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## **Universidad de Valladolid**

FACULTAD de FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS  
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### **FIGHTING A BATTLE OR GOING ON A JOURNEY? METAPHORICAL CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF CANCER IN PATIENTS' BLOGS. A CASE STUDY**

Olga Esteban Puebla

Tutor: Laura Filardo Llamas  
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## ABSTRACT

The present dissertation presents a case study about the different conceptualizations of cancer found in blogs written by patients. Since conceptual metaphor is a matter of both language and thought, it plays a big role on the understanding and the way of perceiving realities around us. Therefore it is important to understand how they work for the construction of illness. Based on a corpus consisting of four blogs of cancer sufferers, the aim of this paper was to study how breast cancer patients, both English and Spanish speakers, conceptualize their illness and their experience as patients. And more specifically, how the most frequently used metaphors, CANCER IS VIOLENCE and CANCER IS A JOURNEY contribute to the perception and living of the experience, and as a result to the creation of emotions in the patients.

*Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor, cancer, VIOLENCE, JOURNEY, quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis.*

## RESÚMEN

El presente trabajo presenta un caso práctico sobre las diferentes conceptualizaciones del cáncer que se encuentran en blogs escritos por pacientes. Dado que la metáfora conceptual es una cuestión de lenguaje y pensamiento, juega un papel importante en la comprensión y la forma de percibir las realidades que nos rodean. Por lo tanto, es importante entender cómo funcionan en la construcción de la enfermedad. Partiendo de un corpus conformado por cuatro blogs de enfermas de cáncer, el objetivo de este trabajo fue estudiar cómo las pacientes de cáncer de mama, tanto de habla inglesa como española, conceptualizan su enfermedad y su experiencia como pacientes. Más concretamente, cómo las metáforas más recurrentes, EL CÁNCER ES VIOLENCIA y EL CÁNCER ES UN VIAJE, contribuyen a la percepción y vivencia de la experiencia y, en consecuencia la creación emociones en los pacientes.

*Palabras clave: Metáfora conceptual, cáncer, VIOLENCIA, VIAJE, análisis cuantitativo, análisis cualitativo.*

## 1. Introduction

“Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language.” (Lakoff and Johnson 4) This has been the opinion about metaphor for a long time, and therefore, it has been considered as only a matter of language that did not affect people’s way of talking or thinking about something. However, the truth is that metaphor is pervasive in our everyday language, action and thought (Lakoff and Johnson 4). Conceptual metaphor (CM) could be defined as thinking of one thing in terms of another. This happens when a concept is difficult to understand, usually because it is abstract, difficult to talk about, or even strange; and it is explained through another concept that tends to be more concrete and comprehensible.

Lakoff and Johnson pointed out that “because the metaphorical concept is systematic, the language we use to talk about that aspect of the concept is systematic.” (8). Therefore, it is normal that if, for instance, the concept IDEA is understood in terms of FOOD, all the language to talk about ideas will imply using language related to food such as “It was difficult to digest” and “I can’t stomach that idea”. This phenomenon also appears when dealing with topics such as diseases. More specifically, in the case of cancer, CMs are likely to appear due to the difficulty that explaining this situation to others may entail. Therefore, CMs such as CANCER IS WAR, CANCER IS AN ANIMAL, and CANCER IS A JOURNEY may be used by the patients to talk about their situations. And since metaphors, as stated before, are also a matter of thought and action, such conceptualizations can highly affect the patient’s way of perceiving their situation, and as a result, the way of coping with the illness.

As Semino et al. state “it is increasingly important to understand the (often lengthy) experience of cancer, including the effects it may have on people’s psychological well- being and identity” (261). And one of the possible ways to understand that it is through analyzing the language they use to talk about their experiences to see how they conceptualize the illness.

This dissertation arises from the recent interest that has been playing social media and linguistic scholars, such as Elena Semino, in how cancer patients conceptualize the disease and their experience through their way of speaking, and which are the most

frequent conceptualizations. To study that, this dissertation focuses on a case study concerning four different blogs, and displays a quantitative analysis from which, later, a qualitative analysis is done too. The latter one is done in order to study more in depth two types of CM, *CANCER IS VIOLENCE* and *CANCER IS A JOURNEY*. These CMs are analyzed because of their high frequencies and because they have been recently subjected to debate as Semino et al. observe (122). Such analysis presents how each CM conceptualizes the illness, and reflects about *VIOLENCE* CM the implications and the feelings that such conceptualizations can bring.

## 2. Literature Review

Conceptual metaphor (CM) refers to the conceptual linguistic understanding of metaphor; a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. Therefore, when we use a metaphor we are conceptualizing an entity in terms of another. This analogical reasoning lies at the core of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). CMT stresses that metaphors do not only contribute to expressing things in certain ways. In fact, CM is not only a linguistic process, but also a much more complex matter related to our cognitive capacity and the ways in which we perceive the world and create the realities that define our lives. This is due to the fact that metaphors are ubiquitous in our language, in the way we think and in the way we act since our conceptual system is metaphorical. (Lakoff and Johnson 3).

More specifically, CM is defined by Kövecses (2002) as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain (4). These domains are defined as “portions of our background knowledge that relate to particular experiences or phenomena, and may include elements, relations and patterns of inferences” (Semino 5-6). In CMT two different domains are identified: the *SOURCE* and the *TARGET*

domain. And as Semino et.al (2018) state “the thing we want to express or think about (the ‘topic’ or ‘target’) is abstract, subjective, complex and/or sensitive in some way, while the thing we use to describe it (the ‘vehicle’ or ‘source’) is often more concrete, physical and tangible.” For example, in the CM *CANCER IS AN ANIMAL*, “cancer” would

be the TARGET domain whereas “animal” would be the SOURCE one. Thus, what a conceptual metaphor does is “to conceptualize the cognitively less easily accessible domains in terms of the more easily accessible ones.” (Semino and Demjén). By doing this, some of the elements from the SOURCE domain are mapped onto the TARGET, and a set of systematic correspondences, called mappings, is established between them. This reversion from the TARGET-SOURCE order, done by the mappings, is what gives the meaning to the metaphorical expressions (Kövecses 7). Metaphorical linguistic expressions “are words or other linguistic expressions that come from the language or terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain.” (Kövecses 4). In CMT, the study of CM starts with the identification of metaphorical linguistic expressions since “it is the metaphorical linguistic expressions that reveal the existence of the conceptual metaphors” (Kövecses 6). Nevertheless, these expressions usually focus on certain aspects of the source domain and leave behind others producing a phenomenon called highlighting, i.e. focusing on the aspects that are similar between the two domains and that, therefore, are being compared, and “backgrounding” or leaving behind those aspects from the domains that cannot be compared because they have no relation between each other. This is very frequent in metaphors because “in allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept, a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor.” (Lakoff and Johnson 10).

Metaphors are of great importance for speakers since the lexical choices used for evoking them may result in some cognitive effects which “can reflect, convey and reinforce different ways of seeing and experiencing different aspects of our lives” (Semino and Demjén). This view lies at the core of the CMT cognitive approach which states that “the perceived similarity between two entities that is captured by metaphor also inevitably provides a particular take on the topic at hand” (Semino et. al 29). As a result, metaphors can very much influence the way people react emotionally to them. For instance, a commonly cited CM such as CANCER IS A BATTLE, due to its cognitive role in our lives can affect the sufferer’s experience leading to either feelings of empowerment or disheartenment; while CANCER IS A JOURNEY is usually related to positive emotions, as for example, reinforcing the feeling of companionship among the sufferers. These metaphors -or others used- do not necessarily affect every person

in the same way as “other patients, however, may find WAR metaphors inappropriate and disheartening, and may feel more comfortable with other conventional metaphors for illness, or may indeed creatively invent their own metaphors, often drawing from their personal experiences” (Semino 178). Henceforth, we can observe that although the patients may choose different types of metaphors, they all use metaphors indeed.

