Metaphorical Representation of Coronavirus in Spanish and Brazilian Cartoons

Representación metafórica del coronavirus en caricaturas españolas y brasileñas

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The worldwide outbreak of Covid-19 epidemic has been profusely covered by the mass media in 2020. This research focuses on the metaphorical content of cartoons from prominent Spanish and Brazilian newspapers published online in March and April 2020. In these satirical drawings the virus is portrayed through two main modes of representation: i) pictorial and ii) verbal. The conceptual metaphors conveyed in each cartoon were identified, analysed, and classified into four source domain scenarios: i) arts and literature, ii) conflicts, iii) sports, and iv) games, and other. Mainly, two theories coming from Cognitive Linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and the Multimodal Metaphor Theory, have been used to approach this contrastive study in which the metaphorical representation of Covid-19 serves to offer a humorous and persuasive point of view about the impact of the pandemic in the Spanish and Brazilian society and the way the most important politicians of each country dealt with the sanitary crisis.

Keywords: *Spanish and Brazilian newspapers; cartoons; Covid-19; metaphorical representation; pictorial and multimodal metaphors*

El estallido mundial del Covid-19 ha sido cubierto abundantemente por los medios de comunicación en 2020. Esta investigación se centra en el contenido metafórico de las caricaturas publicadas online en marzo y abril de 2020 en importantes periódicos españoles y brasileños. En estos dibujos satíricos el virus es retratado por medio de dos modos de representación: i) pictórico y ii) verbal. Las metáforas conceptuales subyacentes en cada caricatura fueron identificadas, analizadas y clasificadas en cuatro escenarios de dominio fuente: i) artes y literatura, ii) conflictos, iii) deportes y iv) juegos y otros. Principalmente, dos teorías procedentes de la lingüística cognitiva: teoría de la metáfora conceptual y teoría de la metáfora multimodal, han sido utilizadas para abordar este estudio contrastivo en el cual la representación del Covid-19 sirve para ofrecer una perspectiva humorística y persuasiva sobre el impacto de la pandemia en España y Brasil y de cómo los políticos de cada país afrontaron la crisis sanitaria.

Palabras clave: *periódicos españoles y brasileños; caricaturas; Covid-19; representación metafórica; modos pictórico y verbal*

1. FIRST WORDS

At the end of 2019, the Chinese authorities announced the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic. Months later, the first cases appeared in other countries such as Spain and Brazil, but it was in March and April 2020 when the amount of people infected by this deadly virus reached its first peak. Consequently, the most immediate aftermaths of this unexpected worldwide event were political and economic instability as well as public unease. Furthermore, the sudden spread of the disease and the increase in the number of patients and casualties overflowed hospitals and morgues around the world, while streets, parliaments, schools, sports facilities, and museums, conversely, emptied because of a long confinement decreed by the government of each country. During this period, mass media duly informed the population about the progress of the pandemic and specifically, newspapers´ cartoonists showed their satirical perspective about the virus in their drawings and comments.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, the term *cartoon* originally defined the "preparatory sketches made for more formal artwork, such as an oil painting, fresco, or tapestry" (Sternadori & Holmes, 2020: 347) but the British satirical magazine *Punch*, influenced by the French magazine *Le Charivari*, used it to define its comical illustrations. Cartooning has been a graphic art form traditionally linked to print media, politics, and other social issues. Moreover, it has subtly synthesized and criticized complex contextual information in their drawings and humorous captions. Currently, cartoons mostly aimed their opinions towards the government´s policies to deal with the pandemic and the impact of the virus in daily life. These critical points of view communicated in pictorial and verbal modes of representation provide significant conceptual information about the construal of the exceptional situation that is taking place not only in Spain and Brazil but all around the world. Usually, cartoons offer satirical perspectives and figurative meanings about important current events which make this genre an interesting area for linguistic research. Some relevant work on graphic art can be found, for instance, in El Refaie (2003, 2009), Tsakona (2009), Schilperoord and Maes (2009), Bounegru and Forceville (2011), Negro Alousque (2014), Forceville (2016), and Nicholls (2020).

Finally, the discourses and metaphors used to frame diseases have become a prominent subject and have led to remarkable results. Perhaps the clearest example is the huge number of studies regarding acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) metaphors and their role in the stigmatisation faced by those infected, demonstrating the potency of language in shaping the impact of epidemic disease (Epstein, 1992; Drass, Gregware & Musheno 1997). Since Susan Sontag's work on the interdependence of language and stigma in disease (1978, 1989), the importance of examining what effects metaphors have had in framing diseases has become clear, as well as whether they present the same problems identified in HIV/AIDS or in broader critiques of militarism within medicine (Wallis & Nerlich, 2005). Other studies about metaphors on previous pandemics are, for example, Kleine (1994), Sime (1996) and Weiss (1997).

Specifically regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, previous research on the way metaphors deal with this pandemic have also been published. Craig (2020), for instance, updated the framework of AIDS metaphors to the Covid-19 era. Crespo-Fernández (2021) analysed the metaphors employed by the British and Spanish Prime Ministers in their declarations of the state of emergency and concluded that metaphors were used both to help people to face the coronavirus pandemic and to foster a positive self-presentation in order to avoid criticism and gain approval for their decisions. Semino (2021) argued that a particularly appropriate and versatile metaphor to talk about this virus is that of *Covid-19 as a fire*, more specifically, *a destructive and hard-to-control fire*. Vereza and Dienstbach (2021) investigate the role played by images in the instantiation of cross-domain mappings in social and political cartoons in the

context of the pandemics. Finally, Charteris-Black (2021) gave a comprehensive overview of how metaphor and language drew on moral frames and the nature of those moral frames on which they relied during the coronavirus pandemic. We will go back to these studies during our analysis.

Relying on this background, this paper aims at identifying and analysing the metaphorical representations of coronavirus in cartoons published online between March and April 2020 in the webpages of three Brazilian and three Spanish newspapers. The main reason for assessing cartoons in which Covid-19 is metaphorically depicted in different modes of representation is that valuable information can be extracted from how this virus has been conceptualised through different pictorial and multimodal metaphors created in Brazilian and Spanish contexts. For this purpose, theories coming from Cognitive Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis have been used to approach this topic.

This paper is organised as follows. After presenting the theoretical paradigms on which this study relies, we present the corpus and describe the methodology of this study. Then, we proceed to the analysis and discussion of the metaphoric representation of coronavirus in our data. Finally, we present some concluding remarks and suggestions for further research.

