

EXPLORING EMOTIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF THE MULTI-LEVEL VIEW OF METAPHOR

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1. INTRODUCTION

Metaphors serve as windows into the human mind, revealing the underlying conceptual structures that shape our understanding of the world. The richness of metaphorical language is evident in its ability to convey abstract and complex ideas through more concrete and familiar domains (Kövecses, 2020; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). In the realm of Cognitive Semantics, metaphorical expressions have been a subject of intense scrutiny, offering a lens through which scholars explore the nuances of human cognition.

Within the broader spectrum of metaphor studies, the investigation of emotion metaphors occupies a unique place. Emotions, being integral to the human experience, are often conveyed through metaphorical language, allowing individuals to articulate the ineffable aspects of their inner states (Kövecses, 2000a, 2008a, 2014). The current study contributes to the burgeoning body of research on how emotions are metaphorically conceptualized, offering a nuanced exploration through the adoption of the "multilevel view of conceptual metaphor" proposed by Kövecses (2020).

The innovative aspect of this study lies in the adoption of the multi-level view of conceptual metaphor, a framework that unveils the hierarchical complexity inherent in conceptual metaphors. This approach, which particularly focuses on image schemas, domains, frames, and mental spaces, provides a comprehensive understanding of how metaphorical constructs operate on multiple levels of schematicity

(Kövecses, 2022). By applying this perspective to the examination of emotion metaphors, this study aims to unravel the intricate cognitive processes underlying the conceptualization of specific emotions.

Our exploration of metaphorical expressions related to diverse emotion domains not only contributes to our understanding of metaphorical conceptualization but also holds significant implications for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning. Metaphors are pervasive in everyday language, and their comprehension is crucial for effective communication. By dissecting these metaphors into their constituent levels of schematicity, this study provides EFL instructors with a valuable tool to enhance their teaching methodologies, fostering a deeper understanding of the cultural and emotional dimensions embedded in language.

Moreover, this investigation not only identifies the conceptual constructs associated with each metaphor but also elucidates the corresponding mappings, offering insights into the conceptual projections that underlie the conceptualization of emotions. This study serves as a bridge between Cognitive Semantics and vocabulary teaching, providing a novel approach to metaphor understanding and its potential application in the EFL classroom.

The remaining part of this chapter unfolds in the following manner: the next section delineates the aim of this investigation. Subsequently, an overview of the multi-level view of metaphor is provided. Then, the methodology employed to analyze emotion metaphors is presented. The results section analyzes in detail the selected metaphors evoking emotions, unraveling their conceptual components at distinct levels of schematicity. Lastly, the conclusion summarizes the main findings and suggests potential avenues for future research.

2. AIM

This study endeavors to employ the "multilevel view of metaphor" proposed by Kövecses (2020) to comprehensively analyze the metaphorical conceptualization of a set of emotions. Therefore, our primary aim is a nuanced exploration of the conceptual constructs configuring

emotion metaphors at different levels of schematicity (i.e., image schemas, domains, frames, and mental spaces). This multilevel analysis provides a comprehensive examination of the hierarchical intricacies inherent in the conceptual metaphors linked to diverse emotional states such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear and surprise.

Moreover, this study not only identifies conceptual constructs associated with these metaphors but also determines the corresponding mappings involved in those metaphors. This dual focus on constructs and mappings aims to contribute significantly to comprehending the cognitive intricacies shaping emotional experiences through metaphorical language.

Lastly, this study aims to bridge the gap between theoretical insights and practical applications by highlighting the implications of our findings for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning. By delving into the multilevel view of emotion metaphors, this study strives to offer EFL instructors a valuable tool to enrich language teaching methodologies, creating a more profound connection between language, sensorimotor experience, culture, and emotion.

3. THE MULTI-LEVEL VIEW OF METAPHOR

Kövecses (2020) proposed a new view of conceptual metaphors that considers them to encompass conceptual structures at various levels of schematicity simultaneously. These levels include image schemas, domains, frames, and mental spaces, in addition to the linguistic level of the actual metaphorical expressions. Kövecses suggests that the multi-level view of metaphor offers a fresh and comprehensive framework for examining metaphors within conceptual metaphor theory.

