

Facing Fear: A Corpus-based Approach to Fear Metaphors in English and Lithuanian

Žvelgiant baimei į akis: anglų ir lietuvių kalbų tekstynuose esančių baimės metaforų analizė

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojama kultūrinio lietuvių ir anglų pasaulio suvokimo ir mentaliteto įtaka *baimės* konceptualiosioms metaforoms. Remiantis anglų ir lietuvių kalbų tekstynais (*the British National Corpus* ir *Donelaitis*) sudaromos *baimės* konceptualiosios metaforos. Jų analizė rodo, kad metaforos kalbose ne vien nusako fizinius pojūčius ir patirtį, bet atskleidžia kultūros įtaką abstraktaus mąstymo struktūroms. Anglų ir lietuvių kalbų kolokacijų analizė leidžia pastebėti tiek universalias *baimės* konceptualiąsias metaforas, tiek subtilius kultūrinius šio koncepto ištakų skirtumus. Šie skirtumai iliustruojami remiantis viena *baimės* konceptuoliąja metafora BAIMĖ YRA BŪTYBĖ.

Išsami šios konceptualiosios metaforos analizė rodo, kad fiziniai pojūčiai, kalba, aplinka bei gyvenimo būdas įtakoja mūsų kognityvines struktūras ir tiesiogiai dalyvauja konceptualizacijos procese. Metaforiniai posakiai gimsta ir funkcionuoja kalbančiojo ir klausančiojo pasaulio suvokimo ribose. Kadangi lietuvių kalboje, skirtingai nei anglų kalboje, yra daug metaforinių posakių, siejamų su reiškiniais ir procesais vykstančiais gamtoje, daroma išvada, kad istoriškai susiklostęs gyvenimo būdas ir aplinka įtakoja skirtingą lietuvių ir anglų pasaulio suvokimą, kuris atsispindi skirtingai apibūdinamose baimės metaforų ištakose.

Prasminiai žodžiai: *emocijos, baimė, kultūra, konceptualioji metafora.*

Summary

The study focuses on how cultural patterns of thought or world views shape the conceptual metaphors of fear in English and Lithuanian. The analysis is based on corpus data of English and Lithuanian (*the British National Corpus* and *Donelaitis*), hence, it may represent the conventional patterns of thought in both the languages. The research of conceptual metaphors of fear in English and Lithuanian suggests that metaphorical expressions are more than registers of physical experience – they are also directed by cultural models of thought. A corpus-based study presents universal and language specific metaphors of fear in English and Lithuanian. The descriptive results have been illustrated by the conceptual metaphor FEAR IS A BEING.

A thorough analysis of the metaphorical labelling of the same source domains in English and Lithuanian assumes that our way of life affects deep structures of our cognitive system and plays an important role in the process of conceptualisation. Many metaphorical expressions function within the speaker's and the listener's background knowledge of the environment and derive historically from the cultural experience of a language community. Hence, Lithuanian makes the attributes of source domains related to nature more salient than English does.

Key words: *emotions, fear, cross-cultural, conceptual metaphors.*

Introduction

Language places structure on emotional consciousness. This structure is revealed through the analysis of metaphor, metonymy, and other qualities of emotion language. Since human bodies have obvious universal properties and functions, the approach of Lakoff & Kövecses predicts universalities in emotion concepts and emotional language (Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987).

Lakoff (1987) suggests that the figurative language of a community might be seen as a reflection of that community's conventional patterns of thought or world views. The suggestion should be supported from the perspectives of cross-linguistic studies of large naturalistic data. However, "this area of study has remained almost uncultivated" (Yu, 1995: 60) in Lithuanian. A case

study of how Lithuanians and English think and speak about fear may shade the light on cross-cultural similarities and differences in ways of thinking and speaking. It also reveals which speakers' choices of fear metaphors are governed by the universal physical experience and which of them are governed by the cultural model.

We will briefly discuss the general organization of fear-related expressions in English and Lithuanian, and then focus attention on some cultural differences on the basis of one conceptual metaphor FEAR IS A BEING. The analysis is based on corpus data of English and Lithuanian, hence, it may represent the conventional patterns of thought in both the languages.

