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ON THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF LIFE IN THE MELODRAMA “THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON” (2008)

Abstract: According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (hereafter: CMT), conceived by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), metaphors are not merely rarely occurring poetic or stylistic features of language. On the contrary, as the scholars point out, conceptual metaphors have their origins in our bodily experiences of the world around us. Hence, they are ubiquitous and have a consequently profound influence on our thoughts and actions.

This paper aims to show that people, life, love, romance, birth, life stages, life goals, progress made, obstacles along the way, successes and failures, emotions experienced, as well as time, death and the afterlife are conceptualized in modalities of a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, JOURNEY and MOTION IN SPACE domains in accordance with CMT. This is achieved by analysing a monomodal discourse using the Pragglejaz Group (2007) method and an online *Cambridge English Dictionary*. For the study, I have used a selection of monologues and dialogues of Benjamin Button, the protagonist, together with the characters who have the greatest impact on his life in the Eric Roth screenplay of a melodrama entitled: “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button”, directed by D. Fincher and based on a short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald, featuring Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett.

Key words: conceptual metaphor, life, journey, melodrama

Introduction

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3–6), conceptual metaphors (hereafter: CMs) enable us to verbalize our thoughts in ways that are most accessible to us and our interlocutors. In other words, as stated by Deignan (2005: 13–32) and Kövecses (2017: 13), CMs provide hands-on tools for communicating complex concepts, called *target domains*, in terms of simpler ideas, referred to as *source domains*. The two are linked by a series of mappings or correspondences that contribute to the creation of meaning in context. Kiełtyka and Kleparski (2005: 22)

and Grzaśko and Kiełtyka (2021: 9) add that from a cognitive perspective, the term metaphor refers to concepts rather than words, while the focus of conceptual metaphor theory is on understanding concepts used in various aspects of discourse. Moreover, as claimed by Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 14–17) CMs are embodied, i.e., they can map concrete physical experiences onto abstract concepts. Orientational metaphors pertaining to orientation in space, for example: front – back, up – down, in – out, etc., are prime examples of such mappings. Kövecses (2020: 61) argues that the abstract concept of life plays a prominent role in metaphor studies. Therefore, I used “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” screenplay to determine if and how the protagonist and other characters at the centre of the plot conceptualize life and its aspects in terms of a JOURNEY.

SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image-schema

In the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM, the source domain JOURNEY encapsulates the beginning of life, distance covered, obstacles encountered, crossings traversed, and goals reached. It thus derives from the path schema widely described in the cognitive studies (cf. Lakoff 1987: 275, Johnson 1987: 113, Krzeszowski 1993: 317–18). As Hedblom (2015: 21–54) points out, MOVEMENT ALONG PATH is one of the first image schemas that humans acquire in early childhood through almost immediate exposure to movements of various objects. He further argues (Hedblom 2015: 27) that MOVEMENT ALONG A PATH is inherently linked to the spatial schema MOVEMENT OF OBJECT (also conceptualized in early infancy). The path itself must be perceived and learned as it is distinct from movement or a moving object. In later stages of development, the concepts of START and END are acquired, hence, a PATH-GOAL schema is developed. In the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, an object called *a trajectory* starts from a source or starting point and moves along *a path* or *trajectory of motion* in a forward direction at a given time in a linear sequence toward a goal, which is an endpoint. The prototypical human movement described here is characterized by progress from the starting point to a destination. Consequently, structural elements of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM examined in the section **LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM** derive from the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema.

LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM

LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM occupies an important place in the works of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Mark Turner, Zoltan Kövecses and others. As Kövecses (2002: 3–4) asserts, it is often invoked to help us understand various

