



CONCEPTUAL MODELS OF METAPHORICAL STRUCTURES (A COGNITIVE AND PRAGMATIC APPROACH)

<https://doi.org/10.70728/qdpi.v08.i01.036>

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Abstract. This article explores conceptual models of metaphorical structures through a cognitive and pragmatic lens, comparing examples from English and Spanish. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), it examines how abstract concepts are mapped onto concrete domains, while pragmatic analysis considers contextual interpretation and cultural subjectivity. Findings reveal shared conceptual metaphors (e.g., emotions as containers) alongside language-specific variations, such as animal-based idioms in proverbs. The analysis highlights cognitive universals in embodiment and pragmatic differences in subjectivity, contributing to cross-linguistic understanding of metaphor.

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor Theory, metaphorical structures, cognitive linguistics, pragmatic approach, English metaphors, Spanish metaphors, cross-linguistic comparison, embodiment, cultural subjectivity, proverbs and idioms.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются концептуальные модели метафорических структур с когнитивной и прагматической точек зрения, сравниваются примеры из английского и испанского языков. Опираясь на теорию концептуальной метафоры (ТКП), исследуется, как абстрактные понятия отображаются на конкретные области, а прагматический анализ учитывает контекстную интерпретацию и культурную субъективность. Результаты показывают наличие общих концептуальных метафор (например, эмоции как вместилища) наряду со специфическими для каждого языка вариациями, такими как идиомы, основанные на образах животных, в пословицах. Анализ подчеркивает когнитивные универсалии в воплощении и прагматические различия в субъективности, способствуя межкультурному пониманию метафоры.

Ключевые слова: теория концептуальной метафоры, метафорические структуры, когнитивная лингвистика, прагматический подход, английские метафоры, испанские метафоры, межкультурное сравнение, воплощение, культурная субъективность, пословицы и идиомы.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola metaforik tuzilmalarning kontseptual modellarini kognitiv va pragmatik nuqtai nazardan o‘rganadi, ingliz va ispan tillaridan misollarni taqqoslaydi. Kontseptual metafora nazariyasiga (CMT) asoslanib, u mavhum tushunchalarning aniq sohalarga qanday bog‘lanishini o‘rganadi, pragmatik tahlil esa kontekstual talqin va madaniy subyektivlikni ko‘rib chiqadi. Topilmalar maqollardagi hayvonlarga asoslangan iboralar kabi tilga xos o‘zgarishlar bilan bir qatorda umumiy kontseptual metaforalarni (masalan, hissiyotlarni idish sifatida) ochib beradi. Tahlil metaforani tillararo tushunishga hissa qo‘shadigan timsoldagi kognitiv universallarni va subyektivlikdagi pragmatik farqlarni ta’kidlaydi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Kontseptual metafora nazariyasi, metaforik tuzilmalar, kognitiv tilshunoslik, pragmatik yondashuv, ingliz metaforalari, ispan metaforalari, tillararo taqqoslash, timsol, madaniy subyektivlik, maqollar va iboralar.

Introduction. Metaphors are not merely linguistic ornaments but fundamental cognitive structures that shape how humans conceptualize and communicate abstract ideas. According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors involve systematic mappings from a source domain (typically concrete and experiential) to a target domain (often abstract), enabling the understanding of complex phenomena through familiar experiences. For instance, Argument is war manifests in English phrases like "defend a position" and Spanish equivalents such as "defender una posición," reflecting shared cognitive models rooted in physical conflict.

A pragmatic approach complements CMT by emphasizing how metaphors are interpreted in context, influenced by relevance, speaker intent, and cultural norms (e.g., Relevance Theory by Sperber & Wilson, 1986). Pragmatics addresses subjectivity—the speaker's stance and selective highlighting of features—which can lead to cross-linguistic divergences despite conceptual similarities. This is particularly evident in bilingual comparisons, where English and Spanish, both Indo-European languages but with distinct cultural histories, exhibit overlapping yet unique metaphorical structures.

