РАЗДЕЛ II. СОПОСТАВИТЕЛЬНОЕ ЯЗЫКОЗНАНИЕ
SECTION II. COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS

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Coronavirus pandemic reality in mass media discourse: a comparative analysis of English-Russian onomastic metaphors

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Abstract. The paper is devoted to the study of onomastic metaphors used in Russian and English mass media discourse to reflect the coronavirus pandemic situation. The status of onomastic metaphors in the language according to cognitive-discursive approach is determined as a mental operation when an integral conceptual structure surrounded by context and activated in minds of native speakers is subject to metaphorical transformation. Research interest in onomastic metaphors is explained by the fact that proper names enter the personal space of each individual, act as cultural, historical and linguistic markers and participate in the process of conceptualization and reconceptualization of reality. The object of the study was 215 Russian and English mass media texts, the analysis of which showed that anthroponymic, toponymic and mythonymic types of onomastic metaphors are most frequently used in mass media discourse to conceptualize the period of the coronavirus pandemic. The analysis of different types of onyms used to represent the pandemic events allowed to reveal the quantitative ratio of onomastic metaphors in Russian and English media texts, where anthroponymic metaphors occupy 43%, toponymic metaphors 31% and mythonymic metaphors 26% of the total volume of metaphors found in the analyzed discourse. It has been established that the most common source areas in both Russian and English media discourse are famous names of real time, historical figures, literature characters, real and unreal places, mythological and religious personages. These names are the most significant for a person regardless of national and cultural affiliation, however, some national priorities in the choice of proper names used to describe the pandemic period can also be observed. It has also been found that fictional source spheres are more common both in Russian and English media discourse, which is a consequence of the creative nature of human thought. The powerful pragmatic potential of onomastic metaphors influencing the recipient's value attitudes and contributing to stereotyping and assessment of the current situation in the public mind is emphasized.

Keywords: Conceptualization; Coronavirus; Linguistic picture of the world; Mass media discourse; Onomastic metaphor; Pandemic; Proper name
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Анализ ономастических метафор, используемых для описания реальности пандемии коронавируса в медийном дискурсе

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Аннотация. Данная статья посвящена исследованию ономастических метафор, используемых в русскоязычном и англоязычном медиадискурсе для описания событий пандемии коронавируса. Статус ономастической метафоры в языке определяется согласно когнитивно-дискурсивному подходу как мыслительная операция, при которой целостная понятийная структура, окруженная контекстом и активизируемая в сознании носителей языка, подвергается метафорической трансформации. Исследовательский интерес к ономастическим метафорам объясняется тем, что имена собственные входят в личное пространство каждого индивида, выступают своеобразными культурно-историческими и языковыми маркерами и участвуют в процессе концептуализации и реконцептуализации действительности. Объектом исследования стали 215 русскоязычных и англоязычных текстов СМИ, анализ которых показал, что наиболее часто в медийном дискурсе для концептуализации периода пандемии коронавируса используются антропонимические, топонимические и мифонимические типы ономастических метафор. Анализ различных типов онимов, используемых для репрезентации событий пандемии, позволил выявить количественное соотношение ономастических метафор в русскоязычных и англоязычных медиатекстах, где антропонимические метафоры занимают 43%, топонимические метафоры 31% и мифонимические метафоры 26% из общего объема метафор, встречающихся в анализируемом дискурсе. В ходе исследования было установлено, что наиболее распространенными сферами-источниками как в русскоязычном, так и в англоязычном медиадискурсе являются известные имена реальных людей современности, исторические личности, литературные герои, реальные и вымышленные топосы, мифологические и религиозные персонажи. Данные имена являются наиболее значимыми для человека независимо от национально-культурной принадлежности, однако можно наблюдать и некоторые национальные приоритеты в выборе имен собственных, используемых для описания периода пандемии. Также установлено, что вымышленные сферы-источники чаще встречаются как в русскоязычном, так и в англоязычном медийном дискурсе, что является следствием творческой природы человеческого мышления. Подчеркивается мощный прагматический потенциал ономастических метафор, влияющих на ценностные установки реципиента и способствующих стереотипизации и оценке текущей ситуации в общественном сознании.

Ключевые слова: Концептуализация; Коронавирус; Языковая картина мира; Медийный дискурс; Ономастическая метафора; Пандемия; Имя собственное

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Introduction

Nowadays the world is changing radically, which is mostly connected with the current situation caused by the spread of COVID-19 virus. These changes in the society including all spheres of people's life (medicine, economy, politics, education, and others) have a significance influence on our consciousness, behaviour, and speech, which causes great interest in the study of "coronavirus" concept and the linguistic picture of the world overall.

It should be noted that the "coronavirus" concept has gone far beyond medicine and its terminology and has become a phenomenon of our everyday life, as well as economic, socio-political and media communication. Being a global social phenomenon and affecting all aspects of human life, the coronavirus pandemic has enriched vocabulary in many languages vividly illustrating how a person adapts to the changing reality at everyday and global levels.

The authors of the Dictionary of the Russian Language of the Coronavirus Era note that "the linguistic situation during the coronavirus pandemic is a rare case in the history of the Russian language, when a huge number of new words have appeared in a very short period of time, existing words have changed their meanings, word-formation models and different forms of the language game reflecting the moment of the language development in a very concentrated form have activated" (Gromenko, 2020: 4).

The coronavirus language has recently been in the focus of attention of many domestic and foreign linguists studying the emergence of new words or new meanings in the language, word-formation patterns, metaphorical modeling of pandemic events, the use of coronavirus neologisms in different types of discourse, linguocultural aspects of the pandemic language, the pragmatic effect of the coronavirus language as a tool for mass consciousness control, corpus-based studies of coronavirus vocabulary, etc. (Al-Salman, Haider, 2021; Benabid, 2021; Chaiuk, Dunaievska, 2020; Golovanova, Madzhaeva, 2020; Karasik, 2020; Katermina, Lipiridi, 2020; Lee, 2021; Li, 2021).

Status of onomastic metaphors in the language

Presenting coronavirus changes in the society, journalists, politicians, and other different experts apply various expressive language means, including figurative ones, which describe modern events and phenomena in a bright and laconic way. One of the most effective ways of drawing the addressee's attention to events happening in the world is metaphor, which aims not only at increasing the expressiveness of the statement but also at conceptualizing reality.

