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Introduction

While the occurrence of death is universal, the experience of death is cultural in a specific time and place. It is a physical event with deep ramifications for our mental and social understanding. Death together with Birth provide the defining end points of how we look at our lives, and the purposes and values we create from the experiences about them. At Birth we take our first breaths, open our eyes and let out cries; at Death our eyes are closed, we stop breathing and become cold to all life forces.

To understand how our ideas are shaped by the experience of Death and Dying we need to look beyond the surface language of vocabulary and grammar to see what underlying conceptual patterns may be the foundation for our communication and understanding. Joseph Campbell (1988:61) has argued that “Our thinking today is largely discursive, verbal, linear. There is (however) more reality in an image than in a word.” He quotes Goethe (p.230) as saying “All things are metaphors”, that is, everything that’s transitory is but a metaphorical reference. The depth and power of metaphoric patterning of our conceptualization has been a focal point of research in Cognitive Linguistics in recent decades. George Lakoff, et al. (Lakoff 1980, 1987, Gibbs 1994, Goatly 1997) have shown the depth of the cognitive roles of metaphor in all our communication. This study, a part of the larger project on the conceptualization of Death and Dying in contemporary English and Japanese, also will follow the Lakoffian analytical approach and in particular utilize some general semantic categories to do so. See the previous chapters 4 and 5 of this volume.

To analyze and compare the English and Japanese conceptualization patterns in contemporary discourses on Death and Dying a data base of comparable English and Japanese discourses on Death and Dying was built up from a variety of genre. While the original Lakoffian conceptual metaphoric patterns were initially used, some adaptation and development were necessary to make an exhaustive analysis of the data. Six schematic patterns were set up for the general project, each with several conceptual metaphoric patterns to provide frames for analyzing and making cross-cultural comparisons. See Chart 1 for detail.
(1) DEATH AS AN ACTION/EVENT,
(2) LIFE AS A CONTAINER/DEATH IS THE LOSS OF ITS CONTENT,
(3) DEATH AS AN ENTITY,
(4) DEATH/DYING AS A JOURNEY,
(5) DEATH AS A CHANGE OF STATUS,
(6) DEATH AS A TIME PERIOD.

The data sources for English included Biblical passages on Death, the psychology of religious experience, theological writing and ethics on Death, and religious culture. For Japanese, Buddhist writing on Death and Life as well as Buddhist philosophy were collated. The total number of token expressions in the data was 146 for English and 198 for Japanese. While many conceptual patterns were shared between English and Japanese, culturally preferred aspects of metaphoric patterns were notable in the religious discourse.

To illustrate the characteristics of conceptual metaphoric analysis, let us examine the official Vatican announcement in English of the death of Pope John-Paul II in 2005 which had the following key sentences:

(1) The Holy Father has returned to the house of the Father.
(2) He (John Paul II) is now where he wanted to be.
(3) The Pope is now dead.
(4) Death is our definitive passage.
(5) To face it (death) with serenity, without regret for what we leave behind.
(6) Life is a pilgrimage.
(7) Life is God’s to give and to take.

From the perspective of Contemporary Metaphor Theory (CMT) we can relate (1), (2), (4) and (6) to the conceptual metaphoric pattern of DEATH IS A JOURNEY (TO ANOTHER PLACE). However, (3) is simply a descriptive statement of an event: DEATH IS AN ACT/EVENT. (7) implies that DEATH IS AN ENTITY as Life can be given, received and taken away. No. 5 To face death also implies an ENTITY but which is potentially animate and threatening, an adversary. It is notable that only in (6) can we find an example of a literary type of metaphor. Contemporary Metaphor Theory is an analysis of the underlying metaphoric concepts found in the discourse of all types of surface language; ordinary verbs, nouns, prepositions, as well as idioms and figurative expressions must be taken into account.

These underlying patterns are known as “Conceptual Metaphors” as opposed to surface “Conventional Metaphors”. Such “conceptual metaphors” are grounded in
our essential experiences, about our bodies, space, movement as well as constructs from those experiences. They act as cognitive instruments in our thinking. (Black 1962:37) An example which Lakoff (1980:14-21) discusses is from our basic experience of orientation such as UP and DOWN from which we create patterns in our language use which give coherence to our thoughts and are grounded in our physical experience. E.g. HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN. “Drooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state.” CONSCIOUS IS UP; UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN. “Humans and most animals sleep lying down but stand up when they awaken.” (Lakoff 1980:15)

In the news sources on the death of John Paul II, the following sentences were found and are analyzed into the conceptual metaphors added in block letters.

