



## CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF METAPHOR IN UNDERSTANDING AND EMOTION

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### Annotation:

This article investigates cognitive functions that metaphor fulfils in newspaper discourse and emotional situation in conceptual metaphors. Metaphor has a wide range of applications in everyday speech and allows us to communicate our thoughts widely. The analysis shows that natural phenomena are metaphorically constructed. The analysis draws upon cognitive theory of metaphor, as introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

**Keywords:** Metaphor, conceptual metaphor, conceptual analyzing, emotion

### Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in our daily lives as a means of communication. Language is used by people in a variety of ways to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The speaker's expression of those meanings is not always evident; he or she may express the implicitly at times. According to M.H. Abrams, figurative language is a visible departure from what language users perceive as the conventional meaning of words or the standard arrangement of words in order to produce some specific meaning and effect. There are various types of figurative language; but one of them is appealing enough to be studied and thought to play an essential part in cognition, and that is metaphor.

In cognitive linguistics **conceptual metaphor**, or **cognitive metaphor**, refers to the understanding of one idea, or conceptual domain in terms of another. An example of this is the understanding of quantity in terms of directionality (e.g. "the price of peace is *rising*") or the understanding of time in terms of money (e.g. "I *spent* time at work today").

A conceptual domain can be any mental organization of human experience. The regularity with which different languages employ the same metaphors, often perceptually based, has led to the hypothesis that the mapping between conceptual domains corresponds to neural mappings in the brain. This theory has gained wide attention, although some researchers question its empirical accuracy.

This idea, and a detailed examination of the underlying processes, was first extensively explored by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their work *Metaphors*





*We Live By* in 1980. Since then, the field of metaphor studies within the larger discipline of cognitive linguistics has increasingly developed, with several annual academic conferences, scholarly societies, and research labs contributing to the subject area. Some researchers, such as Gerard Steen, have worked to develop empirical investigative tools for metaphor research, including metaphor identification procedure. In Psychology, Raymond, Gibbs has investigated conceptual metaphor through a number of psychological experiments. Other cognitive scientists, for example Gilles Fauconnier, study subjects similar to conceptual metaphor under the labels analogy and conceptual blending".

### **Methodology:**

Conceptual metaphors are useful for understanding complex ideas in simple terms and therefore are frequently used to give insight to abstract theories and models. For example, the conceptual metaphor of viewing communication as a conduit is one large theory explained with a metaphor. So not only is our everyday communication shaped by the language of conceptual metaphors, but so is the very way we understand scholarly theories. These metaphors are prevalent in communication and we do not just use them in language; we actually perceive and act in accordance with the metaphors.

There are two main roles for the conceptual domains posited in conceptual metaphors:

- **Source domain:** the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions (e.g., love is a *journey*).
- **Target domain:** the conceptual domain that we try to understand (e.g., *love* is a journey).

A **mapping** is the way in which a source domain tracks onto and describes aspects of the target domain. Mappings describe the mental organization of information in domains, the underlying phenomenon that drives metaphorical usage in language. This conceptualization relates closely to image schemas representations used in reasoning, through the extension of spatial and physical laws to more complex situations.

A primary tenet of this theory is that metaphors are matter of thought and not merely of language: hence, the term *conceptual metaphor*. The metaphor may seem to consist of words or other linguistic expressions that come from the terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain, but conceptual metaphors underlie a system of related metaphorical expressions that appear on the linguistic surface. Similarly, the mappings of a conceptual metaphor are themselves motivated by image schemas





which are pre-linguistic schemas concerning space, time, moving, controlling, and other core elements of embodied human experience.

Conceptual metaphors typically employ a more abstract concept as target and a more concrete or physical concept as their source. For instance, metaphors such as 'the days [the more abstract or target concept] ahead' or 'giving my time' rely on more concrete concepts, thus expressing time as a path into physical space, or as a substance that can be handled and offered as a gift. Different conceptual metaphors tend to be invoked when the speaker is trying to make a case for a certain point of view or course of action. For instance, one might associate "the days ahead" with leadership, whereas the phrase "giving my time" carries stronger connotations of bargaining. Selection of such metaphors tends to be directed by a subconscious or implicit habit in the mind of the person employing them.

