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DISCURSIVE REPRESENTATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE BRITISH MEDIA IN 2025

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In 2025 the humanity witnessed a revolutionary development of Artificial Intelligence (AI), its cardinal transformation from a simple instrument for automatization into autonomous systems able to take decisions on their own and work without human guidance. These changes affected all the spheres of business as well as everyday life of its users making the humanity question the future of AI and their relations with it. In a while the topic has no longer belonged to visions of futurists but entered the everyday discourse as a subject of government policy, industrial dispute, ethical debates and cultural anxiety. Main UK outlets could not ignore it and dedicated lots of column space to the AI technology to comment both on its positive (e.g.: analysis of huge amounts of data, personalisation, cost cutting and resource management, fraud detection, mediation and facilitation of translation and communication etc.) and negative sides (e.g.: environmental footprint of AI, anxious reflections on job displacement, copyright, impact on ability of critical or nonstandard thinking among young people, their laziness, dependence on the AI instruments etc.) highlighting the crucial issues of access of large language models to broad consumer, adoption of controversial proposals to relax copyright protectionism for AI training data by the British government, growth in geopolitical competition between the US and China and the intensification of dispute between

AI-enthusiasts and AI-sceptics. In this respect within the highly mediated environment, it is of a huge importance to trace how ordinary people understand, debate and politically engage with the AI technology that is reshaping our world and how media and language not merely describe the new technological reality but construct it.

As Lakoff and Johnson [4] suggested, our conceptual reasoning operates through systemic metaphorical mappings that structure our understanding of abstract domains in terms of more familiar ones. Artificial Intelligence being a profoundly abstract and complex phenomenon, journalists could not but resort to metaphors to comprehend it, at the same time finding themselves caught in cognitive framing that shapes how readers reason about AI's risks and alike. This paper, therefore, investigates into discursive representation of Artificial Intelligence, precisely its metaphorical modelling in the British media outlets exactly throughout 2025. Combining corpus-assisted investigation into metaphorical representation of AI with qualitative and close reading, informed by Fairclough's three-dimensional model [1; 2], we identify, categorise and analyse the main conceptual metaphors structuring public understanding of AI. The mentioned model distinguishes between the level of the text (linguistic features, including metaphor), the level of discursive practice (how texts are created and read), and the level of social practice (ideological context in which discourse occurs). Media discourse is of particular concern for critical discourse analysis researchers because it's media that influence, construct and circulate public understandings of complex issues.

The corpus for this study includes 320 articles from seven major British media outlets between January 1 and December 31, 2025. *The Guardian* and *BBC* represent central-left and public service orientations, *The Times* and *Telegraph* – centre-right to right position, *The Financial Times* works with a market-liberal stance, *The Independent* is centrist-liberal, and *The Daily Mail* is populist conservative. Articles were identified through keyword search for “Artificial Intelligence”, “AI”, “ChatGPT” and related terms, filtered to exclude technical content and focusing on explanatory, opinion, analysis.

The analysis of the articles helped to identify six major conceptual metaphorical clusters as follows.

AI as COMPETITOR / ADVERSARY: in 2025 the British media speak of AI development as a race, competition using the sport metaphor (e.g. “*racing ahead of regulators*”, “*winning the AI competition*”) but also the military metaphor (e.g. “*AI weapons*”, “*defensive capabilities*” etc.) This aligns with prior research [3] and frames AI as an instrument of national power rather than a technology serving human needs.

AI as NATURAL FORCE refers to an overwhelming natural phenomenon which is especially active when the outlets speak about AI's impact on employment, creative industries and information ecosystem (e.g.: *"a wave of automation"*, *"the tide of AI"*, *"being swept away"* etc.)

AI as ORGANISM/CREATURE cluster encompasses metaphors that attribute animal or human properties to AI, which is perceived here as an infant, as a predator, as a person or colleague, and as an alien.

AI as TOOL/INSTRUMENT cluster presents AI as *"a powerful tool"*, that *"enables"* or *"empowers"* users etc.

AI as THIEF/PARASITE. In February and March 2025 most UK outlets ran coordinated front pages to oppose the Labour government's idea to relax copyright protectionism for AI training data. This cluster frames AI companies as criminals and parasites (e.g. *"internet-age magpies"*, AI firms – *"robbing"* creators).

AI as INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION. In August 2025 the Guardian cited Demis Hassabis saying *"...we're in modern civilisation. The difference here is, it's going to be 10 times bigger than the Industrial Revolution, and maybe 10 times faster."*[5] that structures AI's social impact as a transformation of a scale of the Industrial Revolution. The historical transformation frame serves important rhetorical functions in legitimizing AI which becomes implicitly inevitable. This shares with the National force frame are one of the important ideological effects of AI metaphorical representation: it promotes AI adoption as a historical necessity rather than political choice.

It is worth mentioning that in all these cases there is no agency as human decision-makers are removed from AI narratives: races run themselves, tides rise and fall, creatures act on instinct, revolutions occur. As a result, AI itself is framed as a primary agent. The effacement of human agency thus appears the most significant ideological effect identified in this study. Another thing to be mentioned is that in our corpus there are no articles framing AI as existential risk equal to nuclear threat [23], but we have also observed a recurring blurring of the boundary between present AI capabilities and fictional futures.

The analysis showed that the mentioned clusters of metaphors are not just rhetorical devices. When journalists write of AI *"racing ahead"*, of companies *"flooding"* the market, or algorithms *"devouring"* content, of a new *"industrial revolution"* or of tech firms as *"magpies"* and *"thieve"*, they are not using decoration, but create ideologically loaded cognitive frames that shape public perception and social legitimation of enthusiasm and fear around AI. Future research may be devoted to examination of how metaphorical frames evolve as AI develops employing reader-response methods to assess the cognitive and political effect on audience and

of course comparative research between different countries / languages may provide interesting data on differences in metaphorical repertoires.

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