(8) John Paul was close to death.  
DEATH IS A DESTINATION.

(9) John Paul’s life was in danger.  
DEATH IS A THREATENING ENTITY.

(10) As he lay dying, he held onto life.  
DEATH IS THE LOSS OF AN ENTITY.

(11) John Paul is like a star that has suddenly disappeared.  
LIFE IS A LIGHT SOURCE/DEATH IS ITS LOSS/DARKNESS.

(12) Our father has left us. The Pope has left us.  
DEATH IS LEAVING THE VISIBLE FIELD/ DEATH IS DEPARTURE.

(13) He passed away. The pope’s passing.  
DEATH IS LEAVING THE VISIBLE FIELD.

(14) We weep for the departure of John Paul.  
DEATH IS A JOURNEY.

(15) We have lost our father.  
DEATH IS THE LOSS OF A (PRECIOUS) ENTITY.

(16) Death is a loss to us.  
DEATH IS THE LOSS OF A (PRECIOUS) ENTITY.
(17) The world has lost a champion.
DEATH IS THE LOSS OF A (PRECIOUS) ENTITY.

(18) He slipped away.
DEATH IS A JOURNEY /DEPARTURE TO ANOTHER PLACE.

(19) The Virgin Mary welcomed him.
DEATH IS A JOURNEY TO ANOTHER PLACE.

(20) His final journey.
DEATH IS A JOURNEY.

(21) God welcomed him home. God called him home.
DEATH IS A JOURNEY.

(22) He gave up his spirit/gave up the ghost.
DEATH IS THE LOSS OF A PRECIOUS ENTITY.

(23) He faced death.
DEATH IS AN ENTITY.

To summarize the conceptual patterns which occur, we notice the concept of a JOURNEY, including departure or leaving the visible field make up half of the frames; Death as an ENTITY has seven and the metaphor of LIGHT/DARKNESS is only used once. There are also the layers of emotion (sadness and hope, fear and security) added to the basic conceptual patterns.

**Research Goals and Data**

What is notable in contemporary metaphoric research into the underlying conceptual patterns which shape our discourse is that not only overtly figurative language, such as metaphors, metonyms, similes, etc., need to be analyzed but ordinary descriptive language is also significantly shaped by the underlying concepts. In researching the underlying conceptual patterns used in the English and Japanese contemporary discourse of Death and Dying the following research goals were set:

(1) To make an analysis of conceptualization patterns in the domain of Death to examine how our concepts are shaped.
To make a comparative analysis through collating balanced blocks of data in each language.

All and every expression in the data would be analyzed into appropriate underlying conceptual patterns to make a profile of the contemporary discourse.

To shed light through the conceptual metaphoric patterns on the language-cultural perspectives which are universally shared or divergent.

The data base for each language was first begun by consulting reference works, dictionaries and thesauruses. Systematic collations, however, were made from family oriented medical works on death, counseling books on death and dying, religious writings, Christian in English and Buddhist in Japanese, including English biblical passages, psychology of religious experience, theology and ethics as well as religious essays on death, poetry, general essays and fiction.

**Analytical Issues**

While representative works were sought and a rough balance between genre types and language were striven for, a strict quantification was not possible. While cross-cultural comparison was a goal, cross-cultural comparisons could only be essentially aimed for. That is, the data was classified into patterns in the metaphoric conceptualizations similar in form and meaning, similar in form but different in meaning and divergent forms but with similar meaning. Any other expressions, that is, miscellaneous items, would become significant for noting cultural differences. (Berendt 1991: 189; 2009:80)

Etymological meanings of expressions needed to be taken into consideration. In the English verb *decease*<L. *decedere* *(de “from” + cedere “go/move”) = “to depart, go away,” we have underlying it the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE/LEAVING THE VISIBLE FIELD. Within lexical items, such embedded etymologies provided a basis for classification (Sweetser 1990).

In Japanese the iconic, logographic nature of writing kanji (Chinese characters) adds an important dimension of meaning. For example the Japanese *rai* 来 (come) - *se* 世 (world) implies DEATH IS GOING TO ANOTHER PLACE. Hiraga (2005) has examined the significant role that the visual iconic aspects of *kanji* have in Contemporary Metaphor Theory, arguing for the metaphoric nature of the icons. Thus in analyzing the Japanese data, the meaning of such iconic metaphors were included.
Another issue in analyzing the significant concepts in each sentence frame in the data is that there may be co-occurrences of multiple concepts within the sentence frame. For example, in the sentence *Father lives on in his son*, we have “live in” >CONTAINER pattern as well as >CHANGE OF STATUS of father to son, but this has embedded in it also “live on” >which implies the JOURNEY schema.

Finally the research classification of the patterns clustered into larger schemata and semantic categories. In the final analysis six general or supra semantic categories were established as necessary to analyze the data exhaustively into underlying conceptual patterns. These are ACTION/EVENT, CONTAINER, ENTITY, JOURNEY, STATUS and TIME. See Chart 1 for “Conceptual Patterns of Death”.

Each category was structured in terms of underlying conceptual metaphoric patterns with sub-categories reflecting the features of the entailments. For example in the category of ENTITY, one pattern is DEATH IS A PERSON with sub-features of being positive or friendly and negative or fearful. The pattern under ENTITY of DEATH IS LOSING AN ENTITY includes aspects of COMPENSATION FOR AN ENTITY, DESTROYING AN ENTITY, and STEALING AN ENTITY.

Under the category of STATUS a basic stance is DEATH IS DOWN or falling down compared to LIFE IS UP. DEATH IS LACK OF MOVEMENT (sleep, rest, silence). DEATH IS DISAPPEARANCE, DEATH IS FREEDOM, DEATH IS A TRANSFORMATION, DEATH IS BONDAGE are other sub-patterns occurring.

In the schema pattern of JOURNEY we could find the patterns: DEATH IS DEPARTURE (with no return), DEATH IS END OF A JOURNEY (FINAL DESTINATION), DEATH IS GOING TO ANOTHER PLACE (home, nirvana, paradise, heaven, hell), DYING IS A JOURNEY. The cross-cultural divergences in the concepts about the destination or “other place” are significantly reflected in the Christian versus the Buddhist religious discourse. These are notably contrasted to the LIFE conceptual patterns, such as LIFE IS ARRIVAL, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LIFE IS A JOURNEY WITH BURDEN or STRUGGLE.

The data analysis and conceptual patterns were also examined in terms of public and private discourse situations. Mass media, books, newspapers are regarded as a form of public communication, whereas internet bulletin board exchanges and conversations reflect a more private type of “off stage” discourse. Significant variation across discourse types and between the two languages was found. English discourse utilized more frequently the descriptive concepts of
ACTION/EVENT (45%) than Japanese (32%). Japanese had not only a greater use of figurative conceptual patterns (ENTITY 31%, JOURNEY 22%, STATUS 15%), particularly in the private discourse types, whereas in English these categories were fairly evenly distributed. The Japanese penchant for euphemism and honorific language undoubtedly contributed to this.

In the general semantic categories we can find important features shaping the conceptual patterns. ACTION/EVENT usually had time or place added, process (manner of death) and attitude (feelings) about death. The features of “freedom” and “annihilation” were also often present.

For JOURNEY the basic schema of PATH is important but END OF JOURNEY, GOING TO ANOTHER PLACE (with positive or negative features), and the DEPARTURE on the journey also are common.

ENTITY is frequently animated (that is, a process of personification) but may be inanimate. It may be moving, the loss of it, a change in entity or an end of something. CONTAINER mostly was linked to loss of content which reflects the fact that LIFE can be viewed as a liquid, heat, flame or breath which is lost.

**Religious Conceptualizations**

The conceptualization patterns in Chart 1 which occurred in the religious data are given here with the Japanese and English frequencies of occurrence in the data base plus some sample expressions.

ACTION/EVENT

A.1 DEATH IS AN ACTION/EVENT (E. 11%; J. 26.2%)
   (J) < si 死, sinu 死ぬ >

A.2 DYING IS A PROCESS (E. 5.5%; J. 11.1%)
   (E) < Quick death. Slow death. Die peacefully. Kill someone >
   (J) < odayakana si 穏やかな死, totuzen si 突然死 >

A.3 DEATH IS ANNIHILATION (E. 4.8%; J. 0.5%)

CONTAINER
C.1 DEATH IS DESTROYING A CONTAINER (E. 1.4%; J. 0%)
(E) < The body is a prison which the soul is released by death. >

C.2 DEATH IS LOSS OF CONTENTS (E. 0.5%; J. 1%)
(E) < Breathe one’s last.>
(J) < ikiwo hikitoru 息を引き取る>

