33%) and is mentioned in 8 articles (i.e. 53%) (see Table 6.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of articles the main topic of which concerns aid of the West</th>
<th>Number of articles that mention aid of the West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The New York Times</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>14 (93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Globe and Mail</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>13 (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: Aid of the West

Such a foregrounding of one’s own country’s aid provides the articles with a high degree of cultural proximity, fulfilling the criterion of meaningfulness, and thus makes them newsworthy. At the same time, it points to self-centredness of the two countries. It offers a positive self-representation, with the articles including a number of the examples of explicit self-appraisal, such as Examples 127 and 128.

Example 127: The scale and speed of the relief mission being prepared [by Canada] is remarkable for a country that has been criticized for being slow off the mark in reacting to past disasters. (The Globe and Mail, 14 Jan 2010)

Example 128: [...] Canada, which for decades has demonstrated a special affinity for Haiti. (The Globe and Mail, 16 Jan 2010)

The emphasis put on the helpfulness of Western rich countries is contrasted with the foregrounding of helplessness of Haitians. As has already been pointed out, from the very beginning of reporting, the newspapers focus on the poor political, economic and social conditions of Haiti prior the disaster. Furthermore, an emphasis is put on the portrayal of Haiti as chaotic after the earthquake, with a number of references to violence. Although the depiction of the aftermath of the catastrophe as chaotic is also present in the articles on the other two catastrophes, mainly Hurricane Katrina, it is not as prominent as in the discourse on the Haiti earthquake (see Table 6.2). Some of the examples of reference to chaos and violence after the earthquake include:
Example 129: Inside Haiti the situation was still more chaotic, with thousands of people sitting in roads to stay clear of quake-damaged buildings, and widespread reports of looting. (The Guardian, 15 Jan 2010)

Example 130: [...] the scene in its densely populated capital was one of chaos and devastation that completely overwhelmed the country's threadbare emergency resources. Gunshots rang out as night fell and widespread looting was reported. (The Globe and Mail, 14 Jan 2010)

Example 131: In the midst of the chaos, no one was able to offer an estimate of the number of people who had been killed or injured. (The New York Times, 13 Jan 2010)

Example 132: Looting of houses and shops increased Friday, and anger boiled over in unpredictable ways. (The New York Times, 16 Jan 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The New York Times</th>
<th>The Guardian</th>
<th>The Globe and Mail</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian Ocean tsunami</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurricane Katrina</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti earthquake</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: Number of references to chaos

Concerning the voices of ordinary people, the newspapers omit directly quoted personalized narratives of the experience of the earthquake itself (there is only one such narrative in The Guardian, which is though told by an American visitor, one in The Globe and Mail, told by a Canadian visitor, and three in The New York Times, two of which are told by American visitors and one by a Haitian) and rather focus on quoting those who emphasize their helplessness and dependence on aid from outside, such as victims who describe themselves as completely destitute and ask for help – Please save my baby!, Please take me out., We need outsiders to come. The portrayal of Haiti as being in need of help from outside is also conveyed in Examples 133, 134 and 135.
Example 133: "Help, Ayuda, Aide" read one [a sign] in three languages, with arrows pointing to a yard filled with survivors. (The Globe and Mail, 18 Jan 2010)


Example 135: A nation in ruins, crying for help (headline in The Globe and Mail, 14 Jan 2010)

The choice of a word ‘cry’ in Example 135 implicitly portrays Haiti as childlike. There are other examples with a patronizing undertone in the newspapers, such as the depictions of a crowd of Haitians as well-behaved (The Globe and Mail, 19 Jan 2010) and mostly appreciative, with only a little shoving (The New York Times, 18 Jan 2010). The inclusion of such a characterization presupposes that normally, a crowd of Haitians is not well-behaved and not appreciative, with shoving.

The foregrounding of helpfulness of Western rich countries and the portrayal of Haiti as dependent on it suggests an adult-child hierarchy, involving a power asymmetry (Murali 2011). Such a representation creates a division between the two groups of social actors based on WE versus THEM, as is revealed in the words of the United Nations secretary general published on 19 January 2010 in The New York Times: When their [Haitians’] patience level becomes thinner — that is when we have to be concerned.

Moving to the discussion of van Leeuwen’s category of individualization, it is applied to victims in personalized stories. The newspapers thus bring human interest in the stories and heighten readers’ involvement. As in the case of the other two disasters, individualization is realized by naming the victims, identifying them by their age and functionalizing them by their occupation.

Example 136: “I would like for my family to escape the misery in this city, but I need painkillers for my child first,” said Manuel Lamy, 28, a plumber. (The New York Times, 19 Jan 2010)

Another example of individualization worth mentioning is Example 137.

Example 137: A worldwide effort to race aid to Haiti was about to swing into action, and within hours Barack Obama and Pope Benedict would be among foreign leaders expressing solidarity. (The Guardian, 13 Jan 2010)
This example corresponds to the one published in The New York Times when portraying the tsunami (see section 4.5.1). In both cases, it is the Pope and the American president that are named as the world leaders. By foregrounding these two men, the two newspapers implicitly establish them as the most powerful.

6.5.2 Victim Stories

Personalized stories of people affected by the earthquake contain background information about the victim, including the activity that he/she was engaged in just before the catastrophe.

