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Investigating Conceptual Metaphorical Expression in English Suicide Notes: A Cognitive Linguistic Study

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ABSTRACT

The human experience is mysterious, so, metaphor is commonly used to portray life experiences. The significance of metaphor for expressing and developing selfhood. The function of metaphor in determining the conceptual meanings in suicide letters. Language reflects our worldviews. Language is a component of the body. The technique is used to illuminate crucial issues in cognitive semantics that is linked between experience, the conceptual system, and the semantic structures encoded by language is studied in cognitive semantics. These include conceptual metaphor and embodied cognition. The study's flaw is that body metaphors and embodiment may be linked. A suicide note's cultural domain aspect and the importance of interpreting conceptual metaphoric notions cannot be overstated. The study claims that body metaphors utilized in suicide can be systematized utilizing sensory-perceptual information of the outside environment. Either way, the body or actual components as domains are clearly connected. Art is considered to require embodiment.

“The mind is inherently embodied. Thought is mostly unconscious. Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical”. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999b, p. 3)

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INTRODUCTION

The present study examines the connection between experience and knowledge. The main concepts of cognitive semantics, the conceptual system, and the semantic structure encoded by language, are covered in this study. Aspects of conceptual organization and conceptualization are also studied by Cognitive Semantics. It is, in other words, the study of cognitive states like knowledge representation and meaning construction (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). In the end, it uses language as a prism through which to evaluate ideas. To put it another way, it is the study of how experience, embodied cognition, and language interact. As a consequence, Langacker (1987, p. 12) refers to language as "an integral part of human cognition". In this respect, the relationships between language and meaning have raised in (1980) by Lakoff and Johnson in the great work "*Metaphors We Live By.*", in which the main focus is to understand the metaphorical language, everyday life is structured in terms of metaphors as being sad or down and so on (Holme, 2009, p. 8-9). Accordingly, "language reflects the cognitive grasp of the world (p.9). A very important idea is reflected in the metaphor alters people's conceptualizations of abstract concepts via various language expressions or the use of metaphorical

language reveals how conceptual metaphors are only one component of a larger system of conceptual integration (Gibbs & Steen, 1999, p. 5). Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.3) refer to metaphor as advice that is used by the human to express their imaginations as well as it is the main characteristic of language. That metaphor abounds, not only in language as well as in thought and behaviour as a result, the daily conceptual system, that controls the way humans act and think, is basically metaphorical so, the conceptual system can be regarded as metaphorical in nature (p. 3-4). Generally speaking, metaphor is the main interest in cognitive linguistics, the latter as Evans & Green (2006, p. 3-5) provides a fruitful definition of CL that is "a strategy that has accepted a common set of guiding principles, assumptions, and views that has resulted in a varied range of complementary, overlapping (and often competing) theories", in which The concept is also described as "an approach to the study of language and the mind rather than a single articulated theoretical framework". In this regard, Holme (2009, p. 11) describes language as "a mirror of the mind" and the world can be conceptualized through body and mind. Evans & Green (2006, p. 6) reflect the importance of language that is used as a means of expressing certain ideas and a means of "encoding and transmitting".

Language, on the other hand, is considered to also be symbolic in nature because it is based on the connection between semantic and phonetic representation, to prove that Langacker (1987) discusses the essential assumption that language “makes available to the speaker... an open-ended set of linguistic signals or expressions, each of which associates a semantic representation of some type with phonological representation” in his book “*Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*” (p.11). Samuelsson (2013, p. 6) adopts Glucksberg (2001) to identify figurative language as a language in which metaphors is an example of a language where the meaning does not correspond to the literal language's meaning with emphasis on the context affects the meaning of figurative language. Language is the essential means of communication and its main function is to express ideas, thoughts and desires so, language is expressivity to express the feelings and thought in the world so that different mental images are reflected by these expressions (Evans & Green, 2006, p. 6-10). Langacker (1991, p. 2) states “meaning is equated with conceptualization”. From this point of view, the meaning is based a great deal on experiences (Geeraerts, 2006, p.5). Croft & Cruse (2004, p. 44) indicate the conceptualization experiences that can be

imposed by cognitive linguistics, in which “meaning construction is conceptualization” (p. 157). As a consequence, Holme, (2009, p. 69) refers to meaning and conceptualization cannot be separated because the selected meaning is dependent on the thought that humans conceptualise. As a result, “meaning emerges from conceptualization” (p. 70). Experience is embodied in the CL point of view, and it generates the mental schemas via which humans conceptualize meaning (Johnson 1987), so the different people's experiences may be grouped into common conceptualizations that produce common meanings this can be reflected by the culture (Holme, 2009, p. 65). Gibbs (1999, p. 146) depicts the importance of cultural experience to understand the conceptual metaphor which is related to “the embodied behaviour”. Cultural representations of conceptual metaphors provide an important cognitive function, allowing people to think and speak more freely. This notion implies that metaphoric thought and language are as much a part of the cultural world as they are internalized mental entities in the human's heads (146-147). The conceptual metaphor provides evidence for embodied cognition, that is a hypothesis of how language receives meaning and/or refers (Lakoff, 2008; Lakoff, 1983; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

