

A Cognitive Study of Happiness Metaphors in English, Tunisian Arabic and Spanish

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Abstract

Traditionally, metaphors were perceived as a mere ornamental device used by poets to embellish their language. With the advent of cognitive linguistics, the perception of metaphor has been “revolutionized.” Metaphor has ceased to be considered as a purely linguistic device. It is studied as a cognitive instrument, shaping our language, thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2002). Metaphors are found to be very pervasive in everyday language. They are used by native speakers to express abstract concepts such as emotions and time. This paper aims at filling this gap, at least partially, by providing a cross-linguistic analysis of happiness metaphors in these three unrelated languages. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (the CMT), as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), is adopted in this study as the analytical framework. Thus the methodological tools provided by the CMT, such as “conceptual metaphors”, “linguistic metaphors”, and “cognitive transfer” are used for the analysis of the data at hand. The results suggest that English, Tunisian Arabic and Spanish share many conceptual metaphors for happiness, such as HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER, HAPPINESS IS LIGHT, HAPPINESS IS BEING OFF THE GROUND. Some differences are observed at the conceptual and linguistic levels, which can be attributed to cultural differences.

Key words: English metaphor, Happiness, Metaphor, Tunisian Arabic, Spanish metaphor

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Introduction

Metaphor has a long history. Traditionally, it was perceived as a purely linguistic phenomenon, as a matter of language, and “an extraordinary” device used by poets for the sake of linguistic embellishment. Aristotle, for instance, one of the earliest philosophers, states that metaphor is a “deviant” rhetorical device that serves as an emotive instrument. However, with the advent of Cognitive Linguistics (CL), this traditional definition of metaphor has been challenged. In fact, since the emergence of Cognitive Linguistics in the 1970s, studies have started to be concerned with the way our human conceptual systems are organized. One of the areas that have triggered the interest of linguistics is related to metaphor. Scholars, such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Kovecses (2002) have “revolutionized” our conception of metaphor. They have shown, on the basis of language data, that metaphor is not a merely linguistic device used by poets to embellish their language, rather, metaphor is a matter of language, thought and action. It is shaping our actions and thoughts. For them, metaphor is a conceptual mapping of a source domain to a target domain, where elements of the source correspond to elements of the target domain. These cognitive correspondences enable us to think about the target domain in terms of the source domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Turner, 1989). To illustrate with an example, English native speakers understand and conceptualize the concept of *LOVE* in terms of the concept of *JOURNEY* through the conceptual metaphor *LOVE IS A JOURNEY*. This metaphor is based upon a set of correspondences that characterize a mapping. Thus, “the lovers correspond to travelers, the love relationship corresponds to the vehicle, and the difficulties in the relationship correspond to impediments to travel” (Lakoff, 1993, p. 207).

With this novel conception, the study of metaphor has evolved from the early comparison, substitution, and interactive theories to the current conceptual metaphor. CL has attributed so much importance to metaphor that it has been labeled “the Conceptual Metaphor Theory” (the CMT).

This paper aims to compare the conceptual metaphor for happiness in three unrelated languages: English, Spanish and Tunisian Arabic. The choice of this subject is motivated by several factors. To start with, despite the continuing interest in metaphor, on the one hand, and the growing interest in emotion studies, on the other hand, to the best of our knowledge, no study has provided a systematic comparative analysis of happiness metaphors in English, Spanish and Tunisian Arabic. This paper will address this gap by pinpointing the conceptual metaphors for happiness underpinning the linguistic metaphors in these three unrelated languages. Secondly, comparing metaphors in different languages exposes what is universal and what is language-specific with respect to abstract concepts, a result which cannot be obtained from monolingual studies. Thirdly, by comparing metaphors, one reveals how these linguistic communities express their conceptualizations of happiness, how they think about it and how they act with respect to it simply because metaphor is not a mere linguistic device; rather it is a matter of language, thought and action.

Methodology

In this paper, the research methodology is mainly qualitative. The comparative analysis is based upon linguistic data derived from ordinary language used by and familiar to native speakers. The data are taken from folk popular songs and everyday language used by native speakers to express the emotion of happiness.

This paper comprises three main sections. The first section will define the basic tenets of the study’s theoretical framework, i.e. the CMT. The second section will survey a few significant

studies conducted within the CMT framework on emotion metaphors cross-linguistically. The third section will analyze the linguistic metaphors for happiness in the three unrelated languages in order to identify the conceptual metaphors underlying these linguistic metaphors of happiness.

