



DOI: 10.1515/rjes-2017-0008

METAPHORS OF SADNESS IN QUOTATIONS

ANDREA CSILLAG

Debrecen Reformed Theological University

Abstract: The paper studies metaphors used in common people's passages about sadness on the internet site www.searchquotes.com/search/Sadness. The paper also investigates which sadness metaphors listed in Kövecses (2000) and Esenova (2011) are applied in sadness quotations on the site and finds only a small number of them. However, the quotations instantiate a number of other metaphors not listed by the two authors. The difference may be explained by the fact that linguistic expressions in Kövecses's and Esenova's corpora describe what people feel when they say they are sad, whereas sadness quotations present what people understand by the concept of sadness.

Key words: cognitive view, conceptualization, emotion concept, metaphor, sadness

1. Introduction

Emotions have been studied by a number of different fields of science. Psychology is mainly interested to investigate how emotions come about, what components they comprise of (Atkinson et al. 1997) and what people actually feel when they say they are happy or sad (cf. Davitz 1969). Following Darwin (1965/1872) Ekman et al. (1972) claim that there are six universal basic emotions (happiness, anger, fear, sadness, surprise and disgust) that are accompanied and can be distinguished by universal facial expressions and physiological reactions. Linguistics investigates the language of emotion. Cognitive linguistics claims that the language we use reveals a lot about our emotion concepts, that is, about the way we conceptualize our emotional experiences (Kövecses 1990).

The present paper focuses on sadness. We usually feel sad when we lose or miss someone/something or we are not successful in achieving something. Often the bodily reactions accompanying sadness are not very easy to notice, however, a sad person may turn pale in the face area, become less energetic and slow down. A sad person normally assesses his/her situation as unpleasant, disappointing or hopeless. His/her body posture is drooping. His/her facial expression is typically a "long face" with drooping upper eyelids and a slight pulling down of lip corners (cf. [http:// descriptivefaces.blogspot.hu/2011/05/facial-expressions-sadness.html](http://descriptivefaces.blogspot.hu/2011/05/facial-expressions-sadness.html)). A sad person usually reacts with some kind of passivity including moving backwards, keeping away from other people, not speaking much, getting reserved and inactive (cf. Davitz 1969).

2. Metaphors in expressions of sadness

2.1. The cognitive view of metaphor in the conceptualization of emotion

Cognitive linguistics claims that all human thinking is pervaded by the use of metaphor, a cognitive mechanism that enables us to understand very complex experiences and

abstract ideas in terms of simpler and more concrete experiences. It means that metaphor is a matter of thought rather than that of language. (Lakoff, Johnson 1980).

Research has found that the language of emotion also abounds in metaphors. In his seminal books *Emotion Concepts* (1990) and *Metaphor and Emotion. Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling* (2000) Kövecses surveys a number of different emotions, discusses conceptual metaphors (and metonymies) underlying linguistic expressions of emotions, outlines the prototypical scenario of emotion, focuses mainly on American English concepts of emotion and investigates questions of universality and cultural variation in the conceptualization of emotion.

In his *Emotion Concepts* Kövecses finds that the container metaphor EMOTIONS ARE FLUIDS IN A CONTAINER (Kövecses 1990:146) has a central role in the conceptualization of emotion, and it is especially true for prototypical emotions such as anger, fear and (romantic) love. He also claims that several other metaphors such as EMOTIONS ARE OBJECTS, EMOTION IS A LIVING ORGANISM, etc. (Kövecses 1990:160-181) play an important role in our understanding of emotions. In his *Metaphor and Emotion*. Kövecses surveys the metaphors of anger, fear, happiness, sadness, love, lust, pride, shame and surprise (Kövecses 2000:20-34).

Using Kövecses's findings in her corpus-based study Esenova (2011) surveys the metaphors of anger, fear and sadness in English. She points out that the container metaphor comes in several varieties in the conceptualization of the three emotions in question. Besides conceptualizing anger, fear or sadness as a fluid in a container, there is linguistic evidence that we also understand them as different kinds of substances or colours in a container. Esenova, too, identifies a number of other source domains for the conceptualization of anger, fear and sadness such as various animals, tastes, smells and so on.

2.2. Research questions

As can be seen cognitive linguistic literature claims that all human thinking uses metaphor as a cognitive mechanism and the language of emotions is metaphorical in nature. Therefore I hypothesize that speakers of English use a number of metaphors not only when they describe their emotional states and reactions but also when they tell what they mean by and what they think of certain emotions.