Example 138: Mr. Dorvil said they had all been in their living room watching television when the earthquake hit. (The New York Times, 21 Jan 2010)

Not only does this bring the aspect of ordinariness into the stories and thus heightens readers’ involvement but it also accentuates the unexpectedness of the disaster by drawing upon the Ruined Fairy Tale motive (see 4.5.3).

The pattern of alternation between positive and negative victim stories discovered in the articles on both the tsunami and the hurricane is present in the articles on the earthquake as well.

Example 139: The United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, described another “small miracle during a night which brought few other miracles.” […] Rescuers found him with the help of electronic sensors and dogs brought in by the American, Chinese and French teams, and had helped keep him alive by piping him water through a tube.

But hope was fading for perhaps tens of thousands of others. (The New York Times, 15 Jan 2010)

Example 140: But in at least one spot on rue Capois, a 10-minute walk away, people are cheering and a rare rescue mission has succeeded.

"It's the first miracle we've seen here in a long, long time," says Luis Modelet, a 57-year-old retiree whose house was flattened, alluding to Haiti's long troubled past.

But there's only so much room for hope, and the miracles are running out. (The Globe and Mail, 15 Jan 2010)
As can be seen in Examples 139 and 140, the newspapers describe the stories of survival as miracles, providing thus a sensational tone. Similarly to the articles on the other two disasters, an emphasis is put on unusual stories, such as a rescue of a 69-year-old woman from a collapsed building a week after the earthquake (The Guardian, 20 Jan 2010) or a 7-year-old girl who survived more than four days eating dried fruit rolls in the supermarket that collapsed around her (The New York Times, 18 Jan 2010). Apart from the reference to something positive, such stories bring an entertaining aspect, which makes them newsworthy.

6.6 Discursive Strategies of Dramatization

In contrast to the tsunami and the hurricane, some discursive strategies with a dramatic effect, including demonization of the natural phenomenon and fairy-tale-like motifs, such as the employment of the WARRIOR iconography with an ascription of the role of a VILLAIN, are missing in the representation of the earthquake. Yet, the other discursive means of dramatization listed in the analyses of the other two disasters are present in the articles on Haiti as well.

One of them is a contrast. As in the depictions of the tsunami and the hurricane, it is employed to build up a tension between the states before and after the disaster:

Example 141: Just another humid, busy afternoon, the aroma of fried plantain from street stalls mixing with diesel fumes and the babble of more than 3 million voices. At 4.53pm, everything changed. (The Guardian, 13 Jan 2010)

Among other instances of the use of a contrast is its application to the difference between the description of the city and the countryside where many Haitians aimed after the catastrophe:

Example 142: It was around 8 a.m., and over the next hour and a half, the landscape transformed. Sugar cane fields replaced collapsed buildings. Flowers pink as cherry bubble gum climbed fences by the road near fruit stands and potato chip vendors. There was even, at one point, the smell of lilacs — a sharp contrast to the putrid smell of bodies and burned tires in the capital. (The New York Times, 21 Jan 2010)
Such a depiction leads to the idealization of the countryside, providing a simplified black-and-white portrayal.

Another common strategy of dramatization is a hyperbole, which exaggerates the impact of the disaster by portraying it as all-destructive:

**Example 143:** But this has wiped out everything. (eyewitness account in *The New York Times*, 20 Jan 2010)

**Example 144:** [...] the entire city is destroyed. (eyewitness account in *The Globe and Mail*, 14 Jan 2010)

**Example 145:** Everybody is just totally, totally freaked out and shaken. (eyewitness account in *The New York Times*, 13 Jan 2010)

Example 145 contains another dramatizing strategy – a repetition. This device is also used in the Haitian president’s account, which employs a sequence of short simple sentences having a dramatic effect:

**Example 146:** Parliament has collapsed. The tax office has collapsed. Schools have collapsed. Hospitals have collapsed. (*The Guardian*, 13 Jan 2010)

There are a number of instances of a ‘telegraphic style’ employed in the articles, including elliptic sentences:

**Example 147:** People are terrified and have no hope. Natural holocaust. (eyewitness account in *The Guardian*, 13 Jan 2010)

As in the case of the other two disasters, the discourse on the earthquake employs round numbers without any modification, such as 1.5 million left homeless (*The Globe and Mail*, 19 Jan 2010) and 7,000 people had already been buried (*The New York Times*, 15 Jan 2010) and superlatives. The earthquake is depicted as the worst in the region in more than 200 years (*The New York Times*, 13 Jan 2010), one of the most powerful earthquakes to ever hit the region (*The Globe and Mail*, 13 Jan 2010) and the most powerful to hit Haiti in 200 years (*The Guardian*, 13 Jan 2010).

