

Analysis of English Proverbs with an Anthroponymic Component in the Conceptual Integration Theory

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ABSTRACT

Proverbs are aphorisms that bespeak people's deep-rooted experience, wisdom, undergoing and attitude towards certain events as well as judgements in a literary, figurative and descriptive way. For example, *Rome was not built in a day*, *Jack of all trades but master of none*, *Honesty is the best policy*. Humans' characteristic features, outstanding behaviour or remarkable attributes connected with them are directly embodied in English proverbs with personal names. From this viewpoint, anthroponyms in the component of English proverbs have significant importance with regard to imparting encyclopaedic information about certain people, on the basis of whose peculiarities certain concepts can be formed. After having reviewed published articles devoted to the investigation of English proverbs, it has been noticed that the concept formation and conceptual integration analysis of English proverbs with an anthroponymic component have not thoroughly been researched yet. The aim of this article is to analyze English proverbs with an anthroponymic component in the conceptual integration theory and to indicate their potential for concept formation.

KEYWORDS: *anthroponymic component, proverb, blending theory, conceptual system, associative meaning, encyclopaedic information, conceptual metaphor, conceptual integration.*

INTRODUCTION

It is evident that proverbs reflect people's accumulated and rich life experience, lesson-to-learn history in brief and precise form, as well as embody those who directly went down in history with their outstanding features. English proverbs with an anthroponymic component are illustrative examples of this kind in that on the basis of peculiarities pertaining to anthroponyms they typicalize general image of those who bear such peculiarities associated with anthroponyms as component part of proverbs. Moreover, anthroponyms in English proverbs make a significant contribution to activation of certain encyclopaedic information about English people's historical, social and religious life, as well as literary pursuits in human's mind.

From a cognitive viewpoint, such proverbs not only activate encyclopaedic information about English people, but also metaphorically describe those who possess the same characteristics as anthroponyms in English proverbs. This can clearly be grounded by the fact that, first of all, the literal meaning of English

proverbs with an anthroponymic component, as observed in other linguistic units, are transferred into metaphorical meaning by way of human knowledge with the requirement of circumstance and time lapse, secondly, they "are a unique expression of the language culture of any people, they usually represent people's ideas metaphorically, through the realities of the outside world, in a generalized and concise way" [Katvalyan et al., 2025; 166]. As a consequence of this, certain characteristics of anthroponyms in the system of English proverbs are transferred into other people on the basis of similarity and generality.

In cognitive linguistics metaphor is considered as a cognitive mechanism, a way of contemplation and one of the rudimentary processes of human cognition, a specific way of conceptualizing information based on the mental process of analogy and knowledge transfer from one conceptual field into another [Ashurova & Galiyeva, 2018; 80]. G.Lakoff and M.Johnson, who introduced the term "conceptual metaphor" into linguistics, emphasizes that our

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conceptual system in which our contemplative activity and daily routine are directly actualized is mainly metaphorical in nature [Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; 4].

With regard to transferred linguistic units, the terms conceptual metaphor and conceptual integration theory are particularly applied in cognitive linguistics, the main difference between which is the number of mental spaces. In conceptual metaphor, two mental spaces, such as source and target spaces are activated, whereas in conceptual integration theory four and more mental spaces, including input spaces, generic space and blended space, are operated for the process of meaning transfer of linguistic units. Although these theories differ in terms of quantity of conceptual spaces, they are complementary and clarifying in that metaphor is placed at the centre of conceptual integration theory and provides inputs to it [Omazić, 2005; 54].

METHODS AND MATERIALS

In this article, the etymological analysis is firstly used to identify the origination of English proverbs with an anthroponymic component, the semantic analysis is frequently used to describe semantic features of such proverbs, the conceptual analysis is mainly used to clarify the opportunity of such proverbs to form certain concepts on the basis of encyclopaedic information associated with anthroponyms, the analysis of conceptual integration is predominantly used to interpret the cognitive mechanism of the transferred meanings of such proverbs.

English proverbs that are expected to be analyzed through conceptual integration theory are excerpted from *English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary* [Kunin, 1984; 944], *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* [Speake, 2008; 625] and *McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs* [Spears, 2005; 1098].

RESULTS

In accordance with N.A. Skitina and V.P. Shabanova, a proverb, possessing an internal form and meaning, has two cognitive levels, the first one being the cognitive level of meaning and the latter one being the cognitive level of the internal form of the proverb. The internal form of a proverb can be defined as the literal meaning of the proverb, while the meaning of a proverb is considered as a conceptual representation of a certain section of the world, as a certain knowledge about the world, characteristic of a society [Skitina & Shabanova, 2019; 134]. Correspondingly, N.V. Novospasskaya, X. Yang and A.Y. Mikhaylenko state that the interrelation between the form and content of the proverb is grounded by the generalization of the meaning, in other words, steady

orientation of characteristics and attributes. Linguistic groups in which there is no specific content act as formal means of representing a generalization of the proverbial structure. The proverbial form is established on an associative-imaginative motivational complex of semantic dominants that organize the complex content of the proverb [Novospasskaya et al., 2023; 636].

