CONCEPTUAL *"HEART"* METAPHORS
IN AMERICAN MOMMY BLOGS

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Abstract: Based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), this study investigates the use and conceptualization of "heart" metaphors in the self-built corpus of 500 American mommy blog posts in 2021-2022 using some corpus tools namely word sketch and concordance lines. The study aims at exploring the different ways of conceptualizing the metaphorical expressions and the frequency of each category of "heart" metaphor. The results show that HEART IS AN OBJECT is the most common metaphor in the mommy blog corpus, followed by HEART IS A CONTAINER and HEART IS A PERSON.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, metaphorical expressions, heart metaphor, mommy blogs

1. Introduction

The "heart" holds significant significance in many cultures as a primary source of emotions and sentiments (Niemeier, 2003). Swan's (2009) study explores the significance of the "heart" in the historical context of English language, highlighting its crucial role in English-speaking societies. The author argues that metaphorical connotations associated with the "heart" evolve and expand throughout time, while retaining some specific meanings.

"Heart" metaphors have been studied by some researchers (Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008; Swan, 2009; Berendt & Tanita, 2011; Afreh, 2015; Al-Saleh, 2020; Sirait, 2021; Wu, 2022). In these studies, "heart" metaphors in English are contrasted with "heart" metaphors in some other languages such as Japanese, Thai, Indonesian, German, French. The research findings often suggest significant similarities between the conceptualization and manifestations of "heart" metaphors in different cultures, highlighting that these types of metaphors have been universally accepted.

Even though "heart" metaphors have been widely examined, the investigation of these conceptual metaphors in mommy blogs is very limited. Mommy blogs offer a rich resource for linguistic analysis, providing insights into gaining valuable insights into the evolution of language and the emergence of online communities with their own linguistic nuances. This will improve understanding of the complexities and dynamism of everyday language use.

The present study aims at:

- investigating the "heart" metaphors in English, and how they are conceptualized in the American mommy blog corpus.

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- specifying the frequency of "heart" metaphors in the American mommy blog corpus.

The findings of this study could provide insights into the language used by mothers to express emotions, share experiences, or connect with their audience.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is a prominent theory in cognitive linguistics, primarily developed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980a, b). It claims that metaphors are not only a stylistic aspect of language employed to enhance speech, but rather they are intrinsic to human comprehension, perception, and engagement with the outside world. CMT argues that metaphors are widespread in both everyday language and mind, serving as a fundamental tool for conceptualizing abstract concepts and experiences.

The core principle of Conceptual Metaphor Theory is that people's comprehension of abstract concepts is primarily rooted in their physical experiences and sensorimotor actions. Therefore, one depends on concrete and recognizable encounters to understand and understand intangible concepts. For example, spatial orientations (up/down, in/out) are frequently employed to comprehend abstract notions like emotions, time, and hierarchical connections. This leads to the formation of metaphors such as "TIME IS A MOVING OBJECT" (Lakoff, 1994, pp. 56-58). In this example, time is conceptualized as an object that can move, and characterized by some actions such as *pass*, *come, go by.* Therefore, the metaphors that are formed based on the understanding of one conceptual domain (such as TIME) in terms of another conceptual domain (such as MOVING OBJECT) is called a conceptual metaphor.

As claimed in CMT, there are two primary elements inside a metaphor: the source domain and the target domain. The source domain refers to the tangible and experienced foundation from which we derive metaphorical expressions, such as the sensation of physical warmth. On the other hand, the target domain represents the abstract notion that we want to comprehend by using the metaphor, such as the feeling of emotional warmth. Metaphors aid in comprehending abstract topics by connecting them to familiar, tangible experiences, therefore enabling a more profound comprehension through cross-domain mapping. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a). The mapping involves the correspondence between the entities in each domain by conceptualization.

2.2. Heart Metaphors in English

A large number of recent studies have devoted to research *heart* conceptual metaphors in English and in some other languages.

Gutiérrez Pérez (2008) implements Idealized Cognitive Model to examine and classify *heart* metaphorical expressions from dictionaries, comparing metaphorical expressions in English, Spanish, German, French and Italian.