Conceptual metaphor theory (the CMT)

Since this paper is conducted within the analytical framework of the CMT, this section will define the CMT and expose its basic tenets.

With their seminal book *Metaphor we Live By* (1980), Lakoff and Johnson have marked a turning point in the history of metaphor by defining it as a basic cognitive instrument used by native linguistic communities consciously or unconsciously in order to express the most mundane concepts in their everyday life. For them, “metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In other words, the locus of metaphor is not in words but in our way of conceptualizing and comprehending one domain in terms of another. For instance, the conceptual metaphor TIME AS MONEY underpins many linguistic metaphors for time in English, such as “a waste of time,” “to save time,” “time is precious.” In this conceptual metaphor, the abstract concept of *TIME* is understood and expressed in terms of a more concrete, experiential and tangible concept, *MONEY*.

What makes the CMT an appropriate analytical framework for metaphor analyses is the distinction it has drawn between linguistic metaphor and conceptual metaphor. What native speakers say is linguistic metaphor. A conceptual metaphor has to do with the mental representation of a concept in the native speakers’ mind. For instance, expressions such as “a waste of time” and “to save time” are linguistic metaphors that reflect the conceptual metaphor TIME AS MONEY. For the CMT, emotions are metaphorically structured, as stated by Kövecses (2000, p. 4):

...Although a sharply delineated conceptual structure for space emerges from our perceptual motor functioning, no sharply defined conceptual structure for the emotions emerges from our emotional functioning alone.... Metaphors allow us to conceptualize our emotions in more sharply defined terms.

According to the CMT, conceptual metaphors can be classified into three main categories: orientational, ontological, and structural. To start with orientational metaphors, they are also labeled spatial metaphors because they derive from our perception of space. They are the result of our constant interaction with the environment and our experience of the physical space. HAPPY IS UP and SAD IS DOWN are, for instance, two orientational conceptual metaphors underpinning the linguistic metaphors “My spirit rose” and “I am feeling down,” respectively

As for the second category of conceptual metaphor, i.e. ontological metaphors, they are based on our basic experiences with physical objects and with our own bodies. Indeed, with these metaphors we conceptualize and understand abstract concepts in terms of objects and substances. Thus, intangible and abstract concepts, such as emotions, states, ideas, psychological activities, and time are conceptualized in terms of concrete tangible objects and substances.

With structural metaphors, the target domain is understood and expressed in terms of a structured and “sharply defined” domain, as in ARGUMENT IS WAR underlying the expressions “You attacked every weak point in my argument” and “His criticisms were right on target.”

The CMT is a good analytical framework for this metaphor study for several reasons. To start with, it provides good analytical tools that help distinguish between metaphor and “non-metaphor.” These tools are: linguistic metaphor, conceptual metaphor, and metaphoric extension. The application of these tools to metaphor analyses has yielded good results in the CMT literature. Secondly, the CMT’s basic tenets have been corroborated by psychological and empirical studies. For instance, research has shown that our human reasoning about the abstract concept for time is metaphorical in nature. Finally, the CMT has moved the study of metaphor from a berating and peripheral status into a central status by showing, on the basis of attested language data, that metaphor is a cognitive instrument we live by in our everyday life. As such, and as stated by Sauciuc (2013), the CMT is “one of the most prolific frameworks” for the study of emotions.

Since this paper is concerned with the similarities and differences in the conceptualizations of happiness in three unrelated languages, the next section will deal with dimensions for metaphor variations and the universality of metaphor in order to clarify why certain metaphors are universal, and are, therefore, shared by different languages, while others tend to be culture-specific and they, therefore, vary from one language to another.

Dimensions of metaphor variation

Kövecses (2006) defines two dimensions for metaphor variation: the cross-culture dimension and the within-culture dimension. To start with cross-cultural dimension for metaphor variation, Kövecses states that cross-cultural variation in metaphors is caused by the general cultural context, which consists of “the governing principles and the key concepts in a given culture” (Kövecses, 2002, p. 186), as well as the natural and physical environment wherein the culture is situated. Kövecses identifies “congruent metaphors” (2006, p. 157). These are metaphors that “are filled out in congruence with the generic schema” and “when the generic schema is filled out, it receives unique cultural content at a specific level”. To put it differently, “a generic-level conceptual metaphor is instantiated in culture-specific ways at a specific level” (Kövecses, 2005, p. 68). Kövecses identifies alternative metaphors. When a source domain is used for a specific target domain in a language and a different source domain is used for the same target domain in another language. In this case, the mappings constitute alternative metaphors. As for “within-culture dimension” for metaphor variation, Kövecses (2006, p. 161) argues that “languages are not monolithic but come in varieties that reflect divergences in human experience.” Metaphors differ not only across diverse cultures but also within the same culture. According to Kövecses (2006), several social, regional, ethnic, stylistic, subcultural, diachronic, developmental and individual factors generate variations within the same culture.

