Euphemistic Metaphors in English and Spanish Epitaphs: A Comparative Study

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Following the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, it is the aim of this paper to analyse the conceptual organisation underlying death-related metaphorical expressions in English and Spanish. With this in mind, this paper presents a comparative study of death metaphors in a sample of epitaphs from Highgate Cemetery (London, UK) and from the Cemetery of Albacete (Albacete, Spain) focusing specifically on those aimed at substituting the notions of 'death' and 'dying'. The results obtained reveal that the conceptual organisations that underlie the euphemistic metaphors for death in English and Spanish derive both from our common bodily experience and from specific cultural constraints. Although the set of conceptual metaphors for the domain of death is similar in both languages, the Spanish epitaphs show a clear preference for source domains in which Jewish-Christian beliefs and political issues play a crucial role, whereas the English epitaphs tend to display a more optimistic, life-like approach to death.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor; euphemism; taboo of death; epitaph; cross-cultural conceptualisations

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Metáforas eufemísticas en epitafios ingleses y españoles: Un estudio contrastivo

Siguiendo el modelo teórico de la metáfora conceptual, el objetivo de este artículo es analizar las unidades metafóricas del ámbito de la muerte en inglés y español. Para tal fin, este trabajo presenta un estudio comparativo de las metáforas observadas en una muestra de epitafios de los cementerios de Highgate (Londres, Reino Unido) y de Albacete (Albacete, España). Dado que los epitafios constituyen una fuente inagotable de eufemismo relacionado con la muerte, este estudio comparativo se centra en las metáforas conceptuales que sustituyen a los conceptos 'muerte' y 'morir' en las inscripciones de ambos cementerios. Los resultados obtenidos demuestran que la organización conceptual que subyace al eufemismo relativo a la muerte en inglés y español deriva tanto de la experiencia física común a ambas sociedades como de las restricciones culturales propias de cada una de ellas. De hecho, aunque el conjunto de metáforas empleadas es similar en ambas lenguas, los epitafios españoles muestran una clara preferencia por dominios fuente en los que se aprecia el peso de la religión y de cuestiones políticas, mientras que los ingleses se muestran relativamente optimistas con respecto a la muerte.

Palabras clave: metáfora conceptual; eufemismo; tabú de la muerte; epitafio; conceptualizaciones interculturales

1. Introduction

Either owing to fear, religion or issues of tact and respect, death is a topic that, far from having lost its interdictive strength with the passing of time, remains one of the greatest taboos in our contemporary society.[1] In consequence, language users feel reluctant to deal with death using straightforward terms and tend to soften the effect of what they really wish to communicate. To this end, they resort to 'euphemism', the process whereby the taboo is stripped of its most explicit overtones thus providing a way to speak about experiences too vulnerable and intimate to be discussed without linguistic safeguards. In this way, death-related euphemism performs a healing function: if we use words other than death, the grief of a loved one dying may become more bearable. In this process of linguistic makeup, figurative language plays a crucial role: metaphor constitutes a potent source for euphemistic reference and a common device to cope with death, as shown in different cognitively-based studies (Bultnick 1998; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Herrero Ruiz 2007; Crespo-Fernández 2008 and 2011).[2]

Despite the reluctance to mention the subject of death, there are communicative situations in which one cannot evade the notions of death and dying. This is the case of 'epitaphs', inscriptions placed on tombstones which, for hundreds of years, have been a significant part of the death ritual in Western cultures. Given the obvious need to refer to mortality, the gravity of the situation and the social impositions of these particular texts, epitaphs constitute a breeding ground for metaphorical euphemism. This is especially true of the so-called 'opinion' epitaphs, i.e., personal and intimate funeral texts in which feelings and emotions, as well as socio-political issues, play a vital role.[3]

It is the aim of this paper to analyse the conceptual organization underlying death-related metaphorical expressions in English and Spanish. With this in mind, following Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth CMT) as theoretical paradigm, this paper presents a comparative study of death metaphors on a sample of epitaphs from East Highgate Cemetery and from the Cemetery of Albacete.[4] More precisely, this study focuses on the conceptual metaphors aimed at substituting the notions of death and dying inscribed upon gravestones in order to account for cross-linguistic and cross-cultural variation in the metaphorical mappings involved in coping with death. I have focused on a concept that is so relevant to both cultures as death, since, as Wierzbicka puts it, any

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[2] Thanks are due to the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier draft.

[3] By contrast, 'informative' epitaphs, i.e., objective inscriptions that provide basic information about the deceased (including the name of the decedent and their dates of birth and death), tend to rely on impersonal language and standardised formulae. For a full account of the types of epitaphs and their functions in discourse, see Crespo-Fernández (2011: 201-02).

[4] Situated in North London, Highgate Cemetery is divided into the West (original) Cemetery, built in 1839, and the East Cemetery, opened in 1854. There are about 167,000 people in total buried in the two areas of the cemetery. The Cemetery of Albacete, a city situated in southeast Spain with a population of around 150,000 inhabitants, was inaugurated in 1879. It is estimated that there are 140,000 people buried there.

contrastive study in the field of linguistics should be done "in terms of concepts which are relatively, if not absolutely, universal" (2003: 71). This contrastive analysis seems to be a worthy enterprise. Despite the substantial body of cognitively-based research in cross-linguistic perspectives related to death (Marín-Arrese 1996; Vogel 2009; Lee 2011), to the best of my knowledge, no study has been devoted so far to the comparison of conceptual metaphors in English and Spanish epitaphs.

