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Covid-19-Related Metaphors in Italian Online Press

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a uvedl úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne

Podpis

Děkuji vedoucí bakalářské práce, Mgr. Michaele Martinkové, Ph.D., za užitečnou metodickou pomoc, cenné rady a ochotu, a to i v této nelehké době.

V Olomouci dne

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Abstract

This bachelor's thesis deals with metaphors that were used in Italian Covid-19-related articles, covering roughly the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic in Italy. The thesis describes the understanding of metaphor according to the conceptual metaphor theory and then focuses on the usage of metaphors in illness-related discourse, building up on the corpus-based research about cancer and its metaphors that was carried out by Semino et al. (2018). The thesis further describes the creation of a corpus of Italian Covid-19-related articles and provides an analysis of Covid-19-related metaphors identified in the corpus.

Keywords

Metaphor, conceptual metaphor, violence metaphor, Covid-19, pandemic, corpus, Italian

Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá metaforami, které byly používány v italsky psaných online článkách o Covidu-19. Práce pokrývá zhruba období první vlny koronavirové pandemie v Itálii. Práce nejprve popisuje chápání metafory na základě teorie konceptuální metafory a následně se soustřeďuje na užívání metafor v diskurzu spojeném s nemocemi, a to na základě korpusového výzkumu metafor týkajících se rakoviny, jenž byl proveden Semino et al. (2018). Práce dále popisuje tvorbu korpusu italsky psaných článků týkajících se Covidu-19 a předkládá analýzu metafor, které byly v korpusu identifikovány.

Klíčová slova

Metafora, konceptuální metafora, metafora násilí, Covid-19, pandemie, korpus, italština

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1 Introduction

Ever since the European outbreak of the new coronavirus in the first quarter of 2020, the pandemic has claimed the main stage in media around the world. What was, in the early months of 2020, a mostly unknown virus that was “likely to become a pandemic that circles the globe”¹ has, in the recent months, flooded most countries around the world, with the exception of only a few countries—the likes of Samoa, The Marshall Islands and North Korea—who declared their territories Covid-19-free², and so have the metaphors related to the newly found coronavirus.

One of the countries that were hit hard by the first wave of the virus is Italy. Especially at the beginning of the now so-called *prima ondata* [first wave], the country fought its battle against the virus by all possible means, still suffering numerous civil and medical casualties—between March and April of 2020 there were, according to ISTAT, 48,000 more deceased individuals than average, and 29,000 of the deaths were officially attributed to the virus.³ It was the 25th of April that the Italian minister of foreign affairs stated: “In Europe, the battle has just begun...”⁴

As the preceding paragraph suggests, the usage of different metaphors is far from uncommon in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. Apart from the metaphorical term “wave”, which is regularly used to speak about the risings of numbers of infected individuals in a specific temporal period, we can now almost daily read news about the war against the invisible enemy, whose presence calls for mobilization, as declared by French President Emmanuel Macron⁵, about “doctors fighting a trench warfare” or “heroes fighting on the viral front line,” as well as about Donald Trump’s transformation into America’s “task force” surrounded “wartime President” (Craig 2020, 1026). Even though most of the mentioned metaphors originate in the sphere of the military, there are also other fields from which journalists borrow their expressions, for example sports, as we could have heard that the

¹ McNeil Jr., Donald G. 2020. “Wuhan Coronavirus Looks Increasingly Like a Pandemic, Experts Say.” *The New York Times*, February 2. Accessed January 1, 2021.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/02/health/coronavirus-pandemic-china.html>

² “Which countries have not reported any coronavirus cases.” 2020. *Al Jazeera*, September 14. Accessed September 22, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/14/which-countries-have-not-reported-any-coronavirus-cases>

³ “Quanti sono stati i morti da Covid-19.” [How many died of Covid-19]. 2020. *Il Post*, 26 October. Accessed January 2, 2021. <https://www.ilpost.it/2020/10/26/coronavirus-istat-mortalita-eccesso-prima-ondata/>

⁴ “Battaglia in Europa appena iniziata, per noi è partita della vita.” [The battle in Europe has just begun. For us it the battle of our life]. 2020. *Sky TG*, April 25. Accessed January 2, 2021. <https://tg24.sky.it/politica/2020/04/25/coronavirus-di-maio-mes>

⁵ Erlanger, Steven. 2020. “Macron Declares France “at War” With Virus, as E.U. Proposes a 30-Day Travel Ban.” *The New York Times*, March 16. Accessed January 2, 2021.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/16/world/europe/coronavirus-france-macron-travel-ban.html>

pandemic is “not a sprint, but a marathon,”⁶ and that a football goalkeeper, who has survived the virus, did not recover, but “denied coronavirus.”⁷

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the metaphors that were used for the conceptualization of the Covid-19 pandemic, and their prevalence in online articles published in Italian online press during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

In order to do so, I will adopt the conceptual metaphor theory framework, first presented by Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors we live by* (1980). The authors consider metaphor to be a conceptual mapping between two domains, rather than a marked, poetic usage of words (1980, 3). I further examine the approach to the use of metaphors in discourse about illness taken by Susan Sontag (1978) and (1989), whose attitude can be foreshadowed by her statement “the metaphors and myths, I was convinced, kill,” (1989, 14) and Semino et al.’s study of cancer-related metaphors (2018). While Sontag’s attention is mainly given to historical overview and comparison of the usage of tuberculosis and cancer-related metaphors (1978) and the metaphors of the epidemic of AIDS (1989), Semino (2018) offers a more linguistic insight into the problematics, focusing predominantly on cancer and its metaphors. Both authors do, however, contribute to the knowledge about illness-related metaphors and metaphors in general and thus offer crucial background knowledge for this thesis.

The thesis further describes the creation of the corpus of Italian Covid-19-related articles in Sketch Engine and offers an analysis of the collected data, making use of concordance and collocation tools.

6 McIntosh, Diane. 2020. “Covid-19: it’s a marathon not a sprint.” *Telus Health*, May 29. Accessed February 9, 2021. <https://www.telus.com/en/health/blog/covid-19-its-a-marathon-not-a-sprint>

7 “Rustu ha “parato” il coronavirus: “Me la sono vista brutta, percorso lungo e difficile.” [Rustu has “denied” coronavirus: “The situation was bad. It was a long and difficult journey.”] 2020. *La Repubblica*, April 15. Accessed February 9, 2021. https://www.repubblica.it/sport/calcio/esteri/2020/04/15/news/rustu_ha_parato_il_coronavirus_me_la_sono_vista_brutta_percorso_lungo_e_difficile_-254074612/

2 Literature review

The following section offers a brief overview of what linguistic literature has to say about metaphor. First, I will start with the traditional view of metaphor, and then will focus on the notion of conceptual metaphor as introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Kövecses (2010). Finally, I will provide an outline of what literature says about the usage of metaphors in discourse about illnesses, focusing mainly on the military/violence metaphors, as these metaphors appear to be in common use in articles related to the newly found virus.

2.1 Metaphor

Upon hearing the term “metaphor”, most people’s mind immediately shifts to literature, as we are often taught that metaphor is a concept frequently used by poets and writers in their works. This claim is supported by the definition of metaphor provided by Cambridge Dictionary: “an expression, often found in literature, that describes a person or object by referring to something that is considered to have similar characteristics to that person or object.” Cambridge dictionary states that “[m]etaphor and simile are the most commonly used figures of speech in everyday language,” i.e. they are not limited to literary language. The role of metaphor in everyday language is later studied by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who claim that metaphor is not only a marked, poetical usage of words, but rather the sole nature of our conceptual system (1980, 3). This understanding of metaphor is further elaborated in the following chapter.

2.2 Conceptual metaphor

“Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language.” It is with this sentence that Lakoff and Johnson introduce their book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980, 3). According to their theory, however, metaphors are not related merely to language, but rather to the way human conceptual system works. Lakoff and Johnson claim that the nature of our conceptual system is mostly metaphorical and unconscious, and since communication is based on the same conceptual system as thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for the study of the system. Metaphor in this view is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (1980, 5), i.e. it is a mapping between two domains. The example that Lakoff and Johnson use is the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR:

(1) ARGUMENT IS WAR

Your claims are *indefensible*.

He *attacked every weak point* in my argument.

His criticisms were *right on target*.

I *demolished* his argument.

I’ve never *won* an argument with him.

You disagree? Okay, *shoot!*

If you use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out*.

He *shot down* all of my arguments.

(Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 4)

After entering an argument, we can either *win* or *lose*, we need to *defend our position and attack the position of our opponent*—the other participant of the argument—we *gain* or *lose* ground and we need to apply our *strategies*. An argument obviously does not represent a real battle, yet the structure of the argument that consists of attacking, defending, and counterattacking remains the same for both. ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is a part of our culture and it thus “structures the actions we perform in arguing” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 5). Had there been a culture in which an argument is perceived as a dance, people would approach the act of arguing differently. To us, it would, however, seem that they are performing a different action. This difference would best be described by saying that “we have a discourse form structured in terms of battle and they have one structured in terms of dance” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 5).

By the above-illustrated example, Lakoff and Johnson explain the way a metaphorical concept, in this case WAR, structures the way we perceive the act of arguing. It is important to note that Lakoff and Johnson do not consider an argument a subspecies of war, but there are similarities between the two, as ARGUMENT “is partially structured, understood, performed, and talked about in terms of war. The concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 5).

The war-related vocabulary we use when talking about arguments or when having one is not considered marked, fanciful nor poetic. It is a rather conventional way of talking. This shows us that even though we tend to use metaphorical expressions very often, we are not always aware of doing so. The metaphor is not encoded in the language we use, but rather in the fact that we as humans perceive an argument as a war, and metaphor is thus a notion natural to our conceptual system. The metaphorical linguistic expressions we use in our speech are based on the underlying conceptual metaphor, such as ARGUMENT IS WAR, and it is thus important to distinguish the two terms. Throughout the thesis, the metaphorical linguistic expressions in examples are written in italics and the conceptual metaphors are written in small capital letters.

2.2.1 The domains and mappings of conceptual metaphors

Cognitive linguistics defines metaphor as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. Kövecses (2010), who builds up on Lakoff and Johnson's findings, illustrates this definition by examples of understanding life in terms of journey, arguments in terms of war, as already mentioned in the previous chapters, theories in terms of buildings, ideas in terms of food, and social organizations in terms of plants. To generalize,

Kövecses uses the formula CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN A IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN B, where a domain defined as “any coherent organization of experience” (2010, 4).

Each of the two domains carries its specific denomination. The first conceptual domain is called the source domain and it is the domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions in order to understand another domain. The second conceptual domain is called the target domain and it is the domain that we try to understand through the use of the source domain. As examples of target domains, Kövecses (2010, 4) mentions LIFE, ARGUMENTS, LOVE, THEORY, IDEAS, and SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS. As regards source domains, the mentioned domains are JOURNEYS, WAR, BUILDINGS, FOOD, and PLANTS. For the purpose of this section, I decided to use the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY. See the example below:

(2) LOVE IS A JOURNEY

Look *how far* we've come.

We are *at a crossroads*.

We'll just have to *go our separate ways*.

We can't *turn back* now.

It's been a *long, bumpy road*.

(Kövecses 2010, 6-7)

It is important to note that a more abstract concept, such as LOVE, is usually employed as target and a concept that is more concrete, or physical—in this case JOURNEY—is usually employed as source. In reality, there is a solid logic behind this since “if we want to fully understand an abstract concept, we are better off using another concept that is more concrete, physical, or tangible than the abstract target concept for this purpose” (Kövecses 2010, 7). One more aspect worth noting is the principle of unidirectionality. The principle of unidirectionality tells us that in most cases of regularly used metaphors the source and target domains are not interchangeable, as the metaphorical process usually goes from the more concrete to the more abstract, but not vice versa. We, for example, do not speak about ideas as food nor do we speak about journey as love.

It was previously suggested that Lakoff and Johnson define metaphor as “understanding one kind of thing in terms of another.” The authors further claim that it is the systematicity of metaphorical concepts that allows for such understanding (1980, 10). The systematicity is demonstrated on the metaphor TIME IS MONEY:

(3) TIME IS MONEY

How do you *spend* your time these days?

I've *invested* a lot of time in her.

You're *running out* of time.

You don't *use* your time profitably.

(Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 8)

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 8) point out that in contemporary society, time is a valuable commodity, a limited resource that can be used to satisfy our needs and achieve our goals. The metaphor TIME IS MONEY is commonly present in our lives, as we tend to get paid for hours worked, we usually pay our phone bill based on the hours we have spent in calls, and should a person end up in prison, their debt to society is paid by the time they spend behind the bars. Because of this, we tend to perceive time as a valuable commodity, and consequently, we speak about it in such way. We can thus *spend* our time, *invest* our time, *waste* our time, or *run out of* time. It is also important to note that because of the way our society conceives of money, the TIME IS MONEY metaphor entails that TIME IS A RESOURCE, which further entails that TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY, as both resources and commodities are also used to conceptualize time. Even though TIME IS MONEY is the metaphor that is characteristic of the system (as it is the most specific), certain expressions that are listed under it refer specifically to either of the entailed metaphors; *use*, *use up*, and *run out of* refer to limited resources and *have*, *give*, and *lose* to valuable commodities. Lakoff and Johnson consider the entailments characteristic of a “coherent system of metaphorical concepts and a corresponding coherent system of metaphorical expressions for those concepts” (1980, 9).

