Conceptualization of Covid-19 in The New Life Post Covid-19 Pandemic: A Cognitive Semantics Approach

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Abstract

At the time of writing, the government of Republic of Indonesia releases the warning the danger of new variant of Covid-19, Omicron XBB. Long after people get used to live on "the new life after pandemic", we might perceive that the danger of Covid-19 has no longer considered as threatening as it used to before. Looking at how people perceive their life after new normal, this study aims to describe the conceptualization of Covid-19 newest variation, Omicron XBB, in online mass media. This study is conducted using a qualitative descriptive method that aims to depict how online mass media conceptualize the newest variation of Covid-19, Omicron XBB today. The data were gained from the news headline on online mass media in Indonesia, ranging from October to mid Desember 2022, and were analysed using the framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). The results show that the Omicron XBB is no longer conceptualized as a war but later it is more depicted as a mobile thing/human.

Keywords: cognitive semantics, conceptualization, covid-19, omicron XBB, post pandemi

1. Introduction

First, this strange phenomenon signed by the spread of 'unidentified pneumonia' that continuously appeared until, according to WHO, Chinese scientists have determined that the outbreak in Wuhan was caused by a new type of coronavirus (Mushtaque et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2020). Later, World Health Organization (WHO) officially announced the mysterious disease as SARS-Cov-2. and warned the world to get ready for pandemic. Although the outbreak had encountered in other countries outside China after the finding in Wuhan, Indonesia had just reported their first case at March 3rd 2022.

The condition was uncertain. Here, the media, both online and offline media, has the main role to picture how the situation was at the time. By looking at what the media wrote, many online mass media outlined the danger of Coronavirus into many pictures, mostly as something terrifying. Sarjono & Bram (2021) argue that the news might steer the public"s opinions and perceptions which can lead to negative emotions such as anger, fear, anxiety, and insecurity.

The use of metaphor in headline media has a certain purpose. It can be seen that the use of metaphor in the media headline also function to portray how Covid-19 is conceptualized. In advertising and other media, the implementation of metaphors will also create that new realities that are, of course, described metaphorically for us. Metaphor is most frequently used as a rhetorical device to boost the vividness of expression and efficiency of particular meaning in the news (Chen, 2018). According to Seva & Lingga (2020) metaphors provide a rapid and easy means for structuring complicated issues in a way that facilitates particular ideological perspectives. Metaphors deeply shape our thoughts and affect our emotions, and, in the news.

In regard to the use of metaphor in media, conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) in cognitive semantics aims at settling crucial cognitive problems. This theory discusses how people understand abstract domains mapped into concrete domain which makes the abstract concept more understandable (Lakoff & Johnson, 1990). Therefore, the study of conceptual metaphor in online mass media can give the overview of how this virus is picture in order to understand linguistically how dangerous the virus is.

In recent study, at least there are two previous study in Indonesia that focus on how media picture the virus. First, the study by (Seva & Lingga 2020), their study examined the kinds of conceptual theory that mainly used in the headlines of online mass media and possible intention of the headline in using the metaphors based on the data drawn from The Jakarta Pos and Kompas.id. The other study was conducted by (Sarjono & Bram 2021) explored the Coronavirus through metaphor in three mass media headlines, namely The Jakarta Post, The New York Times and
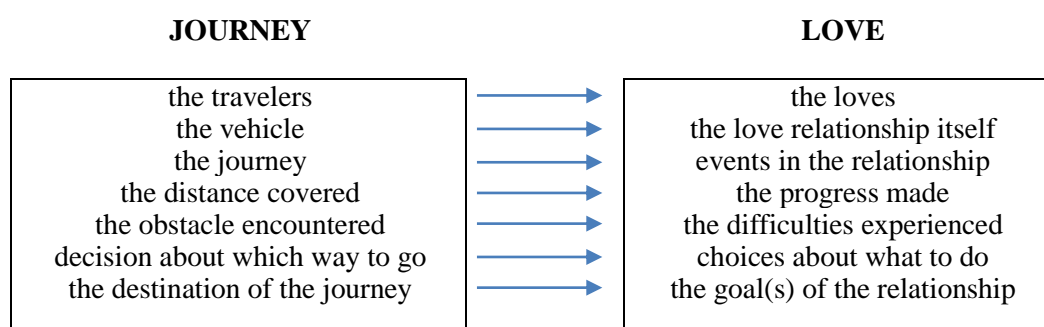
The Guardian. Those two studies focus on the headline written in English while in this study, we focus on the Indonesian headlines. The two studies also focus on the conceptualization of coronavirus before the new normal while here, we focus on the conceptualization of Coronavirus variant Omicron XBB. This variation is the sub variation of Omicron that was announced on October 2022 after the government had relaxed the large-scales social restriction. With that conditions, people tend to not consider this sub variation as dangerous as its predecessor like Delta or Omicron. Thus, in this paper we question how online mass media conceptualize the newest variation of Covid-19, Omicron XBB using Conceptual Metaphor Theory approach.