The principle of unidirectionality states that the metaphorical process typically goes from the more concrete to the more abstract, and not the other way around. Accordingly, abstract concepts are understood in terms of prototype concrete processes. The term "concrete," in this theory, has been further specified by Lakoff and Johnson as more closely related to the developmental, physical neural, and interactive body. One manifestation of this view is found in the cognitive science of mathematics where it is proposed that mathematics itself, the most widely accepted means of abstraction in the human community, is largely metaphorically constructed, and thereby reflects cognition unique to humans that uses embodied prototypical processes (e.g. counting, moving along a path) that are understood by all human beings through their experiences. Conceptual metaphors are seen in language in our everyday lives. Conceptual metaphors shape not just our communication, but also shape the way we think and act. In George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's work (*We Live By* 1980). The body of data used in the analysis consists of articles on two major natural

disasters that happened in the last decade: the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and 2005 Hurricane Katrina. As this paper is a part of my dissertation thesis, which *Multi-Functionality of Metaphor in Newspaper Discourse* 141 focuses on the investigation of the way newspapers deal with the tension between natural catastrophes and Enlightenment ideology of domination of mankind over the natural world prevalent in Western thinking, two newspapers considered to be representative of Western English-speaking countries have been selected as sources: *The Globe and Mail*, a Canadian national daily newspaper, and *The New York Times*, an American national daily newspaper. The number of collected newspaper articles is 15 per newspaper for each catastrophe, which makes the total number of articles gathered in





the corpus 60. The articles cover the time span of two weeks since the disaster occurred, i.e. December 26, 2004 – January 8, 2005 for the Indian Ocean tsunami, and August 29, 2005 – September 11, 2005 for Hurricane Katrina. The next section, which is analytical, introduces major metaphor themes employed by the newspapers in their representation of the tsunami and the hurricane and the lexical and syntactical realizations of these metaphor themes. This is followed by a section which discusses multiple social and cognitive functions that the metaphor serves. The paper is concluded with a few summarizing comments.

### **Analysis**

Characteristic that is attributed to the tsunami and the hurricane by the newspapers is cruelty. The articles explicitly refer to the natural phenomenon as merciless and brutal, portraying it thus as having no sympathy with people. Such a representation is even intensified by the employment of the metaphor themes of fight and WAR. The metaphor themes of FIGHT and WAR are often realized by explicit comparisons in similes, as in it looks like we've been nuked or reporters likened it to war zones. Apart from similes, a number of other references to war and fight occur in news discourse, for instance, the depiction of the hurricane as pummeling, i.e. fighting with fits, the description of the landscape as a bombed-out landscape, and the portrayal of the landfall of the hurricane as the onslaught from Katrina. The natural phenomenon is seen as acting with volition, aiming to physically set upon people. Such a view is also conveyed in the following two examples:

(12) The water separated, then it attacked. (The New York Times, 31 Dec 2004)

(13) The hurricane targeted the heart of U.S. oil. (The Globe and Mail, 29 Aug 2005)  
Instead of revealing that the waves and the wind move because of geophysical forces, the newspapers portray the natural phenomena as having a desired goal, a target – to hurt and kill people, and cause damage to their property. To intensify the negative portrayal of the tsunami and the hurricane even more, newspaper discourse constructs the notion of the natural phenomena as punishing people, which is explicitly expressed in the following sentences: (14) Our mother has punished us. (The New York Times, 5 Jan 2005) (15) The storm was potent enough to rank as one of the most punishing hurricanes ever to hit the United States. (The New York Times, 30 Aug 2005) What it is that people are punished for is, though, left unspecified. In effect, the 'punishing' theme, on one hand, evokes the feeling of guilt in people, and on the other hand, portrays the natural phenomena as malicious. To sum up, the metaphor themes of fight and war construct the tsunami and the hurricane as evil and a people's foe. speaker, however well trained.





Different methods can be used to probe a corpus for figurative expressions used to talk about emotion in a given language. One option is to focus on specific emotion words of the domain under scrutiny. For example, in order to study the domain of anger in English, one may select words like anger, irritation, fury, indignation, frustration or resentment. Once the target words are identified, we can retrieve from the corpus all the sentences in which those words are employed. This usually involves numbers too high for manual inspection, but a typical approach in the field is to analyze some of them randomly selected from the full list. The following are some examples for the word anger extracted from the British National Corpus (BNC):

5 Julius couldn't remember when he had last been hit by such a wave of anger.

6 Anger was still simmering in him.

7 He was also formidable, demanding, difficult—and smoldering with anger.

8 Once out of his presence he vents his anger for his dead friend on nature.

9 His occasional outbursts of anger shocked those around him.

The researcher would then identify the metaphorical expressions and classify them according to the metaphor they instantiate. As analysis method, my colleagues and I employ Metaphorical Profile Analysis (Ogarkova and Soriano 2014b). This method entails the rephrasing of the observed metaphorical expressions as metaphorical patterns. A metaphorical pattern is “a multi-word expression from a given source domain into which a specific lexical item from a given target domain has been inserted” (Stefanowitsch 2006: 66).

