


# Metaphor as a Means of Communicating Emotional Experience (Death) in Religious Discourse

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## Abstract

*Loss, untimely departure, and a sense of emptiness are common experiences in coping with sudden death. In such situations, metaphors prove to be a key means of expression, especially when personal experience is not aligned with collective discourse, and emotional experiences often lead to creative metaphorical production (Littlemore 2019; Moon, 1998). In religious language, metaphor occupies a special place as a means of figurative representation and can be analyzed through the identification of conceptual mappings and their linguistic realizations (Hobbs 2021). This paper empirically analyses conceptual metaphors in religiously marked narratives of mourning based on a corpus of 68 posts taken from a memorial page on the social media platform Facebook. The analysis examines which metaphors occur, how they are distributed within the corpus, and which discursive and religious functions they perform. Drawing on conceptual metaphor theory, the analysis shows that participants structure the experience of death as embodied experience, the perception of time, attitudes towards the self, and religious discourse, and how this contributes to the function of religion in linguistic communication. The paper contributes to research in cognitive linguistics and religious dis-*



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*course by showing how universal patterns of metaphorical conceptualization intertwine with contextually specific religious meanings within the discourse of mourning.*

**Keywords:** *conceptual metaphor; mourning; religious discourse; embodied experience*

## Introduction

Metaphor occupies a central place in human language and thought. Early linguistic and philosophical reflections have already observed that language is fundamentally figurative and that metaphoricity does not appear only in literary or poetic discourse, but also in everyday communication (Durrigl 1989; Carter 1998). In everyday speech, people use metaphors to express experiences, emotions, and perceptions that are difficult or impossible to articulate in literal language, especially in situations of strong emotional intensity such as grief, loss, and confronting death (Demjén 2011; Junghaenel et al. 2008).

The death of a close person affects the emotional, cognitive, and existential dimensions of human experience. Expressions such as *premature departure*, *eternal rest*, or *great emptiness* show that such experiences are regularly conceptualized metaphorically. In these contexts, metaphor emerges as a key means of communication, especially when personal experience exceeds conventional social patterns of understanding and when emotions become difficult to express (Littlemore 2019). Research shows that metaphorical expressions are particularly frequent in contexts of negative and traumatic experiences, where they enable creative and cognitively flexible processing of emotional content (Moon 1998).

Religious language occupies a special place in the expression of grief and loss. Religion, as a social and symbolic system, provides a framework for understanding experiences that go beyond empirically accessible reality, such as death, transcendence, and life after death. Religious discourse is strongly permeated by metaphors that enable the conceptualization of abstract and inaccessible phenomena through experientially closer domains (Kövecses 2003; Hobbs 2021). Metaphor thus becomes one of the fundamental means through which religion is put into function - axiomatic, socio-cohesive, and emotional - within concrete linguistic practices.

This paper does not aim to demonstrate that metaphors structure experience, which is a basic assumption of cognitive linguistics (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2010), but rather to investigate which conceptual metaphors appear in a specific religious corpus of mourning, how they are distributed, and which functions they perform in discourse. The study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) which conceptual metaphors are used in the expression of grief and

death, (2) how emotions are conceptualized through bodily grounded metaphors, (3) what role religious conceptual metaphors play in making sense of death and in maintaining social cohesion, and (4) to what extent the analyzed metaphors exhibit universal features and to what extent contextually specific characteristics.

## 1. Theoretical Framework

### 1.1. Classical Theories of Metaphor

The concept of metaphor has a long history in the Western philosophical and rhetorical tradition. In classical metaphor theory, which dates back to Aristotle, metaphor is defined as the transfer of a name from one object to another based on similarity. Aristotle describes metaphor as the “application of a foreign name,” implying that it functions as a substitution for a literal expression. Within this framework, metaphor is understood primarily as a stylistic and rhetorical device used to embellish speech or achieve an aesthetic effect.