According to the research conducted by Z. Simin, the study of proverbs as a means of accessing the content of concepts grants us an opportunity to identify cognitive information about the reflected object or phenomenon, about the attitude of linguistic knowledge to this phenomenon or object [Simin, 2022; 184]. Likewise, Y.A. Filyasova and D.S. Levin consider proverbs to form a system of knowledge representation and the cognitive structures of language, reflecting the frame principle of contemplation, the cognitive ability to establish semantic intersections and create conceptual schemes that ensure constant analysis of the relationships between elements of cognitive systems and the extrapolation of meanings [Filyasova & Levin, 2025; 56]. Proverbs are actually connected with the encyclopaedic knowledge about a certain nation, on the basis of which particular associative-symbolic concepts can be formulated and stored in human's mind. These concepts integrate a network of knowledge about historical events, literary works, religious statements, legendary and mythical accounts, as well as, the ordinary life of people.

According to R. Sinjapova and K. Sinjapova, the mechanism of conceptual integration consists of three stages called composition, development and completion. The first stage is perceived as the process of identification of mental spaces on which the complete mechanism of conceptual integration is grounded, the second one is the process of identification of the conceptual attributes of each mental space and the last stage is assumed as the creation of a new meaning in an integrated mental space [Sinjapova & Sinjapova, 2022; 99]. In the process of conceptual integration analysis, two unrelated concepts which are involved in two input spaces are selected, then analogous elements common to two input spaces are identified, and, on the basis of which a linguistic unit with a new meaning are created.

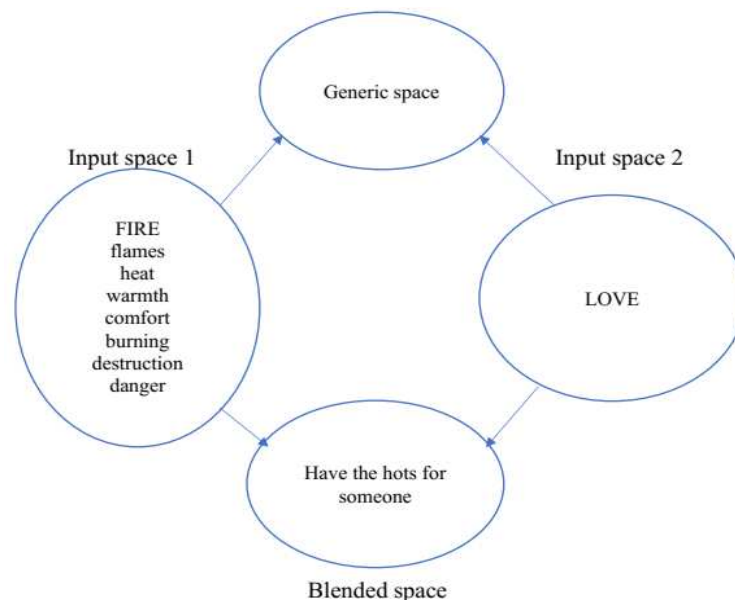
As M. Omazić accentuates, the conceptual integration theory is one of the most budding theoretical foundations that provides insight into the way we contemplate, create and perceive the surrounding reality, aiming to account for both non-linguistic and linguistic blends [Omazić, 2005; 38]. This theory

comprises conceptual integration network which habitually includes two or more input spaces organized by information from various mental spaces, a generic space and a blended space. The construction of the generic space is common to all input spaces and the construction of the blended space assumes elements from the whole inputs, generating an innovative and incipient structure.

Four and more mental spaces are activated in the theory of conceptual integration, in the centre of which the conceptual integration network is situated. This network is an array of mental spaces in which the process of conceptual integration unravels and consists of four or more input spaces containing information from mental spaces and is a mechanism for modeling how emergent meaning materializes [Ashurova & Galiyeva, 2018; 93].

