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CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ANGER IN MODERN STANDARD ARABIC AND ENGLISH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract: Figurative language is part of our everyday life where meaning is communicated indirectly. Metaphor is among the major figurative devices that are commonly encountered in interactions. This study investigates the use of metaphors employed to conceptualize abstract concepts, namely that of anger in both English and Arabic. For this purpose, a corpus of metaphorical expressions denoting anger in both languages was utilized. These expressions were classified based on their metaphorical mappings and later analyzed using Kövecses' (2002) framework. The results indicate that although the two languages share several anger conceptualizations, they have specific differences. These differences were attributed to language differences, in that language genius and vocabulary repertoire often influence the conceptualization process. Culture also proved to be another source of elements like climate and lifestyle that manipulate the conceptualization process. The study of metaphorical conceptualization of emotions in general and anger in particular in the Arabic language is a prospective topic that requires further research.

Keywords: anger metaphors, contrastive analysis, English, Arabic, mapping

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language, the primary communication source for people worldwide, is flexible in the sense that meaning can be transmitted in different forms. Figurative language, for instance, allows language users to manipulate how meaning is conveyed through stylistic devices. Metaphor is among the major figurative devices which are common in interaction. Metaphors do not only produce stylistic effects, but may capture most abstract concepts, namely feelings, such as happiness, lust, and anger. This attracted many scholars to investigate how metaphors represent such abstract notions.

According to Ortony [1975], metaphors have different functions. To begin with, metaphors are a helpful tool when trying to express complex and abstract concepts. Furthermore, metaphorical expressions allow users to convey information using fewer lexical items. Lastly, metaphorical language is seen as a stylistic tool to convey meaning in a non-conventional way using colorful images [Gibbs, 1994].

Katz [1996] postulated that an expression is regarded as figurative, i.e. metaphorical, when its surface meaning differs from the profound meaning intended to convey. This means that meaning in metaphorical expressions is not delivered directly but in the form of interrelated layers, as in “*Her tears were a river*”. In such a sentence, the word “river” is combined with “tears” to convey the meaning of “too many tears shed”. Hence, the listener must make inferences about the overlapping relationship between the terms to get the meaning.

The study of metaphor was first restricted to rhetoric, where it was seen as just a tool used to render talk elegant, i.e. decorative. However, recent studies led by Lakoff & Johnson in 1980 went beyond the traditional view and introduced new perspectives on this subject. The metaphor was no longer seen as just a figure of speech but as a conceptual mechanism that is essential and indispensable in language and thought [Op. cit.].

In their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), Lakoff and Johnson [1980] defined metaphor as a cognitive process that allows one domain of experience to be understood in terms of another through conceptual mappings. This occurs when the conceptual structure of the more concrete, *source*, domain (fire) is transferred to the more abstract, *target*, domain (anger) as in “anger is fire”. Metaphorical mappings allow the understanding of certain abstract concepts such as time, life, emotion by granting them more concrete features.

Emotions are the best example of abstract concepts where meaning is captured using metaphorical mappings. Researchers were interested in investigating the semantic structure behind metaphorical expressions related to emotions. Lakoff and Kövecses’ [1987] pioneer work on anger in American English revealed that anger metaphors were systematically structured in a specific pattern such as heat, intensity, and opponent. Their study introduced a framework that was later on used to study other types of emotions like fear [Kövecses, 1990], love [Barcelona Sánchez, 1995], and lust [Csábi, 1999].

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emotions conceptualized via metaphors were not only studied intra-linguistically (within one language) but inter-linguistically as well within several language systems. The reason behind such studies was to investigate whether different languages have similar conceptualizations of emotions or not. Determining differences could help bridge the gap between cultures and enhance effective communication. Since the scope of this study will cover anger in Arabic and English, it is essential to give an overview of some works conducted on anger across unrelated languages.

Barcelona Sánchez and Soriano [2004] conducted two studies on the metaphorical conceptualization of colors and anger in Spanish and English. Their work uncovered some contrasts in how English and Spanish conceptualize a given domain of experience metaphorically. They concluded that, as in other areas of cognition and language, it is rather uncommon for a conceptual metaphor to have precisely the same conceptual structure and to be manifested by the same linguistic structures.