2. Literature Review

To talk about cognitive semantics, first we need to understand cognitive linguistics as a study of language. In relation to understanding how language affects mind, cognitive linguistics draws perception that language pattern of thought and to study language from this perspective is by studying patterns of conceptualization (Norman, 1993). Cognitive linguistics takes experimental view on conceptualization and meaning. Observing that many of our concept are grounded in our experience-cultural and physical. Briefly, metaphor structures the way we talk, think and act.

The concept of cognitive linguistics come from (Lakoff & Johnson, 1990). In the other words, cognitive linguistics is the study of language in relation to the human mind, treating language as reflecting and revealing the mind. Cognitive linguistics consists of the study of cognitive semantics and cognitive approaches to grammar (Norman, 1993). In this paper, we focus only on cognitive semantics, especially Conceptual Metaphorical Theory (CMT).

The central concept of Conceptual Metaphorical Theory (CMT) is how people perceive that an abstract domain is mapped to a source domain. This mapping makes the abstract definition more comprehensible (Lakoff & Johnson, 1990). The concepts are known as the source domain (concrete domain) and the target domain (abstract domain). The domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called the source domain. On the other hand, the other domain is the domain that is understood, so it is called the target domain (Kovecses, 2010). To understand what source domain and target domain, let's see the popular example 'LOVE IS A JOURNEY' (Norman, 1993) below

JOURNEY		**LOVE**
the travelers	→	the loves
the vehicle	→	the love relationship itself
the journey	→	events in the relationship
the distance covered	→	the progress made
the obstacle encountered	→	the difficulties experienced
decision about which way to go	→	choices about what to do
the destination of the journey	→	the goal(s) of the relationship

Figure 1: The Conceptualization of 'Love is A Journey'

The conceptualization of "Love is Journey leads us to think of various deductions a: the person in love is a traveler, the ultimate love is the destination, and the progress of a love relationship is the distance travelled. This popular metaphor describes how love is represented as a journey regarding the lovers, progress, difficulties, and goals of the relationship. The expressions show a relationship between the two domains, the source domain and the target domain, it was just the application of the journey domain to the love domain that provided the concept of love. The journey domain was what structured all these examples of sentences in referring to the love domain. It is impossible to understand the concept of journey through the concept of love. On contrary, if we try to see love as a goal or progress without using the journey domain we are unable to do so. There is no goal of a love relationship without thinking of trying to reach the destination at the end of the journey domain (Fabijanac, 2013).

Noted that the source domains are usually concrete and physical, while the target domains tend to be abstract Kovecses, 2010). Furthermore, he added that the source domains are presented in many forms. First, the most frequently used domain is the human body. The human body most commonly used in metaphorical comprehension include the body parts like head, face, legs, hands, back, bones, heart, and shoulders as we can see in the example like in the metaphor "the heart of a problem". The aspect of human body also connected to health and illness, like a metaphor "a healthy society". The second common source of domains are the domain of animals. It is understood in terms of some assumed properties and characterizations of certain animals like when we call someone for being "a sly fox", "a snake", ect. Next, the concept of plants is also commonly used by people metaphorically by distinguishing their various parts, the many actions we perform in relation to plants, and we distinguish their different stages of growth. Later, it is buildings and construction. It is commonly used by people in basing expressions such as "He's in

ruin financially". Machines and tools are also commonly used on a daily basis in people's everyday lives, for work, fight, and for pleasure. Thus, they are also commonly used as source domains like in the example "she p*roduces* a book every year". Games and sport have been a source of entertainment for people, so it is understandable that games and sport would also become part of their cognitive perception as well. Money and economic transaction (business) are other kind of productive source domains. People in societies have engaged in various business activities and actions. That is why we know some metaphor such as money, *handing over the commodity*, *handling over the money,* etc. We should not forget cooking and food either. In relation to cooking and food, the most common metaphoric expressions would include the activity of cooking with its parts and the product served. Heat and cold, as the most basic human experiences, are normally used to talk about human emotions and attitudes to people and things. The properties of light and darkness or often appear as weather conditions. Also, forces such as waves, wind, storm fire, and agents pulling, pushing, driving can be found in conceptualizations. Lastly, movement and direction. If movement involves a change of location, it is associated with direction (forward, backward, up, down).