DISCUSSION

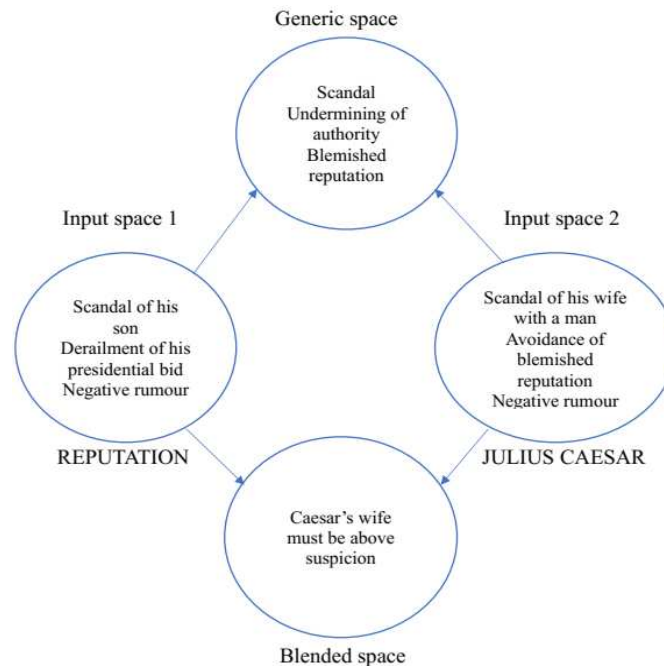
M.Omazić explains the conceptual integration network of the idiom *to have the hots for someone* based on the conceptual metaphor LOVE is FIRE. As she states "... that flames, heat, warmth, comfort, burning, destruction and danger normally associated with fire are projected onto the blended space, where the emotions associated with love are also projected, to arrive at a unique emergent structure not found in any of the input spaces: *to have the hots for someone*. This reasoning is unorthodox in many respects, but appears to be valid in accounting for figurative language expressions... What is more, with this kind of reasoning we can easily imagine another input space, that of a specific culture, to be included, and in such a way explain for cross-linguistic variations of figurative expressions via conceptual integration theory" [Omazić, 2005; 42-43]:



Picture 1. Conceptual integration network with central metaphorical cross-space mapping

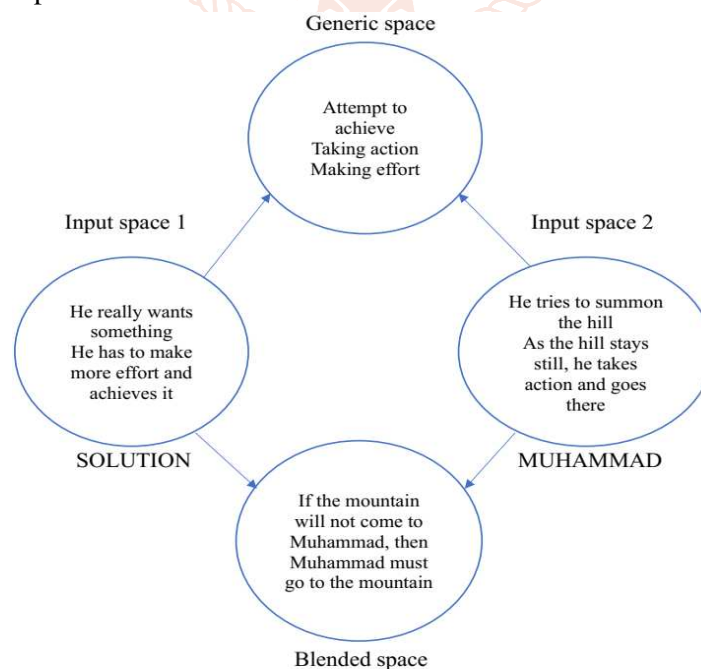
With regard to the analysis of English proverbs with an anthroponymic component in conceptual integration theory, two input spaces, including source and target spaces, generic space which integrates general and similar features of two input spaces and blended space in which English proverb with an anthroponymic component is emerged on the basis of analogy and similarity of two input spaces. In source input space features of anthroponyms as component of English proverbs are described, while in target input space, the concept we intend to interpret are activated.

The proverb *Caesar's wife must be above suspicion* means that those involved in authority should avoid not only suspicion, but also impropriety so as to preserve their reputation. This proverb emanates from an ancient Roman army leader Julius Caesar, whose divorce of his wife Pompeia in 62 BC because of a scandal where a man entered a women's-only festival to seduce her led to establish the statement. In order to maintain his reputation as a public official and avoid negative attention, Julius Caesar stated that his wife should not even be under suspicion. This historical event activates the concept REPUTATION in human's mind, leading to a conceptual network of maintenance of reputation, avoidance of negative attention, disgraceful behaviour and impropriety. Associated with such historical event, the anthroponym Julius Caesar in this case can formulate the cognitive model REPUTATION is JULIUS CAESAR. Let's take a look at the example sentence: - *After my son's scandal derailed my presidential bid, I understood why Caesar's wife must be above suspicion* [<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/Caesar%27s+wife+must+be+above+suspicion>]. The conceptual integration analysis of this proverb is as follows:



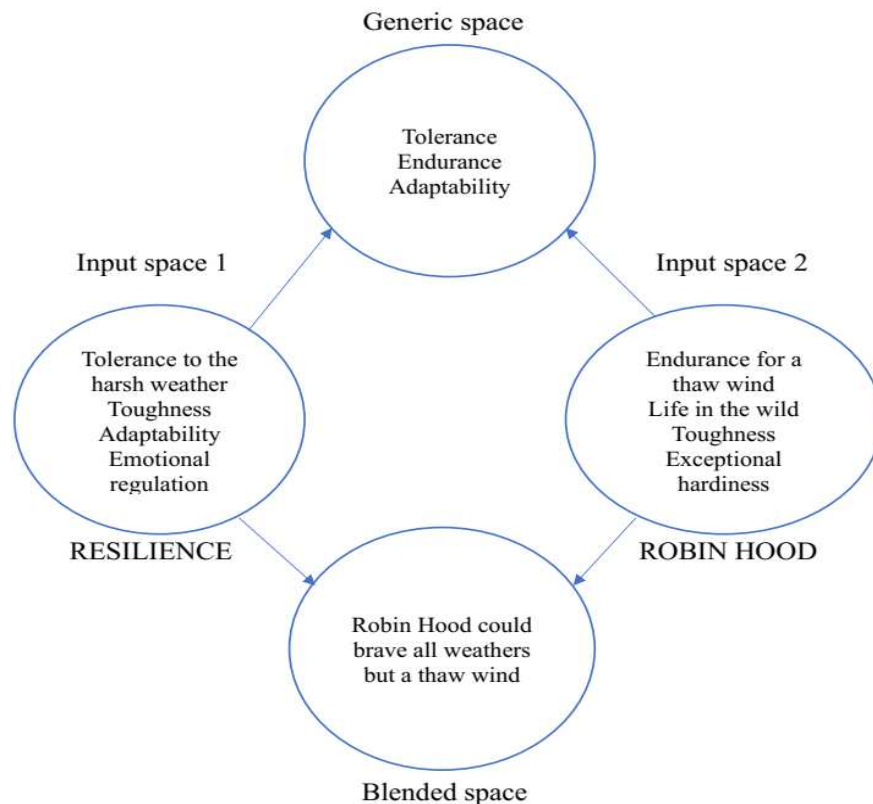
Picture 2. Conceptual integration analysis of the proverb “Caesar’s wife must be above suspicion”

The proverb *If the mountain will not come to Muhammad, then Muhammad must go to the mountain* signifies that if someone is not able to get his desired outcome, then he must be willing to adapt, take action himself and find a solution. The statement was publicized by the English philosopher Francis Bacon in his 1625 collection of essays. In his essay, he recounts a story of Muhammad (pbuh) trying to summon a hill to himself. When the hill remained still, he declared “If the hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the hill”. Although the story is perceived as apocryphal due to the fact that this event does not appear in the Quran, it circulated among English people as a proverb. This incident in Francis Bacon’s essay activates the concept SOLUTION in human’s mind making up a sequence of the situation: Muhammad (pbuh) attempts to collect the hill – the hill stays still – Muhammad (pbuh) has to go there – he decides to take action. Associated with this situation, the anthroponym Muhammad (pbuh) can formulate the cognitive model SOLUTION is MUHAMMAD. Let’s take a look at the example sentence: - *If this is something you really want, you’re going to have to make more of an effort. Remember, if the mountain will not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain* [<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/if+the+mountain+wont+come+to+Mohammed>]. The conceptual integration analysis of this proverb is as follows:



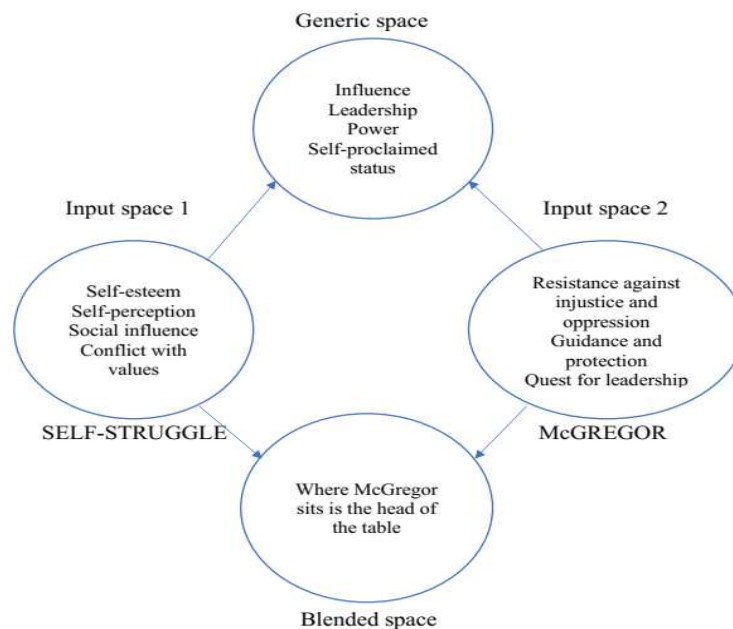
Picture 3. Conceptual integration analysis of the proverb “If the mountain will not come to Muhammad, then Muhammad must go to the mountain”