Methods

The cross-linguistic analysis of the concept of *fear* is based on the conceptual metaphor theory adopted by Lakoff (1987), and a practical analysis on the basis of conceptual metaphor suggested by Kövecses (Lakoff, 1987; Kövecses, 2002). As G. Lakoff argues metaphor is not just a way of naming, but also a way of thinking. On this view, "a metaphor is a process by which we understand and structure one domain of experience in terms of another domain of a different kind" (Johnson, 1987: 15). Hence, the study of metaphor reveals cognition in general.

The data has been taken from the *British National Corpus (BNC)* and from the Lithuanian online corpus *Donelaitis*, with an amount of about 100 million word collections of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide cross-section of current British English and Lithuanian. All the examples contain the lexeme *fear* for English and *baimė* for Lithuanian to avoid any ambiguity and various possible interpretations of the emotion. In order to reveal the source domain and conceptual metaphors of the concept of fear not all the samples with the

words naming the emotion have been taken, but only these, which define them. The defining words and phrases express the reason, location, agitation, and consequences or modify an emotional state itself. In the examples they are printed in italics (e.g. Some of his drinking was an attempt to *dampen that fear*). The meanings of the defining words have been checked up in *Oxford English Dictionary* (www.oed.com) and *Lietuvių Kalbos Žodynas* (www.lkz.lt). Their primary or literal meanings related to the physical world have been the basis for structuring source domains.

It is the source domains that let us group linguistic expressions and form conceptual metaphors, which have been printed in capital letters (for instance, FEAR IS A BEING). The conceptual metaphors reveal how the concept is treated by the language community, how it is realised and finally, they trace back to the cultural worldview. Hence, conceptual metaphors present the cognitive process, where physical phenomena and physical experiences – source domains – are mapped to the abstract notion of fear – the target domain.

Fear metaphors

The concept of fear is motivated by the human body and produced by a particular social and cultural environment. The concept represents a blend of experiences originating in both the spheres. In his theory of conceptual metaphors, George Lakoff argued that bodily experience is universal, and therefore probably results in basic level metaphors

that are widely shared by humans in different times and places (Lakoff, 1987). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued that everyday metaphors are not just linguistic, but conceptual in nature and can actually create social, cultural, and psychological realities for us. Gibbs (1999) suggests that we cannot "talk about, or study, cognition apart from our specific

embodied interactions with the cultural world” (Gibbs, 1999: 153). He believes that what we see as meaningful in the physical world is highly constrained by our cultural beliefs and values.

“Our folk view of knowledge as being absolute comes from the same source as our folk view that truth is absolute, which is the folk theory that there is only one way to understand situation. When that folk theory fails, and we have multiple ways of understanding, or “framing”, a situation, then knowledge, like truth, becomes relative to understanding” (Lakoff, 1987: 300). Thus, the abstract concept *fear* is structured by multiple ways of understanding and its mappings cover a wide range of human knowledge and experience. The multiple sources of fear in English and Lithuanian indicate that both language communities exhibit relationship between different notions. The cross-linguistic study let us construct the following conceptual metaphors of fear that derive from different source domains (all the examples have been taken from the *BNC* and *Donelaitis*, not edited):

1. FEAR IS AN OPPONENT

1.1. – Dread, yes, - he replied, - *but fear can be defeated*.

1.2. Baltarusijos piliečiai *nugalėjo baimę* ir atėjo į rinkimus.

2. FEAR IS COLD

2.1. Dot felt herself *freeze with fear*.

2.2. Pamaniau, kad tu *pastaręs tik iš baimės*.

3. FEAR IS A BEING

3.1. My sadness over and *fear* for Jordi *would not go away*.

3.2. Tai viena didžiausių blogybių, *gimstančių iš baimės*.

4. FEAR IS OBJECT / SEED

4.1. *A sour, thick fear* eddied in his throat.

