

ELINA PALIICHUK<sup>1</sup>

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Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0626-6841>

# Cognitive “warning signs” in human trafficking media texts

**Abstract.** This paper focuses on image schema manifestations in media texts on human trafficking, which may perform the role of “warning” signals in anti-trafficking media campaigns. For this, a conceptual analysis was done to establish profiled image schemas, and a survey was conducted to measure the reader’s response to two types of texts on human trafficking (HT), different in genre and schemata organisation. The texts were selected as experimental material representing typical human trafficking media discourse. The participants were divided into control (G1) and experimental (G2) groups according to the type of text they were exposed to. G1 read an expository text (T1) and G2 read a media narrative (T2). The respondents of G2 showed a significant tendency for a higher degree of involvement in the problem of human trafficking when reading T2 as contrasted to the responses of G1 to T1. G2 identified their reaction as a feeling being in danger. Looking back to T2, it was clear that respondents reacted to verbal manifestations of prevailing CONTAINMENT and SCALE/ PROCESS/UP schemata clusters. G1 gave the weaker emotional response to T1 with verbal manifestations of UP, BLOCKAGE, and COUNTERFORCE schemata. It can be assumed that CONTAINMENT is the image schema organising spatial representation of human trafficking from the victim’s perspective, conveying the feeling of *being contained*, *being in a difficult situation*, *being in an enclosed space*, supported with other schemata manifestations through the lens of the concept of *bigness*, *large scale*, *growing process*, etc. The results may be used in anti-trafficking content as a new methodology for raising awareness in a target audience vulnerable to HT.

**Keywords:** human trafficking, image-schemas, conceptual analysis, empirical study, warning signs, media texts.

## 1. Introduction

People in society today are living in a world that is more unpredictable, hostile, and volatile than ever before. Fueled by social disturbances, human trafficking has become

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1 Address for correspondence: Department of Linguistics and Translation, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, 18/2 Bulvarno-Kudriavska Str, Kyiv, Ukraine, 04053. E-mail: [e.paliichuk@kubg.edu.ua](mailto:e.paliichuk@kubg.edu.ua)

a pervasive problem across the globe, being both a latent and highly aggressive phenomenon. The latest social upheavals and crises such as wars, illegal migration surges, cross-border incursions, pandemics, and political shifts are aggravating the feeling of uncertainty and have been paving the way for the intensification of crime ring activities.

In this turbulent world, human trafficking (hereinafter – HT) is a constant, affecting “5.4 victims for every 1,000 people in the world” (*The Scale of Human Trafficking* n.d.). According to the latest statistics, 35 million people are becoming victims of sex trafficking daily. Estimates show that, internationally, only about 0.04% of the survivors of trafficking cases are identified, while the majority of cases go undetected (Bedbible.com 2022). Anyone ending up in an HT situation has a clear and identifiable vulnerability that a trafficker preyed upon (ibid). For instance, many people have been “unable to build resilience to the economic effects” (*Trafficking in Persons Report 2021*: 6), provoked by COVID-19.

In the broader sense, the social context of the problem is predetermined by criminal activities taking place in source, transit and destination countries and includes illegal migration, selling human beings for the purposes of prostitution, bonded labour or involuntary servitude, trafficking in human organs, illegal inter-country adoption of children, recruitment of illegal soldiers, coercion into illegal activities, etc.

As a response to the challenges existing in Eastern Europe, this paper deals with HT as a research case study. The embedded patterns of soviet-like thinking in terms of job opportunities and overall life satisfaction still linger in Ukrainian society and predetermine family education stereotypes. One of the consequences of such attitudes to the future is a common “better life abroad” myth, supported by framed media messages as well as tales of employment prospects circulating among members of local communities. Much has changed since Ukraine gained its independence, however, there is a false belief of working abroad as panacea for all woes.

The foregoing situation requires that awareness be raised at various social levels, with much attention given at the pre-employment stage, which can be achieved in an academic setting. The objective of this study is to verify the potential of a cognitive theory for the prospective development of linguistic strategies to reduce HT-related risks among the youth and prevent their victimisation. As educators, we are able to increase awareness among the youth through critical reading sessions and post-reading discussions. A conducive academic environment enables us to incorporate social topics in regular reading courses of non-fiction literature in order to change the pattern of collective thinking due to innovative approaches and, thus, instill a sense of self-worth in the minds of future generations by helping them believe they are able to manage their lives and promote social change. Classroom activities can encourage students to think positively about their prospective careers and develop an active prosocial position.

The recent developments on HT (Gulati 2010; McIntyre 2018; Gonzalez-Pons 2021) have advanced towards responding to HT through the lens of media narratives and

myths, anti-trafficking language in welfare services (de Shalit et al. 2014; Nichols et al. 2018 ) and the maintenance of a social balance to avoid polarity thinking or condemnation of victims, aid and support for the vulnerable groups in society.

However, the problem is more complex and multilayered: any person coming from any walk of life may fall victim to this illegal activity. The observations based on the literature study highlight that the situation has changed in recent decades: “the treatment of trafficking has focused exclusively on prostitution, migration, and organized crime. Only recently has this focus shifted slightly toward a more comprehensive approach, centered on the protection of victims” (Rodríguez-López 2018: 61).

Ukraine has been a source country of a productive workforce from which waves of labour migrants flow in search of a better life for their families. The situation is grave in view of instability in border areas and temporarily occupied territories<sup>2</sup>. Unemployment is another pressing problem, as many citizens have lost a stable income because of COVID-19 restrictive measures, and are in search of better economic opportunities.

Notwithstanding success stories regarding education and subsequent career prospects obtained by a great number of Ukrainian students abroad, it is, nevertheless, anticipated that the risk of getting involved in an HT scheme is increased among young people graduating from academic institutions. Lacking life experience, they constitute a vulnerable category of citizen who may fall victims to these illegal practices.

Theoretically, as a point of departure to develop the counteraction against myths about employment abroad, a media-linguistic approach has been adopted in the sense that realities mediated through pre-constructed messages (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998; Iyengar 2018) have an impact on people’s lives through framing technologies. This is so because, there is a need to change the attitudes towards employment prospects

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2 The study was conducted in November 2021 and presented at TALC 4 in December, when Ukraine was under the conditions of the threat of the Russian military aggression. By the time the paper is submitted, the Russian Federation has attacked Ukraine and unleashed a full-scaled war against Ukrainian people. Under these conditions, the situation of HT in Ukraine has become even more vicious: minors are being forced to fight on the side of the enemy, women and children are being illegally displaced under the pretense of evacuation or are being taken hostage, the number of migrants and refugees is increasing, etc. The number of the refugees ranges from within 6.8-12 million people (Zandt 2022; BBC News 2022). These are women and underaged children, who find themselves in the unknown circumstances with minimum sustenance. As far as men are not allowed to cross the border according to the war-time law, women go abroad without husbands. They are unprotected, vulnerable, scared, and susceptible to falling in a HT situation. These circumstances multiply the risks of sexual exploitation of women and children and forced labour. The periodical by Donna M. Hughes describes the traffickers as predators who are “awaiting the arrival of Ukrainian women refugees. The sex buyers, pimps, and sex work advocacy groups are eager to prey on them” (Hughes 2022).

within the country and develop both strong occupational competences and soft skills, required for successful competition in the national labour market.

