

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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