



Conceptual Metaphors in Reporting on the COVID-19 Pandemic in Japan's NHK Newspaper *A Cognitive Semantics Analysis*

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ABSTRACT

This research is a cognitive semantic study using qualitative methods on conceptual metaphors used in reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic in Japan. The theory used is conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) and image schema theory by Croft and Cruse (2004). The data collection method used was the method of free-living and proficient viewing, while the data review method used was the referential equivalent method. The data was taken from six online news articles in the Japanese-language NHK newspaper. This study aims to describe the classification of conceptual metaphors and image schemes that appear in the news regarding the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic in Japan. There were 13 data found, which were divided into 3 structural metaphors, 4 orientational metaphors, and 6 ontological metaphors. Based on the image schema, the data is also divided into 5 forces, 4 scales, 1 space, 1 existence, and one schemes container. The concept mapping of the metaphor in this study is the depiction of COVID-19 as an enemy, government policies as medicine, and the process of handling COVID-19 as a way forward on the road. In terms of image schema, the metaphor used tends to be a force, depicting COVID-19 as an opponent or obstacle.

KEYWORDS

Cognitive semantics; Conceptual metaphor; COVID-19.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis that has affected all aspects of human life in today's world. Of course, in a crisis like that, language plays an

essential role as a communication tool to understand and solve problems. One of the ways we can see how language shapes our understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic is

through a cognitive semantic approach to the metaphors used to describe COVID-19.

Cognitive linguistics is a paradigm in linguistics that examines language as a form of expression of thought (Wen & Taylor, 2021). According to Saeed (2016), cognitive semantics is a semantic approach that understands the meaning of language as knowledge that cannot be separated from conscious processes in general. Therefore, the cognitive semantic approach can be used to understand linguistic phenomena born of conceptual structures, one of which is a metaphor. According to Ullman (2014), metaphor is a figurative language that uses similarities between meanings. Metaphors talk about one thing by using another thing as a comparison. The thing being discussed is called the tenor, while the thing being compared is termed the vehicle. The metaphor does not explicitly state that the tenor resembles discourse, but it is a vehicle used as a verbal shortcut to say something about the tenor. Meanwhile, Keraf (2004) defines metaphor as an analogy that compares two things directly in a short form. Metaphors do not use conjunctions such as like or like. This distinguishes the metaphorical language style from the simile language style which also compares two meanings but uses a conjunction between the two meanings. Metaphors stand alone as words, while similes depend heavily on context to support their meaning.

In view of cognitive semantics as explained by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphor is a way to understand and experience a concept by using terms from other concepts. A metaphor is understood as a linguistic expression that originates from the human cognitive conceptual system. Kövecses (2021) reveals that metaphor is a thinking tool that can define reality for humans. In other words, humans use metaphorical expressions to understand the world around them. This theory is known as the conceptual metaphor theory.

One of the events that have dominated public discussion over the past two years has been the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the beginning of 2020, COVID-19 has spread around the world. Therefore, there is a lot of news covering the impact of the spread of the disease, as well as the handling of COVID-19 carried out by the governments of these countries. From a cognitive linguistics point of view, it is of course important to examine what kind of metaphors appear in the news about handling COVID-19, because by researching this issue we can find out how the

media and society talk about an event that has a major impact on human life. This research is expected to be able to answer the following questions: What concepts are used in metaphors about COVID-19, and how are these concepts mapped to human cognition?

This study aims to describe the classification of conceptual metaphors and image schemes that appear in the news regarding the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic in Japan. The research was conducted on the news of the Japanese language NHK newspaper which covered the handling of COVID-19 using the conceptual metaphor theoretical framework of Lakoff and Johnson (2003) and the image schema theory by Croft and Cruse (2004).

Several previous studies have been conducted on the use of metaphors on the topic of COVID-19. Herwan and Devi (2020) discuss metaphors in Indonesian poetry with the theme of COVID-19 using Ullman's theory of metaphor classification (2014). The research found that the most widely used metaphor in poetry on the theme of COVID-19 is the anthropomorphic metaphor. Sarjono and Bram (2021) discuss the metaphors that describe COVID-19 in mass media headlines. The theory used is the conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (2003). The results of this study indicate that the conceptual metaphor that appears in the English headlines of COVID-19 is as an enemy or as a war. Ibrahim (2021) discusses structural and ontological metaphors in reporting COVID-19 which is also in English using Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) theory as well as a critical discourse analysis approach, finding metaphors that describe COVID-19 as "robbers."

