The use of COVID-19 metaphors in British tabloids and broadsheet newspapers

Bachelor's thesis

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Abstract

This study investigates the metaphor use of British tabloids and broadsheet newspapers regarding the COVID-19 virus. Investigating metaphors about COVID-19 provides an opportunity to gain new theoretical insights: as the virus is such a new phenomenon, not much is yet known about the ways in which it is talked about. A corpus of 200 newspaper articles was analysed by using the MIP procedure and by identifying eight different metaphor domains (war, sports, journey, weather events or natural disasters, fire, animal, healthcare and other/original). Findings indicate that overall, the most frequently used type of metaphor is the other/original type of metaphor. In this study, tabloids were statistically more inclined to using other/original metaphors, and a marginally significant difference was found for their use of war metaphors. However, more research using a more extensive corpus and a more specified codebook is necessary in order to be fully conclusive.

Keywords: metaphor, war metaphor, virus, corona virus, COVID-19, broadsheets, tabloids, Britain

Introduction

In media communication, metaphors are often used to make sense of complex events. Throughout history, both by politicians and media outlets, viruses like SARS and the Avian flu have been referred to in a militaristic context (Seixas, 2021). For example, former president Hu of the People's Republic of China referred to the Avian flu as if it was an enemy advancing: "It's coming closer and strikes without warning" (De la Rosa, 2007, p. 21). Correspondingly, American newspapers described the Ebola virus as something that "attacks anytime" and "hits like a bomb" (Trčková, 2015, p. 33).

This use of so-called war metaphors has been widely critiqued, mainly on the account of them being perceived as masculine, power-based and violent (Reisfield & Wilson, 2004). Even so, politicians and the media don't scare away from using them to describe viruses.

With the ongoing corona virus pandemic, it seems metaphors are used more than ever. In the Netherlands, politicians make use of so many metaphors to describe COVID-19 that a popular talk show programme was able to create a whole segment out of summing them up (Even tot hier, 2020). In the case of COVID-19, this virus too is mostly referred to in terms of war metaphors (Seixas, 2021; Semino, 2021). However, studies on this topic are sparse, and the studies by Seixas (2021) and Semino (2021) only focused on language by politicians. One aspect that is not yet investigated is the use metaphors about COVID-19 by newspapers. Like

politicians, newspapers have a large impact on their audience (Mason, 2007). Therefore, it would be prudent to explore how newspapers use corona virus related metaphors. More specifically, this study will research two types of newspapers: tabloids and broadsheets. As there are substantial differences between these two types of newspaper (Boykoff, 2008), it would be interesting to investigate whether they also differ on their COVID-19 metaphor use. This is why the present study will research the use of metaphors about COVID-19 by conducting a corpus study on British tabloid and broadsheet articles.

Speed, O'Meara, San Roque and Majid (2019, p. 2) define metaphor as "A mechanism that allows us to think and talk about one thing in terms of another, ratcheting up the cognitive and expressive capacity of humankind." Severino and Zonana (1988) described metaphors as having two important functions: firstly, a metaphor is able to give a more concrete representation of a situation, and secondly, that metaphors can manipulate the minds of a reader or listener through the inference patterns and value judgements they generate. Or, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 4) put it more directly: "Metaphors are crucial for expressing attitudes and beliefs and making sense of complex events." Indeed, metaphors are crucial, as they help us talk about phenomena we cannot quite grasp. This may be why they are used so often: multiple studies have found that metaphorical expressions in language occur on average between 3 and 18 times per 100 words (e.g. Cameron & Stelma, 2004; Steen, Dorst, Herrmann, Kaal, Krennmayr & Pasma, 2010). In addition, next to making things easier to discuss, Carpenter (2008) presents metaphor use as a way to evoke emotion. Metaphors are more effective in creating engagement than by just providing straightforward information, because they help connect people to experiences (Carpenter, 2008). Therefore, metaphors can be an powerful tool in spoken and written communication.

For many, the current pandemic is a difficult time that was especially uncertain at the very beginning. Therefore, the emerging of many different metaphors about COVID-19 is not surprising. Because of the forementioned functions of metaphors (e.g. making sense of complex events and evoking emotion), metaphors currently are very applicable. Be that as it may, the kinds of metaphors that are used to describe the virus are not yet identified. As previously mentioned, past viruses have often been described by using war metaphors. However, being such a recent event, we do not yet know in what ways this corona virus is referred to.