4.2. Atrodo, lyg kažkas tyčia *sėtų baimę* ir nepasitikėjimą tarp žmonių.

5. FEAR IS DISEASE

5.1. Another *epidemic of fear* which McCarthy triggered off was book-burning.

5.2. Kiti meistrai *nuo valdiško darbo baimės gydėsi* įprastu būdu – gurkštelėdami per pietus, per vakarienę, vėliau ir po pusryčių.

6. FEAR IS LIQUID

6.1. No, what I want to know is whether the US is *gripped by a wave of fear* of the Japanese.

6.2. Tai yra naivuolių gąsdinimas tariamu baubu, tikrojo *baimės šaltinio dangstymas*.

7. FEAR IS A CONSTRUCTION

7.1. People are actually forced to do so *by the well-founded fear* of persecution.

7.2. M.Laurinkus pirmiausia patikino, kad žmonių *baimė* rašyti komentarus apie jį *nepagrįsta*.

8. FEAR IS ATMOSPHERE

8.1. Kai bankui pradėjo vadovauti R.Visokavičius, įsivyravo *baimės* ir pataikavimo *atmosfera*.

9. FEAR IS ENERGIZER

9.1. *Fear makes* a horse *run from danger*.

9.2. Meluoti *skatino baimę*.

10. FEAR IS A DRAG

10.1. She said *fear prevented* her escaping.

10.2. Iki šiol taip pasielgti generaliniam prokurorui *trukdė baimė*.

11. FEAR IS A CONTAINER

11.1. They turned the lights out and sat *in fear*.

From the examples above (1 – 11) we can see, that most of the conceptual metaphors are universal. Both English and Lithuanian share the same sources for fear conceptualisation: OPPONENT, COLD, BEING, DISEASE, LIQUID, CONSTRUCTION, ENERGIZER and DRAG.

There is a striking difference in productivity between English and Lithuanian. It is performed by the COLD metaphor – the ratio is 8 to 143. In Lithuanian *cold* is a highly productive source domain and constructs the most common metaphorical labelling in the language. In English the COLD metaphors represent one of the minor groups of verbal manifestations (8 samples) through forming such idiom as *get/have cold feet* (for the absence of the lexical item of *fear* such idiomatic expressions have not been analysed). The high level of the COLD metaphor suggests this pattern of conceptualisation to be typical for Lithuanian. Hence, we may suppose that a great number of figurative expressions underlying this pattern refer to the emotion of fear even in the absence of the naming word of *fear*; *horror*; etc., for example, *Šiurpas perbėgo nugara*; Generalinėje prokuratūroje kai kam *sudrebėjo kinkos*.

Another remarkable difference is in the case of the OBJECT/SEED metaphors (4). Even though these metaphors are grouped under the same item of an OBJECT/SEED, the corpus analysis differentiates the source domains – a source of an object in general is applied in English conceptualisation of fear (no the SEED source mappings), whereas in Lithuanian the source domain refers definitely to seed with its entailments from the flora world (e.g. *baimės šaknys, vaisiai*). Thus, we may assume that in English the conceptual metaphor FEAR IS AN OBJECT is used (4.1), whereas in Lithuanian the FEAR IS SEED metaphor is applied (4.2).

Lithuanian shares with English all the conceptual metaphors of fear. It also applies one language specific metaphor FEAR IS ATMOSPHERE (8), which is not used in English. This metaphor also implies container aspect as well as some other Lithuanian conceptual metaphors, e.g. FEAR IS AN OPPONENT and FEAR IS A BEING (e.g. *baimės atmosferoje, baimės nelaisvėje, baimės gniaužtuose*), whereas in English the FEAR IS A CONTAINER metaphor may be singled out as a definite conceptual metaphor of fear as in (11). In Lithuanian the ATMOSPHERE metaphor is one of the minor metaphorical labelling as most of the others exhibit a higher productivity rate. Despite this, it is nearly of the same frequency as many other English conventional figurative expressions of fear. In this context the FEAR IS ATMOSPHERE metaphor cannot be treated as a rare case of the non-literal use of the language.

