Worldwide trends in the development of education and academic research, 15 - 18 June 2015

Metaphorical Conceptualization of the Concept of Siberia in Modern American Mass Media Discourse

Marina Terskikh*, Evgeniya Malenova

Omsk State University n.a. F.M. Dostoyevsky, 55, Prospekt Mira, office 221, Omsk, 644077, Russia

Abstract

The paper focuses on application of conceptual blending theory to reconstruction of the region's media-image. The authors determine the peculiarities of perception of Siberia by the representatives of American culture; detect image-making and metaphorical potentials of the concept "Siberia". By the means of content analysis, the authors detect the mental spaces blended more frequently and explain how the constructed blends influence the image of Siberia. The methodology of the research may be used in PR or marketing practice for the purpose of place branding and creation of a country’s positive image. This work was supported by the Russian humanitarian scientific fund (RGNF) under Grant 15-14-55002 “Reconstruction of Siberian Region Image”.

* Terskikh Marina. Tel.: +73812229815
E-mail address: terskikh@mail.ru

Keywords: place branding; media discourse; concept; conceptual blending; metaphor

1. Introduction

Regional place branding has been an issue for all major spheres of the scientific and mass media discourse lately. Both theoretical and applied studies discuss problems of a public image of a territory; place-branding issues become an agenda for the round table discussions and conferences. German specialist in Political Sciences Alexander Rahr points out that “Russia is facing different obstacles in a modern world. Moreover, they are connected not with the real situation in the country but with the stereotypes of its comprehension by foreigners” (Suprun, 2007, p. 28).
Therefore, we may say that the image of a state plays a very important role nowadays. It determines Russia's place in the structure of international intercourse, which becomes the main federal and governmental issue.

The problem is that the firm and adequate public opinion of Western people on an issue of Russia has yet to be formed. Most of ideas connected with the perception of Russia are not true anymore. The other point is a problem of Russia's regions self-identification that constitutes the whole image of the state; the modern societies’ development tendency highlights the issue of territories' competition.

At present, most part of negative stereotypes concerning Russia is connected with one of its largest regions - Siberia. There is little doubt that the image of Siberia is tightly connected with the image of the whole country, especially in terms of international relationships. It is necessary to create a positive image of Siberia to ensure the further development of the region, to put its infrastructure to a new level, to attract foreign investments. Besides, the positive image of Siberia may improve the image of the whole country.

The interviewing of English-speaking respondents shows that they use cognitive metaphors as often as not to describe culture-specific concepts related to Siberia. From the other point of view, the concept of Siberia evolves a huge interest as a source of the metaphorical transfer, because this aspect also plays a very important part in the development of the public image of the territory.

2. Objectives, methodology and research design

The present paper focuses upon metaphorical conceptualization of Siberia in American mass media, which proved to be a very interesting object of the research.

American mass media very often use Siberia as a source of nominal metaphors. On the one hand, we were able to identify a number of regular metaphorical models based on the vision of Siberia; on the other hand, these metaphorical models cannot be called standard that fills them with a creative potential being an integral feature of any media discourse.

Creative potential of the metaphor is defined by its very nature, because a genuine metaphor is a unique combination of objects, culture-specific concept, etc., with is impossible from the point of view of the common logical laws. Metaphor is constructed according to integration principle in terms or swift drawing together and association of images related to different semantic fields. As famous Russian linguist, Nina Arutyunova (1990, p. 17) says, “Metaphor denies that an object is a member of its class and claims it to be included into a category it never could be associated with on a rational basis. Metaphor challenges the Nature. The source of the metaphor is a conscious mistake in objects' taxonomy”.

In other words, metaphorization mechanism provides unconventional submission of information, which is the core of mass-media discourse.