Regarding CM in the illness field, “metaphor is relevant to the linguistic and conceptual description of illness” (Semino 175). Metaphors are used to describe the process, consequences and feelings when suffering a disease and one of the first people to address this issue was Susan Sontag. Sontag, with her book *Metaphor and Illness* (1979), was a pioneer in writing and discussing about metaphor and its role and effects in illness such as tuberculosis and cancer. She states that “illness is not a metaphor, and that the most truthful way of regarding illness—and the healthiest way of being ill—is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking” (Sontag 3). Sontag analysis of the metaphors used when describing the diseases in relation to psychological effects and traits offered a negative view on the use of them. She emphasized the negative consequences of the metaphors used such as violence and military ones for cancer discourse, claiming that “they encouraged a punitive view of the illness, constructing the patient as a victim and the illness as the culprit” (Semino & Demjén). This negative view has changed over the years: Elena Semino, in her seminar study about CM and illness, offers a more positive view and argues that “metaphor is seen as a resource insofar as it enables sufferers to express and share their experiences” (Semino 176). Semino’s work on cancer metaphors demonstrates the veracity of the previously mentioned statement and highlights that “what matters is how the metaphor is used, and the extent to which the individuals are free and able to select the ones that work best for them.” (Semino 178)

In one of her latest works, *Metaphor, Cancer and the End of Life: A Corpus-Based Study*, she identified and analyzed the different and various metaphors used among cancer patients, healthcare professionals and caregivers when speaking about the different aspects of the experience. Observing, for instance, that war-like metaphors, which are said to be the most frequently used, did not always pose an entirely negative view, but that the patient could use them in order to feel empowered and motivated. Semino reaches the conclusion that metaphors are ubiquitous and pervasive, and that

should not be eradicated nor imposed on anyone since they play a big role for those who use them. Therefore, identifying them and analyzing the way in which they are used by cancer patients, is essential to understand how they work in the construction of their illness and in the emergence of different feelings that can very much impact both the patients' facing of the disease and even the recovery.

### **3. Methodology**

Following suggestions in the literature regarding Elena Semino's seminal study, the data in this dissertation is taken from patients' blogs. Blogs allow more anonymity, the authors are in a non-formal environment, and they are writing about their actual state and experience (Semino 49). This favors a greater production of a more metaphorical language compared to what we would find if they were talking directly to a doctor. More specifically, this dissertation focuses on four blogs, two in Spanish and two in English. Since there are many types of cancer and many blogs on the Internet, it was necessary to establish and take into account some requisites that the blogs should comply with. The four of them had to be blogs from female breast cancer patients, and their posts had to be approximately from the same years. As a contrastive perspective is taken in this dissertation, two blogs were written in English and two in Spanish and for each two of them, one had to be from a survivor and another from a non-survivor. More specifically, the blogs are called Booby and the Beast (BB), Let us be Mermaids (LUMB), La Batalla de mi Vida (LBM) and, Mi Lucha contra el Cáncer de Mama Metastásico (LCMM). In this dissertation we will refer to them using the acronyms in parentheses. All of the posts were a total of 738 texts that were carefully read and tagged when a metaphorical expression was found.

For the identification and selection of metaphors related to cancer, this dissertation applies Lakoff's and Johnsons's, and Kövecses CMT, which establishes that CM is any organization of experience understood in terms of another (Kövecses 4). Each CM is expressed through metaphorical expressions, which are the linguistic realization of CMs. These have been manually identified and extracted from the corpus. Once they were extracted, the next step was to classify them depending on the conceptual metaphor they evoked. For that, the metaphorical linguistic expressions were grouped



depending on the target domain that was being conceptualized and the source domain of the expression.

The analysis was done in two ways: quantitatively for the account of all the metaphors that appear in the corpus; and a qualitative analysis of VIOLENCE and JOURNEY metaphors to see how they conceptualize the illness and the effect they may create on the patient. The last two CM were chosen for the qualitative analysis because they were the ones that both in Spanish and English had a the highest and more similar frequencies, which can be seen in table 1.

The quantitative analysis consists of an account of all the metaphorical keywords that appeared in the corpus as conceptualizations of cancer. The process consisted in a deep reading of all the posts to manually identify the different metaphors used. This was performed because it allowed an easier recognition of the keywords when the corpus was put into a software. After the manual identification of keywords, the texts in the corpus were converted into .txt format and put into AntConc, a corpus analysis software. The process of extraction of keywords with AntConc was the following: once all the texts of the corpus were put into the software, the identification of the metaphorical words was done through the use of Wordlist tool, which allowed to see every single word that conformed the corpus. Since it is difficult to see if a word is metaphorical in isolation it was necessary to see the context where it was placed on. Thus, the tool 'Collocates' was also used. This allowed seeing the words as they appeared in the texts and facilitated the research and identification. Finally, the calculation of the frequency of each word was done through the 'concordance hit' tool.

The qualitative analysis was carried out because it provided a better understanding of how CMs work. It focuses on two of all of the CM identified, which are those of CANCER IS VIOLENCE and CANCER IS A JOURNEY. Since the metaphorical keywords for each CM had been previously extracted through the quantitative analysis, the next step was to select which of those words were of most relevance for the analysis and which sort of mappings were established. The focus was on how each of these metaphorical expressions construct the illness and which of the stages or issues of this experience they highlight. And to do that, each keyword was analyzed taking into account the

context in which they appeared. This led to a number of sentences for each metaphorical word that were numbered regarding their appearance in the analysis and studied focusing on how the CM is created through the metaphorical keyword and the rest of the words around it.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 Quantitative Analysis

The analysis consisted on quantifying the metaphorical keywords found in the corpus as conceptualizations of cancer. Such quantification provided information on how many metaphors appeared in the blogs, what sort of metaphors there were and the frequency with which each word appeared. More specifically, the results of the analysis are gathered in 4 main tables, as we can see below and in the appendix.

Table 1 presents the different types of CMs found in the corpus and the number of metaphorical keywords, both in English and Spanish, for each CM. This shows that the total number of metaphorical keywords found in the corpus was 625 for the English corpus and 411 for the Spanish. And also that the CMs with the highest number of metaphorical words were CANCER IS VIOLENCE in the English corpus with a total number of 309; CANCER IS VIOLENCE in the Spanish corpus with a total number of 201; and CANCER IS A JOURNEY in the Spanish corpus with a total number of 48.

**Table 1**

#### Types of Conceptual Metaphors found in the corpus

Conceptual metaphor	English items	Spanish items
CANCER IS VIOLENCE	309 → 49 %	201 → 49%
CANCER IS A JOURNEY	41 → 6 %	48 → 11%
THE BODY IS A CONTAINER	170 → 27%	24 → 6%
CANCER IS METEOROLOGY/NATURE	11 → 2%	39 → 9%
CANCER IS A MACHINE	21 → 3%	24 → 6%

CANCER IS AN ANIMAL	17 → 3%	27 → 6%
CANCER IS A PERSON	23 → 4%	17 → 4%
CANCER IS SUPERNATURAL/RELIGIO N	8 → 1%	28 → 7%
CANCER IS A SPORT/GAME	25 → 4%	3 → 0,7%

Tables I, II and III, which can be found in the appendix, are arranged in such a way that they first show the type of CM. The metaphorical keyword for each CM is also included. These are subdivided depending on their grammatical function: verb, noun, adjective, adverb, whenever it was possible to do so. Next to it, there is the occurrence of each keyword within the corpus. And in each section, the metaphorical words with the highest frequency appear in bold letters.

More specifically, Table I is a detailed account of the different metaphorical keywords found in the corpus for the CM *CANCER IS VIOLENCE* and *CANCER IS A JOURNEY*. This table was done because they were the ones with the highest number of keywords and, therefore, the qualitative analysis is focused on them. Through them it can be seen that the metaphorical expressions of the CM *CANCER IS VIOLENCE* with the highest frequency in the English corpus are those related to ‘survive’ with a total number of 100 uses whilst for the Spanish corpus are those of ‘fight’ with a total number of 81 uses, hence showing difference in the type of word utilized. And regarding the CM *CANCER IS A JOURNEY*, the metaphorical keyword with the highest frequency in English is ‘journey’ with a total number of 23 uses; while in Spanish they are those related to ‘path’ with a total number of 26 uses. Although the complete version of table I is found in the appendix, we include here table 2, which shows only the keywords taken into account for the qualitative analysis.