As for the universality of metaphors, cognitive linguists argue that humans can understand several human experiences, emotions and thoughts within the range of conventional mechanisms, universally. Emotion metaphors, for instance, tend to be universal and shared by unrelated languages because they are accompanied by physiological and bodily effects that are shared by all humans. In fact, all humans, regardless of their cultures and individual differences, get red, for instance, when they experience the basic emotion of anger.

Interestingly enough, the presence of main similarities and differences in the conceptualizations of emotion concepts within and across cultures has been widely searched in the CL literature (Kövecses, 2000; Yu, 1995). The similarities of conceptualization of emotions across languages are attributed to the notion of embodiment. In fact, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) were the first to propose that conceptual metaphors derive from our human embodied cognition, i.e. how the

human body and brain interact with and react to the physical space surrounding them. Consequently, universal human experiences, such as human emotions, generate universal conceptual metaphors.

Literature review

Since the publication of *Metaphors we live by* (1980), the CMT literature has witnessed an upsurge of comparative studies on emotion metaphors. However, a complete review of these studies is beyond the remit of the paper. Thus, in the following section, a few cross-linguistic studies conducted within the CMT framework on emotion metaphors will be summarized.

Mashak and al's paper (2012) aims at studying the universality of emotion conceptual metaphors and at identifying the dominant pattern in English and Persian by using Kovecses's (2003) model for linguistic metaphors. The emotions investigated in this paper are happiness, anger, sadness, fear, and love. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) CMT is used as a model for the purpose of comparison. 782 emotion linguistic metaphors are compiled from diverse literary texts and articles as well as dictionaries in both languages. The study is carried out through two main phases: categorization and comparison. First, the linguistic metaphors are categorized according to their general and specific target and source domains. Then, in each category, they are compared on the basis of their conceptual metaphors and literal meanings. In this phase, three patterns of "totally the same," "partially the same," and "totally different" are identified. Interestingly enough, Chi-Square results are applied to these three patterns and showed that anger ($= 108.85$, $P < 0/000$) is the most universal emotion, and that sadness ($= 31.40$, $P < 0/000$) is the least universal emotion according to this study's findings.

Chen's paper (2010) purports to investigate happiness metaphors in two unrelated languages: English and Chinese. Situated with the CMT framework, the study demonstrates that despite the cultural, etymological and geographical differences between the two languages, they share a few conceptual metaphors, such as HAPPINESS IS UP and HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER. These metaphors tend to be "universal" because they are based on a common universal bodily experience shared by all humans.

Liu and Zhao (2013) pinpoint similarities and differences in the conceptualizations of two basic emotions: happiness and sadness in two unrelated languages: Chinese and English. Both languages conceptualize the emotion of happiness through the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS UP. However, at the specific-level, English has the metaphor HAPPINESS IS BEING OFF THE GROUND, a metaphor which is not shared by Chinese because it regards "being off the ground" as a socially inappropriate attitude reflecting haughtiness and a lack of modesty. The study suggests that both languages construe the emotion of sadness through the orientational conceptual metaphor SADNESS IS DOWN. However, some cultural differences are observed with respect to this sadness metaphor. For instance, the metaphor SADNESS IS BLUE exists in English, but it is not used in Chinese. In the same vein, SADNESS IS PAIN IN HEART exists in Chinese but it is absent from the Chinese conceptualizations of this basic emotion of sadness. This study corroborates Kövecses's (2002) statement that some metaphors are universal because they derive from our universal embodied experience, and others tend to be culture-specific.