Discursive strategies that add a dramatic tone to the articles include graphic, explicit and detailed descriptions of the dead. As can be seen in Example 148, some accounts call forth images from horror movies:

**Example 148:** One of the bodies has its hand outstretched and when a car passes by, bringing into the cemetery yet another corpse, it hits the arm and makes it swing like a creaking door. (*The Guardian*, 17 Jan 2010)

The immediacy of the situation in Example 148 is brought about by the employment of the historic present tense.
6.7 Photography

As in the other disasters, the photographs from Subset C (i.e. photographs accompanying the articles on the earthquake) portray people as their main objects. Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.2 contribute to the overall discursive representation of Haiti as helpless and the West as helpful since they focus on the depiction of chaotic and violent conditions in Haiti and help provided by the USA. In Figure 6.2 the West is portrayed as help that comes from above; it descends from the sky and heaven and thus symbolically stands for something sacred, worth worshipping. On the other hand, Haiti is represented by masses of people standing on the ground (= being down), waiting for the help behind a fence, which constitutes a barrier between them and the West, with some of them reaching up towards the help. Such a portrayal clearly constructs a divide between Haiti, portrayed as dependent, and the West, depicted as a savior. Furthermore, since the spatial dimensions ‘up’ and ‘down’ have acquired a number of metaphorical extensions, including ‘up’ standing for power and ‘down’ standing for a lack of power (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), the contrast between the USA being positioned ‘up’ and Haitians being positioned ‘down’ in the photograph implies a power hierarchy between the two groups.

Figure 6.1: Fleeing gunshots
People fled gunshots that rang out in downtown Port-au-Prince on Saturday, where the needy were growing desperate. (The New York Times, 17 Jan 2010)
Figure 6.2: American help
American troops landed at the National Palace in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Tuesday. They began rolling through the capital and assisting with the relief operation. (The New York Times, 20 Jan 2010)

In general, the photographs convey grim conditions after the earthquake, including images of the dead and the injured. Figure 6.3 shows an uncovered body of a dead man, providing thus a direct confrontation with death and reinforcing the graphic and explicit discursive representation of the dead (see subchapter 6.6). Figure 6.4 provides a face-to-face contact with an injured young boy, directly appealing to emotions of empathy and pity. As the caption reads that the young boy “receives treatment”, the hand depicted in the photo symbolically stands for the help. Similarly to the victim stories, the newspapers include photographs evoking hope and joy, such as a close-up image of a survivor extracted from the rubble one week after the earthquake (Figure 6.5).
Figure 6.3: Dead body
A body in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, covered with dust from a collapsed building. The search was still on for survivors two days after a devastating earthquake. (*The New York Times*, 15 Jan 2010)

Figure 6.4: Boy receiving treatment
A young boy receives treatment at a makeshift medical clinic at the UN logistics base in Port-au-Prince. (*The Guardian*, 18 Jan 2010)
Concerning the representation of gender, the following two photographs (Figure 6.6 and Figure 6.7) provide two similar images of women and men, reflecting characteristics stereotypically attributed to the two genders. In both cases, the women are portrayed as the vulnerable ones, with Figure 6.6 focusing on the expression of pain, while men play a supportive role to the women. This confirms the finding of the analyses of the other two disasters that the photographs openly depict emotional expressions of women, mainly those of pain and distress, with no such photographs of men being found. For instance, both the woman in Figure 6.6 and the young boy in Figure 6.4 receive treatment and must be in pain; yet, in contrast to the image of the woman, accompanied by the words ‘screamed in pain’, the young boy is portrayed with an emotionless expression.
Clenette Cermot screamed in pain as doctors treated her leg at a field hospital set up by Cuban doctors in Port-au-Prince. Rescue efforts wound down on Friday as the focus shifted from rescue to delivering shelter, water and medical care to injured, hungry and displaced Haitians. (*The New York Times*, 23 Jan 2010)

Mikerlyne Dorvil, injured in Haiti’s earthquake, rested her head on her brother, Arckela, on Wednesday on a bus leaving Port-au-Prince for the countryside. (*The New York Times*, 21 Jan 2010)
6.8 Discussion of the Findings

In contrast to the discourse on the hurricane and the tsunami, the discourse on the earthquake lacks a metaphoric conceptualization of the natural phenomenon. The question of the reasons for this absence arises. One of the possible answers is that metaphors are employed in the portrayal of only certain types of natural disasters. This explanation can though easily be contradicted since a metaphoric depiction of earthquakes is present in ancient mythology. Nur (2008: 73) points out: “The belief that one or more supernatural beings were responsible for natural cataclysms such as earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, and hurricanes was intrinsic to every known society.” In Greek mythology, earthquakes are caused by Poseidon who takes a form of a large bull and bellows and paws the ground (Harris and Platzner 2004). Similarly, in North American mythology, it is believed that the earth is shaken by anthropomorphic beings (McMillan and Hutchinson 2002). This reveals the existence of the metaphoric conceptualization of earthquakes in the Western culture.

It seems that it is rather the place where the earthquake happened, i.e. Haiti, a very poor country, culturally distant from Great Britain, Canada and the USA, that plays a determining role in the way the catastrophe is discursively represented. The focus is put by the newspapers on the poor social and historical conditions magnifying the consequences of the Haiti earthquake since the very beginning of reporting. Such a discursive representation would be in conflict with the portrayal of the natural phenomenon as an uncontrollable monster attacking people, the function of which is, as has been pointed out, to divert attention from man-made factors contributing to natural disasters.