Table 2

## CANCER IS VIOLENCE and CANCER IS A JOURNEY

Conceptual metaphor	English metaphorical keyword	#items	Spanish metaphorical keyword	#items
CANCER IS VIOLENCE	surviv*( <i>verb</i> )	100→3 2%	sobreviv*	2→ 1%
	fight*	40→12, 6%	luch*	81→4 0 %
	battl*	14 → 4%	batall*	9→4, 5%
	beat* ( <i>verb</i> )	26 → 8%		
	aggressive*	18 → 5,3%	agres*	6→2, 5%
	target*	19 → 5%		
	kill*	8 → 2,6%	mat*	2 → 1%
	devastat*	7 → 1,9%	machaca(da)	3 → 1%
	suppress*	7 → 1,9%		
	attack*	5 → 1,3%	atac*	11 →5%
	punch(ed)	4 → 1%		
	strik*	2 → 0,6%		
	destroy*	2 → 0,6%	destru*	4 → 2%
	eradica*	2 → 0,6%	elimin*	1→0, 5%
	enemy	2 → 0,6%	enemigo	3 → 1%
	front	1 → 0,3%		
	retreat*	1 → 0,3%		
vanquish*	1 → 0,3%	venc *	9 → 4%	

	ravish*	1 → 0,3%	destroz*	1→0, 5%
	arsenal	1 → 0,3%	arma	3 → 1%
	armor	1 → 0,3%	coraza	1→0, 5%
CANCER IS A JOURNEY	<b>journey</b>	<b>23 →</b> <b>56%</b>		
	road	5 → 12%		
	path	3 → 7%	<b>camin *</b>	<b>26→5</b> <b>4%</b>
			tramo [del camino]	1 → 2%
			final (del camino)	3 → 6%
	route	1 → 2%	rumbo	4 → 8%
	forward	6 → 15%	avanz*	2 → 4%
	navigat*	3 → 7%	naveg*	2 → 4%
			subida(s)	2 → 4%
			bajada(s)	2 → 4%

Table II and III, in the appendix; gather the rest of the metaphorical keywords found in the analysis. In table 3 they are classified depending on whether they belonged to the CM CANCER IS A SPORT/GAME, CANCER IS METEOROLOGY/NATURE, CANCER IS SUPERNATURAL/RELIGION, CANCER IS AN ANIMAL, CANCER IS A MACHINE, THE BODY IS A CONTAINER OR CANCER IS A PERSON. And in table III, there are the creative metaphors found in the corpus.

#### 4.2 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis of the metaphorical conceptualizations of cancer, as stated in the methodology section, consists on the analysis of the metaphorical linguistic expressions or keywords that were extracted from four blogs. For space reasons, the

focus is on the two more frequently used CM found in the blogs: VIOLENCE metaphors, and JOURNEY metaphors. These are also the most commonly used, as stated by Semino. These two metaphors offer completely different perspectives of the illness and construct the patient experience in ways that help them -and us- understand their situation. Metaphors, both VIOLENCE, and JOURNEY ones, are essential in the construction and framing of the illness since depending on their usage they can drastically change the view of cancer and the emotional response from those suffering it. Therefore, “understanding the impacts of different metaphors may help us use them in ways that are most helpful to patients’ particular situations and mindsets.” (Hendricks et al 269).

#### 4.2.1 VIOLENCE Metaphors

The VIOLENCE metaphors found both in the English and Spanish blogs in the corpus, were first analyzed taking into account the mappings between the source domain and the target domain, found in table 3, and their lexical realizations. These mappings and their linguistic realization lead to the construction of the illness and its experience as a violent or war-like situation which affects very much the patients’ experience and view of their disease.

**Table 3**

#### Mappings in VIOLENCE metaphors

<i>Source: VIOLENCE</i>	<i>Target: CANCER</i>
Fighter	Patient
Battle	Disease / Therapy
To battle/ fight	Trying to be healthy again / Not dying
Enemy	Disease / Therapy

The most frequent lexical realization of the VIOLENCE CM in English was “survive”. Throughout the several posts of the English blogs the words “survival”, “survive” and “survivor” are frequently used when the authors of the blogs talk about not having cancer anymore and being healthy again, but instead of saying that, they

place themselves as survivors. Placing themselves as survivors, the authors emphasize the final result of the process, which in this case is overcoming cancer.

The VIOLENCE metaphors of cancer appearing in the blogs place the patients as fighters having a battle against their illness. Thus, when they finally “win” that battle and become healthy they say they have “survived” cancer as if they had survived the battle. This happens because the linguistic expressions highlight the fact of not being cancer sufferers anymore and contributes to empowering themselves, as we can see in examples [1] and [2].

[1] *I introduced myself, and said I was in town from Phoenix to talk to his staff about my experience as a cancer survivor. (BB)*

[2] *Cada vez somos más las mujeres que sobrevivimos a un diagnóstico de cáncer metastásico. (LBMV)*

Other times the word "survivor" appears followed by the word "guilt" like in example [3]. When the patients are no longer ill, they feel sorry and guilty for the rest of the people they know that are still suffering the consequences of cancer. The use of this sort of metaphorical expression does not give a sense of empowerment but rather helplessness. The "cancer survivors" feel powerless because they cannot change the situation of their friends and they would like them to be as well as they are.

[3] *And then I started crying as I strung the lights, thinking about my friends whose cancer situations are worsening or who are spending this season without family members because of cancer. The music wasn't helping. I'm blaming you, Mariah Carey. Is this survivor's guilt? (BB)*

What is more, example [3] is not only a metaphorical conceptualization of the cancer patient as a survivor, but it also expresses a metonymic relation inside that metaphor which is the emphasis on the guilt of the person that has survived cancer. Taking into account the cognitive grammar concept of construal<sup>1</sup>, this emphasis on the guilt gives focus and prominence to a consequence of the result of surviving.

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<sup>1</sup> In cognitive grammar, construal refers to the semantic features of an expressions which work in the same way as visual perception. The construal establishes different dimensions from which a concept can be studied: specificity (how closely a scene or its parts are viewed); focus and prominence (what, within the scene, receives the attention); and perspective (the position from which the scene is viewed). (Giovannelli and Harrison 34)

Survival-related lexical units also appear in the blogs when the writers talk about facts and percentages about cancer as in examples [4] and [5]. This brings to the analysis the idea that even the healthcare sector makes use of this sort of expressions as it has been analyzed by Semino et.al (2018). They may be used without being aware that they are metaphorical: people actually die because of cancer and therefore, if they do not die, it can be considered that they have survived. This could be because such conceptualization is a conventional metaphor deeply rooted in our everyday conceptual system (Lakoff and Johnson 211).

[4] *And of course I can't remember where I saw it, but I've read a few times that the median survival time once metastases are detected is twenty-six months. (BB)*

[5] *En el estudio de mujeres posmenopáusicas con cáncer de mama hormonalmente sensible, el letrozol redujo la recurrencia del cáncer, pero no cambió la tasa de supervivencia, comparado con el tamoxifeno. (LCMM)*

But still, not all the appearances of this sort of metaphorical linguistic expression are positive, sometimes they are used by the authors (mostly in LUBM) in order to criticize them or to explain that she is not defined by this CM nor by the correspondences it establishes. As seen in [6] the author rejects the war-like and violent metaphorical linguistic expressions and claims that she does not feel like a fighter in a battle against cancer. This is why she rejects the survival metaphors too.

[6] *Metster, lifer, thrivor, and survivor are some terms folks use to call themselves after receiving a diagnosis of metastatic breast cancer. Because **my cancer does not define me**, I am **not** very comfortable calling myself any of these. **I am so much more than someone who has cancer**, but of course, it does play a HUGE part in my life. (LUBM)*

If the co-text of [6] is analyzed too in order to see this rejection: the words in bold such as "my cancer does not define me" and "I am not very comfortable" in which the 1st person and the negative adverb "not" show refusal to feel like a "metster, lifer, thrivor, and survivor ". The author does not only reject being defined only by cancer but emphasizes that she is more than someone suffering from cancer when she says "I am so much more ..." This is what leads to the above- mentioned criticism of this CM.



The second most frequent lexical choice for the realization of the VIOLENCE CM on the blogs is that of “fight/battle”. This is mainly due to the fact that since cancer is conceptualized as WAR, BATTLE or FIGHT, the patients use the words “fight”, “battle” and “fighter,” which highlight the situation they are experiencing or themselves. The English blog BB and the two Spanish ones (LBM and LCMM) contain the majority of these words since the authors clearly refer to themselves confronting the disease as if it was a battle they are fighting and, thus, call themselves and their fellows “fighter/s.” This, in terms of cognitive grammar, construes the scene by profiling the patients, who become the specific focus of attention against the conceptual base of “fight” (Giovanelli and Harrison 37). This view of going into battle in cases like [8] and [9] implies feelings of empowerment and bravery or even companionship, as in [7], with “my fellow” next to “fighter”.