A small number of studies have already conducted research on which COVID-19 metaphors are frequently used. Most of these studies focused on language used by politicians. Seixas (2021) for instance, found that political representatives often refer to the virus by using

both militaristic and war metaphors. Semino (2021) also found this to be the case, recognizing that war metaphors were widely used by political leaders such as Xi Jinping, Macron, Conte and Trump. However, while a politician's speech obviously has some impact, some consideration must be given to the role of the media. Even though some studies have already conducted research about COVID-19 metaphor use in politics, not much is yet known about COVID-19 metaphor use in media outlets. Since the media plays a key role in public opinion (Mason, 2007), it would be prudent to explore in what ways this new corona virus is portrayed to help fill this gap in research. Therefore, the present study will research the media's use of COVID-19 metaphors by exploring metaphor use by British tabloids and broadsheet newspapers.

Tabloids and broadsheets

Newspapers are of great importance in the sense that they give a representation of the current status quo and climate and reflect the way in which we think and talk about things (Mason, 2007). While in the past mainly broadsheet newspapers were considered to be the largest influences on not only perceptions but also decision-making and public policy (Boykoff, 2008), in the present day the influence of tabloids is not to be underestimated. Next to their increase in influence, there is also a notable increase in the daily circulation of tabloids in Britain, with an average that can be up to ten times as high as broadsheet newspapers (Boykoff, 2008).

In Britain, differences between tabloids and broadsheet newspapers (or 'quality' newspapers) tend to be large. A distinction between the two can be made based on three different metrics: tenor, breadth and depth (Boykoff, 2008).

Tenor: tabloids seem to be more opinion- and commentary-based, while broadsheets tend to be more objective (Boykoff, 2008; van Zoonen, 1998).

Breadth: tabloids tend to pay more attention to domestic stories, scandal and conflict, while broadsheets tend to focus more on politics and economics (Boykoff, 2008; Rooney, 2004).

Depth: tabloids place a greater emphasis on surface-level topics, while broadsheets are more prone to emphasize in-depth political and societal analyses (Boykoff, 2008; Djupsund & Carlson, 1998).

Furthermore, in addition to differences between tabloids and broadsheets on tenor, breadth and depth, there also seem to be large differences in language use. A study by Timuçin (2010) pointed towards a difference in language use between UK tabloids and more traditional

newspapers, concluding that tabloids generally tend to use a more involved and biased type of language. Timuçin found this to be true even when tabloids and broadsheets were both describing the same event. Correspondingly, a corpus study by Joffe and Haarhoff (2002) investigating media representations of Ebola in British tabloids and broadsheets found differences in language use as well. While this study was not conducted to explore metaphor use per se, its findings seem to point towards a clear difference in metaphor use between the two types of papers. For example, in this study tabloids mostly referred to Ebola as a "killer African virus" ("(…) human beings have fallen victim to this killer"), while broadsheets mostly referred to it as just "the Ebola virus" (Joffe & Haarhoff, 2002, p. 960).

As tabloids evidently exercise a more sensationalized type of writing and are more inclined to play into emotion, it would be in line with expectations that tabloids would also use more metaphors to describe current events. This possibility is strengthened by the argument that playing into emotion is also one of the main functions of metaphors (Carpenter, 2008). Besides that, as other researchers have pointed towards the use of war metaphors in relation to other viruses, newspapers could possibly also be using war metaphors when writing about COVID-19. This would be interesting to know, as the image of violence can sometimes have an unintended negative effect on the perceptions of readers (Reisfield & Wilson, 2004).

Research questions

Research regarding the use of COVID-19 metaphors could shed some light on how tabloids and broadsheets differ from one another in terms of this. This leads to the first research question: to what extent does the way in which British tabloids and broadsheet newspapers use metaphors to describe COVID-19 differ?

Additional to finding out if the use of metaphor differs per type of newspaper, the aim of this study is to find out whether the use of metaphors differs over time. For instance, in 2019, the virus was still far away and relatively unknown – but terrifying nonetheless. Nowadays, the general consensus seems to be that people have grown tired of the virus and are learning to live with it being around them. Does time influence the use of virus metaphors? This leads to the second research question: to what extent does time influence the use of COVID-19 metaphors by British broadsheet newspapers and tabloids?

Method

To investigate if British tabloids and broadsheet newspapers use COVID-19 metaphors differently, a corpus analysis of 200 news articles was analysed on metaphor use.

Materials

A corpus consisting of 200 newspaper articles from British tabloids and broadsheet newspapers was analysed.

The corpus was composed by stratified random sampling. First, two tabloids (The Sun and The Daily Mail) and two broadsheet newspapers (The Guardian and the Independent) were selected based on biggest monthly reach (Statista, 2020). Then, using Nexis Uni, all articles with titles containing the term 'COVID-19' and/or 'coronavirus' that were published between march 2020 (which is when the virus entered Britain) and march 2021 were selected. As they are not classified as news articles, opinion pieces and pieces sent in by readers were excluded from this selection. Lastly, for each newspaper, 50 articles were randomly sampled.