At the same time, the emphasis on poor socio-economic conditions in Haiti allows a construction of another binary opposition: the helpful Western rich countries versus the helpless and dependent Haiti. This is realized by discursive foregrounding of helplessness, chaos and dependence of Haitians (they are, for instance, not given a voice to speak about the earthquake itself; rather, their cries for help are reported in the articles), and helpfulness of the Western rich countries, which function as potential saviors. The discourse draws upon the opposition US versus THEM with an embedded power asymmetry.
The analysis of the articles on the earthquake confirms the pattern of dramatizing discursive strategies discovered in the discourse on the other two disasters. The devices with a dramatic impact discerned in the reports include a contrast, a hyperbole, a repetition, short and elliptic sentences, and superlatives.
CHAPTER 7 – Conclusion

7.1 Summary of the Findings

The present dissertation focuses on the representation of natural catastrophes in newspaper discourse from a critical discourse analysis (CDA) viewpoint. It attempts to uncover recurrent discursive strategies and decipher an ideological perspective/ideological perspectives employed by newspapers published in Western English-speaking countries in their depiction of natural catastrophes. Applying a multi-disciplinary approach, the thesis has drawn not only upon CDA, but also the cognitive theory of metaphor, sociological and anthropological research, and media studies.

The present research can be situated in the context of studies on newspaper discourse from a critical discourse analysis point of view that investigate the role of ideology in the portrayal of national and international affairs by newspapers (van Dijk 1988a; 1991; Fowler 1991; Brookes 1995; Fairclough 1995b; Teo 2000; El Refaie 2001; Bishop and Jaworski 2003; Conboy 2007; Richardson 2007). These studies focus on the selection of discursive devices in representation of different groups of people, attempting to find out whether the newspaper discourse maintains or challenges existing power relations. Following these studies, the present research examines the choice of discursive devices and their ideological underpinnings, yet not only in the representation of human beings but also in the depiction of natural phenomena.

By adopting the cognitive theory of metaphor, this thesis follows recent linguistic scholars who promote a combination of critical discourse analysis and cognitive studies in research (Wodak 2002; Chilton 2004; Hart and Lukeš 2007). The thesis shares with such scholars the conviction that cognitive structures play a significant role in shaping discourse, and, at the same time, discourse has impact on recipients’ cognitive structures. Similarly to recent research on metaphor in discourse employing a critical cognitive approach (Chilton 1996; Semino and Masci 1996; Santa Ana 1999; El Refaie 2001; George Lakoff 2004; Koller 2004; Lule 2004; Charteris-Black 2005), the present study reveals the power of metaphor to convey ideologies and construct a naturalized portrayal of reality.
Employing mainly a qualitative, data-driven analysis, the study investigates both macro- and micro-structures of discourse. The tools for analysis include main topics of the articles, vocabulary – mainly naming and referential strategies and metaphor, grammar – mainly transitive pattern of sentences, narrative structure of victim stories, and photographs.

The most significant finding of the present research is that, by employing the metaphorical conceptualization of a natural phenomenon as an ANIMATE BEING, a MONSTER and a WARRIOR, newspaper discourse does not depict natural catastrophes neutrally but socially constructs the natural phenomenon as a furious demon that aims to attack people. Such a representation conveys an ideological portrayal of human-nature relationship: it draws a sharp divide between people and nature and thus reproduces human-nature dichotomy deeply rooted in Western thinking. Human beings are not depicted as part of a natural world; rather, nature is constructed as people’s enemy. This human-centred perspective simplifies the complexity of natural catastrophes and ideologically serves to justify and conceal any human failure. Furthermore, demonization of the natural phenomenon dramatizes the events and appeals to readers’ emotions, which hinders people from rational thinking.

On the whole, this thesis has attempted to address three research questions followed by three hypotheses posed at the beginning of the study:

**Question 1 – Ascription of blame:**
Who is to blame for the natural catastrophes in newspaper discourse? Do the discursive devices selected by the newspapers represent the disasters as a joint outcome of natural phenomena and social, politico-economic and historical factors?

**Hypothesis 1:**
Newspaper discourse puts the blame for natural disasters on natural phenomena rather than social factors.

**Question 2 – Nature-culture relationship**
How do the newspapers deal with the tension between natural catastrophes and Western Enlightenment ideology of domination of humankind over nature? Does the newspaper discourse acknowledge that Western nature-culture dualism is deconstructed in natural disasters?
Hypothesis 2:
The binary opposition between humankind and nature is reproduced in newspaper articles on natural catastrophes.

Question 3 – Rhetorical devices of dramatization:
What are the common rhetorical devices of dramatization employed in newspaper discourse on natural catastrophes?

Hypothesis 3:
Newspaper discourse does not restrain from dramatizing the account of natural catastrophes; rather, it highlights the dramatic and emotional impact of the events.

The analysis has revealed the following findings:

ad Question 1 – Ascription of blame:
All the three newspapers employ the same representation of both the Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina in the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe; they adopt a metaphorical conceptualization of the natural phenomenon, which draws upon mythology. The tsunami and the hurricane are discursively portrayed as ANIMATE BEINGS, MONSTERS and WARRIORS. In both cases, the three conceptual metaphors are materialized by the same linguistic devices. The metaphoric theme of an ANIMATE BEING is realized by the ascription of a life of its own to the natural phenomenon (the formation of the tsunami and the hurricane is depicted in analogy with the birth of an organism), supported syntactically by the use of a middle ergative option; the depiction of the natural phenomenon as having an animal body (it swallows, sucks and pummels); the ascription of sounds made by animate beings (it roars); the attribution of negative emotions (anger); and the recurrent transitivity pattern of sentences with the natural phenomenon occupying the role of Actor of material processes. The conceptual metaphor of a MONSTER is realized by the depiction of the tsunami and the hurricane as large, powerful, violent, frightening and cruel creatures. To convey such a portrayal, the newspaper discourse, for instance, adopts emotionally colored and hyperbolic lexis, and verbs that are commonly used with small objects while, when referring to the natural phenomenon, are used with large
and heavy objects (e.g. sweep cars, peel away aluminium sheets, etc.). Finally, the metaphoric theme of a WARRIOR is realized by portraying the natural phenomenon as acting with volition and choosing people and their property as its target to attack.