The issues of metaphorical phenomena and processes in different types of discourse, the metaphorical nature of human thinking, the role of metaphor in the formation of cognitive and linguistic pictures of the world have been of particular interest of many linguists (Anderson, 2004; Arutyunova, 1990; Baranov, Karaulov, 1991; Chudinov, 2003; Kövecses, 2010; Lakoff, 1980; Littlemore, 2019; Massey, Ehrensberger-Dow, 2017; Musolff, 2004; Zinken, 2004).

Adhering to the cognitive-discursive approach to studying metaphor, we consider metaphor as a mental operation, when metaphorical transformation occurs not over an isolated name with a direct nominative meaning, but over an integral conceptual structure surrounded by context and activated in minds of native speakers in the process of communication. This approach implies an understanding of metaphor as a socialized form of conceptualizing reality, which has a powerful pragmatic potential, includes evaluative char-

acteristics and reflects the national picture of the world.

Since metaphor is a complex phenomenon, it can be found in all types of discourse and expressed by various lexical means, including proper names, which either become common nouns (***Bedlam, Olympus, Rubicon***), or retain their status as proper names, but are used in an unusual type of discourse as metaphors (*new* ***Wuhan*** (the city in China where COVID-19 virus first appeared) – about New York beating coronavirus infection records).

Addressing proper names that perform the metaphorical function is interesting due to the fact that, firstly, such names are an ambiguous, not fully explored phenomenon occupying a special position in the language system denoting specific objects and phenomena and acting as a kind of cultural sign, a symbol of certain qualities, events, or phenomena. Secondly, proper names play an important role in the communication process, since they are present in the lexicon of any person and included in their personal space. Proper names are characterized, on the one hand, by the tendency towards their universality appealing to the national and world cultural heritage and background knowledge, and on the other hand, they fulfill the function of individualizing nomination.

In modern mass communication, the metaphorical use of proper names to designate a person in a figurative sense in terms of their qualities and behavior is widespread. This linguistic technique allows the author to draw analogies between behaviour, attitudes, views, or personal qualities prescribed to specific proper names, express attitude towards them, and make an emotional impact on the recipient. In mass media texts, two opposite tendencies are found: on the one hand, an expression of the speaker' individuality, and on the other hand, an appeal to well-known statements that the recipient can easily correlate with previous knowledge accumulated as a result of life experience. In such cases, proper names reflecting not only a direct denotative, but also a figurative metaphorical meaning are commonly used under certain conditions and communicative situations.

Proper names, acting as cultural, historical and linguistic markers, verbalize important concepts and create favorable conditions for the comprehensive study of consciousness, culture and language. Possessing an additional connotative meaning, proper names can create secondary nominations, accumulate associative-figurative and emotional elements, thereby becoming onomastic metaphors, in order to represent various concepts to categorize, conceptualize and evaluate reality when constructing the linguistic picture of the world and its fragments. In most cases, onomastic metaphors serve as expressive means of conveying people's attitude to described objects or phenomena.

Referring to proper names based on metaphorical transfer according to the similarity of associations they cause, we use the term *"onomastic metaphor"*, which includes both proper names and their derivatives. However, it should be noted that not all linguists agree with the definition of *onomastic metaphor*. M.Ya. Bloch and T. N. Semenova called such language units "semi-anthroponyms", i.e. a special category of proper names that can also act as common nouns (Blokh, Semenova, 2001). Representatives of the precedentness theory refer considered linguistic units to the category of precedent names or phenomena, although they emphasize their metaphorical nature (Gudkov, 1999; Karaulov, 2003; Nakhimova, 2007; Zolotarev, Privalova, 2020; Zueva, 2016). Other researchers support the version that anthroponyms used in a figurative sense are related to such a rhetorical (stylistic) figure as allusion, which consists in correlating the described phenomenon with a stable concept or phrase of a literary, historical, or mythological order (Arnold, 2000).

We agree with E. S. Otin who writes that onomastic metaphor is an intermediate state of a proper name which still retains its

onomastic status and at the same time takes a step towards the appellative, i.e. becomes a kind of metaphor, a two-plane unit, where one plane is individual and the second is general (Otin, 2003). In this case, onomastic metaphor can be regarded as a stage in the development of semantics: from proper names to appellatives.

Thus, determining the linguistic status of onomastic metaphors, we emphasize that the most important criterion for defining onomastic metaphors is their metaphorical nature, with the help of which certain objects and phenomena based on similarity are explained through proper names absorbing their main properties, qualities and characteristics. The use of proper names in a connotative meaning corresponds to the traditional understanding of metaphor as a transfer of a name based on the similarity of designated objects. This is the main reason why onomastic metaphors playing a special role in the process of cognition, creating a powerful associative field with the help of images or symbols and having a powerful pragmatic impact are often used to describe the rapidly changing reality.

Types of onomastic metaphors describing the pandemic reality in mass media discourse

The number of onomastic metaphors used in mass media discourse to represent the pandemic reality has been rapidly growing and the frequency of their usage is also increasing which is rooted in the information embedded in the original semantics of proper names.

The aim of the study is to analyze onomastic metaphors in mass media discourse used to represent objects, phenomena and events related to the pandemic period.

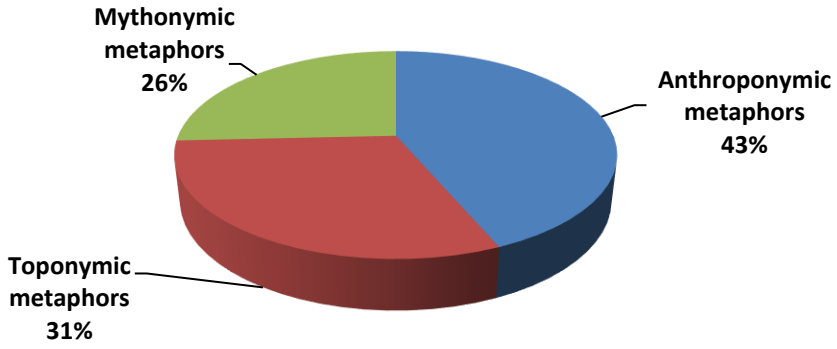
The material of the study involved 215 Russian and English mass media texts including interviews, notes, articles, interviews and blogs covered by the topic of coronavirus pandemic. The choice of mass media texts for analysis is explained by their saturation with bright images, neologisms, expressive descriptions and therefore their pragmatic impact on the recipient's consciousness.