In conclusion, both English and Lithuanian apply the same cross-domain mappings and culture seems to play a small part in selecting the source domains for the target domain of fear. However, the corpus-based analysis of the conceptual metaphors of fear in both languages lets us suppose that “different cultures hold different folk beliefs about attributes of the source domains” (Deignan, 2003: 256). For example, different connection between a part of the body and fear lets us expect which part of the body or physiological response stands for fear; a particular description of the source domain of an animal explains folk beliefs about animals and the relation between people and their cultural environment.

For the purposes of illustration of cross-cultural differences in the deeper structure of conceptualisation, we will analyse one of the universal conceptual metaphors of fear – FEAR IS A BEING.

Fear is a Being

The BEING metaphor in English and in Lithuanian is one of the major metaphors for the concept of fear. The corpus data suggest that it may be also considered as one of the most interesting ones, because it transfers certain human and animal features to the abstract concept of emotion. In both languages figurative realizations of *fear* are generally rich in connotations and have a particular evaluation associated with them. Moon argues that certain schemas show realizations that underlie “cultural stereotypes, or stereotyped situations, where evaluations, connotations, and images are givens, constrained by contextual ideology” (Moon, 1998: 165). This seems to be true of metaphorical expressions, which are grounded on the source domain of *a being*. The data do not specify what kind of being is implied – an animal, a bird or some other, as there is no definite attributive expressions that would indicate which features are specific to a certain group of living organisms. Therefore a neutral term of *being* has been chosen for this particular source domain. However, *fear* goes through many stages of life and behaves as any living thing.

The corpus samples illustrate how the deeper realizations of metaphorical expressions derive from a tendency toward a fixed schema of folk beliefs about any living creature. The tendency to draw on a living thing as a source domain the human behaviour pattern characterizes fear in terms of: 1)

events of life, 2) descriptions of physical appearance, and 3) certain behaviour.

Thus, in English fear passes through all stages of life of a living thing: it can *grow* (And, as the Soviet Union deteriorates in other ways, the *fear* and cynicism *grow stronger*), it can get old (He shuffled the pages again, trying to control the new panic or the *old fear*) and it is naturally *mortal* (These people were *in mortal fear* of being returned to their homes). Furthermore, it has also the gender – masculine or feminine (So we begin to understand *the masculine fear* in the early modern period). In some cases, fear can be *childish* (The Doctor who came to see the poor Doc [...] said that every neurotic case went back to the *childish fear* of the father), which is an allusion to childish behaviour and psychical characteristics of people during that period of life.

As any living being *fear* has its physical appearance. The description of fear is rather contradictory – it is defined as either *blind* (What *blind fear* in snow-chaos!) or, in contrast, it *has many eyes* (*Fear has many eyes*, and can see things underground). In order to be more precise in fear profiling, we will explain what the word *many* implies. “The evidence from neuroscience, child development, and animal research indicates that we (and certain other animals) have evolved with a part of our brain dedicated to enumeration and simple arithmetic up to a small number of objects (around four)” (Lakoff, 1999: 13) Hence, the expression of

many eyes in English means that fear has 5 eyes or more. Logically, fear has a face (You need have no *fear facing* the world). The allusion to people is also implied in the expressions of “dressed” fear in English, where fear is wearing a straitjacket and uses it to imprison people (I spent that night *in a straitjacket of fear*). The data presuppose, that fear has legs, because it can walk: *fear came, was met* as in (But when he was in this mood, *fear came*). Finally, the physical appearance profiling may be completed in the colour of *fear*. There is very little indication about the colour of this emotion in English. Actually, the corpus data define the concept of fear only in the way of being *dark* without any definite naming or explanation of the colour. Hence, we may just hypothesize that the concept of fear in English is some variation of black colour (e.g. When he got exhausted from parish work, and felt unwell, *a fear would darken* him).

Fig. 1 visually presents the profiling of fear, which is suggested by the metaphorical expressions in English.



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Figure 1. FEAR IS A BEING in English¹.