Mindsets can be changed in the course of systemic and consistent exposure of students to the HT-related language material. The cognitive processing of such content would result in young people reshaping their worldviews due to critical and analytical thinking practices.

The awareness of HT should refer both to volitional and subconscious domains of mental processes during conceptualisation of the information about HT. In this regard, the phrase “warning signs” used in the title of this paper conveys the idea that the specific pre-conceptual entities (image-schemas) directing information processing in a specific way may work as deterrents (analogous to safety road signs) against potentially risky actions made by potential victims.

Within linguistics, the aim is to verify whether there is a dependency to specific image schemas (hereinafter – IS) and readers’ responses. One should strive to identify IS which contribute to a subtle rendering of a warning effect through media. According to M. Johnson’s definition, an image schema is an abstract representation of “a recurring dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience” (Johnson 2013).

The most discussed schemata are *Containment, Path, Source-Path-Goal, Blockage, Center-Periphery, Cycle, Cyclic Climax, Compulsion, Counterforce, Diversion, Removal of Restraint, Enablement, Attraction, Link, Scale, Axis Balance, Point Balance, Twin-Pan Balance, Equilibrium*. These schemata are categorized in terms of three groups: spatial motion group, force group, and balance group. Other schemata also embrace such abstractions as *Contact, Surface, Full-Empty, Merging, Matching, Near-Far, Mass-Count, Iteration, Object Splitting, Part-Whole, Superimposition, Process, Collection* (Johnson 2013).

Image schemas are “directly meaningful”, they are “experienced” and “embodied”, “highly schematic gestalts”, they are “continuous” and exist “beneath conscious awareness” (Hampe 2008: 1). “Brain areas formerly thought to be purely sensorimotoric are turning out to have important roles in the so-called ‘higher’ cognitive processes, e.g., language ... language makes much more use of the brain’s processes of spatial, visual and mental imagery than previously thought” (Rohrer 2005: 165). In this regard, language preserves the traces of IS, which may not only reveal an author’s way of reasoning, but also can be used deliberately as elements to be subconsciously recognised by the audience and thus evoke the readers sensorimotoric sensations in response to the content they are exposed to. Hypothetically, the readers may experience higher involvement in the problems raised in an HT-related media text as a response to the underlying verbal representation of HT in IS.

Therefore, the IS exist not as separate pre-conceptual entities functioning as a sort of filter in the process of perception and structuring of information. Instead, their

numerous combinations may provide specific reading experiences in line with certain lines of thoughts and thus stimulate a particular emotional response.

In the framework of this study, the research tasks were: 1) to identify prevailing IS in two contrasting (expository vs narrative) texts and explain their verbal manifestations; 2) to establish to which of the two texts (T1 or T2) the participants show higher emotional response; 3) to analyse the participants' perceptions with reference to the prevailing IS; 4) to find out which IS can be potentially used as preventive language tools in anti-trafficking media content.

## 2. Materials and methods

This study explores the cognitive pre-requisites of warning vulnerable audiences about HT. The conceptual perspective of the study is highlighted through the lens of Image-Schema Theory (Cienki 1997; Lakoff & Johnson 2003; Johnson 2005, 2013; Rohrer 2005; Hampe 2008; Hedblom 2020) for identifying image-schemas (IS) based on the conceptual analysis and corpus analysis of a language dataset collected from the media on HT. Actuation of IS in conceptualisation of HT during the reading process may be impactful in terms of shaping attitudes towards HT.

In practical terms, the tradition of empirical studies maintained by a specific group of contemporary linguists is followed (Paliichuk 2011; Chesnokova 2016; Kuijpers & Hakemulder 2017; Miall 2018; Peer & Chesnokova 2019) with a focus on the investigation of the reader's response. In particular, the focus was on verifying a hypothetical dependency of the reader's impression on the use of IS-charged language units and on establishing effective IS in terms of the pragmatic value of the texts.

The methodological strategy includes two lines of research: conceptual analysis of media language material and empirical methods for verifying the dependency between media language actuating IS and post-reading impressions. The procedure for the study embraces the conceptual analysis of the language material based on the verbal content of two texts selected for the experiment, two surveys and a presentation of statistical results based on the unified empirical datasets from two surveys.

The design of the research involved the following aspects ensuring the validity of the obtained data and conclusions:

### A) Texts:

The case study material includes 2 authentic<sup>3</sup> English language media texts taken from British (Gentleman 2020), labeled as T1, and Canadian (Ricci 2019), labeled as T2, media.

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<sup>3</sup> The curriculum at the Institute of Philology of BGKU is focused on the literature and media of the countries which language is being studied.

The features of both texts imply that: 1) the texts represent typical HT media discourse<sup>4</sup>; 2) two media genres (news article and a media narrative) are tested; 3) T1 is used as an expository text containing factual information, mainly used for content-learning and general awareness of HT; T2 is used as a media narrative, containing analytical coverage of HT from a victim's perspective, with elements of a narrative, including direct speech.

For the purposes of the study, the selected texts must meet the following criteria:

- The texts must be about HT, but from different perspectives;
- The texts must be the “news article vs analytical article” opposition, i.e. the more objective coverage is contrasted to the more subjective coverage; therefore, a news article, reporting facts and measures taken to tackle the problem, was used as an expository text for content-learning information, i.e. general awareness of HT based on a particular case study, and a media narrative was used as the content highlighting additional aspects of HT from the point of view of a victim;
- The texts must be of similar size; therefore, the T1 is 717 words and T2 – 789;
- The texts should be readable in one sitting (estimated reading time for T1 is 3 minutes, 34 seconds, and T2 – 3 minutes, 52 seconds);
- The texts must be typical for HT discourse and represent a homogeneous information flow on HT;
- The texts should enable the testing of the hypothesis that a media narrative<sup>5</sup> induces readers to feel *being inside HT situation*, as well as encourage a higher level of empathy and emotional response, and should allow for the *feeling of being in danger* after reading the text;
- The texts must have varying sets of profiled schemata.

## B) Hypotheses:

H0: the schemata-charged verbal units have no potential for evoking a greater emotional response in the reader when exposed to HT-related media content nor should it stimulate readers to experience the feeling of being in danger, the *feeling of being sad, angry, disappointed*, or the *feeling of fear*; H1: the schemata-charged verbal units have the

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4 The two different texts were selected as typical media discourse fragments on HT. This decision was made based on the previous thorough investigations and observations. For instance, the corpus of 600 English language media texts from 2000-2011 was analysed in the framework of PhD thesis (Paliichuk 2011). That study showed the prevalence of news articles, reporting facts and statistics, and media narratives, highlighting events from a particular point of view, where the subjective tone is achieved through direct speech elements representing the experience of a particular participant or a witness.

5 We also believe that a media narrative has potential for a transportation effect (which is another study being carried out in this regard (Paliichuk 2022), which helps readers experience co-presence in the situation described or identify themselves with a victim.

potential to evoke a greater emotional response in the reader when exposed to HT-related media content and stimulate the reader to experience the feeling of *being in danger*, the feeling of *being sad, angry, disappointed*, or the feeling of *fear*.

If the alternative hypothesis is proven, the results will be meaningful for raising awareness of HT risks and designing guidelines on the deliberate use of IS-charged language units in anti-trafficking campaigns.

