

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR “VIRUS SARS-CoV-2 AS A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST” IN VIETNAMESE ONLINE NEWSPAPERS

Thi Bich Hanh Nguyen¹, Vien Lan Huong Le², and Thi Kim Lien Nguyen^{3*}

¹ Faculty of Culture-Linguistics, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam

² Faculty of Foreign Languages, Vietnam Military Medical University, Vietnam

³ Faculty of German Language, Hanoi University, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

***Corresponding author:**

Thi Kim Lien Nguyen
lienntk@hanu.edu.vn

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This paper conducts further analysis of metaphors correlating with the source domain “criminal/terrorist.” There are two main questions that the study attempts to answer: 1) What mechanism of thinking entails the use of metaphors with the source domain “criminal/terrorist” to discuss the virus Sars-CoV-2 in media coverage of the COVID-19 epidemic from Vietnamese online newspapers? and 2) Why do Vietnamese reporters and editors often use metaphors from the source domain “criminal/terrorist” to garner thought over Sars-CoV-2, notably during the period of the COVID-19 outbreak in Vietnam? Based on the interrelated relationship between the experience and knowledge reflected from the source domain to the target domain, this paper aims to unravel the notion that VIRUS SARS-CoV-2 IS A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST in Vietnamese online newspapers and elaborates on the hierarchical characteristics of the author’s conceptual thinking. Through the mapping structure, this paper demonstrates the appearance of three derivative metaphors in media coverage on the COVID-19 pandemic related to the three outstanding characteristics of the source domain of behavior, threat level, and the means which authorities undertake to hunt down said criminals/terrorists. The findings of the research show the use of war metaphors, with specialization into the aspect of “criminal/terrorist” is used as strategy by Vietnamese media to guide discourse in order to create political motives. The metaphor of viruses as a type of criminal/terrorist also implies the severity and pushes for reductive methods and defensive actions, in turn enhancing public awareness on the prevention and eradication of the disease. This research paper will point to the specific way of thinking present in the conceptual structure of the virus SARS-CoV-2 and contribute to shedding light on the thinking of Vietnamese media on the pandemic and dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic as a global catastrophe.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor; virus SARS-CoV-2; criminal; war

1. INTRODUCTION

Conceptual metaphor is the conceptualization from one cognitive domain to another, which is a structural mapping from a “source domain” to a “target domain” with the aim of creating a perceptual model in relation to the inner workings of the mind (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 185). According to Lakoff and Johnson, conceptual metaphors are cognitive mechanisms through which the logic of abstract concepts are replaced by the logic of more concrete concepts (1980, p. 4). Conceptual metaphors help further the understanding of target domain A (often abstract) through the conceptual structures of source domain B (often more specific) (Kövecses, 2002, p. 4). The source domain provides a relatively rich knowledge structure for the target concept domain, which occurs through mappings between the attributes of domains A and B (Kövecses, 2002, p. 12). According to Kövecses (2002, p. 33), metaphorical mappings have an important role to play in conceptual expression since they explain why specific attributes are used to understand the target domain. Lakoff (1993, p. 208) demonstrates that mapping is one of the common ways to conceptualize things. The foundation for mapping relies on the shared knowledge and experience of human beings in everyday life. The correspondences between the forming elements of source domains and target domains establishes a mapping diagram in the conceptual structure. Once these correspondences are activated, the characteristics of the source domain will then be projected onto the target domain while complying with the single line and partial projection principles. Thus, there is transference in properties from the source domain to the target domain.

The study of conceptual metaphors has become trendy and strongly developed in many countries and covers various fields. The COVID-19 pandemic, that emerged as an alarming global issue, has hit many countries and regions. The third wave of this virus spelled disaster for mankind with the number of deaths comparable to world wars. The pandemic has shocked the whole world and induced complete changes in various aspects from perception, foreign relations to organizational activities in the education and tourism industries, alongside the global economy as a whole. The SARS-CoV-2 virus (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2), an abbreviation for acute respiratory infection caused by the Coronavirus 2019/COVID-19, has shaken economies, shattered medical achievements, and crushed medical systems of many advanced countries. Virus Sars-CoV-2 is constantly changing, creating multiple variations which modern medicine has struggled to counter with adequate vaccines. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to prolong and cause some distress on a global scale.

In this research study, through metaphorical analysis of the COVID-19 epidemic in Vietnamese online newspapers, the mapping mechanism of attributes between the source domain “crime/terrorist” and the target domain “SARS-CoV-2 virus” is clarified showing the hierarchy in the metaphorical structure. This answers certain questions: Through which metaphor does the article wish to clarify Vietnamese media’s different interpretations of the COVID-19 epidemic? What message does it wish to convey to readers? From there, it contributes to highlighting the characteristics of linguistic and cultural thinking of Vietnamese people through discourses about the epidemic in online newspapers.

This research study will bring more insight to those who are interested in the language of journalism, including journalism students, journalists, language trainers, translators and news editors, raising their awareness of the effectiveness of metaphorical language in the altercation of media narratives on diseases. Hence, desired modes of communication can be established to aid the audience in building upon their knowledge of the means of attack, the development, and danger levels of diseases, as well as the difficulties governments and medical authorities are faced with in stopping diseases. This enhances the level of acknowledgement and collaboration between the masses and governmental bodies in taking unified prevention and precautionary actions against a global-level pandemic.

2. RESEARCH HISTORY

War/security source domains and war/security-related sub-domains such as enemy, criminal, and terrorist seem to have become an integral part of communication discourses when it comes to understanding and interpretation of such target domains as politics, commerce, economy, sports and health. In COVID-19 related news reports, a number of terms related to the “criminal/terrorist” source domain are activated when describing the attributes of the target domain “virus SARS-CoV-2”. There have been a sizable number of studies on the SARS-CoV-2 virus in media discourse.

Studies on the COVID-19 pandemic-related media discourse are conducted, adopting two major approaches. The first approach shows that COVID-19 pandemic metaphors are often reflected via the concept of “war” and “terrorist” as an optimum way to encourage the community to join hands and combat the pandemic. The second approach criticizes the use of the metaphor of “war” when talking about the COVID-19

pandemic because it can induce feelings of confusion, fear and depression in patients as well as weaken the masses’ confidence in public health.

Regarding the first approach, Todorova (2021) studied the use of war metaphors in Bulgarian official discourse during the ‘state of emergency’ due to the spread of SARS-CoV-2. War rhetoric has also been published by many world political leaders. However, the militarization of discourses related to the COVID-19 pandemic in Bulgaria between March and May 2020 was a strategic decision, as the country was hit by the second wave of COVID-19, and the “state of emergency” was changed into the “national epidemic emergency” in response to the spread of SARS-CoV-2 into the community. In addition, Leo and David (2020) investigated editorials about COVID-19 in Malaysian mainstream English newspapers in the context of the movement control order. The findings show differences between metaphors and outstanding problems signaled through 10 metaphorical mappings with the source domains of ‘motion’, ‘film’, ‘war’ and ‘space’, thereby clarifying the pragmatic perspective of metaphors.

In the second approach, a conclusion has been reached through different literature analyzing the way world leaders speak on COVID-19 by using war metaphors (Rajandran, 2020; Bates, 2020), comparing the reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic to an actual military campaign (Rohela et al., 2020; Gillis, 2020). Within this literature, COVID-19 is described as ‘the enemy’ by the media, capable of ‘attacking’ and ‘destroying’ nations. Reflecting on the severity of the pandemic through the narratives of war could raise the perceived threat level of COVID-19, hence influencing communal awareness and behavior (Rajandran, 2020). Public declarations made by authoritative figures using war metaphors could make a timely appearance in order to raise public morale and unity (Rohela et al., 2020; Gillis, 2020) and justify governmental emergency measures in regard to COVID-19 (Gillis, 2020). However, from a practical point of view, when it comes to the practice of communication in political discourse, research shows that the use of war metaphors to describe the virus has brought about negative connotations: a shallow public perception of the pandemic; decreased unity in the community; and increased stigma, creating dispute between workers and providers of the healthcare system, harming healthcare providers as well as patients both morally and mentally. In addition, war metaphors provoke negative emotions, inducing a sense of fear into the public space. Bates (2020) believes that war metaphors should not be used to aid public awareness of Sars-CoV-2. Instead, he encourages alternatives to war metaphors in order to improve the masses’ understanding of the pandemic. Apart from the current use of metaphors to discuss COVID-19, a variety of media have attributed fear to the pandemic when described as a deadly creature, attacking nations similarly to a tsunami. Information on the virus accessible on most popular mainstream media is painted in a negative light, often irregular and sensational, consequently fostering a culture of fear on a global scale (Chaiuk & Dunaievska, 2020).

Semino (2021) concurs with Tamkin (2020) regarding the usage of war metaphors in the US media: “Usage of military-related language to discuss coronavirus is dangerous and negligent—America needs to stop.” She suggests a substitute metaphor when talking about the pandemic. Through the survey of a large corpus of English news articles, Semino (2021) suggests fire metaphors, specifically forest fire metaphors, which are especially suitable and useful for the media on different aspects of the pandemic, including raising awareness on its danger and urgency, the differentiation between different time periods of the pandemic; explanation for the different means of infection and the role of individuals; explanation for measures against the spread; presenting the function of healthcare professionals; making the correlation between the pandemic and healthcare provision inequalities, among other issues; and sketching a post-pandemic scenario. In these situations, the focus of fire metaphors is to better prepare for future pandemics or prevent them completely.

In contradiction with the use of war metaphors to describe the COVID-19 pandemic, other metaphors draw inspiration from the tourism, music, and sports industries (Rajandran, 2020), with the main idea of these metaphors involving humanity and equal contributions of mankind in defeating the common antagonist, COVID-19. This narrative has inspired unity and care within the community to enhance the ability to recover from the pandemic both physically and mentally, therefore joining hands to come out victorious over this deadly virus.

To conclude, the aforementioned studies have shown that basic political and ideological orientations of the media are conveyed through discourses about the COVID-19 epidemic and the metaphorical use of virus SARS-CoV-2 for the purpose of public propaganda and influence. COVID-19 is no longer a pandemic, but has become a war, a global catastrophe from a political perspective. However, in those studies, there has not been any work exploiting the “criminal/terrorist” source domain to describe the attributes of virus SARS-CoV-2 target domain with the aim of emphasizing the extreme danger, attack power and destruction of this particular type of “criminal”. This study investigates the mapping in the conceptual model of ‘VIRUS SARS-CoV-2 AS A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST’ in Vietnamese online newspapers, contributing to clarification on how Vietnamese people think about and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as a global disaster.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

In order to survey and study the metaphor ‘VIRUS SARS-CoV-2 AS A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST’ in COVID-19 pandemic reports in Vietnamese online newspapers, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods have been utilized, which consists mainly of discourse analysis combined with statistical and classification methods to achieve the set research objectives.