The research methods applied in the study correspond to the anthropocentric and cognitive-discursive paradigm and involve both purely linguistic and general scientific methods including continuous sampling, classification and systematization of linguistic material, cognitive-discursive and comparative analysis, descriptive method, quantitative assessments of recorded phenomena, methods of induction, deduction and generalization.

The pertinence of the study stems from the fact that, despite the emergence of a sufficiently large number of linguistic studies on the topic of language transformations in the coronavirus period, the phenomenon of onomastic metaphors has not been studied yet and presents a great interest both within the framework of scientific and everyday knowledge.

Taking into consideration classifications used in modern onomastics, we identified anthroponymic, toponymic and mythonymic metaphors as the most productive types of onomastic metaphors used in mass media texts devoted to pandemic problems. The ratio of onomastic metaphors describing the pandemic reality in mass media discourse is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Ratio of types of onomastic metaphors used to describe the pandemic situation in mass media discourse.



The analysis of 215 Russian and English mass media texts showed that onomastic metaphors were found almost in half of the texts (101 texts), among which anthroponymic metaphors were identified in 44 texts (43%), toponymic metaphors in 31 texts (31%) and mythonymic metaphors in 26 texts (26%). So, we can see that not all types of onomastic metaphors are equally common in mass media texts devoted to coronavirus problems which is due to the spread of proper names in the onomastic space, though the presented three types are the most widespread in the pandemic discourse. It should also be noted that almost the same number of onomastic metaphors was found in Russian and English media texts, namely 52 metaphors in Russian texts and 49 metaphors in English texts, which proves the metaphorical nature of human mind regardless of national preferences. Let us consider types of onomastic metaphors in descending order – from the most common to the least common.

1. *Anthroponymic metaphors*, when the human or their prototype becomes the term of comparison. Anthroponymic metaphors, reflecting the paradigm of anthropocentrism, are the most common type of onomastic metaphors. This type of onomastic metaphor is of the greatest interest both in terms of scientific and existential, "naïve" knowledge because anthroponyms largely have the properties of a proper name, are given to each individual without exception and constitute the personal sphere of any human.

This group of onomastic metaphors is mainly represented by the following anthroponyms:

– famous names of real time

In the analyzed mass media texts, the image of the Russian president is often exploited as terms of comparison (***путикулы, ковидопутинизм, coronaputin***). For example, ***путикулы*** is a word denoting a short period of time when Russian citizens were quarantined due to the spread of coronavirus. The surname of the Russian President V.V. Putin was used to represent this period through blending.

The figure of the American ex-President D. Trump is also a frequent image for metaphorical comparison both in Russian and English mass media texts. However, he usually becomes the subject of metaphorical comparison:

*Колумнист The Washington Post Дэвид Игнациус уверен, что **Дональд Трамп** – вовсе не **Гитлер** и не **Муссолини**. **Трамп** – американский **Путин**. Он использует грубые выражения, чтобы сойти за простого парня, однако в действительности он – миллиардер. Он нарцисс, который не может прожить без внимания СМИ. И, несмотря на все свои недостатки, он очень популярен.*[1]

[1] Donal'd Tramp – eto… [Donald Trump is ...], retrieved from:

*Joe Biden is **George W. Bush 2.0**. They are basically the same person down to their inability to formulate complete sentences. Just puppets on strings. Empty vessels for their handlers.*[2]

*Singer Linda Ronstadt has called President Donald Trump the "new **Hitler**" and said that "Mexicans are the new **Jews**," adding that she believes separating children from adults at the border is a "violation of human rights laws".*[3]

Comparing D. Trump with the aforementioned political leaders endows him with signs of strength and power. However, in Russian media texts D. Trump is shown as a media person who wants to get closer to American people while in the English media he is compared to the leader of German National Socialists A. Hitler due to his xenophobic rhetoric and regular attacks on the existing party establishment. Moreover, associating D. Trump with G. Bush demonstrates his inability to govern the country independently and even speak in a confident and persuasive way, and the puppet metaphor contributes to this helplessness.

– big names in history

The onomastic metaphor ***корона-гитлер*** in Russian media texts based on the image of A. Hitler, the leader of the German Nazi Party, reflects the aggressive nature of the virus, which is perceived as an attack on humanity, and proves serious and severe character of this disease and its consequences both regarding people's health and economic, social and political situation in every country. Resorting to this onomastic metaphor, the author evaluates the coronavirus pandemic as a war, where a sense of fear and panic is created in the recipient's mind.

The use of prominent historical figures is a frequent source of comparison in onomastic metaphors used to describe the pandemic situation:

*Boris Johnson says he and Joe Biden are like **Churchill** and **Roosevelt** during WW2.*[4] In this case, the present Prime Minister of the United Kingdom B. Johnson and the president of the United States J. Biden are compared to historical figures of W. Churchill and T. Roosevelt governing their countries during World War II. By means of this metaphorical comparison, we see how difficult it is for modern political leaders to fight against the coronavirus pandemic, which is implicitly compared to World War II.

Another text draws the analogy between J. Biden and Franklin D. Roosevelt (abbreviated here to FDR) in order to show that both presidents seized moments of crisis to do big things for the American society:

*How Joe Biden is positioning himself as a modern **FDR**. FDR adopted a bolder approach and Biden – who on Wednesday delivered a poignant Thanksgiving-eve statement on the fight against Covid-19 – should do the same.*[5]

To predict the spread and the end of the coronavirus pandemic journalists often address famous names of ***Nostradamus*** and ***Vanga***:

*Билл Гейтс **вангует**: ему известны сроки окончания пандемии.*[6]

https://meduza.io/feature/2016/03/15/donald-tramp-eto (Accessed 02 December 2021)

[2] Joe Biden is George W. Bush 2.0, retrieved from: https://www.reddit.com/r/C_S_T/comments/l239n2/joe_biden_is_george_w_bush_20/ (Accessed 16 December 2021)

[3] Trump the 'New Hitler' and 'Mexicans Are the New Jews', retrieved from: https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2020/10/21/linda-ronstadt-trump-the-new-hitler-and-mexicans-are-the-new-jews/ (Accessed 29 November 2021)