Procedure

The coding procedure followed two main steps. First, in order to determine whether a word or lexical unit was metaphorical, the Metaphor Identification Method (MIP) was used. MIP is deemed to work well for a standard variety of language (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) and is therefore suitable for newspaper articles. MIP compares the contextual meaning of a lexical unit to the basic meaning of that unit and looks for a contrast (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). The basic meaning of a word is defined by the first dictionary meaning found in Macmillan dictionary. When a contrast is found, this could mean the lexical unit is metaphorical (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). See Appendix A for a full guide to using MIP.

However, while MIP is a relatively reliable method to help identify metaphors (Pragglejaz Group, 2007; Peréz-Sobrino, 2014), it is not able to classify and differentiate between different kinds of metaphors. Therefore, a second coding step to help determine the type of metaphor was necessary. Consequently, metaphors were classified in categories as proposed by Sirait et al. (2020), Semino (2021) and Sabucedo, Alzate and Hur (2020), who performed prior research into the use of COVID-19 metaphors. The metaphors they found to be used most frequently were the following types of metaphors: war metaphors, sports metaphors, journey metaphors, weather events or natural disaster metaphors, fire metaphors, animal metaphors and healthcare metaphors (Sirat et al., 2020; Semino, 2021; Sabucedo et al.,

2020). To help determine to which metaphor type a metaphorical lexical unit belongs, the following scheme as proposed by de Haas (2021) was used:

War metaphors: The source domain refers to war, a fight, a battle, soldiers or an enemy. Example: *He lost his battle with Covid-19*.

Sports metaphors: The source domain refers to any type of sport, sport terminology such as 'defending' or 'attacking', or an opponent. Example: *We are all in the same team playing against Corona and can only win if we all stick to the rules*.

Journey metaphors: The source domain refers to a journey, a short/long process, an easy/difficult process, a route or the destination/end goal. Example: *We are not there yet. We still have a long way to go*.

Weather events or natural disaster metaphors: The source domain refers to weather events or natural disasters, such as a tsunami, earthquake, avalanche, etc. Example: *We are expecting a tsunami of new Covid-19 cases in the following weeks*.

Fire metaphors: The source domain refers to fire or firefighters. Example: *The fire is spreading more and more, and our firefighters cannot keep up with it anymore*.

Animal metaphors: The source domain refers to any type of animal or animal behaviour. Example: *Covid-19 bites back*.

Healthcare metaphors: The source domain refers to health, healthcare, healthcare workers, diseases, etc. Example: *Because of Covid-19 there is now a mental health epidemic*.

When a metaphor did not fit into one of these categories, they were classified as 'other/original metaphor'. A demonstration of the codebook is given by applying it to a sentence of an article from the Daily Mail titled "90-minute tests to transform the war on corona" (see Appendix B for the full article) (Daily Mail, 2020). The sentence is about the way in which 90-minute covid-tests, that had just came out at that time, would help with controlling the corona virus.

The news of quicker tests is encouraging and should mean we have a further weapon in our armoury to defeat the virus.

First, all lexical units, nouns and main verbs in the sentences are identified with slashes indicating the boundaries between lexical units. The words that are underlined are either nouns or main verbs.

The / <u>news</u> / of / quicker / <u>tests</u> / is / encouraging / and / should / <u>mean</u> / we / have / a / further / <u>weapon</u> / in / our / <u>armoury</u> / to / <u>defeat</u> / the / <u>virus</u>.

Then, for all nouns and main verbs, it will be decided whether they are metaphorical. This is done by comparing the contextual meaning to the basic meaning.

News

Contextual meaning: The type of information heard about something – in this case: the news of quicker tests.

Basic meaning: "Information about something that has happened recently" (MacMillan Dictionary, n.d.).

Contextual versus basic: In this case, the contextual meaning and basic meaning are the same.

Metaphorical: No

Tests

Contextual meaning: In this context, 'tests' is about a test used on a person to detect COVID-19

Basic meaning: "A set of written or spoken questions used for finding out how much someone knows about a subject. A test is less formal than an exam (MacMillan Dictionary, n.d.)."

Contextual versus basic: The contextual meaning does not correspond with the basic meaning. However, there is no way the contextual meaning can be understood in comparison with the basic meaning. The contextual meaning corresponds with Macmillan's third definition of the word: "a process designed to find out whether a particular substance is present in another substance".

Metaphorical: No

Mean

Contextual meaning: In this context, 'mean' refers to the particular meaning of the news about quicker COVID-19 tests.

Basic meaning: "To have a particular meaning (MacMillan Dictionary, n.d.)."

Contextual versus basic: In this case, the contextual and basic meaning correspond.

Metaphorical: No

Weapon

Contextual meaning: The text refers to having a tool – the tests – as a means to control the virus.

Basic meaning: "An object that can be used to hurt people or damage property, for example a gun, knife, or bomb (MacMillan Dictionary, n.d.)."

