`Conceptualizing emotions. A cognitive linguistic perspective

Zoltán Kövecses

Eötvös Loránd University, Heidelberg University

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In a number of studies in the 1980s and ‘90s, I attempted to offer a detailed description of emotion concepts from a cognitive linguistic perspective (see, e.g., Lakoff and Kövecses 1987 and Kövecses 1986, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991ab, 1995, 1998, 2000). The emotion concepts I investigated included anger, love, pride, fear, happiness, friendship, and respect. Following these studies, several scholars have analyzed the same and additional emotions in a fashion similar to the one that I employed. The product of all this work is a large body of knowledge concerning the potential cognitive structure of emotions within the larger framework of our conceptual system as envisaged by cognitive linguists.

The results of these early original studies indicated several important points about emotion concepts, including, on the content side:

- that emotion concepts are largely metaphorical and metonymic;
- that several of the conceptual metaphors and metonymies are tightly connected;
- that many of our emotion concepts have a bodily basis, i.e., that they are embodied;
- that our emotion concepts can be seen to have a frame-like structure, i.e., that they can be represented as cultural models in the mind;

and on the methodology side:

- that the description and analysis of emotion concepts requires the collection and analysis of preferably complete lists of linguistic expressions that have to do with an emotion.

However, all of these ideas, except perhaps the first one, have undergone modification or revision in the past 25 years. My talk will focus on these more recent developments.
Books on emotions by Zoltán Kövecses:


Papers on emotions by Zoltán Kövecses: