COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CORONAVIRUS METAPHORIC REPRESENTATION IN CHINESE AND RUSSIAN ONLINE MEDIA

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Abstract

This article aims at comparing the coronavirus metaphorical image in the online media of China and Russia. A metaphor is viewed as a cognitive frame within the discourse. The study was conducted on 750 Chinese and 1000 Russian headlines and leads of news reports about the coronavirus. General results show that the virus images in the two countries are based on similar metaphorical models, but the quantitative analysis of metaphors and metaphorical entailments indicate significant differences in the virus image that media creates. The coronavirus in the Chinese media generally images an enemy that should be fought and can be defeated, which helps to cool down public opinion. The Russian media discourse on the other hand treats the coronavirus as a dangerous surprise enemy, giving no suggestions on 'how it can be won'.

Keywords: coronavirus; WAR metaphor; media discourse; metaphorical model; discourse metaphor; Chinese media

Povzetek

Cilj članka je primerjati metaforično podobo novega koronavirusa v spletnih medijih Kitajske in Rusije. Metaforo prevzemamo kot kognitivni okvir v diskurzu. Študija je zajela 750 naslovov in vodil prispevkov o koronavirusu za kitajski jezik in 1000 ustreznic za ruski jezik. Splošni rezultati kažejo, da predstave o novem koronavirusu v obeh državah temeljijo na podobnih metaforičnih modelih, vendar kvantitativna analiza metafor in metaforičnih rab kaže na pomembne razlike v podobi virusa, ki jo ustvarjajo mediji. Novi koronavirus v kitajskih medijih v splošnem predstavlja sovražnika, s katerim se je treba boriti in ga je moč tudi premagati, kar pomaga umiriti javno mnenje. Ruski medijski diskurz po drugi strani novi koronavirus obravnava kot nevarnega, nepričakovanega sovražnika in ne ponudi nasvetov, 'kako ga je mogoče osvojiti'.

Ključne besede: novi koronavirus; metafora VOJNA; medijski diskurz; metaforični model; metafore v diskurzu; kitajski mediji

1   Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic that broke out around the world in the first half of 2020 has become a landmark event in world politics and economics. The virus, appearing in the Chinese Wuhan city, not only spread to all countries of the world, causing many human deaths but also 'infected' the world economy, crashing stock markets and influencing world politics, leading to mutual accusations between countries and giving rise to conspiracy theories.

At the same time, the main channel for disseminating information about the virus and all its consequences is the media. The mass media discourse creates in the public opinion a certain image of the disease, forming an attitude towards it. Information about the virus transmitted by the media correlates with the existing cognitive structures, acquires new conceptual features through them and, as a result, starting to categorize within people's minds. Categorization of some phenomenon within the consciousness, in many respects, forms the attitude towards this phenomenon.

In addition, it is the media that largely reflects government policy to combat the virus, and China is a good example of such a case. Well known that PRC became the first country that faced the virus threat, and finally, it was China that demonstrated high efficiency in combating the pandemic within its country (Kalinin, 2020, p. 35).

In the Russian Federation, the fight against coronavirus has not been so successful. Faced with the disease in late spring 2020, the Russian government was able to carry out several measures that led to the localization of the virus, which made it possible to prevent a large-scale epidemic. However, over time, the disease spread to the entire territory of Russia, which is largely because the Russians poorly followed the prescribed measures of social distancing and self-isolation. It is considered Russian mass media also played an important role in this. The representation of the image of the virus corresponded to the national character, but, unfortunately, did not lead to the mobilization of the Russian people at the right time to face the pandemic.

2   Problem statement and theoretical background

There are many approaches to identifying the image of an event in media texts, but the most relevant to the objective of our study is a cognitive-discursive approach. As Popova and Sternin note, "a word is a means of access to the conceptual knowledge" (Popova & Sternin, 2007, p. 79). At the same time, it is known that the word 'acquires life' in discourse, which means that cognitive structures are manifested mainly through discursive practices. The cognitive-discursive approach makes it possible to combine the study of ideologically determined discourse models with the form of their conceptualization (Hart, 2011; Hart & Lukes, 2007; Wodak, 2006). Wodak stresses the importance of cognitive research "as a mediator between discourse and society since

the processes of production and understanding of a text depend on cognitive models and frameworks that are associated with social stereotypes and prejudices in the consciousness of the information recipient" (Wodak, 2006, p. 182).