### C) Annotation strategy:

Firstly, interim linguistic observations were made, followed by preliminary manual<sup>6</sup> identification of IS based on the semantic criterion, i.e. on the meanings derived from the texts. However, this interim result may seem biased. To avoid this, a software tool to check all possible relevant occurrences of IS in the texts was applied.

Secondly, to reduce the level of subjective interpretation of the meanings derived from the texts, the corpora of the two texts were pre-processed separately with the use of Sketch Engine Software ([https://ske.li/text\\_1\\_ws](https://ske.li/text_1_ws); [https://ske.li/text\\_2\\_ws](https://ske.li/text_2_ws)). For this, hypothetical key notional and functional words actuating established IS were identified and the texts were verified for their occurrences and concordances to trace how such language elements shape meanings in the microcontexts.

Thirdly, semantically relevant examples were selected and the micro-contexts were marked in italics (Corpora 1 and 2 below), as well as the verbal manifestations of IS labelled with square brackets and with a number in brackets assigned to a particular IS, e.g. [*into*] (5) *slavery conditions*, where [*into*] is a marked a verbal manifestation of CONTAINMENT IS, labelled with (5), and *slavery conditions* is also marked with italics to show the micro-context actuating the concept of *being in/into the HT situation*.

Then all possible sentences or parts of sentences were collected and assembled as two unified corpora for either text, featuring all the verbal occurrences of IS. After this, the number of manifestations of each IS based on the quantity of numeric labels was calculated and the prevailing IS in either text were thus identified. The prevailing IS are considered significant, because they predetermine the concepts to which the participants have stronger responses as contrasted to other less obviously manifesting IS. Such an approach enabled the provision of a more accurate account of the media corpus tested.

Participants: The survey was conducted in two phases. The first survey was undertaken in April 2020. The participants were 76 respondents, who were the students from Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University and the cadets from the Military Institute of Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University, Ukraine (Paliichuk 2021). The second phase was

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<sup>6</sup> We admit that there might be a tolerated error in exact number of IS identified because of the manual approach used in the linguistic analysis at the preliminary stage, which was then modified and specified based on the results of the corpus analysis.

conducted in November 2021: 42 students from Borys Grinchenko University were engaged. In total, 118 undergraduates took part in the experiment. All of the participants were divided into control (G1) and experimental (G2) groups according to the type of the text they were exposed to: G1 read T1 and G2 read T2.

Other conditions. The questionnaire contained the items on personal and general information, for instance initial awareness of HT, reading media in English, the overall period of learning English; pre-reading and post-reading questions, and an open-answer section. The study is gender-sensitive, with 80 female humanities students and 38 male respondents, all of them aged 20-23; very often they may be thinking of careers abroad or continuing their education, and thus they represent a vulnerable social category. The survey was conducted during regular practical sessions in the framework of an academic “Analytical Reading” course, which is a part of the “Stylistics of Texts” course. The respondents were asked whether they imagined themselves being in the same situation, whether they felt sympathy with the trafficked girls, and whether they were affected by HT before and after reading the media texts; the data were processed with the use of SPSS 26 for Windows (Descriptive Statistics, Frequencies, Independent Samples T-test). The open answers are taken as qualitative data for the interpretation of the results.

### 3. Results

The designed strategy of the study was based on the principle of being conceptual and empirical to meet the objective set out above. Therefore, the first line of the research focused on the conceptual analysis made on the premises of Image-Schema Theory, whereas the second line involved the procedures of empirical study.

The case study for the conceptual analysis includes the fragments of two quality papers taken from the Canadian and British media. The participants were divided into two groups respectively. The general characteristics are given in Table 1, where T1 and T2 stand for Text 1 and Text 2, G1 and G2 – group 1 and group 2, describing the main idea and number of verbal manifestations of IS.

Table 1. General characteristics of case study texts

<b>Type</b>	<b>T1</b>	<b>T2</b>
<b>Group</b>	<b>G1</b>	<b>G2</b>
<b>Title and origin</b>	<i>Number of slavery victims in London up tenfold in five years, The Guardian</i>	<i>Luring of girls into sex trade reaching 'epidemic' level, police say, CBC News</i>
<b>Genre</b>	Expository text: informative, news	Media narrative text: editorial, analytical



<b>Content message</b>	reports HT across GB and in London, states the facts about growth in numbers of HT cases, the measures to be taken.	intermingled with narrative elements, provides some personalised accounts of HT cases.
<b>Manifestations of IS</b>	UP/SCALE =21; COUNTERFORCE=15; BLOCKAGE=10; CONTAINMENT =11; DOWN=6; LINK=4; ENABLEMENT=2; CENTER-PERIPHERY=1; Total=71	SCALE and PROCESS/UP=22; CONTAINMENT=13; LINK=9; ATTRACTION=5; ENABLEMENT=4; PATH=3; BLOCKAGE=1; COUNTERFORCE=1. Total 58

The qualitative conceptual analysis of T1 and T2 shows the dominance of UP/SCALE, BLOCKAGE and COUNTERFORCE in T1 and SCALE, PROCESS/UP and CONTAINMENT in T2. The concepts of “upness”, “manyness”, “increasing”, dominating in both texts, stress the rising scale of HT, and are actuated through UP, SCALE, PROCESS; however, they are supported with varying other schemata, affecting the totality of meanings rendered. The aim was to discover which of the two texts evoked a stronger response and which of the IS identified predetermine a significant impact on the readers. Before processing the empirical data, the corpus of relevant sentences from both texts were extracted, bearing the markers of the verbal manifestation of IS, to analyse the conceptual and semantic features of the texts (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Verbal traces of IS in T1 corpus

- 1 *[Number] of slavery victims (1) in London [up]tenfold in five years (1) ... Committee demands overhaul of how police and mayor's office [handle] (3) [problem] (2).*
- 2 *There has been a [more than] (1) tenfold [increase] (1) in the [number] of people identified as victims of [modern slavery] (5) and human trafficking (1) in London, and [more than] (1) 30% of all cases (1) nationally are discovered...*
- 3 *Of the 5,143 people (1) ... after being identified as victims of slavery in 2017, about 1,500 were in London (1) - almost three times the [number] in any other region or country in the UK (1).*
- 4 *In October, the Local Government Association reported an 807% [rise] in the [number] of child victims of [modern slavery] (5) and human trafficking.*
- 5 *The [number] of referrals (1) has [risen] year on year (1), as has the [number] of pending cases (2) and the [proportion] (9) of cases where an individual is formally recognised as a victim of trafficking and is given housing and support [has been declining] (4).*
- 6 *"In 2013, 47.8% of referrals (4) received a conclusive [decision] (3); in 2018 this [figure] (1) [fell] (4) to 16.45% (4)".*
- 7 *"The [challenge] (2) London [faces with] (2) [modern slavery] (5) and human trafficking is unique, and considerably [greater than] in any other region of the UK (1).*
- 8 *The [rise] of [modern slavery] cases (5) in London over the last five years shows that [action] is needed now (3).*
- 9 *Awareness of the issue of human trafficking [has risen] following the deaths of 39 Vietnamese people found in the back of a refrigerated lorry (1) in Essex last October.*
- 10 *The assembly's police and crime committee are calling for an overhaul of the way the police and the mayor's office [handle] (3) the [problem] (2), and it has written to Sadiq Khan recommending that more detectives should be assigned (3) to the Met's specialist crimes and vulnerabilities unit.*