1. How metaphors in suicide notes are fundamentally grounded in embodiment and what is the connection between metaphors using the body or body parts as domain in metaphoric mapping, and the notion of embodiment?
2. How conceptual metaphor systems are depicted in the complex and abstract thinking processes?

Objectives of the Study

1. Exploring the metaphorical mapping of the target & source domains in suicide notes.
2. Investigating the conceptual metaphor systems that are depicted in the complex and abstract thinking processes.

Modal of Analysis

- 1- The present study uses conceptual metaphor to English metaphoric language, as well as the idea that the relationship between metaphors includes the basic frame of reference for people from diverse cultures. In fact, the following study is qualitative, with an emphasis on describing and analyzing. As a consequence, the researcher clarifies (4) suicide notes

assertions. This study looks into the usage of conceptual metaphor and schema theory by Johnson's (1980, 1987, 1999) cognitive metaphor and embodiment (1980, 1987, and 1999).

- 2- through the multiplier and accelerator.
- 3- Presenting some proposals to achieve diversity in the structure of the Iraqi economy .

The Limits of the Study

The study is limited to the analysis of conceptual expressions on the selected (suicide notes) by using image schema and conceptual metaphorical theory.

Key Concept

Suicide Notes

Rani, Girdhar & Murty (2015, p. 35) refer to suicide notes as notes are frequently left by suicidal people. This is a suicidal statement that is used to determine why someone committed suicide, suicide notes should be collected and prioritized at the crime scene. Suicide is a difficult topic to talk about. More investigation is needed to decipher the expressions of the suicide notes since they are full of metaphors.

AREAS OF STUDY**Cognitive Semantics (CS)**

Cognitive semantics (henceforth CS) research covers a wide range of topics, including conceptual organization and structure. Aspects of cognitive study are focused on knowledge representation and meaning formation (Lakoff, 1980). With this in mind, it is possible to assert that it thinks through language. The study of the interactions between experience embodied cognition, and language. Some of the most essential CS concepts are Mental Spaces Theory, Conceptual Blending Theory, and Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which all add up to encyclopedic meaning. Charles Fillmore offered the majority of the significant contributions to CS. He coined the term "FRAME" to describe a system of concepts in the mid-1970s. "The frame connects the components and entities connected with a specific culturally embedded scenario from human experience," he continues. That is, words and grammatical constructs are inextricably linked to FRAMES and cannot be understood alone. (Evan, 2006, p. 89)

Langacker also popularized the DOMAINS concept in the CS community (1987). A domain is a semantic framework that supports at least one notion. According to Langacker (1987), a domain

is a "coherent knowledge system of any level of complexity or organization."

The present study mostly focuses on conceptual metaphor and embodied cognition. As a result, the researcher narrows the scope of the investigation to CS to apply its principles, which are regarded as CL's essential assumption.

Key Concepts in Cognitive Semantics***Embodied Cognition/ Experience Thesis (EC)***

Understanding that the linguistic system includes semantic representations that interact with conceptual representations is crucial. The conceptual structure also includes structured knowledge. With a few assumptions, ES is described as "a perspective on the study of meaning inside "cognitive semantics." Cognitive semantics' guiding concept is embodied cognition. To put it another way, it directs how the human mind and conceptual organization interact with the world we live in. To put it another way, our daily lives shape and arrange our ideas (Evan, 2006, p. 66) such as about the body's embodied intelligence. The idea of embodied experience is embodied by our bodies. This enables us to comprehend our species' distinct viewpoint on the world. That is, we comprehend the cosmos or a

situation through our bodies' perception of reality (Evans, 2006, p. 67).