The process of metaphorization also plays a significant role in the representation of the virus in discourse. When the message author transfers the features of a virus (target domain) to other areas (source domain), he, without a doubt, affects the deep cognitive structures of readers, having a powerful effect on forming the image.

The theoretical background of this work is the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Kövecses, 2016; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), as well as the Discursive Theory of Metaphor (Hülsse, 2003; Walter & Helmig, 2005). In addition, we also used some works on critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Simpson et al., 2018a; Weiss & Wodak, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2009) and a critical metaphor analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004; Simpson et al., 2018).

The main task of CDA (critical discourse analysis is to identify and describe discursive metaphorical models within extralinguistic factors. The focus of the research in such an approach shifts from the processes of the metaphorical models' formation to the impact that these metaphors have on the collective consciousness.

The theory of Critical Metaphor Analysis, which formed the basis of the research method of the same name (Critical Metaphor Analysis), belongs to Charteris-Black (Charteris-Black, 2004). By analyzing the discursive metaphorical models, the researcher seeks to reveal the implicit information that the author of the text puts into it. This method applies to the analysis of various languages and was further developed in theoretical and applied aspects (Li, 2016; Simpson et al., 2018; Kalinin, 2019).

Research in the field of a discursive approach to metaphor was initiated by German linguists Walter, Helmig and Hülsse (Hülsse, 2003; Walter & Helmig, 2005). They paid attention to the fact that metaphor is not only a cognitive phenomenon but also a social one. The metaphor reflects certain categorization structures, expressed implicitly, which influence the reflection of the reality in consciousness (Hülsse, 2003, p. 236).

Zinken understands discursive metaphor as "a relatively stable metaphorical projection that functions as a keyframe within a certain discourse for some time" (Zinken et al., 2008, p. 245). Thus, to classify a metaphor as discursive, it is necessary to have each of the following criteria: length in time, stability, frame character, and relatedness to a certain discourse.

This research is based on understanding the dual nature of metaphor: metaphor functions as a cognitive and as a discursive phenomenon. Metaphoric projections within the media discourse can have a significant impact on the construction of public opinion and the representation of socio-political processes in the collective identity of citizens of a particular country. The critical analysis of the discursive metaphorical models of coronavirus in the Chinese and Russian online media will make it possible to

confirm this thesis and make a small contribution to the development of a holistic theory of discursive metaphor.

3   Research questions

In the light of the above-described theoretical background, it can be assumed that the coronavirus image is a stable metaphor that functions as a keyframe within a media discourse. This metaphoric frame is both a cognitive and social phenomenon, connected with the formation of public opinion, and in the case of coronavirus, this metaphoric image can have a certain impact on the spread of the pandemic.

In this regard, this study will test the following hypothesis:

The representation of the coronavirus in Chinese and Russian online media is a discursive metaphor, the content of metaphor models varies depending on extralinguistic factors.

4   Purpose of the study

In this regard, the main purpose of this study is to analyze the metaphorical representation of coronavirus in the Chinese and Russian media and to identify it as a discursive frame through its relationship with extralinguistic factors. The following research tasks were consistently solved.

- To conduct content analysis of news headlines and leads in Chinese and Russian online media discourse.
- To identify the main metaphorical models used to represent the new coronavirus.
- To establishing the content of the WAR metaphor and its entailments for the Chinese and Russian media discourses.[1]
- To compare the results obtained for mass media discourses in Chinese and Russian.

Such an analysis will allow not only to get an idea of how the new virus's image is formed in the mass media discourse of China and Russia but will also help to understand the role of the media in the fight against the viral pandemic.

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[1] A small digression should be made to clarify the term 'metaphoric entailment'. Kovecses points out: "The source domain often projects onto the target domain additional meanings that go beyond the basic meaning" (Kövecses, 2005, p. 7). These additional meanings are called conceptual metaphor entailments.

5   Research methods

To confirm the hypothesis, 750 headlines and leads (1-2 sentences at the beginning of a news article, which usually fully reflect the content of all articles) of news messages in Chinese were analyzed. Every day from January 21 to March 10, 2020, the period when the virus outspread in China was the largest, were randomly examined 15 news stories. The main sources for this news reports were leading online media in China, materials are available through a news aggregator Baidu, for example, Téngxùn wǎng 腾讯网, Rénmín rìbào 人民日报, Quánjǐng wǎng 全景网, Huánqiú wǎng 环球网 or Xīnhuá shè 新华社.

