

AUTHOR - WORKS

METAPHOR AND EMOTION: LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND BODY IN HUMAN FEELING

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ABSTRACT: In the treasure of books as well as research on cognitive linguistics, we can come across many good and worth reading books. If anyone is interested in the areas of language that are viewed and studied from the perspective of both psychology, neuroscience, and kinesthesia, then Talmy, Langacker, Lakoff & Johnson, Fauconnier & Turner, Barcelona, Kövecses, Gibbs, and Fillmore, to name but a few, are considered famous authors and scientists with great influence in the field of cognitive science research in general and cognitive language in particular. This article aims to give an overview of one of Kövecses's best books "*Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling*", and want to share the author's views about the book. Hopefully, this paper will be useful for those who love cognitive linguistics, are interested in metaphors and metaphorical expressions of emotions, or are looking for issues that they want to research related to.

KEY WORDS: cognitive linguistics; emotion; metaphor; psychology; neuroscience; kinesthesia.

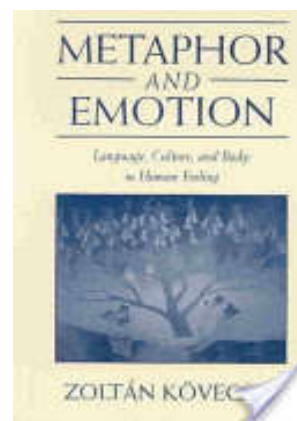
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1. Introduction

Zoltán Kövecses is a Professor of Linguistics in the Department of American Studies at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. He is one of the four editors of the international scholarly journal, *Metaphor and Symbol*, published by Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers in the U.S. He also serves on the advisory board of *Cognitive Linguistics* and several other international professional journals. He is the head of the Cultural Linguistics doctoral program at Eötvös Loránd University. He is currently working on the language and conceptualization of emotions, cross-cultural variation in metaphor, and the issue of the relationship between language, mind, and culture from a cognitive linguistic perspective.

([HTTP: //das.elite.hu/content/faculty/kovecses/](http://das.elite.hu/content/faculty/kovecses/))



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The early 1980s witnessed the real beginning of cognitive metaphor study with the publication of Lakoff & Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By*, in which the remarkable conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) was introduced and elaborated. It defines metaphor as one of the basic cognitive mechanisms that structure the way we formulate and understand abstract concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). According to CMT, metaphor resides not only in language but also in thought. We use metaphors to speak about certain aspects of the world and think about them. One of the striking roles which metaphor plays is to describe emotions. The relationship between metaphors and

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emotions has been interested as a sexy topic by a remarkable number of scholars including typical linguists and psychologists, namely G. Fauconnier, Johnson, Kendra Cherry, A.Ortony, G. Lakoff, Liza Freedman Weisberg, Kovecses, etc. Most people are not too surprised to discover that emotional concepts like *love* and *anger* are understood metaphorically (A. Ortony, 1993).

This book, as its title “*Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling*”, raises many key issues about the role and nature of human feeling in emotions. The author tries to “bring together three threads of emotion research into a coherent whole, including the research on how the human body behaves in an emotional state, the research on how cultural and social factors influence and shape emotional experiences, and the research on emotional language from a cognitive linguistic perspective.”

2. A tour of the book

Chapter 1, *Language and emotion concepts* (pp.1-19) takes the readers to a land of emotional concepts in which the author illustrates several endeavours to characterize emotional meaning as follows: the ‘label’ view, the ‘core meaning’ view, the ‘dimensional’ view, the ‘implicational’ view, the ‘prototype’ view, the ‘social-constructionist’ view, and the ‘embodied cultural prototype’ view. In this chapter, the author also touches upon some issues in the study of emotional language, which constitute the bulk of the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2, *Metaphors of Emotion* (pp.20-34) deals with figurative emotion language in English. The conceptual metaphors of emotion examined include *anger*, *fear*, *happiness*, *sadness*, *love*, *lust*, *pride*, *shame* and *surprise* metaphors since they are considered “prototypical emotion concepts and occur on most lists of basic emotions” (p.20). In this chapter, the author focuses on summarizing the research that has been done on metaphorical aspects of emotion concepts in English in the past decade or so. He limits himself to the presentation of results that have been acquired by using a cognitive linguistic framework that was established in the 1980s and early 1990s by the work of such figures as George Lakoff (1980, 1987, 1989, 1991), Mark Johnson (1987, 1993), Mark Turner (1987), Ray Gibbs (1994), and others. However, the author expresses his own opinion when asserts that “It seems then that much of our language of anger is based on normal, conventional ways of understanding anger”. When discussing the fear metaphor, he explains the concept of the **divided self**, from his point of view, “as a metaphorical source domain suggests that the self that is normally inside the body container moves outside it; this happens when the person loses control, in our case, over his or her emotions”. The tour of the book becomes more and more interesting when the readers experience specific examples shown respectively to illustrate each kind of emotional metaphor. Having read these sentences as well as the author’s analysis, one must agree with him that “the figurative linguistic expressions that speakers use to talk about their emotions derive from a largely shared conceptual system” (p.34).