The difference between this study and previous research is the language studied because previous research has focused on metaphors that appear in Indonesian and English-language discourse. In addition, in contrast to previous research which only used Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) conceptual metaphor theory for data analysis, this study also used image schema theory by Croft and Cruse (2004) as a supporting theory. Apart from adding an explanatory theory to fill the research gap, the image schema theory was also chosen because this theory can explain how metaphor relates to human sensory experience (Tay, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p.10-32), conceptual metaphors are formed from inner

constructs based on analogy principles that conceptualize one thing in another. The conceptual metaphor covers the transfer from the source domain or source domain (vehicle) to the target domain or target domain (tenor). The aspects contained in the transfer are only certain aspects that are emphasized from the source domain, while other aspects of the domain are hidden. In conceptual metaphors, generally, the source domain is more concrete, while the target domain is more abstract. That way, the source domain is used to more easily understand the target realm.

The metaphor exemplified by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) is a structural metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR or “argument is war.” This metaphor is realized through the use of vocabulary such as “I won that argument” and “He attacked every weak point in my argument.” In this example, the language used is not the language that is considered figurative, but the language that is used in everyday life. This does not mean that arguments are part of the war, but that the target domain in the form of an argument is understood and described through the concept of the source domain in the form of war (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.2-3).

According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 10-32) metaphor consists of three types, namely structural metaphors, orientational metaphors, and ontological metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p.11) define structural metaphors as metaphors that construct a concept based on aspects of other concepts. The source and target domains are connected through an emphasized similarity in an aspect.

Meanwhile, orientational metaphors use concepts that are systematically organized toward one another. This type of metaphor is generally paired and related to the concepts of space and direction: up-down, inside-out, front-back, inside-shallow, and center-around. Metaphors that use one direction have opposite directions and their meanings are contradictory. A metaphor UP-DOWN can be mapped as HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN or “Happy is up; sad is down” as in the following expressions: “My spirits rose” and “My spirits sank” (“my spirits are up,” “my spirits are down”) (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.11).

Ontological metaphors are metaphors that describe events, emotional states, or abstract ideas as concrete entities or substances. An example is the metaphor “THE MIND IS A MACHINE” which is expressed in the sentence “My mind just

isn't operating today” (today my brain really isn't working/ today I really can't think). Ontological metaphors can also presuppose something abstract as a substance, entity, space, or container (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.21).

Image schema is also an important framework in metaphorical analysis. According to Tay (2021), image schemes are schemas that arise from human sensory experience, such as container, path, force, and so on, which are then used in language to express abstract concepts. Saeed (2016, p.366) also emphasizes the image scheme as an important part of the cognitive semantic conceptual structure resulting from the way the human body interacts with the world. One of the image schema classification models developed by Croft and Cruse (2004). The image schematic is divided into seven sections which are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Image Schematic of Croft and Cruse (2004).

Space	Up-Down, Front-Back, Left-Right,
	Near-Far, Center-Periphery, Contact
Scale	Path
Container	Containment, In-Out, Surface,
	Full-Empty, Content
Force	Balance, Counterforce, Compulsion,
	Restraint, Enablement, Blockage,
	Diversion, Attraction
Unity/Multiplicity	Merging, Collection, Splitting,
	Iteration, Part-Whole, Mass-Count,
	Link
Identity	Matching, Superimposition
Existence	Removal, Bounded Space, Cycle,
	Object, Process

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative research with a descriptive method. At the data collection stage, the method used is the method of listening to the

note-taking technique (Neumann, 2014). According to Mahsun (2012), the listening method is a method with basic tapping techniques used to obtain data by listening to the use of language, while the note-taking technique is an advanced technique for recording data that has been obtained.

The data is taken from the online circular of the NHK newspaper (www3.nhk.or.jp) which is sorted by the keyword *shingata corona* or COVID-19. Thirteen pieces of data were collected from six news articles.