The results show that heart metaphors in the given languages can be categorized as:

a) THE HEART IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS (including love, kindness or generosity, sincerity, affection, worry or interest, sadness, pity or sympathy, desire, courage)

b) THE HEART IS A MATERIAL

c) THE HEART IS LIVING ORGANISM

d) THE HEART IS A CONTAINER FOR INTELLIGENCE

e) THE HEART IS THE CORE OR CENTRAL PART OF SOMETHING

(Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008, p. 50)

Swan (2009) examines the significance of the body in shaping human cognitive attributes and emotions with data sourced from the Helsinki Corpus, dictionaries, with a specific emphasis on the cultural understanding of the *heart* throughout the history of the English language. The results suggest that heart metaphors in modern English lie within three main categories:

Table 1

Mappings of Hear Metaphors in Swan (2009, p. 466)

I. THE HEART AS A SEAT OF EMOTIONS	A. LOVE, PASSION; WARM FEELINGS, INTEREST (lose one's heart to someone, win someone's heart, a broken heart, hearts that burn for something)
	B. SADNESS, JOY (heavy or light heart, it cuts me to the heart)
	C. PRIDE, COURAGE, COWARDICE (EXPECTATION, EXCITEMENT) (a proud heart, a swelling heart, hammering heart, his heart stood still, her heart beat excitedly, her heart almost stopped, to lose heart, chicken-hearted, heart of oak)
Il. THE HEART AS THE SEAT OF VALUES OF MORALITY AND SPIRITUALITY, ONE'S REAL SELF	A. MORALITY, RELIGION (a pure or unclean heart, devout hearts)
	B. GENEROSITY, KINDNESS (a warm heart, a heart of gold, a heart of stone, have a heart!)
	C. ONE'S REAL SELF, TRUE NATURE (a man after my own heart, this comes from the heart, all that which my heart desires, a heart-to-heart, at heart)
III. THE HEART AS AN OBJECT	A. CONTAINER (an empty heart, a heart laden with sorrows, a heart flowing over)
	B. MOBILE PHYSICAL OBJECT/CAN BE MANIPULATED (the heart is squeezed, is heavy, my heart sank, throw one's heart away)

The study of Afreh (2015), based on the findings of Niemeir (2003), examines the metaphorical and metonymic structure of the heart in English and Akan (a language in West Africa) within Lakoff and Johnson's CMT. The study shows no significant differences in the conceptualization of the "heart". The results indicate that the "heart" metaphorical expressions in English is grouped into four categories: THE HEART IS A METONYMY FOR THE PERSON, THE HEART IS A LIVING ORGANISM, THE HEART IS AN OBJECT OF VALUE and THE HEART IS A CONTAINER (Niemeir, 2003, p. 199) In a more recent study, Al-Saleh (2020) contrasts the head and heart metaphors in English and Spanish, with the results suggest many culturally similar conceptualizations of head and heart metaphors in two languages.

Sirait (2022, p. 76) investigates the conceptualization of heart metaphors from Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) through the framework of CMT. The study results reveal three types of conceptualizations of *heart* metaphors namely HEART IS A CONTAINER, HEART IS AN OBJECT, and HEART IS HUMAN/BEING. These main concepts were then elaborated into several sub-concepts; they are HEART IS A CONTAINER, HEART IS A FRAGILE OBJECT, A HEART IS BURNABLE/INFLAMMABLE OBJECT,

A HEART IS AN AGILE PERSON/BEING, A HEART IS AN EMOTIONAL HUMAN, and A HEART IS A FLYING BEING/BIRD. This finding is similar to Berendt and Tanita (2011)'s study when the "heart" metaphors of English are contrasted with those of Thai and Japanese.

Based on the results of the previous studies, it can be seen that *heart* metaphors in English are classified into three main categories: HEART IS A PERSON, HEART IS AN OBJECT/ENTITY and HEART IS A CONTAINER. However, previous studies (Swan, 2019; Sirait, 2021; Afred, 2015) also indicate that the classifications of "heart" metaphors into three source domains above can be confusing, as one metaphor can be put into more than one category. Therefore, in this study, a metaphorical expression can belong to more than one domain.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The corpus of the current study consists of 500 blog posts (in 2021 - 2022) from the ten most popular mommy blogs in the US based on number of followers. All blog posts are written in English by mothers who identify themselves as mom bloggers who use their blogs to share their experiences with readers and provide tips and advice to other mothers. The total token of the corpus is 365,176. Out of 256 hits of *heart* in the corpus, 136 metaphorical expressions are collected for analysis. Some common corpus tools available in www.sketchengine.eu (namely word sketch and concordance lines) were used in data collection. The *word sketch* shows the most typical collocations and word combinations of *heart* in the corpus; whereas *concordance lines* display the results of *heart* in context, which can easily be sorted, filtered, counted and processed further. The examples are given below.

