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An Analysis of the war Metaphor in the Chinese Government White paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action"

Abstract: A salient example of the function of media is the government white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action." Metaphor is a kind of language phenomenon which exists pervasively in people's lives. Based on the mapping theory of Lakoff and Johnson, this article analyzes the WAR metaphor in a government white paper and tries to explore the reasons for and effects of using this metaphor. Based upon a small-sized corpus built on "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action," I use the metaphor identification procedure (MIP) to manually identify instances of metaphors in an initial analysis and then use AntConc to identify metaphors in a second analysis based on the context to improve the accuracy of the data. With empirical evidence, it is found that the WAR metaphor is more widely used in the white paper than other metaphor examples such as the TEST metaphor and the DEVIL metaphor. Then, representative metaphor examples are selected from the corpus to explore the mapping process of the WAR metaphor. Finally, this article points out the underlying historical and cognitive motivations for the wide use of the WAR metaphor and further analyzes its effects. The advantages include highlighting the Chinese nation's spirit of solidarity and encouragement of people's immediate action, while the disadvantages can be seen in the negative and violent nature of war.

Keywords: effects of metaphor; mapping theory; MIP; motivations for metaphor; self-built corpus

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1 Introduction

At the end of 2019, an epidemic which was later called "COVID-19" caused

negative repercussions for the global economy, politics, and people's way of life. At that time, it was crucial and urgent for the government to figure out a way to comfort people who were suffering trepidation and also to alleviate the detrimental impact the virus had. Therefore, the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China released an official white paper titled "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action," which elaborated the process of fighting against the coronavirus in detail.

In order to shorten the distance between the government and the public, as well as steering citizens to better understand news related to COVID-19 and boosting the confidence of the whole nation, a variety of metaphors are employed in the government white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action." Before the COVID-19 outbreak, literature in linguistics mainly focused on analyzing specific metaphors in official news reports. Since the outbreak of SARS in 2003, there is a growing body of literature concerning epidemic discourse and metaphor analysis, including analysis of the reasons for the formation and development of specific metaphors and the advantages and disadvantages of their use by applying such theories as framing theory (Dai and Guo 2020) and deliberate metaphor theory (Zhang and Wang 2020).

Although previous research has touched upon dealing with public health emergencies from discursive perspectives, an analysis of the English version of a Chinese government white paper with a systematic expatiation of the advantages and disadvantages of the WAR metaphor has not previously been undertaken. The overarching aim of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of metaphor, especially the WAR metaphor, using the example of the white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action." The WAR metaphor in the white paper is compared with other metaphors such as the TEST metaphor and the DEVIL metaphor, so as to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of using the WAR metaphor when dealing with the epidemic. This article collects data from the English version of the white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action" from which a small-sized corpus was built for metaphor analysis.

After identifying instances of the WAR metaphor, I use mapping theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) to initially determine prominent features of the WAR metaphor in the process of fighting against COVID-19 and then identify similarities between the target domain and the source domain. I subsequently analyze how the mapping is formed in this process. After the theoretical analysis, I focus on the motivations for and effects of using the WAR metaphor in the battle with COVID-19.

2 Literature review

Research on the use of metaphor in public health emergency discourse has been discussed heatedly by experts and scholars both in China and abroad. From the outbreak of SARS in 2003 to the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020, a plethora of studies have centered on metaphor in news reports during the epidemic. From lexical formation to metaphorical theory in cognitive linguistics, scholars have analyzed epidemic news reporting from multiple perspectives.

2.1 Theoretical basis

The theoretical basis of this study is formed by definitions of metaphor and by conceptual metaphor mapping theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Although different explanations of metaphors have been offered by scholars from different perspectives, the study outlined in this article is based on Lakoff and Johnson's definition of metaphor and their interpretation of mapping theory. Metaphor is not only a kind of rhetorical device, but also a research paradigm subsumed in cognitive linguistics. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) define metaphor from the perspective of cognitive linguistics by arguing that "our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 4) and illustrating that "the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined. Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person's conceptual system" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 7). Twelve years later, Lakoff (1992) further elaborates the nature of metaphor, commenting that metaphor is the major mechanism by which people understand abstract concepts and the reasons for these concepts, enabling people access the meaning of a comparatively abstract or unstructured subject from the aspect of a more concrete or more highly-structured subject.