Contextual versus basic: From context, it can be understood that the tests could be seen as a tool (or weapon) that would 'damage' the virus – namely, by ensuring that infections can be mapped better, which could case fewer people to become infected (and hereby 'damaging' the virus in a way). Therefore, the basic meaning and the contextual meaning contrast, but can be understood in comparison.

Metaphorical: Yes

Armoury

Contextual meaning: The texts refers to the tests like part of a collection of means necessary in order to control the virus.

Basic meaning: "A building where weapons are kept (MacMillan Dictionary, n.d.)."

Contextual versus basic: The contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning and can be understood by comparison with it: we can understand the way in which a test would be seen as something that can be kept in combination with other tools to control the virus, the way a weapon would be physically stored in an armoury.

Metaphorical: Yes

Defeat

Contextual meaning: In this context, 'defeat' refers to getting rid of COVID-19.

Basic meaning: "To win against someone in a game, fight, or election (MacMillan Dictionary, n.d.)."

Contextual versus basic: The contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning and can be understood by comparison with it: it can be understood that the public sees the virus as an enemy or opponent and is fighting to get the virus under control (to win from the virus), like a soccer team defeating their opponent.

Metaphorical: Yes

Virus

Contextual meaning: In this case, the context refers to a virus causing an illness (and more specifically, COVID-19).

Basic meaning: "A simple living this that is smaller than bacteria and that can enter your body and make you ill. If your body can protect itself against a particular virus, then you are immune to it. A vaccine is a medicine that makes you immune to a particular virus (MacMillan Dictionary, n.d.)."

Contextual versus basic: The contextual and basic meaning are the same.

Metaphorical: No

As the metaphorical units are now established ('weapon', 'armoury' and 'defeat'), what then needs to be determined is to which metaphor type the units belong. This is done by comparing them to the scheme as proposed by de Haas (2021). For 'weapon', one could argue it would be classified as a war metaphor; however, the use of weapons is not limited to war alone. Besides, a weapon is no fight, battle, soldier or enemy. The same could be said about 'armoury'. For 'defeat', this metaphorical unit could be classified as a sports metaphor, as in this context, the virus could be seen as an enemy to win from.

During the coding process, nouns and main verbs were coded. This was done for two reasons: the first being that it made the coding of the corpus more comprehensive; and the second being that most (deliberate) metaphors that occur in language are verbs and nouns (Gudrun Reijnierse, 2017). Auxiliary verbs (like have, will, be, do) were left out of the coding process as they are always followed by another (main) verb. Additionally, for each article the following was coded: the newspaper the article came from, the type of newspaper (broadsheet or tabloid), the wordcount of the article, the total number of metaphors found in the article and the types of metaphors used. Lastly, the date the article was published was coded. Coding the date allowed the opportunity to find out whether different kinds of metaphors are used throughout the months in which the pandemic progressed.

The coding was done by independent coders. To test the intercoder reliability, two coders both coded the same twenty articles (five articles per newspaper), after which Cohen's Kappa was measured. Cohen's Kappa was measured to find out whether coders both coded the same words and lexical units as metaphorical ('metaphorical') and whether they both classified words and lexical units as the same type of metaphor ('type of metaphor'). The interrater reliability of the variable 'metaphorical' was moderate: $\kappa = .498$, $p < .001$'. Although this number is lower than the minimum of 0.60 Pragglejaz recommends (Pragglejaz Group, 2007),

the MIP-procedure has been validated in literature multiple times (for example, see Pérez-Sobrino, 2014). Therefore, even though the reliability was moderate, it was still opted to use the data. The interrater reliability of the variable 'type of metaphor' was good: $\kappa = .797$, $p < .001$', which was satisfactory.

Statistical treatment

In order to conduct statistical tests, the measurement levels of the variables need to be determined. Type of article is a nominal, independent variable consisting of two categories (broadsheet newspaper or tabloid), and type of metaphor is a nominal, dependent variable consisting of eight categories (war metaphor, sports metaphor, journey metaphor, weather events or natural disaster metaphor, fire metaphor, animal metaphor, healthcare metaphor and other/original metaphor). Date is a nominal, independent variable consisting of two categories: before September 11th 2020 and after September 11th 2020 (which was the median date).

To get a more general view of the data, frequency analysis were done to determine the most frequently used metaphors. Descriptives were performed to investigate differences in article length and metaphor use. Independent sample t-tests were done in order to investigate possible significant differences between the two types of newspaper.

In order to investigate whether metaphor use differs amongst different types of newspapers and to see if date is of any influence on this, a mixed design ANOVA with number of metaphors per 100 words as the dependent variable, type of metaphor as a within-subjects factor and type of newspaper and date as between-subjects factors was performed. Independent samples t-tests were conducted as post-hoc tests.