This paper is structured as follows: After first presenting the theoretical paradigm into which this study is embedded and considering euphemism from the cognitive standpoint, I present the corpus and the methodology used. Next, I proceed to analyse the different death-related conceptual metaphors encountered in the sample of epitaphs, which constitutes the primary focus of this paper. A summary of the results obtained will bring this study to an end.

2. EUPHEMISM AS A COGNITIVELY-MOTIVATED PHENOMENON

The well-known framework of CMT, as pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), opens a new way to the interpretation of euphemism, which is primarily a mental phenomenon and, as such, can be fruitfully studied from a cognitive perspective. Broadly speaking, CMT claims that metaphor is not simply a matter of language, but also —and fundamentally— a matter of thought which stands as a means of creating, organising and understanding reality. From this standpoint, a metaphor is defined as "a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system" (Lakoff 1993: 203), i.e., a set of conceptual correspondences from a source domain (the realm of the physical or more concrete reality) to a target domain (death, in our case). Though traditional CMT claims that conceptualisations are grounded in our embodied, sensorimotor experience (that is, metaphorical projection from the concrete to the abstract makes use of our bodily and social experience), Grady (1997) states that many conceptualisations do not have an experiential basis. The so-called complex metaphors are not directly motivated by correlations in experience; rather, they are a combination of primary metaphors, i.e., those grounded in how we experience reality. In order to better assess the role that conceptual metaphors play in language, thought and culture, and thus study such a culturally sensitive phenomenon as euphemism, a more comprehensive approach to metaphor than that outlined in traditional CMT seems necessary.

The framework of CMT has been subject to redefinition over the years. Different cognitive studies have complemented and improved on the initial version (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Gibbs 2011; Steen 2011; Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez 2011; Kövecses 2011, among others) and explored the relationship between body, language, culture and cognition (Kövecses 2005 and 2010; Yu 2009; Sharifian 2011), which is of utmost interest for the understanding of metaphor in real-world discourse. One of the most influential contributions is that proposed by Steen. He goes beyond a strictly cognitive-scientific approach to language and offers a three-dimensional view of metaphor: "[M]etaphor may

be theoretically defined as a matter of conceptual structure, but in empirical practice it works its wonders in language, communication, or thought" (2011: 59), allowing for a deeper insight into the deliberate use of metaphors in communication. For his part, Gibbs proposes a dynamic view of metaphor to account for the interaction of brain, body and world that simultaneously operate in the metaphorical structuring of abstract concepts. He considers conceptual metaphors "as basins of attraction . . . in the phase space of the talking and thinking of a discourse community, which emerge from many different forces, operating along different time scales" (2011: 551).

Kövecses' (2005 and 2010) work on cross-cultural variation in metaphor use and understanding is especially useful for my purpose here. He argues that the influence of embodiment coexists with the influence of cultural environment to explain the culture-specific aspects of shared conceptual metaphors in different languages. Kövecses offers a version of CMT in which the pressure of context plays a central role: "Our effort to be coherent with the local context may be an important tool in understanding the use of metaphors in natural discourse. This aspect of metaphor use has so far remained outside the interest and, indeed, the competence of "traditional" conceptual metaphor theory" (2010: 206). Allied to this view of context are the key notions of 'differential experiential focus', the process whereby the embodiment associated with a target domain consists of several components that are given different priorities in different cultures (Kövecses 2005: 246); and of 'main meaning focus', i.e., central knowledge concerning a source domain that is widely shared in a community (2005: 12). This meaning focus characterises source domains: it represents the social values and cultural knowledge shared by members of a society that are preserved for the metaphorical structuring of the target. Shariffian's (2011) work on metaphor in culture is also worthy of mention. In order to account for the fact that a large proportion of conceptualisations emerge as cultural cognitions, he proposes the notion of *cultural conceptualisation*, i.e., schemas and categories that emerge in cultural groups where people have similar cognitive systems of values and beliefs and are interacting in a shared situational context.

As mappings are always partial, that is, they highlight some aspects of the source domain while hide or disregard others (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 10), metaphors are readily accessible for euphemistic (and dysphemistic) reference. In fact, the nature of the source domain chosen and the values that are singled out and emphasised for the structuring of abstract concepts have a significant effect on the euphemistic capacity of the metaphorical item. Cognitive issues, however, have been largely excluded from the analysis of euphemism. One of the few scholars to have considered euphemism from the perspective of CMT is Chamizo-Domínguez (2005), who argued that many euphemisms are structured by their integration into conceptual networks. In this vein, Casas-Gómez defined euphemism as "the cognitive process of conceptualization of a forbidden reality, which . . . enables the speaker, in a certain 'context' or in a specific pragmatic situation, to attenuate . . . a certain forbidden concept or reality" (2009:

738). That euphemism is a cognitively-motivated phenomenon can also be gathered from Lee: "Euphemism and taboo are not only sides of one coin in our pragmatic competence, but also linguistic manifestations of our cognitive system" (2011: 351-52).