Meaning is Conceptualization Thesis

"Meaning is conceptualization" is a crucial tenet of cognitive semantics. After all, we can only comprehend language and so generate an explicit unit of grammar by combining semantic and conceptual structure. "Language does not encode meaning" as a result (Evan, 2006, p. 162). Conceptualization becomes a never-ending process of meaning construction. In addition, inference techniques are utilized to generate meaning from encyclopedic data. Sweetser connects aspect structures to inferencing techniques

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR (CM)

Geeraerts & Cuyckens (2007, p. 4) highlight the structural characteristics of natural language categorization (such as metaphor). Martinez (2003, p. 1-2) explains figurative language as phrases or expressive sentences in which the intended meaning is distinct from the literal meaning of the constituent elements and is often not directly computable. The tradition of figurative language has given rise to various distinct theories of metaphoric processing such as (conceptual metaphorical theory). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), linguistic meaning is dependent on embodied experience.

According to this viewpoint, embodied experience (for example, see our body as a container) shapes language and mind, and the meanings of words and phrases are limited through conceptual metaphors, providing for prompt comprehension of expressions, as a result, the conceptual metaphor view is built on the foundation of embodied experience Martinez (2003, p. 1-3). In general, in the work *Communication and Reference* Martinich (1984) defines metaphor as a "figure of speech" that makes a concealed or implicit comparison between two entities that are different yet share some traits. In other words, it depicts an object or activity in a way that is not literally accurate but aids in the development of a particular notion or thought. It is utilized in poetry, literature, and anywhere it is necessary to impart a unique flavour to one's language (Martinich, 1984, p. 85). The term metaphor is defined as "...essential in all languages. It is the verbal manifestation of the creative synthesis process and its outcomes... Metaphor is the creative force of language " (Standford, 1936, p.100). According to Lakoff and Johnson, "metaphor is prevalent in everyday life, not only in language but also in terms of how we think and act; the metaphor is one by which we live in this culture" (1999, p. 4).

The essential concept of the metaphor, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), is "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." (p.5). Object concepts are so described through the experiences of an individual with other items, and the metaphor is thus employed to convey new meaning (p.117). As a result, the language offered by such a metaphor encompasses entire systems of knowledge rather than a single concept. This system of understanding is based on individual experiences with the concept as well as the concept's character, which allows for a deeper understanding, its function, and how to deal with it (p.116). For example, using the metaphor of:

TIME=MONEY

As a result, to consider time as valuable, even as something to spend or store. A metaphor's objects are defined as "fundamental domains of experience" (p.117) and structured as a full representation of the domain's coherent "natural forms of experience" (ibid). To the experimental gestalts classified as "interactional features," these natural kinds of experiences add negotiated aspects (p.121). Multidimensional experimental gestalts are formed by the various experiences that are likely to be assigned to a domain and the consequent interactional qualities. Interactional qualities are also organized gestalts rather

than solid collections of concept containers (p.122). Individual differences in attributed object attributes are likely to arise if the concept of an object is formed through personal experiences (p.118). Langacker (1999), in "Philosophy in the flesh" on the other hand, indicates that one situation might be conceptualized by relying on the backdrop provided by another. As previously stated, when discussing metaphor, "the source domain serves as a background for structuring and understanding the target domain" (1999, p. 208). Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), whose views on metaphors are considered first since they believe metaphors are conceptual constructs. Evan and Green explain that "the various ways in which we think and act are fundamentally metaphorical (2006, p. 44).

Conceptual metaphors describe as "mental devices" for cognition and interaction regarding abstract concept domains in terms of concrete, or is at least consistent, conceptual domains (substitutions), as well as for thoughts and interacting more quickly and accurately by incorporating semantic features into new conceptual compounds. As a result, metaphor is important to thought in this theory, which rejects the assumption that metaphor is a descriptive mechanism separate from language and thought (Deignan, 2005, p.13). Metaphor

organizes thinking, metaphor structures knowledge, metaphor is anchored in physical experience, and metaphor is ideological are the core pillars of CM (ibid).

Target and Source Domains

According to Langacker (1987, p. 147) in "Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things", domains are mental experiences, representational spaces, concepts, or conceptual complexes, so, domains are conceptual entities that vary in their organization and complexity. The background information of lexical concepts aids in interpreting a domain's knowledge structure. The terms cold and hot, for example, are lexical concepts in temperature; they cannot be employed successfully until the temperature system is understood (ibid).

Lakoff (1987) refers to the target domain as asemantic space that can be comprehended metaphorically. In up-down analogies, joy, for example, is up. The source domain of the metaphor is the one that gives it. In this case, the source domain is 'up'. For John Taylor (2003, p. 488), the source domain corresponds to the traditional metaphor vehicle, whereas the destination domain corresponds to the traditional metaphor tenor. Importantly, once the target and source domains' syntactic structures are known, they may

be easily identified. Evans & Green (2006, p. 160-170) distinguish between basic and abstract domains, which is comparable to Langacker's conceptual organization theory, which addresses both basic and abstract domains. In actuality, the distinction between abstract and fundamental domains is based on experiential grounding and embodiment, because some fundamental domains, such as space and time, are directly drawn from our bodily experience. Other categories, such as "love" or "marriage," are more abstract, yet being founded on physical experience.