[7] *I learned at lunch on Saturday that my fellow fighter Jen passed away Friday night. (BB)*

[8] *Una mujer luchadora como la que más, que **ha batallado** con uñas y dientes contra este **monstruo** llamado cáncer y en ningún momento ha dejado de sonreír, de ser feliz, de VIVIR. (LBMV)*

[9] *Pensé que iba a ser solo un año malo y bueno... aquí sigo luchando, como ya sabéis, haciendo un pulso contra él y contra los tratamientos pero... **AQUI SIGO!!!** (LCMM)*

Example [8] is quite representative of the “fight/battle” lexical choice. This is so because it does not only states that the patient is a “fighter”, but also that she has indeed battled, “ha batallado”, against the disease, to which she refers as a “monster”. The use of the word “monstruo” to conceptualize cancer is another metaphor, ‘CANCER IS AN ANIMAL’, combined with the metaphor ‘CANCER IS VIOLENCE’.

The fact of viewing the condition and experience of the cancer patient as a fight establishes the mapping of cancer as being the “enemy” and the patient as the one “facing” or “confronting” the disease, therefore, the “fighter.” In particular, in examples [10] and [11] the focus is given to the disease through the use of “enemy”. This metaphorical expression turns also into a personification of cancer, as it can also be seen in example [13].

[10] *Our **fight** isn't over, but **our** enemy is **MUCH** less intimidating now. (BB)*

[11] *No hay que bajar la guardia porque el enemigo **acecha** ya seas hormiga o león. (LCMM)*

More specifically, in the co-text of example [10] shows that the prominence is given to “enemy” by placing it as the subject of the coordinating clause. This can also be seen through the use of the verb “to be” in 3rd person singular and the attribute “MUCH less intimidating”, which is even more emphasized with the capital letters in “MUCH”.

The usage of VIOLENCE metaphors can also imply the creation of certain metonymic relations. This is why there are other words such as “cancer front”, the “retreating” of the patient's “chemobrain,” the cancer drug “arsenal,” and the “armor” the patient puts on in order to “battle” the disease, which make reference to the war-like experience of having cancer and recall again a battlefield scenario.

[12] *No news is good news, and for now, all is quiet on the cancer front. (BB)*

[13] *And so my boys and I are gearing up, putting on our armor and heading into battle again. (BB)*

[14] *No hay que bajar **la guardia** porque ahí está el cáncer, resistiendo ante cualquier amenaza con una gran coraza que hace impenetrable y que no se le puede **aniquilar**. (LCMM)*

In example [12] the metonymic relation is created through the metaphorical expression “cancer front,” which recalls the idea of a battlefield in which the cancer patient is fighting. We observe that although this word is not directly referring to a fight, the “front” word forms a part of the fighting situation, and leads to association with it. The same happens with examples [13] and [14] in which the patient refers in both languages to the armor, either the one the patient wears in the battle or the one the enemy (cancer) wears.

Although in many cases these VIOLENCE metaphors are used to encourage the patient, the author of BB also states that fighting against cancer is not directly related to being brave, that sometimes they just do it because they have to stay alive and because they want to be healthy again. In this case, the word fight is not so much

related to empowerment but to duty, to something they must do in order to overcome the disease. Therefore, we see how through the same CM one can achieve two different emotional effects depending on its use.

[15] *We can all **be brave** (or not; a diagnosis of cancer does not automatically turn one into a **superhero**, and some days, brave has nothing to do with the decision to get up and keep fighting. No--some days, that decision is pure **stubbornness**, or a deep-rooted **responsibility** to those who most depend on you to get your ass out of bed, or a little seed of hope that today might be the day they announce a cure).* (BB)

It may happen that other patients, such as the author of LUBM, may feel like they are not fighting and that those war-related words are not of use for them. Thus, instead of being motivational these metaphorical linguistic expressions just produce the opposite effect. Reisfield & Wilson (ctd in Hendricks, K et al. 269) say that using these metaphorical expressions is suggesting that when someone “wins” (recovers) it is because they tried hard enough, and this message disregards more social and emotional aspects of healing. This is why the author of this blog feels that by using the word “fight” we are implying that the patients are the ones in charge of how their disease develops, when in fact, that is the chemotherapy's and the rest of the drugs' task. Moreover, from her point of view “fighting” means that there is a loser and a winner, and therefore, if the patient finally dies -as it happens with the author of LUBM- “the battle metaphor presents lack of recovery as defeat, and hence potentially as a personal failure.” (Granger ctd in Hendricks, K et al. 269). Thus, this may lead to a rejection of these metaphorical expressions like in examples [16] and even clearer in [17] through the use of the negation of the verb “lose”.

[16] *The idea that a person “fights” or “battles” cancer is **meant to be motivational** for patients, **but**, recently, some have started to question whether the use of these war metaphors **can cause inadvertent harm**.* (LUBM)

[17] *Mom is dying. It's the awful truth. **She's not losing** a fight or a battle, she hated when people said that about others who died of MBC.* (LUBM)

Very much related to the “fight/battle” metaphorical words, other metaphorical linguistic expressions, which are highly repeated in the corpus were “beat,” “beating”

or “beaten,” in which the idea of recovering or overcoming the illness is mapped into the “beating the illness” idea. In this case, the metaphorical linguistic expressions construct the patients’ situation as a war-like experience. This can be clearly seen in example [19] when overcoming breast cancer is presented as a “victory” over cancer.

[18] *I have never doubted that I will beat this, but I still have moments when I'm scared out of my mind. (BB)*

[19] *Nunca hay que perder la fe, la esperanza, la alegría de vivir.....**hay que luchar....PODEMOS VENCER**.*

The same happens with other metaphorical words appearing in the blogs such as “ravished” for the development of cancer in a person’s body; and “vanquish” for the stopping of the cancer cells development; or the words “attack” and “strike” in reference to either the way in which the treatment for cancer works or to the way cancer appears within the body. The way in which these verbs are used in examples [20], [21], [22] and [23] also result in a personification of both the disease and the treatment. And contribute to the construction of cancer as a war. This conceptualization may lead to negative feelings towards the patients’ situation due to the violent way of talking about it.

[20] *The cancer hasn't ravished their bodies and they haven't begun treatment.*

[21] *I am also hoping this new chemo is effective and attacks the cancer in a major way. (LUBM)*

[22] *Como la quimio ataca las células tumorales que son células de crecimiento rápido pues también ataca a las células que componen estos órganos.(no nos olvidemos que la piel es un órgano ). (LCMM)*

[23] *Breast cancer in younger women tends to be far more aggressive than the disease that strikes women who are post-menopausal. (BB)*

Another lexical choice related to the VIOLENCE conceptualization of cancer are the evaluative terms "aggressive" or "aggression." This sort of metaphorical expressions

is mostly used by the patients (and also by the healthcare professionals) to talk about both the tumor and the medical procedures taken for the elimination of the tumor as seen in examples [24], [25] and [26]. Since the cancerous tumor is malign and “attacks” your body, it is described as “aggressive” and, therefore, the way to eliminate it is by taking “aggressive” measures. This idea contributes to the conception of the disease as a violent experience in which not only the cancer is aggressive but also the medicine that is supposed to save you. This is also highly related to the fact that the patients refer to the treatment (generally the chemotherapy) as ‘poison’. Thus, if the whole experience is regarded as aggressive and even what is supposed to save you is addressed as ‘poison’, it may lead to feelings of disempowerment and distress that will create a negative vision of the situation for the patient and that will make her/his experience more difficult to adapt to.

What is more, we observe that even in the blog that rejects war-related metaphors, this sort of aggressiveness also appears, and that has to do with the fact that they are also used in clinical language, as can be seen too in Semino’s et.al work. Furthermore, Reisfield and Wilson state that these sort of metaphors are used by pharmaceutical companies to promote chemotherapy drugs (Semino and Demjén).

