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AUTHORS: Fazila Derya AGIS

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MOTHER IN SEPHARDIC, TURKISH, AND ITALIAN PROVERBS AND IDIOMS: CASE OF ONLINE BLOGS

Sefarad, Türk ve İtalyan Atasözleri ve Deyimlerinde Anne: Çevrimiçi Bloglar Örneği

Fazıla Derya AGİŞ[*]

ABSTRACT

In this study, references to mothers in certain positive and negative circumstances in some Sephardic, Turkish, and Italian proverbs and idioms that depict the concept of mother will be analyzed. Fear and unhappiness as negative emotions, and joy and love as positive emotions in the Sephardic, Turkish, and Italian cultures will be observed within the framework of the Cognitive Metaphor Theory of Lakoff and Johnson. Thus, this study will reveal that the mother is the person who reconciles the members of a family, alienates all the fears, loves unconditionally, builds up, directs, and protects a family in the Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, and Italian proverbs and idioms. The proverbs and idioms were formulated in the past. However, the contemporary concept of motherhood will also be analyzed in blogs for and by Sephardic, Turkish, and Italian mothers and compared to that depicted in proverbs and idioms, products of ancestors of nations for proving proverbs' and idioms' contemporary uses in modern blogs for revitalizing traditional beliefs. According to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, some cognitive conceptualizations are formulated in the brains of people in accordance with the cultures to which they have been exposed. Briefly, in this study, the sacredness of the mothers in three different languages (Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, and Italian) and cultures will be emphasized, and this will be done with proverbs, idioms and online blogs belonging to three cultural groups.

Keywords: motherhood, proverbs, idioms, conceptual metaphor theory, culture.

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada, anne kavramını betimleyen bazı Sefarad, Türk ve İtalyan atasözlerinde ve deyimlerde bazı olumlu ve olumsuz durumlarda annelere yapılan atıflar analiz edilecektir. Lakoff ve Johnson'ın Bilişsel Metafor Teorisi çerçevesinde Sefarad, Türk ve İtalyan kültürlerinde olumsuz duygular olarak korku ve mutsuzluk, olumlu duygular olarak sevinç ve sevgi gözlemlenecektir. Böylece bu çalışma, Yahudi İspanyolcası, Türkçe ve İtalyanca atasözleri ve deyimlerinde annenin bir ailenin fertlerini barış-

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[*] Dr., Adjunct Instructor. University of the People, USA. E-mail: deryaagis@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0001-7871-0932.

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tıran, tüm korkuları uzaklaştıran, koşulsuz seven, bir aileyi inşa eden, yönlendiren ve koruyan kişi olduğunu ortaya çıkaracaktır. Atasözleri ve deyimler geçmişte formüle edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, geleneksel inançları diriltmek amacıyla çağdaş blog yazılarında atasözleri ve deyimlerin güncel kullanımlarını kanıtlamak için annelik kavramı, Sefarad, Türk ve İtalyan anneler için veya tarafından yazılan bloglarda analiz edilecek ve bu ulusların atalarının ürünleri olan atasözlerinde ve deyimlerde tasvir edilenlerle karşılaştırılacaktır. Kavramsal Eğretileme Kuramına göre, bazı bilişsel kavramsallaştırmalar insanların beyinlerinde şahit oldukları kültürlere uygun olarak formüle edilir. Kısaca, bu çalışmada annelerin üç farklı dilde (Yahudi İspanyolcası, Türkçe ve İtalyanca) ve kültürdeki kutsallıkları vurgulanacak ve bu, üç kültür grubuna ait atasözleri, deyimler ve çevrimiçi bloglarla yapılacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: annelik, atasözleri, deyimler, kavramsal eğretileme kuramı, kültür.

Introduction

This study intends to examine common and divergent beliefs on mothers in specific positive and negative situations in some Sephardic, Turkish, and Italian proverbs and idioms as well as the recovery of customs and family esteems in present day electronic sites, thus online blogs. Accordingly, in these proverbs, idioms, and blogs, the gloomy feelings of dread (fear) and despondency (sadness) and the blessing feelings of delight (happiness) and love will be examined in terms of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Subsequently, this study shows that the mother is the individual who accommodates the individuals from a family, eliminates trepidation, adores unequivocally, develops, coordinates, and safeguards a family in the Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, and Italian precepts and maxims. Old Sephardim living in Turkey can speak Judeo-Spanish as their native language transferred to them from their relatives accepted by the Ottoman Empire after their expulsion from Spain in 1492. Thus, some similar beliefs exist among Sephardim and Turks. Italian was picked as a Romance language similarly to the Judeo-Spanish language. The cultural interaction between these three different cultural groups is analyzed in proverbs and idioms, whose contemporary uses in online blogs are discussed in relation to how they revive traditional beliefs and family values.