Metaphorical Mapping

In CM, the concept of mapping is critical. The comparisons are between two domains, or more specifically between two things in two domains (Bulgrin, 2007, p. 5). Notably, the mappings are important tools for CM comprehension. The same mapping describes both analogical reasoning and inference (Kövecses, 2010, p. 70-80). In other words, there are partial mappings between A and B. When only a fraction of concept B is allocated to target A, this occurs. It is important to understand how the source is mapped to the target. Partial mapping has two features, "We have the framework for solid arguments, and "as opposed to" we have the framework for good arguments." This metaphor refers to a building's general

framework as a framework and its strength as solid (Kövecses, 2010, p. 79-81).

Because humans typically share emotional experiences, it is not surprising that analogous mappings exist across languages, at least in CM. Trim (2011, p. 56) differentiates conceptual mapping from linguistic metaphor in CL. Geeraerts & Cuyckens (2007, p. 181) explains Lakoff (1993) perspective concerning the metaphorical mapping that is conceptual metaphor mappings, are between two "domains of experience," in which a target domain (of experience) is understood in terms of a source domain (of experience). Because the phrase was not yet used in that work, many of those who used the theoretical framework beginning with Lakoff and Johnson (1980) had an implicit knowledge of what constituted a domain for a long time. However, it was evident from the start that domains, as defined by conceptual metaphor theory, are larger than the mental spaces previously defined. Domains are different components of an experience that are imagined as connected, whereas mental spaces are conceptualizations deployed by the individual in a specific situation for a specific aim.

Embodied Image Schemas

Early conceptual frameworks (Mandler, 2014) were constructed by the gestalt that give rise to (image schema). Image schema is full of non-spatial components. In CL and other domains, Canovas researches conceptual integration and visual schema (2016). As a result, three mental models are proposed. The first conceptual building blocks established in childhood are precursors. Simple spatial stories, on the other hand, help to develop perceptual schemas. Space schema and image schemas are used to create force and emotion (Mandler, 2014) & (Canovas, 2016, P. 510-532) Image schemas are neurally embodied in as well as among unimodal neuronal maps, according to Buchmuller's *The Embodied Mind* (2007, P. 3). These maps are strongly related to the prefrontal motor system, which governs movement. Higher cognitive abilities are likewise controlled by these brain locations. Conceptual domains and inferential structure are elevated as a result of this (ibid). The visual intellectual foundation is based on embodied experience. Embodiment is a form of culture. As previously said, each language is distinct. It has a strong cultural foundation. Johnson (1987) claims that lived experience shapes conceptual image schema. Image schemas are cognitive organizing systems, he says. These are

considered to be founded on our extensive sensory and perceptive understanding of the world. Asymmetry in the human body represents how we interact with our surroundings. As a result, the vertical scale of the body is asymmetrical, with multiple top-bottom portions. Image schemas are not spontaneous knowledge structures. This is because the imagistic perception is tied to and emitted by the external environment. A sensory experience enhances imagistic perception. The sensory-perceptual systems include vision, touch, hearing, and neurological.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies adopt conceptual metaphors and from different disciplines, purposes, objectives and perspectives. The first study for example is conducted by Tamer Amin (2015) under the title, "Conceptual Metaphor and the Study of Conceptual Change: Research synthesis and future directions". The research in this study explains the idea that many research goals in science education are similar. Contextual metaphors can help you understand mental transfers. Learning about conceptual metaphors in science education has grown. The results have not been summarized or linked to the research goals. In this study, the researcher defines conceptual transition research's goals, contributions, and concerns. Then comes a