The beginning of this section demonstrated that in each metaphor there is a source domain and a target domain. In the metaphor TIME IS MONEY, TIME is the target domain, as it is the domain which we are trying to understand. MONEY, on the other hand, is the source domain, i.e. the more tangible concept. Further developing the systematicity suggested by Lakoff and Johnson, Kövecses states that if we want to understand one domain in terms of another, we need to be familiar with the mappings between the two domains, as they linguistically manifest the conceptual metaphors (2010, 14). Based on the previously mentioned formula CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN A IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN B, Kövecses defines mappings as “a set of systematic correspondences between the source and the target in the sense that constituent conceptual elements of B correspond to constituent elements of A” (2010, 7). To understand the mappings, let us once again consider the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY and the sentence “*We aren’t going anywhere.*” In the sentence, we can find three constituent conceptual elements of journey, the first being the travel itself in the expression *go somewhere*, where *somewhere* also stands for the second constituent, the destination. The final constituent is represented by the pronoun *we*, which stands for the travelers. However, in a different context, we would not understand the sentence as if speaking about travelers who do not know which road to take or where to go. Should the sentence be uttered in a conversation between two lovers, we would understand the pronoun *we* as the pair of lovers itself, the negated expression *go somewhere* would suggest that the relationship might not be evolving the way it should, and that the destination here is not a physical location but rather a sensual goal of the relationship. Consider the following examples:

(4) LOVE IS A JOURNEY

a) We are at a *crossroads*.

- b) It's been a *long, bumpy road*.
- c) This relationship is *foundering*.

(Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 44-45)

Example (5), in accordance with the above-listed constituents, does not, in the context of relationships/love, speak about travelers sitting in their car deciding whether to turn right, left or continue onwards, but rather about facing an important choice about where the relationship should be headed. In the second example (4b), the length and bumpiness of the road is not related to the surface of the road, but to the obstacles the two lovers encounter in their relationship. Finally, the third example (4c), specifically the word *foundering*, according to Kövecses, suggests a conceptual equation between vehicles used in the journeys and love (2010, 8).

Now that we understand the interpretations of the examples above, we can lay out the mappings between the target and source domain constituents. It is important to note that the target-source order is reversed to emphasize the fact that we typically understand a more abstract concept by the means of the more concrete concept.

(5) <i>Source:</i> JOURNEY	<i>Target:</i> LOVE
the travelers	the lovers
the vehicle	the love relationship itself
the journey	events in the relationship
the distance covered	the progress made
the obstacles encountered	the difficulties experienced
decisions about which way to go	choices about what to do
the destination of the journey	the goal(s) of the relationship

(Kövecses, 2010, 9)

Given the above-offered mappings, we can observe that there is a systematic correspondence of constituent elements between the two domains. Kövecses stresses out that we need to realize that, even though it might seem that the elements of the target domain have been present all the time and that language users started using the metaphor on the basis of pre-existing similarities between the elements of the two domains, it is not such a case (2010, 9). The domain of love was structured by the domain of journey, i.e. “it was the application of the journey domain to the love domain that provided the concept of love with this particular structure or set of elements” (Kövecses 2010, 9).

Based on what has been mentioned in this chapter, it can be concluded that to know a metaphor means to know the mappings between the two conceptual domains. We, however, need to bear in mind that the illustrated mappings are, in reality, unconscious processes and we are thus normally not aware of them, yet based on our understanding we are able to use linguistic expressions that are in accordance with the underlying metaphor.

2.2.2 Types of conceptual metaphors

The so far examined metaphors were all structural metaphors, i.e., one concept was structured in terms of another. Structural metaphors are not the only type of conceptual metaphor, as there are two more subtypes. The first subtype is called orientational metaphor, the second ontological metaphor.

Oriental metaphor is defined as “metaphorical concept that does not structure one concept in terms of another but instead organizes a whole system of concepts with respect to one another” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 14). The name orientational metaphor comes from the fact that most of them are related to spatial orientation: up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, central-peripheral. To get a better understanding of the concept, see the following examples of the metaphor and its related linguistic expression:

- (6) a) MORE IS UP; LESS IS DOWN: Speak *up*, please. Keep your voice *down*, please.
- b) HEALTHY IS UP; SICK IS DOWN: Lazarus *rose* from the dead. He *fell* ill.
- c) CONSCIOUS IS UP; UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN: *Wake up*. He *sank* into a coma.
- d) CONTROL IS UP; LACK OF CONTROL IS DOWN: I’m on *top* of the situation. He is *under* my control.
- e) HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN: I’m feeling *up* today. He’s really *low* these days.

(Kövecses 2010, 40)

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 15), the spatial orientations of the above-mentioned metaphorical concepts are not coincidental, as there is a real-life physical basis to each of them. For example in (6a), the physical basis is similar to adding substance or a physical object to a container or a pile, i.e., the level goes up with the addition. In (6b), sick is down, as serious illnesses force us to lie down and when we die, we are physically down. In example (6c), the reason for the spatial orientation is in reality more obvious than we might think-humans and most mammals sleep lying down and stand up when they awaken. As regards (6d), physical size usually goes hand in hand with physical strength, and the winner of a fight is thus usually on top. Finally, in (6e), sad or depressed people tend to have a drooping posture, while people with a positive emotional state tend to stand upright, maintaining an erect posture.

The second subtype of conceptual metaphor is ontological metaphor. In Encyclopedia Britannica, ontology is defined as “the philosophical study of being in general, or of what applies neutrally to everything that is real.” This definition suggests that ontological metaphors help us conceive of our experiences as of “real” objects, substances, or containers, without specifying exactly what kind of object, substance or container is meant. We do this, above all, with experiences that are vague, abstract, or not clearly delineated, as it is easier for us to understand them in terms of objects, rather than to understand their abstract nature (Kövecses 2010, 39).

Source Domains

Target Domains

PHYSICAL OBJECT

NONPHYSICAL OR ABSTRACT ENTITIES (the mind)

	EVENTS (going to the race), ACTIONS (giving someone a call)
SUBSTANCE	ACTIVITIES (a lot of running in the game)
CONTAINER	UNDELINEATED PHYSICAL OBJECTS (clearing in the forest)
	PHYSICAL AND NONOPHYSICAL SURFACES (the visual field)
	STATES (in love)

(Kövecses 2010, 39)

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 33), personification—specifying an object as being a person—is perhaps the most obvious case of ontological metaphor. By assigning human qualities to non-human entities we become capable of understanding a vast variety of otherwise abstract notions. See the following examples:

(7) His *theory explained* to me the behavior of chickens raised in factories.

The *fact argues* against the standard theories.

Life has *cheated* me.

Inflation is *eating up* our profits.

Cancer finally *caught up with* him.

(Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 33)

In all the examples in (7) a non-human entity is presented as human. Personification, however, is not a unified general process, as “each personification differs in terms of the aspects of people that are picked out” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 33). See the examples of personifications of inflation below:

(8) Inflation *has attacked* the foundation of our economy.

Inflation *has pinned us to the wall*.

Our biggest *enemy* right now is inflation.

The dollar *has been destroyed* by inflation.

Inflation *has robbed* me of my savings.

(Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 33)

Each example in (8) is an example of personification of inflation. The underlying metaphorical concept, however, is not INFLATION IS A PERSON, but a more specific aspect of seeing the “person” is picked out, namely INFLATION IS AN ADVERSARY (1980, 33). The adversary, i.e., the inflation, can thus be declared war on by the government, it can be set as a target of an action taken by the government, etc. What this paragraph is trying to demonstrate is that by viewing abstract, complex economic phenomena, such as inflation, as a human, against whom an action can be taken, we get a better understanding of the situation.

2.2.3 *Military metaphors*

Military metaphors are structural metaphors that take WAR as the source domain. Military metaphors are commonly found in many different fields of discourse, as many target domains, such as dealing with an illness, political rhetoric, climate change debates, etc., are structured through the domain of WAR. This claim can be supported by statistics offered by Flusberg et al., according to which 17% of all articles published in *Time* magazine between 1981 and 2000 used at the minimum one war metaphor (2018, 2).

To explain why this is the case, I will describe an experiment referred to by Flusberg et al. (2018, 7). In this experiment, respondents were asked to read a short article about the U.S' approach towards climate change. In the first version of the article, climate change was talked about in terms of war, in the second version, climate change was talked about in terms of race. The research found that the respondents who were given the version of the article that made use of terms such as *enemy* and *war* perceived the problem of climate change as more urgent and were more willing to adopt climate change-friendly behavioral patterns. Flusberg et al. account this effect—and the actual broad usability—of war metaphor to multiple factors. First of all, due to either first-hand or second-hand experience—for example, school, movies, videogames, etc.—everyone knows what a war is. A war involves a fight between two sides, i.e. a fight between good and evil, there is a certain hierarchy of military roles, like generals, troops, and medics, and importantly, there is the ultimate goal of a total defeat of the enemy. Secondly, as drawn from Lakoff & Johnson's example of a metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, many topics of our regular discussions, such as sports and politics, carry a resemblance of war, for example, the presence of two opposing sides, winners and losers, the goal of defeating the opposing side, etc. Finally, war metaphors evoke a certain level of urgency and, most importantly, fear. And fear is one of the strongest emotions recognized by human brain. People thus tend to pay more attention to matters that are talked about in a fear-evoking manner (Flusberg et al., 2018, 4).

One of the areas where military metaphors are often used is the discourse about one's experience with a disease. In 1978, while “fighting her own battle with cancer”, the American writer Susan Sontag wrote her famous essay about the usage of metaphors in communication about illness and cancer in particular.⁸ The essay will be discussed in more detail in the next section, after an introduction into metaphors used in this type of discourse is presented.

2.3 **Metaphors about illness**

Why metaphors at all, one may ask. The onset of the illness is often ominous, unobservable, and the illness itself may, for many years, grow in the “shadow” of our own body. There is still a touch of mysteriousness, and mysterious things are often unknown,

⁸ Cancer is, however, not the only illness observed throughout the course of the essay, as tuberculosis was, until the early 1880s', considered to be an illness of tumorous origin (1987, 10). It was only in 1882—the year of the discovery of the bacterial origin of tuberculosis—that both the medical perception of the two illnesses, and the language used when speaking about them started changing.

unexplored, and hard to understand. They are thus an ideal target domain for metaphors.⁹ Sontag writes: “The controlling metaphors in descriptions of cancer, are, in fact, [. . .] drawn from the language of warfare: every physician and every attentive patient is familiar with, if perhaps inured to, this military terminology” (1978, 64). The military metaphors used in discourse about cancer are exemplified by expressions such as a *fight* or a *crusade* against cancer, the cancer as a *killer* and people ill with cancer as *victims* (1978, 57).

Sontag believed that in a relatively short time, the metaphors used for speaking about cancer would become history, as they do not offer any support to the patient and can actually give the patient a certain sensation of guilt for not *fighting* hard enough, being weaker than the *enemy* (the cells inside his own body) or losing his *battle*. This, however, did not happen.

In Sontag’s second publication (1989), attention is paid to the New York AIDS epidemic which reached its peak in the mid-1980s. Twelve years after publishing her first treatise, Sontag takes an even more critical stance to the usage of metaphors, not only the one of plague, which she considers to be prototypical of an epidemic (1989, 44), but above all the military ones, as she argues that our body is not a *battlefield*, we are not *invaded* and that the ill are neither *unavoidable casualties* nor the *enemy*. She further considers military metaphors contributive to the stigmatization of the illness and consequently the people who fall ill (who are, due to the way the illness transmits, stigmatized anyway). Her overall approach to the usage of military metaphors in medicine could be summarized as follows: “About that metaphor, the military one, I would say, if I may paraphrase Lucretius: Give it back to war-makers” (1989, 95).

In the next section, I will provide a brief overview of corpus-based linguistics accounts of metaphors in discourse about diseases.

2.3.1 Corpus-based accounts of metaphors in illness-related discourse

Semino et al. (2018) were the first to carry out corpus research on cancer and metaphors. A corpus of 1.5 million words was created to allow the authors to analyze communication concerning cancer among three different groups of speakers—namely patients, professional health care workers and non-professional caretakers, such as family members—, with a focus on metaphors found in such discourse. Various types of metaphors were identified and analyzed, including the military ones; these are subsumed under a broader category of violence metaphors. Semino et al. classify as an instance of violence metaphor “any metaphorical expression or similes whose literal meaning suggests scenarios in which, prototypically, a human agent intentionally causes physical harm to another human, with or without weapons” (2018, 100); I follow Semino et al. in this respect.

