

Transparency and Opaqueness of Conceptual Metaphors in Jordanian Medical Discourse: A Cross-Cultural Analysis

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Abstract

The translation of medical conceptual metaphors (CMs) from Arabic into English and the cross-cultural transparency of their meanings are examined in this study. Metaphors were found using the metaphor identification procedure (MIP) and then examined using Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Critical Metaphor Analysis on a corpus of Jordanian Arabic health texts, including Ministry of Health advertising and hospital materials. War, journey, predator, balance, and machine were the five primary realms that arose. WAR and religious metaphors needed adaptive translation to preserve empathy and steer clear of overly severe language, whereas JOURNEY and MACHINE metaphors demonstrated excellent transparency. Micro-glossing and functional equivalency struck the optimal balance between accessibility and fidelity among the examined techniques. The results highlight the necessity of culturally sensitive translation techniques that maintain the emotional and persuasive power of medical metaphors while guaranteeing understanding among speakers of different languages.

Keywords: medical discourse, conceptual metaphors, functional equivalence, health discourse

1. Introduction

The study of conceptual metaphors, as outlined by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), reveals how metaphors are deemed more than mere linguistic devices; they shape our perception, cognition, and social interactions. The literature on conceptual metaphors, all in all, explores the role, function, and application of metaphor across various languages, cultural contexts, domains, and communicative purposes, where Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is the guiding theory. This theory introduces metaphors as fundamental structures in shaping human cognition and perception, rather than merely as an adornment to the texts. Within medical discourse, metaphors not only structure thought but also impact patient attitudes and how illness is framed, making their translation especially critical. (Bleakley, 2017).

This study's importance lies in the translational perspective it adopts; it seeks not only to record metaphor frequencies but also to assess their cross-cultural transparency and explore the methods for faithfully yet responsibly expressing them. This study proposes a reproducible framework for evaluating how metaphor transfers across cultures, focusing on maintaining semantic mapping, avoiding stigma, and improving comprehension by fusing reader-based transparency ratings and strategy testing (literal translation, functional equivalence, paraphrasing, and glossing) with MIP-based metaphor identification. Based on the continuous progress of public health communication in Jordan, where precise cultural awareness is vital in influencing commitment, trust, and health outcomes, this strategy is especially relevant.

This current work fills a critical gap at the crux of translation studies, cross-cultural communication, and CMT. The exploration of metaphors like WAR, JOURNEY, PREDATOR, BALANCE, and MACHINE in health discourse has been extensively examined in previous research (Coll-Florit & Climent, 2022; Rodehau-Noack, 2021), but much less attention has been paid to investigating how these metaphors are rendered, modified, or transformed in Arabic–English translation, especially in the Jordanian medical field. According to the literature, it is attested that conceptual metaphors are strong cognitive tools that shape how the general public views sickness and health-related behavior. However, it is also found that they contain emotional and ideological significance varying with the language and culture (Stibbe, 1995; Lahlou & Rahim, 2022). To bridge this gap, this research focuses on answering the following questions:

- 1- Which conceptual metaphors are more frequent in the Jordanian medical discourse, and how are they distributed across various genres, including media, clinical pamphlets, and campaigns?
- 2- Which source domains are most at risk of cultural or emotional misrepresentation, and how transparent are these analogies when translated literally into English?
- 3- Which translation techniques—functional equivalency, paraphrasing, glossing, and literal retention—achieve the greatest transparency and maintain rhetorical effect for target audiences?
- 4- What strategies can lessen possible meaning loss or unexpected connotation? How can religiously and culturally particular metaphors (such as disease as a heavenly trial) impact cross-cultural understanding?

2. Literature Review

Since studies on conceptual metaphors have been conducted in the medical field, this review section is to discuss the theory of conceptual metaphors in health discourse and how these metaphors could be tackled cross-culturally by examining the extent to which these are transparent/opaque across languages, and surely, how they could be rendered and what strategies of foreignization and domestication are employed. The recent literature in this domain has addressed the dominant frames and their functions, patients' and professionals' metaphor preferences, alternative metaphor ecologies, and cross-cultural transfer, as well as implications for translation and their transfer. Additionally, in the context of prevention discourse, it has explored how it interacts with biomedical imagery.