The proverb *Robin Hood could brave all weathers but a thaw wind* denotes the most arduous or unendurable conditions that even the hardest people like Robin Hood cannot tolerate. The phrase emerged as a local saying in northern England, specifically Yorkshire, as a reference to the harsh and unpleasant winds of a thaw in this area. The saying became a piece of folklore metaphorically commenting on the extreme arduousness of a thaw-related wind, emphasizing its severity by using the legendary figure known for his resilience. This comment activates the concept RESILIENCE in human's mind, associating it with Robin Hood's such peculiarities as self-belief, adaptability and toughness. On the basis of this comment, the anthroponym ROBIN HOOD can formulate the cognitive model RESILIENCE is ROBIN HOOD. The proverb emphasizes the idea that despite those with exceptional strength and adaptability like Robin Hood, particular forces of nature are recognized as universally challenging even for the mythical hero. The conceptual integration analysis of this proverb is as follows:



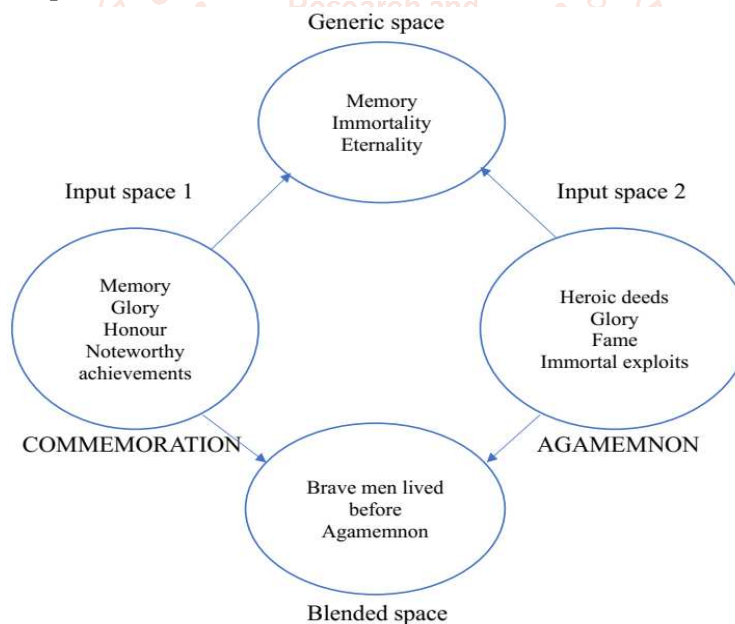
Picture 4. Conceptual integration analysis of the proverb “Robin Hood could brave all weathers but a thaw wind”

The proverb *Where McGregor sits is the head of the table* means that a man with true power and confidence can assure their presence and strength by way of prioritizing their location, irrespective of social status. It can be traced back to the quote ascribed to the legendary Scottish outlaw Rob Roy MacGregor in Sir Walter Scott's novel "Rob Roy" and it embodies the independent and influential spirit of McGregor, underscoring the authentic status of individuality instead of external authority. The quote activates the plot narrated in the novel "Rob Roy", where the MacGregor clan and his representation of inherent pride, belief in his influence and right to leadership is described, as well as, it can create the concept SELF-STRUGGLE in human's mind. On the grounds of this statement and the narrative plot, the anthroponym McGregor can formulate the cognitive model SELF-STRUGGLE is MCGREGOR. Let's take a look at its conceptual integration analysis as follows:



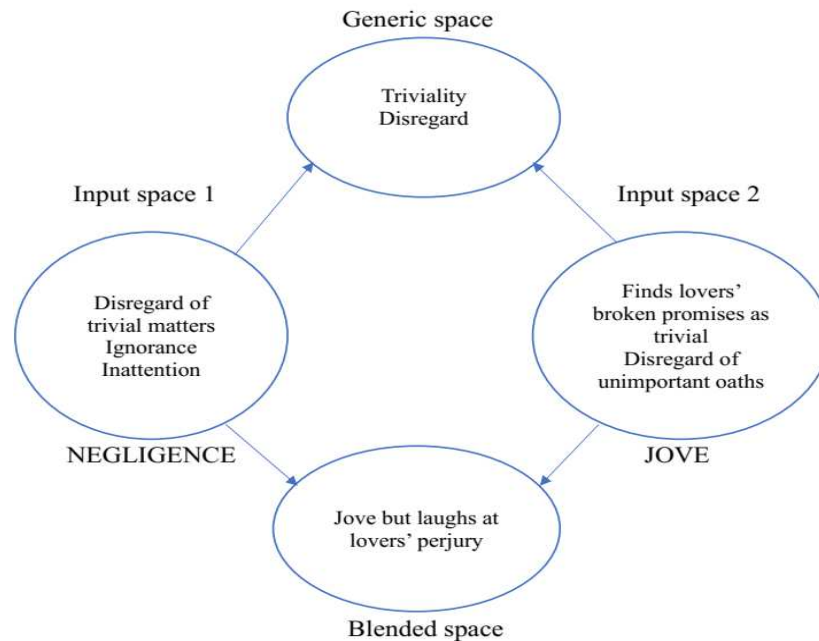
Picture 5. Conceptual integration analysis of the proverb "Where McGregor sits is the head of the table"