For example, the metaphorical patterns in sentences (5–9) are *wave of* [emotion], [emotion] *simmer*, *smolder with* [emotion], *vent* [emotion], and *outbursts of* [emotion]. Then the metaphorical patterns are grouped according to source domain (e.g., fire, hot fluid), and the number of expressions in each group is counted. The resulting list of conceptual metaphors and their degree of exploitation for a given word constitutes the word's “metaphorical profile.”

Some of the conceptual metaphors in the metaphorical profile of *anger* are presented in Table 1, with examples of the metaphorical patterns that instantiate these metaphors, and the number of occurrences of them, in a random sample of some citations from the methods of exploring in emotion and conceptual metaphor. .

*Table 1* Examples of conceptual metaphors and linguistic metaphorical patterns in the representation of anger in English

| <i>Conceptual metaphor</i> | <i>Metaphorical patterns</i> |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>(anger is a . . .)</i>  |                              |



pressurized [anger] rise in ,  
fluid in the [anger] wells  
body-container up in , contain  
[anger], vent  
[anger],  
[anger] spill-  
over, outburst  
of [anger],  
explode with  
[anger]  
fire [anger] burn,  
flame of  
[anger], spark  
[anger], kindle  
[anger], stoke  
[anger], blaze  
with [anger],  
fume with  
[anger],  
[anger] scorch  
weapon turn/direct/cas  
t [anger]  
against (/at,  
/on) , target 's  
[anger], deflect  
[anger],  
[anger] be  
(sharp) like a  
knife  
hot fluid [anger] boil,  
[anger]  
simmer,  
[anger] bubble,  
[anger] seethe,  
[anger] sizzle  
opponent in a fight [anger],  
struggle conquer





[anger],  
overcome  
[anger],  
imprison  
[anger],  
[anger] assail  
animal leash/unleash  
[anger], rein in  
[anger], fierce  
[anger],  
[anger] roar  
inside  
force of nature eruption of  
[anger], storm  
of [anger],  
[anger] engulfs  
X, wave of  
[anger],  
[anger] ebbs  
away, tide of  
[anger]  
illness spasm of  
[anger],  
festering  
[anger], suffer  
from [anger],  
chronic [anger]  
insanity fit of [anger],  
beside oneself  
with [anger]

### Discussions

The fact that metaphors highlight only certain aspects of a concept while hide other ones results in a biased picture of reality. To be more specific, in spite of the fact that tsunamis and hurricanes are normal naturally occurring phenomena, newspapers provide us with a demonizing portrayal of them as abnormal, monstrous, angry and violent creatures, the aim of which is to attack and harm people. This biased



metaphorical representation of natural catastrophes conceals the fact that the damage inflicted in these events is to a certain extent the result of a human failure. The damage in the Indian Ocean tsunami catastrophe was not caused by the natural phenomenon itself but was compounded by human-made aspects, including a destruction of protective environmental features provided by nature (Niman 2010). Furthermore, social, political and economic conditions determined the vulnerability of people to the tsunami, with the poor, the marginalized and the disempowered being affected more than the rest of the population (Gamburd and McGilvray 2010). The investigation following hurricane Katrina revealed that the blame for most of the devastation and destruction is to be ascribed to local, state and federal government: “The Committee on Homeland Security observed that government officials failed to heed disaster warnings, made poor decisions before and after the hurricane hit, failed to provide effective leadership, and failed to develop the capacity to respond to catastrophic events.” (Greene 2009: 208)

Similarly to the tsunami, those worst affected by the hurricane were the poor and the black, who did not have the means to escape and options to live anywhere other than in the Lower Ninth Ward, where most damage was inflicted (Levitt and Whitaker 2009). This was a consequence of a long history of a class-based and race discrimination in New Orleans, as Levitt and Whitaker (2009: 8) point out:

“Employment and housing discrimination remains, prejudicial zoning regulations endure, racialized bank lending and real estate practices flourish, while federally financed highways that privilege predominantly white suburbs and tax breaks for wealthier home owners facilitate this inequitable system.”

Yet, all these factors are made invisible in the metaphorical portrayal of natural catastrophes used by the newspapers. Therefore, the key ideological aspect of the employment of metaphor is the concealment of politico-economic and social conditions.