The scope of emotion metaphors is the scope of Chapter 3 (pp.35-50) - **Emotion Metaphors: Are they unique to the emotions**, where the author tries to discover if there are any metaphorical source domains unique to the emotions. It is suggested that most of the source domains associated with the nine emotion concepts discussed in Chapter 2 are not specific to emotion concepts but have wider applications instead. In this chapter, the author also explains why some emotion concepts appear specific to the emotions. Heat or Fire, for example, in the sense of “hot”, can be found in anger, (romantic) love and lust. It may be applicable to shame (“*She was burning with shame/embarassment*”). However, the author also notes that the fully conventionalized expression for shame “*My cheeks were burning*” can be called “metaphorical metonymy” because there appears metonymy “body heat for shame”. According to his conclusion, heat or fire does not seem to occur as a source domain with happiness, sadness, pride and surprise.

The relationship between emotion metaphors and Lakoff’s (1990) event structure metaphor is examined in Chapter 4 - **Events and Emotions: The subcategorization of emotions** (p.51-60). In

this chapter, the author attempts to find the answer to these questions: Are the emotions subcategorised as states, passions, events, actions, or any combination of these? There are different points of view about “emotion”. Some anthropologists consider emotions as events (e.g., Lutz, 1988), while some philosophers, like Solomon and Fromm, view them as actions, rather than passions (e.g., Solomon, 1976; Fromm, 1956). The main goal of chapter 4 is to examine the extent of overlap if any, and the nature of the relationship between metaphors of emotion and what Lakoff (1990, 1993) calls the “event structure metaphor”. According to the author’s view, “in the EVENT STRUCTURE metaphor, states, in general, are conceptualized as *physical locations* or *bounded regions* in space. States are a part of EVENT STRUCTURE because *events often involve entities* changing from one state to another.” (p.52). After analyzing each kind of sub metaphor belonging to the EVENT STRUCTURE metaphor and exemplifying them persuasively, the author concludes that “metaphors of emotion overlap with the event structure metaphor; many sub metaphors of event structure apply to the emotions as well.”

In Chapter 5 - **The force of emotion** (pp.61-86), inspired by Talmy’s (1988) notion of ‘force dynamic’, the author shows that what underlies most emotion metaphors is a “master metaphor”, namely, EMOTION IS FORCE. Accordingly, the “master metaphor” is classified into three kinds: (1) Emotion is a social force (*He is ruled by anger*), (2) Emotion is a natural force (*I was swept off my feet*), (3) Emotion is a mental force (*Our emotion often fool us*), and (4) Emotion is a physiological force (*I’m starved for affection*). It is concluded in this chapter that emotion metaphors are not isolated and unrelated specific-level metaphors, the various emotion metaphor source domains are instantiations of the concept of force. (p. 85). In addition, a basic structure for emotion that is metaphorical is provided in the conclusion: cause of emotion => emotion => response. Kövecses calls it “the skeletal structure”.

Chapter 6 - **Emotions and Relationships** (pp.87-113) extends the scope of discussion into the area of friendship, where the focus is mainly on the conceptual metaphors of human relationships. One of the major points made in this chapter is that the conceptualization of emotions is both related to and different from that of human relationships. It is interesting to listen to the discussion about “sharing”, one of the most typical features of a very close concept of “friendship” from different perspectives. It is found that the American conception of friendship is constituted to a considerable extent by the notion of communication. It is the foundation for the three interrelated metaphors: *Experiences are objects*, *communication is sharing (experience) objects* and *people are containers (for experience objects)*. Thanks to the mappings and examples for each kind of metaphor shown in this chapter, we have a great deal of knowledge about friendship.

Kövecses presents in Chapter 7 - **Folk versus expert theories of emotion** (pp.114-138) folk and expert emotion theories, arguing against Naomi Quinn’s (1991) view that metaphor reflects rather than helps to form cultural models. The author reiterates that metaphor does constitute the cultural model. Another point made in this chapter is that expert emotion theories are not necessarily “merely ‘dressed up’ variants of folk or cultural models” (p.137).