Image schemas serve as fundamental conceptual structures that give significance to our experience (Johnson, 1987). According to Kövecses (2020), image schemas represent directly meaningful preconceptual structures, characterized by their highly schematic gestalts, continuous analogue patterns, and internal structure with only a few components. Due to their highly schematic nature, image schemas provide meaning to a diverse range of concepts and experiences. For instance, the

concept of body relies on image schemas like CONTAINER, VERTICALITY and STRUCTURED OBJECT, among others. Furthermore, these image schemas can characterize various concepts.

As image schemas are grounded in bodily experiences, these structures commonly demonstrate universality. As a result, conceptual metaphors that integrate these image schemas also lean towards universality.

Regarding cognitive domains, Esbrí-Blasco et al. (2019, p.134) define them as:

Conceptual constructs or configurations that comprise (all) the concepts related to a particular area of human experience or human knowledge. That area may vary in its complexity but cognitive domains include the different conceptualization of prototypical frames that humans share about that domain of experience. Thus, cognitive domains are not equated to frames, but they consist of frames and their frame constituents (FEs), as well as frame sequences (i.e., scripts).

Furthermore, domains are propositional in nature and occupy a level directly beneath image schemas, which make them meaningful. Different image schemas are applicable to distinct facets or dimensions within a domain matrix (Kövecses, 2022).

Conceptual metaphors are commonly defined as connections between domains. Nevertheless, conceptualizing metaphors as a series of conceptual projections between two cognitive domains poses a significant challenge. Source domains generally encompass more conceptual content that exceeds what is conceptually transferred to the target domain.

As for frames (Fillmore, 1982), they are less schematic knowledge configurations than cognitive domains. Kövecses (2020) suggests that the main distinction between cognitive domains and frames can be expressed by a difference in their level of schematicity. Frames elaborate specific elements of a domain matrix, referring to particular higher-level concepts within a given domain.

Therefore, frames consist of more conceptually specific information compared to domains. As proposed by Esbrí-Blasco (2020), a frame can be conceived of as “a culturally dependent conceptual knowledge configuration/cognitive construct that represents a particular prototypical

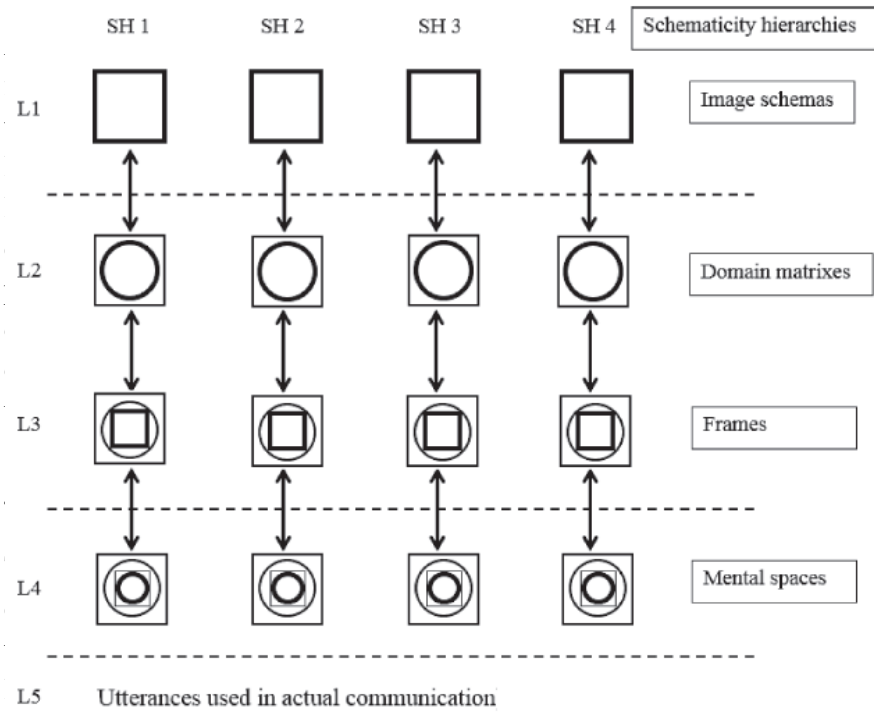
situation based on human experience consisting of interrelated frame elements (FEs). This particular prototypical situation is, in turn, located conceptually within a broader knowledge construct called domain” (p.36). For instance, within the COOKING domain, various specific frames, like BOILING, BAKING, AND FRYING, serve to elaborate on different aspects of that domain.

