

## METAPHORS OF CORONAVIRUS IN CONTEMPORARY MEDIA

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the universal metaphorical models of coronavirus in Belarusian, Russian, and English based on the contemporary mediatexts. Such models as “aggressor”, “war”, “fire”, “plague”, and “wave” are manifested and analysed. Comparing the three languages, the author reveals similarity based on common cognitive settings. At the same time some deeper conclusions are made concerning metaphorical reframing of reality and consciousness. The author provides translation of the Belarusian and Russian metaphors thus making practical solutions for media texts translation.

**Keywords:** mediatext; metaphor; metaphorical model; M-model; metaphorical reframing; coronavirus.

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Linguistic literature pays great attention to the problem of metaphor – both as a process that creates new meanings of language expressions in the process of rethinking them, and as a ready-made result of metaphorization of meaning, because, according to A. Richards, a metaphor is the ubiquitous principle of language [1, p. 17].

The greatest range of functions is characteristic of a metaphor in a natural language, where it creates names that are capable of identifying existing objects, forming new meanings that display abstract concepts (conceptual metaphor), displaying the mark “glued” with description and the emotional-evaluative attitude of the subject to what is metaphorically displayed. A metaphor is an attribute of artistic speech, where it participates in the creation of an individual author’s vision of the world [2, p. 5] and serves an aesthetic, rather than informative, purpose.

Metaphors in languages do not only illustrate the basic concepts of understanding the world but also react immediately to the changes in real life. While new objects and notions appear, metaphor as a global language principle serves the main mechanism for new meanings formation [3]. At the same time, referring to the linguistic and cultural experience of the people, new metaphors are not taken out of the window – the usually follow regular models existing in the taken linguistic culture.

Today when the world is facing the novel coronavirus, authors of media texts tend to apply regular metaphorical models to characterize and evaluate this disease, having studied recent mediatexts we have revealed a number of metaphorical models used to represent the spread of coronavirus. Let us consider these below on the mediatexts examples from three languages – Belarusian, Russian and English.

The first and definitely universal tendency is personification. For all cultures since ancient times, natural disasters, incurable diseases, and social maladies have been regularly compared to actors – empowered with human-like abilities to walk, fight and kill. In this relation, we consider a group of metaphors based on model “coronavirus is an aggressor” which is created with collocations containing components with meaning ‘invade’, ‘fight’, ‘offend’. These metaphors are close to war metaphors: “coronavirus is the foe”, “preventing coronavirus is war”. We come across “aggressor” metaphors in all the considered languages: *Коронавирус COVID-19 захватил популярные среди украинцев курорты* ‘Coronavirus has **invaded** the Ukrainian resorts’. *Коронавирус захватил Италию* ‘Coronavirus has **invaded** Italy’. *Смертельный вирус атаковал более 30 стран Европы* ‘The deadly virus has **attacked** more than 30 countries’. *Коронавирус-«убийца» атаковал мир* ‘Coronavirus-

*killer has attacked the world*'. *Коронавирус набросился на спорт* 'Coronavirus has struck sports'.

As the metaphor develops, there's a big amount of war metaphors relating to coronavirus as a dangerous foe that has to be diminished: *Польскія ўлады рыхтуюцца да вайны з каронавірусам* 'Polish government wages war on coronavirus'. *Ці гатовая Беларусь да змагання з каронавірусам?* 'Is Belarus ready to fight with coronavirus?' *Война с коронавірусом урегулювала палітычны крызіс* 'War on coronavirus helped to regulate the political crisis'. *At the Pentagon, figuring out how to respond to the coronavirus has been a stop-and-go mission. A nurse on the frontline of Italy's coronavirus outbreak has described the experience as "war-like" / described the onslaught as a "world war."* It has to be noted that people tend to appeal to metaphors when they have to explain something unknown or want to restructure something complicated in simpler terms. Accordingly, metaphor can be used as means of metaphorical reframing – manipulating the recipient's consciousness. In public speaking, war metaphors can be used to promote negative and active reaction to the virus expansion, to spur action among the people: *Americans can come together to fight coronavirus. The crisis we face from the coronavirus is on a scale of a major war, and we must act accordingly*. In these examples we can reveal the pragmatic intention of the sender.

If we deal with emotion metaphors, we will see that war and fire have much in common. The same is true for destruction metaphors and metaphors of severe illness (which kills and burns from inside). Some components (e.g. *outburst*, *outbreak*) are not seen as metaphorical now, but collocations with words *fire*, *flames* still carry a lot of connotation: *the explosive spread of coronavirus; coronavirus outbreak. Успышка загадкавага каронавіруса пачалася ў кітайскім горадзе Ухань у снежні 2019 года* 'An outburst of the mysterious virus...'. *Из-за вспышки коронавируса церемония зажигания Олимпийского огня для Игр в Токио проходила без зрителей* 'Due to the virus

*outbreak...*'. *It's now or never for the U.S. if it hopes to keep coronavirus from burning out of control. We call on all countries to use the window of opportunity we have to prevent a bigger fire. Instead of damping down the flames of the coronavirus outbreak, his Oval Office address on Wednesday poured fuel on them.* As we see from the examples, "fire" metaphor is quite popular for describing the spread and danger of the virus.

As we described tactics of metaphorical reframing before, one should understand that this strategy is used as a means of explaining a complicated situation in reality (or imaginary situation) using linguistic tools. At the same time, the connotation of these tools will implement pragmatic intentions into the communicational process molding the recipient's picture of the subject. Interesting enough, strong emotions and basic fears return people to primitive thinking and actions. Metaphors do not only help us explain the reality – they might help to escape reality and treat fears serving as a means of trauma therapy. And the following example proves this idea: *Coronavirus effigy burned to ashes in Holika Bonfire in Mumbai*.

Close to lexicalized metaphors *outbreak* and *outburst* come collocations with *wave*. We do not claim these metaphors to be of strong connotation but still it is important to establish similarities in metaphorical modeling (and – consequently – collocations) in the tree languages. As the study shows, all the languages appeal to metaphors *new wave*, *first wave*, *second/next wave*: *Осенью 2020 года ожидается вторая волна эпидемии* 'The second wave of the epidemics is expected in fall 2020'. *Китай уже сдержал первую волну на своей территории к началу марта* 'China had stopped the first wave on its territory by March'. *Ангела Меркель считает, что следует ожидать новой волны эпидемии коронавируса* 'Angela Merkel considers the possibility of a new wave of coronavirus'. *2 charts show how the coronavirus is spreading faster outside China, and the next wave of catastrophe could be across Europe. South Korea hopes its coronavirus epidemic has peaked – but there's risk of a "second wave"*.

And the last quite regular metaphorical model used to describe the spread and harm of the coronavirus is “coronavirus is the plague”: *Коронавирус – чума 21 века* ‘coronavirus is the plague of the 21<sup>st</sup> century’. *Расея прыраўняла каронавірус да чумы* ‘Russia has equated coronavirus to the plague’; *the novel coronavirus as a “modern plague”*. Developing the idea of how the language transforms the reality, we should mention a very interesting logical chain. First, coronavirus is compared to the plague, next – people get interested in the plague. As the result, the spread of coronavirus made *The Plague* (La Peste) by Albert Camus one of the most popular novels to be bought.

So, as the research shows, there are universal metaphorical models of coronavirus as aggressor, fire, war, and plague. All these

meanings are used in Belarusian, Russian and English which testifies to common cognitive processes of all nations. Another important conclusion is that metaphorical reframing can be used to appeal to public’s consciousness and to deal with primitive fears creating reality reenactment in terms of language.

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