Moreover, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) were the first to propose mapping theory through the study of conceptual metaphor. As they describe it, two domains exist in the same metaphor: the first is called the target domain, which consists of the immediate subject matter, and the other is called the source domain, where significant metaphorical reasoning occurs and which provides the source concepts that are used in that reasoning process. In a source domain, metaphorical language embodies literal meaning. Additionally, a metaphorical mapping is on multiple levels, with two or more elements being mapped into

two or more other elements in the target domain. Lakoff illustrates mapping theory in detail in his article "The contemporary theory of metaphor" (1992), proposing that each mapping is a fixed pattern of conceptual correspondences across different conceptual domains. When activated, a mapping may apply the knowledge structure and features of a source domain to a corresponding target domain knowledge structure.

2.2 Previous research

Metaphor has always been a highlight in the study of cognitive linguistics; however, its integration with discursive studies of official media during the epidemic period is a new research arena for experts and scholars. The following section provides a brief review of the research status and achievement in these topics from different perspectives.

2.2.1 Previous research in China

Previously, when scholars carried out studies on the metaphors employed in public health emergencies, they particularly discussed the advantages of using the WAR metaphor. Based on the corpus of 120 official reports on SARS and H7N9, Zhang et al. (2015) make an analysis of the characteristics and effects of the metaphor frame used in official media reports under the epidemic situation. Their study finds that at the beginning of the two epidemics, the metaphor of MYSTICAL CREATURE was used, and the FEAR frame activated by the metaphors generated the emotion of panic in the public to some extent. In the middle and late stages of the epidemic, the WAR metaphor and the COMPETITION metaphor were used by the media, which activate the COLLECTIVE frame and the RESPONSIBILITY frame, with the aim of enhancing a united spirit in the public in fighting the disease.

After the COVID-19 outbreak, Zhang and Wang continued to analyze the frame used to discourse on COVID-19 from the perspective of cognitive linguistics (Zhang and Wang 2020). Using framing theory and deliberate theory in cognitive linguistics, they analyzed the use of metaphor in the official blog posts of such media outlets as *People's Daily*, Xinhua News Agency, and CCTV News collected from Weibo (a social media platform in China) as well as in their official WeChat (a social application in China) accounts. Through multimodal forms such as images and texts, this study highlights the frame

of WAR, COMPETITION, and EDUCATION, which arouses in the public a sense of collectivism and a united sprit in the epidemic prevention period, and the social media discourse also functions as a guide for shaping public opinions.

Nevertheless, some experts analyzed the WAR metaphor from the opposite perspective: instead of concentrating on the advantages of using the WAR metaphor, they pointed out its disadvantages. In Yang and Dong's (2017) study of the WAR metaphor in contemporary Chinese media discourse, they tested the universality of the WAR metaphor on the basis of real data. They built a corpus by collecting data from various fields such as political governance, economic development, sports, medical treatment, etc. Yang and Dong (2017) discuss the reasons for the universality of WAR discourse in China from the perspectives of cognition, rhetoric, history, and culture, and then analyze both the advantages and disadvantages of this universality. At the end of their article, they suggest that we should take a discreet attitude toward the use of WAR metaphors in order to avoid the use of dead metaphor and the negative effects of aggressive language in daily life.

Dai and Guo (2020) also demonstrate through their analysis of the structure of the WAR metaphor in Western media reports that the WAR metaphor has its merits and demerits, and that its use may lead to a perspective of binary opposition. They also discuss the cognitive reasons and historical and cultural origins behind the use of the WAR metaphor and comment on the limitations of its use.

2.2.2 Previous research in foreign countries

In addition to studying the WAR metaphor in COVID-19 media reports from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, foreign scholars also discussed other linguistic phenomena in terms of lexicology and critical discourse analysis.

Vocabulary, as the most obvious form of language to show various changes in society, reflects social reality to some extent. Katermina and Yachenko think that the outbreak of COVID-19 has contributed to an abundant production of English vocabulary in their analysis of data from articles in *The Economist* (a British newspaper) in combination with studies on neologism, inflection, derivation, and the metaphorical meanings behind social media discourse (Katermina and Yachenko 2020). For example, the terms *COVID-19* and *coronavirus* are instilled with negative connotations and seen as signs of threat, often being portrayed in images in media discourse such as "killer," "disaster," "punishment," etc. Their research points out that metaphor is embodied in all

aspects of language, including the vocabulary level.