In the present paper, I look at the language of sadness used in quotations published on the internet site <http://www.searchquotes.com/search/Sadness>. I wish to investigate which of the sadness metaphors surveyed in Kövecses (2000) and Esenova (2011) are instantiated in the quotations and whether or not there are other emotion metaphors that are not discussed in either work.

2.3. Data collection and processing

For the aims of the present paper I retrieved ordinary peoples' passages on sadness from the first twelve pages of the internet site <http://www.searchquotes.com/search/Sadness> on 2016, February 02.

First, I read through the site and found that it contains two kinds of passages. There is an introductory passage presenting some introductory thoughts and there are numerous quotations listed on 70 pages. I selected the quotations containing the terms *sad* and *sadness*, *depressed* and *depression*, *grief* and *sorrow* from the first twelve pages of the site. (My quotations corpus contains 98 items.) The authors of the quotations are generally submitted, mostly common people, rarely poets, philosophers, and so on, however, there is a considerable number of passages with the note "unknown quotes". Below, I will only give names of internationally renowned authors.

Next, I attempted to arrange the quotations into groups according to the imagery used in them, then I identified the metaphors instantiated in the quotations and compared them with the metaphors in Kövecses's (2000) and Esenova's (2011) lists. Consider the following sadness metaphors listed in Kövecses (2000:25-26):

SAD IS DOWN: He *brought me down* with his remarks.
SAD IS DARK: He is in a *dark mood*.
SADNESS IS LACK OF HEAT: Losing his father *put his fire out*; he's been depressed for two years.
SADNESS IS LACK OF VITALITY: This was *disheartening* news.
SADNESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER: I am *filled with* sorrow.
SADNESS IS A PHYSICAL FORCE: that was a *terrible blow*.
SADNESS IS AN ILLNESS: She was *heart-sick*. Time *heals* all sorrows.
SADNESS IS INSANITY: He was *insane with* grief.
SADNESS IS A BURDEN: He *staggered under* the pain.
SADNESS IS A LIVING ORGANISM: He *drowned* his sorrow in drink.
SADNESS IS A CAPTIVE ANIMAL: His feelings of misery *got out of hand*.
SADNESS IS AN OPPONENT: He was *seized by* a fit of depression.
SADNESS IS A SOCIAL SUPERIOR: She was *ruled by* sorrow.

and in Esenova (2011: 97-111)

SADNESS IS A SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER.
SADNESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER.
SADNESS IS A DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER.
SADNESS IS A COLOUR.
SADNESS IS A CHILD.
SADNESS IS A PURE SUBSTANCE.
SADNESS IS A MIXED SUBSTANCE.
COMPLEX EMOTIONS ARE MIXED SUBSTANCES.
COMPLEX EMOTIONS ARE MIXED FOOD SUBSTANCES.
SADNESS IS A SUPERNATURAL BEING.
SADNESS IS A BLACK DOG.
SADNESS IS A HIDDEN ENEMY.
SADNESS IS A TORMENTOR.
SADNESS IS A HORSE.
SADNESS IS A SNAKE.
SADNESS IS AN OLD SNAKE SKIN.
SADNESS IS A BAD SMELL.
SADNESS IS A BAD TASTE.
SADNESS IS A GOOD TASTE.
SADNESS IS A PLANT.

2.4. Metaphors in the introductory passage

The passage below gives an introduction to the internet site <http://www.searchquotes.com/search/Sadness>. It defines the concept of sadness, its cause and effects, and suggests that it should be avoided:

Sadness pertains to the state of being sad, gloomy or sorrowful. One feels sad and experiences sadness when everything is going against us, or one is dejected or neglected. Ample reasons and situations can cause sadness. But melancholy and sadness should be overcome in some manner or the other. Sadness only hinders progress and efficiency at work. A sad person cannot concentrate on anything because his mind does not work at all and is bothered with the cause of his sadness. Sadness makes one grave, serious and too dejected. It halts progress and forces us to see the negative side of things rather than the brighter side. So, kill sadness or if possible, stay away from it. In the words of Percy Bysshe Shelly, 'Change is certain. Peace is followed by disturbances; departure of evil men by their return. Such recurrences should not constitute occasions for sadness but realities for awareness, so that one may be happy in the interim'.

