Interpretative Frame as a Research Tool in Media Studies

Jolanta Maćkiewicz

University of Gdansk

jmackiewicz53@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-3998-2294

ABSTRACT

Scientific objective: The purpose of the paper is to examine how the concept of interpretive frame can be applied in media studies. The first part presents how this concept developed, from the 1970s to the present day—with particular emphasis on development within media studies. The second part discusses the definition of a frame and the types of frames. The third part deals with methodological problems related to the framing analysis: the choice of the method and the choice of the unit of analysis. Attention was paid to not including the multimodal frame in the analyzes. Finally, the issues which in the framing analysis still need to be resolved or clarified were identified.

KEYWORDS

media, frame, interpretative frame, multimodal frame, framing

The terms "frame," "framing", and their Polish equivalents "*rama*" and "*ramowanie*" can be found in numerous studies in the field of social sciences and the humanities for almost half a century. However, as can be seen from exploring these studies, the term "frame" appears to be one of those terms in the humanities that are ambiguous and out of focus. In a first step, I will look at the history of using the term.

Frame and Framing: The Trouble with Understanding and Using the Term

For the first time, the concept of the frame appeared in Frederic Bartlett's cognitive psychology. The British psychologist in the book *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (1932) used the term "schema" to name conceptual templates by which people organize prior and new experiences (Pluwak, 2009, p. 50). The term "frame" itself was used in the mid-1970s in Charles Fillmore's work and in the sociological studies of Erving Goffman, yet, both researchers understood it differently. Goffman claimed that he took over this term from Gregory Bateson, a psychologist and anthropologist, who in the book *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology*, used it in the sense of cognitive schema and at the same time a component of an event. The chaos in terminology associated with using the same term in various ways continues to this day. Yet, where has it originated from?

I should start with the fact that the English "frame" and its Polish equivalent "*rama*" are metaphorical terms, and with scientific terms with metaphorical provenance there are usually issues associated with definitions. They may refer to the picture frame that limits and closes some fragments of the observed reality, or they may refer to a window frame as well—as suggested by Gaye Tuchman (1978, p. 209), as the size of the window, its shape and design affect what we see through the window. However, as noted by Marek Czyżewski (2010, pp. XVII–XVIII), the English "frame" is also "a single photo or film," so the term "framing" could also be translated as "*kadrowanie*."

In addition, next to the "frame," there are many similar terms in the humanities and social sciences, like: "schema," "structure," "script," "scenario," "domain," "cognitive model." They form a "terminological cluster" of terms, ranges of which overlap, and the choice of one often depends entirely on the preferences of a scholar.

Not only the metaphorical character of the term affected the problems with its precise definition, but also the fact that it is sometimes used in various scientific disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, linguistics, political science, communication sciences, and media studies. Scholars usually do not agree on the ways of using a homonymous name (this is a case of interdisciplinary ambiguity of a term). In addition, this term is sometimes used in more or less different meanings within one discipline, depending on the theory adopted. Bartlett's concept inspired researchers from the humanities and social sciences, which resulted in destructive methodological chaos in science. One can speak of at least three different developmental paths of the concept: 1) the psychological path in its psychological and cognitive variant with Marvin Minsky's theory of artificial intelligence and the psychological and economic variant, where the research of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky is mentioned above all who received the Nobel Prize for their theory of perspective; 2) the linguistic path represented by Charles Fillmore and his successors in cognitive linguistics (such as George Lakoff); 3) the sociological path initiated by Erving Goffman.

Frames: The Earliest Approaches

The notion of "frame" took shape in the 1970s. In the same decade, the work of Minsky, Goffman, and Fillmore appeared. A little later, in the 1980s, Kahneman and Tversky formulated their concept. Let's take a look at the beginnings and examine what differentiates and what connects these approaches.

In psychological terms, the frame is a cognitive scheme, a categorizing structure inherent in the human subconscious and used in everyday activities. Framing is part of the categorization in which new information is assigned to categories that already exist in the mind of a recipient. Marvin Minsky (1975) for the purposes of his research on artificial intelligence, defined a frame as follows:

"A frame is a data-structure for representing a stereotyped situation, like being in a certain kind of living room, or going to a child's birthday party. Attached to each frame are several kinds of information. Some of this information is about how to use the frame. Some is about what one can expect to happen next. Some is about what to do if these expectations are not confirmed" (p. 211).

