

ANGER IS RED and FEAR IS WHITE: universal conceptual metaphors?

Starting from the physical evidence that the face usually flushes with rage and whitens with fear and from the general view that people generally conceptualise their emotions in metaphoric terms (Lakoff 1986), in this paper we examine the relationship between emotions and colours, with a focus on ANGER and FEAR. After a short theoretical introduction (Gibbs 1994; Kövecses 1994; Lakoff 1986; Lakoff & Johnson 1999; Elliot & Mayer 2007), we will look at the conception of ANGER and FEAR on the basis of a series of interviews conducted with native speakers of various languages (French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Catalan, German, English, Chinese, Japanese, Persian, Russian, Polish, Turkish).

We will use non-linguistic criteria, i.e. will base our argument on the classical-medieval theory of the *four humours* that account for the physiological response of the body to experiencing emotions such as ANGER and FEAR. Consequently, we will argue that the two metaphors are based on a metonymic process that indicates a physiological response: AN INCREASE IN BLOOD FLOW (ANGER) vs. A DECREASE IN BLOOD FLOW (FEAR). The colours associated to the two types of emotions are the carriers of an image content that serves as relation between the investigated emotions and the corresponding physiological reactions. As emotions and physiological responses to them are tightly related to bodily experiences, we will investigate to what extent the metaphors are universal or culture-specific.