Yu's paper (1995) presents a comparative analysis of linguistic metaphors for anger and happiness in English and Chinese. It shows that English and Chinese share the same generic conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEAT. However, English uses FIRE and FLUID metaphors, Chinese has selected FIRE and GAS for the same metaphor. In the same vein, both languages

share the metaphors: HAPPINESS IS UP, HAPPINESS IS LIGHT and HAPPINESS IS A CONTAINER in their conceptualizations of happiness. The study suggests that both languages share the metonymic principle in expressing anger and happiness by describing these emotions' physiological effects. The results show, however, that Chinese tends to use more body parts, mainly internal organs, than English in its conceptualizations of anger and happiness. Yu explicates these differences between English and Chinese in the light of the theories of yin-yang and of the five aspects of Chinese medicine. These theories constitute a model underpinning Chinese conceptualizations. This study demonstrates that metaphors of anger and happiness are mainly based upon a universal embodied experience, with a few observed culture-specific differences.

Beger and Flensburg (2009) investigate the emotion metaphors of SADNESS, LOVE and ANGER. The data consist of English expressions extracted from psychology guides which are accessible on the internet. The study's main objective is to investigate the metaphorical models underpinning the discourse between experts and laypersons in order to spotlight the ubiquity of conceptual metaphor. The results suggest that a more important number of different conceptual metaphors is present in the experts' data. Even though experts and laypersons share some of the conceptual metaphors of LOVE, ANGER and SADNESS, they reflect remarkable differences in the frequency of linguistic metaphors emanating from those concepts.

Similarities of happiness metaphors in the three languages

Happiness is defined as a basic emotion experienced universally. It is defined in psychology as pleasure and comfort experienced by individuals once their objectives have been accomplished and the stress is gone. This section will deal with the happiness metaphors that are shared by at least two languages. These are: HAPPINESS IS UP, HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER, HAPPINESS IS BEING OFF THE GROUND, HAPPINESS IS LIGHT, and HAPPINESS IS AN OBJECT.

Happiness Is Up

There is no linguistic realization for this conceptual metaphor in Spanish according to the data at hand. However, this metaphor is pervasive in English and Tunisian Arabic. Both languages construe and express the abstract concept of happiness through the orientational conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS UP. Thus, happiness is conceptualized as being up in a high location. This conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS UP is reflected by the examples (1) - (4) below:

1. I am feeling up
2. Cheer up, boy!
3. She was over the moon
4. Thaz bel farha

“He is up out of happiness”

The examples (1) - (4) demonstrate that happiness is construed in terms of an upward orientation as reflected by the adverb UP and the preposition OVER in English, and the verb HAZZA (to lift) in Tunisian Arabic. These metaphors are conventionalized and they are, therefore, used unconsciously by native speakers. It can be argued that they are shared by these two languages because they are grounded in a human embodied experience. Indeed, all humans, regardless of their cultures and individual differences, have upright bodies and tend to have “an erect posture that goes with a positive emotion”, as stated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 15).

Happiness Is a Fluid in a Container

The three languages are found to share the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER, as reflected in examples (5) – (10) below:

5. My heart is full of joy
6. I was overwhelmed with joy
7. Joy welled up inside her
8. Wakharraj al-farha illi fi qalbu

“And he expelled the happiness he was enclosing in his heart”

9. Qalbu miibi belfarha

“My heart is full of joy”

10. Me gusta hablar de la felicidad en la vida

“I enjoy talking about happiness in life”

As shown in examples (5) – (10), the emotion of happiness is conceptualized and expressed as being located in a container. As such, the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER is a specific-level instantiation of the generic conceptual metaphor EMOTIONS ARE IN A CONTAINER. In examples (5), (8), and (9), the container is the internal organ, HEART. In examples (6) and (7), the container is the body or the Self. In the Spanish example (10), happiness is conceptualized as enclosed and contained in life.

Kövecses (1986) asserts that the body is conceived of as a container and the emotions are the fluid inside this bounded container. When emotions grow strong and get beyond the limitations of the container, they “overflow” and “burst” as in the linguistic metaphor “He is bursting with joy” in English. The Spanish and TA data contain no such conceptualizations of emotion as “overflowing” or “bursting.” This is not the only descriptive difference between the three languages. TA, for instance, tends to use more body parts, such as HEART, than do English and Spanish, when expressing the emotion of happiness as in examples (11) and (12) below:

11. Qalbi bish yokhroj min blastu

“My heart is getting outside its place”

12. Wsayeb el-farha ili fi qalbu

“And he released the happiness that he was enclosing in his heart.”

In these examples the internal organ, HEART, is construed as capable of getting outside the body and as a container for happiness. This is no surprise since, as stated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), if people are containers, the different parts of the body are containers as well.