Castro Seixas (2021) analyzes the war metaphors in political communication on COVID-19 from the aspect of discourse analysis. In particular, she observes that the use of militaristic metaphors reflects practices in crisis communication, and she further elucidates the reasons why the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging to the whole world, such as factors affecting the efficiency of communication in crisis situations, as well as political, economic, and sociocultural factors.

From the abovementioned previous studies, we can see that Chinese research subjects have mainly been certain dominant media reports, such as *People's Daily*, Xinhua News Agency, and CCTV News. However, there are few research studies on government publications such as the Chinese government white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action." In addition, the majority of scholars seek inspiration from framing theory in cognitive linguistics, but few of them use the mapping theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Most mainstream studies focus on the advantages of the WAR metaphor, but there are few studies that systematically explain the reasons for and advantages and disadvantages of using the WAR metaphor after the outbreak of COVID-19.

Meanwhile, foreign studies are mainly carried out under cross-cultural circumstances, and additionally, Western media are easily influenced by politics in the Western world while elaborating the WAR metaphor, so their research results are not objective.

Therefore, the study outlined in this article is innovative and worthwhile in its employment of mapping theory in the analysis process, and systematically analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of the use of the WAR metaphor in the white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action."

3 Research methodology

This section firstly introduces information about the research questions. Then all relevant research methods and procedures are explained in detail. Finally, this section introduces the corpus and data which were used in the study.

3.1 Research questions

The study analyzes the WAR metaphor in the Chinese government white paper

"Fighting COVID-19: China in Action" by using the mapping theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). It also tries to determine the reasons for and the advantageous and detrimental effects of using the WAR metaphor in media discourse. In this section, three questions which are generated from this research are presented.

(1) What is the metaphorical mapping process of the WAR metaphor in the government white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action"?

(2) Why is the WAR metaphor the most frequently used metaphor in the government white paper?

(3) What are the effects (advantages and disadvantages) of using the WAR metaphor in the government white paper?

3.2 Research methods and procedures

In this study, the white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action" was selected as the corpus, and a small corpus was built by the researcher herself, which was mainly achieved through combination of manual metaphor analysis and automatic lexical software analysis. This study only analyzes selected metaphor examples (such as *battle*, *fight*, and *frontline*), which appear in a relatively high frequency in the corpus, and their mapping relations, and explores the dynamic process of news discourse communication by comparing different metaphors (such as the WAR metaphor, the TEST metaphor, and the DEVIL metaphor) and analyzing the reasons for and effects of using the WAR metaphor. Specifically, I employ both quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis in the study.

The quantitative analysis in this study mainly consisted of data processing. The first step required reading through the full text of the white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action" and using MIP (Pragglejaz Group 2007) to identify all the metaphors and key words in the text. The MIP procedure has been widely used by scholars, for instance Tian and Li (2018) in their research on President Xi's speech. The specific identification steps of MIP (Pragglejaz Group 2007) are as follows:

(1) Read the whole text to understand the general meaning of the text.

(2) Determine the lexical units in the text.

(3) a) Determine the contextual meaning of each lexical unit, that is to say, how it applies to a kind of relation or an entity or how it is used in a certain situation.
    b) Determine a more basic contemporary meaning of each lexical unit in contexts other than the one in the existing context, with the basic meanings usually being more concrete (relating to our five senses), related to our body action, more precise, and historically older.
    c) If the lexical meaning has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts instead of the existing contexts, determine whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning.

(4) If the selected expressions contrast with each other, the lexical unit can be marked as metaphorical.

After the whole MIP process, the metaphors were classified according to different types, such as the WAR metaphor, the TEST metaphor, and the DEVIL metaphor.

The second step was to use AntConc to re-identify the metaphors collected in the first step. In order to make the outcome more accurate and objective, the software AntConc (version 3.5.8) was used to identify the key words that were collected from the MIP process once again, and then the frequency of key words was calculated. AntConc, a free green tool for corpus analysis developed by Japanese scholar Laurence Anthony, has three functions: file view, concordance, and collocates (Wang 2009).

A table of the data collected from the abovementioned process was compiled on completion of the first and second steps.