- 11 It is also proposing that the London [modern slavery] (5) [partnership] board (7) ... should develop a London-[specific] (6) [modern slavery] (5) [strategy] (3) to improve the capital's [response] (3) to the [problem] (2).
- 12 Southwark officials point out it has become [difficult] (2) to carry out regular raids after a period of heavy local authority cuts (2).
- 13 There has been disappointment about a lack of funding (2) for implementing the legislation.
- 14 Theresa May introduced legislation to [combat] (3) [modern slavery] (5) in 2015 and described it as one of the "great human rights issues of our time" (2).
- 15 "Local councils have been forced to make some tough [decisions] ..." (3) following a 50% cut (4) in their government funding over the last decade.
- 16 It's clear that London needs to have a more [coherent] (7) [strategy] (3) to [tackle] [modern slavery] (5) and human trafficking (3).
- 17 "That's why we're calling on the mayor to urgently task (3) the London [modern slavery] (5) Partnership Board with developing a [coherent] (7) [strategy] (3) for [modern slavery] (5) in the capital."
- 18 [Figures] (1) released in December indicated that the government was failing in its attempts to [tackle] (3) [modern slavery] (5), with only 42 [convictions] on slavery and human trafficking in 2018, down from 59 (1) in 2017 and 69 (1) in 2016.
- 19 We see the safety of the people ... to be a top priority (3).
- 20 ... [some] (9) migrants' rights organisations have questioned whether this focus on human trafficking was simply a softer side to the government's preoccupation with [cutting] (4) net migration numbers (1) and creating a hostile environment
- 21 [Some] (9) London councils, such as Southwark, have been working [with] (7) the Met's specialist crime unit. The committee has also called on the Home Office to change the national referral [mechanism] (8), which is the gateway to getting support (8).

Figure 1 shows 21 relevant sentences from T1. The occurrences of IS are labelled as follows: UP (1), BLOCKAGE (2), COUNTERFORCE (3), DOWN (4), CONTAINMENT (5), CENTER-PERIPHERY (6), LINK (7), ENABLEMENT (8), SCALE (9). The order of IS is irrelevant, the numbers are assigned conventionally, as they appear in the text. The given combinations of IS can be presumed to govern the perceptions of HT in terms of its scale, challenges and tasks, and counter measures.

According to the number of the verbal manifestations (Table 1 above), the dominant IS are UP/SCALE, BLOCKAGE, and COUNTERFORCE. There are explicit and implicit manifestations of IS, i.e. both signified directly in the texts and derived from the micro-contexts or actualised as word combinations. The semantic approach was used for the interpretation of the qualitative data. Each IS is manifested in a range of concepts, as well as in a set of key words and functional parts of speech.

Thus, the verbal markers of UP are lexical units such as *number, increase, rise, figure*; comparative forms *more than, greater than*; the adjective *tenfold*; references to statistics in numbers and percentages; and adverbs *three times, considerably*. Predominantly, UP represents the rising nature of HT. Close to UP in its semantic nature is SCALE, which represents the concept of *measurement* of HT and actualises through the lexical unit *proportion*, and determiner *some* pointing to a certain number of organisations counter-acting HT.

BLOCKAGE represents the concepts of *difficulty* and *barriers* in combatting HT. Its explicit manifestation is traced in lexical units such as *problem, difficult, challenge*, and

the phrasal verb *face with*, though its implicit manifestations are derived semantically from microcontexts in concordances, for instance: *lack of funding, disappointment, pending cases*, referring to HT as an unresolved problem.

Another prominent IS manifesting in the text is COUNTERFORCE. Its explicit manifestation finds its particularisation in the lexical units (verbs and nouns) related to the concept of counteracting, e.g.: *handle, tackle, response, combat, action, decision, strategy, priority*. Its implicit manifestations are expressed through word combinations denoting the importance of counterforce to HT, e.g. *top priority, tough decisions*, and also formally, through modal verbs *should assign, should develop, needs to have a strategy*, and adverbs such as *urgently task*.

The IS discussed above are the most salient in the corpus of T1, however, less frequent manifestation of other IS can be seen to support the inference one could make after reading T1.

As compared to contextual manifestations of UP referring to the figures demonstrating the scale of the problem, the contextual manifestations of DOWN mostly refer to the inefficiency of the measures taken and difficulty in overcoming HT cases. The relevant context refers to cuts in funding and a decrease in the number of cases where a person is identified as a victim of HT. The manifestation of DOWN conveys the idea that governmental offices fail to counteract HT effectively. Verbally, it actualises through the words bearing the meaning of *falling*, such as *declining, failing, cutting*, and statistics expressed with figures and percentages, as well as formal markers such as prepositions *down from*, and continuous forms of the verbs, as in *has been declining*.

CONTAINMENT is manifested in the verbal units with implicit meanings of *lacking freedom, being inside the HT situation*. The most typical manifestation is the [modern slavery] (5) cliché, which may be interpreted as *a closed entity which victims get into*, but on the other hand, it may also point to “taking victims into care”, as in *placing them in safe conditions*, however in all cases the victims are represented as passive participants or objects.

CENTER-PERIPHERY actualises the idea that measures are concentrated in one city only, but not across the country as a whole, e.g. *London-specific*, and have a peripheral or sporadic character. The counter-actions are also ineffective and the rate of efficient actions declines.

LINK represents the semantics of *cooperation and coordinated activity* against HT. It actualises through lexical units with the meaning of *connectedness and interaction*, such as *coherent, partnership*, and formally through preposition *with* in semantically relevant occasions. The occasional manifestation of ENABLEMENT actualises the meaning of *official possibilities*, which are rather *weak*, through language units with the meaning of *creating opportunity for victims to get support*.

Having due regard to identification of IS in T1, we can conclude here that the bundle of IS in question highlights the concept of *disproportion* between the nature of HT and the *ways of combatting* the problem. The interpretative approach to annotating the corpus of T1 allowed for the revelation of the semantic features of T1, while registering the basic concepts and dominant IS subject to verification with empirical methods.

