

Metaphorical COVID-19 Concepts: A Corpus Pragmatics Study

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المفاهيم المجازية لكوفيد-١٩ : دراسة تداولية بيانية

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the way pragmatics and corpus linguistics can benefit from each other through tackling metaphorical language. The metaphors of COVID-19 and how they can be analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively in the realm of corpus pragmatics analysis will be focused on. Significantly, the basic aim of the paper is to shed light on the very nature and use of metaphorical concepts, particularly their pragmatic functions. Moreover, the paper seeks to uncover the fundamental similarities between pragmatics as a linguistic discipline and metaphor as a linguistic tool, since both represent the essence of a hidden or implied meaning. Pragmatic theory views metaphor as a speech act. In other words, a speaker is using signs with a literal meaning to create a new intentional structure which has no literal meaning. To answer the research questions set by the paper, the study adopts a corpus pragmatic analysis in order to trace the recent spread of metaphorical language concerning COVID-19. The combination of pragmatics and corpus linguistics in this study led to

ملخص:

يدرس هذا البحث امكانية التعاون بين علم التداولية وعلم اللغة البياني ليستفيد كل منهما من الاخر في تناول اللغة المجازية. التركيز في هذا البحث سيكون على التعبيرات المجازية المستخدمة للإشارة الى مرض كوفيد-19 وامكانية تحليلها تحليلًا نوعيًا وكميًا في مجال التحليل التداولي البياني. ان الهدف الاساسي من هذا البحث هو تسليط الضوء على طبيعة واستخدام التعبيرات المجازية وبالأخص وظائفها التداولية. اضافة الى ذلك، يسعى البحث لإظهار التشابهات بين التداولية والتعبيرات المجازية كأداة تحليل لغوي حيث ان كليهما يهتم بالمعاني الضمنية ان النظرية التداولية تتعامل مع التعبيرات المجازية كفعل لفظي، بمعنى اخر فإن المتكلم يستخدم العناصر اللغوية بمعناها الحرفي لخلق بنية قصدية جديدة بعيدة عن المعنى الحرفي. وللإجابة على التساؤلات المطروحة بهذا البحث تبنى الباحث تحليل تداولي بياني لتتبع التعبيرات المجازية التي تم استخدامها مؤخرًا للإشارة الى كوفيد-19. ان المزج بين التداولية وعلم اللغة البياني في هذه الدراسة نتج عنه استخدام منهجية مستمدة من كلا الفرعين من علم اللغة. واثبتت التحليلات البيانية للتعبيرات المجازية عدم وجود تطابق بين الوظيفة والشكل حيث ان الافعال الكلامية واستراتيجيات التلطيف في حالة تغير مستمر بضوء السياق الذي توضع به. وان التعبيرات المجازية المستخدمة تستند في اغلبها على الكلمة المنقاة والمعنى المرجعي الذي استخدمت لأجله. ومن ابرز التعبيرات المجازية المستخدمة في الاشارة الى هذا الوباء هي تعابير الحرب والنار حيث نعبر الاكثر ملائمة والاكثر تنوع بالإشارة الى الوباء وطرق مكافحته. لذا،

the use of methodologies from both fields. Regarding metaphorical concepts, the corpus analysis proves that there is no one-to-one relation between form and function. The speech acts as well as the politeness strategies are in constant change in accordance with their context. Yet, the metaphors expressed are most frequently based on the choice of words and their accompanying referential meaning. Most notably, the 'War Metaphors' and the 'Fire Metaphors' have been particularly appropriate and versatile in reference to the pandemic and the process of combatting it. Therefore, this research also attempts to discuss the different types of metaphors used referring to the pandemic from a corpus pragmatics perspective.

Keywords: Corpus, Corpus Pragmatics, Covid-19, Pragmatics, Metaphor.