1. THEORETICAL RATIONALE

As Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 39) state, human beings think in metaphors or metaphorically in an attempt to make abstract concepts comprehensible. The authors suggest that "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (2003: 5). In other words, this phenomenon is defined as a mapping between two conceptual domains, with the more abstract domain being partially structured in terms of the more concrete one. According to this comprehension, metaphors are everywhere, and they are cognitive tools that can only exist in a context. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) "has always stressed that human beings can only come to grips with the abstract by metaphorically coupling it with the concrete-perceptible" (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009: 12). CMT then focuses on the relation between two conceptual domains or units of cognitive organization that are called cognitive domains which are mental representations of how the world is organized. The domains can include a large variety of data, from the most indisputable and empirically checked facts to the most flagrant mistakes, illogical inventions, and superstitions; they are the equivalent to what Fillmore (1975, 1985) and Lakoff (1987) define as frames and idealized cognitive model (Cuenca & Hilferty, 1999: 70). Metaphorical conceptualization is achieved through mapping which consists of linking two domains or conceptual structures, in other words, associating a concrete vehicle or source domain to an abstract topic or target domain. The conceptual structure from the source is unidirectionally projected into the target. All languages and cultures make use of cognitive processes (metaphors, metonymy, blending) in metaphorical conceptualization but the use of these processes may be different in each language, and this is called "cognitive preferences or styles" (Kövecses, 2008: 68).

Despite its key role in establishing a contemporary theory of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) approach can be too limiting to account for the communicative potential of figurative language in public discourse. Therefore, a more comprehensive and discourse-oriented approach to be considered is Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA). The author assumes that metaphors arise from how language is used, arguing that any word can be a metaphor if the way that it is used makes it so (Charteris-Black, 2011). Thus, a metaphor is a cognitive device which can structure the conceptual system and provide a particular understanding of the world through cross-domain correspondences. CMA highlights the understanding of metaphor as a persuasive aspect of discourse, since "it mediates between

conscious and unconscious means of persuasion—between cognition and emotion" (Charteris-Black, 2009: 103). Key notions in this framework are the understandings i) of persuasion as the use of language by one party to encourage another to accept a point of view; and ii) that persuasion assumes the existence of a prior intention on the part of the speaker/writer (Charteris-Black, 2011). The author also argues that, in political rhetoric, the primary purpose of metaphors is to frame our view and understanding of some political issues, by eliminating alternative points of view. Aligned to this approach, Steen (2011: 29) points out that "metaphor is one of the very few basic mechanisms for abstract communication, and categorization, which in turn is fundamental for human cognition, language." This author's three-dimensional model of metaphor argues that metaphor operates in language, communication, and thought.

These metaphors can be expressed in discourse by different modes or "sign systems interpretable because of a specific perception process" (Forceville, 2009: 22). Although language has traditionally been the main method of communication and metaphors have been compositions to convey information that show the complex and creative nature of language and thus, of the human mind, nowadays, communication seems to be a combination of ways or modes of expression and perception. In this context, Multimodal Metaphor Theory (MMT) has been approaching the different modes of metaphorical representation and the methods to trigger a metaphorical relation between concepts (Forceville, 2009: 31), such as: i) perceptual resemblance—when a visual representation resembles another one; ii) filling a schematic slot unexpectedly—when an element is placed unexpectedly in an unsuitable context; and iii) simultaneous cueing—when two elements are shown in different modes, target and source are represented simultaneously. Furthermore, MMT identifies two types of metaphors: *monomodal* which are conveyed in one single mode of representation (verbal or non-verbal) and *multimodal* that are communicated in more than one mode simultaneously (words, pictures, sounds, gestures, etc.). Forceville (1996: 148-61; 2007: 8, Lecture 3) points out that the most usual type of multimodal metaphor is the combination of words and pictures which he calls *verbo-pictorial metaphor*, a subtype of pictorial metaphor. Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009: 9) show that some metaphors are not translatable into language but are expressed only in images, arguing that these could be "direct manifestations of conceptual metaphors" from a more generic-cognitive range.

2. CORPUS, QUESTIONS AND APPROACH

This section, which describes our methodological approach, is structured into four different sub-sections: i) corpus selection; ii) metaphor identification; iii) corpus annotation, and iv) research questions.

3.1 *Corpus selection*

To select the cartoons for our analyses, we collected all cartoons published in three Spanish and three Brazilian newspapers online editions, during March and April 2020. The newspapers were selected by their representativeness in the respective country, meaning that they are some of the most read newspapers in their publishing regions. The Spanish sample includes cartoons published in *El País*, *ABC,* and *El Mundo,* which are in the top ten of the Spanish newspapers with most readers, according to *Asociación para la Investigación de Medios de Comunicación.* Regarding the political orientation of these newspapers, following Teruel (2016: 215-216), *ABC* as well as *La Razón* could be considered "clear right-wing" newspapers, but *El Mundo* seems to have detached from the *Partido Popular* (*PP*; the most important conservative party in Spain) since this newspaper has criticised its policies and cases of corruption. Similarly, *El*

Pais could have severed links with the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE; the main Spanish social democrat party) precisely when the former director of this newspaper, Antonio Caño, confirmed the lack of connections. The Brazilian sample includes cartoons published in *O Globo, Folha de São Paulo,* and *Zero Hora*, which are among the five most read newspapers in the country, each of them leading in their states, according to the *Instituto Verificador de Comunicação*. Santos, Marques and Fontes point out that "the fact that the newspapers address similar issues does not mean framing each issue in the same way" (2020: 143). In addition, Mundim argues that "in Brazil, the view that owners of information vehicles sacrifice their profit for ideology and the desire to influence elections is supported by researchers and analysts who take a critical perspective." (2018: 18). In this sense, although the three Brazilian newspapers of our sample have been characterised as more right-wing over the years, currently, the three of them strongly criticise the Brazilian president (a conservative politician).

Finally, a time frame was defined to encompass the first period of confinement due to the Covid pandemics. Furthermore, the selection of two distant geographic locations—such as Spain and Brazil—as spatial contexts of this investigation has two main reasons. First, both countries present quite different social and political environments at the moment and this factor seemed to be relevant for the analysis of the metaphors in the cartoons since contrasting viewpoints on the impact of Covid-19 in both Spain and Brazil, which have a social democrat and conservative government respectively, could result in diverse metaphorical representations of the virus. Secondly, these are the home countries of the two authors, which gives them both valuable contextual knowledge for the analysis of the cartoons.

To collect the samples, initially, all cartoons related to the pandemics published in the six newspapers' webpages during the defined time frame were selected. Then, our criteria for including a cartoon from the first large sample was that the Coronavirus had to be explicitly represented, either verbally or visually. The final sample was composed of 70 cartoons.

3.2 *Metaphor identification*

To identify something as a metaphor, we adopted the criteria used by Bounegru and Forceville (2011), based on Forceville (1996). They are:

> 1) An identity relation is created between two phenomena that, in the given context, belong to different categories.

> 2) The phenomena are to be understood as target and source respectively; they are not, in the context, reversible.

> 3) At least one characteristic/connotation associated with the source domain is to be mapped onto the target domain; often an aligned structure of connotations is to be also mapped.