During the data analysis phase, the referential equivalent method was used with a determinant in the form of elements outside of language, namely the reality designated by language (Djajasudarma, 2010, p.66) to determine metaphorical data based on a transfer of meaning. The determining tool used is referential discernment, namely, the reality referred to by language, to determine the source and target domains of metaphorical data. The data are then grouped based on conceptual metaphor categories by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), namely structural metaphors, orientational metaphors, and ontological metaphors. Finally, the data were also analyzed using image schema theory by Croft and Cruse (2004).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The metaphorical data that has been collected from news on the handling of COVID-19 in Japan are grouped into three types according to Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) conceptual metaphor theory.

Structural Metaphor

Data in the form of structural metaphors were found in three pieces of data. The following is an analysis of the data that has been collected.

(1) 新型コロナという見えない敵との戦い *Shingata-korona to iu mienai teki to no tatakai*
COVID-19 is the invisible **enemy** and **against**

“**Fight against the enemy** invisible that is COVID-19”
Source domain: 敵 (*puzzle, enemy*)
Target realm: 新型コロナ (*Shingata-corona, COVID-19*)

In data (1), the source domain is a puzzle or “enemy” while the target domain is *shingata corona* or COVID-19. The word *tatakai* which means “against” which originally colloquial with

“enemy” and was borrowed to describe efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The “enemy” resource domain is used to describe COVID-19 which is considered harmful and must be fought. The imaging scheme in data (1) is a force, namely, counterforce, related to the force that is reciprocated with equal force (“against”).

This metaphor is strengthened by the reuse of the word “against” in data (2) as follows.

(2) 就任して1年新型コロナとの戦い
Shuuninshi-te ichinen shingatakorona to no tatakai
Serving for 1 year COVID-19 **opponent**
に明け暮れた日々だった
ni akekureta hibi da-tta
devoted period

“One year serving **against** COVID-19.”
Source realm: 戦い (*tatakai, fight*)
Target realm: 新型コロナ (*shingata-korona, COVID-19*)

The similarity drawn between COVID-19 and the “enemy” is that both must be fought so as not to harm themselves or themselves. The imaging scheme that appears is a force, namely counterforce, by describing COVID-19 as a force that must be fought with equal force.

Meanwhile, data (3) describes a structural metaphor used to describe government policies toward the spread of COVID-19 infection.

(3) 『緊急事態宣言』という薬をばらまいても
'Kinkyuujitai-sengen' to iu kusuri o baramaite mo
‘Declaration of emergency’ that **will** spread too
ウイルスが退いたわけではなかったと思う
uirusu ga shirizoita wake de wa nakatta to omou
virus backward does not mean

“I don’t think the virus has receded even if the **drug** ‘Emergency Declaration’ was distributed”
Source domain: 薬 (*kusuri, medicine*)
Target realm: 緊急事態宣言 (*kinkyuujitai-sengen, emergency declaration*)

The target realm “Declaration of emergency” is likened to the realm of sources of “medicine” that can repel the spread of COVID-19. The similarity emphasized is the nature of drugs that can cure disease, so that an emergency declaration can be said to “cure” the spread of disease in society. The imaging scheme in this data is a force, namely enablement, which describes something that can empower people to defeat COVID-19.

In structural metaphor data, the source domains found are “enemy” and “medicine.” The spread of COVID-19 itself is described as something that must be “fought.” The use of the concept of “medicine” to discuss Japanese government policies is not literal, because the purpose of the emergency declaration is not to cure COVID-19 patients directly, but to help the government deal with social problems that arise around the spread of the virus, such as a lack of beds in hospitals and making health protocol regulations that must be obeyed by the public to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The formulation of concepts that can be formulated after seeing the use of the source domain is “COVID-19 is the ENEMY” and “POLICY is MEDICINE.”

Oriental Metaphors

Data in the form of orientational metaphors have collected as many as four pieces of data. The following is an analysis of the data.

(4) 各国がワクチン接種を進めるため

Kakukoku ga wakuchin-sesshu o susumeru tame
Each country's vaccination number will advance for
の対策を強化しています
no taisaku o kyoukashite-imasu
response strengthens

“Each country strengthens response to advance vaccination.”

