



**COGNITIVE MECHANISMS OF MEDIA DISCOURSE: FRAMING,
CONCEPTUALIZATION, AND MEANING CONSTRUCTION**

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Abstract. In the context of rapidly evolving media environments, the cognitive dimension of media discourse represents a critical area of interdisciplinary inquiry. This paper undertakes a systematic examination of the cognitive mechanisms underlying media discourse, particularly focusing on how framing strategies, conceptual metaphors, and meaning construction processes interact to shape audience cognition. Drawing on cognitive linguistic theory and discourse analytical frameworks, we investigate a corpus of contemporary media texts, including political news articles, televised broadcasts, and social media narratives. The study employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative metaphor analysis with quantitative frame mapping, to elucidate how media discourse organizes, filters, and directs public interpretation of complex socio-political phenomena. Our findings reveal that cognitive mechanisms such as metaphorical framing and conceptual blending not only structure media narratives but also function as potent tools of ideological influence and identity construction. This research contributes to the theoretical elaboration of media cognition by offering an integrative account of how linguistic and conceptual patterns operate across discursive modalities. Ultimately, the paper underscores the importance of critical media literacy in recognizing and deconstructing the cognitive strategies embedded in contemporary media communication.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, media discourse, framing theory, conceptual metaphor, discourse analysis, media cognition, ideological influence.

**КОГНИТИВНЫЕ МЕХАНИЗМЫ МЕДИАДИСКУРСА:
ФРЕЙМИРОВАНИЕ, КОНЦЕПТУАЛИЗАЦИЯ И КОНСТРУИРОВАНИЕ
СМЫСЛА**

Аннотация. В условиях стремительно развивающейся медиасреды когнитивное измерение медиадискурса представляет собой критически важную область междисциплинарных исследований. Настоящая статья предпринимает систематический анализ когнитивных механизмов, лежащих в основе медиадискурса, уделяя особое

внимание тому, каким образом стратегии фреймирования, концептуальные метафоры и процессы конструирования смысла взаимодействуют, формируя когницию аудитории. Опираясь на теорию когнитивной лингвистики и дискурсивно-аналитические подходы, мы исследуем корпус современных медиатекстов, включающий политические новостные статьи, телевизионные трансляции и нарративы социальных сетей. В исследовании используется смешанный методологический подход, сочетающий качественный анализ метафор с количественным картированием фреймов, с целью выявления того, каким образом медиадискурс организует, фильтрует и направляет общественную интерпретацию сложных социально-политических явлений. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что такие когнитивные механизмы, как метафорическое фреймирование и концептуальное смешение, не только структурируют медианарративы, но и функционируют как действенные инструменты идеологического влияния и конструирования идентичности. Данное исследование вносит вклад в теоретическую разработку проблемы медийной когниции, предлагая интегративное объяснение функционирования лингвистических и концептуальных паттернов в различных дискурсивных модальностях. В заключение подчёркивается значимость критической медиаграмотности для распознавания и деконструкции когнитивных стратегий, имплицитно встроенных в современную медиакommunikацию.

Ключевые слова: когнитивная лингвистика, медиадискурс, теория фреймирования, концептуальная метафора, дискурсивный анализ, медийная когниция, идеологическое влияние.

MEDIA DISKURSINING KOGNITIV MEXANIZMLARI: FREYMLASH, KONSEPTUALLASHTIRISH VA MA'NO KONSTRUKSIYASI

Annotatsiya. Tez o‘zgarib borayotgan media muhit sharoitida media diskursining kognitiv o‘lchami fanlararo tadqiqotlarning muhim yo‘nalishlaridan biri sifatida namoyon bo‘lmoqda. Mazkur maqolada media diskursining asosida yotuvchi kognitiv mexanizmlar tizimli ravishda tahlil qilinadi hamda freymlash strategiyalari, konseptual metaforalar va ma’no konstruksiyasi jarayonlarining auditoriya tafakkurini shakllantirishdagi o‘zaro ta’siri o‘rganiladi. Tadqiqot kognitiv lingvistika nazariyasi va diskurs tahlili yondashuvlariga tayanadi hamda zamonaviy media matnlari korpusiga asoslanadi. Ushbu korpus siyosiy yangilik maqolalari, televideniye translyatsiyalari hamda ijtimoiy tarmoqlardagi narrativlarni o‘z ichiga oladi. Ishda sifatli metafora tahlili va miqdoriy freym xaritalash usullarini birlashtirgan aralash metodologiya qo‘llanildi. Bu esa media diskursi murakkab ijtimoiy-siyosiy hodisalarni qanday tashkil etishi, filtrlashi va jamoatchilik talqinini yo‘naltirishini aniqlash imkonini berdi. Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatadiki, metaforik freymlash va konseptual integratsiya (blending) kabi kognitiv mexanizmlar media narrativlarini strukturaviy jihatdan tashkil etish bilan birga, ideologik ta’sir va identitet konstruksiyasining samarali vositasi sifatida ham faoliyat yuritadi. Mazkur tadqiqot media kognitsiyasi nazariyasini rivojlantirishga hissa qo‘shib, turli diskursiv