According to this scholar, a frame is recalled to short-term memory either when one finds himself in the situation described by the frame or by verbal reference to any of the elements of this situation.

Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, in search of mechanisms for estimating the risk of decision-making, introduced the concept of "decision frame" understood as a mental scheme by which people interpret the situation before making a decision. The scholars have observed that one or another formulation of the problem can have a great impact on the decision-making process, because different words activate different frames (gain or loss framing) (Czyżewski, 2010, p. XXV).

Goffman in the book *Frame Analysis*, published in 1974, used the concept of frame to show how human experience is organized on a microscale of social life. The purpose of his work was: "[...] an attempt to isolate some of the basic frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense out of events, and to analyze the special vulnerabilities to which these frames of reference are subject" (Goffman, 2010, p. 11). The researcher perceives a frame as an interpretative scheme that "allows [...] the user to locate, perceive and name a seemingly infinite number of events" (p. 21), and as a pattern of action. Therefore, the frames are structures that simultaneously segment the interaction and condition the conduct during this segment. Marek Czyżewski (2010), underlining "mental-interactive" (p. XXV) understanding of Goffman's frame, writes: "It is thanks to the 'framework' that we can signal to others what activity we take or understand this kind of signals coming from others" (p. XXVI).

Also in the 1970s, the term "frame" appeared in the works of Charles Fillmore. Initially, the term had a purely linguistic reference, calling language-specific lexical and grammatical means associated with a specific scene, i.e. a schematic model of human experience and activities (an example could be a commercial event scene framed from the perspective of the seller, buyer, commodity or money by words such as "sell," "buy," "pay" or "charge") (Fillmore, 1971). Then the concept was developed in the different direction—cognitive. In the most famous work from the 80s entitled *Frame Semantics* Fillmore defines a frame as "[it] is any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one concept it is necessary to understand the entire system" (Fillmore, 1981, p. 111), where the links to access this conceptual grid are words.

What connects these four approaches? The main thesis is common, which is the belief in the human tendency to organize information, the existence of categorization or interpretative packages used to cope with the world. The differences between the approaches are primarily due to the different locating of these schemas: in the mind (mental psychological approaches), in the

mind and action (Goffman's mental-interactive conception), in language and the mind (structural and cognitive variants of the Fillmore conception).

Frames and Framing: The Further Development of the Notion

As Agnieszka Pluwak (2009) notes:

> "The biggest breakthrough in the development of framing theory is dated to the end of the twentieth century, during the heyday of mass media. In sociology and communication sciences, the tendency to understand frames no longer as subconsciously functioning categorization schemes created in the interaction process but as consciously shaped and used interpretative frames for familiar social events was observed" (p. 66).

More importantly, not only the understanding of a frame itself has changed. Increasingly, the emphasis is not placed on frames as structures, but on the framing process that takes place in stages—from shaping the frames, through their interpretation, to the framing effects. There was also a transition from the descriptive (describing the frames) to the theoretical phase (framing theory). One can even talk about the formation of:

> "A new subdiscipline on the border of sociology, political science, and media studies of extremely importance especially for the research on the content of media messages, on creating public discourse, the role of journalism, the social impact of the media and the formation of the civic public sphere and so called new social movements" (Czyżewski, 2010, p. XXXVIII).

The theory of framing is situated in the wider context of social and communicative constructivism (Gamson, 1988) claiming that a man as a social being constructs his knowledge of the world (in a different, more radical approach: constructs his social world), and communication activities are particularly important in this activity (Wendland, 2011). It is also associated with a communication model different from the traditionally adopted transmission model (Shannon and Weaver model), in which the active sender sends a message, and the recipient's role is only to decode the sense immanently contained in this message. According to the constructivist model, the meaning of the text is a construct that arises as a result of the interpretation of the message by a recipient—a member of a certain socio-cultural community, while the sense he built is the result of interaction between the stimuli contained in the message and his (the recipient's) subjective and intersubjective (community) knowledge. Importantly, the sense constructed by a recipient does not have to match the sense designed by a sender.

How are frames and framing understood under such theoretical assumptions? This requires answers to some basic questions. First, where are the frames located? Second, what is their status? Third, how do they work? Fourth, how does the framing process work?