Figure 1

Word Sketch of "Heart" in the Mommy Blog Corpus
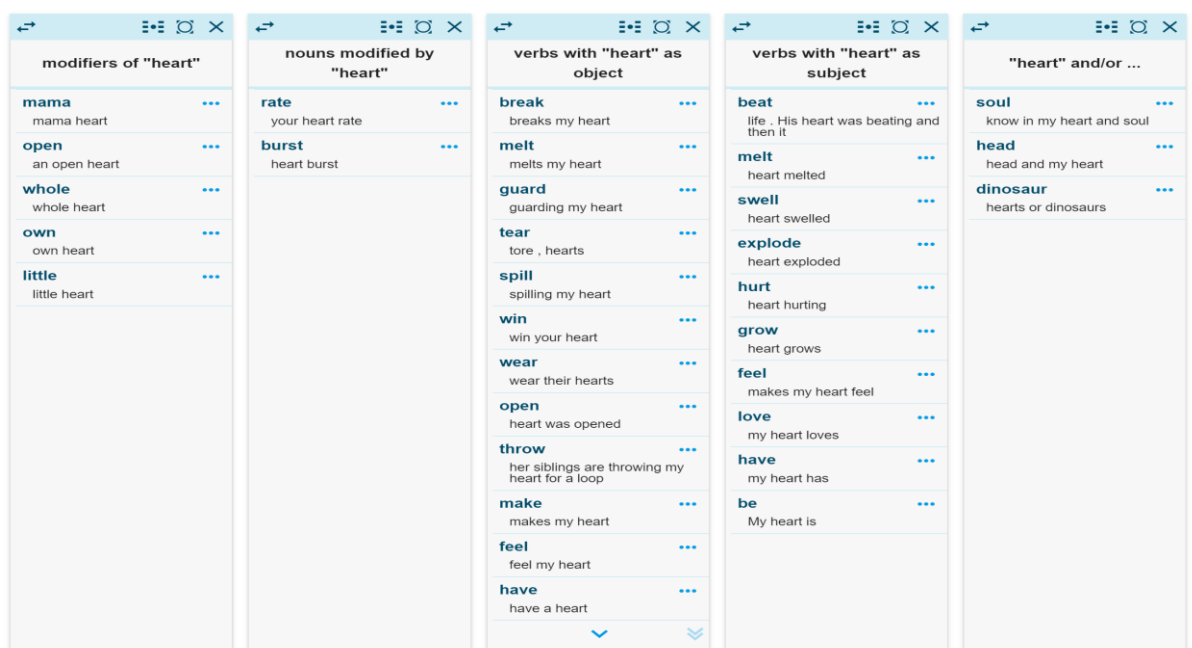
Figure 2

Concordance Lines of "Broken Heart" in the Mommy Blog Corpus

3.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive method is used in this study to analyze the data both quantitatively and qualitatively. After collecting the targeted conceptual metaphors for heart in the corpora, the expressions are classified and analysed based on the type of mappings used in conceptualizing heart metaphors. The collected data is grouped into source domains (PERSON, OBJECT, CONTAINER).

The metaphor identification procedure proposed by Group (2007) is used in the present study along with the use of corpus tools (word sketch and concordance lines). It includes

(i) Determining the lexical units in the corpus by searching for the word "heart" using www.sketchengine.eu

(ii) Looking at the word sketch to have an overview of how the lexical unit is used in different contexts.

(iii) Choosing the concordance lines of each word combination and identifying the meaning of "heart" in the context.

(iv) Marking the lexical unit as metaphorical if the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with each other.

<div align="right">(Group, 2007, p. 3, as cited in Afreh, 2015, p. 42)</div>

The researcher also consulted the previous studies to cross-check the meanings of the metaphorical expressions. The expressions are then grouped into the three main mappings (HEART AS A PERSON, HEART AS AN OBJECT and HEART AS A CONTAINER). Some metaphors can belong to more than one source domain.