Once the quantitative process of data collection and processing was completed, a qualitative analysis applied to summarize the possible reasons for and effects of using the WAR metaphor, which included reading relevant literature on the reasons for and effects of using different metaphors.

3.3 Corpus

The research corpus of this paper comes from the Chinese government white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action" issued by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (www.scio.gov.cn). The

main responsibility of the State Council Information Office is to promote the Chinese media in their presentation of China's image to the world, guiding media coverage, holding press conferences, and providing books, films, and other products. Moreover, it also assists foreign journalists in China and promotes objective and accurate reporting on China overseas.

To build a small corpus, this study extracted data from the Chinese government white paper named "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action" (English version), which was released by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China on the official website. The total number of words in the corpus of "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action" is 23,833.

4 Results and discussions

This section outlines the results of the research to answer the research questions listed above. Specifically, this section firstly presents a table of data collected by means of the research methods, and then uses the mapping theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) to analyze the most frequently occurring metaphor, that is, the WAR metaphor. After analyzing the WAR metaphor, this section further illustrates the reasons for and advantages and disadvantages of using it in the white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action."

4.1 Statistical findings

In this section, quantitative analysis is adopted to process the collected data. As shown in Table 1, there are altogether four types of metaphor existing in the government white paper, namely, the WAR metaphor, TEST metaphor, DEVIL metaphor, and STORM metaphor. Table 1 shows the results after processing the data with AntConc and manually.

According to Table 1, it is obvious that the WAR metaphor has various keywords ranging from general processes like *fight*, *battle*, and *war* to subjects of war like *adversity* and *enemy*. Also, it is clear that among all the metaphors, the WAR metaphor occupies the highest proportion, of about 96%. Therefore, the WAR metaphor, as the most prominent discursive feature in the white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action," was the metaphor chosen for analysis and research.

Table 1: Identification of metaphors in the Chinese government white paper.

Types of keywords	Elements	Keywords	Frequency	Metaphor frequency	Percentage
war-related elements	General process	fight/fighting/fought	46	46	96%
		battle(s)	27	27	
		war	9	9	
	Specific process	defense/defending	11	11	
		combat/combating	5	5	
	Outcome	victory	14	14	
		win/won	17	17	
		beat/beating	3	3	
	Place	battleground/battlegrounds	2	2	
		battlefield	1	1	
		rampart	1	1	
		a Great Wall	1	1	
		strongholds	2	2	
		bastion	1	1	
		frontline/front line	25	22	
	Effect	solidarity	18	18	
		sacrifice(s)	3	3	
		hero	1	1	
		unite/uniting	4	4	
	Subject	adversity	3	3	
		enemy	1	1	
test-related elements	Subject	test	17	5	2%
evil-related elements	Subject	devil	1	1	1%
weather-related elements	Subject	storm	1	1	1%
Total	/	/	214	199	100%

4.2 The mapping process of the WAR metaphor

MIP and AntConc identified *enemy*, *battleground*, *hero*, *victory*, and other typical metaphorical expressions related to the WAR metaphor. These metaphorical expressions belong to the source domain WAR and are used to understand the more abstract target domain. Thus, the conceptual metaphor of WAR is constructed. The corresponding metaphorical expressions are as

follows:

(1) The common **enemy** of humanity is this virus, not any particular country or any particular race.

(2) By making critical advances in the city of Wuhan, the main **battleground** against the virus, China initially halted the spread of Covid-19 on the mainland.

(3) People throughout the country observed a silence to mourn the loss of lives and pay tribute to **heroes** who had protected others' lives at the cost of their own.

(4) (4) A decisive **victory** was secured in the battle to defend Hubei Province and its capital city of Wuhan.

All the above metaphorical expressions use more specific and WAR-related source domains to construct more abstract and EPIDEMIC-related target domains. The corresponding metaphorical mappings can be inferred from the metaphorical expressions: THE CORONAVIRUS IS THE ENEMY; MEDICAL STAFF, THE GOVERNMENT, THE MEDIA, AND THE PUBLIC ARE HEROES; HOSPITALS AND HARD-HIT AREAS ARE BATTLEFIELDS; and RECOVERY OF PATIENTS AND RESUMPTION OF WORK ARE VICTORIES. Table 2 shows the results of the analysis of the WAR metaphor using the mapping theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as demonstrated in the metaphorical mapping process of four typical WAR metaphors.