aspects of our lives because the source domain JOURNEY together with its mappings is perfect for helping people make sense of the target domain LIFE. The mappings include the *traveller* referring to *a person leading a life*, *the journey* itself to *living a life*, *the stages of a journey* correspond to the *stages of life*, i.e., *birth, adolescence, maturation, death*, *the destination* becomes *the purpose of life*, *the distance travelled* represents *progress in life*, *the path of the journey* signifies *ways of living*, while *obstacles* along the way – *difficulties in life* (2020: 61). Similarly, Lakoff and Turner (1989: 1) argue that *birth* should be viewed as arrival, *life* as presence at this moment or “here,” and *death* as departure. It is noteworthy that this metaphorical system is one of the few available for forming concepts of life and death (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 26).¹ Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 60–63) update these mappings by elaborating on the complexity of the PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM, formed from primary metaphors PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS and ACTIONS ARE MOTIONS. As these two scholars argue (1999: 63–65), the impact of the CM PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY on our lives manifests itself through strongly culturally rooted inferences related to the domain JOURNEY. It is evident that to reach a destination, a route must first be established. Similarly, living a purposeful life requires securing resources to achieve goals. Along the way, there may be obstacles that should be considered in advance. In parallel, a purposeful life is likely to encounter some difficulties, and these need to be considered in advance. After all, we must prepare for a journey before we embark on it. Thus, to live a purposeful life, we should secure the resources that will enable us to achieve our goals. Research findings discussed in this section were further enriched by Lakoff’s (1993: 216) *Invariance Hypothesis* according to which “image-schema structure inherent in the target domain cannot be violated, and that inherent target domain structure limits the possibilities for mappings automatically”, Grady’s (1997a,b) work stating that the logic inherent in the source domain based on *primary metaphors* can be mapped on the target domain, and finally, Kövecses’s (2002/2010, 2020) assertion that “the source maps conceptual materials that belong to its main meaning focus or foci.” (Kövecses 2020: 5).

Another complex metaphor that profoundly affects our lives and builds on the CM PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY is a LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. It reflects the cultural expectation that in a long-term romantic relationship we should have individual and common goals. The latter, as Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 65) argue, is a much more difficult task because of the need to agree on common goals and then pursue them together despite inevitable differences. Efforts to do this are also conceptualised in terms of a JOURNEY, where LOVERS ARE TRAVELLERS and COMMON GOALS ARE DESTINATIONS. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 65), the concept of an enduring love relationship,

¹ For a list of these mappings see Lakoff and Turner (1989: 304).

with its ups and downs on the way to achieving common goals, is firmly embedded in our culture, and reflected in everyday expressions such as: *Look, how far we've come*. The metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, therefore, methodically connects the literal meanings of these travel expressions with equivalent meanings in the abstract realm of LOVE.

EVENT-STRUCTURE CM

The EVENT-STRUCTURE metaphor is interconnected with the LIFE IS A JOURNEY since the JOURNEY domain is inherently associated with movement in space, being a source domain in the majority of the submappings of the EVENT-STRUCTURE metaphor discussed in this section. As Roush (2018: 56) writes, following Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 163), the EVENT-STRUCTURE metaphor, “allows us to conceptualise events and various aspects of events in terms of our embodied experience with motion in space,” where MOTION IN SPACE stands for *the source domain*, while the EVENT domain represents *the target domain*. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 163), this single mapping provides us with a deep understanding and knowledge of movement in space that we gain from our own and others’ experiences. As they state:

Some movements are movements to desired locations (called destinations). Some movements begin in one bounded region of space and end in another. Some movements are forced, others are not. The force of a forced movement may be internal or external. If someone moves to a desired location, that person must follow a path. There are various kinds of impediments that can keep someone from moving to a desired location, for example, blockages or features of the terrain. (Lakoff & Johnson 1999: 163)

The above quotation is further illustrated in Table 1:

**Table 1: The submappings of the EVENT STRUCTURE metaphor.
Own elaboration based on Lakoff and Johnson (1999).**

| THE EVENT-STRUCTURE metaphor | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> |
| 1. States | Are Locations | interiors of bounded regions in space |
| 2. Changes | Are Movements | into or out of bounded regions |
| 3. Causes | Are Forces | |
| 4. Causation | Is Forced Movement | from one location to another |
| 5. Actions | Are Self-propelled Movements | |
| 6. Purposes | Are Destinations | |

| <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> |
|---|--|------------------|
| 7. Means | Are Paths | to destinations |
| 8. Difficulties | Are Impediments To Motion | |
| 9. Freedom Of Action | Is The Lack Of Impediments To Motion | |
| 10. External Events | Are Large, Moving Objects | that exert force |
| 11. Long-term, Purposeful Activities | Are Journeys | |

As shown in Table 1, the submappings of the EVENT STRUCTURE metaphor enable us to envisage events and each of their constituents using our entire life awareness and experience related to motion in space. The results of the study presented in Section 4 of this paper confirm this attestation.