Additionally, frames and metaphors at the frame level exhibit not only lower schematicity compared to domains and metaphors at the domain level but also greater susceptibility to the impact of the cultural context in which they operate (Kövecses, 2022).

Concerning mental spaces, Fauconnier (2007, p.351) defines them as “very partial assemblies constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action. They contain elements and are structured by frames and cognitive models. Mental spaces are connected to long-term schematic knowledge, such as the frame for walking along a path, and to long-term specific knowledge,...”. Mental spaces may be organized by one or more distinct frames, since they can manifest as realizations of a single or various frames.

Moreover, mental spaces represent the least schematic conceptual structures among the four examined, operating at a highly specific and conceptually rich level. These specific conceptual structures arise during online processing within distinct communicative scenarios (Kövecses, 2020). In the context of metaphorical usage, mental spaces can be viewed as elaborations of frames that expand specific facets of domains for metaphorical conceptualization.

FIGURE 1. The schematicity hierarchy proposed by Kövecses (2022, p.25)



The analysis delves into the internal configuration of the conceptual metaphors underlying metaphorical expression evoking emotions. Beyond specifying the four distinct levels of schematicity involved (image schemas, domains, frames and mental spaces), the analysis examines the mappings involved in each metaphor to elucidate which are the main elements that are conceptually mapped. To enhance clarity, visual representations of the various levels of conceptual schematicity are provided in figures, illustrating the internal configuration of each metaphor. This in-depth analysis contributes to a nuanced comprehension of the conceptual phenomena associated with complexity of emotional states expressed metaphorically.

5. RESULTS

5.1. ANGER

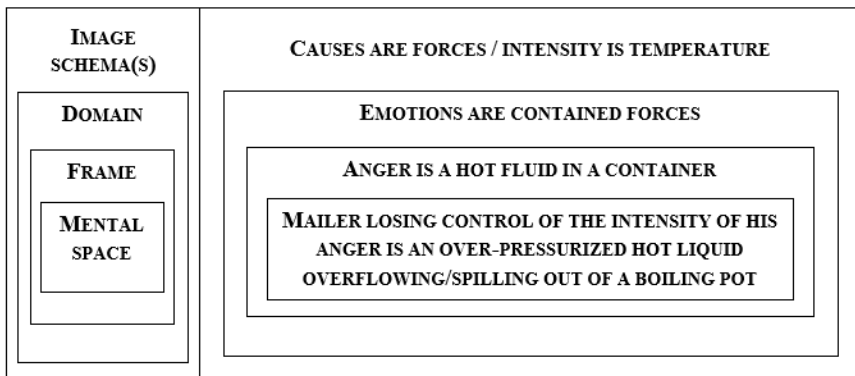
The emotion of anger, as defined in the *Cambridge Dictionary Online* is “a strong feeling that makes you want to hurt someone or be unpleasant because of something unfair or unkind that has happened”. The metaphorical conceptualization of anger has been extensively studied by cognitive semanticists, including Dąbrowska (2022), Lakoff and Kövecses (1987) and Kövecses (1986, 2000b, 2008a, 2015b). As postulated by Kövecses (2008a, p.390), the five-step prototypical model of anger consists of the following stages:

(Step 1) cause → (Step 2) existence of anger, or its counterpart (in the form of a force) → (Step 3) attempt at control → (Step 4) loss of control → (Step 5) expression

As a way of illustration, example (1) contains a metaphorical expression evoking the emotion of anger.