We also distinguished between pictorial and multimodal metaphors, using the strategy suggested by the same authors. That is, we imagined erasing all verbal elements in the cartoon, then we classified the metaphor i) as a pictorial one if the visuals still allow for identifying the target (always: "coronavirus") and a source; tii) as a multimodal metaphor, if either the target or source becomes unidentifiable. It is important to highlight that we identified and analysed only those metaphors in which the target domain was coronavirus, that is, even when other metaphors or other conceptual operations were also present in the cartoons, they were not thematised.

Despite being usage-based, the present analysis follows the identification of the connotations mapped from source to target, and as such also stems from interpretation. This is a necessary step because pictorial and/or multimodal metaphors are not yet readily identifiable by means of automatized corpus searches. Besides, there is still no reliable procedure to detect and label conceptual operations in multimodal settings. We formulate the metaphors in the standard CMT form *A IS B*. However, it should not be forgotten that this is a convenient 'shorthand' for signalling a conceptual metaphor. This formulation i) suggests a misleading precision and lack of ambiguity; ii) downplays the dynamic nature of metaphors; iii) opens space for both the target and the source domain to be formulated at different levels of abstraction (Forceville & Paling, 2018). As stated by Forceville and Paling (2018: 103), the most important in this kind of analysis is that, in metaphor, "things people do to, or experience through, the source domain are mapped onto the target domain, including the emotions, attitudes and values associated with these things." Therefore, although we adopt the A IS B format in the metaphors' formulation—as previous studies on multimodal metaphors (e.g., Forceville & Paling, 2018; Bounegru & Forceville, 2011) have done, our interpretation was guided by CMA, which is a more discursive-oriented approach, since we understand that the cartoonist aims to present a relevant message to the audience. Our discussion is also crucially constrained by genre characteristics, that is, a cartoon provides a usually humorous criticism about a current topic or public figure. As discussed by the specialists involved in the project *Vismet*, visual metaphors in political cartoons tend to need a lot of contextual information in order to be understood, e.g., knowledge about the political events taking place in a specific time and setting. The cartoons analysed in this paper addressed the coronavirus with humoristic and satirical criticism. Even though these features constrain possible interpretations, we are aware that different viewers may infer different interpretations.

3.3 *Corpus annotation*

Both authors independently annotated all 70 cartoons to allow for the quantitative panorama of the whole corpus and the qualitative analysis of the most outstanding examples. After the first annotation round, the cases of disagreement were discussed in order to arrive at a final classification. The issues raised in the discussion of these cases were all related to the necessary cultural background to identify or understand the metaphorical representation. For instance, in cartoon no. 1, it is necessary to know the Brazilian poem *José*, written by Carlos Drummond de Andrade, in order to fully comprehend the cartoon. Thus, the Spanish researcher couldn't classify this metaphor during the independent analysis since he did not know that poem. This kind of difficulty is intrinsically related to the genre cartoon that usually requires contextual knowledge to be understood. The agreement rate between the two authors in the independent annotation was above 90%.

3.4 *Research questions*

We have formulated four specific research questions that have both a descriptive (1 and 2) and an explanatory dimension (3 and 4).

- RQ1: Which conceptual domains are used to predicate something metaphorically about the coronavirus?

- RQ2: What is the distribution of multimodal and pictorial metaphors in the corpus?

- RQ3: Is there any distinctive pattern between the identified metaphors in Spanish and Brazilian cartoons?

- RQ4: Is the choice between multimodal and pictorial metaphors related to some particular source domain scenario?

3. ANALYSIS OF THE CARTOONS ABOUT COVID-19

In this section we present a quantitative panorama of our corpus and qualitative analysis of the most representative cases among the selected 70 cartoons.

4.1 *Quantitative panorama*

We start this quantitative panorama by highlighting that 59 out 70 cartoons were classified as containing metaphors to characterise the coronavirus, which represents 84.3% of the data. Considering these 59 cartoons, two presented monomodal verbal metaphors, which were not our focus in this study and therefore were not included in the following analysis.

Regarding our first RQ, we were able to identify four groups of cartoons sharing the same source domain scenario: i) arts and literature; ii) conflicts; iii) sports and games; and iv) others. It is important to highlight that all the analysed cartoons had a political background, so we consider politics as a major theme that permeated the cartoons and was fundamental to their understanding. In subsection 4.2, we describe these groups in detail, presenting the identified metaphors and outstanding examples.
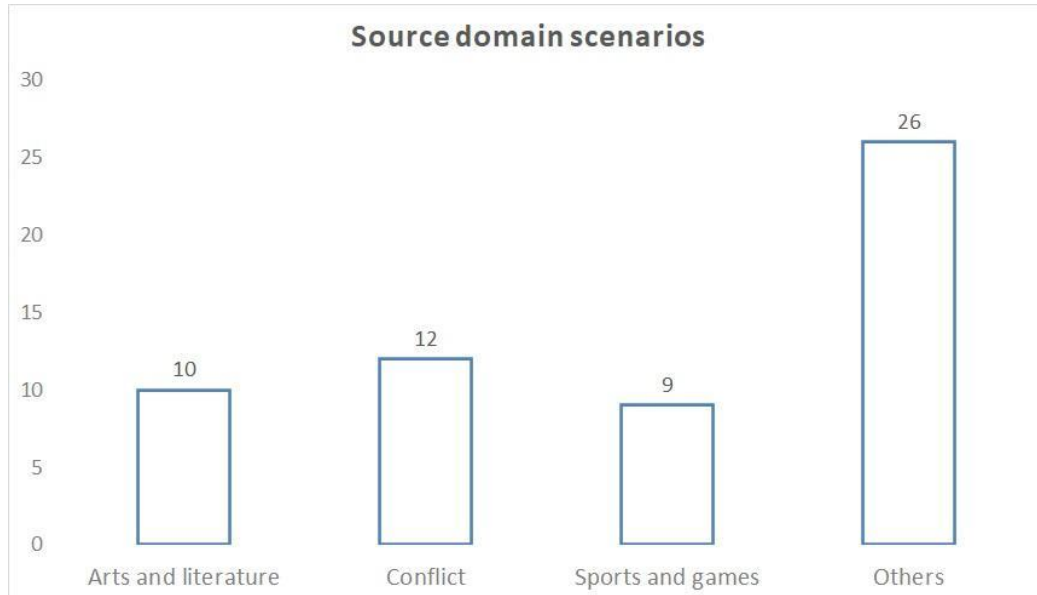

Figure 1: Distribution regarding the source domain scenarios

Regarding RQ2, the distribution of multimodal and pictorial metaphors in the 57 cartoons was quite balanced; following the criteria described in the previous section, we identified 28 pictorial metaphors (49.1%) and 29 multimodal ones (50.9%). Thus, there was no significant difference related to the type of metaphor.