4. Results and Discussions

Of the 256 occurrences of the word "heart" in the mommy blog corpus, there are 136 times where the word "heart" is used in a metaphorical sense, accounting for 53.1%.

Table 2

Frequency of "Heart" Metaphorical Expressions in the Corpus

"Heart" metaphorical expressions	No. of hits	"Heart" metaphorical expressions	No. of hits
HEART is broken / breaks	36	Pour our **HEART** out	1
HEART melts	11	Guard our **HEARTS**	1
HEART burst	6	fall into my **HEART**	1
close to my **HEART**	6	(something) nestles into my **HEART**	1
Open my **HEART**	6	Clutch my **HEART** with love and worry	1
HEART feels (*whole, lifeless, beautiful, sad, proud*)	5	Prepare our **HEARTS** for something	1
Heal **HEART**	5	Have a **HEART** to love them	1
HEART grows	4	In my **HEART**	1
A hole in my **HEART**	4	Take a hit straight to the **HEART**	1
HEART is/feels heavy	4	The tightening in your **HEART**	1
HEART explode	3	Wear **HEART** on the sleeve	1
HEARTS fall out	3	Do something with an open **HEART**	1
HEART swell	3	Rip my **HEART** out	1
HEART bleeds	2	The memory pulls on my **HEART**	1
Spill my **HEART**	2	Know something by **HEART**	1
HEART aches	2	Have a big **HEART**	1
Make my **HEART** sing	2	Put your **HEART** to paper	1
HEART mends	2	Someone is a happy **HEART**	1
HEART doubles in size	2	Little **HEARTS** (refer to small children)	1
HEART expands	2	A generous **HEART**	1
HEART shatters	1	Type her **HEART** out	1
Hold his **HEART** together	1	Share her **HEART** with someone	1
Tear **HEART** out of the chest	1	Your **HEART** lives outside you	1

Each metaphorical expression is then put into three domains namely HEART is a person, HEART is an object, and HEART is a container. The frequency and percentage of each source domain of "*heart*" metaphor is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3

"Heart" Metaphorical Expressions by Frequency and Percentage

No.	SOURCE DOMAIN	Frequency	Percentage
1	**HEART IS A PERSON**	10	7.4%
2	**HEART IS AN OBJECT**	88	64.7%
3	**HEART IS A CONTAINER**	38	27.9%

As can be seen in Table 3, nearly 65% of the "heart" metaphors in the corpus are mapped through the image of a perceivable object. It is followed by nearly 28% of the metaphorical expressions belonging to the domain of **heart as a container** of emotions. The least common source domain is **heart as a person**, representing a minor 7.4%. Each of the source domains will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

4.1. The Conceptual HEART IS AN OBJECT

In the corpus, a heart is a fragile / valuable object that can easily be broken and should be protected (*broken heart, break my heart, guard our hearts, heart shatters, win one's hearts).*

By conceptualizing one's experiences, including physical bodies, as objects and entities, people can selectively focus on certain aspects of our experiences and see them as separate things or substances (Al-Saleh, 2020) Therefore, we have the ability to refer to, classify, organize, quantify and reason them (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 25). Hence, by associating the target domain of heart to the source domain of OBJECT, it is easier to logically analyze them. For example, a very common metaphor "brokenhearted" is used to imply that the heart is delicate and easily damaged, and can no longer function properly, which can leave detrimental impacts. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 28).

In the corpus, mommy bloggers use this metaphor to describe the feelings of emotional pain and loss through the analogy of physical damage of an object (the heart).

Figure 3

Concordance Lines of "Broken Heart"

In some other cases, a heart is an object that can change its size, shape or form, as in the cases of heart melts, heart expands, heart doubles in size, heart burst/burst wide open, heart

mends, heal my heart, heart swells, etc.

According to Ruiz de Mondoza's (1999) cognitive model (as cited in Al-Saleh, 2020), the large size is often associated with positivity. Therefore, when the heart expands, doubles in size or bursts wide open, it means the heart is more ready to welcome more positive emotions. In the mommy blog corpus, mothers describe their heart getting bigger to imply that their love for their children grows. In these incidences, the "heart" can also be conceptualized as a container of emotions.