[24] *Breast cancer tends to be very aggressive in younger women, as is the case with mine. (BB)*

[25] *(For MBC, the hope is for hormone therapy to work, chemo is an option for when hormone therapy doesn’t work or more aggressive measures need to be taken, and clinical trials come into play when those other treatments types run out.) (LUBM)*

[26] *Cuando nos sometemos a estos tratamientos tan agresivos como la quimio, llegamos a tener efectos indeseables entre los cuales está la bajada de defensas. (LCMM)*

Something similar happens with the words “target,” “targeted” or “targeting” which are mostly used with regards to the cancer treatments and whose use, again, recalls the war and military lexicon. The medication is presented as a weapon that ‘targets’ the cancerous or ‘assassin’ cells in order to kill them, as in [27]. These metaphorical expressions generate the patient’s view of their own illness as something

they have to attack, which again may bring negative evaluations and effects for both the patients and the people that surround them.

[27] *Herceptin . . . From what I understand (scientists, help me out here), it specifically targets those HER-2 receptors on my tumor that act like an "on" switch and signal cancer cells to proliferate. Herceptin turns that switch off. (BB)*

Negative lexical choices for the VIOLENCE related metaphor like “kill,” “killing,” “suppressing,” “suppressors,” “eradicating,” “destroy” or “eliminate” (particularly in the blogs BB and MLCCM) appear as means of referring to the way the drugs eliminate mutant cells. The patients’ usage of these expressions contributes to the violent and war- like vision of the treatments used for cancer. In this case, the focus on the mapping ‘battle as a therapy’ highlights the violent nature of the treatment. This negative perspective of not only the illness itself but also of the treatment reinforces the disempowering feelings that both the patient and those around him/her may have.

[28] *I'm told Herceptin then **sends a message telling** my white blood cells that the cancer cells are ready to be killed. (BB)*

[29] *De hecho, tras una respuesta inicial al tratamiento, muchos pacientes con cáncer tienen recaídas debido a que las células madres tumorales no habían sido destruidas. (LBMV)*

[30] *Well, yes, but technically only the right one, and **chemo is working on eradicating** that mold problem. (BB)*

[31]. . . *de tal forma que si son eliminadas el tumor será destruido en su totalidad y ello dará lugar a la ansiada curación de los enfermos. (LBMV)*

As it can be seen in examples [28], [29] and [31] these metaphorical expressions appear in passive voice. This gives prominence to the object of the sentence, the cancerous cells, and to the action of killing, destroying or eliminating them. And also personifies them. But more importantly, taking into account the concept construal, the passive voice helps to highlight the final result of the use of the treatment, that is, the elimination of the cancerous cells.

The CM CANCER IS VIOLENCE is also realized when the patient refers to cancer and its effects as “devastating” or “crushing.” These lexical units appear whenever the patients refer to the way they felt when they discovered they had cancer, to the way it affects not only the patient but those who surround her, and to the way the disease or the medication acts. These metaphorical expressions show the hardship of receiving the diagnosis and the apparition of feelings of disempowerment since the patients’ usage of these words shows that “they cannot control the emotional consequences of illness and death.” (Semino 117).

[32] *Last weekend marked six years since my bilateral mastectomy. I still remember waking up from surgery [...] Feeling devastated.* (BB)

[33] *The effect it has on our families and friends is devastating.* (LUBM)

[34] *También está con eribulina ahora y está machacada, muy floja.* (LCMM)

Even more obviously violent and direct is the way the author of the blog BB also refers to receiving the news of having cancer as “being punched in the gut” as can be seen in example [35]. This metaphor is very powerful and, although is not directly related to war or military metaphors, it is still related to the violent way of talking about the cancer patients and their feelings of despair.

[35] *Then, last week, I got a phone call that felt nearly equivalent to the one I got last August telling me my cancer had spread - like I had been punched in the gut.* (BB)

As shown in this section, we can argue that there is no single metaphorical word for the violent conceptualization of cancer. Instead, it is conformed of many different lexical choices for conceptualizing certain aspects of the illness. For instance, the word ‘enemy’ makes reference to cancer, whereas ‘aggressive’ is used for the treatment. Also by applying the concept of construal, it could be observed that specific metaphorical words give focus to specific parts of the process. With the word ‘survivor’, the emphasis is put on the result of the process of having illness, whilst with ‘fighting’ it is the process itself of trying to be healthy again that is highlighted. The analysis, thus, shows that violence metaphors can highly vary the framing of the



experience depending on the lexical choice and the co-text where it is placed. And that the subsequent emotions depend on how the metaphorical words are used, they do not bring negative emotions by themselves.

#### 4.2.2 JOURNEY Metaphors

As in the previous section, the analysis of JOURNEY metaphors will first identify the mappings that the CM CANCER IS A JOURNEY establishes and will focus on the lexical choices that represent those mappings. These mappings and their different lexical realizations construct the experience of suffering cancer as a JOURNEY that the patient is travelling, either on her own or accompanied by her family or others in the same situation. This metaphor departs from the idea of a path or a road that can be travelled along (Semino and Demjén 386). Conceptualizing cancer as a journey means that “there is no winning or losing . . . ; the emphasis is instead on a larger process, since life itself is often compared to a journey” (Lakoff & Johnson; Reisfield & Wilson ctd in Hendricks et al. 269). It may result on the patients having a more positive view of their situation, which could help them cope better with it or it can express a negative perspective if the patients state that they do not want to be in such a difficult and long journey.

**Table 4**

#### Mappings in JOURNEY Metaphors

<i>Source: JOURNEY</i>	<i>Target: CANCER</i>
The traveler	The patient
The vehicle	The patient's body
The journey	The process of having cancer
To walk/to navigate/ to travel	Way of movement along the process
The distance covered	The progress made
The obstacles encountered	The difficulties experienced
Decisions about which path to take	Choices related to treatment
The destination of the journey	Being healthy



The lexical choices found in the corpus for the JOURNEY source domain are those of “journey,” “path,” “road,” “route” and “course”. These metaphorical linguistic expressions appear whenever the authors of the blogs refer to their experience as cancer patients and to the treatment they undergo to be healthy again. In this case, as McFadyen state, journey metaphors allow the patient to be more positive because this conceptualization does not place the illness as an enemy and therefore, does not put the pressure on the patient to fight it (ctd in Semino 126). Instead, it makes the patient, for instance, feel accompanied by those who are ‘travelling’ on the same journey, i.e., other cancer patients; help them realize that it is a long process and that, like a journey, it has different stages or obstacles that may hinder the path. This results in the construction of the illness as a path towards health and wellness, and it may lead to feelings of encouragement -to keep moving forward; peace with oneself and empowerment for being in such a long and hard journey.

The most frequent lexical choice for the JOURNEY CM was ‘journey’ in the blogs in English. As previously mentioned, it is used to express feelings of companionship, either on the part of other patients, or on the part of relatives who are alongside those who suffer from the disease. This can be seen in examples [36] and [37], which contribute to the idea that this CM results in a more positive emotions and a better perspective towards the experience.

[36] *This time last year, we had no idea what was in store for us. **Along the way**, someone remarked to me that they couldn't imagine going through cancer with a baby at home; **I couldn't imagine going through it without you. I hope you never remember your Mama sick, but I hope you always know what strength you gave me - continue to give me - through this journey.** (BB)*

[37] ***My family, and friends** have been with me every **step** of this journey. (LUBM)*

If the co-text of example [36] is analyzed, it can be seen that the patient feels accompanied by her son when she says “I couldn't imagine going through it without you.” In this sentence and the following one, it is interesting the use of the word “you” since the author is directly speaking to her son, stating that he is the one that helped her cope with her illness. Similarly, in the co-text of [37] the author’s use of the possessive “my” remarks that her family and friends were the ones by her side. And

even she uses another metaphorical word “step” to refer to every stage she went through during her process of being ill.

The metaphorical word “journey,” in some occasions, such as in example [38], can appear when the patient clearly states her discontent with being in such a difficult situation but still refers to it as “journey” maybe because it helps emphasize “continuity and purposefulness over lengthy periods of time, even in situations that are unwelcome ... or where there is no hope of curative treatment” (Semino et al. 134). This is why the sense of companionship that is related to the “journey” shared among cancer patients can disappear. Not all the types of cancer are the same, not everybody has the same experience, and therefore, they can be in very different “journeys” as we can see in example [39] with the phrase “journey of her own- with very different results”. This may lead the patient to experiencing feelings of sadness and loneliness.