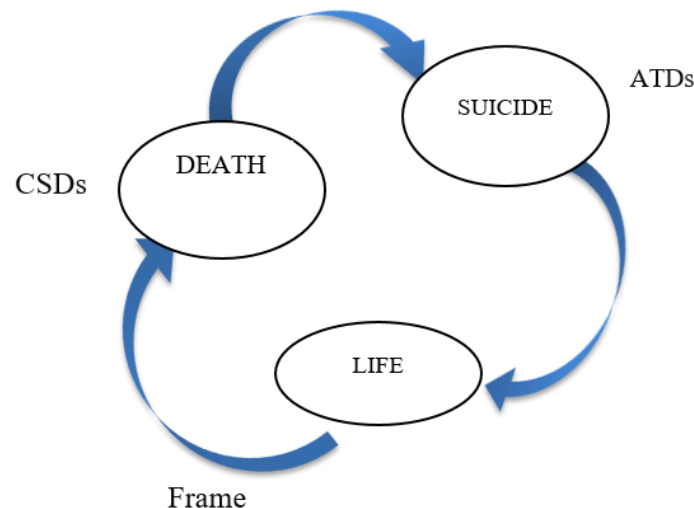
review of scientific literature on conceptual metaphors. The focus is on mental metaphor and transformation. While the study's goals are to characterize students' conceptual growth, identify learning impediments, and propose effective teaching approaches to encourage conceptual change. The study ends with future conceptual change research suggestions. The second study is conducted by Sy Thi Thom (2021) entitled "Conceptual Metaphors of Spring in English and Vietnamese Song Lyrics". The findings of a study that employed Lakoff and Johnson's "Metaphors We Live By" to find conceptual metaphors for spring in English and Vietnamese song lyrics are presented in this paper (1980a). 736 metaphorical expressions were discovered in 205 English and Vietnamese songs from the twentieth century to the present (98 and 107 songs, respectively). The study use description as the primary strategy and comparison method to identify the similarities and differences between spring mental metaphors in English and Vietnamese songs. According to the data, English and Vietnamese share 12 spring conceptual metaphors (out of 20 ones in total). The results are also culturally interpreted, taking into account people's actual experiences and surroundings.

DATA ANALYSIS

In what follows forty English metaphorical expressions will be analysed using the model already discussed:

Text (1): “If life is part of death, death must be a part of life”¹.

Figure (1) Analysis of text (1)