Regarding RQ3, Fisher´s Exact Test did not identify any significant association between the source domain scenario and the country (p-value= 0.34), nor between the modes of

representation and country (p-value= 1). However, as we discuss in the next subsection, the cultural and political background related to each country is determinant to the understanding of the humoristic and satirical criticism with which the cartoons analysed in this paper addressed the coronavirus.
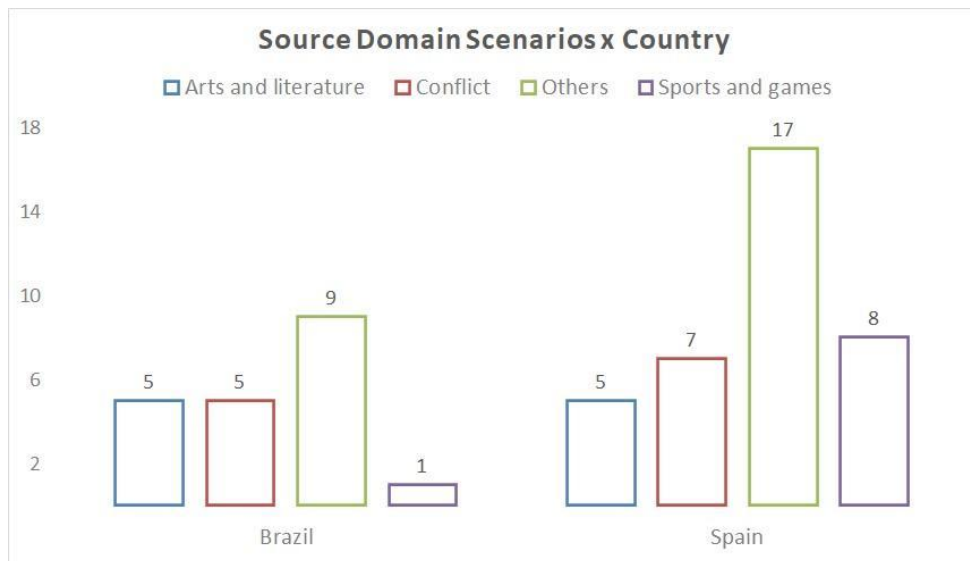

Figure 2: ***Distribution of Source Domain Scenarios per Country***

Regarding our RQ4, no significant association between modes of representation and source domain scenario was identified by Fisher's Exact Test (p-value= 0.076).
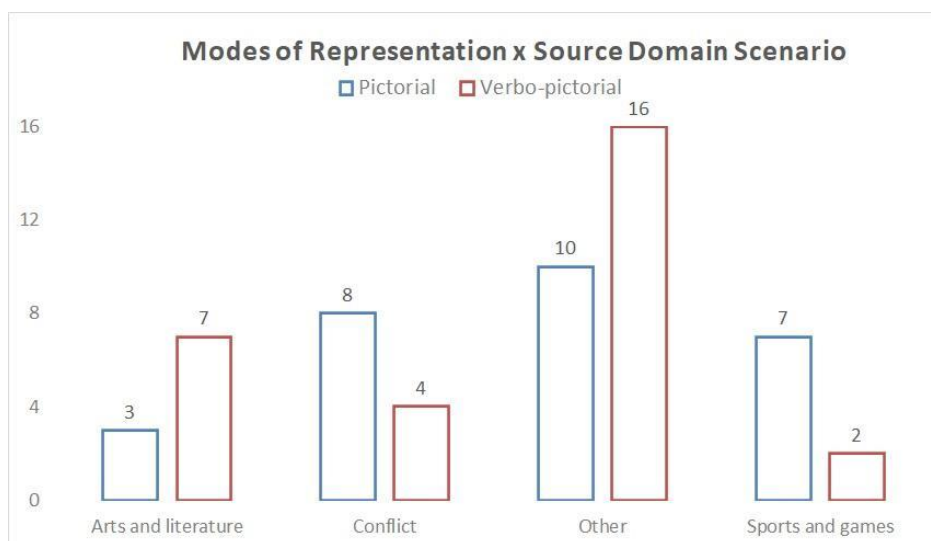

Figure 3: ***Distribution of Modes of Representation per Source Domain Scenario***

This quantitative panorama aimed at drawing a bigger picture of the data. In the next section, we present a qualitative analysis of the outstanding examples, in order to address RQ1 and RQ3 specifically.

4.2 *Qualitative analysis of exemplars*

As presented above, we classified the 57 cartoons into four groups, taking into account common source domain scenarios: i) arts and literature; ii) conflicts; iii) sports and games; and

iv) other. Here, these groups are described, and two prototypical examples of each one are analysed.

4.2.1 *Arts and Literature*
In this cluster we grouped cartoons in which the virus was understood in terms of poets, scenic props, elements from literature, painting, and movies. The identified metaphors in this group are: *The virus is a bard; The virus is a clown´s nose; The virus is a fantasy; The virus is a monster; The virus is an apple from a Magritte´s painting; The virus is French troops in a Goya´s painting; The virus is character from a Hollywood movie*. In the main, these cartoons use verbal and pictorial elements from artistic fictions and entertainment for children to show how the most important Brazilian and Spanish politicians seem to conceive the pandemic. Eight out of the ten cartoons that compose this group represent a politician as the focus of the main criticism, that is, the metaphorical conceptualization of the coronavirus in these cartoons is not the central focus of the text, it is rather a persuasive strategy to criticize a politician's attitude towards the pandemic. This use of metaphors as a persuasive strategy is well known and frequently employed discursively in argumentative genres, according to Charteris-Black, "this is because it represents a novel way of viewing the world that offers some fresh insight" (2004: 7).

Cartoon no. 1 (Figure 4) was made by the cartoonist João Mantanaro and published in the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* on March 30th. The metaphor communicated in this cartoon is *The virus is a bard* which is multimodal/verbo-pictorial because the target *virus* can be distinguished by the visual elements but the source *bard* is only extracted from the written content in a speech balloon. The verbal text is a reference to a famous Brazilian poem written by Carlos Drummond de Andrade and titled José (1942). Originally the verses ("What now, José? The party's over, the lights are off, the crowd's gone, the night's gone cold, what now, José?") referred to the gloomy situation in Brazil during the Great World War II but the cartoonist seems to set a satiric analogy with the pandemic of Covid-19 since, in the first verse, the proper name *José* was replaced by another one, *Jair,* which is the first name of the current Brazilian President, Jair Bolsonaro, who minimised the aftermaths of the pandemic. We can say that the use of this metaphor to conceptualise the coronavirus is an example of persuasive use of metaphors, since it is central in the criticism addressed to the Brazilian President, even though other elements also play significant roles to a comprehensive understanding of the criticism (e.g., the posture and facial expression of the President, the size of the visual elements, and so on).