[38] *It is not a journey I wish for anyone to have to take. But since I am taking it, having caring, kind, and supportive people in my life makes **this unpleasant situation more tolerable.** (LUBM)*

[39] *But at the same time, her best friend embarks on a cancer journey of her own—**with very different results.** (BB)*

In example [38] it can be seen that the word “journey” itself does not express negativity or discontent, but the negation “it is not” followed by “a journey I wish for anyone to have to take” is what brings the idea that the patient’s, conscious or unconscious, conceptualization of cancer as a journey is not bringing positive feelings to her. This can also be seen with the clause ‘but since I am taking it’ where the coordinating conjunction ‘but’ is suggesting a contrast to the sentence “it is not a journey ...” Moreover, by saying “since I am taking it” the author shows lack of agency as if cancer patients were “passengers’ with no control on the journey” (Semino et al. 137). All of this discontents it is more reinforced when she states that it is an “unpleasant” situation.

The JOURNEY CM can also appear through metonymic words. Since a journey consists of different stages, ways of traveling it, different surfaces to travel on and directions, these things are also mapped into the metaphor CANCER IS A JOURNEY. Therefore, we may find the word “path” and “road” alluding to the surface where that journey is happening, as in examples [40], [41], [42], [43] and [44]. In example [43], for instance, the patient uses the word ‘road’ instead of ‘path’ but works in the same way. Although the appearance of this word and the co-text do not give any specific framing to the situation of having cancer. While, in example [44], she directly says that the “road” is a “rough” one. Thus, it is the adjective “rough” what places the negative view on the situation. In other occasions, the word ‘path’ together with ‘route’ can also appear, but in reference to treatment options such as in examples [45] and [46]; to the process followed in order to recover such as in example [47] and [48]; or to the direction taken as in [49]. These words are being used metonymically. Such metonymies do not frame the experience of having cancer by themselves; it is the context where they are placed which brings the positive or negative perspective and the subsequent emotions they create in the patient.

[40] *Que no hay que perder la esperanza y hay que seguir confiando en que ahí, detrás de las nubes está el sol y que al **final de todo este camino** lo encontraremos. (LCMM)*

[41] *Voy a empezar a dejar caer por el camino las piedras que llevo en los bolsillos, ya me pesan demasiado y no me dejan caminar como yo quiero, **ligera**, dando **pasos firmes**, pero **sin arrastrar los pies**. (LBMV)*

[42] *Hoy todo es distinto, hoy planeo mi futuro, he cogido un lápiz y he trazado un camino desde el cual puedo ver el arco iris, con sus preciosos colores, un camino que antes, hace unos meses, no estaba segura si podría **recorrer**... un camino llano, **sin subidas, ni bajadas** empinadas..... totalmente llano, un camino agradable, cómodo y fácil de andar en el.*

*Ahora estoy **en este punto del camino**, tranquila, **paseando**, observando los colores de ese arco iris, el arco iris de mi vida, que hoy brilla más que nunca. (LBMV)*

In example [41] co-text, the author states that it is not the path that has obstacles, but herself the one that carries ‘stones’ and that she wants to get rid of them by saying “voy a empezar a dejar caer” in order to move forward more easily. The use of the

first person singular in “voy a dejar caer” denotes that she is in control of her movement and thus, of making it easier or faster. The movement that the ‘stones’ are not letting her do, is walking, as she states “no me dejan caminar”. She even refers to the way she wants to walk which is ‘dando pasos firmes, pero sin arrastrar los pies’. This can be interpreted as a sort of optimistic approach to the situation that gives her a sense of having some sort of control over her movement along the path. It may help empower and encourage the patient to keep going. Something similar happens with example [40] in which the patient puts emphasis on the end of the journey through the metonymy of the end of the path as means of motivation. Being on a journey implies that there is an end of it and knowing that what she is going through is not forever regardless of whether she finally recovers or not, may help her approach her situation in a more positive way.

Even more illustrative of the path the patient is walking down and of the fact that she has some control over her movement is example [42]. In this case, the patient refers to her path after having been operated. Regarding the co-text, it clearly states through the repetitive use of verbs in first person singular like “planeo”, “he cogido”, “he trazado”, that the patient is the one who can trace her path and that she can decide how that path is going to be. Here, “the person with cancer is also placed in a position where they have at least some degree of choice and agency in the journey and how they approach it ... even if the journey itself cannot be avoided” (Semino et al. 135). Moreover, in this example there are some other metaphorical words, such as ‘ups’, ‘downs’. These words have a metonymic relation with the word ‘path’. And they refer to types of movement along the path but evaluating it, since as Lakoff and Johnson stated when exposing the different types of metaphors that appear in everyday language, “GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN (16). The patient clearly states that she does not want that type of movement, but instead she wants to walk through a plane path. In this case, again, it is not the word ‘path’ itself which places a positive view, but the rest of the co-text. This construction of cancer can be seen as positive since it gives the option to the patient of creating a path, a ‘new beginning’, and seems to create feelings of hope, encouragement and peacefulness.

[43] *In fact, 20-30% of everyone diagnosed with breast cancer will at **some point down the road** develop metastases. (BB)*

[44] *But it never feels like quite enough. So here's what other women who've been down this **rough road** have to say on the matter. (BB)*

[45] *La semana que viene voy a hacerme una eco de mama por lo privado y se la enviaré para que el valore y me diga que camino he de tomar. (LBMV)*

[46] *I still had cancer. I still experienced nearly five tears of metastatic cancer. No I just have different appointments and different doctors to figure out what the best path forward is for me. (BB)*

[47] *I am feeling far, far less than resilient at this very moment along my path to wellness that I've ever felt in a while, but I'm going to show up and give it my messy best. (BB)*

[48] *I would recommend getting multiple options on route of treatment. (BB)*

[49] *Parece que al final las cosas van tomando el rumbo **correcto**, todo lo que pasas, lo bueno y lo malo, siempre pasa por algo, cada día lo tengo más claro. (LBMV)*

In [45] and [46], referring to treatment options as “paths” that both the patients and the doctors have to choose gives a major agency to them, since they are the ones in charge of deciding which “path” they are going to take. In these examples that agency is given to the doctors. Equally, in [48] the word “route” makes reference to treatment but the rest of the interpretation comes from the co-text in which the agency is given to the patient with the phrase “I would recommend”. Therefore, these expressions could be regarded as expressing positive feelings towards the fact that they can have choice on how to treat their illness.

An even more positive conceptualization is referring to the treatment itself as a ‘path to wellness’ as in example [47]. The fact that the patient directly talks about her ‘path’ towards recovery and being healthy again places a very optimistic view over her experience since it focuses on the goal, on the final destination of the path. And although she first states that she does not feel resilient in that moment, the fact that she is focusing on the destination and saying that she is going to “give it my messy

best” contributes to creating an optimistic view. Similarly, in [49] the patient’s progressive recovery is conceptualized as ‘taking the right direction’, which, in this case, is not showing the patient as the one in control of the direction but shows a positive opinion about how her life is going through the use of the adjective “correcto”.

Since cancer is conceptualized as a journey, that journey implies “going forward” or not being able to do so, meaning respectively a positive change or a negative one (Semino et al. 132). Such conceptualization can be seen in example [50] in which the patient clearly states her fear of not being able to advance, while example [51] the patient states that she is about to start a new stage of the process, which involves receiving treatment. This also reveals that journey metaphors can either express negativity of positivity, and “potentially put some responsibility for success or failure on patients” (Semino et al. 137). This construction of the illness can express negative emotions such as fear and disempowerment; and positive ones like acceptance and determination to try to be better.

[50] *Miedo de nuevo a la incertidumbre, a los cambios... a no avanzar... a que haya saldo otra mancha en la espalda y no sepa como digerirlo. (LCMM)*

[51] *Within a few weeks we all adjusted as well as we could to this devastating news. It was time to move forward, and begin treatment. (LUBM)*

The last instance for this analysis of a lexical realization of the CM CANCER IS A JOURNEY is the verb ‘navigate’. This word is used in reference to the type of movement through the process of having cancer and being on treatment. Since the experience is viewed as a journey, that journey implies movement, and thus, there can be different types of movement. In example [52] the usage of the metaphorical word ‘navigate’ makes reference to that type of movement along the journey, but the word itself does not contribute to a particular framing of it. It is the final part of the co-text, “tricky business”, which is part of the ‘navigating’ metaphor, that gives the idea of ‘navigating’ as a complicated thing to do through the use of the adjective ‘tricky’.