From this viewpoint, I consider death as a conceptual category, which leads me to adopt a broader concept of euphemism that goes beyond a mere lexical substitution strategy. Euphemism, as a linguistic manifestation of our cognitive system, offers significant information concerning the way in which a certain taboo topic is actually perceived, understood and mitigated. By doing so, euphemism helps to understand how taboos are conceived in cultural groups and what beliefs are accepted or rejected.

3. Corpus Data and Methods

The corpus samples epitaphs collected in Eastern Highgate Cemetery and in the Cemetery of Albacete. The data for the Spanish subcorpus consists of 172 tombstone inscriptions and 140 for the English. The choice for epitaphs as the source of empirical data for this article is not random. Firstly, epitaphs are obviously a rich source of death-related euphemism, as mentioned earlier; secondly, when dealing with epitaphs I believe that it is necessary to focus on some authentic data, thereby avoiding an approach to death metaphors based on examples constructed by the author (Marín-Arrese 1996) or excerpted from lexicographic sources (Bultnick 1998). Indeed, fictitious inscriptions lack authenticity, which is necessary to ensure added sociological value. In the epitaphs used to illustrate the analysis, the family names of the deceased have been hidden under the initials followed by an asterisk, as I think that verbatim copies of the inscriptions might prove unpleasant to the relatives of the dead.

The choice for the cemeteries of Highgate and Albacete was not random either. Though I am aware that a bigger sample of epitaphs from a broader sample of cemeteries would have allowed for serious statistical work and a more representative qualitative analysis, given space limitations I had to rely on a small data sample. The two cemeteries involved in the study were chosen because they were founded at around the same time (second half of the nineteenth century), they are similar in size and are both still operating (see Note 4).

The research methodology followed corresponds to the "top-down" approach in the tradition of cognitive linguists (see, for example, Kövecses 2008). The methodology is the following: first, certain linguistic data is selected; second, generalisations are made given that data; third, cognitive structures are suggested, e.g., conceptual metaphors that underlie the selected data. As this approach is based on an incomplete set of linguistic material, it does not allow valid conclusions in quantitative terms to be reached. Despite this limitation, I believe that the corpus data used here is reasonably representative of the features of the euphemistic metaphors that appear on gravestones in Spain and England.

4. Results and Discussion

From the analysis of the corpus, I identified different types of metaphors that contribute to the understanding of death in both languages. I found five conceptual mappings for the metaphors excerpted from the English epitaph subcorpus, namely DEATH IS A JOURNEY (49 occurrences), DEATH IS A REST / A SLEEP (39), DEATH IS A JOYFUL LIFE (34), DEATH IS A LOSS (7) and DEATH IS THE END (3). As far as the Spanish subcorpus is concerned, the metaphors encountered can be assigned to seven conceptualisations, namely LA MUERTE ES UN DESCANSO ('death is a rest', 48), MORIR ES SUBIR AL CIELO ('to die is to ascend to Heaven', 42), MORIR ES VIVIR EN EL RECUERDO ('to die is to live in memory', 35), MORIR ES CAER POR DIOS Y POR ESPAÑA ('to die is to fall for God and Spain', 18), ESTAR MUERTO ES ESTAR CON EL SEÑOR ('to be dead is to be with the Lord', 15), LA MUERTE ES UNA PÉRDIDA ('death is a loss', 10) and LA MUERTE ES EL FINAL ('death is the end', 4).

Before going into further detail, it is worth noting that most of the conceptualisations used in both subcorpora imply a positive value-judgement of death. In fact, the majority of the source domains employed are domains with positive connotations, whereas those that imply a negative, or at least non-positive, value-judgement of death (a loss and the end) are, by far, the least quantitatively relevant. I will turn now to comparing the way English and Spanish conceptual metaphors deal with death by analysing those conceptualisations that imply a positive view of human mortality.

4.1. Metaphors with positive connotations

The conceptual metaphor viewing death in terms of a journey is quite frequent in both corpora. It is the source of 37% out of the metaphorical items detected in the English epitaphs. Though not considered explicitly as a journey in the subcorpus of Spanish epitaphs, the metaphor MORIR ES SUBIR AL CIELO ('to die is to ascend to Heaven') shares the same conceptual basis (dying as a departure) and appears in almost one third of the Spanish metaphors collected.

This metaphorical mapping transfers different attributes from the source domain of a journey to the target domain of death. It presents different sets of conceptual correspondences as a result of using the knowledge we have about journeys to talk about death: first, the act of dying corresponds to the act of leaving; second, the deceased is the one that embarks on the journey; and third, the destination of the journey (if mentioned) is an encounter with God in Heaven. In these correspondences the notion of death as movement from one place to another plays a crucial role, aptly demonstrated in the verbs of motion found in the English epitaphs (*pass away*, *pass on*, *depart*, *leave*, *go*, *cross* and *fly away*) and in the Spanish ones (*subir* 'ascend', *elevarse* 'rise', *volar* 'fly' and *ir* 'go'). These verbs map motion (as the euphemistic source domain) onto change (as the target domain) by virtue of the primary metaphor CHANGE IS MOTION, which ranges over all the cases included in this metaphor. Consider the two epitaphs below:[5]

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[5] Hereafter the metaphorical units I wish to highlight in the epitaphs provided as examples will appear in italics.