1. Introduction:

Pragmatic research is interested in what is said and what is unsaid and the interplay between the two are mostly conducted in a qualitative way based on careful horizontal reading of a limited number of texts within the context they appear in. As for corpus linguistics the work is done differently, that is, in a vertical analysis of a huge number of texts to go through as much data as possible. That is the reason that made researchers

يسعى هذا البحث ايضا الى عرض الانواع المختلفة من التعابير المجازية المستخدمة للإشارة الى الوباء من منظور تداولي بياني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علم البيانات اللغوية، التداولية، علم التداولية البياني، التعبير المجازي، كوفيد-١٩..

view pragmatics and corpus linguistics as "parallel fields but are often mutually exclusive" (Romero-Trillo, 2008: 2).

However, in the last few years, a new tendency has arisen based on common grounds between pragmatics and corpus linguistics which led to the introduction of a new field "corpus pragmatics". The rise of the new field is evident in the publication of a number of studies in edited collections such as Felder et al, 2011; Taavitsainen et al, 2014; Aijmer & Ruhlemann, 2015; and a new journal entitled corpus pragmatics in an attempt to make benefit of the collaboration between the two fields. The new field has made benefit of both the horizontal method of reading adopted in pragmatics targeting and interpreting individual occurrences of a selected items within their context integrated with the vertical methodology adopted in corpus linguistics conducted through software digging through text samples for the frequency of occurrences of a selected item.

Regarding the previously presented studies concerning metaphor, it has been noted that semantic theories of metaphor has a setback of failing to distinguish metaphors from literal statements, on the one hand, and a pragmatic theory explaining metaphor as a speech act, on the other hand. Basically, a speaker employs signs with literal meaning to create a new intentional structure with no literal meaning. Hence, metaphors present a specific qualitative way of experiencing something and intuition is basic for their understanding.

Although the analysis of metaphorical language has been placed under scrutiny by a multitude of different authors under different perspectives, there has yet to be a corpus pragmatics study of the nature and use of metaphorical concepts, particularly their pragmatic functions. This research gap motivates the researcher to dig deeper into the pragmatics of metaphor especially in its active role during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has witnessed the increase of metaphorical language use.

Based on the aforementioned research gap, the study attempts to find an answer to the following:

- I. How is corpus pragmatics helpful in the identification of metaphorical language?

- II. Why is it important to discover patterns of authentic language use, such as the tracing of metaphorical language, through the analysis of actual usage?
- III. What are the main types of metaphors used in reference to the pandemic?
- IV. Why are metaphors used in the communication about different aspects of the pandemic?
- V. Why does the use of metaphorical language matter, particularly in the case of COVID-19?

To answer research questions, the researcher aims to accomplish the following:

- I. Shed light on the very nature and use of metaphorical concepts, particularly their pragmatic functions.
- II. Uncover the fundamental similarities between pragmatics as a linguistic discipline and metaphor as a linguistic tool, since both embody the essence of a hidden or implied meaning, especially since pragmatic theory explains metaphor as a speech act.
- III. Determine how a speaker may use signs with a literal meaning to create new, ideal intentional structure or paradigm which has no literal meaning.
- IV. Identify the ways by which corpus pragmatics may be insightful in understanding the different forms and functions of metaphorical language use.
- V. Discuss the different types of metaphors for the pandemic from a corpus pragmatics perspective.

Accordingly, the present study can be of great significance to linguists in general, as well as pragmaticians, applied linguists, and corpus linguists, in particular. The significance lies in the fact that it integrates corpus linguistics and pragmatics, i.e., the expansion of the horizon of linguistic research by allowing access to authentic data and showing frequency patterns of metaphorical words.

Moreover, the study is hoped to be of value in the pedagogical field since the patterns of metaphorical concepts can be used to improve language

materials or in teaching students how metaphorical language works. Therefore, the present study can be of benefit to teachers, students, and researchers since it gives special attention to the pragmatic aspects of metaphor in the corpora of language use.

2. Corpus Linguistics and Pragmatics

2.1 Corpora Defined

It has become a tendency in linguistics and the related disciplines to claim that their work is based on a corpus. To understand the term, it is needed to shed light on the different senses of the word. In the first sense, the term corpora may simply, denote an "electronically stored searchable collection of texts" (Jones & Waller, 2015: 5). According to Biber (1993) this is not a corpus in the strict sense of the word, but rather a large computerized collection of texts ranging from, at least, one hundred thousand word to trillions of words. Mostly it includes naturally occurring language not edited or elicited language. The language is often annotated in some form. The variability of language is a crucial problem facing the researchers. Language is infinite in its ability to create new words through the well-known word creation processes such as coinage, backformation, derivation, etc. it is also infinite in its historical dimension and in its social variation. Hence, covering the full range of variability is almost impossible and can never be established unless the corpus is continuously fed with the latest new forms occurring in the language.