2.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory in Health Discourse

Research in the fields of linguistics, medical communication, and discourse studies repeatedly demonstrates that conceptual metaphors play a vital role in how people perceive, understand, and respond to sickness. Metaphors such as *war*, *journey*, *predator/disease*, *balance/energy/cleansing*, and *disaster* are not merely decorative; they have a direct impact on translation transparency because they frame behavior and reasoning, influence genre choices (science vs. press), and transfer differently between languages and cultures.

War is the most prevalent source domain in the general health and crisis discourse. According to studies of COVID-19 news and public discourse, war was the most recurrent metaphor, followed by *disaster*, *killer/agent*, and, infrequently, *possession* and *earthquake* as Stibbe (1995) and Lahlou & Rahim (2022) proved. These source domains can shift the emotional tone toward fear and militancy and are employed to attract public attention, assign roles such as *enemy/pathogens*, *commander/doctor*, *fighter/patient*, *allies/health team*, and motivate urgency. Similar ideological work and domination of war (as well as killer, possession, and earthquake) are reported in English language publications in Pakistan, where metaphors are used to impact public opinion and instill a sense of seriousness (Lahlou & Rahim, 2022); Rasool Jan & Noreen, (2021). Rodehau-Noack (2021) further found that *war/biomedical crossing* also occurs in the opposite direction beyond war. In prevention medicine, war is framed as a disease, either as a plague or epidemic (a cataclysmic idea) or as a risk factor that needs to be managed through techno-scientific governance. Each of these framings conveys unique ideological implications regarding health, order, and the “body politic”.

Both *war* and *journey* are popular in a corpus of a million-word Spanish mental health blog, but they are employed differently by patients. War signifies struggle and empowerment, while a journey encodes progress and hope. With varying emotional and coping outcomes, these two sources reinterpret the same source domains (disease, symptoms, emotions, society, and medical activity), implying cautious, context-sensitive application rather than categorical acceptance or rejection (Coll-Florit & Climent, 2022). Comparing oncology research articles and press articles reveals that the former favor vivid, approachable imagery that reflects to everyday experience (e.g., disease as a predator ‘attacking’ a victim) with clear rhetorical effects, while the latter relies more on structural, ontological, or directive metaphors for categorization and knowledge construction (I Ferrando, 2021). Translators should strike a balance between accuracy and public logic while maintaining the audience and skopos in mind. These genre implications are crucial (I Ferrando, 2021).

FIGHTING coexists with other powerful families—BALANCE, ENERGY, CLEANSING, and WHOLENESS—and these migrate across cultures according to a thorough thesis on illness metaphors in clinical talk and alternative medicine. The paper provides a dynamic explanation of metaphor activation and examines how patients' quality of life and adherence to treatment can be positively or negatively impacted by metaphor selection, contending that context and personal coping mechanisms are important. Additionally, it details how WAR analogies have crossed cultural boundaries into Chinese medical contexts and how balance/energy metaphors have flowed backward into Western discourse (Rodehau-Noack, 2021). This emphasizes for translators that CM transparency is culturally situated: unless appropriately localized, metaphors that “click” in one discourse community (such as “ENERGY CLEANSING”) may be opaque or have unwanted meanings in another.

Disease is a predator, a strong metaphor that organizes patient-disease interactions (*aggressive*, *opportunities*, *dominant*), and even when it is lexically concrete, the predicate behavior contains *attack/response* dynamics, according to a detailed analysis of oncology discourse (I Ferrando, 2021). Another clue for translators about where literalness preserves meaning versus where a descriptive gloss improves transparency is provided by the same work, which separates metaphors (e.g., *starry sky pattern*) from technical denominators (“diffuse,” “effusion”) and proves how some labels become conventionalized and lose their metaphoric connotation (ibid.).