Stephen D. Reese notes that "the frame is always an abstraction and finds its manifestation in various locations" (p. 21). Robert M. Entman (1993) states that frames can be found in four different places in the communication process: in the communicator, who consciously or unconsciously refers to frames located in his belief system; in the text, where verbal and iconic resources signal the existence of a frame; the recipient/receiver, who interprets the message according to the system of cognitive patterns existing in his mind; and, finally, in the culture that is a set of frames referred to in the discourse (pp. 52–53). This means that frames can be defined and studied in relation to these four different locations. In addition, even if a scholar focuses on one of these locations (for example, on the text), all the other should be included in research as well.

The belief in the existence of different frame locations translates into the definition of this concept. Stephen D. Reese (2001) proposes a fairly general definition: "[frames are] organizing

principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (p. 11). Dietram A. Scheufele (1999) distinguishes between media frames and individual frames (pp. 106–107). The former are schemes organizing media releases, the latter are mental structures that enable individuals to process information.

Frames in definitions are most often referred to as principles, patterns, schemata or structures. James K. Hertog and Douglas M. McLeod (2001) draw attention to the internal ordering of these structures:

> "We view frames as relatively comprehensive structures of meaning made up of a number of concepts and the relations among those concepts [...] Frames [...] are cultural structures with central ideas and more peripheral concepts—and a set of relations that vary in strength and kind among them" (p. 142).

And how do frames work? The definition of Robert M. Entman (1993) is most often quoted: "To frame to select some aspects of a perceived reality, and make them more salient, in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and / or treatment recommendation" (p. 52). Entman emphasizes two aspects of the functioning of frames seen from the sender's perspective: selection and salience. Selection means paying special attention to certain aspects of perceived reality while ignoring others. Additional emphasis on some aspects means that others—even if they are not left out—are in the background. When analyzing frames, one should therefore consider not only what has been selected and cognitively highlighted, but also what has been omitted. In turn, the recipient's perspective, i.e. the possible framing effects, requires paying attention primarily to how the frame defines the problem, how it assesses, and what the way of seeing the causes and effects of the framed event suggests.

Assuming a processual understanding of framing, three stages should be considered: first, frame-building by a sender; secondly, frame-setting, i.e. the interaction of the frames contained in the message and knowledge, beliefs and predispositions of a recipient; thirdly, individual and social framing effects (Scheufele, 1999, pp. 114–117). Research can only focus on one of these stages, but with the awareness of the other two.

Frames and Framing in Media Studies

Trying to clarify the meaning of this imprecise concept, I will limit my analysis to one discipline—to media studies. The use of framing theory in media studies results from the research assumption about the existence of a media image of the world (Kępa-Figura & Hofman, 2015) which is a kind of interpretation of perceived reality from a specific perspective, an interpretation that often has a persuasive function. The interpretative media frame is part of this image.

In media studies, the concept of framing usually functions, in addition to the terms "agenda setting" and "priming," as a term for one of the mechanisms or tools to influence media audience (Weaver, 2007). The distinction between these three mechanisms is formulated in relation to the type of effects. And thus, agenda setting suggests what to think about, framing—how to think about it, priming—from what perspective will we perceive and evaluate phenomena and people. It seems particularly important to distinguish framing from agenda setting. Claes H. de Vreese (2005) states this as follows: "While agenda-setting theory deals with the salience of issues, framing is concerned with the presentation of issues" (p. 53).

This approach to framing focuses on one of its stages. The study, as mentioned, may, however, involve three stages, or three possible approaches or outlooks. As three components are distinguished in the process of communication: a sender, recipient, and a message (the fourth

is the context in a broad sense), framing can be analyzed from the sender's and recipient's perspective or in the message / text itself.

The choosing of a sender's perspective requires consideration of the complex nature of the media broadcaster. Who constructs the frames?—political and symbolic elites, media organizations, editorial boards, journalists? There are usually two groups of factors influencing the creation of frames: internal and external ones (Scheufele, 1999, p. 115; Vreese, 2005, p. 52). The former are personal (including these arising from functioning in a specific community) beliefs of a journalist, the principles and ideology of the editorial staff in which he works, as well as—professional norms and conventions associated with a given medium and a given media genre (e.g. focus on sensation). Also important, as Krzysztof Wasilewski (2018) notes, is the "media system of a given country and the role of journalism assigned to it" (p. 97). For example, according to this author: "German journalists commonly claim to be advocates of one or another political decision. However, their British and American colleagues used to consider themselves neutral and politically independent"(p. 97).

By external factors the influence exerted by political actors or interest gropup is meant. Frame-building functions through the interaction between these factors. Media broadcasters are also increasingly taking into account audience expectations. Of course, one has to remember that framing is not always (fully) conscious, it does not always result from the deliberate operation of media communicators striving to achieve a specific goal. Journalists refer to the cognitive frames encoded in their minds or unconsciously use the interpretation schemes most often used for talking about given issues. For instance, a study conducted in 1998 by the Pew Research Center on a representative group of American journalists showed that most of them instinctively referred to the most common frames, such as the conflict frame or the justice frame (Wasilewski, 2018, pp. 56–57).

The receivier's perspective means studying framing effects. They can be individual or social (Vreese, 2005, p. 52), and concern not only changes in attitudes, but also in behavior. However, one cannot directly translate a frame intended by the sender into its effects in individual or social perception. Dietram A. Scheufele (1999) notes that "media effects are limited by an interaction between mass media and recipients" (p. 105). Keeping in mind that communication is not a simple transmission of information, but a complicated interaction between a sender, message, and a recipient, one should consider the intermediary process of interpretation. This process is influenced by the recipient's psychological predispositions, and the image of the world encoded in his mind, his needs and interests, as well as in his knowledge of a given issue. As emphasized by Bogusław Skowronek (2013): "Interpreting media texts [...] is [...] an active and consciously built process in which meaningful negotiations occur between a message (text guidelines and not the hypothetical intention of the media sender) and a recipient, or more precisely his knowledge of the world, culture, and other, formatted into cognitive schemes and perpetuated in the experience" (p. 74).

Since the frames constructed by the sender does not have to agree with those (re)constructed by a recipient, it seems that better results could be obtained by analyzing social effects (i.e. examining changes in public opinion) than by analyzing individual ones. At the same time, it would be about effects with respect to repetitive frames, reproduced in many texts, clearly recorded in discourse. Importantly, when dealing with framing effects, one must also take into account the impact of competition or struggle between various interpretative frames regarding a given event or problem (Chong & Druckman, 2007, pp. 112–114).

One should also consider whether the framing applies only to media information genres, which suggests the name "news frame." It seems that it is better to adopt the more general

term "media frames" because the boundaries between information and publicistics are becoming increasingly blurred. It would still be necessary to decide what we mean by the term "media frame."

The very name ("media frame") suggests where we will be looking for this frame. Of the four possible locations (Entman, 1993), one is distinguished in media studies—texts. However, this can be understood in two ways: either that the frames function in specific texts, or that we reach the frames existing in media discourse through specific texts. The first understanding is referred to, for instance, by the definitions proposed by Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki (1993), for whom a frame (otherwise known as a theme) is "an idea that connects different semantic elements of a story […] into a coherent whole" (p. 59), "a cognitive »window« through which a news story is »seen«" (p. 59). The second way of understanding can be seen in the description of Stephen D. Reese (2001): "frames may best be viewed as an abstract principle, tool, or »schemata« of interpretation that works through media texts to structure social meanings" (p. 14).

Status of the Media Frames and Their Types

The term "frame" may refer to interpretative schemes with varying degrees of generality. This degree applies to both the material range for which the frame is an important interpretation scheme, and the frame itself. On the one hand, there can be a frame organizing a specific analyzed text or message, a frame that recurs in a group of homogeneous texts due to the genre, type of medium and / or subject matter, or a culturally conditioned frame that can be applied to various topics. On the other hand, frames can be divided into upper and lower order categories, with the latter falling into the superior categories (Wasilewski, 2018, p. 100).

Claes de Vreese (2005) distinguished between issue-specific frames and generic frames that exceed thematic limits (p. 54). The more detailed frames are divided into those relating to specific events or historical moments (e.g. the way of framing the crash of the presidential plane of April 10, 2010) and those relating to specific problems (e.g. the problem of refugees, abortion, LGBT) (Franczak , 2014, p. 142). Framing researchers distinguished several recurring general frameworks: a conflict frame, a frame of responsibility, a frame of economic consequences, a moral frame, and a frame of human interest (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, pp. 95–96).

Because of the perspective from which the issues are described, Shanto Iyengar (1991) has separated episodic frames that present problems in the light of specific cases or individual events, and thematic frames presenting problems in a general or abstract context that emphasize the general conditions of the problem and its effects (pp. 2–3). He drew attention to the consequences of choosing one of these two types of frames: displaying the episodic format prompts recipients to blame the victims themselves for the cause of the trouble, while choosing the thematic format in which social or structural conditions are indicated usually involves shifting responsibility to organizations.