A corpus is intended to be representative of language in general or any language variety. This point is critical since language as a whole will always exceed the bounds of any corpus no matter how huge it is intended to be. Therefore, it is necessary to direct attention to a sample of language which should be representative of a certain domain including "the full range of variability in a population" (Biber, 1993:243).

The effort to achieve representativeness may be the main reason for having "no spoken corpus since the spoken BNC(British National Corpus)1994 has reached its utility for research" (Love et al, 2017:324). Its representativeness also distinguishes it from a number of other spoken

corpora including the BNC2014; a large spoken corpus with 11.5 million words.

2.2 Corpus Linguistics

The history of corpus linguistics is very recent although the use of concordances for processing corpus information is considered, for Hunston (2002), as the basic way that can be traced back to the thirteenth century (O'Keeffe & McCarthy, 2010). Yet the introduction of corpus linguistics to the realm of research is made possible by the availability of computers since the second half of the previous century. The first electronic corpus to be compiled was in 1960s named the Brown Corpus with one million words representing a range of written genres (Francis & Kucera, 1979). Later on, due to the huge advances in computer technology which made it possible to store a great amount of data as well as a fast processing capability, corpora has rapidly made its way into linguistics leading to the starting point of corpus linguistic. Recently, corpora was made freely available online to everyone (Anderson & Corbett, 2010). Moreover, Google published a large-scale corpus "Google Ngram Viewer" an online resource with hundreds of millions of books in a number of languages (see Michel et al, 2011). Corpora was applied to a number of linguistic disciplines including lexicography, grammar, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, language teaching, literary studies, translation, forensic linguistics, and pragmatics (O'keeffe & McCarthy, 2010).

2.3 Pragmatics

It is widely acknowledged that the introduction of pragmatics is often traced back to the work of Morris (1938) who distinguished three dimension of semiosis, syntax denoting the relation of signs to one another; semantics denoting the relation of signs to objects or thoughts in the world; and pragmatics which represents the relation of signs to their users. Different aims underlie the three branches; semantics aims to find the meaning of signs in abstraction from the context in which they appear; and pragmatics foregrounds the circumstances in which the signs appear focusing on the signs, their users, as well as the situation of use. The main

point that distinguishes pragmatics from syntax and semantics, however, is that it is not concerned with well-established rules for sentences nor with inherent meanings of signs, instead, it is concerned with how language is used in actual communication.

According to Bublitz and Norrick (2011:4) "communication involves at least two parties, a speaker and a listener in spoken language, or writer and reader in written language". Consequently, pragmatics revolves around language use and its users as well as the interaction between them. The users of language are important because the people having an interaction can affect the way language is interpreted since people may or may not share different background knowledge, and depending on the type of knowledge being recalled the same words may be interpreted differently by different recipients. For this reason, communication is more complicated than the coding and the decoding of language; it involves complex processes such as differencing and interpretation.

Mey (1993:245) claims that pragmatics in this sense is "the art of the analysis of what is unsaid". Based on that, the fundamental question in pragmatics is "what does the speaker or writer mean by X and how is it interpreted by the listener or reader in a given situation? Thus, pragmatics can be defined as "the study of the use of context to make inferences about meaning" (Fasold,1990:119).

In the philosophy of language and linguistics, speech act is something expressed by an individual that not only presents information but performs an action as well. For example, the phrase: could you please pass me the salt?" is considered a speech act as it expresses the speaker's desire to acquire the salt, as well as presenting a request that someone passes the salt. Almost any speech act is really the performance of several acts at once, distinguished by different aspects of the speaker's intention. There is the act of saying something associated with what one does in saying it, such as requesting or promising, and how one is trying to affect one's audience. The contemporary use of the term goes back to J. L. Austin's development of performative utterances and his theory of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Speech acts serve their function once they are said or communicated. These are commonly taken to include

acts such as apologizing, promising, ordering, answering, requesting, complaining, warning, inviting, refusing, and congratulating (Horn and Ward, 2004).