Figure 4

Concordance Lines of "Heart Expands/Doubles/Grows"

4.2. The Conceptual Metaphor HEART IS A CONTAINER

This kind conceptual metaphor frames the heart as a vessel holding emotions, feelings, or qualities. In this metaphor, emotions or feelings are viewed as entities or substances that can fill, overflow, be emptied from, or be stored within the heart, just as physical objects or liquids might fill or be contained within a physical vessel.

One way to identify HEART as a container metaphor is by the use of the preposition "in".

Figure 5

Concordance Lines of "In ... Heart"

As a container, the "heart" can be *opened, closes or spilt out*, as in the following examples in the corpus.

s I can look to the beautiful signs you send.</s><s>All day I walk around with an **open**	**heart**	and mind craving signs and little love notes left out from you.</s><s>I can tell
newest memory book with you all!</s><s>My toddler journal is extremely **close** to my	**heart**	.</s><s>All last year I worked on creating a memory book for parents to captu
and yet we've been through way more than so many.</s><s>I have been **spilling** my	**heart**	all over my blog for the last five years and somehow I've never really shared n
ne was thisclose to taking me out.</s><s>Ayva gave me something to live for, and my	**heart**	was **opened** again when I had her.</s><s>Thus Eve / Eva / Ava was my choi
/s><s>I will forever remember those days as the ones that challenged me to **open** my	**heart**	in ways I never had before.</s><s>My wedding day My first-born My second-l
cement of an impending poop machine isn't always met with graciousness or an **open**	**heart**	.</s><s>This is about people who believe we should not expect anything but t
e paper clenched in my fist, and the triangle grew bigger and bigger.</s><s>As it tore,	**hearts**	began falling out from behind the paper, like the paper had been containing th
ented to get me through this really difficult time in my life.</s><s>I feel like **spilling** my	**heart**	out may have saved my life or kept me from "losing it."</s><s>SpiderWoman

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 29) state that "each of us is a container with a bounding surface and in in-out orientation", which means humans "project their in-out orientation onto other objects that are bounded by a surface", also treated as a container (Al-Saleh, 2020, p. 128). That may explain why HEART IS A CONTAINER is a widely used and powerful conceptual metaphor.

Previous studies on conceptual metaphors in different languages indicate that HEART IS A CONTAINER OF EMOTIONS (which lies within the domain HEART IS A CONTAINER) is a universal metaphor, indicating that the emotions that are located in the "heart" range from positive ones such as love, passion, joy, kindness, generosity, sincerity, affection, courage, sympathy, interest, and desire to negative ones such as worry, sadness, and lack of interest (Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008; Swan, 2009). In the corpus, there are some examples of this conceptualization.

near him say 'chai watte' and the memory pulls on my heart.</s><s>This memory makes my	**heart**	feel **heavy** and sad, with a small smile.</s><s>These coffe
ar.</s><s>I can see my girls showing each other affection and for the first time I can feel my	**heart**	**double** in size.</s><s>I can feel Mila warming back up wit
many, and yet we've been through way more than so many.</s><s>I have been **spilling** my	**heart**	all over my blog for the last five years and somehow I've ne
>Terrible things can happen in a moment.</s><s>Tomorrow is never guaranteed.</s><s>My	**heart**	is **heavy** with the loss of those in Orlando.</s><s>I find my
e to a close, and my weren't-you-just-born-yesterday Lyla Grace turns two today.</s><s>My	**heart**	is grateful, yet **heavy** .</s><s>Minutes after she was born
as invented to get me through this really difficult time in my life.</s><s>I feel like **spilling** my	**heart**	out may have saved my life or kept me from "losing it."</s>
n't judge the mechanics; just dig the contents.</s><s>P.S. I'm sitting in Starbucks **typing** my	**heart**	out (unfortunately at a table near the bathroom) and some(
nderstands **shared** custody arrangements, I want her to understand that it's OK to share her	**heart**	with others.</s><s>She can build relationships with more t
o GIVE UP.</s><s>What?!?</s><s>That's right.</s><s>The resentment that **nestles** into my	**heart**	after a long day of parenting is there because of unmet exp
o precious, and because of that every misstep feels like this.</s><s>The **tightening** in your	**heart**	, the inability to breathe, the tears.</s><s>I relinquished co
ck periods, nine things helped me stay present and enjoy my time away... 1) To **prepare** our	**hearts**	for three days apart, I decided to make Ella's and my last (

The word "heavy" in the expression "my HEART feels **heavy** and sad" is often used metaphorically to describe the sensation of carrying a physical burden upon one's spirit. By attributing the feeling of heaviness and sadness to the heart, the locus of emotional experiences, the writer emphasizes the depth and sincerity of the negative emotions.

