



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**A COGNITIVE SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF CANCER METAPHOR IN  
MALAY AND ENGLISH WOMEN'S NARRATIVES**

**NUR SABRINA ZAFIRAN MOHD JAMIL**

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By

**NUR SABRINA ZAFIRAN BINTI MOHD JAMIL**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts**

**April 2019**

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## DEDICATION

This piece of work is dedicated to all women out there battling cancer...



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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**April 2019**

**Chairman : Associate Professor Sabariah Md Rashid, PhD**  
**Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication**

Metaphor on cancer has been frequently addressed in research due to its powerful use in both spoken and written discourse. The analysis of cancer related metaphor in language would provide insights into how cancer patients conceive the cancer disease and their experiences with the disease. However, studies conducted cross-linguistically on cancer metaphors are scarce as most previous studies on cancer have mainly focused on European languages. This study sought to examine the use of cancer related metaphors in women's narratives in Malay and English language. The specific objectives of this study are to unravel the conceptual metaphor that underlie the metaphorical expressions in Malay women's narratives on cancer experience and to compare the unravelled Malay conceptual metaphor with those of English.

In this study, the cancer data in Malay were extracted from Malay women's narratives on cancer experience and were identified and selected based on the Pragglejaz Group's Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (2007). In contrast, the English data, a secondary data, was extracted from Gibbs and Franks. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) was employed for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed 14 conceptual metaphors of cancer in the Malay data which structure the women's experience with cancer. The comparison between Malay and English conceptual metaphors on cancer revealed differences and similarities in the conceptualisation of cancer in both languages. Accordingly, the findings of the study showed that Malay and English share some conceptual metaphors and also differences. Whilst the former provides evidence for the theory of metaphor universality, the identified variation shows that cancer metaphor is also culture-specific to Malay. The findings of the study provide insights into how women across different languages and cultures conceive the cancer disease and their experience with the disease, which would be valuable to health professionals and caretakers to find more effective ways of communicating and thinking about cancer, and providing emotional support to women cancer patients.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera

**ANALISIS KOGNITIF SEMANTIK METAFORA KANSER  
BERDASARKAN NARATIF DALAM KALANGAN WANITA MELAYU  
DAN INGGERIS**

Oleh

**NUR SABRINA ZAFIRAN BINTI MOHD JAMIL**

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**Pengerusi : Profesor Madya Sabariah Md Rahsid, PhD**  
**Fakulti : Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi**

Penggunaan metafora kanser sering dikaji disebabkan oleh kekerapan penggunaannya dalam wacana pertuturan dan juga penulisan. Kajian terhadap penggunaan metafora memberikan gambaran tentang pemahaman pesakit kanser terhadap penyakit tersebut dan pengalaman yang dilalui oleh mereka. Namun begitu, kajian silang linguistik berkaitan penggunaan metafora kanser amat terhad kerana kebanyakan kajian lepas mengutamakan bahasa-bahasa di benua Eropah. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji penggunaan metafora kanser dengan menggunakan pendekatan naratif dalam kalangan penutur wanita berbangsa Melayu berdasarkan kepada perbandingan dengan penutur wanita berbangsa Inggeris daripada data sekunder dan dapatan kajian oleh Gibbs dan Franks (2002).

Dalam kajian ini, data Melayu diambil daripada naratif dalam kalangan wanita Melayu mengenai pengalaman penyakit kanser yang dilalui. Data Melayu seterusnya dikenal pasti menggunakan *Metaphor Identification Procedure* (MIP) oleh Pragglejaz Group (2007). Manakala data daripada sumber Inggeris pula merupakan data sekunder, diambil daripada Gibbs dan Franks. Teori Konsep Metafora oleh Lakoff dan Johnson (1980) digunakan untuk data analisis. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan terdapat 14 metafora konseptual kanser dalam data Melayu yang membentuk pengalaman pesakit wanita dengan kanser. Perbandingan antara metafora konseptual kanser dalam kalangan wanita Melayu dan Inggeris mendedahkan perbezaan dan persamaan dalam konseptualisasi kanser. Oleh itu, dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa metafora konseptual kanser dalam Melayu dan Inggeris mempunyai persamaan dan perbezaan. Dapatan kajian ini juga turut menunjukkan bahawa persamaan antara kedua-dua bahasa ini menyokong teori universal metafora, manakala variasi yang dikenal pasti menunjukkan bahawa terdapat metafora kanser yang spesifik kepada budaya Melayu. Kesimpulannya, dapatan kajian ini dapat memberikan gambaran tentang pesakit