Charge de João Montanaro publicada no dia 30 de março de 2020 João Montanaro

*Figure 4: **Cartoon no. 1. The virus is a bard***

Cartoon no. 2 (Figure 5) was made by the cartoonist Puebla and published in the Spanish newspaper ABC on March 26th. The metaphor identified in this cartoon is *The virus is French troops in a painting by Goya*, that is, monomodal/pictorial. The composition of this drawing resembles the famous painting *El dos de mayo de 1808 en Madrid* by the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya who portrayed the confrontation between Napoleonic troops and citizens of Madrid in 1808. Therefore, there is an analogy between the Spanish War of Independence and the pandemic in which the Spanish doctors, nurses, soldiers, and police officers are the brave citizens of Madrid and the virus is the Napoleonic troops. Although it is possible to understand the metaphor without considering the verbal elements of the cartoon, the encouraging written message "*¡Vamos, Madrid!"* (Come on, Madrid!) reinforces the metaphorical representation, since it is suitable for both historical moments. The metaphor *The virus is French troops in a painting by Goya* is categorised as "art" since the source *The French troops in a painting by Goya* belongs to the domain of Spanish art, and in this case, the readers of this Spanish newspaper can easily identify the resemblance of the cartoon with the famous painting by Goya which portraits acts of heroism and gallantry in the liberation of Spain against an invasive army. That is, even though the painting represents a *conflict*—which is another group of source domains in our analysis—this is not any conflict nor is it represented by any image. This painting has a role in Spanish *imaginary*, therefore the "art" domain prevailed in our classification. Traditionally, works of art rely on the persuasive power of emotions and they aim to raise feelings and interpretations in the audience. A possible reading to this cartoon published in the conservative newspaper *ABC* is that this metaphorical representation of the coronavirus could appeal to the readers for the admiration towards the Spanish armed forces and health professionals who helped to restrain the expansion of Covid-19, and thus, the national pride could be promoted among the readers. Thus, this metaphor also plays a persuasive role in the cartoon.

*Figure 5: **Cartoon no. 2. The virus is French troops in a painting by Goya***

4.2.2 *Conflict*

The commom target domain *coronovirus* is shown, in the cartoons of this cluster, as *troops, weapons, demonstrators,* and *hostile* people. In general, these satirical drawings depict coronavirus as destructive and rebellious entities which go against the current status quo. In this group of cartoons the identified metaphors are: *The virus is an army; The virus is a nuclear bomb; The virus is a projectile; The virus is a knife; The virus is a protester; The virus is an opponent; The virus is a disrespectful person; The virus is a threateaning person.* It is particularly worth pointing out that the coronavirus was understood in terms of a (potentially lethal) threat caused or intensified by human beings in all 12 cartoons of this cluster, and not by forces of nature or by other circumstances beyond the control of human beings as could be expected considering the nature of the virus. According to Crespo-Fernández (2021: 21), the WAR metaphor in the coronavirus pandemics presents different "sets of ontological correspondences as a result of transferring attributes from the source domain of war to talk about the coronavirus disease," the author mentions, for instance, the correspondences: "to stay healthy is to fight a battle," "to overcome the virus is to beat an enemy," and "to recover health is a victory."

Moreover, Craig (2020) states that military metaphors, which are abundant in discourses of plagues, including AIDS, are also very productive in discourse about coronavirus. Interestingly, Semino (2021: 51) also mentions that the high productivity of the use of "war metaphors" in prior outbreaks of diseases is also observed regarding Covid-19. Vereza and Dienstbach (2021) in their analysis of social and political cartoons in the context of the Covid-19 pandemics also identified the WAR metaphor as a productive one.

Therefore, the presence of this source domain in our analysis of the metaphorical representation of coronavirus in Spanish and Brazilian cartoons coincides with previous research in the identification of the conceptualization of this virus as a belligerent entity (Craig,

2020; Crespo-Fernández, 2021; Semino, 2021; Vereza & Dienstbach, 2021). About the persuasive power of the WAR metaphor, Charteris-Black argues that references to wartime make people feel like the situation requires a community effort, that "everyone is in it together" (2021: 50). Also, regarding the effects of such metaphors, Schnepf and Christmann (2022) investigated the effects of militaristic metaphors on people's perceived threat of the COVID-19 virus and support for corresponding policies in the United States and Germany and identified that the metaphor of WAR is associated with people ascribing greater responsibility to their governments, whereas the concept of *struggle* triggers a sense of individual responsibility.

Cartoon no. 3 (Figure 6) was made by the cartoonist Iotti and published in the Brazilian newspaper *Zero Hora* on April 18th. The metaphor identified in this cartoon is *The virus is an army* which is monomodal/pictorial since target and source can be identified just by the images. The target *coronavirus* is pictorially represented as several oval and spiky shapes with human traits and the source *army* can be identified by the military attire, such as helmets and a hat that are visually depicted, as well as by the colour of their clothes. Although it is possible to understand the metaphor without considering the verbal elements of the cartoon, the Portuguese word *aliados* (allies) which is often used by armies appears in a speech balloon, reinforcing the source domain characterization. Another verbal element that can be seen in the composition is the word *Negacionistas* (Negationists) which alludes to those who denied the existence of the virus but there could be a subtle analogy with the Holocaust denial, also known as Negationism. This charge is an example in which the metaphorical representation of the virus is done pictorially, but the political criticism is fully understood only in the association of the visual and verbal modes. The verbal text in the speech balloon (*We have allies here: Brazil, Nicaragua, Turkmenistan and Belarus!*) presents Brazil, the country where the cartoon was published, as an ally of the coronavirus, which alludes to how the country (or the Brazilian government) seems to conceive the pandemic. In this case, the responsibility of the human beings—specifically the government's authorities of the mentioned countries—for the intensity of the pandemic in certain countries is being suggested, and this is the focus of the criticism.

Although the use of militaristic metaphors in health crises is not a new practice, as stated by Seixas (2021), with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic it was recurrently used by political representatives and by the media. However, while the findings of Seixas' study suggest that the war metaphor related to Covid-19 is often used by the political representatives for the pursuit of specific goals of crisis communication and management—such as preparing the public for hard times and persuading the population to change their behaviour—in this cartoon, this metaphor was used to address and criticize the way the Brazilian government was dealing with the pandemic—almost in the opposite way from the crisis management goals present in other political representatives' speech as identified by Seixas (2021).