4.3. The Conceptual Metaphor HEART IS A PERSON

This study suggests that HEART IS A PERSON is the least used conceptual metaphor in the corpus. Some previous studies (Niemeir, 2003: Gutiérrez Pérez, 2008: Berendt & Tanita, 2011; Al-Saleh, 2020) suggest HEART IS A PERSON is rather a metonymy rather than a metaphor, so the target domain PERSON is still debatable.

In the present study, this kind of metaphor is denoted by verbs typically used for humans (such as *bleed, ache, grow, sing*) and adjectives to describe humans (such as *generous* and *happy*).

Figure 6

Some Concordance Lines of HEART IS A PERSON

In order to confirm the popularity of HEART IS AN OBJECT metaphor and the lack of popularity of HEART IS A PERSON metaphor, the researcher uses two reference corpora available in www.sketchengine.eu namely Open American National Corpus (11,048,137 tokens) and National British Corpus (96,132,981 tokens). By looking at common word combinations, it is clear that "heart" is often collocated with verbs that denote the changes in size/shapes/location (such as break, form, grow, sink). This indicates the commonality of HEART IS AN OBJECT conceptualization. However, there is very little word combination that illustrates the conceptualization of HEART IS A PERSON. More details can be found in Figure 8 below.
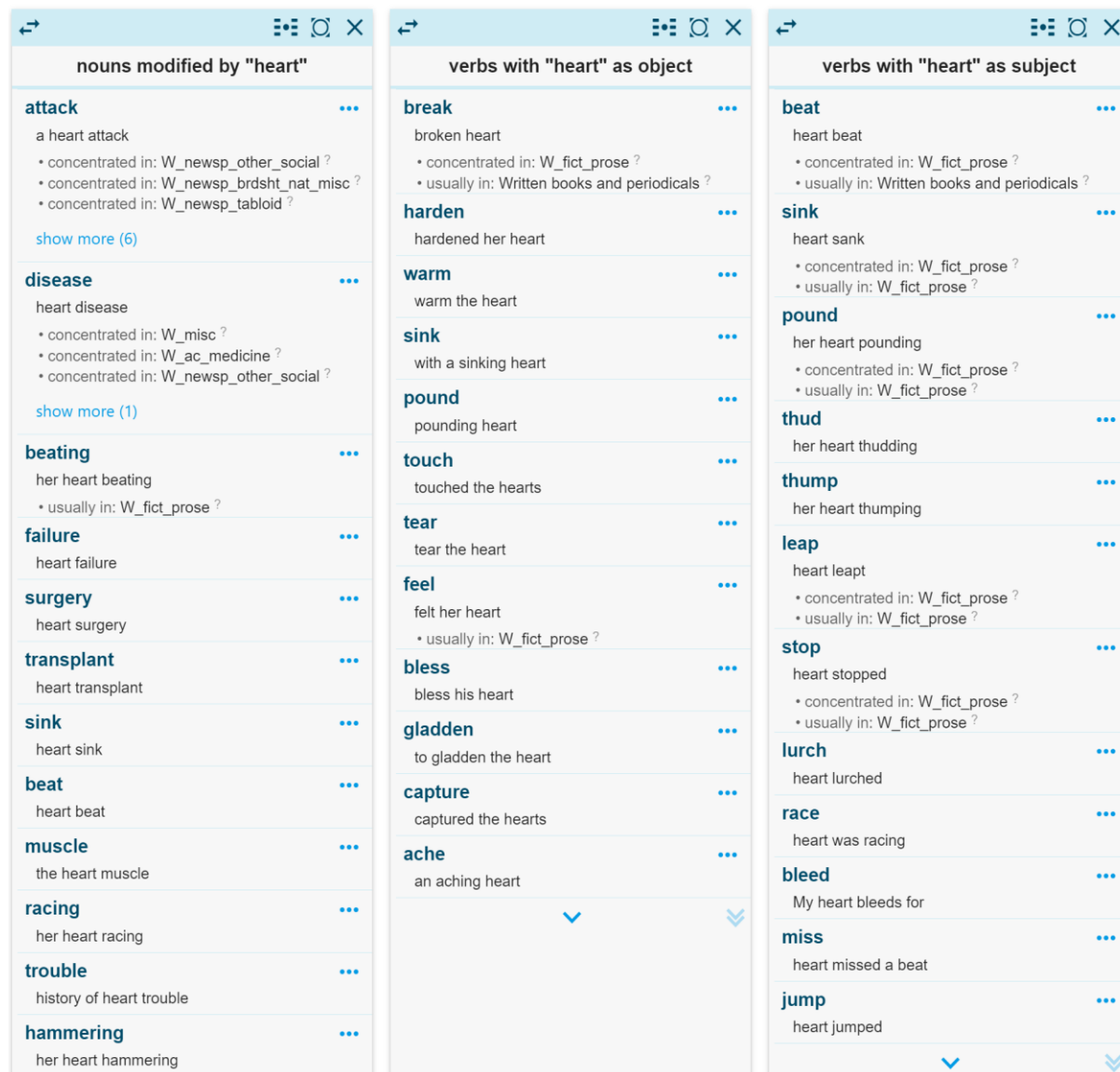
Figure 7