The first sentence identifies sadness as a state. In psychology sadness is clearly identified as an emotion, in fact, it is one of the six universal basic emotions (cf. Ekman et al. 1972). The following sentences suggest that sadness is associated with something negative. There seem to be two groups of expressions according to the imagery they use. Consider:

melancholy and sadness should be overcome in some manner or the other
kill sadness or if possible, stay away from it

In these expressions melancholy and sadness are conceptualized as an opponent that can be overcome, killed or at least one can stay away from them. Therefore these expressions instantiate the conceptual metaphor SADNESS IS AN OPPONENT, which is an item in Kövecses's list (Kövecses 2000:26).

Sadness only hinders progress and efficiency at work.
It halts progress and forces us to see the negative side of things rather than the brighter side.

These sentences present sadness as a power, which is stronger than the self and forces the self to do certain things and does not allow to do certain other things. Thus the metaphor SADNESS IS A POWER STRONGER THAN THE SELF. This metaphor is not mentioned either in Kövecses (2000) or in Esenova (2011), however, it seems to capture an aspect of the sadness experience that is easily associated with Kövecses's "SADNESS IS A SOCIAL SUPERIOR: She was *ruled* by sorrow." The following sentences refer to the fact that sadness just like other intense emotions may disturb the normal functioning of the mind (and body):

A sad person cannot concentrate on anything because his mind does not work at all and is bothered with the cause of his sadness.

Thus the metaphor SADNESS IS DISTURBED MENTAL FUNCTIONING. At a more extreme case disturbance of normal mental functioning can result in some illness, consider Kövecses's (2000:25) examples:

SADNESS IS AN ILLNESS: She was *heart-sick*. Time *heals* all sorrows.
SADNESS IS INSANITY: He was *insane* with grief.

2.5. Metaphors in quotations

In this section, I discuss the metaphors instantiated in the quotations found on the site <http://www.searchquotes.com/search/Sadness>. In a detailed analysis of my corpus I arranged the quotations into groups according to the imagery used in them, that is, the source domains applied in the underlying metaphors. I also realized that some of the metaphors have several varieties. Therefore I present the metaphors in groups giving the main metaphor first, then its varieties followed by their instantiations.

I have claimed above that the container metaphor has a central role in the conceptualization of emotions. Kövecses (2000) and Esenova (2011) prove that it is true for sadness, too. At the beginning of my research I expected to find a considerable number of linguistic expressions manifesting a variety of the SADNESS IS A FLUID/SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER metaphor. However, I have only found a small number of expressions applying the container source domain. Consider:

- (1) Through all those times I lived in sorrows, I learned that grief isn't the answer, but staying happy is what keeps life going.

- (2) Music is the only thing in the world that can block out madness and can be consumed in sadness, for it helps the soul survive even if only for a short time.
- (3) Can I see another's woe, and not be in sorrow too? Can I see another's grief, and not seek for kind relief? – William Blake
- (4) When love is lost, do not bow your head in sadness; instead keep your head up high and gaze into heaven for that is where your broken heart has been sent to heal.

The expressions above do not present sadness as a fluid or substance in a container but as a container itself. It is something in which one can be or live, thus the metaphor SADNESS IS A CONTAINER. The metaphor is a specific level version of the generic level metaphor EMOTIONAL STATES ARE CONTAINERS (Kövecses 1990:145).

Related to the container metaphor Esenova (2011: 100) identifies the metaphor SADNESS IS A DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER instantiated by *There's a corrosive sadness in her, because of that* and *Tears help get the poisonous grief out of your system*. In my corpus I find the following quotations manifesting the metaphor SADNESS IS A DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE:

- (5) Being sad corrodes happiness of your surroundings, but shows you the person who cares for you.
- (6) Good humour is the health of the soul, sadness its poison.

Sentence (6) implicitly contrasts health and illness and as can be seen Kövecses (2000:25) identifies the metaphor SADNESS IS AN ILLNESS, and gives the examples *She was heart-sick. Time heals all sorrows*. The following sentence in my corpus captures a similar aspect of sadness, too:

- (7) He that conceals his grief finds no remedy for it.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby 1989) gives the example *He found a remedy for his grief in constant hard work* telling not only that grief is thought of as an illness but also what a possible remedy can be.

The following quotations instantiate the metaphor SADNESS IS A LIVING ORGANISM:

- (8) With time the intensity and sharpness of my pain, my sadness my disappointments and my despair, slowly fades, but my heart is still broken and my eyes still cry for you.
- (9) Depression is nourished by a lifetime of ungrieved and unforgiven hurts.
- (10) Depression may bring people closer to the church but so do funerals.
- (11) We have no right to ask when sorrow comes 'why did this happen to me?' unless we ask the same question for every moment of happiness that comes our way.
- (12) Let your tears flow and where they go, let your sorrows follow.