Results

The aim of this study was to find out whether there is a difference between English tabloids and broadsheet newspapers and their use of COVID-19 metaphors (type and frequency), as well as the possible effect of time on metaphor use.

Frequencies and length

In total, 203 articles were analysed. The articles contained a minimum of 54 words and a maximum of 3279 words, with an average number of 558 words per article (M = 558.11, SD = 419.01).

An independent samples t-test shows a significant difference in the average article length between broadsheets and tabloids (t (193.95) = 2.63, p = .009). Broadsheet newspapers published the longest articles with an average of 632 words per article (M = 632.06, SD = 458.42), and tabloids the shortest with an average of 480 words per article (M = 480.42, SD = 359.34). The means and standard deviations for the article length are shown in table 1.

There was no significant difference between the total number of metaphors used throughout the articles and the two kinds of newspapers (t (187.35) = .76, p = .446). On average, broadsheet newspapers used roughly 9 metaphors per article, whereas tabloids used 8. However, an independent samples t-test did show a significant difference in the relative number of metaphors per 100 words (t (192.79) = 2.91, p = .004). Articles in tabloids contained more metaphors per 100 words (M = 0.018, SD = 0.012) than articles in broadsheet newspapers (M = 0.014, SD = 0.010) (table 1).

Table 1.   Means and standard deviations for the number of words and number of metaphors used in broadsheet newspapers and tabloids

	Broadsheets N = 104 M (*SD*)	Tabloids N = 99 M (*SD*)
Number of words	632.06 (*458.42*)	480.42 (*359.34*)
Number of metaphors	8.78 (*9.02*)	7.94 (*6.51*)
Ratio	0.014 (0.010)	0.018 (0.012)

Metaphor use

Some small differences were found in the overall use of metaphors per type of newspaper. Metaphors that were most frequently used among broadsheet newspapers were 'lockdown(s)' (11.4%), followed by 'wave' (2.7%), 'crisis' (1.7%), 'hit' (1.7%) and lastly 'fight' (1.2%). Tabloids most frequently used the metaphors 'lockdown' (7.6%), 'hit' (2.2%), 'wave' (2.2%), 'jab' (1.8%) and 'battle' (1.1%). Frequencies and percentages are shown in table 2.

Table 2.   Most frequently used metaphors in broadsheet newspapers and tabloids

Broadsheets		Tabloids	
Metaphor	Frequency (percentage)	Metaphor	Frequency (percentage)
Lockdown(s)	105 (11%)	Lockdown	60 (8%)
Wave	25 (3%)	Hit	17 (2%)
Crisis	16 (2%)	Wave	17 (2%)
Hit	16 (2%)	Jab	14 (2%)
Fight	11 (1%)	Battle	8 (1%)

Types of metaphors

A mixed ANOVA for type of metaphors per 100 words as a within-subject factor and type of newspaper and publishing date as between-subject factors was performed. Because Mauchly's test of sphericity was significant (< .001), the Greenhouse-Geisser estimate was used (ε = .244). The ANOVA showed a significant main effect of type of metaphor (F (1.706, 339.51) = 289.67, p < .001) and a significant main effect of type of newspaper (F (1, 199) = 8.77, p = .003). These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction effect between type of metaphors per 100 words and type of newspaper (F (1.706, 339.51) = 5.377, p = .008). The date articles were published did not show a significant main effect (F (1, 199) = 1.748, p = .188), as well as no significant interaction effect on type of newspaper and type of metaphors used per 100 words (F (1.706, 339.51) = 2.059, p = .137). Because date has no statistically significant effect, this variable is left out for the remainder of the results. A visual representation of the significant effects is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1.   Estimated marginal means of metaphor type (1 = war metaphors, 2 = sport metaphors, 3 = journey metaphors, 4 = weather/natural disaster metaphors, 5 = fire metaphors, 6 = animal metaphors, 7 = healthcare metaphors, 8 = other/original metaphors) per type of newspaper (broadsheet and tabloid).
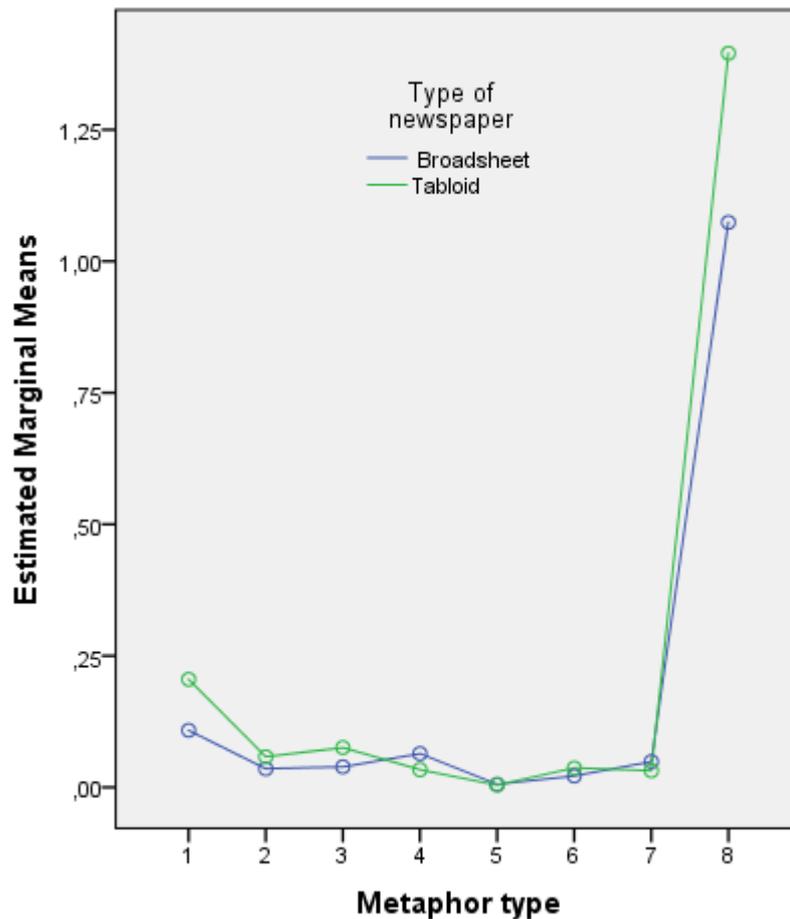