Corpus and methodology

The choice of the screenplay “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” (2008)², written by Eric Roth, as the focal point of this study is not accidental. The David Fincher-directed film is a well-known example of a contemporary, American melodrama³ that has won three Oscars while being nominated in thirteen categories overall. It contains the typical conventions of the genre⁴ with an optimistic, resilient hero, named Benjamin, played by Brad Pitt, who fights for love despite an unusual illness he was born with, and through his choices and actions conveys values such as love, bravery, compassion, forgiveness, the importance of taking responsibility for one’s own life, accepting and overcoming challenges, living in the present, and enjoying life against the odds. Birth and death play an important role in the plot. All of these are elements inherent in the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, LIFE IS A JOURNEY and EVENT-STRUCUTRE CMs.

² The film script is available from: <https://scripts-onscreen.com/tag/the-curious-case-of-benjamin-button-screenplay/>

³ Ribut Basuki (2003: 2) claims that melodrama was developed by René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt in an eighteenth-century revolutionary France to control lower and middle classes, alleviate violence and promote moral values. It flourished in America at around the same time for similar reasons.

⁴ Barry Langford (2005: 29–50) calls it a ‘drama of passion’ while Linda Williams (1998: 42–50) defines it as a “fundamental mode of popular American moving pictures. It is not a specific genre like the western or horror film; it is not a ‘deviation’ of the classical realist narrative; it cannot be located primarily in woman’s films, ‘weepies’, or family melodramas – though it includes them. Rather, melodrama is a peculiarly democratic and American form that seeks dramatic revelation or moral and emotional truths through a dialectic of pathos and action. It is the foundation of the classical Hollywood movie.”

Furthermore, the uniqueness of the screenplay lies in the *curious* part of the hero's life, i.e., its reverse cycle, where DEATH and DECAY are portrayed as BIRTH since the character is born old and in poor health condition whereas BIRTH is depicted as DEATH since the character having become younger through the course of life, dies as an infant. Hence, it might be concluded that BIRTH IS DEATH since every birth inevitably leads to death. Likewise, DEATH IS BIRTH because it signifies a new stage in life as it is believed in most religious contexts⁵. In addition, the nature of Benjamin's life is extraordinary as it is a perfect example of a person leading their life governed by the concept LIFE IS A JOURNEY as opposed to, for example, LIFE IS A STAGE as discussed by Kövecses (2020: 7–8).

For the analysis of the written discourse, taken from the film script, with the aim of identifying verbal expressions⁶ as metaphoric, I followed the MIP procedure developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007: 3–13). Briefly, the procedure helps to (a) determine a contextual meaning of a word in contrast to its meaning (which is obviously different) and (b) interpret the meaning of a word, a phrase, or a lexical chunk in comparison to its root meaning. According to Cienki and Müller (2009: 316), “it is a maximally inclusive procedure, intended to identify words which may even potentially be understood metaphorically in the given context of use.”⁷ To conduct the procedure, an online *Cambridge English Dictionary* was used.⁸ The script of the selected film contains 40,154 words. First, I read the whole screenplay and underlined utterances which included words and phrases that were verbal manifestations of the source domain JOURNEY discussed in the sections **LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM** and **Event-Structure CM**. Seven monologues and seven dialogues, in the entire screenplay, were identified as containing verbal manifestations of the domain JOURNEY. They were analyzed within the scope of this study. The Pragglejaz Group's procedure was applied to identify words, expressions and chunks used metaphorically from a cognitive perspective. The *Invariance Hypothesis* (Lakoff, 1993) and Kövecses's (2020) elaboration of it, included in the section **LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM** of this paper, were then applied to further validate the research results. The results of the investigation are presented in the section **Analysis and research results**.

⁵ See: <https://uofazcenteronaging.com/care-sheet/providers/religion-and-end-life-part-1-how-different-religions-view-end-life/>

⁶ Charles Forceville (2009: 23) refers to them as monomodal metaphors i.e., “metaphors whose target and source are exclusively or predominantly rendered in one mode.” He distinguishes nine different modes: “(1) pictorial signs (2) written signs (3) spoken signs (4) gestures (5) sounds (6) music (7) smells (8) tastes (9) touch.”

⁷ For a comprehensive account of the procedure, see Pragglejaz Group (2007).