Figure 2. Verbal traces of IS in T2 corpus

- 1 "To me that was a point when I realized, I have to *get [out] of here* (5) because *my life is [in danger]* (5).'
- 2 But she was *[in a vulnerable position]* (5) -- and that's when she was *[approached]* by a woman who said she could find her work, and help her save for a condo (7).
- 3 "So, when the topic came up of working *[in the sex industry]* (5)– dancing, working in strip clubs . . . .
- 4 *[Luring]* of girls (10) *[into]* sex trade (5) reaching *['epidemic'] level* (9), police say Social Sharing In 5 years, police have seen *[1,100 cases]* (9), *[assisted]* (8) nearly 300 victims (9) in Toronto
- 5 Since the team was formed, police say they have investigated *more than 1,100 [cases]* (9), (11) and *[assisted]* (8) close to 300 (9), (11) victims.
- 6 Rhonelle Bruder *[ran]* away from home (12) as a teenager after enduring years of bullying. She was quickly *[lured]* (10) *[into]* work (5) by human traffickers.
- 7 Sgt. Nunzio Tramontozzi says the 'grooming process' of *[luring]* young women (10) *[into]* the sex trade (5) can happen in as little as 48 hours.
- 8 "We have victims as young as 12 years old being *forced [into]* the sex trade (5) ... even with the *[number]* of investigators I have right now, we're not keeping up (9)."
- 9 Last year, the team investigated 280 *[cases]* (9), (11) and arrested around 55 people (9), (11) for trafficking women and girls *[into]* the sex trade (5).
- 10 She says . . . she experienced a lot of bullying, which *put her [in]* a dark place (5).
- 11 Tramontozzi has seen *[cases]* (9), (11) where traffickers *[lure]* girls (10) *[through]* social media apps like SnapChat and Instagram (7), but also *[in person]* (7) at places like malls, group homes and even Canada's Wonderland.
- 12 "The one thing they do have in common is they are *master manipulators* (10)," he said.
- 13 "The now 36-year-old says she realized almost immediately she didn't want to be *[in]volved* (5) in that work but *felt [trapped]* (5), was *[in]debted* (5) to the woman who *[recruited]* (7) her.
- 14 After witnessing the assault at the party, she *[contacted]* people she'd met before she was trafficked (7) and planned her *[escape]* (12)
- 15 Police say they're still seeing a trend toward *females doing the [recruiting]* (7), as in Bruder's case, "*especially in middle schools and high schools.*" (7).
- 16 But for police and activists *at the forefront of the [fight]* against human trafficking (3), it's a *[problem]* (2) that *[continues to grow]* (9), (11).
- 17 Sgt. Nunzio Tramontozzi says the *[number]* of offences and occurrences (9), (11) since the team's launch has *[increased]* (11) dramatically (9).
- 18 "It's really at an *[epidemic]* (9) *[proportion]* (9) now in Toronto, and really throughout the GTA and across Canada," Tramontozzi said.
- 19 At a point where she felt like she couldn't take it anymore, she *[ran]* away (12).

- 20 "I thought that I could kind of [run] away from my problems (12), start fresh somewhere new.
- 21 That woman eventually [led] Bruder to (12) the man who would be her trafficker
- 22 "Victims [come] from all walks of life (12) -- they do [come] from marginalized communities (12), but also from families that have influence in the community (12)."
- 23 ... Bruder, who now heads a program that [assists] (8) vulnerable youth.
- 24 Bruder calls herself lucky for having the [support] (8) she did.
- 25 I [ended up] (12) in downtown Toronto."

Figure 2 shows 25 relevant sentences from T2. The occurrences of IS are labelled as follows: CONTAINMENT (5), ATTRACTION (10), LINK (7), SCALE (9), PROCESS+UP (11), BLOCKAGE (2), COUNTERFORCE (3), PATH (12), and ENABLEMENT (8). The numbers assigned to IS in T1 are preserved for respective occurrences in T2, and the occurrences of new IS in T2 are labelled with further numbering. The IS are analysed in the order they appear in the text.

Alongside representation of the scale of HT through the lens of the victims' stories, the main message, nevertheless, is transmitted through CONTAINMENT. Based on the analysis of lexical and grammatical language units, the prevailing meanings were established, and respective IS were identified. Lexical means predetermine the conceptualisation of HT as in *an enclosed space, circle or container from where there is no way out*, and through the lexical units *being involved in, indebted or feeling trapped*. From the grammatical point of view, we observe the usage of verbs in the passive voice forms having the prefix *in-*, supported with the prepositions *in, into, out*, actuating respective IS and representing the passive condition of the victims. Yet, it should be verified whether such meanings stimulate the transmission of the feeling of *danger* to the readers of media articles.

These meanings are supported with the actuation of ATTRACTION and LINK, which represent the semantics of *engagement of potential victims*, e.g.: *lure, recruit, contact, approach*. On the one hand, the meaning of *luring* is quite recurrent in the text, on the other hand, the conceptualisation of the *link between participants of organised HT crime* is directly or implicitly incorporated in the context of HT coverage. For instance, the phrase "*master manipulators*" implies how traffickers operate to make victims accept their offer and make them dependent on their traffickers. Verbally, this cluster of IS is manifested in lexical units, e.g.: *lure* for *attraction*, and *approach, contacted* – for *link*; and in grammatical units with prepositions (*into, in, with*) or the passive voice forms of verbs.

SCALE and PROCESS/UP represent the scope and size of HT, as in T1. Their manifestation is predetermined by CONTAINMENT-related environment, i.e. by the lexical units with the meanings of *level, reach process, increased, close to, number, cases*, metaphorical expressions *epidemic level, epidemic proportion*, denoting the degree of HT and the process of growing, and adverbs. e.g.: *dramatically*.

Another IS highlighting the nature of HT is PATH. These are verbal utterances, e.g.: *run away, lead to, end up*, conveying the idea of the previous life of victims and consequences of their being entrapped. This time-and-space parameter is actuated through lexical means standing for the concept of *journey/path* and denoting *motion* as well as grammatical units, predominantly, the prepositions *at, from, to, etc.* This IS in combination with less discussed IS (contact) conveys the overall meaning of *wandering of a victim throughout many places across the world and being exposed to many hardships*. The verbal means of expression bear figurative meanings and actuate conceptual metaphors of *journey*, for instance, in the representation of the initial background of victims. Most often, the way victims come through is represented as actuation of such IS as *path to endpoint (endpoint focus)*, and through the prepositions *from/to/away* to signify starting point, transit places, and destination point.

In terms of BLOCKAGE, HT manifests only once in T2, e.g. *problem*. There are also occasional manifestations of such IS as COUNTERFORCE, e.g.: *fight*, and ENABLEMENT through the verbal means of expression denoting the *struggle against* or *resistance HT*, e.g.: *assist*.

Thus, in the corpus of T2, the dominance of such IS as SCALE and PROCESS/UP were to be enhanced by CONTAINMENT. This configuration of IS contributes to conceptualisation of HT as *a dead-end, a situation which victims are lured into*. This can also be interpreted as a “blind street” metaphor which serves as a cognitive “warning sign” for potential victims. The degree of the victims’ engagement in HT is represented by the verbal means of expression actuating CONTAINMENT IS standing for *a closed entity* or *a container* in the meaning of *the situation a victim gets in or into*. Moreover, these meanings are supported with the actuation of ATTRACTION and LINK.

T2 lacks description of a specific measure taken to stop HT, or, rather, a latent reaction towards HT prevention. Again, we can observe the imbalance in the representation of HT, with the prevalence of description of the danger of getting into HT rather than how to escape the situation. Hypothetically, it can be anticipated that the combination of the dominant IS revealed as a result of the analysis of the corpus of T2 predetermines the perception of HT as a dangerous situation, which should be verified empirically.

The second line of the research is an empirical study for measuring the degree of the reader’s response to T1 and T2. To this end, a survey was conducted according to the procedure described in the methodology section. The preparatory stage included the development of the questionnaires for two groups of respondents. They were identical apart from the text included therein depending on the group. The sections were developed as follows: personal information obtained based mainly on nominal and interval scale questions; the pre-reading stage, which included the interval scale questions; and the post-reading stage, which included the interval scale and open-answer questions.

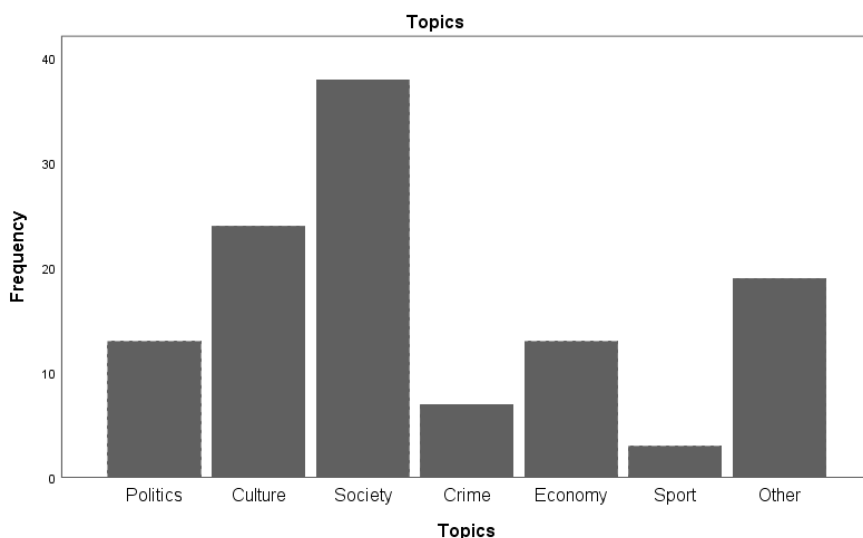
The general information was processed with the help of Descriptive Statistics. The mean value for the respondents' age is 20.5. The respondents have been studying English for more than 11 years on average. 80.5% of the respondents are aware of HT. 84.6% of the respondents read media in English, *daily* (33%) and *once a week* (33.9%), against *once a month* (8.9%) and *very rarely* (24.1%). Frequency table 2 shows the distribution of the topics the respondents are mostly interested in, where among 117 valid answers, the respondents' preferences are given to culture (20.5%), society (32.5%), and other topics (16.2%). Politics (11.1%) and economy (11.1), crime (6.0%), and sport (2.6%) are less preferred topics in reading media.

Table 2. *Topics respondents are interested in variable*

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Politics</b>	13	10.7	11.1	11.1
	<b>Culture</b>	24	19.8	20.5	31.6
	<b>Society</b>	38	31.4	32.5	64.1
	<b>Crime</b>	7	5.8	6.0	70.1
	<b>Economy</b>	13	10.7	11.1	81.2
	<b>Sport</b>	3	2.5	2.6	83.8
	<b>Other</b>	19	15.7	16.2	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	117	96.7	100	
<b>Missing</b>	<b>System</b>	4	3.3		
<b>Total</b>		121	100.0		

Figure 3 illustrates the dominance of *society* and *culture* among the respondents' reading preferences. It can be predicted that the respondents are more susceptible to perceive the socially-relevant content rather than other topics. The respondents show less interest in *politics* and *economy*, *crime* and *sport*, which may partially affect the respondents' perceptions of HT.

Figure 3. Topics respondents are interested in variable



Before analysing the responses to T1 and T2 separately, the data were collected on the preliminary degree of the readers' involvement in HT in terms of their sympathy with victims, imagining being in the same situation, and emotional response (Tables 3-5 and Figures 4-5) before they read T1 or T2, depending on the group, according to the interval scale, where 1 and 2 are low indicators (*absolutely not* and *probably not*), and 3 and 4 are high indicators (*probably yes* and *totally yes*). At the pre-reading stage, the respondents were not affected by the experimental media content and showed a unified response.

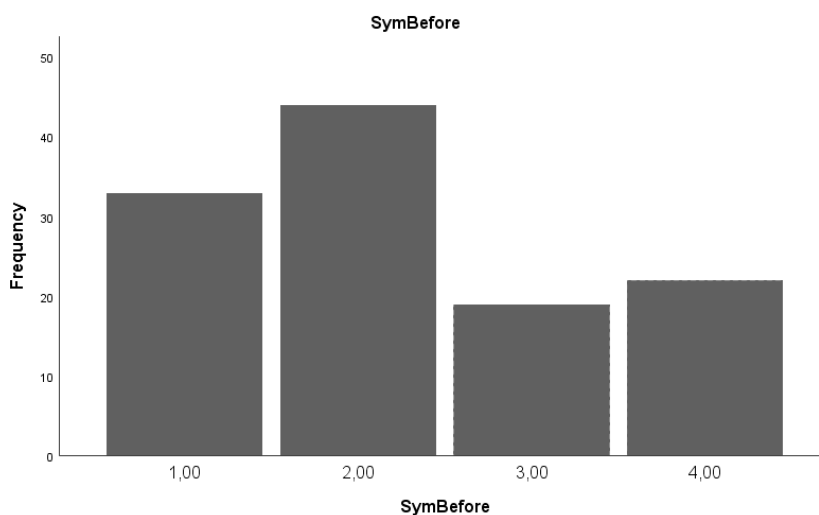
Table 3 and figure 4 illustrate that 115 valid answers highlight that the respondents are not prone to feeling *sympathy toward a victim of HT before reading the text* (28.0% – *absolutely not* and 37.7% – *probably not*) and some feel a certain degree (16.1%) and a lot of sympathy (18.6%).

Table 3. Frequency table: the *sympathy before* variable

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>1.00</b>	33	27.3	28.0	28.0
	<b>2.00</b>	44	36.4	37.3	65.3
	<b>3.00</b>	19	15.7	16.1	81.4
	<b>4.00</b>	22	18.2	18.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	118	97.5	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>	<b>System</b>	3	2.5		
<b>Total</b>		121	100.0		



Figure 4. *Sympathy before variable*

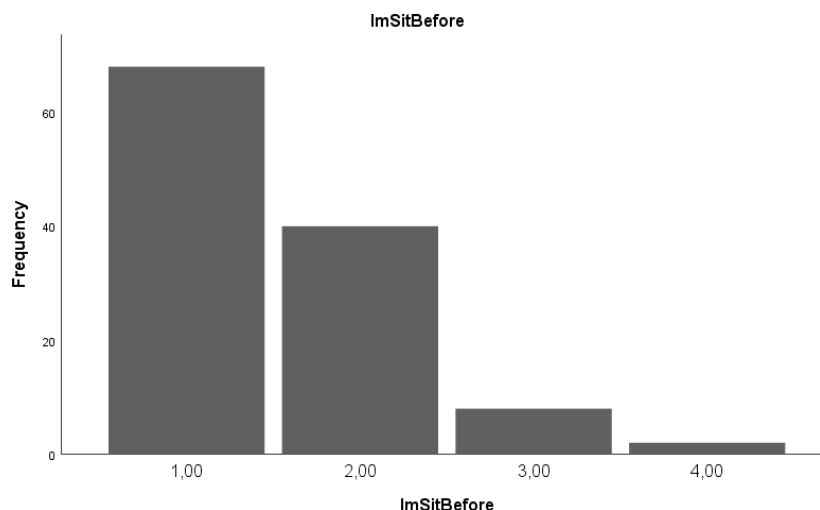


The degree of *imagining themselves being in the same situation* is rather low. We can see from table 4 and the bar chart in figure 5 that the respondents do not imagine themselves being in the same situation as the victims of HT either, with 57.6% – *absolutely not* and 33.9% – *probably not*, and 16.1% and 18.6% – *probably yes* and *totally yes*, respectively.