Figure 1 shows that other/original metaphors are probably making up the largest domain group. In addition, there could be a possible difference in the use of war metaphors between the two kinds of newspapers.

To find where exactly tabloids and broadsheets differ on their (type of) metaphor use, independent samples t-tests were conducted as post hoc tests. A significant difference in the use of the different types of metaphors per type of newspaper was found only for the use of other/original metaphors (t (200.45) = 2.61, $p < .01$). Tabloids used more other/original metaphors per 100 words (M = 1.39, SD = 0.87) than broadsheets (M = 1.07, SD = 0.87). Independent samples t-tests found no differences between the two types of newspapers and their use of sports metaphors (t (143.29) = .79, p = .428), journey metaphors (t (198.92) = .16, p =

.874), weather/natural disaster metaphors (t (147.87) = 1.46, p = .146), fire metaphors (t (145.76) = .05, p = .959), animal metaphors (t (179.61) = 1.19, p = .236), and healthcare metaphors (t (126.12) = 1.36, p = .175).   However, for the use of war metaphors, a marginally significant difference between broadsheet newspapers and tabloids was found (t (191.92) = 1.88, p = .061). Tabloids use slightly more war metaphors per 100 words (M = 0.21, SD = 0.39) than broadsheet newspapers (M = 0.11, SD = 0.33). Means and standard deviations for the types of metaphors used per 100 words by both types of newspapers are shown in table 3.

Table 3.   Means and standard deviations for the types of metaphors used per 100 words in broadsheet newspapers and tabloids

	Broadsheets N = 104 M (*SD*)	Tabloids N = 99 M (*SD*)
War metaphors	0.11 *(0.33)*	0.21 *(0.39)*
Sports metaphors	0.04 *(0.11)*	0.05 *(0.18)*
Journey metaphors	0.04 *(0.11)*	0.07 *(0.21)*
Weather/natural disaster metaphors	0.06 *(0.21)*	0.03 *(0.21)*
Fire metaphors	0.01 *(0.03)*	0.00 *(0.04)*
Animal metaphors	0.02 *(0.14)*	0.04 *(0.13)*
Healthcare metaphors	0.05 *(0.22)*	0.03 *(0.16)*
Other/original metaphors	1.07 *(0.87)*	1.39 *(0.87)*

Conclusion/discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare British broadsheet newspapers and tabloids with regards to their COVID-19 metaphor use. The first research question investigated whether broadsheets and tabloids differed on the frequency with which they used metaphors and to look at possible differences regarding the use of different types of metaphors. The second research question investigated whether the use of COVID-19 metaphors was influenced by time.

Findings and possible explanations

Findings of this study seem to point towards differences between broadsheets and tabloids on the frequency of metaphor use and preferences towards certain types of metaphors. First of all, overall, this study found that tabloids used significantly more metaphors per 100 words than broadsheets did. This is somewhat in line with previous findings: as previously found by Boykoff (2008), Timuçin (2010) and Joffe and Haarhoff (2002), there is a clear difference in writing style between the two types of newspapers. On the whole, broadsheets seem to attain a more factual style of writing, while tabloids seem to be more focused on sensation-seeking and creating a narrative. It could be argued that using metaphors is an element of a specific writing style, which may be more in line with the writing style tabloids employ. This could be an explanation for the finding that tabloids were found to have a higher metaphor-density: it could be possible that for tabloids, using metaphors is a way of 'fanning the flame' and incite such a narrative.