Source domain: 進める (*Susumeru*, advancing)

Target realm: ワクチン接種 (*wakuchin-sesshu*, vaccination)

In data (4), the source domain of *Susumeru* or “advanced” is used to describe the target domain of vaccination. The imaging scheme used is a scale, namely a path, depicting the progress of the vaccination as the path being traversed, with a starting point and an ending point. The same metaphor is also used in the following data (5).

(5) 菅政権が進めてきたワクチン接種

Suga-seiken ga susumete-kita wakuchin-sesshu
Government advanced vaccination

“Vaccinations that have been advanced by Suga prime minister's government.”

Source domain: 進めてきた (*Susumete*, forward)

Target realm: ワクチン接種 (*wakuchin-sesshu*, vaccination)

In contrast, data (6) uses the opposite metaphor of the two data above.

(6) 『緊急事態宣言』という薬をばらまいても

'Kinkeyuujitai-sengen' to iu kusuri o baramaite mo
'Declaration of emergency' which is medicine will spread too

ウイルスが退いたわけではなかったと思う

uirusu ga shirizoita wake de wa nakatta to omou
virus retreat does not mean suspected

“It is suspected that even by spreading the so-called ‘declaration of emergency’ medicine does not mean that the virus will retreat.”

Source realm: 退いた (*shirizoita*, backward)

Target realm: ウイルス (*uirusu*, virus)

source realm *shizoku* used to describe the target domain of the COVID-19 virus. The imaging scheme used is the *scale*, namely *path*, in this case, it describes the lost progress as a “setback” from a journey.

(7) 時間の経過とともに抗体の値が

Jikan no keika to tomo ni koutai no chi ga
passage of time at the same time antibody gene level

将来的に 下がる可能性が高く

shouraiteki ni sagaru kanousei ga takaku
in the future is down probability high

“As time passes, highly likely that the antibody level will decrease.”

Source realms: 下がる (*sagaru*, down) and 高く (*takaku*, up)

Target realms: 抗体の値 (*koutai no chi*, antibody level) and 可能性 (*kanousei*, presumably)

Data (7) shows one of the metaphors exemplified by Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p.12) namely “MORE IS UP; LESS IS DOWN” or “More is up; less is down.” A decrease in antibody is described as a “decrease” in antibody, while an increase in probability is described as an “increase” in probability. The image schema that appears in data (7) is a spatial schema, namely up-down because it describes the level of quantity as a space that has an up-down direction

In the orientational metaphor data, the domain of the source of direction, especially in data (4), (5), and (6), is used to describe aspects of the government's handling of COVID-19. Vaccination is described as something that can be “advanced,” while viruses are described as something that can be “regressed” (prevented from spreading).

Therefore, the use of orientational metaphors on data can be formulated as “HANDLING is FORWARD, PREVENTION is REVERSE.”

Ontological Metaphors

Data grouped into ontological metaphors are six pieces of data.

(8) デルタ株による感染拡大の中でも、
Deruta-kabu ni yoru kansen-kakudai no naka de mo, delta variant ratio of infection inside
2回接種を済ませた方の感染は、接種してない方
Nikai sesshu o sumaseta kata no kansen wa,
sesshushitenai kata
Second vaccine is people who have received people who have not been vaccinated
の13分の1だった。
no 13bun no 1 datta.
1 in 13

“**Inside** the spread of infection due to the delta variant, the ratio of infection in people who have received the second vaccine to people who have not been vaccinated is 1 in 13.”

Source domain: 中 (*naka*, in)

Target realm: 感染拡大 (*kansen-kakudai*, spread of infection)

In data (8), *naka* or “in” source domain is used to describe the target domain of the Delta variant infection. The population of people who have received the second vaccine and the population of people who have not been vaccinated is likened to being in the same room, namely the Delta variant infection spread category. The image schema in data (8) is a container, namely content because it describes the space that holds something.