The data from the corpus created by Semino et al. revealed that violence metaphor was the most frequently found type of metaphor in the whole corpus (2018, 100), and that violence

⁹ Mysteriousness, according to Sontag, determines the variety of metaphors used when speaking about an illness (1978, 61).

metaphors were more often used by caretakers and patients than by professional health care workers (2018, 122).

As regards the possible effects of the usage of violence metaphors in relation to illness, both preventive and treatment-related effects of such metaphors have been addressed by researchers.

Concerning prevention, Flusberg et al. argue that “preventative behavior is not inherently incompatible with the war metaphor; prevention just needs to be mapped more explicitly to the war structure” (2018, 8). In other words, if a war metaphor is used to describe cancer, people are usually less willing to adopt behaviors that would help reduce the risk of developing cancer. Yet, if cancer is spoken about in terms of war and the preventive behavior is spoken about as a way of *fighting the disease*, people are more likely to break possibly harmful habits, such as smoking and extensive consumption of red meat (Flusberg et al., 2018, 8).

As for the effects of the usage of violence metaphors in the cancer treatment process, Semino et al. (2018) do, based on their findings, acknowledge that certain criticisms of the violence metaphors could indeed be justified, as some of the metaphors might, especially in patients, whose treatment is not progressing well, lead to a feeling of failure, guilt, and incapability of *defeating the enemy*. It is further claimed by Flusberg et al. that through certain metaphors, people with diseases can be reduced to a *battlefield* on which *a war is fought*. This leads to a situation in which the patient is, in a way, stripped of the “humane”, and such understanding of the patient and his body might lead to a sensation of disempowerment (2018, 7). It is also important to note that, according to Flusberg et al., the “status” of a war metaphor may fluctuate in time, since war metaphors generally work well as the initial “call to arms”, but, as time proceeds, people tend to get progressively less enthusiastic about both real and metaphorical wars, and usage of such metaphors might thus not be as beneficial in the long term (2018, 11).

(9)

“She lost her brave fight.” If anyone mutters those words after my death, wherever I am, I will curse them. [. . .] I do not want to feel a failure about something beyond my control. I refuse to believe that my death will be because I didn’t battle hard enough.

(Semino et al., 2018, 98)

Thus far I have overviewed the negative aspects of the usage of violence metaphors in the treatment process, as they were in accordance with what has been previously suggested by Sontag. It is, however, important to note that violence metaphors in the context of illness should not be perceived as generally negative, and the reviewed literature does not perceive them as such. Semino et al. argue that violence metaphors are “best at expressing defiance, intense activity or concentration, and determination to succeed against the odds” (2018: 155), and censoring such metaphors completely is—due to the pervasiveness of metaphors in our language—neither possible, nor desirable, as the patients could be robbed of the benefits an apt usage of metaphor may offer.

It is also interesting to point out that according to Flusberg et al., the usage of military terminology in the discourse about illness might lead to a better funding, as more attention is given to topics that are talked about in such terms. This claim is supported by an increase in cancer research funds (\$1.5 billion from National Cancer Act in 1972) that was documented after President Nixon declared *a war on cancer* in the United States (2018, 6).

2.3.2 SARS, Covid-19, and their metaphors

The first coronavirus to be talked about in linguistic journals was, to my knowledge, SARS in the early 2000's. In the British press, the most-often used metaphor was the one of a killer (Washer, 2004). The “singularity” of the metaphor of killer can be attributed to the fact that, unlike the later emerged Covid-19, SARS was not as globally spread¹⁰, and the virus thus was not perceived as such a global threat (the enemy in a war, for example). In other words, the metaphor was still violent but the complex, large-scale conflict background, typical of Covid-19 military metaphors, was not present.

When Covid-19 hit the world, it was new to everyone. Like originally with cancer and AIDS, there was mystery behind it, hence numerous metaphors. Unlike cancer, however, and like AIDS, Covid-19 is contagious (though transmitted differently) and has caused an epidemic;¹¹ both Covid-19 and AIDS are, up to this date, without a cure, and lastly, both were, in their respective time period, talked about in military terms.

According to Semino, military metaphors were, especially at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, among the most regularly used metaphors (Semino et al., 2020).¹² This is confirmed by Wicke & Bolognesi (2020, 13), who report that in a corpus of 203, 756 Twitter posts related to Covid-19, written by both professionals and non-experts of mass communication, collected between March and April 2020, 5.3% (10, 846) of the tweets contained at least one term from the framing of WAR.

We have already seen the harmful effects military metaphors can have when used to describe cancer or AIDS experience. In the context of the pandemic, there is one more aspect that potentially plays a role. Semino suggests that the usage of military metaphors in Covid-19-related political discourse might lead to an increase in authoritarian tendencies of governments (2021, 50). In other words, if a country enters, even metaphorically, a state of war, the measures taken are probably going to be war-like and limitations of human rights may thus become more easily defensible. Staying within the political frame, it is interesting to point out that there are countries whose leaders refrained almost fully from the usage of military-motivated rhetoric in the context of the pandemic. An example of such a leader is the German chancellor Angela Merkel. Paulus believes that Merkel's choice to stay away from the usage of military metaphors stems from German military history, which, up to this date,

¹⁰ According to the World Health Organization, only 8439 cases were recorded globally.

“Cumulative Number of Reported Probable Cases of SARS.” 2003. *World Health Organization*, July 4. Accessed February 24, 2021. https://www.who.int/csr/sars/country/2003_07_04/en/

¹¹ In the case of Covid-19, we are speaking about a pandemic. Epidemic is tied to a region, country, or location, while pandemic means that the illness has spread to more countries or continents.

¹² In this thesis, (Semino et al., 2020) refers to “Guns, Germs and Covid-19. Why science communication needs metaphors,” an online discussion of multiple speakers that was held by Ca'Foscari, the University of Venice.

shapes the perception of war in German society, and the usage of such a rhetoric could thus lead to undesired understandings of the situation (Semino et al., 2020).

Because of the negative aspects of military metaphors, linguists have called for alternative sets of metaphors.¹³ Let me mention two such examples:

The first alternative metaphorical framing is suggested by Semino (2021), who believes that instead of war, the pandemic should be talked about in terms of fire and firefighting. Unlike wars, fire is not fueled by the goal of defeating the enemy. According to Semino, it is exactly this mapping of WAR applied to PANDEMIC that is responsible for the increase in fatalistic thinking among people, as the victory over the enemy (the end of the pandemic) may often seem distant and unattainable. Another advantage of the fire metaphor lies in the fact that everyone can imagine fire and the calamity it can cause if left uncontrolled. It is thus easier to use the imagery of fire to illustrate the urgency of the situation and to explain different phases of the pandemic. For example, should the progression of the pandemic be spoken about as “fire raging”, it would be easier for us to understand the current state of things we find ourselves in. The verb “to rage” itself suggests that the fire (the pandemic/the virus) is blazing, aggressive, possibly growing uncontrollably, and, if used in the progressive aspect, active at the moment.

As regards the perception of medical workers and people in general, the fire metaphor also offers certain benefits. In the fire metaphorical framing, medical workers would not be referred to as soldiers, but as firefighters. Semino is convinced that viewing medical workers as firefighters is a more precise metaphorical representation of the role they play in the managing of the pandemic. Not only are firefighters capable of getting the fire (the infection) under control, they are also known for their willingness to run into a roaring fire to save human lives. Hospitals—as places with high concentrations of infected patients—could thus be seen as the buildings on fire inside which the firefighters (the medical workers) bravely operate. Finally, non-medical individuals would be perceived as inanimate entities, such as trees, i.e. entities that are not “capable” of deliberately spreading the fire (the virus). Even though this understanding of human beings is usually undesirable, in the pandemic context it would be beneficial, as it would lead to a reduction of the feeling of guilt in people who unknowingly transmit the infection (2021, 50-56).

Even though Semino (2021) advocates the usage of fire metaphors and sees numerous benefits in such framing of the pandemic, she acknowledges that there are certain downsides to such metaphors. She, for example, warns that fire metaphors should be refrained from in locations where large fires pose a regular threat, as they could end up being detrimental rather than beneficial, and also points out that fire metaphors might not be the best at highlighting the dangers of asymptomatic transmission, as people who are not afraid of fires would not perceive the danger as significant (2021, 56).

¹³ Linguists around the world—among which we can find both Semino and Bolognesi—have started a Twitter initiative called “#ReframeCovid.” The aim of the initiative is to collect alternative options to the often-used WAR metaphor. The collection is not language specific, i.e., speakers of any language are free to contribute. There are more than 600 contributions in the freely accessible file.

The second interesting shift away from the military metaphorical frame of the pandemic is offered by Sinha, who, inspired by Melville's *Moby Dick*, suggests that we speak of the current situation as of a "stormy sea, frothing with danger," and of the humankind as of a "weathered ship buffeted by the winds and waves" (Sinha, 2020). In this understanding of the pandemic, Sinha believes, everyone has a role to fulfill, be it either navigating the ship towards safety, operating the engine, or keeping the passengers calm to prevent panic from breaking out on board. Importantly, even the passengers (patients) themselves have a crucial role. Their role is to stay inside their cabins (homes) so that their or the crew's (medical workers) lives are not unnecessarily put in danger. The point Sinha is trying to make with this metaphor is that on the board of the ship the passengers and the crew must manage the situation together, and it is only by their cooperation that the boat can be safely navigated back to the harbor.

To conclude the whole chapter, it is difficult to decide about the aptness of violence metaphors in relation to illness, as different people perceive different metaphors in distinct ways. While in some people the usage of violence metaphor might evoke a sense of fear, panic and, especially with seriously ill patients, even a sensation of guilt and disempowerment, others may perceive the usage of violence metaphor as a way of encouragement and incentive to try to take active steps towards recovery. The usage of such metaphors thus remains a subject of discussion. It was suggested that metaphors should not be completely censored in illness-related discourse, but if used, they should be used cautiously and accordingly to cultural and social context, and—when in communication between medical professionals and patients—the mental state of the patient.

3 Methodology

This section describes the creation of the corpus of Covid-19-related articles, and the way the metaphors were identified.

3.1 Corpus

All the data analyzed in chapter 4 are drawn from a corpus that was created in Sketch Engine. The corpus consists of 211,784 words and was created with data collected between February 2, 2020 and May 31, 2020, i.e., it roughly covers the first wave of the pandemic in Italy. The source of the data are three Italian online news pages, namely *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, and *Il Corriere della Sera*. I downloaded one Covid-19-related article a day from the front page of each of the three pages. In order to be able to download only the text of each article, i.e., without advertisements, the page’s interface, etc., I made use of the Google’s reader mode where possible, and where not possible, additional advertisement text was manually removed in order to keep the corpus data relevant. I intentionally avoided articles that only offered statistics, such as the numbers of new cases, the numbers of deaths per day, percentages of hospitalized patients, etc. Such statistics can be found even in the downloaded articles—as they represent key background information—but they are not as prevalent.

3.2 Metaphor identification – Concordance and Collocations

To locate the metaphors in the corpus, I made use of the Collocations tool, which is available via Concordance. Through collocations, the user can access a list of collocation candidates, ordered either by simple co-occurrence, or various association measures; LogDice was selected for this purpose. Furthermore, the Collocations tool allows the user to adjust the desired range—the number of words that precede and follow the searched term—and the frequency threshold for each collocate. To demonstrate typical collocates of the term “Covid-19” (10), the range was set to -3, 3, and the frequency was set to 5 for the minimum frequency in corpus, and 3 for the minimum frequency in the given range.

(10) Typical collocates of “Covid-19”

	Word	Cooccurrences ?	Candidates ?	T-score	MI	LogDice ↓	
1	<input type="checkbox"/> emergenza	18	220	4.19	6.33	10.28	...
2	<input type="checkbox"/> pandemia	12	143	3.42	6.37	9.95	...
3	<input type="checkbox"/> epidemiologica	8	24	2.82	8.36	9.88	...
4	<input type="checkbox"/> causa	9	73	2.98	6.92	9.81	...
5	<input type="checkbox"/> pazienti	14	271	3.67	5.67	9.77	...

I examined the collocations of the following terms: *pandemia* [pandemic], *virus*, *coronavirus*, *Covid-19*, *Covid*, *Sars-CoV-2*, and *epidemia* [epidemic]. To see all the possible metaphorical expressions, the above-mentioned parameters were set to their least specific values, i.e., range was set to -5, 5, and both the frequencies were set to 1.

I compiled a list of all the metaphorical expressions that occurred as collocates of the examined terms and then used the Concordance tool to analyze their token frequencies. In this process, additional metaphorical expressions were identified and added to the list; similes were included as well. The individual expressions were then divided by the type of metaphor they instantiate.

The following chapters discuss the identified metaphors in more detail.