The corpus was randomly collected from 288 news articles about the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnamese online newspapers starting from March 2020, WHO’s official starting point of COVID-19 as a global pandemic, and ending in May 2021. This was the first phase of the pandemic, when the virus had a high infection rate and high fatality rate. Scientists were still diligently engaged in genome sequencing, exploring the virus’s mutation and duplication pattern to devise vaccines. During this period, world and Vietnamese media delivered a large number of news in relation to the epidemiological research on COVID-19, backup medical services, especially the issue of quarantine as a desperate measure to minimize communal spread. As a result, war metaphors started to make frequent appearances in Vietnamese healthcare-related news articles. The articles investigated were official websites managed and censored by the Ministry of Information and Communications of Vietnam. A total of 38 news articles were investigated. Articles were selected from various online newspapers to diversify information sources about COVID-19 including epidemiological information, epidemiological studies, epidemic surveys, editorials, and studies from the perspectives of sociology, psychology, and economics that are related to the pandemic. With the collected data, the authors proceeded to identify conceptual metaphors according to the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) proposed by Group (2007), since this process is highly applicable and widely used. The MIP has four levels of analysis before it accepts or rejects an expression as a metaphor: (i) going over all the discourse in medical news to establish a general semantic understanding; (ii) marking words/phrases which contradict semantically in the given context; (iii) going over marked words/phrases by identifying their meanings through dictionaries to dictate whether they make semantic sense or not in relation with other words/phrases in the given context; and (iv) if not, identifying them as a metaphor. The words/phrases which create the initial semantic conflict become “metaphorically-expressed words” (interpreted as “lead”). Discourse that contains “metaphorically-expressed words” are called “metaphor expressions”.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is clear from the survey that the concept of ‘SARS-CoV-2 VIRUS AS A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST’ is a prominent metaphor which regularly appears in COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnamese online news reports. According to the rule of partial and unilateral mapping, the attributes from the source domain “criminal/terrorist” are activated and mapped onto the target domain “virus SARS-CoV-2”, causing the target domain to bear some properties of the source domain.

From 288 news articles in Vietnamese online newspapers, the conceptual model VIRUS SARS-COV-2 AS A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST can be visualized through the mapping scheme in Table 1.

Table 1: Mapping VIRUS SARS-COV-2 AS A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST

Source domain's attributes (<i>Criminal/Terrorist</i>)		Target domain's attributes (<i>Virus Sars-CoV-2</i>)	Sample metaphorical expressions
Hazardous to the community	→	Dangerous to the patient's body	“...cuộc đối đầu với kẻ thủ ác này” [...] [“...the battle against this murderer ”]
Usually attacks others with sophisticated tricks	→	Infiltrates and attacks the patient's body in various ways	“ Khi virus xâm nhập vào cơ thể người, chúng bắt đầu cuộc chạy đua với thời gian để bắt cóc tế bào, sinh sản, lây lan và chiếm giữ để tồn tại” [“When viruses enter the human body, they begin a race against time to kidnap cells, reproduce, spread and seize to survive.”]
Actions are often of a criminal and barbaric nature	→	Attacks the body to destroy the target	“ Cách giết người của virus trong cách đại dịch được gọi là thảm sát .” [“The way viruses kill people in pandemics is called massacre .”]
Often hides, deceives, avoids the search of authorized forces	→	Often hides, deceives, avoids the body's immune system	“ Các phân tử đường glycan trên bề mặt gai protein của nCoV biến virus này thành sói đội lốt cừu ...” [...] [“Glycan sugar molecules on the spike proteins of nCoV turn this virus into a wolf in sheep's clothing ...”]

Table 1: Mapping VIRUS SARS-COV-2 AS A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST (Continued)

Source domain's attributes (Criminal/Terrorist)		Target domain's attributes (Virus Sars-CoV-2)	Sample metaphorical expressions
Ready to kidnap, threaten and terrorize hostages	→	Ready to control infected cells or immune system	"...chúng bắt đầu cuộc chạy đua với thời gian để bắt cóc tế bào..." [...] ["...they start a race against time to <i>kidnap cells</i> ..."]
Finds every trick to escape when arrested	→	Often finds ways to escape from the immune system	"E484K dường như là đột biến quan trọng giúp virus SARS-CoV-2 <i>tẩu thoát</i> ["The E484K mutation seems to be an important one that helps SARS-CoV-2 <i>escape</i> ."]

In the research corpus, a number of metaphorical expressions of 'VIRUS SARS-CoV-2 AS A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST' appear with specific metaphorically-expressed words corresponding to each attribute of the criminal and terrorist source domain (belonging to the war/security source domain). These words typically associated with military/security terminologies that refer to groups of criminals and terrorists are selected and mapped onto the target domain "virus SARS-CoV-2". Derivative metaphors have been activated from the basic metaphor 'VIRUS SARS-CoV-2/AS A CRIMINAL TERRORIST', including the following.

4.1. Conceptual metaphor: VIRUS SARS-CoV-2'S ACTS ARE THOSE OF A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST

For national security, "crime" is a legal concept referring to acts that are dangerous to society done by individuals with criminal liability.

The acts of criminals and terrorists usually involve direct attacks on individuals or organizations with the purpose of harming other people's life or destroying property of other organizations or individuals to create public terror. Criminal acts include threatening to infringe on the life and health of citizens using offensive weapons to intimidate, threaten, kidnap or massacre. Conceptualizing virus SARS-CoV-2 as a criminal/terrorist, Vietnamese newspapers tend to attribute the virus to a terrorist with criminal intent, aiming to infringe or threaten the life of others, take or obtain property, and destroy and slaughter their target. Potential metaphors are often noted with such metaphorically-expressed words as: *attack, invade, kidnap, capture, seize, rob, kill, massacre, murder, eliminate, knock down, threaten, resist, hide, evade, escape, cross the border*, etc. These words are then used to describe the acts of the virus. These acts are similar to those of a criminal/terrorist with malice, causing harm to life of others while evading the reprimand of law enforcement. The frequency of the metaphors belonging to the conceptual model 'VIRUS SARS-CoV-2'S ACTS ARE THOSE OF A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST' can be observed in Table 2.