1. Conceptual Metaphor Theory

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson authored a book titled *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980; according to them (1980), people sort illustrations of anal-

ogies that they figure out through word handling in their minds as 1) conceptual metaphors (structural metaphors) and 2) linguistic metaphors (orientational and ontological metaphors). Conceptual metaphors are created through mental processes of mapping the characteristics of an item in the source domain that are related intellectually with those of one more item in the target domain, and lastly, an analogy, that is, a conceptual metaphor is built (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 7), such as "redness is danger": one thinks about the fact that warnings are written in red metaphorically. In general, people choose red pens to write down warnings, and the red iconic traffic light warns us that we should not cross the road and wait for the green light; otherwise, a car may crash into us and kill us. Furthermore, (a) "life is a train" and (b) "death is the final destination/stop" are also examples to conceptual metaphors. Life can be regarded as a train where an individual, her or his family members and peers are voyagers, and this person may choose different paths and gets off and on this train at several stops, making life changing decisions until s/he will have passed away. One's educational institution, job, and romantic partner choices can be depicted either with the "pathway" metaphor or the "stop" metaphor. On the one hand, in the case of (a) life is an abstract object whose qualities match with a train as a concrete object. On the other hand, in (b) death is an abstract concept that can be depicted with the concrete destination metaphor: a city is a concrete object like a tomb. Humans formulate conceptual metaphors related to their feelings, thinking about their experiences with concrete objects. According to Zhang and Hu (2009: 78), mappings are used to associate the source domains to the target domains. Figure 1 shows the formation of the metaphors (a) and (b):
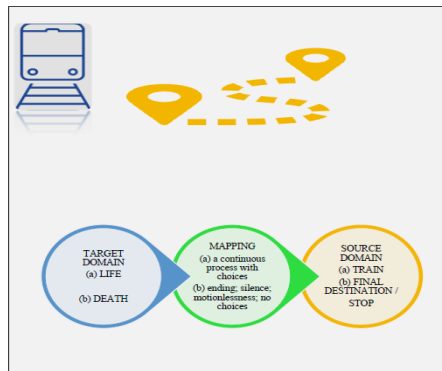

Figure 1. Cognitive mapping process related to the metaphors of (a) "Life is a train and (b) "Death is the final destination/stop."

Furthermore, orientational metaphors associate objects with spatial relations for describing their effects (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 14), for instance, the Turkish idiomatic expression "bulutların üstünde olmak" [being up above the clouds] defines a happy person as an orientational metaphor with a direction description: the sky is above humans. Besides, another Turkish idiomatic expression, "yerin dibine batmak" [to sink to new depths] means to get ashamed; thus, the metaphorical downward orientation in this idiom refers to the negative emotion of shame. Thus, orientational metaphors are formulated through abstract directions expressed by adpositions (prepositions and postpositions) and concrete concepts (Vu, 2015: 68). For instance, in Turkish, the postpositions of "üstünde" (on), "altında" (under), et cetera can be used in constructing orientational metaphors. In English, "what lies ahead?" is a question with the orientational metaphor of "ahead" that is associated with the concept of "future" (Vu, 2015: 70).

In addition, ontological similitudes (metaphors) are utilized to portray social convictions on specific objects through assessments (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 25–27), for instance, the Turkish idiom, "dili dönmemek" [one's tongue does not turn] is an ontological metaphor, associating the organ of tongue and speech with a gear: a broken gear cannot work properly, and an extremely forlorn person cannot talk and describe her or his sorrow, witnessing an unexpected sad event, such as the death of a loved one in a car accident. Similarly, regarding ontological metaphors, Vu (2015: 69) argues that "thinking is a machine" is an ontological metaphor that makes one regards the human brain as a machine that can be turned on and off and has different performance levels. A unique conceptual metaphor can become a conceptual ontological and orientational metaphor, when "life is a long train going forward, but never backwards" or "death is the ugly final destination/stop ahead." The adjectives added to conceptual metaphors transfer them into conceptual ontological metaphors and the orientational adverbs used for describing them transfer them into conceptual orientational metaphors.