[4] Boris Johnson says he and Joe Biden are like Churchill and Roosevelt during WW2, retrieved from: https://www.westernjournal.com/boris-johnson-says-joe-biden-like-churchill-roosevelt-ww2/ (Accessed 11 June 2021)

[5] Want to Be Like FDR, Joe Biden? Make Your Thanksgiving Proclamations Rallying Cries, retrieved from: https://www.thenation.com/article/society/fdr-biden-thanksgiving-proclamation/ (Accessed 29 November 2020)

[6] Bill Gejts vanguet: emu izvestny sroki okonchaniya pandemii [Bill Gates wangs: he knows when the pandemic will end], retrieved from: https://news.myseldon.com/ru/news/index/246492819 (Accessed 16 March 2021)

*All the predictions of Bill Gates – **Nostradamus** of our Time. Alternative view on coronavirus*.[7]

In his book "Business at the Speed of Thought" published in 1999, the head of Microsoft made many predictions about the technological future of the world, which came true during the coronavirus pandemic. In the analyzed media texts seven prophecies of the billionaire Bill Gates that have already come true and seven more that should come true in the near future are described. The founder of Microsoft, who is considered the second Nostradamus, declares that the world should prepare not only for new pandemics, but also for possible terrorist attacks using biological weapons, and in this case, coronavirus may seem like a childish prank. He also makes predictions about the end of coronavirus and warns about new more severe viruses.

– literature, folklore and film personages

Famous personages from literature, as well as folklore and cinematography characters are often used in representation of "coronavirus" concept, which confirms the proposition about literature centricity of the human mind.

In the following text, the author compares COVID-19 virus with Joker, a supervillain of the DC Comics universe, the main and sworn enemy of Batman. Using the Joker metaphor the description of the pandemic period coinciding with technological innovations introduced almost in all spheres of people's life gains the meaning of uncertainty and ambiguity. The author expresses doubts towards techno-optimists who inspire the public with tales of the pandemic's accelerating impact on the transition to tele-learning and advances in artificial intelligence and warns about huge risks:

*Но самое страшное случается, когда подрывные инновации совпадают по времени с **джокерами** радикальной неопределенности. Так и произошло сейчас, когда мир столкнулся с «Большим откровением» – назревшей серией подрывных технологических инноваций, совпавшей по времени с явлением миру корона-**джокера.***[8]

Another text sarcastically uses the Robin Hood metaphor to name scammers showing how criminals try to capitalize on people's fear during the pandemic, in what ways they switch to remote work and try to make money on recovering from COVID-19, on those who lost their jobs during the pandemic, and on pensioners:

***Робин Гуды** пандемии. Мошенники в эпоху ковидного страха.*[9]

Journalists also exploit the image of Frankenstein personage of M. Shelley's novel, a scientist who created the monster, to compare it to the virus:

*There are still more questions than answers about the new **"Frankenstein"** COVID-19 variant of concern that has rattled the world this week.*[10]

To create positive images and attitudes, English texts use the name of the knight Lancelot, the character of the Arthurian legend, where he is typically depicted as King Arthur's close companion and one of the greatest knights of the Round Table. In the metaphorical sense the name of Lancelot is used to describe the mystery warrior and

[7] All the predictions of Bill Gates – Nostradamus of our Time. Alternative view on coronavirus, retrieved from: https://greatplainsparanormal.com/6351051-all-the-predictions-of-bill-gates-nostradamus-of-our-time-alternative-view (Accessed 16 April 2021)

[8] Sergej Karelov: Plohie idei dlya investicij [Sergey Karelov: Bad investment ideas], retrieved from: https://www.finversia.ru/obsor/blogs/sergei-karelov-plokhie-idei-dlya-investitsii-84835 (Accessed 16 April 2021)

[9] Robin Gudy pandemii. Moshenniki v epohu kovidnogo straha [Robin Hoods of the pandemic. Fraudsters in the era of covid fear], retrieved from: https://molsport.ru/video/2TLrfzRvBkw/ (Accessed 29 August 2021

[10] COVID-19: Behave as if 'Frankenstein' Omicron variant is already here, expert says, retrieved from: https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/covid-19-behave-as-if-frankenstein-omicron-variant-is-already-here-expert-says (Accessed 16 December 2021)

inhabitant of an unidentified village who decided to enforce the Chinese government's lockdown measures in order to curb the deadly pneumonia-like virus:

*Horseback 'knight **Lancelot**' in armour guards the entrance to Chinese village in bid to stop anyone with coronavirus bringing in the infection.*[11]

– unknown fictional names

Unknown names invented by authors of media texts are also characteristic of the pandemic language and give rise to the emergence of spontaneous neologisms used to name COVID-19 virus:

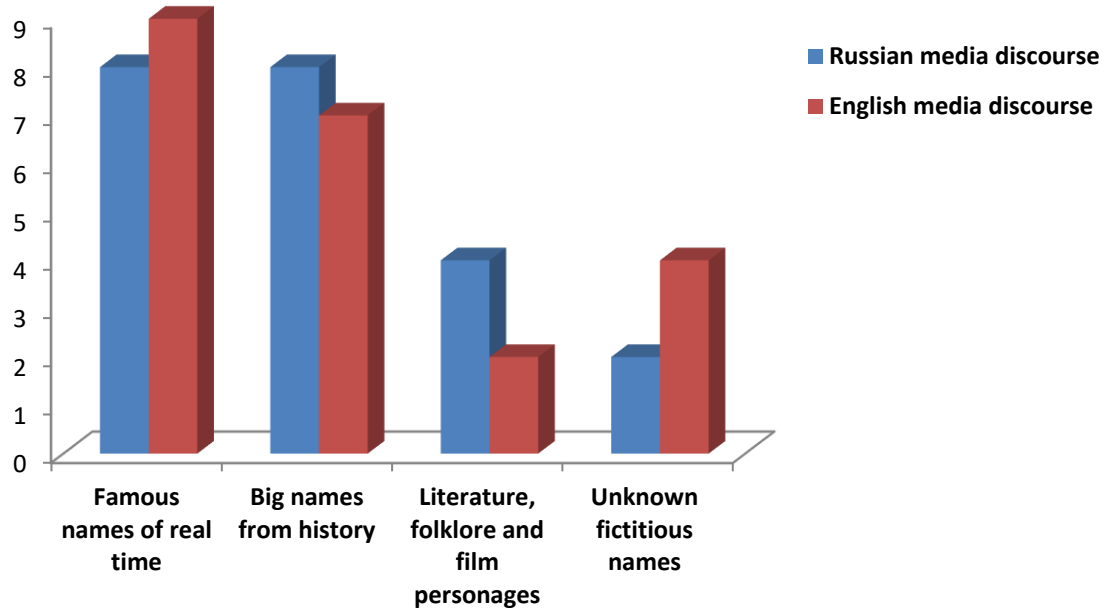
***Miss Rona** will not lay a finger on me because I will stay at home.*[12]

