BOOK REVIEW


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Metaphor and Emotion provides an excellent account of how the human body influences and constrains the conceptualization of emotion. The book convincingly illustrates how figurative language plays a pivotal role in understanding a phenomenon as complex as the nature of human emotion by providing a comprehensive analysis of conceptual metaphors and metonymies across different linguistic communities and cultures, as well as historical time.

Zoltán Kövecses addresses several fundamental issues that have remained on the backstage of his earlier work, and for which he has been criticized (e.g., Seitz, 1992). Specifically, in contrast to Emotion Concepts (Kövecses, 1990), which analyzed conceptual metaphors and metonymies that are used to talk about specific emotion but drew on what struck some as "isolated linguistic samples" (Seitz, p. 100), Kövecses now identifies an overarching "master metaphor," namely the metaphor of "EMOTION IS FORCE" (chapter 5). By integrating a large number of distinct metaphors into this framework, Kövecses considerably strengthens his argument that a few basic physically derived schemata underlie the conceptualization of abstract concepts in general and the conceptualization of emotions in particular. In other words, many source domains, such as the domain of physical space, have a quite broad range of applicability (chapters 3 and 4). For example, the metaphor of "STATES ARE LOCATIONS" can be found in nonemotional expressions such as "I am in trouble" as well as in emotional expressions, as in "He’s in a rage." Thus metaphorical mappings appear to be based on a limited number of conceptual domains.

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Kövecses uses Talmy's (1988) term "force schema" to show that one of the most central aspects of folk models of emotions is that emotion is viewed as an antagonistic force that strives to upset the balance within the rational self. Subordinate metaphors such as "EMOTION IS AN OPPONENT" and "EMOTION IS INSANITY," converge to form this more general higher level metaphor and are used to describe various aspects of the emotional experience, such as the causes and responses associated with emotions.

Kövecses' earlier work has been criticized for not dealing with scientific accounts of emotion (Seitz, 1992), but in this book he takes up that issue. In chapter 7, Kövecses juxtaposes "folk" conceptions and "scientific" accounts of emotion. The central issue whether it is possible to build upon "lay" theories of psychology in order to arrive at scientific theories of human nature is highly debated in the philosophy of science (e.g., Fletcher, 1995). Kövecses demonstrates the coherent structure of folk models and their internal consistency with regard to the master metaphor of "EMOTION IS FORCE," and compares and contrasts various parallel aspects of the two kinds of accounts. However, he goes a bit light on one central aspect of any theory or model, namely, its function as a causal-explanatory framework. How do emotion theories of laypersons and scientists fare in terms of not only describing but also explaining and predicting behavior? Kövecses lists a number of scientific emotion theories that focus on different aspects of emotional experiences. He points out that the higher the overlap with the folk model, the more generally accepted a scientific theory seems to be. Kövecses adds that although scientific theories that do not incorporate aspects of lay thinking appear to be more "scientific," they are less popular than accounts mainly based on folk notions. Here Kövecses contrasts how "popular" or "accepted" certain theories of emotion are with their "scientific" status.

However, in my opinion, the value of a theory, whether folk or scientific, depends not only on how scientific or intuitive it appears to be but also on how readily it generates testable hypotheses. It is precisely how well the theory predicts outcomes on those hypotheses that a theory can be judged as useful or not. For instance, as Kövecses points out, counterintuitive emotion theories, such as the Jamesian notion that peripheral bodily feedback leads to emotional feelings (James, 1884; see also Laird, 1974), are not found in folk conceptions of emotions. However, Kövecses does not point out that empirical evidence clearly supports predictions based on the Jamesian, or self-perception, theory of emotion. Similarly, many recent emotion theories emphasize the adaptive function of emotions (e.g., Damasio, 1994; Frijda, 1994) and are diametrically opposed to folk notions of the disorganizing, disruptive role of emotions. Thus certain predictions can be derived only from scientific theories, not from folk models. In that respect, scientific reason offers insights that go well beyond folk models and can advance our understanding of human nature considerably.

This is not to say that folk conceptions such as the one provided by Kövecses are not as useful as scientific ones, but their function may lie in a different realm,
which Kövecses does not elaborate on. More specifically, Kövecses' notion of folk conceptions could be used to address such questions as what is the communicative or discursive function of talking about emotions. Bamberg (1997) pointed out that in addition to culture-specific referential and communicative purposes, talking about emotion also serves a more local discursive function, namely, when people use discursive means in order to be understood in certain ways. Emotion talk, after all, has the potential to attribute a moral order to what is being said, for example, by taking or denying responsibility for one's actions and feelings or by assigning responsibility to others. Clearly, Bamberg's focus is different from Kövecses' when he proposed a pragmatic approach that centers on analyzing the function of emotion talk. In his view, references to emotions are not only semantically but also discursively constructed. I think this local level of analysis is not at all incompatible with Kövecses' view and certainly does not take away from the more central goals that Kövecses accomplishes in his analyses. However, it could add to understanding how emotions are generally used in cultural routines and discursive practices thus combining the discursive construction of emotion talk with the semantic construction of emotion within specific cultural communities. Indeed, Kövecses hints at this potential for future research in the last chapter of the book.