Such a metaphoric conceptualization of natural catastrophes is rooted in our cultural heritage – mythology. The metaphoric demonization of natural phenomena draws upon culturally rudimentary concepts, such as the evil. Yet, the link between cultural models and metaphors is not one-way: not only do the existing cultural models influence the selection of metaphors in newspaper discourse on natural catastrophes, but also the metaphoric conceptualization employed in the newspapers has impact on, re-awakens and reproduces, these cultural models in readers’ minds.

Underlying the metaphorical representation of natural catastrophes is a scapegoating ideology. It identifies a single entity – the natural phenomenon – as the one to blame for all the damage and destruction. This is compounded by the absence of reference to social and politico-economic factors contributing to the disaster in the newspaper discourse during the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe. Thus, during this phase of reporting, Hypothesis 1 (newspaper discourse puts the blame for natural disasters on natural phenomena rather than social factors) is confirmed: both disasters are discursively constructed as solely an outcome of a natural event, with people and broader social and historical conditions void of any responsibility. The danger of such a portrayal results from the fact that the discursive representation influences people’s thought, which consequently has impact on people’s behavior – it hinders constructive action and does not allow people to learn from their mistakes.

The ideology is legitimized, as has been pointed out, through a myth (more specifically, a myth of the natural phenomenon as a furious, aggressive monster), which is effective for a number of reasons. First of all, it draws upon deeply rooted cultural concepts and schemata. It brings order to the world, makes the reality more graspable for readers, and helps readers overcome their anxiety from something unknown by ‘transforming’ it to something more tangible. Furthermore, by transferring connotations and associations from a source conceptual domain to a target one, the metaphors, through which the myth is conveyed, call forth emotion rather than reason. They intensify fear in people, which makes them vulnerable and aggravates their insecurity leading to their heightened willingness to be protected. As Altheide and Michalowski (1999: 476) reveal, “the prevalence of fear in public discourse can contribute to stances and reactive social policies that promote state control and surveillance”. The police, the
army and the power-holders are turned to for help and establishment of safe environment and are praised when they get control of the situation and bring order. This gives them an opportunity to exercise power over ordinary people resulting in the reinforcement of asymmetrical power relations. Last, but not least, the direct emotional appeal and the absence of alternative viewpoints on the catastrophe make the metaphorical portrayal seem natural and commonsensical.

While such a discursive representation of the catastrophe is maintained during the whole 14-day period of reporting on the Indian Ocean tsunami, a discursive change has been traced in the articles on Hurricane Katrina. After the initial shock of the catastrophe passes, Hypothesis 1 (newspaper discourse puts the blame for natural disasters on natural phenomena rather than social factors) does not hold true any more: the newspaper discourse on the hurricane relinquishes the demonization of the natural phenomenon and the omission of reference to human-made factors, and resorts to a more rational and analytical reporting. It foregrounds social, politico-economic and historical conditions in New Orleans as factors contributing to the disaster. At the same time, it adopts a critical stance towards the government and bureaucracy, proving the potential of newspapers to challenge views and actions of those in power. The discursive change in the representation of Hurricane Katrina shows that discourse is not static with a fixed ideology but rather is a dynamic process.

Significantly, the analysis reveals that the demonizing metaphoric conceptualization of the natural phenomenon is lacking in newspaper discourse on the Haiti earthquake. Instead, since the very beginning of reporting, the articles emphasize poor social, political and economic conditions existing in Haiti prior the disaster and foreground them as factors contributing to the catastrophe. Hypothesis 1 (newspaper discourse puts the blame for natural disasters on natural phenomena rather than social factors) is thus not confirmed in the case of discourse on the Haiti earthquake. While in the initial phase of reporting on the tsunami and the hurricane, the newspapers put one-sidedly blame for the destruction on the natural phenomenon by personifying it as evil, which ideologically functions to hide any human failure, the tendency to conceal human failure is absent in reports on the Haiti earthquake. This seems to stem from the fact that the disaster happened in a Third World country. As van Dijk (1996b: 26) points out, the blame for misfortunes and problems in the Third World tends to be attributed “primarily to the “backward” policies and behavior of Third World Nations”, which plays down, for instance, effects of international trade and politics. A patronizing ideology
reproducing power asymmetry between Haiti and the West is further conveyed in the discourse by the construction of a dichotomy of helpless and dependent Haiti and helpful Western countries.