The corpus data suggest that fear lives apart from people in some lands or places (Arctic travel was a miserable journey into *a land of cold and fear*), and it can *come* (But when he was in this mood, *fear came*), *go away* (*Fear for Jordi would not go away*) or it can *be met* (She *met a fear* so great that it burned away forever all the other fears). Thus, *the*

human body is not a container for the emotion of fear in this pattern of conceptualisation.

Finally, fear has certain features of character and behaviour. The description of *walking* fear is not all that we know about it. Fear may also *scream* at people (His *fear screamed at him* to bolt, but he forced his mind into action), breed something or, on the opposite, it can be bred (Love *breeds fear*; and *fear breeds* hatred). Fear *seats* somewhere (Both the people of West Germany and its central bank, the Bundesbank, had a *deep-seated fear* of inflation) when it *visits* (This fear of the mob has *continued to haunt* the executive). But it sometimes *lurks* (But *fear lurks* beneath the surface and is beginning to paralyse normal life). Like people or animals, fear can be *neurotic* (All of these bands explicitly indicate parochialism and *neurotic fear* of major label compromise).

Apparently, Lithuanian observes the same principles of A BEING, since similar expressions are found in everyday use. Both animal and human features are present in Lithuanian.

The Lithuanian data indicate that metaphorical expressions for the emotion of fear are similar between the two languages. Fear is defined in terms of a living thing. It has overcome all human periods of life from birth to death. Some examples show, however, that cultural models do enter and influence the selection of linguistic expressions. The English example focuses on death (*mortal fear*), but Lithuanian one selects birth (Tai viena didžiausių blogybių, *gimstančių iš baimės*). Furthermore, a descriptive difference exists between English linguistic expressions where fear *comes, goes away* and *meets* people, and Lithuanian metaphors where fear *flies* (*Baimė tebesklando*) and *worms* (Viduje jis jautė *tebešliaužiojančią baimę*) – the behavior that is definitely characteristic of living things with no legs. Animal features are supported by figurative expressions, where fear is defined as a rodent, which gnaws people’s hearts (*Baimė graužė jo širdį*) – physical annoyance, and has tentacles and *grips* (Tačiau bioteroro *baimė savo čiuptuvų neatleidžia*).

Thus, in Lithuanian the BEING profiling is the following: it is a reptile with large eyes, tentacles and wings; it worms into people and gnaws them. Furthermore, the Lithuanian BEING source domain, in contrast to English general consideration of being dark, is described as being definitely black (Šitiek manyje prisikaupė deginančio troškimo ir

¹ Illustrated by Rūta Sirvydė according to the description of metaphorical expressions in English.

juodos baimės). The colour mapping is in a way independent from the BEING metaphor and is mostly associated with a negative attitude attached to this colour. In many cases it is expressed not only by the lexeme *black*, but also by *a shadow*, which is associated with dark/black colour and a vague shape. However, it does not violate the figurative principle in which the source domain of a living being appears and, hence, it supports the BEING profiling by supplementary information of black colour and having *a shade*. The Lithuanian metaphor FEAR IS SEED provides some information about a small size of the source domain. In (Fig. 2) we can see the visual representation of fear in Lithuanian according to the description cited above. It shows us Lithuanian folk labelling of fear expressed in the language.

(Fig. 1) and (Fig. 2) show us what a remarkable difference is under the surface structure of the same BEING source domain in both English and Lithuanian. In Lithuanian conventional linguistic expressions, fear has *large eyes*, whereas in English fear possesses *many eyes*. Besides, in common Lithuanian metaphorical expressions fear may be *driven* into a person (*Daug baimės įvarė 1946 m. sausio mėn. 167 baltiečių pabėgėlių perdavimas sovietams Švedijoje*). In the Lithuanian figurative language, where people can overcome, hunt away, tame, drive away, evict, banish, or get rid of fear (*nugalėti, išguiti, sutramdyti, išvaryti, ginti, išvyti baimę, atsikratyti baimės*), focuses on hostile and adverse nature of the emotion of fear in contrast to English fear conceptualisation, where fear independently *comes* and *goes away* and is never driven.