2.4 The Amalgam: Corpus Pragmatics

Basically, corpus pragmatics is used to refer to the use of corpus linguistics in the study of pragmatics. It is a new concept, relatively, compared to the integration of corpus linguistics in other areas (Aijmer,2018:98). Much of the potential of corpora for pragmatics research has not even been realized. The reason underlying this under-performance is mostly ascribed to the fact that corpus linguistics deals with linguistic data in a bottom-up inductive way with the form being the starting point rather than the function. (Ruhlemann & Aijmer, 2015:21).

The idea here can be understood through an example, when a researcher wishes to look at language items representing vague concepts in a corpus will start with collecting a list of words or phrases associated with the function in pursuit and not the opposite direction. It is difficult to begin with the function, and then search for all its instances in the corpus. It is possible to systematically annotate the data as being vague. Therefore, the norm in corpus linguistics is to begin by looking at form-frequency results then map these forms to functions. The following are examples of corpus pragmatics studies working from form-to-function:

- A work by Bednarek (2008) exploring language and emotion.
- A systematic investigation of turn co-construction in conversations by Clancy and McCarthy (2015).
- A study by Clancy (2018) examining conflict episodes in family discourse.

In spite of its potentials, this approach bears a number of challenges when examining speech acts in a corpus. The whole matter comes down to, as Aijmer (2018) notes, its ability to recall instances of a certain function. Since the study of how language functions lies at the center of empirical pragmatics, it is necessary to reveal how corpus pragmatics can

accommodate both a form-to-function and a function-to-form approach to language corpora.

2.5 The Two Opposite Directions of Analysis

As discussed earlier, pragmatic research has successfully worked in the opposite direction to corpus linguistics, from function-to-form. The work adopting such tendency starts with a question about a specific pragmatic function aiming to find the forms usually associating that function. The reverse paths of both approaches is revealed in the figure below:

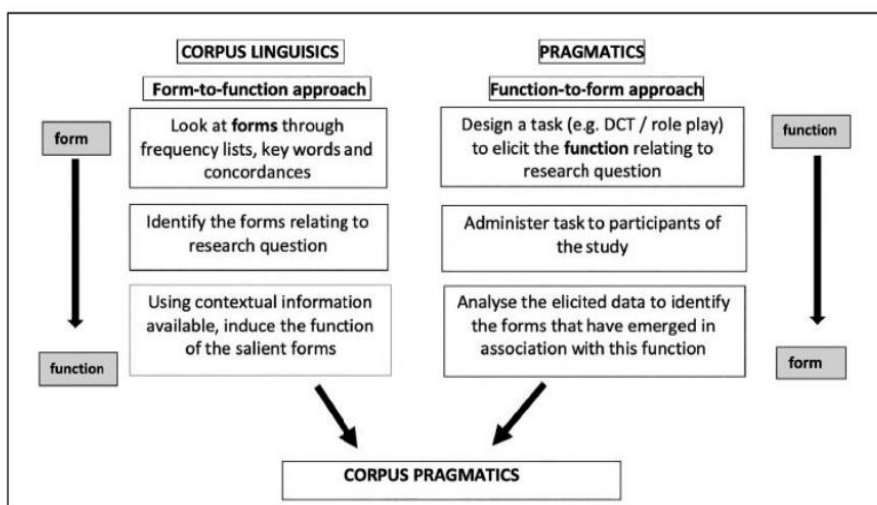


Figure 1: Form-to-function and Function-to-form approaches in corpus pragmatics

Within the corpus, many speech acts and other pragmatic phenomena are incorporated. The challenge in such approach is to retrieve those phenomena in a systematic way. Therefore, corpus pragmatics must pay more attention and focus to the way that enables the researcher of using corpus linguistic in pragmatic research. The key to achieving success in such approach is to avoid assuming the prevalence of form-to-function processes and to find ways to address the challenges facing function-to-form processes.

