



## Covid-19 and War Metaphor; A Linguistic Projection through Pakistani Advertisements

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Advertisement Language,  
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War metaphor,

### ABSTRACT

*This paper analyses the war metaphor used in selected Pakistani advertisements about Covid-19 pandemic. The research particularly explores the working of conceptual war metaphor through Conceptual Blending theory (Fauconnier 1997, Fauconnier and Turner 1996, Turner and Fauconnier 1999, 2000). The paper discusses the cognitive mapping for the Covid metaphors through linguistic analysis which results in a psychological effect of war narrative on the audience. The war narrative thus leads to produce effect of fear and dread; the audience resultantly finds safety in following the Covid SOPs by consuming the advertised product. This study is a qualitative analysis of war metaphor used in selected Pakistani advertisements of soaps, detergents, sanitizers etc. The significance of this research is to correlate the importance of metaphor used in advertisements to magnify the fear of Covid pandemic through language manipulation. As language becomes psychological affair through metaphors; it heightens the effect on the audience which in turn leads to active positive response from them. The response is not only in submission to follow the message of the advertisement but also in readily consumption of the advertised product against the dangers and challenges posed by Covid-19.*

## INTRODUCTION

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Media in particular advertisements use discourse which linguistically and cognitively rationalizes the intended message or propaganda. It is not only the window dressing of the advertised product which catches the attention of the customer; the language used for commercials is also pivotal in appealing to the shopping sense of the audience. However, the effect of media language is not only verbal; it has added cognitive aspect which creates make believe impact on the minds of the populace. With the surge of Covid-19 pandemic, different sanitary products took a hike by capitalizing on the notion of providing safety against the fatal virus. The selected commercials in this paper discuss the cognitive facet of language mainly deployed through the metaphor of war. This metaphor activates the conceptual networking by corresponding similarities between the source and target domain. The source domain is the war metaphor whereas the target domain is the narrative of the advertisement. The similarities between the two domains create semblance between the advertised product and weapon effective in attacking the germs (enemy). Consequently, the war metaphor used in these commercials trigger war schema which manipulates the customers to trust and buy the advertised product.

### **Aims and Objectives**

- To describe how metaphors map cognitively through language manipulation.
- To analyse how advertisements, make use of war metaphor to affect the perception and action of consumers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Lundmark (2005) takes a cognitive linguistic approach of conventional metaphors used in creative ways in advertising texts accompanied by images in British magazines. Agnes (2009) conducts a critical discourse analysis of manipulation of people done by *Cosmopolitan* magazine through metaphors. Phillips and McQuarrie (2009) examine the importance of metaphor in marketing communication. They investigate the impact of style factor as compared to content factor of advertisements on the consumer response. Pérez-Sobrinó (2013) discusses how the interaction between multimodal metaphor and metonymy may enhance the covert communication in advertising discourse. Rodríguez (2015) presents cognitive analysis of visual metaphors in commercial advertising, through a continuum of monomodal and multimodal images. The current research elaborates the cognitive functioning of war

metaphor used in selected Pakistani advertisements. It discusses how these advertisements influence the opinion of consumers by creating war like urgency and fear which convinces the consumers to buy the product.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research takes a qualitative approach to do descriptive analysis of selected advertisements. The analysis explores the cognitive perspective of the functioning of metaphors which resultantly determines the effectiveness of metaphors in influencing consumers' interest in buying the product.

The rationale behind the selected advertisements is that they guarantee the effectiveness of their products to counter the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, these commercials establish their premise on the metaphor of war to create the effect of urgency and effectiveness of the advertised product. There are however, minor differences in the details of projection of the war metaphor. The Protex soap advertisement speaks of the intermediate stage of battling against the virus and thus advocates the continued use of the product to win the fight against Covid. The Safeguard soap commercial plays on the notion of heroic figure “commander safeguard” that is to save the consumers by providing long lasting protection against the virus and germs. The Robin bleach commercial rationalizes its consumption for sanitizing purposes by targeting the invisibility of the germs and highlighting the multipurposeness of the initially known bleaching product. Peak Freans taps on the patriotic spirit of Pakistani nation by verbally drawing parallels between the nation facing the pandemic and an army at war.

