

“What Happened to My Body My Choice?”: Viewpoint Stacking and the Construal of Picket Signs

Lumi Kang¹ & Iksoo Kwon²

¹Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, iamlumiya@hufs.ac.kr

²Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, kwoniks@hufs.ac.kr

Keywords: my body my choice, picket signs, viewpoint, viewpoint networks, multilayered meaning constructions, intertextuality

This paper aims to analyze meaning constructions in picket signs containing *My Body My Choice* (MBMC) within a Viewpoint Spaces network (Dancygier, 2012). It is specifically concerned with the multilayered conceptual structures where viewpoints are stacked in the construal of the picket sign. It reads as follows: Since it is about my body, it should be I, no one else, who decides what to do to it. It is noted, however, that the phrase is not newly created against COVID-19 vaccine mandates: it has been used in the abortion-rights movement.

This paper argues that *MBMC* together with its adjacent phrase superimposed on it in the picket sign cues multiple conceptual layers where viewpoints are implicitly (de-)compressed: one fully understands it when learning among other pertinently assumed information, for example, that those who would use the phrase in an anti-vaccination rally are unlikely to be those who would for the abortion-rights movement, even though the phrase is ostensibly employed to invariably support one’s own bodily autonomy. This makes another good source of multilayered meaning constructions as the phrase is situated in another conventional form of discourse structure, i.e., a picket sign, which is designed to publicly express the picket maker’s idea with syntactically truncated forms that cue viewpoint stacking as in (1) and (2).

- (1) I call the shots / My Body My Choice
- (2) My Body / My Choice / includes / vaccines / too

On the one hand, the phrase *I call the shots* in (1) idiomatically indicates that it is the speaker who has control in whatever matters to be said, and it conforms to the picket sign’s intended argument for securing one’s own bodily autonomy. Due to the literal meaning of the lexical item *shot* in the phrase, the picket sign could convey a blended construal that may profile either the lexical meaning or the whole idiomatic meaning. At any rate, the picket sign maker avows that he or she is the one who decides regarding the issues of COVID-19 vaccines.

On the other hand, example (2) indicates that the rationale behind bodily autonomy should hold consistently for the issue of vaccine mandates as well as for that of abortion, signaling that more conceptual layers are involved: the situation evoked by the content of the phrase (i.e., *MBMC* in the abortion-rights movement); the situation where a picket sign maker frames it as a fossilized phrase in a different situation (i.e., *MBMC includes vaccines, too* in an anti-vaccination rally); the situation where the picket holder sympathizes with the maker’s intention (i.e., (I support that) *MBMC includes vaccines, too*) in the presence of viewers, etc. Hence, *MBMC* in (2) does not seem to reside in the same layer as the rest of the text, considering that its conventionalized meaning has already been reified into a grammatical subject.

Among others, this paper specifically investigates those with invoked frames including abortion-rights such as *What Happened to MBMC*, *MBMC Includes Vaccination, too*, *Your body my choice* etc. by modeling and generalizing over the conceptual structures behind the construals. This paper provides an elaborate account of how multiple pieces of knowledge of different viewpoints are stacked and (de-)compressed into the overall construal, such as invoked frame knowledge of the abortion-rights movement, presupposed knowledge triggered by linguistic constructs etc.

References

Dancygier, Barbara. 2012. *The Language of Stories: A Cognitive Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.