(1)   To the memory of
       Michael B*
       Who *departed this life*
       On December 24th 2003
       He gave so much to so many
       Requiescat in Pace

(2)   El niño
       Luisito P*G*
       subió al Cielo el 15 de julio de 1947
       a los 6 años
       Tus padres y hermano no te olvidan

       [The child Luisito P*G* ascended to Heaven on 15 July 1947 aged 6.
                    Your parents and brother will not forget you]

The journey metaphor is an example of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema. As Lakoff (1993: 275) puts it, "[c]omplex events in general are also understood in terms of a source-path-goal schema; complex events have initial states (source), a sequence of intermediate stages (path) and a final stage (destination)". Lakoff and Johnson argue that the trajectory between the source and the final location is imaginative, "conceptualized as a line like 'trail' left by an object as it moves" (1999: 33). This image schema is applied differently in the English and Spanish epitaphs. Whereas most English inscriptions focus on the act of leaving, that is, on the starting point of the journey (source location), those from the Spanish gravestones emphasise the destination (goal location). This can be explained by the addition of profiling and a trajectory-landmark relation (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 33): either the destination can be highlighted and thus identified as the landmark relative to which the motion takes place, or the source can be taken as the landmark in the trajectory of motion. Consequently there are two versions of the journey metaphor at play here: DEATH IS DEPARTURE and DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 7-8), as I will explain in what follows.

In most of the English epitaphs with the verbs *depart*, *go*, *pass* or *leave* the destination of the journey is left implicit; thus, the journey is seen as a departure with neither the opportunity for return nor an expressed destination. There are numerous consolatory expressions within this metaphor such as "*gone but not forgotten*", "*not dead, but gone before*" and, especially, *pass away*, a euphemism that leaves the destination of the journey vague, ambiguous and, therefore, unknown (Ayto 2007: 235). By leaving the destination unexpressed, English epitaphs evoke the comforting thought that the deceased has not really died, but merely set out on a journey and will so be absent. However, some of the Highgate epitaphs do refer to the final destination of the journey in concrete and explicitly religious terms: the joyful meeting with God in Heaven. This notion provides

the euphemistic support of phrases with the verbs *to pass* (*pass into the Light*, *pass Home*, *pass into the Great Beyond*) and *to go* (*go to Heaven*, *go Home* and *go to our Father's Home above*). Consider the following epitaph:

(3) In Loving Memory
     of
     John Harvey Stone
     who died Jan. 20th 1886
     Aged 39
     Not lost to memory or to love
     but *gone to our Father's Home above*

In the Spanish subcorpus the encounter with God in Heaven as the final point of the journey is mentioned in *all* cases: *subir al Cielo* ('to ascend to Heaven'), *subir a la Gloria* ('to ascend to Glory') and *ir al Cielo* ('to go to Heaven') focus on the conclusion of the act of leaving, which is equated to a final location. Thus, the abstract concept of death, which does not really have a particular location, is associated with a place in space by virtue of the primary metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS (Lakoff and Johnson 1989: 7), a metaphor that acquires positive connotations for euphemistic purposes in (2) and (3).

Grady's work on primary metaphor (1997) considers the departure metaphor, typical of English epitaphs, to be principally based on the primary metaphor CHANGE IS MOTION: the change (passing from life to death) motivated by the fact that the deceased sets out on a journey to an unknown destination. This notion is not found in the Spanish epitaphs, which are based on the religious belief in the sacredness of the afterlife (destination). A conceptualisation which exploits the primary metaphor A CHANGE OF STATE IS A CHANGE OF LOCATION, whereby the deceased suffers a change in state —from being alive to being dead— as a result of changing location —going from earth to Paradise.

By making the heavenly destination explicit, Spanish epitaphs are directly connected with Christian death. Given that Heaven is traditionally located in the sky, death is seen as a desirable event, a reward even, by virtue of the orientational metaphors HAPPY IS UP and GOOD IS UP (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 14-21). These metaphors are motivated by cultural and physical experiences associated with the upper vertical position: an erect posture of the body usually accompanies a happy emotional state. The verticality schema, on which our preconceptual structures of spatial orientation are based, constitutes an appropriate source domain for the euphemistic reference to death (Marín-Arrese 1996: 46).

This Heaven metaphor is also based on a reoriented version of the primary metaphor PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, which arises from our experience of going to places we intend to reach.[6] In the same way as goals in life are destinations, that is, desired locations

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[6] Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez (2011) argue that the multiplicity of journey metaphors can be explained in terms of the primary metaphor PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS. This primary metaphor underlies any metaphor in which we talk about goal-oriented activities.

to be reached, death is metaphorically conceived as a purposeful activity through which one may reach a desired location, Heaven, the highest reward for any believer in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus we have here the complex metaphor A PURPOSEFUL DEATH IS A JOURNEY as the product of the combining of the primary metaphors PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS and ACTIONS ARE MOTIONS, together with a religious principle according to which people are believed to set on a journey after life and move to a desired destination.