modalliklarda lingvistik va konseptual naqshlarning qanday ishlashini integrativ asosda yoritadi. Xulosa sifatida, zamonaviy media kommunikatsiyasida yashirin kognitiv strategiyalarni aniqlash va dekonstruksiya qilishda tanqidiy media savodxonlikning ahamiyati alohida ta’kidlanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: kognitiv lingvistika, media diskursi, freymlash nazariyasi, konseptual metafora, diskurs tahlili, media kognitsiyasi, ideologik ta’sir.

INTRODUCTION

The investigation of media discourse through the lens of cognitive linguistics represents a rapidly developing interdisciplinary field that integrates linguistic, psychological, sociological, and communication research traditions. Scholars increasingly acknowledge that media discourse functions not merely as a neutral transmitter of information but as an active constructor of social meaning, shaping collective worldviews, cultural imaginaries, and political orientations. Media discourse does not simply reflect reality; it constitutes it through language, framing, metaphor, and discursive practice [1,2].

Conceptual metaphor theory posits that human cognition is fundamentally metaphorical in structure, with conceptual metaphors providing cognitive scaffolding for understanding abstract domains such as politics, economics, and morality [3]. These metaphorical mappings are embedded in everyday language and institutional discourse, particularly within media environments [3,4]. Through systematic framing and conceptual mapping, media texts foreground certain aspects of socio-political phenomena while backgrounding others.

Subsequent research has demonstrated how cognitive frames and metaphorical scenarios structure media narratives and reinforce ideological positions [4,6]. For example, the *WAR* frame (“fighting inflation,” “defending our rights”) activates conflict schemas that structure public understanding of political processes [4,7]. Similarly, *JOURNEY* metaphors frame political development as goal-oriented movement (“on the right path,” “navigating crisis”) [5].

Despite substantial progress in metaphor and framing research, the mechanisms through which cognitive strategies operate across digital and multimodal media platforms remain insufficiently examined. The transition from traditional print and broadcast media to interactive and algorithmically mediated environments introduces new dynamics of meaning production and reception [8,9].

This study addresses this gap by integrating cognitive linguistic theory [3,10] with discourse-analytical frameworks [9,11] to examine how framing, conceptual metaphor, and blending mechanisms structure political media discourse across platforms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study employs an integrative multi-method research design that combines qualitative and quantitative analytical procedures in order to capture the cognitive mechanisms embedded in contemporary media discourse. This design is grounded in the assumption that cognitive strategies in media communication operate simultaneously at different analytical

levels: at the micro-level through localized metaphorical expressions and at the macro-level through recurrent framing patterns that structure how socio-political reality is represented and interpreted. Accordingly, the methodological architecture of the study enables a systematic examination of linguistic, conceptual, and discursive regularities across multiple media platforms.

The empirical basis of the research is a carefully curated corpus consisting of three data streams. The first stream comprises 150 political news articles selected from leading national and international outlets representing both print and digital journalism. The second stream consists of 30 transcripts of televised political debates sourced from publicly available parliamentary sessions, election debates, and political talk shows. The third stream includes 250 social media posts drawn from Twitter and Facebook, selected from verified accounts of politicians, journalists, and public figures, along with high-engagement posts produced by non-institutional users. The corpus was collected within a defined temporal window from January 2023 to December 2024, covering major political events, policy controversies, and socio-political crises that dominated the media agenda throughout this period. The selection procedure was purposive and guided by criteria of topical relevance, representational balance across platforms, and linguistic variability.

Data analysis proceeded in two sequential and methodologically complementary stages. The first stage involved qualitative metaphor analysis conducted through the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) proposed by the Pragglejaz Group, which provides a standardized protocol for detecting metaphorically used lexical units in discourse. Each text was coded for metaphorical expressions and then interpreted at the conceptual level by reconstructing the underlying mappings between source and target domains. This procedure enabled the identification of dominant conceptual metaphors such as POLITICS IS WAR, NATION IS FAMILY, and ECONOMY IS A MACHINE, as well as more implicit metaphorical framings that function not only as stylistic choices but as cognitive operations shaping public interpretation.