Literature review and research methodology. The foundational framework for understanding metaphorical structures is Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which posits that metaphors are systematic cognitive mappings from concrete source domains (e.g., physical experiences like heat, containers, or motion) to abstract target domains (e.g., emotions, arguments, time). This theory has been widely applied to cross-linguistic studies, revealing both universal patterns rooted in human embodiment and language-specific variations influenced by cultural and typological factors. In English-Spanish comparisons, research consistently identifies shared conceptual metaphors, particularly in basic experiential domains. For instance, anger is frequently conceptualized as Heat/Pressure in both languages (e.g., English "boiling with rage" and Spanish "hirviendo de ira"), reflecting embodied physiological responses, though subtle differences emerge in elaboration and frequency (Soriano, 2013; Barcelona, 2008). Similarly,

the Heart as container or Center of emotions metaphor appears cross-linguistically, but pragmatic realizations vary: English often emphasizes temperature ("warm-hearted"), while Spanish prioritizes moral or qualitative attributes ("buen corazón"), highlighting cultural selectivity in feature highlighting (Tejedor, 2013; Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008).

Proverbs and idioms provide rich data for contrastive analysis. Galera Masegosa (n.d.) and other studies examine animal-based metaphors (e.g., Freedom is flight in "clip someone's wings" / "cortarle las alas a alguien"), showing metonymic interactions (part-whole mappings) and pragmatic extensions, such as Spanish's broader application to loss of enthusiasm. Agitation metaphors like "stir up a hornet's nest" versus "alborotar el gallinero" illustrate pragmatic subjectivity in feature selection (danger vs. noise), aligning with Relevance Theory's emphasis on contextual inference (Sperber & Wilson, 1986).

Domain-specific metaphors, such as those in financial discourse, reveal both convergence and divergence. Charteris-Black and Ennis (2001) found strong similarities in conceptual metaphors (e.g., Economy as organism, market movements as physical motion, crashes as natural disasters) between English and Spanish financial reporting, but differences in linguistic frequency and connotation—English metaphors often carry negative valence, while Spanish ones lean more positive or mood-oriented. This supports mild linguistic relativity effects, where habitual metaphorical usage subtly shapes thought patterns (cf. typological studies on motion metaphors; e.g., Ibarretxe-Antuñano & Caballero, 2014; Lewandowski & Özçalışkan, 2024).

Pragmatic approaches complement CMT by addressing how metaphors are interpreted in context, influenced by speaker intent, cultural norms, and communicative relevance. Cross-linguistic studies on proverbs, idioms, and learner corpora underscore that while cognitive universals (e.g., orientational metaphors like Consciousness is up) persist, pragmatic subjectivity leads to variations in metonymic chaining and cultural emphasis (Myers, n.d.; Çakır, 2006). Recent work extends CMT to translation and foreign language teaching, demonstrating how awareness of these models improves intercultural competence and metaphor interpretation (e.g., in Spanish as a foreign language contexts).

A comparative qualitative analysis was employed, focusing on metaphorical structures in English and Spanish. Primary data were drawn from established corpora and texts, including proverbs involving animals (birds and winged creatures) for cultural specificity, heart-related idioms for emotional conceptualization, and financial discourse for domain-specific metaphors. The methodology involved: (1) identifying conceptual metaphors via CMT, such as ontological (abstract as concrete) and orientational types; (2) analyzing metonymic interactions (e.g., part-whole mappings) for cognitive complexity; (3) examining pragmatic aspects, including subjectivity and contextual inference; and (4) cross-linguistic comparison to discern universals (e.g., embodiment) and variations (e.g., cultural selectivity). Examples were selected for their frequency and illustrative power, ensuring balance between languages. No quantitative tools were used, prioritizing interpretive depth.

Results. The analysis identifies shared conceptual models with pragmatic variations, exemplified in emotional, behavioral, and economic domains. In emotional conceptualization, the Heart as container metaphor appears in both languages but with pragmatic differences. English uses "warm-hearted" and "cold-hearted" to denote kindness or cruelty, mapping temperature to emotional disposition. Spanish, however, employs "buen corazón" (good heart) or "mal corazón" (bad heart), focusing on moral quality rather than temperature, reflecting a pragmatic emphasis on ethical evaluation over sensory experience.