kanser wanita, merentasi bahasa dan budaya memahami kanser dan pengalaman mereka menghadapi kanser. Hal ini dapat memberikan manfaat kepada petugas kesihatan dan penjaga untuk berkomunikasi mengenai penyakit kanser secara lebih berkesan serta membantu memberi sokongan dari segi emosi kepada wanita yang menghidap kanser.



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Thank You.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMT	Conceptual Metaphor Theory
MLE	Metaphorical linguistic expression
MME	Malay metaphorical expression
MIP	Metaphor Identification Procedure



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an introduction to the fundamental aspects of the study. It begins with a discussion on the background to the study followed by an overview of why cancer was chosen as the focus of the study and statement of the problem. The purpose of the study and its research questions are then presented, followed by the scope of the study, definition of key terms used in the context of the study, and the structure of the thesis.

### 1.2 Background to the Study

Metaphor, which is seen traditionally as a figurative device in poetic language and literary works, has been regarded as part of thinking rather than just a figurative device (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003). It is a powerful cognitive tool that is frequently used to communicate abstract concepts involving sensitive and subjective experiences, such as illness, emotions, moral and death (e.g. Landau, Robinson, & Meier, 2014; Lendik, Chan, Renganathan, & Yap, 2017; Moradi & Mashak, 2014; Tian, 2014). In other words, this cognitive tool can be used to talk and potentially think about abstract concepts in terms of something concrete, which are manifested in word(s) or phrases used in daily expressions and are claimed to be pervasive (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003; Semino, 2008). Such expressions, which can be referred to as linguistic metaphors can be used to persuade, reason, evaluate, explain, theorize, and offer new conceptualization of reality (Semino, 2008). Moreover, it is now generally acknowledged that metaphor, which is regarded as a fundamental part of human thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), permeates our daily language, and we often use it subliminally.

Due to its pervasive linguistic manifestation in different types of discourse, metaphor has attracted the attention of scholars from different disciplines, namely, psychology (Gentner & Grudin, 1985; McMullen, 1999; McMullen & Conway, 2002), medicine (Ferguson et al., 2010; Golden, Whaley, & Stone, 2012; Periyakoil, 2008; Pritzker, 2003), law (Blavin & Cohen, 2002; de Sousa Santos, 1995; Greenwood, 2005; Hanne & Weisberg, 2018), politics (Ahrens, 2009; Charteris-Black, 2004a, 2004b, 2011, 2013; Meisenberg & Meisenberg, 2015) and economy (Arrese, 2015; Arrese & Varamiguel, 2016; Charteris-Black & Musolff, 2003; Chung, Ahrens, & Huang, 2003; Nurul Hijah bte Jasman & Kasim, 2013; Rajandran, 2013). Research has shown that metaphors perform many flexible functions in various textual presentations which involve the transfer of meanings from different domains: source and target. This transfer of meanings involves interaction between the thoughts of two different elements, reflected in a single word or phrase with certain functions (Charteris-Black, 2004a; Semino, 2008). For instance, in the health communication context, metaphors



are often used to describe a certain condition or health experiences because such experiences are often difficult to describe. The use of metaphors allows patients to express their subjective experience in a more concrete, lucid and delicate manner.

In the U.S. healthcare system, metaphors are often infused throughout cancer-related documents or conversations (Harrington, 2012). For example, the fight against cancer is often expressed in terms of war as illustrated in the following: 'I began to feel like I was winning the battle against the disease' (Armstrong & Jenkins, 2001). Such a linguistic metaphor employed by cancer patients does not only offer a valuable truth about what they feel and give an understanding about their complex experience with the disease, but also describes a sense of therapeutic determination (Fillion, 2013; Hammond, Teucher, Duggleby, & Thomas, 2012; Teucher, 2000).