Later authors, such as Quintilian, further develop this perspective by interpreting metaphor as a shortened comparative construction based on similarity, in which the conjunction *like* or *as* is omitted (Stamać 1983). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, within interaction theories of metaphor (Richards 1936; Black 1962), metaphor began to be viewed as an interaction between two semantic fields. Richards introduces the terms *tenor* and *vehicle*, describing metaphor as a process in which two ideas jointly produce a new meaning. However, even in these approaches, metaphor remains primarily a linguistic phenomenon, tied to individual expressions and discursive effects.

What classical and early modern theories of metaphor have in common is the understanding of metaphor as a deviation from literal language and as a secondary, stylistic means of expression. Metaphor is seen as something added to language, rather than as a fundamental mechanism of its functioning. Such an approach limits the analysis of metaphor to the level of language, neglecting its role in human cognition and the conceptualization of experience.

Already in the hermeneutic approach of Paul Ricoeur (*La Métaphore vive*, 1975), metaphor is no longer viewed merely as a rhetorical ornament or a linguistic phenomenon tied to individual expressions. Ricoeur emphasizes that the metaphorical statement operates at the level of the entire discourse, creating a tension between literal and figurative meaning that prompts the reader to generate new meaning. Such an approach shows that metaphor is not a secondary stylistic device, but a process of semantic innovation that can transform the way we understand reality and opens up space for further reflection on metaphorical structures of thought.

### 1.2. Cognitive Theory of Metaphor

A major shift in the understanding of metaphor occurs with the work of Lakoff and Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980). In cognitive theory, metaphor is viewed as a fundamental cognitive mechanism involving mapping between a source and a target domain. According to this approach, metaphor is primarily conceptual, while metaphorical linguistic expressions are only surface manifestations of deeper cognitive structures. For example, in the conceptual metaphor *death is a journey*, the experientially familiar domain of travel is used to structure the abstract concept of death. Linguistic expressions such as *premature departure*, *see you again*, or *gone too soon* are realizations of this same conceptual metaphor.

Lakoff (1993) emphasizes that metaphor is not a linguistic but a cognitive phenomenon: it structures the way people think, feel, and act. This does not mean that metaphor lacks a linguistic dimension, but rather that the linguistic expression is a secondary manifestation of a deeper conceptual structure.

In this paper, metaphor is approached on three analytical levels: (1) as a cognitive mechanism that structures abstract experience (conceptual level), (2) as a linguistic realization in concrete metaphorical expressions, and (3) as a discursive-sociocultural resource through which meaning is produced and maintained within a community. These levels are not contradictory but analytically complementary.

### 1.3. Conceptual Metaphors of Emotion

Emotions represent one of the central areas of research in cognitive metaphor theory because they are, by nature, abstract, subjective, and difficult to describe directly. Kövecses (2003, 2010) shows that emotional experiences in language and thought are systematically conceptualized through a limited number of source domains derived from bodily and perceptual human experience. Emotions are thus not expressed arbitrarily, but through stable and recognizable conceptual patterns.

One of the fundamental assumptions of Kövecses's theory is the embodiment of emotions. Emotional states are not only mental, but are closely connected to physiological bodily reactions, such as changes in heart rate, muscle tension, and sensations of weight or pressure. These bodily sensations form the basis for the metaphorical conceptualization of emotions.

In the context of grief and loss, metaphors involving weight, emptiness, and physical damage are particularly relevant. Grief is often conceptualized as *a heavy burden* that a person carries, or as *an emptiness* caused by the loss of a close person. These metaphors allow speakers to express abstract emotional states through experientially familiar bodily sensations, thereby making emotional experience communicable and shareable with others.

Kövecses (2010) emphasizes that many emotion metaphors are widespread across languages and cultures, pointing to their partial universality grounded in shared human bodily experience. However, the way these metaphors are realized in language, as well as their frequency and pragmatic function, depends on cultural, discursive, and situational context. In religious discourse, emotion metaphors are often further intertwined with religious concepts, thereby acquiring specific meanings and functions.

In this paper, conceptual metaphors of emotion represent a key analytical tool for understanding how participants articulate experiences of grief, shock, and loss, particularly in the context of sudden death.