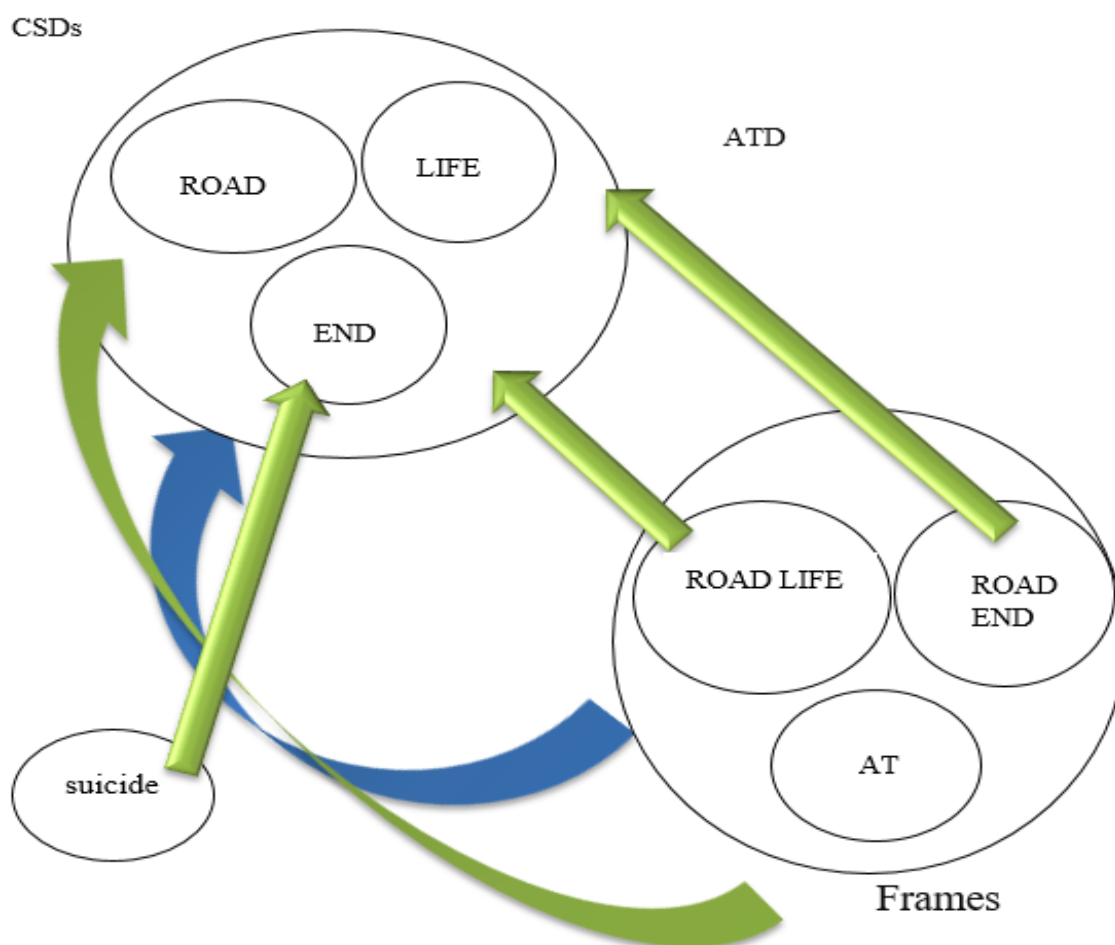


Discussion: Suicide makes an implicit comparison between life and death. We can derive further knowledge about the given metaphorically used set of elements in the source domains. This additional kind of source domain knowledge is the ‘metaphorical inference’. The metaphorical inferences of this text are THE LIFE and DEATH. WE conceptualise THE DEATH in terms of THE LIFE as a target domain, in which one metaphorical expression can be conceptualised in terms of another. The embodied experience of the natural circle of life in our minds gives rise to the conceptual structure in which the *Path* image schema of the concept (part) means there are sources (Life, Death) of this movement toward the consequence of life. This conceptual structure leads to the *Generic* and *Conventional* encyclopaedic knowledge of the metaphorical frame (DEATH) in **life** which is followed by the (LIFE) in death. The projection happened from the CSDs onto the ATDs; since people begin their lives with the birth of life that led to the death in life in which path represents the way in which people interact in their life in which (everything has stopped just like what happens in the death, and everything has become awful and scary just like when most people become afraid in the death).

¹ This sample has taken from: <https://psykologisk.no/sp/2018/12/e9/>

Text (2): “The road is at the end; I am at the end of the road of life”².

Figure (2) Analysis of text (2)

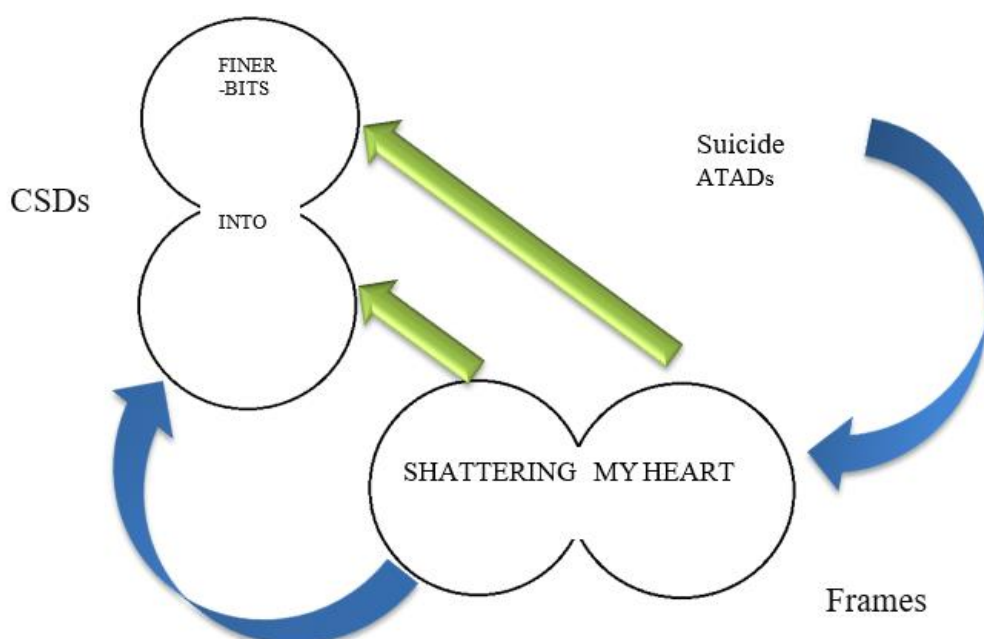


Discussion: The metaphorical inferences of this text are that: THE ROAD IS THE END, THE END OF THE ROAD and THE LIFE, as (the road) and (the road) is conceptualised in terms of (life) respectively. (the road, the end) are CSDs. Derived from life is the ATDs. The *Scale* image schema of the concept (at the end) is driven from the daily life experience of scaling the longness of the road. The *Generic* and *Conventional* encyclopaedic knowledge here is derived from the abstract nature of life that is long. The end of the road is the end of life in which the internal-lexical relations give rise to the message of raising the time for death.

² This sample has taken from: <https://psykologisk.no/sp/2018/12/e9/>

Text (3): “My heart kept shattering into ever-finer bits”³.