Table 2: The mapping process of the WAR metaphor.

Source element	Mapping process	Target element
enemy	→	coronavirus
hero	→	medical staff, government, media, public
battleground	→	hospitals, hard-hit areas
victory	→	recovery of patients, resumption of work

According to what is shown in Table 2, we can clearly see the metaphorical mapping processes of the typical WAR metaphor examples in the government white paper, and the subjects in the source domain have similar characteristics

with those in the target domain. The mechanism of metaphor implies that using the WAR metaphor in the process of fighting with COVID-19 virus is appropriate.

4.3 Reasons for and effects of using the WAR metaphor

After analyzing the mapping process of the WAR metaphor, it is necessary to find out the reasons for and effects of the pervasive use of the WAR metaphor in the government white paper, which is also the content of this section.

4.3.1 Reasons for using the WAR metaphor

The following outlines the reasons why the WAR metaphor is extensively used in the government white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action."

Firstly, using the WAR metaphor is related to the Chinese nation's history and culture of defending itself against invaders from other countries. From the First Opium War (Britain's invasion of China, 1840–1842) to the War of Resistance Against Japan (1937–1945), the Chinese nation suffered significantly from the repercussions of war. Yuan (2004) demonstrates that since war pervades the history of the world, and it changes the development of human society, we have reasons to believe that war has had a profound impact on other parts of national culture, and the use of the WAR metaphor is related to history and culture. Thus, if an object or event can be described as war, its urgency and severity can immediately be conveyed to the Chinese people, and they can make preparations accordingly.

The second reason is analyzed from cognitive aspect. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) remark that everyday conceptual systems with which we think and act are metaphorical in nature. And Shu (2001) also comments that metaphor is the basis of the conceptual system of human organization, and the tool of human to organize experience, which provides a new perspective for understanding things. Dai and Guo (2020) also illustrate cognitive reasons for using the WAR metaphor, pointing out that in FIGHTING AGAINST CORONAVIRUS IS A WAR, the war image is evident with concepts of cruelty, urgency, confrontation, and destruction, which can generate visual, auditory, tactile, and psychological associations, and thus stimulate readers' strong cognitive and emotional reactions. The structure of the WAR metaphor is familiar to people. When it comes to war, people will naturally think that a WAR metaphor

includes elements such as *adversity* and *battlefield*.

Based on the above two explanations, we can see some of the reasons why the war metaphor is widely used in the white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action."

4.3.2 Effects of using the WAR metaphor

The effects of using the WAR metaphor in the white paper can be examined from the perspective of both its advantages and disadvantages.

On the one hand, the advantages of using the WAR metaphor are as follows. To commence with, the use of the war metaphor can generate the Chinese nation's spirit of solidarity. Zhang and Wang (2020) remark that the WAR metaphor in combination with words of unity and encouragement activate the collectivist values of the Chinese nation, which is consistent with the values solidified in the public brain and long-accepted traditional Chinese culture, and thus strengthen the concept of the shared destiny of the Chinese nation. The use of the WAR metaphor in the white paper will simultaneously generate in people a sense of responsibility and unity to fight against the virus as a whole. The second advantage is that the use of the WAR metaphor can generate a sense of emergency and thus make people act immediately. At the beginning of the outbreak of COVID-19, people, especially in Western countries, who even rejected wearing masks were lacking a crisis consciousness, and they simply thought that the epidemic was not severe. Dai and Guo (2020) postulate that the WAR metaphor can activate deep feelings of trepidation and fear, make people aware of the public health threat posed by COVID-19, facilitate urgent and effective defense actions, and mobilize resources to respond to this emergency in time. Therefore, under circumstances like this, it is imperative that we use the WAR metaphor to warn people about the harsh situation we are facing.

On the other hand, the use of the WAR metaphor also has its disadvantages and negative repercussions. The outcome of a war is either win or lose, and there is a lot of violence involved in it, which reflects the confrontation nature of war. However, the process of fighting against the coronavirus cannot be generalized as simply a war. Just as Yang and Dong (2017) commented, the WAR metaphor in medical discourse highlights the urgency and confrontational nature of war, while concealing the violence, compulsion, and destruction of war, and neglecting the irrationality and blind following it may cause.