(9) 年内には全人口のおよそ4分の1にあたる Nen-
nai ni wa zenjinkou no oyoso 4bun no 1 ni ataru
In the year total population quarter
1400万人近くが追加の接種を終える
1400ban-nin chikaku ga tsuika no sesshu o oeru
14 million people about additional vaccines get

“**In the year** this 14 million people, about a quarter of the total population, will get additional vaccines.”

Source realm: 内 (*nai*, deep)

Target realm: 年 (*nen*, year)

In data (9), the source domain *nai* or “in” is used to describe the target realm of *nen* or “year.” The one-year period is likened to a container that accommodates a quarter of the total population

who will receive additional vaccines. The image schema used is the container, namely content, describing something that is accommodated in a container.

(10) 早い段階で接種を終えた高齢者などの間

Hayai kaidan de sesshu o oeta koureisha nado no aida

Early stages of vaccination for the elderly, etc. middle

“In **the middle** early stages of vaccination of the elderly and so on”

Source domain: 間 (*aida*, middle)

Target realm: 接種を終えた高齢者 (*sesshu o oeta koureisha*, vaccination of the elderly)

In data (10), source domain *aida* depicts the target area of the elderly’s vaccination progress as the path being traversed, with a scale namely path, describing the journey being traveled (has a starting point, midpoint, and end).

(11) 各国がワクチン接種を進めるため

Kakukoku ga wakuchin-sesshu o susumeru tame

Each country's vaccination advancing

の対策を強化しています

no taisaku o kyoukashite-imasu

response strengthens

“Each country **strengthens** response to advancing vaccination.”

Source realm: 強化しています (*kyoukashiteimasu*, strengthen)

Target realm: 対策 (*taisaku*, response)

In data (11), the source realm *kyoukashiteiru* or “amplify” is used to describe the target realm of *taisaku* or “response.” The imaging scheme in data (11) is a force, namely, enablement, which describes the response to COVID-19 as a force that can be strengthened.

(12) 私がやるべきことは、危機を乗り越え、安心

Watashi ga yarubeki-koto wa, kiki o norikoe, anshin

The thing I have to do to overcome this crisis

とにぎわいのある日常を取り戻す道筋を

to nigiwai no aru nichijou o torimodosu michisuji o

peaceful and prosperous daily life takes back way

つけることだ

tsukeru koto da

make

“The thing I have to do is make a way to **overcome** this crisis and take back peaceful and prosperous daily life.”

Source domain: 乗り越え (*norikoe*, overcome)

Target realm: 危機 (*kiki*, crisis)

In data (12), the source domain *norikoe* or “overcome” is used to describe the source domain *kiki* or “crisis.” The imaging scheme used is a force, namely diversion, because it likens a crisis to an obstacle that can be “overcome” or bypassed by taking another path (going up or climbing).

(13) 国民の命と暮らしを守る、
Kokumin no inochi to kurashi o mamoru.
life of the people and daily life **protection**
この一心で走り続けてきた。
kono isshin de hashiritsuzukete-kita.
This is all my heart with do

“For the sake of **protection** the daily life and life of the people, I do this with all my heart.”

Source domain: 守る (*mamoru*, protect)

Target realm: 暮らし (*kurashi*, every day)

In data (13), the source domain *mamoru* or “protect” is used to describe the target realm of *kurashi* or every day. Data (13) shows an existence namely an object because it describes everyday life as an item that must be protected so that it is not taken or confiscated.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes conceptual metaphors and image schemes in reporting on COVID-19 in the NHK newspaper to be able to describe the concepts used to talk about the COVID-19 pandemic. After analyzing the types of metaphors found in the news on COVID-19 in the NHK newspaper, it was found that the conceptual metaphors that emerged could be divided into 3 structural metaphors, 4 orientational metaphors, and 6 ontological metaphors. Based on the image scheme, the data is also divided into 5 forces, 4 scales, 1 space, 1 existence, and one schemes container.

The concept mapping of the metaphor in this study is the depiction of COVID-19 as an enemy, government policies as medicine, and the process of handling COVID-19 as a way forward on the road. In terms of image schema, the metaphor used tends to be a force, depicting COVID-19 as an opponent or obstacle.

Further research can focus on more specific concepts, for example, metaphors that describe government policies against the spread of COVID-19, so that the mapping of metaphors in these concepts can become more comprehensive.

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