The second stage involved quantitative frame analysis based on Entman’s framing model, conceptualizing framing as the selective highlighting and salience of certain aspects of reality. Using NVivo, coded materials were processed through quantitative content analysis to measure frequency, distribution, and co-occurrence of key frames across the dataset. This made it possible to identify dominant frame configurations, including issue-specific frames, causal attribution patterns, and moral-evaluative structures, and to compare cross-platform tendencies between institutional media formats and social media discourse. Additionally, framing shifts were examined in relation to specific socio-political events to trace changes in salience and interpretive emphasis over time.

Analytical rigor was ensured through procedures of reliability and validity. Intercoder reliability tests were conducted on a 20% subsample of the corpus. The results yielded Cohen’s Kappa values of 0.82 for metaphor coding and 0.87 for frame identification, which indicates

substantial agreement and supports the consistency of the coding procedures. Coding protocols were designed prior to full-scale analysis and were refined through iterative coder training sessions. Methodological triangulation was implemented by systematically cross-validating qualitative metaphor findings against quantitative distributional patterns, thereby strengthening internal validity and enhancing interpretive robustness.

Ethical standards were observed throughout the study in accordance with institutional research guidelines and data protection principles. Social media materials were collected exclusively from publicly accessible sources, and any personal identifiers were anonymized to protect privacy. The study did not involve experimental manipulation or intervention and therefore posed minimal risk to human participants. Transparency in data handling and reproducibility of analytical procedures were treated as core methodological priorities.

RESULTS

The analysis revealed several dominant cognitive mechanisms embedded within the media corpus, highlighting both recurrent metaphorical structures and framing strategies. Below, we present the key quantitative and qualitative findings, supported by visual data representations.

The qualitative analysis identified several dominant metaphorical patterns shaping media narratives, each functioning not only as a linguistic device but also as a cognitive tool that structures public understanding of complex socio-political realities. Notable among these were:

POLITICS AS WAR (e.g., “attacking the opposition,” “defending national interests”), observed 120 times across the corpus. This metaphor activates a conflictual schema that frames political competition as a zero-sum battle between adversaries, invoking associations of winners, losers, strategies, and casualties. Such framing not only simplifies complex political dynamics but also heightens emotional engagement, mobilizing fear, aggression, and solidarity [9, 10, 11].

NATION AS FAMILY (e.g., “protecting the motherland,” “caring for citizens”), identified in 85 occurrences. This metaphor draws on the deeply embodied experience of familial relations to conceptualize the nation-state as a protective parental figure, emphasizing themes of care, loyalty, and moral responsibility [7]. Importantly, the family metaphor often serves to naturalize political hierarchies and legitimize paternalistic governance structures, framing political leaders as parental caretakers and citizens as dependent children.

ECONOMY AS MACHINE (e.g., “restarting the economy,” “fueling growth”), present in 95 instances. This metaphor portrays economic systems as mechanical entities that require maintenance, adjustment, or repair, foregrounding technical rationality and managerial control [8]. By depersonalizing economic relations, the machine metaphor often obscures the human and social dimensions of economic policy, shifting public focus toward efficiency and functionality.

In addition to these predominant patterns, the analysis uncovered several emergent metaphorical themes that, while less frequent, indicate shifting conceptualizations in the digital

media landscape. For instance, *INFORMATION AS VIRUS* metaphors (e.g., “viral content,” “contagious rumors”) were increasingly common in social media contexts, reflecting concerns about the rapid, uncontrolled spread of misinformation and its societal impact [9]. Similarly, *ENVIRONMENT AS PATIENT* metaphors (e.g., “healing the planet,” “sick ecosystems”) were observed in climate-related reporting, underscoring the anthropomorphic projection of vulnerability and the need for remedial action.

These findings suggest that metaphorical framing in media discourse is not static but evolves in response to emerging socio-political concerns and communicative practices. Moreover, the differential distribution of metaphor types across platforms (as detailed in Figures 1–2) highlights the role of media-specific affordances in shaping cognitive patterns, with social media favoring more novel and hybrid metaphors compared to the relatively stable metaphorical repertoires of traditional journalism.