Table 2: Metaphorically-Expressed Words Activated in the Conceptual Model VIRUS SARS-CoV-2'S ACTS ARE THOSE OF A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST

Source domain	Metaphorically-expressed words	Frequency	Target domain	Metaphorically-expressed words	Frequency
Hành vi của tội phạm/ kẻ khủng bố (Acts of a criminal/ terrorist)	Lẩn trốn/lẩn tránh/trốn tránh (Evade/elude)	26	Hành vi của tội phạm/kẻ khủng bố (Acts of a criminal/ terrorist)	Tấn công (Attack)	12
	Đánh lừa (Divert)	18		Giết người/giết chết/cướp sinh mạng (Kill/murder)	11
	Xóa sổ (Erase/eliminate)	16		Ấn náu/ấn nấp/ấn sâu (Lurk/stay low)	10
	Ngụy trang (Disguise)	12		Vượt mặt/quá mặt (Deceive/fool)	7
	Trốn/trốn thoát/trốn khỏi (Escape/run away from)	12		Thoát khỏi (Slip away from)	6
	Cú đấm/cú đâm chí mạng/cú đánh mạnh (Hit/punch/fatal hit/strong blast)	6		Tránh/né/tránh né (Avoid)	6
	Thảm sát (Slaughter)	5		Tiêu diệt/triệt hạ (Destroy/eliminate)	3
	Đe dọa (Threaten)	4		Sói đội lông cừu (Wolf in sheep's clothing)	3
	Đánh rồi chạy/tấn công rồi bỏ chạy (Hit and run)	3		Mánh khóe (Antics)	2
	Cảnh giới (Limit)	2		Trốn thoát (Escape)	2
	Đe dọa con tin (Threaten the hostage)	2		Mở đường thoát (Open the way)	2
	Cướp/ăn cướp (Steal)	3		Tẩu thoát (Run free/flee)	2

Table 2: Metaphorically-expressed Words Activated in the Conceptual Model
VIRUS SARS-CoV-2'S ACTS ARE THOSE OF A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST (Continued)

Source domain	Metaphorically-expressed words	Frequency	Target domain	Metaphorically-expressed words	Frequency
	Đánh lạc hướng cảnh sát (Distract law enforcement)	2		Đánh gục (Knock out/paralyze)	
	Bắt cóc (Kidnap)	2		Chiếm/chiếm giữ (Capture/hold/occupy)	2
	Che giấu (Hide)	2		Che giấu (Hide)	2
	Săn tìm mục tiêu (Search for target)	2		Tàn sát (Massacre)	1
	Thoát khỏi biên giới (Cross the border)	1		Săn lùng (Hunt)	1
	Chọc thủng hàng phòng ngự (Destroy/penetrate the defense)	1		Chặn (Stop)	1
	Kháng cự (Resist)	1		Xâm lược (Invade)	1
	Trốn tìm (Hide and Seek)	1		Tàng hình (Invisible)	1
	Đầu hàng (Surrender)	1		Giả vờ (Pretend)	1
	Tái xuất (Show up)	1		Bắn một mũi tên trúng 2 đích (Hitting two birds with one stone)	1
	Quấy rối (Harrass)	1		Gian manh (Devious)	1
Total			183		

Via the table, we have acknowledged the high appearance rate of metaphorical expressions reflecting typical behavior of law offenders, with sneaky and non-discrete characteristics such as *evade/elude* (26 appearances), *lurk/stay low* (10 appearances), *escape* (12 appearances); behavior exhibiting actions, tricks, and antics of criminals such as *disguise* (12 appearances), *divert* (18 appearances), *wolf in sheep's clothing* (3 appearances), *avoid* (6 times), *threaten hostages* (2 times); and behaviors that serve to attack or take out targets such as *eliminate* (16 appearances), *attack* (12 appearances), *kill/murder* (11 appearances), *hit/punch* (6 appearances). These are properties describing the expected actions of criminal, terrorist gangs. When chosen, activated, these properties move to the target domain, forming into the properties of virus Sars-CoV-2. In other words, virus Sars-CoV-2 is personified into criminals/terrorists with antics and tricks of law offenders when engaging in attacking and unauthorized penetration of the human body. Because the attacking behavior of viruses is “illegal” with a negative motive, their actions are usually discreet and are always looking to deal with, hide, or evade from the pursuit of the immune system. Upon reaching the target, the patient with their organs are likened to the front-line receiving attacks and critical strikes from the virus. It is easy to observe the mapping similarities between the source domain and target domain through the following analysis.

Since criminal acts are illegal, noticeable ones that can be observed among criminals/terrorists are *deceiving and fooling* individuals and organizations when infiltrating their houses/offices to commit crimes. Similarly, when entering a patient's body, virus SARS-CoV-2 also uses sophisticated tricks to *thread their way through* tests, *deceive* the immune system and attack key areas. For example,

- (1) COVID-19 xâm nhập vào cơ thể người bằng cách **đánh lừa** một loại enzyme, có thể khiến nó 'hợp nhất' với protein bên trong và gây nhiễm trùng (An, 2020).
[COVID-19 enters the human body by **tricking** an enzyme, enabling it to 'fuse' with a protein inside and cause infection.]
- (2) Ngoài ra, trong quá trình tiến hóa, chúng có thể trở nên khó kiểm soát hơn và sau một thời gian biến đổi đủ lâu, như các nhà khoa học nói thường phải mất nhiều năm, chúng có thể đủ **thông minh** để **vượt mặt** phần nào đó các vaccine đã có (Đan, 2021).
[Also, in the course of evolution, they can become more difficult to control, and after a long enough transformation period, which as scientists say often takes years, they can be **smart** enough to **fool** some existing vaccines.]
- (3) Phát hiện cách virus SARS-CoV-2 **ngụy trang** nhằm **qua mặt** hệ miễn dịch. (“Phát hiện cách virus SARS-CoV-2 ngụy trang nhằm qua mặt hệ miễn dịch,” 2020).
[Detecting how the SARS-CoV-2 virus **disguises** itself to **fool** the immune system.]

A distinct post-crime act of criminals is lurking, hiding, and trying to escape when being surrounded by security forces. When mapping this attribute to the target domain, metaphorically-expressed words also highlight similar acts of the virus so as to hide, evade, escape from the pursue or reaction of the immune system

or biomedical therapies. The following examples describe the “escape mutation” of SARS-CoV-2, a mutation that allows the virus to *evade* antibodies and replicate at high speed.