Mailer's anger **boiled over** and he sent Vidal to the ground with a punch. (COCA, 2016, MAG: Scientific American).

FIGURE 2. Anger metaphor at different levels of schematicity



If we consider example (1), we can observe that this sentence involves stages 4 and 5 of the prototypical model of anger (i.e., the loss of control

and expression of anger). As seen in figure 2, this sentence activates the ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER metaphor. However, in terms of the four levels of schematicity, this metaphorical sentence also involves more schematic and more specific metaphorical conceptual structures. At the most schematic level (i.e., the level of image schemas), this metaphor is based on the highly schematic image schema metaphors CAUSES ARE FORCES and INTENSITY IS TEMPERATURE.

Regarding the image schema metaphor INTENSITY IS TEMPERATURE, it is important to remark the physical motivation of this metaphor, as there are some physical aspects of the human body implicated in the emotion of anger that metonymically motivate the resulting metaphor (Kövecses, 2008a). In this specific example of anger, the increase in body temperature is one the physiological responses to anger that motivates the metaphorical conceptualization of this emotion. When a liquid in a pot reaches its boiling point, it can boil over if the heat is too high or if the pot is too full. Boiling over occurs when the vapor pressure of the liquid exceeds the pressure exerted by the atmosphere, causing the liquid to escape from the confines of the pot. To prevent boiling over, it is important to regulate the heat appropriately and ensure that the pot is not overly filled. Similarly, when a person's anger reaches its boiling point, it can boil over if the intensity of the emotion is too high or if the person is dealing with overwhelming circumstances.

As for the FORCE schema, in example (1) the emotion of anger is conceptualized as a force that is building up within a person, much like heat or pressure builds up in a container. Therefore, in terms of the force schema classification, this scenario aligns with the idea of compulsion, an internal force driving an object (in this case, the emotion of anger) in a certain direction or out of a container, as in the metaphorical expression *boiling over*. The metaphor in example (1) suggests that the intense emotion of anger is building up inside Mailer like a hot fluid in a container, and when this hot liquid boils over, there is a sense of an irresistible, internal force driving the action of punching. The intense emotion of anger builds up to a point where it becomes overwhelming, leading to a compelled, almost automatic response of punching. The individual (Mailer) is portrayed as being under the influence of this

internal force (i.e., anger), and the action of punching is driven by the compelling nature of the emotion.

Then, at the level of domains, those causes that provoke a change of state or emotion are seen as forces in a container in the metaphor *EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINED FORCES*. This, in turn, is reflected at the frame level in the metaphor *ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER* (Kövecses, 2008a, p.391). In the mappings of this metaphor, the human body is viewed as a boiling container, anger is conceived of as a forceful liquid within that container, the intensity of anger is conceptualized as the heat, trying to control anger is construed as trying to keep the forceful substance inside the container and the expression of anger is understood as the hot fluid going out of the container.

Finally, all the higher levels structure the very specific mental space metaphor *MAILER LOSING CONTROL OF THE INTENSITY OF HIS ANGER IS AN OVER-PRESSURIZED HOT LIQUID OVERFLOWING/SPILLING OUT OF A BOILING POT*. In example (1) Mailer losing control of his anger is viewed as a hot liquid overflowing a pot. Boiling over in the context of anger occurs when the emotional pressure exceeds the coping mechanisms of the angry person, causing the emotion of anger to manifest in uncontrolled expressions or actions. In example (1), the loss of control of anger is manifested through Mailer's punch to Vidal.