Metaphoric expressions are cognitively effective and persuasively powerful, according to these studies, yet their cross-cultural transparency varies depending on the genre, audience, and cultural metaphors. War and JOURNEY are widely used because they are highly transparent/concrete in many languages, such as Spanish, French, and English. Still, they also include emotional and ethical tradeoffs (*mobilization* vs. *Stigma/fatalism*) (Coll-Florit & Climent, 2022) (Stibbe, 1995). WAR and JOURNEY have well-established and probably understandable renderings in Arabic (Jordan); however, *disaster* and *killer* can evoke terror, and *balance* and *energy* may correspond with religious or traditional health notions in ways that need to be carefully drafted to prevent misunderstandings (Rodehau-Noack, 2021). In this respect, translators and health communicators should (a) diagnose the metaphor's function (categorize vs. motivate), (b) prefer functional equivalency where literal metaphor transfer risks cultural noise, given the obvious genre split between technical and public communications. These actions mirror methodological strategies that are suggested or demonstrated across the corpus (I Ferrando, 2021; Rodehau-Noack, 2021;).

In conclusion, the reversal of ‘war as disease’ serves as a reminder that metaphor crosses both the political and medical spheres. Every import carries ideological baggage (civilization mission vs. technocratic risk control), which translators must address or temper in footnotes or pretext when necessary, particularly in high-risk public texts (Rodehau-Noack, 2021).

2.2 Cross-cultural Transparency of Medical Metaphors

Studies on conceptual metaphors in various languages attest to the fact that they are influenced by cultural worldviews and embodied cognition at the same time. Due to this dichotomy, while translating metaphorical language, translators must bear in mind both cultural resonance and semantic equivalence. It is necessary to strike a balance between universals and cultural specifics to achieve cross-cultural transparency (Alshunnag et al., 2025), where the target audience understands the metaphor’s cognitive understanding and pragmatic impact.

Some metaphors, like happy is up and sad is down, are almost universal, according to basic cross-cultural research, but other mappings demonstrate reversals based on value systems, in order to show why ‘transparent’ metaphors in English may have the opposite meaning in other cultural contexts, Wnuk, E., & Ito, Y. (2021) documents the Mlabri community’s inversion of up/down valuations, where Doen indexes desirable states (Wnuk, E., & Ito, Y. (2021)). Similarly, Tang et al., (2025) warn against flattering culturally rich frames into biomedical literalism and emphasizes the epistemic relevance of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) metaphors (liver fire flaring up) Karimovna (2023) illustrates how pragmatic elements like power distance and politeness standards influence the uptake of metaphors in Uzbek and English medical consultations, influencing the perception of translated metaphors.

Techniques and models for translating metaphors. In order to maintain metaphor density when it enhances text esthetics, Zahid (2020) suggests a methodological paradigm that combines Venut’s (1995) foreignization/domestication continuum with Nord’s skopos theory. This is further supported by Sundqvist (2018), who calls for translators to receive training in metaphor awareness and use Newmark’s (1988) techniques to determine when to use, modify, or replace metaphors. These models are essential for translating medical texts into Arabic because using war metaphors literally could indicate hostility the is not intended by the original material.

In order to prevent stigmatization, Gao & Zhao (2025) suggests inclusive metaphors design for cultural metaphor panels that highlight the significance of figurative language in fronting group identification and adherence to health initiatives. An empirical comparison of COVID-19 messaging in the UK, India, and china is given in Hussain et al. (2025). In China, responsibility frames predominated, spiritual metaphors were prominent in Indian discourse, and collective metaphors dominated Chinese discourse. These differences highlight how, in the absence of cultural adaptation, direct translation may lose its persuasive power.

Examining metaphor in its communications, Mykhalchuk et al., (2021) makes the case that while metaphors like “firewall” or “virus” aid in understanding, audiences without common cultural schemes require meditation. Kövecses, Steen, and Eco’s theories are synthesized in Philip (2016), which emphasizes that figurative language is “at the limits of translatability” and shouldn’t be neutralized needlessly. Instead, translators should mediate metaphor rather than remove it in order to increase interpretive space.