Image-metaphor claims the source of attributes transferred to the advertised object, thus the attributes themselves serving as a base of metaphorical transfer are still implicit. The task of the consciousness is to pick those attributes of secondary subject, which may be compatible with the nature of the denotation accepting these attributes. As Nina Arutyunova (1999, p. 368) says “metaphorical attribute should become a conjunct with other features of the denotation”. In the process of working with metaphors (meanings that contradict logical thinking), the consciousness gradually manages to conform the meaning to the laws of logic.

The consciousness has to match the objects with contradictory or different characteristics from the point of view of the logical laws. By overcoming that entropy, the consciousness is searching for an attractor - a common feature that may balance this situation and justify the metaphorical comparison. “Mental efforts connected with creation and understanding of a metaphor consist of overcoming this incompatibility and reconstructing the harmony of a meaning” (Arutyunova, 1999, p. 368). Such complicated cognitive operations provide the effect of “knowledge privatization” consisting in firm fixation of the received information in the consciousness of the recipient.

It is necessary to say, that the process of metaphor decoding is a variable one, metaphor gives a recipient a possibility to implement his or her own individual creative interpretation of the metaphor. Talking of the journalists working with mass audience and trying to carry some information to the recipients' consciousness, such characteristic of a metaphor becomes a real disadvantage rather than advantage. This ambiguousness of the interpretation of the information “packed” into a metaphor prevents the mass audience from forming an integral image of the described object.
Thus, the journalist should define a “conceptualization corridor” of the metaphor by estimating all variants of the suggested image's interpretation. The main means of defining this “conceptualization corridor” for information delivered with the help of imagery metaphorical code may be verbal elements that let us target the recipients' cognitive processes in accordance with the addressee's needs.

“During creative processes in a language the objects of the world cannot be detached from the bulk of knowledge concerning these objects. And it doesn't matter whether this knowledge is true or false” (Arutyunova, 1999, p. 369). This idea can be applied to a metaphor in mass media. Here we are talking about distant type of the discourse, its texts are addressed to mass and dispersed recipients, and thus it is necessary to choose the most evident characteristic of the source of metaphorical transfer. In other words, we believe it is necessary to choose the so-called reference carriers of the attributes and features as an auxiliary subject of mass media metaphorical coding. In this case, it is much more possible, that the consciousness of the recipient will follow the “categorization corridor” defined by the addressee.

Stereotypical mindsets connected with the source of the metaphor and reflected in the media discourse usually act as a ground of the metaphorical transfer. It helps to determine those components of the concept of Siberia, which are of importance for representatives of American culture.

We would like to point out that investigation of the blends, as they are understood by G. Fauconnier and M. Turner (1998), Siberia being one of its source spaces, will help us to define structural peculiarities of this concept in the mass-consciousness of American culture representatives.

3. Discussion of the research outcomes

In terms of further investigation of metaphorical conceptualization of the concept of Siberia, it is necessary to detect the way it is actualized in the texts of American mass media. Thus, we will be able to understand the peculiarities of the public image of Siberia created by these means. For the purpose of the present research, we have used the method of content analysis.

The content analysis was performed in the form of a case study of American national press, namely the following papers: The USA Today (USA Today), The New York Times (NYT) and The Los Angeles Times (LAT). We analyzed all articles where the authors mentioned Siberia in any possible context; all the articles were published between the years 2004 - 2014. Among 482 mentions of Siberia, we found 80 examples (16.5%), in which the concept of Siberia is used in its metaphorical sense.

Thus, it shows a great metaphorical potential of the concept under consideration. Siberia is a frequent source of metaphorical transfer, so we can suppose it occupies a definite niche in the consciousness of American people. We use the method of content analysis to define the general tendencies of the image formation of this region and to understand the way American people see Russia, and particularly Siberia. We have mentioned earlier that separate regions become a real image making resource for Russia.

3.1. Reference attributes research of the concept of Siberia

Before proceeding to the content analysis of the selected texts, we think it is necessary to review definitions of “Siberia” used in American dictionaries. It will help us to define basic differential features (reference attributes) of the researched concept.