3. Metaphor Theory

Etymologically, the word "metaphor" is derived from the Greek "métaphora" where "meta-" means "among", "with", "between", or "after" and "-phora", means "to bear" or "to carry" so that the whole word "métaphora" means "carrying over the meaning of one word to another word" (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, 2019). Therefore, metaphor is a figurative use of language based on an implicit notion of resemblance. The whole concept of metaphor is viewed as a process of mapping one domain of knowledge onto another, one is the source and the other is the target. For example:

(1) John and his wife have called a truce.

The source domain is "war" and the target domain is marital dispute. Metaphor is viewed as a relatedness between word meanings, the literal meaning and the transferred one (Palmer, 1976: 66). Within a similar notion, Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 62) state that metaphor is deeply imbedded in one's thoughts, actions, and everyday language. So metaphor is seen as constituting the foundation of the conceptual system and can influence the way of communication.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 14-21) identify a large number of common metaphors asserting the significant role of "metaphor" in ordinary language. They view metaphor in terms of "Up-Down orientation". Culturally, the different directions have different implications, for instance, in the western, and even the eastern culture "up" holds positive concepts like "happiness and love", while down, on the contrary, holds negative implications such as "sad and loneliness". This gave rise to metaphorical concepts such as "high spirits".

Metaphor can be structural, oriental, ontological, container, and imaginative and creative. Structural metaphor denotes the idea that a concept can be structured metaphorically in the light of another as in "your argument is indefensible" which structures the concept of "verbal exchanges" in terms of "war". In oriental metaphor, a set of concepts is organized with respect to one another. They are connected to spatial orientation such as "up-down" as in "I feel up today" and "my spirits are down". In ontological metaphor, the experience with objects, physically,

supports the basis of understanding and employment. This type of metaphor reflects the way of seeing things, actions, feelings, ideas as entities and substances as in "the middle class is a powerful silent force in American politics". In container metaphor, every person is viewed as a container, i.e., concrete objects, for example the metaphorical expression "Workers put a lot of effort into their work". By imaginative and creative metaphor, a new meaning is given to human experience by highlighting certain features as in "love is a collaborative work of art".

3.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) proposed an approach termed "Conceptual Metaphor Theory". According to this theory, metaphor is considered as a "conceptual or mental" operation which is reflected in language and it enables speakers to structure and make sense of abstract knowledge and experience in concrete experiential way. Language users use a certain knowledge domain which is well known to them to construe another domain which is less comprehended. The source domain is understood through bodily experience and the physical world we live in. To make the notion more clear, the following examples adopted from Lakoff and Johnson (1980:54):

(2) Dr. Jones is a butcher

The source domain in this example is the butcher and the target domain is the "doctor". The knowledge that a butcher is cruel is transferred to the meaning of a doctor to implicate that the doctor is cruel. This is performed through linking the most abstract domain of doctors to the more familiar knowledge about butcher and their feature of being. The outcome of this conceptual linking process implies a negative sense of the concept of doctor.

3.2 Pragmatics of Metaphor

In addition to the conceptual interpretation of metaphor, it can be interpreted pragmatically. Early interpretations were presented by the traditional approaches to this phenomenon classifying it alongside other tropes such as hyperbole or understatement. This approach views metaphor as being a product of an overt violation of the maxim of quality as the speaker deliberately uses false statements. This forces the recipient

to search for the most similar proposition that rectifies the use of the maxim.

However, other approaches used alternative ways of viewing metaphors such as Relevance Theory based on the idea that metaphor is a kind of non-literal use of language with an inference; a new concept is derived inferentially from an encoded one. This notion may present a solution to the challenges mentioned above. A central point that requires clarification is the role of indirectness in metaphorical language. Basically, the tendency of metaphors to be indirect is a violation to the Gricean maxims, as well as an aspect of indirect speech acts.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data Description

The data is mainly gathered from an online corpus "#ReframeCovid" that was initiated with an aim of gathering metaphorical terms mostly associated with Covid-19. The corpus provides data to reveal the alternative ways of denoting the pandemic. It is initiated by Spanish academics, Paula Perez-Sobrino and Ines Olza, in which alternatives for the war metaphor during the first lockdown in March and April of 2020 are collected. They started building this Covid-related corpus by collecting metaphors used to denote the pandemic and their possible concordances. The data analysed in the current study included more than 600 word from contributors to the corpus. The data adopted in this work is collected during the period from November 2020 to November 2021.