Abbasvandi and Maghsoudi [2013] investigated anger metaphors in English and Persian from a socio-cultural perspective. A corpus of English and Persian metaphors was analyzed using

Kövecses' [2000] methodology. Despite the cultural gap between the two languages, the study showed that specific conceptualizations are shared between them. This entails that there are some universal aspects of metaphorical mappings.

More recently, Dahiru and Saidu [2018] compared metaphorical conceptualizations of anger in two typologically unrelated languages (English and Fulfulde) to determine whether they have similar or different conceptualizations. The researchers used focus group discussions and audio-recorded the production of 100 native speakers of the Fulfulde language in Nigeria. Conceptual metaphors were detected and then analyzed using Kövecses' [2010] framework. The study concluded that the existence of similar conceptual metaphors in the two languages supports the claim of some cognitive linguists that certain conceptual metaphors are universal.

Regarding the Arabic language, little inquiry was made to investigate metaphors from a cognitive viewpoint. For instance, Dihna [2008] conducted a study on anger metaphors in English and Arabic and their implications on translation. He created a corpus of Arabic metaphorical expressions denoting anger based on data from Classical, Modern Standard, and Iraqi varieties of Arabic. The English corpus was based on the work of Lakoff on anger in American English. The examination of the Arabic and English data showed that variations in the conceptualization of "anger is heat" were pervasive across the three Arabic varieties and the two cultures. However, this study failed to elaborate on how conceptualization occurs since it was based on a dictionary of Arabic figurative expressions with an English translation.

Al-Hadlaq and Maalej [2012] studied the conceptualization of anger in two varieties of Arabic: that of Saudi Arabia and of Tunisia. Using the framework of Lakoff and Kövecses [1987], the researchers analyzed some metaphorical expressions. Results showed that anger in Tunisian Arabic (TA) revealed more embodiment dimensions than physiological ones. They concluded that these types of embodiment could be related to such stylistic devices as metonymy when it concerns physiology-based anger while culture-based anger is usually expressed by means of metaphor.

More recently, Al-Haq and Al Sharif [2018] conducted a comparative analysis of metaphorical expressions of happiness and anger used in English and Arabic. The Arabic expressions were extracted from the Arabic culture (literature, dictionaries, thesauri), while the English expressions were taken from the works of Kövecses [1991]. Later on, the data was analyzed using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The study showed that despite the cultural gap, there are specific standard mappings.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The present study aims to investigate how anger is conceptualized in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and then compare the findings with the results of the same research of English. Most of the studies on this topic focused on different variants of Arabic (Jordanian, Tunisian, etc.), and the only work conducted on Modern Standard Arabic was just a collection of figurative expressions in Arabic and their English translation. The novelty of the present research is that it aims to provide a detailed analysis of how MSA conceptualizes abstract notions and how the process compares to that of the English language. In particular, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the major conceptualizations of anger used in Modern Standard Arabic and English?
- 2) What are the similarities and/or differences in the conceptualizations in MSA and English?

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Data collection

This study was based on a corpus consisting of metaphorical expressions denoting anger in both English and Arabic. The English expressions were extracted from “The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms” [Siefring, 2005], “The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs” [Speake, 2008], and articles related to the research topic. Unlike in the English language, in Arabic there are no dictionaries specialized in emotions or extensive research covering such topic. Most researchers rely on self-made corpora explicitly designed to address their research goals. The same method will be adopted in the current research. Virtual platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube allow millions of people to express their feelings (affection, fear, hate, anger) via comments. This latter will be used as an input for our corpus.

The researcher selected several recent events that generated public debate like football matches (derbies) between two rivals and urgent news events about local riots and clashes between the public and the police. We tracked how famous local Facebook and YouTube pages covered such topics, mainly, how the people resorted to such platforms to express themselves. Comments that included figurative language in Modern Standard Arabic were extracted from the comment section to be later on analysed.