The largest dictionary of American English Merriam-Webster Dictionary pays attention only to geographical position of Siberian region situated in the Asian part of Russia extending from the Urals to the Pacific: “region in Asia in Russia extending from the Urals to the Pacific”. We can see that this definition also comprises a part of the Far East, which is really another region of Russia.

Webster Online Dictionary also defines Siberia as a part of Russia, located in Asia, with a particular focus on its size: “a vast Asian region of Russia”; besides it gives some facts concerning boreal climatic conditions in winter that are considered a kind of a brand identity of the region. According to this dictionary, Siberia is well-known thanks to its long and cold winters: “famous for long cold winters”.
More detailed definition of Siberia can be found in “Oxford American Dictionary”, which pays attention not only
to geographical position of Siberia, but also to climatic conditions, namely to severe winters: “noted for the severity
of its winters”, some historical facts connected with prisons and exile: “it was traditionally used as a place of exile”.
Besides it pays attention to the economic development of Siberia pointing out its vast natural resources, the main
industry, according to the authors of the dictionary, is hydraulic power engineering: “it is now a major source of
minerals and hydroelectric power”.

The analysis of the definitions of the concept of Siberia lets us schematically presents its structure. Geographical
position characteristics - region of Russia, dimensional characteristics - vast territory, and climatic conditions - cold
winters, construct basic layers of the concept. Interpretation field of the concept contains the following
characteristics: “extending from the Urals to the Pacific”, “territory from Kazakhstan, Mongolia and China to the
Arctic Ocean”, “long winters”, “place of exile”, “natural and power resources”.

Nevertheless, this structure of the concept cannot be considered as a referential one, because it does not reflect
the whole scope of knowledge about Siberia that may theoretically be a part of USA citizens' cognitive base.
Americans get the bulk of their knowledge about other countries and continent through the lessons of Geography at
school. That is why the structure of the concept reconstructed in accordance with the dictionaries, should be
supplemented with additional characteristics reflected in the Geography textbooks used in American schools. We
managed to analyze Geography textbooks published for students of the 6 - 10th grades: Complete Geography, Daily
Geography Practice, Grade 5, X-Kit FET Grade 10 Geography, Spectrum Geography, Grade 6. We also took into
consideration textbooks for students of colleges and universities: Human Geography: People, Place, and Culture,
Geography; as well as teacher's books used by secondary school teachers: Teaching Geography, Second Edition.

It is very interesting that the most frequent characteristics of Siberia was not its geographical position, but severe
climatic conditions, which supplemented the structure of the basic layer of the concept “cold winters”: “extremes in
temperatures”, “very cold region”, “dry cold winters”, “permanent frost”. This impression of adverse climatic
conditions of Siberian winters is supported by mentioning of cold short summers. Dimensional characteristics of
Siberia are supported by the epithets reflecting remoteness and inaccessibility of the Siberian territory: “barren”,
“remote”, “inaccessible”.

Interpretation layer “place of exile” is objectified by historical characteristics reflecting facts of the years of
1920-1940: “during Stalin’s ruthless rule”, “forcibly move”, etc. All above said characteristics with a little doubt
form a negative image of Siberia in the consciousness of American students that in turn reflects the image of the
region in the global sense.

Otherwise, more advantages of Siberia are reflected in the basic layer "natural resources", which is supplemented
by the units of the interpretation field characterizing abundance of the region and its economic power: “pivot area”,
“resource reach area”, “extensive forests”, “oil and gas pipelines”. Nevertheless, interpretation field of this layer
also includes characteristics with the negative connotation, e.g. “environmental damage”.

The basic layers of the concept mentioned coincide with the structure reconstructed based on the dictionaries.
However, we can add one more layer connected with the culture of the region and culture-specific concepts of
Siberia known all over the world. Interpretation field of this layer also includes names on the peoples living in
Siberia: “Inuits”, “Yakuts”, as well as a well-known culture-specific concept “Trans-Siberian railroad”.