### **1. Theoretical Framework: Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Blending Theory**

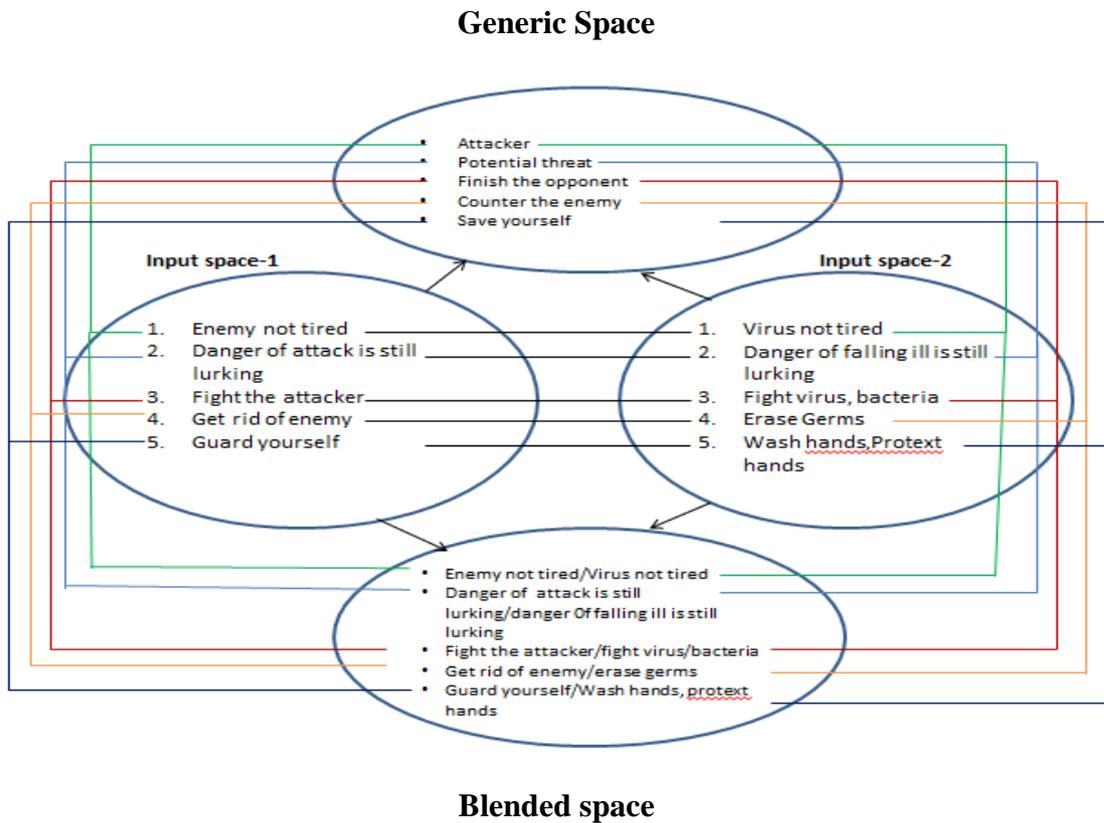
The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) contends that metaphors are not merely linguistic expressions; they are deeply rooted in cognitive structure mappings. This theory rejects the idea that “metaphor is a decorative device, peripheral to language and thought” (Deignan, 2005:13). Blending Theory (Fauconnier 1997, Fauconnier and Turner 1996, Turner and Fauconnier 1999, 2000) takes a step deeper and explains the online construction of these mappings which develop between mental spaces. In Blending theory, these mental spaces include two “input spaces” which refer to the source and target domains of Conceptual Metaphor Theory; a “generic space” which presents conceptual structure shared by both the input spaces and a “blend space” where the material of the input spaces

combine and interact. (Grady *et al.* 1999: 103). It is in the blended space that meaning of metaphor is generated. This research will make use of Blending theory to explain the metaphor of war as used by the selected advertisements to rationalize the effectiveness of their product against Covid. In other words blending theory will explain how abstract concept of viral attack, illness is rationalized through the physical action of war and violence.