4.2. Data analysis and procedure

After selecting metaphorical expressions in both Arabic and English, we first classified them according to the source domains they contain and then analyzed how conceptualization occurred. Metaphorical expressions in Arabic were transliterated and given an English translation to help non-native speakers of Arabic understand the results of the research. Data were analyzed based on Kövecses’ [2002] framework, which identified several metaphorical patterns, including: emotion as a fluid in a container, heat, a natural/physical force, an opponent, an animal, and a burden.

5. RESULTS

Before we proceed to the analysis of the collected data, it is essential to mention that metaphors were classified into two primary levels according to Kövecses [2002]. The generic level refers to metaphors that can be used to conceptualize many different concepts, such as: “more is up, less is down” and “the body is a container” metaphors. On the other hand, the basic level involves metaphors typically used to capture not just emotions in general but happiness and anger in particular. Based on these levels, the following part will discuss the results of the comparative analysis of the expressions used to describe anger.

5.1. Anger is Heat

In such conceptualization, the representation of anger is based on the physiological property of heat, where metaphors describe anger via mapping the physical properties of fire onto the feeling. The metaphorical expressions collected show that this type of conceptualization is found in both English and Arabic, as reflected in the examples below:

1) *You made my **blood boil***

(2) يغلي دم الاحرار في عروقي

/ *Yagli dam al ahrari fi oroki* /

(Lit. Boiling blood of the free in my veins)

Exp. The sense of freedom is part of his identity.

This type of metaphor usually goes hand in hand with another form of conceptualization where anger is seen as “fluid in a container”. Hence, the examples (1) and (2) above have a pattern where anger is “heat of a fluid in a container”. Such metaphorical representation consists of three major elements: the source of heat (anger), fluid (temper), and container (human body). The hotter the substance – the angrier the person. The term “substance” refers to any kind of matter within the container as it is not always fluid, as highlighted in the following examples:

3) ***Smoke** was coming out of her nose just like a furious bull*4) *He was spitting **rivets***

(5) انفجر اللاعب غضبا عندما تم استبداله

/ *Infajara al laibo gadaban inda istibdalihim* /

(Lit. Exploded the player when substituted)

Exp. The player became extremely angry when he was substituted

(6) ان تصب جام غضبك على الحكم تصرف غير محترف

/ *An tasoba gadabak ala al haqam tsarofon gayro laik* /

(Lit. to pour your anger on the referee is unprofessional)

Exp. It is unethical to behave in an angry way with the referee.

In the above metaphorical expressions (3-6), different substances were used to describe anger. In the English example (3), smoke refers to the kind of gas that results from burning concrete. This conceptualization infers that intense pressure will produce steam. In Arabic (6), anger is conceptualized as a fluid that comes outside the container when anger rises. One may entail that such liquid or fluid has a destructive nature, like magma or acid.

The relationship between the substance and the container is used to describe the state of the angry person. In the English example (4), “rivets” refer to small metal pins that hold metal plates together. The plates represent someone’s nerves or temper, while anger is seen as a kind of “pressure on the container” that causes the rivets to explode, i.e. the person loses control over his anger. The same conceptualization is found in the Arabic expression (5) where such pressure causes an explosion.

5.2. Anger is Fire

Moving on beyond the notion of contained and container, sometimes the feeling of anger is conceptualized as “fire”. This type of metaphor depicts anger as having the features of a burning fire that ignites within the angry person’s internal organs. Such conceptualization is found in both English and Arabic, as highlighted in the examples below:

7) *They left him **burning** inside, after their offensive comments*8) *Your attitude is just adding **fuel** to fire*

(9) استفزاز الشرطة تسبب في اشعال المتظاهرين

/ *Istifzaz ašorta tasababa fi išaali al motadahirin* /

(Lit. Provocation the police caused flaming the protesters)

Exp. The provocations of the police made the protestors angry

(10) كان الغضب يستعر في داخله

/ *Kana al gadabo ystairo fi daxilihi* /

(Lit. Was the anger burning inside him)

Exp. The anger was burning inside him.