*We don't host parties since **Aunt Rona** came to town but we both continued to smoke cigarettes and weed in the house.*[13]

These nominations are used in English media discourse as an ironic or often sarcastic way of naming COVID-19 virus enhancing the pragmatic effect of the statement.

The quantity analysis of anthroponyms used to metaphorically describe the pandemic reality in mass media discourse can be presented as a diagram (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Types of anthroponyms used to describe the pandemic situation in Russian and English media discourse.



[11] Horseback 'knight Lancelot' in armour guards the entrance to Chinese village in bid to stop anyone with coronavirus bringing in the infection, retrieved from: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7969889/Horseback-knight-guards-entrance-Chinese-village-bid-stop-coronavirus-brought-in.html (Accessed 21 May 2020)

[12] Urban Dictionary Online, retrieved from: https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=miss%20rona (Accessed 20 October 2021)

[13] AITA for smoking in my house around a pregnant woman? Retrieved from: https://www.reddit.com/r/AmItheAsshole/comments/ihhy6e/aita_for_smoking_in_my_house_around_a_pregnant/ (Accessed 20 October 2021)

Based on this diagram, we can draw the conclusion: the most common source areas in both Russian and English media discourse are famous names of real time and historical figures, i.e. these names are the most significant for a person regardless of national and cultural affiliation. However, despite the mentioned similarity, some national priorities in the choice of anthroponyms can be observed. As the study shows, names of literature, folklore and film personages are more common in Russian media discourse, while unknown fictional names are more widespread in English media discourse, which, in our opinion, depends on the mentality of the nation making a choice in favor of one or another area of knowledge, from which proper names are borrowed to describe the pandemic reality.

Thus, facing new, complex, incomprehensible phenomena, a person tries to use elements of a more familiar sphere for their understanding and explaining. This is also characteristic of the pandemic language: to explain new coronavirus concepts and phenomena, a person often uses simpler and more specific images from familiar areas of knowledge, namely well-known proper names.

2. *Toponymic metaphors* naming specific geographic objects (continents, countries, cities, seas, rivers, etc.) are also common in mass media texts describing the pandemic reality. Toponymic metaphors can have real and unreal prototypes:

– real geographic objects

Places where serious catastrophes happened become the terms of comparison in Russian and English media texts reflecting the pandemic situation:

Нью-Йорк – новый ***Ухань****. В городе зарегистрировали половину всех зараженных в США.*[14]

But if the virus cannot be contained quickly, this could turn out to be China's ***Chernobyl*** *moment.*[15]

The toponym ***Chernobyl*** is used to denote the events happening in Wuhan, China when describing not only the emergence of COVID-19 virus but also the fact that at the beginning the Chinese government tried to conceal the tragedy like with Chernobyl catastrophe:

В Ухане, очевидно, имел место "биологический ***Чернобыль****", и его эпицентр – Уханьский вирусологический институт. И как и в случае с Чернобылем, правительство вначале пыталось скрыть трагедию… Если бы о ней сообщили в декабре, то можно было бы спасти 95% погибших от ковида и избежать экономического ущерба.*[16]

The Auschwitz metaphor is used in Russian media discourse to show how human rights and freedoms were violated in the lockdown period:

Освенцим *в каждый дом: элиты используют COVID-19 для строительства мирового концлагеря.*[17]

Metonymic transfer is often used to describe varieties of coronavirus infection strains. So, a new variant of coronavirus first identified in the UK is called ***British***:

В исследовании в The Lancet Infectious Diseases авторы собрали пробы у 341

[14] N'yu-Jork – novyj Uhan [New York is the new Wuhan], retrieved from: https://360tv.ru/news/mir/nju-jork-novyj-uhan/ (Accessed 21 November 2020)

[15] Xi Jinping faces China's Chernobyl moment, retrieved from: https://www.ft.com/content/6f7fdbae-4b3b-11ea-95a0-43d18ec715f5 (Accessed 25 November 2021)

[16] Sbezhavshie iz Uhanya kitajskie uchyonye rasskazali FBR pravdu o koronaviruse i "biologicheskom Chernobyle" [Chinese scientists who escaped from Wuhan told the FBI the truth about the coronavirus and the "biological Chernobyl"], retrieved from: https://www.kp.ru/daily/27154.5/4251844/ (Accessed 20 November 2020)

[17] Osvencim v kazhdyj dom: elity ispol'zuyut COVID 19 dlya stroitel'stva mirovogo konclagerya [Auschwitz in every home: elites use COVID-19 to build a global concentration camp], retrieved from: https://glavred.info/opinions/osvencim-v-kazhdyy-dom-elity-ispolzuyut-covid-19-dlya-stroitelstva-mirovogo-konclagerya-10216940.html (Accessed 21 November 2020)

пациента двух больниц в Лондоне с 9 ноября по 20 декабря, расшифровали геномы выделенного вируса: у 58% был ***«британец».***[18] By analogy, the names of Brazilian, Indian, South African strains arose in mass media texts.

It should be noted that such examples of metonymic transfer are more frequent in the Russian language since it is more prone to word formation and has a lot of word formation models than English. For example, Russian media texts often include lexemes formed with diminutive suffixes to show negligence:

Уханька*, она же коронавирусная инфекция COVID-19 – вирусное заболевание, вызываемое возбудителем SARS CoV-2 и похожее по многим симптомам на «обычный» грипп.*[19]

Metaphoric nominations of COVID-19 virus also include names of other serious viruses. In the following example, the author resorts to Ebola virus disease named after the river in Congo where the unknown hemorrhagic fever claimed hundreds of lives in 1976:

Is Coronavirus The New ***Ebola****?*[20]. In this example, we can trace how the proper name first changed its meaning by way of metonymic transfer from the river to the virus and then continued to develop its figurative meaning through metaphoric nomination of coronavirus.