*Figure 6: **Cartoon no. 3. The virus is an army***

Cartoon no. 4 (Figure 7) was made by the cartoonists Gallego & Rey and published in the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* on April 8th. The metaphor conveyed in this cartoon is *The virus is a projectile* that is monomodal/pictorial. The target *virus* is pictorially shown as two spiky red balls and the source *projectile* is pictorially portrayed as a slingshot-shaped face mask. The lack of face masks at the beginning of the pandemic could have been the reason for arguments between members of the European Union, so the cartoonists use the acronym UE for *Unión Europea* (European Union) in order to indicate the confrontational situation in this institution at that time. Here, the metaphorical representation of the virus is done pictorially, and the verbal text is important to provide contextual information, which is relevant to the political criticism conveyed. The hands depicted can be understood as an allusion to the responsibility of human beings for the conflict.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that the choice of using a *conflict* metaphor determines the nature of the speaker's evaluation. In other words, the conflict is either *for* something positively evaluated—cure, recovery)—or *against* social phenomena that are negatively evaluated—disease, contamination (Charteris-Black, 2004).
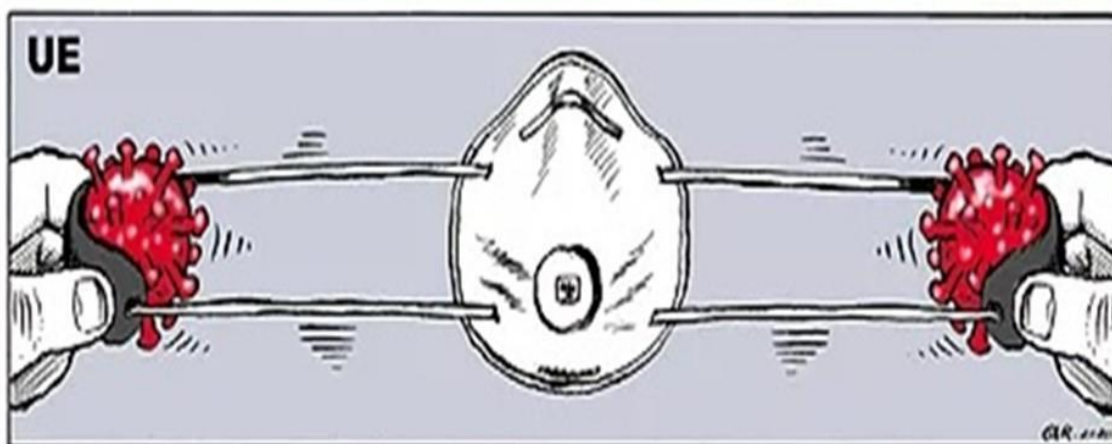
*Figure 7: **Cartoon no. 4. The virus is a projectile***

4.2.3 *Sports and games*

In this cluster we grouped cartoons in which the coronavirus was displayed as *sportsmen, sports equipment, games,* or *card players*. The identified metaphors are: *The virus is a boxer, The virus is a gambler, The virus is a pool bar, The virus is a tennis ball, The virus is a baseball* and, *The virus is a piñata*. In eight out of nine cartoons of this group, the virus appears to be an opponent of a politician. Although no significant association between the source domain scenarios and the country was identified, the distribution of this group between both countries was not balanced. While only one Brazilian cartoon was classified into this cluster, eight Spanish cartoons shared this source domain scenario.

Cartoon no. 5 (Figure 8) was made by the cartoonist Iotti and published in the Brazilian newspaper *Zero Hora* on April 11th. It is the only Brazilian cartoon of this cluster. The metaphor identified in this cartoon is *The virus is a boxer* which is monomodal/pictorial. In this cartoon, a virus that is wearing boxing gloves on a ring is about to punch a distracted boxer who is letting his guard down. The verbal text is not essential to the metaphor's comprehension, but it reinforces the message, since in one of the corners of the ring there is a doctor shouting '*Não é hora de baixar a guarda'* (Now is not the time to let the guard down). Apart from that, there is the following inscription '*Números apontam que circulação de pessoas aumentou nesta semana no Capital e na Região Metropolitana'* (Data indicate that the circulation of people increased this week in the Capital and the Metropolitan area). Thus, this pictorial metaphor also contributes to the persuasive communication goal of this cartoon, since together with the verbal text it is a way to tell the readers that 'the increase of people on streets' could be understood as 'let the guard down'.

Considering that a *boxer* is a human being, in this specific metaphor we identify a more generic one, namely, *The virus is a person*. Crespo-Fernández (2021) has also identified this metaphor in his analysis of the metaphors employed by the British and Spanish Prime Ministers in their declarations of the state of emergency due to Covid-19. The author argues that the personification of the virus acquires negative connotations, since it is usually characterised as a a malign creature, an enemy, or, in our case, an adversary on a sport competition. The communicative purpose of this metaphor is related to the cultural and cognitive model The Great Chain of Being. Its premise is that everything in the universe has its place in a hierarchical order, which is pictured as a vertical chain (humans, animals, plants, objects) where different entities occupy their corresponding position (the entities at the top are more complex and more highly valued than those that rank lower down). So, when conceptualising the virus as a person, the cartoonist uses a metaphor that proceeds from a higher source domain to a lower target domain in this chain (Crespo-Fernández, 2021).

Números apontam que circulação de pessoas aumentou nesta semana na Capital e na Região Metropolitana

NÃO É HORA DE BAIXAR A GUARDA!

*Figure 8: **Cartoon no. 5. The virus is a boxer***

Cartoon no.6 (Figure 9) was made by the cartoonists Gallego & Rey and published in the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* on April 13th. The metaphor identified is *The virus is a tennis ball* which is monomodal/pictorial. In this picture the current President of Spain Pedro Sanchez, on the right, and the Leader of the opposition Pablo Casado, on the left, are playing a tennis match with a tennis ball-shaped virus and the net of the tennis court is a face mask. Both Spanish political leaders have disapproved of one another of their attitudes against the pandemic so passing a ball from side to side can be seen as an exchange of reproaches. In this sense, there is also a covert ideological motivation in the use of *sports* metaphors (Charteris-Black, 2004).
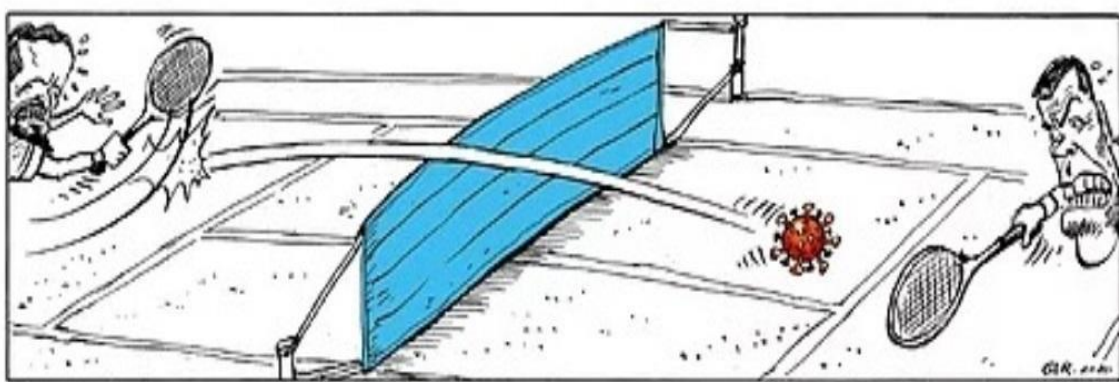

