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The war on fake news? Fake news metaphors and the media in the United States of America

Abstract:
Fake news has been a controversial topic, especially since the 2016 Presidential Elections in the United States of America (cf. Veszelszki 2017). The core of the doubts concerning fake news might lie in the fact that it is difficult to determine what news items can be considered as true, or that as a matter of fact, even the interpretation of the term news is problematic (Aczél 2017); therefore, the exact definition of fake news is not clear either.

To discover how the media, i.e. one of the main actors affected by the controversy surrounding fake news describe the phenomenon; with the help of conceptual metaphor theory, Szabó (2018) has attempted to discover the underlying metaphors that are exploited by North American news outlets. The observation of the articles published on the relationship between fake news and the social media website, Facebook by USA Today, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, New York Post, and Washington Post between 1 January 2016 and 31 March 2018 has lead Szabó (2018) to identify that fake news are described with the conceptual metaphors FAKE NEWS IS AN ENEMY (e.g. combat fake news), FAKE NEWS IS A VIRUS (e.g. fake-news epidemics), FAKE NEWS IS WEED (e.g. weed out fake news), and FAKE NEWS IS WATER (e.g. tide of fake news). Furthermore, it has been noted that the pressure of coherence, as defined by Kövecses (2005) is in effect not only within certain articles, but metaphors prevail intertextually as well.

The next step that follows from the above considerations with regards to false reporting is whether metaphors that appear to be established in relation to fake news and Facebook are present in different contexts as well. The present research addresses another context that frequently issues fake news; based on his critical attitude voiced on the micro-blog Twitter, and the fact that he established the Fake News Award, the incumbent president of the USA, Donald Trump is heavily involved in the usage of the term observed here. To explore the way the metaphors connected to fake news function in relation to the current US administration, the same methodology is applied as has been used by Szabó (2018), i.e. the same period with the same journals taken into account. The results show that there are considerably less metaphorical expressions in this relation and that apart from the FAKE NEWS IS AN ENEMY (e.g. fight the fake news) metaphor, the others appear in a relatively low number, or they are not present at all.
References:


