

# CA OF FEAR METAPHORS

## INTRODUCTION

Human beings are emotional creatures, whose emotions are often observable through physiological manifestations. Dr. Paul Ekman, whose work on emotions is not only seminal but also canonical, posits that six basic emotions are universally recognized, shared, and easily interpreted through specific physiological manifestations regardless of culture. These referenced emotions are happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust (Ekman, 1999). The notion of universally shared emotions entails that all humans experience these basic emotions in the same manner, with the same bodily manifestations, irrespective of culture.

Diaz-Vera and Caballero (2013) explain that although emotions are tied to bodily feelings, their sociocultural dimensions are best illustrated at the language level. By focusing on the emotion of jealousy, they demonstrated that differences exist in the way North Americans and Spaniards construe it through metaphors. Since jealousy as an emotion is a social construct, such differences were indeed expected. Along the same lines and drawing on data from five Chinese corpora, Ye (2014) demonstrated that "happiness," although being one of Ekman's basic emotions, differs in its indigenous conceptualization between English and Chinese cultures. Particularly, the Chinese conception of *xingfú* or happiness is firmly anchored in interpersonal relationships.

The present analysis, like these cited examples, seeks to compare metaphorical expressions of "fear" between Jula, a Niger-Congo Mandé language spoken in West Africa, and American English, an Indo-European language.

## RATIONALE

Since emotions are internal experiences, it is often difficult to describe them with accuracy. For this reason, metaphorical expressions are frequently used to this end, and these expressions tend to be tied to the physiological manifestations of the emotions. For example, the metaphorical expression 'he was boiling with anger' establishes a comparison between anger and heat, which is very often the physiological manifestation of anger. If an emotion's perceived physiological manifestations are the same between two cultures, we should then expect the metaphorical expressions used to describe it to be somewhat similar. For instance, if anger causes internal heat, it is likely that it will be associated with that physiological effect. When an emotion does not have a particular physical effect, however, its conceptualization and the emotion itself will not be close (Maalej, 2004, p. 51). Given this theory, we should expect similarities between the way the emotion of fear is construed through metaphors in English and in Jula, as fear is a universally shared emotion which is experienced in similar ways by individuals from different cultures.

## ENGLISH

In American English, the following examples of metaphors are often used to talk about the emotion of fear. These examples were drawn from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

1. She abused me in like every way she could have. **I was paralyzed with fear.** It's just the scariest thing in the world to have someone you trust, respect, and admire betray you.
2. Carried by adrenaline, **numb with fear**, she managed to escape into her daughter's bedroom.
3. I fought to move but laid **rigid with fear**. Suddenly, a loud implored in Hebrew: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

The following collocations are also commonly used in tandem with fear.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  <i>shiver with fear</i>        |  <i>frozen with fear</i>       |
|  <i>heart twisted with fear</i> |  <i>laced with fear</i>        |
|  <i>consumed with fear</i>      |  <i>voice quiver with fear</i> |
|  <i>shake with fear</i>         |  <i>haunted with fear</i>      |

These examples demonstrate that in English, the emotion of fear is associated with the physiological state of **paralysis** and **coldness**. Analyzing paralysis and coldness within the realm of physics, we quickly realize that heat, a source of energy, is responsible for the movement of electrons while cold, a lack of energy, is responsible for a static body. Even at the physical level, coldness also provokes paralysis. For this reason, it is not surprising that fear is associated with bodily feelings of coldness and paralysis.

Aside from these collocations of 'fear,' some other idiomatic expressions support the idea of fear being construed within the cold domain metaphor.

4. Make your blood run cold
5. To breathe out in cold sweat

Other idiomatic expressions drive the point home that the emotion of fear, besides being felt in the body as a whole, is often felt in particular areas of the body such as the stomach (6), the skin (7), the heart (8 & 9), and even the voice.

6. To have butterfly in the stomach
7. To have goosebumps
8. Heart skips a beat
9. Heart in one's mouth

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## JULA

Jula speakers also use metaphors to express the emotion of fear. The following are examples of such metaphorical expressions.

10. a ja tige-ra --- ----- his/her spirit cut-Post ----- his or her soul was cut with fear
11. a farisi tama-na ---- his/her bodyhair walk-Post ---- he or she had goose bumps
12. a kɔnɔ kari-ra ----- his/her belly break-Post' ----- he was frightened
13. a ja-ra ----- he dry-Post ----- he dried up with fear
14. nɛnɛ kari a ra ----- cold break him Post ----- he was afraid with cold
15. a kɔnɔ mɔn-na ---- his/her belly cook-Post ----- his belly cooked with fear

Like the English metaphorical expressions of fear, the Jula ones are also tied to the idea of coldness. Examples (13) and (14) illustrate this point. On top of being conceptualized as 'coldness,' fear is further conceptualized as a type of coldness that causes paralysis, as illustrated in example (13).

Example (11), like the English expression 'to have goose bumps' indicates that the emotion of fear is associated with that physiological manifestation. Indeed, when human beings were evolving as a species and had to face threats such as wild animals, they had goose bumps, which made them look bigger and threatening to their predator. The defense-mechanism origin of goose bumps explains why they are associated with the emotion of fear and the physical state of coldness.

Just like in English, fear metaphorical expressions in Jula suggest that this emotion is also felt in the stomach. When this happens, however, it is not felt as a cold sensation but rather as a warm one. Indeed, Jula uses the expression 'to have a cooked stomach' to translate the idea that it is not a feeling of cold, but rather one of warmth. Unlike the physical cold, which does not have capability to consume its container, this type of cold can consume its experiencer, ultimately taking on some of the properties of heat. This 'hot sensation of coldness' can be seen in the English expression 'to be consumed with fear' and the Jula expression 'to have a cooked stomach.'

The main difference between metaphorical expressions of fear in Jula and English resides in the body parts that are implicated when experiencing this emotion. While some of the English metaphorical expressions suggest that fear is often felt in the heart, it is never the case in Jula. The same way, some of the Jula metaphorical expressions suggest that fear is rather felt by the 'ja,' which roughly translates as 'shadow', 'ghost,' 'soul', or 'spirit.'

## CONCLUSION

This analysis shows that a great deal of similarity exists in the way metaphorical expressions of fear are construed in both Jula and English. In theory, therefore, Jula speakers learning English or English speakers learning Jula should not find it challenging to understand metaphorical expressions of fear when learning the other language. In practice, however, additional factors should be taken into consideration.

The findings also indicate that differences exist between the two languages with the respect to the places or the body parts where fear is felt. While it is sometimes felt in the 'ja' or 'soul' in Jula, this is never the case in English. Contrastive linguists and EL materials developers and teachers can use this finding to ensure that it is not a source of interference for learners.

## REFERENCES

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