#### *1.4. Religious Metaphor and Conceptual Metaphor*

This paper distinguishes between conceptual metaphor as a general cognitive mechanism and religious metaphor as its specific discursive realization. A conceptual metaphor denotes systematic mapping between domains (*death is a journey*), while a religious metaphor represents a case in which the target domain is a religious concept (God, salvation, afterlife) and functions within a theological narrative.

Kövecses (2003, 2015, 2020) emphasizes that religious metaphors are not merely stylistic devices, but fundamental cognitive mechanisms through which believers structure their understanding of the sacred, the divine, and their own place in the world. Through religious language, we acknowledge human limitations and explain what lies beyond the reach of human reason (Hobbs 2021). Religious language enables us to respond to complex life circumstances, amid inexplicable phenomena, uncertainty, suffering, grief, and frustration, and to make sense of death. Metaphor helps describe the divine, the transcendent, the supernatural, the invisible, those phenomena that cannot be articulated literally, and is especially valuable given the limitations of a purely rational approach to knowledge and experience (Hobbs 2021). In religious language, conceptual metaphors frequently appear such as: *God is a father, God is a protector, God is a ruler, God is a judge, Heaven is a place, Heaven is a home, life is a journey, life is a race, death is a transition, death is a departure, faith is light, faith is an anchor*. These metaphors enable believers to understand abstract theological concepts in terms of everyday experience, such as family relations, movement through space, or being in a particular place. The metaphor *Heaven is a home*, for example, allows the afterlife to be conceptualized as a safe and familiar place, thereby reducing the fear of death and loss.

In the hermeneutic tradition, particularly in the work of Paul Ricoeur, metaphor is not only a mechanism of mapping but also an event of meaning that produces a “surplus of meaning” and enables the reinterpretation of experience. In

this sense, religious metaphors not only structure the understanding of death but also open space for its existential reinterpretation within a narrative of hope. This dimension is particularly relevant in the religious discourse of mourning. When death is conceptualized as a journey or a transition, there is not only a cognitive mapping from the domain of movement to the domain of death, but also an existential reinterpretation of loss. Metaphor allows the experience of death to be understood not as an absolute rupture, but as part of a broader narrative of hope. In this sense, religious metaphors function hermeneutically: they do not merely describe reality, but shape it within a shared horizon of meaning. In this paper, a religious metaphor is therefore defined as a conceptual metaphor whose target domain is a religious concept, and which performs specific theological and communal functions within discourse.

### *1.5. Universality and Variation of Conceptual Metaphors*

One of the key questions in cognitive metaphor theory concerns the relationship between the universality and variation of conceptual metaphors. Kövecses (2005, 2010) emphasizes that conceptual metaphors simultaneously exhibit universal and culturally specific characteristics. Universality arises from shared human bodily experience, while variation emerges under the influence of cultural, religious, historical, and discursive factors.

Metaphors grounded in basic bodily experiences, such as weight, movement, balance, or spatial orientation, appear in many languages and cultures. Thus, emotions of grief and loss are conceptualized in many languages as burden, emptiness, or physical damage, while death is often conceptualized as a journey or a transition. These patterns point to a relatively high degree of universality. However, the way these universal metaphors are concretely realized in language, as well as their interpretation, largely depends on the cultural and religious context. In religious communities, for example, the metaphor that *death is a journey* is often associated with belief in the afterlife and reunion, while in secular contexts it may have different implications. Religious discourse further enriches metaphorical structure with concepts such as *heaven*, *divine will*, or *salvation*.

In this study, the analyzed texts are written in English but within a relatively homogeneous religious context. This allows for the observation of universal conceptual metaphors of grief and death, as well as their specific religious interpretations. Such an approach shows that although many conceptual metaphors are grounded in universal bodily experience, Kövecses (2010) emphasizes that their concrete realization shows considerable variation depending on cultural, social, and discursive context. Universality manifests at the level of basic source domains, while variation appears in the choice of metaphorical expressions and their inter-

pretation. In religious discourse, metaphors of emotion and death are further shaped by the theological beliefs of the community, allowing for the simultaneous existence of general and contextually specific metaphorical patterns.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Corpus and Sample

The corpus consists of 68 short written posts drawn from a publicly available memorial page on the social media platform Facebook, dedicated to a deceased theologian, and publicly archived in the Zenodo repository (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18913195>). The names of the authors and personal data were not included in the analysis for the protection of privacy, although the posts are publicly available. Most of the texts are written in English, which is also the language of analysis.

### 2.2. Analytical Procedure

The research is based on qualitative discourse analysis, carried out in three steps: (1) identification of metaphorical linguistic expressions, (2) their grouping according to shared source domains, (3) interpretation of their discursive and religious functions.

The identification of metaphorical expressions was conducted through a combination of careful manual reading of the corpus and thematic coding, whereby expressions were identified as metaphorical based on a discrepancy between their basic (dictionary) and contextual meanings. Since conceptual metaphors are not tied to specific grammatical or formal structures, their identification presents a methodological challenge (Stefanowitsch and Gries 2006).

The texts were read multiple times in order to understand their overall meaning and the context in which expressions are used. Metaphorical linguistic expressions were identified according to the following criteria:

- The meaning of the expression in context deviates from its basic dictionary meaning.
- The expression indicates a transfer of meaning between two conceptual domains.
- The expression is used to conceptualize abstract experience (emotions, death, faith).

In the identification procedure, principles of the MIP method (Pragglejaz Group 2007)<sup>1</sup> were partially applied, particularly in distinguishing literal and figurative meanings of lexical units, although the method was not applied in full due to the nature of the corpus and the aims of the research. The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and the Croatian Encyclopedic Dictionary were used to verify basic meanings. If the contextual meaning deviated from the dictionary meaning, the expression was considered metaphorical.

All texts were compiled into a single digital file and analyzed using the open-source qualitative tool *Taguette*. The program was used to annotate metaphorical linguistic expressions, group them according to thematic codes, and review and compare expressions within the same thematic categories. Following the identification of metaphorical expressions, a conceptual analysis was conducted in which individual expressions were linked to corresponding conceptual metaphors. The analysis was carried out inductively, whereby conceptual metaphors were derived from the set of linguistic realizations, in line with common practices in cognitive linguistic research. Religious metaphorical expressions were additionally analyzed with regard to the functions of religion they realize in discourse: axiomatic, socio-cohesive, and emotional (Hobbs 2021).

### 2.3. Research Limitations

This research has several limitations. First, the corpus is relatively small and thematically specific, which limits the generalizability of the results. Second, the identification of metaphorical expressions partly relies on the researcher's interpretation, which is common in qualitative analyses but may affect the degree of subjectivity. Third, although the texts are written in English, the analysis is conducted from the perspective of Croatian academic discourse, which requires additional theoretical care in the formulation of conceptual metaphors. Despite these limitations, the methodological approach provides insight into how metaphor functions as a cognitive and discursive tool in religiously marked narratives of grief.

## 3. Results

The analysis of 68 posts reveals a high degree of systematicity in the use of conceptual metaphors. Metaphorical expressions do not appear sporadically but are grouped into stable patterns that structure the experience of loss at four levels: (1)

1 MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure) is a standardized procedure for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse. It involves comparing their basic (dictionary) meaning with their contextual meaning in order to determine whether a transfer occurs between conceptual domains (Pragglejaz Group 2007).

embodied emotional experience, (2) temporal reorganization of experience, (3) evaluation of the identity of the deceased person, (4) religious reinterpretation of death.

In the corpus, 214 metaphorical linguistic realizations were identified, grouped into 17 conceptual metaphors. During qualitative coding in the *Taguette* program, some segments were occasionally assigned multiple conceptual codes because, in certain cases, they simultaneously realized several conceptual metaphors, resulting in a total of 231 coded units in the exported dataset. Table 1 presents the most frequent conceptual metaphors in the corpus and the number of their linguistic realizations identified in the analyzed texts.

Conceptual metaphor	Number of realizations
DEATH IS A JOURNEY / TRANSITION	38
GRIEF IS PHYSICAL WEIGHT / DAMAGE	31
LOSS IS EMPTINESS	18
TIME IS DURATION / MOVEMENT	17
A PERSON IS A STRUCTURE / SIZE	15
EMOTIONS ARE INABILITY TO SPEAK	13

The distribution indicates that religious conceptualization is not secondary, but central to the structuring of loss.

### 3.1. Embodied Experience of Grief

The analysis of metaphorical expressions shows that participants largely conceptualize grief and loss through bodily experience.

#### 3.1.1. Grief is a weight/burden

One of the most frequent conceptual metaphors in the corpus is that grief is understood as a physical weight pressing on the body. Examples: “*My heart was tortured*” (P11), “*My heart is a little heavy*” (P21), “*Our hearts are broken*” (P39), “*We are left with a broken heart*” (P46). Here, the emotional state is structured through the sensory domain of physical pressure or breaking. Notably, the heart is almost always the syntactic subject, whereby emotion is objectified and externalized. The speaker is not “sad”, but “the heart is broken”. In this way, pain is presented as an event that happens to the body, not to a volitional subject.

In some cases, metaphor clustering occurs: “*You left a huge void in our hearts*” (P55). Here, the following appear simultaneously:

- LOSS IS EMPTINESS
- EMOTION IS SPACE IN THE BODY.

Thus, emotional experience is spatially mapped within the body, which intensifies both the perceived intensity and duration of loss.

### 3.1.2. Emotions are the inability to speak

Examples such as “*We have no words*” (P3, P18), “*Words are few and pale*” (P4), and “*The pain cannot be expressed in words*” (P49) show how language functions as a limited resource. The inability to verbalize becomes metaphorical evidence of emotional depth. Paradoxically, the discursive act of mourning begins with a claim of inability to speak, thereby further legitimizing emotional authenticity.

## 3.2. Perception of Time

Death and grief strongly affect the perception of time, which is clearly reflected in the metaphorical conceptualization of temporal relations.

### 3.2.1. Death is a premature interruption

Participants use expressions such as “*Premature departure*” (P3), “*Gone too soon*” (P7), “*Way too soon*” (P29), and “*Too fast, too young*” (P56), thereby conceptualizing time as a linear process that has been violently interrupted. Evaluative modifiers (*too soon, premature*) introduce a moral dimension in which death is implicitly framed as unjust.

### 3.2.2. Presence is duration

Through examples such as “*I will never forget*” (P14), “*You will always remain in our memory*” (P24), and “*His influence will continue*” (P30), memory is conceptualized as enduring existence. Physical death does not interrupt symbolic presence. Temporal metaphor thus serves to regulate the experience of loss.

## 3.3. Attitudes towards Self and Others

Metaphors are also used to express attitudes towards one’s own emotional state and towards the deceased person. The deceased is described through metaphors that emphasize their value and importance. Examples include: “*Academic mountain*” (P4), “*A pillar of wisdom*” (P28), “*A mountain of knowledge*” (P46), “*A giant*” (P67). These metaphors conceptualize the person as a large, firm, and stable structure, thereby symbolically emphasizing their influence on the community.

## 3.4. Religious Conceptual Metaphors

Religious discourse strongly structures the way participants conceptualize death, the afterlife, and God, forming the largest semantic cluster in the corpus.

### 3.4.1. Death is a journey/transition

The most dominant religious metaphor in the corpus is the metaphor of death as a journey. Examples: “*Smooth road in the Light*” (P2), “*See you soon*” (P21, P46), “*Safe journey to heaven*” (P55), “*Gone to be with the Lord*” (P68) show that movement implies continuity rather than interruption. The journey has a destination, which integrates death into a teleological narrative. Death is not conceptualized as a final end, but as a temporary separation and transition towards a future reunion.

