

Conceptual Metaphor Death Is A State Of Light In English Discourse

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Abstract:

Background: The conceptual metaphor DEATH IS A STATE OF LIGHT is a conceptual metaphor that uses the common source domains "darkness", "shining" and appears in discourses expressing the concept of "death". Its basic structure is a partial mapping schema with the characteristic of "State of Light".

Materials and Methods: In this study, the researcher conducted a survey on 506 discourses (containing 525 metaphorical expressions) in the "Personal stories" section on some British news sites about death; uses the descriptive method to describe metaphorical models, mapping mechanisms and transfer of attributes between the source and target domains to express the concept of "death" in English discourse. Besides, the research uses an interdisciplinary approach to help to understand metaphor more comprehensively and deeply based on the relationship between language (words, metaphors, metaphorical models) and background knowledge. Statistical and classification methods are also used to compile examples and group them according to source domain and frequency of occurrence, which is the basis for some quantitative conclusions in English language.

Results: Through a survey of discourses about death in memorial messages in English, the researcher found the basic metaphor DEATH IS A STATE OF LIGHT in English which includes two hypocritical metaphors: DEATH IS THE OFF OF LIGHT / DARKNESS and DEATH IS A STATE OF SHINING.

Conclusion: The study has shown that the source domain STATE OF LIGHT is used to express the concept of "death" in English. The study also demonstrated that knowledge about humans (mind, physiology), religion and culture have influenced the way British people think and express about "death".

Key Word: Conceptual metaphor; Death; State of Light; Darkness; Shining.

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I. Introduction

Metaphor is the key to understanding the basis of thinking and the processes of perceiving mental symbols about the world. With that meaning, metaphor has become the concern of cognitive linguistics. Specifically, with the appearance of the book "Metaphors We Live By" (1980), Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. changed the concept of metaphor, no longer just in the scope of literature and poetry, metaphors present in everyday life language [4].

In terms of studying the metaphor of death, it is necessary to affirm that this is a universal category, the greatest concern in human life [1]. The way people in different cultures perceive and conceive of death will be reflected in their own languages.

Thus, through the study "The conceptual metaphor of DEATH IS A STATE OF LIGHT in English discourse", the researchers have the opportunity to explore how British people reflect their perception of the concept of "death", explain the mechanism of forming metaphors about "death", explain and demonstrate the influence of cultural, ideological, religious, and environmental factors English people adopted to think about the concept of death.

The way of thinking that considers light to represent life comes from the objective reality that light promotes the metabolism of all species, helps life proliferate and develop, and helps the perception of the objective world. The view is clear and clear. Since primitive times, people have always worshiped light, considering light to represent life. The light and heat from fire also protect people from darkness, representing survival. On the contrary, darkness and cold represent "unknowability" and are not encouraging conditions for life to exist, according to Tylor, E.B [7, pp:786-798]. From this perception of the objective world, it can be seen that the loss of light and heat are said to represent the abstract idea of "death". With the principle regarding humans in the central position when perceiving the universe, the East is considered to represent the rising sun, with light, representing life, happiness and prosperity. glory; On the contrary, the West is where the sun sets, associated with darkness, cold, death and destruction. From visual perception in the central position, people

perceive the movement of the sun as the movement of time and, more deeply, as the movement of human life. The sun rises from the East at dawn, is at its brightest when in a vertical position above a person's head at noon, sets to the West at dusk and disappears at night. It is associated with the cycle of life, in which the rising of the sun represents the growth of life, the falling represents the decline of life, and the darkness is death.

From the above interpretations from the perspective of perception of the objective world and religious beliefs, it can be seen that the abstract category "death" is also conceptualized through the specific source domain "State of light". There are two ways of connecting the concept of "death" with the state of light: the state of "loss of light" (darkness) in the sense that "darkness" represents unfavorable conditions for development of life (biology), representing mystery and vague fear (psychology) associated with the image of demons and souls (belief, religion); or the state of "shining" according to the religious approach, which is resurrection.

II. Material And Methods

Research Materials:

Regarding the English corpus, the researcher conducted a survey on 506 discourses (containing 525 metaphorical expressions) in the "Personal stories" section on some British news sites about death such as www.hopeagain.org.uk, www.rememberme2020.uk, www.whatsyourgrief.com and www.cancerresearchuk.org during the period from January 2019 to July 2022.

The common characteristic of the corpus is that the discourses all contain messages of remembrance of the dead, mentioning death from the perspective of facing the actual experience of feelings of sadness, emotion, and grief when witnessing the death of the deceased. death of another person due to risk factors and illness. The language is of an everyday nature, expressing confidences, condolences, and views about death without rhetorical or artistic intent.