So the citizens of the United States see Siberia as a vast, cold and deserted land, rich with the natural resources
and used as a place of exile for political prisoners. Interpretation field of the concept includes mainly negative
characteristics of Siberia, which make the region less attractive and even dangerous for the foreigners.

3.2. Metaphorical potential of the concept of Siberia in media discourse

The next stage of the research is a content analysis of the texts, where Siberia is used in its metaphorical aspect.
In the summary, we will try to compare the results of the content analysis with the structure of the concept of
Siberia.

To analyze the chosen contexts containing metaphors with the element Siberia we use the conceptual blending
theory of G. Fauconnier and M. Turner (2003). Conceptual blending is a “basic mental operation that leads to new
meaning”, the common so-called “blended” space, which appears in the course of blending of two “input spaces”
having one common “generic space”. The authors think that this blending ability plays a crucial part in the process of thinking and language development (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003).

In our case one of the input spaces (which G. Lakoff and M. Johnson called source-sphere) is occupied by the concept of Siberia; blend formation is tightly connected with common characteristics of the concept in the consciousness of the authors of the metaphor, which occupy the second mental space, target-sphere, accordingly.

As Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2003) believe, conceptual integration is performed by three operations:

1) Composition - blending composes elements from the input spaces, providing relations that do not exist in the separate inputs;

2) Completion - blends recruit a great range of background conceptual structure and knowledge without our recognizing it consciously. In this way, composed structure is completed with other structure;

3) Elaboration develops the blend through imaginative mental simulation according to principles and logic in the blend.

All mental spaces correlate by the means of different types of connections; resulting blend is a dynamically developing structure, which may interconnect with the mental structures available from the long-term or short-term memory of the people. They also acquire a potential for formation of the new blends via integration with new mental spaces.

During content analysis and research of conceptual integration process used in the process of formation of the chosen metaphors, the contexts were classified according to defining a common generic space, which becomes a base for transfer of characteristics of the source-sphere to the mental space of a target-sphere. As the analysis shows the most frequent feature acting as a base for blending and constitution of a new metaphoric meaning is perception of Siberia as a rimland, some provincial and backward region, they all constitute some negative features of Siberia compared to the other world. This feature was found in 27 examples (34%). Below there is a more detailed analysis of some examples.

The first example is an extract from restaurant critic’s review describing interior and cuisine of the restaurant located in the Western Hollywood: “The inside dining room is Siberia. Do not get me wrong. It is a perfectly lovely room and the booths along the windows are ideal for watching long-legged women outside hobble by on their red-soled high heels…. Jumbo lump crab cake is mingy; the crab does not taste fresh and there is too much filler. One bite and I'm done. Goat cheese baklava is dead awful, undercooked filo dough filled with goat cheese doused in truffle oil. I guess it's the sugar glaze on top that qualifies it as baklava. What a bad idea” (LAT, September 9, 2009 The Review: Boa in West Hollywood, by S. Irene Virbila).

The metaphor is a blend of two mental spaces - perceptions of Siberia and perceptions of a restaurant. As a result, there is a blend formed with a distinct negative connotation, which actualizes perceptions of Siberia as a nice place, because the interior of the restaurant triggers positive emotions (“a perfectly lovely room”), though the cuisine is terrible. This fact makes the restaurant a kind of a second-rate snack bar, which is common for such faraway provincial regions as Siberia.

Detailed elaboration of this occasional metaphor helps to shed light upon its meaning. The author thinks that the portions of food are “mingy”, the crab “doesn't taste fresh”, and the amount of filler in crab cake is too big (“too much filler”). Other food is simply “dead awful”, baklava is like an “undercooked filo dough” with sugar glaze, which is the only thing that makes us understand we are eating baklava. As a result, we get a culinary blend reflecting perception of Siberia as a “culinary rimland”, where the guests in the restaurants have to eat awful unpalatable food.

The same kind of the blend is formed by blending mental spaces connected with perception of Siberia as a rimland, which is transferred to the professional sport sphere: “The other sure signs of spring are hopeful baseball stories about teams like the Nationals, with Tracy Ringolsby of Foxsports.com hoping the future ace Stephen Strasburg benefits from a low-key start in the minors, and the Reds, for whom the Cuban pitcher Aroldis Chapman wowed people in his first spring training start. Count Joe Posnanski of SI.com among the wowed, while Terence Moore of Fanhouse.com wonders how he ended up in Cincinnati, the Siberia of baseball” (NYT, March 10, 2010, By Lynn Zinser: “Leading Off, UConn and the Common Good”). The article focuses on Aroldis Chapman - a pitcher from Cuba - who signed a long-term contract with the baseball team “Cincinnati Reds” in 2010. Aroldis is a really the highest-scoring player, who managed to “wow people” in his first spring training start. Nevertheless, the
author is curious, how such a good sportsman “ended up in Cincinnati, the Siberia of baseball”. The matter is that “Cincinnati Reds” are an American professional baseball team, which did not have another winning season since 1999 until 2010. It has been occupying the bottom of tournament brackets for 10 years and its low scores are associated with a faraway region.

This blend also has a very distinct negative connotation: The team that becomes a regular looser creates an impression that the whole state of Cincinnati becomes a “baseball rimland”, which is called “the Siberia of baseball”.

The same kinds of blends can also be found in the conceptual field “television”. Any TV show that is shifted to a less desirable time slot in the schedule goes to the “metaphorical Siberia”. “With CBS' comedy block faring worse than Survivor did Thursdays, and CSI and Grey's Anatomy down, that night is "not what it used to be," says Fox scheduling chief Preston Beckman, so Thursday seemed "much more takeable." Bones moves to 9, where it'll benefit from Idol's lead-in, but low-rated sci-fi series Fringe is headed for Friday's Siberia” (USA Today, January 19, 2011, By Gary Levin: Fox does the 'American Idol' shuffle by shifting nights).

The article is an interview with Preston Beckman, Fox Broadcasting Company’s EVP of strategic program planning and research, who is telling about recent changes in TV program schedule connected with growing of “American Idol” show ratings. The decision made was to shift the show to the prime-time slot, as a result Bones series moved to Friday, 9 pm, taking place of the low-rated sci-fi series Fringe, which was shifted to Friday, 9 pm. This time slot is usually called “Friday night death slot” in American television. It implies that a television program scheduled on Friday evenings (especially, between 8:00 and 11:00 p.m.) is destined for cancellation. It reflects the belief that young, single Americans rarely watch television on Friday or Saturday nights, that's why advertisers pay much less attention to the programs scheduled for Friday night. As a result, these shows become less profitable and the channel owners have to cancel such cost-prohibitive programs, which are “headed for Friday's Siberia”.

The formed blend is based on negative characteristic of the time slot that is blended with perception of Siberia as a middle of nowhere, faraway rimland, where any initiative is doomed to fail.

There is one more interesting example connected with perception of Siberia as a rimland, where nothing interesting can happen. It is a blend, where one of the mental spaces is connected with the perception of success and failure. “Butler endured a decade-plus sojourn in a metaphorical Siberia, recording a series of barely heard projects that were inevitably described (if mentioned at all) as “being by the guy who used to be in Digable Planets - whatever happened to them?” (LAT, March 19, 2011, by Mike Eagle and Jeff Weiss: SXSW 2011: Politicking with Shabazz Palaces and Open). This article tells about an American rapper Ishmael Butler, who used to be a front man of a New-York band “Digable Planets” famous in the early '90s. The first album of the group was released in 1993 and rushed to the top of American charts; the musicians were awarded with a Grammy. However, after the release of the second album the band disbanded in 1994 and Ishmael Butler had to stay in a “metaphorical Siberia” recording some “barely heard projects”, moreover his name was not mentioned at all.

This blend explicitly expresses metaphorical character of the mental space defined by the word “Siberia”. The musician, who used to be a rap titan, found himself in a rimland of the show biz, his new projects were failures, and for 10 years, his career has been going down. So his being in the rimland of the show biz is compared with being in Siberia.

Another frequent feature combining generic input spaces is connected with the boreal conditions, huge amounts of snow and low temperatures. These kinds of blends were found in 13 examples (16%).

Traditionally Siberia is perceived as the coldest place on Earth and it is reflected in the structure of this concept given above. However, blends based on similarity of the climatic conditions receive additional connotations due to different mental spaces of the target-sphere.

The main characteristic of Siberia is a vast snow that is why many blends are composed to describe harsh weather conditions, abundant snowfalls or snowfalls unusual for the season. “Two is that Denver is a weather Siberia. Yes, there are snowstorms in March” (USA Today, March 19, 2012, by Bob Kravitz, Indianapolis Star: Why Broncos are a perfect fit for Peyton Manning). The article focuses on Peyton Manning, a famous football player, who left his club Baltimore Colts for a football team Denver Broncos. The author speculates on the future of Manning reminding the readers that Manning's performance highly depends on the weather conditions. It is well known that this famous quarterback plays much worse if it is raining or snowing. Beforehand, he played for a football club in Indianapolis, where rainfalls and snowfalls are evenly distributed throughout a year. Denver is seen as “weather Siberia”
compared to Indianapolis, because the climate in Denver is rather unpredictable, and “there are snowstorms in March”, when football teams take part in the finals of the Super Cup.

Here perceptions of abundant snowfalls in Siberia blend with unpredictable and unstable weather in Denver that may reflect adversely on Manning’s performance, who has been a key player in a new football season. This blend is quite unstable though it mostly reflects a negative connotation, which accompanies the given characteristics of the weather conditions. In the course of the content analysis we did not manage to define any examples, in which the blend Siberia - snow was used with a positive connotation, though abundance of snow is a climatic norm in some states of the USA.

A lot of snow means the low temperature, and such blends are included into the present study. Dynamic nature of a blend is reflected in the course of blending two mental spaces: Siberia - low temperature. Traditional metaphor constructed according to the scheme Siberia - cold builds a new mental space, which is used for construction of new blends. It is shown by the following example: “Several hundred yards away, while the Nicklaus interview went on, a man in tan slacks and a black, short-sleeve shirt scattered with logos, rolled putts on the practice green. Around him in tight little groups of players and caddies, some of them bundled up as if this were Siberia instead of San Francisco, were many of the top pros. Jim Furyk, Bill Haas and Luke Donald were all nearby” (LAT, June 13, 2012, By Bill Dwyre: Blue-collar player shares the stage with golf royalty).

The article tells about golf, especially about two golf players: legendary Jack Nicklaus and an experience golfer Dennis Miller. Miller managed to win only one big tournament; but this winning was remarkable, so he immediately became a star of American golf. The article describes a moment, when Jack Nicklaus was told that the gold medal given to this tournament's winner, and henceforth, would be called the Jack Nicklaus Medal. At the same moment, a probable future winner rolled putts on the practice green. Around him, there were top professional players and just caddies “in tight little groups of, some of them bundled up as if this were Siberia instead of San Francisco”. Here we may see a blend of two mental spaces: Siberia - cold - warm clothing + untypical weather conditions, though there is a new blend constructed Siberia - cold - necessity of gathering together in a tight group to get warm.

On the other hand, the players gathered together not only because they were cold, they felt themselves quite uneasy, because no one knew what they should expect of a new golf star. This blend also actualizes the meaning of uncertainty; the players did not know whether they should take the side of an experienced player, who had set several world records, or the side of a player, who had unexpectedly reached the very top of golf Olympus.