Second, the overall most popular metaphor type was the other/original metaphor, as this category was by far the biggest metaphor domain found in this study. While both types of newspapers favoured this metaphor type, tabloids used this type of metaphor significantly more than broadsheets did. As stated in the paragraph above, this could be due to the fact that tabloids employ a different writing style. However, what also seems likely is that the categorization of metaphors in this study has something to do with this category being the biggest (see limitations).

Moreover, tabloids were also more inclined to use war metaphors, although it must be noted that the difference on the use of war metaphors between the two papers was only marginally significant. These findings are somewhat in line with findings by Seixas (2021), Semino (2021) and Trčková (2015), who found that metaphors about COVID-19 and other viruses were usually war metaphors. The way in which, second to using other/original metaphors, war metaphors seem most popular to describe the virus could be an example of the

"we are all in this together"- feeling that seemed to be going around at this period in time. The message that covid is a common enemy that needs defeating, and that there are vulnerable groups of people that need protecting, is a message that was shared by UK's prime minister Boris Johnson at the very start of the pandemic. In fact, even as the pandemic progressed, Johnson kept urging on 'the spirit of "togetherness" to combat the pandemic' (AP news, 2020).

Third, the results showed no effect of time on the use of metaphors for either type of newspaper. A possible explanation for this finding could be that people possibly did not get used to living with the virus. Perhaps people have maintained the same mindset as they did in the beginning of the pandemic. Another possibility is that the writing styles of both types of newspaper just have not changed over time: it could be that their writing style is consistent and events do not influence it.

Limitations and restrictions

First of all, the intercoder reliability for the decision on whether a lexical unit was metaphorical was only moderate. This could be due to the fact that the codebook that was used was not clear enough, or possibly that the coders were not experienced enough. Either way, the results of this study therefore need to be interpreted with some caution.

Moreover, for one newspaper (the Daily Mail), there was a shortage of five articles that contained 'coronavirus' or 'COVID-19'. Next to the fact that these missing articles could have a slight influence on the completeness of the corpus, more importantly it could mean that the search queries used were not sufficient to look up the right articles. Seeing as how most newspapers publish at least a couple articles about something to do with COVID-19 a week, it seems unlikely that there were really too few articles about the matter. It could be possible that newspapers use other terms that describe the virus, or that searching just the titles of articles was not sufficient. Therefore, the analysis might not be entirely thorough and the results might be inconclusive.

Lastly, as most metaphors were classified as other/original metaphors, it is possible that one or more larger metaphor domains were overlooked. For example, as shown by the frequency analysis, one of the most commonly used metaphors in relation to COVID-19 is 'lockdown'. The first definition of lockdown by Macmillan dictionary is "an occasion or time when prisoners are locked in their cells", so in this context 'lockdown' could be seen as a prison metaphor. Seeing as prison metaphors could perhaps be the biggest metaphor domain found in this study, it raises the question what other metaphor domains could have been overlooked. Therefore, the results of this study are probably

Implications and recommendations

This study shows a difference in the way and frequency broadsheets and tabloids use metaphors. This strengthens the argument other studies have made on how there is a difference in the way tabloids and broadsheets report news.

The study also shows that there might be a slight preference of newspapers, and especially tabloid newspapers, to use war metaphors in communication about viruses. As previously shown by Reisfield and Wilson (2004), this metaphor domain can negatively influence perceptions. While the use of war metaphors can be well-intentioned – used as a way of painting a picture or to exaggerate something – it might be off-putting for some, as the image of violence can sometimes have an unintended negative effect. This is something that journalists could to take into consideration when writing. However, whether the use of war metaphors is always a bad thing is still up for debate. As tabloids aim to create more sensation, their readers might be more interested in reading articles with sensationalized language as well. However, more research is needed in order to make any definitive statements about this.

For a more complete corpus, and therefore more complete results, a few recommendations for future research could be made. Firstly, other search queries in addition to the ones used in this study need to be applied. Examples of other terms are 'China virus' or 'variant Alpha', which is the name attributed to the Kent variant of the virus. Secondly, a codebook that is more inclusive of other metaphor types would help specify which metaphor domains make up the group that is now other/original.

Moreover, more research is needed into the use of war metaphors by broadsheets and tabloids. It could be possible that other studies, using a different and more extensive corpus, will show an actually significant difference between the two types of newspapers.

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Appendix A: MIP procedure

"The MIP is as follows:

1. Read the entire text–discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.

2. Determine the lexical units in the text–discourse

3.
   a. For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in context, that is, how it applies to an entity, relation, or attribute in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). Take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit.

   b. For each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context. For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be

      - —More concrete [what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell, and taste];

      - —Related to bodily action;

      - —More precise (as opposed to vague);

      - —Historically older;

      Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit.

   c. If the lexical unit has a more basic current–contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it.