Moreover, Velasco (2001) suggests that metaphors and metonymies are founded on image-schemata related to the functions of objects; thus, humans draw a picture of an event in their minds and express this with conceptual metaphors and metonymies. According to Velasco (2001: 52), in the sentence "the conscripts have no stomach for fight," "qualities are possessions" metaphorically, but "the stomach [stands] for courage" appears as a metonymy for being just a part of the possessions of the experi-

encer of courage, as metonymies define objects by being a part of that object.

To sum up the conceptual metaphor theory, a last example can be given: "Anger is a captive animal" is a conceptual metaphor where anger is mapped into an intimidating force, such as that of a tiger by Kövecses (2000: 21), interpreting the sentence, "He unleashed his anger." In general, an elevated temperature depicts anger, or anger appears as the cause of unimpeded behavior. This study deals with such conceptual and/or linguistic metaphors. Regarding some previous studies on similar metaphors, Esenova (URL-3) examines English anger expressions where "animal, container, plant and child" source domains are linked to the anger target domain, for example, according to her (2009), "The anger is a horse" that can be stopped by reasoning, thus, by being "bridled" (URL-3). Constantinou (2014) analyzes the anger metaphors in popular scientific texts, written in English, Greek, and French. My study differs from these two previous studies for being based on motherhood metaphors in Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, and Italian proverbs and idioms.

2. Data on Mothers in Turkish, Sephardic, and Italian Proverbs and Idioms

The Judeo-Spanish data are from this book: Bardavid & Ender, 2006. On the other hand, the Turkish data were gathered from the following books containing most of the proverbs and idioms used in Turkey and Turkic nations that have shared common beliefs since centuries: Püsküllüoğlu (1998) and Çobanoğlu (2004). Besides, Italian proverbs and idioms were gathered from the following books to show that the same expressions have been used for years: Conti (2015); Strafforello (1868); and *Madre brutta fa li fiji bbelli* (2007).

3. Discussion

The negative and positive emotions related to proverbs and idioms are analyzed in this section.

3.1. Negative Emotions

This study deals with negative emotions, first. These negative emotions are fear and unhappiness.

3.1.1. Fear

Concerning dread or fear, in the Sephardic culture, individuals blame mothers for the awful perspectives or acts and the grotesqueness of their

offspring: awful mentalities and offensiveness might cause trepidation among individuals. The following is a Judeo-Spanish proverb on this issue:

Judeo-Spanish: (1)"Ken alava su ija tinyosa? Su madre la mokoza" [Who praises her bald daughter? Her mother with her sneezing nose] (Bardavid and Ender, 2006).

A revolting young lady who has terrifying practices and body parts can prompt fear, although her mom can see the value in her. Thus, "baldness is ugliness" and "fear is a long distance" are the conceptual metaphors that are active in this proverb since people escape from an ugly individual or a violent individual. Moreover, in Turkish, "the eyes stand for alertness" and "the eyes stand for avidity" as a person who becomes the eyes of her or his mother becomes more alert to obtain more resources, as mothers care for their children, and try to find food for them; everybody avoids avid people since they may be approaching them for obtaining more resources for their greed:

Turkish: (2) "Anasının gözü" [the eye of her or his mother] (Püsküllüoğlu, 1998).

Furthermore, in Italian, "motherhood is truth" allegorically, as one is brought into the world by a remarkable mother who is apparent, yet one cannot rest assured with regards to her or his dad without a genetic hereditary test. This might be a frighting truth for a few moderate families. Consequently, being a child, whose father is obscure, becomes alarming for this child in a public where the accompanying precept exists:

Italian: (3) "Nessuno è bastardo per parte di madre" [Nobody is bastard due to her mother] (*Madre brutta fa li fiji bbelli,* 2007).

3.1.2. Unhappiness

Regarding unhappiness, the celebrations of Jewish feasts are obligatory for Jews, and a person who does not celebrate these feasts cannot be viewed as a decent devotee Jew, prompting pity inside her or his Jewish family:

Judeo-Spanish: (4) "Ken a Purim su tiempo peryera, ken a Pesah, mas vale ke su madre no lo paryera" [The one who has lost her or his time during Purim or Pesah should not have been born by her mother] (Bardavid and Ender, 2006).