Besides low temperature, Americans see Siberian winter as the longest season in a year. As a result, there is a blend actualizing this characteristic. Here is the example: “The Oscar silly season has officially begun. That’s the only way to look at the new Motion Picture Academy rules governing how studios and filmmakers can promote their movies during Oscar season, a period that these days lasts longer than winter in Siberia” (LAT, September 22, 2011, By Patrick Goldstein: New Oscar rules: Can the Academy curtail awards season excess? ).

The article tells about the Oscar season, the period in which Hollywood studios release new films, hoping to win at the Academy Awards. This season starts in the fall and ends with the Ceremony itself. The thing is that the films to be nominated should be released in the city of Los Angeles, CA starting midnight January 1 and finishing December 31 of the year prior to the Ceremony. That is why, some studious do not release their films in Los Angeles, while many other films that are deemed “Oscar worthy” do not qualify for the Award, because they had no chance to be released in Los Angeles during the year prior to the Ceremony.

That happened, for example, to the movie “The Hurt Locker” that was released in 2008, thus it was eligible for the Academy Award only in 2009, when it was shown in the US. In 2010, it was nominated for nine Academy Awards and won six Oscars. Thus, according to the rules of the Academy, the Oscar season for this film was quite a long one, it lasted for 2 years. So here, we can see a described blend: Siberia - long winter + too long Oscar season.

Other types of blends are not so frequent but nevertheless of a great interest. They are formed because of blending of the following mental spaces Siberia is a remote region + isolation, Siberia + vast faraway region. We managed to find 12 (9.6%) and 10 (8%) examples of this type of blends accordingly. Here are the most interesting examples.

The first example is an extract from Republicans debates, where Jon Huntsman, who was a candidate for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination and United States Ambassador to China, claimed the attempt of Obama's
administration to legalize waterboarding, a form of torturing which water is poured over a cloth covering the face and breathing passages of an immobilized captive, causing the individual to experience the sensation of drowning. “Jon Huntsman - complaining about a lack of attention, saying “it gets a little lonely over here in Siberia sometimes” - says waterboarding is torture and should not be allowed” (USA Today, November 13, 2011, by David Jackson: The Republicans: Live from South Carolina).

The example actualizes the following mental spaces: Siberia as a remote land - sense of isolation, a politician, whose voice is unheard. As a result, we get a new blend, which, on the one hand, contains some facts because Jon Huntsman really stayed quite far away from the United States, though he exaggerates the situation saying he is in Siberia, because actually he was in China, which just has a common border with Siberia. Simultaneously the blend actualizes the meaning of being lonely and isolated from political discourse. The USA is unlikely to hear the voice of a person located in an opposite part of the globe, being in a political isolation.

The same kind of a blend is composed in course of blending of the following mental spaces: Siberia - faraway region + something far away, inaccessible; a high profiled event. Below there are some more examples. This blend is frequently actualized in the articles focused on restaurant business and events connected with it. “As she put it, she had little time to explain to dissatisfied customers why they were being directed to tables in the back, known as Siberia” (NYT, December 3, 2010, By Enid Nemy: “Elaine Kaufman, Who Fed and Fussed Over the Famous, Dies at 81”). The article is an obituary in memory of Elaine Kaufman, a symbol of New York as the “salty den mother of Elaine’s, one of the city’s best-known restaurants”. The main feature of the restaurant is a special zone “the line”, where all the tables were booked for special guests, who have been regulars for many years, including some prominent New Yorkers like Woody Allen, Mario Puzo, Mia Farrow and others. General public could not even dream of getting to "the line", so even when the tables along “the line” were empty, the customers were being directed to tables in the back. This part of the restaurant was called “Siberia”.

Here in this blend two mental spaces are blended: Siberia - faraway territory + tables far away from the entrance. But it also actualizes some additional meanings: isolation (general public is out up against the famous regulars, who always can get the best places; thus one type of customers is isolated from the other), rimland (famous people are sitting in the center, though other people have to sit in a rimland, that makes them feel a bit humiliated), the customers felt like in an exile (they had to sit at worse tables). Thus, the blend under consideration is filled with new meanings. That makes it a potential source for formation of new blends.