Table 4. Frequency table: the *imagining in HT situation before variable*

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>1.00</b>	68	56.2	57.6	57.6
	<b>2.00</b>	40	33.1	33.9	91.5
	<b>3.00</b>	8	6.6	6.8	98.3
	<b>4.00</b>	2	1.7	1.7	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	118	97.5	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>	<b>System</b>	3	2.5		
<b>Total</b>		121	100.0		

Figure 5. *Imagining in situation of HT before variable*

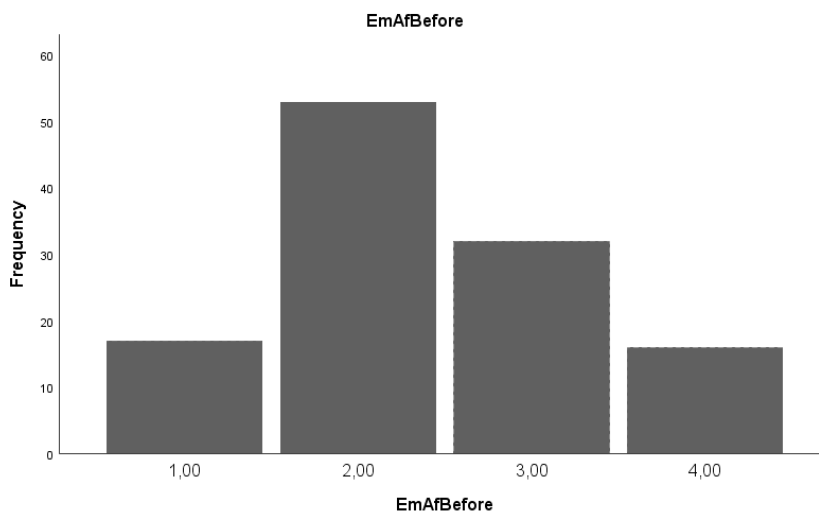


The degree of being emotionally affected by the topic of the article is rather low. Table 5 and the bar chart in figure 6 both show that the respondents are not emotionally involved in the topic of HT either, with 14.4% – *absolutely not* and 44.9% – *probably not*, whereas 27.1% of the respondents answered with *probably yes* and 13.6% – *totally yes*.

Table 5. Frequency table: *being emotionally affected with HT before*

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>1.00</b>	17	14.0	14.4	14.4
	<b>2.00</b>	53	43.8	44.9	59.3
	<b>3.00</b>	32	26.4	27.1	86.4
	<b>4.00</b>	16	13.2	13.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	118	97.5	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>	<b>System</b>	3	2.5		
<b>Total</b>		121	100.0		

Figure 6. *Being emotionally affected with HT before variable*



Both groups show low involvement in HT-related issues. However, the focus of the research was which group (G1 or G2) had a stronger response to the assigned text. These pre-reading attitudinal parameters were compared with equivalent post-reading answers. Then a more effective IS was established in terms of prosocial reactions based on the text to which the respondents had a stronger response. The next stage was to measure the differences in the respondents' perceptions of T1 and T2 between G1 and G2.

The respondents evaluated the language of the texts as not difficult (84.7% cumulatively) and the message as clear (60.7% cumulatively). Apart from the general tendency to attitudinal and general emotional changes after the respondents read the assigned text, the focus turned to particular emotions such as *the feeling of anger, being disappointed with the message of the text, being sad, feeling fear, and the feeling of being in danger*.

To this end, an Independent Sample T-test was conducted to measure the perceptions of T1 and T2 by respective groups of respondents. Tables 6-7 show the group statistics and independent sample test significance results.

According to the mean values and dependencies on reading T1 by G1 who read T2, the degree of *sympathy towards victims* is higher in G2, *imagining being in the same situation* is almost the same; the respondents of G2 state a higher emotional response to T2; also, G2 shows a greater level of *anger*, and *danger*, and there is almost no difference as to being *sad* or *feeling fear*, whereas the level of *disappointment* decreased.

Table 6. Group Statistics

	Text	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>SymAfter</b>	<b>T1</b>	59	2.8305	1.13187	0.14736
	<b>T2</b>	59	3.2712	0.84752	0.11034

<b>ImSitAfter</b>	<b>T1</b>	59	1.9322	0.90714	0.11810
	<b>T2</b>	59	2.1017	0.92279	0.12014
<b>EmAfAfter</b>	<b>T1</b>	59	2.6780	1.00757	0.13117
	<b>T2</b>	59	3.3729	0.78561	0.10228
<b>FAnger</b>	<b>T1</b>	57	2.3509	0.99087	0.13124
	<b>T2</b>	59	2.6271	1.06509	0.13866
<b>FDissappointed</b>	<b>T1</b>	58	2.7931	0.89362	0.11734
	<b>T2</b>	59	2.6441	0.97843	0.12738
<b>FSad</b>	<b>T1</b>	58	3.0862	0.97844	0.12848
	<b>T2</b>	59	3.0678	0.96248	0.12530
<b>FFear</b>	<b>T1</b>	58	2.5517	0.97643	0.12821
	<b>T2</b>	59	2.7288	0.92532	0.12047
<b>FDanger</b>	<b>T1</b>	58	2.3966	0.97224	0.12766
	<b>T2</b>	59	3.1356	0.68122	0.08869

Following on from Table 7, the results are significant only for dependent variables *feeling sympathy towards victim of HT* (mean value for T1 – 2.8305 and for T2 – 3.2712,  $p=0.009$ ), *being emotionally affected* (mean value for T1 – 2.6780 and for T2 – 3.3729,  $p=0.000$ ), and the *feeling being in danger*, with the mean values of the reader’s response being higher to T2 (mean value for T1 – 2.3966 and for T2 – 3.1356,  $p=0.000$ ) (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Significant dependent variables after reading