Given the advantages and disadvantages of using the WAR metaphor, we

can see that metaphorical expressions in media discourse play an essential role in various aspects of people's lives, such as shaping their thoughts and values. The path to totally eliminating the coronavirus is long, and thus people using social media should be cautious in their considerations before choosing certain expressions. The public needs to have critical attitude toward social media discourse and use their judgement in assessing the impact and appropriateness of metaphorical expressions.

5 Conclusion

There are three parts in this section to conclude this article. The research findings are first reiterated in order to answer the research questions listed above. Then, the implications of the study are presented, and suggestions are raised for researchers to improve relevant studies in the future.

5.1 Research findings

The purpose of this study was to analyze the mapping process of the WAR metaphor used in the government white paper, and determine the reasons for and effects of using the WAR metaphor. The corpus was built by the researcher herself based on the government white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action." After data collection through MIP and AntConc, and qualitative analysis on the basis of reading and summarizing related literature, the major findings are as follows:

(1) The metaphorical mapping process of the WAR metaphor in the government white paper can be exemplified by the following four typical mappings: CORONAVIRUS IS THE ENEMY, MEDICAL STAFF, GOVERNMENT, MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC ARE HEROES, HOSPITALS AND HARD-HIT AREAS ARE BATTLEFIELDS, and RECOVERY OF PATIENTS AND RESUMPTION OF WORK ARE VICTORIES. A metaphorical mapping contains a source domain, a target domain, and the one-way mapping. Here, the source domain elements are *enemy*, *hero*, *battleground*, and *victory*, and they form a mapping with the target domain elements *coronavirus*, *medical staff*, *government*, *media and the public*, *hospitals and hard-hit areas*, and

recovery and resumption, respectively.

(2) The reasons for using the WAR metaphor include historical reasons, which relate largely to Chinese history and culture, such as oppression by invaders. This can also be analyzed from a cognitive perspective, which shows that because people are familiar with the concept of war and its structure, more cognition and emotions toward the war image are easier to generate. Based on the above two reasons, the WAR metaphor is widely used in the government white paper.

(3) The effects of using of the WAR metaphor can be generalized in terms of the advantages and the disadvantages of its use. The advantages include generation of the Chinese nation's spirit of solidarity and encouragement of immediate action in the people. The disadvantages can be seen from the perspective of war's negative and violent nature, which may lead to irrationality and blind following.

5.2 Implications

It can be concluded from this study that the WAR metaphor is widely used in official media, and the usage of it indeed has significant effects on citizens, society, and even the whole world.

This study may contribute toward an understanding of the implications of using the WAR metaphor in official media, and thus encourage people to form an objective attitude toward its usage and avoid being affected by its negative repercussions, in such cases as an unintended mapping of violence.

In addition, for media staff, this study may be helpful to encourage a more informed attitude toward the choice and usage of metaphorical expressions in their reports. This enables them to try to maximize the positive effects and also minimize the negative influence such metaphors as the WAR metaphor may have on the public.

5.3 Future study

Further research is required as the corpus of this study is limited. Firstly, it only analyzes data from the government white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action," and the number of entries in this corpus is relatively small. A larger

corpus that includes other influential media or comparison with a reference corpus would provide more conclusive results. Secondly, the corpus was limited to a single genre, that is, a report from an official news agency. There are also other genres for researchers to explore, such as antivirus signs, images, cartoons, and videos, which will make the research multimodal. Thirdly, this study only focuses on the media in China, making the research area limited. Therefore, if studies can make a comparison between Western media like *The Economist* newspaper or other foreign official documents, this would make the results more comprehensive.

However, the theory used in this article has its shortcomings. Although the mapping theory which is used in this article reveals some characteristics of the mechanism of metaphor from different perspectives, it is not a perfect theory with complete explanations on metaphor. To make up for the demerits of the mapping theory, the following studies can provide more novel and comprehensive guidance for future researchers. A recent study reiterates Lakoff and Johnson's mapping theory (Shu 2002), comparing this theory with other theories and showing that the metaphorical meaning derives from the interaction between the two concepts. In addition, other innovative theories can be used to analyze the WAR metaphor and discourse in the government white paper, theories such as Critical Cognitive Linguistics (Zhang, 2020), which mainly concerns interdisciplinary studies between critical discourse studies and cognitive linguistics, and could provide more novel ideas on the analysis of the WAR metaphor.

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