In this light, it can be seen that illness such as cancer is generally often talked about metaphorically, as metaphor goes beyond language, transcending the realms of thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003; Semino, Demjén, Hardie, Payne, & Rayson, 2017). Research has shown that metaphor is a powerful tool in the discourse of cancer as related studies have revealed that healthcare providers and researchers employ metaphors to make unfamiliar concepts more perceptible to the public, whereas patients and family members use metaphors to share their illness experiences (Demmen et al., 2015; Semino et al., 2017). Previous studies on cancer metaphors have also shown that patients frequently employ a wide range of metaphorical expressions in describing their subjective experiences with the disease in English (e.g. Appleton & Flynn, 2014; Bowker, 1996; Demjén, Semino, & Koller, 2016; Gibbs & Franks, 2002; Hurley, 2014; McCartney, 2014; Semino et al., 2017).

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Kövecses (2005), some conceptual metaphors are universal. In this light, several unrelated languages may share similar conceptual metaphors for a particular illness experience. For instance, the conceptual metaphor CANCER IS WAR<sup>1</sup> (e.g. 'I'm battling cancer') can be found in English, Spanish and German (Fillion, 2013; Gibbs & Franks, 2002; Magaña, Matlock, & Quintana, 2016; Teucher, 2000; Williams Camus, 2009, 2016). The aforementioned conceptual metaphor provides evidence that some metaphors are universal, however the variability of conceptual metaphors across languages cannot be denied as (Kövecses, 2005) asserts, culture has a powerful influence on the diversity of the metaphorical linguistic expressions, which eventually invoke culture-specific conceptual metaphors. In the light of these universalities and disparities, the study focuses on the conceptualisation of cancer in Malay women's narratives on cancer experience and a comparison with women's conceptualisation of cancer in English based on a major study by Gibbs and Franks (2002). It would be interesting to discover the metaphors employed across the two cultural groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the thesis, metaphorical concepts and metaphors are presented in small capital letters.

In summary, language is believed to be the reflection of culture and mind, as indicated by Kövecses (2005) language reflects an individual's cultural pattern, custom and lifestyle. Therefore, language samples taken from different cultures would be insightful; they would provide us with data on cross-cultural variation or similarities on illness such as cancer.

### 1.3 Why Cancer Metaphor

Cancer, a disease feared by many, is a serious health challenge worldwide and having being diagnosed with cancer can be one of those critical incidents that negatively affect an individual's life. The World Health Organization (2008) estimated that by 2015, the mortality rate due to cancer has increased up to 83.2 million people from 7.4 million in 2004. In 2007, a total of 18,219 new cancer cases were registered at the Malaysia National Cancer Registry, whereby 55.4% of these cases were female (Zainal Ariffin Omar & Nor Saleha Ibrahim Tamin, 2011). Although cancer is not a new illness in the history of humanity, over the past decades, the number of cancer patients has grown drastically and related research on language used by cancer patients revealed several systematic metaphors that structure their expressions on cancer experience (Bowker, 1996; Gibbs & Franks, 2002; Magaña & Matlock, 2018; Semino et al., 2017). These studies have also shown that cancer is a complex, subjective and poorly delineated experience thereby expressions related to this disease tend to be verbalized and conceptualized through metaphors.

Historically, studies on metaphors pertaining to cancer first began in the 1970's when the former US President Nixon declared "War on cancer". Ever since then, there has been a great deal of work on the metaphors that conceptualize cancer and focus on the way individuals use metaphors in talking about their experiences with the illness. Various studies have shown that metaphor is regarded as a framework for patients to make sense of their cancer illness and it provides the intellectual and linguistic tools for communication about senseless suffering, and yet also offers plan for personal transformation in coping with such an illness (Bowker, 1996; Gibbs & Franks, 2002; Hurley, 2014; Semino, Demjén, Demmen, et al., 2017). To take an example, Bowker (1996) analysed the metaphors in her own narratives on her cancer experience and discovered that five metaphors were central to her narratives: insanity and chaos, natural disaster, cancer as an animate character, battle, and splitting her apart or dividing her. These metaphors allow her to personally define her illness experience in metaphorical ways. The variation of metaphors employed allowed her to personally express her illness experience might differ to those used by physicians or any other medical professionals (Gibbs & Franks, 2002).