4 Discussion

In this chapter, I am going to discuss the specific metaphors that were identified in the corpus. Since violence metaphors represent the majority of examples, I will focus on them first, and then I will proceed to other metaphors identified; these are represented by Nature metaphors, Sport metaphors and other metaphors. Furthermore, the individual tokens of metaphorical expressions will be divided into groups based on the mapping they represent. The frequencies of the tokens of individual metaphors are summarized in Table 1 at the end of this chapter.

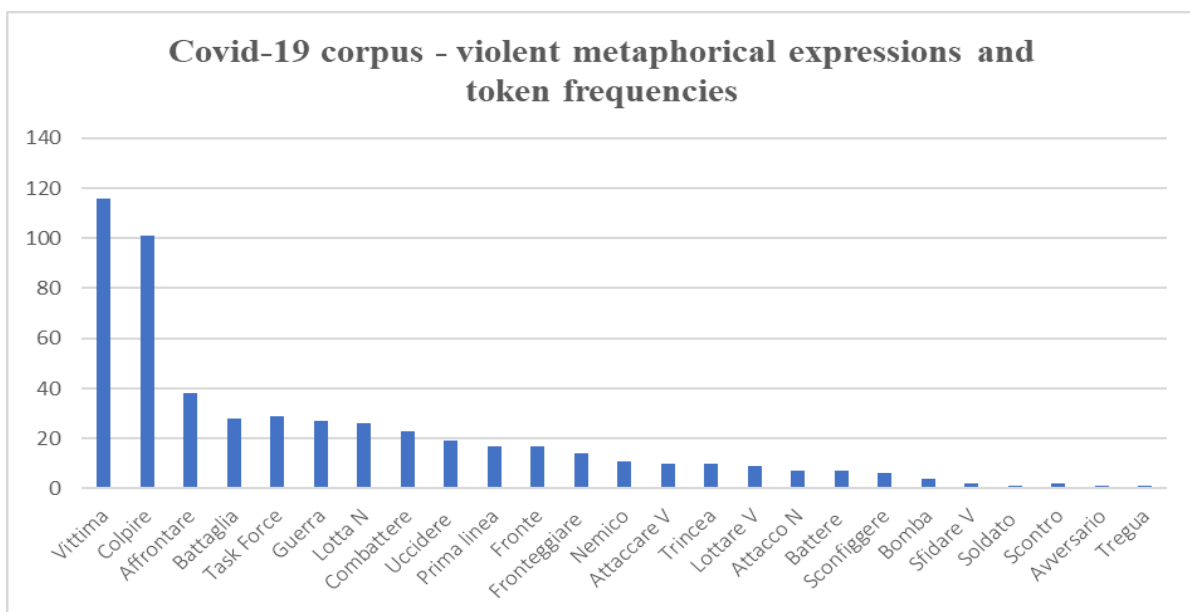
In certain cases, the example phrases contain mappings of two different conceptual metaphors, where one belongs to a different established subgroup than the other. Even the “non-belonging” metaphors are indicated (non-bold, underlined) but are commented on in their respective sections.

The titles in italics stand for either the metaphor (*A IS B*), or a mapping (*A AS B*).

4.1 Violence metaphors

Violence metaphors were the most frequently identified metaphors in the corpus. The graph below is the visualization of frequencies of the specific violent metaphorical expressions¹⁴ and their token frequencies.

(11) Identified violent metaphorical expressions and their tokens frequencies



In total, 526 tokens of violence metaphorical expressions were identified. It can be observed that some of the expressions in the graph originate from the military environment. As suggested previously (2.2.3), military metaphors, i.e., metaphors that take WAR as the

¹⁴ Only tokens used to refer to the Covid-19 pandemic are included. In other words, if a word, such as *guerra* [war], appeared in a Covid-19-unrelated context, for example *la seconda guerra mondiale* [the second world war], it was omitted from the statistics.

source domain, can be seen as a subtype of violence metaphors. To allow for a more specific analysis, I will distinguish between military and non-military violence metaphors. The distinction will be made based on the aspect of complexity.

While non-military violence metaphors are usually more concerned with the purely physical aspect of the act of violence, military metaphors tend to be more structurally worked through and thus more complex. The complexity of such metaphors stems from the complexity of the WAR domain. In a real war, there are many different combat strategies, numerous levels of military hierarchy, various types of weaponry, different warfronts, etc. All that allows for a vast number of possible mappings.

First, I will focus on the WAR metaphor and its related mappings, then I will address the non-military violence metaphors.

4.1.1 THE CONFRONTATION OF THE PANDEMIC IS A WAR

In the collected articles, the pandemic situation was quite frequently referred to as *guerra* [war]. This understanding of the pandemic can be accounted to two factors. Firstly, especially in the Northern regions of Italy, the situation in health-care institutions often resembled that of a real war, as hospitals were not capable of handling the consequences of the unexpected spreading of the virus. As regards the second factor, it has been mentioned previously that war metaphors generally work well as the initial “call to arms.” I believe that this was one of the aims of the usage of such metaphors, as the situation was extremely urgent, and it was crucial to raise people’s awareness about the possible danger. The following examples illustrate the metaphor THE CONFRONTATION OF THE PANDEMIC IS A WAR:

(12)

- a) *Il segretario della Lega: «In guerra si adottano le misure di guerra.»*
“The secretary of La Lega: “In war, war measures are adopted.”
- b) *Era domenica primo marzo: «Uno scenario di guerra, pazienti ovunque, gravi, rantolanti.»*
“It was Sunday, 1st March: “A war scenario, seriously ill patients gasping for breath everywhere.”
- c) *Coronavirus: la guerra disarmata degli operatori sanitari torinesi contro la pandemia.*
“Coronavirus: Turin medical workers’ unarmed war against the pandemic.”

Example (12a) can be seen as a “declaration of war” with the pandemic. In section (2.3.2) it was suggested that military metaphors may lead to authoritarian tendencies of governments, in other words, if the country is in a declared state of war, the war-like measures are more easily justifiable, and certain human rights, such as the freedom of movement, can be limited. I can imagine that by some, the sentence could be perceived as an instance of

declaration that sets the background for such tendencies. On the other hand, the beginning of this section reminded us that military metaphors were previously said to work well as the initial “call to arms.” Since the examined statement was made at the mere beginning of the pandemic, I believe that its aim was to alarm Italians rather than to prepare the soil for authoritarian measures. In (12b), the expression *uno scenario di guerra* [a war scenario] metaphorically describes the situation in an Italian hospital. In a war, the hospitals are often full of seriously injured patients, be it soldiers or civilians. The hospital environment at the beginning of the first wave was often compared to the one of a war-stricken hospital, as the virus caught Italy off guard. I believe that in example (12c), the metaphorical expression *guerra disarmata* [unarmed war] implies two things. First, it suggests that the war can sometimes appear desperate, as there is no known “weapon” (in this case treatment or a medication) that can be used against the virus. The medical workers are thus put in a disadvantageous position. Second, the only “weapons” the medical workers can rely on, are gloves, masks, face-shields, and other protective equipment.¹⁵ Due to the unexpectedly rapid onset of the pandemic, Italy quickly ran out of protective medical gear, and because of that, medical workers were often not properly protected and had to face the “fully armed” enemy bare-handed.

4.1.2 THE VIRUS AS ENEMY

In the framing of WAR, there is always a side that is, based on the point of view, perceived as enemy. The virus was frequently referred to as *nemico* [enemy] and was often given attributes that were either expressive or described the characteristics of the virus’ behavior. I will first approach the expressive attributes:

(13)

- a) *Siamo tutti chiusi nelle nostre case – ha continuato il patron azzurro – per combattere un nemico terribile e subdolo.*

“We are all closed in our houses—continued the patron azzurro—in order to fight a terrible, sneaky enemy.”

- b) *Non è, però, tempo di cantare vittoria. Il nemico è infido e può tornare.*

“It is, however, not time to claim victory yet. The enemy is treacherous and it may return.”

Example (13a) describes the enemy as *terribile* [terrible] and *subdolo* [sneaky]. While the virus can certainly be perceived as terrible, there are people who do not see the virus in this way. The adjective *terribile* [terrible] can thus root from either first or second-hand experience with the virus. The adjective *subdolo* [sneaky] expresses a certain level of

¹⁵ It could be argued, that rather than weapons, the mentioned pieces of equipment should be referred to as pieces of armor, however, in the context of the pandemic, our only way of attacking the enemy is by not allowing it to spread further, be it by the means of the protective gear or a vaccine

wickedness, a masking of one's intentions. The virus' intention—that is to use the host and to spread even further—is hidden, the virus does not play fair and it often strikes when least expected. In (13b), the enemy was given the attribute *infido* [treacherous], which suggests that the enemy cannot be trusted. The sentence further suggests that the enemy may return. In the context of the pandemic, this sentence can be understood as a warning that we should not get the impression that the virus is retreating, as it can easily start spreading again if not given appropriate attention.

In the two examples below, the attributes that were given to the word *nemico* (enemy) are descriptive of the virus' characteristics:

(14)

- a) *A 22 anni, poteva mai pensare a dedicarsi allo scontro con un nemico invisibile e letale?*

“Who would have thought that, at the age of 22, one would have to clash with an enemy that is invisible and lethal?”

- b) *So di non fare un'affermazione scientifica, ma la verità è che per sconfiggere un nemico nuovo e sconosciuto abbiamo bisogno anche di una somma insondabile di coincidenze positive.*

“I am aware that I am not making any scientific affirmation, but the truth is that to defeat an enemy that is new and unknown, we also need an unfathomable amount of positive coincidences.”

Example (14a) describes the virus as *invisibile* [invisible] and *letale* [lethal]. Both the attributes reflect reality, as the virus is, due to the way of transmittance, really invisible and is, especially for high-risk groups, lethal. In example (14b), the virus is described as *nemico nuovo e sconosciuto* [new and unknown enemy]. Especially at the beginning of the pandemic, both the attributes were literal, as the virus was something unforeseen and largely unknown.

I have also identified a case in which the virus was seen as an enemy entity with whom an agreement could be reached:

(15)

“Coronavirus, *l'epidemia non dà tregua*: pronto il piano di maxi-emergenza.”

“Coronavirus, the epidemic does not call a truce: the plan for maximal emergency is ready.”

Tregua [truce] is a temporary suspension of hostilities between enemies. In example (15), the pandemic is seen as a side of the conflict that is capable of making an agreement but is unwilling to do so. The ability of making an agreement is a rather human-like one, and the epidemic certainly does not possess it, unless given human traits, in other words, personified.

4.1.3 EFFORTS OF MEDICAL WORKERS AS BATTLE/FIGHT AGAINST THE VIRUS

In English covid-19-related texts, both “battle” and “fight” against the (corona)virus/covid-19 can be found. In Italian, there is either *una lotta contro/al (corona)virus/covid-19* [a fight against (corona)virus/covid-19] or *una battaglia contro il/al (corona)virus/covid-19* [a battle against (corona)virus/covid-19]. Both *battaglia* and *lotta* can be translated as either battle or a fight. The findings from the corpus suggest that *battaglia* was used when referring to a more specific moment, for example a “battle” of a certain hospital, location, or a specific group of medical workers. On the other hand, *lotta* was more often used to refer to the global “fight” against the virus. Even though this tendency was observable, there are some examples that seem to shift away from it. In some contexts, it thus remains debatable whether *lotta* should be translated as “fight”, or as “battle”. To maintain regularity and to comply with the suggested premise, I always translate the noun *battaglia* as “battle”, and the noun *lotta* as “fight”.

First, I will comment on the examples that contain the word *battaglia*:

(16)

- a) *Penso a chi è in terapia intensiva, penso al personale medico che sta combattendo una battaglia difficilissima.*

“I think of those in the intensive care unit, of the medical workers who are fighting a very difficult battle.”

- b) *La battaglia totale dell’ospedale Maggiore di Parma contro il coronavirus.*

“The Maggiore hospital of Parma’s total battle against coronavirus.”

- c) *Il Sindaco: “Vinceremo questa battaglia.”*

“The mayor: “We will win this battle.”

Example (16a) expresses the speaker’s compassion and appreciation of the demanding work the medical staff is doing. In the sentence, the whole confrontation of the virus is perceived as a battle, and the medical workers are seen as the battle’s soldiers.¹⁶ Example (16b) suggests the complexity of the battle that is happening behind the walls of the Parma hospital. In this case, *battaglia totale* [total battle] suggests that the virus is fought by any possible means and that a great effort is made by the medical personnel. The introduction to this section suggested that the word *battaglia* [battle] is usually used when referring to a specific location or hospital-in this case the hospital of Parma. The speaker in (16c) is the mayor of a small Italian city after finding out that the tests have revealed the first positive person in the city. I believe that in this case, the mayor was referring to the battle that is to be

¹⁶ Semino (2021) expressed her doubts about such understanding of the role of the medical workers. Based on the findings from the corpus, medical workers were often perceived as the war’s soldiers, even though they were, interestingly, never directly called soldiers, but rather referred to as “those who fight the virus on the frontline,” etc.

fought by him and “his” citizens, as he uses the first-person plural in the sentence. It is, of course, only an interpretation, however, following the previously suggested contextual condition of battle/fight it seems to be intact. Had the mayor been referring to the whole nation, or maybe the whole population of the planet, he would have, I believe, opted for *lotta* [fight] or *guerra* [war]. It is also important to realize that the statement was made at the beginning of the pandemic, and back then, the virus was not as widely spread. The situation was thus more resembling of a “local” battle than of a global fight/war.