A further religious framework conceptualizes cancer as a divinely decreed ordeal, which translators must maintain to prevent eliminating spiritual meaning. This is demonstrated by Abaalalaa & Ibrahim (2022), which examines the online narratives of Arabic breast cancer sufferers. War and journey metaphors overlap with English. When agency models clash, Al-Kharabsheh (2011)’s analysis of euphemistic metaphors in Jordanian obituaries reveals how Arabic fatalistic theories-which hold that death is God’s will, pose a barrier to English translation. The significance of harmonizing neologisms to preserve clarity is highlighted by Haddad et al., (2023), which examines the origin and translation of COVID-19 into Arabic. According to Aladel’s (2023) analysis of Naidi Arabic body-parts proverbs, the metaphors head, nose, and hand embody culturally particular values such as honor and moral autonomy, necessitating the use of functional counterparts or cultural glosses; a similar result drawn by Alboutoush et al. (2026). Jabber & Al-Saedi (2020) examine hot/cold metaphors in Iraqi Arabic, demonstrating how their emotional intensity is localized while still verifying their universality. These studies collectively show that whereas Arabic CMS share structural similarities, they also carry extra religious and pragmatic weight that translators need to carefully balance (Abaalalaa & Ibrahim (2022); Jabber & Al-Saedi ,2020).

3. Methods

3.1 Data Collection

Selected medical texts and public health resources created in Jordan were used to compile the metaphorical excerpts. These included television health segments that were accessible on official media between 2023 and 2025, the Ministry of Health booklets, hospital pamphlets, internet articles, and announcements of vaccination campaigns. In order to reflect continuing public health efforts and to capture the most current metaphorical framings of disease and health communication during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, this time range was selected. Only validated and extensively disseminated sources were used to assure validity, with preference given to those approved by the Ministry of Health or significant hospitals.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The present work falls within the categories of critical metaphor analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004) and conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). In the Jordanian socio-medical context, these complementary frameworks enable the identification of metaphorical mappings (source –target domains) as well as the interpretation of their ideological and rhetorical purposes.

3.3 Metaphor Identification

The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) by Pragglejaz Group (2007) was used to systematically identify linguistic metaphors across the sample. Given this method, a lexical unit was classified as metaphorical when a cross-domain mapping was triggered and its meaning in the given context had shifted from its more basic, concrete sense. In uncertain situations, the concept of semantic tension (Charteris-Black, 2004) was employed to verify metaphorical status.

3.4 Categorization and Conceptual Patterns

The five main target domains found in the sample were WAR, JOURNEY, PREDATOR, BALANCE, and MACHINE. Every metaphorical expression found was tabulated according to the respective source domain that corresponded to it. Then, the grouping of conceptual metaphors in forms such as CANCER IS AN ENEMY and RECOVERY IS A JOURNEY was collected, followed by layering meaning and potential for translation ambiguity of cases involving mixed-domain metaphors. Some expressions have religious or spiritual qualities that overlay the five primary source domains previously described, even though the analysis adheres to these core domains. These metaphors enhance the cultural interpretation of already-existing domains, especially in situations when language practice and spiritual worldview collide, but they do not form a distinct domain in the taxonomy. Therefore, more cultural awareness is needed when translating them.

3.5 Translation and Transparency Assessment

There were four strategies employed to translate each metaphorical expression into English: (1) literal retention; (2) culturally related metaphor, aka functional equivalence; (3) paraphrasing; and (4) metaphor with micro-gloss. Using a 5-point Likert scale (1 being opaque and 5 being entirely transparent), a bilingual panel of Jordanian and English-speaking volunteers ($n = 5$) evaluated each translated metaphor's transparency. To guarantee rating consistency, inter-rater reliability was assessed.

3.6 Interpretation and Rhetorical Function

The findings are qualitative in terms of interpreting the resulting CMs, focusing on how they map illness, treatment, and patients' roles. Particular attention was given to metaphors on stigmatization, alarming, or empowering patients, besides those that function to resonate culturally and religiously, such as *illness as a divine trial*. The goal of this interpretive step is to identify the rhetorical purposes of metaphor use in Jordanian health communications, such as reassurance, education, and mobilization.

3.7 Presentation Style

In the findings section, source domains are highlighted and metaphor keywords are italicized for clarity. To illustrate how source-domain information is projected onto the target domain, CM patterns are arranged into brief narratives and presented in small uppercase (e.g., DISEASE IS AN ENEMY).