- (4) *Đột biến này có thể cho phép virus lẩn trốn trước sự bảo vệ từ kháng thể* (Hà, 2021).
[This mutation may allow the virus to **evade** protection from antibodies.]
- (5) *Chuyên gia nhận định đáng sợ: Virus corona ẩn nấp hàng thập kỷ, thích nghi để lây cho con người* (Anh, 2020).
[Experts made an astonishing announcement: Coronavirus **has lurked for decades** and adapted itself before infecting humans’]

The aim of a criminal/terrorist is to threaten, intimidate others or even slaughter, kill or destroy a target. In order to achieve this aim, they often use tricks and scams such as attacking, invading, controlling, kidnapping hostages, robbing and appropriating property. Likewise, the aim of SARS-CoV-2 is to attack the patient’s body to disable its immune system and destroy internal organs, especially the lungs, causing respiratory failure and death. In these metaphorical expressions, the acts of SARS-CoV-2 are described similarly to that of a criminal/terrorist with a full range of tactical steps from *attacking, breaking through defenses, and invading to capturing, robbing, kidnapping cells, and finally knocking out, killing, and massacring*. For example,

- (6) *Cho đến nay, SARS-CoV-2 cũng không biểu lộ bất kỳ đột biến cực đoan nào khi nó đi xâm lược khắp toàn cầu. Có thể đó là một hành động ăn cướp thành công và nó chưa cần phải thay đổi chiến thuật.* (Bình, 2020)
[So far, SARS-CoV-2 has not shown any extreme mutations as it **invades** around the globe. It could be a successful **robbery** and it didn’t need to change **tactics**.]
- (7) *Khi virus xâm nhập vào cơ thể người, chúng bắt đầu cuộc chạy đua với thời gian để bắt cóc tế bào, sinh sản, lây lan và chiếm giữ để tồn tại. Điều này cũng đúng với nCoV, virus gây đại dịch COVID-19.* (Khang, 2020b)
[When **viruses** enter the human body, they start a race against time to **kidnap cells**, reproduce, spread and **occupy** to survive. The same is true for nCoV, the virus that causes the COVID-19 pandemic.]
- (8) *Cách giết người của virus trong cách đại dịch được gọi là thảm sát. Và kể từ dịch cúm Tây Ban Nha khiến 1/3 dân số toàn cầu nhiễm bệnh, kiểu thảm sát ấy chưa từng ngủ yên trong lịch sử.* (Đào, 2020)
[The way viruses **kill people** in pandemics is called **massacre**. And after the Spanish Flu pandemic which infected a third of the global population, such **massacre** has never rested in history.]

Criminals often try to flee after committing crimes to evade the pursuit of the law enforcement. Correspondingly, virus SARS-CoV-2 often finds a way to elude the immune system to attack its target. Dangerous criminals often tend to cross borders to evade the pursuit of the law enforcement forces. SARS-CoV-2 is also recognized as a criminal crossing borders to rampage and spread fear to neighboring countries. For example,

- (9) *E484K dường như là đột biến quan trọng giúp virus SARS-CoV-2 tẩu thoát.* (Vân, 2021).
[The E484K mutation seems to be an important one that helps SARS-CoV-2 **escape**.]
- (10) *E484K được gọi là đột biến trốn thoát bởi nó có khả năng thoát khỏi một số kháng thể mà vaccine tạo ra.* (Anh, 2021)
[E484K is called the **escape mutation** because of its ability to evade some of the antibodies the vaccine produces.]

A similar feature between “criminal/terrorist” and “virus Sars-CoV-2” is the skill level in antics usage when attacking and penetrating the target. Criminals are particularly dangerous with their tricks to deceive organizations and individuals in order to appropriate property or threaten life. In addition to being reckless and aggressive, they also possess intelligence and abundant tricks of intimidation, diversion, or dual tasks. When mapped onto the target domain “virus SARS-CoV-2”, these attributes are reflected via the following metaphorically-expressed words: *a wolf in sheep’s clothing, hiding, avoiding, harassing, robbing, pretending, camouflaging, stealth, tricky and deceitful, threatening, diverting the police force, killing two birds with one stone*.

In the COVID-19-related discourse in Vietnamese online newspapers, metaphorical expressions describe SARS-CoV-2 as a criminal with adept experience and a reckless nature. They are cunning with many tricks and always aggressive in attack. Also, they know how to pretend and divert attention from the immune system. Virus SARS-CoV-2 is also fully equipped with sophisticated and cunning tricks of criminals like *camouflaging, hiding, evading* protection from antibodies; *harassment and intimidation* of “cell” hostages; *distracting attention from the police*; knowing how to *pretend* like a *wolf in sheep’s clothing* to avoid the pursuit of the immune system, performing illegal acts of robbery and appropriation. For example,

- (11) **Virus có những protein làm nhiệm vụ cảnh giới, có protein bắt cóc và đe dọa con tin.** Nó cũng có những protein nguy trang để **đánh lạc hướng cảnh sát**, và có protein **mở đường thoát** khi chúng đã làm xong nhiệm vụ (ZKNIGHT, 2020).
[Viruses have proteins that act as a **guard**, **kidnap** and **threaten** hostages. They also have **camouflage** proteins to **distract** the police, and proteins that **open the way** when they're done.]
- (12) **Một khi đã xâm nhập vào trong tế bào, virus cướp lấy tế bào để sinh sản thêm nhiều hạt virus mới** (Huong, 2020a).
[Having infiltrated inside the cell, **the virus robs the cell** to produce more new virus particles.]
- (13) **Các phân tử đường glycan trên bề mặt gai protein của nCoV biến virus này thành sói đội lốt cừu, có khả năng đột nhập cơ thể mà không bị phát hiện** (Khang, 2020a).
[Glycan sugar molecules on the spike proteins of nCoV turn this virus into a **wolf in sheep's clothing**, enabling it to **infiltrate** the body without being detected.]
- (14) **Virus rất gian manh** (Huong, 2020b).
[Viruses are very **cunning**.]
- (15) **Nếu virus dùng mánh khéo để lọt qua được các tế bào B và xâm nhập vào trong tế bào thì sẽ bị tế bào T xử lý** (Huong, 2020b).
[If the virus uses **a trick** to get past B cells while entering, it will be handled by T cells.]