The following example sentences include the noun *lotta* [fight] and in the case of (17d) the verb *combattere* [to fight]:

(17)

- a) *Il mondo si è fermato: più del 40% della popolazione mondiale è chiusa in casa o sottoposte a limitazioni di movimento o isolamento sociale nella **lotta alla pandemia di coronavirus Sars-Cov-2**.*
 “The world has stopped: more than 40% of the population is closed at home or a subject to movement limitations or social isolation in the **fight against the Sars-Cov-2 coronavirus pandemic**.”
- b) *La rivolta degli **eroi della lotta al coronavirus** è andata in scena questa mattina, 30 aprile, davanti agli ospedali.*
 “The revolt of **the heroes of the fight against coronavirus** took place this morning, April 30, in front of hospitals.”
- c) *È **una lotta impari**, che fa male a noi, fa male ai cittadini, fa male al paese.*
 “It is **an unfair fight** that is harmful to us, to the citizens and to the country.”
- d) *Sia Denicolai sia Quattrococchi fanno parte della **task force del governo italiano chiamata a combattere l'emergenza Covid-19** grazie all'impegno dei Big Data.*
 “Both Denicolai e Quattrococchi are part of the **Italian government’s task force that was called in to fight the Covid-19 emergency**, utilizing the Big Data.”¹⁷

The speaker in (17a) describes the effects the pandemic has on the world. In the sentence the situation is understood as *lotta* [fight]. It does not refer to a specific location, hospital or group but rather to the whole population, and it can thus be seen as an example supporting the previously suggested premise. In example (17b), the medical workers are referred to as the heroes of the fight against coronavirus. It has, however, been made clear by

¹⁷ “Big Data refers to the large, diverse sets of information that grow at ever-increasing rates. It encompasses the volume of information, the velocity or speed at which it is created and collected, and the variety or scope of the data points being covered.”

Segal, Troy. 2021. “Big Data.” *Investopedia*, January 1. Accessed April 11, 2021.

the medical workers themselves that the portrayal of them as heroes is often not desired. In April 2020 Italian daily newspaper *La Repubblica* published an article named “*I medici: “Non eroi, ma persone”* [“Doctors: “Not heroes, but people”].¹⁸ The title of the article suggests the reason for the inappropriateness of the usage of the term hero. The word itself implies a certain level of fearlessness, bravery and nowadays, due to the influence of popular culture, even supernaturality. Medical workers do have their own fears, their own vulnerabilities and can, ultimately, fall victim to the disease just like anyone else. The sentence in (17c) comments on the unfairness of the fight. The virus is invisible, there is, up to this day, no confirmed cure and new mutations further complicate the situation. Again, the word *lotta* [fight] is used and the reference of the sentence is rather broad, namely the situation in the whole country (Italy). (17d) is examined in this section because of the meaning of the verb *combattere* [“to fight”/“to battle”], and because of the fact that the role of “the soldier” is occupied by the term “task force”.¹⁹ The sentence informs about Stefano De Nicolai and Walter Quattrociocchi (both IT and data analysis experts) being part of the task force formed by the Italian government. In this context, the term “task force” denotes a group of experts, who are to monitor the progression of the pandemic via Big Data. The group will then, based on the conclusions drawn from the data, advise the government on handling of the pandemic.

4.1.4 HEALTH-CARE INSTITUTIONS AS PARTS OF BATTLEFIELD

The previous section suggested that health-care workers are the ones who fight the battle against the virus, and consequently, the medical staff can be thought of as soldiers facing the virus. In a real war, there is only one place where the soldiers meet face to face with the enemy: the battlefield. In the articles about Covid-19, health-care institutions, such as hospitals and hospices, were seen as parts of battlefield on which the soldiers (medical staff) fight their battles against the virus. The health-care institutions, above all their Covid-19 units, were generally referred to by two metaphorical expressions. The first one was *prima linea* [the frontline]:

(18)

- a) “*Noi, medici di famiglia prima linea contro l’epidemia.”*
 “We, the family doctors on the frontline against the pandemic.”

¹⁸ Corica Alessandra, Brunella, Giovara. 2020. “I medici: Non eroi, ma persone” [“Doctors: Not heroes, but people”]. *La Repubblica*, April 2. Accessed March 12, 2021.
https://rep.repubblica.it/pwa/generale/2020/04/02/news/pezzo_corica_giovara-252983206/

¹⁹ I was originally in doubt whether to consider “task force” an example of military metaphorical expression, as it nowadays often refers to a group of experts in a specific field and the original military meaning—a temporarily formed armed unit whose purpose is to carry out a specific operation, for example eliminate an important target—is frequently sidelined. I have, however, decided to treat the term as military metaphorical expression for two reasons. Firstly, the main task of a “coronavirus task force” is to eliminate the enemy (the virus) as effectively as possible, and it can thus be seen as a group of soldiers trying to eliminate the enemy, even though not necessarily directly, and secondly, up to this day, the term has its specific—the above mentioned—purpose in the language of military.

- b) *Con l'eccezione dei medici e degli infermieri, che stanno combattendo in prima linea, rischiando la salute e sopperendo alle deficienze di un sistema sanitario impoverito negli anni...*

“With the exception of the doctors and nurses who are fighting on the frontline, risking their health compensating for the deficiencies of a medical system that has been impoverished through the years...”

- c) *Insieme alle cosiddette Rsa (Residenze sanitarie ospedaliere) i più tradizionali ospizi sono stati e sono l'epicentro di questa tragedia, il buco nero del lutto nazionale che osserviamo oggi, la prima linea di una trincea esposta al fuoco nemico senza difesa.*

“Together with the so-called Rsa (...) the most traditional hospices have been the epicenter of this tragedy, a black hole of the national sorrow we are witnessing today, a defenseless frontline of a trench exposed to the enemy fire.”

Example (18a) is a headline of an article that was published by *La Repubblica*. The article points out that during the first wave of the pandemic, family doctors were the most common victims²⁰ among Italian professional health-care workers. The expression *prima linea* [the frontline] illustrates the closeness and directness of the confrontation between the virus and family doctors, who were often the first ones to deal with the infected patients. In example (18b), the expression *prima linea*, again, points out imminence of the confrontation and stresses out the risk that is taken by the medical workers who work with Covid-19 positive patients. As regards example (18c), not only does the sentence stress the proximity of the threat, it also suggests a high level of defenselessness, as the health-care institutions are not only seen as the frontline, but also as a trench that is exposed the enemy fire (high viral load).

The second expression was *il fronte* [front]:

(19)

- a) *Parma, il fronte del coronavirus: reportage della terapia intensiva.*

“Parma, the coronavirus front: a report from the intensive care unit.”

- b) *L'Italia si risveglia in coda dopo il giorno dei record negativi sul fronte del coronavirus.*

“Italy wakes up at the bottom (of the statistics) after a day of negative records on the coronavirus front.”

- c) *Parma, il fronte del coronavirus: reportage della terapia intensiva.*

“Parma, the coronavirus front: a report from the intensive care unit.”

²⁰ The term victim only denotes people who died of Covid-19.

Unlike *prima linea* [the frontline], the term *front* does not necessarily stress the closeness of the contact between the medical workers and the virus. It can, however, be understood as a military parallel to the situation in hospitals. In other words, the hospitals are seen as the front because of the everyday battles that take place behind their walls.

4.1.5 INFECTED INDIVIDUALS AS THE VIRUS' BOMBS

In section 4.1.1 it was mentioned that medical equipment, such as gloves, masks, gowns etc., can be seen as the “weapons” medical workers can use against the virus. Not only does the protective gear protect the wearer, but it also robs the virus of another potential host, and thus of the possibility of further spreading. Unfortunately, the virus also has its own “weapons”, and they are, possibly, weapons of mass destruction. Infected people were sometimes seen as the virus' bombs.

To put this into perspective, let us consider a bomb that is put in a car and the car is parked in the city center. Apart from those who set the bomb, no one is aware of the possible explosion, and once the bomb goes off and damages everything in its radius, it is too late to act. With a bit of exaggeration, the same can possibly happen with a highly infectious patient, who, without being aware of being infectious, visits his family. The only one being “aware” of the presence of the virus inside the body is the virus itself (the one who “set the bomb”). A few days after the visit, the visitor tests positive for the virus. However, the bomb has already gone off. The family members are thus possibly already infected, and the spreading of the virus continues. Even though the imminent consequences will probably not be as devastating as in the case of the explosion of the bomb, the long-term effects of the “viral explosion” are possibly even worse.

The examples below offer both the headline and the first sentence of the article to allow for a better understanding of the examples:

(20)

a) *«Venezia è **una bomba sociale**, ed è già innescata.»*

*Non vorrei usare questo tono, ma purtroppo siamo di fronte **a una bomba sociale**, ormai già innescata.*

“Venice is **a social bomb** and it has already been triggered.”

“I do not like using this tone but unfortunately, we find ourselves in front of **a social bomb** that has already been triggered.”

b) *Puglia: “I rientri non sono **una bomba**.”*

*“Abbiamo avuto qualche segnale, ad esempio qualche studente rientrato dal nord che ha contagiato i propri genitori, però non è **una bomba**.”*

“Puglia: “The returns are not **a bomb**.”

“We have had certain signals that some students who have returned from North have infected their parents, but it is not **a bomb**.”

In the first sentence (20a), the whole city of Venice is seen as a social bomb that has already been triggered. It was suggested that people are often completely unaware of being infected. The infected individuals in the city may often remain untraced and the virus can thus travel through the city (and possibly through the region and the country) without an obstacle. Since the first symptoms usually appear a few days after contagion, the bomb (of contagions) can go off without anyone noticing. However, after a few days, the possible effects of the “explosion” can be devastating. The second example (20b), on the other hand, illustrates a rather optimistic point of view. According to the speaker, the returns are not a bomb, in other words, the number of asymptomatic, yet infectious people who return home—for example from schools, jobs, work trips, etc.—is not as high and it is thus unlikely that an “explosion” (a sudden rapid growth of cases) should happen.

4.1.6 THE VIRUS IS AN ADVERSARY TO BE FACED

The metaphors dealt with in this section are violence metaphors in which the mappings of the WAR domain are not present. The virus is not seen as an enemy in a war, but rather as a faced and confronted adversary. The metaphors are thus more inclining to a scenario of a fight between two individuals and are not as structurally complex:

The following examples illustrate the facing of the adversary (the virus):

(21)

- a) *Gloire ha battuto Ebola e oggi **affronta il Covid-19** senza paura.*
 “Gloire has beaten Ebola, and **now she faces Covid-19** without fear.”
- b) *Il locale da via San Pietro destinerà a parte del ricavato all’acquisto di mascherine da inviare in Cina **per affrontare l’epidemia.***
 “The via San Pietro’ restaurant will spend some its revenue on masks that will be sent to China in order to help the country **in facing the pandemic.**”
- c) *Stiamo spendendo una montagna di soldi **per fronteggiare il virus.***
 “We are spending a mountain of money **on facing the virus.**”
- d) *Ma il fabbisogno di mascherine, guanti, apparecchiature mediche e personale sanitario resta altissimo in una regione che si è trovata **a fronteggiare il coronavirus con le armi spuntate.***
 “But in a region that has found itself **facing coronavirus with blunt weapons,** the need for masks, gloves, medical equipment, and medical personnel remains high.”

Examples (21a-c) are all examples of facing/opposing the virus. One of the sides is represented by the virus, the other by either Gloire (21a), China (21b), or us (the population, community; 21c). The verbs *fronteggiare* and *affrontare* [both “to face”] carry a certain

component of hostility and unfriendliness. They suggest a hostile, possibly confrontational encounter with the adversary (the virus). The virus was referred to simply as the virus, but also Covid-19 and the pandemic. The most interesting example from this section is the sentence in (21d). It was previously suggested that medical protective equipment can, in a way, be seen as weapons held by the medical workers. Example (21d) clearly considers the equipment—masks, gloves etc.—the weapons, as it suggests that it is the lack of protective gear that has left the medical workers facing the virus with blunt weapons.

4.1.7 THE VIRUS IS AN ASSAILANT

In the metaphor THE VIRUS IS A FACED ADVERSARY, the metaphorical expressions *fronteggiare* and *affrontare* [to face] suggest an awareness of the opponent (the virus) and the confrontation between the two sides is thus expectable. In the case of THE VIRUS IS AN ASSAILANT, rather than illustrating the two facing sides, the metaphorical expressions are focused on the side that carries out the attack. Some of the expressions also carry a certain level of unexpectedness.