### 3.4.2. Heaven is a place/home

The afterlife is often described through spatial metaphors. In examples such as “*Heaven is richer*” (P6, P30), “*A place where people no longer mourn*” (P11), “*In our Father’s arms*” (P35), heaven is spatially conceptualized as a safe, familiar, and comforting place, thereby reducing the existential uncertainty of death.

### 3.4.3. God decides

Examples such as “*God has decided so*” (P20), “*God decided to take him home*” (P46) portray God as the one who decides on the transition. In this way, the randomness of death is replaced by a narrative of intention, which has a strong axiomatic function. These metaphors enable the interpretation of death as part of a divine plan, placing the experience of loss within a broader religious framework of meaning.

## 3.5. *Metaphorical Clusters and Discursive Function*

The most interesting finding is the frequent coexistence of embodied metaphors of pain and religious metaphors of hope. Example (P46): “*We are left with a broken heart... but through the eyes of faith...*” shows that in the same text, the following coexist: the heart is broken, death is a divine decision, and reunion in the future. This shows that religious discourse does not negate pain but builds upon it through reinterpretation.

## 4. Discussion

The results show how the theoretical postulates of cognitive linguistics are concretely realized in the analyzed religious discourse. In the context of sudden death and intense grief, metaphors emerge as a necessary means of conceptualizing experiences that are emotionally overwhelming and difficult to express. The analyzed texts show a high level of systematicity in the use of metaphors, which indicates the existence of stable conceptual metaphors shared among participants as members of the same religious community. Metaphorical linguistic expressions are neither arbitrary nor individual, but reflect collectively adopted patterns of

thought that enable mutual understanding and emotional resonance within the community.

#### *4.1. Embodiment of emotions and conceptualization of grief*

One of the strongest findings of the research is the dominance of metaphors that derive from bodily experience. Similar patterns are also shown in corpus studies of metaphors in discourses of illness and coping with death, where metaphorical frameworks serve as a cognitive resource for structuring emotionally intense experiences (Semino 2018). Metaphors of grief as weight, emotions as physical damage, and loss as emptiness clearly show that participants understand emotional states through the sensations of their own bodies. Such conceptualization is in accordance with Kövecses's (2010) understanding of emotions as embodied experiences, whereby physiological reactions of the body serve as source domains for abstract meaning. Grief is thus not presented as a transient mental state, but as a state that has weight, duration, and spatial dimension, which points to its strong impact on the overall experience of the individual. The metaphor of emptiness is particularly significant because it implies a permanent change in the life space of the grieving, rather than only a temporary emotional response.

#### *4.2. Metaphors of time and the experience of loss*

The analysis of time metaphors shows that sudden death deeply disrupts the usual temporal structure of experience. Metaphors such as death as premature interruption and time as movement enable participants to articulate the feeling of shock and injustice resulting from the sudden interruption of the expected life course. At the same time, metaphors of duration and continuity (*you will always remain, his life will continue*) indicate the need to preserve the symbolic presence of the deceased person over time. Here, metaphors are used as a means of reconciling two opposing experiences: the physical finality of death and the emotional need for and hope for the persistence of relationships. Such use of metaphors confirms their regulatory function in emotionally critical situations.

#### *4.3. Identity, value, and interpersonal relations*

Metaphors that describe the deceased person as a size, structure, or pillar have an important evaluative and identity function. By describing the person as *a giant, a mountain of knowledge, or a pillar of wisdom*, participants not only express personal respect but also symbolically construct the collective identity of the community to which that person belonged. These metaphors indicate an understanding of the individual as a stabilizing element of the community, whose loss leads to a sense of insecurity and destabilization. In this way, metaphors are not used

exclusively to express emotions, but also to articulate social relations and hierarchies within the religious community.

#### *4.4. Religious metaphors as cognitive and emotional resources*

Religious conceptual metaphors have a central role in understanding death and regulating grief. Metaphors of death as a journey, heaven as a home, and God as father/protector enable participants to experience death not as an absolute end, but as a transition into another form of existence. In this way, the existential threat of death is reduced, and a framework for hope and comfort is provided.