The conceptualisation that views death in terms of a rest or a sleep appears in almost one third of the metaphorical items detected in both subcorpora. Here the source domain is provided by the analogy between certain of the physiological characteristics of sleep (lack of movement and speech) and those that accompany death. "Rest" and "sleep" were chosen as source domains for three reasons: first, sleeping and resting are commonplace, temporary activities we do every day, which may lead us to conceive of death as a temporary event.

Second, as Herrero Ruiz (2007: 64) notes, these activities suggest not only a physical, but also a psychological rest, such that in death we seem to be peacefully sleeping, far from earthly worries and troubles. The third and more evident reason is that the mapping of the physiological signs of sleep onto the image of a dead person leads, ultimately, to the denial of death as such.

Though both the English and Spanish metaphors share the same conceptual basis, some significant differences arise. The relaxation that is obtained through sleep is transferred to death in the English epitaphs. As death is conceptualised as a peaceful and serene experience, this source domain provides an effective euphemistic support. Take the following epitaph:

> (4)   In loving memory of
> Ella
> who *fell asleep* July 30th 1881 aged 8 years
> for the maid is *not dead but sleepth*

Note that in the target domain, Ella could not choose whether to die or not, while in the source domain humans do normally choose whether they want to sleep or not. This mismatch is a case of what Lakoff (1993: 216) has called a 'target domain override', the target domain limits what can be mapped: it cancels out a source element, while the rest of the source structure is preserved by virtue of its ability to talk about the target domain in euphemistic terms.

In contrast to most English epitaphs, in the Spanish examples this death-as-a-rest conceptualisation explicitly associates the source domain with the afterlife: the rest is tinged with a deep religious sense through prepositional phrases like *en el Señor* ('in the Lord'), *en la Paz del Señor* ('in the Peace of the Lord') or *en los brazos del Señor* ('in the arms of the Lord').

(5)   *Descansó en el Señor*
        Cristina C*M*
        † 8 septiembre 1966
        a los 64 años de edad
        Tu esposo e hijos no te olvidan

                        [Cristina C*M* rested with the Lord on 8 September 1966
                            aged 64. Your husband and children will not forget you]

Here we have a cultural elaboration of a metaphor grounded in experience, that is, the previously mentioned primary metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS and the related metaphor CHANGES OF STATES ARE CHANGES OF LOCATIONS. In this way, a phrase like *en el Señor* makes us understand the rest in spiritual terms and separate it from earthly life and from the life-like overtones that the source domain of rest suggests in English.

Also, associated with the view of death as a desirable condition, the metaphor DEATH IS A JOYFUL LIFE is used to conceptualise human mortality in one fifth of the metaphorical items, all from Highgate. It transfers the attributes from the source domain of a joyful life to the target domain of death. In this regard, the metaphorical items of hope and consolation that arise from this conceptual association (*higher life*, *holy life*, *alive*, etc.) have positive overtones. Indeed, the fact that the word *life* and its derivatives are commonly employed in this metaphor is highly significant of this optimistic tone. The following inscription, in which the noun *life* coexists with the adjective *alive*, is a good case in point:

(6)   Alive in Christ
        Ralph James H*
        Was called to the higher life
        June 19 1932
        Aged 60 years

However, death is not understood in terms of a joyful life in the Spanish epitaphs. What is emphasised is the Christian hope that death is the gateway to an afterlife in Heaven where the deceased will await the resurrection of the dead. Thus, a metaphor like ESTAR MUERTO ES ESTAR CON EL SEÑOR ('to be dead is to be with the Lord') gives rise to metaphorical items whose capacity for consolation derives from the fact that the deceased is said to be with God. The euphemistic force of this conceptualisation is based on experiential correlation through the primary metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS whereby a state (i.e., being dead) is equated with a particular location (i.e., being with the Lord). This idea is verbalised through a wide variety of locative expressions to which the UP-DOWN schema applies like *en la Mansion celestial* ('in the house of the Lord'),

en la Gloria ('in the Glory of God') or *en el Reino de los Cielos* ('in the Kingdom of Heaven').

(7)   Antonio R*S*
        8 de marzo de 2007. A los 84 años
        Tus hijos y nietos no te olvidan
        Buscadme *en el Reino de los Cielos*

        [Antonio R*S* 8 March 2007 aged 84. Your children and
                grandchildren will not forget you. Look for me in the
                        Kingdom of Heaven]

The pervasiveness of religiosity in the Spanish figurative language used to talk and reason about death can be seen in the journey and rest metaphors, as already commented. However, the metaphorical items arising from these conceptualisations are not explicitly related to a joyful life and are not as optimistic as the English ones. In fact, the life metaphors employed in the epitaphs from Highgate lead to the denial of death as a means for consolation in an overt way. This denial is not so obvious in the Spanish corpus, in which the antiphrasis death-life appears in MORIR ES VIVIR EN EL RECUERDO ('to die is to live in memory'), a metaphor that lacks the explicitly positive overtones of DEATH IS A JOYFUL LIFE.[7] After all, a life in the memory of those left alive is not necessarily a joyful life. This metaphor is, however, commonly accepted as a means of consolation in the Spanish epitaphs. Compare the different conceptions of death as life in the two epitaphs below. Whereas in (8) there is no reference to a joyful life whatsoever, in (9) the approach to death is rather optimistic: not only is the deceased said to be happily "safe in the arms of Jesus", but also to have gone cheerfully "to a happier and holy life":