The material for analysis in Russian was presented by 945 news reports during the period from April 12 to June 14, 2020, where we also selected 15 random news messages on the topic of coronavirus daily. For the Russian language, a longer time interval was chosen compared to the Chinese language, due to the later time of the disease outspread into the territory of the Russian Federation and, accordingly, the later moment of stabilization of the situation. The main source for these news reports was the leading online media in Russia, whose materials are available through a news aggregator Yandex, for example, RIA News, RBK, Interfax, TASS.

It is worth mentioning that only news articles reported just domestic situations were selected for analysis.

The research method consisted of several consecutive steps:

1. A quantitative content analysis was conducted in the AntConc program (Anthony, 2013). We made a list of the most common words and collocations for the keyword 病毒 bìngdú 'virus'.

2. A qualitative content analysis aimed at analyzing keyword collocations and identifying the most popular metaphorical models of the virus image.

3. A linguo-cognitive analysis of media messages' headlines and leads conducted to identify metaphorical models of the virus image.

Such a sequence of the practical tasks fully meets the requirements of discursive-cognitive research and makes it possible not only to gain an understanding of the virus image content in mass media discourse but also to reveal the deep differences in cognitive modeling of this image in the consciousness of a mass addressee. By researching on the text-to-cognitive metaphorical models' principle, we move from semantics to cognitive, from content to understanding.

It should also be noted that in the metaphorical models' analysis, one of the most difficult stages is the identification of metaphors in the text. In our work, we relied on the MIP VU method developed at Metaphor Lab (Deignan, 2015). This method is a multi-stage procedure based on comparing the textual and basic meanings of lexemes

to identify so-called metaphorical tension. It is conducted through the dictionary meanings and the use of the lexeme in the national language corpora.

6   Findings

As a result of analysis of 750 news reports in Chinese and 945 news reports in Russian, the four most distinctive metaphorical models of the coronavirus in the media discourse of China and Russia are identified: VIRUS is an ENEMY (FIGHT against a virus is a WAR), VIRUS is a LIVING BEING, VIRUS is a NATURAL DISASTER, VIRUS is a FEAR. For the Chinese language, a total of 611 metaphors were identified, in the media discourse of the Russian language, a total of 504 metaphors were identified.

First of all, it is worth noting that Russian news reports contained less metaphors. On average, there were 0.814 metaphors per news item surveyed in Chinese and only 0.53 in Russian.

The quantitative and percentage distribution of the identified models by source areas is presented in Figure 1.
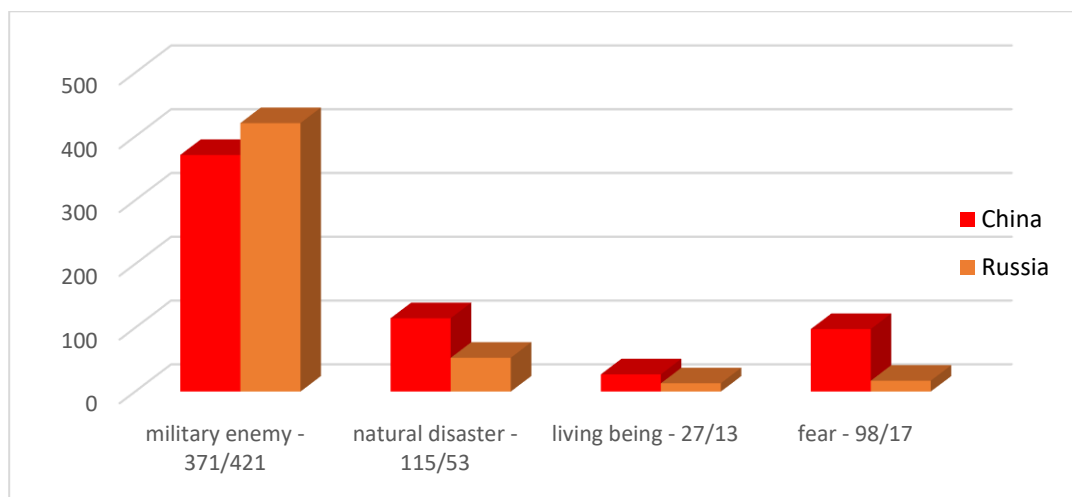
Figure 1: Frequency of the virus metaphorical models in Chinese and Russian online media discourses