Kövecses (1990:165-166) claims that the metaphor EMOTION IS A LIVING ORGANISM (PLANT, ANIMAL, PERSON) goes back to the metaphor EMOTIONS ARE OBJECTS, where there is a distinction between the animate and the inanimate. Furthermore, as can be seen from the examples above that show emotions as living organisms "emotions are capable of *doing* something on their own" (Kövecses 1990:166), e.g. *fade* in sentence (8) and "they are also capable of independent action such as leading a life independent of the self" (loc. cit.), e.g. *bring* something in sentence (10) and *come* and *follow* in sentences (11) and (12) respectively as well as "can be conceived of as living organisms that are TO BE TENDED" (loc. cit.), e.g. *be nourished* in sentence (9). We may think of such expressions as phrases instantiating several varieties of the same metaphor (living organism / animate object) and capturing a variety of aspects of the sadness experience.

ROMANIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES
RJES 14 /2017

In contrast to sentences manifesting the animate object metaphor, I found ample examples instantiating the metaphor EMOTIONS ARE INANIMATE OBJECTS. Sentence (13) instantiates SADNESS IS A MEASURABLE OBJECT, consider:

(13) There is no greater sorrow than to recall in misery the time when we were happy.

The examples below use a similar imagery, however, they manifest the metaphor SADNESS IS A UNIT OF MESAUREMENT, consider:

(14) The essential sadness is to go through life without loving. But it would be almost equally sad to leave this world without ever telling those you loved that you love them.

(15) It is sadder to find the past again and find it inadequate to the present than it is to have it elude you and remain forever a harmonious conception of memory.

(16) Of all the sad words of tongue and pen, the saddest are these: it might have been.

I found eleven quotations with one of the following: *sad*, *sadder*, *saddest*. One uses the positive, another the comparative form, and nine sentences use the superlative form of *sad*. Quotation (14) mentions two things and refers to the same intensity of sadness of the two experiences. Quotation (15) compares the relative measures of two experiences, while (16) refers to the extreme measure of sadness in the situation in question.

In example (17) another aspect of the object experience is captured:

(17) Shared joy is a double joy; shared sorrow is half a sorrow.

It is interesting to note that sentence (17) instantiates the metaphor SADNESS IS A SHAREABLE OBJECT (*shared sorrow*) in combination with the instantiation of the metaphor SADNESS IS A MEASURABLE OBJECT (*half a sorrow*), too. Therefore we can say that the sentence is an instantiation of two metaphors in one sentence.

The following quotations highlight that one can learn from their sadness:

(18) I'm just human, I have weaknesses, I make mistakes and I experience sadness; But I learn from all these things to make me a better person.

(19) Sometimes being sad is an important lesson in life.

(20) Sorrow is better than laughter: for by sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. (Ecclesiastes 7:3)

In our culture there is a widely shared view that we become better persons by gaining experience in different fields of life. Often we also think that the worse or more painful the experience is the more important the lesson is and the greater the change is in our character. The metaphor underlying examples (18) to (20) is SADNESS IS A BENEFICIAL THING (or SADNESS IS AN EXPERIENCE THAT MAKES ONE BETTER).

I found thirteen quotations instantiating the metaphor SADNESS IS A THING HAVING A CAUSE. Consider the following three of them:

(21) ... whenever I start feeling sad, because I miss you, I remind myself how lucky I am, someday I'll be with you.

(22) Attempts at kindness that compromise your heart cause only sadness.

(23) There is only one reason for sadness, and that is the lack of ability to find happiness in everything.

The passages not presented here identify a wide range of causes of sadness, such as memories, worrying, disappointment, mistakes, failure to do something, saying goodbye, etc. The following quotation does not only name the cause of sadness but also tells how to avoid it, which in turn is a recipe of happiness and contrasts the two emotions at the same time. Consider:

(24) One of the simplest ways to stay happy is by letting go of the things that make you sad.

I found five more quotations that contrast happiness and sadness and show that the two emotions do not exist or cannot be identified without each other, thus the metaphor SADNESS AND HAPPINESS FORM A DICHOTOMY, consider the following three examples:

- (25) Some days are just bad days, that's all. You have to experience sadness to know happiness, and I remind myself that not every day is going to be a good day, that's just the way it is!
- (26) Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word happy would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness. (Carl Jung)
- (27) Life is a circle of happiness, sadness, hard times, good times. If you are having hard times have faith that good times are on the way.