[52] *Navigating cancer treatments with kids at home, and more importantly, figuring out how to keep discussions with them (or conversations when they're in earshot) age-appropriate is a tricky business.*

This analysis of JOURNEY metaphors has shown that regarding words like “journey,” “path,” “road” and “route”, it is not the metaphorical word itself what places a specific evaluation of the illness and the situation of the patient, but the context in which the word is placed. It has also been proved that the words like “path” or “road” do not conceptualize the illness as such, but establish a metonymic relation with the general CM CANCER IS A JOURNEY focusing on the traveling surface. In regard to the types movement, they are part of the mappings established by the CM and in some occasions, like “ups” and “downs” they are evaluative. Thus, all the keywords for JOURNEY metaphors conceptualize the illness in a similar way, but may highlight different aspects of the disease that will bring different types of emotions.

## 5. Conclusion

The evidence shown above through the quantitative analysis demonstrates that the language patients use to talk about their illness is full of CMs. And that they conceptualize cancer in many different ways in order to better understand their situation. The compilation and quantification of all the metaphors found in the corpus leads to think that CM “far from being a superfluous though pleasing linguistic ornament, is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning” (Kövecses 9). Indeed, metaphors are pervasive in language and thought, no matter the language used, and they play an important role in both the linguistic and the conceptual construction of everyday realities and experiences, like in this case, of illnesses such as cancer. What is more, as English and Spanish metaphorical words were collected and compared through tables, it can be seen that in both languages the most frequent CM is that of CANCER IS VIOLENCE English and Spanish speaker use similar metaphors for the construction of the illness but the lexical choices and their frequency of use vary from one language to another.



With regard to the qualitative analysis of the CM CANCER IS VIOLENCE, it has shown that patients, both in English and Spanish blogs, mostly conceptualize cancer by means of violent scenarios, which position them as “fighters” while undergoing cancer treatment, as “survivors” once they have overcome it, and cancer as the “enemy” they must overcome. It has also been proved that even the medical language that patients use contains CM that conceptualize the treatment as an “aggressive” procedure in which cancerous cells are not only eliminated but “attacked”, “killed” and “destroyed”, and in which chemotherapy is personified and “targets” the malign cells. Although these metaphorical words carry violent connotations, they are not always used as means of portraying a negative view of the illness but instead, many times the patients talk in this way as means of empowerment and positions themselves as brave for confronting such difficult disease. However, it is undeniable that using so much violent language results in a violent perception of the illness as a war that the patients have to win.

Cancer is presented as an enemy, which, inevitably, creates disheartening feelings in the patients. This happens because they feel like they are being ‘attacked’ when in fact it is not that they are attacked but that their cells mutate. And also puts them under the pressure of winning the battle, which may also highly affect them if they finally do not achieve the victory. This is why, as it can also be seen in the analysis, the usage of this CM is not always done in order to conceptualize the illness but in order to criticize the violent view that their usage entails. Nevertheless, it has also been proved through the examples and the analysis of their co-texts that it is not only the metaphor as such that results in either a negative or positive framing of the illness and the experience, but the way in which each lexical choice is used and how their meaning or implications are shaped through the co- text. As a result, it could be said that the overarching metaphor needs to be studied together with all the elements and details that conform the co-text in which they appear since the implications and the feelings the metaphorical expressions may create on the patient vary depending on who says them and how. But, contrary to what scholars like Susan Sontag think, their usage cannot be suppressed since they are quite useful for patients in terms of explaining their situation.



On the other hand, the CM *CANCER IS A JOURNEY*, which was also highly found in the corpus, conceptualizes the illness as journey that the patient is traveling, which creates the perception of cancer as a long process in which the patient finds herself. Such conceptualization, as has been shown through the analysis, involves different types of surfaces where the patient is travelling, different directions that the patient has to take, like for instance, deciding between two types of treatment, different types of movement along the journey and a final destination, which is healing. This sort of metaphorical words conceptualize cancer in a way that does not contribute to a specific framing of the illness, since “journey,” “path,” “walk” and “route” do not entail a positive or negative conceptualization, they are rather neutral. Instead, it is the broader co-text within they are found that implies certain evaluations of the illness. This has been proved during the qualitative analysis many occasions through the study of the co-text of several examples where these words appeared. In fact, the only occasions in which a certain framing or expression of feelings aroused was when the patient referred to the type of movement during the journey, and to the relation with other evaluative CM such as “ups” and “downs”.

Overall, it could be said that patients indeed make use of the CM *CANCER IS A JOURNEY* constructing the idea of a lengthy experience that has different stages and, even, impediments to continue moving. But it is not the journey metaphor itself that puts forward a specific framing of the illness and, thus, creates the subsequent negative or positive feelings, but the way in which the patient addresses the fact of ‘being on a journey’ and the way they use the metaphorical words to present their situation as cancer patients.

As a general conclusion then, it should be noted that patients do conceptualize cancer, either consciously or not, and that the usage they make of the metaphors and the way they are presented highly influences the perception of the illness and the emotions of the patient. However, contrary to what social media and some scholars of this field have been recently saying, we should take into account that these CMs are not entirely negative or positive. In fact, they may present advantages for some and disadvantages for others since it all depends on the way they are used and how the people using them feels towards their situation.

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**Table I**  
**CANCER IS VIOLENCE and CANCER IS A JOURNEY**

Conceptual metaphor	English metaphorical keyword	#items	Spanish metaphorical keyword	#items
CANCER IS VIOLENCE	surviv* ( <i>verb</i> )	13 → 4%		
	<b>survivor(s)</b>	<b>50 → 16%</b>	Superviviente	1 → 0,5%
	<b>survival (noun)</b>	<b>37 → 12%</b>	Supervivencia ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,5%
	fight* ( <i>verb</i> )	12 → 4%	<b>luch* (<i>verb</i>)</b>	<b>36 → 18%</b>
	fight ( <i>noun</i> )	26 → 8%	<b>lucha(s) (noun)</b>	<b>36 → 18%</b>
	fighter(s)	2 → 0,6%	luchador*(s)	9 → 4%
			Compañera/o (de lucha/batalla)	13 → 6%
	battl* ( <i>verb</i> )	3 → 1%	Batall* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 1%
	battle ( <i>noun</i> )	11 → 3%	Batalla(s) ( <i>noun</i> )	6 → 3%
			Batallón ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,5%
	combat* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,3%	Combat* ( <i>verb</i> )	4 → 2%
			Combativo	1 → 0,5%
			Batir* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,5%
			Guerre* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,5%
			Guerrera(s)	3 → 1%
			Soldado(s)	1 → 0,5%
			Pelea(s) ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,5%
			Pulso ( <i>noun</i> )	3 → 1%
	beat* ( <i>verb</i> )	26 → 8%		
			Paliza ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,5%
			Tortur* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,5%
			Tortura(s)	15 → 7%

		Agred* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,5%
		Agresión ( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 1%
aggressive ( <i>adj</i> )	17 → 5%	Agresivo (s)	3 → 1%
aggressive(ly)	1 → 0,3%		
target* ( <i>verb</i> )	4 → 1%		
target ( <i>noun</i> )	4 → 1%		
target(ed)	11 → 3%		
face* ( <i>verb</i> )	9 → 3%	Afront* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,5%
kill* ( <i>verb</i> )	6 → 2%	Mat* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 1%
kill(ed)	2 → 0,6%		
devastat* ( <i>verb</i> )	4 → 1%		
devastation ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,3%		
devastat(ed)	2 → 0,6%	Machaca(da)	3 → 1%
suppress*( <i>verb</i> )	4 → 1%		
suppression ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,3%		
suppressor(s)	2 → 0,6%		
		Envenen* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,5%
poison ( <i>noun</i> )	6 → 2%	Veneno ( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 1%
		Porquería ( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 1%
attack* ( <i>verb</i> )	4 → 1%	Atac* ( <i>verb</i> )	11 → 5%
attack(ed)	1 → 0,3%		
threat* ( <i>verb</i> )	5 → 2%		
		Amenaza ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,5%
		Acech* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 1%
		Acecho ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,5%
lose* ( <i>verb</i> )	4 → 1%		