In addition, Kovecses also explain that target domain are abstract and perceivable. He added that target domain commonly can be found in many ways. First, emotion concepts are usually conceptualized via the physical forces source domain, like in the example "*She was moved deeply*" or "*He unleashed his anger*". Second, desire is mostly understood in the terms of psychological forces like hunger and thirst, for instance: "*she is hungry for knowledge*" and "*I am starved for affection*". Morality is commonly conceptualized as a hard to explain target domain. Concrete source concepts such as economic transactions, forces, straightness, light and dark, are most commonly used to express categories such as good and bad, honesty, courage, honor and sincerity. For example: "He"s a shady character", and "She resisted the temptation". Thought is perceived as work and as perception, such as seeing like a way to demonstrate: "I see your point" and "He searched for the memory". To conceptualize society and nation, the most common way of is through the concept of family and person as in: "the founding fathers of the country" and "neighboring countries". Also, source domains of machines and human body are quite often, e.g.: "the functioning of the society" and "the machinery of democracy". Political power is comprehended as physical force, games and sport, business and war: "The fight erupted over abortion" and "They forced the opposition out of the House". Later, Target domain of economy is usually understood via the source domains of buildings, plants and journey (movement, direction), as shown: "Germany built a strong economy" and "the growth of the economy". Human relationships such as friendship, love and marriage are often understood in the terms of building, plants and machines, e.g.: "It"s a budding relationship" and "They built a strong marriage". Communication that consist of a speaker, a hearer and the transfer of the message, metaphorically can be seen as containers, objects, and sending. For example: "You"re putting too many ideas into a single sentence" and "She gave me a lot of information". The notion of time, we see it in accordance with time in which an object moves. Here are some examples: "Time flies", "Christmas is coming up soon", and "The time will come when... ". Life and death as a part of life, as life is a journey to some destination, it is often connected metaphorically to a day, light, warmth, etc., birth is seen as an arrival while death is seen as departure, something dark and cold. Instances of these are: "The baby will arrive soon", "The Grandpa is gone" and "His father passed away". Religion, or in this case God, is seen as a person (Father, King, and Shepherd) and therefore the believers are viewed as God"s children, sheep or subjects. Other aspects of religion include notions such as eternity, life after and before death. Last, Events and actions are usually understood through source targets of movement and force, but they also include notions such as change, purpose, cause, as can be seen in: "She turned thirty last month", "She has reached her goals in life" and "The goal sent crowd into a frenzy". Based on the literature review, this study explores how Covid-19 newest variant XBB is conceptualized by online media in Indonesia.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach. Since the data were non-numerical, this study describes the data in the form of words. According to Ary, et al., (2018) state that a qualitative approach is used to analyze the data in the form of words rather than statistic data. Data were gathered by collecting headlines from Indonesian mass media online using search engine google.com with keyword Omicron XBB. The selected headlines were limited to the headlines that is only written in Indonesian and ranging from October to December. Then, the selected headlines were classified into some categories regarding analyzing the metaphorical words in the headlines. Furthermore, the classifications were mapped based on the conceptual metaphorical theory by (Lakoff & Johnson, 1990), supported (Kovecses, 2010). Kovecses states that the basic idea of apprehending the view of metaphor is in the concept of conceptual source domain is the conceptual target domain, which is understandable as a conceptual metaphor.

4. Result and Discussion

The depiction of Covid-19 in Indonesia on online media before the 'new normal' was similar to something dangerous. In Seva & Lingga (2020) concluded that Covid-19 is conceptualized as a wild animal, an enemy, a war, a criminal, an unwanted guess, and a harsh natural. The other study by Sarjono & Bram (2021) summarized that Coronavirus is mostly depicted in online mass media as war and enemy.

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper elaborates how Covid-19 subvariant Omicron XBB is conceptualized in Indonesian online media from October to mid Desember 2022. Thus, we focus on the headlines from the Indonesian

media that contains or refers only to information of this subvariant. The findings show that Covid-19 subvariant XBB is conceptualized as follow.

4.1. Omicron XBB Conceptualized as Climbing Mountain

This conceptualization of Omicron XBB describe the virus as a mobile thing that climb a mountain. It shows as if the virus moves toward the summit. It signed by the representation of "summit" as it says in Datum 1. "Reach the summit" conceptualized as if the covid-19 is on a movemet to climb the mountain and has reached its final destination. In Datum 2 and Datum 3, the movement of climbing is represented by "naik" (go uphill) and "melandai" (sloping).

Datum 1: *Menkes Yakin Omicron XBB di RI Sudah Capai Puncak, Nih Prediksinya*! (Detik.com)
"The Minister of Health believes Omicron XBB in the Republic of Indonesia has reached the summit, this
is the prediction!" (Detik.com)
Datum 2: *Kemenkes: Kasus Covid-19 Akibat Omicron XBB Mulai Melandai* (Merdeka.com)
"The Ministry of Health: Covid-19 Omicron XBB case has started to slope" (Merdeka.com)
Datum 3: *Lonceng Bahaya Berbunyi! Kasus Covid-19 RI Naik 3x lipat* (CNBC)
"The warning bell rings! Covid-19 case in RI rise up 3 times" (CNBC)

Table 1: Omicron XBB is movement of climbing mountain

Source Domain	Mapping	Target Domain: Omicron XBB
Capai Puncak (reach the summit)	→	End of climbing
Melandai (slope)	→	The process of moving downhill.
Naik (go up)	→	The process of moving uphill

4.2. Omicron XBB is Conceptualized as Human Movement

Beside the conceptualization as climbing movement, we also discover that Omicron XBB is conceptualized as human, specifically its movement as seen in Datum 4. In Datum 4, Omicron XBB is depicted as if it is moving in human movement "jumping up". "*Melonjak*" in Indonesia describe as doing upward movement by using two feet.

Datum 4   : *Lagi melonjak, siapa saja orang yang berisiko tertular Covid-19 XBB?* (CNNindonesia.com)
"Jumping up, who are at risk to get infected by Covid-19 XBB? (CNNindonesia.com)

Table 2: Omicron XBB is human movement

Source Domain	Maping	Target Domain: Omicron XBB
Melonjak (jumping up)	→	Movement of XBB

4.3. Omicron XBB is Conceptualized as Scary Ghost

Another conceptualization of Omicron XBB is scary ghost. In Datum 5, Omicron XBB is metaphorically describe as death human (ghost) that haunted. Here we can see that Covid-19 is depicted here to give the impression that covid-19, in this case Omicron XBB, although has dead like a ghost but still dangerous.

Datum 5   : *RI dihantui kasus Omicron XBB, Kemana tren saham farmasi?* (CNBC)
"The Republic of Indonesia is haunted by Omicron XBB case, where does the stock pharmacy go? (CNBC)

Table 3: Omicron XBB is scary ghost

Source Domain	Mapping	Target Domain: Omicron XBB
Dihantui (haunted)	→	Omicron XBB is ghost

4.4. Omicron XBB is Conceptualized as Human Behavior

Next, still related to human as source domain, Omicron XBB is also conceptualized as human behavior "mengelabui" or "deceive" in Datum 6. In this headline, Omicron XBB is perceive as if it is a human that can deceive human's antibody.

Datum 6   : *Dokter sebut Covid-19 subvarian Omicron XNN mampu kelabui antibody* (Antara.com)
"Doctor mentions that Covid-19, subvariant Omicron XBB, has the ability to deceive antibody (Antara.com)

Table 4: Omicron XBB is human behaviour

Source Domain	Mapping	Target Domain: Omicron XBB
mengelabui (deceive)	→	The behaviour of Omicron XBB

4.5. Omicron XBB is Strong

Last, Omicron XBB is conceptualized as strong. Strong is a character that can attached to human, building or machine. Virus cannot be seen by naked eyes, however here the virus Omicron XBB is conceptual as something that has the characteristics of "firm and powerfull".

Datum 7: *Munculnya Covid-19 varian baru Omicron XBB.1, terkuat hindari vaksin* (Jawapost.com)

"The emergence of Covid-19 newest variant Omicron XBB.1, the strongest to avoid vaccine (Jawapost.com).

Table 5: Omicron XBB is strong

Source Domain	Maping	Target Domain: Omicron XBB
terkuat (strongest)	→	characteristic

5. Conclusion

To conclude, the findings present that compare to what it was before the new normal, there is a change in how the online mass media in Indonesia conceptualized Covid-19. In the study that was conducted by Seva and Lingga (2020) and also Sarjono & Bram, (2021), the media tended to conceptualized Covid-19 as something dangerous and worth to be 'defeated' like in a battle of war. In this study however, we discover that the conceptualization of Covid-19, in this case the newest variant Omicron XBB, is conceptualized more like a human and its related traits. In the findings we figure that Omicron XBB is conceptualized as a mobile thing/human that can make a move like climbing mountain, sloping the mountain, going uphill, or jumping up. It is also conceptualized as having human-like traits such as strong and deceitful.

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