War-triggered Negative Emotions: the Case of Russia.

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Keywords: cultural conceptualization, conceptual metaphor, emotions

The present research falls within the realms of cultural linguistics and computer-mediated communication (CMC). It focuses on the cultural conceptualizations of negative emotions (anger, hatred, irritation) instantiated in both linguistic (comments) and visual (Internet images, photos) online content produced by Lithuanian Internet-users on a number of Internet forums as a response to Russia's military actions in Ukraine. The importance of CMC for the studies of emotions should not be underestimated, as socially meaningful activities online leave a textual trace making the interactions more accessible to scrutiny and reflection. What is more, the anonymity of CMC, the fact that a person is non-identifiable and unreachable leads to a greater freedom of expression and higher levels of self-disclosure in conversations as opposed to face-to-face interactions.

The study aims at identifying the ways war-triggered emotional responses are conceptualized/categorized within the Lithuanian cultural context through the identification of underlying cultural metaphors.

The ethnolinguistic method with the elements of cognitive and computer-mediated discourse analyses was applied in the research. The collected samples (posts/comments/images; approx. 4000) were analysed in the theoretical framework of Cultural Linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor theory, Extended Conceptual Metaphor theory, as well as the Metaphor scenario theory (Gibbs 2011, Herring 2004, Kövecses 2010, 2015, 2020, Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Sharifian 2017).

The research data revealed a number of negative emotions conceptualizations captured by the following underlying cultural metaphors: Putin and Russians are Criminals (e.g., murders, killers or the Hague's client) with Crime and Criminal Law being the Source Domain. Entertainment, Arts (Literature and Folklore) and Medicine are among other Source Domains drawn upon extensively (e.g., Putin should cure his paranoia; Russians are vampires, orcs, zombies (illustration 1 saying: "Bloodthirsty Russian zombies are drinking their neighbour's blood"); Putin is on the dark side of the Moon (an allusion to Pink Floyd's album), etc.). It is noteworthy to mention that some comments represent multi-media content, i.e., the combination of a text and an image, as in illustration 1; whereas in a number of cases a text or an image would stand on its own, as in illustration 2. Illustration 2 exemplifies the way cultural conceptualizations are realized in art. In this particular case negativity towards Russia is captured by the visual conceptual metaphor Russia is Death; the face of the symbol of fertility, motherhood and Russia, Matryoshka doll, is distorted to represent the skull, the symbol of mortality.

Illustration 1.

Illustration 2.

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