The highlighted elements in the examples above (7-10), such as “burn”, “fuel”, and “light” belong to the same lexical field of “fire”. In the English example (7), anger is depicted as an actual fire being lit within the internal organs of the angry person. The term “burning” denotes that the person is being consumed by anger just like concrete materials such as coal or wood can be consumed by fire. Arabic metaphors similarly depict anger as fire as in example (10) where the term “ystairo” was used to denote an aggressive form of burning. Furthermore, both English and Arabic position the burning process as occurring within internal parts of the human body, namely the chest and the heart.

Sometimes the notion of “anger as fire” is delivered differently. For instance, in the English example (8), anger is explicitly referred to as “burning fire”, and the process of agitation is conceptualized as “adding fuel to the fire”. The same image can be found in Arabic (9) but with different representation where the concept of agitation is captured by verb “išaali=ignite”, which metonymically refers to fire. In this situation, the protestors are seen as “fuel” and the police’s reaction as “fire”; combining the two would result in protestors being “lit” i.e. becoming angrier. Besides “anger is heat”, there is another conceptualization where anger is seen as insanity.

5.3. Anger is Insanity

This type of conceptualization draws a picture where anger is seen as responsible for making an angry person behave in a specific unusual way. In order to understand how such types of metaphors operate, consider the following examples:

11) *When he heard he was fired; he just went crazy*

12) *She just went nuts when she heard the news*

13) *When the police came, he went out of his mind*

(14) جن جنون المرسل لما أرادوا اعتقاله

/ *Djana djonono al morasili lama arado iitikalaho* /

(Lit. Went crazy the reporter when tried they to arrest him)

Exp. The reporter went crazy as the police tried to arrest him

(15) اقضاء الفريق في بداية المنافسة أفقد الجمهور صوبه

/ *Iksao al fariq fi bidayat al monafasa afqada al jomhora sawabaho* /

(Lit. Having disqualified the team in early competition made the supporters go wild)

Exp. When the team was eliminated, the supporters lost their mind.

The above expressions in both English and Arabic (11-15) are examples of metaphorical expressions denoting angry people as insane. In the English examples (11-13), we have three keywords: “crazy”, “nuts”, and “out of his mind”. These words explicitly denote that the person went from a normal to an uncontrollable mental state. The conceptualization of anger as insanity is also found in Arabic. The Arabic verb “djana” in example 14 means “went crazy”, and depicts the shift

from the natural into an aggressive or insane mental state. Similarly, the expression “fkada sawaba-ho” in (15), which is equivalent to “lost his mind” in English, entails the same idea of insanity.

Often the insanity of an angry person is mentioned directly; however, the exact representation is captured by referring to another metaphorical pattern in the sense that “insane behavior stands for anger”. Such expressions involve describing “insanity” by referring to certain aggressive behaviors. To have a better picture, consider the following examples:

16) *He **banged his head** against the table when they missed the chance*

17) *The children’s savage behaviour got the teacher **pulling his hair out**.*

(18) كان يعض على لسانه من الغيض

/ *Kana yaoudo ala lisanih mina al gayd* /

(Lit. Was biting his tongue from rage)

Exp. He was biting his tongue from rage

(19) استشاط اللاعب غضبا عند طرده

/ *istashata al laibo ghadaban lama torida* /

(Lit. Went into rage the player when took him out the referee)

Exp. The player went into rage when he was sent off.

Even though the conceptualization of insane behavior is present in both English and Arabic, the difference is seen only in the type of behavior. While in English we find expressions like “banging one’s head” or “pulling one’s hair”, in Arabic we have “biting one’s tongue”. In the Arabic example (19), we have the term “istashata”, the equivalent of the English verbal form “agitated”. This verb has a kind of animalistic connotation where the angry person resembles an agitated animal, such as a bull. This leads us to conclude that anger is seen as the source or cause of insanity, which surfaces as abnormal behavior.