The analysis revealed that media outlets employ a range of framing devices that systematically shape audience interpretation by highlighting particular causes, assigning responsibility, and guiding moral evaluations. Building on Entman’s conceptualization of framing as the selection and salience of certain aspects of reality, our data identified several recurrent framing patterns across the corpus.

First, causal attribution frames were frequently used to assign blame or credit for socio-political outcomes. For instance, political leaders were often framed as responsible agents (“the president’s failure to act,” “the government’s decisive response”), which structured audience perceptions of accountability and agency. This aligns with Iyengar’s findings on episodic and thematic framing, where individual or systemic causes are emphasized to direct public judgment.

Second, emotional framing emerged as a powerful mechanism to evoke affective responses. Media texts employed emotionally charged language to construct narratives of crisis, threat, or hope (e.g., “a looming catastrophe,” “a glimmer of hope”), amplifying public engagement through affective resonance [8]. This was especially pronounced in social media contexts, where emotional amplification was linked to higher rates of sharing and virality.

Third, moral evaluation frames positioned actors and actions within normative dimensions, casting them as either morally righteous or blameworthy. Such moral framing served to reinforce ideological alignments, depicting political allies as “protectors” and opponents as “threats” or “corrupt agents.” This binary moral coding simplifies complex political landscapes, making them more cognitively accessible to mass audiences [12].

Quantitative analysis further revealed platform-specific tendencies: while traditional media predominantly employed causal and moral frames, social media environments displayed a marked increase in emotional framing, reflecting the interactive, affect-driven nature of these platforms.

Our analysis uncovered several instances of hybrid cognitive models in media discourse. One prominent example was the blend between technology and democracy, where digital

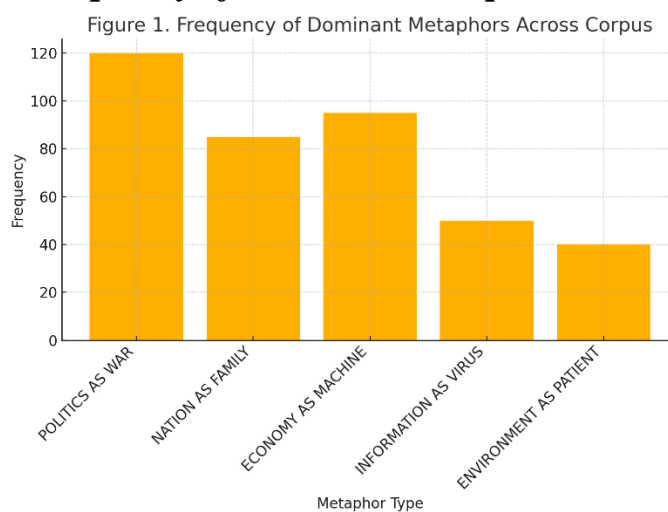
innovations (e.g., online voting, e-petitions, social media activism) were framed as enhancing democratic participation. This blending generated emergent meanings such as “citizen empowerment through technology” or “digital sovereignty,” which are not inherent in either input domain alone.

Another salient blend was between health and security, particularly in pandemic-related reporting. Here, public health crises were conceptualized through security and defense schemas (e.g., “the frontline of the pandemic,” “combatting the virus”), producing a militarized understanding of health governance. This blend foregrounded notions of threat, defense, and sacrifice, with profound implications for public attitudes toward health policy and civil liberties.

Crucially, the prevalence of conceptual blends was disproportionately higher in social media discourse, where multimodal content (text, images, videos, memes) facilitates complex cognitive integrations (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009). This suggests that digital media environments not only transmit but actively reshape cognitive patterns by promoting creative, multimodal blends that challenge traditional conceptual boundaries.

Overall, these findings underscore the significance of conceptual blending as a key cognitive mechanism in media discourse, expanding our understanding beyond metaphor and framing to capture the generative, emergent nature of meaning-making in contemporary media ecologies.

Figure 1. Frequency of Dominant Metaphors Across Corpus



The results depicted in Figure 1 demonstrate a clear dominance of the *POLITICS AS WAR* metaphor across the analyzed corpus, followed by the *ECONOMY AS MACHINE* and *NATION AS FAMILY* metaphors. These three conceptual patterns together account for the majority of metaphorical framings identified, underscoring their entrenched role in structuring media narratives.

Notably, the emergent metaphors *INFORMATION AS VIRUS* and *ENVIRONMENT AS PATIENT*, while less frequent overall, represent significant cognitive innovations within the media discourse, particularly in the context of digital and environmental reporting. Their

presence suggests a growing sensitivity in public discourse to the complexities of information spread and ecological crisis, reflecting the media’s adaptive incorporation of contemporary societal challenges into its metaphorical repertoire.