– unreal geographic objects

Unreal geographic names derived from fiction, cinematograph, or myths are also common in mass media texts. For example, toponyms ***Eldorado*** and ***Eden***, denoting the names of mythical country of gold and the paradise, in the pandemic discourse develop the meanings of ideal places to spend holidays during the lockdown.

The toponym ***Armageddon***, meaning the location where the armies gathered for a battle during the end times, causes negative associations and exploits the metaphor of the global catastrophe (***coronaarmageddon / coronageddon***):

Настоящий ***Армагеддон****: врачи ужаснулись последствиям омикрона.*[21]

Can America Survive ***"CORONAGEDDON"****? Rage profiteers are weaponizing the coronavirus.*[22]

Thus, toponyms, being an integral part of the background cultural knowledge of native speakers, are "sources of not only language, but also encyclopedic information, i.e. they give a set of knowledge about objects available to each member of the language community" [Voyakina, 2010: 294]. That is why toponyms become common sources of metaphorization.

The ratio of real and unreal toponyms in representing the pandemic events in Russian and English media discourse is presented in Figure 3.

[18] Britanskij shtamm koronavirusa ne opasnee dlya zabolevshih, chem "obychnyj" [The British strain of coronavirus is no more dangerous for the sick than the "normal" one], retrieved from: https://udinform.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=627035&Itemid=51 (Accessed 23 December 2021)

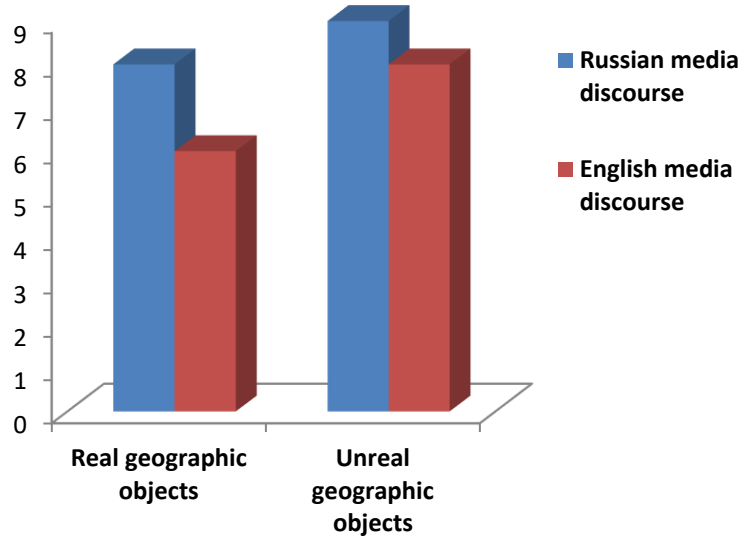
[19] FAQ po "uhan'ke" - koronavirusu [FAQ on "Wuhan" – coronavirus], retrieved from: https://cont.ws/@Aleksandr88/1618643 (Accessed 25 November 2021)

[20] Is Coronavirus The New Ebola? Retrieved from: https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/coronavirus-ebola-002152063.html (Accessed 25 January 2020)

[21] Nastoyashchij Armageddon: vrachi uzhasnulis' posledstviyam omikrona [Real Armageddon: doctors were horrified by the consequences of omicron], retrieved from: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/20220120/coronavirus-omicron-posledstviya-shok-1044988232.html). (Accessed 21 January 2022)

[22] Can America Survive "CORONAGEDDON"? Retrieved from: https://medium.com/politically-speaking/can-america-survive-coronageddon-b79c10727750 (Accessed 15 October 2021)

Figure 3. Types of toponyms used to describe the pandemic situation in Russian and English media discourse.



The diagram shows that proper names of real geographic objects prevail in Russian media discourse, which can be explained by greater word-formation potential of the Russian language to describe the pandemic situation, especially ironically. Unreal geographic objects are even more common in both Russian and English media discourse, since such metaphors include general universal knowledge usually based on myths and legends that constitute the national cultural heritage. In addition, onomastic metaphors based on fiction (mythological, biblical, artistic spheres) have greater pragmatic power compared to metaphors based on real geographical objects, which are often unstable, unlike, for example, mythological type of knowledge.

2. *Mythonymic metaphors*, naming specific fictional objects of any category (heroes, gods, demons, and other mythological and legendary personages, creatures and places, religious symbols).

The scope of using proper names from the sphere of mythology and religion goes beyond the scope of the language in which it originally appeared. Mythonyms being an important cultural element of the entire world civilization become part of coronavirus vocabulary. To describe the pandemic situation, the mass media employs the following mythonyms:

– names of mythological and religious characters

Using the image of a two-faced Janus, the following text describes the actions of Moscow mayor S.S. Sobyanin in the course of fighting COVID-19 virus as ambiguous and even contradictory:

***Двуликий Янус**: как мэр Москвы ограничения (не) вводил.*[23]

Such mythonyms as Augean stables, Achilles heel, Hercules, Gordian knot, Minotaur, Odysseus, etc. used in Russian and English media texts to depict the dangerous situation developing around COVID-19 virus are widespread. The authors of media texts employing mentioned mythonyms try to persuade the recipient that the whole world is on high alert and in battle to fight the potent threat:

*Уязвимое место: найдена **“ахиллесова пята”** коронавируса.*[24]

[23] Dvulikij Yanus: kak mer Moskvy ogranicheniya (ne) vvodil [Two-faced Janus: how the mayor of Moscow (not) imposed restrictions], retrieved from: https://readovka.news/news/64378 (Accessed 15 August 2021)

*В Испании создали **“Ноев ковчег”** для спасения от коронавируса.*[25]

*Covid-19 is therefore a **Damocles sword** hanging over the world. Although new cases reported in China continued to drop, the virus's spread to an increasing number of countries has braced the world for a protracted battle to prevent it from spreading until an effective vaccine is found.*[26]

*Decoding **the Gordian Knots** at the ends of the SARS-CoV-2 genome.*[27]

It is interesting to note that using onomastic metaphors compared to common nouns requires more background cultural knowledge from the recipient. In order to understand what is meant when COVID-19 is called a Damocles sword, it is necessary to have cultural knowledge about the mentioned myth. So, on the one hand, onomastic metaphors include concepts that are easily recognizable in a particular culture. On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that the use of a precedent phenomenon as the basis for a metaphor implies the presumption of a certain level of erudition on the part of the recipient.