Other groups of examples are quite small and include the following mental spaces: Siberia - place of exile (4 examples), Siberia - inhospitality (4 examples), Siberia - hard life (3 examples). We managed to find only one example for each of the following mental spaces: Siberia - white color, Siberia - a closed region, Siberia - a home for mythical creatures, Siberia - lack of common sense, Siberia - large territory, Siberia - Terra Incognita, Siberia - slum condition.

Nevertheless, even solitary examples let us feel a tendency of negative image formation, reflected in the metaphors. Here we discuss the most vivid solitary examples of negative connotation formation connected with the conceptual field “Siberia”.

An interesting example is the blend with the following mental spaces combined: Siberia + lack of common sense. “When the NFL entered a higher tax bracket, sensitivity took the first train to Siberia” (USA Today, February 2, 2011, by Paola Boivin: Decision Time). The article focuses on the American National Football League, which has switched to a new tax system, and now it is necessary to carry out a staffing reduction in the teams. Therefore, Ken Whisenhunt, the head coach of Arizona Cardinals, has to choose between two quarterbacks - Kevin Kolb and John Skelton. The author thinks that it is a hard decision to make, and “sensitivity took the first train to Siberia” because of this new taxation system. There are two mental spaces blended together: Siberia is a faraway territory with little of sensitivity + decision with a lack of sensitivity. This example shows that the decision made by NFL jeopardizes the team members, because they may lose their job that is why the author sends it to the metaphorical Siberia.

Very often Siberia is associated with concentration camps, GULAG and prisons. These associations are reflected in the metaphors used in the press. Here is one of examples, where the bled is formed by blending two conceptual fields: Siberia - a place of exile + prison, imprisonment. “In the early 20th century, Ushuaia was a Siberia-like outpost, and Argentina built a notorious prison compound here, with convicts put to work building roads and other…” (LAT, May 10, 2007, By Patrick J. McDonnell: Argentina's Ushuaia rides eco-tourism wave). The article tells about the city of Ushuaia, the capital of Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, which is commonly regarded as the
southernmost city in the world, located somewhere at the edge of the world. In the beginning of the XX century, the prison for the most dangerous criminals was built there; the prisoners spent much of their time building the town with timber from the forest around the prison. They also built a railway to the settlement. That is why, the location of the city and the type of the prison reminds of Siberia.

4. Conclusion

The content analysis allowed us to reconstruct the following public image of Siberia in the consciousness of American culture representatives:

- It’s a distant, deserted and wild territory located in Russia and isolated from the other world.
- It is a vast, cold territory with severe climatic conditions, mostly covered with the snow.
- GULAG (System of Soviet labor camps and prisons) still exists so Siberia is seen as a place of exile.

This public image rests upon stereotypes; most of them are just false. Thus, the actual task is to correct the negative stereotypes and to create positive ones to form a desired image of Siberia, which may strengthen positions of both Siberia and Russia.

There is little doubt that the image of Siberia is tightly connected with the image of the whole country, especially in terms of international relationships. It is necessary to create a positive image of Siberia to ensure the further development of the region, to put its infrastructure to a new level, to attract foreign investments. Besides, the positive image of Siberia may improve the image of the whole country.

Historically, Siberia possesses a large territory and includes regions of resource type. Since the Soviet era, Siberia has been perceived as playing a raw-exports role. Nevertheless, now the Russian culture is considered exotic and becomes of a great interest for foreigners. For quite a long time Siberia has been a kind of a brand with a set of tolerant associations most of which should be corrected to provide a stable development of this region.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Russian humanitarian scientific fund (RGNF) under Grant 15-14-55002 “Reconstruction of Siberian Region Image”.

References