Research Methodology:

To conduct a survey on this topic, the study uses the following research methods:

- Descriptive method: to describe metaphorical models, mapping mechanisms and transfer of attributes between the source and target domains to express the concept of "death" in English discourse and analyze and make clarify the pragmatics of metaphor according to the theoretical frameworks of cognitive linguistics used in the English discourse that the study surveys.

- In addition, the research uses an interdisciplinary approach. According to a modern perspective, metaphor is not only a way of transferring meaning in language but also a way of perception. Therefore, metaphors are related to many elements of culture, society, religion, psychology, other sciences, etc. The interdisciplinary approach used in the research helps to understand metaphor more comprehensively and deeply based on the relationship between language (words, metaphors, metaphorical models) and background knowledge in fields such as biology, religion, philosophy, and psychology. The metaphorical models found will be explained through the knowledge of other sciences because the category "death" is a category that contains many research implications in many different fields and is widely understood. differences between ethnic groups.

- Statistical and classification methods are also used to compile examples and group them according to source domain and frequency of occurrence, which is the basis for some quantitative conclusions in English language.

Procedure methodology

After collection, the English corpus is coded from [A001] to [A506].

After being collected, research data will be processed as follows:

Based on the theoretical framework of metaphor, metaphorical expressions in the research corpus are identified. Based on the characteristics of the source domains, the found metaphors will be divided into source domains, depending on the source domain used to activate these metaphors. Metaphor classification will be conducted based on Lakoff and Johnson [4] and Kövecses [3] theory as well as Pragglejaz Group's metaphor identification method [6].

For example, when reading a discourse related to death:

"My granny left me on June 7th in her sleep. My grandfather, her husband, passed two years ago. Now they're both gone, I feel empty." [...]. (A46)

Step 1: We read the entire discourse and established a common understanding of the information related to the context, this is the grandchild's confession when talking about the circumstances of his grandparents' death.

Step 2: Identify the phrases "left me", "pass", "gone" as phrases that have the potential to be used metaphorically, placed in correlation with the context when talking about a grandchild losing a grandparent.

Step 3: collate potential metaphorical phrases into the SOURCE DOMAIN “departure” and from there determine the TARGET DOMAIN “death”.

Step 4: The phrases "left me", "pass", "gone" are identified as "metaphorical references", thereby allowing to determine that the context of the sentence containing these examples is a metaphorical expression. After identifying the metaphor, the researcher proceed to classify and label the metaphor (The metaphorical expression given as an illustrative example above is classified into the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE), confirm Identify the set of characteristic features belonging to the SOURCE DOMAIN and TARGET DOMAIN in the conceptual model, thereby determining the corresponding activated points in the cognitive frame; lists selected metaphoric references in each SOURCE DOMAIN attribute; create a mapping diagram and explain the mechanisms of moving and copying attributes between the source and target domains in conceptual expressions; From the regularity in the mapping, the researcher present the understanding of characteristics of the writer's thinking and perception. The findings from the research proved the close relationship between language - culture - thinking expressed through conceptual expressions.

III. Result

The metaphor DEATH IS A STATE OF LIGHT appears in 17 discourses of the total English research corpus, accounting for 3.4% with 17 metaphorical expressions. Table 3.1 describes the number and proportion of source domain attributes that are enabled to represent that source domain.

Table 3.1. Number and proportion of source domain attributes activated in the DEATH IS A STATE OF LIGHT metaphor in English language

STT	Attributes	The discourse uses conceptual metaphors		Number of metaphorical expressions	Number of metaphors
		Total number	Percentage		
1	State of loss of light / darkness	2	0.4	2	1
2	State of running out of lighting energy	4	0.8	4	1
3	Shining state	11	2.2	11	2
	Total	17	3.4	17	4

Based on the typical attributes of the source domain, the researcher built up a mapping schema of the metaphor DEATH IS A STATE OF LIGHT as shown in table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2: Mapping scheme of the metaphor DEATH IS A STATE OF LIGHT

Source domain: STATE OF LIGHT	Correlated to	Target domain: DEATH
State of loss of light / darkness	→	A state of being not alive
State of running out of lighting energy	→	A state in which the body runs out of vital energy <i>thái cơ thể hết năng lượng sống</i>
Shining state	→	The state of resurrection after death (according to Christian belief)

From table 3.2, it can be seen that the attributes representing the specific concept perceived by eyes are "light states" which are used as the source domain for the abstract concept of "death". The perception of light is divided into 2 states: Light loss / Dark and Shine. The source domain of darkness and running out of lighting energy is a familiar source domain in the associations of "death" in many languages (DEATH IS THE DARKNESS / DEATH IS A LIGHT GONE OUT) because of its universal perception. The negative influence of darkness on the lives of living beings on earth. In addition, darkness also evokes fear, insecurity, and is associated with the appearance of elements of the spiritual world such as ghosts, demons, and souls.