It is important to note that, apart from the demonization of the natural phenomenon, other discursive strategies depicting the natural catastrophes as uncontrollable and diverting attention from ‘controllable’ vulnerabilities of a society have been found in the newspaper discourse. Common to the reports on all the three catastrophes is the portrayal of the disaster as indiscriminate/indiscriminating. This constitutes a fallacy since sociological and anthropological research reveals that natural catastrophes do not affect people equally but have the worst impact on those socially, politically and/or economically marginalized. Another discursive strategy, employed in the articles on both the tsunami and the hurricane, is the characterization of the natural phenomenon as giving no warning. In the case of the tsunami, it conceals the fact that people were not warned because of the lack of a warning system in the Indian Ocean and the failure of technological communication, and in the case of the hurricane, it distorts the facts since people were warned against the approaching catastrophe. Finally, the employment of the warrior iconography, with clearly delineated roles of a villain – the natural phenomenon and innocent victims – people, and the use of the motif of a Ruined Fairy Tale, which draw upon the notion of fatalism, contribute to the establishment of the catastrophe as being beyond people’s control.

**ad Question 2 – Nature-culture relationship:**

The articles on the tsunami and the initial reports on the hurricane resolve the tension between natural catastrophes and the Enlightenment ideology of superiority of man over nature, and the anxiety resulting from this tension by resorting to mythical thinking (demonization of nature). Paradoxically, this is in conflict with one of the main principles of Enlightenment – the emphasis on reason and the elimination of irrational superstitions. Thus, during the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe when people feel they have lost control over the reality, the newspaper discourse retreats from rational thinking and seeks an explanation in a myth.

By portraying the natural phenomenon as an enemy of people and the society, the metaphorical representation results in the reinforcement of nature-culture dualism, which confirms Hypothesis 2 (the binary opposition between humankind and nature is reproduced in newspaper articles on natural catastrophes). In the case of the discourse
on the tsunami, the dichotomy is further intensified by the employment of the Ideological Square of US (people) versus IT (the natural phenomenon), which highlights positive characteristics of people and negative characteristics of the natural phenomenon. While an emphasis is put on the portrayal of people as innocent, peaceful, constructive and helpful, the natural phenomenon is discursively depicted as cruel, violent, hostile and destructive.

The western Enlightenment ideology of domination of man over nature is, on one hand, subverted by the ascription of animate characteristics to the natural phenomenon, which positions it at the pinnacle of creation; on the other hand, it is reproduced by portraying the natural phenomenon as a VILLAIN and thus investing discursively power over it.

In contrast, the articles on Hurricane Katrina during the second half of reporting and the discourse on the Haiti earthquake deal with the tension between natural disasters and the Enlightenment ideology of domination of humankind over nature by deconstructing the binary opposition between nature and society. **Hypothesis 2** (the binary opposition between humankind and nature is reproduced in newspaper articles on natural catastrophes) is thus not confirmed in these articles. The newspapers resort to a more rational analysis, which represents the catastrophe as an outcome of not just the natural phenomenon but also human-made factors, revealing that we cannot divorce nature from society and society from nature.

**ad Question 3 – Rhetorical devices of dramatization:**

The analysis reveals an abundance of discursive strategies that dramatize the events and appeal mainly to readers’ emotions, which confirms **Hypothesis 3** (newspaper discourse does not restrain from dramatizing the account of natural catastrophes; rather, it highlights the dramatic and emotional impact of the events). This proves the tension between information and entertainment in newspapers, resulting from media being a commodity that aims to sell, as pointed out by Fairclough (1995b) and Talbot (2007). The study shows that even broadsheet newspapers aim to entertain and sensationalize, often at the expense of providing calm and explanatory information that would call forth rational decisions and actions.

Rhetorical devices with a dramatizing effect, common to the newspaper discourse on all the three catastrophes, include:
1) **Contrast**
Contrast is mainly employed to juxtapose the situations before and after the catastrophe. The situation before the catastrophe is discursively established as idyllic and non-problematic, with the natural phenomenon suddenly disrupting and reversing the harmony. As contrast draws upon polar counterparts, which are incompatible, it results in a simplification of the reality by providing a black-and-white portrayal.

2) **Hyperbole**
The extent of all the three disasters is discursively exaggerated by depicting the natural phenomena as *all-destructive* (*everything was destroyed and everyone was affected*). In other words, the newspapers dramatize the impact of the disaster by constructing a picture of total destruction.

3) **Numbers**
Especially in the first phase or reporting, the articles are replete with numbers, which conveys an image of objectivity; yet, at the same, the abundance in high numbers can lead to dramatization. Significantly, the newspapers tend to employ round numbers without any modification (*10,000 dead*) and thus distort the precision of facts at the expense of vividness.

4) **Repetition**
All the three newspapers draw upon both lexical and syntactical repetition.

5) **Telegraphic style**
When describing the impact of the disaster, the newspaper discourse resorts to the use of a sequence of elliptic and short sentences with an emphatic significance.

6) **Superlatives**
There is an abundant use of superlatives in reference to the catastrophe in newspaper discourse. The catastrophe is established as (one of) the worst disasters in a particular period of time, which changes from one reference to another. Such a portrayal helps to sensationalize the events and thus enhances the news value of the reports.
7) **Emotive victim stories**

The newspapers select highly emotionally charged victim stories which emphasize the cruelty of the disaster.