The percentage of the identified metaphorical models for the Chinese and Russian media discourses is presented in Figure 2.
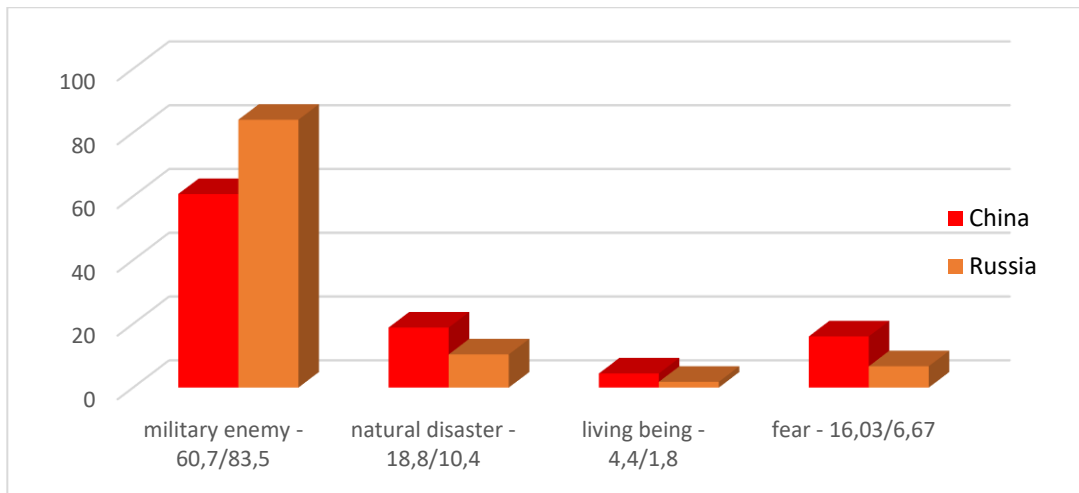
Figure: Percentage ratio of the virus metaphorical models in Chinese and Russian online media discourses

First, it should be noted that the composition of metaphorical models for both languages and the quantitative distribution of these models are quite similar, with obvious differences, which are primarily visible in the distribution of the metaphors of WAR and FEAR, which is implicitly related to the sociocultural context. Let us take a closer look at the similarities and differences.

Metaphors of war are often used to describe various epidemics, pandemics, and diseases: cancer (Camus, 2009), AIDS (Sandahl, 2001), H1N1 (Larson et al., 2005), Ebola (Trčková, 2015), SARS (Washer, 2004) and others. The reason for using the metaphors of war is that during a pandemic, people strive to fight it, and it is a war that is the extreme form of confrontation.

For the Chinese media, the metaphorical model with the WAR source domain has the largest share, that is 60.7% of all metaphors. The means of verbalizing metaphors are military terms such as 抗击 kàngjī 'to counterattack, to fight back'; 动员 dòngyuán 'to mobilize'; 消灭 xiāomiè 'destroy, liquidate'; 杀灭 shāmiè 'to destroy, to kill', 预防 yùfáng 'to prevent', 打击 dǎjī 'to strike', 打赢 dǎyíng 'to win' and others. It should be noted, however, that the term 打赢 dǎyíng 'to win' began to prevail in headlines since mid-February, when the situation with the epidemic began to improve significantly. In this context, the neologism 战疫 zhànyì 'war against the pandemic' (27 appearances) is also worth mentioning.

For the metaphor 'the FIGHT against the VIRUS is a WAR' in the discourse of the Chinese mass media, 6 entailments were identified, the quantitative and percentage distribution of which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The WAR metaphor entailments in the Chinese online media discourse

Entailmnet	Number	Proportion (%)
Fighting the virus is protecting against the enemy	117	31,53
Fighting the virus is attacking the enemy	105	28,30
Medical workers are war heroes	72	19,41
The fight against the virus is a common war	29	7,82
China is a battlefield	32	8,62
Patients are victims of war	5	4,31

As we can see, most of the WAR metaphors are associated with active hostilities: attack and defense. The metaphor of protection from a virus and an attack on it is practically identical in quantitative terms. Also, the model of MEDICAL WORKERS are HEROES stands out clearly, and the model linking victims of the virus with victims of hostilities is not very popular.