Word Sketch of "Heart" in Open National Corpus

However, when looking at one of the largest English corpus in Sketch Engine, more examples of word combination that indicate HEART IS A PERSON can be found (HEART leap, HEART jump, HEART race).

Figure 8

Word Sketch of "heart" in British National Corpus

It can be said from the reference that the results from the American mommy blog corpus in the present study are quite consistent with the Open American Corpus but may not be generalized in the context of other English-speaking countries.

5. Conclusion

From the CMT perspective, 136 expressions of metaphors of "heart" have been identified from 500 American mommy blogs. They are distributed into three source domains: HEART IS A PERSON (with 30 hits), HEART IS AN OBJECT (88 hits), and HEART IS A CONTAINER (38 hits). The results of the study show that HEART IS AN OBJECT is the most

popular source domain of metaphors in the corpus, followed by HEART IS A CONTAINER and HEART IS A PERSON. Further research is needed to investigate the different ways of conceptualizing "heart" in different types of discourse, and to contrast the "heart" conceptual metaphors in mommy blogs of different languages.

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Appendix

List of 10 Mommy Blogs

https://www.athomewithnatalie.com

https://jacquisaldana.com/

https://mamaknowsitall.com/category/moms/motherhood/

https://whencrazymeetsexhaustion.com/

https://mommytalkshow.com/

https://mindonmed.com/category/motherhood

https://cupofjo.com/category/motherhood

https://www.yourmodernfamily.com/

https://www.kerrylouisenorris.com/search/label/Parenting

https://www.scarymommy.com/parenting

ẨN DỤ Ý NIỆM VỀ *"TRÁI TIM"*
TRONG KHỐI LIỆU BLOG LÀM MẸ Ở MỸ

Phạm Hoàng Long Biên

Khoa Sư phạm tiếng Anh, Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội,
Số 2 Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt: Dựa trên Lý thuyết ẩn dụ ý niệm (CMT), nghiên cứu này điều tra việc sử dụng và ý niệm hóa ẩn dụ "trái tim" (HEART) trong kho ngữ liệu tự xây dựng gồm 500 bài đăng trên 10 blog làm mẹ ở Mỹ trong năm 2021-2022. Một số công cụ phân tích khối liệu được sử dụng trong nghiên cứu này là: phác thảo từ (word sketch) và dòng dẫn mục (concordance lines). Nghiên cứu nhằm mục đích khám phá các cách ý niệm hóa các biểu thức ẩn dụ và tần suất của từng phạm trù ẩn dụ về "trái tim" (HEART). Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy trong khối liệu blog làm mẹ ở Mỹ, TRÁI TIM LÀ ĐỒ VẬT là phép ẩn dụ phổ biến nhất, tiếp theo là TRÁI TIM LÀ VẬT CHỨA và TRÁI TIM LÀ CON NGƯỜI.

Từ khóa: ẩn dụ ý niệm, ẩn dụ về "trái tim", biểu thức ẩn dụ, blog làm mẹ