ENTITY

E.1 DEATH IS A PERSON (E. 0.5%; J. 0%)
(E) < Death knocks at the door. >

E.2 DEATH IS AN ENTITY (E. 28%; J. 17.7%)
(E) < Death is the last thing. Death hangs like a dark shadow. Break the power of death. Meet death. >
(J) < siga tikazuku 死が近づく, siwo ukeireru 死を受け入れる>

E.3 DEATH IS THE LOSS OF A (PRECIOUS) ENTITY (E. 5.5%; J. 1.3%)
(E) < He gave up his spirit. >
(J) < inotiwo otosu 命を落とす>

JOURNEY

J.1 DEATH IS DEPARTURE. (E. 5.5%; J. 11.6%)
(E) < Say goodbye. Departed. Passed on. >
(J) < tabidatu 旅立つ, wakareru 別れる>

J.2 DEATH IS THE END OF A JOURNEY (E. 4.1%; J. 3.5%)
(E) < Death is the end of life. Death makes an end of sins and voice. >
(J) < saigo 最期, jinseino owari 人生の終わり>

J.3 DEATH IS GOING TO ANOTHER PLACE (E. 19.9%; J. 16.2%)
(E) < Gone to heaven. A return journey to God. Join one’s ancestors. Go home. >
(J) < anoyoe iku あの世へ逝く, syoten 昇天>

J.4 DYING IS A JOURNEY (E. 4.1%; J. 2.5%)
(E) < Journey’s end. Go west. >
(J) <sinu katei 死ぬ過程>

STATUS/STATE

SS.1 DEATH IS FALLING/DOWN (E. 2.8%; J. 0%)
  (E) <If you’re in bed you’re dead. Drop off.>

SS.2 DEATH IS LACK OF SENSIBILITY (E. 0.7%; J. 1%)
  (E) <Fall asleep. Lifeless. At rest. Asleep in Jesus.>
  (J) <eienno nemurini tuku 永遠の眠りにつく>

SS.3 DEATH IS DISAPPEARANCE (E. 0.5%; J. 2%)
  (E) <no longer with us>
  (J) <nakunaru 亡くなる>

SS.4 DEATH IS FREEDOM (E. 0.7%; J. 0%)
  (E) <Death is freedom from sin and suffering.>

SS.5 DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION (E. 0.7%; J. 5%)
  (E) <She’s become an angel.>
  (J) <jobutu 成仏, tensini naru 天使になる>

SS.6 DEATH IS DARKNESS (E. 1.4%; J. 0%)
  (E) <All encompassing blackness. Death hangs like a dark shadow. Extinguished by death.>

TIME

T.1 DEATH IS A PHASIS OF TIME. (E. 3.4%; J. 0.7%)
  (E) <Have one’s time. One days are numbered. One’s hour is out.>
  (J) <jikanganai 時間がない>

As might be expected, the contemporary religious discourse on death and dying is the most highly emotive and metaphoric among the genre groups studied in the Death and Dying project. See chapter 4 of this volume. Religion deals with imaginative projections from our immediate bodily experiences onto interpretations relating to our sense of DEATH and LIFE and TIME. The data show not so much in the use or non-use of particular underlying conceptual patterns but the rich diversity of expression in the discourse. It should be noted that highly technical
writing or systematic theological works were not included in the data base. In both languages the occurrence of the descriptive DEATH IS AN EVENT/ACT is relatively low, and the focus on emotive aspects higher.

Graph 1: Conceptual Patterns in Religious Writings

Some Implications

In considering the universal versus culturally particular patterns and semantic schemata, the semantic category of JOURNEY is central to both languages in the religion genre but the relative ranking in Japanese frequency of use is ACTION<JOURNEY<ENTITY whereas in English the frequency is reversed ENTITY<JOURNEY<ACTION. In general both languages make great use of concepts for The Other Place as the destination of the JOURNEY SCHEMA. The features of “the other place” vary from “heaven concepts” as well as occasionally negative concepts such as “hell”. Death in Christian writing is sometimes conceived of as BIRTH/REBIRTH and the beginning of a NEW LIFE. These are further related to conceptualizations of ENDS, as life is conceived as a journey, the finality of an END as in a path and choices about direction, purpose, quality and destinations lead to conceptualizations of the values of life and mirror reflections on post-life issues of idealized aspects of this Life. Just as we can conceive “cultures of life”, so too the “culture of death” is shaped by our conceptualization processes which the underlying metaphors bring to light.
Two unique concepts were found. In Christian thinking there is the concept of the “Death of Death” in the end purpose of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, which suggests a “freedom from death” schema. In Buddhism there is the renaming (戒名) of the deceased for a “new life” in the Other Place.

References