From a cognitive perspective, linguists concur that metaphor is an important tool which helps to conceptualize the world in a particular way and make sense of "the unfamiliar, intangible world through mapping it to the more familiar physical world" (Zhao, 2009, p. 120). Hence, when a patient uses metaphorical expressions in talking about her illness, it reveals some representations of how she deals with her illness. Besides that, the use of metaphor in talking about illness is not only common among

the patients themselves, but also among health professionals. For example, a comparative study on patient's illness narratives and healthcare workers consultations revealed that metaphors do not only appear very frequently in health communication between nurses and patients, but also among healthcare workers who used metaphors to simplify messages and patients used metaphors as an instrument to help with the understanding of their illness (Sairanen, 2015). Accordingly, the focus on cancer metaphor is deemed important because diseases such as cancer which is fearful to many are often discussed in metaphoric terms as a way for individuals to understand and describe and cope with their illness experience.

In this regard, people from different cultures may have different beliefs in ways of coping with critical illness such as cancer. According Lim, Gonzalez, Wang-Letzkus, and Ashing-Giwa (2009) cancer patients' attitude and perception towards the disease are highly dependent on their cultural background. Related to cultural background, one's faith in religion also has a powerful influence on how cancer patients cope and perceived the illness (Venter, Venter, Botha, & Strydom, 2008). Accordingly, religion does not only provide valuable source of support, but also offers patients with a basis that helps them to understand disease better Ogden (2007). Therefore, it would be interesting to examine the conceptualizations of cancer across different cultural group such as the Malay and English.

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

A metaphor is often used in simplifying complex concepts which permits us to make sense of abstract concepts by drawing parallels to concepts that are more easily accessible to us. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) stress that human ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. Since then, scholars from a myriad of disciplines have investigated how metaphors are used, and over the years, they have produced new significant results in the use of metaphor (e.g. Berendt, 2008; Gibbs Jr, 2017; Gibbs & Franks, 2002; Semino, 2008; Semino et al., 2015; Steen, 2007; U. Teucher, 2003; Yu, 1995, 1998, 2009). The main focus of such studies was to explore the use of metaphors in different contexts. The studies demonstrate that metaphor is ubiquitous in our life, and metaphor is an important phenomenon in shaping the way people think and understand certain phenomena.

The metaphors people choose reflect how they see and experience a certain phenomenon, particularly when they are ill. Cancer, an illness that is normally associated with physical discomfort, anxiety, fear, isolation and shame, is one of those diseases that is often represented using metaphors in various writings such as blogs of those who have cancer, articles on cancer in newspapers and health magazines. It is regarded as a complex, subjective and poorly delineated experience that tends to be conventionally verbalized and conceptualized through metaphor (Casarett et al., 2010; Semino, 2008).

For instance, Harrington (2012) and Casarett et al. (2010) describe the use of metaphor in conveying patients' feelings as powerful, as it enables us to "access the patient's world" by comprehending patients' implicit perspective of the disease. This is evident in discourse studies that have been carried out on the use of metaphor in expressions related to cancer (e.g. Appleton & Flynn, 2014; Demmen et al., 2015; Gibbs & Franks, 2002; Grant & Hundley, 2008; Halperin, 2017; Hurley, 2014; Jasen, 2009; Krieger, 2014; Lanceley & Clark, 2013; Seale, 2001; Semino et al., 2017; Skott, 2002). These studies have shown that within the discourse of cancer, patients' use of metaphorical expressions manifest the conceptualisation of their cancer experiences. In other words, their use of metaphors provide valuable insights into the shared and individual ways patients make sense of their illness, and particularly, of their cancer experience (Hammond et al., 2012). Moreover, the use of metaphors bridges communication gaps between health professionals and cancer patients during the consultation by revealing aspects of the illness that they experienced. It also projects how they conceived their experience with the illness (Bowker, 1996; Casarett et al., 2010; Domino, Affonso, & Hannah, 1992).