In accordance with Kövecses's (2015) claims, religious metaphors in this corpus clearly realize an emotional, but also an axiomatic function of religion. Death is understood as part of a divine plan, whereby individual suffering is integrated into a broader, meaningful narrative. At the same time, a shared religious language enables social cohesion and a sense of community among participants. Particularly significant is the metaphor of temporary separation (*losing a friend temporarily*), which implies a future reunion. This metaphor directly opposes the conceptualization of death as a final loss and enables the reinterpretation of grief as a temporary state.

#### *4.5. Universality and contextual specificity of metaphors*

The results confirm Kövecses's thesis that conceptual metaphors simultaneously display universal and contextually specific features. Metaphors grounded in bodily experience, such as weight, emptiness, or damage, appear independently of the religious context and can be considered relatively universal (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). In contrast, religious metaphors of death and the afterlife are clearly conditioned by the specific theological beliefs of the community. This combination of universal and religiously specific metaphors shows that conceptual metaphor functions as a dynamic system in which body, culture, and discourse complement each other. Metaphors in this corpus are not only a reflection of individual emotions, but also a means of reproducing a religious worldview.

## **Conclusion**

This research analyzed conceptual metaphors in narratives of mourning published on a memorial page dedicated to a deceased theologian. The aim was to determine how metaphorical expressions participate in the conceptualization of death and loss within religious discourse.

The results show that participants predominantly structure the emotional experience of death through metaphors grounded in bodily experience, such as

metaphors of weight, emptiness, and physical damage. At the same time, metaphors of time express the experience of premature interruption of the course of life, but also the need for symbolic continuity through memory.

Religious metaphors play a key role in the reinterpretation of death because they enable loss to be understood as a transition or temporary separation within a broader theological narrative. In this way, the individual experience of grief is connected with the collective religious meanings of the community.

The results confirm that conceptual metaphors simultaneously display universal patterns, grounded in bodily experience, and contextually specific forms connected to the religious beliefs of the community. In this way, the paper contributes to research in cognitive linguistics and religious discourse and opens space for further contrastive studies of metaphors of mourning in different cultural and religious contexts.

Despite methodological limitations, such as the intuitive identification of metaphors and the analysis of a corpus in English, the paper provides insight into the way metaphors function as a key cognitive and discursive resource in situations of intense emotional experience. Future research could include more systematic methods of metaphor identification, such as MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure) or MIPVU (its extended version developed at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), as well as contrastive analyses of different religious and cultural communities.

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## **Metafora kao sredstvo komuniciranja emotivnog iskustva smrti u religijskom diskursu**

Sažetak

Gubitak, prerani odlazak i osjećaj praznine česta su iskustva suočavanja s iznenadnom smrću. Metafora se u takvim situacijama pokazuje kao ključni alat izražavanja, osobito kada osobno iskustvo nije u skladu s kolektivnim diskursom, a emocionalna iskustva često dovode do kreativne metaforičke produkcije (Littlemore 2019; Moon 1998). U religijskom jeziku metafora zauzima posebno mjesto kao sredstvo figurativne reprezentacije i može se analizirati prepoznavanjem konceptualnih prijenosnika te njihovih jezičnih realizacija (Hobbs 2021). Ovaj rad empirijski analizira konceptualne metafore u religijski obilježenim narativima žalovanja na temelju korpusa od 68 objava preuzetih s memorijalne stranice na društvenoj mreži Facebook. Analiza ispituje koje se metafore pojavljuju, kako su raspodijeljene unutar korpusa te koje diskurzivne i religijske funkcije ostvaruju. Polazeći od kognitivne teorije metafore, analiza pokazuje da sudionici iskustvo smrti strukturiraju kao utjelovljeno iskustvo, percepciju vremena, stavove prema sebi i religijski govor te kako doprinosi funkciji religije u jezičnoj komunikaciji. Rad doprinosi istraživanjima kognitivne lingvistike i religijskog diskursa pokazujući kako se univerzalni obrasci metaforičke konceptualizacije prepliću s kontekstualno specifičnim religijskim značenjima unutar diskursa žalovanja.