5.4. Anger is the Opponent

In this type of metaphorical conceptualization, anger is given characteristics of a human being. In fact, anger is depicted as an adversary that people struggle with. Such conceptualization is found in both English and Arabic, as shown below:

20) *She is **struggling** with anger.*

21) *You need to **subdue** your anger.*

22) *Rage **took over** him*

(23) رغم انه حاول جاهدا الا ان الغضب نال منه في النهاية

/ *Rogma anho hawal jahidan ila ana al gadaba nal minho f nihaya* /

(Lit. Despite he tried anger finally conquered him)

Exp. Despite his efforts to control himself, anger won in the end.

(24) لم يستطع التغلب على غضبه

/ *Lam yastaie atagaloba ala gdabih* /

(Lit. Could not he beat his anger)

Exp. He could not overcome his anger

(25) لقد استسلم لغضبه في هذه المرحلة

/ *Lakad istaslama li gadabih fi hadih al marhala* /

(Lit. Surrendered he to his anger at this stage)

Exp. He surrendered to his anger at this stage.

In the English examples above (20-22), verbs like “struggle” and “subdue” entail that there are two people involved in a kind of battle. Anger is depicted as an adversary trying to dominate the actual person. Similarly, the same conceptualization is present in Arabic as in examples (23-25). The verbs “istaslama” (surrender) and “nal” (won) draw the same picture, in which anger is seen as an opponent we are struggling with. In such a conflict, each party tries its best to conquer the other. If anger is victorious, it means that the person will lose control, which may lead to dire consequences.

5.5. Anger is a Burden

In this type of metaphorical representation, anger is depicted as a heavy overload that is placed on the angry person. The removal of such a charge will lead to liberation from the feelings of anger. Such conceptualization is found in both English and Arabic, as in the examples below:

26) He was *relieved* to let his anger out

27) He *carries* his anger around with him

(28) أحس بارتياح لما نفّس عن غضبه

/ Ahasa birtiyah lama nafasa an gadabih /

(Lit. Felt good when releasing his anger)

Exp. He felt relieved after he expressed his anger.

In the English example (27), the verb “carry” entails that anger is seen as a load. This load has an enormous weight as reflected in example (26). When a person lets loose of something heavy, he/she will feel much lighter and relieved. In example (28), the notion of “irtiyah” (relief) suggests that the same image of “anger as a burden” is also found in Arabic. Note that there were no other expressions denoting such pattern in the collected Arabic expressions.

5.6. Anger is a Captive Animal

In this conceptualization, anger is depicted as an animal that stirs aggressive behavior within the angry person. In this pattern, the irrationality of the angry person is somehow linked to animal instinct-based behavior. Such conceptualization is highlighted in the examples below:

29) Beware of awakening the *monster* within him

30) She *unleashed* her anger on her boyfriend

31) One can notice his *fierce* mood

(32) كشر عن أنيابه

/ qašra an aniyabih /

(Lit. Showed his teeth)

Exp. He was fed up to the back teeth.

(33) كاد ينقض عليه

/ qada ynkado alaiyhi /

(Lit. Almost jumped on him)

Exp. He almost pounced on him

(34) الغضب كلب ان أفلت اتلف

/ Al gadabo qalb inoflita atlaf /

(Lit. Anger is a dog when released it will do damage)

Exp. Anger is just like a mad dog if unleashed it will cause harm.

In the examples above (29-34), we notice that both English and Arabic conceptualize anger as a captive animal. The representation of anger as an animal is reflected in the use of different terminology. Sometimes the notion of animal is explicitly denoted, as in “monster” (29) and “dog” (34), while in other cases it is often mentioned implicitly. For instance, English expressions “un-leash” and “fierce” usually collocate with aggressive animals. In the Arabic example (32), the verb “qašra” means “to make an aggressive grimace in which you show your teeth”. This verb is restricted to animals, such as dogs and tigers. Similarly, in example (33) the verb “yankado” means “to pounce”, which is a feature of an animal.