The metaphorical model with the WAR source domain in Russian media discourse was even more popular, it was encountered 421 times out of 504 metaphors, which accounted for 83.5% of all metaphors. The military vocabulary used in leads and headlines is represented by the following words: война 'war', победа 'victory', враг 'enemy', атака 'attack', мобилизация 'mobilization', удары 'strikes', умереть 'die', герой 'hero', линия фронта 'front line', фронт 'front', поле боя 'battlefield', битва 'battle', нападение 'attack', штаб 'headquarters for the fight'.

It is worth noting that in the Russian media, the war terms were more obvious in use, military metaphors often appeared in the headline of the news. For example, 'Doctors are more important in the war than generals', 'The market withstood the attack of the coronavirus'. In most cases, the coronavirus was presented as an attacking adversary against which Russians are forced to defend themselves. Sometimes there were even allusions to reports from the front lines of World War II: 'the coronavirus wasn't able to defeat the 96-year-old veteran of the Great Patriotic War'.

The WAR metaphor entailments in Russian media are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The WAR metaphor entailments in the Russian online media discourse

Entailmnet	Number	Proportion (%)
Fighting the virus is protecting against the enemy	168	45,28
Fighting the virus is attacking the enemy	53	14,28
Medical workers are war heroes	107	28,84
The fight against the virus is a common war	15	4,04
Russia is a battlefield	9	2,42
Patients are victims of war	69	18,59

In the distribution of the WAR metaphors entailments in Russian online media discourse, we see a slightly different picture. Almost half of the metaphors are associated with protection from the enemy (45.3%), the metaphors of attack are much less. It means that the virus is perceived as a suddenly attacked enemy from which it is necessary to defend, while the means of this defense are still unclear. It is also worth highlighting a rather high percentage of metaphors for medical heroes and victims of the 'war' against the virus.

Numerous metaphors in the Chinese media belonged to the 'VIRUS - NATURAL DISASTER' model: 18% of all identified metaphors. In this case, the virus is perceived as a kind of dangerous emergency. Sometimes this metaphorical model was based on specific comparisons with a hurricane (3 times) or an earthquake (4 times), but most often the press used lexemes 天灾 tiānzāi 'natural disaster, force majeure', 灾害 zāihài 'disaster', 灾难 zāinàn 'disaster'.

In Russian media discourse, this metaphorical model occupied about 10% of all metaphors, the metaphor of a natural disaster was not distinguished by its concretization and was most often based on the lexeme бедствие 'disaster'. For example, 'no one saw in the fog of the future such a disaster as the coronavirus pandemic', 'although the coronavirus epidemic hit the travel market as a natural disaster'.

The metaphoric mapping 'VIRUS is a FEAR' was singled out into a separate metaphorical model, since in this case, the basis for the transfer was only the consequence 'the appearance of fear', while the source of fear was not mentioned in any way. Such metaphors in the Chinese-language discourse accounted for 16% of all metaphorical models, and the number of uses of this metaphor was 98 cases. For example, 担忧之时 dānyōu zhī shí 'in times of alarm', 是人类最害怕最讨厌的病毒之一 shì rénlèi zuì hàipà zuì tǎoyàn de bìngdú zhī yī 'is one of the most frightening and hated viruses'.

For Russian discourse, this metaphorical model did not take a significant place. We have identified only 17 such metaphors, they were based on the lexemes: страх 'fear', беспокойство 'anxiety', страшный сон 'bad dream', боязнь 'fear'.

The least frequent metaphorical model for both discourses is the metaphor VIRUS - LIVING BEING. In the Chinese language material, the number of such metaphors was - 27, and in Russian - 13, which in percentage terms was 4.4% and 2.57%, respectively. This group included all metaphorical models that are associated with the mechanisms of personification and comparison with humans or animals, real and mythological. For example, 疫情肆虐 yìqíng sìnüè 'an epidemic is raging', 病毒虽然凶猛 bìngdú suīrán xiōngměng 'although the virus is ferocious'. Understanding a viral infection through something living largely reflects the mythological features of Chinese culture. In the Russian media discourse, the medical metaphor of 'cough' was used to create the

image of the virus as a living being 'the coronavirus coughs on the economy'. You can also distinguish the expressions 'coronavirus imposes a death sentence', 'coronavirus fury'.