*Figure 9: **Cartoon no. 6. The virus is a tennis ball***

4.2.3 *Others*

In this group of cartoons there is an extensive variety of sources which are linked to the target *coronavirus*. Their distribution indicates that there is not a pattern strong enough for any of them to constitute a specific category. A total of 12 sources domain scenarios were depicted in the cartoons, they are: *animals, death, devices, economy, feelings, thoughts, weather, national*

identity, political rallies, transportation, uncertainty, and untidiness. These are the identified metaphors: *The virus is a bug, The virus is a deer, The virus is a cow´s udder, The virus is necropolitics, The virus is a set of headphones, The virus is a greedy person, the virus is a tired person, The virus is a symbol in the Brazilian flag, The virus is a storm, The virus is a ribbon, The virus is a politician, The virus is a protester, The virus is a clapping person, The virus is a symbol in a banner, The virus is a human head, The virus is a helm, The virus is a van, The virus is a gear lever, The virus ia a briefcase, The virus is a backpack, The virus is a crystal ball,* and, *The virus is a wool ball.* As higlighed before, the analysed cartoons had a political background. In this sense, 17 out of 27 have the main criticism directed to the national government of both countries. Throughout different source domain scenarios, the Brazilian President and Spanish political leaders are portrayed as leaders who deal with the virus in an irresponsible way. Cartoon no. 7 (Figure 10), made by J. M. Nieto, and published in the Spanish newspaper ABC on March 12th, and the cartoon no. 8 (Figure 11), made by Gilmar Fraga and published in the Brazilian newspaper Zero Hora on March 19th, are examples of this. Accordingly, the Spanish politician is using a usual object for communication inside a helicopter: *a set of headphones* with the shape of a *virus*. In three speech bubbles, that represent what the Prime Minister of Spain is thinking, there are the following written messages in Spanish: *'todo esta controlado'* ('everything is under control'), *'no hay que perder la calma'* ('keep calm'), *'y además, aquí en el helicóptero no hay riesgo de contagio'* ('besides, inside the helicopter there is no risk of contagion'). In the identified metaphor *The virus is a set of headphones* (Figure 10), the President's attitude when the first signs of the pandemic appeared in Spain is criticised as well as his personal use of official vehicles. The possible interpretation of the metaphor could be that the virus is muffling reality, and thus making the representative think that the virus itself was not so dangerous, leading to the criticism that the Spanish leader was excessively self-confident at the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak. This emergent meaning would not be extracted completely without the combination of conceptual content from pictorial and verbal modes. In the other cartoon, the Brazilian head of state is portrayed as a person who is supposedly steering a ship which could be identified with the government of Brazil. However, he is holding a *virus* instead of a *helm* and his eyes are covered by a sanitary face mask. The president´s posture of a helmsman and the ironic written message in Portuguese *'grande timoneiro'* ('great helmsman'), on the left top corner of the cartoon, contribute to the understanding of the metaphor *The virus is a helm* (Figure 11), so although the metaphorical representation of the virus is done pictorially, the verbal text is important to intensify the criticism. Besides, both cartoons could illustrate the expression 'See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil' coming from the traditional Japanese maxim conveyed in the pictorial representation of *The Three Wise Monkeys* which disapproves selfish and ignorant postures adopted by some human beings. Therefore, in these two examples, the metaphorical representation of Covid-19 seems to be a persuasive strategy to criticise possible lenient policies taken by both presidents to cope with the pandemic.

*Figure 10: **Cartoon no. 7. The virus is a set of headphones***

*Figure 11: **Cartoon no. 8. The virus is a helm***

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this last section, we discuss the results of the study, framing our findings within the theories that underpin the analysis. Because our sample is small, we cannot make claims for representativeness, nor is this something we aimed for. Rather, we argue that our results offer an inspiring starting point to further theoretical and empirical research. We use our research questions (see Section 3.4) to guide our discussion.

Considering our first research question, we identified four groups of cartoons that we consider sharing the same source domain scenario: i) arts and literature; ii) conflicts; iii) sports and games; and iv) others. This variety of scenarios identified in our sample is a relevant contribution, considering the importance that metaphors have had in framing diseases. Bellini and Frasson (2006), for instance, investigated the approach given by school textbooks to HIV. The authors identified the metaphor of war as central to the HIV/AIDS conceptual model, through statements such as "the virus *invades* the cell," "viruses are extremely simple beings that *attack* the host cell," "the virus *invades* and *destroys* T lymphocytes." They state that, for textbook authors, "HIV, this 'extremely simple being', attacks, commands, proliferates and kills" (Bellini & Frasson, 2006: 336). On the other hand, the analyses of scientific texts about the virus showed that the metaphor used by scientists is the one of interaction. What happens, then, is an interaction between the RNA of the virus and the DNA of the lymphocyte. This contrast between the metaphor proposed by the scientists and the one used by the textbooks, according to the authors, leads to an approach that does not privilege preventive education, since by presenting AIDS as a deadly disease, it subjugates teachers and students to fear. Semino (2021) proposes a similar discussion comparing the effects of using the *war* metaphor or the *fire* metaphor to talk about the Covid-19 pandemics. The author points out that the use of *war* metaphor for illness highlights the need to eliminate it completely, while backgrounding the possibility of adapting to and living with it. On the other side, the *fire* metaphor may be particularly useful to convey danger and urgency, talk about the phases of the pandemic, explain how contagion happens, portray the role of health workers, connect the pandemic with other problems, and outline post-pandemic futures (Semino, 2021: 54).

A common ground between the four groups was that either when conceptualized in terms of arts, conflicts, sports, or of the other less representative scenarios, the coronavirus in most cartoons was understood in terms of a (potentially lethal) threat caused or intensified by human beings. That is, the virus was not considered a dangerous opponent on its own, as the governments were frequently pointed as allies (i.e., Figure 6). This result contrasts with Wallis and Nerlich's study (2005) about the metaphorical conceptualization of the SARS epidemic in 2003. The authors analysed the total reporting on SARS of five major British newspapers during the epidemic of spring 2003. They concluded that the main conceptual metaphor used was SARS as a killer. In that context, SARS was understood as a killer that was a single unified entity, not an army or force. In other words, the virus itself was conceptualised as the main and most dangerous opponent. This result also contrasts with studies on metaphors related to Covid-19. Crespo-Fernández (2021), for instance, identified as a fear-instilling description of Covid-19 (although not so frequent in his data) the metaphor *The coronavirus is a (dangerous) natural phenomenon*. The author argues that metaphors that evoke natural phenomena base their persuasive capacity on the association between the target domain and a potentially dangerous and wild nature as source domain. Again, this was not the case in our data, when characterised as a threat, the coronavirus dangers were caused or intensified by human beings.

This result can also be related to the fact that, as we stated before, the source domain scenarios used to predicate something metaphorically about the coronavirus also acted as contextual background to present some political criticism, since politics was considered a major theme that permeated the cartoons and was fundamental to their understanding. The analysis of the conceptual domains used to predicate something metaphorically about the coronavirus highlighted how metaphor may shed light "on the way that discourse, cognition and society intertwine, emphasizing the fundamental role of situatedness in discourse and cognition" (Soares da Silva, 2016: 107). Therefore, this result is related to the persuasive function of the metaphors, which will be further explored below.

Regarding our second research question, we could verify that the distribution of multimodal and pictorial metaphors in the corpus was balanced. Although not all cartoons had

verbal text, those in which there was some verbal text showed an interesting pattern: if the verbal text was not necessary to the metaphorical conceptualization of the coronavirus, it acted as an intensifier of the criticism. That is, visual and verbal modes fit together to create a set of powerful intermodal situated meanings (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001).

Considering our third research question, although the Fisher's Exact Test did not identify any significant association between the source domain scenario and the country (p-value= 0.34), nor between the modes of representation and country (p-value = 1), the cultural and political background related to each country was determinant to the understanding of the humoristic and satirical criticism. In fact, that is not a surprise, since cartoons are a genre strongly related to contextual information.

Moreover, the suggestive messages in the satirical drawings of these newspapers seem to be triggered by political reasons, for instance, the resignation of the governance of Spain and Brazil for their lack of ability to deal with the sanitary crisis. Charteris-Black argues that, in many cases, "metaphor choice is motivated by ideology" (2004: 247), therefore, different beliefs may have permeated the metaphorical content of the cartoons. For instance, the cartoon where the Spanish Prime Minister is depicted wearing virus-shaped headphones is published in *ABC,* a newspaper that could be considered "clear right-wing". So it can be understood that the choice of this metaphor is motivated by the ideological position of the communication vehicle, in order to contest the politician's attitudes when the first signs of the pandemic appeared and to his personal use of official vehicles.

Even though that result was expected, it reinforces the comprehension of metaphor as a persuasive aspect of discourse that mediates between conscious and unconscious means of persuasion, in other words, between cognition and emotion (Charteris-Black, 2009). It is therefore both a central strategy for political legitimization and political criticism. As postulated by Charteris-Black after arguing for the continuing value of the classical Aristotelian view of rhetoric, a single metaphor may "appeal to ethos, pathos and logos while simultaneously creating a myth and communicating an ideology" (2009: 113). Furthermore, when analysing discourse about Covid-19, Charteris-Black argues, for instance, that "politicians were keen to harness the persuasive power of metaphor to the goals of encouraging the take-up of the vaccine" (2021: 270). Considering our dataset, this persuasive function of the metaphors seemed to be boosted by the inherent characteristics of the genre 'cartoons,' that is, by the fact that cartoons' communicative goal is to offer satirical perspectives and figurative meanings about important current events.

Looking at our fourth research question, no significant association between modes of representation and source domain scenario was identified by Fisher's Exact Test (p-value = 0.076), which means that, considering our dataset, the distinction between multimodal and pictorial metaphors did not play a major role. Meanwhile, since target and/or source domain(s) need to be depictable to function in pictorial metaphors and in multimodal metaphors (with one pictorial term), the identified metaphors draw heavily on metonyms, similarly to the findings by Bounegru and Forceville (2011) during their analysis of cartoons related to the financial crisis. That is, usually there is a metonym, or chain of metonymies, enabling the target or/and source domain(s) to be understood by an object or person that "stands for" the domain as a whole. The analysis of the metonyms was not our goal in this paper, but we could not leave out its presence in our data. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of its role is a suggestion for future work. We did not study the possible influence of Talmy´s force-dynamic pattern (2000a, 2000b) in the making and construal of the hinted metaphors in the cartoons, but we understand that it could be a potential topic to deal with since politics and pandemics are domains in which forces of different kinds collide.

We argue that our results dialogue with Chiang and Duan's (2007) conclusions related to the discourse about the SARS epidemic in 2003. After analyzing the conceptual metaphors

for SARS in three major Chinese broadsheet newspapers, the authors demonstrate how the political agendas and underlying ideologies of newspapers permeate their use of metaphors and they argue that the linguistic devices analysed represented SARS as an issue in the domain of political rather than medical discourse. We argue that our findings regarding the metaphorical representation of coronavirus in Brazilian and Spanish cartoons place the pandemic in a political discursive framework, not in a medical one. Rather than being seen as a common enemy to the human beings or a natural enemy, in terms of the well-entrenched metaphor system of war and plague related to other diseases, the coronavirus was mostly conceptualized in terms of a threat—either in the scenario of arts, conflict, or games—supported/prompted by politicians. As suggested by Wallis and Nerlich (2005), this kind of shift in the metaphorical framing might not only signal a shift in the metaphorical conceptualization of a disease but can also "contribute to an emerging shift in the theorising of metaphor itself, away from seeing it purely as a rhetorical or cognitive device towards seeing it as a cultural and political one" (2005: 2638).

Finally, a dimension that was not originally addressed by our research questions but that showed to be relevant during our qualitative analysis of the representative cases is the function that metaphor performs in the cartoons. In sum, the theme of the analysed cartoons was the coronavirus, however the criticisms were usually addressed to the politicians, and the metaphors worked as a persuasive tool which combined with other verbal and pictorial resources presented ideological, humoristic, and satirical criticism. This result is aligned to Vereza and Dienstbach concluding remark that metaphors contribute to the persuasive intention of the cartoons, however, as the authors highlight, it is a "subtle persuasion through —often acid—humour, as opposed to explicit, indoctrination-like persuasion" (2021: 23). Therefore, our study reinforced the comprehension that metaphors are not neutral ways of talking about real phenomena and that each metaphorical representation highlights some aspects of the target and backgrounds others. In this sense, the metaphors used in Brazilian and Spanish cartoons about coronavirus during the first long confinement persuasively lead to different comprehensions and evaluations and, therefore, they matter.

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APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CARTOONS

Cartoon no.1. Retrieved from
https://fotografia.folha.uol.com.br/galerias/1659892950262982-charges-marco

Cartoon no.2. Retrieved from
https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2020/04/08/5e8cc409fc6c83bd118b45b4.html

Cartoon no.3. Retrieved from
https://gauchazh.clicrbs.com.br/opiniao/iotti/noticia/2020/04/iotti-aliados-
ck94pa4wr00pk014q5h0bfoa0.html

Cartoon no.4. Retrieved from https://abcblogs.abc.es/el-sacapuntas/espana/vamos-
madrid.html

Cartoon no.5. Retrieved from
https://gauchazh.clicrbs.com.br/opiniao/iotti/noticia/2020/04/iotti-nao-e-hora-de-baixar-a-
guarda-ck8upire001ym01qw4b1xnry4.html

Cartoon no.6
Retrieved from
https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2020/04/13/5e932e1afc6c832e728b462d.html

Cartoon no.7 Retrieved from
https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2020/04/08/5e8cc409fc6c83bd118b45b4.html

Cartoon no.8
Retrieved from https://gauchazh.clicrbs.com.br/opiniao/noticia/2020/03/gilmar-fraga-grande-
timoneiro-ck7xwcloj05sf01oap8vewlkb.html