⁸ As on the website, “The Cambridge English Dictionary is based on original research on the unique Cambridge English Corpus and includes all the words at CEFR levels A1–C2 in the English Vocabulary Profile.” For details see: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/>

Analysis and research results

In the first monologue, Benjamin describes life in the nursing home: “And mortality was a common visitor to our house. People came and left [...]” (Roth 2006: 29). He seems to see *mortality* as a TRAVELLER since he calls it *a visitor* and uses the verb *leave* to conceive of dying. This may be viewed as resulting from the working of the conceptual metaphors MORTALITY IS A TRAVELLER and LEAVING IS DYING. In the first dialogue, 6-year-old Benjamin shares his worries about his life with his adoptive mother, and she comforts him. “QUEENIE: [...] We’re all goin’ the same way, just taking different roads to get there. You’re on your own road, Benjamin” (Roth 2006: 35). The subject pronoun *we* in the context of Queenie’s response could refer to the source domain TRAVELLERS in the CM LIFE IS A JOURNEY or actors in the EVENT STRUCTURE metaphor, *going the same way* may imply a forward direction to a final stage of life, destination or death as in the path-goal schema, *taking different roads* might refer to different means of reaching goals and *to get there* to the source domain of location. *You’re on your own road* may refer, as in the path-goal schema, to an object moving along a path, which can be interpreted as a person leading their own life.

In the second monologue, Benjamin talks about the changes in his life when Queenie’s biological baby is born. “BENJAMIN: When the baby came things were different [...]” (Roth 2006: 45). Clearly, he envisages the baby’s birth as an arrival.

When Benjamin becomes fitter and more independent, he decides to leave his home and become a sailor. In a port in Russia, he meets Elizabeth Abbott, the wife of a British politician and a spy. Elizabeth and Benjamin cannot sleep at night. They often meet in the hotel kitchen and talk about life. ELIZABETH ABBOTT: “We’re all just crossing in the night. Sometimes we intersect [...]” (Roth 2006: 83). The verb *cross* is typically used to mean ‘go or extend to the other side (of an area, stretch of water, etc.)’. Evidently, Elizabeth sees the transience of life in the domain of TRAVEL and people as TRAVELLERS. *To intersect* (of lines, roads, etc.) means ‘to cross one another’. Elizabeth seems to view meeting different people at different stages of life like a road JOURNEY i.e., INTERSECTIONS ARE MEETINGS. One evening, Benjamin confesses to Elizabeth that she makes him feel younger, she returns his compliment by adding that she wishes she were younger and could undo her mistakes. ELIZABETH: “I kept waiting, thinking I would do something to change my circumstance. [...] But I never did. It’s an awful waste, you can never get it back wasted time” (Roth 2006: 87). By using the verb + noun collocation to *waste time*, she shows that she sees time as money, since money can be earned, spent, invested, or wasted. Consequently, it can be interpreted that TIME IS A PRECIOUS OBJECT. On the other hand, she might also envisage *wasted time* as a LACK OF PROGRESS made.

Meeting Elizabeth was an important event in Benjamin's life, as she was the first woman to love him. When the war reaches them, Elizabeth and her husband leave the port, and Benjamin is drafted into the Navy. Captain Mike's tugboat, where Benjamin works, is attacked by the enemy and Captain Mike is shot dead. Benjamin has his last conversation with his friend. "BENJAMIN: You're going to heaven Captain Mike. [...] CAPT. MIKE: You can be mad as a mad dog at the way things went. [...] but when it comes to the end, you have to let it go" (Roth 2006: 96). In Christianity, entry to heaven is another stage in the spiritual life (provided we have earned it through our actions). Heaven or hell is conceptualized in terms of a final place. Thus, it can be said that HEAVEN IS THE LAST LOCATION. By using *the way things went* Capt. Mike might be referring to the extent he managed to achieve his aims in life whereas *the end* might be seen as the last stage of life, or the final event, i.e., DEATH IS THE END, DEATH IS OUR FINAL DESTINATION. After Capt. Mike dies, Benjamin goes back home. Queenie is delighted to see him: "QUEENIE: [...] Every night I got on my knees asking the Good Lord to bring you back safely. Remember what I told you?" BENJAMIN: You never know what's coming for you" (Roth 2006: 99). Queenie seems to see *God* as Benjamin's companion – TRAVELLER, who has the power to *bring him back safely*. Literally, the phrasal verb *to bring something back* means 'to return something to where it came from'. Clearly, *God* is seen as an entity who can protect Benjamin and return him to his mother, which might be conceptualized as GOD IS A PROTECTING FORCE. Furthermore, it seems that Benjamin conceptualizes *you never know what's coming for you* as negative future or bad fate.