The leading expression of this metaphor is the verb *colpire* [to hit/to strike/to affect]. In its literal sense, the verb *colpire* means to hit repeatedly (with a fist, for example). Parallel texts suggest that when used in the context of natural disasters, the verb *colpire* is quite often translated as “hit” or “strike”, and in parallel Covid-19-related texts the verbs “hit”, “strike” and “affect” are all used. In the examples I have chosen, the verb “hit” seems to be an acceptable translation—as it is probably the closest to the literal meaning of the Italian verb—and seems to be the most fitting the established metaphor THE VIRUS IS AN ASSAILANT. I do, however, acknowledge that different translations are possible based on the phrasal context.

(22)

- a) *Per il momento anche l'Irlanda ha deciso: «Non andate nelle zone colpite dal coronavirus nel nord dell'Italia», ha scritto il ministro degli Esteri in un travel advice aggiornato in queste ore.*
 “For the moment, Ireland has decided: “Do not go to the zones of Northern Italy that were hit by coronavirus,” wrote the minister of foreign affairs in a travel advice that has been updated in recent hours.”
- b) *Forse è perché ha già colpito i soggetti più fragili, facendo una “selezione naturale”, o forse si è depotenziato.*
 “Maybe it is because it (the virus) has already hit the most fragile subjects, making a “natural selection,” or maybe it has lost some of its strength.”
- c) *Il virus colpisce, e non guarda in faccia nessuno.*
 “The virus hits without looking into anyone’s face.”
- d) *... ma certo questo virus, oltre a seminare morte e disastri, è davvero infido. Ti colpisce alle spalle in modo inatteso e ti inchioda a una vita da recluso, quando va bene e non ti regala i sintomi.*

“... but of course, apart from sowing deaths and disasters, the virus is also really treacherous. **It stabs you in the back** when you least expect it and even if it does not give you any symptoms, it still condemns you to a life of a prisoner.”

Especially in example (22a) it could be argued that the verb *colpire* could be translated as “affect”—as that appears to be the most commonly used term in English texts which speak about zones/locations—rather than as “hit”, and that the violent metaphor is not present. However, the zones can be seen as the targets of the assailant, and, again, in the literal sense, the Italian verb suggests physical violence. In (22b), the speaker wonders what the reason for the seeming weakening of the virus is. He attributes the lower hospitalization rates to the fact that the most fragile subject, i.e. the elderly with co-morbidities, were already “hit” (infected) at the beginning of the pandemic, and the currently infected individuals do not belong to the high-risk groups anymore. The whole sentence (22c) can be seen as an example of personification, where the virus is perceived as the one who hits/carries out an unexpected attack, i.e., the assailant, and yet is too cowardly to look in the face of his victim. In example (22d), the verb *colpire* is not translated as *hit* for stylistic purposes. The fixed expression “to stab in the back” is more illustrative of what the sentence is trying to say. The virus is unpredictable, sneaky, and even if trying as hard as we can to protect ourselves from its attack, the virus in some way always takes its toll.

Another way of referring to the activity of the assailant (the virus) was through the verb *attacare* [to attack] or the noun *attacco* [an attack]. The attack was carried out against either a corporal part or a person:

(23)

- a) *Guerra*²¹ (Oms): «Il coronavirus è un mostro, **non attacca solo i polmoni.** »
“Guerra (WHO): “Coronavirus is a monster; **it does not attack only lungs.**”
- b) *Così se **una persona viene attaccata dal virus vero** il sistema immunitario saprà già che cosa deve combattere e sarà in grado di attaccare, immunizzandosi.*
“This way, if **a person is attacked by the real virus**, the immune system will already know what it has to fight and will be able to strike back by immunizing the body.”
- c) *Quindi il 100 % dei pazienti trattati ha sviluppato gli anticorpi che risultano essere la “memoria” del nostro corpo all’infezione e anche quelli che indicano la primissima risposta all’**attacco del virus.***

²¹ In this sentence “Guerra” stands for Dr. Ranieri Guerra, a representative of the World Health Organization.

“This means that 100% of the treated patients have developed antibodies, which are our body’s “memory” of the infection, and also an initial response to the **attack of the virus.**”

In the first example (23a), the speaker warns that the virus does not only attack the lungs but also other parts of the human body. The virus is also referred to as *mostro* [monster]. What adds to this “monstrosity” is the aforementioned sneakiness, cruelty, and indifference of the virus. The second example (23b) describes what happens in the body once the virus has attacked the patient. Interestingly, the whole sentence evokes a violent environment, as the immune system has to “fight” the virus, and after a while, it will be able to “strike” back. The third example (23c) mentions the body’s response after recovering from the “viral attack.”

4.1.8 THE VIRUS IS A KILLER

It was previously mentioned that in the early 2000s, the leading metaphor in the discourse about SARS was that of a killer. This metaphor also appeared in Covid-19-related texts, yet it was not the leading metaphor of the discourse, as only 19 cases were identified in the corpus. It is important to point out that the virus was never directly referred to as the killer, but this perception of the virus was suggested by the verb *uccidere* [to kill]. Had we—based on the verb *uccidere*—established the mapping DYING OF COVID-19 AS BEING KILLED (BY THE VIRUS), we would be led to the superordinate THE VIRUS IS A KILLER.

Examples depicting the virus as the killer are given in (24):

(24)

- a) ***Il Covid-19 uccide*** *percentualmente meno di Sars e Mers.*
“Percentage wise, **Covid-19 kills** less than Sars and Mers.”
- b) *Aumentano a 154 i medici **uccisi dal virus.***
“The number of doctors **killed by the virus** raises to 154.”
- c) ***Così il coronavirus uccide:*** *viaggio in 3D nel corpo umano dal contagio a quello che succede ai polmoni.*
“**This is how coronavirus kills:** A 3D journey through the human body from contagion to what happens to the lungs.”
- d) *Lo abbiamo visto e raccontato per decine di storie così, unite dalla morte dovuta a **questo maledetto virus che non soltanto ti uccide**, ma ti strappa alle persone più care anche per un ultimo saluto, un bacio, un veloce contatto.*
“We have seen and told tens of those stories, stories that are all united by a death was caused by this cursed virus. **The virus not only kills you;** it does not even give you and your loved ones the chance for the last goodbye, the last kiss, the last quick contact.”

Example (24a) compares the death rates of the three coronaviruses, namely Covid-19, SARS (that was, as mentioned before, spoken about as killer) and MERS. It is important to realize that this percentage was applicable at the beginning of the pandemic and it has changed as the pandemic continued. The second example (24b) informs about the rising number of doctors who were killed by the virus. Example (24c) is the headline of an article that presented a 3D animation of the virus’ “travel” through the human body. The animation covered the progression from the moment of infection to the moment of attacking the lungs and killing the host. The last example (24d) is an emotional description of the final moments of the intensive care units’ patients made by a nurse. The beginning of the sentence suggests that such scenarios were not uncommon in the intensive care unit. The nurse describes the virus as *maledetto* [cursed], expressing her contempt, maybe even hatred. She also describes the virus’ cruelty, as she states that the virus often robs its victims of the final moments with their families and loved ones, making the already difficult final moments even worse.

4.1.9 DECEASED INDIVIDUALS AS VICTIMS

If there is a mapping that applies to the before-mentioned metaphors THE CONFRONTATION OF THE PANDEMIC IS A WAR, THE VIRUS IS AN ADVERSARY TO BE FACED, THE VIRUS IS AN ASSAILANT, and THE VIRUS IS A KILLER, it is the one between deceased individuals and victims. All the mentioned metaphors are examples of violence metaphors, and victims are thus seen as consequences of the violent scenarios that are present in each of the metaphors. Once again, in the data from the corpus, only people who died of Covid-19 were considered victims.

Below are the examples containing the word *vittima* [victim]:

(25)

- a) *L’allarme dell’Istituto superiore di sanità: **“Le vittime per coronavirus potrebbero aumentare.”***
 “Italian National Institute of Health’s warning: “The numbers of **coronavirus victims** could grow.”
- b) ***Il virus ha già mietuto 19.468 vittime** e ogni giorno – nonostante il lockdown duri da oltre un mese – si raggiungono 4000 contagiati nuovi.*
 “**The virus has already claimed 19,468 victims**, and every day—despite the lockdown going on for almost a month—4000 new cases are revealed.
- c) ***Le vittime del coronavirus sono una ferita che ci porteremo dietro per sempre, purtroppo, come tanti altri paesi.***
 “**The victims of coronavirus** are a scar that we will, like many other countries, have forever.”

- d) *Videomessaggio del Presidente della Repubblica agli italiani: “Sarà una festa diversa dalle altre, il mio pensiero va alle vittime dell’epidemia, i sacrifici che stiamo facendo stanno producendo però dei risultati.*

“A video message from the president to Italians: “It will be a holiday different from others, my thoughts go to the victims of the epidemic, but the sacrifices we are making are yielding results.”

Example (25a) informs about a warning that was released by the Italian National Institute of Health about the possible rising of numbers of Covid-19 deaths. Example (25b) is part of statistics about the number of the so far deceased people, and the number of newly confirmed cases of contagion, which is, despite the lockdown, still high. The verb *mietere* [literally “to reap”] suggests that the virus is seen as the one “sweeping its scythe”, causing grievous wounds all around with each sweep. In example (25c), the victims are seen as a “scar on the nation’s skin.” Just like a scarred person remembers the incident that caused the scar, the coronavirus scar is always going to remind the countries of the losses the pandemic has caused. Finally, example (25d) is a headline summary of a speech that was delivered via video by the Italian president. The holiday that is spoken about is Easter. In Italy, Easter is a holiday of great importance, and it usually goes hand in hand with numerous gatherings. However, during a raging pandemic, the tradition had to be left behind. The president expressed his sorrow for the victims of the epidemic, but encouraged the nation to stay strong, as the sacrifices (the restrictions, the deaths of medical workers, family members, etc.) the government makes are bringing results.

4.1.10 THE END OF THE PANDEMIC IS DEFEATING THE VIRUS

Finally, I will comment on examples of the metaphor THE END OF THE PANDEMIC IS DEFEATING THE VIRUS. In the corpus, the desired defeat of the virus was expressed by two different verbs. The first verb was *battere* [“to beat”/“to defeat”]. The literal meaning of *battere* is “to strike/punch repeatedly”. It can thus be said that this was the more physically focused way of describing the defeating of the virus.

The examples below contain the verb *battere*:

(26)

- a) *La priorità è battere la pandemia e fare in modo in parallelo che il sistema economico non si blocchi e non si perdano posti di lavoro.*

“The priority is beating the pandemic in a way that the economic system is not blocked, and jobs are not lost.”

- b) *La “partita a scacchi” per battere il virus.*

“The chess game of beating the virus.”

The first sentence (26a) stresses out the importance of beating the virus in a way that does not cause any further economic or labor-related harm. The beating of the virus is the utmost priority, but it is crucial not to overlook the correlated problems, such as job losses, business drops, etc. Example (26b) combines the aspect of strategy with the aspect of violence. A game of chess can only be won by adopting a sophisticated strategy. The virus must be stood up against firmly, but not injudiciously. In other words, each step in the managing of the pandemic must be carefully thought through, because the violence itself (contained in the verb “to beat”) would probably not be enough.

The second verb was *sconfiggere* [“to defeat”]. According to the *Treccani* dictionary, the verb *sconfiggere* can mean both “to defeat the enemy in a battle” and also “to beat an adversary”. The two examples below can thus be seen as applicable for both military and non-military violent metaphors, as both the adversary and the enemy (in both cases the opposing side represented by the virus) can be defeated.

Examples containing the verb *sconfiggere* [“to defeat”] are given in (27):

(27)

- a) *In qualche giorno, se le cose vanno bene, il corpo dovrebbe reagire e sconfiggere il virus.*

“In a few days, if things go well, the body should react and **defeat the virus.**”

- b) *In attesa di farmaci specifici e di un vaccino che lo sconfigga del tutto.*

“(We are) waiting for specific medicines and a **vaccine that defeats it** (the virus) **completely.**”

Example (27a) is a sentence taken from an article that described the way the body slowly gets the upper hand over the virus when the treatment works the way it should. After being helped by oxygen for a short time, the body should grow stronger than the virus, and it should, in the end come out victorious. In the second example (27b), the virus is defeated once and for all by the vaccine. There are two different ways of interpreting the metaphor. First, the vaccine is a weapon that is required to defeat the virus. Second, the vaccine is one of the sides of the confrontation, in other words, the confrontation stands between the vaccine and the virus.

4.2 Nature metaphors

The introduction to this thesis mentioned *ondata* [wave] as a common example of nature metaphors that were used in the articles. To my surprise, *ondata* resulted only the second most frequent natural metaphorical expression, as it was surpassed by *focolaio* [outbreak].