The examples below demonstrate that sadness and happiness are contrasted through the idea of having and not having certain things. The following quotations are instantiations of the metaphors HAPPINESS IS HAVING THINGS, SADNESS IS NOT HAVING THINGS, consider:

- (28) There's nothing more depressing than having it all and still feeling sad.
- (29) The saddest part isn't that with each passing day I feel like I need you more, but it's the fact that you don't need me at all.
- (30) If happiness always depended on what we had, then the richest would always be glad, not sad.

The examples below contrast happiness and sadness to each other in a special way:

- (31) Some people look at your exterior and all they see is happiness but they don't know that your interior is full of sadness.
- (32) Every human walks around with a certain kind of sadness. They may not wear it on their sleeves, but it's there if you look deep.

Quotations (33) and (34) instantiate the metaphors HAPPINESS IS A THING OUTSIDE THE SELF and SADNESS IS A THING INSIDE THE SELF.

3. Conclusion

In the discussion above we have seen that the language of quotations on sadness is very rich in metaphors, which goes hand in hand with the cognitive view on the metaphorical nature of human thinking in general. However, my second hypothesis expecting the same metaphors in the language of sadness quotations as in the language of happiness has only partly proved to be the case. The metaphors SADNESS IS AN OPPONENT, SADNESS IS A CONTAINER, SADNESS IS A DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE, SADNESS IS AN ILLNESS, SADNESS IS A LIVING ORGANISM are found to be instantiated both in the language of sadness according to Kövecses (2000) and Esenova (2011), whereas the metaphors SADNESS IS A MEASURABLE OBJECT, SADNESS IS A UNIT OF MEASUREMENT, SADNESS IS A BENEFICIAL THING, SADNESS IS A THING HAVING A CAUSE, SADNESS AND HAPPINESS FORM A DICHOTOMY, SADNESS IS NOT HAVING THINGS and SADNESS IS A THING INSIDE THE SELF are not covered in either Kövecses (2000) or Esenova (2011). It is worth noticing that the language of sadness mainly describes what we feel and how we behave when we are sad, while the language of happiness quotations is mainly concerned with what happiness means, how it comes about, how it can be overcome and so on, that is, it has a rather theoretical approach to the emotion. Therefore I assume that the difference in the range of metaphors can be explained by the difference in the approaches of the two areas.

References

- Atkinson, Rita L., Atkinson, Richard C., Smith, Edward E., Bem, Daryl. J. 1997. *Pszichológia*. transl. Bodor Péter, Csibra Gergely, Csontos Anikó, Ehman Bea, Farkas Mária, Kiss Szabolcs, Kovács Ilona, Nádasdy Zoltán, Nagy János, Pléh Csaba, Szecskő Tünde, Varga Katalin, Budapest: Osiris.
- Bradford, Charity. 2011. "Sadness" in *Descriptive Faces. A Resource for Writers*. Available: <http://descriptivefaces.blogspot.hu/2011/05/facial-expressions-sadness.html>; [Accessed 2016, February 02].
- Darwin, Charles. 1965 (1872). *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Davitz, Joel. R. 1969. *The Language of Emotion*. New York and London: Academic Press.
- Ekman, Paul, Friesen, Wallace V., Ellsworth, Phoebe. 1972. *Emotion in the Human Face: Guidelines for Research and an Integration of Findings*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Esenova, Orazgozel. 2011. *Metaphorical Conceptualization of Fear, Anger and Sadness in English*. Doctoral Dissertation. Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar.
- Hornby, Albert S. 1989. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kövecses, Zoltán. 1990. *Emotion Concepts*. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.
- Kövecses, Zoltán. 2000. *Metaphor and Emotion. Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, George, Johnson, Mark. 1980. *Metaphor We Live By*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Unknown author. Year not known. "Sadness" in *Search Quotes*. Available: <http://www.searchquotes.com/search/Sadness> [Accessed 2016, January 25].

Notes on the author

Andrea CSILLAG, PhD, is college associate professor at the Department of Foreign Languages of the Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary. She earned her PhD in the linguistics program of the University of Debrecen in 2000. Her main academic interests include cognitive semantics, the language of emotions, the role of metaphor and metonymy in human cognition.