Metaphor analysis can also reveal aspects of emotion salient for the speakers of a language, but potentially disregarded by emotion theorists. Two examples are the association of anger with irrational behavior (captured by the metaphor anger is insanity), and the damage it can cause to the person him/herself (captured by anger is an illness) (Soriano 2013). The first aspect is overshadowed in emotion psychology by the tendency to emphasize the overall utility of emotions as adaptive mechanisms that prepare the organism for optimal interaction with the environment. And if anger prepares us to correct wrongs inflicted on our person, how can it be irrational? Indeed, in an analysis of English (1) psychology guides, and (2) websites, where lay people seek advice for their psychological problems, Beger and Jäkel (2009) found





that experts hardly talk about anger resorting to the insanity metaphor, while this strategy is common among lay people. Our folk-representation of the emotion, as suggested by language, invites a more nuanced view: anger may be rational overall, but it often results in irrational reactions nevertheless. The second aspect, often disregarded by psychology (except in clinical contexts), is the potential damage of the emotion to the person. It is common in psychology to refer to anger as a “negative” emotion because it feels unpleasant, it is caused by something negative, and it leads to confrontation. But nothing is typically said (when justifying the “negativity” of anger) about the possible negative effects of the emotion for one’s well-being. By contrast, metaphor highlights the “pain” inherent in anger, the disruption it causes to body functions, and its possible long-term negative effects. In sum, both aspects of the emotion (irrationality and damage) are present in expert theories of emotion to some extent, but a look at language can remind psychologists that these two factors are much more salient in the way lay people represent anger for everyday purposes. Metaphorical profiles can also be relevant for cross-cultural studies. For example, Wierzbicka (1989) has observed that Russian “*duša*” (soul) and English “mind” are salient terms in their respective cultures to discuss intangible aspects of human life. Congruently with these observations, our analysis of metaphor across several terms revealed that when the body is conceptualized as a container for anger the emotion is more frequently associated with the soul and heart in Russian; and with the head and mind in English (Ogarkova and Soriano 2014a).

Another example of cultural specificity is the pattern observed for the semantic foci of expression (the visibility of the emotion) and regulation (the willing control of the feeling). Significantly, more expressions related to containment are found in Spanish than in English for the metaphor anger is a pressurized fluid. Additionally, more Spanish expressions are related to pressure. The latter is also true for Russian. By contrast, English compared to Russian has a significantly larger number of metaphors highlighting expression—the coming out of the anger-fluid. It has been suggested (Ogarkova and Soriano 2014b) that these patterns may reflect the more collectivistic nature of Spain and Russia, compared to English-speaking communities like the USA and the UK—which score high on individualism. Cross-cultural psychology suggests that collectivistic communities experience a greater urge to repress the overt manifestation of intense negative emotions for the sake of harmony within the group. This would explain the relevance of containment metaphorical expressions in Russian and Spanish. Individualistic communities, on the contrary, would have a comparatively more positive evaluation of the open manifestation of anger, seen as an affirmation of the self.





## Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to present and illustrate CMT, a popular approach to the study of conceptual representation in cognitive linguistics that can also be of use to the interdisciplinary field of the affective sciences. CMT is a theoretical framework in that it posits the existence in our minds of stable associations between different domains recursively employed to help us represent reality. CMT is also a methodology in the sense of proposing a way of looking at language to identify these stable associations. The theoretical paradigm introduced in the 1980s was applied from the very beginning to the study of emotion concepts, and continues to generate new studies all over the world. Cognitive psychology has also used metaphor research for the experimental investigation of embodied cognition. Furthermore, the paradigm has inspired cross-cultural and social psychology, which now advocate a “metaphor-enriched social cognition” (Landau et al. 2010).

In the middle of this interdisciplinary interest in metaphor, constructs like the semantic foci discussed here are particularly useful to compare findings across disciplinary domains. Another important development is the adoption of corpus-based quantitative approaches to metaphor analysis, which allow us to measure the relative significance of the observed patterns for different emotion concepts within and across languages. This has useful applications in linguistic research, but also in other disciplines. As illustrated in previous sections, patterns in metaphorical language use inform us of the way communities represent their emotional experiences and can reveal underlying cultural difference.

To conclude, the paper reveals on the analysis of concrete linguistic material that metaphor simultaneously performs several cognitive and social functions, which are all intertwined with each other. This multi-functionality makes metaphor a unique and very effective discursive tool to be employed in newspapers. Emotion is a multifaceted phenomenon and its study requires a multidisciplinary approach. Linguistics, anthropology, and psychology look at it, respectively, from the standpoint of language, culture, and cognition. Conceptual metaphor research stands halfway between the three, providing a privileged vantage point on the phenomenon. This may be the greatest advantage of CMT for the affective sciences. The various disciplines involved in the study of emotion can communicate, quite literally, through metaphor.





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