Table 1, below, summarizes the main types of metaphorical concepts that have been repeatedly employed when discussing or referring to COVID-19 or any related matters.

Table 1: Data of metaphorical concepts and their pragmatic functions

No.	Concepts	Reference	Type of Metaphor	Pragmatic/Rhetorical Tool
1.	Enemy	COVID-19	WAR metaphor	Dysphemism
2.	Beaten	COVID-19	WAR metaphor	Cooperative Principle
3.	Fight/Attack	COVID-19	WAR metaphor	Euphemism
4.	Battle/Combat the virus	COVID-19	WAR metaphor	Euphemism
5.	People's war	COVID-19	WAR metaphor	Dysphemism
6.	Army on standby	COVID-19	WAR metaphor	
7.	Kill the deadly virus	COVID-19	WAR metaphor	Implicature
8.	Tsunami (of cases)	COVID-19	DISASTER metaphor	Hyperbole
9.	Storm	COVID-19	DISASTER metaphor	Euphemism
10.	China's Chernobyl	COVID-19	DISASTER metaphor	Dysphemism
11.	Wildfire	COVID-19	FIRE metaphors	Cooperative Principle
12.	Embers	COVID-19	FIRE metaphors	Cooperative Principle
13.	House on fire	COVID-19	FIRE metaphors	Assertive speech act
14.	Not Soldiers but Fire-fighters	COVID-19	FIRE metaphors	Assertive speech act

4.2 Model of Analysis

This study adopts a function-to-form approach within corpus pragmatics, meaning that the point of start would be with a search for a particular speech act and the associated pragmatic phenomena. The qualitative analysis is conducted adopting Austin's Speech Act Theory (SAT). Then, the frequencies and concordances of the metaphors employed to address Covid-19 will be identified revealing the underlying implication.

5. Analysis

This section is an in-depth analysis of two main types of COVID-19 metaphors, namely, those that have to do with WAR and FIRE. The analysis will include a qualitative description of the metaphors under scrutiny (5.1). A quantitative account of the frequencies of metaphors in different corpora, as well as their concordances, will be investigated (5.2). Finally, the analysis will conclude with a discussion of the most prominent results and findings (5.3).

5.1 Qualitative Analysis

In this subsection, the study aims at determining the metaphors frequently associating the discussion of Covid-19 disease. The study selected two of the most frequently used metaphors (War and Fire). The focus is directed towards the intended acts associating Covid-19 metaphors as well as the their frequencies and the implied meanings they hold.

The concepts associated with the use of war metaphor are mostly used to discuss the pandemic depicting it as an enemy who needs to be fought and that there is a war coming that may cause destruction if no action is taken. The war metaphor may increase the anxiety of people to make them take the matter seriously enough for actions to be undertaken, but it may spread panic leading to chaos. Hence, the use of this metaphor can be a two-edged blade. This takes us back to the beginning of the breakout of this pandemic when people and some news outlets spread the idea that it is a lie and there is no such thing as a disease, therefore, no worries needed. The use of the war metaphor performs the act of warning, and threat leading to high levels of anxiety which exceeds the acceptable threshold.

The use of war metaphor may have infuriated some researchers who refused the use of war metaphors and all its concordances. Instead, researchers started to use a less extreme concept, the concept of fire. The concept of fire is widely accepted among researchers. The metaphor of fire is associated with several other concepts such as flame, breakout, destruction, and firefighting. The appeal of this concept lies in that it portrays the other side of the conflict, the people helping overcome the pandemic rather than the pandemic itself. The focus, drawn by the use of this metaphor, is centered on the doctors and nurses depicting them as fire

fighters. Also, the attention is placed on the pandemic as being something that, although destructive, can be controlled. The use of this metaphor also raises worries, but to acceptable levels. Moreover, the use of fire metaphor and all its concordances act as an advice which is a more mitigated term than threat or warning.