Happiness Is Being Off The Ground

The three languages share the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS BEING OFF THE GROUND, as reflected by examples (13) - (19) from the corpus:

13. They were in the clouds
14. He was six feet off the ground
15. I was floating
16. Walla yimshi winagez min el-farha

“He was jumping while walking out of happiness”

17. Tar bel farha
“He flew out of happiness”

18. Wallah inatter bilfarha
“He was jumping out of happiness”

19. Saltó de alegría
“He jumped out of happiness”

The existence of this conceptual metaphor in these three unrelated languages reflects its universality. The emotion of happiness makes people feel light like a bird, a symbol of freedom and peacefulness. In TA, being off the ground is expressed through the verbs TAR (to fly) and NATAR (to jump) as in examples (17) and (18). In Spanish, the verb SALTAR (to jump) is used to portray a happy person feeling off the ground. In English, more descriptive details are encoded in these linguistic metaphors. Thus, a happy person is conveyed as being in the clouds, “six feet off the ground,” and as “floating,” as in examples (13) - (15).

Happiness Is Light

The three languages share the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS LIGHT wherein the effects of happiness stand for the emotion, as in examples (20) – (24) below:

20. Her eyes were sparkling like diamonds

21. Amusement gleamed in his eyes

22. Ayneh yilmou bil farha
“His eyes were shining out of happiness”

23. Sus ojos brilaban de alegría
“His eyes were shining out of happiness”

24. Sus ojos brillan de felicidad, de presunción desborda su corazón.
“His eyes are shining of happiness, presumption overflows his heart”

The conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS LIGHT tends to be universal because it is grounded in a common bodily experience. Shining eyes are a natural and universal reaction to the emotion of happiness. For this reason, it tends to be shared by the three unrelated languages.

The metaphors HAPPY IS UP, HAPPY IS OFF THE GROUND, HAPPY IS LIGHT attribute a highly positive evaluation for the concept of happiness. Indeed, being light, feeling up and off the ground are all very positive.

Happiness Is an Object

In English and Spanish, the abstract concept of happiness is construed and expressed in terms of a physical entity, i.e. an object that can be possessed, given, brought, shared, lost then looked for, as reflected in the examples (25) – (30) from the corpus:

25. The news has brought them joy and delight

26. In search of lost happiness

27. Me ha dado much alegría verla
“Seeing her has given me much happiness”

28. Su felicidad es mi felicidad
« His happiness is my happiness »

29. Todas la criaturas de la tierra buscan la felicidad
“All creatures of the earth are looking for happiness”

30. Querría compartir mi felicidad con ustedes
“I would like to share my happiness with you”

According to the data at hand, the reification of the abstract concept of happiness through the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS AN OBJECT is more pervasive in Spanish than in English. The majority of linguistic metaphors for happiness in Spanish fall into the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS AN OBJECT wherein happiness is construed as an entity, an object that individuals can possess, lose, look for, give. Interestingly enough, this metaphor is not shared by TA. The TA corpus contains no linguistic metaphor for the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS AN OBJECT.

Some characteristics which are typical to possessions are hidden in the metaphor HAPPINESS IS AN OBJECT. For instance, possessions are controlled entities. They can be manipulated. Thus one can buy happiness or he can see it stolen as people would normally do with possessions. These features of happiness as stolen or bought are not highlighted in this metaphor in the two languages. In the same vein, a possession can sometimes harm its possessors if it is not wisely used; this feature is also hidden in this metaphor in the two languages.

Different happiness metaphors

Each language has its specific metaphors for happiness. One can argue that these are culture-specific metaphors and this variation could be attributed to the cultural differences among these three unrelated languages.

Spanish has conceptual metaphors for happiness that are not shared by English and TA. In Spanish, happiness is conceptualized as a path, a virus, a building, a medicine, and a flower as reflected by examples (31), (32), (33), (34) and (35), respectively:

31. Algunas personas seguirán el camino a dinero et otras seguirán el camino a verdadera felicidad

“Some people will follow the road of money and others will follow the road of true happiness”

32. Me contagias tu felidicidad

“Your happiness is contagious”

33. Podemos permitirnos contruir nuestra propia felicidad cuando esa felicidad provoca la infelicidad de tantos otros ?

“How could we allow ourselves to build our own happiness when this happiness could lead to the unhappiness of so many others?”

34. La alegría es el mejor medicamento que existe sin receta médica.

“Joy is the best medicine without any prescription.”