Figure (3) Analysis of text (3)

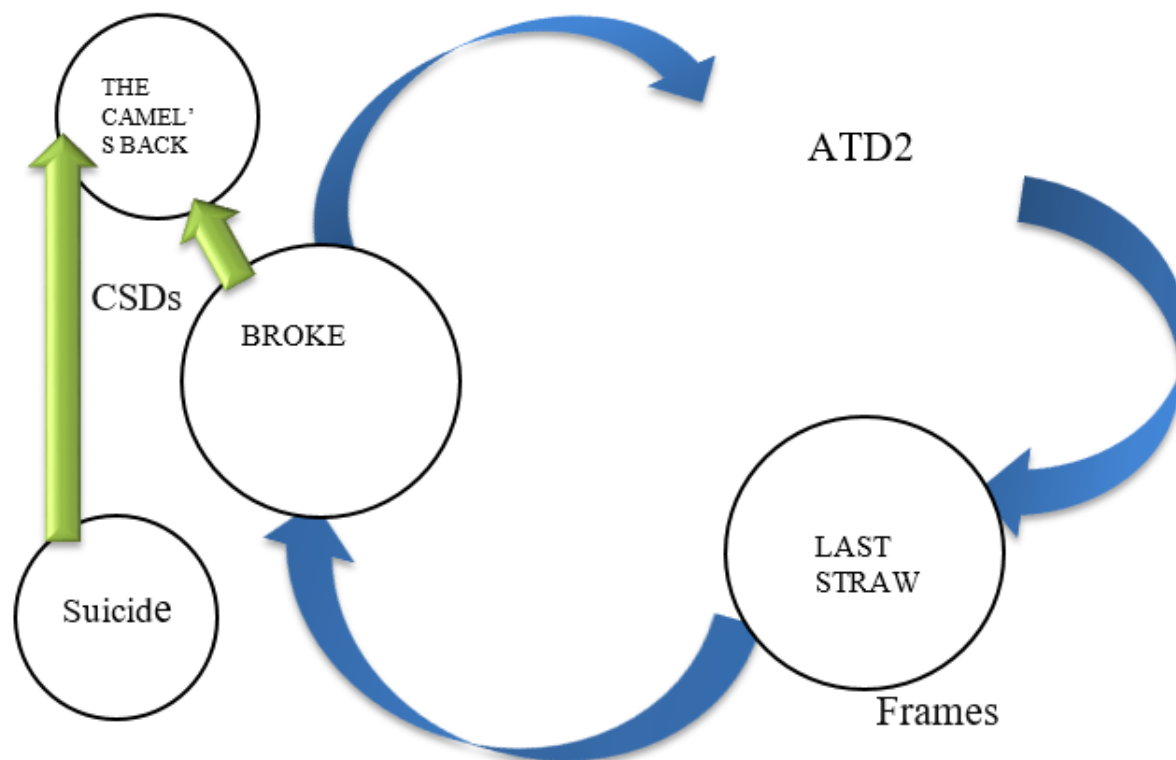


Discussion: As this text illustrates, the meanings associated with the metaphorical words often draw upon the advanced experience of knowledge. The metaphorical entailments are: MY HEART IS KEPT SHATTERING, ENER FINER BITS where the ATD (FINER BITS) is conceptualised in terms of the CSDs. (heart, shattering), and MY HEART IS KEPT SHATTERING where the CSD (Into) is mapped onto the ATD (Finer bits) The metaphor works by mapping roles from the source to target domains. The human experience about the shattering and what it can do represents the conceptual structure of the shattering the heart is a container in sense of image schema that consists of the structural element(content element) that is represented by (into). Our *Generic* and *Conventional* encyclopaedic knowledge from abstract experiences of the continuity of the heart-shattering in which this idea in its term serves as an important embodied message to deliver the semantic structure to the hearer’s\reader’s mind.

³ This sample has taken from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/at-10-i-wrote-a-suicide-note-today-i-have-an-urgent-message-for-that-troubled-little-girl--and-others-like-her/2019/05/24/983d9636-6134-11e9-bfad-36a>

Text (4): “Then, came the last straw that broke the camel’s back”⁴.