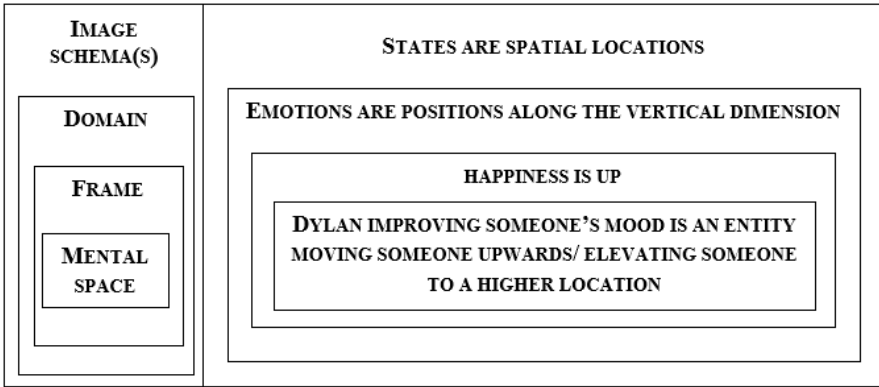
5.2. HAPPINESS

The concept of happiness can be defined as a mental state encompassing not just sensations of joy, contentment, and other positive emotions but also a feeling that one's life holds significance and is esteemed (Lyubomirsky, 2001). A major conceptual metaphor for the emotion of happiness in English is the orientational metaphor *HAPPY IS UP* (Kövecses, 1991, 2008b).

The concept of happiness is activated in example (2):

(2) Dylan **cheered me up** immeasurably that night, even throwing in my favorite song (COCA, 2005, MAG: Backpacker).

FIGURE 3. *Happiness metaphor at different levels of schematicity*



Example (2) activates the HAPPINESS IS UP orientational metaphor. Delving into the intricacies of this metaphor at various levels of abstraction, we start at the most schematic level, the image schema level. Here, this metaphorical expression is rooted in the image schema metaphor STATES ARE SPATIAL LOCATIONS (see Figure 3). This image schema metaphor posits that our conceptualization of abstract states or conditions is metaphorically structured by spatial relations. In the context of happiness, the abstract concept of being happy is metaphorically linked to a spatial orientation, specifically an upward direction. This association draws from our embodied experiences and the way we perceive and interact with space.

At the domain level, a less schematic one, EMOTIONS (in this case happiness) are conceptualized as POSITIONS ALONG A VERTICAL DIMENSION. In this regard, emotions can be metaphorically understood as existing on a vertical continuum. The vertical dimension serves as a metaphorical representation of valence of emotions, where higher positions along this vertical axis correspond to more positive emotional states, and lower positions denote less positive emotional states (Wnuk & Ito, 2021).

This conceptualization manifests then at the frame level in the orientational metaphor HAPPINESS IS UP. This orientational metaphor is grounded in bodily experience. In the realm of emotions, particularly happiness and sadness, these feelings can be linked to spatial positions,

high positions co-occurring with happy feelings and low positions with sad feelings. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.15) illustrate this connection, stating that a drooping posture is typically associated with sadness and depression, while an erect posture aligns with a positive emotional state. Therefore, being in an upward position is mapped onto being happy.

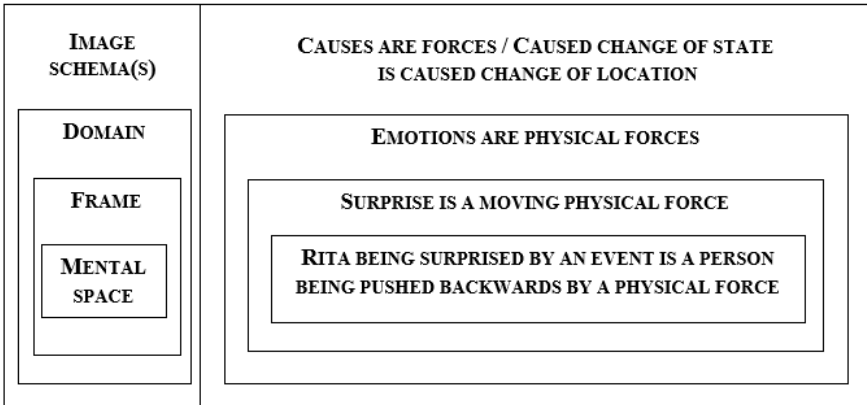
Lastly, at the least schematic level, we encounter the mental space metaphor DYLAN IMPROVING SOMEONE’S MOOD IS AN ENTITY MOVING SOMEONE UPWARDS / ELEVATING SOMEONE TO A HIGHER LOCATION. This metaphor further enriches the understanding of the emotional dynamics involved in Dylan's act of cheering someone up, highlighting the transformative impact on somebody's mood through the metaphorical elevation to a higher emotional state.