Thus, "religiosity is goodness" and "motherhood is the source for evil or unhappiness" in the Sephardic culture, if the daughter or son of a mother

does not obey the traditions and cultures of families. "Purim" (Lots) is a Jewish feast celebrating the rescue of the Jews from Haman's tyranny and murder plans in the Persian Empire, and it is narrated in the *Biblical Book of Esther* (URL-6). Infuriated that Mordecai, as a Jew, treated him with contempt and refused to grovel him, Haman, Monarch Ahasuerus' top clergyman, persuaded the king that the Jews living under Persian authority were defiant and ought to be eradicated; with the king's authorization, Haman established a date for Mordecai's execution via lots on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar and raised a scaffold for him (URL-6). Esther was Ahasuerus' adored Jewish queen and Mordecai's adopted daughter, who approached the king and suggested to organize a feast where Haman would be present; she appealed for the Jews at the supper and accused vile Haman of preparing their extermination; Haman's frenzied pleadings for mercy were interpreted by the king as an attack on the queen; accordingly, the enraged monarch ordered Haman's execution and the appointment of Mordecai to his office; successively, on Adar 13, Esther and Mordecai acquired a royal proclamation authorizing Jews across the empire to attack their adversaries, and they declared the following day a celebration and dubbed it Purim in relation to the lots of Haman (URL-6). Furthermore, Pesah, or the Passover celebrates the Hebrews' redemption from subjection in Egypt, starting on the fifteenth (the 22nd for the Reform Jews) day of the period of Nisan (thus in March or April) (URL-7).

Moreover, "motherhood is empathy" for sadness in Turkish:

Turkish: (5) "Ağlarsa anam ağlar, kalanı yalan ağlar" [If my mom cries, it is for my sadness; if others cry, it is a lie] (Çobanoğlu, 2004).

Thus, "sharing sadness is love" and "love is richness" are the active metaphors in (5). Moreover, in Italian, an ugly mother can have beautiful children: "nature is null," "nurture is around," and "motherhood stands for nature and nurture" are the active conceptualizations in (6); others can be unhappy, seeing an ugly or bad person, though:

Italian: (6) "Madre brutta fa i figli belli" [An ugly mother makes beautiful children] (*Madre brutta fa li fiji bbelli*, 2007).

3.2. Positive Emotions

Several proverbs and idioms indicate positive emotions with the concept of mother, and this section analyzes such proverbs and idioms about joy and love in Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, and Italian.

3.2.1. Joy

A mother can bring joy and happiness to a Sephardic family, as she feels empathy towards her offspring:

Judeo-Spanish: (7) "Ande no ay madre no ay padre" [If there is no mother, there is no father] (Bardavid and Ender, 2006).

Therefore, in (7), "the family is a unique mother" and "the mother is the constructor": accordingly, "mothers stand for joy." In addition, in (8), "one's date of birth is luck" and "sacredness is joy and luck" if one is born on the day when the Islamic Prophet Mohammed was born:

Turkish: (8) "Anası Kadir gecesi doğurmuş" [One's mother gave this person birth on the night of *Kadr*] (Püsküllüoğlu, 1998).

Furthermore, in Italian, one's mother indicates where this person's home is, as "a mother is a joyful shelter" from a conceptual metaphorical point of view:

Italian: (9) "Casa mia, mamma mia!" [My home, my mother!] (Strafforello, 1868).

Thus, "My home, my mother" is a good example to Italian proverbs portraying Italians who love their mothers and households and have a blissful outlook on residing with their moms or in their family homes.

3.2.2. Love

A mother's adoration for her offspring is inescapable in the Sephardic, Turkish, and Italian societies, as this study will show by means of the accompanying maxims and sayings:

Judeo-Spanish: (10) "Amor es de madre, lo demas es ayre" [Love comes from the mother, the rest is air] (Bardavid and Ender, 2006).

In 10, the following conceptual metaphors are present: "love is possession" and "lies consist of air" since the real love existing on earth is that of a mother for her children, as only a mother takes care about her children. Furthermore, in (11), "a mother is an affectionate constructor/an architect" and "a family is a building" conceptual metaphorically:

Turkish: (11) "Yuvayı yapan dişi kuştur" [The female bird constructs the nest] (Çobanoğlu, 2004).