The quantitative prominence of these metaphorical patterns not only confirms their explanatory relevance but also provides a foundation for examining their qualitative functions in subsequent sections of the analysis.

While Figure 1 provides an overview of the overall frequency of dominant metaphors across the entire dataset, it is equally important to examine how these cognitive patterns are distributed across different media platforms.

Figure 2 presents a comparative analysis of metaphor and cognitive mechanism usage across news articles, televised debates, and social media posts, highlighting platform-specific tendencies and variations.

Figure 2. Distribution of Cognitive Mechanisms Across Media Platforms

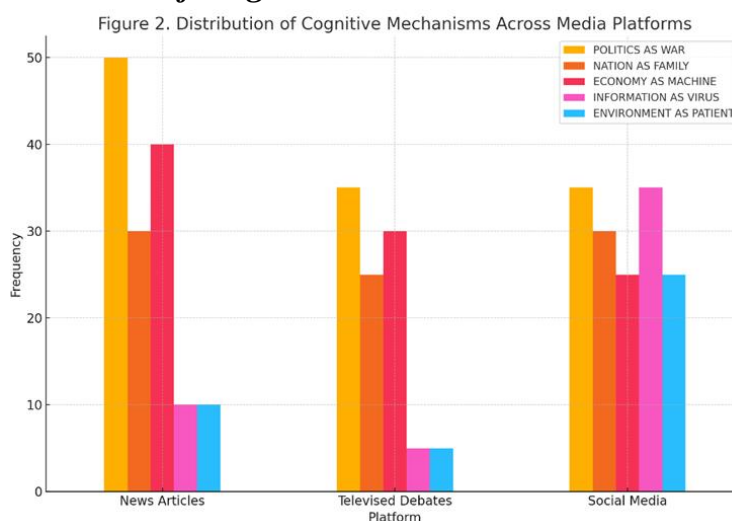


Figure 2 illustrates the distributional patterns of key cognitive mechanisms – including metaphorical framing and conceptual blending – across the three analyzed media platforms: news articles, televised debates, and social media.

The data reveal that traditional media (news articles and televised debates) predominantly rely on well-established metaphorical frames such as *POLITICS AS WAR*, *NATION AS FAMILY*, and *ECONOMY AS MACHINE*, reflecting conventional journalistic and institutional discursive norms. In contrast, social media displays a markedly higher occurrence of emergent cognitive blends, particularly *INFORMATION AS VIRUS* and *ENVIRONMENT AS PATIENT*, suggesting that digital media environments not only replicate but also innovate cognitive strategies by incorporating hybrid and multimodal patterns.

This platform-specific variation underscores the significance of medium effects in shaping public cognition: whereas traditional media tend to reinforce stable interpretative frameworks, social media appears to foster dynamic and experimental meaning-making

processes. These findings provide important empirical support for the hypothesis that the cognitive architecture of media discourse is fundamentally shaped by the affordances, constraints, and interactional dynamics of its communicative platform.

DISCUSSION

The findings presented in the previous section provide important insights into the cognitive mechanisms underlying contemporary media discourse. By systematically analyzing metaphorical framing, framing devices, and conceptual blending across multiple media platforms, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how linguistic and conceptual strategies shape public cognition, ideological positioning, and social meaning-making.

One of the most salient observations is the predominance of classical metaphorical frames – particularly *POLITICS AS WAR*, *NATION AS FAMILY*, and *ECONOMY AS MACHINE* – within traditional media formats, such as news articles and televised debates. This aligns with prior scholarship [9,13] that has emphasized the stability and durability of entrenched cognitive models in institutional discourse. Such frames not only simplify complex socio-political realities but also structure public perception along familiar and cognitively accessible lines, enabling mass audiences to navigate abstract domains through concrete, embodied schemas.

In contrast, social media platforms demonstrated a marked shift toward the use of emergent and hybrid cognitive blends, such as *INFORMATION AS VIRUS* and *ENVIRONMENT AS PATIENT*. This pattern reflects the dynamic, participatory, and multimodal nature of digital media, where rapid user interaction and algorithmically driven amplification foster novel meaning-making practices [15,16]. Importantly, these blends not only reflect contemporary societal concerns – such as the spread of misinformation and the urgency of ecological crises – but also reveal how digital environments actively reshape cognitive repertoires by promoting innovative combinations of conceptual domains.