7   Discussion

The image of the coronavirus in the PRC online media is mainly formed through the metaphors of war, natural disaster, and fear. The virus is represented as an enemy, and the fight against it becomes a war. At the same time, the virus is a natural enemy that causes fear and anxiety. However, the dominance of military metaphors forms an idea that this virus can not only be fought but can also be defeated. Thus, the virus is described as not so terrible, not very dangerous, and not always deadly, and bringing not so disastrous consequences. At the same time, the fight against coronavirus requires the mobilization of the efforts for the entire nation, it is connected with the protection from an external enemy, which is very similar to the traditional Chinese model of 'responding to external challenges'. Thus, the fight against coronavirus presupposes active and concerted actions by both the government and the nation, which, according to the media agenda, must 'strike' and 'defeat the virus'.

The representation of the virus image in Russian online media is based on similar metaphorical models, however, the quantitative distribution of metaphors, as well as the difference in metaphorical entailments, indicate significant differences in this image. For the Russian media discourse, the coronavirus is some surprise and unexpected enemy, an enemy that is quite dangerous, causing many deaths. The Russian mass media also pay great attention to the 'attacks' of the virus on the economy, healthcare system, international relations, but not to the 'counterattacks' of Russia against the virus. The fight with the virus in the Russian media space is presented as a 'defensive war', which consists of taking all the necessary measures, but it is not yet clear how it can be won.

The use of the WAR metaphor, which is quite distinctive for the representation of mass disease, was also different in the discourses of the two countries. In China, the following strategy of combating the disease is traced: 'first defense, then attack and finally the victory'. The 'war against the virus' is viewed as a national war, which has its heroes, while the victims of the war are not reported, so as not to cause unnecessary panic and not interfere with the conduct of the war itself.

In Russia, the militaristic tone of the news report aimed at combating the virus within the country is more distinctive, but the metaphor modeling in Russian news did not imply an active attack on the virus, the results of the virus attack on the country and its citizens were mostly postulated, and active measures were not proposed to confront the enemy. While the Russian media promoted containment measures to avoid a wave of mass infection, these kind of news reports were minimally metaphorical, and were

more like a list of recommendations rather than a call to action. It is also worth noting that the significant number of mentions of victims of the virus attack and the weak manifestation of the 'COUNTRY is a BATTLEFIELD' metaphor model led to the fact that the people, realizing the problem, did not understand its scale, did not heed the calls for mobilizing efforts to combat the pandemic. The Russian media did not create a unified image of the virus as an enemy that can be defeated, it was simply an 'attacker, attacking enemy', and the attempts to mobilize the nation were not fully implemented.

Thus, we are dealing with two models of the formation of public opinion about threats to social stability within two cultural and political systems. In the PRC, the political power has a resource for the general mobilization of the people's efforts to combat the threat and the rapid mobilization of public opinion, as well as to prevent panic among the population. In Russia, the media also chose military terms to describe the pandemic, which is close to the national character of the Russian people, who are accustomed to unity in the face of the external enemy. However, due to the lack of a single agreed information agenda, the image of the enemy was not fully formed, so the people did not perceive the fight against the virus as a 'national war'.

It should be noted that the use of the strategy of covering the virus outspread in the PRC was coordinated with the real actions of the authorities. Formation of the image of the virus was one of the directions of the fight against the pandemic, while in Russia the authorities and the media were more likely to act on their own, which led to the fact that the image of the virus in the Russian media did not help to defeat the disease, on the contrary, it might have even caused an escalation of the pandemic.

8   Conclusion

A study of the representation of coronavirus in Chinese and Russian media made it possible to compare the models of the virus image representation in the PRC and the Russian Federation which is a stable metaphor that functions as a keyframe within a media discourse.

The results of our study confirmed the role of metaphor in reflecting the surrounding reality, as well as in the formation critical views on it. The metaphor of coronavirus in the media course is a discursive metaphor that reflects relevant extralinguistic factors - both cultural and social features.

For Chinese online media discourse, it is 'responding to external challenges', for Russian – 'defensive war against external enemy'. The research showed the media strategy for representing the pandemic in China, which is traced 'defense – attack - victory', but in Russian online media, a unified image of the virus was not created. We can assume that this kind of difference anyhow connected with the spread of the disease in the countries.

Thus, metaphorical mappings within the media discourse, which are detailed discursive metaphors, have a significant impact on the construction of public opinion.

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