4.2. Conceptual metaphor: VIRUS SARS-CoV-2'S THREAT LEVEL IS AS HIGH AS THAT OF A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST

A criminal/terrorist committing crimes against a victim or a community is at a dangerous or especially dangerous level, and needs to be severely punished and eliminated. In terms of social security, criminals or terrorists are often identified as menacing enemies, and combating this type of enemy requires the participation of the masses as well as the whole security and political system. When mapping this attribute onto the target domain in news reports on COVID-19, a number of metaphorical expressions view SARS-CoV-2 as a dangerous criminal/terrorist. These include *dangerous enemy*, *invisible enemy*, *enemy in the dark*, *evildoer*, *invisible killers*, *public enemy*, and *terrorists*. The virus is also considered as an *invader*, or *foreign invader* because of its unannounced landings and attacks on each nation as shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Metaphorically-Expressed Words Activated in the Conceptual Model VIRUS SARS-CoV-2'S THREAT LEVEL IS AS HIGH AS THAT OF A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST

Source domain	Metaphorically-expressed words	Frequency	Target domain	Metaphorically-expressed words	Frequency
Tính chất, mức độ nguy hiểm đối với cộng đồng (Threat level to the community)	Giặc (Invader)	26	Tính chất, mức độ nguy hiểm đối với cộng đồng (Threat level to the community)	Kẻ thù vô hình (Invisible enemy)	11
	Kẻ thù (Enemy)	8		Kẻ thù chung (Common enemy)	6
	Kẻ địch (Enemy)	5		Kẻ giết người vô hình (Invisible murderer)	4
	Sát thủ thầm lặng (Silent killer)	3		Kẻ thù nguy hiểm (Dangerous enemy)	3
	Kẻ thù số 1 (Number-one killer)	3		Những tên khủng bố (Terrorists)	2
	Kẻ thù được xác định/kẻ thù công khai (Identified enemy/public enemy)	2		Kẻ thù trong bóng tối (Enemy in the dark)	2
	Thủ phạm (Culprit)	2		Sát thủ (Killer)	2
	Hung hãn (Aggressor)	2		Sát thủ vô hình (Invisible killer)	1
	Kẻ thù không xứng tầm (Unpaired enemy)	1		Kẻ thủ ác (Murderer)	1
	Mối đe dọa (Threat)	1		Kẻ xâm lược (Intruder)	1
Total		82			

Via the table, we see a high appearance rate of metaphors reflecting the danger levels of criminals/terrorists against national security and the community: *invader* (26 appearances), *invisible enemy* (11 appearances), *enemy* (8 appearances), *common enemy* (6 appearances), *enemy* (5 appearances), *invisible murderer* (4 appearances), and *silent killer* (3 appearances). These are words with extreme connotations describing danger levels in the Vietnamese language. When activated, the property "threat level of criminals"

is moved towards the target domain, becoming a property of virus Sars-CoV-2. In other words, virus Sars-CoV2 is personified as a nation-level threat, as an external force (invader, enemy) or terrorist force fighting against the welfare of the nation and humanity (enemy/murderer). Because the motive of invaders is to penetrate and assimilate, and the motive of murderers is to commit homicide, when the target domain receives properties from the source domain, in metaphorical phrases, virus Sars-CoV-2 is considered a national-level threat and a serial killing machine. The mapping similarities between the source domain and target domain is validated through the following analysis.

Virus SARS-CoV-2 has caused a global pandemic. In many metaphorical expressions, SARS-CoV-2 is seen as a *dangerous enemy*, *common enemy of mankind*. So far, the virus' attack and infection mechanism are still unknown, especially when it constantly changes shape and approaches. As a result, it is also considered as an *enemy in the dark*, *invisible enemy*, and *ghost*, which is not easy to capture and subdue. Currently, as vaccines against COVID-19 cannot keep up with the mutation of the virus, SARS-CoV-2 is also regarded as a *murderer*, “*invisible killer*” with an increasing number of patients dying or infected. For example,

- (16) *Chi tiết bộ gen SARS-CoV-2: Những tên khủng bố chiếm dụng tế bào phổi người* (ZKNIGHT, 2020).
[Detail of the genome SARS-CoV-2: **Terrorists** occupy human lung cells.]
- (17) *Cuộc chiến với virus corona: Kẻ thù trong bóng tối khiến y, bác sĩ Trung Quốc ‘trả giá quá đắt’* (Đat, 2020).
[Fighting corona virus: **Enemy in the dark** makes Chinese doctors pay high price.]
- (18) *Bản tin đặc biệt ngày thứ 90 chiến đấu với kẻ thù vô hình ở Việt Nam* (Thu, 2020).
[Special bulletin on the 90th day fighting the **invisible enemy** in Vietnam.]

As SARS-CoV-2 landed and attacked communities and countries, it caused severe and catastrophic consequences; it wreaked havoc on the socio-economy and directly threatened people's lives. Therefore, in many metaphorical expressions, the virus is also seen as a kind of *invader*, or *intruder*. Every country must declare war on this foreign invader. For example,

- (19) *Khi phát hiện ra mối đe dọa dựa vào vô số hóa chất tuần tra khắp cơ thể, hệ miễn dịch sẽ truy lùng quyết liệt kẻ xâm lược* (Zing, 2020).
[Having detected the threat based on numerous chemicals **patrolling** throughout the body, the immune system aggressively pursues the **invader**.]
- (20) *Chuyển phương án “tốc độ” hơn để chiến đấu với giặc COVID-19* (Lâm, 2021).
[Switch to a more “speedy” approach to **fight against** the **enemy of COVID-19**.]