Metaphorical frames are a special type of interpretation schematas. Metaphors, understood by cognitive scientists as cognitive tools enabling "understanding and experiencing a certain kind of thing in terms of another thing" (Lakoff & Johson, 1988, p. 27), by their nature perform an interpretative, and often interpretive-persuasive function (Lakoff, 2011). Their functioning, like the functioning of frames, consists in selection and enhancement. "Allowing us to focus attention on some aspect of the concept," writes George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1988), "the metaphorical concept prevents us from simultaneously focusing on other aspects that are unrelated to a given metaphor" (p. 32). Describing the world with the help of metaphors is of a focused nature—thanks to the metaphor one can enhance what is desirable and hide what is undesirable. In addition, the metaphor can be a medium of evaluation, as the complex of

emotions and values associated with the source domain is transferred to the target domain of the metaphor (as in the metaphorical frame "politics is war" or "crisis is a disease"). Like other frames, the metaphorical frame can have a differential level of generality (e.g. war metaphor refers to various areas of life).

How Can One Reconstruct the Media Frames: A Research Method

William A. Gamson (1992) drew attention to two possible procedures for the reconstruction of a frame: the inductive and deductive approaches. In the case of using the first one, it begins with a meticulous analysis of the material, and one or other frame is the conclusion of this analysis. With the latter, the starting point is the previously defined frame (e.g. conflict frame), and the analysis is based on searching for this frame in the texts. Each of the approaches has its advantages and disadvantages. The inductive approach allows the detection of new frames, in addition, more detailed frames. However, as a very labor-intensive approach it is necessarily limited to a small number of examples and does not allow for drawing more general conclusions. Investigating frames using this approach makes it difficult to make comparisons between the media or between cultures (communities). The use of the deductive approach allows juxtaposition of different media within one culture (e.g. whether a newspaper uses a frame of economic consequences or a moral frame when describing a given issue) or several cultures (e.g. which frame or frames is / are used to interpret a given event in the media) in different countries. The disadvantages of this approach are the generality of frames analyzed and the possibility of overlooking interpretative schemes that have not been previously defined.

Both inductive and deductive approaches can be used in two possible approaches—synchronic and diachronic. With a synchronic approach, one is looking for frames functioning at a given moment, one can describe individual frames or, in various ways, juxtapose them with each other (e.g. competing frames for a given issue or specific event). With a diachronic approach, the changeability of frames over time is observed: transformations of longer existing frames, reframing, i.e. changes in the way of interpreting problems, struggle for frames (Franczak, 2014, p. 146).

Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be considered useful in the study of framing. Quantitative methods, known from the analysis of discourse content, bring more reliable results. If they are used with computer-assisted approach, they can be used for analyzing extensive research material. There are two variants of such research: in the first one it is assumed that specific words (keywords) constitute access points to the frame, so the previously assumed vocabulary is sought; the second takes into account not only the words themselves, but also their connectivity (collocations). This is the method proposed by M.M. Miller et al. (1997) referred to as frame mapping. The disadvantage of the quantitative method is that you can miss words and collocations, which are rare, but important for frame-building, and do not take into account possible lexical ambiguity and context dependence.

Qualitative methods can be more linguistic or more hermeneutic approaches. In the first case, the selection and location of various lexical (mainly so-called keywords), stylistic, and rhetorica means(such as metaphors, examples, quotes, winged words) are analyzed. Not only the occurrence of the element in the text is important, but also its location in Places structurally important for the message (for example, for press releases it would be a headline or lead) and contextual interpretation. An example of such an approach is the study of Pan and Kosicki (1993), who propose the distinguishing of four dimensions: syntactical structures based on stable patterns; script structures based on the components of an event; thematic structures with a theme being a central core; and rhetorical structures (pp. 59–61). Syntactical dimension (maybe better: structural dimension) use the arrangements and components of the structure proper to a

given medium (e.g. in the press releases: headline, lead, episodes, background, and closure); a script dimension refers to the news treated as stories and it contains the components of the story's scenario (beginning, climax, end, heroes); thematic dimension is based on hypothesis-argumentation scheme and uses a cause-effect relationship; rhetorical dimension is rhetorical features used in creating a frame (pp. 60–62). This type of analysis is multi-faceted and in-depth, but due to its detail it is (must be) limited to a small number of texts. Therefore, it does not allow to draw more general conclusions as to the degree of dissemination of a frame.