3.8 Validation

The qualitative assessment of metaphor transparency was carried out with a targeted panel of five bilingual experts, despite the fact that the corpus component of this study comprises a wide variety of texts. This purposeful design aligns with earlier research that employ expert-driven judgment for interpreting metaphorical language. The goal was depth rather than breadth, enabling evaluators to deliver nuanced linguistic and cultural insights that large-scale participant surveys cannot provide.

4. Findings

4.1 Corpus Characteristics and Genre Profile

The sample has been drawn from 62 documents, including televised health announcements, hospital patient booklets, Ministry of Health (MoH) publications, posters for vaccination campaigns, and quality assessment reports (such as staff satisfaction surveys and discharge summary audits). The corpus as a whole represents the most extensively shared health communication documents in Jordan from 2015 to 2024, a period marked by heightened public education efforts and post-pandemic health system improvements. The final corpus included 62 texts with a combined word count of about 35,400. These materials were selected from three primary genres of Jordanian medical discourse: public health announcements ($n = 25$), Guidelines from the hospital and ministry ($n = 18$), and Patient education materials and awareness brochures ($n = 19$).

In order to capture metaphor use across various communicative goals and technical levels, this genre diversity was purposefully chosen. Actually, five dominant metaphor domains were systematically identified as shown in Table 1. Below:

Table 1. Metaphor Domains and their Frequencies in the MoH Resources in the Years 2015-2024

Metaphor domains	Frequency across the sample	Examples
War/ combat	35	-we fight cancer تحارب السرطان -prevention is our weapon الوقاية سلاحنا
Journey/ progress	27	-the treatment journey رحلة العلاج -steps toward recovery خطوات التعافي
Predator/ enemy	15	- the disease attacks the body المرض يهاجم الجسم -the virus hides الفيروس يختبئ
Balance/ homeostasis	13	- Hormonal imbalance اختلال الهرمونات - Fluid balance توازن السوائل
Machine/ mechanism	10	- The heart is not functioning efficiently القلب لا يعمل بكفاءة - The immune system is down الجهاز المناعي معطل

Comparing genres revealed significant variations in distribution. JOURNEY metaphors were the most widely used in brochures about chronic illness, mental health, and rehabilitation; BALANCE and MACHINE metaphors were prevalent in technical hospital reports and pharmaceutical pamphlets; and WAR and PREDATOR metaphors were widely used in campaign slogans and vaccine programs. This demonstrates how metaphor selection is extremely genre-sensitive according to the specific medical context, and this may reflect the communication objectives of technical accuracy, reassurance, or mobilization.

4.2 Translational Transparency across Domains

Whether literal or modified English renderings maintain both cognitive representation and rhetorical impact was the main subject of translation analysis; the frequency analysis has shown, first, that the most transparent metaphors were codified as JOURNEY metaphors (mean 4.7/5) without losing semantic meaning, phrases like “رحلة التعافي” translated literally to “the recovery journey”. Crucially, by portraying illness as a process with attainable milestones, these metaphors promoted reader participation. This representation is reflected in international patient-centered care recommendations. Second, when translated literally, WAR metaphors exhibited tone amplification despite having a clear semantic meaning (mean transparency=4.3/5). Some raters thought that the militaristic implications in “نحارب , السرطان” which means “we wage war on cancer” were emotionally tough. Transparency remained high, and emotional reception was enhanced when rephrased as “working together to defeat cancer”. PREDATOR metaphors (such as “الفيروس يهاجم”), thirdly, when they are translated literally, increase raters’ terror indices. Compared to more neutral alternatives like “the virus affects the body” bilingual reviewers indicated that “the virus attacks the body” ran the risk of escalating public fear. Further, homeostasis and balance metaphors were moderately transparent (Mean 3.9/5). For biological audiences, the phrase “اختلال” meant “unbalance”, but for average readers, it was sometimes opaque, suggesting that more explanation was required. MACHINE/ MECHANISM metaphors as common organs or systems described, lastly, were quite transparent (Mean=4.6/5), but this was not the case for texts including metaphors for technical devices (such as pacemaker reset), where the procedure of micro glossing enhanced understanding.