Perhaps because Vietnam is a country with thousands of historic years dedicated to the fight for unification and unity, in the subconscious minds of Vietnamese people, bringing up war is similar to bringing up invaders and external forces. As a result, the appearance rate of metaphors “enemies” and “invaders” in COVID-19 metaphorical phrases are the highest.

4.3. Conceptual metaphor: HOW DOCTORS TRACE VIRUS SARS-CoV-2 IS HOW POLICE TRACE A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST

In the fight against criminals/terrorists, setting up a special case and working out a pursuit plan must be done in great relevance to the subject and the objective context. This is not only a race of strength, but really a battle of wisdom. In criminal raids and pursuits, law enforcement forces must base their approach on the actual situation to decide on plans. If the criminal surrenders voluntarily, the pursuit is favorable; if not, the pursuit must be conducted with numerous professional operations and approaches from *hunting*, *surrounding*, *tightening the siege*, *breaking in*, *hand-to-hand combating*, to *capturing*, even *destroying*, *killing*, and *eliminating*. When mapped onto the target domain, these attributes are reflected via metaphorical expressions describing how doctors and medical staff, researchers of governmental and national preventive health programs trace the virus. Metaphorically-expressed words are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Metaphorically-expressed Words Activated in the Conceptual Model HOW HEALTH WORKERS TRACE VIRUS SARS-CoV-2 IS HOW POLICE TRACE A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST

Source domain	Metaphorically-expressed words	Frequency	Target domain	Metaphorically-expressed words	Frequency
Cách thức lực lượng chức năng truy bắt tội phạm/kẻ khủng bố (How the police trace a criminal/terrorist)	Truy vết (Track)	17	Cách thức lực lượng chức năng truy bắt tội phạm/kẻ khủng bố (How the police trace a criminal/terrorist)	Săn lùng (Hunt)	13
	Truy tìm (Pursue)	16		Xoá sổ (Eliminate)	10
	Truy lùng (Search)	7		Tiêu diệt (Destroy)	7
	Giáp lá cà (Hand-to-hand combat)	4		Bắt (Arrest)	7

Table 4: Metaphorically-expressed Words Activated in the Conceptual Model HOW HEALTH WORKERS TRACE VIRUS SARS-CoV-2 IS HOW POLICE TRACE A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST (Continued)

Source domain	Metaphorically-expressed words	Frequency	Target domain	Metaphorically-expressed words	Frequency
	Săn tìm (Chase)	4		Ngăn chặn (Prevent)	3
	Truy bắt (Capture)	2		Bao vây (Surround)	2
	Chiến lược đánh đập (Attack strategy)	2		Đánh bại (Defeat)	2
	Tóm/tóm lấy (Grab)	2		Siết chặt vòng tay (Tighten the siege)	2
	Tham chiến (Engage)	1		Phong tỏa (Lockdown)	1
	Tự tử (Suicide)	1		Đột nhập (Infiltrate)	1
	Giết chết (Kill)	1		Chiến đấu (Fight)	1
	Tấn công (Attack)	1		Kiểm soát (Control)	1
	Hàng phòng ngự (Defence)	1		Bắt giữ tù nhân (Take prisoners)	1
Total		109			

The table shows that metaphorical expressions with the highest frequency are *track* (17 appearances), *trace* (16 appearances), *hunt* (13 appearances), and *search* (7 appearances). Under the context of law enforcement, these are strategic maneuvers aimed at capturing criminals when finding out evidence. The acts of tracing, tracking, followed by hunting and searching are operational conducts. These metaphorical signaling codes clarify the property "how health workers trace criminals" of the source domain. When activated and moved towards the target domain, they become how doctors trace virus Sars-CoV-2.

The first operation in criminal tracing is *tracking* and *hunting*. Similarly, functional forces, the medical team and the epidemiologists start from *tracking* and *hunting* SARS-CoV-2 and its variants via tests. When detecting traces of the virus, the next step will be to encircle and tighten the siege through measures belonging to social regulations such as medical isolation of infected individuals, blockade, social isolation. or local distancing in areas where people are infected with the virus. For biomedical therapy researchers, the hunt for *viral criminals* is carried out fiercely in the laboratory, causing the virus to show its true form, with tactics of *beating*, *fighting*, and *finally capturing*, control and inactive viruses to serve research and preparation of vaccines. For example,

- (21) Các bác sĩ trong phòng thí nghiệm bắt đầu **truy tìm, giáp lá cà** với con virus corona khi thông tin chỉ được manh nha bên Vũ Hán, Trung Quốc (Nhon & Thảo, 2020).
[Doctors began to **trace and combat hand-to-hand** the corona virus in laboratories when information was only available in Wuhan, China]
- (22) Kiên định **chiến lược đánh đập COVID-19** (Vinh, 2020).
[Stick to **the strategy of smashing COVID-19**]
- (23) Thượng tá chuyên về ung thư nhảy sang **bắt virus Corona**: 'Tôi chỉ là người tra dầu nhớt.' ("Thượng tá chuyên về ung thư nhảy sang 'bắt' virus Corona: 'Tôi chỉ là người tra dầu nhớt'", 2020)
[The colonel specializing in oncology turns to **catch the corona virus**: 'I'm just a lubricant.']

Tracing is not only conducted by functional forces, including doctors and biomedical researchers, but also by the human immune system, which also acts as a security force keeping the body healthy, guarding and preventing the invasion of foreign viruses. The immune system has become the functional force to *catch*, *capture*, and *kill* the virus. For example,

- (24) Hệ miễn dịch không **bắt giữ tù nhân** (Khang, 2020b).
[The immune system does not **take prisoners**.]
- (25) Khi phát hiện ra tế bào nào bị nhiễm virus, bị virus biến thành nơi để sinh sôi, hệ miễn dịch sẽ **tóm lấy** tế bào đó, và **bắn dữ dội** các phân tử xuyên vào trong, **giết chết tế bào** và mọi thứ bên trong (Zing, 2020).
[When a cell is detected to be infected with a virus, the immune system will **grab** that cell and **violently shoot** molecules to penetrate and **kill** the cell as well as everything inside.]