5.2Quantitative Analysis

The data of this work is processed by employing an online free software "Sketch Engin" (SkE), a corpus database as well as an analysing tool employed by corpus linguists. It offers statistical methods to calculate frequencies of lexical items which help in revealing the recurring patterns and produce wordlists and concordances.

This study begins by identifying linguistic items used to describe Covid-19, that occur in the corpus aforementioned. Then, the words that are used metaphorically are also identified, specifically those that are related to war and fire concepts. After identifying the metaphorically-used words, the concordances of each metaphor are identified using the SkE software. The table below exhibit the frequency of war metaphor and their concordances.

Table 2: War Metaphor Denoting Covid-19 and their Frequencies and Concordances

No.	Form	Frequency
1.	War	98
2.	Attack	73
3.	Invasion	57
4.	Combat	53
5.	Fight	48

It is clear from the table above that the words mostly used to discuss the pandemic are closely associated with the concept of war. The use of

metaphors, such as attack, invasion, combat, and fight, are largely used in referring to the disease under investigation.

Table (3), below, presents metaphorical expressions denoting Covid-19 and their frequencies and concordances:

Table 3: Fire Metaphor Denoting Covid-19 and their Frequencies and Concordances

No.	Form	Frequency
1.	Fire	92
2.	Flame	62
3.	Breakout	78
4.	Destructive	47

The quantitative tool used to draw the metaphorical usage of concepts in addressing Covid-19 revealed that the concepts of flame, breakout, and destructive are mostly used in referring to the pandemic. All of which are concepts closely related to the concept of fire under study.

5.3 Discussion of Results

After the analysis of different metaphors used to depict the pandemic and its effects adopting a corpus pragmatics function-to-form approach, the study reached that war metaphors are frequently used to address the pandemic although they are controversial and are criticized by many who believe that they arouse negative feelings. Hence, it is suggested that fire metaphors are more suitable to address the pandemic.

Using war metaphors to address the pandemic such as "enemy", "invader", and "fight" is widely adopted since early 2020 by many such as political leaders, news casters, and researchers. Using those metaphors to describe the pandemic is criticized by many including the media based on the allegation that personification of the virus would create more anxiety

legitimizing authoritarian governmental measures as well as implying that those who passed away due to the pandemic did not fight enough.

As for "fire" metaphors, they are more preferred for being vivid, rich with imagery, also they are familiar to people from their experience, they include multiple elements such as fire-fighters, victims, arsonists, etc., they even have evolutionary stages including causes, beginnings, middles, ends and consequences. Therefore, fire metaphors are suitable for metaphorical exploitation. Adding to that, fire concepts arouse feelings of fear and destruction and difficulty of control which make fire metaphors a useful way for inspiring fear and the exercise of power via texts. As well, it can help legitimize law enforcement procedures in response to the crisis. The analysis showed that fire metaphors are used for various purposes:

- Its ability to convey feelings of danger and urgency;
- The possibility of distinguishing the different phases of the pandemic;
- Explaining the needed measures for reducing contagion;
- Having the potential to depict the role of health workers;
- Showing how the contagion takes place and the role of individuals;
- Linking the pandemic to health inequalities and other problems; and
- Depicting the future after the pandemic.

6. Conclusions

The present study made use of the great potential that corpus linguistics and pragmatics have in common, and this commonality may be of benefit for studying the implications underlying the use of metaphors in addressing a crisis. It is important not to elude the challenges that may face any effort done to develop a method including the two opposite directions of analysis.

War metaphor, although useful in portraying the danger of a serious pandemic such as Covid-19, yet, it is far from being a perfect depiction tool. War metaphor attracts negativity more than positivity in addressing

the disease, and it causes panic that may disturb the public peace, which is far from being preferred in such a disturbing situation. Fire metaphor can be more appropriate for addressing the pandemic in question compared to the war metaphor. Although it signals ideas of danger, but the level of danger is kept to the minimum point.

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