

Climate change: a constructional approach

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Metaphorical framing can affect attitudes toward climate change and influence willingness to change behavior to mitigate ecological risk (Matlock et al 2017). A parallel but underdeveloped area of research concerns how an individual's attitudes on climate change can be evinced through metaphor. This research has the potential to show associative patterns between different frame mappings and frame profiling effects and specific beliefs concerning climate change. We argue that a construction grammar approach to metaphor (Sullivan 2013), combined with cognitive grammar (Langacker 1991) and viewpoint (Dancygier 2012) are useful in parsing through precisely how stance on climate change is represented in discourse. Just as viewpoint in language conveys experiential aspects of a scene, it can also represent more complex perspectives, including evaluative and epistemic attitudes (Dancygier & Vandelanotte 2017). Through the elaboration of an inheritance network undergirding metaphorical constructions (David, Lakoff & Stickles 2016), beginning with image schematic structure, specific aspects of frames can be highlighted or elided, and different viewpointed and/or deictic centers established.

Climate change is understood in terms of a pathway humanity traverses, i.e., "Climate science is clear: we're **heading in the wrong direction**" ("Climate change impacts" 2022). As such, of particular interest is how PATH and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schemas are elaborated upon for rhetorical effect. Delineations, such as: what kind of path, mode of transportation, onlooker or internal perspective, speed, an impending threat moving closer, if one is moving towards said threat, and whether movements are aided or impeded, are factors that simultaneously serve scene encoding functions, while also expressing stance. When the PATH schema is invoked, elaborated upon and interpreted metaphorically, scope, established deictic centers, and relationships between trajectors and landmarks (Langacker 1991) can be freighted with epistemic and evaluative attitudes concerning climate change. Different viewpoints that pertain to the trajectory, as well as the perspectives provided by the metaphorical structuring of climate change can implicate different degrees of human agency and insinuate causal chains that pertain to political beliefs or purported governmental malfeasance. To that end, we analyze examples of metaphorical constructions from two American late night talk show hosts, Steven Colbert and Jimmy Kimmel.

Particular metaphorical frames of interest inheriting the PATH schema that Colbert and Kimmel use are Roadway and/or Highway, and evoke an overarching metaphor of CLIMATE CHANGE IS PROGRESSION ALONG A PATH TO DANGEROUS DESTINATION AND/OR DEATH. Examples include, "Climate change is here, it's now, and it's bad...We're on a **highway to the danger zone.**" (Colbert 2021), and "Climate change is real. Our car is **speeding off a cliff**, and some of us are fiddling with the radio" (Kimmel 2021). We showcase how the metaphors that the talk show hosts use reflect beliefs pertaining to differing degrees of human agency. They do so via the experiential components of the image schemas and frames that are metaphorically evoked, which aspects of these frames are implicitly or explicitly profiled, and what viewpoint the trajectory of climate change is perceived from.

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