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

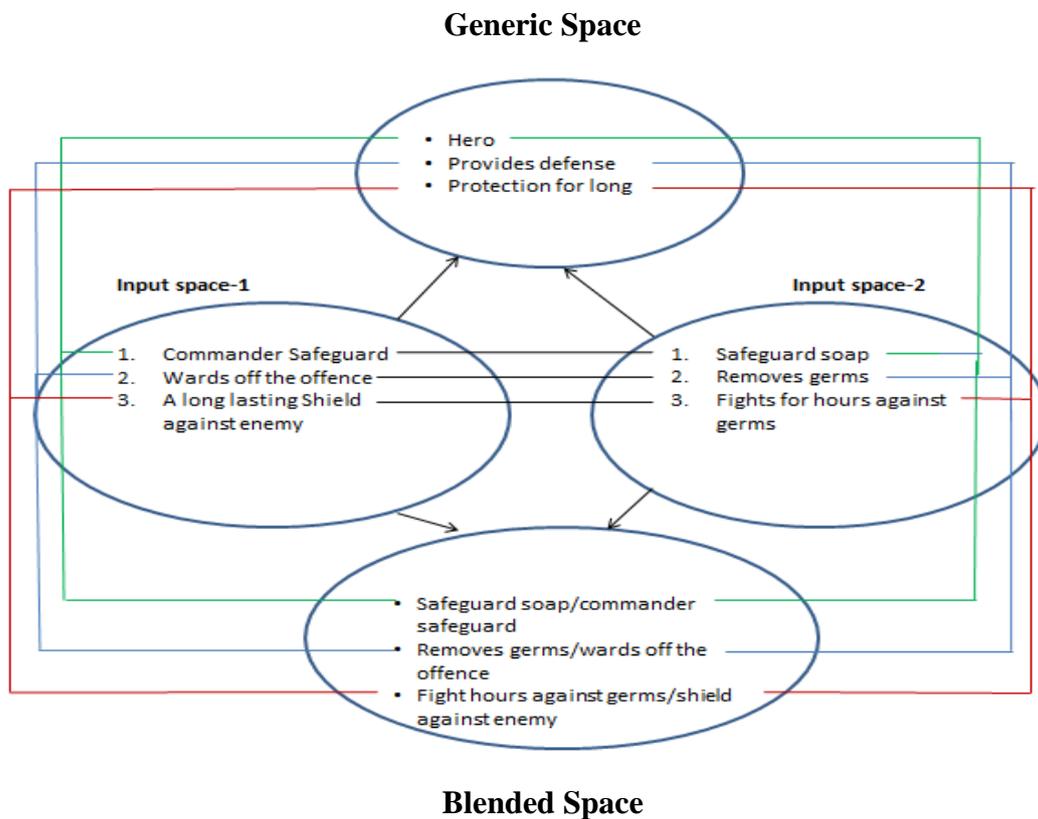
This research will make use of Blending theory to explain the metaphor of war as used by the selected advertisements to rationalize the effectiveness of their products against Covid-19.

#### 6.1 Conceptual Network for the Metaphor of War Field for Protex Soap Advertisement



Protex advertisement builds on the imagery of war by utilizing war metaphor. The two input spaces perfectly map on to each other as the contagion referred to projects itself on the domain of war (input space-1) in which the enemy is persistent in making its attack. Similarly, the danger of falling ill corresponds with the eminent danger of being attacked by the opponent. By using the advertised soap, germs are erased which are cognitively projecting an image of killing the enemy. The metaphor of war thus becomes comprehensible because we see a perfect blend between the two input spaces in the blended space. The blend is sound because the spaces also share same generic characteristics. These also include the features of offence, defence action between the causing enemy and defending soldier which in this case is the customer.