Figure 2. FEAR IS A BEING in Lithuanian.²

It needs to be noted that, although most of the Lithuanian BEING sources are based on animal features, some of them are characteristic of human beings, too. We can see rather neutral expressions typical to all living beings, when they grow or can be woken up (*Jis dažnai vaikščioja į kapines, pasiramstydamas į antkapius ir bandydamas prižadinti baimę*). However, some figurative expressions where fear can *dictate* (*Tokia "romantika" yra diktuojama baimės suartėti su vyru*) are an obvious example of transferring human features to other living beings or even abstract concepts, as it is human idiosyncrasy to be able to tell someone to write down what is said.

A remarkable difference between English and Lithuanian the BEING metaphors is that Lithuanian applies an entailment of COMPANION, which is not employed in English, for example, *Kiekvieną dieną apie privatizavimą lydi baimė – jau reikės už paslaugas mokėti*. This kind of conceptualisation is Lithuanian specific and forms a rather conventional group of metaphors. The lexical expression of *lydi* ('accompanies') places emphasis on time span of the emotion and natural human behaviour under the effect of the emotion of fear. Fear in such cases is not intensive, though always present. It does not make people perform radical behavioural acts, but it affects their minds and worldviews.

In summary, both English and Lithuanian use the universal conceptual metaphor FEAR IS A BEING. In both languages it is one of the most conventional metaphors that characterize the emotion of fear in terms of living things. The English version is "more humane" as there are no direct links to the world of animals, insects, or birds. On the contrary, Lithuanian version of *fear* is more definite and precise, and its figurative use has direct allusions to animals, birds and human beings. In other words, the Lithuanian fear profiling is closer to natural environment, while the English version is limited to personification of human features. This may prompt about different social origin of the conceptual metaphor in both languages. Lithuanian conceptualisation might be affected by people's experience living in the countryside, while English way of mapping describes the urban way of life and social experience. And though both languages share the same conceptual metaphor, they differ in details across the languages reflecting different folk beliefs about the target domain of fear.

¹ Illustrated by Rūta Sirvydė according to the metaphorical expressions in Lithuanian.

The universal metaphorical structures are also cultural in origin and are closely related to the way of life the communities lead. A thorough analysis of the metaphorical labelling of the same source domain in English and Lithuanian indicates that our way of life affects the deep structures of our cognitive system and plays an important role in the process of conceptualisation. We speak about abstract (invisible) things in terms of things and phenomena we know best of all, and we expect others to know them well, too. We describe our emotions in such a way that our listeners could understand us. Hence, we speak within the limits of our and the listeners' understanding.

Members of the same culture share the similar worldview on the background of common language, environment, history and the way of life. This accounts for that great number of allusions to different aspects of agricultural way of life (animal behaviour, growth of plants, natural phenomena), which is led by Lithuanians and explains why such figurative descriptions are absent in English, as the

English cultural community has led a city way of life for a historically long period of time. This also illustrates the folk beliefs or the worldview of different cultures with Lithuanians relating people to animals and treating themselves as a constituent part of nature.

Essentially, some emotion language is universal and metonymically related to experience of the physiological functioning of the body. However, the numerous and "important differences in emotional linguistic expression can be explained by differences in cultural knowledge and pragmatic discourse functions that work according to divergent culturally defined rules or scenarios" (Kövecses, Palmer and Dirven, 2003: 135). The emotional concepts are both motivated by the human body and produced by a particular social and cultural environment. They represent a blend of experiences originating in both these spheres. The thorough analysis of large emotional corpora allows us to see the points where cultural interests contradict or suppress innate tendencies of expression.

Conclusions

- Both language communities associate fear with their own physical experience and things from their environment. The research has shown that metaphorical expressions are more than registers of physical experience – they also have conceptual structure.
- English and Lithuanian share most of the conceptual metaphors of fear.
- A number of examples of cross-cultural differences suggest that, though metaphorical

patterning of the concept of fear is universal, it holds different folk beliefs about attributes of the source domains.

- Many metaphorical expressions derive historically from the cultural experience of a language community. They function within the speaker's and the listener's background knowledge of the environment. Hence, Lithuanian makes the attributes of source domains related to nature more salient than English does.

Sources

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