Initially, I was hesitant whether to consider the word *focolaio* [outbreak] an example of the fire metaphor. According to the *Treccani* dictionary, *focolaio* etymologically originates from *foculus* (diminutive of *focus*, *focus* meaning hearth or fireplace in Latin) from which *focolare* and *focolaio* were derived. For a long time, the two terms were used as synonyms,

yet *focolare* later became used to denote a part of a hearth, and *focolaio* a center from which something—often a disease—spreads. I was thus not certain to what extent the word *focolaio* alludes to fire in the context of the pandemic. Semino examines an excerpt from an Italian text and considers *focolaio*—which she translates as “outbreak”—an example of a mapping of the metaphor THE VIRUS IS A FIRE (2021, 56). Based on both the origin of the expression and Semino’s treatment of the term, I have decided to consider *focolaio* a manifestation of the metaphor THE VIRUS IS A FIRE.

The mapping THE PLACES FROM WHICH THE VIRUS SPREADS AS FIRE OUTBREAKS is exemplified below:

(28)

- a) *Coronavirus, polmoniti anomale a metà gennaio: “Così è nato **il focolaio** di Codogno.”*
 “Coronavirus, anomalous pneumonias in mid-January: “This is how **the pandemic outbreak** started in Codogno.”
- b) ***Il focolaio italiano del coronavirus covava sotto la cenere** “almeno dalla metà di gennaio.”*
 “**The Italian coronavirus fire had been smoldering** at least since the middle of January.”
- c) *Ma perché i due **focolai di coronavirus**, quello in Veneto e quello in Lombardia si sono diffusi così velocemente?*
 “But why did the virus spread so fast from the two **outbreaks** in Veneto and Lombardy?”
- d) *È molto importante spegnere **i focolai** quando esplodono per evitare la diffusione pandemica.*
 “To avoid the further spreading of the pandemic, it is very important that the **outbreaks** are extinguished once they explode.”

Example (28a) is the headline of an article that takes a retrospective look at the beginning of the pandemic in Codogno where some patients were diagnosed with what was initially thought of as peculiar cases of pneumonia. The pneumonias were later revealed to be early unidentified cases of Covid-19. The second example (28b) refers to the same situation. The expression *covare sotto la cenere* [“to smolder”] suggests that the flame was not visibly burning, yet the fire was already cumulating heat. In other words, the virus was not fully active but had already started spreading and thus growing more potent without anyone being aware of its activity. In (28c), the speaker wonders what the reason for the rapid spreading of the virus from the two outbreaks (Veneto and Lombardy) might have been. Finally, in (28d), the word *focolaio* is clearly considered a part of the fire metaphor. The speaker calls for the need of immediate “extinguishing of the exploded outbreaks,” as s/he considers it crucial for containing the fire, i.e. for keeping the progression of the pandemic under control.

Another set of metaphors includes two often, but not always related natural disasters: earthquakes and tsunamis. This is exemplified in (29), which, in addition, includes a more general word for a wave, namely *onda*:

(29)

Il governatore pugliese Michele Emiliano la chiama la Grande Onda e il Sud la aspetta a breve, come uno tsunami dopo un terremoto.

“The governor of Puglia, Michele Emiliano, calls it the Great Wave, and the South expects it to arrive soon, like a tsunami after an earthquake.”

In example (29), the metaphorical wave (*onda*) which is to arrive to the region of Puglia and to the South of Italy, is likened to a tsunami coming after an earthquake. The earthquake, in this case, is the uncontrolled spreading of the virus in other parts of the country. Just like the aftershock of an earthquake can be felt not only near the epicenter, but also in locations that might be distant from it, the virus is about to be “felt” even in the distant parts of Italy, as the viral earthquake resonates.

Even though the pandemic itself was almost never directly referred to as “earthquake”, the places with high numbers of infections were sometimes seen as “epicenters”. The following examples demonstrate the mapping PLACES WITH HIGH NUMBERS OF INFECTIONS AS EPICENTERS:

(30)

a) *Coronavirus, Oms: “Europa, epicentro pandemia.”*

“Coronavirus, WHO: “Europe, the epicenter of the pandemic.”

b) *... Sao Paolo diventato epicentro del coronavirus dell’America Latina: oltre il 25% delle vittime brasiliane (4.782) si concentra nello Stato paulista, seguito da quello di Rio de Janeiro (2.715).*

“...Sao Paulo became Latin America’s coronavirus epicenter: up to 25% of Brazilian victims (4,782) was from the state of Sao Paulo, the state of Rio de Janeiro follows with 2,715 victims.”

c) *Insieme alle cosiddette Rsa (Residenze sanitarie assistenziali) i più tradizionali ospizi sono stati e sono l’epicentro di questa tragedia, il buco nero del lutto nazionale che osserviamo oggi, la prima linea di una trincea esposta al fuoco nemico senza difesa.*

“Together with the so-called Rsa (Sanitary residence care) the most traditional hospices have been the epicenter of this tragedy, a black hole of the national sorrow we are witnessing today, a defenseless frontline of a trench exposed to the enemy fire.”

Example (30a) is a simple declaration made by WHO that Europe is, with its rising number of Covid-19 cases, the epicenter of the pandemic that is the place from which the infection is potentially spreading. Example (30b) focuses on Latin America, specifically on Sao Paulo. Sao Paulo was, at the time, seen as the state that was shaken by the coronavirus earthquake the most, as the numbers were rapidly rising, and the infection was spreading from the territory. The third example (30c) sees the epicenter of the tragedy (the pandemic) in hospices and sanitary residence care. Hospices are healthcare institutions where elderly, often terminally ill people are cared for. During the first wave of the pandemic, such institutions were among the most affected, as the virus is most dangerous for elderly people with co-morbidities and weakened immunity, i.e., hospice patients.

Finally, I would like to address the wave metaphor itself. It is difficult to establish the metaphor to which the metaphorical expression belongs. The simplest solution would probably be THE PANDEMIC IS A STORMY SEA. A stormy sea is moving constantly, it sends waves to the shore and it can change its behaviors in seconds. In a way, the same applies to the pandemic. The pandemic is active, it changes constantly; the virus mutates, it arrives in waves, and it has periods during which it is stronger, such as autumn and winter. As regards the mapping itself, I propose the following: THE RISING, THE PEAK, AND THE DECLINE OF THE NUMBERS OF INFECTED INDIVIDUALS AS A WAVE.²²

The mapping is demonstrated in the following examples:

(31)

- a) *È ormai chiaro, infatti, che il virus procede **a ondate**: la sua lunga incubazione fa sì che gli ingressi in terapia intensiva seguono di giorni, e a volte settimane, il momento del contagio.*

“It is now clear that the virus, in fact, progresses **in waves**: the intensive care unit patients are, due to the long incubation period, hospitalized days or even weeks after the moment of contagion.”

- b) *Coronavirus, Brusaferry (Iss): “In autunno rischio di **una seconda ondata**.”*

“Coronavirus, Brusaferry (WHO): “At risk of **second wave** in autumn.”

The claim that the virus proceeds in waves (31a) was made at the beginning of the pandemic and no one really thought about the situation as if it was one of many waves. In this case, wave is used to describe the delayed onset of symptoms, and consequently the waves in which the patients are hospitalized. In other words, a patient can be hospitalized 14 days after the contagion, but in the 14 days, he may have infected other people, who, again, may be hospitalized many days later. Example (31b) is a warning that was sent out by WHO. At that moment, the authorities were already aware of the potential decline and sudden increase that

²² It is also important to point out that the epidemic waves are usually visible in statistics, and the graphs that are used to illustrate the increases and declines are reminiscent of the shape of a wave. It could be one of the possible reasons for the usage of the term wave.

could come in autumn. In other words, WHO representatives were aware of the possibility of what is nowadays commonly referred to as the second wave of the pandemic.

It is interesting to point out that in Italian, there are two words for “wave”: while *ondata* [wave] was used to refer to the above-mentioned viral increase, peak, decline, and its related temporal period, *onda* [wave/surge] and *tsunami* were—as hinted upon before—used to refer to the high viral load, i.e., the focus was given to the quantity of infections:

(32)

- a) *Ma c'è un altro elemento interessante: l'onda del coronavirus sta raggiungendo l'Est Europeo.*

“But there is another interesting element: the coronavirus wave is reaching Eastern Europe.”

- b) *E mentre la Lombardia va a picco, il Veneto regge lo tsunami del virus.*

“And while Lombardy is sinking, Veneto is handling the viral tsunami.”

- c) *A marzo questo virus era uno tsunami, ora è diventato un'ondina.*

“In March, this virus was a tsunami, now it has become a little wave.”

In example (32a), the term *onda* [wave] is used to describe the imaginary coronavirus wave's progression towards Eastern Europe. A wave starts small and as it travels, it grows bigger and bigger. The coronavirus wave started rising in Western Europe, grew bigger in Central Europe and is about to hit Eastern Europe. The whole example (32b) stays in the “aquatic” environment. Not only does it describe Veneto's response to the tsunami (the rapid increase of Covid-19 cases), but it also refers to the situation in Lombardy as if the region was a boat sinking, i.e. not managing the pandemic situation. Example (32c) is a claim that was made by Matteo Bassetti, an Italian infection disease doctor who, in May, believed that the virus was getting weaker and that the pandemic was retreating. In this statement, his belief is represented by a comparison between a tsunami in March and *ondina* in May. While tsunami quite clearly denotes either a high viral load or a high number of infected individuals, the word *ondina* is a diminutive of *onda* [wave]. The comparison thus suggests that in the eyes of the doctor, the virus is far away from being as dangerous as it was in May. Ironically, only a few weeks after the initial claim, Bassetti warned that the virus was stronger than ever and that the situation cannot be underestimated.²³

²³“Covid-19, Bassetti: «Il virus è più debole, i catastrofisti negano l'evidenza dei fatti.»” [Covid-19, Bassetti: “The virus is weaker, the catastrophists negate the facts.”]. 2020. *Il Messaggero*, May 28. Accessed March 15, 2021. https://www.ilmessaggero.it/salute/focus/coronavirus_piu_debole_contagio_morti_bassetti_cosa_a_detto_cosa_accadra_epidemia_28_maggio_2020-5254767.html

4.3 Sport metaphors

It was previously suggested that certain metaphorical expressions that were used in the analyzed texts originated from the field of sports. The following examples illustrate the metaphor THE PANDEMIC IS A FOOTBALL MATCH:

(33)

- a) *È il secondo tempo di una partita che non sappiamo ancora quanto durerà.*
“It is **the second half of a match**, but we do not know how long the match is going to take.”
- b) *Rustu ha “parato” il coronavirus.*
“Rustu **has “denied” coronavirus.**”

In the first example (33a), the whole pandemic situation is perceived as a football match.²⁴ The problem lies in the fact that normally, there is a distinct time frame of a football match, specifically 2x45 minutes. However, in the “coronavirus match” no one can predict precisely how long the match is going to take. In example (33b), Rustu refers to Rüştü Reçber, a former Turkish football goalkeeper, who was hospitalized after being infected by the virus, and made a full recovery. In football, when a goalkeeper saves a clear chance, he “denies” the player who shoots. In this case, the denied player is the virus. The mapping would thus be THE INFECTION AS AN OPPOSING PLAYER.

Another sport metaphor identified in the corpus was THE PANDEMIC IS A RACE:

(34)

- a) *La battaglia contro il Covid-19 è una maratona.*
“The battle against Covid-19 **is a marathon.**”
- b) *È una corsa contro il tempo.*
“It is **a race against time.**”

The first example (34a), in fact, combines both a violence and a sport metaphor. The sentence suggests that the “battle” against the virus is going to be a long one and it is thus important for us to be patient. It is also crucial that a certain strategy be established, as it is impossible to run a marathon without a strategic distribution of energy. Example (34b) stresses the urgency of the situation. The longer the pandemic takes, the more people are going to die, and the more money is going to be lost. The situation is thus seen as a race between the World’s population and the virus. There is no time to take a rest, as each day puts the virus ahead.

²⁴ *Il secondo tempo* is used to refer to the second half of a football match.

Finally, there was one example in which the pandemic was perceived as a game of chess, and one in which the game of chess was a central part of a complex metaphor. Below the examples of the metaphor THE PANDEMIC IS A GAME OF CHESS:

(35)

a) *La “partita a scacchi” per battere il virus.*

“The chess game of beating the virus.”

b) *Vespignani describe così la crescita esponenziale che caratterizza le prime settimane di ogni epidemia: “Un re fu battuto a scacchi da un suddito e gli disse: chiedimi quello che vuoi. Lui rispose: solo un chicco di riso, che raddoppi però a ogni casella della scacchiera. Il re pensò di essersela cavata con poco, ma alla fine non bastò tutto il raccolto del regno.*

“This is how Vespignani describes the exponential growth that is characteristic for the first weeks of every pandemic: “A servant has beaten the king in a game of chess, and the king says: tell me what you want. The servant answers: just a grain of rice, but you will double it with each square of the chessboard. The king believes to have got by without losing much, but in the end, the whole kingdom’s harvest will not be enough.”