Figure (4) Analysis of text (4)

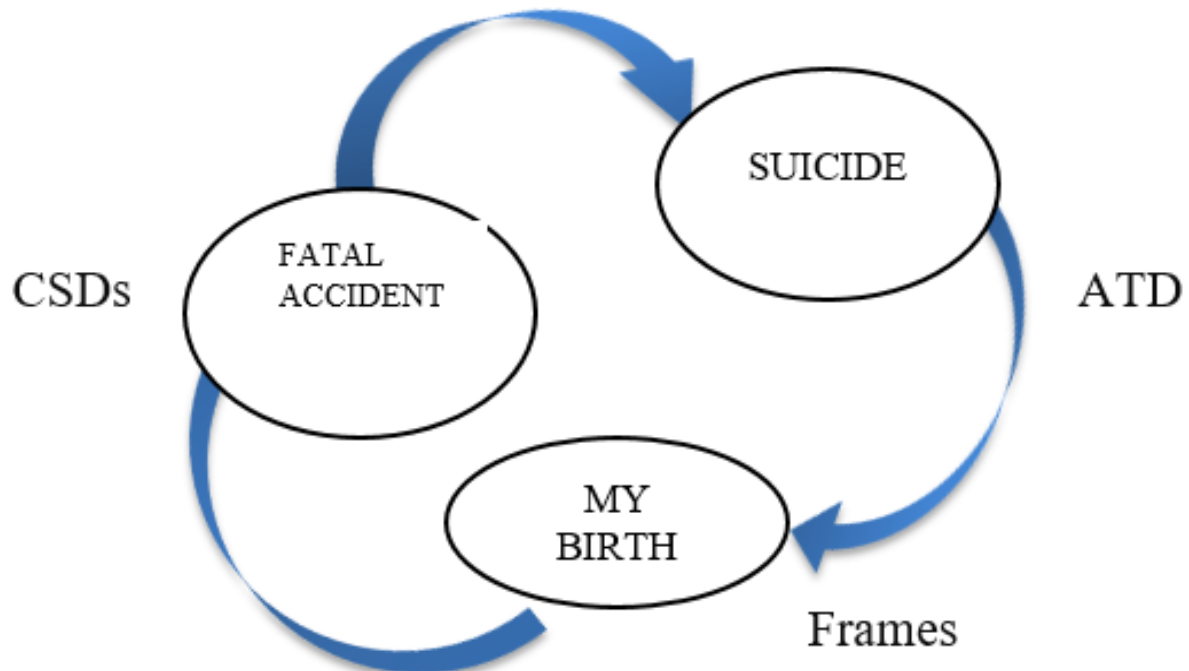


Discussion: The text holds three metaphorical entailments: THE LAST STRAW, THE CAMELBACK, as (last, straw) are CSDs conceptualised as a metaphorical structure in terms of the ATDs (the camel’s back) respectively. The mental knowledge of the consequences of the last straw in the suicide life leads to the conceptual system in which the *Force* schema of the concept (broke) reflects the pains in the suicide life. Accordingly, the mind uses the *Generic* and *Conventional* encyclopaedic knowledge of the risk of the frame (BROKE) as a tool to end the life of the suicide, as (CSD) and very close to the camel (The ATD).

⁴ This sample has taken from: <https://www.hiretheyouth.org/suicide-note-15-year-old-girl/>

Text (5): “My birth is my fatal accident”⁵.

Figure (5) Analysis of text (5)



Discussion: The metaphorical entailment in this sample is: “MY BIRTH IS MY FATAL ACCIDENT” where the ATD (My birth) is described in terms of the CSD (fatal accident). Our mental knowledge of (More is Up) already discussed earlier reflects the *Scale* image schema in this text, that is, the more the new infections are, the more the fast increasing of infections will be. We know from our embodied physical experience that birth is harmful to the person and he cannot go ahead in life. This experience reflects the *Generic* and *Conventional* encyclopaedic knowledge of the (BIRTH) in this text to describe how the state of this person is like through the outbreak of fate. The property of spreading the fire is used as a CSD to make a projection onto the ATD (**My birth**) because life gets this property when it begins to be depressed. This background information holds a warning message to raise the pains.

⁵ This sample has taken from: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/writer-commits-suicide-my-suicide-note/>

CONCLUSION

As a result, now that we have studied cognitive semantics, we will need to memorize the most crucial concepts for this study. To begin, cognitive linguistics aims to characterize and reflect mental patterns so that language can be analyzed as a set of conceptualization patterns (the process of the meaning). Linguistic systematicity, structure, and function are important theoretical assumptions in CL. Using our conceptual framework, we can see a link between perception and cognition. As a result, our shared human experience informs the parallels between vision and knowledge. Grammar, conceptualization, and knowledge are all products of language use. In reality, CS refers to language as concepts rather than objects, despite the widespread belief that words and other linguistic units are linked to thoughts and ideas. The research demonstrates that conceptual metaphors and embodiment can be useful for promoting conceptualisations. Finally, from the viewpoint of Cognitive Linguistics, this study emphasizes the nature of conceptual metaphor and embodiment in Suicide Notes. The researcher identifies source and target domains using conceptual metaphors. It may be concluded that connected image schema, embodiment and conceptual metaphors represent force dynamics.

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