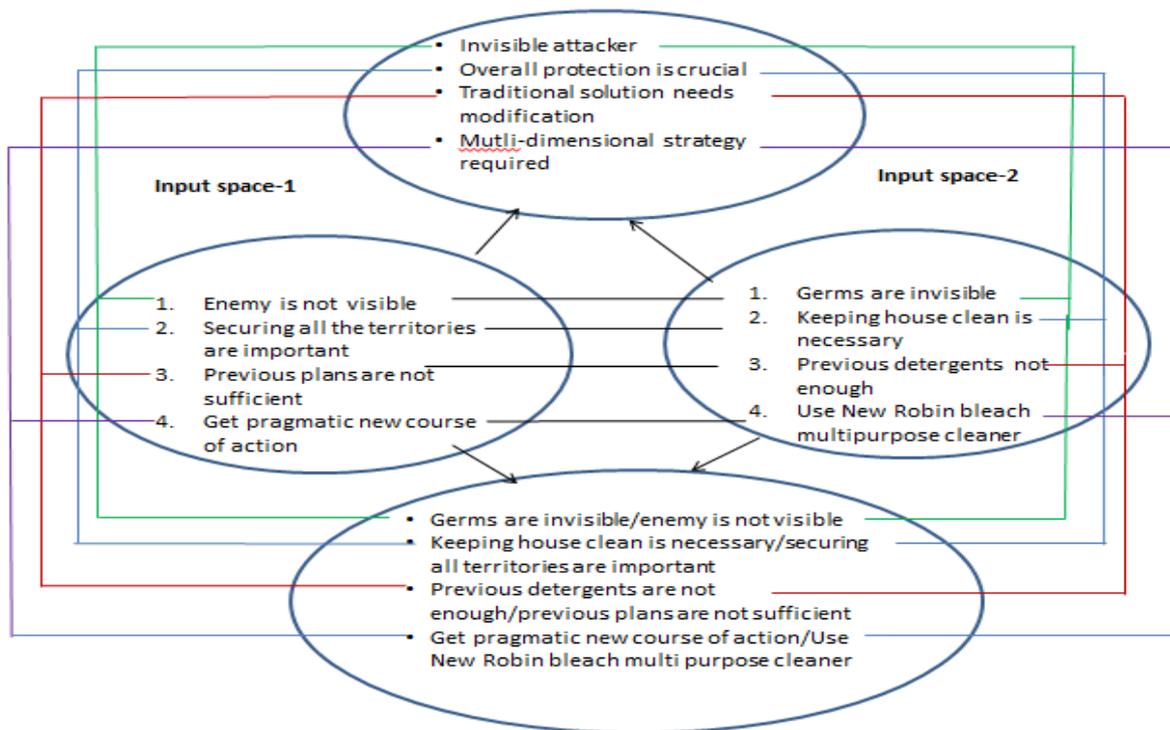
## 6.2 Conceptual Network for the Metaphor of War Field for Safeguard Liquid Hand Soap Advertisement



The advertisement of Safeguard liquid hand soap plays on the idea of a hero figure that saves the community from destruction. Besides the appearance of the action figure of commander safeguard in the commercial, it is the parallelism between him and the advertised product which attracts the attention of the consumers especially the youngsters who idealizes the action hero. Seen through conceptual network, the input space-1 corresponds with the input space-2. The matching features of the two spaces converge in the blended space in which safeguard soap parallels with commander safeguard; one removes germs the other wards off the offence; and one is effective against germs for hours while the other shields the user against enemy for long. At the same time the metaphor of commander safeguard, war hero, is intelligent as the input spaces share general characteristics of a hero providing long protection against peril.