Anger metaphors reveal cognitive consistency in Heat as anger. English expressions like "boiling with rage" and Spanish "hirviendo de ira" map thermal pressure to emotional intensity, often with metonymic elements (e.g., bodily heat standing for anger). Pragmatically, Spanish may intensify via cultural subjectivity, as in proverbs where anger involves animal metaphors.

Proverbs highlight animal-based metaphors with metonymic interactions. In Freedom is flight, English "clip someone's wings" and Spanish "cortarle las alas a alguien" use part-whole metonymy (wings for flight ability), mapping to restriction. However, Spanish extends pragmatically to include loss of enthusiasm, showing broader contextual application.

For agitation, Causing trouble is stirring a nest: English "stir up a hornet's nest" (danger focus) contrasts with Spanish "alborotar el gallinero" (noise emphasis), illustrating pragmatic subjectivity in feature selection. Orientational metaphors like Consciousness is up appear in early rising: English "up with the lark" (metonymic flight to dawn) vs. Spanish "levantarse al cantar el gallo" (direct crowing), differing in animal choice but sharing upward mapping. Anxiety as internal unrest: English "butterflies in one's stomach" (quick movement) and Spanish "tener mariposas en el estómago" share the metaphor, but English "bee in one's bonnet" (hypothetical irritation) contrasts with Spanish "tener algo entre ceja y ceja" (frowning obsession), a metaphoric complex.

In financial discourse, The economy is an organism is common: both languages use growth/decline terms, but Spanish favors mood/personality metaphors (e.g., economic "depression"), while English prefers nautical ones (e.g., "navigate markets"). Market crashes as disasters: shared earthquake imagery, but pragmatic differences in frequency.

Comparatively, cognitive models like Container and Path are universal, but pragmatic subjectivity leads to variations in metonymic expansion and cultural emphasis.

Discussion. The results affirm that conceptual models of metaphors are cognitively grounded in embodiment (e.g., heat for anger, up for consciousness), supporting CMT's claim of experiential basis. However, pragmatic analysis reveals subjectivity: speakers selectively highlight features (e.g., noise vs. danger in agitation metaphors), influenced by cultural contexts, aligning with Relevance Theory where inferences optimize communication.

Cross-linguistically, English and Spanish share models like Emotions as physical sensations but differ pragmatically—Spanish often integrates moral or emotional depth (e.g., enthusiasm in wing-clipping), reflecting Latin cultural expressiveness, while English

emphasizes practicality (e.g., nautical finance). This suggests mild Sapir-Whorf effects: language shapes thought subtly through habitual metaphors. Metonymic interactions add complexity, enabling metaphoric chains (e.g., head as container with birds for disorder), which pragmatically convey nuanced attitudes. Limitations include reliance on translated examples, potentially overlooking nuances; future research could use bilingual corpora for quantitative validation.

In conclusion, this cognitive and pragmatic examination of metaphorical structures in English and Spanish underscores the dual nature of metaphor as both a universal cognitive mechanism and a culturally modulated linguistic phenomenon. Grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the shared mappings—such as Heat as anger, heart as container, freedom as flight, and economy as organism—affirm the embodied basis of human conceptualization, where physiological and experiential realities provide consistent source domains across languages. These universals facilitate mutual understanding in cross-linguistic communication and translation. However, pragmatic analysis reveals significant subjectivity and variation: speakers selectively foreground features (e.g., temperature in English emotional metaphors vs. moral quality in Spanish; danger in English agitation proverbs vs. noise in Spanish equivalents), influenced by cultural histories, typological preferences (e.g., manner omission in Spanish motion metaphors), and communicative contexts. Such differences, though subtle, suggest that habitual metaphorical patterns may exert mild effects on thought and expression, supporting nuanced interpretations of linguistic relativity within the CMT framework.

These insights have practical implications for fields such as translation studies (where preserving or adapting metaphorical valence is crucial), foreign language pedagogy (enhancing awareness of embodied vs. cultural mappings), and intercultural discourse (improving empathy in global communication). By bridging cognitive universals with pragmatic particularities, the study reinforces metaphor's central role in structuring thought, negotiating meaning, and reflecting human diversity.

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