A further theoretical implication concerns the interaction between cognitive mechanisms and platform affordances. While previous research has primarily focused on the linguistic or cognitive dimensions of media framing, the present study highlights the critical role of medium-specific factors – such as interactivity, multimodality, and user-generated content – in modulating the salience, form, and function of cognitive strategies. This underscores the need for an integrated cognitive-discursive approach that accounts for both the mental architectures of meaning construction and the material conditions of media production, circulation, and reception [14].

From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the urgency of developing critical media literacy programs that equip audiences with the cognitive tools to recognize, deconstruct, and resist manipulative or ideologically charged framing strategies. As media environments become increasingly fragmented and algorithmically personalized, the capacity to critically engage with the underlying cognitive patterns of media discourse becomes not merely a scholarly concern but a pressing democratic imperative.

Finally, while this study offers robust empirical and theoretical contributions, it also invites further research, particularly in cross-cultural contexts. Given the linguistic and cultural specificity of the present corpus, future studies should investigate whether similar cognitive patterns operate in non-Western or multilingual media environments, as well as explore the role of visual and audiovisual modalities in shaping cognitive frames and blends.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has provided an in-depth cognitive-linguistic and discursive investigation of contemporary media discourse, offering both empirical findings and theoretical contributions to the interdisciplinary understanding of media cognition. By systematically analyzing how metaphorical framing, framing devices, and conceptual blending operate across multiple media platforms, the research has illuminated the intricate ways in which language, cognition, and media interact to shape public perceptions, ideological alignments, and collective meaning-making.

One of the most salient conclusions drawn from this study is that media discourse is not a passive or neutral medium for transmitting factual information; rather, it functions as an active cognitive system that selectively constructs, organizes, and prioritizes particular versions of social reality. The prevalence of entrenched metaphorical frameworks – such as *POLITICS AS WAR*, *NATION AS FAMILY*, and *ECONOMY AS MACHINE* – in traditional media reflects the deep-rooted cognitive schemata through which political and economic phenomena are conceptualized and communicated to mass audiences. These frames not only simplify complex realities but also exert powerful ideological effects by reinforcing specific interpretative lenses, moral evaluations, and emotional orientations.

At the same time, the findings underscore the transformative role of social media as a site of cognitive innovation and discursive experimentation. Unlike traditional media, which tends to stabilize and standardize interpretative frames, social media platforms enable the rapid circulation, remixing, and hybridization of cognitive patterns, giving rise to emergent conceptual blends such as *INFORMATION AS VIRUS* and *ENVIRONMENT AS PATIENT*. These emergent blends reflect the evolving concerns of digital societies – including the spread of misinformation, the challenges of digital governance, and the urgency of environmental sustainability – and demonstrate how technological affordances shape not only the speed and reach of media communication but also its cognitive architecture.

Theoretically, this research contributes to advancing the field of media cognition by demonstrating that cognitive mechanisms are not static linguistic features but dynamic, context-sensitive operations shaped by the interplay of linguistic, technological, social, and cultural forces. This integrative perspective aligns with recent calls for more ecologically valid and interdisciplinary approaches to cognitive linguistics [3,4] emphasizing the need to situate cognitive processes within real-world communicative environments.

From a practical standpoint, the study highlights the urgent need for critical media literacy initiatives that move beyond surface-level fact-checking to engage with the deeper cognitive

mechanisms underpinning media discourse. As media environments become increasingly fragmented, algorithmically personalized, and ideologically polarized, audiences require sophisticated cognitive tools to navigate, interpret, and critically evaluate the framing strategies, metaphorical patterns, and conceptual blends that shape their informational landscapes. Such literacy is not only essential for informed citizenship but also for maintaining the resilience of democratic public spheres in the face of manipulative or polarizing discursive practices.

Finally, the study offers a series of recommendations for future research. First, comparative cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies are needed to assess whether similar cognitive patterns operate in non-Western, multilingual, or culturally diverse media contexts. Second, greater attention should be paid to the role of multimodal and audiovisual elements in shaping cognitive framing, particularly in digital environments where visual and verbal cues interact dynamically. Third, longitudinal research tracking changes in media cognition over time could provide valuable insights into how major socio-political events, technological disruptions, or cultural shifts reshape the cognitive and discursive landscapes of media communication.

In sum, this research advances the understanding of media cognition by offering a comprehensive, empirically grounded, and theoretically informed account of the cognitive mechanisms that shape media discourse. It invites continued interdisciplinary exploration and emphasizes the importance of cognitive and discursive awareness in both academic and public spheres.

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