4.3 Translation Strategies and Reader Response

Four translation strategies were compared:

1. Literary retention: these are best suited for metaphors that show a high degree of cross-linguistic conceptual alignment, such as JOURNEY and MACHINE, i.e., they are more universal.
2. Functional equivalence: This goes well with metaphors like WAR and PREDATOR. For instance, “stands against smoking” – “تحارب التدخين” reduced perceived stigma while maintaining agency and mitigating the militaristic tone.
3. Use non-metaphoric paraphrasing sparingly; it rided motivational representation from texts and reduced engagement (-18% comprehension ratings).
4. Micro-glossing: this has been proven as crucial for metaphors with cultural or religious value, such as “المرض ابتلاء” (illness is a trial for God), which translates as “illness is seen as a divinely ordained trial (a test of patience)”, maintaining spiritual peculiarity and improving cross-cultural impact.

4.4 Cross-cultural and Religious Sensitivity

Numerous references to faith-based frames were found in the corpus, particularly in palliative care literature (e.g., “الصبر مفتاح الفرج”-patience is the key to relief). The consoling tone appreciated in Arabic was occasionally lost in the literal translation, which yet conveyed propositional meaning. The addition of brief interpretive glosses (≤ 12 words) maintained semantic fidelity while conveying the effective and spiritual dimensions during the back-translation process.

4.5 Genre-Specific Insights

- WAR metaphors in vaccination campaigns: “سلاحنا التطعيم” were effective but ran the danger of upsetting those who were hesitant to receive vaccines. According to pilot surveys, the use of cooperative metaphors (also known as “our shared shield”) increased acceptance ratings.
- Chronic illness Brochures: JOURNEY metaphors, which highlighted gradual improvement and treatment plan adherence, struck a chord with patient groups.

- Mental health resources: excessive use of WAR metaphors (such as “معركة ضد الاكتئاب”) could give the impression that portraying the patient as constantly suffering. Recasting it into metaphors enhanced emotional response by recasting it into metaphors of JOURNEY or BALANCE.

4.6 Implications for Translational Practice

The findings reveal that translation is not a neutral transfer but a reframing process. The evidence suggests that:

- In high-impact contexts such as oncology, mental health, translators should prefer functional equivalence or softened metaphors
- When conceptual metaphors are universal, Literal retention is safe, but tone modulation may be required to avoid unintended severity.
- In public health translation workflows, reader testing (Likert-scale transparency+ emotional impact surveys) should become a standard practice.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpreting the Prevalence of Metaphor Domains

WAR and JOURNEY metaphors are prevalent in Jordanian health communication, which is consistent with research worldwide showing that these themes are both rhetorically and cognitively powerful (Gao & Zhao, 2025; Hussain et al., 2025). Similar to French, Pakistani, and UK COVID-19 discourse, WAR metaphors initiate urgency and collective action, especially in vaccination campaigns (Gao & Zhao, 2025; Hussain et al., (2025), Mykhalchuk et al., 2021). Miller & Monti (2014) state that although critical metaphor studies warn against “militarizing” illness discourse, our results show that literal retention of militaristic language during translation runs the risk of over-intensifying tone and possibly causing patient anxiety or resistance. JOURNEY metaphors, on the other hand, were universally seen as supportive and encouraged patient engagement, supporting cross-cultural research demonstrating their universal transparency and motivational usefulness (Karimovna, 2023).

5.2 Cross-Cultural Transparency and Translation Strategies

As this study is translation-centered research, it shows that conceptual universality does not necessarily guarantee rhetorical equivalence. For instance, when translated as “waging war on cancer,” the phrase “تحارب السرطان” is semantically transparent; yet, bilingual rater input revealed a greater emotional intensity, attesting that earlier research that suggested war metaphors may arouse terror in some target readership (Hussain et al., 2025). We preserved the conceptual framework while lowering the negative effect by using functional equivalence (“working together to defeat cancer”), which is consistent with Venuti’s domestication techniques and Nord’s Skopos theory (Zahid, 2020; Sundqvist, 2018).

Similarly, metaphors rooted in religious-cultural schemes such as “المرض ابتلاء” require more than literal translation. Our results show that adding a concise interpretive gloss (e.g., “a divinely ordained trial”) retained spiritual meaning and encouraged resonance among English readers. This supports Abaalalaa & Ibrahim (2022) and Al-Kharabsheh (2011)’s findings that Arabic metaphorical discourse often embeds faith-based epistemology that must be conveyed carefully to avoid secularization for pragmatic loss in translation (Abaalalaa & Ibrahim, 2022; Al-Kharabsheh, 2011).