5.7. Anger is a Natural Force

In this conceptualization, anger is depicted as a natural force with destructive power. Such metaphorical representation often involves referring to different types of natural phenomena, as shown in the examples below:

(35) *They had a **stormy** debate*

(36) *He **erupted** when he heard the news*

(37) عصف به الغضب ققام بضربها

/ *Asfa bih al gadabo fa qama bi darbiha* /

(Lit. Anger blew him violently so that he hit her)

Exp. He became so angry that he hit her

(38) انفجر بركانه

/ *Infajara borkanoho* /

(Lit. His volcano erupted)

Exp. He exploded angry just as a volcano does.

(39) أصبح يردد غضبا

/ *Asbaha yariado gadaban* /

(Lit. His voice thunders from anger)

Exp. He raised his voice so high from anger

In the English example (36), the verb “erupt” connotatively entails that the person is depicted as a volcano. Similarly, in Arabic, anger is represented as different natural phenomena. In example 37, the verb “asafa” (blew) suggests that anger is a strong wind. In example 38, anger is seen as a volcano that explodes (“infajara”). In the last example (39), anger is seen as thunder heard in the angry person’s loud voice. Note that the conceptualization of anger as a natural force is more conventional in Arabic than in English.

6. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the collected Modern Standard Arabic and English metaphorical expressions revealed that both languages have some similarities and differences in the conceptualization of anger. The results indicate that general patterns such as “anger is heat/ insanity/opponent/burden/ animal” are widely shared. This similarity can be traced back to the notion of experience. Since all human beings go through the same phases while growing up, they would develop approximately the same level of experience. As figurative language is rooted within the notion of experience, according to Lakoff and Johnson [1980], potential similarity across languages is very high, i.e. the

universality of figurative language. Our findings, thus, provide further support for the claim that some conceptual metaphors are universal [Kovecses, 2005; Lakoff, 1987].

Our findings also highlight some differences as specific patterns were noticed to be more dominant or absent in one language than in the other. For instance, “anger is insanity” seems to exist in both MSA and English, but the type of behavior differs significantly. This difference can be traced back to the richness of the MSA language since it has more vocabulary to describe the status of the angry person than English. “Anger as a natural force”, on the other hand, is the main conceptual pattern that was found to be significantly different. This pattern was noticed to be more conventional in Arabic than in English. This can be explained by referring to the influence of cultural thinking. Arabs seem to be more concerned about their culture and nature, including the weather, which is reflected in their use of language. Such finding further supports the claim proposed by Boas [1986], which states that language is molded by culture.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since Arabic does not have special references dedicated to idioms, proverbs, or metaphors, there was a need to rely on the corpus. One of the limitations of this study is that the corpus used is relatively small, compared to the data available for English. Another significant limitation is traced back to the data collection method. Collecting comments from social media is time-consuming and sometimes inaccurate due to the language used (different varieties of Arabic). This obliged the researcher to provide an equivalent for every expression in standard Arabic to serve the purpose of this study. It would be more suitable for researchers to join forces and create a kind of online corpus for Arabic metaphorical expressions. This latter would make it easier for other scholars to investigate different phenomena on similar topics.

8. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the metaphorical conceptualization of anger in English and Arabic. Despite the linguistic and cultural differences between the two languages, the results indicate that both languages may indeed represent emotions metaphorically. This confirms Lakoff’s claim that “once people start talking about abstractions or emotions, metaphorical understanding is the norm” [Lakoff, 1987]. This metaphorical device makes it easier for people to understand each other and talk about their emotions in a way that makes them draw images.

Data analysis revealed that English and Arabic, on many occasions, conceptualize anger similarly. However, variations still occur due to the differences in language genius and culture. Since the two languages belong to distant families and have contrasting systems (vocabulary repertoire), differences in the representation of the same concept are inevitable. Furthermore, culture proved to influence how each language represents a certain feeling.

Due to the lack of research on the conceptualization of feelings in Arabic, this study can be seen as a moderate addition to the existing literature. Since Arabic is a rich language, Arab scholars can study such topics from different perspectives for more extensive and profound research.

Conflict of interest

The author declares there is no conflict of interest.

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