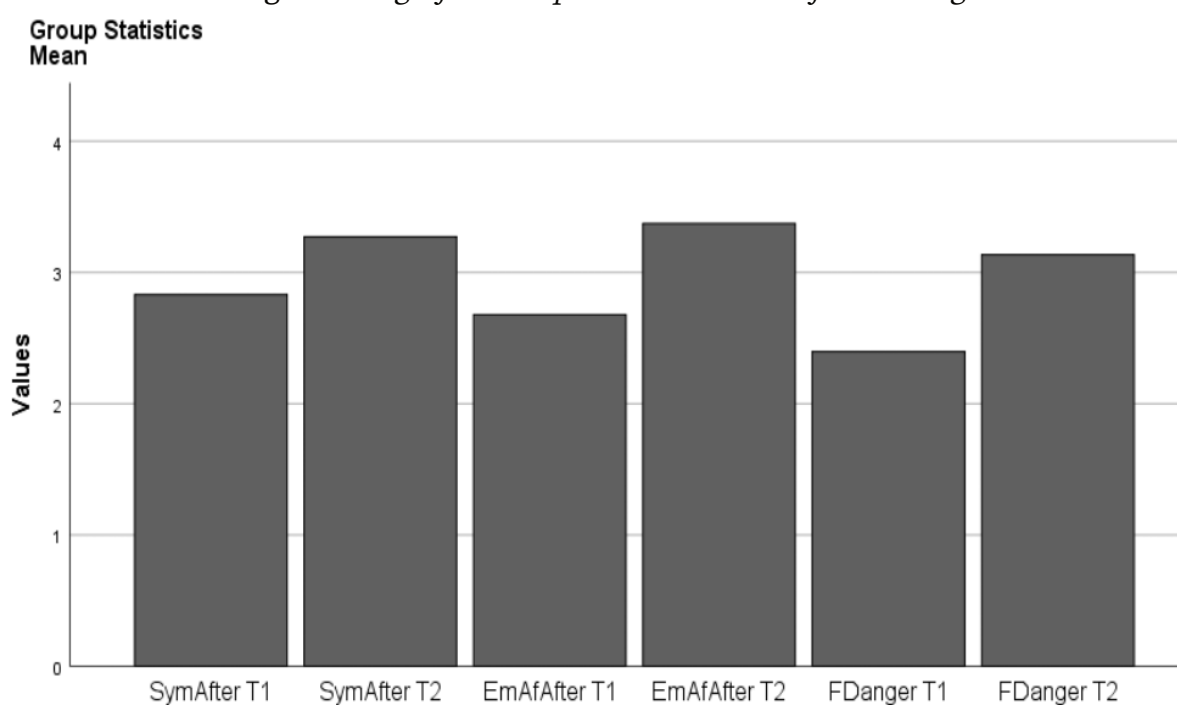


Table 7. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			Std. Error 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	e	Lower	Upper
SymAfter	Equal variances assumed	9,806	,002	-2,394	116	,018	-,44068	,18409	-,80529	-,07607
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,394	107,483	,018	-,44068	,18409	-,80559	-,07576
ImSitAfter	Equal variances assumed	,449	,504	-1,006	116	,316	-,16949	,16847	-,50316	,16418
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,006	115,966	,316	-,16949	,16847	-,50316	,16418
EmAfAfter	Equal variances assumed	3,654	,058	-4,178	116	,000	-,69492	,16634	-1,02436	-,36547
	Equal variances not assumed			-4,178	109,491	,000	-,69492	,16634	-1,02457	-,36526
FAnger	Equal variances assumed	,363	,548	-1,445	114	,151	-,27624	,19117	-,65494	,10246
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,447	113,841	,151	-,27624	,19093	-,65447	,10199
FDissappointed	Equal variances assumed	,653	,421	,860	115	,392	,14904	,17332	-,19428	,49236
	Equal variances not assumed			,861	114,386	,391	,14904	,17319	-,19404	,49211
FSad	Equal variances assumed	,349	,556	,103	115	,918	,01841	,17944	-,33702	,37384
	Equal variances not assumed			,103	114,870	,918	,01841	,17946	-,33708	,37390
FFear	Equal variances assumed	,553	,459	-1,007	115	,316	-,17709	,17585	-,52541	,17123
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,007	114,424	,316	-,17709	,17593	-,52559	,17141
FDanger	Equal variances assumed	14,217	,000	-4,768	115	,000	-,73904	,15499	-1,04604	-,43204
	Equal variances not assumed			-4,754	101,956	,000	-,73904	,15544	-1,04737	-,43072

The extended commenting in the open question section post reading T2 was analysed. The majority of the answers are centered around *sadness, fear, sympathy with the trafficked girl* and, occasionally, *condemnation*. The main evaluative response given by G1 refers to the problem of HT in general, whereas the respondents of G2 show more concern about how they feel after reading the text. Table 8 illustrates the summary of key words and concepts observed in typical, but statistically non-significant, answers, when the respondents are asked to comment on the content of the text they have read. The repeated concepts are given in bold.

Table 8. Open-question section reports

G1-T1	G2-T2
<i>upset, pity, <b>sadness</b>, inconvenience</i>	<i>even <b>sadder</b>, I feel sorry for the girl, <b>sympathy</b> for the girl</i>
<i><b>disappointed</b> of this and I feel some fear, insecure</i>	<i>disappointment, sadness, shock, <b>hopelessness</b> and partially anger</i>
<i>My feelings are <b>mixed</b> due to such a terrible situation</i>	<i>We have to keep off the <b>danger's</b> way, horrible and terrifying,</i>
<i>I hate and <b>disrespect</b> people who can spread this idea</i>	<i>condemnation: it's a victim's fault</i>
<i>compassion, disgust, affliction, confusion, rejection, <b>anger</b> over impunity</i>	<i>I feel <b>embarrassed</b> because I thought human trafficking was long gone</i>
<i><b>unpleasant</b>, but we need to pronounce it</i>	<i><b>afraid</b>, concerned about acquaintances, <b>disillusioned</b></i>

## 4. Discussion

On the basis of the obtained results, it can be inferred that there is a dependency between the type of predominant IS actuated in a media text and the perception of media content in terms of shifts in the attitudes, emotional state, and experience of particular feelings. The Independent Sample Test showed that the degree of feeling sympathy towards a victim of HT rose after reading T2, which was assigned to G2. A similar tendency can be seen with regard to being emotionally affected by HT, so the emotional response of the respondents of G2 was higher.

One of the important findings of the statistical analysis is that the respondents of G2 report a higher degree of the *feeling of being in danger*. This may be explained by the fact that the quantitatively dominating SCALE/UP/PROCESS in both texts is enhanced with the manifestation of CONTAINMENT in T2, thus governing the perceptions of HT as a *closed entity: a situation from which it is impossible to get out*.

However, the study has two major limitations. Firstly, although media texts typical of HT discourse were chosen, it remains questionable whether the reactions would be statistically significant and stable, if other news articles and media narratives of the same thematic organisation and from the same perspective are taken into account. Secondly, different sets of IS are profiled in two different texts, which predetermines the transmission of different perspectives of HT. This requires further deep examination as to whether it is possible to trace the differences in perception of the texts of the same content, but different sets of IS.

The prospect for further study includes a series of surveys where the respondents would be exposed to several HT texts during a certain period of time, which will ensure a more convincing approach to HT prevention. Also, printed versus video reports on HT may also be checked for the efficiency of preventive content used with the focus on prevailing IS.

## 5. Conclusions

It can be ascertained that there is a dependency between the type of IS manifesting in media texts and the message perceived by the audience. This has been proved with the statistically significant results of the Independent Sample test. Firstly, the reader was found to have a higher level of response to T2 based on the data obtained from G2. Secondly, in terms of spatial thinking, the IS actuating the meaning of *being physically contained in HT* bears more potential for encouraging certain emotions in the audience. Such IS have proved to be the combinations of SCALE, UP/PROCESS in both texts and CONTAINMENT in T2, promoting the conceptualisation of HT as a large-scale problem particularised as a *closed entity which a potential victim gets into*. Thirdly, these IS may serve as “warning signs” of danger to be reported to vulnerable citizens. The findings

can develop an innovative approach to designing a victim-oriented linguistic toolkit aimed at actuating specific IS in the minds of the target audience.

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**Elina Paliichuk** holds a PhD in Linguistics and works as an Assistant Professor, a Lecturer of Stylistics at the Department of Linguistics and Translation of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine. Her area of academic activity embraces a series of studies on human trafficking in media, including a thesis on frame modelling and research in the framework of WHTV (warn human trafficking victim) initiative, with a particular focus on metaphor, transportation effect and narrative analysis, storytelling techniques, and image schemas, revealed in discourses and tested by empirical methods. Another activity concerns the translation of legal texts and translation studies, in particular, in the role of an Associate Translation Fellow at EU-funded Project “Association4U” (2017-2019) aimed at support of the harmonisation of the Ukrainian legislation with the standards of EU legal documents.