35. La sonrisa es la semilla que crece en el corazón y florece en los labios.

“The smile is the seed that grows in the hearts and flowers on the lips.”

In these Spanish linguistic metaphors, the abstract concept of happiness is conceptualized and expressed in terms of more concrete concepts. In fact, paths, medicines, flowers and buildings are more tangible, experiential and concrete than the abstract concept of happiness. This finding

corroborates the CMT's claim that the essence of metaphor is to understand an abstract concept through more tangible and concrete concepts.

In the same vein, the source domains used by Spanish to conceptualize happiness are all positive. For instance, a path is always associated with a positive goal, thus one can talk of the path of success and the path of progress. Medicines allow people to be in a good health and to recover from diseases. Flowers are universally lovely and are symbols of beauty, youth and freshness in life. Building is a positive term referring to construction as opposed to destruction. On the basis of these source domains which are selected by Spanish to construe and express happiness, one can notice that happiness is perceived and conceived of in Spanish as a positive concept.

In English, happiness is construed as Heaven, as in examples (36) – (37) below:

36. He was in Heaven

37. He is in seventh Heaven

In English, the conceptualization of happiness as a heaven is related to the feeling of ecstasy that humans experience when overwhelmed by a strong feeling of happiness. Here again, the image is positive and thus reflects the positive perception of happiness in English. Thus being happy is feeling good.

In TA, the excess of happiness is construed and expressed in terms of craziness as in example (38) and as leading to death as in example (39) below:

38. Hbel bil-far7a

“He is getting crazy out of happiness”

39. Shimut bel-far7a

“He is going to die out of happiness”

The TA linguistic metaphors for happiness refer to the resulting effects of this emotion in case of an excess of happiness. In example (38), one feels so overwhelmed by happiness that he loses control of himself and becomes like a crazy who does not realize anything. Associating death with happiness in example (39) is based upon the fact that when the heart gets weak and gets overwhelmed by a strong emotion, it might stop functioning and, thus, causes the death of the “excessively” happy person. The same can happen when a person gets shocked by an unexpected happy event or news. Even though this effect might be experienced universally, it is not shared by the two other languages, i.e. Spanish and English. In other words, it is common that sometimes humans feel overwhelmed by an emotion as if they were controlled by external forces, and, therefore, they have no control over that emotion.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to compare the conceptual metaphors for happiness in three unrelated languages: Spanish, English and Tunisian Arabic within the analytical framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Kövecses (2002). The findings suggest that despite the etymological, cultural and geographical differences between the three languages, they tend to share five conceptual metaphors. These are: HAPPINESS IS UP, HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER, HAPPINESS IS BEING OFF THE GROUND, HAPPINESS IS LIGHT, and HAPPINESS IS AN OBJECT. It has been argued that these similarities in conceptualizing and expressing the abstract concept of happiness in terms of more concrete domains are experientially motivated and bodily derived. They tend to be shared by the three languages since all humans experience the same physiological effects of happiness regardless of their cultures and individual differences.

The study has pinpointed some differences among three languages with respect to the conceptualizations of happiness. For instance, it has been found that the Spanish native speakers conceptualize happiness in terms of a virus, a medicine, a building, a flower and a path. English construes happiness as a Heaven. Thus feeling happy is feeling in Heaven, which portrays the positive perception of the emotion of happiness in English. TA perceives the excessively happy person as being on the verge of death or craziness. These metaphors can be said to be “culture-specific”. For this reason, they are not shared by the three unrelated languages.

This paper has contributed to metaphor studies from different perspectives. To start with, it has shown, on the basis of language data, how three different linguistic communities conceptualize and express the concept of happiness. Secondly, this study has provided evidence from languages other than English for the CMT's claim that humans live by metaphor and that humans comprehend abstract concepts through more concrete and experiential concepts. Thirdly, this study is a comparative enterprise that has not only described how linguistic communities construe and express the abstract concept of happiness, but it has also pointed out where similarities and differences lie. It has, as such, revealed divergent ways of conceptualizing and expressing happiness in three different linguistic communities. Finally, this study has provided evidence for the efficiency of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory as an analytical framework for metaphor analyses and for comparative enterprises.

However, as any work, this study is not without limitations. To start with, the corpus consisted of seventy four examples only. Thus, the results could not be generalized. Secondly, for space constraints, many comparative studies conducted on emotion metaphors within the CMT framework could not be included in this paper.

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