Through a survey of discourses about death in everyday language, especially memorial messages in English, the researcher found that the source domain "Shining state" is activated to express the idea of "death". This way of perception has a positive tone, associated with energy and life and is not common. Specific analyzes of the mechanism and reason for activating this source domain to irradiate the target domain "death" will be explained in detail in the later sections.

To sum up, basic metaphor DEATH IS A STATE OF LIGHT in English includes two hypocritical metaphors: DEATH IS THE OFF OF LIGHT / DARKNESS and DEATH IS A STATE OF SHINING.

Metaphor DEATH IS THE OFF OF LIGHT / DARKNESS

Metaphor DEATH IS THE OFF OF LIGHT / DARKNESS appears in 6 English discourses (Table 3.1) with two examples found to express the attribute of the state of "turning off the light" as "darkness", and the state of "running out of energy to shine" "light gone out".

In the two linguistic expressions below, from the way of thinking "light" represents life, the image "light gone out" or "state of darkness" (*you were ... my light. The world is darker without you in it*) is used in association with the death of a loved one.

A light went out in our lives the day you left us. Miss you x [A13]

Dear Mum, you were my best friend, my life, my light. The world is darker without you in it. [A341]

In English, the image "Fire went out" also symbolizes the idea of death, the fire symbolizes light - life, when the fire goes out it symbolizes death.

When the fire went out, I felt like her life went out. [A17]

The association with darkness, the state of running out of energy to shine are specific associations for the perception of "death" with negative connotations in relation to the perception of "life" and "light".

Metaphor DEATH IS A STATE OF SHINING

Contrary to the popular way of thinking about the concept of "death" as a negative event, in English discourse, the concept of "death" is also mapped from the source domain "light". The metaphor DEATH IS A STATE OF SHINING appears in 11 English discourses, accounting for 2.2% of the research corpus (Table 3.1). The examples used in linguistic expressions are "light up" and shine bright.

Considering some of the following examples:

A loving wife, mother, sister and friend, always smiling and making us laugh. You will always be missed and loved. You lit up the room, now light up the sky [A228]

My soul mate, best friend, husband and dad to our 2 beautiful children, you are missed so much. Shine bright in the sky and watch over us until we meet again. [A328]

With the activation of the SHINING STATE source domain, the concept of "death" is expressed with a positive nuance. This way of thinking is explained from the influence of the concept of resurrection after death in Christianity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church [24, p:473] writes [...*How glorious and happy you will be: when you are accepted by God to see Him, honored to enjoy the joy of salvation and the light of God. eternal light with Christ your Lord... In Heaven, you will enjoy the joy of immortality with the righteous and friends of God...*] (quoted from T.Cyprian, letter 56, 10.1). Once again, it can be affirmed that the perception of "death" as resurrection and enjoying a better life in Heaven with God has influenced the linguistic thinking of English people.

IV. Discussion

From the research corpus, it can be concluded that, quantitatively, the metaphor DEATH IS A STATE OF LIGHT is a metaphor with a low frequency of use in English (appearing in 17/506 discourses), accounting for 3.4%).

The OFF LIGHT / DARK source domain is activated to talk about the idea of "death". This shows that the British way of thinking about "death" considers the symbolic image of death to be "the loss of light". This is explained by the universal way of thinking of people across cultures about the meaning of light, sun and fire. People believe that if there is light, there is life, there is growth and development, the absence of light or the loss of light represents decay and death.

Besides, according to the survey results, the metaphor DEATH IS A SHINING STATE also appears in English to express the idea of "death".

This probably comes from the concept of the destination of the dead. The British, with influence from Christianity, considered death to be only temporary. After death, people will go to Heaven to reunite with God the Creator, be resurrected and enjoy eternal life there. The kingdom of God, illuminated by the light of the Lord, will shine. Because of the belief in God and the concept of "death" as eternal life, a place of light, it is easy to understand that in the discourse expressing the idea of death in English, the British tend to use the expression "*shine bright in the sky*".

V. Conclusion

Through a survey of 506 English language expressions, the study has shown that the source domain STATE OF LIGHT is used to express the concept of "death" in English. The study also demonstrated that knowledge about humans (mind, physiology) and culture have influenced the way British people think and express about "death". Finding this universal source domain also provides suggestions for how to choose and use language

appropriately when practicing communication, avoiding causing awkwardness or discomfort in some situations that refer to "taboo" content.

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