Since the beginning of cancer metaphor research, which focused on the use of metaphor in cancer discourse, various studies have often investigated the Western context, such as English (Casarett et al., 2010; Czechmeister, 1994; Gibbs & Franks, 2002; Hauser & Schwarz, 2015; Laranjeira, 2013; Malm, 2016; Semino et al., 2015; Semino et al., 2017; Williams Camus, 2009; Zetterström, 2013), Spanish (Magaña & Matlock, 2018; Williams Camus, 2016), German (Teucher, 2000) and Finnish (Paal, 2009). This subject, however, has not received much attention in the Asian context, particularly, on Malay data. In other words, the study of cancer metaphor remains under researched in Malay. An exhaustive literature search has revealed that, to date, there is a lack of published studies on the use of metaphor related to illness, specifically, on cancer. The only few studies which have examined metaphor on illness, such as illness in general by Lendik et al. (2017) and Bamber (1987), and on other specific illness such as H1NI (Priyadarshni, Zalina Mohd Kasim, & Afida Ali, 2017). This study therefore aims at examining Malay women's conceptualization of cancer as there is a need to provide a systematic analysis of metaphors in women's narratives on cancer experience in Malay.

On the other hand, with regard to comparative analysis of cancer metaphors cross-linguistically and cross-culturally, there are only a few scholarly work that have dealt with comparative analyses of such metaphors. As far as cancer related metaphor studies are concerned, only a few comparative studies have been conducted cross-linguistically and cross-culturally on cancer related metaphors. For example, Teucher's (2000) comparative study of cancer metaphor in English and German narratives revealed shared metaphors of BATTLE and JOURNEY in conceptualizing cancer treatment. Similarly, a study by Williams Camus (2016) on the metaphors of cancer treatment in English and Spanish press indicate that both languages share WEAPON, GARMENT and FOOD AND COCKTAILS as the major source domains of cancer and cancer treatment.

To date, a search of the literature, however, revealed that there is limited published research that provides a systematic comparative analysis of cancer related metaphors in women's narratives on cancer experience specifically in Malay and English. By carrying out this study, the manner in which cancer is conveyed in terms of its metaphoricity can be unravelled in these two different linguistic communities. In response to this, the study poses questions such as what source domains are used in the manifestation of cancer in both languages? Are there any similarities and/ or disparities in the manifestation of the metaphors across the two different languages, Malay and English? Does different cultural experience influence the manifestation of such metaphors? In the light of these questions, this comparative study of languages of Malay with reference to English provides insights into how different languages and cultures influence the production of metaphorical expressions. It would also unravel any similarities and/ or disparities between the two languages and reflect how different linguistic communities think of cancer.

In addition, since the study focuses on a comparative analysis between Malay and English, two different languages and cultural backgrounds, the embodied nature of metaphors cannot be investigated without cultural influence, since we cannot be separated from our social environments (Kövecses, 2005). The fuzziness in the categorization of the source and target domains, and thus the naming of a conceptual metaphor across individuals and cultures are evidence that culture and embodied experience are inseparable. Thus, by carrying out this study, the manner in which the metaphorical expressions related to cancer conveyed through the narratives on cancer experience could also be unravelled, that is, whether they are culture specific or universal. Such focus allows us to examine how Malay and English women conceptualizes cancer in their language.

In summary, the discussion thus far has established that research on Malay speakers' conceptualizations of cancer has been scarce as most studies were conducted mainly among English native speakers. Secondly, although various research have focused on women's conceptualizations of cancer, no studies have been found to focus on Malay women's conceptualizations of the disease. In other words, the concern here is the metaphors expressed in Malay language, i.e. *Bahasa Melayu*. Thirdly, there is limited study which has explored the subject matter cross-linguistically; there have been very few published empirical accounts of systematic comparative study on cancer related metaphors between languages and cultures. Additionally, for the purpose of studying cancer related metaphors cross-linguistically/cross-culturally, Malay and English (American) are chosen as the languages to be compared in this study as they belong to different language families and are genetically, and geographically unrelated. Thus, owing to these gaps in the literature, this study aimed to conduct a comparative study on cancer related metaphors between the two languages, with the Malay data obtained from narratives on cancer experience compiled from interviews with cancer patients, and the English data derived from a secondary source, namely, Gibbs and Franks' (2002) study.