(8)   Julián M*R*
        María L*P*
        D.E.P.[8]
        Vivís en nuestro recuerdo

        [Julián M*R* María L*P* D.E.P. You live in our memory]

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[7] The antiphrasis as a euphemistic resource plays a crucial role in the metaphors DEATH IS A JOYFUL LIFE and TO DIE IS TO LIVE IN MEMORY. This resource is based on the identification of two antithetical concepts, death and life, as a means to refer euphemistically to the act of dying through the consideration of death as a joyful life in the case of the English epitaphs and as a life in the memory of those left alive in the Spanish ones.

[8] The acronym D.E.P. (*Descanse en Paz* 'May (s)he Rest in Peace') —the Spanish equivalent to the Latin inscription R.I.P. (*Requiescat in Pace*)—is used pervasively in Spanish epitaphs (Crespo-Fernández 2008: 89-90). Latin acronyms are not exclusive to Spanish tombstones, however. They can be found on memorials of all periods in English cemeteries (Yorke 2010: 54).

(9)   In loving memory of
        Charles John F* D.C.M.[9]
        2nd Lieut. 2nd Northamptonshire Regt.
        who died of wounds received at Ypres,
        28th July 1918, aged 36 years

        "Safe in the arms of Jesus"

        He *went with a cheerful spirit*,
        and faced the battle's strife,
        but God in his mercy called him
        to a *happier, holy life*

It is interesting to note that in (9) there is a combined conceptualisation of DEATH IS A JOURNEY and DEATH IS A JOYFUL LIFE, the "happier, holy life" conceived as the destination of the journey the deceased embarks on, demonstrating that conceptual metaphors do not always perform their euphemistic function in isolation.

The metaphors discussed so far exploit experiential conflation; that is, culture and beliefs are ultimately based on primary motor-sensory experience, which is universal. As Yu claims, "[t]he fact that distinct languages show metaphors in a systematic way supports the cognitive status of these metaphors as primarily conceptual, rooted in common human experiences" (2009: 90). Indeed, commonality in human experience determines the emergence of the same conceptual metaphor in different cultures.

That said, some conceptual representations are in fact culture-dependent, that is, subject to the pressure of the *cultural context*,[10] and this influences and, in some cases, takes precedence over embodiment in the course of metaphorical conceptualisation (Köveces 2010: 199). In fact, not all metaphorical thinking is rooted in the body. Given the partial nature of metaphorical mappings, the pervasive religiosity of Spanish society means that metaphors highlight those aspects related to Jewish-Christian thinking that are considered to be more effective for euphemistic purposes, like the reference to Heaven as the destination of a journey or as the final resting place. These features are mapped onto the target domain of death because they are the main meaning foci associated with death in Spanish euphemistic metaphors. This explains why specific features of a given source domain are highlighted while others are ignored (Kövecses 2011: 17). The universality of metaphorical conceptualisations should not, therefore, be considered in absolute terms, but rather in relation to the particular settings in which each metaphor is developed.

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[9] D.C.M. stands for "Distinguished Conduct Medal", a British military decoration awarded to non-commissioned officers and other ranks of the Army for distinguished conduct in the field. It was the second highest award for gallantry in action after the Victoria Cross.

[10] Following Kövecses (2010: 8), by cultural context we understand the belief system of a person (in which religious beliefs are included) and the physical-cultural environment.

As Lakoff and Jonhson put it, "[t]he mind is not merely corporeal, but also passionate, desiring and social. It has a culture and cannot exist culture-free" (1999: 325).

That death is a heavily culture-dependent phenomenon can be clearly seen in the conceptualisation MORIR ES CAER POR DIOS Y POR ESPAÑA ('to die is to fall for God and Spain'), typical of Spanish war epitaphs. This conceptualisation, based on the conceptual metonymy THE EFFECTS OF DEATH REPRESENT DEATH, shows a mapping of one of the physical effects of death —that of falling— onto the larger domain of death.[11] Here the UP-DOWN schema provides a useful source domain to understand death. As this conceptualisation indicates a change of state caused by downward movement, a term like *fallen* is coherent with the orientational metaphor SAD IS DOWN if we assume, following Bultnick (1998: 13), that death is generally perceived as an unhappy event. There is indeed a recurring correlation here between a dropping posture and a depressed emotional state.