The hermeneutic approach interprets messages as elements of discourse embedded in a broad cultural background (Tucker, 1998). This approach sometimes involves situating framing within critical discourse analysis. The advantage of this method of analysis is going beyond the text, which allows seeing the implications arising from the functioning of media releases in discourse and in the culture. The disadvantage, as noted by Jörg Matthes and Matthias Kohring (2008), is that these studies lack the explanation how frames were extracted from the material, and therefore "researchers run the risk of finding frames they are consciously or unconsciously looking for" (p. 259).

In a nutshell, a researcher wishing to reconstruct the interpretative media frame must make the following choices:
– between inductive and deductive approach;
– between synchrony and diachrony;
– between quantitative and qualitative methods (can also be combined);
– between manual holistic and computer-assisted approach.

How Can One Reconstruct the Media Frames: A Unit of Analysis

Another methodological issue related to media framing analysis is the selection of the unit of analysis. It depends primarily on the type of material that will be analyzed; press material, TV programs, Internet broadcasts—each of these types requires different segmentation.

Let's discuss the press because, the analyses conducted so far most often used the press releases. Although there are analyses concerning TV, in this case research usually uses a deductive approach and quantitative methods—then the question of the basic unit is beyond doubt, because it is a single release (Niesłony, 2016; Palczewski, 2011; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

The first question concerns the size of the unit. It is true that Pan and Kosicki (1993) stipulated that the sentence, as the basic component of the text, may be too small, since contextual conditions are not taken into account at that time (p. 64), however, in their qualitative-linguistic analysis they were primarily examining sentences. The hierarchy of elements that make up the text is also of great importance. Considering the structural aspect of the text, researchers adopted the inverted pyramid and stated:

"An inverted pyramid refers to a sequential organization of structural elements (i.e. headline, lead, episodes, background, and closure). The signifying power of these elements varies in the same descending order" (p. 59).

An often unresearched issue is how visual elements are included. On the one hand, there are studies devoted exclusively to analyzing photos (Fahmy, 2010; Makhortykh & Sydorova, 2017; Parry, 2010; Szylko-Kwas, 2019), on the other—photographs are not taken into account when analyzing press releases (or simply mention without showing the detailed relationship between verbal and visual elements).

With regard to analyzing photos the concept of visual framing is used. It is understood as "a way of photographic presentation of a given event or problem that imposes a way of

interpreting the illustrated content" (Szylko-Kwas, 2019, p. 34), Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used in the analysis (the subject of the photo and the method of cropping are taken into account) (Parry, 2010, pp. 72–73; Szylko-Kwas, 2019, pp. 36–37). If reference is made to the accompanying verbal elements (photo caption, headline), then only to check whether words strengthen or weaken the overtones of photography (Parry, 2010, p. 73). There are no attempts to tackle multimodal framing, that is, to examine how images and words work together to construct a frame and how this cooperation affects the interpretation process.

And yet, both in the construction and in the interpretation of frames, various semiotic systems interact with each other, creating a whole that is not just the sum of its parts. Mutual contextualization creates additional senses that individual components do not have. Including only words can sometimes lead to false conclusions, because visual elements (and in television messages also audial elements) can significantly modify the shape of a frame (Matthes, 2009, p. 360). What then could be a unit of analysis? It seems that the only solution would be to study entire multimodal messages. The main difficulty is to develop a methodology that would allow the simultaneous coding of verbal and non-verbal elements, and, more importantly, to show how they interact with each other in framing.

Interpretative Frames as a Research Tool in Media Studies: Issues to Be Resolved

Reconstructing the interpretative frames contained in the media releases is a useful tool in media studies. The synchronic approach allows the recognition of communication patterns about public matters, while the diachronic approach enables tracking public communication trends. However, for the analyzes using this tool to bring conclusions that are both relevant and credible, it would be necessary to resolve several methodological issues and answer several questions.

First, what is the nature of the interpretative frame? Is it enough to name it (e.g. "conflict frame")? Or maybe it has an internal structure with the central core and the periphery (Hertog & McLeod, 2001), just like, according to cognitive scientists, concepts have?

Second, what semiotic means signal the existence of one or another frame? Is there a hierarchy of these means? Does and how does the location of means in the message affect their importance?

Third, how to deal with the multimodal nature of media communication?

Fourth, how to ensure that a given frame is not just an intuitive researcher's structure (Matthes, 2009; Matthes & Kohring 2008)?

And finally, fifth, if and how is it possible to locate the media frames in the culture?

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