

# UNDERSTANDING CANCER METAPHOR WITHIN THE LCCM THEORY

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**Abstract:** *Cancer is a complicated disease that is usually difficult to talk about. While studies on cancer metaphors have shown that different metaphors have been used at different frequency of usage in narrating cancer, there have been few attempts to examine the metaphors used by cancer patients in relation to their cognition. This is because metaphors are also connected to the nature of mental process, reflecting the cognition that could provide insights to the patients' beliefs on cancer instead of being only as a rhetorical device. This study examined the data collected from 31 cancer patients from Kuching, Sarawak through semi-structured interview in light of the connection mentioned using the Metaphorical Identification Procedure (MIP) and LCCM theory through unified framework of analysis. The results show that the patients turned to "journey", "conspiratorial" and "structural" metaphors more to describe their cancer conditions. Besides, the results also show that the cancer metaphors used by these patients shed further insights into patients' cognition about cancer and the connection with their sociocultural background (e.g., social network, occupations, life experiences). Thus, it was concluded that such insights may help to address some of the current debate regarding metaphors used in oncology especially on the connection to the nature of the mental process.*

**Keywords:** cancer, cognition, metaphor, Malaysia, sociocultural background

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## 1. Introduction

Cancer is a complex disease that is usually difficult to discuss about. Over the years, it has been describe through various communication means, one of them being the use of metaphor while some others may wish to avoid discussing their illness. Metaphor, in its basic sense, is "a device for seeing something in terms of something else [as it] brings out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this" (Burke, 1969, p. 503). Metaphors are relevant to embodied cognition. Cognition can be defined as diverse abilities in human intelligence that allow us to identify and process information (Kim, Bahk, Oh, Lee, Lee, and Choi, 2018).

Studies on metaphors in healthcare show that metaphors have been used in conceptualising cancer and cancer experiences since metaphors are connected to cognition and their own unique background experience (Low, 1996; Hauser & Schwarz, In press). Based on past researches, war and journey were identified as the two dominant metaphors used among patients in deciphering and discussing their cancer experience (Hendricks, Demjen, Semino & Boroditsky, 2018). Besides their crucial role, cancer metaphors may have *different effects on different people* who use them to discuss the disease. This is because cancer has been understood differently by patients from diverse populations and sociocultural context. Some patients may refused to talk about cancer or apply cancer metaphors in describing cancer and