## **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to investigate conceptual metaphors of cancer in Malay and English women's narratives on cancer experience. More specifically, this study aims to achieve three specific objectives as follows:

1. To examine the conceptual structure of cancer metaphor in Malay women narratives on cancer experience.
2. To compare the conceptual metaphors of cancer in Malay women's narratives on cancer experience with reference to English (Gibbs & Franks, 2002).
3. To examine whether the conceptual metaphors of cancer in the Malay women's narratives are culture-specific or universal.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions are addressed:

- 1a) What are the conceptual metaphors of cancer that underlie the metaphorical expressions in the Malay women's narratives on cancer experience?
- 1b) What are the mappings manifested in the metaphorical expressions of cancer in the Malay women's narratives on cancer experience?
- 2) How are the metaphors of cancer unravelled in the Malay women's narratives on cancer experience similar or different from those of English (Gibbs & Franks, 2002)?
- 3) To what extent are the metaphors of cancer in the Malay women's narratives are universal or culture-specific?

## **1.7 The Scope of the Study**

In this section, the scope of the study are discussed. First, the focus of this study is situated within the paradigm of cognitive semantics without emphasizing the representation of cancer in relation to health communication.

Second, this research is limited to the study of cancer related metaphors employed by Malay and English women native speakers who have been diagnosed with cancer. It must be emphasized that this study is mainly concerned with the conceptualization of cancer related metaphors, for example, the manifestation of mental structures in the expressions of cancer among Malay women in comparison to English.

Third, according to World Health Organization (2015) women are at greater risk of getting cancer compared to men. Likewise, in Malaysia, Malay women are the second highest in developing cancer (WHO, 2008). Therefore, this study focuses on only

female cancer patients from Malay and English native speakers, i.e. how women talked about cancer and its related experiences.

Lastly, with regards to English data, due to limitation and difficulties faced in collecting primary data from female English native speakers with cancer experience, the English data is derived from a secondary source, i.e. Gibbs and Franks (2002). The findings of the aforementioned study are used as the basis for comparing the unravelled cancer related conceptual metaphors in Malay women's narratives on cancer experience.

## **1.8 Significance of the Study**

The manner in which patients express their thinking and their personal experience with the cancer disease could be uncovered by exploring their use of metaphors. In this light, this study is significant in several ways. First, it demonstrates the use of various metaphors evoked by the linguistic expressions of Malay women perspective on the disease. Additionally, the present study is different from the previous related studies as it focuses on the metaphors employed by Malay native speakers while the majority of previous studies explored cancer related metaphors in the English native speakers' context. Besides, the study fills an important gap in the literature by focusing on Malay women's narratives on the disease since most research on the conceptualization of the disease has been limited to English women's narratives.

Second, the present study analyses similarities and/or differences in cancer related metaphors cross-linguistically and cross-culturally (Malay and English). This angle of study hardly explored as reviewed literature revealed a lack of studies adopting a cultural perspective to examine metaphors used by female cancer patients. Specifically, through this cross-cultural/cross-linguistic study, the study presents what metaphors are commonly used by the two different linguistics communities and point out the similarities and/or disparities across the two groups. Moreover, this study will also contribute to the literature on cross-cultural research on cancer related metaphors and universality of the conceptual metaphors.

Third, more studies on cancer with respect to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) need to be done to further contribute to the field of cognitive semantic research. Numerous studies have been carried out to investigate the occurrences of metaphors in the narratives related to cancer and how the conceptual metaphors are evoked. Studies conducted on cancer discourse in relation to CMT in the Malaysian context are still lacking. There is a need for more studies to be conducted which analyse the conceptual metaphors in cancer discourse and examine how these conceptual metaphors are evoked in describing the abstract experience of the disease. This research will add substantially to a growing body of literature on CMT studies.

Fourth and finally, findings of the study will have insightful implications on how different kinds of metaphors enable women diagnosed with cancer to make sense of their disease as it is commonly believed that a person's mental attitude in response to a diagnosis of cancer affects her chances of survival. Besides, the act of engaging with cancer metaphors can create a fertile ground for scientific creativity and reshape dialogue between patients and cancer care providers which is crucial in advancing and improving the treatment provided to cancer patients.