– names of folklore and mythological creatures

The name of such a Russian folklore creature as ***Змей Горыныч*** in the pandemic discourse by way of blending was transferred to ***Змей Ковидыч*** or ***Змей Короныч*** in order to describe COVID-19 virus:

***Короныч**, похоже, не собирается отступать.*[28] Using this image the virus gains the meaning of cruelty.

Another popular onomastic metaphor is presented by the image of Cerberus, a ferocious guardian instilling fear, like COVID-19 virus, in people:

*Онищенко потребовал поставить “**цербера** во френче” у каждой коронавирусной больницы.*[29]

– names of mythological phenomena

The Apocalypse phenomenon causing negative associations and comparing the coronavirus with the end of the world is also a popular source of onomastic metaphors:

***Коронапокалипсис** в Индии: что происходит в стране, где выявляют по 300 тысяч зараженных в сутки.*[30]

*In Covid's grip, India gasps for air: If there is an **apocalypse**, this has to be one.*[31]

– names of mythological and religious places

Toponyms from the world of mythology rooted in the human consciousness are often used in the pandemic discourse:

[24] Uyazvimoe mesto: najdena «ahillesova pyata» koronavirusa [A vulnerable spot: Achilles' heel of coronavirus found], retrieved from: https://www.gazeta.ru/science/2020/04/06_a_13037935 .shtml (Accessed 06 April 2020)

[25] V Ispanii sozdali «Noev kovcheg» dlya spaseniya ot koronavirusa [A “Noah's Ark” they created in Spain to save from coronavirus], retrieved from: https://lenta.ru/news/2020/04/14/spasite/ (Accessed 14 April 2020)

[26] The Coronavirus Damocles Sword, retrieved from: http://www.mauritiustimes.com/mt/the-coronavirus-damocles-sword-2/ (Accessed 15 September 2021)

[27] Decoding the Gordian Knots at the ends of the SARS-CoV-2 genome, retrieved from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/williamhaseltine/2021/08/25/decoding-the-gordian-knots-at-the-ends-of-the-sars-cov-2-genome/?sh=58ad26a31b61 (Accessed 27 August 2021)

[28] S Koronychem – na virusnye vecherinki??! [With Koronych – to viral parties???!], retrieved from: https://echo.msk.ru/blog/govorimporusski/ 2671529-echo/ (Accessed 15 August 2021)

[29] Onishchenko potreboval postavit' «cerbera vo frenche» u kazhdoj koronavirusnoj bol'nicy [Onishchenko demanded to put a “Cerberus in a jacket” at every coronavirus hospital], retrieved from: https://riafan.ru/1264107-onishenko-potreboval-postavit-cerbera-vo-frenche-u-kazhdoi-koronavirusnoi-bolnicy (Accessed 15 August 2021)

[30] Koronapokalipsis v Indii: chto proiskhodit v strane, gde vyyavlyayut po 300 tysyach zarazhennyh v sutki [Coronapocalypse in India: what is happening in a country where 300 thousand infected per day are detected], retrieved from: https://tvrain.ru/teleshow/here_and_now/koronapokalipsis_v_indii-528998/ (Accessed 16 October 2021)

[31] In Covid's grip, India gasps for air: If there is an apocalypse, this has to be one, retrieved from: https://flipboard.com/article/india-in-covid-s-grip-if-there-is-an-apocalypse-this-has-to-be-one/f-16818c3c85%2Fstatnews.com (Accessed 16 October 2021)

*Коронавирус – **Голгофа** планеты.*[32] Addressing the mythonym ***Голгофа*** the author turns to knowledge about the place where Jesus was crucified, thus showing the cruelty of the virus.

*Одним словом – **содом и гоморра**! Как пандемия повлияла на агрессивность горожан и почему из-за маски начали убивать.*[33] The mythonyms ***содом и гоморра*** demonstrates how aggressive and intolerant the residents of the city and its guests can be.

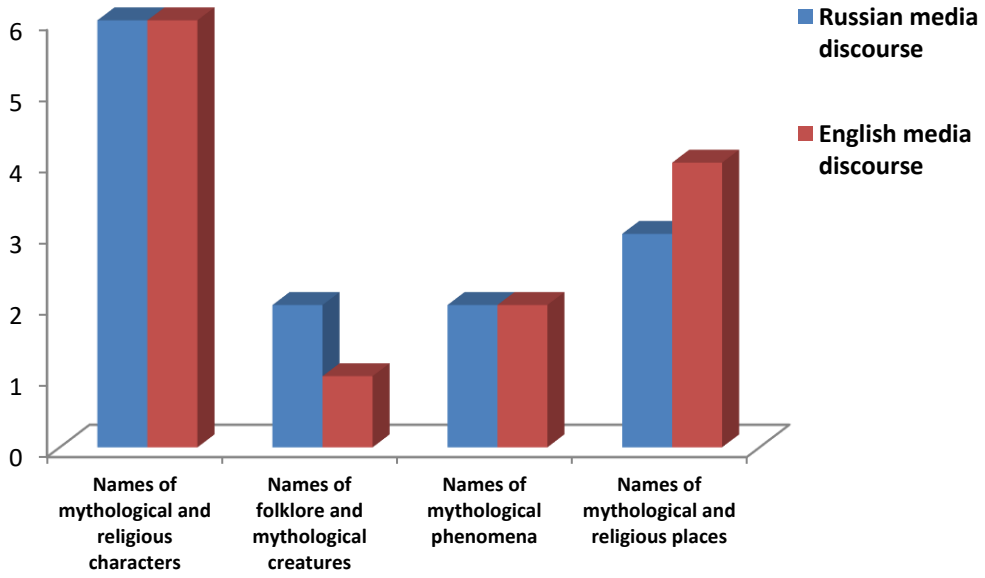
The selection of mythological and religious objects gives grounds to speak about the significance of this knowledge for a person, embedded in his consciousness from childhood and summarizing the experience of many generations. For example, proper names ***Bedlam*** and ***Rubicon*** are so rooted in the mind of a person that they are no longer perceived as metaphors:

*How Aaron Boone is handling Yankees' coronavirus **bedlam.***[34]

*Abe has crossed the coronavirus **Rubicon.***[35]

Figure 4 shows the distribution of different mythonyms used in Russian and English mass media discourse to represent the pandemic reality.