Consequently, in (11), a mother's characteristics as a feeder, peacebuilder, and family pioneer are related with that of a bird that forms a home

for her posterity. Moreover, according to the Italian culture, "a coconut is offspring love" metaphorically:

Italian: (12) "essere il cocco di mamma" [to be the eye light / the coconut of the mother] (Conti, 2015).

Conclusion

To conclude, we can encounter the Judeo-Spanish, Italian, and Turkish proverbs and idioms referenced above in motherhood blogs and the Judeo-Spanish forum known as "Ladinokomunita" [Ladino community] with the sole purpose of the restoration of cultural values and traditions, including respect for mothers, festive celebrations, and empathy to differences alongside the societal need for gender equality. Judeo-Spanish is a language in peril today since a large number of its local speakers are over fifty years of age. We can see that Sephardic mothers safeguard their youngsters, and Sephardic mothers and their offspring have comparative perspectives and practices since children are normally brought by their mothers up in a message posted by Rachel Bortnick on May 12, 2017 (this message of hers was also published as an article in Istanbul's Judeo-Spanish journal *El Amaneser* also in May 2017; it is titled "Las madres sefaradis saven lo mijor: la sensia de madres" [Sephardic mothers know the best: the sense of mothers]) (URL-1); in the message, Bortnick clarifies that she discovered that nothing was more pivotal than wellbeing on earth, she instructs us that she gained her overall knowledge from her mother, for example, the fact that children couldn't drink any coffee. She underscores that she acts like her mom in her day-to-day routine by referencing these proverbs: "La ija a la madre, i la madre a la ija" [The daughter to the mother and the mother to the daughter] and "mira a la madre, toma a la ija" that has a Turkish equivalent, "anasına bak kızını al" ([look at the mother and take her daughter!].

Culturally formulated metaphors underlie proverbs and idioms. Cutting-edge online blogs resuscitate customs. Besides, a blog on politics is titled "Ağlarsa anam ağlar" [If my mom cries, it is for my sadness], and its writer Gülcan Temiz Bila (URL-5) mentions that a politician's mother feels sadness after his death in an accident.

Besides, as a mother, Elif Doğan asks for her husband's assistance in housework in her blog titled "Yuvayı biraz da erkek kuş yapsın" [Let the male bird make the nest a bit!] (URL-2) after having mentioned the Turkish proverbs "Cennet anaların ayaklarının altındadır" [The paradise is under the

feet of mothers] and "Yuvayı dişi kuş yapar" ([The female bird builds up the nest] on January 18, 2017.

As an Italian blog, we can state that *L'Huffington Post* (November 9, 2015) mentions (URL-4) that children appreciated too much at home can be discouraged easily in their lives out of their homes, and failures and criticisms can make them fall into depression based on research conducted on 725 adults; the Italian blog is titled "'Essere il cocco di mamma può più probabilmente portarti alla depressione.' Lo studio della Purdue University in Indiana" ['Being the Mom's coconut can more likely lead you to depression.' The Purdue University study in Indiana].

In sum, we can conclude that children are solely loved and accepted unconditionally by their mothers in the Sephardic, Turkish, and Italian cultures. Moreover, mothers are accepted to infuse their qualities into their youngsters in this multitude of three societies. Plus, the contemporary online blogs show that mothers are accepted to bring up and enculturate their offspring, they need gender equality inside society and the division of housework at home, and the children should not be profoundly valued at home without being told on others' conceivable terrible demonstrations inside society that might hurt them, when they become grown-ups. Accordingly, the mothers are profoundly valued as food suppliers and compassion builders in every one of the three cultural groups' proverbs and idioms; in any case, gender equality and the division of the housework are mandatory for a solid society, while overprotectiveness can prompt sorrow in children when they grow up and experience a debased reality where they can't get anything they desire regardless of their persistent effort. Maxims and sayings reveal customs and traditions; however, the contemporary online blogs might include admonitions on many children's future wellbeing as grown-ups and the unforgiving degenerate circumstances and rivalries in the genuine grown-up life where just mothers feel trouble for the unsuccess of their kids since just mothers' feelings are valid, as a few analogies present in proverbs and idioms show us.

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