Concerning the newspaper discourse on the Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, the discursive strategies dramatizing the events also include the metaphorical portrayal of the natural phenomenon as a demon. Its sensationalizing character seems to be substituted in the discourse on the Haiti earthquake by the employment of a superlative with reference to Haiti, i.e. by foregrounding the portrayal of Haiti as the poorest country in the world. Apart from that, the discursive strategies of dramatization comprise the allocation of the fairy-tale-like roles of a VILLAIN, a VICTIM and a HERO, with the role of a VILLAIN being ascribed to the natural phenomenon and, in the case of Hurricane Katrina, to some people affected by the disaster, who are portrayed as ‘criminals’, and the roles of a VICTIM and a HERO being ascribed to people.

Another recurrent discursive strategy employed in the articles is an alternation between negative and positive accounts. The discourse alternately evokes negative emotions, such as fear, uncertainty and despair, and positive emotions, such as hope and reassurance. Such a strategy has an addictive potential for readers.

To account for photographs, the present research has adopted a multi-modal analysis. The results of the investigation of images support the findings of the analysis of verbal elements. A human-interest and human-centered character of the reports is compounded by the fact that nearly all the photographs accompanying the articles depict people as their main objects. On the whole, the photographs appeal to people’s emotions, heighten readers’ involvement in the events and help readers identify with the victims. The analysis has also revealed that the photographs reproduce a gender stereotype of women being emotional and men not revealing their emotions by including a number of images of women openly expressing their feelings and excluding such images of men.

Suggestions for further research on representation of natural catastrophes in newspaper discourse include modification of the variables of natural disasters – for instance, choose the same type of a catastrophe, such as an earthquake, but with a different variable (e.g. compare the portrayal of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, which happened in a Third World country, with the portrayal of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake in Japan, a country with one of the world’s largest economies). Another possibility is to
carry out a cross-cultural analysis (e.g. compare the representations of the Haiti earthquake in newspapers published in Western English speaking countries and in newspapers published in Haiti). On a more general level, further research could investigate whether metaphorical conceptualization of natural phenomena is employed in articles on other topics than natural catastrophes and how human-nature relationship is portrayed in such a case.
Summary

The present thesis is a research on the representation of natural catastrophes in newspaper discourse from a critical discourse analysis point of view. It attempts to answer who the discourse puts the blame on for the damage and destruction (whether the catastrophe is portrayed as a joint outcome of the natural phenomenon and social factors), how the discourse deals with the tension between natural disasters and the Enlightenment ideology of superiority of humankind over nature, and what are common discursive strategies dramatizing the events.

Being a multi-disciplinary study, the research draws, apart from critical discourse analysis, upon the cognitive theory of metaphor, sociological and anthropological research, and media studies. The body of data consists of articles on the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, 2005 Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the 2010 Haiti earthquake compiled from newspapers published in Western English-speaking countries: *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Globe and Mail*.

The analysis, which is mainly qualitative and arrives at conclusions empirically from the data themselves, focuses on the exploration of global meanings, i.e. main topics, of the articles, and the investigation of vocabulary, mainly in terms of the cognitive theory of metaphor and van Leeuwen’s (1995) set of categories for investigating the representation of social actors in discourse, grammar, drawing upon Halliday’s system of transitivity (1985), narrative structure of victim stories, including character roles of the participants, and photographs (in the present thesis the visual mode is considered only marginally).

The analysis reveals that, in the case of discourse on the tsunami and articles on the hurricane in the first phase of reporting, the blame for the catastrophe is discursively put solely on the natural phenomenon. This results from the absence of reference to social conditions contributing to the catastrophe and the employment of a metaphorical representation of the natural phenomenon, according to which the tsunami and the hurricane are conceptualized as ANIMATE BEINGS, MONSTERS and WARRIORS. The tension between natural disasters and the ideology of superiority of humankind over nature is resolved by drawing upon mythology and demonizing the natural phenomenon, depicting it as an aggressive, cruel creature that acts with volition. Nature-culture dualism is thus in this case reinforced.
Conversely, discourse on Hurricane Katrina in the second half of reporting and discourse on the Haiti earthquake put the blame for the catastrophe on both the natural phenomenon and social, politico-economic and historical factors. This is achieved by foregrounding human-made factors and omitting the demonizing metaphoric conceptualization of the natural phenomenon. Such a representation of the Haiti earthquake since the very beginning of reporting possibly results from the fact that it happened in a Third World country. The tension between natural disasters and the ideology of superiority of humankind over nature is in this case resolved by the deconstruction of nature-culture dualism.

Discursive strategies that lead to dramatization and sensationalization of the events include demonization of the natural phenomenon, contrast, hyperbole, numbers, repetition, telegraphic style, superlatives and emotive victim stories.

The research reveals that the newspapers do not represent the natural catastrophes neutrally but socially construct a portrayal of them, embedding a particular ideological perspective.
Resumé

Tato doktorská práce je výzkumnou studií zabývající se znázorněním přírodních katastrof v novinovém diskurzu z hlediska kritické diskurzivní analýzy. Výzkum se snaží zodpovědět, komu je v diskurzu dávána vina za škody a zkázu (ptá se, jestli je katastrofa popsána jako výsledek jak přírodního jevu, tak sociálních faktorů), dále se snaží zodpovědět, jak se diskurz vypořádává s rozpořadem mezi přírodními katastrofami a osvícenskou ideologií nadřazenosti člověka nad přírodou, a jaké jsou nejběžnější diskurzivní strategie, které vedou k dramatizaci událostí.


Analýza, která je především kvalitativní, vycházející empiricky ze samotných dat, se zaměřuje na zkoumání hlavních témat článků, na lexicální rozbor, který využívá především kognitivní teorii metafory a systém kategorií pro analýzu znázornění sociálních aktérů v diskurzu (van Leeuwen 1995), na syntaktický rozbor, využívající systém tranzitivity (Halliday 1985), na zkoumání návrativní struktury příběhů obětí katastrofy, včetně charakterových rolí připsaných postavám v těchto příbězích, a na rozbor fotografii (v této doktorské práci jsou zkoumány pouze okrajové).

Analýza ukazuje, že v případě diskurzu o tsunami a článků o hurikánu v první fázi zpravodajství, je vina za katastrofu diskurzivně připsována pouze přírodnímu jevu. Pramení to z absence zmínky o sociálních podmínkách, které přispěly ke katastrofě, a použití metaforického znázornění přírodního jevu, které konceptualizuje tsunami a hurikán jako ŽIVÉ BYTOSTI, MONSTRA a VÁLEČNÍKY. Rozpořadí mezi přírodními katastrofami a ideologií nadřazenosti člověka nad přírodou je vyřešen tím, že se diskurz obrací na mytologii a démonizuje přírodní jev – zobrazuje ho jako agresivní, krutou bytost, která jedná úmyslně. Dualismus mezi přírodou a člověkem je v tomto případě zesílen.

Diskurz o hurikánu Katrina v druhé polovině zpravodajství a diskurz o zemětřesení v Haiti naopak dávají vinu za katastrofu jak přírodnímu jevu, tak sociálním,
politicko-ekonomickým a historickým podmínkám. Je toho dosaženo zdůrazňováním lidských faktorů přispívajících ke katastrofě a nezahrnutím metaforické konceptualizace přírodního jevu. Takovéto znázornění zemětřesení v Haiti od samého počátku zpravodajství zřejmě pramení ze skutečnosti, že k zemětřesení došlo v zemi Třetího světa. Rozpor mezi přírodními katastrofami a ideologií nadřazenosti člověka nad přírodou je v tomto případě vyřešen dekonstrukcí dualismu mezi přírodou a kulturou.

Diskurzivní strategie, které události dramatizují a přídávají jim na senzaci, zahrnují démonizaci přírodního jevu, kontrast, hyperbolu, čísla, repetici, telegrafický styl, superlativa a emotivní příběhy obětí.

Výzkum ukázal, že noviny neznázorňují přírodní katastrofy neutrálně, ale vytvářejí sociálně zkonstruované vyobrazení, které v sobě nese určitou ideologickou perspektivu.
**Glossary of Terms**

**culture** – patterns of meaning embodied in symbolic forms, by means of which beliefs, values and norms shared by members of a society are realized and constituted (Thompson 1990)

**discourse** – a social practice embedded in context (Faiclough 1992)

**dissimulation** – a mode of operation of ideology, which conceals or denies rules of domination, drawing thus attention away from the existing asymmetries (Thompson 1990)

**fragmentation** – a mode of operation of ideology, which represents the other as an enemy that constitutes threat (Thompson 1990)

**hyperbole** – the rhetorical device of exaggeration

**ideational function** – a content function through which language represents phenomena of both the outer world and the inner world of our own consciousness (Halliday 1978)

**ideological square** – a strategy based on the construction of two groups: insiders and outsiders (US versus THEM); it works by foregrounding OUR positive characteristics and actions, and THEIR negative characteristics and actions, and backgrounding OUR negative characteristics and actions, and THEIR positive characteristics and actions (van Dijk 1996a)

**ideology** – socio-cognitive schemata which function to reproduce, challenge or resist asymmetric power relations (van Dijk 1995; 1996a; 1998)

**interpersonal function** – a participatory through which the speaker expresses his attitudes and evaluations, and also the role relationships between the participants (Halliday 1978)
**legitimation** – a mode of operation of ideology, which represents asymmetrical power relations as just and worthy of support (Thompson 1990)

**metaphor** – a mapping of structure from one conceptual domain, the *source domain*, to another conceptual domain, the *target domain*, based on the correlation of our experience in these two domains (Lakoff and Johnson 1980)

**middle ergative option** – a grammatical structure of a clause that represents a process as brought about from inside (Halliday 1985)

**multi-modal analysis** – an analysis of discourse that does not investigate only language but also other semiotic resources, such as photographs and page layout

**news value** – a socially constructed category that determines the processes of news selection and transformation

**reification** – a mode of operation of ideology, which portrays a particular state of affairs as natural and commonsensical, devoid of a social and historical character (Thompson 1990)

**Sapir/Whorf hypothesis** – language has a significant impact on human perception of reality and cognition (Sapir 1929)

**source domain** – the conceptual domain from which metaphorical expressions are drawn

**target domain** – a conceptual domain that is metaphorically understood and structured in terms of another conceptual domain

**textual function** – a text-forming function through which language relates to the verbal and the situational context (Halliday 1978)

**transitivity pattern** – a grammatical configuration of a clause that represents our experience as being of a certain type (Halliday 1985)
unification – a mode of operation of ideology, which represents individuals as being part of a united whole, ignoring any differences that may exist among them (Thompson 1990)
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