Figure 4. Types of mythonyms used to describe the pandemic situation in Russian and English media discourse.



[32] Koronavirus – Golgofa planety [Coronavirus is Calvary of the planet], retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pByqphocubY (Accessed 06 October 2021)

[33] Odnim slovom – sodom i gomorra! Kak pandemiya povliyala na agressivnost' gorozhan i pochemu iz-za maski nachali ubivat' [In a word, sodom and gomorrah! How the pandemic affected the aggressiveness of citizens and why they started killing because of the mask], retrieved from: https://www.fontanka.ru/2020/11/20/69563913/ (Accessed 05 March 2021)

[34] How Aaron Boone is handling Yankees' coronavirus bedlam, retrieved from: https://nypost.com/2020/03/17/how-aaron-boone-is-handling-yankees-coronavirus-bedlam/ (Accessed 17 March 2020)

[35] Abe has crossed the coronavirus Rubicon, retrieved from: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2020/03/02/commentary/japan-commentary/abe-crossed-coronavirus-rubicon/ (Accessed 21 November 2021)

The diagram shows that different types of mythonyms are almost equally presented in Russian an English mass media discourse for describing the coronavirus situation. Moreover, names of folklore and mythological creatures and phenomena are less widespread in Russian and English media texts covered by coronavirus content than names of mythological and religious characters and places. The popularity of this type of onomastic metaphors can be explained by the fact that elements of the source spheres "mythology" and "religion" represent a special category of universal units of intercultural communication. Being universal elements of any culture, such metaphors complement the general system of values and form value orientations of the society. Myths, religion and fairy tales are productive sources of metaphorization of the pandemic situation due to their archetypal images, which are stable in time and space and reflect their universality of use in different cultures. The sphere of mythology and religion, absorbing knowledge of many generations, largely implements the cumulative function.

Results and discussion

Onomastic metaphors based on the use of proper names of secondary nomination act as one of the main means of understanding and evaluating the pandemic reality, which is associated with the following:

1) anthropocentric nature of onomastic metaphors;

2) comparison with proper names included in the personal space of any human;

3) onomastic boom in the crisis pandemic period.

The identification of special distinctive characteristics of proper names, which are well known to human consciousness since childhood, or which have become relevant in a certain period of the development, especially crisis periods, makes it possible to transfer them to another area of knowledge. These metaphors serve as a universal tool for understanding and evaluating the modern pandemic reality.

The analysis shows that considered types of onomastic metaphors, namely anthroponymic, toponymic and mythonymic, are frequently used in Russian and English media discourse to describe the coronavirus pandemic period. The analysis of 215 mass media texts showed that onomastic metaphors were found almost in half of the texts (101 texts), among which anthroponymic metaphors were identified in 44 texts (43%), toponymic metaphors in 31 texts (31%) and mythonymic metaphors in 26 texts (26%). Almost the same number of onomastic metaphors was found in Russian and English media texts, namely 52 metaphors in Russian texts and 49 metaphors in English texts, which proves the metaphorical nature of human mind regardless of national preferences.

The widespread use of onomastic metaphors in representing the pandemic reality in mass media discourse indicates, in our opinion, their contradictory nature. On the one hand, with the help of onomastic metaphors, the desire to become "closer" to the audience is emphasized, since there is an appeal to what is most important to each person – the name. On the other hand, there is a focus on the recipient's intellect, i.e. it is assumed that the recipient is as educated and erudite as the producer of onomastic metaphors and can correctly decipher metaphors, which are based on knowledge not only of modern situation in the society, but also mythology, religion, ancient literature, history, geography, etc.

The sources of onomastic metaphors used to represent the reality of the coronavirus pandemic were found to come from different conceptual domains, the most common among which are "History", "Geography" and "Mythology", which is characteristic of both Russian and English mass media discourse, while "Literature" is more typical for Russian media discourse. In each type of onomastic metaphors we have found examples, the sources of which are fictional phenomena borrowed from myths, religion, fiction, folklore, as well as real modern and historical

figures, places and objects. This fact proves both the versatility of human thinking and the existence of the so-called "universal knowledge" which is transmitted from generation to generation and common in most cultures.

It should also be noted that fictional source spheres are even more common both in Russian and English media discourse, which is a consequence of the creative nature of human thought. In addition, metaphors containing modern phenomena as their sources often cease to be actively used but sometimes disappear when the situation is no longer important to people, while historical, mythological, religious and fairy tale characters penetrate deeply into our subconscious, passed on from generation to generation and therefore unconsciously used by native speakers of any language.

In most cases, onomastic metaphors as a socialized form of conceptualizing reality have a powerful pragmatic potential, characteristics of emotional evaluation and act as an element of the national picture of the world.

Conclusions

The conducted research made it possible to demonstrate the cognitive mechanism of onomastic metaphor, which is a very frequent phenomenon used to conceptualize the pandemic reality and increase the effectiveness of speech impact of the statement. The central place in the onomastic field of the analyzed part of mass media discourse is occupied by anthroponymic, toponymic and mythonymic metaphors, which is justified by their close connection with history, culture, peculiarities of people's behaviour, their traditions, value orientations and stereotypes.

Onomastic metaphors involved in the study are of great interest for linguists, since they organize a holistic reflection of reality, characteristic of specific historical time and contributing to stereotyping and assessment of the current situation in the public mind. Moreover, such metaphors take part in the formation and development of the national and linguistic picture of the world and familiarization with national culture within the framework of global civilization.

As a means of evaluation, onomastic metaphors explicitly or implicitly express the author's attitude to the pandemic situation. The analysis shows that most often, onomastic metaphors express an implicit, hidden evaluation, which makes it possible to reconceptualize the reality in the recipient's mind from positive to negative, and vice versa.

Thus, onomastic metaphor is an important component of mass media discourse, a productive linguistic device for conceptualizing and reconceptualizing pandemic events, their evaluation and formation of public opinion towards phenomena, the historical witness of which every person becomes today.

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