Among the aforementioned metaphors, the act of tracing/tracking virus Sars-CoV-2 is similar to the tracing/tracking criminals of law enforcers. Thus, considering the COVID-19 epidemic as a dangerous enemy

and Sars-CoV-2 viruses as criminals/terrorists/invasers, COVID-19 pandemic reports in Vietnamese online newspapers reflected and conveyed the goal of Vietnamese media when they wished to widely inform readers about the COVID-19 epidemic. This helped readers better understand the danger, the impulse, the ways of tracking the virus, the scrams and powerful attacks of the virus on humans.

Therefore, the popular use of conceptual metaphor: virus SARS-CoV-2 is a criminal/terrorist in news on the COVID-19 epidemic in Vietnamese online newspapers is a useful communication strategy. The construction of a criminal tracking scenario and the criminalization of COVID-19 tracing, controlling and treating have brought about a sense of risk and urgency to the whole society. Through the use of knowledge about criminals/terrorists with all levels of danger and risk they can bring to society to the metaphor for the Sars-CoV-2 virus, the target of the media. Vietnam wants to raise the alarm about the danger and emergency of the COVID-19 epidemic to a large number of readers, thereby hoping that people will be more aware of their civic responsibility when responding to the epidemic, thereby coordinating with authorities at all levels in the prevention and control of the COVID-19 epidemic.

5. CONCLUSION

The theoretical framework and discourse analysis has provided insight and greatly contributed to our current understanding of the interrelated nature of language, society and politics (Kremer & Felgenhauer, 2022). Metaphors are a powerful rhetorical tool applicable in a diverse range of contexts, including sports commentary, advertising, news communication and political context. According to Charteris-Black, metaphors "are capable of manipulating the audience" and "affect emotional reactions" (Charteris-Black, 2005, p. 21). Thus, politicians have a tendency to use metaphors as a linguistic strategy to convey their ideas and ideological systems to the masses in order to attain their obligation towards governmental regulations. For the fields of news and communication, this is no exception.

By clarifying the mapping and simulation mechanism of the movement of attributes between the two spatial domains "source" and "target" in the conceptual metaphor model VIRUS SARS-CoV-2 IS A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST in Vietnamese news articles, it can be affirmed that reporters/editors' perceptions about criminal/terrorist and the fight against criminal/terrorist stems from background knowledge and embodied experiences about the brutality, danger and cruelty of crime in general and of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in particular. From the decoding of the formation and mapping mechanisms, it can be seen that the reporters/editors' thinking is quite consistent when coding "SARS-CoV-2" as a dangerous, reckless and cunning criminal/terrorist with all respective attributes relating to criminal nature. The criminalization combined with exaggeration of language has made COVID-19 news reports characteristic of security and social order protection. Real-life criminal/terrorist tracking ideally ends with their defeat, surrender and giving up. In the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the surrender of the virus, the neutralization of the virus' spread and attack, the "tracing", "grabbing", "catching" and controlling virus strains of medical staff, doctors and biomedical researchers all contribute to the victory for soldiers and security forces in the national cause of peace protection. Because metaphors have framing functions, meaning that they impact how we think and perceive different problems and solutions (Semino, 2021), based on the purpose of media discourse, the writer can employ different tactics in relation to the pandemic. Similar to these findings, prior research has also stated that "it is evident that war metaphors can be appropriately used for the first phase of the pandemic with a view to spreading awareness on the dangers that the virus causes, as a necessary justification for lifestyle changes, creating a sense of responsibility for a common group and sacrificing for a common purpose" (Flusberg et al., 2018). "War metaphors can raise common awareness of the seriousness and urgency of the issues, preparing them for appropriate behavioral changes" (Flusberg et al., 2017). Evidently, under trying circumstances in need of urgent reaction, "war metaphors are used to suggest that an urgent impending threat requires an immediate unified effort" (Semino, 2021). The personification of a crisis allows for the usage of humans' major capabilities to pinpoint motives, objectives, and deliberate actions in order to find preventative measures. We think that during the preliminary period of COVID-19, the use of war metaphors (with emphasis on the war aspects of "criminals/terrorists") had a definite narrative in Vietnamese media in the creation of political motives, raising the overall awareness of the masses toward their pandemic prevention duties. Under the bigger context of COVID-19 discourse in global media outlets during the preliminary phases of outbreak, the usage of war metaphors when discussing COVID-19 appears to be popular in different national media, when they are faced with a community health crisis causing prolonged uncertainty. War metaphors are therefore considered a means of discourse that have the capabilities of enhancing the understanding of certain social processes, used with purpose, fit for specific societal communication intentions of the message convene (such as governmental and health authorities, experts, reporters, and news editors). This serves to orientate the narrative in order to convince and change the audience's perception, thus altering their behaviour, as war and fighting metaphors

help push reduction measures. When considering the pandemic as a spontaneous process, war metaphors prove to be especially effective, as they convey both the urgency and severity levels of the pandemic (Semino, 2021) and call for defensive actions as well as winning conditions (Chapman & Miller, 2020). As a result, metaphors could play an integral role in the conveyance of community health messages (Semino, 2021). The findings also shed light on how Vietnamese media discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and how Vietnamese media comment on the danger of the SARS-CoV-2 virus through knowledge from the source domain of “crime/terrorism”. Therefore, basic ideological and political orientations of the Vietnamese-language press conveyed through SARS-CoV-2 metaphors was highlighted.

It is obvious that the whole conceptual model VIRUS SARS-CoV-2 IS A CRIMINAL/TERRORIST in Vietnamese online newspapers is represented by the image schema available from the background knowledge of journalists and media editors. This is formed by correlations in their experience and available knowledge about security, crime prevention and control, and experiences related to the “military/security” source domain, within a universal cognitive framework.

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