			Derrota ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,5%
	punch(ed)	4 → 1%		
	onslaught ( <i>noun</i> )	3 → 1%		
			Gan* ( <i>verb</i> )	6 → 3%
	victory ( <i>noun</i> )	3 → 1%		
	strik* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 0,6%		
	destroy* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 0,6%	Destru* ( <i>verb</i> )	4 → 2%
	eradicat* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 0,6%	Elimin* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,5%
			Aniquil* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 1%
			Achicharr*( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,5%
			Arras* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,5%
	victim ( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 0,6%		
	enemy ( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 0,6%	Enemigo ( <i>noun</i> )	3 → 1%
			Contrincante ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,5%
	bomb* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,3%		
	bomb ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,3%		
	front ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,3%		
	retreat* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,3%		
	vanquish* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,3%	Venc* ( <i>verb</i> )	7 → 3%
			Vencida	2 → 1%
	ravish* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,3%	Destroz* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 0,5%
	vengeance ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,3%		
	arsenal ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,3%	Arma ( <i>noun</i> )	3 → 1%
	assassin ( <i>adj</i> )	1 → 0,3%		
	armor ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,3%	Coraza ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 0,5%
CANCER IS A JOURNEY			Camin* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 4%
	<b>Journey (<i>noun</i>)</b>	<b>23 → 56%</b>	Camino ( <i>noun</i> )	24 → 50%
			Tramo [del camino]	1 → 2%

			<i>(noun)</i>	
			Final (del camino) <i>(noun)</i>	3 → 6%
			Recorrer* <i>(verb)</i>	2 → 4%
			Recorr(ido) <i>(verb)</i>	1 → 2%
Road <i>(noun)</i>	5 → 12%			
Path <i>(noun)</i>	3 → 7%			
Route <i>(noun)</i>	1 → 2%	Rumbo <i>(noun)</i>		4 → 8%
Forward <i>(adv)</i>	6 → 15%	Avanz* <i>(verb)</i>		2 → 4%
Navigat* <i>(verb)</i>	3 → 7%	Naveg* <i>(verb)</i>		2 → 4%
		Subida(s)		2 → 4%
		Bajada(s)		2 → 4%
		Paso(s)		2 → 4%
		Compañero <i>(noun)</i>		1 → 2%

**Table II**  
**Other Conceptualizations of Cancer**

Conceptual metaphor	English metaphorical keyword	#items	Spanish metaphorical keyword	#items
CANCER IS A SPORT / GAME	<b>Marathon (noun)</b>	<b>6 → 24%</b>	<b>Carrera (noun)</b>	<b>1 → 2%</b>
	Puzzle (noun)	3 → 12%	Puzzle (noun)	1 → 2%
	Piece(s) (noun)	1 → 4%		
	Card (noun)	1 → 4%		
	Ballgame (noun)	1 → 4%		
	Game (noun)	1 → 4%		
CANCER IS METEOROLOGY / NATURE			<b>Sol (noun)</b>	<b>10 → 26%</b>
	<b>Fog (noun)</b>	<b>3 → 27%</b>		
	<b>Fogg(ed)</b>	<b>2 → 18%</b>		
			Nubes (noun)	4 → 10%
			Nubarrones (noun)	2 → 5%
	Cloud(ed)	2 → 18%	Nublado	1 → 2%
	Earthquake(s)	2 → 18%		
	Hurricane (noun)	1 → 9%		
	Tornado (noun)	1 → 9%	torbellino	1 → 2%
			Tormenta (noun)	6 → 15%
			Rayos (noun)	2 → 5%
			Truenos (noun)	1 → 2%
			Viento (noun)	1 → 2%
			Borrascas (noun)	1 → 2%
			Arco iris (noun)	5 → 12%
			Mar (noun)	3 → 8%
		Primavera (noun)	1 → 2%	
		Lava (noun)	1 → 2%	
		<b>Ángel(es) (ito)</b>	<b>22 → 78%</b>	



CANCER IS SUPERNATURAL/ RELIGION	Boogeyman( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 25%		
	Monster ( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 25%	Monstruo ( <i>noun</i> )	4 → 14%
	Superwoman( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 25%	Superwoman( <i>noun</i> )	3 → 11%
	Phoenix ( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 25%	Fénix	1 → 3%
	Superhero ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 12%		
CANCER IS AN ANIMAL			<b>Bicho (s)</b>	<b>21 → 78%</b>
	<b>Beast (<i>noun</i>)</b>	<b>2 → 12%</b>		
	Dog(s) ( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 12%	León (a)	2 → 7%
	Tentacle(s) ( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 12%		
	Turtle ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 6%	Tortuga ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 4%
	Tortoise ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 6%		
	Lizzard ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 6%		
	Mold ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 6%		
			Hormiga ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 4%
CANCER IS A MACHINE	<b>Roller-coaster (<i>noun</i>)</b>	<b>6 → 28%</b>	<b>Montaña rusa (<i>noun</i>)</b>	<b>5 → 21%</b>
	Toolkit ( <i>noun</i> )	4 → 19%		
	Toolbox ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 5%		
	Tool(s)	1 → 5%	Destornillador( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 8%
	Fuel* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 9%		
	Fuel ( <i>noun</i> )	3 → 14%	Gasolina ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 4%
	Fuel(ed)	1 → 5%		
	Supply ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 5%		
	Switch ( <i>noun</i> )	2 → 9%		
	Switch(ed)	2 → 9%		
			Barco ( <i>noun</i> )	3 → 12%

			Timón (noun)	2 → 8%
			Enchuf* (verb)	1 → 4%
			Enchufad(a)(os)	3 → 12%
			Desconect* (verb)	2 → 8%
			Pila(s)	1 → 4%
			Batería (noun)	1 → 4%
			Motor	1 → 4%
THE BODY IS A CONTAINER	<b>Progress* (verb)</b>	<b>10 → 6%</b>		
	<b>Progression (noun)</b>	<b>28 → 16%</b>	Avance (noun)	2 → 8%
	<b>Progressive (adj)</b>	<b>1 → 0,6%</b>		
	Spread* (verb)	26 → 15%		
	Spread (noun)	3 → 2%		
	Spread(ing) (noun)	3 → 2%		
			<b>Libr* (verb)</b>	<b>7 → 29%</b>
			<b>Liberación (noun)</b>	<b>2 → 8%</b>
	Free (adj)	29 → 17%	<b>Liberada(adj/partic)</b>	<b>2 → 8%</b>
	Clean (adj)	14 → 8%		
	Clearance (noun)	2 → 1%		
	Clear (adj)	8 → 5%		
	Grow* (verb)	15 → 9%	Aument* (verb)	1 → 0,6%
	Growth (noun)	11 → 6%		
	Invad* (verb)	1 → 0,5%	Invad* (verb)	3 → 12%
			Invasión (noun)	1 → 0,6%
	Invasive (adj)	7 → 4%		
	Return* (verb)	7 → 4%		
Imprison(ed)	7 → 4%			

	Shrink* ( <i>verb</i> )	5 → 3%	Reduc* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 8%	
			Desaparec* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 8%	
CANCER IS A PERSON			<b>Señor (super sofóco)</b>	<b>6 → 35%</b>	
			<b>Señora (frío polar)</b>	<b>6 → 35%</b>	
		<b>Feed* (<i>verb</i>)</b>	<b>3 → 13%</b>		
		Kick* ( <i>verb</i> )	3 → 13%		
		Outsmart* ( <i>verb</i> )	3 → 13%		
		Misbehav* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 9%		
		Lurk* ( <i>verb</i> )	2 → 9%		
		Fickle ( <i>adj</i> )	2 → 9%		
		Bit* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 4%		
		Eat* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 4%		
		Bitch ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 4%	Cabrón(cete) (noun)	2 → 12%
				Puñetero (noun)	1 → 6%
		Discriminat* ( <i>verb</i> )	1 → 4%		
		Dormant ( <i>adj</i> )	1 → 4%		

**Table III**  
**Creative Metaphors for the Conceptualization of Cancer**

Conceptual Metaphor	Metaphorical Keyword	#items
CREATIVE METAPHORS FOR CANCER	<b>Mancha(s)(ita(s))</b>	<b>16 → 36%</b>
	Putad(a)(ón)	4 → 9%
	Hilo	1 → 2%
	Cuerda (s)	2 → 4%
	Funambulista ( <i>noun</i> )	3 → 7%
	Aprob* ( <i>verb</i> )	3 → 7%
	Cate* ( <i>verb</i> )	3 → 7%
	Chute(s)	4 → 9%
	Espada(de dámocles) ( <i>noun</i> )	3 → 7%
	Gotera(s)	3 → 7%
	Cancerballs ( <i>noun</i> )	1 → 2%
	Laberinto	1 → 2%