## **1.9 Theoretical Perspectives**

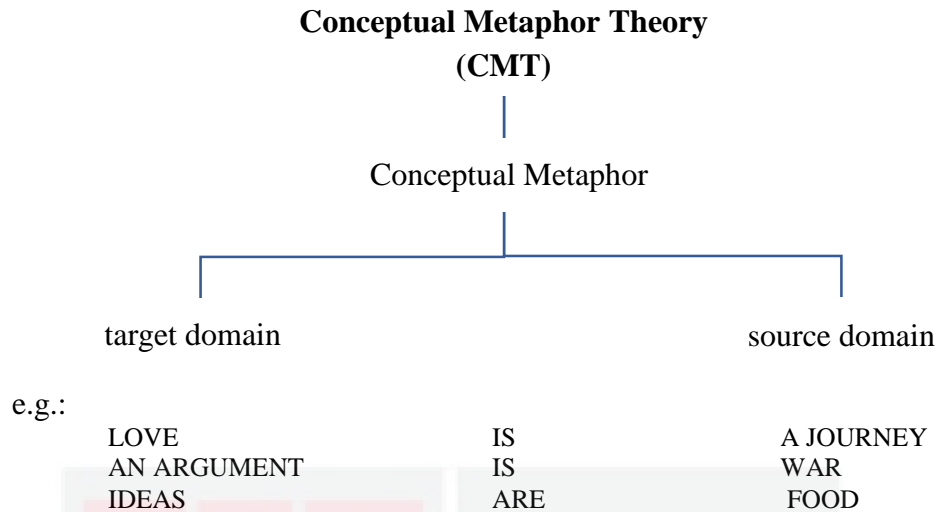
This section discusses the theory that underpins this study. The theory employed in this study is based on Lakoff and Johnson (1980) perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) in the analysis of Malay and English women narratives of cancer experience. To fully understand conceptual metaphor, one must have a thorough grasp of the following constructs: Conceptual Metaphor, Target Domain, Source Domain and Metaphorical Linguistic Expressions, as these are the key features of the theory. In this study, metaphor is regarded as a conceptual tool that provides evidence of how women from different linguistic communities structure and conceive cancer as defined in CMT. Contradicting to the traditional view, metaphor was regarded as a linguistic ornament in language use (Kövecses, 2010b). Further description of the theory in relation to this study is provided below.

### **1.9.1 The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)**

In contrast to the traditional view of metaphor the CMT posits that human ordinary conceptual system of how we think and act is principally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). It structures and guides how we perceive, think and act. From this perspective, it is seen as an essential manifestation for our capacity to think about and conceptualize the world. Derivatively, metaphor is seen as a linguistic phenomenon in which Kövecses (2005) claimed that metaphor exists in language because it exists in thought.

Within the CMT, metaphor is characterized by conceptual mappings of two domains, namely target domain and source domain. Whilst the former refers to something that is abstract and more subjective, the latter (source domain) is typically less abstract or less complex than the target domain. For instance, in the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LIFE is the target domain that we try to understand and JOURNEY is the source domain that further contributes meaning to the concept of LIFE. From here, it can be seen that JOURNEY as the source domain is less abstract and less complex than that of LIFE. Based on this notion, the term conceptual metaphor is used. Referring back to LIFE IS A JOURNEY, this metaphor is based on the comparison of two categories and it is not explicitly marked but rather based on cultural knowledge which holds such understanding that LIFE is regarded as a JOURNEY and is assigned the quality of journey (an act of traveling from one place to another) to an abstract concept (LIFE) to describe a person's definition of life.





**Figure 1.1 : Conceptual Metaphor Theory framework**  
(Kövecses, 2010b; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980)

In the study, CMT serves as the fundamental framework in unravelling the metaphorical expressions of cancer in Malay women’s narratives of their cancer experience. This theory enables the study to understand their depictions of their own personal experience in having to cope with the illness. Furthermore, the systematicities of this theory in uncovering the expressions of linguistic instantiations of underlying conceptual metaphor is evident in many past studies, particularly cancer (e.g. Appleton & Flynn, 2014; Demmen et al., 2015; Gibbs & Franks, 2002; Grant & Hundley, 2008; Halperin, 2017; Hurley, 2014; Jasen, 2009; Krieger, 2014; Lanceley & Clark, 2013; Seale, 2001; Skott, 2002; Williams Camus, 2009). Currently, most of the research on the conceptual metaphor tradition has not been primarily concerned with the metaphor on cancer from the Malay’s perspective as no published study found addresses this in the Malay context. It is important to conduct such study as it will provide evidence of how metaphors on cancer experiences structure cancer patients’ view on their illness as well as providing insights into how different kinds of metaphors enable female cancer patients with different cultural background to more comprehensively make sense of their illness.