5.3. SURPRISE

The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* defines surprise as “the feeling caused by something unexpected or unusual”. As suggested by Kövecses (2015a, p.284), surprise is not a prototypical emotion concept, as it closely aligns with the schematic conceptual structure shared by other emotions. The emotion of surprise is evoked in example (3).

(3) Rita was **taken aback** by his apology. If anything, she had been expecting another physical assault. (COCA, 2012, WEB: Always Pure).

FIGURE 4. Surprise metaphor at different levels of schematicity



As depicted in Figure 4, example (3) involves the SURPRISE IS A MOVING PHYSICAL FORCE metaphor. In turn, this metaphor is grounded in the image schema metaphors: CAUSES ARE FORCES and CAUSED CHANGE OF STATE IS CAUSED CHANGE OF LOCATION. The motion is rendered by the preposition *aback*. The notion of surprise is viewed as a location, an emotional space where individuals enter and undergo the experience of the emotion.

Moreover, at the level of domains, EMOTIONS are conceived of as PHYSICAL FORCES. The concept of surprise involves an occurrence or object that induces a sense of surprise in an individual. This process gives rise to a range of physical and mental responses, one of which is the sensation of being taken aback (Kövecses, 2015a). This event causing surprise is envisioned as a physical force that compels a person to move.

At the frame level, SURPRISE is understood as a MOVING PHYSICAL FORCE. The mappings of this frame level metaphor could be described as follows (Kövecses, 2015a, p.281):

- the person affected by the physical/psychological force → the person experiencing surprise
- impacting the person physically or psychologically → causing the emotion of surprise
- the force responsible for the physical or psychological impact → the cause of surprise
- the physical or psychological sensations/feelings produced → the feeling of surprise caused
- the responses to the impact associated with what the person feels → the physical or psychological responses produced by the cause and the emotion of surprise
- the unexpectedness of the physical/psychological impact → the unexpectedness of the cause of the emotion/surprise

Additionally, the person undergoing surprise lacks control over themselves; they undergo a process over which they have no power. This is

due to the fact that when faced with a sudden force, one is unable to assert control over the unfolding events.

Finally, at the mental space level, we find the specific metaphor: RITA BEING SURPRISED BY AN EVENT IS A PERSON BEING PUSHED BACKWARDS BY A PHYSICAL FORCE. In this case, there is a physical force impacting Rita in an unexpected way, leading to a specific physical reaction (i.e., being taken aback). The use of "taken aback" not only suggests a sudden and forceful element but also aligns with the metaphorical idea that surprise is akin to a force that physically moves an individual from one state to another.

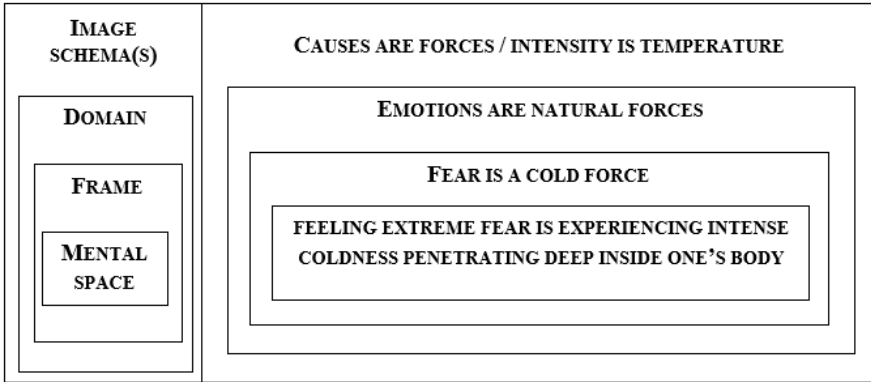
5.4. FEAR

The emotion of fear is described in the *Cambridge Dictionary Online* as “an unpleasant emotion or thought that you have when you are frightened or worried by something dangerous, painful, or bad that is happening or might happen”. The prototypical cognitive model of fear in English, as postulated by Dąbrowska (2023), encompasses five stages:

- Stage 1: Stimulus / trigger
- Stage 2: Fear (e.g., in the state of anxiety)
- Stage 3: Attempt at control
- Stage 4: Loss of control
- Stage 5: Action (e.g., freezing, avoiding, withdrawing)

(4) She looked to the west, where the trees were sparser, and what she saw there **chilled her to the bone**. (COCA, 2018, FIC: Fan Fic)

FIGURE 5. *Fear metaphor at different levels of schematicity*



If we consider example (4), we can observe that this sentence involves a stimulus, the feeling of fear, and the physical response to that fear (i.e., feeling intense coldness). As illustrated in Figure 5, this sentence evokes the FEAR IS A COLD FORCE metaphor. Regarding the four levels of schematicity, at the most schematic level (i.e., the level of image schemas), this metaphor is rooted in the highly schematic image schema metaphors CAUSES ARE FORCES and INTENSITY IS TEMPERATURE. Concerning the INTENSITY schema, it is crucial to emphasize the physical motivation of this metaphor, as the reduction in body temperature is one of the physiological responses to fear that motivates the metaphorical conceptualization of this emotion. There seems to be a correlation between the degree of fear and the intensity of the associated physical experience, particularly coldness. The metaphor INTENSITY IS TEMPERATURE implies that an intense sensation of coldness is metaphorically linked to a high level of fear. Therefore, this metaphor remarks the interplay between emotional intensity and sensory or physiological responses. Furthermore, the cause of fear is construed as a force. When fear is metaphorically conceptualized as a force, it implies that fear possesses characteristics such as strength and impact.

At the level of domains, EMOTIONS are conceptualized as NATURAL FORCES. This domain level metaphor implies that fear, like certain natural forces, possesses an inherent strength and the ability to induce

certain reactions in human beings, as the chilling sensation described in example (4). In turn, this provides the base for the frame level metaphor FEAR IS A COLD FORCE. The person affected by the natural cold force is understood as the person experiencing fear and the intensity of their fear is conceptualized as the intensity of the coldness they endure.

Lastly, at the most specific level, we find the mental space metaphor FEELING EXTREME FEAR IS EXPERIENCING INTENSE COLDNESS PENETRATING DEEP INSIDE ONE'S BODY. In this specific metaphor, the drop in body temperature, which is a physiological effect of fear, is used to refer to the actual emotion. In this case, the metaphor involves a physical sensation of coldness reaching deep into the bones, which is a tangible and visceral experience. This embodiment of fear helps convey the intensity and profound nature of the emotion.

6. CONCLUSION

The current study has explored the intricate cognitive processes involved in the conceptualization of specific emotions by applying the multi-level view of metaphor. By analyzing the four levels of schematicity, we have unearthed the nuanced connections and hierarchies within the conceptual metaphors associated with the emotions of anger, happiness, surprise and fear. Apart from identifying conceptual constructs, our study has elucidated the corresponding mappings implicated in the conceptual metaphors under investigation. The results of our analysis highlight the significance of embodied experience in shaping the metaphorical conceptualization of emotions.

In doing so, this study not only contributes to the theoretical comprehension of metaphorical expressions related to emotions but also provides practical insights for language educators within the EFL context. Through deliberate exposure to instruction on metaphors, learners can identify the underlying semantic motivation behind certain metaphorical expressions, thereby facilitating their understanding and entrenchment of figurative language.

Future research could extend the scope of emotions analyzed through the multi-level view of metaphor, incorporating a broader array of

emotions. Additionally, these emotions could also be studied in terms of the four levels of schematicity across different languages, which would serve to discern their potential universality or cultural specificity of those emotion metaphors.

Overall, the present study serves as a bridge between Cognitive Semantics and vocabulary teaching, as it provides a novel approach that can enrich our understanding of how metaphors operate in the conceptualization of emotions.

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