Chapter 8 - **Universality in the conceptualization of emotions** (pp.139-163) looks for the answer to the question “Are the emotions conceptualized in the same way or differently across different cultures?”. After emotion metaphors in four different languages (Chinese, English, Hungarian and Japanese) are analyzed, the results show that a common basic structure exists in these diverse cultures. For example, the ANGER metaphor in these four cultures all has the same CONTAINER metaphor. All of them have expressions which are equivalent to “*My body is filled with anger*”. The author completes the chapter by discussing “why the similarities”.

Chapter 9 - **Cultural variation in the conceptualization of emotion** (pp.164-181) shifts the focus to cross-cultural and within-cultural variation in the conceptualization of emotion. If chapter 8

focuses on the basic image-schematic structure which is shared by most cultures, the concepts of ANGER, for example, this chapter skews toward several cultural differences in prototypes.

Finally, in Chapter 10 - **Emotion Language: A new synthesis** (pp.182-199), the most important one, the author attempts to offer a new synthesis of emotion language about body and culture. More specifically, this chapter makes three generalizations concerning the language of emotion. First, most emotional language is a shared property of several aspects of the folk theory of the mind. Second, social constructionist and universalist approaches to emotion concepts are complementary rather than mutually exclusive; together they can provide a unified view of emotions called “body-based constructionism”. Third, a general picture of emotional language can be outlined. For instance, *feeling states are both psychologically universal and culturally specific*. In this final chapter, the author emphasizes once again the metaphorical and metonymical nature of emotional language.

The tour of Metaphor and Emotion closes with the explanation of “why metaphor matters”. Thanks to the intensive analysis of metaphorical language shared by three large systems including the force dynamic system, the event structure metaphor and the larger conceptual system, readers will be more likely to have a deeper look into the close relationship between Language and Emotion in a larger scale as well as metaphor and emotion in a narrower scale. In addition, the author draws out some implications, both theoretical and practical, of the analysis to once again confirm the reason why many psychologists, counsellors, and researchers have given much concern about “language and emotion”, especially about the journey of searching for an answer to “how the human body behaves in an emotional state” and how human behaviour has effects on language.

3. Evaluation and application

3.1. Contribution

Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling highlights the important role of figurative language in the conceptualization of emotion, especially providing a new synthesis in the study of emotion from a cognitive linguistic perspective.

Built on a strong foundation of cognitive semantics theory, the book serves as insightful notions and detailed information on how to understand “cognitive metaphor”. It is of particular interest to linguists and social psychologists since it has established frameworks to understand how humans feel and behave. The book raises many important issues concerning the nature and role of human feelings in emotions. The book is also valuable to linguistic researchers whose research interests are within the field of cognitive linguistics.

Kovecses illustrates through detailed cross-linguistic analyses how many emotion concepts reflect widespread metaphorical patterns of thought. These emotion metaphors arise from recurring embodied experiences, one reason why human emotions across many cultures conform to certain basic biological-physiological processes in the human body and of the body interacting with the external world. The view proposed here demonstrates how cultural aspects of emotions, metaphorical language about the emotions, and human physiology in emotion are all part of an integrated system. Kovecses convincingly shows how this integrated system points to the reconciliation of the seemingly contradictory views of biological reductionism and social constructionism in contemporary debates about human emotion.

(<http://www.cambridge.org/gb/academic/subjects/psychology/cultural-psychology/metaphor-and-emotion-language-culture-and-body-human-feeling#KdEAcidTRxQqO7Ze.99>)

This publication is also written in a reader-friendly mode. The author resorts to numerous metaphorical examples to account for abstract thoughts and ideas, making the text reader-friendly. This book must be of much value and interest to those interested in emotional metaphors.

To me, *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling* proves an excellent source of knowledge to study emotion metaphors, without which, it must be very challenging, elusive, and nearly impossible to make meaning. Its author, Zoltán Kövecses is indeed a

productive and influential scientist in metaphor studies. Of course, this is not to say that this book is about emotional metaphors only; rather, this book is more than emotion and metaphor because it tries to reveal what hides behind all the metaphorical emotions.

3.2. Critique

Many researchers claim that emotions arise either from human biology (i.e., biological reductionism) or as products of culture (i.e., social constructionism). Are human emotions best characterized as biological, psychological, or cultural entities? Zoltan Kovecses demonstrates how cultural aspects, metaphorical language, and human physiology are part of an integrated system. This book challenges the simplistic division between the body and culture by stressing how human emotions are to a large extent "constructed" from individuals' embodied experiences in different cultural settings.