### 1.10 Definition of Terms

1. *Cancer* is derived from the Greek word for crab, conjuring images of ‘cancer, like crabs, creeping along and eating away the flesh and the lives of patients’ (Skott, 2002, p. 231). According to the National Cancer Institute, cancer is the name given to a collection of related diseases that involve abnormal cell growth with the potential to invade or spread to other parts of the body.

In the context of this study, the narrative comprised Malay and English women's experience with cancer irrespective of their diagnosis. The study does not specify a particular experience, such as one of a particular stage of cancer or at a specific kind of treatment received by cancer patients. Rather, it focuses on the whole experience, such as patients' experience with the diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, their coping and attempting to heal and the cancer disease itself.

2. *Metaphor* is viewed as a conceptual mapping of the two domains; source domain and target domain. It is a mental phenomenon manifested through language which governs linguistic expressions, and is different from the traditional metaphor as explained earlier (refer page 15).

3. *Cancer Metaphor* refers to conceptual metaphors related to cancer and cancer experience as instantiated by the metaphorical expressions used in describing cancer and cancer related experience in the Malay and English women's narratives.

4. *Conceptualization* is used in a broad sense as a single representation of a person's mental activities, such as beliefs, concepts, and understanding (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2002). In the context of the study, the metaphorical linguistic expressions employed by the women cancer patients represent their concept of perceiving and understanding the disease.

5. *Conceptual Metaphor* refers to a cognitive phenomenon whereby one conceptual domain (the target domain) is understood in terms of another (the source domain) and usually expressed in terms of A is B, such as CANCER IS WAR. According to Turner and Lakoff (1989), conceptual metaphors are part of the common conceptual apparatus shared by members of a culture. Further explanation of conceptual metaphor is as explained in the next chapter.

6. *Domains* refer to the ideas or semantic field referred to by a lexical item. The domains are rich in mental representations that consist of background knowledge that relates to particular experiences or phenomena (Semino, 2008).

7. *Metaphorical Linguistic Expressions (MLEs)* are a set of words or expressions that comprised both source and target domain (Kövecses, 2010b). MLEs in this study refer to a set of words which represent a particular source domain. For example, a source domain of WAR may be represented by words like *attacked*, *indefensible*, *target*, *demolished* and *won* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

8. *Narratives* refer to the writers' or speakers' unique personal history that influences how they make meaning of their life experience (Barbour, 2013). On this basis, narratives on cancer experience provide individual and cultural concepts of health, illness and mortality as patients struggle for meaning when living with a life-threatening illness (Teucher, 2003). Thus, in this context of study, narrative approach

is employed as a part of data collection in providing a spoken account of Malay women's cancer experience in which it tells the details of their personal understanding while coping with this traumatizing illness.

### **1.11 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. The present chapter outlines the various essential topics pertaining to the study. It discusses introductory and fundamental components of the introduction chapter, such as the background to the study, why cancer metaphor was chosen as the focus of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, scope and significance of the study, theoretical framework and so on. Chapter two presents the literature review related to the study, which includes discussions on essential related subject matters. The chapter particularly discusses and provide an overview of previous studies conducted on cancer metaphor, as well as the issues of universality and culture-specific metaphor. Chapter three explains the methodology of the study which consists of a description of the design of the study, data collection procedures and data analysis. Chapter four presents the conceptual metaphors underlying the metaphorical expressions found in the Malay women's narratives, followed by the findings of the comparative analysis of the Malay cancer metaphors with reference to that of English. The concluding chapter, chapter five summarizes the findings of the study and provides implications and recommendations for future studies.

### **1.12 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the fundamental aspects related to the study, such as the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, and theoretical perspectives, definition of terms, and scope and significance of the study. It has provided insights on metaphors in talk of cancer experience through the lens of Malay and English women cancer patients' narratives with the view of creating an overall understanding of why such investigation is conducted.

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