One of the major merits that I see in Metaphor and Emotion is that the author addresses issues related to universality and specificity on multiple levels: One issue raised, and elaborated eloquently, is the universality of one overarching "master metaphor" that incorporates many subordinate metaphors. In addition, Kövecses examines the question whether certain source domains are used exclusively for the conceptualization of emotions or whether they are employed to structure other target domains as well. He concludes that a limited number of source domains structure a great many target domains. For example, the source domain of "physical movement" is used to describe change of physical state in "He went into a coma" as well as change of emotional state in "She fell in love." The far most important question, however, is how universal emotion metaphors are not only across linguistic communities such as lay theorists and scientific theorists but also across speakers from various, unrelated cultures.

Kövecses concludes that many metaphors are universal, or at least shared across many cultures. His treatment of the relative universality in the conceptualization of emotions (chapter 8) has far-reaching implications for the cognitivist theory of metaphor, as well as for emotion theories in general, and can be seen as a milestone on the path to understanding human emotions. Overarching metaphor source domains, such as physical space in general and the source domain of "FORCE" in particular, organize various subordinate metaphors and form a coherent, systematic network of conceptual organization. Further, using the example of anger and extending his previous analysis in English (Kövecses, 1986) to its counterparts in Hungarian, Chinese, and Japanese, Kövecses points out that the most central source domains to describe emotions, "HEAT" and "FIRE" in the
case of anger, are relatively universal. The most plausible reason for this is the relatively universal nature of physiological processes associated with emotional experiences. As Kövecses notes himself, this fits nicely with Emanatian's (1995) cross-cultural work comparing figurative language for conceptualizing lust and sex in English and in the Bantu language Chagga.

Based on the high consistency of the usage of the same source domains, Kövecses explicitly positions himself in contrast to Quinn's (1991) view that conceptual metaphors follow from cultural models that are already in place. His conclusion does not deny the existence of variation across cultures, which Kövecses is well aware of and to which he gives considerable attention. He begins by noting that all people share the same physiological dimensions of emotional response. Rather than determining the conceptualization of emotion, the underlying physiology functions as a constraining factor that limits the possibilities of the content of conceptual tools and makes metaphors that contradict physiological processes very unlikely. For instance, Kövecses points out that it would be unthinkable to conceptualize "anger" metaphorically as softly falling snow.

Given the high overlap of conceptual structure that Kövecses finds in the language communities he studied, he proposes to combine the rival camps of Social Constructionism and universalist views of emotion into what he calls "Body-based Constructionism," for which the notion of "embodied cultural prototypes" is central. Basically, he proposes that certain physiological and other bodily processes should be seen as universal and constrain the social, cultural, and pragmatic discourse functions built upon those embodied aspects of emotion.

Overall, Kövecses outlines a very coherent and plausible account of how people understand their emotions, and for this accomplishment alone he should be applauded, but his analysis goes beyond that. His treatment of the usage of body-based metaphors in various nonrelated languages suggests that there is indeed a relatively universal physiological basis that is used to make sense of emotions. Although there is a rich layer of sociocultural influences, it is the body that constrains how far anyone in any given culture can go when relating one's bodily sensations to emotional experiences.

I expect this book to be of great value not only to students and scholars interested in cognitive linguistics in general, or metaphor in particular, but also to social psychologists and others studying emotions who may not be familiar with the notion of conceptual metaphor and the approach employed to study it. A benefit of using Kövecses' methodology is that it provides a fresh perspective on the question of how people living in different cultural settings experience feelings. Perhaps the same emotional feelings are experienced but named differently. Conversely, one may wonder whether the subjective experience is, after all, different, even if the terms used are similar. Those questions are, of course, highly philosophical in nature. However, by using an approach centered around the usage of bodily metaphors when talking about emotional states, one can shift the issue away from "Do
people feel the same emotions?" to "Do people use the same point of reference when talking about emotions?" That point of reference is the human body. In doing so, empirically testable hypotheses result that can be used to elucidate new, exciting dimensions of emotional experiences across different cultural settings, and this is precisely what Kövecses has done masterfully.

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REFERENCES