While staying with his mother, Benjamin decides to visit Daisy, who he grew up with. He is hoping Daisy still loves him as much as he does her and that they can be together. "Benjamin: I came here to tell you I made a mistake before. A day doesn't go by that I don't regret it. It's not the way I felt. I should have never let you go. [...]" (Roth 2006: 125). In *I came here*, Benjamin sees himself as a TRAVELLER moving from one location to another while time is envisaged as a fixed location, an entailment referred to as a 'Special case 2' by Lakoff (1990: 55–57) in the analysis of the concept of TIME. However, by saying that *A day doesn't go by, I should have never let you go* it seems that the observer is fixed whereas everything else is moving with respect to the observer – a concept, called 'Special case 1' in the analysis of how TIME is perceived in English by Lakoff (1990: 55–57). Hence, the above fragments seem to be linguistic realisations of the CMs TIME IS A THING and TIME IS MOTION.

One day, Benjamin receives a telegram informing him that Daisy is in hospital because of a car accident. He, immediately, packs his bags and flies to Paris to visit her. While waiting to see her, he reflects on the course of life: "Sometimes we are on a collision course, and we just don't know it. Whether it's by accident

or by design, there's not a thing we can do about it" (Roth 2006: 128). *Being on a collision course* is seen as moving along a path, while collision is an obstacle to motion and reaching a final location. The noun *accident*, typically associated with a travel context, is understood in the prepositional phrase *by accident* in the sense of an event without an intentional cause, whereas *by design* is the exact opposite, i.e., a predetermined event.

After a period of recovery, having accepted the fact that she will not be able to dance professionally, Daisy meets Benjamin at his mother's house and their relationship begins. "Daisy: We wouldn't have this. We wouldn't be here. [...] Benjamin: Relationships have a time and a place. [...] You don't usually get more than one chance. If you miss it, it's too late and it's gone [...]" (Roth 2006: 215). By saying *We wouldn't be here*, she seems to see Benjamin and herself as LOVERS/TRAVELLERS who have reached a location and their relationship as a VEHICLE. Benjamin also seems to envisage a relationship as a VEHICLE since missing *a chance*, in this context, appears to be seen as missing a bus, a coach, or a plane. Consequently, the analysed fragment is a linguistic realization of the CM RELATIONSHIPS ARE VEHICLES.

One night Benjamin sees his mother in his dreams. "Queenie: I wanted to tell you I love you and your mama's gone" (Roth 2006: 145). It is clear from the use of the verb *go* and the point at which the plot is that Queenie talks about death and sees it as a DEPARTURE. Soon afterwards, Benjamin goes home and is informed that his mum has passed away. When he goes back to Daisy, she has news for him. "Daisy: I thought I was far too old. I'm pregnant" (Roth 2006: 153). It seems that she sees age in terms of linear scales (Lakoff 1993: 214) as a PATH and DISTANCE COVERED ALONG A PATH whereas being pregnant is a present LOCATION. On Daisy's and Benjamin's daughter's 1st birthday, Benjamin makes a difficult decision. He explains it in a letter to his daughter. "Benjamin: I left, so that you and your mother could have a life" (Roth 2006: 160). Due to the reverse life cycle, instead of growing older together with his family, he was going to get younger. He did not know how he could explain it to his daughter and did not want to be a burden to his family. The verb *leave* is used to talk about abandoning someone or a place. The above fragment is a linguistic realization of the CM LEAVING IS DEPARTING. Later in the same letter, he writes: "BENJAMIN: [...] I hope you see things that startle you. Feel things you never felt before. [...] I hope you stumble and pick yourself up [...]" (Roth 2016: 161A–162). It seems that Benjamin visualizes his daughter as a TRAVELLER, who experiences the world through senses, hence, the use of the verbs *see* and *feel*. Consequently, it can be interpreted as realization of the CMs SEEING / FEELING IS JOURNEYING.

Also, he uses the verb *stumble* to conceive of encountering difficulties, while the verb *pick up* of overcoming them. It can, then, be argued that the interpreted fragment represents the CMs STUMBLING IS ENCOUNTERING IMPEDIMENTS

TO MOTION / FAILING and PICKING YOURSELF UP IS A SELF-PROPELLED MOVEMENT / WINNING.