While being considered an excellent account of how the human body influences and constrains the conceptualization of emotion, the publication *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling, in general*, are not flawless, according to several researchers. In this section, I will try to draw on the reviewers' viewpoints and compare them with what I can observe in this book.

Chaoqun Xie, Fuzhou (2004) expresses his concern when the author strongly argues for distinguishing folk (that is, commonsense) and expert (that is, scientific) theories of emotion, saying that "a scientific theory is scientific because it rejects what ordinary people 'merely believe'" (p.127). He also questions "Where do scientific theories come from? What is scientific and what is unscientific? Is there any possibility that sometimes what is labelled 'scientific' is simply a perspective on the subject in question and cannot be termed 'scientific' at all?". I also question the relationship between "folk" and "scientific" which is mentioned here. What does the author imply when he says that "the more a scientific theory overlaps with a folk theory, the more popular or accepted it is within the scientific community"? There is no illustration with any specific examples for that.

Schnall (2007) shares the same viewpoint with Chaoqun Xie, and Fuzhou (2004) and adds that the value of theory, whether folk or scientific, depends not only on how scientific or intuitive it appears to be but on how readily it generates testable hypothesis. He also remarks that Kövecses highlights one central aspect of any theory or model when demonstrating the coherent structure of folk models and their internal consistency about the master metaphor of "emotion is force".

4. Application

For people with a cognitive linguistics background, the accounts of emotion metaphors presented in the book help enrich their minds with insightful and multidimensional perspectives for studying.

The book offers a framework for emotion metaphor analysis, which is perfectly what I am looking for to frame my research. The most valuable part of the book to my work lies mainly in Chapters 1 to 6 since they concentrate on emotion concepts and emotion metaphors of all kinds including motion verbs contained in emotion metaphors which are closely related to my work. I believe I benefit greatly from the analysis and illustrated examples of each chapter since the highlighted points here can function as the key to directing my analysis. Also, I learn from the way the authors analyze emotional metaphors, especially those anger metaphors (p.21), happiness metaphors (pp.24-25), sadness metaphors (pp.25-26), and love metaphors (pp.26-27), to name but a few.

There are challenges in applying the presented theory into practice, though. As seen in the book, each kind of emotional metaphor offers so many aspects to study on. Therefore, I am considering either focusing on one or two kinds (s) only or narrowing down the number of emotion metaphors being included in my research inventory. In addition, there is an urgent need to trace back to Cognitive Semantics Approach by Leonard Talmy to map the concepts for motion analysis to the appropriate ones for motion-emotion metaphorical expression analysis.

I would highly recommend *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling* to anyone interested in cognitive linguistics, and metaphor as well as those who are fascinated by the migration of plain language to figurative language. As we are living in a time when the neurobiology of emotions and human behaviours is increasingly receiving a lot of concern, this book provides an invaluable and miraculous tool for discovering abstract things hidden inside the human mind.

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Ẩn dụ và cảm xúc: ngôn ngữ, văn hoá, và cơ thể trong cảm xúc của con người

Tóm tắt: Trong kho tàng sách cũng như những công trình nghiên cứu về ngôn ngữ học tri nhận, ta có thể bắt gặp rất nhiều cuốn hay và đáng đọc. Nếu ai quan tâm tới các lĩnh vực ngôn ngữ được nhìn nhận và nghiên cứu dưới góc độ của cả tâm lí học, thần kinh học và cảm giác vận động cơ thể thì Talmy, Langacker, Lakoff & Johnson, Fauconnier & Turner, Barcelona, Kövecses, Gibbs, and Fillmore,... được xem là những chuyên gia có tên tuổi mang tầm ảnh hưởng mạnh mẽ trong địa hạt nghiên cứu khoa học tri nhận nói chung và ngôn ngữ tri nhận nói riêng. Bài viết này nhằm mục đích giới thiệu tổng quát về một trong những cuốn sách hay của Kövecses có tựa đề là "*Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling*", đồng thời cũng muốn chia sẻ những cách nhìn riêng của tác giả bài viết về cuốn sách. Hi vọng, bài viết này sẽ hữu ích cho những người yêu ngôn ngữ học tri nhận, quan tâm tới ẩn dụ và những diễn đạt về cảm xúc mang tính ẩn dụ hay đang tìm hiểu những vấn đề muốn nghiên cứu liên quan đến ngôn ngữ, văn hoá và cảm xúc con người.

Từ khoá: ngôn ngữ học tri nhận; cảm xúc; ẩn dụ; tâm lí học; thần kinh học; cảm giác vận động (cơ thể).