The Spanish term *caído* ('fallen') makes reference, strictly speaking, to the one who falls as a result of enemy fire. However, in the Spanish epitaphs its implications go beyond a respectable description of a heroic death in battle. This word considers the deceased as a person who died in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) fighting in Franco's army or on account of his conservative political views or religious beliefs. It is important to note that Nationalists opposed the separatist movements and confronted the anti-clericalism of the Republicans; hence the inscription "caído por Dios y por España", whose aim was to honour the deceased by claiming that his death helped to build a new country free from the danger of separatism and atheistic Communism. The epitaph below thus demonstrates its partisan nature and legitimises the winners of the war:

(10)   Miguel A*P*
       Caído por Dios
       y por España
       el día 22-9-1936
       a los 20 años
       Tus padres no te olvidan

                                        [Miguel A*P*. Fallen for God and Spain
                                              on 22 September 1936 aged 20.
                                              Your parents will not forget you]

The source domain of this conceptualisation is closely linked to the religious and political impositions in the years that followed the victory of Franco's troops. In this respect, this culture-specific conceptualisation appears to be "marked", as Sharifian (2011: 13) argues, for anyone outside the Spanish culture. In this particular case, this marked

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[11] Metonymy coexists and interacts with metaphor in the conceptualisation of abstract concepts. Both devices are so closely connected that a large number of conceptual metaphors have a metonymic basis (Barcelona 2003).

conceptualisation surfaces as a distinctive conceptual pattern of association between source and target domains that derives from culture-specific constructs. This stands as proof that understanding discourse ultimately depends on understanding its underlying cultural conceptualisations.

4.2. Metaphors with negative connotations

There are only two sets of correspondences in the corpus, of little relevance in quantitative terms, in which death is portrayed negatively or, at least, not positively: *a loss* and *the end*. The metaphorical substitutes arising from these figurative associations cannot be said to provide any sort of consolation or relief; rather, they are epitaphs of lament, insofar as they tend to express the grief of the surviving relatives. Though death is portrayed negatively in these conceptualisations, it must be noted that the metaphorical substitutes for the notions of death and dying that arise from them are milder than those terms that provide a straightforward reference to death. Words like *loss* or phrases like *your last hours* show respect towards the deceased and their families and towards the subject of death itself. In addition, they express the grief of those left alive in a socially acceptable way. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the metaphorical items that present human mortality as a loss or as the end of human existence lead to the notion of death as something negative, these domains are the source of terms and expressions that can be considered as appropriate and effective euphemisms in the context of the epitaphs in which they occur, as we will see in what follows.

The death-as-a-loss conceptualisation has a metonymic basis (THE EFFECTS OF DEATH STAND FOR DEATH) that focuses on one of the negative results of death. The conceptual basis of this mapping lies in the fact that life is perceived as a valuable object by virtue of the metaphor LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 29), and death is thus seen as the loss of this possession; hence its presence in epitaphs of lament. The noun *loss* and its corresponding verb *lose* are the most frequent metaphorical alternatives in this conceptualisation in the English epitaphs. In the Spanish ones the verb *perder* ('lose') is the source of euphemistic phrases like *el bien perdido* ('the lost possession'). The following two epitaphs express the grief of those left alive through this conceptual equation:

(11)   Cherished
        memories of
        Joseph H*
        who fell asleep
        26th April 1993 – Aged 59

        It broke our hearts to *lose* you
        but you did not go alone
        for part of us went with you
        the day God called you home

(12)   Isabelita
       Tus padres y abuelos
       lloran tu muerte

       Estando en la Gloria
       sentí a mi padre llorar
       porque *perdía* a su hija
       para toda una eternidad

       [Isabelita. Your parents and grandparents are crying for your death.
                 Being in the Glory of God / I heard my father cry/
                 because he lost his daughter / for all eternity]

Within this conceptualisation, in the Spanish Civil War epitaphs the expression "dar la vida por Dios y por España" ('to give one's life for God and for Spain') presents the same political motivation as the already commented MORIR ES CAER POR DIOS Y POR ESPAÑA. The fact of losing one's life in the fight against what was considered the evil of Communism was regarded as an act of generosity without limits that deserved some recognition. This is the case of the following inscription:

(13)   Fernando A*M*
       dio su vida por Dios y por España
       el 26 de agosto de 1936
       a los 72 años de edad

                          [Fernando A*M* gave his life for God and
                               for Spain on 26 August 1936 aged 72]

Through the death-as-the-end conceptualisation, human mortality is seen in terms of our bodily experience of spatial domains. By virtue of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema into which our everyday experience is organised, life can be understood as a process with a starting and end point and a time span, as seen in 4.1. From this viewpoint, death is conceptualised as the final stage of our lifespan by means of the metaphor DEATH IS THE END, which is verbalised through the noun *end* and the phrase *end of her/his days* in the English epitaphs and the noun *finado* (derived from *fin* 'the end', meaning literally 'the one who gets to the end of life') and the adjective *última* ('last') in the noun phrase *tus últimas horas* ('your last hours') in the Spanish ones. Consider these euphemistic expressions in the two epitaphs below:

(14)   In loving memory of
       Enid R*

1938 – 1996
Loving and kind
in all her ways,
upright and just
till the *end of her days*

(15)   Rosa M*R*
        † 26 octubre 1992
        a los 48 años
        R.I.P.