The proverb *Brave men lived before Agamemnon* accentuates the influence of poetry and storytelling to perpetuate heroes and their deeds. It stems from the Roman poet Horace in his writing "Odes", where the author asserted that these obliterated heroes lacked a venerated poet like Homer, who recounted Agamemnon's exploits in "The Iliad". This writing by Horace generates the idea that without a poet to record the heroes' deeds, their glory would be forgotten and can activate the concept **COMMEMORATION** in human's mind, ascribing it to such memorable accomplishments as Agamemnon's. According to this quote given by Horace, the anthroponym Agamemnon can formulate the cognitive model **COMMEMORATION** is **AGAMEMNON**. The conceptual integration analysis of this proverb is as follows:



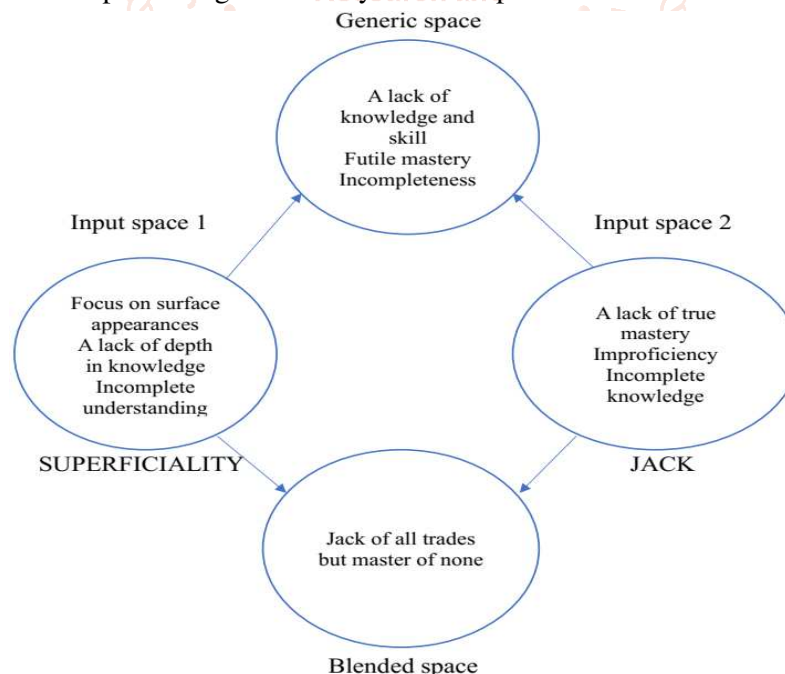
Picture 6. Conceptual integration analysis of the proverb "Brave men lived before Agamemnon"

The proverb *Jove but laughs at lovers' perjury* indicates that with regard to love, oaths ought not to be taken strictly, as they are so customarily ignored. This saying derives from the ancient Roman poet Ovid in his "The Art of Love" writings, where he states that "Jupiter from on high smiles at the perjuries of lovers". According to his work, Jove (Jupiter), the king of the gods, finds frequently broken vows of lovers so amusing that they are disregarded and unpunished, insinuating his consideration of these withdrawn promises as trivial rather than serious. These judgements can activate the concept **NEGLIGENCE** in human's mind, associating it with Jove's ignorance of such insignificant matters as lover's mendacity and the anthroponym Jove can formulate the cognitive model **NEGLIGENCE** is **JOVE**. Let's take a look at its conceptual integration analysis as follows:



Picture 7. Conceptual integration analysis of the proverb “Jove but laughs at lovers’ perjury”

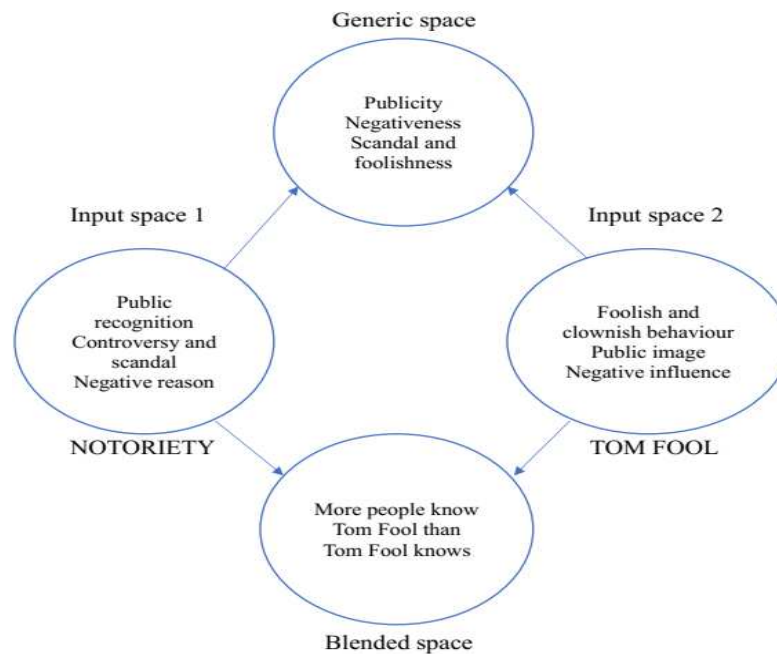
The proverb *Jack of all trades but master of none* describes those who try their hands at many different tasks but lacks proficiency and depth of knowledge in any single one. While the original “Jack of all trades” was a commendation for a multitasking man, the addition of “master of none” in the late 18th century transformed the meaning to have a negative connotation of superficiality. The anthroponym Jack in this proverb serves as a generic name for a man, symbolizing those with lack of expertise in one sphere of occupation. On account of such negative connotation, the proverb can activate the concept SUPERFICIALITY including such subconceptual elements as a focus on surface appearances, a lack of depth in knowledge, incomplete understanding in human’s mind, as well as the cognitive model SUPERFICIALITY is JACK in this context. Let’s take a look at the conceptual integration analysis of this proverb:



Picture 8. Conceptual integration analysis of the proverb “Jack of all trades but master of none”

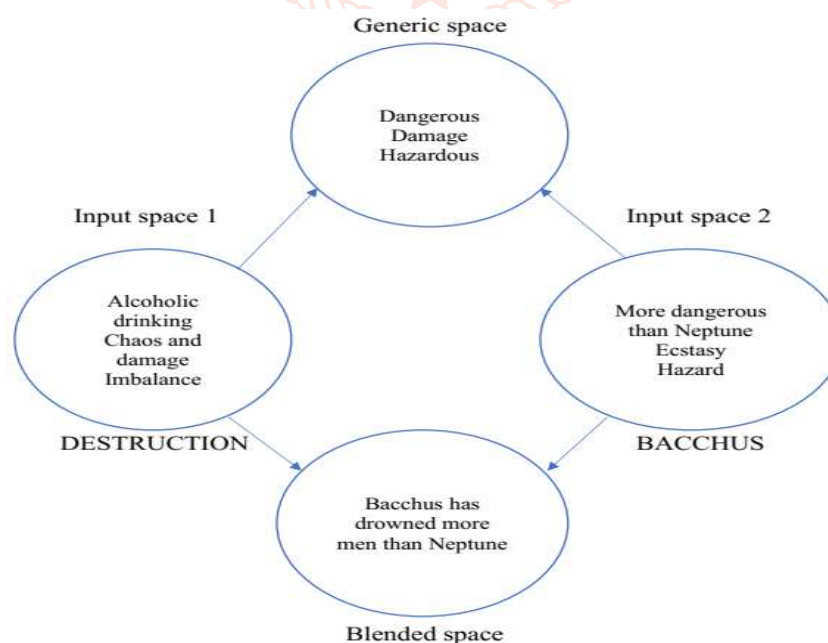
The proverb *More people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows* describes a person who has become known but is not necessarily aware of how he is perceived by others. It acts as a caution that the more attention a person gains, the more their reputation can spread beyond their control, and the harder it becomes for them to manage how they are seen by the public. The phrase derives from older folk wisdom that appeared around the mid-17th century, in which an early recorded version was “More know the Clown, than the Clown knows” and over time it evolved into modern version of this phrase with the substitution of “Tom Fool” as a personification of a fool.

The anthroponym Tom Fool in this proverb serves as a generic name symbolizing a foolish or clownish character who becomes recognized by the public. On the basis of such recognition with an adverse character, the proverb can activate the concept NOTORIETY with such subconceptual elements as public perception, public recognition, controversy and negative consequence in human's mind. In this context, the anthroponym Tom Fool can formulate the cognitive model NOTORIETY is TOM FOOL. Let's take a look at its conceptual integration analysis as follows:



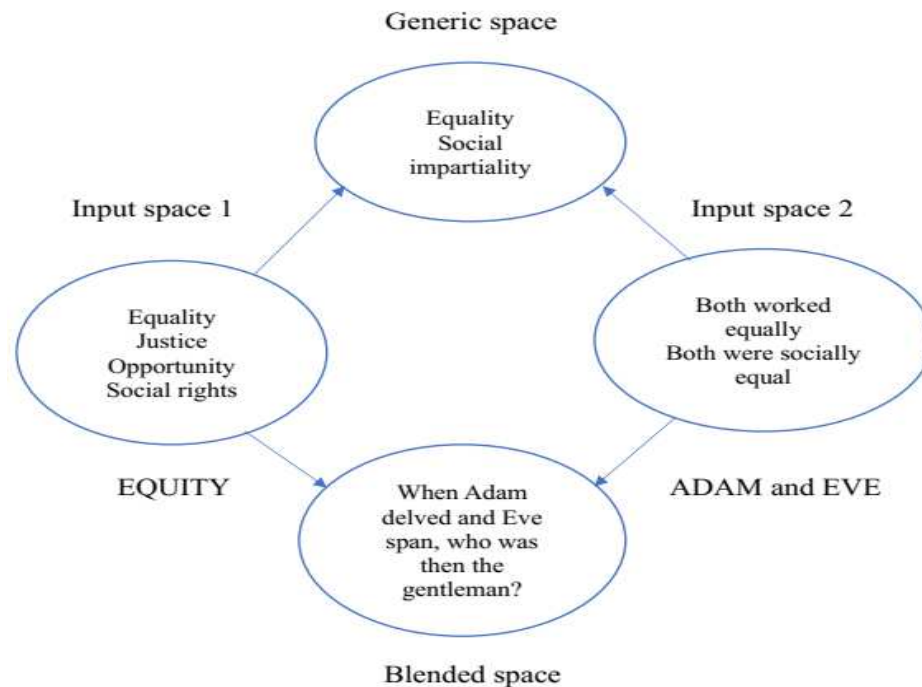
Picture 9. Conceptual integration analysis of the proverb "More people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows"

The proverb *Bacchus has drowned more men than Neptune* describes an alcoholic drinking that has been a greater cause of destruction than the perils of the sea. It suggests that excessive alcoholic consumption may well cause tremendous impairment for people's personal and daily life. The phrase is metaphorically used to compare the destructive power of alcohol with Bacchus, the god of wine, revelry and ecstasy, and Neptune, the god of the sea, in Roman mythology. Associated with this myth and the dire repercussions of alcoholic beverages, the proverb activates the concept DESTRUCTION in human's mind and the anthroponym Bacchus can formulate the cognitive model DESTRUCTION is BACCHUS. Let's take a look at its conceptual integration analysis as follows:



Picture 10. Conceptual integration analysis of the proverb "Bacchus has drowned more men than Neptune"

The proverb *When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?* means that all people are equal irrespective of their social status. Its origin is mainly attributed to a priest John Ball who used the phrase to instigate the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 to confront the feudal system and its implicit inequality. He evidently applied the phrase to gather peasants who were suffering from high taxes and repressive working conditions under the system of feudalism. They believed that all people were created equal by God and that the social hierarchy was a corruption. This historical event activates the concept EQUITY in human's mind with a subconceptual network of equality, justice and opportunity. The anthroponyms Adam and Eve in this case can obviously formulate the cognitive model EQUITY is ADAM and EVE. Let's take a look at its conceptual integration analysis as follows:



Picture 11. Conceptual integration analysis of the proverb “When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?”

Overall, these concepts are directly or indirectly associated with certain outstanding features of anthroponyms, which then developed into forming the component part of English proverbs. The conceptsphere of English proverbs with an anthroponymic component and their integral association with historical, religious, legendary, mythical and typical anthroponyms can clearly be seen in the following table:

Concepts	Associative anthroponyms	Proverbs
Reputation	Julius Caesar	<i>Caesar's wife must be above suspicion</i>
Solution	Muhammad (pbuh)	<i>If the mountain will not come to Muhammad, then Muhammad must go to the mountain</i>
Resilience	Robin Hood	<i>Robin Hood could brave all weathers but a thaw wind</i>
Self-struggle	Rob Roy MacGregor	<i>Where McGregor sits is the head of the table</i>
Commemoration	Agamemnon	<i>Brave men lived before Agamemnon</i>
Negligence	Jove (Jupiter)	<i>Jove but laughs at lovers' perjury</i>
Superficiality	Jack	<i>Jack of all trades but master of none</i>
Notoriety	Tom Fool	<i>More people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows</i>
Destruction	Bacchus	<i>Bacchus has drowned more men than Neptune</i>
Equity	Adam and Eve	<i>When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?</i>
Happy ending	Jack and Jill	<i>All shall be well, Jack shall have Jill</i>
Prosperity	Saint Paul	<i>If St. Paul's day is fair and clear, it will betide a happy year</i>
Celebration	Saint Barnabas	<i>Barnaby bright, Barnaby bright, the longest day and the shortest night</i>
Relationship	Jack and Jill	<i>A good Jack makes a good Jill</i>

Table 1. The conceptsphere of English proverbs with an associative anthroponymic component

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be underscored that anthroponyms as component part of English proverbs have the capability to formulate certain abstract concepts, including reputation, solution, resilience, self-struggle, commemoration, negligence, superficiality, notoriety, destruction and equity from the viewpoint of cognitive aspect. Besides, English proverbs with an anthroponymic component are metaphorical in nature because such metaphorical meaning is realized when a language user intends to compare them with other phenomena on the basis of their similarity and analogy. With regard to the formation of transferred meanings of these proverbs, such cognitive mechanisms as conceptual metaphor and conceptual integration are activated, the latter of which has been applied in this article so as to review a detailed and comprehensive analysis of such proverbs through blending in the theory of conceptual integration.

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