4. If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical."

(Pragglejaz Group, 2007, p. 3).

Appendix B: article Daily Mail

90-MINUTE TESTS TO TRANSFORM THE WAR ON CORONA

DAILY MAIL (London)

August 3, 2020 Monday

Length: 819 words

Body

They'll be rolled out first for NHS next week - and could be key to return to normality

BY SOPHIE BORLAND HEALTH EDITOR

TWO new game-changing tests will be offered to millions of Britons in a major advance in the war on coronavirus. Hailed as transformative', the tests - which give results in 90 minutes - will start being rolled out from next week. One is so simple it could soon be deployed in airports, offices, schools, pubs and restaurants - bringing testing to the bulk of the population.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock last night described the move as lifesaving' as the Government looks to avert a second wave of the disease, prevent the need for draconian lockdowns and restart the stalled economy. The two tests will initially be introduced in the NHS and care homes before being made available more widely over the next few months. Unlike current tests given mainly to patients who already think they have the virus, the new methods will be used to routinely screen members of the public who show no symptoms.

Officials hope they will flag up local outbreaks before they take hold, avoiding the need for local lockdowns such as that imposed in the North West last week. Crucially, both tests can also tell patients if they have the flu even if their result is negative for Covid-19. This means health authorities will be able to track the spread of the two viral illnesses around the country and carry out flu jab campaigns.

Ministers are anxious to avoid a major flu outbreak this winter amid fears it will coincide with a spike in Covid and put an unprecedented strain on the NHS.

One of the tests, the Lampore test, involves taking a sample of saliva, unlike existing methods which require patients to have a swab taken in their nose and mouth, which is difficult to do.

Professor Andrew Beggs, a genetics expert at the University of Birmingham, who has been trialling the Lampore test, described it as transformational'. He said: A rapid test which works off saliva and gives you a result in a maximum of two hours is enormously

powerful. It's definitely an advance on the tools we have at the moment.'

The other test, known as the DNANudge test, will be launched next month. It analyses DNA in nose swabs as with current tests but the results do not need to be sent away to a laboratory.

The firms involved in the tests would not reveal the cost but claim it is similar or cheaper to current tests - which are around £18 privately but less to the NHS. Today's announcement offers new hope after days of grim warnings of a second wave. Figures last week showed

new infections had risen by a third, prompting the Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty to tell the country it had reached the limits' of its lockdown easing. In further developments yesterday:

- There was a backlash against the idea of millions of over-50s being told to stay at home should infections continue to rise;
- The NHS promised to introduce dozens of cancer drugs patients can take at home to avoid the need to go to hospital;
- Several major British firms including Lloyds bank, HSBC and the energy firm SSE were revealed to be allowing staff to continue to work from home;
- The UK recorded 744 new cases - up from 676 the previous day - although there were just eight new deaths.

Mr Hancock described the tests as life-saving innovations'. He said: Millions of new rapid coronavirus tests will provide on-the-spot results in under 90 minutes, helping us to break chains of transmission quickly. The fact these tests can detect flu as well as Covid-19 will be hugely beneficial as we head into winter, so patients can follow the right advice to protect themselves and others.'

Neither of the new tests need to be administered by medically-trained professionals. The developers of the Lampore test, Oxford Nanopur, hope it can be routinely used at airports, avoiding the need for quarantine.

The DNANudge test has been trialled in eight hospitals, protecting the most at risk on cancer, accident and emergency and maternity wards. Now 5,000 Nudgebox' machines will be rolled out across hospitals nationwide. Niall Dickson, chief executive of the NHS Confederation, said: The news of quicker tests is encouraging and should mean we have a further weapon in our armoury to defeat the virus.' Saffron Cordery, deputy chief executive of NHS Providers, said: Having the ability to rapidly test and report the results is very welcome and will help the NHS and other care providers with the challenge of continuing to restart routine services, plan for winter and deal with a potential second surge in Covid-19 cases.'

The development came as ministers ditched a promise to test all residents and staff in care homes throughout the summer, due to supply problems with some of the testing kits.

An email sent to local council chief executives last week from the adult social care testing director Professor Jane Cummings warned of unexpected delays.'

(Daily Mail, 2020)

Appendix C: Statement of own work

<div align="center">CIW English</div>

<div align="center">

Statement of Own Work

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Student name: Anna Leeuw

Student number: s4494423

Course code and name: LET-CIWB351-IBC-2020-SCRSEM2-V

Lecturer: Wilbert Spooren, Ferdy Hubers

Number course group : 3

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Signed:

Date: June 6th, 2021