        No llores por mí, marido mío,
        que en *tus últimas horas*
        te recibiré en mis brazos

[Rosa M*R* † 26 October 1992 aged 48. R.I.P.
Do not cry for me, my dear husband, for in your last hours
I will receive you in my arms][12]

The expressions *end of her days* and *tus últimas horas* share the same conceptual basis, that which understands death as a concluding phase in human existence. In this respect, Johnson points out that "we have a metaphorical understanding of the passage of time based on movement along a physical path . . . toward some end point" (1987: 117). And physical death is precisely that end point. This explains why death is euphemistically conceptualised as the last moment in our lifespan in both English and Spanish epitaphs through the end metaphor, which implies an acceptance of human mortality as the final destiny that awaits all human beings, a conception devoid of any religious considerations in (14) and (15). Death as the final point is even perceived as trivial in the following case:

(16)   Ella Gwendolyn J*
        16 June 1914 – 2 December 2000
        Stylish to *the end*

This example provides evidence for the conceptual metaphor DYING IS SOMETHING TRIVIAL —found by Vogel (2009: 203) in Swedish, Norwegian and Danish— in which the topic of death is seen as something unimportant. Expressions involving a trivial act tend to represent a secularised attitude towards death, which is not common in societies deeply influenced by Judeo-Christian values like the Spanish one.

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[12] It is worthy of note that this epitaph is a message from the deceased person (wife) to the living one (husband).

Before concluding, it is interesting to note that in a number of cases presented in the course of the analysis, it is not clear whether an expression is processed metaphorically or not.[13] In fact, *go to Heaven* or *be with the Lord* are examples of lexicalized or dead metaphors, i.e., those in which the second order or figurative meaning becomes the norm in the speech community and are thus not recognised as metaphors. Though these metaphorical phrases are highly conventionalised means through which to refer to the topic they stand for and are entrenched in everyday use, I believe that they still reflect active schemes of metaphorical thought which provide socially acceptable means of dealing with death in public discourse and are intended as such.

This leads me on to the question of the deliberate use of metaphor in communication, which, as Steen argues, "seems to be a matter of revitalization of available linguistic forms and conceptual structures" (2011: 51). Death-related metaphorical units arising from conventional metaphors are deliberately used in communication with a conscious euphemistic purpose. This deliberate use of euphemistic metaphors involves using language with a persuasive purpose (Stöver 2011: 76). It is, in fact, a means to invite the readers of the epitaph to view the topic being dealt with from a different perspective, one which is oriented towards causing a particular effect on them. Indeed, the conceptualisations analysed invite those acquainted with the deceased and visitors to the cemetery to change their perspective of death to a different domain (a journey, a rest, a joyful life, etc.). By doing so, metaphors aim to provide some sort of consolation to those left alive and help them accept the reality of the loss of a loved one.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Following the framework of CMT, I have presented a comparative study of euphemistic metaphors in a sample of English and Spanish epitaphs. Evidence from the corpus reveals the existence of a coherent conceptual organization underlying the euphemistic expression of death and dying in English and Spanish that derives both from our common bodily and physical experience and from cultural constraints. Though the set of conceptual metaphors for the domain of death is roughly the same in both languages, with most of them implying a positive value judgment on human mortality, the cultural environment is a powerful force in shaping metaphorical conceptualisations. In fact, those elements of the source domain that are more likely to fulfill an effective euphemistic function in each culture are singled out and highlighted to target the domain of death, as summarized in the following points:
1. In accordance with the pervasive dominance of Roman Catholicism in Spain, the Spanish epitaphs show a clear preference for source domains in which Jewish-

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[13] As an anonymous reviewer correctly observes, in conceptualisations like MORIR ES SUBIR AL CIELO ('to die is to ascend to Heaven') the boundaries between literal and non-literal language are quite blurred. Whereas for those who interpret the Bible in a figurative sense the expressions arising from this conceptualisation are processed metaphorically, for fervent believers who consider that the ascendant to Heaven is literally true, the metaphor may go unnoticed. For a cognitive account of metaphor comprehension, see Stöver (2011).

Christian beliefs play a crucial role. The rest metaphors invariably acquire a Christian sense through phrases like *en el Señor* ('in the Lord'), which does not always happen in the English epitaphs. In addition, the journey metaphors in Spanish focus on the conclusion of the act of leaving —conceived as a final location, namely God's Home in Heaven— whereas most English inscriptions emphasise the starting point of the journey. Similarly, the euphemistic metaphorical items in the Spanish subcorpus are strongly influenced by the sacredness of the afterlife and are not as optimistic as the English epitaphs, which tend to display a life-like approach to death.

2. The pressure of cultural context takes precedence over embodiment when conceptualising death. This is the case of TO DIE IS TO FALL FOR GOD AND SPAIN, a euphemistic conceptualisation typical of Spanish Civil War epitaphs which reflects that cultural and social issues determine the connection between the source and target domains and thus the nature of the euphemism employed. Indeed, this cultural conceptualisation proves that funerary language was adapted to fit the requirements of the political context of post-war Spanish society.

In summary, the results provide supporting evidence for the fact that commonality in physical experience is consistent with the idea of conceptualisations which are culturally shaped and motivated. As such, body schemas coexist with cultural schemas in the conceptual structure of the domain of death in English and Spanish euphemistic metaphors.

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