Example (35a) was already commented on in the previous chapter, as it combines both sport and violence metaphors. Again, in this context, the game of chess points to the importance of a sophisticated strategy in the managing of the pandemic. The second example (35b) is a specific one. The whole description of the pandemic growth is presented through a complex metaphor. The aim of the metaphor is to describe the possible exponential growth of the virus. I believe that in this case, Italy could be seen as the king, and the virus as the servant. In the game of chess, the servant came out victorious twice. For the first time by beating the king in the game, for the second time by outwitting the king by his demand. The trick here is that there are 64 squares on the chessboard. Double the amount of grains of rice on each of them would thus result in $2^{64} - 1$ grains of rice, which is a number hard to imagine and hard to initially think about, as proven by the king.²⁵ Applied to the pandemic king (Italy) and the pandemic servant (the virus), the metaphor illustrates the eventual underestimating of the virus’ wit, in other words, its spreading potential and its possible consequences.

²⁵ The explanation is based on a mathematical problem, which is commonly referred to as “Wheat and Chessboard problem”. In this case, wheat is substituted by rice.
Weissten, Eric W. “Wheat and Chessboard problem.” *MathWorld*—A Wolfram Web Resource. Accessed April 4, 2021. <https://mathworld.wolfram.com/WheatandChessboardProblem.html>

4.4 Other metaphors

Finally, let me present the remaining metaphors identified during the examination of the collocates of the words “*pandemia*”, “virus”, “coronavirus”, “Covid-19”, “Covid”, “Sars-CoV-2”, and “*epidemia*”, i.e. those that do not belong to any of the previously established groups.

I have identified two cases of the orientational metaphor CONTROL IS UP; LACK OF CONTROL IS DOWN. In both cases, the metaphor was demonstrated by the metaphorical expression *in ginocchio* [on one’s knees/kneeling]:

(36)

- a) *Dai dipendenti delle cooperative agli stagionali: il coronavirus ha messo **in ginocchio** 600 mila persone.*
“From company employees to seasonal workers: coronavirus has got 600 thousand people **on their knees**.”
- b) *Brasile **in ginocchio** per il coronavirus: “A San Paolo ospedali vicini al collasso”*
“Coronavirus brought Brazil **to its knees**: “Hospitals in Sao Paulo near collapse.”

When one is on their knees (DOWN), we understand that they find themselves in an extremely difficult situation, not being able to carry on. In (36a), the impact of the pandemic on the labor market is described. Those “on their knees” are the people who lost their jobs because of the pandemic and consequently found themselves in extremely difficult financial situations or great psychological distress. Should the psychological distress be considered the most important aspect of the situation, the expression *in ginocchio* could also be seen as representative of the metaphor HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN. Example (36b) describes the desperate pandemic situation in Brazil. As the virus spread, hospitals were not capable of dealing with the high patient inflow, and Brazil was thus seen as brought to its knees by the virus. In other words, Brazil was overpowered by the virus and was unable to gain control over the development of the pandemic.

An interesting metaphor I have identified is the metaphor UNDERESTIMATING THE PANDEMIC IS PLAYING THE RUSSIAN ROULETTE.

(37)

- a) ***La roulette russa del coronavirus di Wuhan**, tra l’altro, sembra girare veloce.*
“**Wuhan’s coronavirus Russian roulette** seems to be spinning quickly.”

- b) *È difficile credere che alcuni preferiscano sottoporre i brasiliani alla roulette russa.*

“It is hard to believe that some people prefer playing Russian roulette with Brazilians.”

Russian roulette is a lethal hazardous game that is played with a revolver that only has one bullet in the chamber. One after another, the players put the gun to their heads, and they pull the trigger. The gun either produces an empty click or releases the bullet. The gun is then—if it has not released the bullet—handed to another player and the hazard continues. In example (37a), the Russian roulette metaphor was used to bring attention to the risk posed by incautious handling of the pandemic in Wuhan. If appropriate restrictive measures are not adopted, the virus spreads, and with the spreading of the virus grows the chance of a new mutation. Not all mutations have to be more deadly, but we need to bear in mind that the faster the revolver’s cylinder spins (the virus mutates), the earlier the bullet (the deadlier mutation) can be released. In example (37b), the speaker is the mayor of Sao Paulo, who called for strict coronavirus measures and expressed his disagreement with those who were willing to risk “playing Russian roulette with Brazilians”. In this case, I believe, the Russian roulette metaphor is used to express the unnecessary risk Brazilians are being put at if the pandemic situation is continually ignored by the government.

I have also identified one case of personification THE VIRUS IS A PERSON HIDING:

(38)

Il coronavirus si era nascosto proprio qui.

“Coronavirus was hiding right here.”

The speaker in (38) is an anesthesiologist from the hospital of Codogno who, based on irregular symptoms, predicted a patient to be Covid-19 positive, and thus discovered a center of the infection. Even though the virus itself is invisible, she speaks about it as if it were intentionally hiding, thus assigning the virus the human-like ability of intentionally carrying out an action; the implication is that the virus had already been circulating through the hospital for some time before it was officially discovered.

4.5 Quantification of results

Table (1) summarizes the frequencies of the tokens of all metaphorical expressions and organizes them according to the type of metaphor these expressions exemplify. The frequencies are further commented on in Conclusions.

Table 1: The frequencies of the tokens of metaphorical expressions

Type	Subtype	Metaphor	Tokens
Violence (526)	Military	THE CONFRONTATION OF THE PANDEMIC IS A WAR	177
	Non-military	THE VIRUS IS AN ADVERSARY TO BE FACED	83
		THE VIRUS IS AN ASSAILANT	118
		THE VIRUS IS A KILLER	19
		DECEASED INDIVIDUALS AS VICTIMS	116
		THE END OF THE PANDEMIC IS DEFEATING THE VIRUS	13
Nature (156)	Fire	THE VIRUS IS A FIRE	80
	Wave	THE PANDEMIC IS A STORMY SEA	63
	Earthquake	THE PANDEMIC IS AN EARTHQUAKE	13
Sport (7)	Football	THE PANDEMIC IS A FOOTBALL MATCH	3
	Race	THE PANDEMIC IS A RACE	2
	Chess	THE PANDEMIC IS A GAME OF CHESS	2
Other (5)		UNDERESTIMATING THE PANDEMIC IS PLAYING THE RR ²⁶	2
	Oriental	CONTROL IS UP; LACK OF CONTROL IS DOWN	2
	Ontological	THE VIRUS IS A PERSON HIDING	1

²⁶ RR = Russian Roulette

5 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to analyze the metaphors that were used for the conceptualization of the Covid-19 pandemic, and their prevalence in online articles published in Italian online press during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic. The accounts of the previously carried out corpus-based research suggested that violence metaphors are in common use in illness-related discourse. The data from the corpus are in accordance with what has been previously claimed by researchers, as 75,8% of the identified tokens of metaphorical expressions belonged to the violence metaphor group.

Military violent metaphorical expressions exemplifying the metaphor THE CONFRONTATION OF THE PANDEMIC IS A WAR represented more than a third (33,7%) of all the identified tokens of violent metaphorical expressions. It can thus be concluded that the three Italian newspapers examined often referred to the pandemic as if it were a war. In 27 cases, the situation was directly referred to as *guerra* [war]. I account the prevalence of this metaphorical framing to four key factors. The first is the large-scale, complex nature that both war and pandemic share. The second is the urgent and fear-evoking character of the whole situation, which in various aspects resembles that of war. Even though many people nowadays do not have direct experience of war, the term still provokes—due to the general knowledge about wars—strong emotional response when used to refer to a phenomenon that directly affects us. The third factor that contributed to the war framing of the pandemic is seeing the virus as the mutual enemy of all Italians. I believe that the fact that a whole country unites against a single, life-threatening enemy suggests a scenario of war, as I do not see many different occasions on which that could happen. Finally, it is the similarities between the consequences of war and pandemic that help form our perception of the situation. People who died of Covid-19 were referred to as “victims”, i.e. by a term that is commonly used to refer to people who lost their lives in wars and violent scenarios in general, and the social and economic aftermath of the pandemic will, in some aspects, possibly be reminiscent of that of war. I believe that the four factors are what establishes the close relation between the two domains (PANDEMIC and WAR), and thus influence the way we conceive and consequently speak of the pandemic.

It is further interesting to point out that the medical workers were never directly referred to as “soldiers”, even though the metaphorical framing of the whole situation incentivized the MEDICAL WORKERS AS SOLDIERS mapping. Speaking about medical workers, in the discussion I also mention an instance of medical workers “revolting” against the perception of themselves as “heroes”. In the corpus, I have only identified 9 cases of the term *eroe* [hero] in relation to the medical workers, and 7 of them appeared in articles that were published either in March or at the beginning of April that is, before the publication of the article in which the medical workers expressed their disagreement with such perception and asked the journalist to refrain from using the term. I believe that the relatively low number of such cases signalizes a certain level of solidarity from the side of journalists, as they were well aware of the role the medical workers played in the initial managing of the viral crisis, and thus respected their request. On the other hand, I do acknowledge that it is impossible to present

this claim as undeniable, as the spectrum of the examined material is limited by both the quantity of articles and the broadsheet, and thus less sensation-seeking character of the sources.

Nature metaphors were the second most frequent of the identified metaphors, as the tokens that represented them stood for 22,5% of all the identified tokens of metaphorical expressions. More than a half of the identified Nature metaphor tokens (51,3%) represented the metaphor THE VIRUS IS A FIRE, more specifically its mapping THE PLACES FROM WHICH THE VIRUS SPREADS AS FIRE OUTBREAKS. This mapping was only expressed by the term *focolaio* [outbreak]. Apart from *focolaio*, I have not identified any further metaphorical expression belonging to the fire metaphor. The second most common metaphorical expressions of natural origin were those representing the THE PANDEMIC IS A STORMY SEA metaphor (40,4% of the Nature metaphor tokens). Interestingly, Italian expressions *ondata* and *onda*, which are both translated as “wave”, manifested two different mappings. While *ondata* illustrated the mapping THE RISING, THE PEAK, AND THE DECLINE OF THE NUMBERS OF INFECTED INDIVIDUALS AS A WAVE, *onda* could be understood as representative of the mapping HIGH VIRAL LOAD AS WAVE. Metaphorical expressions representing to the THE PANDEMIC IS AN EARTHQUAKE metaphor were the least common of the identified nature metaphors. This metaphor was almost exclusively manifested by *epicentro* [epicenter], as the term stands for 12 of the 13 identified tokens of metaphorical expressions.

Metaphorical expressions that belonged to the sport and “other” group were, with 12 identified cases, i.e., 1,7% of all the identified tokens, marginal. However, despite not being the most prevalent, they were rather original, as a football match, a marathon, a game of chess, and even the Russian roulette were mapped onto the pandemic.

In the future, it would be interesting to see whether the metaphors used in the discourse about the following waves of the Covid-19 pandemic differed significantly from what was presented in this thesis, and also whether the metaphors used in other languages differed based on the gravity of the pandemic situation in the respective countries.

6 Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá metaforami, které byly během první vlny koronavirové pandemie používány v italsky psaném online zpravodajství.

Ve své první části se bakalářská práce zabývá teorií konceptuálních metafor, která byla poprvé představena v knize *Metafory, kterými žijeme* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), a následně přibližuje problematiku užití metafor v diskurzu o nemocech, a to na základě korpusového výzkumu o metaforách a rakovině, jenž byl proveden Semino et al. (2018). Práce se dále soustřeďuje na shrnutí dosavadních poznatků o metaforách, které jsou používány ve spojitosti s pandemií Covidu-19.

Metodologická část práce se pak zabývá popisem tvorby korpusu italsky psaných online článků týkajících se Covidu-19 ve Sketch Enginu. Vytvořený korpus čítá 211 784 slov a mapuje italské zpravodajství o koronaviru v období od poloviny února do konce května roku 2020 tak, jak jej prezentovaly zpravodajské weby *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa* a *Il Corriere della Sera*. K identifikaci metafor v korpusu byly využity především nástroje Kolokace a Konkordance.

Metafory, které byly v korpusu identifikovány, jsou pak, dle domén, z nichž vycházejí, rozděleny do různých podskupin, přeloženy a okomentovány. Největší pozornost je věnována metaforám násilí, které byly, na základě dat z korpusu, nejčastěji identifikovaným druhem metafor. Mezi dalšími druhy metafor se pak práce zabývá metaforami přírodních katastrof, sportovními metaforami, a také metaforami ze skupiny ostatní, jinými slovy metaforami, které nebyly pro svou ojedinělost zařazeny do žádné z ustanovených skupin.

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