5.3 Genre-Specific Implications

The study highlights the role that genre plays in mediating metaphor function. While JOURNEY or BALANCE metaphors, which stress harmony and steady progress, prove effective in mental health and palliative care materials, campaign slogans rely on war and predator imagery to inspire immediate action. Therefore, strong metaphors must be reframed or softened in chronic or emotionally sensitive contexts, while remaining in chronic or emotionally sensitive contexts, requiring translators to make genre-specific choices. These findings support the suggestions made by Gao & Zhao (2025) and Hussain et al. (2025), which contend that health communication has to be modified according to the target audience, context, and intended behavioral consequence.

5.4 Pedagogical and Professional Applications

For translator education, these findings highlight the importance of training students to recognize metaphor functions and evaluate their cross-cultural impact. Translator trainees should practice comparative analysis in a variety of metaphor domains, rate transparency on Likert scales, and test with literal vs. functional equivalence to develop critical metaphor literacy (Sundqvist, 2018; Miller & Monti, 2014). Incorporating case studies from Jordanian health discourse into courses would prepare students for real-world difficulties by exposing them to actual, culturally grounded metaphor challenges.

5.5 Policy and Ethical Considerations

The results suggest that in order to avoid inconsistent framings, public health professionals should control the use of metaphors in campaigns (e.g., combining loving journey metaphors improves understanding without aggravating stigma or fatalism). Translators and health communicators should work together to pre-test translated materials with target readers. Calls for inclusive, culturally sensitive metaphor design in health communication are echoed in studies by Gao & Zhao (2025) and Hussain et al. (2025).

6. Conclusion

With a focus on Jordanian Arabic health discourse, this study examined the translation of medical metaphors (CMs) and their transparency when translated across languages. Medical communication is abundant with metaphors like WAR, JOURNEY, PREDATOR, BALANCE, and MACHINE, based on research papers published by the website of the Ministry of Health communications, hospital materials, and public health campaigns. By depicting illness as a battle, rehabilitation as a journey, or the body as a machine, these metaphors serve important cognitive and rhetorical functions. However, evidence of differences is found in emotional tone, cultural resonance, and interpretive clarity when they are translated into English.

The results show that cross-cultural transparency is not the sole case. While some metaphors, like “journey” and “machine,” are almost universally understandable, others, such as “war”, “predator,” and metaphors with religious undertones, like “illness as divine trial,” need adaptive strategies to maintain meaning and reduce negative impact and vagueness. Functional equivalence and contextual glossing were found to achieve the highest levels of transparency and reader comprehension when four translation strategies were compared, namely, literal preservation, functional equivalency, paraphrasing and micro-glossing

6.1 Limitations

The study is limited to the size and scope of its corpus, which incorporates Jordanian Arabic-English health literature created between 2023 and 2025, notwithstanding its contributions. To confirm whether comparable metaphorical patterns and translation difficulties appear, future studies should broaden the dataset to include more Arabic-speaking situations or multilingual corpora. Furthermore, although bilingual rater assessments of transparency were included in this study, patient or practitioner judgments of metaphor reception were not examined, thus opening the door for more practical results if this population has been studied further.

The discrepancy between the relatively large corpus and the modest number of bilingual raters is another methodological drawback. While expert panels are typical in metaphor research, the tiny rater sample suggests that transparency scores should be evaluated cautiously. To improve generalizability, future research might include a broader group of translators, medical professionals, or lay readers.

6.2 Implications for Research and Practice

This research makes a theoretical and practical contribution to the fields of metaphor and translation studies. Theoretically speaking, it supports the notion that metaphor translation is a cultural negotiation process that conveys emotion, ideology, and thought rather than a mere linguistic substitution. In practice, it provides a framework for evaluating and instructing metaphor translation, with a focus on reader testing, cross-cultural calibration, and functional equivalency. The findings show how crucial it is for translators and health communicators to match metaphor selection with genre, communicative goal, and target audience sensitivity.

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