Having left his family, Benjamin wanders around the world while gradually getting younger. One day, at the age of twelve, he is found homeless by a man from Child Welfare Services. Fortunately, he has Daisy’s address on him, and she is contacted immediately. Soon, Benjamin moves into his old home, now managed by his stepsister. Daisy joins him and looks after Benjamin until the very last day of his life when he dies in her arms as an infant.

In one of the last scenes, Benjamin’s daughter finds a copy of an old train schedule upon which is written “Benjamin: [...] Whichever way you’re going, [...]. Along the way you bump into people who make a dent on your life” (Roth 2016: 181). It seems that *whichever way you are going* is seen as the life one has chosen to lead and *along the way* as the course of life. Finally, Benjamin envisages BUMPING as MEETING PEOPLE BY CHANCE and DENTING as EXERTING FORCE / CAUSING A CHANGE. The results of the above analysis are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: The submappings of the LIFE/LOVE IS A JOURNEY CM realized through linguistic expressions (in italics) from the analysis conducted. Own elaboration based on Kövecses (2005).

| LIFE / LOVE IS A JOURNEY CM | |
|---|---|
| SOURCE (JOURNEY) | TARGET (LIFE / LOVE) |
| MAPPINGS | |
| TRAVELLERS | PEOPLE LEADING A LIFE |
| <i>Visitor</i> <i>God</i> <i>You never know what’s coming for you.</i> | (the characters in the screenplay), Daisy, Benjamin, their daughter Caroline, Queenie, Capt. Mike, Elizabeth Abbott mortality God negative future / bad fate |
| TRAVELLERS / LOVERS | PEOPLE IN A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP |
| | Daisy, Benjamin, Elizabeth Abbott |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">MOTION ALONG THE WAY</p> <p><i>travelling on your own road</i></p> <p><i>intersecting</i> <i>bumping</i> <i>making a dent on someone's life</i> <i>whichever way you're going</i> <i>along the way</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">LEADING A LIFE</p> <p>Benjamin leading his own life</p> <p>meeting meeting by chance making a change to someone's life the life one chooses to have during the course of life</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">DESTINATION(S) OF THE JOURNEY</p> <p><i>the way things went</i> <i>If you miss it, it's too late and it's gone.</i> <i>picking yourself up</i> <i>going to heaven</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">PURPOSE(S) OF LIFE</p> <p>(achieved/unachieved) aims in life finding love/each other winning achieving a final purpose</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">OBSTACLES ALONG THE WAY</p> <p><i>being on a collision course</i> <i>stumbling</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">DIFFICULTIES IN LIFE</p> <p>approaching a difficult stage in life: Daisy's accident, injuries failing / experiencing challenges</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">DIFFERENT PATH(S) TO ONE'S DESTINATION(S)</p> <p><i>taking different roads</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">DIFFERENT MEANS OF ACHIEVING ONE'S PURPOSES</p> <p>acting against accepted norms (i.e., Benjamin having to leave Daisy and his daughter due to his reverse life cycle)</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">DISTANCE COVERED ALONG THE WAY</p> <p><i>wasted time</i> <i>going by</i> <i>being far too old to...</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">PROGRESS MADE IN LIFE</p> <p>lack of progress time passing unrealized dreams</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">LOCATIONS ALONG THE WAY</p> <p><i>when the baby came</i> <i>having 'this'</i> <i>here</i> <i>leaving, going, going the same way, getting there, the end</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">STAGES IN LIFE</p> <p>being born being in a romantic relationship living in the present dying, death</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">GUIDES ALONG THE WAY</p> <p>Protecting force <i>bringing back safely</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">HELPERS OR COUNSELLORS IN LIFE</p> <p>God</p> |

Conclusion and suggestions for further research

It can be concluded that the CMs identified during the analysis of monomodal discourse in the screenplay of “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” (2008), conducted using Pragglejaz Group (2007) procedure, the *Invariance Hypothesis* (Lakoff, 1993) and Kövecses’s (2020) elaboration, provide further evidence of the attestation that humans draw on their concrete, bodily experiences to make sense of more abstract concepts such as life, love, death or time through a set of fixed correspondences from the source domain to a target domain whereas the path schema, LIFE / LOVE IS A JOURNEY and EVENT-STRUCTURE CMs play an overarching role in conceptualizing the course of life and its events in the JOURNEY domain. In terms of further research, the material is ideal for exploring multimodal metaphors that include the spoken word with its intonation accompanied by gestures, the effect of music, non-verbal sounds or static and moving images.

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