### 6.3 Conceptual Network for the Metaphor of War Field for Robin Bleach Advertisement

#### Generic Space

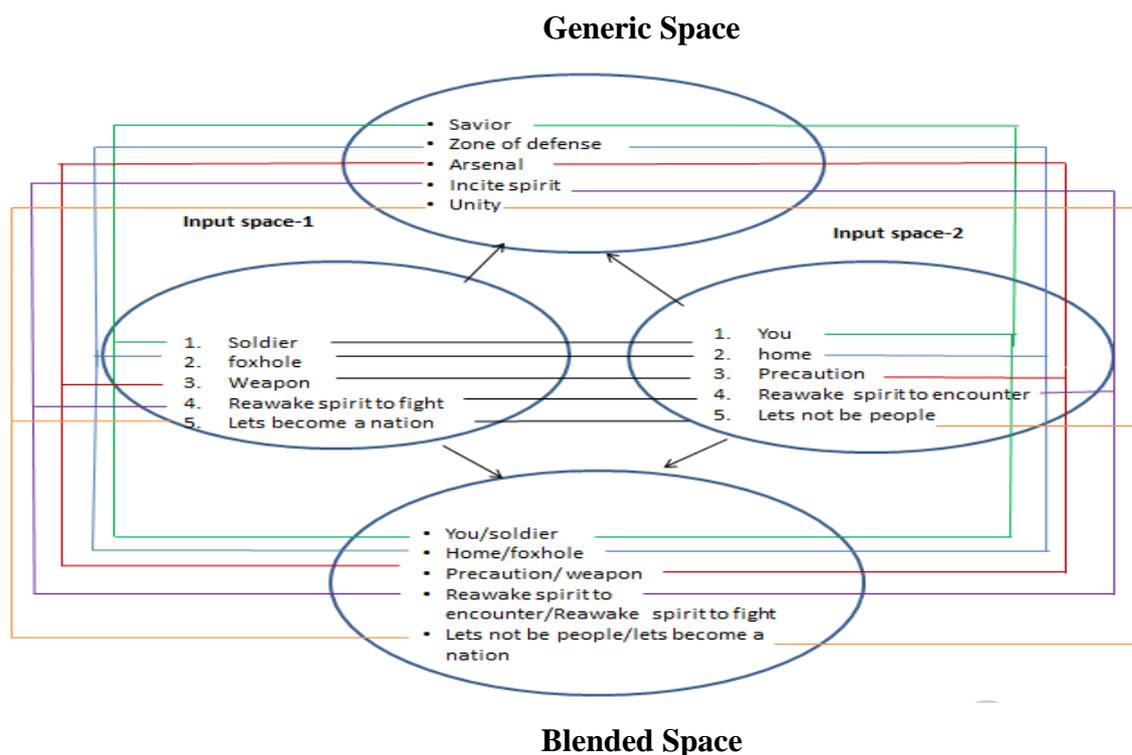


#### Blended Space

Robin bleach which initially enjoyed its fame as a bleaching product for white fabric re-launched itself as a sanitizer against virus and bacteria during Covid pandemic. It establishes its effectiveness through

war metaphor. One can see the input space-2 using narrative of the advertisement in which germs invisibility becomes the premise for the vulnerability of human life. Building on this notion, the advertisement shows the efficiency of the product as water dissolvent which can be used to mop floors, furniture and door handles etc. The commercial states that traditional detergents and soaps are no more effective however Robin bleach (previously fabric bleach and now modified as sanitizer) can fight off the dangerous virus. The input space-2 therefore corresponds with input space-1 where the invisible germs becomes invisible enemy; keeping house clean becomes securing all territories; failure of previous detergents becomes inefficiency of previous plan of action; new Robin bleach multipurpose cleaner becomes pragmatic new course of action against enemy in war. The metaphor is sound as the spaces share generic features of confronting invisible enemy with a new strategic action which in this case is Robin bleach.

#### 6.4 Conceptual Network for the Metaphor of War Field for Peak Freans Advertisement



Peak Freans ran the awareness message to get the people of Pakistan on board to fight against Covid Pandemic. As for many the SOPs like social distancing and staying at home was frustrating and

challenging, there were cases where people would break the protocols and go out and do social gatherings. The advertisement after directly warning the viewers about the repercussions, switches to self-explanatory metaphor. The message verbally draws parallels between viewers and soldiers preparing to put up a fight. Staying home corresponds with stationing in foxhole; taking precaution (following Covid SOPs) becomes using weapon in the war domain. This message has national appeal because it furthers the rise of nation against the pandemic by rekindling the spirit to fight not individually but as a nation. Thus, the issue is portrayed not a personal dilemma but a national health crisis. On a deeper level, the pandemic becomes a reason to unite the different sects and cultures of Pakistan to rise as one nation. In the generic space the input spaces share similarities as both discuss a savior setting a zone of defense and using arsenal against the portended threat. Not only this but to stand and unite against the danger as a single unit by igniting the spirit of unity.

### CONCLUSION

Blending theory aptly explains the conceptual networking of conceptual metaphor of war in the above discussed commercials. The metaphor of war assists in the description of abstract concept of warding off the invisible virus through the physical experience of waging or fighting a war against the enemy. In other words, commercials make sense of abstract notions through dynamics of experiential reality. Moreover, the gravity of combating Covid- 19 virus is instantiated through war metaphor which compels the customers to get armed by buying the product which claims to be effective against the virus.

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